

National University of Ireland Maynooth

This thesis is dedicated to the children and staff of the College

Home for Little Children – past, present and future...

**THE ROLE OF REFORMIST PHILANTHROPY IN LATE
NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
IRELAND: A CASE STUDY OF
ROSA MARY BARRETT (1854-1936)**

By

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Acknowledgements

Chapter One

Introducing reformist philanthropy 1-36

Chapter Two

***Rosa Mary Barrett as a case study of an active reformist both
locally and nationally*** 37-97

Chapter Three

***The Cottage Home for Little Children Kingston – a Barrett
enterprise*** 98-139

Chapter Four

***Rosa M. Barrett and the international welfare and suffrage
movements*** 140-174

Conclusion 175-181

Bibliography 182-188

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Acknowledgements	
Chapter One	
<i>Introducing reformist philanthropy</i>	1-36
Chapter Two	
<i>Rosa Mary Barrett as a case-model of an active reformist both locally and nationally</i>	37-97
Chapter Three	
<i>The Cottage Home for Little Children Kingstown – a Barrett enterprise!</i>	98-139
Chapter Four	
<i>Rosa M. Barrett and the international welfare and suffrage movements</i>	140-174
Conclusion	175-181
Bibliography	182-188

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Rosa Mary Barrett (1854-1916)

(Library of the Cottage Home for Little Children, Dun Laoghaire)

(Photograph not dated)



Rosa Mary Barrett. (1854-1936).

*(courtesy of the Cottage Home for Little Children, Dun-Laoghaire.
photograph not dated).*

After the war

The aim of this book is to provide a study of the role of voluntary philanthropy in the development of the Irish welfare state in the early years of the century in Ireland, particularly the history of voluntary philanthropy in the early years of the century.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING REFORMIST

PHILANTHROPY

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part is a historical study of the role of voluntary philanthropy in the development of the Irish welfare state in the early years of the century. The second part is a study of the role of voluntary philanthropy in the development of the Irish welfare state in the early years of the century.

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Chapter

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Aims of thesis

The aims of this thesis are threefold: firstly to investigate the role of reformist philanthropy as an aegis of social change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Ireland; secondly the impact of reformist philanthropy on child care provision. Particular focus will be given to the Cottage Home for Little Children in Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire), founded initially as a crèche by Rosa Barrett in 1879. The third main aim of the thesis is to examine the linkages, if any, which existed between the suffrage movement in Ireland and international women's welfare movements. In applying these questions, the reformer Rosa Mary Barrett (1854-1936) serves as a case-model of a reformist philanthropist who dedicated her life to reform and child care at a local, national and international level.

Chapter one of the thesis will introduce reformist philanthropy, and will address some key reformist organisations. Chapter two is a biographical treatment of Rosa Mary Barrett (1854-1936). Chapter three deals specifically with the Crèche and Cottage Home at Kingstown, as well as contemporary developments in the childcare sphere. Finally chapter four is a wider analysis of the connections between philanthropy and the suffrage campaign, linked to an international movement pursuing women's welfare interests.

Sources

The principal research archive for this study has been the records of the Cottage Home in Dun Laoghaire. It is still in existence today and retains a full set of annual reports, as well as a clipping book, small Crèche book and some sundry material. The minute books of the home and day to day logbook were not available for study. The Liberty Crèche minute books and reports are available at the Society of Friends

library, Swanbrook House, Donnybrook, while some of Mrs Hilton's reports are in the British Library, London. In looking at the suffrage campaign, the minute book of the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association (IWSLGA) was temporarily stored in the Russell Library in Maynooth making it easily accessible for my research. The Minute book for the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation is in the National Library of Ireland. Much of the material relating to other contemporary charities was gleaned from Barrett's own *Guide to Dublin charities*, published in 1884. This provides a great deal of information on the variety of aid available throughout Dublin City and county. Much of the material relating to female temperance organisations was located at the Public Record Office in Belfast.

A key source for the thesis has of course been the numerous local newspapers and international journals that recorded philanthropic enterprises and reform initiatives. Trying to build up a biographical profile of Barrett has proved the most difficult task. She left no papers or memorabilia in Kingstown when she returned to England, to Welwyn Garden City. There too she left few effects; specifying particularly in her will that anything of a private nature should be destroyed. Through Rosa Barrett's brother George, I was able to trace and contact a great granddaughter of his, however she knows nothing of her relative's existence save for a mark on the family tree! As a result the information presented has been sourced from contemporary reports and newspapers (particularly the local Kingstown paper, the *Bray and South Dublin Herald*), Barrett's own writings and those of her brother, William Fletcher Barrett. Specific information from Dr. William's Library in London and the Council for World Missions provided a good deal of background information. The information on Welwyn Garden City was provided by Mr and Mrs Woodcraft, now resident in what was Rosa Barrett's house

in Welwyn Garden City, and with whom I had made contact. The Colindale Newspaper library in London was invaluable in tracing obscure newspapers such as the *International Psychic Gazette*. Despite repeated queries to various churchmen in England, I was unable to uncover much about the Barrett's after their departure from Royston.

Literature Review

In recent years the efforts by middle-class Victorian women to carve a niche for themselves has received increased attention. Texts like P. Levine's *Victorian feminism* (London, 1987) and Jane Lewis *Women in England 1870-1950* (Brighton, 1986) provide useful background information. On women in the middle class family, a study that address the issue from the perspective of daughters is Carol Dyhouse *Girls growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London, 1981). The work of Ellen Ross is important in exploring working class motherhood, particularly *Love and toil, motherhood in outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford, 1993). On women's involvement in the public world, Patricia Hollis *Ladies-elect women in the English local government 1865-1914* (Oxford, 1987) is an invaluable guide to women's involvement in local politics. Martha Vicinus *Independent women: work and community for single women 1850-1920* (London, 1985) explores the separate worlds of education and settlement work that single women evolved.

The efforts to create a domain for themselves through philanthropy have also received attention from historians both in Ireland and abroad. A groundbreaking British work was F.K Prochaska's *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century England* (Oxford, 1980) which revealed the scale of the movement and the deep

commitment of many of the women involved. In Ireland Maria Luddy's *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995) builds on the work of Rosemary Raughter, Mary Cullen and Margaret Preston.

Exploring Irish charity work, the only study of charity children in Ireland remains Joseph Robin's *The lost children, a study of charity children in Ireland, 1700-1900* (Dublin, 1980). Authors like Mary Daly and Jacinta Prunty have looked at the social and economic history of Dublin, Daly in *Dublin: the deposed capital* (Cork, 1984) and more recently Prunty's *Dublin slums, 1800-1925: a study in urban geography* (Dublin, 1998). Alison Jordan's *Who cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast* (Belfast, 1992) provides a useful counterpoint to the Dublin story.

In exploring the suffrage campaign the British movement has received a great deal of attention, Martin Pugh's *Women and the women's movement in Britain 1914-1959* (Macmillan, 1992), Jane Rendall's *The origins of modern feminism: women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (Macmillan, 1985) and Les Garner's *Stepping stones to women's liberty: feminist ideas in the women's suffrage movement 1900-1918* (Gower, 1984) have all explored the pursuit of the vote by women. In Ireland the campaign for the vote has been addressed by Rosemary Cullen-Owens *Smashing times: a history of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement, 1889-1922* (Dublin, 1984) and Cliona Murphy's *The women's suffrage movement and Irish society in the early twentieth century* (Hempstead, 1989).

In the American context, three articles in particular proved very useful: firstly Paula Baker 'The domestication of politics: women and American political society, 1780-

1920'; secondly Leila Rupp's article on 'Constructing internationalism, women's transnational organisations', thirdly Anne Boylan 'Women in groups: an analysis of women's benevolent organisations in New York and Boston, 1797-1840'.

Essential background

The time span of this thesis covers the period from 1874 to 1922, the two years that mark Rosa Barrett's arrival and departure from Ireland. This was a period of change and uncertainty, which culminated in the emergence of an independent Ireland. In the intervening period, the political situation had been determined initially by land reform, the Home Rule movement of the 1880s, and the resurgence of the Parliamentary Party under John Redmond. The debacle of the Parnell split was followed by the emergence of a new generation of activists. Chief manifestations of changing attitudes were the growth of new forms of cultural nationalism, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic League and the literary revival. Southern Unionism was divided between those who endorsed the government's conciliatory overtures towards nationalism and those who favoured robust resistance to popular demands. The reform of local government in 1899, followed by the routing of unionists in local polls outside of Ulster, had delivered a hammer blow to unionist self-confidence. Advocates of constructive unionism were increasingly isolated in their centrist position by the growing polarisation of Irish society. Yet Ireland remained part of the wider British Empire, though increasingly it was making determined efforts to define itself as separate from the UK both culturally and politically.

Political conflicts were but one divide; more long-running divisions existed between the respective Protestant and Roman Catholic Church in Irish society. An invigorated Roman Catholic church coming into contact with an energised Protestant church ensured volatile confrontations. Sectarian tension divided all, most particularly on matters of childcare and education. Both sides devoted immense energy and funds towards securing the well-being of their respective communities, as well as focusing on controversial issues of 'child saving' and 'child rescue', particularly the child of mixed-religion parents. Proselytism and counter-accusations proved great rallying cry's for both sides while ensuring that the divisions between the two sides were never bridged.

While political and religious differences created tensions at national and local level, the relative position of Dublin as an urban centre continued to decline. Lacking an industrial base, the underemployment and unemployment of large sectors of the city's mainly unskilled working population was increasingly reliant on meagre job opportunities and unreliable conditions. A surplus of labour further undermined job stability. The movement of the wealthier to the independent suburbs left Dublin as an administrative city, yet a city stagnating. Without the necessary funds for reform and oftentimes lacking the political will for radical action, Dublin's city council presided over a city that had some of the worst housed citizenry in the western world.

Much of this thesis is geographically located in the immediate Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) area. Kingstown was an independent township of much style. For those with financial security Kingstown provided a comfortable base. The *Kingstown Guide for 1905* marketed the town as 'savouring more of the twentieth century than

any other town in Ireland; here certainly the lover of comfort has no need to complain'.¹ When the London-Holyhead railway line began to run, the harbours great days had begun.² An excellent service to the United Kingdom and an excellent commuter rail link to Dublin confirmed Kingstown as a dormitory town of some style. However Kingstown treasured its independence, seeing itself as a classic Victorian success story.³

The development of Kingstown gave many people the possibility of residing in a district of good air, pleasant surroundings, and a relatively rural hinterland, near a close and reliable link to the city. These at least appear some of the enticements the Barrett's found in the town.⁴ By 1834 the firm of Alexander Findlater established a store in Kingstown, which became the town's high-class grocer. Findlater's catered for the new class of resident, the occupants of the many substantial houses in Kingstown. The construction of the new Royal Marine Hotel, modelled on a German spa hotel confirmed the township's arrival. With the elegant railway station, the new town hall, all were the hallmarks of a prosperous town. The suggestion on the part of the Town Commissioners to create a free park for the township as early as 1884 highlights the great lengths the township went to, to have all the requisites of a Victorian town. As Pearson highlights, such schemes came long before the planned expenditure of public money on the clearance of the township's slums and erection of the first artisan's dwellings in 1896.⁵ Kingstown like other parts of Ireland was a hot bed of religious difference. However Kingstown replicated Dublin in being unable to provide adequately for its working

¹ *Kingstown Guide for 1905* (Kingstown, 1905) Preface.

² Blackrock Teachers Association, *The book of DunLaoghaire* (Dublin, 1986), p. 31.

³ Blackrock Teachers Association, *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴ Lady Florence E. Barrett, *Personality survives death* (London, 1934), p. 4.

population, religious tensions created a multitude of factions and cross-community relations were often difficult to maintain. This aspect of the township will be further discussed in chapter three wherein it directly pertains to the founding of the Crèche and Cottage Home and some of the problems that institution faced.

The general trend towards greater international contacts, wider media coverage, travel and communication also played a part in the development of a reformist spirit that operated at a local, national and international level. Greater faith in society's ability to solve previously intractable problems and a growing realisation of the scale of these problems linked with an increasing faith in rational statistics and social investigation. For many of those involved in the philanthropic sphere were optimistic about man's potential for good, all were capable of reformation. Many shared this positivist view of human nature and it is this sense of optimism, combined with a strong sense of social responsibility which are often hallmarks of their philanthropy.

Philanthropy: Definition

Philanthropy defined as a, 'love of mankind especially as shown in services in general welfare'⁶, served as a rallying cry to many in the nineteenth century. Philanthropy provided the impulse to get involved in the wider community, to be of service to those less fortunate and to improve the general lot of mankind. Philanthropy offered many a role in a wider social world. Perhaps no group so benefited from growing philanthropic involvement more than middle class women who were actively encouraged by church and state to involve themselves with those

⁵ Peter Pearson, *DunLaoghaire-Kingstown* (Dublin, 1981), p. 112.

⁶ *Chamber's Dictionary*.

less fortunate. Philanthropy was a respectable arena outside of the home. Many insisted their 'special knowledge' of children and the weak, of home and family, gave them the credentials they needed to serve in the wider context.⁷ Both sexes justified women's philanthropic work with reference to their caring qualities. In seeking to change behaviour, philanthropy had a vision of a transformed society, in which their own middle class norms and values would be replicated.⁸ The importance of inculcating proper values in the working class home was a major motivational factor in much nineteenth century philanthropy – divisions were repeatedly drawn between the deserving and non-deserving, the 'respectable' poor and the rest. The deserving included the elderly, the long-term sick and disabled, and widows with children, these were regarded as appropriate recipients of aid; the undeserving were judged to be able but unwilling to work requiring punishment rather than assistance.⁹ All would benefit in both practical and moral ways from the greater involvement of middle class women in their lives.

Benevolence v.'s reform

In analysing women's benevolent organisations in America, Anne Boylan has posited that women created parallel sets of societies that often had little in common.¹⁰ The two parallel strands reveal different organisational traditions: the benevolent and the reformist. The benevolent tradition, which characterised most philanthropy concerned itself with meeting primary wants, the need for food, shelter and clothing. It most actively concerned itself with the 'deserving' poor and rarely

⁷ Joan Perkin, *Victorian Women* (London, 1993), p. 216.

⁸ June Purvis, *Women's history Britain, 1850-1945* (London, 1997), p. 223.

⁹ S.J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 1998), p. 84.

¹⁰ Anne M. Boylan, 'Women in groups: an analysis of women's benevolent organisations in New York and Boston, 1797-1840', *Journal of American History*, 71 (1984), pp.497-523.

questioned the underlying social problems that contributed to poverty.¹¹ The important thing was to cope with immediate needs; discussion of why or how to prevent such need re-occurring did not impinge. Such organisations did not regard their role as women to move beyond benevolence towards a wider critique of the society.

By challenging assumptions that dictated what women should do in the public sphere, reform-oriented women moved beyond benevolence and into active efforts to change basic social relationships.¹² One was either a benevolent lady or a reformer, seldom both. Based on ideas of civic duty and personal service reform-minded women created a public voice for themselves, arguing the advantages that gender difference would bring to public and private life. Some, including Rosa Barrett, spent their lives promoting important social reforms under the aegis of philanthropy. Reformist philanthropists began a more thorough investigation of society and armed with a mass of generalised information, case study detail and perceptive commentary both on the underlying causes and means of reform¹³, they set about applying some of their schemes to the local situation. They argued increasingly the need for reform, of legislation and of institution. Reformists were some of the most eager of workhouse denounciators, seeing the workhouse system as a contributory factor to long-term want and the undermining of self-dependence. A new approach was needed, or at least the overhaul of existing institutions. Usually well informed, these women often became authorities on what was happening

¹¹ Boylan, *Ibid.*

¹² Boylan, *ibid.*, p. 514.

¹³ Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin slums 1800-1925: a study in urban geography* (Dublin, 1998), p. 336.

elsewhere, were adept at proposing reform initiatives and oftentimes became quite articulate in voicing their desire to be involved in implementing reform structures.

While often bemoaning the want of restraint in the working class home, the evils of intemperance, the want of thrift and cleanliness, many became more sympathetic and more able to understand the institutional and infrastructure problems which mitigated against a stable working life or home environment. For many women reformist philanthropy offered a social purpose, a public identity. Many were optimistic about their abilities to respond to the needs of the community in a positive way and thereby initiate progressive change. Their involvement in spirited debate and active organisations energised many. It was this energy and sense of purpose, which sustained them through often-piecemeal change.

The majority of lay reformist women in the latter half of the nineteenth century were Protestant, their minority position in society often contributed to a sense of community and their minority religious position often made them more determined to ensure that the needs of their own communities were satisfactorily met. By the end of the nineteenth century, much female Roman Catholic charity had been subsumed under the auspices of the various female religious orders, both Irish-founded and foreign. Female religious undertook the vast bulk of Catholic charity as it affected women and children, the care of the sick, the education of the child and the welfare of the destitute all became part of their remit. Many pioneered progressive schemes to deal with the situations they confronted. However they rarely became involved in reformist lay organisations like the Philanthropic Reform Association (PRA) or the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). Given the scale of the problems confronting the Catholic community,

and the increased pressure on female orders to come under the control of a priest or bishop, their relative autonomy became more curtailed. According to Prochaska, as a religion of action, philanthropy slowly challenged the complaisance of women, gave them practical experience and responsibility and heightened their self-confidence and self-respect.¹⁴

Motivations

The motive for middle class involvement in a variety of charitable endeavours was complicated. Some historians, for example Anne Summers, have emphasised self-interested reasons, that philanthropy represented one of the few acceptable bridges to the world beyond the home.¹⁵ Martha Vicinus has described the spirit of adventure with which many women embarked on their work.¹⁶ Prochaska also highlights that philanthropic work, 'free from chaperons and prying relatives, represented for some deliverance from the stitch-stitch-church-stitch routine'.¹⁷ Certainly the simple desire to do something interesting and challenging should not be underestimated. For intelligent women, reformist philanthropy offered a work rich in human interest, yet with a large intellectual component, one had to be knowledgeable about current legislation, upcoming amendments, the welfare provisions available and the various criteria involved in gaining access to any care institution. Philanthropy was a socially acceptable way to engage in purposeful work. Philanthropy also offered many a circle of friends, a community of like-minded people.

¹⁴ F. K. Prochaska, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century England* (Oxford, 1980), p. 227.

¹⁵ Anne Summers, 'A home from home, women's philanthropic work in the nineteenth century', in McCarthy (ed), *Lady Bountiful Revisited: women, philanthropy and power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 33-63.

¹⁶ Martha Vicinus, *Independent women – work and community for single women 1850-1920*.

According to Jane Lewis, society encouraged women to become involved. Women's position as primary visitors of the poor assumed considerable importance given the dominant strand of social thought, which made social action in the form of social work with individual family members the chief means of achieving social change.¹⁸ This philosophy of personal social work links well with the overwhelming desire of many women to be of service. A sense of duty often fuelled by religious belief impelled many women into philanthropy as a lifelong pursuit.

Importance of faith

Evangelicalism was essentially a personal religion, which placed the Gospel at the centre of its teachings, and made evangelism, the preaching of the Gospel, the primary purpose of every organisation. The individual soul was of inestimable value, whatever else was attempted was of secondary importance. This personal approach, which the Evangelicals insisted upon, coloured the forms, which their social work took. It often supplied a human touch previously lacking in much earlier voluntary charity. For example, when there was a need for residential care the old type of institution tended to be replaced by the 'home', and the greater freedom of a family relationship to supersede that of strict discipline. Such a personal relationship was also evident in the ways these social organisations were financed. They relied almost entirely upon the donations and subscriptions of those who were interested and also on various gifts in kind from supporters.

¹⁷ Prochaska, *ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Jane Lewis, 'Gender, the family and women's agency in the building of 'welfare states': the British case', p.37-57 in *Social History*, Vol.19, January 1994.

The Evangelicals stress on faith as a personal relationship between the individual and God allowed many to develop very powerful relationships in their daily lives with Christ, for many such a deep commitment became translated into a living, daily relationship, a relationship which demanded certain obligations and duties. Perhaps central was a belief in service, in a faith of duty and love.

All onlookers highlighted the involvement of women as the mainstay of most philanthropic concerns. In commenting on the role of women in evangelical charities and proselytising institutions, a correspondent to Archbishop McCabe wrote:

The machinery is worked principally by ladies, indeed, the financial department almost exclusively. It is amazing how indefatigably they collect, personally and by letter. Most of the reports are manifestly written by ladies of respectability. They are simply fanatics, who think that in every soul they slay; they do a service to God.¹⁹

According to Wilberforce, to evangelical's the love of one's fellow man was the 'indispensable and indeed the characteristic duty of Christians. As a religion of duty, which placed service above doctrine, evangelicalism appealed particularly to women'.²⁰ According to Prochaska author of *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century England*, church and chapel going, scripture readings and family prayers, working parties and mothers meetings, Sunday school teaching and visiting the homes of the poor were habits common to millions of nineteenth century families. They often brought girls into contact with their needy neighbours.²¹ Such contact was perhaps greatest among evangelical families for here women were rather more prominent in church and chapel circles and here they were also given

¹⁹ Correspondent to Arch. McCabe, 1881 Dublin Diocesan Archives 353/2.

²⁰ Quoted in F.K. Prochaska, *Women and philanthropy*, p. 9.

²¹ Prochaska, *ibid*, p.10.

more individual autonomy and power than in other churches. For women, religion tended to be personal and social, something to be integrated into daily life and acted upon. The message of Christ was clear: the salvation of the world through service and self-sacrifice. Again, according to Prochaska, to women, Christ was above all, a martyr to love - if there was a conviction peculiar to nineteenth century philanthropic women it was their belief, inspired by Christ, that love could transform society.²²

Both the activities and restrictions of nineteenth century family life and particularly of female life and education tended to focus the affections, restrict opportunities and raised philanthropy to the level of obedience to God, which necessitated the love of one's fellow man. Such 'love' can be witnessed in the work of people like Rosa M. Barrett who believed, that in loving one's fellow brethren, one could prove and show one's obedience to God and this could serve as inspiration. Such devotion appealed particularly to nineteenth century middle-class women; it was their vocation. With such a vocation, oftentimes came, as indicated earlier a sense of compassion, a thoroughness of approach and a human touch to aid fellow women and particularly children. According to Joan Perkin, author of *Victorian women*, 'religious belief gave many middle class women the courage to tackle social ills'.²³ Many women, including Lady Aberdeen and Ellice Hopkins developed personal relationships with particular spiritual mentors, men whose faith inspired their disciples to their greatest feats of achievement. Henry Drummond in Lady Aberdeen's case and James Hinton in Ellice Hopkin's.

²² Ibid, p. 15.

²³ Joan Perkin, *Victorian women*, p. 205.

The power of faith to provide reassurance and guidance is a common theme for all Evangelical philanthropists. Their sincere belief in the guiding power of the Lord gave many the support and affirmation necessary to continue their work. Such religious convictions provided of course potential differences of opinion, with all sides so committed, it was perhaps inevitable that sectarian differences would provide disharmony and conflict. The case in Ireland showed a particular example of this, with both the Catholic and Protestant churches committed to saving souls, proselytism would of course appear a persistent problem. For people like Rosa Barrett, religion provided the necessary reassurance, the personal connection fundamental to their work in saving the child. Such child saving was linked to a passionate commitment to God and faith. A God of love, not fury, linked all child workers. The Congregational Church to which Rosa Barrett belonged emphasised the 'living church' and a living faith. The independent relationship between the individual and God was stressed and each person shared a personal connection to God. As Prochaska, and others argued, the great champions of such a personal faith, a faith of love and service were women.

How organisations worked

Whatever the community need, be it for a new industry or orphanage, some association rose to meet it. A committee was formed, honorary secretary and treasurer appointed and often the patronage of a well-known figure was sought. The group drew up a specific set of regulations, a stated aim and then worked towards achieving it. Often the name adopted by the organisation reflected its aspirations. The group worked within clearly defined parameters so they could present themselves as targeting a specific want. Their work was purposeful. Usually the ladies committee carried out the bulk of the administration and voluntary work,

though invariably a man; usually a relative was listed on the committee lists. This reassured the public that the society would be well run and accountable!

Organisations run by women were almost completely geared towards helping women and children. Such work was morally acceptable, women and children were often deemed the most 'deserving' of aid and also were the group most visibly in need. Many organisations concentrated their activities at a local level, their charities responded to immediate needs and their limited aspirations reflect the paucity of funds under which many operated and also the boundaries of what they believed they could and should do. Many believed explicitly in a maternalist ideology seeing the proper place for all women in a home like their own.

The necessity of fund raising was a continual problem for most charities. All were invariably dependent on the generosity of numerous small subscribers, subscriptions collected through collecting cards, door-to-door, drawing room meetings or through personal interaction. Annual reports were concluded with long lists of subscribers meticulously recorded and presented for perusal. Alongside subscriptions there appeared donation lists recording everything the charity had received over the previous year, often ranging from rhubarb to red flannel.²⁴ The reports also provide an account page in which all expenses are categorised and written up completely. Organisations were scrupulous in accounting for how they used their money as they felt they had a responsibility to use it to the best possible extent thereby justifying the contribution.

²⁴ See annual reports of Cottage Home and virtually all charities, they all list out numerous small gifts of food and clothing donated over the year.

The circulation of tracts, petitions and annual reports was a key means of publicising the work. Annual reports served many agendas; they publicised the work, through circulation many more could be recruited as helpers or subscribers, they perhaps shamed those who gave nothing into contributing. They also in a direct way served as vehicles for new ideas, as a sign of strength of the organisation. They both served to fortify the supporters and recruit newcomers. Given the religious barrier that existed in Irish charity between Catholic and Protestant, both groups maintained very separate organisations therefore their respective reports were as much concerned with criticising the opposition as they were with outlining the work of their own organisation. Reports were published, annual meetings with a keynote speaker further exemplified the relevance of the work – it was important, necessary and justifiable. Many annual reports also served primarily as collecting devices, by telling heart-wrenching tales of neglect and despair, it was a method of boosting sales and subscriptions. Such calculating sentimentality highlights the very business like approach many women adopted. They knew their audience well and knew best how to ensure positive results.

Charitable involvement taught many women how to organise and conduct a meeting, how to speak in public, how to conduct a business venture, the writing of reports and their presentation. For many women such skills were valuable, the administrative skills many women learned in local charities were later used in more public campaigns, for example throughout the suffrage campaign. Not all organisations however retained their share of the public spotlight. Many charities were founded, worked hard to help those they saw in need of assistance and then gradually faded away, either through mismanagement or changing circumstances. The localised nature of many means we have no record of them, save perhaps an

occasional mention in a local paper. Record survival rates also vary, some charities placed great emphasis on publicising the work, others often through limited manpower and strict fund management placed little importance on preserving a record of their work, the immediacy of their work was what concerned them. As Perkins highlights, as well as the great and the famous there were vast numbers of ordinary women doing grassroots voluntary work.²⁵

The organisations however, which defined themselves as reformist often sought to move beyond the local, into the national and ultimately perhaps international sphere. Organisations like the Irish Workhouse Association, the Philanthropic Reform Association all operated non-sectarian, mixed committees, women were admitted equally as men. Such societies were often more vocal in publicising their ideas, through their organisations they lobbied for change. Similar personalities became involved in many of the key groups. They worked their connections and networks of similarly interested people to ensure an audience. In presenting papers, holding public meetings all were public manifestations of their intentions. Such groups often based their claims for attention on a more rational and scientific appeal. The reports they published though still retaining much sensationalism were tailored to a more informed audience. They were more overtly political in highlighting the defects that existed in present situations and proposing how to alleviate them. The value they placed on social studies, on evidence is a hallmark of the move towards a greater professionalisation of the business of poor relief.

²⁵ Perkins, *ibid*, p.217.

Power of statistics

The nineteenth century was a century of discovery. With scientific discoveries came a new faith, a faith in rational, objective facts. Such rational facts also impacted on social work, indeed the science of social work was a product of the nineteenth century. Organisations such as the Charity Organisation Society, founded in 1869 were amongst the first to promote casework, the detailed investigation into the circumstances of each client, which could then lead to an enhanced understanding of the best way to proceed. With such increasingly rational techniques came professionalisation. All social campaigners were keen to show themselves to be professional; therefore deserving of respect and a listening ear. With professionalism came authority and due deference to the validity of one's opinions. Science and statistics were regarded as professional avenues therefore they were a route worth pursuing. The professional social worker, according to Wickwar stood in fact for the unifying concept of responsible personal action as one of the supreme and intangible bonds that held all classes together in a social fabric.²⁶ The stress on personal action, on individual self-help was a recurring theme. For Rosa Barrett, writing in the *Englishwomen's Yearbook for 1912*:

If accurate, sound knowledge is added to the painstaking effort and enthusiasm, which surely women have in abundance, is there not much for them to do in dispelling ignorance and finding new ways of benefiting mankind.²⁷

According to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, the study of statistics 'promoted a taste for accuracy of observation and research; and by the development of Political Economy we teach the application of scientific principles

²⁶ Hardy and Margaret Wickwar, *The social services; an historical survey* (London, 1949), p. 279.

²⁷ Rosa Barrett, 'Social science and social work', in *Englishwoman's Yearbook for 1912*, p. 66.

to social questions'.²⁸ Rosa Barrett one of the 'expert contributors' to the *Englishwoman's Yearbook* argued that:

The study of statistics makes one acquainted with many facts that bear directly on the welfare of women, and no-one that attempts sociological or philanthropic work can afford to neglect some knowledge of this branch of study. We have to ask which way are we drifting? Is the position of women improving? The true answers to these questions can only be learnt by a study of statistics.²⁹

As if to prove the point Rosa M. Barrett both in the 1911 and 1913 *Yearbook* and again in 1916 presents a bewildering variety of statistics relating to all aspects of women's work, demographics and crime figures, as well as outlining laws affecting women and children, and in 1912 a thorough analysis of the census of 1911.³⁰

Barrett and others focused on rational and efficient ways of helping people through the power of the state and preventive legislation. According to Rosa Barrett, the state through legislation should protect the child in the interests of humanity, and for the protection of the state. Humanity and political economy were not in opposition, they were identical.³¹ An unprecedented wealth of social and vital statistics illuminated a great range of social problems and provided inspiration and statistical legitimisation for reform movements. New campaigners like Barrett maintained that to properly pursue philanthropic work, one had to be knowledgeable about social and economic questions. This was a view increasingly reiterated by charity organisers. In talking on philanthropic work, M. B. Orger, a warden at the women worker's settlement in Belfast stressed:

²⁸ R. D. Collison-Black, *The statistical and social inquiry society of Ireland, centenary vol. 1847-1947, with a history of the society*, (Dublin, 1947), p. 2.

²⁹ Rosa Barrett, contributor in *Englishwoman's Yearbook for 1912*, p. 250.

³⁰ Barrett, *Yearbook for 1913*, p.322-325, *Yearbook for 1912*, p.252-55 and *Yearbook for 1916*, p.325-41.

³¹ Rosa M. Barrett, *The rescue of the young* (Dublin, 1899), p.5.

The days are past when a warm heart was all that was thought necessary for philanthropic work. We are realising more and more that without some knowledge of social and economic questions, our best efforts towards relieving distress may do more harm than good. Warm heart is needed as much as ever, but it must be balanced by the wise mind.³²

The Social Service Union founded to 'arouse the Christian conscience of the country, to teach Christ's will in dealing with social problems; to make people think about the evil conditions affecting the *helpless classes*', saw its business expressed in three words: educate, agitate and operate!³³ The Social Service Union re-emphasising the new commitment to obtaining information before attempting philanthropic work stressed:

A great danger to social service is that enthusiastic people, when their feelings are aroused, begin by immediately 'wanting to do', forgetting that the indispensable preliminary is 'wanting to know'. It must be impressed on all social workers the imperative necessity of study and thought.³⁴

In their emphasis on co-ordinated reform efforts, preceded by social analysis certain organisations fulfilled a new role in the philanthropic canon, such groups became reformist organisations. Their role was not simply to help immediate distress, but to work towards ensuring the alleviation of that distress through change.

Key reformist organisations

The key reformist organisations in the Irish philanthropic sphere in the latter half of the nineteenth century was the Dublin Aid Committee, the forerunner of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Philanthropic Reform Association and the Irish Workhouse Association. Given that Rosa Barrett's own particular interest also lay in reform of the juvenile welfare system, some attention

³² M.B. Orger, 'Philanthropic work' in *Open doors for Irishwomen, a guide to the professions open to educated women in Ireland* (Irish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women: Dublin, 1907), p. 53.

³³ Rev. John Paterson Smyth (ed.), *Social service handbook for Ireland, the association for promoting Christian knowledge* (Dublin, 1901), p. 7.

³⁴ Smyth, *Ibid.*, p. 4.

shall also be given to progressive legislation in that field. Barrett was involved in all of these organisations, often at an executive level.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

The desire to protect the unguarded child, to punish parental neglect and irresponsibility was one of the motivating factors in pushing for legislative change to ensure the rights of the child. According to Pinchbeck and Hewitt, the combined indifference both of parents and of the community to the suffering and exploitation of children, bred of long familiarity with both, was one of the greatest obstacles to be overcome by those seeking to establish their legal right to protection.³⁵ Perhaps the most significant organisation promoting the rights of the child was the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). The NSPCC worked to arouse public interest and exert public pressure and thereby challenge contemporary attitudes. In 1883, the Liverpool Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was formed. In London, Benjamin Waugh, a Congregational Minister, was made honorary secretary of the society. By 1889, thirty-one cities and towns had formed organisations to protect children from cruelty. In May 1889 the NSPCC was formed which was able to co-ordinate efforts to promote legislation in Parliament. Public opinion resented any incursion into the sanctity of the home therefore much of the work of the NSPCC was concerned with exposing the neglect and depravity to which many children were exposed, within the home. The sole object of the NSPCC was that 'every child in the land shall have an endurable life'.³⁶

³⁵ Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children in English society*, ii (London, 1973), p. 355.

³⁶ *Annual report of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children for 1909-10*, Frontspiece.

The Society worked to arouse the nation to a sense of its duty to its children, the majority of cases investigated centred on neglect and starvation, exposure for begging was also a common reason for the involvement of the NSPCC. The Society attributed the majority of its cases to parental ignorance, indifference and selfishness. Gradually the Society's work became supplementary to the efforts of the State and local authorities, thus reversing the position at the time of its founding. Official recognition of the society became apparent in that no enquiry of importance on any subject relating to children has been held without a request for information having been made to the society. The NSPCC through its efforts and that of other voluntary organisations saw enacted a series of bills, which codified a set of abuses no longer sanctioned by society. The NSPCC did not see itself as a charity and worked ostensibly to ensure its own obsolescence, once the rights of the child would be protected. Beginning with the Infant Life Protection Bill in 1889, the remainder of the century saw a continued shoring up of children's rights culminating in the Children's Act of 1908, which consolidated, enhanced and strengthened laws. According to Ellen Ross author of *Love and Toil*, for the first time it labelled and penalised parental neglect.³⁷

Dublin Aid Committee

The founding of the Dublin branch of the NSPCC, in 1889, is credited to Rosa Barrett. She had admitted some children from Tuam to the Cottage Home in Kingstown. The children were badly under-nourished and Rosa Barrett went to investigate the family home they had come from. There she found 'children sleeping in orange boxes, underfed and sickly'. She then got in touch with the London office of the NSPCC who sent over an inspector, the case was investigated

³⁷ Ellen Ross, *Love and toil* (Oxford, 1993), p. 201.

and the person in charge of the home was imprisoned for two years. As a result of this action Barrett called a meeting in Dublin to start a branch of the society in Dublin.³⁸ In the first annual report she stated:

It was abundantly clear that such an organisation was necessary in Dublin; People should no longer think that a sigh is all they can bestow on a suffering child. They are awakening to the fact that something needs to be done, a happier day for suffering children is at last dawning and she thought that the heart of every true woman must respond to any effort made on their behalf.³⁹

The Dublin Aid Committee was determinedly non-sectarian. However Catholic clergy suspicious of the organisation's motives and those of prominent Protestants on its committee, ensured it did not receive their public support.⁴⁰ Like the parent organisation the Dublin Committee wished to ensure that parents did their moral duty by their children. The Society believed that poverty; unemployment and particularly drunkenness all led to children being neglected. It was adamant that parents who neglected their children should be punished. It sought the welfare of children, not by taking them away from their homes, but by punishing 'worthless parents, who make children wanderers, homeless and destitute'.⁴¹ As Luddy notes, though claiming not to judge the morality of the working class parents the society made implicit judgements about the poor. It was their habits, which led to neglect. 'There can be no doubt', the first report of the society noted, 'that the extremely intemperate habits of the lower classes of the people of Dublin have much to do with the high death rate among children'.⁴² As in England the society did valuable work, became a household name and branches appeared in many parts of the

³⁸ A correspondent to *The Times*, 2 Sept. 1936.

³⁹ *First report of the Dublin Aid Committee for 1889-90*, p. 22-4.

⁴⁰ Robins, *The lost children: a study of charity children in Ireland, 1700-1900* (Dublin, 1980), p. 308.

⁴¹ Summary of work in G. D. William's (ed.), *Dublin charities, a handbook* (Dublin, 1902), p. 258.

country. The management of the society consisted of a general and ladies committee, they appointed inspectors to investigate allegations of abuse; after ten years in operation the number of cases investigated had risen to 771, these cases involved the welfare of 2,076 children. They had also established a safe house to which children could be sent when there was nowhere else available.⁴³

The Philanthropic Reform Association

The Philanthropic Reform Association, established in 1896 was yet another progressive organisation. The objects of the Association were to:

1. Enquire into the working of legislation relating to social problems.
2. To see to the efficient administration of existing laws and to promote amendments.⁴⁴

The Philanthropic Reform Association (PRA) worked in conjunction with the NSPCC in investigating the situation of neglected children and enforcing parental responsibility. The Association extended its concerns to state institutions such as reformatory schools, industrial schools and the workhouse. The committee of the PRA was non-sectarian, dissociated itself from party politics of any kind and open to both men and women equally. The PRA investigated the merits of forthcoming social legislation, and lobbied for legislative change, where necessary. The Association also instituted a Police-Aided Clothing Society. A ladies committee administered this scheme. Its aim was to provide warm clothing for poor children. The assistance of the police was seen as a way to deter the parents from trying to pawn the clothes.⁴⁵ It also tried to make some changes in the conditions under which

⁴² *First report of the Dublin Aid Committee*, p. 20.

⁴³ *Annual report of the Dublin Aid Committee for 1898-99* (Dublin, 1899).

⁴⁴ *First annual report of the Philanthropic Reform Association for 1896* (Dublin, 1897).

⁴⁵ *Annual report of the PRA for 1898* (Dublin, 1899), pp.15, 42-3.

women were held in police stations. In its first year of existence, members of the association, both men and women visited police stations and courts in Dublin. They were not satisfied with the conditions they found there and made recommendations to the chief commissioner of police. Some of the proposals included that female officers should supervise women and that proper care should be taken of children who were with their mothers when they were arrested. The Association also worked for the separation of juvenile and adult offenders.⁴⁶ In conjunction with the Irish Workhouse Association (IWA), the PRA also sought to improve conditions within the workhouse. The PRA instituted a number of changes with the South Dublin Union and with the help of Lady Meath introduced the Brabazon Employment Scheme. Through this scheme older inmates of the workhouse were provided with employment to keep them occupied. A number of women from the PRA taught the inmates the skills required. No payment however was made for the work done. The Association tried to introduce the scheme to the North Dublin Union, however the plan failed when the board of guardians refused to allow it.⁴⁷

Irish Workhouse Association

The Irish Workhouse Association (IWA) founded in 1896 lobbied successfully, for political action to be taken with regard to child protection and workhouse management. It urged the adoption of the boarding-out system for orphan and deserted children, the conversion of workhouses into district hospitals, the establishment of auxiliary asylums, and the appointment of a medical inspector for workhouse hospitals and of a woman inspector for boarded-out children.⁴⁸ It was not until 1899 that the Local Government Board requested that all workhouses,

⁴⁶ *Annual report of the PRA for 1896* (Dublin, 1897), pp. 26-32.

⁴⁷ *Annual report PRA for 1899* (Dublin, 1900), p. 15.

which boarded out children, should form ladies' committees and by 1900 fifteen such committees had been formed.⁴⁹ Exactly how welcome such committees were or the scope of their actions is harder to determine. By 1907, the Association was promoting women as poor law guardians, sought to improve the management of workhouse resources. Lady Pembroke's scheme by which nurses were trained gratuitously for service in the workhouses had been inaugurated, and was significantly improving the care received in the workhouse.⁵⁰ The Association was entirely non-sectarian, run by a president, vice-president and executive committee. By the publication of its eleventh annual report in 1907, the Association had attracted the support of many distinguished and familiar names including the Earl of Meath, Mrs Haslam, Miss Buchanan and of course Rosa Barrett.

Barrett and the promotion of reforming English legislation

The failure of English legislation to protect the child was a central concern of Rosa Barrett's. Opening her paper on 'Legislation on Behalf of Neglected Children in America and Elsewhere' (1896), Rosa Barrett began by saying:

Existence carries with it the right to an opportunity for an unfolding of a child's powers and if parents fail to do their duty, the state must step in and protect the child. This is an even more sacred duty than the protection of property. *It is not an interference with the rights of the parent, but a protection of the rights of the child.*⁵¹

English law traditionally recognised only parental rights, but elsewhere the law had begun to range itself on the side of children, both for the good of the child and the future welfare of the community. Rosa Barrett outlined the laws relating to children pertaining in all American states showing how increasingly the U.S. States were

⁴⁸ William's, *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁴⁹ Laura Stephen's, 'Irish workhouses' in Smyth (ed.), *Social Service*, p. 79.

⁵⁰ *Annual report of the Irish Workhouse Association for 1906* (Dublin, 1907).

⁵¹ Rosa M. Barrett, 'Legislation on behalf of neglected children in America and elsewhere' in *Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, August 1892, p. 616.

prepared to act in *loco parentis* and safeguard the rights of the child, even to the point of denying parental rights. Rosa Barrett felt it was necessary to turn from punitive measures to devote themselves to preventive work among the children for as she and others argued:

It is far cheaper to support and train a child for four or five years than it is to support criminals for an indefinite length of time. It surely is not too much to ask that every child, who is born into this Christian land of ours, shall at least have a chance of living a moral, decent life.⁵²

Rosa Barrett laid great stress on the progressive laws, which existed in other countries. Where the child's home environment was determined to be unhealthy, the child was removed and should the parents not prove more responsible the child was not returned. There was, for her, no doubt that legislation for the protection of a child's interests and welfare, physical and moral, was immediately required; this work of rescuing children ought not to rest wholly upon voluntary efforts.⁵³ This effectively reiterated the NSPCC key contention; voluntary societies unless backed by legislation could never achieve much.

Returning four years later in 1896, to the same topic of foreign legislation on behalf of destitute children, Rosa Barrett provided a thorough examination of the laws relating to children in virtually all European countries, and in the Australian colonies. Basing her sources on council reports and statistical information she presented her findings, arguing that 'not merely pity, but justice, to the neglected child, must be our motto'.⁵⁴ Increased public interest needed to be aroused, and England continued to legislatively lag far behind other countries. The State, according to Rosa Barrett needed:

⁵² Barrett, *ibid*, p. 623.

⁵³ Rosa M. Barrett, 'Foreign legislation on behalf of destitute and neglected children' in *Stat. and social inquiry society of Ireland*, February 1896, p. 214.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 215.

Peremptorily to enforce on worthless parents the performance of their duties to their children (a work almost wholly left to the voluntary efforts of the NSPCC) if they persist in negligence, punishment should follow, and the child be made a ward of the state. If it be said that to make such duties compulsory would be too great an interference with the liberty of the subject, I would ask whether a child is not as much a subject of the state as an adult? Ought not those too weak and helpless to protect themselves, be the primary objects of care?⁵⁵

In conclusion she argued that we could never hope effectively to grapple with poverty, pauperism and crime but by the rescue of the children. Rosa Barrett, argued for English legislation to 'catch up' on the work in other countries, which provided adequate safeguards for juvenile offenders, proper adoption laws and a systematic system for the care of neglected children.

In 1899, she wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Rescue of the young*, in which she discouraged complacency over the treatment of children, 'for the future welfare of the country, no less than the good of the individual, no work can compare in importance with the rescue of the young'.⁵⁶ England still remained 'almost the only country in the civilised world where the child's welfare is not considered to be fully as important as the upholding of parental control, when these two interests clash'.⁵⁷ Highlighting once more progressive American legislation, she illustrated that an increased population and more state commitment resulted in decreased poverty levels, 'a state of affairs we never expected to arrive at, till the dreams of socialists were fulfilled, or utopia found'.⁵⁸ Superior rescue work was found to save the state money in the long run, pre-empting the need for prison places or long term relief. A child rescued early did not need years of reformatory training. Rosa Barrett believed that 'nearly all crime arose from the want of something, of a home, of'

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 216.

⁵⁶ R.M. Barrett, *The rescue of the young* (Dublin, 1899), p. 5.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

education, of skill, the want of something which the individual or society should have supplied'.⁵⁹

Neglected children almost inevitably drifted into the pauper or criminal classes. According to Barrett, 'preventive rather than reformatory work is at the root of all social progress, this means primarily the right training of our future citizens, the rescue of children is the key to the problems of city poverty'.⁶⁰ For Rosa Barrett, 'society ought never to be satisfied till each child should have a chance of becoming an honest, industrious individual, too many she argued were practically doomed from their very birth to failure'.⁶¹ Public opinion remained so apathetic and laws so defective that vast anomalies existed in the system, wherein alcoholic, brutal parents were acquitted of the charge of neglecting their children, while a man received six months imprisonment for stealing six pence. Had it, she asked, 'come to this, that Englishmen hold a sixpence to be of more value than a child's life?'⁶²

Over the course of the nineteenth century some such discrepancies in the law were eradicated and when the Children's Bill of 1908 was debated, the Lord Advocate declared that:

There was a time in the history of this house when a Bill of this kind would have been treated as a most revolutionary measure, and half a century ago, if such a measure had been introduced it would have been said that the British Constitution was being undermined. Now a Bill of this kind finds itself in smooth water from the outset. This measure is not the development of the political ideas of one party, but the gradual development of a quickened sense on the part of the community at large, of the duty it owes to the children.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 15.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 15.

⁶² Ibid, p. 15.

⁶³ Hansard, 1908, vol. (LXXXVI, Col. 1251).

Such changed sentiments reflect in part the hard work of campaigners like Rosa Barrett and the NSPCC. At a local level the provisions of the Children's Bill were outlined by Rosa Barrett at the Christ Church branch of the Social Service Union in Monkstown, the Union cordially supported Mr Samuel's Bill.⁶⁴

Shared involvement

All philanthropic bodies were connected indirectly, many directly. While reformers many never have organised into a co-ordinated movement, they shared many personalities, attitudes and techniques. The concept of 'active citizen' was fundamental to all reformist organisations. This strong sense of social responsibility, combined with purpose and a commitment to hard work with which many were instilled gave their work great tenure. Many became involved with organisations when they were first founded and remained committed to them for many years. By taking a random sample of years, it is possible to highlight the shared interests of many determined activist women, including Rosa Barrett. Using the Irish Workhouse Association (IWA) committee and subscription list for 1906, and then judging it against the NSPCC, PRA and Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association (IWSLGA) committee lists for the same year, the following points may be derived.⁶⁵ Of the forty-three women listed on the IWA subscription list, twenty-two were also on one or more of the other committees, six were also on the committee of the NSPCC, including Miss Armstrong and Miss Webb (MA). Twelve of the women were on the PRA list, including Mrs Haslam

⁶⁴ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 4 April 1908.

and Dr. K. Maguire. Nine of the forty-three women were on two or more of the committees. Twenty of the women listed were on the subscription list for the IWSLGA, highlighting the links between reformist philanthropy and political activism, which will be discussed in chapter four. These women included Miss Emily Buchanan, P.L.G.; As well as being a poor law guardian, Buchanan was also involved with temperance work, poor law reform, the Women's National Health Association. She was also a member of the National Union of Women Workers, and a speaker at the International Congress of Women in Toronto in 1909. She was also a speaker at the Cottage Home in Kingstown.⁶⁶ However in 1906, only one woman's name appeared on the lists for all four organisations and that was Rosa Barrett.

If one then looks at membership lists for the founding years of the organisations, the level of interconnections can also be witnessed. Also the presence of names familiar to the later committee lists reinforces the long-term nature of many women's commitment. Five of the women present on the IWSLGA report for 1898, the first year for which we have a published report, were also on the PRA committee for that year, three of the women appear on the NSPCC committee for the same year. Of these three, Rosa Barrett and Dr. Winifred Dickson were on all three committee lists. The PRA list also included Mrs Hartley of Dublin, whose husband was Professor of Chemistry at the Royal College of Science, an institution with which the Barrett's were also connected. The address of those involved also highlights the close relationships that many shared. Mrs Haslam founding member

⁶⁵ Used 1906, as it is the only year for which we have a copy of the workhouse association annual report.

⁶⁶ Information derived from the *Suffrage annual and women's who's who* first printed in 1913.

of the IWSLGA, later vice-president of the NUWW and very committed to all issues relating to women,⁶⁷ lived with her husband on the Rathmines Road. Emily Buchanan also lived on the road alongside Miss Clinch, also a P.L.G. and Miss Webb (MA).⁶⁸

If one then examines the linkages between a local organisation namely the Cottage Home at Kingstown, are there any indications that many of those involved were also participants in other reformist groups? Taking the committee list for 1905, of the sixteen women present on the committee, four including Rosa Barrett were on the PRA subscription list, ten were on the NSPCC committee list. This is not surprising perhaps as both the Cottage Home and the NSPCC were concerned with child welfare and the Cottage Home received quite a few children on the recommendation of the NSPCC officers. Five of the women were on the IWSLGA for that year, including Barrett, Mrs G. F. Stewart, Miss Wall and Mrs Newsom. The Pim's and Goodbody's on the committee were involved with promoting women's employment, the Northcote rescue home and the PRA. All of these organisations also received Rosa Barrett's support. At an executive level, the Social Service Union included among its contributors Sir Frederick Falkiner, chief recorder for the city of Dublin, E.D. Daly, chief clerk and Sir Charles Cameron, medical inspector of the city. All of these men were also involved with the PRA and NSPCC.

Therefore based even on this rudimentary study, there was an obvious connection between membership of various organisations. How much of this was due to being introduced to similar interests by joining one committee and then being invited to

Ibid.

⁶⁸ From *Who's who in Dublin 1900-1901* (London, 1901).

another is hard to deduce. Given the relatively small numbers of committed reformers involved, their minority Protestant position may have contributed to a high level of cohesion. Self-interest would also encourage organisation to form allegiances to better work for change and to mount a concerted attack when necessary. Their commitment to legislation and education united them and their networks of connections provided many with the resilience and support to persevere.

Outcome

The commitment that many of those involved in reformist philanthropy brought to their role ensured the vitality of the organisations. Associations like the Dublin Aid Committee and the Philanthropic Reform Association saw their role as akin to auxiliary government. Both groups worked to establish wardens and officers to ensure the correct legislative rules were being adhered to.

Conclusion

Philanthropy in its broad concern with those less fortunate ensured that many received some aid; food, clothing and/or shelter. Benevolent aid while rarely questioning or innovative was nonetheless a welcome practical response to wants. However within philanthropy there emerged a minority position, exemplified by people like Rosa Barrett, who saw beyond the provision of necessities and looked instead at the needs of the wider society and legislative change. Reformist philanthropy linked charity and politics in a real sense and advocated reforms more responsive to community needs. Such needs were first evaluated and categorised

through the new science of society – statistics. Reformist philanthropy left a legacy of social work methodologies, based on record keeping and quantitative facts.

Philanthropists like Barrett organised with like-minded men and women in establishing reformist associations which broadened the definition of benevolence to include aspirations of change, with concrete models to implement such change- the IWA lobbied for nurses; the NSPCC established officers to monitor implementation of legislation. Such circles of influence worked against the institutionalisation of welfare. Committee membership of reformist organisations introduced women to public action, through equal membership of such organisations some were encouraged to develop more professional approaches to social work. The limited numbers involved in such groups ensured interconnections between the associations; such interconnections did exist and contributed to a concerted reform scheme.

CHAPTER TWO

ROSA MARY BARRETT AS A CASE MODEL OF AN ACTIVE REFORMIST BOTH AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

Aims of chapter

This chapter intends to provide biographical information on Rosa Barrett and outline why she provides a good case-model of a committed reformist philanthropist. As someone who directed her life to social welfare concerns at a local, national and international level Barrett progressed from one committed to local reform to a greater concern with national movements and subsequently an advocate and participant in international reform efforts. Rosa Barrett was closely involved with many of the key philanthropic concerns of her time and therefore highlights the network of inter-connections and shared interests, which contributed to a concerted reform effort. As a result of her many interests the chapter is organised thematically, not necessarily chronologically. Seeing her work in a holistic sense, Barrett highlights the importance of religion as both a private matter but also as a source of inspiration for public service. Duty and service remained key hallmarks of her life throughout, a commitment shared by many philanthropists. Rosa M. Barrett was well-known in her own lifetime but her life and work has been virtually forgotten today. This chapter aims to rescue her from obscurity.

Origins

Rosa Mary Barrett was born on the 15 January 1854 in Royston, Herts., England. Her father the Reverend William Garland Barrett was then incumbent at the John Street Congregational Church in Royston. He and his family had settled in Royston after returning from missionary work in Jamaica. Reverend W.G. Barrett, born in Salisbury in 1812, had graduated from Turvey in 1834. He had married Martha Fletcher of Southampton at the Union Church in Brixton Hill, in 1834. Following

their marriage in November 1834, they sailed for Jamaica as missionaries for the London Missionary Society¹, arriving in December 1834. They arrived at Kingston and commenced their work at an out-station known as Four Paths. In 1838 he was posted to an out-station at Chapelton. In May 1845, at the request of the Directors, Rev. Barrett transferred from Jamaica to occupy the Montrose Station, Demerara.² The mission to Jamaica was begun in earnest in 1834 with the arrival of the Barrett's and five other missionaries appointed by the LMS. The freeing of the slaves in the British colonies had increased the conviction of the Directors of the London Missionary Society that much work had to be done. A sketch of the mission, published in 1861, gives some insight into the nature of the work:

On their arrival these brethren experienced but little difficulty in finding locales with large populations entirely destitute of the means of grace; greatly needing and anxious to obtain instruction both for themselves and for their children. To be *preaching* the Gospel to the people was felt by the missionaries to be their great work. Next to that, to endeavour to teach as many of them as possible to read that Gospel for themselves. Infant schools were formed and conducted by the wives of the missionaries. Word preached was with power, so that during the first five years of the mission, a Christian church was formed at each of their stations.³

Crucial to the success of the missionary was the involvement of his wife and family.

Women's missionary work was vital, as it would be impossible to have access to the 'heathen women' without workers of their own sex. As a missionary's wife women like Martha Barrett would be expected to run a household in which hospitality was always available, receive callers and visitors on all the occasions when her husband was not there, visit sick and poor women and children. Alongside this work, many suffered extreme ill-health in the strange climate, repeated pregnancies and often high rates of child mortality made their lives difficult. The range of activities was

¹ London Missionary Society, founded in 1795 was the missionary society for the Congregational or Independent churches. Source R. Lovett, *A history of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895*, ii, p. 374. (Courtesy of the Council for World Missions).

² Lovett, *ibid.*, p. 377.

³ Lovett, *ibid.*, p. 378.

immense and the working hours extensive.⁴ The tight-knit mission family, the heady days of post-emancipation and the influence and vital work being done by the missionaries in Jamaica often made the years spent in the mission field memorable ones. Such work made an indelible impression on the missionaries themselves. The assault of ill-health and death meant that the average length of service in Jamaica was less than three years.⁵ The Barretts spent fourteen years in Jamaica, however in consequence of Rev. Barrett's ill-health, he returned with Mrs Barrett to England, arriving in April in 1848. The Barretts settled in Royston, a small town in Hertfordshire, England.

Royston

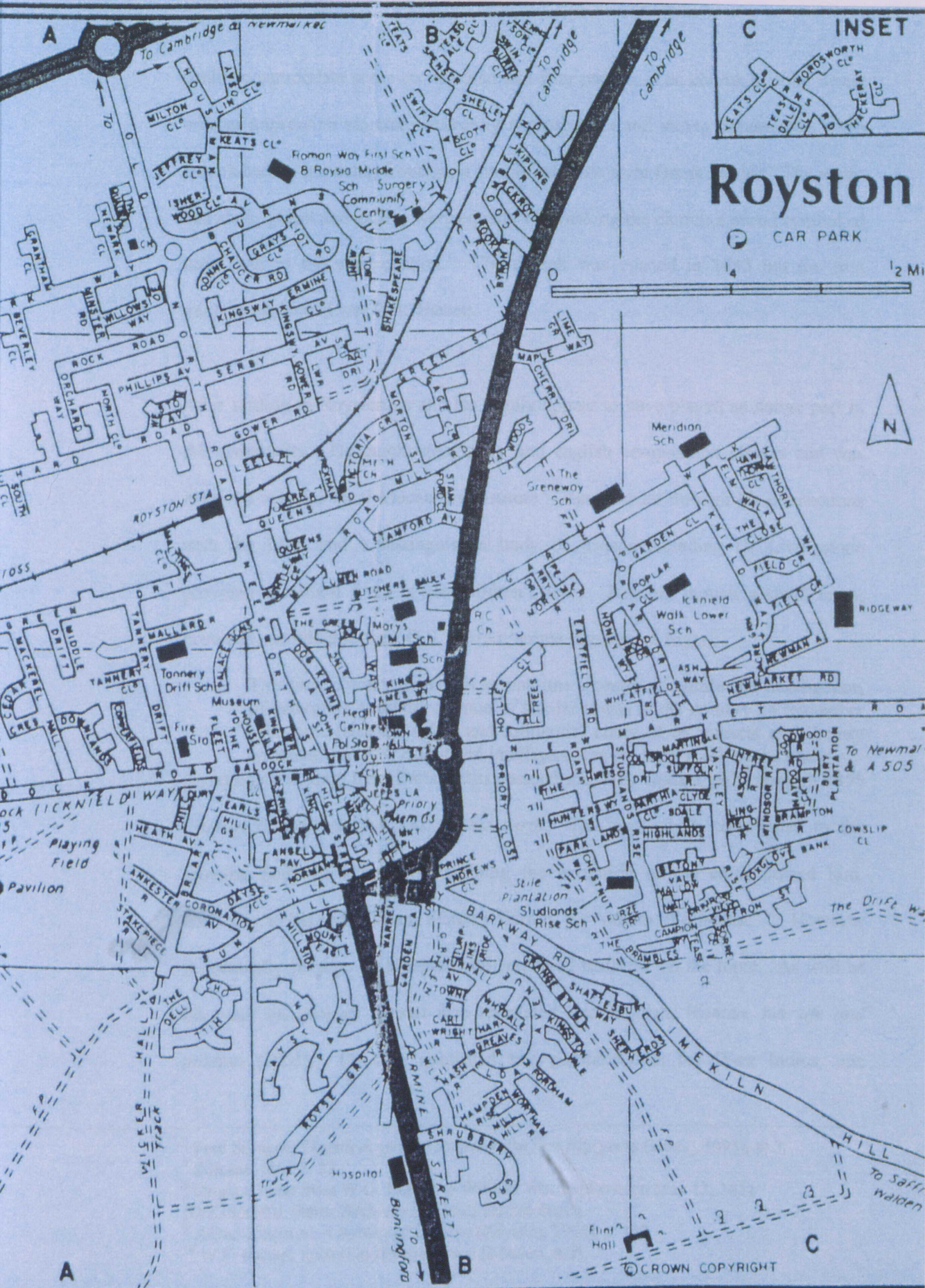
Royston is a small market town located just a short rail journey from London. It remained a predominantly rural town for most of the nineteenth century. According to Sillence, a local historian:

Like most market towns, Royston had its plethora of small shops, cramped streets, local inns and workhouse. The majority of the population were skilled workers, artisans and tolerably paid shop assistants. The more prosperous traders and shopkeepers reckoned themselves among the sound middle class but were respectful in their turn, to the town's relatively few upper middle class families and the sprinkling of professional people.⁶

However Royston was not without its eccentricities. This small town of less than four thousand inhabitants had two Congregational churches, each with its own Minister and manse, its own Sunday school. Doctrinal differences had divided the church in 1791, the original church had continued till 1841 when a disastrous fire had destroyed the Meeting House. Subsequently a new church was built, which

⁴ Catherine Hall, 'Missionary stories: gender and ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s', pp. 205-55 in Hall (ed.) *White, male and middle class- explorations in feminism and history* (London, 1992).

⁵ Hall, *ibid*, p. 219.



Map of Royston.

(Taken from *Guide to Royston*, (Royston, 1997)

could accommodate some six hundred and fifty people. The church at John Street was an impressive structure reflecting a prosperous and strong community. The church had an imposing frontage, a simplified Ionic style Greek temple. The organ and choir, pulpit and gallery were equally fine making the church a proud symbol of their faith to the congregation.⁷ The church was opened in 1843 but the first minister appointed was Rev. Barrett.

After settling in Royston he and his family appear to have played an active part in the community. He taught geography and english composition classes and was involved with the local Mechanics Institute.⁸ Rev. Barrett through his connections with the LMS and a distinguished body of friends including Dr Livingstone provided a cultural force in his children's lives. Royston though a small town, provided according to Rev. G.S. Barrett 'ample intellectual fruits':

This little country town was at that time a centre of culture and intelligence, of enterprise quite uncommon in similar towns in the country. I remember even now (sic) the select and influential circle of its musical and literary societies; and how bright and intelligent was the mental life of the place.⁹

As well as teaching, Rev. Barrett also pursued scientific studies, publishing in 1855 *Geological facts on the crust of the earth*. This text which contributed to the growing body of literature examining the evolution of the earth earned him, according to his son William Fletcher Barrett, the 'odium of a heretic'.¹⁰ However it eventually became an accepted and respected textbook on the topic. As well as his work on geology Barrett also translated into English, *Woman, her life and mission* (1851). He also published two pamphlets on the West Indies, one

⁶ Fred Sillence, *Twentieth century Royston: the first fifty years* (Herts., 1993), p. 3.

⁷ Sillence, *ibid*, p. 37.

⁸ Original letter from W.G. Barrett to William Warren, Royston May 13, 1851 (D/Z38/z1/56: Herts. Archives and local studies dept.).

⁹ Alfred Kingston, *A history of Royston* (Royston, 1906), p. 182.

¹⁰ W.F. Barrett, quoted in *Home science* (London, n.d).

contending that forced emigration schemes were essentially the revival of the slave trade, the other 'Immigration in its moral and religious aspects'. In 1855, Rev. Barrett became a director of the London Missionary Society and the family left Royston.¹¹ Rev. Barrett died in Brighton in 1865, at the age of fifty-three, leaving a wife and six children.¹² After the death of Rev. Barrett, the family would appear to have settled in London, as all were members of the Congregational church at Westminster.¹³

Rosa Barrett and siblings

The 1851 census returns for Royston showed the Barrett family living in Back Street, Royston. Rev. Barrett was living with his wife Martha and four children, plus an adopted son Roger Britten. All of the children recorded except Edwin had been born in the West Indies. Two servants, a housemaid and a twelve-year-old nursemaid completed the household.¹⁴ Both George Slatyer Barrett and Roger Britten were listed as scholars, while William Fletcher Barrett and Charlotte Ann Barrett were being taught at home. Subsequently Jessie Elizabeth and Rosa Mary Barrett were born in Royston; Rosa born in 1854, the year before the family left Royston.

¹¹ According to Urwick, author of *Nonconformity in Hertfordshire* (Herts., 1884) Rev. Barrett stayed in Royston seven years and was succeeded in 1856 by David Worthington Simon, MA.

¹² Sibree, *ibid*.

¹³ Members register, Congregational Church Kingstown (Public Record Office Northern Ireland).

George Slatyer Barrett

Born in 1839, George became a noted Congregational minister. He entered Lancashire College and in 1866 he became pastor at Prince's Street Congregational Church, Norwich, where he remained for forty years. According to his obituary, he was gifted with splendid health, fine energy and great spiritual zeal; he stirred the church to great spiritual activity. His constant theme in sermons was a personal appeal for fuller service to those who were already servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1894 he became Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales and the University of St. Andrew's conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon him. In 1895 he made a tour of the churches in America and Jamaica, re-emphasising his belief in the importance of the missionary movement in the church. He served on many committees for the welfare of the less fortunate and was an active member of the local community.¹⁵ Dr Barrett's church numbered 288 members when he arrived and 840 when he left. In the denomination he was a national figure, in Norwich, recognised spokesman of the free churches, and was often called the Nonconformist Bishop of East Anglia.¹⁶

Edwin Relfe Barrett

Rev. Barrett's youngest son, Edwin Relfe Barrett, who was born in Royston in 1848, also became a Congregational Minister. Rev. Barrett was a student at Lancashire Independent College and at Manchester University, and took his Arts degree at the London University. His enthusiasm for mission work led to his being appointed in 1873 to the London Missionary Society's station at Shanghai, he remained in China till 1878, mastering the language and publishing a Chinese manual of devotion. His

¹⁴ 1851 Census Record, courtesy of the Hertfordshire Archive and local studies department.

¹⁵ Obituary in *Congregational Yearbook for 1917*.

wife's ill-health necessitated his return to England, where eventually he settled in Liverpool in 1882 and remained there for seventeen years. In 1899 he became pastor of Salem Congregational church in Bradford. He took a deep interest in the Young Men's Christian Association and was a valued member of the governing body of the United Independent College. According to his death notice, 'his wide experience, his culture and urbanity, his ready speech and his fine business qualities enabled him to do much useful work.'¹⁷

William Fletcher Barrett

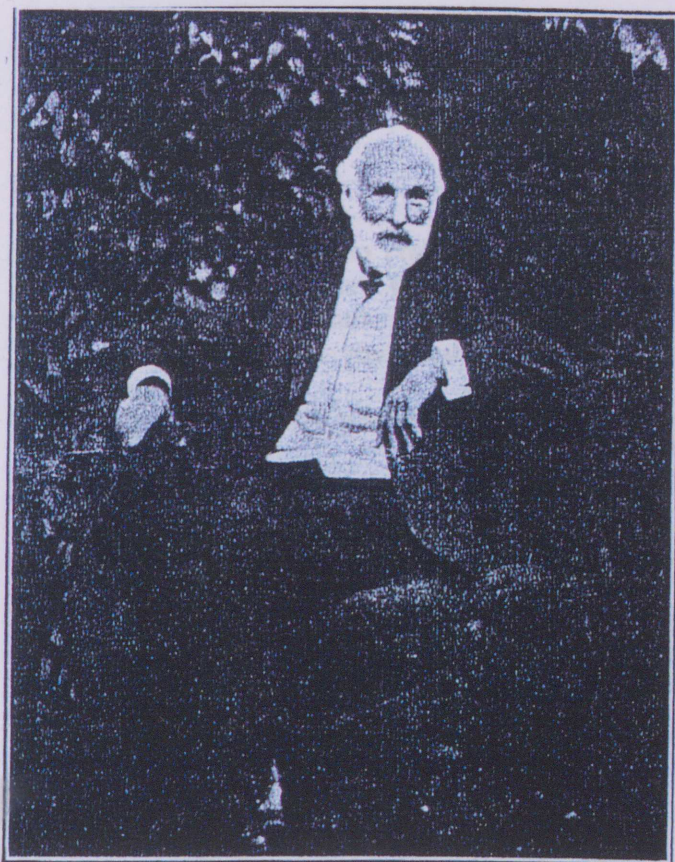
The second of Rev. Barrett's sons, William Fletcher Barrett, was to be the brother most closely associated with Rosa Barrett. Born in Jamaica in 1844, he was educated at Old Trafford Grammar School and in 1863 he became skilled assistant to Professor Tyndall at the Royal Institution. After a short period as science master at the International College, Barrett was appointed in 1869 lecturer in physics at the Royal School of Naval Architecture. In 1867 he had written a paper on 'Sensitive Flames', showing how an ordinary flame of coal gas, shrank and changed its shape in response to various sounds. This paper was delivered as a lecture before the Royal Dublin Society and led to him being offered the Chair of Physics in the Royal College of Science in Dublin, which he accepted and retained from 1873 to 1910.¹⁸

During his thirty-seven years professorship Professor Barrett founded one of the first laboratories for the instruction of practical physics in Ireland. He also gave

¹⁶ Obituary, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Obituary in *Congregational Yearbook for 1911*, p. 132-135.

¹⁸ *The Times* 28 May 1925. Barrett was appointed on the 13 November 1873 on a part-time basis. His annual salary was to reflect this, amounting to £200 per annum. However in April 1876, he was granted a full time salary of approximately £400 per annum, provided



William F. Barrett. (1844-1924), N.D.

(Reproduced from the International Psychic Gazette, March 1934).

popular evening lectures for working men, children and interested amateurs in physics and electricity. He also initiated the provision of separate physics classes for women students and was appointed to present physics classes to the female pupils of Alexandra College.¹⁹ Like his brothers, Professor Barrett would appear to have been an interesting and articulate speaker, his classes were always well attended and his lectures well received and well-illustrated with slides and posters. To the highbrow Maria La Touche the lectures held by the Royal Dublin Society, such as 'Professor Barrett's Lecture on Light' brought her especially to Leinster House, then home of the Royal Dublin Society. In a letter to Miss Young she stated her intentions:

This afternoon I go to Professor Barrett's lecture on light. These lectures interest me greatly and though they go on at 'Tea o'clock' I can make the sacrifice. Next summer when you insist on going on about King Stephen, I'll be able to ask you questions about refraction, which is much more important.²⁰

Throughout the rest of his working life Professor Barrett was associated with the Royal College of Science, through it he developed an acquaintance with students and scholars from around the country. His employment provided both him and Rosa Barrett with a secure income, which facilitated their social welfare involvement.

Rosa M. Barrett

Rosa Barrett was just eleven years old when her father died. As the youngest in the family it is likely that she moved with her mother to London in 1865. When Professor Barrett came to Ireland in 1874, his mother and sister accompanied him.

that he undertook no other paid work and devoted all his time to the public service. (Minute Books Royal College of Science, Ireland; UCD Archives).

¹⁹ Minute Books RCSI, resolutions agreed 18 January 1875, 10 April 1876 and 23 March 1881 (UCD Archives).

²⁰ Margaret Ferrier, *Letter of a noble woman* (London, 1908).

Rosa Barrett remained in Ireland for the greater part of her life, spending approximately forty-eight years here. Mrs Barrett also lived out her life in Ireland, dying in January 1894 and is buried in Deansgrange cemetery, in Dublin. In a Memoir published in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* by Eleanor Sidgwick shortly after Professor Barrett's death, it mentioned that, until 1916 he was a bachelor, living with a 'devoted sister'.²¹ Rosa Barrett and her brother seem to have had a close relationship, sharing similar interests and concerns.

According to *The Visitor*:

It would be hard to find a brother and sister in Ireland who led more active, busy and useful lives than they. They are of one mind in their deep interest in religious and philanthropic work of various kinds, and throw themselves into it with the utmost heartiness to the full measure of their health and strength.²²

Perhaps it was expected that Professor Barrett as the unmarried brother would adopt a semi-paternal role and look after the interests and well-being of both his mother and youngest sister. Regardless it was an arrangement, which seems to have worked well. Professor Barrett undoubtedly benefited from an organised, well run household and his mother and Rosa Barrett gained financial security. Both Rosa Barrett and her brother appear to have been particularly devoted to their mother.²³

On their arrival in Ireland, the Barrett's settled in Montpelier Avenue, moving up-market to Belgrave Square in Monkstown and finally settling in DeVesci Terrace in Kingstown. DeVesci Terrace, with its private park and individual coach-houses was a terrace of twelve houses, which were amongst the best ever built in Kingstown.²⁴ The houses were comfortable and impressive and reflected well on one's position in society. Here the Barrett's remained till 1916, when Professor now

²¹ Colin Wilson, *Death-bed visions* (London, 1986), p.xiii.

²² *The Visitor*, May 1907.

²³ Lady Florence Barrett, *Personality survives death* (London, 1937), p.xii.

Sir William F. Barrett, married and returned to England necessitating Rosa Barrett moving to a smaller house in Glenageary, before she too left Ireland in 1922 and settled in Welwyn Garden City.

Rosa Barrett and career plans

Without the support and security provided by her brother, it is unlikely that Rosa Barrett would have been able to relinquish a full-time paid career in return for voluntary service. The establishment and running of the Cottage Home required a lot of commitment and effort. On her arrival in Ireland, Rosa Barrett had been concerned with finding a career and remuneration. Prior to the establishment of the Crèche and Cottage Home she had been a student at the Royal College of Science, with a view to taking up a teaching career. Between 1874 and 1878, approximately twenty one women enrolled to take Professor Barrett's physics class, both theoretical and practical physics. Rosa Barrett began in May 1877. Her fellow students included Alice Stopford, Louisa LaTouche, Agnes Shannon and Frances and Isabelle Green.²⁵ She attended the semester of practical physics sessions. Subsequently she decided to redirect her life to childcare, a decision she acknowledged to be an unusual one. She believed however that it was divinely ordained. She maintained, she knew nothing of children and it was not the work she would have chosen, 'contrary to all my plans and hopes, I was irresistibly impressed that my work was to find some way by which to try and prevent dreadful accidents to children left alone'.²⁶

²⁴ Peter Pearson, *Dun Laoghaire-Kingstown* (Dublin, 1981), p. 83.

²⁵ Register of occasional students 1867-8 and 1905-6 (RCSI: UCD Archives).

Continued interest in science

However even though she changed her own career path, she remained interested in science and the scope it provided for women's work. According to Rosa Barrett, the training required for science, scrupulous accuracy and attitude of mind necessary for research, were talent girls ordinary education was least likely to produce. As she bemoans, 'what girl was taught to reason, to think for herself, to question? What girls' school or college until recently had a laboratory or dreamt of allowing the pupils to mess with dirty chemicals and dangerous batteries?'²⁷ While many bemoaned their lack of practical education, Rosa Barrett throughout her life remained 'gratefully conscious of the influence left by the upright, religious and studious characters of her own ancestors on both sides of the family'.²⁸

Though Rosa Barrett did not pursue her scientific studies, she remained connected to science and technology through the interests of her brother. She was for many years Professor Barrett's secretary; she also served on Kingstown's technical committee and promoted, with her brother, technical education in Ireland. She also became the contributor on science and statistics for the *Englishwoman's Yearbook* and in 1916 she stated:

Science knows no sex, and any work that women have done to further scientific knowledge is, they recognise to be valued, because of its intrinsic merit, partly for this reason many women hid their work behind the personality of brother, or husband.²⁹

The Cottage Home was planned with great detail and accuracy and all Barrett's published papers are extremely detailed statistical studies, with charts and graphs, which oftentimes she herself had prepared. As highlighted in the previous chapter,

²⁶ Rosa M. Barrett, *International Psychic Gazette*, March 1934, p.83.

²⁷ *Englishwoman's Yearbook for 1916*, p. 69-69.

²⁸ Rosa Barrett, *International Psychic Gazette*, March 1934, p. 83.

²⁹ *Englishwoman's Yearbook for 1916*, p. 69.

she investigated, presented and published two papers studying the legal position of children in various countries around the world, advocating the implementation of certain new models of reform like juvenile courts, the instigation of concrete adoption legislation and generally highlighting the new developments in child welfare around the world which were being state instigated.

Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland

Both Barrett's papers were published in the *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*; the *Journal* provided during the nineteenth century an important platform for people who were concerned about current affairs and social issues. The investigative methods that the society members employed during the nineteenth century: the emphasis on statistics and empirical research, and the tendency to base recommendations for administrative and legal reforms on precedents derived from other nations, remains the basis of modern social policy. In these respects the *Journal* provides an invaluable insight into the thoughts of a professional and intellectual elite, on some of the most important aspects of Irish society.³⁰ Though the society allowed women to present papers, few women chose to do so. Over the nineteenth century women presented only six papers, including the two by Rosa Barrett, to the society.³¹ Alongside her papers to the Irish society, Barrett also presented a paper to the *Royal Statistical Society*; this paper on the 'Treatment of juvenile offenders' had won the Howard Medal Prize. It was subsequently translated into Japanese.

³⁰ Mary E. Daly, *The spirit of inquiry* (Dublin, 1997), p. 3-4.

Kingstown and Barrett's local involvement

Both Rosa Barrett and her brother took an active part in the local well-being of the township and both became well-known and popular figures. What one became involved with seems almost inevitably to have attracted the other. Both became involved with local campaigns to better house the poor in the town, with temperance work, the people's park and horticulture committee as well as organising annual Christmas treats for the poor children of the township, the local Women's National Health Association, relief committees and both were heavily involved with the workmen's club.

The workmen's club had been founded by Professor Barrett in 1892 to provide a place of social recreation for working people, where discussion on either politics or religion would be banned, and drink and gambling not allowed. In a foreword to the club's annual report for 1916, the *Bray and South Dublin Herald* made the point that the club had widespread local support, it served both Protestant and Catholic working men and never suffered a serious dispute.³² The general acceptance of the workmen's club is echoed by the *Kingstown Weekly Echo*, a short-lived pro-Catholic and nationalist paper which nonetheless stressed the general usefulness of the workmen's club and the facilities it provided to the town's working population, which was overwhelmingly Catholic.³³

The workmen's club urged the development of technical schools, cheap and good dwellings for working class families, the provision of baths and wash-houses and a

³¹ R.D. Collison-Black, *The Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, centenary volume 1847-1947* (Dublin, 1947), pp. 87-119.

³² *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 9 September 1916.

³³ *Kingstown Weekly Echo*, October 1904-5.

playground for the children of the township. The township also needed to develop some indigenous industry to cushion families during the off-peak tourist season. As early as 1884, Rosa Barrett had highlighted the deplorable state of housing in Kingstown:

A sanitary commission would reveal an appalling state of things in Kingstown, where, to the detriment of the entire town, nothing has yet been accomplished by any public body to improve the hovels that are hidden away behind the respectable fringe of houses facing the streets.³⁴ Nothing was done however till 1896! Professor Barrett in a deputation to Kingstown Urban Council, in February 1911 urged upon the council the necessity that existed in the premier township for wash houses, baths and playground for the use of the poorer classes. The council eventually agreed to support such a scheme – municipal elections were looming. However by June 1911 nothing had yet been done. Rosa Barrett wrote to the national papers calling public attention to the poor facilities in the 'premier township'.³⁵ Eventually some facilities were provided, though perhaps never on the scale initially envisaged.

The Barrett's, along with Kingstown residents like the McDermott's were actively involved in most of the welfare provisions made for the needy of Kingstown. The greatest limitation on charity work was the inability of the members to change the environment in which the poor lived.³⁶ Through the provision of washhouses, housing schemes, the establishment of technical schools and efforts to provide playgrounds, some citizens like the Barrett's attempted to improve the environment

³⁴ Rosa M. Barrett, *Guide to Dublin charities*, vol.3, p. 80 (Dublin, 1884).

³⁵ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, February-June 1911.

³⁶ Alison Jordan, *Who cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast* (Belfast, n.d.), p. 232.

of the poor. Such reform programmes were a structural response to the traditional emotive world of poverty and wants and were to be a long-term solution.

Public recognition for the work of Professor Barrett came in 1912 when he was knighted with the following endorsement in the local paper:

It is many years since an honour conferred on a prominent man has given such satisfaction locally as that conferred on Professor Barrett. He was well-known to everybody and the respect held for him is universal.³⁷ Rosa Barrett too had earned a title, that of 'fairy godmother of children'³⁸ and her decision in 1909 to extend the Christmas treats to the children of Kilmacanogue, was greeted with much enthusiasm in the local press.³⁹ Public awareness of this work at a local level was an acknowledgement of the input that institutions like the Cottage Home made to the local welfare provisions. The Cottage Home filled a void in the charity structure and through it, many including Rosa Barrett became more aware of deficiencies in the local social network. Such shortcomings she and others sought to rectify.

Barrett and Crèche

The next chapter of this thesis deals specifically with the Crèche and Cottage Home founded by Rosa Barrett in Kingstown in 1879. The founding of the crèche was as a direct response to the need, that Barrett and her friends witnessed in the homes of the poor of Kingstown. The idea that someone lacking any specialised childcare skills or any training undertaking such a venture was of course frowned on, what did she a single woman know of children? Crèches were extremely difficult to maintain funding invariably became scarce and often the health of the children

³⁷ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 6 January 1912.

³⁸ *Bray and South*, 18 December 1909.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

deteriorated. Nonetheless Barrett was determined to try! The Cottage Home developed Barrett's interest in wider social issues yet it remained her pioneering work and was the occupation which according to *The Visitor*, 'absorbed the chief part of her thought and time and affection'.⁴⁰ The Cottage Home while providing undoubtedly much pleasure was a continual source of worry and anxiety to the committee and most especially Rosa Barrett.

Support of family and friends

To establish and perpetuate such vital work necessitated the help of one's family and friends. The support of Mrs Barrett, Professor Barrett, and local clergymen particularly Reverend Burroughs of the Mariner's Church and other key contributors like the Goodbody's and Pims; all would appear to have been invaluable to the institution. Many of the original committee members remained actively involved in the Home for the greater part of their lives. Sewing committees and teaching classes, all were done on a voluntary basis. The guidance and support of the wider Barrett family was also in evidence, particularly during the founding years of the institution. In 1879 the Reverend Edwin Barrett, recently returned from China gave a lecture on the 'Social life of the Chinese: their manners and custom', proceeds went to the Kingstown Crèche.⁴¹ The lecture was repeated in 1881 and Mrs G.S. Barrett of Norwich contributed to the home's funds. In 1883 and again in 1884, Reverend Edwin Barrett and his wife gave £1 and 10 shillings respectively towards the home, a sister Jessie Eveline Barrett gave smaller sums but also donated jam and cakes. The home encouraged individuals to sponsor cots within the home, to support individual children. In 1888 there was the Constance, Trixie, Bridie and

⁴⁰ *The Visitor*, May 1907, p. 74.

⁴¹ Advertisement, *Daily Express*, November 1879 (Cuttings Book, Cottage Home Archive).

Gertrude Barrett cots – all were daughters of Reverend Edwin Barrett.⁴² Mrs Barrett was a continual supporter of the work of the home and her death in 1894 at the age of eighty three caused much grief; in the obituary reference in the annual report her death was recorded in the following terms, ‘another dear and honoured one, the beloved mother of the honorary secretary, whose holy, large hearted and devout life was an inspiration to all who knew her and a sacred memory in the home’.⁴³ The death of her mother upset Rosa Barrett greatly, debarring her from active work through illness for the remainder of 1894.

Another continued source of support for the Cottage Home was Lady Aberdeen. On her arrival in Ireland in 1886 she visited the home and became its patron. Despite leaving Ireland in 1886 she remained in contact with the home and on her return to Dublin as Vicereine in 1910, she was patron of a concert held in aid of the Cottage Home and again at a fund-raising ball.⁴⁴ Rosa Barrett and Lady Aberdeen had a number of shared interests, the International Congress of Women, the Home Industries Board, the Women’s National Health Association, the suffrage movement, temperance and the general welfare of children. In 1906 while visiting the home to open a new wing, Lady Aberdeen spoke of how she and Rosa Barrett had first become acquainted:

They first met twenty years ago when Lady Aberdeen needed some competent person to whom she might safely entrust the teaching of her little boy and since that time they had many opportunities to hear about her work and keep in touch.⁴⁵

⁴² See *Annual Reports of the Cottage Home for Little Children for 1883, 1884 and 1888*.

⁴³ *Annual Report of the Cottage Home for Little Children for 1894* (Dublin, 1895), p. 6.

⁴⁴ *Daily Express*, 24 May 1910 and *Irish Times* 14 December 1910.

⁴⁵ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 2 June 1906.

For many single women, a network of friends became both socially and emotionally important. The Cottage Home retained the same core group of supporters throughout Rosa Barrett's time. Similarly in other reformist philanthropic organisations, many names reappear with great regularity. People like the Earl of Meath, Sir Charles Cameron and Lucy Buchanan, all were involved with the Cottage Home, yet they were also involved with the Philanthropic Reform Association and the Irish Workhouse Association. For people like Rosa Barrett, meetings and conferences were aspects of daily life. However some of these meetings could also be social outings, the suffrage campaign was primarily based on drawing room meetings; the temperance association held annual picnics and get-togethers. According to Lucy Kingston, the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation, of which both she and Barrett were members, was 'very reasonable to work with and very nice'.⁴⁶ Given the localised nature of many of the organisations and the limited numbers involved as well as the continued religious divide, many committee members would have been at least acquaintances, if not friends. Even for those not involved with welfare movements, other interests could unite people. In later life the interest of Professor and Rosa Barrett in spiritualism and Christian Science linked them to couples like the Cousins who in their memoirs recollect:

Sir W. F. Barrett invited me to a dinner party at his house, with intent to engage my mind and keep me in touch with the pleasantries of intellectual life. At the table there was the interchange of badinage, literary reminiscence and humour, that made gatherings of the time so stimulating to the mind in Dublin.⁴⁷

As the Cousins highlight, given the small size of Dublin, people could have different connections and various networks of friends.

⁴⁶ Personal correspondence with Daisy L. Swanton, 15 November 1997.

⁴⁷ John and Margaret Cousins, *We two together* (Madras, 1950), p. 137.

Rosa Barrett in undertaking her life's work made the decision that to do the job thoroughly meant sacrificing any thoughts of a family of one's own. This was a sacrifice she made; 'I felt strongly that such work would involve giving up any career, or marriage, as if undertaken it must be carried on whole-heartedly'.⁴⁸ Such self-sacrifice was one which, according to Vicinus many single women transformed into an active role of spirituality and social service.⁴⁹ Such a vocation could though be a lonely one, often increasing one's reliance upon a few friends and relatives, who would provide reassurance and support. In her memoir on Ellice Hopkins, inspirer of the Purity League, Rosa Barrett writes feelingly and tellingly of the necessity of family and friends to reformers:

All women workers, they must either become hardened or more dependent on others for in their work for the good of humanity they have to sacrifice so much of the ordinary fireside happiness and domesticity, that is to them an unusually large share of the love of friends is necessary and is perhaps given. But no woman of this nature, however true and deep her satisfaction, or whatever her sense of fun, can be classed among the happy ones of earth. Deep as may be the satisfaction and the abiding sense of joy in service, yet there must always remain also the longing – acknowledged or not, for something more personal.⁵⁰

Perhaps therefore it was advantageous that Rosa Barrett and Professor Barrett shared many similar interests. One of the luxuries many such active workers missed was leisure, according to Rosa Barrett reflecting on another busy year: 'if anyone could invent some means of passing on spare hours to those for whom the days are never long enough, what a boon it would be'.⁵¹ 1906 saw the instigation of an executive committee under Mrs Lawson at the Cottage Home, which much lightened the heavy responsibilities on Rosa Barrett, who was thereby enabled, for

⁴⁸ Barrett, *International Psychic Gazette*, *ibid*.

⁴⁹ Martha Vicinus, *Independent women: work and community for single women* (Chicago, 1985), p. 5.

⁵⁰ Rosa M. Barrett, *Ellice Hopkins a memoir* (London, 1907), p. 225-26.

⁵¹ *Annual report of the Cottage Home for Little Children for 1908* (Dublin, 1909), p. 5.

the first time for many years to take a much-needed holiday abroad.⁵² Over the course of her life, Rosa Barrett visited Norway, Sweden, South Africa and the Americas. Undoubtedly the highlight of all these trips was the visit as delegate to the International Congress of Women in Toronto in 1909.

Wider involvement in philanthropic sphere

The opening of the crèche in 1879, subsequently the Cottage Home for Little Children was Rosa Barrett's first venture into charitable activity. However she increasingly became aware that hers was a relatively unique institution in the United Kingdom and so she set about providing a directory of charities in Dublin. The result, the *Guide to Dublin charities*, published in 1884 is an important work. It was the first such directory and was also organised very much on the lines laid out by the Charity Organisation Society for such work, highlighting perhaps a relatively inexperienced author. In a review of the third volume in the *Temperance Yearbook for 1891*, the author said:

This third part completes Miss Barrett's labour of love, and contains particulars about 'Asylums, Penitentiaries, Homes and Almshouses'. The work represents an immense amount of patient labour in collecting facts and an excellent method of exhibiting them.⁵³

In the *Guide* Rosa Barrett stressed the necessity of co-ordinating relief efforts so as to ensure the most efficient administration of aid and to guarantee its most usefulness. She also called for a central agency to which all organisations would send information and thereby prevent over-lapping and wasted energy in charity provision. However such an organisation failed to materialise until the founding of the Association of Charities in 1902. This organisation was to serve as a 'common

⁵² *Annual report of the Cottage Home for Little Children for 1906* (Dublin, 1907), p. 12.

⁵³ *Temperance Yearbook for 1891*

melting ground where all creeds can confer and obtain information'.⁵⁴ The organising committee was composed of the representatives of affiliated bodies, and members co-opted by the committee, such as Poor Law Guardians, relieving officers and experienced workers who are in daily touch with the poor.⁵⁵

The initial years of the Cottage Home had revealed the horrific lives endured by some children. This prompted the establishment of a Dublin branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The Society was inaugurated at a meeting held in May 1889, attended by influential citizens at the Shelbourne Hotel. As the *Irish Times* remarked 'the list of names prefixed to the account of the meetings is important and representative and affords ample proof that the sympathies of the community have been caught'.⁵⁶ As mentioned in the first chapter, Rosa Barrett was a key instigator behind the establishment of an NSPCC branch in Dublin, the Dublin Aid Committee.

Letchworth Scheme

The over-riding concern with social environment as being the major determinant of a child's potential, led organisations like the NSPCC to focus on ways of improving the socialisation the child received- imparting the mores of middle class society, a belief in hard work, thrift and upstanding character. One scheme developed was the Letchworth scheme, promoted in 1913. The object of the scheme according to the NSPCC report was 'to provide a home for orphans or children who are otherwise destitute or improperly cared for, and "to inculcate the principles of universal

⁵⁴ G.D. Williams, *Dublin charities: being a handbook of Dublin philanthropic organisations and charities* (Dublin, 1902), p. 2.

⁵⁵ Rev. John Paterson Smyth (ed.), *Social Service Handbook for Ireland – Association for promoting Christian knowledge* (Dublin, 1901), p. 168.

citizenship and true patriotism”⁵⁷. The scheme was based around cottage homes, accommodating six to twelve children in each, under the charge of a married couple, or two friends, one of whom should have some training in educational work. The *Irish Citizen* commenting on the scheme noted that ‘the names of the Council members included that of an Irishwoman who has spent her life in advanced social reform work, Rosa Barrett’.⁵⁸ The scheme with its emphasis on manual work, simple handicrafts and self-sufficiency would instil the virtues of a simple, hard-working self-reliant lifestyle. Citizenship and solidarity would be fostered by the devolution of administrative responsibilities on the girls and boys themselves.

Barrett and social viewpoints

Schemes such as the one proposed for Letchworth showed an optimistic willingness to believe in the essential goodness of people, that all if raised well, educated and trained would prove able citizens. Rosa Barrett stressed similar concerns, advocating the value of education and the failings of the society as being a root cause of many social ills. She believed that no inmate or prisoner should be discharged until he or she had learnt habits of industry and some employment by which it would be possible to earn an honest living – that reform and education were more necessary than punishment and the biggest impact on reducing the numbers of juvenile offenders was compulsory education.⁵⁹ Ireland, she said furnished a striking example of the truth that as schools are opened prisons are emptied. By ignoring its problems, the society was at fault.

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 6 May 1889.

⁵⁷ *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Annual Report for 1912*, in *The Times*, 22 May 1913.

⁵⁸ *Irish Citizen*, 12 October 1912.

Through progressive legislation, society could iron out many of its loopholes, ultimately to the benefit, not only of the children and juveniles affected, but also fundamentally the creation of a more civilised, evolved and ordered society. Such a society would benefit all. Rosa Barrett believed strongly in the importance of inculcating habits of self-dependency, to help ensure that no able-bodied person should be forced to rely on Poor Relief. The particular concern in the Cottage Home was with the children of the respectable poor, those for whom their misfortune was often unpredictable. In her proposals for reform, Barrett stressed the importance of founding institutions, which would model the family and the home. Therefore she was not approving of large institutions, emphasising that such organisations made adapting to ordinary home life very difficult. Writing in *Good Words* in 1900, she had highlighted some of the problems within the industrial schools:

Unfortunately Roman Catholic institutions generally tend to become too large and machine like: the very perfection of the arrangements and machinery necessitated by large establishments not being that best adapted to turn out boys fit for ordinary everyday life. As a rule also too little oversight and care is exercised over the boys when they first receive their liberty on leaving these large institutions.⁶⁰

Barrett and juvenile reform

Concerns over the future of the young also provided impetus for reform. One of the prime areas for consideration was the juvenile offender, a newly coined term to describe the offences, often petty, committed by youth, usually male. Though never great in number, the law made no distinction between mere boisterousness and criminal activity, all were subject to harsh punitive treatments. The breaking of a

⁵⁹ Rosa M. Barrett in *Good Words* (London, 1900), p. 388.

⁶⁰ Rosa M. Barrett, 'Hooligans at home and abroad' in *Good Words* (London, 1900), p. 393.

pane of glass merited four years in a reformatory school, begging could merit imprisonment. The cold statistics of the General Prisons Board illustrates the cruel face of official justice throughout the United Kingdom.⁶¹ Juvenile crime was in the 1880s still associated primarily with the children of the poor, who tended to be treated as a race apart from the offspring of higher social strata. However works like William Douglas Morrison's *Juvenile Offenders* (1896) and *Juvenile Offenders: An Inquiry Instituted by the Howard Association* (1898) helped to show that youngsters of all social ranks were acknowledged to share certain characteristics including a propensity toward delinquency. A stage of life, adolescence, had replaced station in life, class, as the perceived cause of misbehaviour.

The Howard League for Penal Reform, named after John Howard (1726-90) founder of the penal reform movement, was an association originally composed of the Howard Association, founded in 1866 and the Penal Reform League set up in 1907. Both associations had as their aim - the promotion of the most efficient means of penal treatment and crime prevention and to promote a reformatory and radically preventive treatment of offenders.⁶² The Association campaigned for juvenile courts, special provision for mentally and physically unfit prisoners as well as for the abolition of capital punishment and the allowing of time for the payment of fines. Like the NSPCC the Association became a regulatory body which campaigned and lobbied for a humane prison system. It was regarded as such a key organisation and a reformist and progressive one.

⁶¹ O'Brien, *Dear dirty Dublin* (London, 1982), p. 195.

⁶² *Howard league for penal reform pamphlet* (Courtesy of the Howard League for Penal Reform, London).

The promoting of probation as the best alternative to imprisonment and a reformatory, was a key campaign for the Howard Association. Important in principle, since it provided a middle course between admonition and imprisonment, probation nevertheless remained inadequately implemented. No provision had been made for the supervision of those on probation. The Youthful Offenders Act of 1901 and the Probation Act of 1907 effectively established the form of probation urged by the Howard Association. The probation system was immediately copied from the United States, taken directly from the laws of the state of Massachusetts where the system was first tried.⁶³ One of the people responsible for first bringing the American system to notice was Rosa Barrett who in 1900 had become the first woman to be awarded the Howard Medal for her paper on 'The Treatment of Juvenile Offenders'.⁶⁴

The Howard Prize winning essay written by Rosa Barrett concerned the treatment of juvenile offenders. In it she gave a detailed statistical analysis of juvenile crime, as well as outlining the various schemes implemented in other countries. She advocated the following amendments in English legislation: separate trials for juvenile offenders who should be kept apart from adults, an extension of the First Offenders Act, indeterminate sentences by which children could be confined until there was reason for hope for reform and a special reformatory for first offenders of sixteen years of age and up to twenty one.⁶⁵ For many reformers the sentencing of a child to prison at a young age deprived prison of any threatening veneer, it became almost a second home to recidivists therefore it lost any power to deter, also

⁶³ Reed, *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Ronald Walton, *Women in social work* (London, 1975), p. 21.

⁶⁵ Rosa M. Barrett, 'The treatment of juvenile offenders', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, June 1900, p.258.

punishment without some training or rehabilitation was a costly, usually futile exercise. The true aspiration in dealing with the juvenile offender was to produce worthy citizens, hard-working and upstanding members of the community. As Rosa Barrett said:

Surely a mere child should not be branded for life by imprisonment: its punishment should be *corrective*. A moments reflection on a child's heedlessness, imitative faculty, and its malleability, shows that it cannot be the real culprit, the actual culprits are those who have allowed the child to grow up without knowledge of right and wrong, without self-restraint, without good habits.⁶⁶

The benefits of an education or training on crime levels was readily apparent to most reformers, to substantiate their argument they looked simply at the co-relationship between those illiterate and those in prison. In her paper Rosa Barrett provided charts setting out such comparisons, which outlined how 'even in this twentieth century, only about three in every hundred of our prisoners can read and write well - one in five can do neither, and the rest but very little'.⁶⁷ The great preventives for crime were seen to be a good education, instruction in some trade or employment and sobriety. Education was the greatest avenue to self-respect and self-discipline and the provision of primary state education to virtually all had decreased crime figures. The true meaning of education for Rosa Barrett encompassed far more than narrow definition of reading and writing. In calling for an increased educational ethos in dealing with juvenile offenders she proclaimed that:

Education is not learning to read and write only: it is not knowledge of the classics: it is not book learning - it is the development of all our faculties of the power to see, to reason: it is the development of the character, the cultivation of self-discipline. I hope soon we shall recognise this truth and honour more and pay better our skilled workers and manual instructors, this fact is recognised far more in America than here: there manual instruction is

⁶⁶ Barrett, *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁶⁷ Rosa M. Barrett, *Good Words*, 1900, p. 388.

given in prisons, reformatories more to a view to future usefulness and to its effect upon character than with any thought of present monetary gain.⁶⁸

The extract above was taken from another paper on Juvenile Criminals presented at the International Congress on Prison Management in Buda-pest, in 1905 and also at the International Congress for the Welfare and Protection of Children. In both cases, Rosa Barrett took the English legislature and English people to task asking why it was that:

It is perfectly legal to send a child of seven to prison in this country and for those over sixteen years of age, there is no choice - it is we who allow such laws still to exist, who deserve to be sent to prison, rather than these ignorant, neglected children: One is the wastefulness of imprisonment, it neither reforms nor deters. Secondly it appears to me absolutely indefensible that *criminal responsibility* thus begins years and years before *civil responsibility*: - this appears to me not only a monstrous injustice, but most illogical.⁶⁹

The Children's Act of 1908 provided that no child less than fourteen years would thenceforth be sent to prison under any circumstances. Children under twelve could no longer be sent to reform school. Instead of remanding young offenders to prison to await trial, local Places of Detention were set up for their temporary custody. Children were to be kept separate from adult criminals at their trial and afterwards were to receive treatment suited to their special needs and not punishment fitted to the crime.⁷⁰ The effects of the Act were felt immediately: in 1910 only four children under sixteen years were held in Irish prisons.⁷¹ Punishments for children and virtually all-young persons would henceforth be fines or sureties and probationary care.

⁶⁸ Rosa M. Barrett, '*Inebriety and crime with some state remedies*', *Reprints of papers presented at the International Penitentiary Conference, Buda-pesth 1905* (Dublin, 1905), p. 27-28.

⁶⁹ Barrett, *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷⁰ Alexander Reed, *The Children's Charter, a summary of the main provisions of the Children's Act 1908* (Church of Ireland Temperance Society: Dublin 1909).

Gradually many of the anomalies within the system were eliminated. By 1909 when Rosa Barrett joined Mrs Joseph T. Bowen, Chairperson of the Juvenile Court Committee, Chicago on the platform on the 'Treatment of juvenile offenders' at the International Congress of Women, in Toronto, she was able to recollect on the way things had been and the improved situation operating since the 1908 Children's Charter:

For centuries our one idea in dealing with a criminal was purely vindictive. Punishment was the only thing thought of, more recently the thought of reforming the person, while punishing the crime, dawned on the mind as a possibility, and still more lately the more hopeful method of preventive work took shape.⁷²

She also devoted time to a consideration of the new Children's Courts operating in the United Kingdom, another idea originally imported from the United States. Rosa Barrett said that many offences committed by youngsters were 'technical not moral ones', innocent misdemeanours such as bathing in the canal, football in the street. As Rosa Barrett said, what child did not do this sort of thing?⁷³ The evil of imprisonment, the need to distinguish the adult criminal from the child, was some of the concerns linking prison reformers. However an additional incentive to reform was the benefits to society of reforming the juvenile offender before he became a recidivist offender. Society's responsibility for the offender, linked to the advantages to society of a stable, crime free environment were some of the brokering arguments used by reformers to justify calling for creative, not reactive social policy.

⁷¹ O'Brien, *Dear dirty Dublin*, p. 197.

⁷² Rosa M. Barrett, *Proceedings of the International Congress of Women* (Toronto, 1910), p. 190.

Barrett and temperance

The Christian compassion of women to effect temperance reform was a rallying cry for female temperance workers. According to Andrea Ebel Brozyna:

The supposedly heightened moral sensitivity and natural piety of women was part of a transatlantic evangelical dialogue on women and Christianity that included Ireland. Male Irish temperance workers advocates frequently commended their diligent female workers by praising what they believed to be the innate spirituality and pious 'feeling' of their female adherents.⁷⁴

Many clergymen, interested industrialists and concerned onlookers devoted their lives to the 'crusade against drink'. According to Shiman, drink made a convenient scapegoat for all the troubles of society. It was easily identified and superficially at least, could be held responsible for all depravity.⁷⁵ Alcohol and its abuse was a key reason for all other forms of abuse, be it domestic violence, general crime levels, physical deprivation and child abuse, all could readily be explained by intemperate adults and sometimes intemperate adolescents. The raising of future generations to such an inevitable path of self-destruction was a strong rallying cry in promoting the temperance cause. The cost to the society in terms of poor relief, lost industrial man-hours and the deprivation to family life were ill-effects of the love of alcohol. An emphasis on the restorative power of the family and the primary role of women as rescuers created an ever-greater hostility towards female intemperance. This was seen as the ultimate repudiation of all that women represented. Women according to published Irish temperance material were not to usurp male authority, but rather by moral suasion, restore their menfolk to righteousness.⁷⁶ Great emphasis was laid

⁷³ Barrett, *Inebriety and crime*, p. 39.

⁷⁴ Andrea Ebel Brozyna, "'The cursed cup hath cast her down'", constructions of female piety in Ulster evangelical temperance literature, 1863-1914' from *Coming into the light- the work, politics and religion of women in Ulster 1840-1940*, ed. By Janice Holmes and Diane Urquhart (Belfast, 1994), pp. 154-178.

⁷⁵ Lilian Shiman, *Crusade against drink in Victorian England* (New York, 1988), p. 94.

⁷⁶ Andrea Ebel Brozyna, *Ibid.*, p. 155.

on the importance of women reformers working to aid the 'rescue' of female intemperates.

In assessing the contribution of Ireland to temperance reform, the *Irish Temperance League Journal*, writing in 1905, believed that Ireland had much to be proud of. Not only was it the birth place of an organised movement but the task of making 'Ireland sober, Ireland free' was uniting Catholic and Protestant, Unionist and Home Ruler in 'a great and glorious work'. For the Irish Temperance League believed 'if the people are to benefit by the growth of industrialism and the mighty changes brought about in the tenure of Irish land by the recent legislation, they must be freed from the curse of drink'.⁷⁷ For the Church of Ireland Temperance Society, founded in 1879:

The intemperance of the nation is the greatest of all hindrances to the progress of everything that is good, that the poverty and distress of which we have lately heard so much, are largely due to the reckless expenditure of the working classes on drink.⁷⁸

The involvement of women in the temperance cause in Ireland has received little attention. The most recent work - *Ireland sober, Ireland free* by Elizabeth Malcolm gives the women's movement only cursory attention. Yet Irish women established their own organisations and ran their own Inebriate Homes. It was not until the 1870s that women really took up the issue. In 1874 the Women's Temperance Association (WTA) was established in Belfast and Dublin, the aim being to unite women to offer uncompromising opposition to the spread of intemperance.⁷⁹ By the 1880s they had established coffee houses, homes for inebriates and an industrial

⁷⁷ *The Irish Temperance League Journal*, 1 May 1905.

⁷⁸ *Church of Ireland Temperance Society Reports* (Dublin, 1879), p. 3.

⁷⁹ Helen Blackburn, *Handy book of reference for Irish women* (London, 1888).

school for girls.⁸⁰ The establishment of temperance hotels, like that at St Stephen's Green, run by Mr Russell and coffee houses were seen as popular alternatives to inns and public houses where alcohol was often the only beverage available.

By 1894, all the branches of the WTA merged into one organisation called the Irish Women's Temperance Union (IWTU), whose motto was 'United to Win Ireland'. *The Visitor*, the organ of the Church of Ireland Temperance League commented on the first report of the IWTU:

It is evidently managed by ladies, not only of ability, but also of great earnestness in prosecuting the cause, which they have taken in hand. We are glad to see that the Union is established upon a religious basis, and encourages its members to use prayer as a means to its ends. There is an immense power lying latent in the women of the country, waiting to be aroused and organised and used in some united effort after righteousness.⁸¹

The IWTU was to be non-sectarian and non-political. The work of the society consisted in holding public and private meetings, meetings for young ladies and working girls, in starting Bands of Hope, coffee rooms and temperance refreshment houses. By 1899 the IWTU had seventy societies and published its own paper, the *Echoes of Erin*.⁸²

The involvement of the Barretts with the temperance cause is evident from early on. Professor Barrett listed temperance, as one of his key interests and in 1879 was present on the executive committee of the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance.⁸³ He was also on the executive of the Dublin United Temperance Council, a council composed of representatives of the different temperance organisations.

⁸⁰ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland*, p. 206 and Blackburn, *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁸¹ *The Visitor*, August 1894, p. 114.

⁸² *Englishwoman's Yearbook for 1899*, p. 329.

In 1893 he suggested appointing vigilance committees to report on any breaches of the Licensing Acts.³¹ In 1915, he and a number of ladies and gentlemen including Rosa Barrett conducted an inspection of public houses in Dublin City and Kingsdown. They investigated allegations of lewdness against soldiers and women and their results were submitted to the Press.³² Another brother Edwin Reffe Barrett, a Congregational Minister in England was also actively involved with the temperance cause. His prize-winning essay on 'The Truth about Intoxicating Drinks' was published three times between 1880 and 1899.³³



Rosa m. Barrett. (n.d.)

(Reproduced from *The Visitor*, May 1907).

³¹ Daily Express, 3 November 1879.

³² The Visitor, no. 11, November 1907, p. 165.

³³ Free and South (and the Abroad), 21 January 1915.

³⁴ Obituary notice for Edwin Reffe Barrett in the Congregational Yearbook for 1916.

³⁵ Rosa Barrett, *The Times*, 24 October 1899.

³⁶ The Visitor, May 1907, p. 73.

In 1893 he suggested appointing vigilance committees to report on any breaches of the Licensing Acts.⁸⁴ In 1915, he and a number of ladies and gentlemen including Rosa Barrett conducted an inspection of public houses in Dublin City and Kingstown. They investigated allegations of insobriety against soldiers and women and their results were submitted to the Press.⁸⁵ Another brother Edwin Relfe Barrett, a Congregational Minister in England was also actively involved with the temperance cause. His prize-winning essay on 'The Truth about Intoxicating Drinks' was reprinted three times between 1889 and 1899.⁸⁶

In 1899, Rosa Barrett in a letter to *The Times* had opposed the granting of more beer licences in Ireland, observing that both the publicans and the temperance party acknowledged that Ireland was already vastly overstocked, with licensed houses.⁸⁷ By this stage, she had been an active worker on behalf of the Temperance cause for a number of years. She was according to *The Visitor*, who interviewed her in 1907, 'a life-long abstainer, and has for years been an unwearied worker on its behalf, and an effective speaker on temperance platforms'.⁸⁸

In 1905 she was elected President of the IWTU and was re-elected in 1906, during both Presidencies she 'laboured strenuously and successfully to extend its boundaries and increase its usefulness'. In her opening Presidential address to the IWTU Rosa Barrett stressed:

Though I have been a life-long abstainer, every year I live deepens my convictions and strengthens my reasons as to the value and duty of total

⁸³ *Daily Express*, 3 November 1879.

⁸⁴ *The Visitor*, no. 11, November 1893, p. 165.

⁸⁵ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 21 January 1915.

⁸⁶ Obituary notice for Edwin Relfe Barrett in the *Congregational Yearbook for 1916*.

⁸⁷ Rosa Barrett, *The Times*, 24 October 1899.

⁸⁸ *The Visitor*, May 1907, p. 73.

abstinence, and increases my sense of the importance of safe-guarding the young, so as to Prevent the formation of habits, now known to be injurious from every point of view - physically, mentally, and morally.⁸⁹

When Rosa Barrett succeeded to the presidency, the IWTU had expanded its activities to include a Home for Inebriate Women, established in 1902 and an extension of their cafes to Galway, Cork and Ballina. Rosa Barrett in her opening address spoke of 'the importance of safeguarding the young, of the spread of drunkenness among women and of the urgent need for work by women. She spoke hopefully of the change of sentiment of the Churches and of the medical profession, as contributing in its foremost exponents a temperance army in itself'.⁹⁰ Presidency of the IWTU meant undertaking a series of meeting tours around the country, for example in November 1905, she spoke at Boyle, on the eighth, Castlerea on the ninth, Foxford on the tenth and Westport on the thirteenth. All meetings were both enthusiastic and well attended. All meetings were presided over by a minister and all ended with prayer. Rosa Barrett also visited all the Munster branches.⁹¹ The expenses for such meetings were contributed by members who sent in a sum specifically to cover the travelling expenses of the president.⁹²

The IWTU was in close correspondence with both the American and British Temperance movements. All referred to each other in warm terms as sister or friends, the IWTU organised speaker tours at which notable foreign temperance workers spoke. They were also up-to-date with current literature. For example in September 1906, a meeting was held with Rosa Barrett in the chair detailing the 'Lessons from across the Atlantic on the Liquor Traffic and How to deal with it'.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ *Irish Temperance League Journal*, 1 June 1905, p. 83.

⁹¹ *Everybody's Monthly*, September 1906.

While President of the IWTU Rosa Barrett also submitted a paper with J.S. Gibbons, Esq. (Chairman of the Prisons Board) at the International Penitentiary Conference at Budapest in 1905, on inebriety and crime. It was later published. Before retiring as President of the IWTU, she attended a 'grand meeting' in the Queens Hall, London, to support the Bill for Excluding Children from Licensed Premises. She was there as the delegate from the Church of Ireland Temperance Society. The bill was passed but Ireland was excluded from the provision regarding children. In her closing address to the IWTU, Rosa Barrett spoke of the duty of hope, of helping to improve society for all:

And so let us go back to our different spheres of work, with the helpful thought that in whatever way, unseen or public, we are helping others upward, in so far we are not really alone, for we are helping to bring about the kingdom of God on earth. The gospel of comfort literally means encouragement. So I conclude, urging the duty of hope.⁹³

The meetings of the IWTU like those of the suffragists were very genteel affairs; the annual conference included a river picnic, afternoon tea and musical choirs.

The methods proposed to eliminate female intemperance had some concrete results, notably the Prayers Union and Inebriate Homes. While women supported changes in legislation they placed great stress on personal responsibility. They felt their homes and refuges would provide preventive and reformatory work.⁹⁴

An inebriate home should be homelike, comfortable and tasteful with harmony reigning supreme. The indoctrination of civility and homeliness was an essential aim of the work of inebriate homes, their in-mates would be female and if they could learn the virtues of the home, they would then pose no problem. The

⁹² MS Letter Irish Women's Temperance Union, Strabane Branch, 10 February 1906.

⁹³ *The Visitor*, May 1907.

⁹⁴ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy*, p. 208.

commitment of the women workers should not be underestimated; they remained independent of male organisations and concentrated on local councils, autonomously run and organised under a federal council - the IWTU. Temperance work was often a shared interest for many women and further encouraged the formation of networks of connections. Many women used such connections to their own advantage, it secured them an audience and often consideration. For example, in 1906 Rosa Barrett presented an address of welcome to Lady Aberdeen, as President of the IWTU she suggested providing vouchers for non-alcoholic refreshments for coach drivers during the castle season. Lady Aberdeen subsequently acted upon the idea.⁹⁵

At a local level, Rosa Barrett and Professor Barrett were also involved with the Northcote Home, established in Kingstown in 1860 for the 'rescue of fallen women'. The home accepted any that wished to remain, after admission the inmates were expected to remain a year and a half after which situations were found for them if possible. In 1883, for example fourteen were admitted, nine sent home or to situations and twelve were still in the home.⁹⁶ By 1898, the numbers in the care of the home had risen, forty three were admitted, twenty five left of their own accord, four were sent to hospitals, five placed in situations and fifteen remained in the home.⁹⁷ The main income of the home came from laundry work. Reverend Dowse, chairman in 1913, said the home had a two-fold object, giving occupation to the in-mates and sowing the seeds of God's holy word in those who were from time

⁹⁵ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 1906.

⁹⁶ Rosa Barrett, *Guide to Dublin charities*, vol. 3 (Dublin, 1884), p. 4.

⁹⁷ Mentioned in report in the *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 7 June 1913.

to time resident there. Along with the Barrett's, other people involved included Reverend Dowse, the Pim's and Reverend Gardiner.⁹⁸

Barrett and the Women's National Health Association

As has been shown campaigners like Barrett through their work in the children's sphere, their juvenile care and the temperance movement focused attention on the need for good, secure home environments for children and adults. The power of a home to cater for the needs, both emotional and social of its members would secure the future stability of both the individual and the society. Concerns of the effects on the 'traditional family' of an increasingly urbanised and industrial consumer society, allied to developing eugenicist fears over the vitality of the race linked a variety of organisations and individuals in a crusade to promote better homes. These would inevitably, or so it was believed produce better children. The restorative power of a good home could cure all social ills, be it the hardened drunkard, the juvenile offender or the young infant exposed to earlier neglect.

In Ireland the Women's National Health Association (WNHA) linked concerns about the eradication of tuberculosis and the need to provide and encourage better mothering to alleviate ignorance. All such concerns may be aptly summarised in Rosa Barrett's own phrase, 'the rescue of the young'. The WNHA advocated self-help as the best means of social harmony. Babies clubs, run by the WNHA were established to show and encourage working class mothers how to rear and nurture their infants, using the most up-to-date scientific and hygienic measures.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed a virtual explosion of public concern over infant mortality and the consequent emergence of an international infant welfare movement of truly immense dimensions.⁹⁹ The realisation that the infant death rate was not declining and growing concern over national deterioration focused concern on infant care. Child-rearing became something of a national obsession on both sides of the Atlantic - maternal care required experts to carry it out successfully. Perhaps nowhere was the reorientation of thinking on infant mortality more succinctly captured than in George Newman's immensely influential *Infant mortality, a social problem* (1906) - he characterised infant mortality as a complex social problem with numerous inter-related causes. However, in a statement that became the maxim of infant welfare work, Newman asserted 'the problem of infant mortality is not one of sanitation alone, or housing, or indeed of poverty as such, *but is mainly a question of motherhood*'.¹⁰⁰

Educating mothers seemed to hold promise as a solution for infant mortality that could avoid the critical and problematic issue of poverty and make unnecessary more fundamental socio-economic reform. In Ireland such infant care was taken up by the Women's National Health Association, founded in 1907. The WNHA, according to Lady Aberdeen, its chief founder, was 'an organised effort to popularise the opinions arrived at by the medical profession and to get them put into practice'.¹⁰¹ The WNHA was inaugurated at a public meeting, held in the Royal College of Physicians on 13 March 1907. The audience included Sir C. Cameron, Chief Medical Officer of Dublin, the Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral and Professor

⁹⁹ Richard A. Meckel, *Save the babies: American public health reform and the prevention of infant mortality, 1850-1929* (Baltimore, 1990), p. 101.

¹⁰⁰ Meckel, *Ibid.*, p. 99.

and Rosa Barrett.¹⁰² The association was to be non-political and non-sectarian: its patriotic aim being the improvement of the health of the country.¹⁰³ At the inaugural meeting Rosa Barrett 'rejoiced that such an organisation as this was about to be started and started under such auspices, with a president (Lady Aberdeen) whom they knew would make it a success'.¹⁰⁴ Rosa Barrett and Professor Barrett continued to actively support the WNHA over the next number of years.

The early years of the twentieth century had seen tuberculosis become the most important public hygiene question of the day, with over one thousand three hundred persons per year in Dublin dying from its attacks. Preventive measures assumed considerable importance. The WNHA established branches throughout the country, often with the support of the Gaelic League: arousing rich and poor alike to the grave problem of public health. Its fully equipped caravans carried the fight against 'bad air, bad food, bad drink and dirt' throughout the west and north-west of Ireland. It was instrumental in securing a £25,000 government grant for the construction of the Peamount Sanatorium near Lucan. The superior work of the WNHA was recognised at the 1908 International Congress on TB held in Washington, DC when the Irish organisation shared with a New York voluntary group the grand prize for effective work in the prevention and relief of TB.¹⁰⁵

Writing in 1910 in *Social Service*, Rosa Barrett outlined the 'Modern Irish Crusade - Against TB':

¹⁰¹ Ishbel Marjoribanks, 'Sphere of women in relation to public health' in the *Dublin Journal of Medical Science*, xxiv (470) 3rd Series, 1 September 1911, p. 165.

¹⁰² *Irish Times*, 14 March 1907.

¹⁰³ *First annual report of the Women's National Health Association, 1907-08* (Dublin, 1908), p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ *Irish Times*, 14 March 1907.

The first thing to do was to arouse interest, awaken public opinion, and this was done chiefly by means of a TB exhibition: subsequently two vans were fitted up and taken around to more out-of-the-way places: everywhere lectures were given or simple talks, showing the people how they could best keep consumption at bay. More recently a small home has been opened at the seaside where those in danger of contracting the disease, can be received for a short stay. Another move has been in the effort to acquire disused coastguard stations, so as to use these for holiday or convalescent homes. A free dispensary, especially for TB cases in connection with which classes will be held for the home treatment of patients. Dublin and several other branches are supplying pasteurised, or pure, milk for the case of babies, of very poor families.¹⁰⁶

After five years the Infant Mortality Committee of the Dublin branch of the WNHA had established four Babies Clubs, the St. Monica's Babies Club, the Gordon Babies Club, the St. Andrews Babies Club and the Kingstown Babies Club. The Babies' Club is an effort to '*save the babies*, and to teach their mothers how to bring them up to be strong and vigorous children. *One out of every seven* babies born in Dublin *die* before they are a year old, and the great majority die from *preventable causes*'.¹⁰⁷ While acknowledging that persistent poverty, bad housing, under-nourishment all contributed to the mortality figures, the WNHA was convinced that much could be done, blaming ignorance, particularly over what constituted proper nourishment, as opposed to intentional neglect for the great loss of infant life.¹⁰⁸

According to the fifth annual report for 1911-12, the value of Babies clubs could not be over-estimated; 'The weekly meeting with the doctor, the weighing of the babies, recording progress or the reversion, the emulation existing among the mothers on behalf of their respective infants and the cheerfulness and friendliness engendered

¹⁰⁵ Joseph V. O'Brien, *Dear dirty Dublin-a city in distress, 1899-1916* (London, 1982), pp. 113-4.

¹⁰⁶ Rosa Barrett, 'Social service', quoted in *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 15 January 1910.

¹⁰⁷ *Slainte, journal of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, vol. 1, no. 6, June 1909, p. 128.

¹⁰⁸ *Slainte*, vol. 1, no. 8, August 1909, pp. 169-170.

amongst the Club members. All were productive elements of helpful influence'.¹⁰⁹

The WNHA also promoted classes for 'little mothers', good health guilds for girls and weekly parades. Such classes were perceived as essential by the WNHA for according to Rosa Barrett:

Only recently have girls begun to receive any instruction in home-making. This and minding children are things most girls and women have to do some time of their lives, but they are supposed to be acquired by instinct and do not therefore need to be taught. This may be flattering, but is certainly fallacious, love alone does not keep the baby alive if the mother is so ignorant that she gives the tiny mite a bit of whatever is going'. This ignorance the WNHA is doing its utmost to dispel.¹¹⁰

The girls aged twelve to eighteen learnt how to wash, weigh, feed and put to sleep a baby. The WNHA urged that such training be made compulsory for every schoolgirl in Ireland, preparing them for what would 'undoubtedly is the highest and best of woman's duties'.¹¹¹

Rosa Barrett remained on the executive committee of the WNHA. In talking of the success of the WNHA, she explained that:

Its success is mainly due to the fact that every woman member of the Association feels she can do and is determined she would do something to help forward this work. It has brought into closer touch women from all parts of Ireland, women of all ranks, and has aroused a new feeling of hope, a sense of self-dependence, in trying to stem those great enemies of our country's welfare - ignorance and indifference.¹¹²

The Kingstown Baby Club, founded in 1911, celebrated its first birthday at the Workmen's Club. The event was honoured with the presence of the Lord Lieutenant. Mothers and children were invited to tea and an entertainment in the Club premises. A prize was awarded to the mother who had 'kept her baby the best during the last twelve months'. The ceremony and babies club was organised by

¹⁰⁹ *Fifth annual report of the Women's National Health Association* (Dublin, 1912), p. 51.

¹¹⁰ Barrett, *Bray and South*, 2 January 1910.

¹¹¹ *Fifth annual report of the WNHA*, p.31 and *Slainte*, vol. 1, no. 2, February 1909.

¹¹² Barrett, *Ibid*.

Rosa Barrett, Professor. Barrett and Madame McDermott.¹¹³ Kingstown had its own branch of the WNHA and organised lectures, and information tours as well as co-ordinating a health week. The week, held in April 1913, according to Dr McDermott had as its chief object that the 'whole community should collectively organise and co-operate for as far as in them lies to fight against disease and join with the expert, the inspector and the doctor in a crusade against it'.¹¹⁴

The WNHA and the other philanthropic groups discussed, were all concerned with improving the social position and encouraging the better care of infants, juveniles and the intemperate. Rosa Barrett was also involved with earlier efforts to improve the economic position of Irish women, namely through the provision of home industries and publicising new employment opportunities for women.

Barrett and home industries

One of the first associations organised to promote self-reliance was the Irish Home Industries Board established in 1887, which according to the *Irish Times* was designed 'to foster cottage industries for as everyone knows the people have superior natural aptitudes and sufficient industry and most of all stand in need of educational guiding'.¹¹⁵ Lady Aberdeen established the Irish Home Industries Association in 1886. The Board was set up to manage and market the output of the various producers, an unpaid voluntary committee being organised by Lady Aberdeen. Its first year was spent collecting information about home industries in

¹¹³ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 6 January 1912. Madame McDermott was the wife of Dr. McDermott, Inspector of Prisons. She was actively involved in many Catholic charities throughout the city, as well as with temperance work and the WNHA. The McDermott's and Barretts were close neighbours.

¹¹⁴ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 12 April 1913.

¹¹⁵ *Irish Times*, 1 April 1887, p. 5.

Ireland. In 1888, it succeeded in buying Ben Lindsay's depot for the sale of home products. Its significance thereafter rested in international exhibitions and the co-ordination of sales for other organisations.¹¹⁶ The board also opened at least two shops, one in Dublin and another in London. The Home Industries board provided a co-ordinated organising board, which promoted a market for crochet and lace work providing a much-needed income supplement in rural Ireland. Such work was a development of needlework, a skill with which most middle class women were familiar. By teaching it to poorer women, the Board wished to encourage self-reliance.

At the first general meeting of the Irish Home Industries Board, held in the Mansion House in 1887, there were approximately fourteen people present, including Sir Charles Cameron, Mrs and Miss Matheson, Professor and Rosa Barrett.¹¹⁷ Despite such small beginnings, the Home Industries Board though often short of funds and limited subscribers continued its work. In conjunction with organisations like the Congested Districts Board and Horace Plunketts co-operative Society, they witnessed some development in providing more sustainable lifestyles for local communities. Working with a limited framework the organisers attempted to stem migration and emigration from rural districts, promote domestic contentment and provide female employment.

For reform minded people, the setting up of the Congested Districts Board from 1891, seemed to provide a genuine promise filled opportunity for alleviating rural poverty and according to Rosa Barrett, writing in *Good Words* in 1900:

¹¹⁶ Joanna Burke, *Husbandry to housewifery, women, economic change and housework in Ireland 1890-1914* (Oxford, 1993), p. 112.

It is almost incredible, but none the less true that a way has at last been discovered to benefit the poorest people in various parts of Ireland, giving them aid in the best sort of way, through a special board that is not eleemosynary, nor governed by red tape, nor yet ruled from a London arm-chair. The local needs of the people are first studied, then common sense is applied to meet those wants without any sort of pauperisation: such is the work and the governing principle of the Congested Districts Board.¹¹⁷

The training schemes begun by the Home Industries Board were from 1891 taken on by the Congested Districts Board and many, according to Rosa Barrett, saw immediate results:

How girls who have never learnt even to thread a needle, who have only been used to hard field work, can pick up, as they do in a few short months, the most intricate lace stitches, turning out work that is fit for a Princess, is as much a mystery as their singular adaptability, eagerness to learn and readiness to be guided is to those who come amongst them with the ordinary idea that the Irish are a worthless, shiftless lot, while the real truth is that none are so ready and apt to learn, if they only have a chance.¹¹⁹

While concerned with rural industry, Rosa Barrett and Professor Barrett were also concerned with promoting employment for educated women, namely through the establishment of a central bureau, wherein women could come for information on career options and where employers could advertise vacant posts. The Irish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women published a guidebook, *Open doors for Irishwomen, a guide to the professions open to educated women in Ireland* (Dublin, 1907) by Myrrha Bradshaw. This outlined the qualifications needed, personality and education required to do particular jobs, as well as the professional training offered, remuneration provided and prospects. The new employment's of teaching, nursing and the civil service were included.¹²⁰ Such initiatives were welcome in

¹¹⁷ *Irish Times*, 1 April 1887, p. 5.

¹¹⁸ Rosa M. Barrett, *Good Words* (London, 1900).

¹¹⁹ Barrett, *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Myrrha Bradshaw (ed.), *Open doors for Irishwomen, a guide to the professions open to educated women in Ireland* (Irish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women: Dublin, 1907).

widening the scope of women's employment opportunities, yet the number of positions available remained limited.

Funding the work – Rosa Barrett and finances

On her death certificate Rosa Barrett is listed as a spinster of independent means. Such means were one assumes quite limited. Rosa Barrett had long served as her brother's secretary and as his housekeeper, so she may have received a small payment. She was for many years editor of all Ward Lock and Company guide books to Ireland. Her pattern of contributions to organisations varies from year to year, perhaps depending on circumstances. While serving as President of the I.W.T.U., she received travelling expense money; such expenses were a major deterrent for less well-off women taking on positions, necessitating travel. The trip to Canada was a once-off experience and interestingly 1908 had seen the publication of Rosa Barrett's memoir on Ellice Hopkins. In May 1914 she was left the sole beneficiary of her late sister's estate, which gave her some capital, though the estate only amounted to £281.¹²¹ In his will Professor Barrett refers to his 'dear sister Rosa Barrett' and bequeathed her an annuity of one hundred pounds a year. In her own will there is little to leave, all that she has she leaves to benefit her companion Mrs Bridget Kennedy who according to Rosa Barrett had sacrificed, 'her life and almost her health in care of me'.¹²² Mrs Kennedy had been employed by the Barrett's since at least 1901 and had accompanied Miss Barrett to Welwyn Garden City.¹²³

¹²¹ Will proved 29 May 1914.

¹²² Rosa M. Barrett, will, dated 12 June 1936.

¹²³ Employed as cook by Barrett's according to the census return for 1901. (National Archives Dublin).

Religion: Barrett and Congregationalism

As discussed in chapter one the Evangelicals stress on faith as a personal relationship between the individual and God allowed many to develop very powerful relationships in their daily lives with Christ. Religion was not merely a Sunday exercise but was transmuted into a daily, rewarding experience, a close bond existed between the individual and Christ and such a bond once created was rarely severed. For much of her life Rosa Barrett was a devoted Congregationalist. Love of the brethren and love of the Lord represented the fundamental heart of Congregationalist doctrine. The Congregationalist stress on a living faith and independence of action and belief were ever-present elements in Rosa Barrett's life. The non-conformists placed great stress on conscience and on personal accountability for one's actions.

Congregationalism according to Booth's observation of London in 1902, was 'more than any other the church of the middle classes, the membership being practically confined within the limits of the upper and lower sections of those included under that comprehensive title'.¹²⁴ Congregationalists or Independents originated in England about 1580. They accepted the doctrines of Calvinism, but not its system of ecclesiastical government, believing in the complete separation of church and state and in the independence of each congregation. Each church remained free to determine its own rules with a very loose framework provided. The churches as such stress community above all, group decision making and cohesion. Traditionally therefore the churches have been more egalitarian, accepting men and women as equal members. Congregationalism echoed many of the ideas of the

¹²⁴ Booth, *Life and Labour*, vol.7, p. 112; Quoted in D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain, a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), p. 110.

evangelical reformers, as it believed Christ as the living Head of each church. For the Rev. MacKenna:

Congregationalism means the living headship, the efficient and ever-operative will of Christ, realised through his own people, those who have been spiritually regenerated.¹²⁵

Love of the brethren and love of the Lord are indivisible and represent the fundamental heart of Congregationalist doctrine. An ethos of self-judgement was a key command of the Congregational church. As the Rev. G.S. Barrett, brother of Rosa Barrett explained:

The Master forbids us to 'judge' one another: but on the other hand, we are commanded to judge ourselves, each one to summon himself before the secret tribunal of his own conscience.¹²⁶

The duty of each church and each member to continually assess, reassess and justify their life and motives contributed to what came to be seen as a Congregational ethos, an ethos, according to Routley:

Which distinguishes Congregationalism: independence and flexibility of mind, an aptitude of new Testament scholarship, a sense of political responsibility, a moral rectitude, a disinclination for what is formal and artificial qualities.¹²⁷

Through its association with the nineteenth century evangelical revival, Congregationalism found renewed vigour. Particularly after the formation in 1832 of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, they forged a strong tie with the Liberal Party. The Liberal victory of 1906 is generally seen as the pinnacle of Congregational influence in English society.

The great epoch of Congregationalism coincided with the great outburst of nineteenth century philanthropy and the commitment to personal service combined

¹²⁵ Rev. Alex MacKenna, *The witness of Congregationalism* (London, 1887), p. 9.

¹²⁶ Rev. G.S. Barrett, *The burden of souls, annual sermon preached before the Congregational Union at Southport* (Southport, 1891), p. 14.

¹²⁷ Eric Routley, *Congregationalists and unity* (London, 1962), p. 23.

with increasingly assured revelation of the true scale of social problems increased the level of interest and desire for change. In assessing the possibilities of Congregationalism, Presbyter argued:

The church does not exist for itself. Each member may and should be anxious about his own salvation, but this should not be the object for which he joins a church. He is to live for Christ and for others. A society of pledged workers; such is our conception of a church of Christ in these days.¹²⁸

For people like Rosa Barrett, the church was not worth belonging to unless it was an active agency, impelled by a living faith to promote the interests of Christ's kingdom.

The intellectual component required by the Congregational church added to its appeal for educated people. If each member was to actively participate, all must be well-versed in their New Testament and knowledgeable on issues of current social concern. As each congregation was independent, each chose its own pastor, ran its own affairs, decided its own doctrine and recognised no superior religious authority on earth. The inherited aversion of nonconformists to creeds imposed by law predisposed them to look for fresh ways of stating Christian truth. The methods of science enjoyed particular prestige. And the idea of progress, so much in the air, became a normal assumption, especially among the educated Congregationalists. According to their organ the *British Quarterly Review*, they wished to adhere to orthodox truth and yet 'to encourage free and reverent enquiry'. Investigation was seen as the motor of the advance of knowledge.¹²⁹

In 1877 the member rolls of the Kingstown Congregational Church record the admittance of Mrs Barrett and Rosa Barrett to membership of the church. Mrs

¹²⁸ Presbyter, *The possibilities of Congregationalism* (London, 1888), p. 21.

Barrett was received on transfer from the church at Isilworth, at a church meeting on the twenty seventh of June and on the thirty first of October, Rosa Barrett was received on transfer from the Church at Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate. In 1878 Prof. Barrett was received into the church, where he became an active member until 1882 when he withdrew and became a member of the Church of Ireland in Monkstown. Both Mrs Barrett and Rosa Barrett are recorded as having gone to the Episcopal Church, yet in the 1901 Census; Rosa Barrett gives her religion as Congregational.¹³⁰

Given the emphasis the Congregational church placed on preaching and on an active ministry, the resident incumbent of the church would have a significant impact on the success of the particular church. In Cole's history of Congregationalism in Ireland, he discusses the diminishing vitality of the Congregational church in Ireland in the latter years of the nineteenth century, the church appeared to have lost some of its passion, a spiritual impotence began to settle on the life of the churches.¹³¹

In Kingstown itself, the most active ministers would appear to have been Rev. Burroughs of the Mariner's Church, Rev. Pim of Christ Church and Rev. F.S. Gardiner, minister at the Presbyterian Church. Little mention is made of the Congregational minister in the community; this is especially true of the Cottage

¹²⁹ Bebbington, *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹³⁰ MS Congregational Church Kingstown (Public Record Office Northern Ireland) and Census Returns for 1901.

¹³¹ Malcolm Coles, *'I will build my church' - the story of the Congregational Union of Ireland 1829-1979* (Dublin, 1979), p. 15.

Home, where the main support came from the aforementioned ministers.¹³² The stress the Congregational church laid on independence, of both organisation and study meant one could be a Congregationalist without being a member of a specific church. Perhaps this was Rosa Barrett's position; Prof. Barrett though remained a committed worshipper at the Church of Ireland, Monkstown.¹³³

Barrett and spiritualism

While both Barretts remained life-long members of their respective churches, both also developed their relationship with psychical research. Rosa Barrett and her brother never turned to spiritualism as a surrogate religion, they felt that psychical research could be employed on behalf of a cause that they valued immensely; the survival of religious institutions in the ever more materialist civilisation of the Western world.¹³⁴ The years before World War I saw a fashionable craze for mediums and seances. The strong optimism which people like the Barretts, Gladstone and the poet W. B. Yeats, felt in the power of psychical research to provide answers and a possible antidote to materialism explains much of the success of the Society for Psychical Research in the early part of the twentieth century. The Evangelical revival inspired by the American gospellers Moody and Sankey, their tours of Ireland and England, with a combination of music and sermons evoked a popular response to religion. The version of Christianity espoused by such revivals and encouraged by converts like Henry Drummond was an attractive one, and his message one of hope. Religion was not negative but consisted of spiritual involvement, a good Christian life was not joyless, but full of sparkle and gaiety.

¹³² See Cottage Home meetings and the local community for the limited involvement of the Congregational Minister.

¹³³ He served as a church vestry and was a regular worshipper at the Monkstown church.

¹³⁴ Lady Florence E. Barrett, *Personality survives death* (London, 1937), p. vii and xiv.

The ability to influence people for good, to encourage them to action, a church of energy was reinforced by the new availability of blue books, periodicals like *Leisure Hour* and *Good Words* highlighted what was being done and what more needed doing. There was one certainty; there was no limit to social need. Such an energised gospel provided hope of a reconciliation of Darwin's startling and disturbing theory of evolution with the truths of the bible. Yet another undermining of the truth of the bible came from the growing Bible Critics who challenged the literal interpretation of biblical events. Such religious disquiet sought satisfaction in strange directions. The Society for Psychical Research came to regard spiritualism as something between a branch of experimental science and a religion. Others had visited India and fallen under the spell of the occult wisdom of the East. The theosophical society, headed by Annie Besant, along with a study of phenomena of hypnotism and telepathy all were eccentric movements characteristic of the period.

Barrett and faith

Rosa Barrett's father the Rev. W. G. Barrett had advocated the importance of family prayers, the need for devotional Scripture and the importance of finding religion's way to be 'ways of pleasantness, and her paths, paths of peace'.¹³⁵ This emphasis on a living church and living faith, when translated into a living service could render powerful results. Such results were perhaps exemplified in the work with children. In 'saving the child' both morally and physically the true work of the Gospel became most apparent, in easing the burden on suffering little children. It was here that the Evangelicals presented the best testimony for the strength of their

¹³⁵ Rev. W.G. Barrett, *Hints and examples for an improved family worship on the liturgical model, part 1* (London, 1854).

faith and the importance they attached to it. For Rosa Barrett, her religion was 'one of implicit faith in God's guidance through all aspects of work and play'.¹³⁶

Reiterating the words of other evangelicals she quoted Bishop Westcott who said:

We need to press on all those who seek Christian privileges the acknowledgement of Christian obligations as Christians. We need every Churchman and every Churchwoman to recognise the good works which God afore prepared for them to do and to offer them for the blessing of the whole society in such a way that each offering is part of the life of the offerer. We live by others, surely then it is an unquestionable duty that we should live for others.¹³⁷

This belief that with Christian privileges, with the reassurance, guidance and comfort that faith provided, with these gifts came an obligation, the duty to go forth and in an earnest and sincere way, strive to cater and best contribute to a wiser society. In so doing, one would not merely be aiding others, but in a real and personal way aiding one's own salvation. For Rosa Barrett her own 'earnest conviction was that the *work was prepared just as much as the workers*'.¹³⁸ For such workers, the real work lay among the Lord's most humble and most disadvantaged, for here among the unfortunate lay the greatest opportunity and capacity for self-denial and for rewarding work. In an interview in *The Visitor* in 1907, Rosa Barrett quoted the poet Whittier:

For the dear Christ dwells not afar,
The King of some remoter star,
But here amidst the poor and blind,
The bound and suffering of our kind:
In works we do, in prayer we pray,
Life of our Life, he lives today.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Olive Goodbody, *The Cottage Home, one hundred years a growing 1879-1979* (Dublin, 1979), p. 17.

¹³⁷ Rosa M. Barrett, *The Cottage Home, a retrospect* (Dublin, 1904), p. 4.

¹³⁸ Barrett, *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³⁹ *The Visitor*, May 1907, p. 75.

For Rosa Barrett, as for many of the other Evangelicals, the work of caring for children was not a burden but instead a privilege:

When we more fully realise the Universal Fatherhood of God, shall we not feel the charge of these forlorn little ones not as a burden, but as a joy, a privilege, an honour, for they are given to us as brothers, as sisters. 'In as much as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it Unto Me'.¹⁴⁰ It was believed that work with children received God's special blessing and ultimately work with children was the most productive growth area of philanthropic provision. Much of the funds to support the Cottage Home, as in other Evangelical charities, came from local subscriptions and also meetings, sermons and church offertories. Within the Cottage Home itself, there was also a strong emphasis on religious teaching. Scripture classes, Sunday schools, entrance in the local Diocesan Scripture Examinations, all were recurring features in the life of the Cottage Home. Such schooling, given the dependence of the Cottage Home on local support, may have been important to prove it worthy of support as a charity. However the headship of Rosa Barrett and her committee, all of whom were religious people would nonetheless have ensured a strong religious quotient. Scripture and Sunday schools were areas well known to most middle-class women, therefore they were relatively easy to find teachers for and few materials were required. Also given its central role as a Protestant home for Protestant children of self-supporting parents, the passing on of a strong faith would have been an intrinsic part of their founding principle to build character and strong future citizens.¹⁴¹

Her faith provided Barrett with continual support and guidance. Each annual report of the Cottage Home reiterates the implicit trust and support received from God. In 1906 she explained:

¹⁴⁰ MS Booklet Cottage Home, December 1910, p. 4.

¹⁴¹ *Annual reports of the Cottage Home 1880-1936.*

As ever God has been our guide and friend, and once more there are unexpected mercies to record, so that we cannot help beginning this record by thanksgiving, first to He who is indeed, the Friend of little children, and then to the many friends whom He has sent to help in this work.¹⁴²

Barrett and spiritual healing

In later life Rosa Barrett and her brother became increasingly interested in spiritualism and in Rosa Barrett's case, Christian Science and spiritual healing. In striving for a fuller, personal faith Rosa Barrett stressed the idea of living service, of 'earnestly looking for the kingdom of heaven, God will not let us lose our way, however often we may stumble, if we but make a start and make love, prayer and service, our daily watchwords'.¹⁴³ One could move closer to God by greater love, only to be attained through prayer and only to be expressed in service. For Rosa Barrett her life's motto reflects the importance of a contemplative yet active faith; 'tasks in hours of insight willed, may be through hours of gloom fulfilled'.¹⁴⁴

Rosa Barrett had long served as amanuensis for her brother. In later years her chief interests centred on psychical research inspired by his work. In echoing the optimism of the Society for Psychical Research and the possible connections between psychic phenomenon and psychology, she maintained when asked on the future of spiritualism:

I feel sure that we are going to have, some fresh spiritual Revelation, and I think we should be getting ready for it, trying to be worthier to receive it. Spiritualists must try each one to go onward and upward; not to worry if they cannot do anything great. Let us at least be stepping stones for others and not obstacles¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *Annual Report of the Cottage Home for 1906* (Dublin, 1907), p. 5.

¹⁴³ R. M. Barrett, *The Seekers talks by Dr Lascelles* (London, 1928), p. 14.

¹⁴⁴ These two lines are continually given as her life's motto, both in the Home's reports and in any interviews she gave.

¹⁴⁵ *International Psychic Gazette*, March 1934, p. 84.

For both Professor and Rosa Barrett, religion had a specific purpose. This they outlined in *The religion of health* (1925) when they wrote that it was there to:

Awaken within us a new and profounder consciousness than can be derived from sense and outward things. When it fails to do this and becomes the mere repetition of familiar formularies, it had lost its influence and power and we become indifferent.¹⁴⁶

Religion therefore became all-consuming in one's life, it dictated one's course and determined one's actions. Distressed by the growing barren formalism of official religion, both Professor and Rosa Barrett hoped for a revival of the true spirit of religion, 'an awakening to the consciousness of the indwelling spirit of God'.¹⁴⁷

In seeking such a spirit of God, Rosa Barrett increasingly turned to spiritual healing as a source of divine Revelation and of the power of God to work in our world. Such healing depended on a deep conviction and a willingness to devote oneself to prayer. In connection with this she edited two books of spiritual Revelation given by Dr. Lascelles, a medium of great repute. In explaining her devotion to Dr Lascelles, Rosa Barrett reiterated a now familiar theme, the need to show through love and service one's devotion to God:

I am convinced that no one who longs for a better life, longs for a glimpse into the dim future, for an insight into eternal truth, into the deepest verities of existence, but can be the better for trying to live along the lines laid down by "Dr Lascelles". Three words form the burden of his addresses - Love, Service and Prayer, who can deny that these are the three greatest things, those best worth living for?¹⁴⁸

In attending the prayer meetings of the guild of spiritual healing, Rosa Barrett experienced an atmosphere of reverence and of harmony, the friendly desire to be of service, and an eagerness to learn.¹⁴⁹ Such spiritualism returned to the Barretts the personal connection they felt that formal religion no longer provided.

¹⁴⁶ R. M. Barrett and W. F. Barrett, *The religion of health* (London, 1925), p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Oppenheim, *Ibid.*, p. 367.

¹⁴⁸ Rosa M. Barrett, *The seekers*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁹ Barrett, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

The stress that Congregationalism had laid on preaching, the need for a personal service, all these had been constants in the religious upbringing of Rosa Barrett. Yet formal religion was increasingly seen by the church members to be lacking the initial passion, the conviction. It was no longer promoting independence of thought or of spirit. Therefore there arose a need to look elsewhere, in the case of Rosa Barrett; spiritual healing within a Christian context provided a path to fulfilment. In exploring such religious concerns the Barretts wrote a book attempting to deal in a 'fair and unprejudiced way with the teaching of Christian Science'.¹⁵⁰

Christian Science is a religious denomination founded in the United States in 1879 by Mary Baker Eddy, author of the definitive statement of its teaching - *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Christian Scientists believe that because God is both real and good, evil, which is unlike God, is unreal and does not exist. Man is made in God's image and therefore he is like God and cannot suffer evil, since God is the opposite of evil. Christian Scientists are taught to think deeply on the goodness of God and thus overcome the difficulties of their lives and find health, happiness and freedom. All ills and limitations of the mortal state can be overcome in proportion as one gains 'the minds of Christ'.¹⁵¹ Systematic study and prayer are considered basic to the ongoing life of the denomination and the readiness of its members to meet the challenges of Christian healing. All Christian Science churches maintain reading rooms for this purpose. For Rosa Barrett, in assessing the benefits of Christian Science argued:

Christian Science has rightly and persistently laid stress on the truth that God is, now and always, a God of love, of goodwill and that only as we also

¹⁵⁰ Barrett, *Religion of health*, Preface.

¹⁵¹ Barrett, *Ibid.*, p. 279.

love, can we claim to be His followers. The small gatherings, the meditation and testimony animated as they were by a spirit of sincerity and love, it is to this that Christian Science owes its strength.¹⁵²

For Rosa Barrett the attraction of Christian Science lay in the healing power, but also in the wonderful sincerity and devotion of the Christian Scientists. Rosa Barrett attracted by the spiritual work of her brother and his increasing conviction in an after-life, allied to her own conviction of the existence and possibility for spiritual healing led her to devote the remainder of her life to prayer circles and spiritual healing, returning to the core edict of personal service, self-reliance and a personal relationship to God. As she grew older, spiritualism provided the reassurance that there existed a life beyond the present one and that there existed on the other side, old friends and family who could continue to provide guidance and counsel to those still living. The strength that such knowledge provided gave people like Rosa Barrett a sense of guidance and protection:

To realise for a certainty the Love and Wisdom of God, that our Loved ones are still actively alive, that they still love and help us - is this not a source of strength and joy? Shall we not more earnestly try to be worthy to join them, remembering that what we are and do here not only shapes our present characters but our lives and surroundings hereafter.¹⁵³

Other interests

Rosa Barrett as well as her involvement with the Cottage Home, local initiatives, juvenile reform, temperance, the WNHA and home industries also dedicated her time to other reformist organisations including the NSPCC, the PRA and the IWA, all of which were discussed in the previous chapter. During the 1880's she also became involved in the suffrage movement, a commitment she maintained till the

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁵³ *International Psychic Gazette*, March 1934, p. 84.

vote was gained. The 1890s saw Rosa Barrett become actively involved in the Social Service Union, she became a member of the International Congress of Women, and helped prepare the discussion papers on current legislation for the Congress held in London in 1899, as well as maintaining her other varied interests. The first decade of the new century saw her become involved in an ever wider range of organisations, as well as making deputation's on behalf of the suffrage lobby. She continued to contribute articles to various magazines and journals on juvenile welfare, the Cottage Home and other topics of current attention. She also became involved with the anti-vivisection league, as well as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.¹⁵⁴ Within all the organisations with which she was associated Rosa Barrett took an active part, often serving on executive committee level, making contributions, presenting papers and viewpoints. She became a well-known figure through her philanthropic work, appearing among 'well-known included' lists. However after forty-eight years in Ireland, Rosa Barrett returned to England.

Barrett and politics

For people like the Barretts and many of their contemporaries the turmoil of nationalist Ireland seeking independence seemed a sad end to decades of reform. Professor Barrett long a Home-Ruler and Rosa Barrett both seemed to have a genuine affection for Ireland, but both being pacifists abhorred the violence of war. The Barretts would seem to have been of an ilk with people like Horace Plunkett in believing that constructive unionism - liberal home-rule, self-determination for Ireland in national decision making while retaining a close relationship to England would prove of long-lasting benefit. Self-government by Irishmen, according to

¹⁵⁴ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 14 March 1913.

Irish ideas seemed the only viable solution. In an attempt to allay Protestant fears of Home Rule, Professor Barrett called for an effective safeguard for the Protestants in Ireland; such a safeguard lay in the establishment of voting by orders. Such a system worked admirably in the Irish Synod, but it appeared overly idealistic to many.¹⁵⁵ Professor Barrett long a member of the National Liberal Club, described as an 'epitome of late Victorian high-minded liberalism', and would have supported the liberal party policy and Home Rule.¹⁵⁶ Rosa Barrett too in writing on the progressive work of the Congested District Board in 1900, she had spoken of what she believed the future plans for Ireland should be:

Verily Ireland has suffered much at the hands both of its friends and of its enemies, but the tide has turned and with increasing knowledge, we may confidently expect increasing appreciation and a better understanding between the two nations, whose interests are really so closely bound together but who are only now beginning to understand and to respect each other.¹⁵⁷

The 1920's witnessed an exodus from Ireland of many like-minded liberal Protestants. Kingstown with its renaming Dun-Laoghaire, its historical name heralded a new era in which many like the Barrett's no longer appeared to have a place. According to the Countess of Fingal, writing in her memoirs, 'so much of the work of those years of effort has vanished as completely as though we only built a house of cards with our labour'.¹⁵⁸ For institutions like the Cottage Home, the 1920's were a bleak decade, the numbers in need persisted but the support base had dwindled. Rosa Barrett remained as honorary president of the Home until 1936 and Sir W.F. Barrett and his wife continued to contribute to the Home until his death in 1925.

¹⁵⁵ *The Times*, 10 June 1914.

¹⁵⁶ Who's Who 1901 and the description of the liberal club is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1901), p. 155.

¹⁵⁷ Rosa M. Barrett, *Good Words* (London, 1900), p. 526-33.

¹⁵⁸ Countess of Fingal, *Seventy years young, memories of Elizabeth, Countess of Fingal* (London, 1937; reprinted Dublin 1991), p. 164.

Welwyn Garden City

After her move to Welwyn Garden City, Miss Barrett's chief interest had centred on psychical research, inspired by the work of Professor Barrett. While at Welwyn Garden City she edited the addresses of Dr Lascelles. She also contributed articles and book reviews to the *International Psychic Gazette*. Rosa Barrett though never a member of the Congregational Church in Welwyn Garden City, did have a Congregational minister conduct her funeral service. The Congregational Church had united in the early twentieth century with some branches of the Presbyterian Church to become the United Reform Church. Rosa Barrett may not have approved of such an amalgamation, hence her reluctance to join the church and her increased involvement in spiritual healing may also have deterred her.

Welwyn Garden City was the second of the two garden cities inspired by Ebenezer Howard. Built in the 1920's it was an experimental new concept in post-war building. Howard envisaged his garden cities as utopian centres in which people could breathe fresh air and enjoy well-planted open spaces, while they went about their work. Such people would live in a liberal minded, culturally rich, classless harmony. Such cities combining the benefits of modern living with the self-sufficiency and co-operative spirit of the past attracted many idealists in its early days. Perhaps Rosa Barrett moved with this pioneering spirit! The house she bought 'Cedarcott' was one of the first to be built and was part of a *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition. The *Daily Mail* built an entire village trumpeted as a 'hamlet of new ideas'.¹⁵⁹ Welwyn Garden City ultimately failed to live up to its expectations

¹⁵⁹ *Daily Mail You Magazine*, 27 March ? (Courtesy of the Woodcraft's now resident in 'Cedarcott').

but in its early days; the new residents were a determined group. Miss Barrett lived out her life at 'Cedarcott', dying in 1936 at the age of eighty-two.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the multifaceted nature of the work of women like Rosa Barrett. Such women were relatively well known in their own lifetime but have been virtually forgotten today. As a committed reformer Barrett provides an example of someone who was inspired by an almost vocational sense to do something to alleviate the want that she saw around her. Her work in the Crèche and Cottage Home impressed her of the level of reform needed and led her into a lifelong career of reformist philanthropic work. Barrett during her time in Ireland moved from one focused on the local needs, to a national reformer and ultimately one operating on an international platform. Originally aspiring to be a science teacher, Barrett brought the new methods of social analysis, to her work. The importance of record-keeping, of methodologies, of education and legislation change were important facets of her endeavours. For intelligent women philanthropy offered an outlet and an interest. Barrett like other reformers believed in the possibility of people, their inherent willingness to good. Such a positive approach, individuals like Barrett wished to see reflected in current legislation.

Barrett herself was obviously an independent, self-reliant and strong-willed woman. Coming to Ireland at nineteen and founding the crèche at twenty-five, she was obviously determined to try and respond to the needs of local women for secure childcare. Her work reflects a missionary zeal, a commitment born out of a strong religious faith. That faith never fundamentally wavered, though increasingly it found expression in new ideologies, spiritualism and spiritual healing provided a

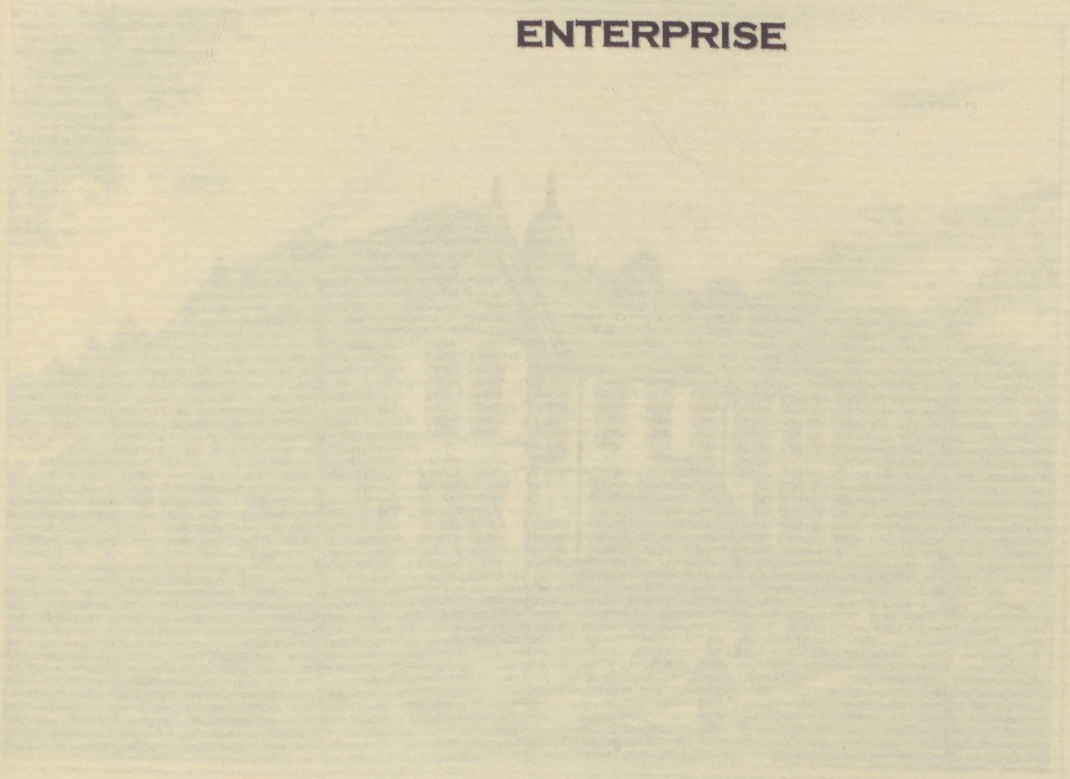
comfort that formal religion may perhaps have increasingly failed to do. Such active citizenship was informed by a strong sense of social responsibility; the idea of service and duty was crucial to her work. Reformers like Barrett were not working for public fame or fortune; it was a service inspired by faith!

Through her involvement in virtually all-social reform measures in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Barrett highlights the high overlap between societies. A relatively small circle of people networked to instigate and maintain various reform committees. For Rosa Barrett, her brother William F. Barrett provided her with a livelihood and a continued source of support, both for the Cottage Home and with many of their shared interests.

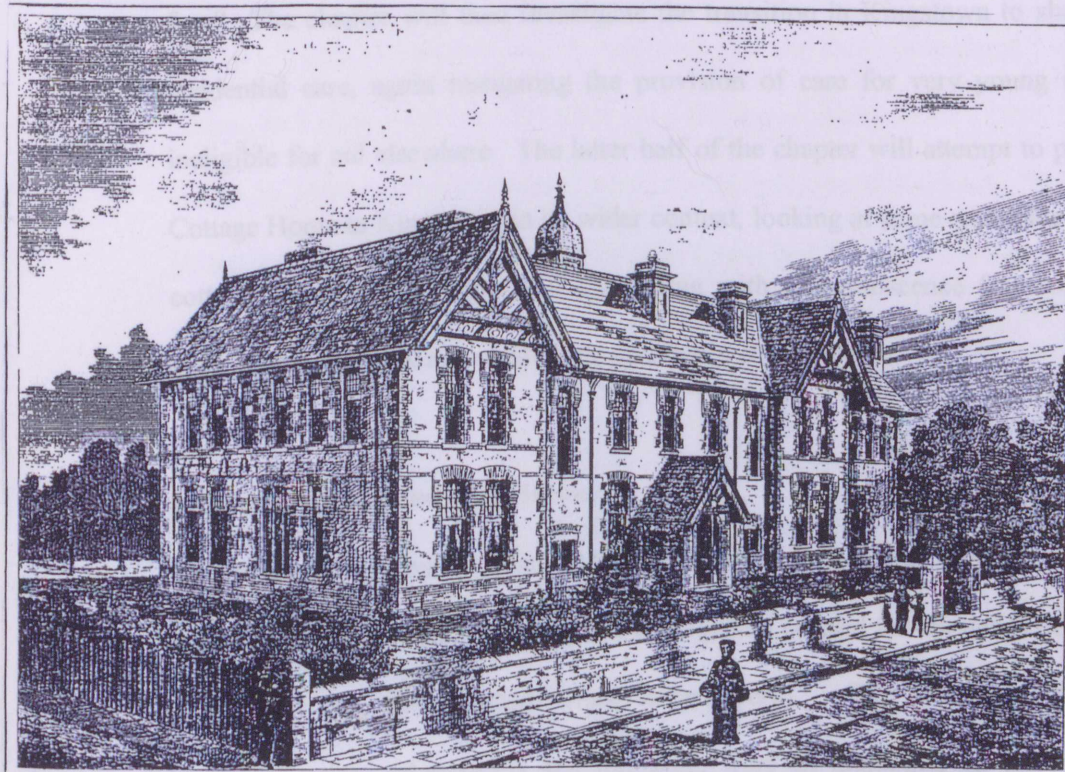
As the chapter has discussed Rosa Barrett provides a representative model of a committed female reformer. Barrett and her contemporaries were working to improve the social situation, whilst endeavouring to steer clear of religious and political differences. This is particularly evident in the next chapter, which deals with the Crèche and Cottage Home at Kingstown.

CHAPTER THREE

**THE COTTAGE HOME FOR LITTLE
CHILDREN KINGSTOWN – A BARRETT
ENTERPRISE**



*Cottage Home for Little Children, Kingston
(c. 1907)*



Lodge Home for Little Children, Kingstown.

(c. 1887).

Aims of chapter

This chapter aims to highlight the crèche and day nursery movement as it was pioneered in Ireland and elsewhere. Focusing specifically on the crèche founded by Rosa Barrett in Kingstown in 1879, the chapter will look at the origins of the crèche, who it sought to cater for and how it determined care should be provided. The chapter will examine how similar aims motivated crèche provision in Dublin, Belfast, England and in the United States – what did these women founders see as their role, how did they view the parents of their charges, what problems did they face? The chapter will then investigate the transition in Kingstown to short-term residential care, again instigating the provision of care for very young children ineligible for aid elsewhere. The latter half of the chapter will attempt to place the Cottage Home in Kingstown in its wider context, looking at some examples of other cottage home developments and concluding with a reminiscence from one child who spent some time in a small scale children's cottage home.

Origins of crèche and Mrs Hilton

The crèche or day nursery had its early origins in France and Belgium where the provision of large scale, barrack-like buildings had catered for the needs of working women in the newly industrialised urban world.¹ The combined effects of industrialisation, urbanisation and migration were all impacting on the traditional functions and roles of the family and this necessitated a consequent change in attitude among some philanthropists. That misfortune was not solely the fault of the individual but could also, perhaps more easily be traced to changing societal structures. This discernment aided the development of childcare provision. Many poorer women had always had to work, but this reality was more widely accepted

¹ MS Cuttings Book, Newspaper article n.d., (Cottage Home for Little Children, Dun Laoghaire).

and more readily acknowledged as the century progressed. In the United Kingdom, the first crèche and day nursery was established by Marie Hilton in Stepney in 1870:

People of every sect and of all shades of opinion can admire a great work accomplished by a woman, which had for its object the salvation of infant life, and lightening the burdens of poverty-stricken mothers. The crèche system has now taken its place among the recognised institutions of Britain, and the woman to whose labours introduction is due must be numbered among the benefactors of the time, Mrs Marie Hilton, the founder of the Stepney Crèche.²

Mrs Hilton, the founder of the crèche at Stepney, was a Quaker with a deep religious commitment, who while performing mission work at Ratcliff, had witnessed, 'sad sights of neglect of little infants whose mothers were at work...and I longed with an intense longing, to help and care for these little ones, I earnestly desired to shelter some of them from the pollution of the streets'.³ After visiting a crèche in Brussels she was determined to establish one in England. There were public nurseries in England, but these she found to be almost entirely lacking in sanitation and educational arrangements. Mrs Hilton took a large house in Stepney Causeway, Ratcliff, fitted it out and opened it as a proper crèche. The crèche attracted the attention of the press and consequently had many visitors. As a result similar establishments taking Mrs Hilton's rules, arrangements and fittings, as a model appeared in various parts of the country.⁴

A description of the crèche, taken from *The Evening Standard* was printed in the fifth report:

The Crèche now occupies three houses in Stepney Causeway, each a house of ten rooms; accommodating no less than 167 children of various ages from three months to various years...infants are tenderly cared for by respectable nurses from 8am-7.30pm thus enabling the mothers who pay 2p per day for each child to go out and earn a days wage and so avoid the humiliation and expense of throwing whole families upon the parish for support...The thirty rooms in this colony of innocents were so many pictures of cleanliness and devoted care...largest amount of praise.⁵

² J. Hilton, *Marie Hilton: Her life and work 1821-1896*. (London, 1897), p.3.

³ Marie Hilton, *The crèche at Ratcliff, being particulars of its fourth year* (London, 1875), p.3.

⁴ Marie Hilton, *ibid*, p.10.

⁵ Marie Hilton, *Fifth year of the crèche at Ratcliff* (London, 1876), p.47.

The crèche was seen to provide much needed supervision for infants whose mothers were 'unable to exercise maternal supervision over them'. The beauty of this particular crèche, according to *The Christian World*, an evangelical periodical, was 'that it is not a demoralising institution; that it does not pauperise the mothers; that they are all expected to pay and do pay'.⁶

As the crèche developed however, it became almost a victim of its own success, as followers established crèches in their own districts, their subscriptions dwindled, leaving Mrs Hilton with a constant struggle to fund the crèches, a burden she found more difficult than either management or supervision. This continual struggle to collect funds is a problem familiar to almost all philanthropic enterprises in the late nineteenth century. As public interest and enthusiasm waned, committee's had to continually strive to avoid becoming a fading fad. Mrs Hilton's system became the principal inspiration for many other crèches and indeed the nursery founded by Rosa M. Barrett in Kingstown in 1879 based its operation on Mrs Hilton's crèche. For Mrs Hilton, in calling on ladies to open crèches of their own proclaimed;

You could not possibly find a more womanly, 'ladylike', and delightful occupation than looking after babies who would otherwise be inconceivably miserable. Think of it, helpless innocents, 'dear little mites', in constant pain, misery and dirt! Therefore, will you do it?⁷

With such a call to action, many ladies responded, including Rosa M. Barrett in Kingstown.

Kingstown and employment: why a crèche was needed

The establishment of the crèche in Kingstown answered a need in the working community. Kingstown despite its renown as the 'premier township' was a town of diverse inhabitants and an often-sharp division between rich and poor. The employment available in Kingstown over much of the nineteenth century remained

⁶ Hilton, *ibid*, p.49-77.

⁷ J. Hilton, *ibid*, p.223.

extremely limited. Given the dearth of an industrial base, the reluctance of the town commissioners to hinder the spa-potential of the town and the gradual stagnation of Kingstown itself - Job prospects particularly for women remained limited. Kingstown had a high proportion of the population concentrated in transport and in general labouring, reflecting the areas dual characteristics, a suburban residential area and a seaside resort, and a port. The employment provided by both port and railway was inadequate for the labouring population while the depressed state of the local building trade from the late 1870s removed another source of casual employment. In a paper read to the 1884 Congress it was noted that,

Kingstown presents some of the worst features of a town of decaying industry, crumbling hovels and an undue proportion of perhaps the most helpless class in the community, worn out workmen too old to seek employment elsewhere and clinging to the spot which once afforded them the means of comfortable existence.⁸

Unemployment or underemployment remained a constant problem for many of Kingstown's less fortunate inhabitants; chronic surplus of labour militated against improvements in wage levels or in job security. Even the tourist potential of Kingstown failed to materialise, by 1911 Kingstown was a failed tourist resort, a mere eighty-two females and twenty five males were listed as employed in hotels and lodging houses.⁹

For many families therefore full time employment was rarely a certainty. Into this insecure world, the prospect of illness, death or desertion could plunge a family into destitution. The jobs open to unskilled women workers were often limited to dealing, charring or needlework. All were badly paying and exploitative and again seasonal and over supplied. This paucity of female employment and the casual earnings that were the lot of many women were rarely adequate for family support. However even the acquisition of such work created further problems, who would mind the children? The reality for many in the absence of a neighbour or relative

⁸ Quoted in Mary Daly, *Dublin: the deposed capital*, (Dublin, 1984), p.196.

was to leave the children unattended and locked in the house all day with perhaps only an older brother/sister as minder. The dangers this posed to the children were a constant worry to the mother: open fires, hot kettles of water, cramped conditions, all could and did result in serious accidents and sometimes fatalities. It was in aiming to provide a support for such women that crèche care was aimed.

Rosa Barrett on her arrival in Kingstown had been confronted with the reality of the ad hoc childcare options available. Visiting the poor of the township, she and acquaintances had witnessed 'the poor women and families living in the unsanitary back alleyways of the wealthy seaport. They realised the depths of misery to which fellow creatures could be reduced'.¹⁰ The founding of the crèche was as a direct result of visiting, of seeing children left alone while their parents worked. According to Rosa Barrett; 'one day my mother told me in great distress of a family she was visiting, where two young children had been burned to death while the mother was at work'.¹¹ It was with such knowledge that Barrett pursued the foundation of the crèche and day nursery with vigour.

Public debate

In October 1879, the *Daily Express* ran a series of letters from various correspondents concerning the high rate of infant mortality in Dublin. Dr. Little stressed the over-crowded living conditions of the poor, improper food, the intemperance of parents, the lack of warm clothing, as contributory factors in child impoverishment. He recommended the establishment of public institutions for the care of poor children during the hours when their parents are obliged to be absent from their homes...Both Dr Little and the editor of the *Daily Express* were sure that,

⁹ Daly, *ibid*, p.197.

¹⁰ Olive Goodbody, *The Cottage Home for Little Children 1879-1979*, (Dublin, 1979), p.4.

'there are benevolent ladies in Dublin who would gladly respond to the suggestion. The cost of such institutions would be comparatively trifling, while the benefit, which they would confer, would be considerable.¹² In reply Rosa M. Barrett wrote to the *Daily Express* stating that a crèche was to be opened within a week or two at Kingstown, and she also appealed for funds, toys and children's clothes.¹³

Kingstown Crèche

On November 17th, 1879, the crèche, consisting of two rooms on York Road opened its doors. A small fee was payable, 2d a day, this being the maximum amount that a poor woman could pay. The fee it was believed helped prevent the danger of pauperisation, as well as maintaining the bond between parents and children. Initially people in Kingstown were not overly optimistic about the crèche and prophecies of failure were many. The principal objections seem to have centred on the undermining of the family unit, the high rates of infant mortality and the subsequent difficulty of rearing healthy children, and in Ireland the problem of religion, providing care to all was deemed to be impossible. However Rosa Barrett and her committee were determined to succeed, other crèches had been founded in Ireland but all had floundered, but she maintained that:

It seemed impossible to remain inactive in the face of an evil that might perhaps be prevented: could it be right to do nothing, not even to make an effort, because of the possibility of failure? decided that some effort, on however small a scale should be made to save the lives of these helpless children.¹⁴

And so after securing rooms, a little furniture and about sixteen pounds in hand, a beginning was made!

In November 1879, Rosa Barrett had written letters to many ladies in the area, outlining the main points of Dr Little's letter, as well as appealing for money, toys

¹¹ Rosa M. Barrett, *International Psychic Gazette*, March 1934, p.83.

¹² *Daily Express*, 28 October 1879, p.4.

¹³ *Daily Express*, 31 October 1879, p.3.

or clothing. She stressed that mothers whose children had safe and happy homes would willingly respond to the needs of the less fortunate children of the neighbourhood.¹⁵

The initial rules for admittance stipulated that the children must be under five, and pay a daily fee of 2d for each child or three halfpence each for two or more. The children on entering would be thoroughly washed and dressed in clean clothes belonging to the Nursery, their own clothes put on again before leaving, in the evening. No sick child was admitted and all must bring a form of admission from some doctor, clergyman, district visitor or committee member, the Nursery was open daily from 8:30am to 6:30pm, Monday to Saturday. It was non-sectarian, accepting any child who fulfilled the qualifications. In March 1880, the Nursery was moved to 25 Patrick Street and it was resolved to accept no children over five and no illegitimate children.¹⁶

In July the Committee decided to print collecting cards and to obtain the names of some influential ladies and gentlemen to act as referees and advisors to the nursery. In August 1880, the Committee had resolved to appoint a deputation to wait upon Mrs Smyly to ask her to establish an infants department in her various homes, so that their work may be carried on in conjunction with hers. They also resolved to request local nuns to open a similar establishment for Catholic children. On September 1st 1880, Rosa Barrett and two other ladies had a meeting with Mrs Smyly. Such an amalgamation however never occurred.

¹⁴ Rosa M. Barrett, *The Cottage Home: a retrospect* (Dublin, 1904), p.3.

¹⁵ Rosa Barrett, MS Letter November 1879 (Cottage Home for Little Children).

The Cottage Home: the move to residential care

The day nursery had changed its course; the desire on the part of some parents to leave their children in the full-time care of the nursery meant the committee faced a dilemma. The original aim had been to provide a nursery but the economic and social needs of the mothers was for residential care, thereby allowing many women the chance to take up domestic service which was better than charring or laundry work. According to Rosa Barrett after the crèche was opened 'a young mother with a baby, eight days old, walked out from the Rotunda Hospital to see if we could take her child in, and so enable her to go to service. Her husband was ill in hospital with rheumatic fever, and she must earn or go to the workhouse.'¹⁷ This dilemma necessitated the calling of a meeting of 'interested parties'. On August 24th 1880, Rosa Barrett wrote,

As there is no Home in Dublin or the Neighbourhood open for the benefit of children under six years of age, the committee have been compelled to enlarge and somewhat alter their original scheme. It has been found necessary to admit some children as permanent in-mates, in cases where the mothers have taken situations as servants.¹⁸

The meeting was obviously productive and the Committee resolved to amalgamate the Nursery and Home, thus becoming the first home for children under six in the United Kingdom. The home had by this stage moved to 48 York Road and there it stayed until the lease expired in 1882.¹⁹

To maintain the home, the Committee was dependent on subscriptions and much was done to try and build up a list of annual subscribers, the Committee also established sewing and knitting class to help the mothers. A business committee of gentlemen was also formed to set the Home on a secure footing and to inspire public confidence in the accountability of charitable enterprises.

¹⁶ MS Minutes, 23 March 1880 (Cottage Home Archive).

¹⁷ Rosa M. Barrett, *Cottage Home: a retrospect* (Dublin, 1904), p.4.

¹⁸ MS Letter 24 August 1880 (Cottage Home Archive)

The transition to residential care necessitated an expansion in the accommodation provided. The Committee realised the importance of a large purpose-built building, but the finance involved was beyond their means. However, by 1887, the Cottage Home moved into its present location, on Tivoli Road. This building was the result of many months of collecting, and site-seeking, as well as confronting objections to the Home itself - residents in the area objected to the siting of a day crèche and children's home in the area as a possible health risk and the impact that the unsightly appearance of most institutions could have on the general tone of the area.²⁰

The Cottage Home for Little Children was officially opened by Lady Aberdeen in 1887 and it was designed to look like a proper 'home', albeit a large and spacious one. There was to be little of the institution in it. The interior was bright and cheerful, built to the most modern standards, with the children's rooms all facing South, on all sides there was open space in which to play. This 'luxurious' Home attracted some criticism; it was seen as providing too comfortable a living for 'poor children'. Rosa Barrett felt compelled in her annual reports to highlight that a pleasant interior, in its benefits to its residents cost little in the long term. Also as Barrett pointed out '...the parents, as they were helping fund the Home have a right to expect a certain quality of care for their children'.²¹ The Day Nursery in Kingstown therefore altered its aims and aspirations, however there remained in Dublin, day nurseries for the benefit of working mothers. In these nurseries could be seen many similar features to the Day Nursery in Kingstown.

¹⁹ MS Committee Minutes (CHA).

²⁰ MS Letter re. Fears of residents 1886 (CHA).

Other Dublin Crèches

By 1884, two Catholic crèches were in operation in Dublin, one in Holles Street and the other in Gardiner Street Dublin. The Crèche at Holles Street was established in 1884 by the Hon. Mrs John O'Halpin and Mrs Kenny, under the patronage of the late Cardinal McCabe, so that 'very young children were fed and taken care of during the day while mothers are out at work, each mother had to produce a certificate signed by an employer or clergyman to show that she was really working'.²² The crèche opened from 8am-7pm at 1d per day per child. It was run and managed by a committee and catered for approximately fifty to sixty children a week. The small fee helped to run the crèche as well as making the mothers ultimately responsible for the welfare of their children.

There were also at least two non-denominational crèches established in the city, one the Liberty Crèche established and run by the Quakers and the other a Crèche or Day Nursery at 101 Stephens Green, established in 1881 and run by a committee of ladies. An average of eight children attended daily and all children were to be under four years of age. The Crèche was open daily from 7am-7:30pm and a daily charge of 1d was made. In 1883 a total of 2,588 children attended the crèche. It was opened to 'take charge, during the day only of young children whose mothers are at work, the children were washed and dressed on arrival'.²³ The opening of the Crèche in Gardiner Street had prompted Rosa Barrett to write to *The Freeman's Journal* congratulating the founder of the crèche of the necessity of their work and saying that this would be the first strictly Roman Catholic crèche. However she urged that there was a need not just for nurseries, but also for homes for such infants and young children. She said that; 'there could be no greater charity for the Sisters if they are taking charge of this Crèche, to open also a home for some of these little

²¹ Annual Report for the Cottage Home for Little Children for 1891 (Dublin, 1892).

²² G.D. Williams (ed.) *Dublin charities: a handbook* (Dublin, 1902), p.147.

ones, deprived of a mother's care'. She offered to provide any help or information that many be required in establishing such a home.²⁴

Liberty Crèche

The Liberty Crèche, attached to the Sick Poor Institution and Dorset Nourishment Dispensary in Meath Street, was established in 1892 at a meeting of the Liberty Crèche Committee. It was resolved that some of the ladies present were to visit the Crèche in Wentworth Place and see what equipment was necessary to begin the crèche and to place an advertisement for a nurse...the Ladies' Committee in February 1893 decided to distribute handbills and cards of recommendation in the neighbourhood and by February 1893, the Crèche was in operation.²⁵ This Crèche was run by a committee of Ladies, mainly Quaker women. It was to be financed by subscription and by the children's payments of 1d a week. That evidently was insufficient since in December 1893, the Sick Poor Institution undertook to bear a portion of the expenses.²⁶ The crèche took children over the age of three months and by the end of 1895, the total attendance was 3,317. The Crèche was avowedly 'strictly non-sectarian and was organised to cater for the children of respectable women, dependent on their own exertions away from their homes for means and support.'²⁷ A daily fee of 1d a day, tended as at the Crèche at Kingstown 'to preserve independence and self-respect...they are also discharging and not shirking, their natural duties as parents'.²⁸

By 1902 the Crèche was well established and the Annual Report of that year stated:

²³ Rosa M. Barrett, *Guide to Dublin charities, ii* (Dublin, 1884), p.4.

²⁴ *The Freeman*, December 20 1884.

²⁵ MS Committee Minute Book, Liberty Crèche 12 Dec. 1892, (Society of Friends Archive, Swanbrook House).

²⁶ Vicky Cremin, *The Liberty Crèche 1893-1993* (Dublin, 1993), p.10.

²⁷ MS Committee Minute Book, Liberty Crèche 20 April 1894.

²⁸ Annual Report of the Liberty Crèche for 1931, (Dublin, 1932), p.4.

A generation of children is now growing up whom, from their infancy until able to take care of themselves, as poor children have to do, were brought up in the Crèche. They were well fed, kept clean and warm, and had bright and pleasant surroundings. Taken home by their mothers at night, they were not deprived of the home relationship and dependence on their parents which is the birthright of all children, but the daytime spent at the Crèche, when their mothers were working for their support must have tended to build up their frames and strengthen them for the physical struggle of life.²⁹

Attitudes of founders to their work

For the founding ladies who established day nurseries, the provision of day care was a necessity but not necessarily a desirable one. All believed that mothers were obliged to work to survive and so needed practical help but the desire to hire 'motherly women' as nurses and the belief that the day nursery provided a better environment for the child was also widespread. In the Liberty Crèche a collecting lady was hired, to boost subscriptions, but she was also 'to visit at the homes of children attending the Crèche and report as to their suitability'.³⁰ For Rosa Barrett also, 'it would of course be better if the mothers could take charge of these babies themselves...Our aim is to give them the motherly care which they so much need.'³¹ For many of these ladies, the provision of necessary day-care to alleviate want encouraged the poor to remedy their problems by self-effort, kept many from the workhouse and provided an outlet for their own sense of Christian duty as Christians and ladies. For many supporters and subscribers, 'My heart goes out warmly to such a true piece of Christianity, to save and help little helpless children seems to me such true woman's work'.³² For many of these ladies, as for Mrs Hilton, the 'rescue of the little mites' was their appointed task; to rescue from want, from neglect and perhaps ultimately from the ignorance and potential danger of the working class home. By the end of the century, such women philanthropists had recognised the inevitable working lives that were the lot of many women. While

²⁹ Vicky Cremin, *ibid*, p.10.

³⁰ MS Committee Minute Book, Liberty Crèche, 20 April 1894.

³¹ Annual Report of the Cottage Home for Little Children for 1881, (Dublin, 1882), p.6.

³² Letter from a well-wisher, MS Cuttings Book (CHA).

some may have 'tut-tutted' over these women's lack of parental responsibility they recognised what would be most beneficial to them, in this sense their ideal of domesticity, was a domesticity tinged with more than a little sense of reality.³³

Progressive views

Women like Mrs Hilton and Rosa Barrett, who established crèches recognised that for many poorer women, their perilous economic situation determined that they had to work in paid employment at least on a part-time basis. In acknowledging such, the founders were moving beyond society's prescribed vision of women's role, a world of home. Such a model of family wherein the wife laboured in the home, the husband outside, was seen as the greatest guarantee of family stability. Through a harmonious family environment a stable society would emerge. In recognising that women had to work, women like Barrett were reformist in moving beyond the orthodox paradigm of poverty which differentiated between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' seeing individual laziness or bad management as the source of troubles. Barrett and the other crèche founders recognised the underlying institutional causes of poverty, the lack of secure employment, the squalid nature of much accommodation and the precipice of destitution on which many 'respectable poor' lived. A sudden change in circumstances could cause massive upheaval.

While recognising such realities, many of the founders worked to foster a homelike atmosphere within their crèches and institutions. Through boarding-out schemes run by St. Brigid's Orphanage and the Protestant Orphan Society they again recognised the desirability of a home environment for the development of upright characters. Proper nurturing could remedy nature's defects, be they intemperance, abuse or malnutrition. The organisations were keen to reject the institutionalisation

³³ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1995), p.96.

of the child. Employing motherlike women as nurses and mothers, all were a reflection on what they often perceived to be defects in the homes from which the children came. As Ellen Ross points out, 'the regular requirement of most crèches that children must bathe and/or wear a special uniform was quite correctly interpreted by mothers as a vote of no confidence in their standards of dress and cleanliness.'³⁴

The founders recognised that 'home' was not just a place to live, instead it was elevated to be the focus of moral, spiritual and social life. In establishing crèches and homes, the ladies worked to rescue the children from moral and spiritual neglect and abuse. They often made explicit judgements about the homes of the children, over-emphasising religious and moral elements. They were perhaps too prone to interpret lack of cleanliness as neglect. The rescue of the child from life on the streets, from parental ignorance, from spiritual ignorance, all was part of the mission of the reformers. According to Purvis the goal was to achieve social reform through the inculcation of a rational and energetic citizenship in individuals. Mothers were to be the agents of that change through their role in the family.³⁵ If working class mothers were unable to fulfil their duty, then 'mother figures' would take on the responsibility through their crèches and homes. Homes were to be 'nurseries of citizenship'!

Rosa Barrett continually put great stress on the fact that many of the parents involved with the Cottage Home were responsible, industrious and loving, but were victims of misfortune. In defending criticisms that the Cottage Home was too luxurious, the children too spoiled, she believed that 'love never spoilt a child, and

³⁴ Ellen Ross, 'Lady philanthropists and London housewives', p.186 in McCarthy (ed.), *Lady Bountiful Revisited; women, philanthropy and power*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

³⁵ June Purvis, *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945*, (London, 1997), p.73.

that no amount of petting can compensate for the loss of a fathers or mothers love.³⁶ The belief that the poor were ultimately responsible for their own children was continually reiterated through the maintenance fees charged on all parents. Such fees attempted to ensure parental responsibility. The Cottage Home and the Liberty Crèche were for children of the industrious poor. The Cottage Home always worked to maintain the link between parent and child by the maintenance fee, regular progress reports, open visiting hours and a regular New Year's Party for parents and former children. In this way it was felt the parents retained their connection with their children and also showed them how well they were being taken care of and that their fees were maintaining their children thereby it was felt increasing feelings of self-respect and self-reliance.

Other Nurseries

In Belfast Lady Henderson started a scheme of day nurseries, when she was Mayoress in 1873-4. The day nurseries worked in conjunction with the Cripples' Institute in Belfast. Belfast's high death rate was due at least in part to infant mortality, so Lady Henderson and other influential local women opened a nursery in Barrack Street which was in the centre of the mills, for the babies of mothers of the industrial class. Infants could be left from 6.30 a.m. to 7 p.m. at a moderate charge of 3d per day and there was room for up to twenty-seven each day.³⁷ Though the nursery became popular with its users, its lack of popular support led inevitably to its closure.³⁸ After a lapse of several years more nurseries were opened, the first and arguably the most successful at 188 Crumlin Road in 1898. Another, controlled by Mr and Mrs Vance, was begun in the Bethel, Sandy Row in 1899. As at Kingstown, on arrival the children were bathed and clean clothes put on for the time they spent in the nursery. Unfortunately by 1911 all the day nurseries were

³⁶ Annual Report Cottage Home for 1894, (Dublin, 1895), p.10.

³⁷ *Northern Whig*, 10 December 1879.

closed.³⁹ Many of the crèches established during this period were initially very successful, but gradually enthusiasm waned and the interest fell away and without subscribers the crèches were inevitably unable to support their continuance. The fees of the parents were too modest to carry the running costs.

The provision of day nurseries was also provoking debate in various parts of England and the United States. For example in Hove, a seaside and railway town near Brighton in England, a Day Nursery was founded in 1877 to provide somewhere for the children. A local directory, *Pages Court Directory* in 1878 advertised the Nursery as 'Hove Nursery, Livingstone Road. The Nursery is open daily from 7.30 am to 9 p.m. on weekdays. The children are received either by the day or week on the pre-payment of a small sum, which varies according to their age'.⁴⁰ The nursery was an immediate success.

This crèche was founded with similar objectives to the day nurseries established in Dublin, to provide maternal care for young children whose mothers were forced to work. The fund-raising methods adopted were also quite similar: subscriptions, fees, and concerts and pound days and as in the Dublin crèches, a ladies committee managed the day nurseries.

Transnational Comparison

On a day to day level, the day nursery's primary concern was physical care of the children, feeding, bathing and keeping them safe from the evils and dangers of street and tenement. But most day nurseries expressed an equally strong concern for the moral care and proper upbringing of the child.⁴¹

³⁸ *Whig*, *ibid.*

³⁹ Alison Jordan, *Who Cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast* (Belfast, n.d), p.156.

⁴⁰ Pam Parsons, *Somewhere for the children- a history of Hove Day Nursery* (Hove, 1977), p.6.

⁴¹ Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, *Who's minding the children, a history of day care in America* (New York, 1973), p.45.

The above may be said to represent the views of our Dublin Ladies' Committees but it is in fact a comment on the day nurseries provided in the United States to cater for the needs of working mothers. As in Dublin, Belfast and England, the tragic evidence that young children were left alone while their mothers worked inclined many enthusiastic and philanthropic women to see the day nursery as an obvious solution to this child-rearing problem. While they believed there may be a decrease in parental responsibility if day nurseries were widely available, however in comparison to the tragic separation of families and the expense to the taxpayer of orphanages, day nurseries were humane and inexpensive - As the Rev. Harris E. Adriance pointed out, 'the institutional child is not a normal child. The day nursery is a necessity for mothers who work, or who have been widowed or abandoned'.⁴²

What was more redolent of motherhood than the day nursery? Therefore what more suitable occupation could there be for middle class women, with leisure time, than to supervise the staff of the nursery, plan fund-raising events and to cajole their peers into donating food, bedding and toys? As in the Irish and British context, the U.S. day nursery considered itself a helping aid for the widowed woman or the victim of an irresponsible husband. For example, the Helen Day Nursery in Chicago, opened in 1905 saw itself as 'a place where children who need shelter and protection by day or night may be cared for during the mother's working hours: and an industrial, educational and social centre for mothers from which shall emanate standards of good living'.⁴³

⁴² Steinfels, *ibid*, p.40.

⁴³ *ibid*, p.43.

Why did nurseries not become more popular?

The day nursery, at all times, was thought of as a temporary expedient. Ideally it would eventually go out of business, when mothers were restored to their proper places - in their homes. Meantime the nursery should be available so as to hasten, not delay that day. However if the day nursery was such a promising idea and such an aid to the industrious poor, aiming at self-help and improvement, why did they not develop further? Thirty years after Rosa Barrett opened her Kingstown nursery, Maude Meredith an English author, wrote in *The Englishwoman*,

Crèches where babies may be well cared for while their mothers are at work are badly needed in London and in all manufacturing towns. All such homes should be conducted by trained women and subject to the supervision of some responsible lady approved by the Health Authority of the district.⁴⁴

A variety of often contradictory arguments were mounted against the day nursery: it loosened family ties, it lessened the mother's sense of responsibility and made her lazy by caring for her children: it minimised the father's sense of responsibility for being the sole breadwinner: it encouraged the mother to work thereby ultimately depressing male wages: in addition to these charges, professional philanthropists (a small but growing band of social workers) distrusted the allegedly soft-hearted women who made up the day nursery boards. They were seen as being insufficiently suspicious of the mothers whose children were admitted to the day nursery, such indiscriminate aid being seen as highly objectionable!

A comparative survey of day nurseries and crèches in France, Germany, Great Britain undertaken in 1904 revealed striking contrasts. In Great Britain, all of the day nurseries responding to the survey were charitable undertakings that relied entirely on private subscriptions. While not included in the survey, the United States presented a similar picture. In France and Germany, a majority of the crèches were subsidised by a combination of local, state and private resources, with the

⁴⁴ Maude Meredith, 'Children and the nation' in *The Englishwoman*, iv, (1909-10), p.25-32.

exception of parochial crèches. In Berlin, there were sixty-six crèches in 1904, by contrast London, with more than twice the population of Berlin, had only fifty-four crèches, none of which were publicly subsidised or licensed. New York City, with a population almost equal to London's had ninety-two day nurseries, but these, too lacked public support or regulation. The British and American women who ran and staffed day nurseries were free from the scrutiny of male officials, but they also had to make do with less generous funding. As a result, their nurseries tended to be less well staffed. There continued a resistance to the greater allocation of resources for crèche care. Trade union activities centred on acquiring a family wage and the denial of women's work. The belief remained that nurseries would be used as a means of deserting children and that they absolved parents of their proper responsibilities.

The Cottage Home Kingstown

The day nursery was not in and of itself a total solution. In cases of illness, or where the mother was in domestic service, or where the children were left 'motherless' more long-term residential care was needed. The realisation of this prompted Rosa Barrett and the committee to re-evaluate the role and function of the nursery at Kingstown. The Cottage Home had developed from a small crèche into a purpose built residential home. Desirous of putting the institution on a firm and lasting footing Rosa Barrett had a deed of constitution of the home drafted and signed in 1887.

The Deed of Constitution of the Cottage Home drawn up in October 1887, stated that the fundamental and unalterable basis of the Home was:

For teaching the lesson of self-help to the industrious poor, by assisting in providing a Home for legitimate children of both sexes, shall profess such child to be of the Protestant religion, and who shall when admitted be under the age of six years or being over that age or being illegitimate, be admitted by an order of a special meeting of the Committee and for whom such

payment shall be made (if any) as the Committee of Management shall require, and which children may be orphans or having parents unable to give them proper care, or who may be ineligible for other charitable institutions.⁴⁵

Of utmost importance was the consideration, that by admitting the children to the Home, the parent or parents would be enabled to earn a living and ultimately hopefully rebuild the family. All therefore were required to contribute something, a continuation of the crèche policy. This principle of self-help and the effort to increase self-respect and independence was a new one amongst Irish charities, and met at first with a lukewarm response. However over time the parents contributions, as a proportion of income grew significantly.

The Cottage Home catered for approximately fifty children, though applications for places always exceeded supply. The children's ages varied from a few days to six years, the younger children were initially boarded out with local women. This was done on the recommendation of the Home's Medical Officer, who saw it as one way of lowering the risk of infection and disease spreading in the home. At the age of six years, the children, if still in the Home, were placed in other orphanages and schools, while some were adopted. Many of the children stayed only briefly in the Home, creating a rapid turnover. The turnover of children and the long waiting lists for admittance undoubtedly created problems of its own, the decisions on which child 'deserved' to be admitted first, must have been quite difficult. Dealing with such young children, their continual coming and going must have made hygiene more difficult and the creation of a secure and stable environment for the children harder to achieve. However Rosa Barrett, the staff and the committee all endeavoured to provide as homelike an environment as possible for the children. Volunteers were encouraged, to give their time to play or read a story to the children, the older children helped the younger ones with feeding and at bedtime, giving all a sense of being in a 'home'. The children were taught reading, writing,

⁴⁵ Annual Report of the Cottage Home for 1887, (Dublin, 1888), p.2.

scripture, knitting and sewing, as well as singing and drill, however they were also taught how to 'play', which Rosa Barrett considered to be as essential for young children as learning to read.⁴⁶ According to Lady Aberdeen, who on making a return visit to the Home in 1906, said that the reason for the success of the Home was its ethos of love:

The keynote of the home was love and the only reason why it had been a success while other homes had been failures was that the children were not merely objects of charity but individuals to be loved and cared for. At the Cottage Home they tried to train the children in a way that would be a help to them in after life, to know right from wrong and always to choose the former, so that they would be a gain to the community instead of the reverse.⁴⁷

Such an emphasis on loving care was also highlighted by Rosa Barrett, who believed that children to survive and prosper needed careful nurturing and lots of love, without such affectionate care, the greatest physical care would be insufficient.

The keeping of such large numbers of young children together was potentially hazardous. Many of the pessimists said that such homes would never work, because the likelihood of keeping the mortality rate low was slim. However with careful care and great attention to cleanliness, the mortality rate in the Cottage Home was very low, especially considering the rate in the city as a whole. The mortality rate in Dublin in 1902 was 81.5 per 1000 whereas in the Cottage Home, the rate for the previous ten years had been less than 10 per 1,000.⁴⁸ Lady visitors from the committee and also lady inspectors from the NSPCC who arrived unannounced and thoroughly investigated the welfare of the children regularly inspected the home and always left favourable reports.

⁴⁶ Rosa M. Barrett, *The Cottage Home - a retrospect*, (Dublin, 1904), p.4.

⁴⁷ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, June 1906.

⁴⁸ Barrett, *Retrospect*, p.4.

Funding the Home

The Cottage Home was funded by parents' contributions and by donations and subscriptions. It had no other source of income, so was wholly dependent on the generosity of the public. As Mrs. Hilgus had pointed out, the raising of public interest in a charity would have a very valuable result in the long run. Therefore it was important for the Home to maintain a public profile, both locally and at a more national level. The supply of funds was a constant worry to the committee, especially during the long summer months. Some people who often failed to



The Nursery- Cottage Home, Kingsdown.

(Reproduced from *The Visitor*, May 1907)

Funding the Home

The Cottage Home was funded by parents' contributions and by donations and subscriptions. It had no other source of income, so was wholly dependent on the generosity of the public. As Mrs Hilton had pointed out, the waning of public interest in a charity would have a very serious impact on funding. Therefore it was important for the Home to maintain a public profile, both locally and at a more national level. The supply of funds was a perpetual worry to the committee, especially during the long summer months. Rosa Barrett was often forced to appeal in the local paper for subscriptions and goods-in-kind. The holding of drawing room meetings, the institution of pound days, the organising of a gift shilling, sponsor a child programs, and the 'usual resource of the destitute'⁴⁹ a bazaar, were all used to fund the work. Later the holding of an annual ball was a boom to fund-raising. However, continual fund-raising took up an enormous amount of time and energy, often for meagre results. Considering that an honorary secretary, treasurer and a committee did the administration of the home on a voluntary basis the workload involved was heavy. The importance of having the right sort of patronage was one way to improve public awareness. Advertisements for balls and concerts often included lists of distinguished ladies and gentlemen, a noted person to open an extension or a well-known lady to act as patron all added status and celebrity to an institution, guaranteeing it publicity and hopefully funds.

The publishing of annual reports, the holding of an annual meeting, instituted in 1888, also helped publicise an institution. The annual reports follow a familiar theme from year to year: repeated thanks to all followers, a brief summary of any notable events, the letters from past-children and well-wishers and an update on children who left the Home. Many of the reports, with their tales of neglected

⁴⁹ Rosa M. Barrett, Letter published in the *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 24 June 1905.

The Cottage Home for Little Children, Kingstown.

A SHILLING FOR A CHILD!

Please give a thought to our Share Group System.

Share Groups are open to all and will consist of about 15 Members.

Each Member may own a full Share for 1/- per month.

"	half	6d.	"
"	quarter	3d.	"

The total amount realised from the Group Collection will help considerably towards the support of ONE completely destitute child.

Each Group to have a Secretary to whom Members will send their contributions yearly, half yearly, quarterly or as arranged. The Secretary will then send the total Group collection to the Hon. Treasurer of The Cottage Home.

The Group Secretary will keep in touch regularly with her members as to the welfare of the child. Any clothing the child may require might be supplied by the Group; also individual Members might like to send sweets, toys, etc.

Please give this appeal your most earnest consideration
and join a Group, or even better, start a Group among your friends.

The Share Group is recommended as especially applicable to G.F.S. Branches, Scout & Guide Companies and Schools.

Remember, if you join a Share Group, you are helping to keep one little child from complete destitution.

For further particulars write to:-

Fund-raising Appeal, n. d.

(courtesy of Cottage Home for Little Children, Dun-Laoghaire).

waifs, were also aimed at encouraging popular support, at a time of numerous charities, all appealing for support and funding.

Profile of the children admitted

By 1905, over six hundred children had been admitted into the home, their ages ranging from a few days to six years. The reasons for their admittance often highlighted the impact a death or illness could cause in a household, destroying the family and disrupting children's lives. In 1905, Sir Charles Cameron, Dublin's Chief Medical Officer claimed that the special characteristic of the Cottage Home was that the majority of its in-mates were the children of respectable people in misfortune. The home was intended for Protestant children who 'not having lost both parents, were not admissible to regular orphanages yet who through the delicacy of their surviving parent or their own delicacy or other circumstances were as helpless as orphans. The home also received children on referral from the NSPCC; in cases of desertion, cruelty or alcoholism the home provided a refuge'.⁵⁰

Taking a random sample of three years of the Home's admission register, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the circumstances of those admitted. Taking 1894, 1904 and 1914 as samples, we can see that the circumstances of those admitted remained quite similar over a twenty year span. In 1894, the Cottage Home received one hundred applications, of those twenty were admitted, four were boarded out and four were awaiting admittance. The average age of those admitted was three and a half years. Of those admitted fifteen were eligible due to the death of a parent, four were admitted through the desertion of the mother or the illness of the father compelling the mother to go into full-time work. Of those not taken by the Home, some were subsequently admitted by the Bird's Nest and others by the Elliott Home for Waifs and Strays, another organisation linked to Mrs Symly's

network. Sixteen of the children admitted were accompanied by a brother or sister. For example, William and John aged four and a half years and six months respectively, were admitted as their father was in prison due to desertion and the mother was left with three young children, she went into service and the older child went to the Elliott Home.⁵¹

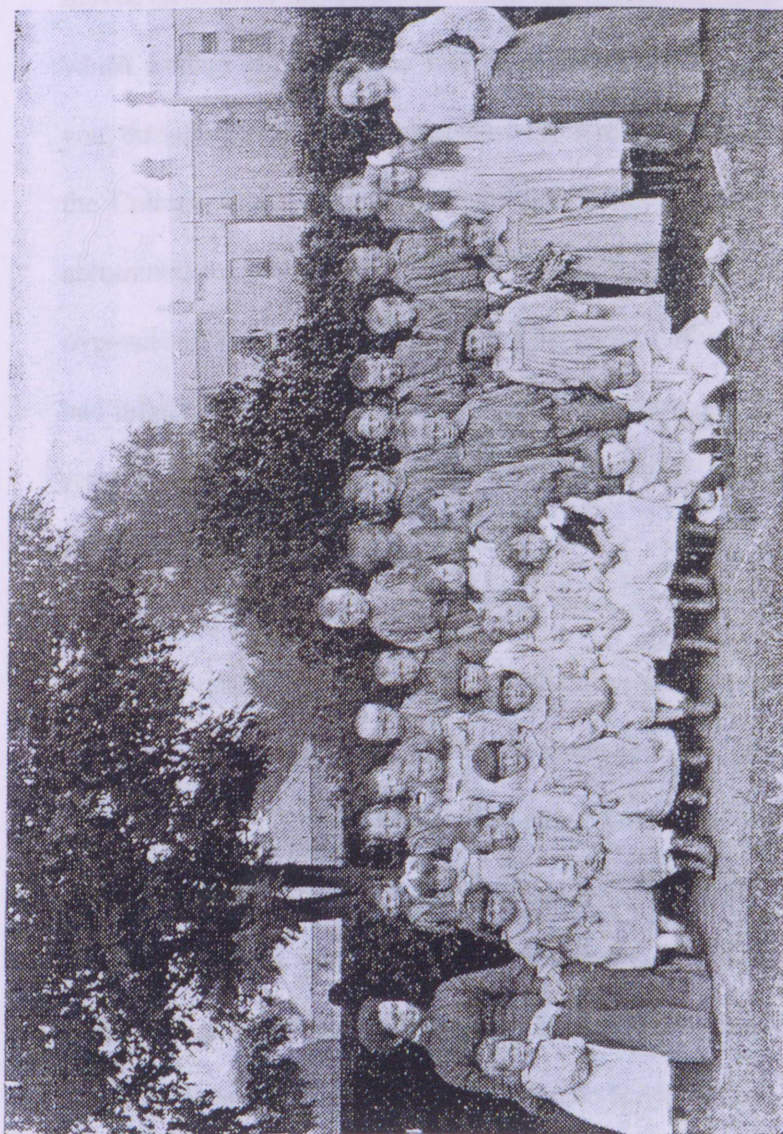
The picture that emerges for 1904 is quite similar. In 1904 twenty-seven were admitted, the average age being three years. Nine were admitted through cruelty or neglect of one or both parent, six were admitted through the illness of either parent and seven were admitted through desertion or ill-treatment of mother, compelling her to get a situation. For example, the story of Robinson and Sydney, aged five and almost three years is quite typical. Their mother died, leaving eight children, the eldest girl was delicate and unable to mind the little ones, the father was in service and so there was no one to mind them.⁵² Of those who left in 1904, seventeen of them moved on to other homes and twelve returned home to their families.

1914 saw a reduced number of admissions, this year only fifteen were admitted and twenty-four had left. Of those taken in, the average age again was three years. Five of the children were admitted through the death of the mother, in four cases the mother was left alone and in one case the parents were both in prison for the neglect of their children. As in other years, there was a high incidence of admitting two or more children from the same family. Of those who left the home, three were adopted, five who had been admitted temporarily due to mother's illness returned

⁵⁰ See list of children admitted, which was printed in each annual report.

⁵¹ Admission Register Cottage Home for Little Children, 1894.

⁵² Admission Register, 1904.



Children and staff at Cottage Home, Kingstown, N.D.

(Reproduced from The Visitor, May 1907)

home, a further five were taken by relatives and ten went on to other homes, of which five went on to the Bird's Nest where they had older brothers and sisters.⁵³

Network of connections

Children once they had outgrown the Cottage Home, if unable to return home, many moved on to other organisations. Such institutions provided a network of charities, which worked in conjunction with each other. If they themselves could not assist you, through contacts they endeavoured to find a suitable arrangement. Every year the Cottage Home received perhaps four times as many applicants as it could accommodate, yet it prided itself on helping all. The Cottage Home found itself over-subscribed principally because of the lack of other Homes for young children and infants. The want of such accommodation was continually felt and the Home received applications from all parts of the country, though its subscription base remained localised.

Protestant establishments and their Catholic counterparts worked assiduously to ensure that their respective children were kept safe from the opposition. A network of organisations linked by similar aims and often sharing a similar list of subscribers, linked to the relatively small Protestant community worked to guarantee a liaison system for all. For as many argued, the Protestant community was small enough and wealthy enough to ensure that none of its children had to be reared in the workhouse. The Cottage Home children moved on to a wide diversity of institutions. Many went to Mrs Smyly's Bird's Nest Home, others to the Elliott Home, the Meath Industrial School and some to the care of the Protestant Orphan Society. In terms of patronage and support, many organisations shared similar connections, therefore helping to ensure that all were aware of the work of the other,

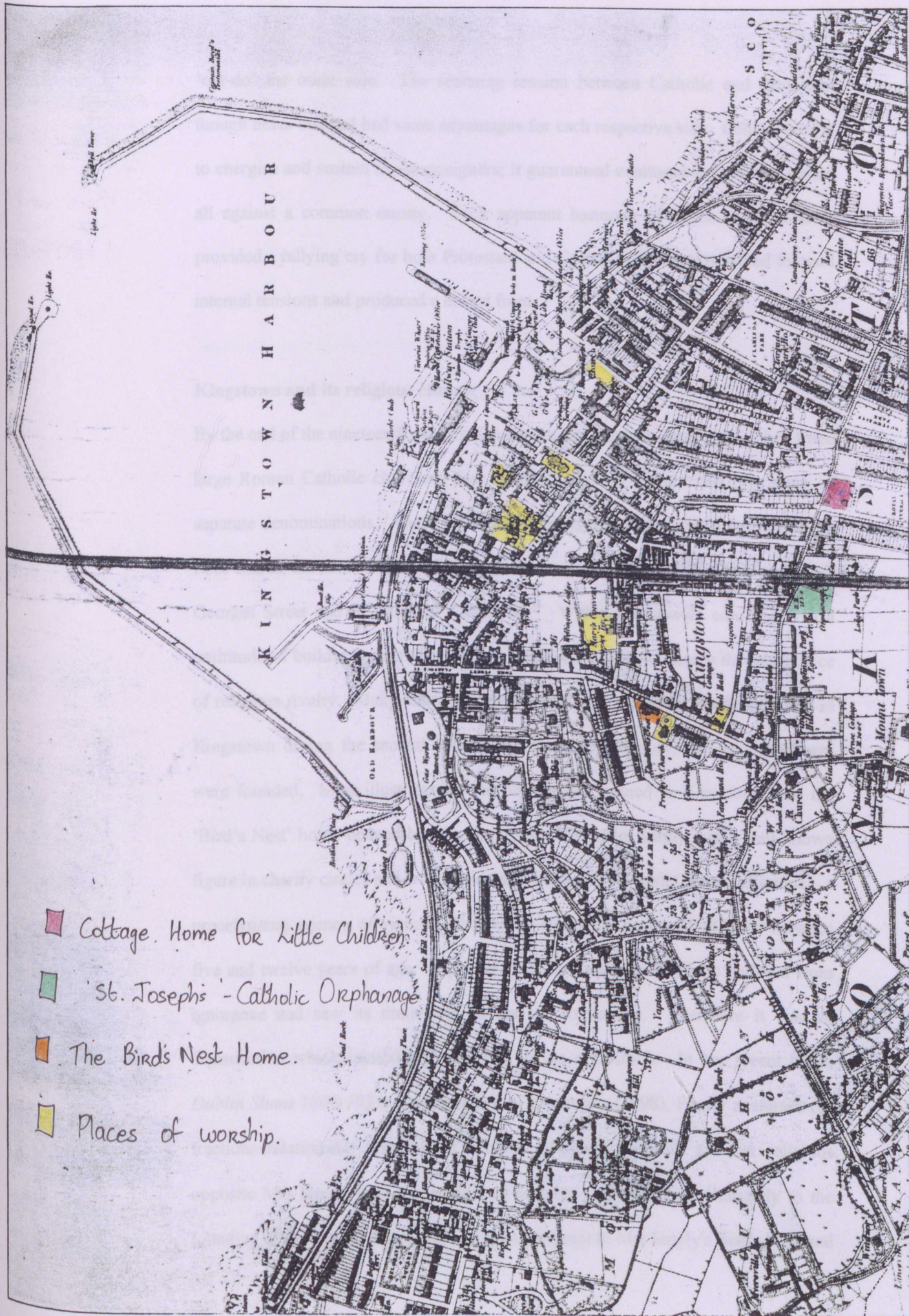
⁵³ Admission Register, printed in Annual Report of the Cottage Home for 1914, (Dublin, 1915).

the involvement of noted public figures like Sir Charles Cameron, T.W. Grimshaw and the Earl of Meath confirmed the solid credentials of the Cottage Home.

Religion

Religion as outlined in chapter one was a primary incentive for many to undertake welfare work. Many saw it as their duty to serve the wider community in the best way that they saw fit. If the work prospered this could be seen as a sign of divine approval. Staunchly held religious principles energised many to dedicate their lives to the alleviation of social want. One particular group in society benefited more than any other from such attention – the child. The Evangelical movement of the nineteenth century sharpened religious divisions and especially in Ireland the rivalry between the two main religious groups, Catholics and Protestants, made each side eager to look after their own. This was especially obvious where the fate of the child was concerned. The religion of a child often provoked disagreement and impeded good working relations between the different charities in a town or community. In an era of heightened religious difference and resultant tensions all sides feared losing the moral majority. Efforts to 'save' the child overrode all others. Of particular concern to many was the fate of the child of parents of 'mixed' religion, these cases proved extremely controversial. All charity work undertaken in nineteenth century philanthropy was done in the context of religious rivalry. Many charities including Rosa Barrett's pledged themselves to be 'non-sectarian', to be open to all. However few such charities persisted, it was important in this tense climate to specify which side, Protestant or Catholic, you wished to benefit from your work. All sides feared accusations of proselytism, of endeavouring to win souls for the opposing camp through nefarious methods.

Renewed vigour on both Catholic and Protestant side ensured the provision of many institutions, the continued appeals for funding and support and persistent efforts to



One hundred and eight

Kingstown C.1867.

(six-inch Ordnance Survey sheet).

'out-do' the other side. The sectarian tension between Catholic and Protestant though never bridged had some advantages for each respective side. Often it served to energise and sustain the campaigners; it guaranteed continual support and united all against a common enemy. Such apparent harmony of action on both sides provided a rallying cry for both Protestant and Catholic churches; it served to quell internal tensions and produced a united front.

Kingstown and its religious climate

By the end of the nineteenth century Kingstown and its close surroundings had three large Roman Catholic churches, five of the Church of Ireland and four more of separate denominations. There were also chapels attached to the convents of the Poor Clares, the Little Sisters of the Assumption on York Road, the Dominicans off Georges Street and St. Michael's Hospital.⁵⁴ Within a relatively confined area a multitude of buildings catered to diverse interests helping to ensure the persistence of religious rivalry. Many charities, which were well supported, were instituted in Kingstown during the second half of the nineteenth century. Three orphanages were founded. Most illustrious of the orphanages opened in Kingstown was the 'Bird's Nest' home opened by Mrs Smyly in 1859. Mrs Smyly was a well-known figure in charity circles and was particularly linked to the Irish Church Missions – a proselytising agency of vigour. The Bird's Nest took orphaned children between five and twelve years of age. It prided itself on 'rescuing' Catholic children from ignorance and saw its main role as one of conversion. Therefore it was an organisation which incited high feelings in the opposition. In her recent book, *Dublin Slums 1800-1925: a study in urban geography* (1998), Prunty examines the fractious relationship that existed between Margaret Aylward and her religious opposite Mrs Smyly over the welfare of children. This leading ultimately to the founding of St. Brigid's Orphanage as a counterpoint to Mrs Smyly's Bird's Nest and

certain other Protestant-run homes which were actively involved in proselytising, run with the aid of the Irish Missionary Society. As Prunty says, 'the intensity and viciousness of the very public "battle for bodies and souls" which ranged between the Protestant missionary movement and Catholic organisations in nineteenth century Dublin cannot be overstated'.⁵⁵ Opposition to the more organised, longer established, and much better funded Protestant charities was according to Prunty, an important motivation in the Catholic response to the problem of poverty. The provision of Catholic alternatives was seen as the only practicable response to the twin evils of poverty and proselytism. As a counterpoint to Smyly's 'Bird's Nest', St Joseph's on Tivoli Road in Kingstown was built in 1860. It was run by the Daughters of the Heart of Mary who trained its eighty orphans in 'habits of industry and order'.⁵⁶

Other organisations which operated in Kingstown included the Ladies Association of Charity of St Vincent de Paul for the Spiritual and Temporal Relief of the Sick Poor. This lay charity served as Margaret Aylward's first active involvement with the Ladies of Charity in the Dublin area. It served to introduce her to the methods of Mrs Smyly and was the beginning of a long-running and often-acrimonious relationship between the two women. Into this fractured world opened the Crèche at Kingstown.

Religious tensions and the Cottage Home

In seeking to establish the crèche and day nursery, Rosa Barrett encountered at first hand some of the difficulties posed by religious differences. Initially when seeking accommodation she had found:

⁵⁴ Peter Pearson, *Dun Laoghaire-Kingstown*, (Dublin, 1981), p.71.

⁵⁵ Dr Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin Slums 1800-1925: a study in urban geography*, (Dublin, 1998), p.238.

⁵⁶ Pearson, *ibid*, p.132.

For a time it seemed impossible to get rooms, and even when some had been taken, papered and done up, we were more than once ejected. It was not for some time after that I found this was generally because the landlords were generally Roman Catholics, and so I learnt my first lesson in one great difficulty of work in this country, the antagonism between the different religions.⁵⁷

The crèche was originally intended to serve all children, but fearing accusations of proselytism Rosa Barrett made the Cottage Home an exclusively Protestant institution. Such exclusivity was incorporated into the rules and charter of the Cottage Home. As the Home developed the question of religion sometimes presented difficulties. One or other parent removed some children placed in the Home after they professed to have converted or perhaps reverted⁵⁸ to Roman Catholicism. In such cases, the annual reports hoped, perhaps optimistically that the children would retain some of the good teaching received in the home. One such case in 1890 concerned a 'little girl whom we had rescued from absolute ignorance and destitution, and who had been under our care for three years, was (sic) removed from the Home by the Father, who professed to have become a Roman Catholic'.⁵⁹

The potential for conflict over religion became most apparent at times of missions when emotive talks, passionate and rousing rhetoric could have a possible detrimental effect on cross-community relations. In 1890, Professor Barrett wrote to the *Freeman's Journal* saying that a Protestant clergyman had informed him that he had been annoyed by Catholic boys while making his visits to the Protestant poor of Kingstown. Professor Barrett also added that a friend present at the addresses given to children at the Catholic Church in Kingstown Mission services, complained that it was a violent tirade against Protestants and Protestantism and warned its congregation against the Cottage Home at Kingstown. In replying to these

⁵⁷ Rosa M. Barrett, *Cottage Home: a retrospect*, (Dublin, 1904), p.4.

⁵⁸ Without access to the specifics of each child's case, it is very hard to determine whether such parents may originally have been Roman Catholic or whether they did in fact convert to Catholicism at a later date. Given the strict admissions policy of the home, it is probable that many of the parents were recent converts.

⁵⁹ Annual Report of the Cottage Home for Little Children for 1890, (Dublin, 1891), p.7.

complaints the *Journal* firstly felt compelled to highlight that 'it was the honourable distinction of the almost exclusively Catholic portion of Ireland, that they were never marked by those exhibitions of intolerance either at the hands of young or old of the majority which unfortunately have made the centres of Protestant ascendancy, places of continuous insult and oftentimes of positive danger to the Catholic priest' - therefore the misconduct of Catholic boys to Protestant clergyman was highly unlikely!⁶⁰

When addressing the denunciation of the Cottage Home, the *Journal* was equally rigorous. While believing the mission speaker may only have mentioned it in passing, they believed it to be the most rigorous Protestant institution in the country in regard to acceptance of children. The religion 'Roman Catholic' would be an absolute bar to the acceptance of any child. The *Journal* maintained that the Cottage Home was not a proselytising institution but the others mentioned like the Bird's Nest and the Sewing School were.⁶¹ In stressing that the Cottage Home was not a proselytising institution, but was instead a strict Protestant one, the *Journal* and Catholic hierarchy affirmed its non-threatening status and was prepared to virtually ignore its existence. The Home continued to provide care for the Protestant child with little negative publicity from the Catholic press. The Cottage Home of course bemoaned when some of its children were removed by newly converted Catholic guardians, but such cases happened infrequently and often resulted in the Home adopting an even-more stringent admittance policy.

Cases of controversy

On admittance to the Cottage Home, the children were initially boarded out with local women, thus reducing the likelihood of infection in the Home. This policy

⁶⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 and 14 March 1900.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

continued until 1905, when protracted and messy legal case proceedings caused a lot of distress to the Committee and Rosa Barrett. The case concerned the death of a little baby under the care of an employee of the Home. Mrs Reading a nurse took children into her home to nurse, and occasionally she helped out in the Cottage Home. Court procedure found the woman guilty of neglect and further in-depth investigations found that two children had died in her care. The first child, who had no connection with the cottage home, had died from ill health as opposed to neglect. The second child was from the Home but had been a very sickly child who was under constant medical supervision. The nurse therefore was eventually acquitted and the Home was applauded by the magistrate, who considered it a most admirable institution.⁶²

The result of the enquiry relieved much anxiety and re-assured the committee and supporters of the Home of the merits of its work. The case however had been sensationalised by the popular press, with accusations of baby farming and neglect being targeted at the Committee of the Cottage Home. The *Kingstown Echo* referred to the case as showing 'the baby farming and child murder merrily goes on in Kingstown, being sent from a proselytising institution, what has Miss Barrett to say?'⁶³ The Home had refrained from publicly commenting on the case pending the hearing of Mrs Reading and this according to the *Bray and South Dublin Herald* allowed scurrilous rumours to circulate and highlighted the willingness of a certain class of people to believe anything against a Protestant institution.⁶⁴

⁶² Virtually all local and national papers reported the case in great detail, including the *Irish Times*, *Daily Express*, *Northern Whig*, *Evening Telegraph* running the story from 23 September until 7 October 1905. Eventually all charges were dropped by Mr Justice Gibson.

⁶³ *Kingstown Echo*, 23 Sept. 1905.

⁶⁴ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 5 October 1905.

The question of religious identity also propelled the Home into unwelcome publicity in 1907. Given that the Home was funded mainly by donation and subscription, any negative publicity was doubly unwelcome. In 1907, a case concerning an infant Victoria Strahan, came into the limelight. The baby had been admitted to the home when she was an infant, her father had subsequently vanished, but now had re-appeared, claiming to be a Roman Catholic. The child had been admitted to the Home on the recommendation of the local Church of Ireland rector, who had been told by Mrs Strahan that they were a Protestant family. Her husband had deserted the family and Mrs Strahan had subsequently died. When William Strahan had presented himself at the Home he had provided no proof or guarantee of identity or means and the Home had been wary about committing the child to his care.⁶⁵ Some media reports claimed that the Cottage Home had kidnapped the infant and would not relinquish it. The Home however stressed that they wanted some assurance from the father that he would support the child. The case was well publicised. Once again the newspaper reports insinuated that such attempted proselytising was an inevitable feature of all Protestant charity and that therefore all needed to be vigilant to 'protect' the child.

In 1911, a deserted child was found, and baptised Norah Gray, and was then temporarily admitted to the Cottage Home before being brought into the workhouse. The lady who found the infant subsequently wished to maintain the child in Miss Carr's Home. However the workhouse guardians wanted the issue of the religion of the child settled. Their intransigence over the issue resulted in the child being left in the workhouse; the councillors' concern for religious identity over-rode their interest in the welfare of the child.⁶⁶ Such sectarian divides were a persistent feature in Irish welfare provision. The case of infants like Norah Gray highlighted to some

⁶⁵ *Evening Telegraph*, 22 November 1907, p.5.

⁶⁶ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, Nov and Dec. 1911.

Protestant commentators the fragility of claims for religious tolerance in a New Ireland:

Guardians up and down the country just now are showing an unusual tolerance towards those who differ from them in theological matters, so as to convince Protestants that they have nothing to fear under Home Rule, but one such act, as that perpetrated by the Rathdown Board on Wednesday will do more to illustrate the treatment Protestants will receive if a parliament is established in College Green than any number of make believe acts by other boards.⁶⁷

Such religious divides when linked to political differences meant that often the welfare of the child took a secondary role.

Rosa M. Barrett and the Cottage Home

From the outset, Rosa Barrett had been the principal innovator for the Kingstown Crèche and Cottage Home. The committee minutes of the time show an organised and systematic approach to the task at hand. The type of care needed, the finance involved, the current literature available all were entered into the minutes and recorded. Once the Crèche and Cottage Home had been established the administration grew considerably. Much of this burden was undertaken by Rosa Barrett, who wrote the annual reports, organised the meetings and acted as honorary secretary to the Home for many years. Alongside Rosa Barrett, there was a ladies' committee, and a general committee. As the years passed the Home's existence and continuance became more secure, however financial burdens remained an ever-persistent worry. The Home consistently evolved to keep track of changing trends in childcare. The institution of a kindergarten, on Froebel lines in the Home was one indication of new methods. To ensure a constant link a telephone line was installed between the Cottage Home and Rosa Barrett's home in 1892. The existence of some early drafts of typed letters also points to a personality eager to keep up to date with new trends!

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 9 Dec. 1911.

The remainder of the nineteenth century saw Rosa Barrett and the Cottage Home continue to provide much needed short-time care. The Home continued to receive more requests than could be adequately accommodated. This situation was exacerbated during World War I when food shortages and the determination of Rosa Barrett to shelter Belgian refugee children stretched the Home's resources. During the whole of 1919, Rosa Barrett suffered from ill health. In February a sub-committee had been set up to see how her work for the Home could be lessened and assistance was given. However 'it was the vigour of her personality, her mental ability and great and studied knowledge of children which had, up to now, carried the Home through many problems. Her religion was one of implicit faith in God's guidance through all aspects of work and play.'⁶⁸ The strain however began to show and in 1920, Rosa Barrett reluctantly left the Cottage Home, returning to England in 1922. She remained honorary President of the Cottage Home, and continued to take an active interest in its welfare until her death in 1936.

Other Homes in Dublin for young children

Barrett's *Guide to charities* provides information on other homes for younger children which included the Home for Orphan Girls in Phibsboro, founded in 1884. This was established to keep 'destitute Protestant orphans, of four and upwards, from the workhouse or elsewhere.'⁶⁹ The Female Orphan School, Dorset Street, catered for fourteen girls of between seven and eleven years. Another Female Orphan House in Harold's Cross, catering for eleven girls from three to eight years was designed to 'train orphans in the fear of the Lord.'⁷⁰ There was also a Cottage Home for Girls in Dundrum, established in 1882 which catered for ten Protestant girls.⁷¹ Many of these homes catered for small numbers of children and they were

⁶⁸ Olive Goodbody, *One hundred years a growing*, (Dublin, 1979), p.16.

⁶⁹ Barrett, *Guide to Dublin charities*, p.8.

⁷⁰ Barrett, *ibid*, p.9.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.7-9.

all female homes, girls were easier to train and considered more pliable and as the majority of homes were run by women, it was perhaps not unusual that they would concern themselves with female orphans.

The majority of children's homes catered for older children, of seven years and over. Children at this age were easier and cheaper to maintain and were more self-reliant. High rates of infant mortality combined with inexperienced nursing and sometimes ignorance made the fate of the infant a precarious one. Therefore many homes opted to look after children that had been weaned and reared. This of course placed an increased burden on the homes, which did look after the younger child.

Wider Cottage Home movement

Traditionally orphanages had been built on a large scale, barrack-like structures accommodating large numbers of in-mate. In 1873, the Local Government Board (which from 1871 onward controlled the Poor Law) was so concerned about the training, care and education of the pauper children under its care, that it asked Mrs Nassau Senior a poor law commissioner, to report on the education and training of poor law girls. Her report strongly criticised the large-scale structure and thus began a gradual move away from such large-scale institutions towards a more family like environment. She advocated the extension of boarding-out for children and the establishment of schools, on a more homelike character. Each family cottage would contain not more than twenty to thirty children of all ages, a 'mother' and 'father'. Each home was to be separate, all self-contained family units.⁷² The Cottage Home Village became popular among Poor Law Unions. On a smaller scale the Cottage Home with its emphasis on family, small numbers and a certain degree of self-sufficiency, with the cottages having gardens and plots of their own became a popular system for small scale philanthropic enterprise. The cottage

home could easily be converted from a domestic house. Such small-scale homes formed the mainstay of residential care for children.

Some of the larger versions of the Cottage Home Village included one created by Dr Barnardo. Dr Barnardo established in his Girl's Village Home at Barkingside, England the most well-known village system. He created a world in miniature, which showed his vision of childhood. The ivy-clad doll's house cottages clustered round the village green and the girls in white pinafores who lived in them captured the imagination of the public. All his waifs were to be transformed into industrious women of virtue and the Village Homes were to accomplish this aim in a carefully ordered world of work, stern love and good Christian influence under the care of 'motherly women', chosen for their earnest, abstaining and devout qualities. These ladies held charge over a group of twenty girls, from babyhood to teenage years.⁷³ For almost sixty-five years, life in the Village Home revolved round a ritual inspired by the founder himself.

Other Cottage Homes through out England, catering for younger children were less publicised. The Fulwood Cottage Homes operated essentially self-contained communities with long-serving staff allowing for little change in an isolating and restrictive structure. The Ecclesall Board of Guardians had decided to collect together all the children in their care. They chose to have a group of stone built semi-detached cottages constructed, the homes were ready for residents by 1905. This complex of homes, laundry and training halls became known as the Fulwood Cottage Homes.⁷⁴ The Homes eventually accommodated one hundred and twenty

⁷² Jean Heywood, *Children in care*, (London, 1959), p.72-3.

⁷³ June Rose, *For the sake of the children* (London, 1987), p.61.

⁷⁴ Marjorie Dunn, *For the love of the children, a story of the poor children of Sheffield and of Fulwood Cottage Homes* (Sheffield, 1989), p.37.

six boys, girls and infants. The children were treated well, with Christmas celebrations, an annual holiday and attendance at the local school.

However a traditional disciplined approach remained in some Poor Law Union cottage schemes. Such a disciplined approach persisted in some of the new Cottage Home Villages. For example, life at Perryfields Cottage Homes in Worcester could be quite harsh on its young inmates. The Village established in 1893, provided care for approximately eighty children, infants, boys and girls. This complex was laid out in the following manner:

The site of the Cottage Homes is arranged in three blocks, with accommodation for twenty-four boys, twenty-one girls and twenty-one infants. Each block has day rooms, dormitories, bathroom and lavatories: and in connection with the same, there are industrial rooms, wash house, and laundry, play yard and the necessary out-offices.⁷⁵

The Perryfields Cottage Homes were very similar in appearance to all the other Homes, including the Cottage Home in Kingstown, all had mock-Tudor decorative woodwork, gabled roofs and bay windows and their own grounds, providing vast amounts of fresh air.

For the children at Perryfield, parental death, illness, poverty and imprisonment were among the most common reasons for admission, factors repeated in all the homes. Many of the children were never to know their parents, having transferred directly from their workhouse birthplace to the Homes Infants block and then to the older blocks. The regime here was harsher than in the other villages, great priority was placed on discipline and swift punishment: all the children had duties to help maintain the homes, often hard, physical work. There was a ladies committee established which visited the homes regularly, however the Rev Carr protested that the Board was being 'over-ridden by outside ladies interference'.⁷⁶ Church attendance was compulsory for all children, this helped the Home be accountable to

⁷⁵ Eric Payne, *The Perryfields and Cottage Home story*, (Worcester County, 1994), p.11.

its donors and the keeping of meticulous accounts signifies the importance of self-justification.

Shenley Fields Cottage Homes were opened in 1887, when eighty children were removed from the workhouse, and were placed in the cottages under their new foster fathers and mothers. The Homes were erected for 'the purpose of furthering the desire to separate the children whose unfortunate circumstances placed them in care, from contact with adult paupers in the workhouse.'⁷⁷ Eight houses were built initially, these were gradually added to. As in the other Homes, Shenley Fields catered for infants and older children, and as in Perryfields the children were expected to work, each having assigned tasks, the atmosphere and memories of the Homes seem dependent on the foster mother and father and how they managed the Home, some are remembered with fondness, some not.

As in many of the Homes, the daily routine varied little, making for monotony. The Home Village, as in the other Villages looked idyllic, lovely cottages in well-maintained grounds. However this became part of the problem with the Cottage Home and the Cottage Home Village, they created an artificial unreal world cut off from the wider community. The Villages became too self-contained, the cottages often became villas and the community of children and 'caretakers' were unable to create or maintain social networks outside the Homes. In many Homes the original educational and family aspects of the Homes became submerged under a smooth administrative procedure, which created uniformity and inhibited creativity and flexibility. This appears especially true of the Homes like Perryfields and Shenley Fields built to cater for workhouse children, private homes were more open to innovation and change. Many of the Village Homes closed in the 1960s, when a

⁷⁶ Berrows Journal, 9 March 1895 in Payne, *Perryfields Story*, p.31.

change in direction in child welfare, in the wake of the Curtis Report, made Homes a redundant idea. The system now advocated foster care, boarding out on a large scale. However the Cottage Home Villages did create for the first time a family sense, it banished large orphanages and enabled homes to be started without an enormous outlay and to expand gradually as the funds became available. Thus the 'children's home' replaced the asylum or orphanage, and the needs and interests of the child became paramount. It was however in smaller scale homes, like the Cottage Home in Kingstown, that the cottage home system came nearest its ideal, a small community of children and carers, which strove at all time to remain integrated into the local community and not become isolated and staid.

Personal account of life in a small-scale Cottage Home

Few personal accounts exist, recreating life in a small scale cottage home, but one that does is Joan Warne's reminiscences of life in the Children's Home and Mission, Woodford. This was a home very like the Cottage Home or William Smith's Homes, a home established for children whose mothers or fathers were forced to relinquish children on a short-term basis due to a change in circumstances. Joan Warne was born in 1924. In 1928, her father's family business collapsed, two years later her mother died suddenly, leaving six children. The father, devastated, was unable to cope and so the three youngest children were received into the Children's Home and Mission in South Woodford.

The Children's Home and Mission had been founded in 1899, primarily for motherless children, not specifically orphans. The co-founders, Herbert White (Pa) and Rosa Hutchin (Ma) together ran the Home and Mission, both had a strong faith and Pa had felt it God's will that he would help 'Ma' run the Home. 'Ma' was about

⁷⁷ Jill Plumley, *The Children's Home Village; 100 years of memories of the Shenley Fields Cottage Homes*, (England, 1992), p.4.

thirty and single when she took a little orphan girl into her flat to care for her. Thus the work began. 'Ma' had immense willpower, which fuelled her care of the children. A basic weekly amount of money came from relatives, but beyond that all funds came from prayer!⁷⁸

There were approximately eighty children in the Home, boys and girls, aged seven to eleven years. The children were accepted into the Home by recommendation. The third Saturday of each month was Visiting Day, lasting from two to five. The children eagerly anticipated this day. Each year great preparations were undertaken for the Annual Thanksgiving Service- 'our part was to sit on the platform and sing and recite to the packed congregation and perhaps act out a Christian message.'⁷⁹ The afternoon service included a report by 'Pa' on various aspects of the work, a health report and letters from past children. Then a guest speaker, who frequently talked for too long, followed by a special tea. The routine of the year was broken by the Annual, Christmas, Magic Lantern Displays, drill and the Annual Garden Party. On leaving the Home, Joan Warne was immediately struck by how sheltered they had been in the Home, even though they had attended local schools, they were always the 'Home children'.⁸⁰

Conclusion

The nineteenth century witnessed an explosion in child-care provision. Partly spawned by an evangelical movement keen to 'save the child', and an increased awareness that the child had rights separate from and distinct to its parents making it worthy of 'protection'. The realisation that an abrupt change in circumstances through death or illness could have a major impact on the family dictated the

⁷⁸ Joan Warne, *My other family; a Woodford Children's Home in the thirties*, (Essex, 1996), p.38-9.

⁷⁹ Warne, *ibid*, p.100.

⁸⁰ Warne, p.1.

necessity of providing short-term care, as a bulwark against the workhouse. The growing numbers of working mothers prompted by economic necessity into limited employment options made the provision of day nurseries an imperative. Despite objections, Mrs Hilton in London and Rosa Barrett in Dublin, pioneered the day nursery, providing safe and secure accommodation for children. The need to keep children from the pollution of the street, both in terms of dirt and vice, was an important factor in promoting day care. An amalgam of ideas relating to duty, worthiness and the need to 'protect and train' motivated the founders. By insisting on parental contributions to the day nursery and cottage home, founders like Barrett wished to ensure the continuance of the bond between parent and child. The organisers of the day nursery saw the responsibility of making the parents aware of their duties to their children as an important facet of their work.

Many of those involved had an implicit belief in the duty of Christians to serve God in an active way. This helped them to justify and explain their work, the unquestionable duty that they should live for and work for their fellow man. This chapter traced the growth and development of childcare, the increased provision of day nurseries in an Irish, British and American context. Similar aims motivated all and very often the organisation and running of the nurseries was alike, the stress on cleanliness and self-reliance being a universal one. The day nursery provided a 'bright, clean environment' as opposed to the working class home.

The growth of day nurseries was but one aspect of evolving child welfare. The necessity of short-term residential care was recognised by pioneers like Rosa Barrett who saw a need to provide a refuge for 'motherless infants'. While old-style orphanages remained current, there was also the realisation of a new dream of residential care- The Cottage Home. The Cottage Home as the name suggests was to be a small-scale development, with a ready-made family unit. Such ideas linked

the Victorian belief in the purity of the countryside and self-sufficiency with the virtues of simple family life. All this would provide a 'proper' environment for the child to prosper.

This chapter, using a series of specific examples showed how the cottage home system evolved, both in the private and public sphere and focuses specifically on the only cottage home in Ireland for children under six, the Cottage Home for Little Children in Kingstown, founded in 1880 by Rosa Barrett. Many of the crèches established in Ireland and elsewhere were founded on the initiative of ladies and were subsequently run by them. The majority originated from a humanitarian concern for the plight of the poor. Their attitude was to reject institutionalism and through their emphasis on preserving the family, they strengthened the virtues of the family and enhanced their own role as carers and public workers. In advocating more enlightened childcare provision and progressive residential care, women like Barrett represent reformist philanthropists!

Notes of chapter

The passing in January 1918 of the Representation of the People Act, signalled the end of a long and arduous campaign by a disparate group of women for the parliamentary franchise. The suffrage movement represented for many women a lifelong commitment to the cause of women's rights, a vote they believed would secure the

CHAPTER FOUR

ROSA BARRETT AND THE

INTERNATIONAL WELFARE AND

SUFFRAGE MOVEMENTS

Aims of chapter

The passing in January 1918, of the Representation of the People Act, signalled the end of a long and active campaign by a sizeable group of women for the parliamentary franchise. The suffrage movement represented for many women a lifelong commitment; an earnest endeavour to obtain the vote, a vote they believed would secure for them greater representation and a more active role in policy making. Such a campaign was not purely a British Isles phenomenon, but was instead one taking place all over the world where significant women's movements emerged, for whom the late nineteenth century signalled the emergence of an active campaign for the parliamentary franchise. From New Zealand to Iceland, the Americas and Asia, all saw a sizeable upsurge in the interest of women seeking active representation. The purpose of this chapter is to place the Irish movement in such an international context and highlight why for so many women, the vote was seen as an instrument of change, a means of reforming the society, in which they lived and increasingly worked. With a specific emphasis on Rosa Barrett and the Irish movement, this chapter attempts to highlight the similarity of aims and the cross-cultural connections that made women aspire, not alone to the vote and reform, but to a transnational co-operative spirit. Such a spirit was put under severe strain during World War I and the idealism of previous years was never rekindled, however the war also provided an enhanced scope for women to 'prove' their worth, an opportunity many seized.

Reasons for involvement

A significant number of women saw the vote as a means of actively reforming society. Many contemporaries readily accepted such a movement of social reform. For many clergy and churchmen, the emphasis of the suffragists on temperance and

prostitution work highlighted their 'natural' abilities as carers and nurturers. Such special qualities would encourage social reform and imbue society with a more Christian, caring, and humane ethos. This was an agenda with which many of the women would have agreed, for they too saw their evolving role in philanthropy as a justification for increased public work, in a sense through campaigning for legislative reform and by collectively caring for society's less fortunate, they had *earned* the vote.

This aspect of the movement has received little or no attention in Ireland and it is a theme worth investigating, as philanthropy and organised charity played such a large part in the daily lives of many women. It gave them a sustaining community of like-minded women and occasionally men, which permitted them to assert themselves in the public world. For many, an active involvement in philanthropy had provided the necessary organisational acumen to run suffrage organisations. The ability to convene and chair meetings, to speak in public, to appeal for funds and supporters were all valuable lessons learned from philanthropic involvement. For many women, the suffrage movement provided a discussion forum, a circle of friends and an international context for their efforts. Philanthropy had created such circles and in many cases, such women became the foot soldiers of the suffrage campaign - women like Isabella Tod, Anna Haslam, Josephine Butler and Rosa M. Barrett, all had active roots in philanthropy. As Luddy says, 'membership of a voluntary organisation was a respectable way for women to exercise their social duty and provided them with a legitimate platform from which to voice their social and political concerns'.¹

¹ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995), p.213.

For many such women their work in reformist organisations, which has been discussed in the two previous chapters, had helped to create committed reformers and suffrage workers. Reflecting its social origins the suffrage campaign was primarily a middle class movement, re-emphasising the property qualification inherent in nineteenth century voting. Only those with leisure, a certain degree of education and independence could devote their time to so abstract a concept as suffrage. For the vast majority of women, survival was the aim. This though, does not belittle or undermine the serious or deep commitment of many women in pursuing this ideal.

Origins of campaign

The first public suffrage meeting was held in Dublin in 1870, at which Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the English suffragist leader spoke. In 1876 the Haslams, Anna and Thomas, founded the Dublin Women's Suffrage Association (DWSA), the first permanent suffrage organisation in Dublin. The DWSA worked to educate public opinion by writing to the newspapers and holding drawing room meetings. The society also held public meetings, whenever the opportunity of a high-profile speaker presented itself. The DWSA was closely linked to the English movement, sending delegates to attend conferences and meetings of the National Union of Women Workers. At all times it actively campaigned for the franchise. It followed political developments in Ireland and Britain to avail of every favourable opportunity to lobby in support of its objective.² It organised petitions to the House of Commons, sent deputations and letters to Irish MP's urging them to introduce or

² Rosemary Cullen-Owens, *Smashing times; a history of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement 1889-1922*, (Dublin, 1984), p.174.

support bills or amendments to bills to enfranchise women. It exhorted 'influential' women in various parts of the country to lobby their MPs. It noted with approval advances in the various feminist campaigns.³ Despite being staunch Unionists the Haslams were committed to crossing barriers of religion and politics. The DWSA was explicitly non-party and Haslam consistently tried to widen its membership.

The DWSA membership remained extremely small but one of its earliest members was Professor Barrett. He was according to his sister Rosa Barrett always an active supporter of women's suffrage and of the efforts to obtain better educational opportunities and the opening of wider careers for women.⁴ The first mention of the Barretts in connection with the suffrage movement concerns Professor Barrett who is listed among others, with Isabella Tod and Mrs Haslam as attending a meeting held in Leinster Hall in Dublin in October 1880. The meetings moved that:

The exclusion of women possessing the statutory qualifications from voting in the election of members of Parliament deprives a large part of the property, intelligence and industry of the country of all participation in its government: and is therefore injurious both to them and to the community at large.⁵

At a subsequent meeting in October 1881, Professor Barrett was also present. His commitment to the suffrage campaign extended beyond merely attending meetings for he is listed as being a member of the Association's committee in 1885 and is recorded as presenting a petition to the House of Lords seeking the women's franchise.⁶

³ Cullen-Owens, *Smashing Times*, p.174.

⁴ Rosa M. Barrett, 'Sir W.F. Barrett's social and other activities' in *International Psychic Gazette*, May 1932, p.125.

⁵ MS Press Cuttings Book, Dublin Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association, 2 October 1880, (Russell Library, Maynooth).

⁶ Minute Book, DWSA 1885.

By 1885 Rosa Barrett had also become involved in the suffrage campaign. She was mentioned as attending a meeting at Molesworth Hall, wherein the Rev J. Carmichael presided and stated that:

The cause of the social emancipation of women was now triumphantly surviving the ridicule with which it was once assailed and it was now approaching the region of practical politics: Women were proving in many ways their thorough capacity for all educational and social work.⁷

In this meeting and the one held in 1880 the speakers stressed the unfairness of depriving intelligent women of the vote, women who would as reiterated throughout the chapter 'quicken the life and hasten the progress of the nation'.⁸

The membership of the DWSA remained extremely small. By 1896 it had only succeeded in attracting thirty-four committee members. The meetings Rosa Barrett did attend were usually concerned with reports of women as poor law guardians or social workers and meetings on issues relating to children and wider reform measures. She invariably attended the meetings in March, April and June.⁹ Few of the committee members, save the Haslams attended all the meetings. Given the initial frustrating lack of progress, the meetings became quite repetitive, which may explain a general reluctance to greater attendance. It was not till the prospect of the much-anticipated Local Government Act gave an impetus to the organisation, that a more active campaign was undertaken by the DWSA.

Local Government Act

The Local Government of Ireland Act 1898 set up county councils and urban and rural district councils. It gave women all local government franchises on the same qualification as men, as well as making women eligible for election as urban and

⁷ *The Daily Express*, 6 February 1885.

⁸ *Ibid.*

rural councillors, though eligibility as county councillors was withheld until 1911. For the DWSA this was a significant step towards the parliamentary franchise, as it could encourage women to become more actively involved in local politics, which may well entice them into national politics. According to the DWSA annual report:

For the vast majority of our countrywomen, their political education commences with the present year. The experience of participating in local government will make them not only desire the Parliamentary vote, but willing to take some little trouble in order to obtain it.¹⁰

As the quote shows, for Mrs Haslam and her organisation, participation at a local and community level in politics would in a sense empower women to strive harder for the parliamentary vote. The campaign to obtain the local government vote had brought a change in name, in 1898 the DWSA renamed itself the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association. The parliamentary franchise remained their core objective, the local government vote was not, 'and never could be a substitute for the parliamentary vote, to which all duly qualified women are morally as indubitably entitled as any male voters'.¹¹

In an attempt to generate wider enthusiasm for active political involvement the IWSLGA organised a public meeting for ladies in the Parochial Hall in Kingstown in 1898. The principal paper was to be on 'The Public Duties of Irishwomen', read by Mrs Haslam, but Mrs Lawrenson, PLG, Mrs Maurice Dockrell and Miss Rosa Barrett were included on the speech list in the advertisements - showing that all

⁹ MS Minutes Book DWSA, (Russell Library, Maynooth).

¹⁰ Anna Haslam, *Englishwoman's Review*, 15 October 1898, pp.223-5.

¹¹ Irishwomen's Suffrage and Local Government Association Annual Report for 1900, (Dublin, 1901), p.11.

were known in the local community.¹² The object of the meeting was to bring before women the privileges bestowed on them by the new Act. Subsequent to the meeting, a local suffrage branch was established in Kingstown.

Social service

By May 1902, the Dublin branch of the Social Service Union was holding meetings to further the candidature of Miss Emily Buchanan for Poor Law Election. Miss Buchanan was a reform candidate and the Union pledged itself to only support reform candidates in the forthcoming Poor Law Elections. In defining what this entailed, Rosa Barrett outlined the following set of resolutions:

- The classification of the aged poor
- The classification of lunatics and epileptics
- The better care of children in the nurseries and more efficient supervision of boarded out children by ladies.¹³

In pursuing reform and actively supporting reformist candidates, the Social Service Union and the wider suffrage community was pledging itself to active political involvement at a local level.

Strategies and new departures

Women's suffrage bills were repeatedly introduced and defeated in Parliament between 1886 and 1911. The introduction of an amendment was preceded by a great flurry of activity, petitions would be sent, deputation's made and letters written to all MP's seeking their stance on the question. The I.W.S.L.G.A.

¹² MS Cuttings Book, advertisement bill 1898. Mrs Dockrell was a Protestant, Unionist and Dublin Urban District Councillor, Mrs Lawson was one of the first women elected as a Poor Law Guardian.

¹³ MS Cuttings book, May 1902.

repeatedly in its reports urged women to write to their representatives, thereby highlighting that a sizeable interest existed in the question. Between 1886 and 1905, the Conservative Party was almost continually in power. Both Conservative and Liberal were fearful of tipping the balance in their opponents' favour and so were wary of supporting the women's movement. The suffrage campaign though persistently waged by campaigners had remained small and had enjoyed limited success and dwindling public attention. For example the DWSA repeatedly sent accounts of meetings or campaigns to Dublin papers, but either they did not appear at all or else only printed a portion of the report.¹⁴

However the formation in 1903 of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst would serve to both re-invigorate and divide the campaign. Militancy and its escalation was a development people felt compelled either to support or to disavow. Militancy according to Haslam and the IWSLGA undermined the seriousness of what they were determined to achieve, while at the same time they felt themselves unable to condemn outrightly their actions, saying that a growing sense of impatience resulting from the political neglect of the issue had provoked more militant action:

We refuse to join in the easy, but not very chivalrous denunciation of the women who, under the severest provocation have adopted them. Continued denial of those rights by government after government, for nearly half a century, has become an intolerable grievance and the women who have gone to prison in their efforts to remove it, are entitled to our warmest gratitude.¹⁵

However the increased militant action of the suffragettes and the unwillingness of the IWSLGA to condemn it outrightly provoked disquiet within the organisation. In

¹⁴ MS Minute Book, 7 November 1907.

November 1908, two members of the committee withdrew in consequence of the militancy in England.¹⁵

In January 1909, a special meeting of the committee was called at the request of Rosa Barrett and others, their object being to re-consider the group's revised report, which included the above citation. The report was voted in by a majority of the committee, while some of those unable to accept it, including Rosa Barrett later withdrew their membership. For Rosa Barrett, the condoning of the militant action was an outright contradiction of the IWSLGA traditional resolve to use only parliamentary and peaceful methods to promote their objectives. As such she and others felt compelled to tender their resignation.

In 1910, Prime Minister Asquith conceded to the formation of a Conciliation Committee which was composed of a number of members of all sides and whose task was to come up with acceptable women's suffrage bill. The Conciliation Bill came before Parliament on a number of occasions between 1910 and 1912. The Bill had to reconcile all factions of the suffrage movement while maintaining enough support in Parliament to get it passed. However with all the Irish Party voting against it or abstaining the Bill was defeated. Willoughby Dickinson proposed the 1913 Woman Suffrage Amendment to the Reform (Suffrage) Bill, Irish members once again voted against the bill. The final attempt before the war was the Home Rule amending bill, which was to have been introduced to the House of Lords after the summer holidays in 1914. This bill did not materialise because of the outbreak of World War I.

¹⁵ IWSLGA Report for 1908, (Dublin, 1909), p.14-5.

¹⁶ MS Minute Book IWSLGA, 26 November 1908.

The persistent apathy of the Irish party to women's suffrage was a continual irritant to the suffrage question. For the suffragists, those with seats in Parliament were the only ones with the power of introducing a franchise bill and thus they had to be pursued with vigour. The irony that those who wouldn't support them were themselves seeking sovereignty was not lost on the suffragists. A key target was John Redmond, leader of the Irish Party. He epitomised what they were up against. For Redmond, Home Rule was the paramount concern; women's suffrage would upset the balance of power, delay a Home Rule Bill and anyway was most probably an unnecessary measure. The Irish suffragists faced a further dilemma. In seeking a vote from a United Kingdom parliament, they faced the wrath of their nationalist colleagues for pursuing a traitor's path. Their argument was simply that they wanted the vote from anyone who would give it! As each bill was defeated, the chances of success grew fainter.

Ideology linking Philanthropy and Suffrage

Paula Baker in writing about the American suffrage movement states that suffragists believed that the conduct and content of electoral politics, voting and office holding would benefit from women's special talents. Temperance activists and suffragists in the late nineteenth century wanted political equality so that the special qualities of womanhood could be better expressed and exercised: femininity provided a sort of expertise needed in formal politics. If not maintained by church, government and community, woman and the home would preserve the social order.¹⁷ Through philanthropic organisations they worked to correct what they defined as injustices

toward women and children. This belief in public motherhood, the idea of women as social housekeepers formed the basis for some of the suffrage movement. The scale of social problems required the help of the state and therefore it was to the parliamentary vote that women campaigners turned their attention. In this way according to Baker politics became domesticated. Women's charitable work had hardly made a dent in the social dislocation of industrial society. Women therefore turned their efforts toward securing legislation that addressed what they perceived to be the sources of social problems. Such a movement saw the parliamentary vote as a tool of ameliorating society's problems.¹⁸

In Ireland similar concerns motivated the Irish Women's Reform League, the Dublin branch of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation. As discussed in chapter one reformist philanthropy though relatively small in size was ultimately the more vocal, particularly in relation to the politicisation of women. For as a contributor to *Common Cause*, Miss Matheson, a Bermingham settlement worker, said in 1913: 'as a class social workers probably feel their un-enfranchised position more keenly than any body of women, for social workers have all the instincts of reformers and to such political helplessness must be galling'.¹⁹

Public support

The involvement of women at voluntary and local government level was considered appropriate places for women to work, contemporary social thought even went so far as to highlight the importance of that particular kind of work – personal social

¹⁷ Paula Baker in 'The domestication of politics, women and American political society, 1780-1920' in *Women, the state and welfare*, ed. By Linda Gordon (Wisconsin, 1990), p.55-92.

¹⁸ Baker, *ibid*.

work that women did at a local level. Patricia Hollis *Ladies elect: women in local government, 1865-1914* stresses the extent to which women's social action was premised on the idea of extending their work at home into the local community. The vast majority of female activists were concerned to address what late Victorians and Edwardians often called the 'social problem', that is, poverty. Local administration and even local politics were considered to be well within women's proper sphere.

Both Hollis and Baker have argued that, using the language of separate spheres, women succeeded in 'domesticating politics'. Even if they were implicated in the administration of a poor relief system that conferred considerable stigma on recipients, it is argued that women succeeded in 'humanising' important aspects of that system, especially in regard to the regime of the workhouses. Hollis had contended that 'women remade the workhouse' by the attention they gave to detail and to the individual inmates.²⁰ In Ireland, the Irish Workhouse Association, founded in 1896, lobbied successfully, for political action to be taken with regard to child protection and workhouse management. The IWA promoted women as poor law guardians, sought to improve the management of workhouse resources and advocated the employment of properly trained nurses to minister to the workhouse sick. Barrett was also involved in the Irish Workhouse Association and was as we have seen actively part of the campaign to have women elected as Poor law Guardians. For many women, as Hollis and Baker have argued, their local involvement spurred them into the campaign for the parliamentary franchise. They

¹⁹ Miss Matheson, *Common Cause* (London, 1913), p.54.

²⁰ Patricia Hollis, *Ladies elect; women in local government, 1865-1914*, (Oxford, 1987), p.285.

had proven their suitability for local office, therefore why should they not be allowed to serve society in a wider capacity.

Idealism

An idealistic faith in the power of the vote was reinforced at all levels. Campaigners genuinely believed that the possession of a vote would reward and justify citizenship and allow all a representative voice. Such lofty ideals and the idea that citizenship naturally brought duties were part of a sincere belief in the importance and nobility of the franchise. The input of women was required to truly realise society's potential for greatness. Women were believed to have a marked difference in outlook to their male counterparts, therefore the present condition of society, a society plagued by poverty and injustice were plain evidence of the lack of women's particular contribution. In an editorial on 'The Need for Women in Politics' in the *Irish Citizen* in November 1912, the author wrote:

Such grim and squalid realities form the starting point of the demand for the intelligent co-operation of women on a national scale in the work of social reorganisation. They concern women more intimately and closely than they can possibly concern men. Children are a nation's most important assets and women are the guardians and nurture the young. Votes for women will everywhere train and discipline the instinct of maternal responsibility will elicit a volume and impulse of truer thinking on all subjects connected with the most elementary needs of the people.²¹

In *Women in a New Ireland* (1912), Susan Day described what the heritage of the previous fifty years meant to Irishwomen:

In profession after profession they have proved their merit. On county councils, Boards of Guardians and committees they have vindicated their public spiritedness. But her position on administrative boards has only increased women's demands for the vote. In administering the law she has

²¹ Edit. 'The need for women in politics' in the *Irish Citizen*, 17 May 1913.

learned how to criticise it, and its weak spots stare up at her in helpless and hopeless and often tragic confusion.²²

As Susan Day highlights, active participation, as Mrs Haslam and the IWSLGA had predicted, whetted the appetite of women for participatory politics, while also emphasising their subservient position in the overall scheme of affairs.

Barrett and local government

The provisions of the Local Government Act had also encouraged Rosa Barrett to pursue active office. In 1908 the Kingstown Urban Council elected her a member of the Kingstown Technical Instruction Committee.²³ In 1911, she along with Professor Barrett was re-elected to the technical committee. Miss Barrett was also elected on the Distress Committee. In April 1911, she stood as candidate in the County Council and Poor Law Elections for the Rathdown Board of Guardians in the Kingstown/Monkstown ward. The candidates included long-established committee members like J.J. Kennedy, Chairman of the Rathdown Board of Guardians and Edward Field and two newcomers, Rosa Barrett and Thomas Weir, a reform candidate. The results were predictable, with both Kennedy and Field getting overwhelming support and retaining their seats.²⁴ For women like Rosa Barrett, the parliamentary franchise promised the opportunity to be on equal terms and to directly influence the areas of concern most pertinent to them, namely the welfare of women and children. The franchise campaign allowed them to develop their talents and join a worldwide movement, optimistic for reform and social progress, as they defined it.

²² Susan Day, *Women in a New Ireland*, (Munster Women's Franchise League, Cork 1912), p.3.

²³ *Bray and South Dublin Herald*, 19 December 1908 and 11 February 1911.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 29 April 1911 and 3 June 1911.

Suffrage, welfare and Internationalism

The suffrage movement was part of a determined effort on behalf of middle class women around the world to try and create a collective identity. Using international women's organisations that together would promote a transnational spirit of harmony and co-operation. The International Congress of Women, the International Alliance of Women and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, all proclaimed their openness to women of all continents, religions, political affiliations, occupations and race. They worked for a range of goals, organised large numbers of women from different parts of the globe and survived over a long span of years.²⁵

The International Congress of Women had as its express purpose;

- to provide a means of communication between women's organisations in all countries.
- To provide opportunities for women to meet together from all parts of the world to confer upon questions relating to the welfare of the commonwealth, the family and the individual.²⁶

The Congress was a federation of national councils, which met every four years. The Congress usually convened for several days to discuss issues of importance regarding welfare and women's role in society. During the congress, the groups were addressed by a series of speakers, experts in their respective fields. The

²⁵ Rupp, 'constructing internationalism: the case of transnational women's organisations' in *American Historical Review*, December 1994, p.1573.

meetings provided a forum for women of different countries to meet and discuss items of specific concern. Being part of an international organisation also gave determination and motivation to individual women working at home. If national hatred could be taught, so too, they believed, could international understanding and love. Despite the limitations, women's internationalism in the period before World War I points the way to one form of global identity.²⁷

Emphasising inclusivity, the ICW assiduously avoided taking sides on controversial issues, including in the early years, the fundamental question of women's right to vote. In fact, Lady Aberdeen, long-time ICW president, insisted that anti-suffragists deserved a hearing in a meeting on women's political rights at a congress in 1899, spurring suffragists to organise their own international organisation, the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, founded in 1904. However by 1909, the ICW believed that the vote would garner for women an increased and necessary role in social and moral welfare. Reiterating the argument made by philanthropic women around the world the Congress believed that:

we are awakening to the realisation of the greatness of our work as women. It is no longer only my house, my home, my children. We have learnt from the Great Teacher that the whole human race is one family and we women are its mothers. All that concerns my child concerns me, therefore all that concerns all children concerns me. Women's influence is as necessary to a well-governed town as it is to a well regulated home. Women have been and probably will be for hundreds of years to come the great spiritual and moral force in the world.²⁸

The international nature of these organisations was part of a belief that to formulate harmonious relations between countries, international bodies would promote discussion and co-operation. The notion of women's difference from men, whether

²⁶ *Reports of the International Congress of Women*, (Toronto, 1910), p.417.

²⁷ Rupp, 'Constructing internationalism', p.1600.

biologically or socially based, found organisational expression in the separatist nature of the three major international bodies. The presence of flags and national anthems at international congresses both expressed national loyalties and symbolised the process of bringing different nationalities together under a banner of internationalism. Personal interaction at congresses, meetings and organisational headquarters solidified the notion that national borders could not separate women committed to internationalism. For many, attendance at a congress, followed perhaps by a few weeks visiting in the country of choice allowed, according to a correspondent to *Jus Suffragi* for a 'full and frank interchange of views between delegates, and no one who was present can doubt the benefit of such opportunities, and their value in bringing enlightenment and inspiration to the Council workers in the various countries'.²⁹ Mobilising a wide variety of existing women's groups, firstly organised into National Councils of Women, the ICW claimed to represent four to five million women by 1907 and thirty six million by 1925.³⁰

However in constructing an international perspective, power politics were replicated, the organisations promoting internationalism though made up of women from all over the world, reproduced a collective identity dominated by European ideals. Women from European or former European colonies, like America and Canada dominated the organisations at the upper echelons of power. The presence of three official languages, English, French and German also favoured European women and many complained that the costs of trilingual communication itself bogged things down. The continued practice of prayers to open and close meetings

²⁸ 'Suffrage and the rights of citizenship', *International Congress of Women report*, (Toronto, 1910), pp.201-9.

²⁹ *Jus Suffragi*, 15 October 1909, p.269.

³⁰ Rupp, 'constructing internationalism', p.1574.

and observance of Christian holidays emphasised the Protestant dominance at meetings. Without access to financial resources, a woman could not participate in international activity. Occasionally friends, patrons or national organisations, came through with financial support as in 1909 when the IWSLGA funded Miss Buchanan's trip to Toronto, for the ICW conference.³¹ To have a powerful voice required funding, Lady Aberdeen paid for everything during her long presidency of the ICW and in fact her successor would not take over until guaranteed that her expenses would be paid.³²

Organisations like the ICW were quite articulate in seeing what they could do to improve society and their shared sense of injustice was a potent one. These organisations were quite forward thinking in deliberately challenging the notion that all reform schemes had to be reworked to fit individual countries, that there were no common questions or problems, in showing that this was not the case, such organisations pursued quite a radical agenda and in allowing national councils to prepare their own reform schemes, individual and collective efforts could be applauded.

Local Organisations

In the United Kingdom, the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) represented the ICW. This union was organised to encourage sympathy of thought and purpose among the women of Great Britain and Ireland. It was 'to promote the social, civil, moral and religious welfare of women; to focus and to redistribute information likely to be of service to women workers; to federate women's

³¹ MS Minutes IWSLGA 1909 (Russell Library, Maynooth).

³² Rupp, *ibid*, p.1577.

organisations; and to encourage and assist the formation of local branches'.³³ The organisations had branches investigating legislation affecting women, industrial questions, preventive and rescue work, work among girls' clubs, international questions, educational matters and public health. The National Union had quite a wide mandate and held an annual conference dedicated to a specific area of social concern each year.³⁴ In 1898 Rosa Barrett urged the affiliation of the IWSLGA to the National Union of Women Workers and in 1899 she proposed Mrs Haslam as the group's representative on the NUWW committee.³⁵ In 1903, 1904 and again in 1906 Rosa Barrett attended the annual NUWW conference as the representative of the IWSLGA.³⁶

By 1909 Local Council Branches of the NUWW had increased to forty-two and approximately 1,247 local societies were affiliated to these forty-two Councils. The NUWW had taken public action for women medical inspectors in schools; inspection of all infants put out to nurse for money payment, for establishment of children's courts and for women to be eligible to serve on local authorities.³⁷ Affiliating to a larger organisation brought increased authority and determination to a group. Given the initial limited nature of the movement in Ireland, membership of the NUWW, of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), all this provided a vocal lobbying force, as well as increased resources and better access to popular speakers and literature.

³³ Rev. J.B. Haldane, *Guide to social work*, (London, 1911), p.468.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ MS Minutes IWSLGA 7 June 1898 and 14 September 1899.

³⁶ MS Minutes IWSLGA 22 October 1903, 22 September 1904 and Sept. 1906.

³⁷ *Report of the International Council of Women- British and Irish Council Report*, (Toronto, 1910), p.326.

Barrett and internationalism

As mentioned above, Rosa Barrett had been a keen supporter of the importance of Irish organisations affiliating to a larger group. Throughout her philanthropic career, she laid great stress on the value of continually monitoring what was going on elsewhere and seeing how applicable it was to the current Irish situation. In her promotion of American and European reforms in adoption and juvenile laws, Barrett stressed the progressive laws which existed in other countries, as the United Kingdom continued to legislatively lag behind. Public interest needed to be aroused, for the work of caring for and rescuing children ought not to rest wholly upon voluntary efforts.

While President of the Irish Women's Temperance Union in 1905-6, Barrett was in close correspondence with both the American and British temperance movements. All referred to each other in warm terms as sister or friends, the IWTU organised speaker tours at which notable foreign temperance workers spoke. There were also up to date with current literature.³⁸ While President of the IWTU she submitted a paper with J.S. Gibbons, Esq. (Chairman of the Prisons Board) at the International Penitentiary Conference at Budapest in 1905, on inebriety and crime. She also presented a paper on Juvenile Criminals at the International Congress for the Welfare and Protection of Children. In both she stressed the importance of education and particularly the emphasis that should be placed on rehabilitation in prison and training, a topic which received far more attention and indeed funding in American states.³⁹ Barrett had been a member of the International Congress of

³⁸ *Everybody's Monthly*, September 1906.

³⁹ Gibbons and Barrett, *Inebriety and crime with some state remedies*, reprints of papers presented at the International Penitentiary Conference, Buda-pesth 1905, (Dublin, 1905), p.27-38.

Women since its foundation and she had helped prepare the discussion papers on current legislation for the Congress held in London in 1899. She was also invited as a delegate to the International Congress of Women held in Toronto in 1909, again to present a paper on 'the treatment of juvenile offenders'. She joined Mrs Joseph T. Bowen, Chairperson of the Juvenile Court Committee, Chicago on the platform.⁴⁰

International Congress of Women – Toronto 1909. The social dimension!

The International Congress of Women Conference held in Toronto in 1909 was a unique opportunity for women from all over the world to meet and exchange views on all manner of social and legislative issues. As such it gave many women a sense of self-affirmation. The Toronto Congress though also provided a unique cultural experience. Given the distance many women had travelled, it was decided to have a tour of Canada and America for interested participants. A trip of this sort was according to the Norwegian delegation writing later on their memories of the visit:

A bold conception to send some one hundred women representing eleven nationalities off on a twenty-two days' tour, within the narrow confines of a Pullman train. The dust and the heat and the inconveniences of a Pullman dressing rooms will soon be forgotten, while the friendships made, the lessons learned, and the delights of those days of travel will live in our memories forever.⁴¹

Throughout their visit the women received overwhelming generosity, hospitality and kindness. Wherever they went, Detroit, Boston, Chicago or New York, they were shown all novel or interesting welfare institutions, but alongside such working day there was 'quite a bit of fun'. For Rosa Barrett, the trip afforded an opportunity to visit the Juvenile Courts, to see various Remand Homes and the children's court in Boston. To see in operation the reforms for which Rosa Barrett and other

⁴⁰ Rosa Barrett, *Proceedings of the International Congress of Women*, (Toronto, 1910), p.190.

⁴¹ Lady Aberdeen (ed.), *Our lady of the sunshine and her international visitors*, (London, 1910), p.89.

activists had campaigned was a rewarding and encouraging experience. This trip provided a once in a lifetime opportunity to visit institutions, meet like-minded people and discuss shared interests as well as the opportunity to make friends. Such friendships obviously did become lifelong, for in later life Rosa Barrett still referred to her Canadian friends.⁴²

International dimension in literature

Irish reformists were aware of progress made abroad; they were isolated neither physically nor intellectually. Publicity tours organised for outside speakers and the belief that such speakers would provide increased public awareness, highlights that the suffrage members believed the general public would identify the celebrity of such speakers. Authors of international repute were recognised by Irish women. Louie Bennett cited the work of author Olive Schreiner as a defining influence on her growing awareness of women's inferior status.⁴³ The presence of feminist journals, international magazines like *Jus Suffragi*, the newspaper of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, the *Englishwoman* and the *Englishwoman's Review* gave in-depth information on all matters relating to women. The *Englishwoman's Yearbook* was the annual listing of all aspects of life with which women were involved. As it said itself, 'The *Englishwoman's Yearbook* is much too well known to need any introduction: no woman who takes any part in public or social life can afford to be without it, especially in view of the great renaissance of women now going on'.⁴⁴ All of these publications provided detailed coverage of the Irish movement. The IWSLGA from the outset worked to ensure the presence of magazines and journals like *Votes for Women* and *Common Cause*

⁴² *The Times*, 28 May 1925.

⁴³ R.M. Fox, *Louie Bennett – her life and times*, (Dublin, 1958), p.33-5.

in various reading rooms around the city. These magazines were read and widely distributed, and given that all the members usually knew each other, they most likely exchanged magazines. By conversing all knew what was happening around the world.

The *Irish Citizen*, in its book reviews was concerned with the latest additions in suffrage literature as well as relevant previously published book. From these reviews it can be seen that Irish women were exposed to the same material as their American, British and continental counterparts were reading. Thus there was a common intellectual understanding among women who were often five thousand miles apart. To cement their knowledge of international progress, articles appeared in the *Irish Citizen* showing how the vote had been won in various American states, as well as a foreign news page, showing various campaigns being waged for the vote. Having a newspaper of their own was a way of distinguishing the Irish movement, it gave a stamp to their Irishness and it acted as a type of ambassador for Irish feminism.⁴⁵ To retain a unique identity, whilst remaining part of an international movement, was seen as important to the suffrage movement. To be part of such a campaign lessened their dependency on their English colleagues.

This struggle to be seen as an independent movement was more problematic for organisations like the Irishwomen's Franchise League, which was keen to be seen as separate from the WSPU; for others like the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation and the IWSLGA, co-operation was the aim. However both the IWFL and the ISF established branches in London, an easier location from which to gain attention. In

⁴⁴ *Englishwoman's Yearbook and Directory for 1912*, p. v.

⁴⁵ Cliona Murphy, *The women's suffrage movement*, (Herts., 1989), p. 76.

1913 the ISF annual report recorded that Miss Barrett and Miss Blanche Poe had gone to London to help Mrs Spring Rice lobby for the Reform Bill.⁴⁶

Irishwomen's suffrage federation

The Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation (ISF) was founded in the autumn of 1911 for the purpose of 'uniting scattered suffrage societies in Ireland in a system of practical co-operation, combined with local autonomy. Its policy was strictly non-party, and as a whole non-militant. By 'lobbying' the parliamentary members, sending deputation's and petitions, the Federation aimed to keep the suffragist standpoint in the foreground'.⁴⁷ The Society, established by Louie Bennett and Helen Chenevix, both of who were later involved in the trade union movement, aimed to provide an umbrella organisation.

After only a year in operation it represented twenty-six organisations and proceeded over the next number of years to remain a fairly solid organisation, producing regular reports, organising speaking tours around the country and suffrage conferences in Dublin. Its determination and motivation can be seen in its missionary like effort to convert the countryside, citing the establishment of a society in Galway as a major coup. The ISF 'strove to prove to the people of Ireland that the Suffragists are working not merely to win political influence for its own sake, but rather for the added power it will give women to help in evolving a braver, a purer, a clearer-eyed world'.⁴⁸ The Federation wished ultimately to form the basis of an Association which after enfranchisement would 'continue to work, through the

⁴⁶ *Irish Citizen*, 25 January 1913.

⁴⁷ First annual report of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation, (Dublin, 1912).

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.13.

power of the vote after it is obtained for the welfare of women in every department of life, industrial and social reform, and for the general welfare of the country'.⁴⁹

In 1917 the name was changed to the Irishwomen's Civic Federation which encouraged education in civic and political questions. The opening of public positions to women on the same terms as men, the investigation of present social conditions and practical reform work and the securing of equality of liberty and opportunity between men and women were its aims. For the ISF, the history of suffrage was 'a history of work done voluntarily and in a spirit of complete selflessness'.⁵⁰ The ISF worked to keep alive the consciousness that the woman's movement was a worldwide movement, that their cause was the cause of humanity'.⁵¹

Irishwomen's Reform League

The Irishwomen's Reform League was formed in October 1911, mainly in order to establish a Dublin branch of the ISF, and also to 'form a working centre for a number of suffragists in Dublin, who, for various reasons could not find their right environment with any of the existing societies'.⁵² Such suffragists included Rosa Barrett. It was non-party and non-militant, individual members could practice militancy but the League as an organisation refused to take militant action. The Irishwomen's Reform League believed that actions were more effective than words and so lent a hand to any reform or philanthropic activity, which could benefit society. By making its members responsible for providing practical proof of the

⁴⁹ *Irish Citizen*, 8 June 1912.

⁵⁰ Second annual report of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation, (Dublin, 1913), p.11.

⁵¹ Louie Bennett, *Irish Citizen*, 17 May 1913.

⁵² *Irish Citizen*, 1 June 1912.

'kind of spirit it is in modern women which is urging them to demand the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship'.⁵³

The Reform League actively campaigned for the provision of school meals, technical education for girls and it initiated a committee to monitor legislation affecting women's wages and conditions of work and a 'watching the courts' committee to observe cases involving justice to women and girls. The League encouraged the trade union movement and labour party but resolutely refused to be affiliated to any party. In pursuing feminism of a more all-embracing kind, not merely the vote, the League was akin to the English National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and its aspirations were very similar to women's clubs in America. The League also established a successful suffrage library in South-Anne Street in Dublin that lent books to its countrywide branches.⁵⁴

The League held public meetings dealing with suffrage propaganda and various social questions like 'Prison Reform'. They also helped form a Citizen's Housing League to campaign against slum dwellings in Dublin.⁵⁵ On the outbreak of war the League urged upon all members the importance of keeping the suffrage movement alive during the war crisis. They initiated a cafe and recreation room for women and girls and conducted inspections of public houses to gauge the amount of intemperance in Dublin.⁵⁶ For the League 'freedom to serve' was the goal for which

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Second annual report of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation, (Dublin, 1913), p.10.

⁵⁵ Annual report of the ISF for 1915, (Dublin, 1916), p.8.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.8.

they strove.⁵⁷ The Reform League differed from other suffrage groups in urging progressive legislation and practical welfare measures.

Reform League as an example of a philanthropic organisation

The IWRL and its parent organisation the ISF, were the best examples of the philanthropic zeal working in conjunction with the movement for voting rights. By organising and presenting conferences aimed at Poor Law Guardians and Women in the Public Arena, both organisations wished to educate the public and prepare women professionally for a greater role in society. Conferences made specialist knowledge available to a wider audience and showed the serious earnest motivations of the organisers. The conferences were all held in the Mansion House, highlighting the general acceptability of the ISF and IWRL to the public in general.

Unlike the IWFL, the ISF and IWRL never had a problem with their press coverage, the IWFL complained of being slighted in the popular press whereas the ISF considered that on the whole the papers, especially the provincial press recognised their farsighted and improving work. Many of their ideas centred on improving the lives of women and children, but in their wider schemes to improve housing and implement harsher drinking laws, they saw society as a whole as being ultimately the beneficiary.

Network of contacts

Both these organisations worked in conjunction with groups like the Philanthropic Reform Association (PRA), the Women's National Health Association (WNHA) and the Trade Union movement, all worked to improve the material conditions of

⁵⁷ Annual report of the ISF for 1915, p.8.

people's lives. The first attempt at such concerted action had come in 1914 with the formation of a Joint Committee formed from representatives of societies in Dublin interested in social and Municipal work including the ISF, the WNHA, IWA, the PRA, Temperance Union, United Irishwomen and the Workhouse Association, this committee aimed at 'the uniting of women of every opinion to work for the furtherance of women's interests in Municipal affairs'.⁵⁸ The subsequent formation of the Emergency Council, on the outbreak of war meant that the formal joint committee became once again informal in structure, and the concerns of war increasingly dominated all.

Rosa Barrett and Suffrage

Rosa Barrett was among the founding members of the ISF. Through her continued involvement with the International Congress of Women (ICW), the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (DSPCC) and the Irish Workhouse Association (IWA), she maintained active links with many of the women on the IWSLGA committee. With Lady Aberdeen she was involved in the establishment of the Women's National Health Association and the Irish Home Industries Board. Rosa Barrett had continued from 1910 on to send an annual subscription to the IWSLGA, though it was not until 1920 that she rejoined the committee.⁵⁹ The formation in 1911 of the ISF and the IWRL offered an organisation for activist women wishing to get involved in a loose amalgamation of similarly oriented groups. The Executive Committee of the ISF for 1912 included Rosa Barrett and in 1915 Professor Barrett, now Sir William F. Barrett joined the committee. Rosa

⁵⁸ IWSLGA Report for 1914 (Dublin, 1915), pp.4-5.

⁵⁹ IWSLGA Reports 1910-13 (Dublin, 1911-14).

Barrett actively promoted the ISF to join the NUWW. In 1915, a branch of the NUWW was finally established in Dublin. Mrs Haslem, Lady Argot, Lady Finagle, Lady Holmpatrick, Lady Wright and Miss White, were all elected vice-presidents, while Miss Buchanan, Miss Hayden, MA and Miss R. Barrett were amongst those forming a provisional committee working for an organisation which showed 'devotion to the women's cause, the advancement of which is the 'one and only sure foundation for all true social reform'.⁶⁰

By 1913 Rosa Barrett was actively involved in the IWRL, though she was by now fifty-nine years of age. In writing to the press in 1913 she highlighted the growing sense of frustration on the part of suffragists on the illogicality of a system which allowed:

The voter who could only enunciate 'pau' and the criminal who eluded the police, both good examples of the readiness of the law to extend voting rights to anything in the shape of a male, while every woman, no matter how valuable her opinion might be to the state, remains an outlaw.⁶¹

In stressing the valuable contribution potentially made by women to society, Rosa Barrett was advocating the reformist position pursued by women all over the world.

By 1915, the ISF and the IWRL had adopted the slogan 'Non-militant and non party' and Rosa Barrett had become the editor of the ISF newsletter she had introduced during her time as Hon. Secretary of the organisation after the resignation of Dora Mellone.⁶² The 1918 Committee of the ISF included Miss Mary Hayden, Lady Hermione Blackwood, Hon. Mary Lawless, Mrs Spring Rice, Sir Wm. Barrett, Miss Louie Bennett, George Russell, Mrs Hannay and Miss Edith E. Somerville, people of diverse origins, which emphasised the varied roots of the ISF members and its

⁶⁰ Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation Report for 1915 (Dublin, 1916), p.5-8.

⁶¹ Quoted in the *Irish Citizen*, 8 February 1913.

loose grouping of different groups with often local aims and organisations, united in a formal structure of co-operation.

The minutes of the ISF Executive Committee further illuminate the role of the organisation and the part the Barretts played. In 1915 Rosa Barrett was appointed honorary assistant treasurer on a part-time basis. By 1916 she had been appointed hon. editor of the newsletter.⁶³ By June 1917, she was encouraged by the committee 'to carry on as active a press campaign as possible, owing to the importance of keeping women's suffrage before the public at this critical time'.⁶⁴ This critical period was the presenting of the Representation of the People Bill and after almost forty years of campaigning, women suffragists were determined to succeed. In 1912 the ISF had sent a petition signed by approximately 3,500 people seeking votes for Irishwomen from Mr Asquith. This petition had been just one of three presented by different organisations campaigning for the franchise for Irish women. The ISF petition signatories included long-time campaigners for the suffrage vote, including the Barretts, Louie Bennett and the Cousins. The actions and work of the Emergency Council in performing war-relief work had diverted attention from the suffrage movement and the organisation was determined to refocus public attention.

World War I and its impact

The advent of World War I did much to strain the co-operative spirit established through organisations like the ICW. After decades of stressing the role of the national within the international, that national boundaries though important were ultimately part of a global world, such a message was severely undermined by a war

⁶² Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation Report for 1915 (Dublin, 1916), p.7.

⁶³ MS Minute book ISF, annual general meeting 21 January 1916 (National Library Ireland).

which stressed national defence and total war. World War I provides one of the great chasms of the twentieth century; nothing was ever really going to be the same again. So to, for the suffrage movement, the war dissolved harmony and divided the movement into different factions. In Ireland the Irish Women's Franchise League was staunchly anti-war and used the *Irish Citizen* as its organ, to such an extent that the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation formally dissociated itself from the *Irish Citizen* because of the paper's anti-war stand. Clearly one effect of the war was to shatter the always fragile unity of the suffrage movement and as Levenson says the significance of this should not be minimised.⁶⁵

For the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation the war gave a 'magnificent opportunity to serve our country. We must awaken to it, welcome it, spend a few minutes each day in dwelling on it and then we shall unite the share of light which has come to each of us in that silence, and translate it into deeds'.⁶⁶ For the Federation the British Empire was a 'noble one and that through love and service the world would form one happy family'.⁶⁷

The Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation and its affiliated branches threw themselves whole-heartedly into war relief work. The Federation worked to provide first aid and nursing classes, houses were refitted to accommodate Belgian refugees and convalescents. For women thrown out of work by war, attempts were made to provide alternative employment. In conjunction with the Church League for

⁶⁴ Ibid, 30 June 1917.

⁶⁵ Leah Levenson and Jenny H. Natterstad, *Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, Irish feminist*, (Syracuse, 1986), p.55.

⁶⁶ President's open letter to the members of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation, December 1914.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Women's Suffrage, workrooms were opened and girls employed to make underclothing, babies clothes, embroidery and such. With the aid of the National Relief Fund and army contracts, employment was given, thereby girls were saved from destitution. From amongst the ISF branches and the IWSLGA, an Emergency Council was formed and successfully started industries, previously unknown in Dublin, including a toy factory employing sixty girls. A Domestic Training Centre was also established instructing girls using the simplest of ingredients and utensils. As Rosa Barrett in writing on war work amongst Irish women said, 'many came almost barefoot and in rags, they learnt to make their own clothing and several have now made, and paid for, their own outfits and have gone into service.'⁶⁸ For the Emergency Council, the personal service involved in caring and philanthropic work would ultimately prove more lasting. Again according to Barrett, spokesperson for the ISF:

When we see girls, formerly frivolous and heedless, ready to scrub floors, spend hours in stuffy and dull work, we begin to see that the simplest act may be made beautiful by self-devotion and sacrifice.⁶⁹

Women's clubs were established for the relatives of soldiers and sailors, providing simple talks on nursing and childcare, as well as babies' clubs, saving schemes and the regular feeding of school children. On all fronts, constructive efforts were made by the women war-workers to provide for the dislocation caused by war.

The war in one sense split the philanthropic and more militant branch of the movement, those who saw their role as a caring one, saw the war as an opportunity to help, whereas for more nationalist and militant suffragettes, the war was

⁶⁸ Rosa M. Barrett, 'War work amongst Dublin women, a fine record' in *Irish Times*, 10 July 1915.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

anathema and the system it was striving to defend was one that they wanted no part of.

The Emergency Council wished to 'fulfil the demands the present situation makes on all civilians', without entirely suspending propaganda work. In a letter to the *Freeman's Journal* the council stated:

while recognising the imperative necessity for organised remedial work, and while taking part therein, we wish to emphasise our conviction that the claim for the enfranchisement of women must not be blotted out, even at the present crisis. All the conditions, which are the outcome of the present situation, prove more than ever the absolute necessity for the enfranchisement of women.⁷⁰

Many of the suffrage women became actively involved in the Peace and Freedom League, for over and above disagreement on the propriety of suffrage societies becoming involved in war relief work loomed the larger question of war and militarism as opposed to feminism and pacifism.⁷¹

Final Days

The last meeting of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation, recorded in the minute book took place in January 1918, the same month, which saw women gaining a limited vote, the fruits of a long campaign. From the beginnings of the suffrage movement in Ireland, Professor Barrett and later Rosa Barrett had been involved. Through her forty years of work with the suffrage movement in Ireland, Rosa Barrett had stressed the duties of women to pursue reformist policies; she had represented the organisations at international meetings dedicated to amalgamating diverse groups to improve society's welfare infrastructure. Like some of the more enlightened women of the age, she recognised the essential injustice in depriving

⁷⁰ Rosemary Cullen-Owens, *Smashing times*, p.98.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.99.

intelligent women of the vote. Through her involvement with reformist organisations like the IWA and the ISPCC she had initially started in philanthropy, but gradually realised the necessity for legislative change and therefore voting power. All along, both she and her brother would seem to have abhorred militant action and its decisiveness on the suffrage movement can be seen in her decision to leave the committee of the IWSLGA. However Professor Barrett did ultimately support the movement to treat women as political prisoners, when imprisoned for militant action.⁷²

Conclusion

The belief in reformist philanthropy and the commitment to a network of friends, contacts and ultimately organisations was the hallmark of the lives of many of the women discussed in this chapter including Rosa M. Barrett. Their continued dedication to a cause lasting almost forty years highlights their earnest and sincere belief in public service as a duty and potentially an honour. The granting of the parliamentary franchise to a limited number of women in 1918 marked the end of the *raison d'être* for many of the suffrage organisations. For others like the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation they had always anticipated what would happen after the war and so they re-emerged as the Irish Civic Federation. The IWSLGA too remained in place, now renamed the Irish Women's Citizens and Local Government Association, a symbolic name change for some of the women who had been involved from the early days. Its chief objectives were to promote the registration of women and the selection of suitable women for candidates for public office as well as working for necessary legislation regarding women. The Executive Committee for 1920 included Miss Barrett, signalling her return to an

⁷² James and Margaret Cousins, *We two together*, (Madras, 1950), p.208-9.

organisation she had left in 1909. The council for 1920 also includes long-established names like Miss Buchanan, Miss Mellone and Lady Dockrell.⁷³ Ultimately suffrage for adults over twenty one year was introduced in the Free State Constitution of 1922. However the idealism and aspiration of the vote as a weapon of change quickly faded and a newly emerging Irish society gradually championed the sole role of women in the home.

⁷³ Report of the IWSLCA for 1920, (Dublin, 1921). Fawcett Library, London.

Conclusion

Reformist philanthropy

A primary aim of this thesis has been to study the role of reformist philanthropy in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland. Reformist philanthropic organisations, epitomised in Ireland by the Irish Workhouse Association, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Philanthropic Reform Association, worked to actively expand our perception of benevolence to include some public and political role. Though often piecemeal such change laid the groundwork for future generations and broadened the parameters of state responsibility.

Deriving much of their impetus from the new mechanisms of studying society, namely statistics, reformists believed they could reveal the extent of the problem and comprehensively alleviate it. Reformists also displayed a more positive view of society, seeing it in a holistic sense. They upheld the dignity of the individual in an industrial and urban context, championing the rights of neglected groups – poor relief recipients, children or young offenders. As such they moved beyond mere charity, beyond rigid institutions to create organisations addressing specific needs. Containment of want was not the aspiration; they instead looked towards the alleviation and elimination of the conditions that created such dependency on charitable provision.

Rescuing women philanthropists from obscurity

In dealing with reformist philanthropy this thesis has focused specifically on women reformers as active agents of social progress. Working within a relatively confined grouping, often members of the minority Protestant faith, women reformers like Rosa Barrett represented the key concept of active citizenship. Duty and service above all was their motto!

In a traditional analysis of the 'great women' of history, women involved in philanthropy or social work including Rosa Barrett have thus far failed to figure. Regarding reformism as akin to a profession in the seriousness with which it was undertaken and in the skills required and acquired, women like Barrett often believed in deeds, not epitaphs.

Sectarianism was a continual factor in their work and their Protestantism is also a factor in the relative obscurity to which such women have been cast. Independent Ireland and the turbulence that created it, were often anathema to them and many did not fit the mould of nationalist Ireland. As such they have invariably been forgotten.

World War I and its aftermath eclipsed the optimism and belief in progress, which pervaded their work and that of their counterparts internationally. The reactive social and gender policies of the post-war world often gave little credence to the legitimacy of women's social work.

The relatively late blossoming of Irish women's history is also a factor in the obscurity of women campaigners. For these reasons women like

Rosa Barrett have not featured in the canon of Irish history. This thesis was an attempt to spotlight such women, their 'causes', aspirations and motivations.

Role of internationalism

Women participated in an unusually rich associational life, both formal and informal. Networks and connections highlight the effective way in which women lobbied at local and national level. Associations extended beyond the national into the international sphere. Women through organisations like the National Union of Women Workers and the International Congress of Women, worked to link women across the world through their shared aspirations and programmes, emphasising that as women they could work to shape 'better homes' and enhanced welfare for all.

As discussed in chapter four, many women involved in reformist organisations acquired the conviction that only when women had the franchise could they achieve their social aims. This inter-relationship between suffrage and philanthropy had not previously been addressed in the Irish context. It did however exist!

Organisations like the Irish Women's Reform League devoted themselves to social reform as part of the suffrage campaigning. Their philanthropy had *earned* them the franchise and society would be the immediate beneficiary of their increased involvement in public affairs. This belief was part of an international consensus, which promoted the

essential merit and uniqueness of women's work and its necessity in creating a progressive social system.

Irish groups were in close communication with their colleagues elsewhere and women like Rosa Barrett often urged the membership of international groups. Irish temperance, suffrage and childcare workers were linked to their international allies by shared ideas, personalities and methods.

Barrett's own work on destitute children and juvenile offenders was an effort to awaken English national attention to the work being accomplished abroad. The promotion of international contacts coalesced a reformist mood and provided Irish women with the strength and commitment to persevere. They were not acting alone.

Reformist philanthropy and childcare

A principal aim of this thesis was to explore the role of reformist philanthropy as it pertained to childcare, with emphasis on one institution in particular, the Cottage Home for Little Children founded in Kingstown in 1879 by Rosa Barrett. Established initially as a crèche, the Cottage Home was unique in the Irish charity network.

The Cottage Home for Little Children continues today in Dun Laoghaire providing both day and residential care, fulfilling an essential and vital role in the social services framework. As a reformist institution the

greatest indication of the wisdom of its founding is that it remains needed today, some one hundred and twenty years on. As a model it worked!

Rosa Mary Barrett

A key aim of this thesis was to use Rosa Barrett as a case-model of an active reformer. By highlighting her work in the local, national and international arena, Barrett represents an indefatigable worker on behalf of social issues, often dealing in neglected areas like juvenile offending and the provision of care for young children. Barrett through her life demonstrated the importance of an active faith. Religious commitment provided her with the necessary guidance to realise that her life's work lay not in science but in working with children, in teaching society its obligation to the young.

Her life long commitment also demonstrates the integrated nature of reformist philanthropy in Ireland. Barrett was a key member of all reformist organisations, being actively involved in the founding of the NSPCC Dublin branch, as well as supporting the work of the PRA and IWA. This though was not the extent of her work; she was a participant in essentially all social welfare movements. This 'finger in everything' capacity gives the reader a sense of the scope and diversity of causes to which one could devote attention in the philanthropic canon.

In all organisations Barrett was no mere silent subscription payer! She spoke at meetings, lobbied and made deputations on behalf of suffrage and temperance, as well as being completely committed to the

importance of co-ordinating activities and amalgamating local societies to international bodies. Barrett's own achievements did not go unnoticed, her work on temperance and juveniles was recognised at the International Penitentiary Conference and at the International Congress of Women. The Cottage Home itself became the focus of much interest in the charity sphere.

In sum, Rosa Barrett shows the evolution in one woman's life from a local worker trying to help the mothers of Kingstown to a national activist and finally to a woman recognised on an international stage.

Findings

This thesis in its discussion on reformism and its particular emphasis on Rosa Mary Barrett as a model reformer adds to the multi-dimensional perspective on late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland. The limited acknowledgement of the work of such reformers deserves to be rectified.

The world they worked in may have appeared to disappear with the founding of the state, followed by the decision of many, including Rosa Barrett to leave Ireland in the immediate aftermath. However this does not refute the real achievements they had accomplished.

The work of such reformers in establishing a heritage of connection between local networks and national organisations and ultimately international alliances still exercises considerable social power.

An emphasis on social work methodology, of investigating and reporting remains a key component of modern social policy. In their work in the voluntary sector reformers like Barrett worked to cohere the voluntary and state, to better uphold the rights of individuals. Voluntary and state action continues today as the key determinants of social change. Through lobbying, the voluntary sector often impelled the state to action. Such action be it child laws, the vote for women or a juvenile welfare system, continues to benefit us all. This is the legacy of women like Rosa Mary Barrett.

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