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Maynooth

Crime in nineteenth-century Ireland: Grangegorman female penitentiary and Richmond male penitentiary, with reference to juveniles and women, 1836-60

by

Rebecca Sharon Lawlor

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Department of History
National University of Ireland
Maynooth

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: Professor Marian Lyons

Supervisors of Research: Dr. Dympna McLoughlin
Dr. Jacinta Prunty

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List of abbreviations

DLA	Dangerous Lunatics Act, 1838
D.M.P.	Dublin Metropolitan Police
I.G.	Inspectors-general of Irish prisons
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
<i>OED</i>	Oxford English dictionary
R.I.C.	Royal Irish Constabulary

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Introduction

A high rate of crime in nineteenth-century Ireland, especially among females and juveniles, indicated to middle-class penal reformers that radical intervention was required. The entire system of imprisonment needed to be reformed. This thesis seeks to examine crime and the poverty which was behind it, in nineteenth-century Ireland, and how those who committed crime, in particular women and juveniles, were dealt with by the prison system. Grangegorman female penitentiary, Dublin, the only prison in the British Isles established exclusively for women will be utilised as the main case study for the purposes of this research. The study spans from the year Grangegorman opened in 1836 until 1860, to allow a pre-Famine, Famine and post-Famine analysis of the institution. The overall penal system will be discussed in this thesis, with specific emphasis on the conditions women endured within the prisons. Juvenile and mentally ill inmates as well as vagrants were a constant presence in Irish prisons during the period, 1836-60 and so cannot be overlooked in any prison study. A comparative analysis of the treatment of male and female inmates in Richmond and Grangegorman during this period reveals the similarities and differences between their treatment in these institutions.

Context

The system of transportation, that is, moving criminals to overseas colonies, was the main mode of punishment in Ireland in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but quickly became unviable with the start of the American War of Independence in 1776. The state was forced to devise an alternative solution. The opening of penal colonies in Australia and Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1791 solved the immediate problem. However, the happenings in America highlighted that the days of transportation were indeed numbered. Transportation

was progressively scaled down, and eventually ceased for female inmates in 1853.¹ Transportation officially ended in 1868.² There were prisons in Ireland, but these were primarily intended for prisoners before transportation. Penal reformers and the statutory authorities hoped that the establishment of a uniform system of general penitentiaries, which aimed to reform prisoners, would serve to prevent crime and to improve the morals of the country.³ Prisons in Ireland came under increased state control and much closer supervision with the passing of the 1826 Irish Prisons Act.

Key concepts

Morality is an important term to understand when discussing prison and inmate reform in nineteenth-century Ireland. What was meant by ‘moral reform’ at this time? Penal reformers wanted inmates to feel remorse for their crimes. This was of course a very individual experience. Anne Jellicoe, Quaker educationalist and philanthropist,⁴ expressed in 1862 that ‘the only sound basis of permanent reform was the intelligent co-operation of the individual herself in the efforts for her own amendment.’⁵ Moral reformers advocated honesty and hard work, and condemned alcohol, idleness, gambling and crime. The aim of ‘moral reform’ was to inculcate inmates with habits of industry, self-denial and self-respect.⁶ Religion was the medium for moral instruction. ‘Moral reform’ was a means of controlling anyone who deviated from the accepted upper and middle class norms and behaviour. The nineteenth-century system of ‘moral reform’ was designed to provide inmates with a new code of acceptable behaviour. This would supposedly enable them to be productive members of

¹ Beverly A. Smith ‘The female prisoner in Ireland 1855-1878’ in *Federal Probation*, liv, no. 4 (1990), p. 69.

² S. J. Connolly, ‘Transportation’ in idem *The Oxford companion to Irish history* (Oxford, 2002), pp 579-80.

³ *Report of the Inspectors-General 1823 with abstract from the appendix of general observations on each prison, in the several districts*, p. 10, H.C. 1823 (342), x, 291 (henceforth cited as *I.G. report 1823*).

⁴ Anne V. O’Connor, ‘Anne Jellicoe’ in Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy (eds.), *Women, power and consciousness in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 1995), p. 125.

⁵ Anne Jellicoe, ‘A visit to the female convict prison at Mountjoy, Dublin’, in George W. Hastings (ed.), *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science* (London, 1863), p. 442.

⁶ Jellicoe, ‘Female convict prison at Mountjoy’, p. 442.

society, and of course law-abiding citizens. The concept of ‘moral reform’ in the nineteenth century was somewhat of a paradox. Middle-class philanthropists, despite visiting females in prisons, and the legislative authorities in Westminster and at the county or local level, had no idea what it was like to be poor. They failed to comprehend the destitution of the people of Ireland and advocated ‘moral reform’ as the best means to diminish crime.

Poverty and immorality were closely linked at this time. There was a distinction made between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor. The ‘deserving’ poor, such as widows, were seen as respectable; they had become poor through no fault of their own, and those who were ill or injured during work. On the other hand, the ‘underserving’ poor were seen as those who through their own failings became poor. For example, they were idle and too lazy to work. Of course this was not the reality: there were limited employment opportunities for the poor in Ireland at the time. There was some acceptance by the authorities and penal reformers that crime was in some instances, committed out of desperation. However, they maintained, despite ample evidence, that ‘moral reform’ was the solution to crime among the poor classes. A possible reason for this was that moral instruction was imparted through religion. It is possible that an acceptance, of the failings of ‘moral reform’, might have been perceived as a failure of religious instruction.

Recidivism is another concept central to this thesis. A recidivist refers to a person who relapses, especially habitually, into crime.⁷ The evidence suggests that female and juvenile offenders were more likely to be recidivists than male offenders. There was a particularly high rate of recidivism among the inmates of Grangegorman. This suggests that the discipline system implemented in Grangegorman was not effective in deterring women

⁷ ‘Recidivist’ in *OED* (3rd ed., Oxford, 2009).

from re-offending. In fact, the evidence is that prison was used as a survival tool by many poor people, especially females and juveniles, in nineteenth-century Ireland.

Thesis aims and structure

There are four central research issues examined in this thesis. The first chapter provides an overview of prison structure, and examines the foundation and development of Grangegorman female penitentiary, 1836-60. It also looks at the various penal reform movements that arose during this time and discusses the establishment and objectives of the penal system in nineteenth-century Ireland. There is an analysis of the conditions in Irish prisons in terms of hygiene, health care, diet, overcrowding, moral and educational instruction, and discipline. As well as the prisoners' daily routine, such as physical activities or the attendance at religious services.

The second chapter examines what is known of the prisoners who were received into Grangegorman during this period, 1836-60: the social backgrounds of prisoners and the nature of their crimes and punishments. This includes an examination of the presence of vagrants and mentally ill inmates in the prison

Juvenile offenders and destitute children were a constant feature of Grangegorman female penitentiary from 1836-60 as there were in most Irish prisons of the period. Chapter three examines the position of destitute juveniles and non-criminal children who were received into the prison with their mothers. It also looks at education in the nineteenth century and the establishment of juvenile institutions such as reformatories in Ireland during the period, 1836-60.

A comparative analysis is offered in chapter four which compares Grangegorman to Richmond Penitentiary in Dublin. This chapter looks at how male inmates were treated in comparison to female inmates. This is to provide a comprehensive view of what prisons in nineteenth-century Ireland were like. Richmond was the ideal institution to compare with Grangegorman as it was based on a similar discipline system that advocated classification, industry and schooling.

There was a problem with how to structure the chapters: thematic or chronological? If the chapters were structured thematically, the chronological order would be very scattered and confusing. If they were organised chronologically, then thematically they would be in disarray. As a solution to this problem, sub-headings are utilised to bring clarity of structure and coherence to the chapters.

Literature review

The study of female criminals and juveniles in Ireland in nineteenth-century Ireland is a developing area of research. However, no historical study of Grangegorman female penitentiary has been completed to date, and no historical study offers a comparative analysis of the treatment of female and male offenders as is done in this thesis. The majority of the published studies on prisons or prisoners are either on a small scale, in an English or American context, or based on an individual case study of criminals. The penitentiary system, large institutions aimed at the reform of prisoners, was the system in Ireland, England and America. Although English legislation influenced legislation in Ireland (Ireland became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, under the Act of Union, 1801), Ireland had a different social and economic structure than England and America. Many laws passed in England, did not extend to Ireland, and usually Ireland had its own laws. For example the

English Poor Law was passed in 1834, while the Irish Poor Law was passed four years later. Owing to the Famine, those who were committed to Irish prisons had very different living conditions than their counterparts in England and America.

There are a number of general histories of prisoners and prisons. The most recent study is Christina M. Quinlan's *Inside Ireland's women's prisons past present* (Dublin, 2011) which offers a general survey of female inmates in Irish prisons over the last 200 years. This is an exceptional study. Quinlan's study shows that the females in prison were generally the most marginalised in society. The methodology employed by Quinlan was useful as similar sources were used for this thesis. *The Oxford history of the prison, the practice of punishment in western society* (Oxford, 1995) edited by Norval Morris and David J. Rothman offers a comprehensive study of prisons. The numerous contributors offer rich and varied insights into prisons and prisoners. This includes Lucia Zedner's 'Wayward sisters: the prison for women' which offers a valuable foundation for the study of women's prisons. This valuable study was a brilliant starting point for the study undertaken for this thesis. Shane Kilcommins; Ian O'Donnell; Eoin O'Sullivan and Barry Vaughan's *Crime punishment and the search for order in Ireland* (Dublin, 2004) offers a general study of crime and punishment in Ireland. This book provided a context for how crime and punishment developed in Ireland and how the criminal was perceived by society.

Alongside Quinlan's work, there has been extensive research carried out regarding female prisoners. Lucia Zedner's *Women, crime and custody in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1994), is concerned with the literature and imagery of fallen women in nineteenth-century England. Zedner discusses how social discourses on women have an effect on the treatment of female criminals. An issue with Zedner's research is that she is exclusively concerned with

female criminals who were part of the middle and upper classes. Zedner neglects the majority of women and juveniles who were received into prison, who did not hold any position in society from which to fall from. Zedner's work is concerned with Victorian England which had a different social structure to Ireland. Maria Luddy's *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995) discusses women and the Irish prison system only as a background to understanding women philanthropists' work concerning convicts. It was believed by them that female prisoners could be rehabilitated through discipline, religious instruction and education. Unfortunately, these philanthropists were wrong. There were complex reasons for female crime, the key one being poverty. Again Luddy's research focuses on the middle and upper classes of society, the prison visitors and those who ran refuges and rescue homes, while this research is concerned with the lower classes, those who made up the chief portion of the prison population. Rena Lohan's 'Matrons in Mountjoy female convict prison, 1858-83' in Bernadette Whelan (ed.), *Women and paid work in Ireland, 1500-1930* (Dublin, 2000) considers the role of prison matrons. These women predominantly came from lower class backgrounds and were not trained. The lives of these women are a neglected area of research and need to be addressed more comprehensively.

Other existing research on female prisoners focuses on the most destitute class of society. Geraldine Curtin's *The women of Galway jail: female criminality in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Galway, 2001) uses a social history approach. This is an excellent and pioneering study but its focus is limited to one jail in one county. The historiography of Curtin's research was very helpful as similar sources were utilised for this research. Maria Luddy's 'Women of the pave: prostitution in Ireland' (2008) is relevant to this thesis as it is likely that many females who were confined in Grangegorman were prostitutes. Luddy's work supports the argument that poverty was a predominant cause for crime; loss of

employment or desertion by their spouse or the breadwinner meant that there was little choice left to women to support themselves and their family.⁸ Despite the obvious drawbacks, such as pregnancy, disease and violence, prostitution offered women a chance to provide a living for themselves and their families. Understanding the lives that women in prostitution led, and what drove them to lead such a life, greatly contributed to the methodology of this dissertation. Carolyn A. Conley's 'No pedestals: women and violence in late nineteenth-century Ireland' (1995) also examines the experiences of females of the lower classes. This research suggests that the ideal Victorian image of woman was docile and submissive, which was dominant in church rhetoric and literature but did not reach into the Irish countryside.⁹ Conley observes that 'generally, brawling was not considered incompatible with women's roles as wives and mothers.'¹⁰ Conley's work counteracts the imagery of female criminals as the victims, and places them instead in a defiant and courageous light. Conley thus provides another context in which female criminality can be examined; her work acknowledges crimes that were not committed due to poverty but out of provocation, in defiance and for defence.

Mentally ill inmates were an important segment of the prison population. The existing literature that deals with mentally ill inmates such as Peter McCandless's article 'Liberty and lunacy: the Victorians and wrongful' (1978), Joseph Robins's *Fools and mad: a history of the insane in Ireland* (Dublin, 1986), Mark Finnane's *Insanity and the insane in post-famine Ireland* (London, 1981) and Elizabeth Malcolm's *Swift's hospital: a history of St Patrick's hospital Dublin 1746-1989* (Dublin, 1989) all provide a general context for studying the mentally ill. The existing research tends to chart the development of insane asylums and examine the treatment of the mentally ill as well as how they were perceived by society.

⁸ Maria Luddy, 'Women of the pave: prostitution in Ireland' in *History Ireland*, xvi, no. 3 (2008), p. 17.

⁹ Carolyn A. Conley, 'No pedestals: women and violence in late nineteenth century Ireland' in *Journal of Social History*, xxviii, no. 4 (1995), p. 802.

¹⁰ Conley, 'No pedestals', p. 804.

Oonagh Walsh and Anne Shepherd offered alternative methods of perceiving male and female lunacy in the nineteenth century in Jonathan Andrews and Anne Digby's *Sex and seclusion, class and custody: perspectives on gender and class in the history of British and Irish psychiatry* (New York, 2004). However, none of the existing research adequately deals with the mentally ill in Irish prisons in nineteenth-century Ireland.

The issue of juvenile offenders and destitute children is also central to this thesis. Jane Barnes's *Irish industrial school 1868-1908* (Dublin, 1989) offers an insight into the development of industrial schools in nineteenth-century Ireland. Although her research is slightly outside this thesis time frame, her work provides historical context of the treatment of destitute children in nineteenth-century Ireland. Joseph Robins's *Lost children: a study of charity children in Ireland, 1700-1900* (Dublin, 1980) is the classic study of destitute children in Ireland and how they were treated by state and society. However, these studies fail to sufficiently address the issue of non-criminal children held in Irish prisons.

The connotations of prisons within society are examined in Tim Carey's *Mountjoy: the story of a prison* (Cork, 2000). Carey's book is concerned with the significance of Mountjoy prison as an institution. Once transportation of criminals became unviable, the prison system in Ireland was forced to make big changes in Mountjoy as well as in Grangegorman penitentiary. Prisons became more than just holding pens for criminals.¹¹ Carey discusses the role of penal reformers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They hoped that a stern regime of strict discipline and moral reform in prisons would lead to an eradication of crime. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, 'practically everyone

¹¹ Tim Carey, *Mountjoy the story of a prison* (Cork, 2000), p. 3.

involved in prisons became disillusioned'.¹² Freida Kelly's *A history of Kilmainham gaol: the dismal house of little ease* (Dublin, 1988) discusses Kilmainham jail as a place of punishment.¹³ Other research surrounding prisons tends to claim that prisons were basically holding pens for criminals before transportation, or else compares prisons to factories or workshops when transportation ceased. Kelly recounts the history of Kilmainham from its establishment to its eventual closure in 1924. Kelly focuses on Kilmainham prison as an institution and on a few select people and what might be termed celebrity prisoners who were associated with the gaol. While the importance of the history of the prison as an institution should not be dismissed, the proposed dissertation is more concerned with the social backgrounds of the inmates in prison and how they were treated; who were these criminals, and why did they commit crime?

This existing literature in the field of prison studies provides valuable context for this thesis. However, nothing has been published that comprehensively addresses all the central research issues in this thesis. From studying the secondary sources relating to this topic, the role of society is a dominant theme. It seems to be a common viewpoint that society was the most important issue to discuss in relation to criminality. However, the actual treatment, the daily lives of these prisoners, and their motivations for crime should surely be the important questions to ask. The prison as an institution may represent many things to society, but the real issue is the inmates that served their time in these prisons. What was *their* life like? Was the prison a punishment or a life line to *them*? These are the fundamental questions posed in this research. Nevertheless, it is necessary to examine the society in which they lived because we need to know the ideals that society was attempting to impose on them. This thesis is

¹² Carey, *Mountjoy*, p. 117.

¹³ Freida Kelly, *A history of Kilmainham gaol: the dismal house of little ease* (Dublin, 1988), p. 7.

concerned with the lower classes who filled the prisons in Ireland, and above all with women and children.

Primary Sources

Among the numerous primary sources available to this research are the reports of the inspectors-general of Irish prisons, contemporary legislation, Grangegorman prison registry, pamphlet and journal literature, and newspaper coverage.

The reports of the inspectors-general of Irish prisons used for the purposes of this study were from the fifteenth report (1836) to the thirty-ninth report (1860). There were two inspectors-general who were appointed by the lord lieutenant. Between them they made an annual inspection of all the penal institutions in Ireland. Joseph Robins suggests that the creation of the second post of inspector-general of prisons was more to do with religious tensions - one was Catholic, while the other was Protestant - than improving conditions.¹⁴ They composed a joint annual report on the individual prisons. This included an assessment on cleanliness, accommodation, diet, education, conditions of the building and discipline to name a few. Comment was also made on the inmates and on the officers. The inspectors-general made recommendations on improving conditions and the reform of prisoners. Their annual report was to be given to the chief secretary and then put before the two houses of parliament. A copy of the report relating to the counties was to be sent to the respective grand juries. The inspectors-general were also required to make a general statement on the state of prison discipline in each district. These reports are a valuable source because they offer an excellent insight into the inner workings of Irish prisons, including Grangegorman female penitentiary, in the nineteenth century.

¹⁴ Joseph Robins, *Fools and mad: a history of the insane in Ireland* (Dublin, 1986), p. 34.

Legislation will be one of the key primary sources used. One of the most influential pieces of legislation was the Penitentiary Acts, 1779. John Howard helped to draft this act and establish state penitentiaries. This new prison system would replace the old system of transportation with the attempted reform and restoration of the criminals to society. Irish legislation, in terms of the prison system, was heavily influenced by English legislation. Another very influential act was the Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826. The Irish prisons act of 1826 attempted to create a uniform system of prison discipline and management that would be regulated and inspected. Classification, a regulated diet for all inmates, bedding and clothing, the separation of male and female prisoners were provided for under this act. However, were the prisons as uniform as the legislation suggested? This thesis shows that they were not. Other acts including the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1838, Criminal Lunatics (Ireland) Act, 1838 and the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act, 1847 will be referred to in this thesis. These acts provide valuable information as regards the state's attitudes towards individual members of society during the time covered by this research.

The general prison registers of Grangegorman female penitentiary are available in microfilm in the National Archives of Ireland. For the purposes of this study, the registries for the years 1836-60 were utilised. The Grangegorman registry provided valuable information. This included the name, age, religion, occupation, birth place and a brief description of the inmate (height, skin and hair colour) as well as the crime the inmate committed, the length of sentence she received, the dates of her committal and her discharge. There were also columns including former reference number and general observations. Mary Cooney aged twenty was a servant. She received ten days in Grangegorman for disturbing the peace. In the former reference number column, '4th time' was recorded. This number presumably refers to how many times Cooney had previously offended. The general

observation column consisted of entries such as if the inmate died, was sent to a refuge, if she was committed before her trial, as well as if her sentence included hard labour. Elizabeth Markey aged seventeen was confined in Grangegorman for being destitute. Her sentence was not listed. She was committed on the 19 April 1837. She died on the same day. Maria Byrne aged twenty-one was committed for having an unsound mind on 31 May 1837. She was discharged on the 25 September 1837. Her sentence was stated as 'not committed', this meant that she was released without further imprisonment. She was sent to a lunatic asylum the following year. Eliza Casey aged twelve years, was sentenced to three months' hard labour in Grangegorman for stealing a hen. Margaret Clarke aged fifty was a servant. She was committed to Grangegorman on the 14 December 1844 at hard labour. She was sentenced on the 30 December 1844 and received three months for stealing a watch and chain.

Apart from the general prison registry books, there was a registry for drunkenness, inmates for trial and there were two books which recorded the committal of juveniles into Grangegorman. These registers offer valuable statistical information for this study.

There were numerous books and articles published during this period. These works offered valuable first hand commentary on the conditions in Prison, and some were very influential in the reform of prisons at the time. This includes books published by early penal reformers such as Elizabeth Fry and Mary Carpenter, and an article published by James Palmer (prison inspector). These sources not only offered social commentary but also suggestions on improving the penal system and on how inmates should be treated. These sources provide an insight into the opinions of the middle and upper classes on a range of issues such as, prisoner reform, morality, prison management, crime, poverty and the lower classes. Some also offer vivid descriptions of life inside the prison and the treatment of

prisoners. Other significant theorists include Jeremy Bentham and Cesare Beccaria. It is from these influential theorists that one can appreciate the emerging ideas on the treatment of prisoners.

Newspaper sources will also be utilised for this thesis. These include the *Freeman's Journal*, *The Nation*, *The Times* and the *Irish Times*. Newspapers offer details of trials, court cases and other legal matters. They also give a good insight into general society and the political attitudes and outlooks that prevailed at the time. However, they are somewhat limited as a source because they reflect the perceptions of the upper and middle classes, and they tend to overlook the problems that the lower - and criminal - classes faced on a daily basis in nineteenth-century Ireland.

Methodology

The investigative and analytic methods used in researching the topic were empirically based. It includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The historiographical approach of the research is based on a social history perspective. Social history is concerned with the ordinary person and their experiences or reactions at different stages in history. It is looking at how ordinary people and juveniles coped with life within the penal system of nineteenth-century Ireland. This research is concerned with how ordinary people were affected or influenced by major social and political changes in nineteenth-century Ireland. This work also examines the influence of philanthropists. These include very influential philanthropists such as Elizabeth Fry, who through her dedication changed the treatment of inmates, especially women and juveniles in prison, for the better. In addition this research also looks at how male prisoners in Richmond penitentiary were treated in contrast to the female inmates in Grangegorman female penitentiary. This research used statistical analysis

to chart, highlight and compare and contrast important data derived from the published annual reports of the inspectors-general. The results are presented in tables and as charts.

Overall, this research aims to shed new light on criminality and the treatment of criminals in nineteenth-century Ireland.

Chapter I

The foundation and development of Grangegorman female penitentiary and intermediate refuges, 1836-60

The nineteenth century was a century of optimism about penal reform. When the inspectors-general of Irish prisons began their annual assessments in 1821, prisons were described as full of ‘filth, fraud and vice.’¹ Prisoners were neglected. There was no proper accommodation for inmates. Inmates were not clothed, classified or educated. By 1860, quite remarkable changes had been implemented. This chapter examines the basis for this, namely the development and implementation of ‘moral reform’ in the penal system. The establishment of Grangegorman female penitentiary as one of the model penal institutions, the conditions there, as well as the daily lives of the officers and inmates are examined in this chapter. Attempts at the moral reform of inmates continued after prison and intermediate refuges were established with the objective of reinforcing individual reform

Perceptions of the lower classes and moral reform

Poverty was closely associated with crime in the nineteenth century. Middle-class reformers believed incorrectly that a lack of morals among the poor lower classes was responsible for high crime rates. Most prisons were filled with the poorer classes. In the nineteenth century, the poor were divided into two broad categories: ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’. The ‘deserving’ poor included widows or wives abandoned by their spouse and children who were orphaned or deserted. The ‘non-deserving’ poor were seen as leading debauched lives of crime, idleness, gambling and drinking. It was generally assumed by nineteenth-century upper and middle classes that criminals were poor because they were immoral, for example

¹ *Twenty-fourth report of the inspectors-general on the general state of the prisons of Ireland, 1845 with appendixes*, p. 8, H.C. 1846 (697), xx, 257 (henceforth cited as *I.G. twenty-fourth report, 1845*).

they were idle and refused to work. In this way, crime was associated with the ‘undeserving’ poor. However, this was not the reality. Crime was used as a way of survival for many poor people and prison became a key institution for the survival of the poor.

The upper and middle classes looked to the state to control the lower classes. James Palmer (inspector-general of Irish prisons, 1823-45) theorised that it would not be possible to rid the lower orders of their vices but that legislation was needed to control popular practices such of gambling, drinking and idleness.² Prisons were state institutions which attempted to control these vices and to inculcate the ideals of middle class reformers into poor inmates.

The state’s key solution to crime was to implement concept of ‘moral reform’ in the penal system, as inspired by middle-class reformers. Hard work, strict discipline and religious instruction formed the basis of the nineteenth-century prison reform system. Reform at this time had a two-fold objective. The first objective was to make the prisoner feel remorse for his or her crime. Religion was the medium used to encourage inmates to feel regret for their crimes. However, despite the optimism about religious instruction of prisoners, it failed completely. The second objective was to provide inmates with a new code of behaviour that was acceptable to the upper and middle classes, and would supposedly enable them to be productive members of society. It was hoped by the penal authorities that through moral reform, inmates would become law-abiding and industrious. Thus the state utilised prisons to attempt to control the poorer classes.

² James Palmer, ‘A treatise on the modern system of governing gaols, penitentiaries and houses of correction, with a view to moral improvement and reformation of character: also, a detail of duties of each department of a prison, together with observations on the state of prison discipline at home and abroad, and on the management of lunatic asylums’ in *Hume tracts* (1832), available at (<http://www.jstor.org>), p. 16.

At this time, immorality was wrongly perceived by the upper and middle classes of society as contagious. Crime was frequently referred to as the consequence of moral disease that ‘infected’ the lower classes of society.³ It was believed that immoral traits, such as criminality, could be passed from person to person. It was from this reasoning, that the prison reform system of the nineteenth century took shape.

Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826 and the establishment of Grangegorman female penitentiary.

New theories on how to successfully reform prisoners shaped the internal disciplinary system of the penitentiary. The most important humanitarians that inspired penal reform in Ireland were John Howard (1726?-1790) and Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845). John Howard helped to draft the Penitentiary Acts, 1779. This act made the provision for the first ever establishment of state penitentiaries. Howard was appointed high sheriff of Bedfordshire in 1773. Part of his duty was keeper of the county jail where he was horrified to discover the condition in which inmates were kept. Inmates who were acquitted, or who were not brought to trial, were not released by the courts. They were forced to pay a jailer’s fee to be released, and remained in jail until they could pay. To avoid corruption, Howard wanted jailers to be paid a salary instead.⁴ He published the *State of prisons in England and Wales* in 1777. This work described the terrible conditions that prevailed in prisons at the time. He advocated cleanliness, classification of prisoners, the appointment of a surgeon or apothecary and a chaplain to each prison. He also proposed that prisons should be regulated and that prisoners have structured days, as well as a uniform diet. He suggested that convicted prisoners should be made to work, while untried prisoners should have the option to work. He advocated that

³ Margaret May, ‘Innocence and experience: the evolution of the concept of juvenile delinquency in the mid-nineteenth-century’ in *Victorian Studies*, xvii, no. 1, *The Victorian Child* (1973), p. 18.

⁴ Rod Morgan, ‘Howard, John (1726?–1790)’, *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004).

prisoners should attend divine service every Sunday. Howard managed to get two parliamentary acts passed in 1774. One of these abolished the jailer's fee,⁵ while the other was related to the improvement of prison health.⁶

Elizabeth Fry was a Quaker, penal reformer and philanthropist. She was very influential in the drafting and passing of the prison acts in England. Her influence extended to Ireland and the continent. She advocated humane treatment of prisoners, moral reform, and the reintegration of inmates to society after prison, as well as the separation of male and female prisoners. She also advocated that female officers should be in charge of female prisoners.⁷ In this way, Fry was instrumental in establishing Grangegorman penitentiary, as it was the first prison for female inmates within the British Isles and it was managed by female officers. She chose the head matron in Grangegorman, Mrs Marian Rawlins.⁸ Fry disagreed with a system of separate or solitary confinement, deeming it to be inhumane and liable to corruption by prison officers. However, this was the system preferred at this time, and thus many of her contemporaries disregarded her. While Fry's name is most associated with the improvement of the treatment of female inmates, her work contributed to improving conditions for all prisoners.⁹ The ideals of both Howard and Fry clearly influenced the Irish Prisons Act of 1826.¹⁰

Further influential penal theorists were Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham. Beccaria's *On crime and punishment* in 1764 condemned the death penalty and sought for the humane treatment of prisoners. Beccaria suggested that society functioned around a *social*

⁵ 14 Geo. III, c. 20 (13 Jan. 1774), Discharged Prisoners Act, 1774.

⁶ 14 Geo. III, c. 59 (13 Jan. 1774), Health of Prisoners Act, 1774.

⁷ Francisca de Haan, 'Fry, Elizabeth (1780–1845)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004).

⁸ *I.G. sixteenth report, 1837*, p. 8.

⁹ De Haan, 'Fry, Elizabeth (1780–1845)'.

¹⁰ 7 Geo. IV, c. 74 (31 May 1826), Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826.

contract: for society to effectively continue everyone had to give up some of their personal liberty for a collective sense of security. Jeremy Bentham, an English theorist, helped develop the idea that prisons should be just more than holding cells for prisoners who were awaiting transportation or execution. One of Bentham's most influential books was *An introduction to the principles of moral and legislation* in 1789.

The Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826 paved the way for a new type of jail and a new system of prison discipline. The ambition of this act was to aid the 'moral reform' of inmates. To facilitate 'moral reform' a code of strict silence was to be enforced between prisoners, and the employment of inmates was advocated. This act was central to the treatment of female criminals: Grangegorman penitentiary could not have been established without the passing of this act. It asserted that only female officers were permitted to be in charge of female inmates. It declared that female inmates should be separated from male inmates, provided with clothing and given educational and moral instruction by the class matron. Inmates were to also receive moral instruction through the visits of their respective chaplains.

Other important provisions contained in the Irish Prison Acts of 1826 were in relation to hygiene, classification and prison management. Clean and hygienic prisons were advocated under this act, as well as ventilated cells for inmates. This was in contrast to the filth of eighteenth-century prisons. To help prevent the spread of disease, whitewashing the walls of prisons was mandatory under this act. Whitewashing was a type of lime-based paint that was used in the nineteenth century as it had some antibacterial properties. The same act acknowledged that all prisoners should not be treated the same, that it is to say, that external factors such as age, crime and recidivism were to be taken into account. The strict classification of prisoners was recommended to be implemented in Irish prisons. For

example, juvenile prisoners should be placed together in one class, and not mixed with more hardened prisoners, and the untried should be separated from the convicted.

The state's attempt to regulate the penal system in Ireland highlights society's increased concern in the nineteenth century with criminality. The state's concern with prison management becomes apparent when considering the number of books and journals that were required to be kept by prison staff, both external and internal. Chaplains, gatekeeper, matrons, governor and the physician and surgeon, were obliged to keep detailed records of their own actions, and those of the prisoners. This new method of detailed record-keeping was a more professional approach to the management of prisons. It could also be seen as a system for checking-up on individuals; it meant that there was more accountability on the part of those individuals in charge. The board of superintendents, inspectors-general of prisons and the local inspector, were provided for under the Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826. These bodies were created as regulatory tools, to inspect and control the penal system. The boards of superintendents attempted to establish uniformity among the prisons under their charge. These boards met regularly to discuss and oversee the management of the prisons under their jurisdiction. They were required to keep detailed minutes of their meetings to present to the grand juries. The grand juries were a landlord-controlled county-based administrative body, in control of granting money to their respective board of superintendents. It was the boards of superintendents that had the responsibility of enforcing the rules and regulations of penal legislation.

The other regulatory tool used by the state under the Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826 was the inspectors (local and general). Their main function was to check that all the rules and regulations set out in the Irish Prisons Act of 1826 were adhered to. Under this act, the

inspectors-general were to visit each prison on an annual basis. They divided up the task between them: the north district, south district and the Dublin district. The inspectors-generals were required to make a general statement on prison discipline, as well as making a report on each individual prison. The local inspector was expected to make weekly visits to the prisons under his jurisdiction and was required to provide a detailed report of his visits to the inspectors-general. It was the inspectors-general who prepared an annual report on the state of Irish prisons for the chief secretary, who then placed it before the two houses of parliament. A copy of the report relating to the counties was also sent to the respective grand juries. It is difficult to gauge the extent of the influence that the reports had on the maintenance of prisons and the treatment of prisoners, but they remain valuable sources for the historian.

The state had limited power in enforcing legislation as the prisons in Ireland were not under a national uniform system. The grand juries, boards of superintendents, and the magistracy all played a role in the management and thus the reform of prisons. For this reason, reform was not implemented nation-wide, as each prison was under the control of its respective board of superintendents. As a result, conditions varied considerably from prison to prison. In many instances the regulations in relation to classification, outlined in the Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826, were abandoned due to lack of resources or overcrowding.

Conditions in Grangegorman female penitentiary 1836-60

The number of committals into the prison system in Ireland fluctuated greatly throughout the years 1836-60. Committals for the years 1840-1 saw a decline in numbers.¹¹ By 1842, crime was continuing to remain at low levels due to the influence of the workhouses, erected under

¹¹ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 27.

the Irish Poor Law of 1838, and the increased level of sobriety among the people of Dublin.¹² This sobriety can be attributed to the temperance movement which was started in Ireland in 1838, by Father Theobald Matthew.¹³ This movement convinced people that drunkenness had evil associations and condemned it. The height of membership was in 1842. However, the downturn in crime that was witnessed at the start of the 1840s was short lived due to the onset of the Famine, 1845-9. This movement probable did not reach the poorest sections of society. People were forced to leave the countryside in search of work in the cities and beyond Ireland. The majority of those entering Dublin were unemployed or beggars. Although there was a decrease in the total population during the Famine, the population of Dublin actually increased which led to overcrowding.¹⁴ The increased population inevitably led to an increase in crime, and therefore a demand for cells in the city prisons.

The severe level of disease and overcrowding experienced during the Famine were never anticipated by the penal authorities. Under these strained circumstances, conditions in many Irish prisons deteriorated.¹⁵ The penal authorities struggled to maintain acceptable standards of discipline and hygiene in the prisons under their control. In most prisons, the fundamental aspects of reform, outlined in the Irish Prisons Act of 1826, such as industry, classification and separation were abandoned.¹⁶ Grangegorman penitentiary was fortunate in that the transportation of female criminals continued until 1853 and hence the prison did not have the burden of convicts remaining in the prison for long periods of time. On the day of the inspector-general's visit in 1847, it was reported to be in good condition and order.¹⁷

¹² *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 19.

¹³ Mary E. Daly, *Social and economic history of Ireland since 1800* (Dublin, 1981), pp 127-8.

¹⁴ Daly, *Social and economic history of Ireland*, p. 100.

¹⁵ *I.G. twenty-eight report, 1849*, p. xii.

¹⁶ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 5.

¹⁷ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 38.

The dismal situation in Irish prisons during the Famine was attributed to three factors: destitution and distress caused by famine, the sudden cessation of transportation of Irish male prisoners in 1846 for two years¹⁸ and the criminalisation of vagrancy under the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act, 1847. The transportation of male prisoners was suspended as Australian authorities complained of the high number of convicts being transported from Ireland.

The effect of the Famine on the prison system in Ireland lasted until 1850, when committals began to decrease and some regularity returned. This decrease can be attributed to the increased prosperity, education and employment of the lower classes that occurred in the aftermath of the famine.¹⁹ However, the penal authorities perceived this decrease as proof that a moral and social amelioration had taken place in Ireland. This belief was misguided because the gradual improvement in general living conditions helped to somewhat ease the main motivation for crime, which was poverty. By 1859, the removal of the convict prisoners and some of the lunatics, and the short stay of juveniles, reduced numbers in Grangegorman penitentiary.²⁰

The increased role of the police must also be considered in relation to the number of committals to Irish prisons during, and after the Famine. The Appointment of Superintending Magistrates, etc., Act, 1814²¹ established the 'peace preservation force'. The lord lieutenant could dispatch the 'peace preservation force' to any area that was thought to be in disturbance. Another important act was the Appointment of Constables, etc. (Ireland) Act, 1822.²² This established four regional police forces in Armagh (North), Ballinrobe (West),

¹⁸ 'Sources in the National Archives for researching the Great Famine: Convict Management Papers' (<http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/famine/convmgmt.html>) (03 Mar. 2011).

¹⁹ *I.G. thirty-sixth report, 1857*, p. vii.

²⁰ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, pp 352-3.

²¹ 54 Geo. III, c. 131 (25 July 1814), Appointment of Superintending Magistrates, etc., Act, 1814.

²² 3 Geo. I, c. 103 (5 Aug. 1822), Appointment of Constables, etc. (Ireland) Act, 1822.

Daingean (Midlands) and Ballincollig (South) and it effectively ended the 'peace preservation force'.²³ This act stated that the chief constable had to be resident in the barony in which he was stationed. It also established the post of resident magistrate. However, the lord lieutenant was permitted to appoint a resident magistrate only when requested by local representatives. The constables were required to work with the magistrates in the area in which they were stationed. The resident magistrates acted as justices of peace in issuing warrants and heard minor cases. Another act that altered how Ireland was policed was the Constabulary (Ireland) Act, 1836.²⁴ This act repealed and consolidated existing acts. The four regional forces were merged to form the Irish constabulary.²⁵ This act enabled the lord lieutenant to appoint resident magistrates throughout Ireland. The magistrates were to be in permanent residency in their districts. One further important act was the Dublin Police Act, 1836.²⁶ This act created the Dublin Metropolitan Police (D.M.P.).

The police were used by the state to maintain the status quo. The Dublin Police Act of 1836 explicitly stated that the police had the power to apprehend all persons who were 'loose, idle and disorderly', or who they suspected of 'evil designs'. This clearly targets vagrants and prostitutes who could be arrested for loitering. Vagrancy does not become a crime until 1847. The increased role of the police in society can be perceived in two ways. Police presence meant that more people, who were seen as disorderly or loitering, were liable to be arrested, but it also must have acted as a deterrent for people to do so openly. It can be assumed that inebriates were targeted by the D.M.P. for disorderly behaviour also. There were a large number of females sent to Grangegorman penitentiary for twenty-four to forty-hours for

²³ Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: a short history and genealogical guide* (Dublin, 1997), p. 39.

²⁴ 6 & 7 Will. IV, c. 13 (20 May 1836), Constabulary (Ireland) Act, 1836.

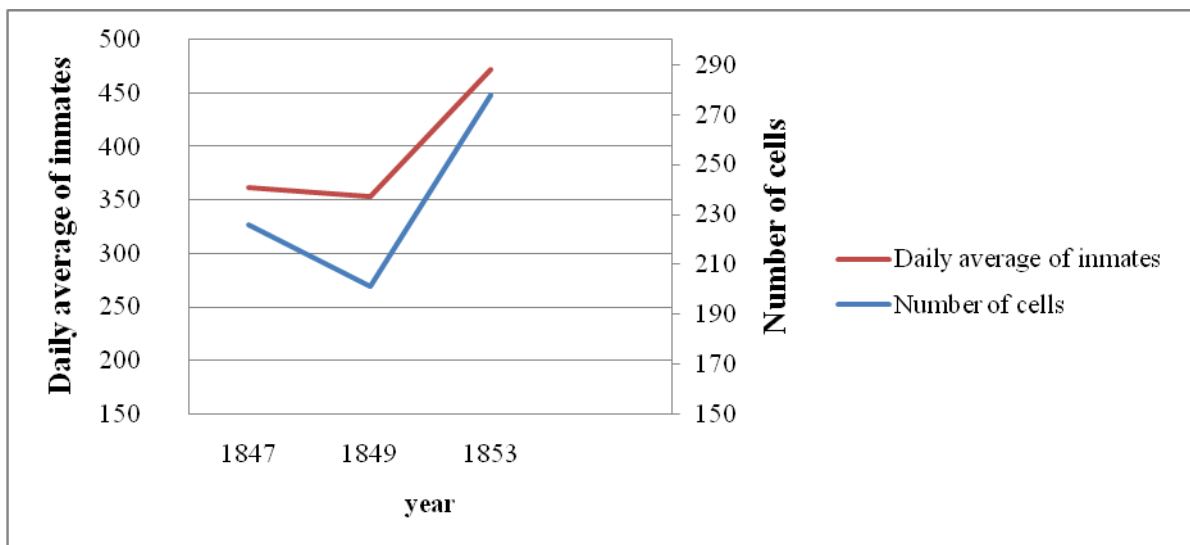
²⁵ Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary*, pp 42-4.

²⁶ 6 & 7 Will. IV, c. xxix (4 July 1836), Dublin Police Act, 1836.

drunkenness. Disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace were also crimes that appeared frequently in the Grangegorman prison registers.

The introduction of the separate system began a new phase of prisoner discipline and reform. This system advocated a separate cell for each prisoner. Table 1 compares the number of cells in Grangegorman penitentiary to the daily average number of inmates confined there. The number of cells in Grangegorman penitentiary was insufficient to deal with the number of committals in the immediate aftermath of the Famine. Of the 278 cells in Grangegorman penitentiary in 1853, eleven of these cells contained six beds.

Table 1
Comparison of cells in Grangegorman female penitentiary to the daily average of inmates, 1847-53



Source: I.G. reports 1847-53

The eighteenth report (1839) and the nineteenth report (1840) of the inspectors-general of Irish prisons, dealt with the desired introduction of the ‘separate system’ in Ireland, and how the system fared in practice in other countries. In England, moves had already been made to adopt such a system. The ‘separate system’ was a less severe form of solitary

confinement. The ‘separate system’ involved each prisoner being completely isolated from other prisoners for the whole of their imprisonment, but under strict conditions. Separate confinement was intended to facilitate reform as individual reflection on past crimes was encouraged. However, the main purpose of the ‘separate system’ was to protect the prisoners from all evil association with other prisoners. The authorities hoped that with separation, hardened inmates would be prevented from corrupting young inmates, and from leading them into a life of crime.

The ‘separate system’ was seen as the only legitimate means of reducing crime rates and recidivism among the lowest order of females in the city.²⁷ In 1840, the inspector-general who visited Grangegorman penitentiary stated that ‘[...] with qualified and zealous Matrons, I know of no system so likely to produce reformation amongst this class of prisoners [...]’.²⁸ It was thought by the penal authorities, that even if the inmate did not show remorse in their isolation, then at least they would be deterred from re-committing for fear of separate confinement in prison.²⁹

The ‘separate system’ was liable to lead to serious abuse, under the charge of an unqualified, brutal or corrupt governor/head matron and officers. Inmates could be neglected or mistreated by officers. Checks on the conduct of penitentiary staff were required to prevent this. The Prisons (Ireland), Act 1840 effectively legalised the separate system and outlined some safeguards to protect inmates who were under this system.³⁰ The cells for the ‘separate system’ were to be of fifteen feet by seven, lighted, warmed and ventilated and have a yard. Cells were to be fitted to enable inmates to communicate at any time with an officer. Cells

²⁷ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 61; p. 23.

²⁸ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 19.

²⁹ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 62.

³⁰ 3 & 4 Vict., c. 44 (4 Aug. 1840), Prisons (Ireland), Act 1840.

had to be certified by the inspectors-general of prisons and be approved by the lord lieutenant. Under this act, every inmate under separation confinement was to be permitted to exercise, and be instructed in morals, and religion. They were to be provided with books and be employed in the prison. Under these conditions prisoners, in theory, would not be able to recognise each other upon release and would be prevented from any loss of character, as their imprisonment would be unknown to other inmates.

Most of the prisons in Ireland did not have the facilities to implement such an idealistic system. In 1854, three stages of separate confinement were identified: complete, partial and approximate. ‘Complete separation’ meant the whole of the prison was certified for separate confinement and the inmates were strictly separated. Only four prisons were reported to be under, or nearly under, this system. ‘Partial separation’ meant that some sections of the prison were certified for separate confinement while other sections remained in the associated imprisonment of inmates. There were seven jails under this system. ‘Approximate separation’ meant that every effort was made in the prison to avoid the interaction of inmates: prisoners were separated at night and during meals and during industry as much as possible. There were twelve jails under this system, including Grangegorman female penitentiary. However, there were nineteen jails in Ireland in 1854, which did not have any provisions for separate confinement.³¹

‘Separate system’ was introduced as far as possible into Grangegorman penitentiary from 1840. However, as long as committals remained higher than cell capacity, it could never be fully implemented, thus Grangegorman penitentiary remained in ‘approximate separation’, throughout the period studied. In 1839, there were ninety-four inmates in Grangegorman

³¹ *I.G. thirty-third report, 1854*, pp xx-xxi.

penitentiary who were on the 'separate system' and in their own cell (this was before the criteria for separate confinement was legislated for). In the same year there were 260 inmates in association with other prisoners. They were not separated at night. However, a strict code of silence was maintained between the inmates in associated imprisonment.³² In 1840, the classes of inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary were prioritised for separate confinement as follows: juveniles, first committals, short or re-committals, re-committed felons, re-committed misdemeanants and committals for drunkenness.³³ The class matrons were reported to have constantly gone from cell to cell to check on the prisoners who were under separate confinement. Superior officers were also reported to have frequented the cells of those prisoners, as well as their respective chaplains. Mrs Marian Rawlins, the head matron in Grangegorman penitentiary, claimed that with these visits, every half an hour there was some communication for the prisoner, to break the gloom of solitude.³⁴ Prisoners who were not following the 'separate system' were strictly supervised in their work rooms, and at meals. Each class was appointed a class matron. The class matron was responsible for her class's instruction, education and moral, for their work, and for the good order of their rooms and cells. In 1849, there were forty-five cells which were fitted with the legal requirements for separate confinement. Repeat offenders and first committals were prioritised for separate confinement at this time: they were seen as the best and the worst of the inmates.³⁵ In 1856, in Grangegorman penitentiary, there were ninety-five cells equipped with the legal requirements for the 'separate system': artificially heated and fitted with gongs.³⁶

By 1859, the overcrowding issue in Grangegorman penitentiary had been reduced, and it was more or less operating under the 'separate system'. There were 121 cells fitted for

³² *I.G. eighteenth report, 1839*, p. 20.

³³ *I.G. nineteenth report, 1840*, p. 20.

³⁴ *I.G. eighteenth report, 1839*, p. 20.

³⁵ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 27.

³⁶ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, pp 318-9.

the 'separate system'. Plans were under way to alter the laundry, and other sections of the prison, to enable separate confinement throughout the prison. The inmates were classified. There was a class of tried misdemeanours. Another class consisted of nurses and vagrants. The term nurse refers to inmates who were breastfeeding infants. There was a class of re-committed felons and of first committal felons. There was a class for the mentally ill inmates. Another class consisted of untried prisoners, divided on the basis of first or second committal. Finally there was the reformatory class. This class contained juvenile inmates. By this time, juveniles were committed to Grangegorman penitentiary for a short period before being transferred to a reformatory school. The juveniles were kept strictly apart from the other inmates. All of these classes slept in single cells and took their meals in separation.³⁷

Daily life in Grangegorman female penitentiary: officers and inmates

The success of the 'separate system', and indeed, any system of prison reform, was determined by the efficiency and humanity of the prison officers. Efficient and trained officers were needed to manage and maintain a competent and effective institution. 'It requires the daily and hourly attention of a humane and intelligent officer, well instructed in sound penitentiary principles and supported by turnkeys whose visits to the cells tended to forward the work of reformation, for which the system is intended.'³⁸ Despite this matrons did not need to have any previous experience in prison management or have any training. Rena Lohan in her research on prison matrons in Mountjoy convict prison found that the only requirements for the job were that candidates could read and write, have knowledge of arithmetic, and be in good health. Officers had to undergo a medical examination before acceptance. Lohan found that the previous occupations of applicants ranged from school teacher to dressmaker and midwife. The application form for the job requested information

³⁷ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, pp 352-3.

³⁸ *I.G. nineteenth report, 1840*, p. 6.

such as age and marital status, as well as the number of children, and previous jobs. There seemed to a prejudice against married women. An entrance exam was introduced only in 1863.³⁹ Unsurprisingly, there were inconsistencies in the competence of the class matrons in Grangegorman penitentiary. In 1838, the inspector-general examined each class matron on her knowledge of the inmates under her care. He also looked at the inmates' progress in reading and their trade. He determined that the proficiency of the individual matrons varied considerably.⁴⁰

Under the Irish Prisons Act of 1826, prisoner fees were abolished and instead the officers and inspectors were salaried. This was implemented to stamp out corruption in the penal system. In 1859, the head matron and governor received £200 for annum: this was very substantial for the time. The assistant matron received £80; the school, store, hospital and kitchen matrons received £40. There were four first-class matrons, who also received £40. There were eleven second-class matrons, who received £30 each. The local inspector received £150. The physician received £100 while the surgeon received £150. The Roman Catholic chaplain was paid £100, while the Protestant and Presbyterian chaplains received smaller sums of £50 and £33 6s. 8d. respectively.⁴¹ There were some resident officers in Grangegorman penitentiary. They received daily provisions of two pounds of bread, one quarter pint of new milk and two stone of coal per day. They also received a half pound of soap and a pound of candles per week.⁴²

There were many officers employed in Grangegorman penitentiary, both external and internal. The majority of the officers were female. The most important officer in

³⁹ Rena Lohan, 'Matrons in Mountjoy female convict prison, 1858-83' in Bernadette Whelan (ed.), *Women and paid work in Ireland, 1500-1930* (Dublin, 2000), pp 87-9.

⁴⁰ *I.G. seventeenth report, 1838*, p. 17.

⁴¹ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 355.

⁴² *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 305.

Grangegorman penitentiary was the afore-mentioned Mrs Marian Rawlins, the head matron there from 1836-64. She had numerous responsibilities including the governance of the prison and the discipline of inmates. It was Mrs Rawlins's duty to ensure the proficiency of the class matrons. The deputy matron was next in charge to the head matron. Class matrons were under them. There was also a male governor in Grangegorman penitentiary. The governor's duties included the safe custody of the prisoners, the management of stores and expenditure, registry and books. The storekeeper and the turnkey (jailer) were under his authority. He was also in charge of male officers who performed the night watch and who protected the prison by day. In 1841, there was thirty-one internal staff employed at Grangegorman penitentiary: eighteen female officers, ten male officers, one nurse in charge of the mentally ill inmates and two servants. In addition to this, there was external staff, which included the local inspector, Protestant, Catholic and Presbyterian chaplains, medical officers, the physician and surgeon.

Chaplains had a special role within the Irish penal system. Under the Prisons Act of 1826, there were three chaplains in charge of religious instruction in the prisons: Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic and dissenting religion (Presbyterian). Each chaplain was expected to visit frequently the prison under his care (twice weekly) and on Sundays. Their role was to visit prisoners of their respective religions and instruct them. They also held a general supervisory role in the prison. They were required to keep check on the treatment of inmates, and on the quality of the food given to prisoners. They tested the progress of inmates in the prison school.⁴³ They were expected to keep detailed records of their visits to give to the inspectors-general.

⁴³ *I.G. thirty-seventh report, 1858*, p. 343.

The other outsiders with a role in the prison were philanthropic and religious middle-class women. These women were from various denominations and established voluntary groups.⁴⁴ Some of them visited prisons. Two groups that visited Grangegorman penitentiary were the Sisters of Charity and a ladies' committee.⁴⁵ The Sisters of Charity was a Roman Catholic religious order established by Mary Aikenhead in Dublin, 1816. Their role was to comfort inmates and to instruct them in the teaching of their religion.⁴⁶ Elizabeth Fry was behind the establishment of the ladies' committee.⁴⁷ They had the same role as their Catholic counterparts.

It is difficult to determine how successful the visits of chaplains, nuns and philanthropic women were at instructing inmates in religious matters. It was reported in 1848 that the majority of inmates, who were Roman Catholics, were in fact ignorant of the fundamental teachings of their church.⁴⁸ On the one hand this suggests that the chaplains and religious groups were not fulfilling their functions. However, sentences at this time were generally very short, thus it was difficult to adequately teach inmates who were confined for short periods. In 1849, the inspectors-general stated that the spiritual needs of the inmates were well attended to.⁴⁹

While the impact of the visits of external officers to Grangegorman penitentiary cannot be measured, the number of times they visited was recorded. All the external officers for Grangegorman penitentiary did visit the prison often. As noted in table 2 for external visits 1849-58, the Roman Catholic chaplain visited Grangegorman penitentiary most

⁴⁴ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 21.

⁴⁵ *I.G. seventeenth report, 1838*, p. 18.

⁴⁶ 'The Religious Sisters of Charity' (<http://www.rscaritas.ie/our-history>) (05 Dec. 2011).

⁴⁷ Luddy, *Women and philanthropy*, p. 155.

⁴⁸ *I.G. twenty-seventh report, 1848*, p. 35.

⁴⁹ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 30.

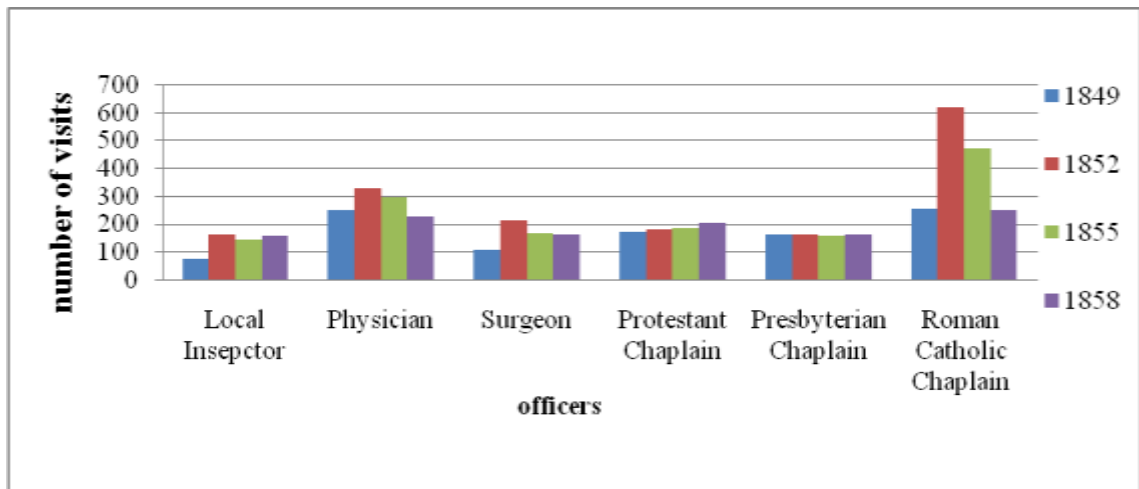
frequently, in comparison to the other chaplains. There was a spike in his visits in 1852, when he visited the prison no fewer than 623 times. He managed to visit the prison only 255 times in 1849. This can be explained as in 1849, the then chaplain in Grangegorman penitentiary resigned his post as he was unable to devote his full attention to the inmates there. He was replaced by Rev. Mr Lee who worked exclusively in the penitentiary.⁵⁰ It is not surprising that the Roman Catholic chaplain visited the prison more than the other chaplains as there were significantly more Roman Catholic inmates than Protestant or Presbyterian. In 1849, in relation to felons and misdemeanants, there were 2,814 Roman Catholic inmates, 542 Protestant inmates, while there were six Presbyterian inmates confined in Grangegorman penitentiary.⁵¹ For the year 1855 there were 7,394 Roman Catholic inmates, 719 Protestant inmates and mere six Presbyterian inmates confined in Grangegorman penitentiary.⁵² However, the other officers seemed to be more consistent with their visits from year to year. The local inspector did significantly increase his visits in 1852. He managed only seventy-six visits in 1849, while he visited Grangegorman penitentiary 161 times in 1852. It is interesting to note that the local inspector visited Grangegorman penitentiary a mere twenty-three times during the year 1851. The medical officers were in charge of the care of sick inmates and the mentally ill inmates. There is no record of the visits of external officers prior to the 1849 report.

⁵⁰ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, pp 29-30.

⁵¹ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 28.

⁵² *I.G. thirty-fourth report, 1855*, p. 40.

Table 2
Visits of External Officers to Grangegorman female penitentiary, 1849-1858



Source: *I.G. reports 1849-58*

The officers controlled the daily lives of the inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary; this included clothing, daily routine, education, industry, diet and health care. Prisoners committed for over one week were given one linen shift, one cap, an apron, linsey (coarse linen fibre)⁵³ jacket and petticoat, a handkerchief and a pair of shoes. The bedding was a pair of blankets, one rug and mattress.⁵⁴ The inmates’ day began at dawn in the winter and at half past six in the summer. The prisoners cleaned their cells and the corridors after washing and saying prayers. Then they were required to work until breakfast time. Prisoners were locked up for the night at 6pm in the summer and when it got dark at winter time.⁵⁵

Education added regularity to lives of inmates and was a means of controlling inmates for a few hours a day. It was thought at the time that education would lead to obedience to the law, and generally better behaviour. It was hoped by the upper and middle classes that if the poor were educated, they would be able to create a new life for themselves, on release,

⁵³ ‘Linsey’ in *OED* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1989).

⁵⁴ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 29.

and in turn, they would not be dependent on the state.⁵⁶ Many of the inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary could not read or write: in 1857, out of a gross total of 4,371 committals for that year, there were 2,081 inmates who could neither read nor write. There were 1,408 inmates who could read only, while 882 inmates could read and write.⁵⁷ The education of the inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary was criticised in 1848, as though it had a school it was not under the Board of Education, and a qualified school matron was not employed.⁵⁸ In 1849, the class matrons taught their respective classes from 11am to 1pm and if there was no work available to the prisoners, lessons continued into the afternoon.⁵⁹ In 1851, restrictions were introduced on schooling. This had the effect that only young inmates and those confined for long periods were permitted to attend school.⁶⁰ In 1855 the inmates were instructed from 10am to 3pm and from 4pm to 5pm. In 1856, the school in Grangegorman penitentiary finally came under the control of the Board of Education. A trained school mistress instructed the juvenile inmates in reading, writing, arithmetic and geography. Classes were held for two to three hours daily.⁶¹ In 1857, the daily hours of instruction were increased: from 10am to 3pm in winter and 10am to 5pm in summer.⁶² However, although instruction was an important part of life in Grangegorman penitentiary, it is hard to determine how much the inmates learned during their time there.

Industry was seen as an important aspect of prison life as it promoted regularity and prevented idleness. Instruction of prisoners in a trade was intended to enable inmates to make a living for themselves upon their release. This was idealistic. Industry also helped with prison discipline. The designated working hours were day light to dark in the winter and in

⁵⁶ Palmer, 'A treatise on the modern system of governing gaols' pp 37-9.

⁵⁷ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ *I.G. twenty-seventh report, 1848*, p. 35.

⁵⁹ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 30.

⁶⁰ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 59.

⁶¹ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 320.

⁶² *I.G. thirty-sixth report, 1857*, p. 214.

the summer from 6am to 6pm.⁶³ Inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary were employed at numerous trades, such as needlework and knitting, laundry work, and as cooks and cleaners. Prisoners were also employed as carers for the mentally ill inmates. The bulk of the needlework came from army contacts.⁶⁴ In 1838, credit was given to the head matron for securing profitable work. 'The matron had no precedent [...] to the most beneficial mode of employing the classes, nor any channel opened through which work could be procured for them; yet [...] the penitentiary has been established under a judicious system of by-laws, and an ample supply of profitable work had been provided'.⁶⁵ In 1841, the hard labour classes in Grangegorman penitentiary had to do the washing in the laundry, whitewashing and pumping water.⁶⁶ In 1844, all the prisoners in Grangegorman penitentiary were reported to be employed at some sort of a useful trade, primarily plain work⁶⁷, plain needlework or sewing.⁶⁸ By 1849, it was extremely difficult to secure any type of work for the inmates. The competition for labour, between the poor classes on the outside, and the inmates in prison, was acknowledged. The inspectors-general suggested the introduction of oakum picking as a solution. Oakum picking was the picking apart of tarred hemp rope in order to provide the material used to caulk ships.⁶⁹ Caulking is the process of making the joints of ships watertight.⁷⁰ Oakum picking was undoubtedly tedious, disagreeable work which could occupy inmates for many hours without supervision. However, the laundry in Grangegorman penitentiary continued to be a success and the main source of employment and profit.⁷¹ Once the Famine ended, it did not take long for the employment prospects of inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary to rise. In 1850, the industry for woman witnessed a substantial

⁶³ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 29.

⁶⁴ *I.G. sixteenth report, 1837*, p. 21.

⁶⁵ *I.G. seventeenth report, 1838*, p. 17.

⁶⁶ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 28.

⁶⁷ 'Plain work' in *OED* (3rd ed., Oxford, 2006).

⁶⁸ *I.G. twenty-third report, 1844*, p. 8.

⁶⁹ 'Oakum picking' in *OED* (3rd ed., Oxford, 2004).

⁷⁰ 'Caulk' in *OED* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1989).

⁷¹ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 29.

growth.⁷² With this growth, a shed for manufacturing flax, cotton, wool and shoes as well as looms, and other instruments, were made available to inmates, to produce materials such as blankets. A matron, trained in wool and flax dressing, spinning and dyeing was employed to instruct the inmates in these trades.⁷³ All the clothing and bedding for the prison was produced by the inmates. Between 1853-5, the inmates were primarily employed in plain work, picking cotton, dressing flax, the laundry and weaving. However, laundry in Grangegorman penitentiary still remained the biggest money-making industry.⁷⁴

Prisoners who were not under sentence of hard labour received a percentage of any profits resulting from their labour. This was provided for under the Irish Prisons Act of 1826. Those that were employed in sewing and knitting were paid one third of the net profit, while the women employed in laundry, cooking or in the lunatic class as carers, were paid 4*d.* per week. In 1841, there were two prisoners who acted as nurses to the physician and the surgeon, each was paid, 6*d.* per week.⁷⁵ To ensure regulation of the payment of prisoners, each had to sign a book, in the presence of a third party, conceding to the amount that they were to receive.

There were economic advantages to the employment of prisoners and profit was a concern for prison management. The profits earned by the labour of the prisoners were hoped to cover the cost of their confinement. There were no provisions in place to allow the separation of prisoners in the kitchen or the laundry. In 1844, the inspector-general suggested that servants should be employed to this work instead as separation and *not* profit was the

⁷² *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 58.

⁷³ *I.G. thirty-first report, 1852*, p. 16.

⁷⁴ *I.G. thirty-fourth report, 1855*, p. 42.

⁷⁵ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 28.

goal.⁷⁶ This might have been the expectation of the inspectors-general, but in reality the management in Grangegorman penitentiary had to be concerned with profits, as money was needed towards the maintenance of the prison, its staff and inmates. In 1856, the looms were dismantled and manufacturing ceased. Grangegorman prison management justified this by the fact the profit made from this industry did not cover the high cost of training the inmates and the price of materials.⁷⁷

Diet was another vital aspect to prisoners' lives. The diet in Irish prisons was regulated under act of parliament and thus was supposed to be uniform in all the prisons in the country. However, a change in diet could be approved by the board of superintendents. The diet was designed to be plain but sufficient and economical, so as not to act as an inducement to the poor classes to commit crime.⁷⁸ Officially, the general diet in Grangegorman penitentiary consisted of eight ounces of oatmeal in stir-about, a pint of new milk for breakfast, four pounds of potatoes with a pint of buttermilk for dinner. The bread diet consisted of two pounds of bread and two pints of new milk per day which was supplied to the sick, to mentally ill inmates on medical authority, and to infant children. The mentally ill prisoners were also supplied with beef and soup three days a week.⁷⁹ The bread diet cost four and a half pence per head while the mixed diet in Grangegorman penitentiary only cost two and three-quarter pence per head.⁸⁰ It is doubtful that the inmates received the full rations that they were entitled to.

As the strain of the famine took its toll on prison resources, the diet was reduced in the naive hope that inferior prison food would deter criminals. It did not. However, it was

⁷⁶ *I.G. twenty-third report, 1844*, p. 8.

⁷⁷ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 320.

⁷⁸ Palmer, 'A treatise on the modern system of governing gaols' p. 44.

⁷⁹ *I.G. twenty-second report, 1843*, p. 24.

⁸⁰ *I.G. sixteenth report, 1837*, p. 18.

approved by a medical officer and it was more economical.⁸¹ In 1846, the diet was reduced to three and half ounces of oatmeal and three and a half ounces of Indian meal, mixed together into stir-about, and a pint of new milk for breakfast, dinner consisted of one pound of brown bread and one pint of buttermilk. The diet was further reduced in 1849: it consisted of seven ounces of oatmeal and one pint of new milk for breakfast, twelve ounces of brown bread and three-quarters of a pint of new milk for dinner.

Another change came to the prison diet in 1850 as a further attempt to diminish the number of vagrants and drunkards, as well as those who purposely caused trouble in the workhouse. The prison authorities were aware at this time of inhabitants of the workhouse being refractory for the purpose of being sent to prison. The prison diet was of a greater quantity than in the workhouse. This new diet consisted of seven ounces of meal in stir-about and a half pint of milk for breakfast. Dinner was twelve ounces of bread and three quarter pint of milk. One pint of gruel was to be substituted for milk at dinner time on two days. Prisoners confined for less than one month were to receive seven ounces of meal in stir-about and a half pint of new milk for breakfast. Dinner consisted of twelve ounces of bread and three quarter pint of oatmeal gruel or vegetable soup. It would seem that the inmates were being given close to the minimum amount of sustenance to maintain life. An amendment was made to the Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1856 concerning food.⁸² The Prisons Act of 1826 did not state the food regulations for richer prisoners, only those who could not provide for themselves. Under the 1856 act no convicted prisoner could buy extra rations. Inmates who were not convicted were permitted, if they had the means to do so, to purchase extra rations.

⁸¹ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. ix.

⁸² 19 & 20 Vict., c. 68 (21 July 1856), Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1856.

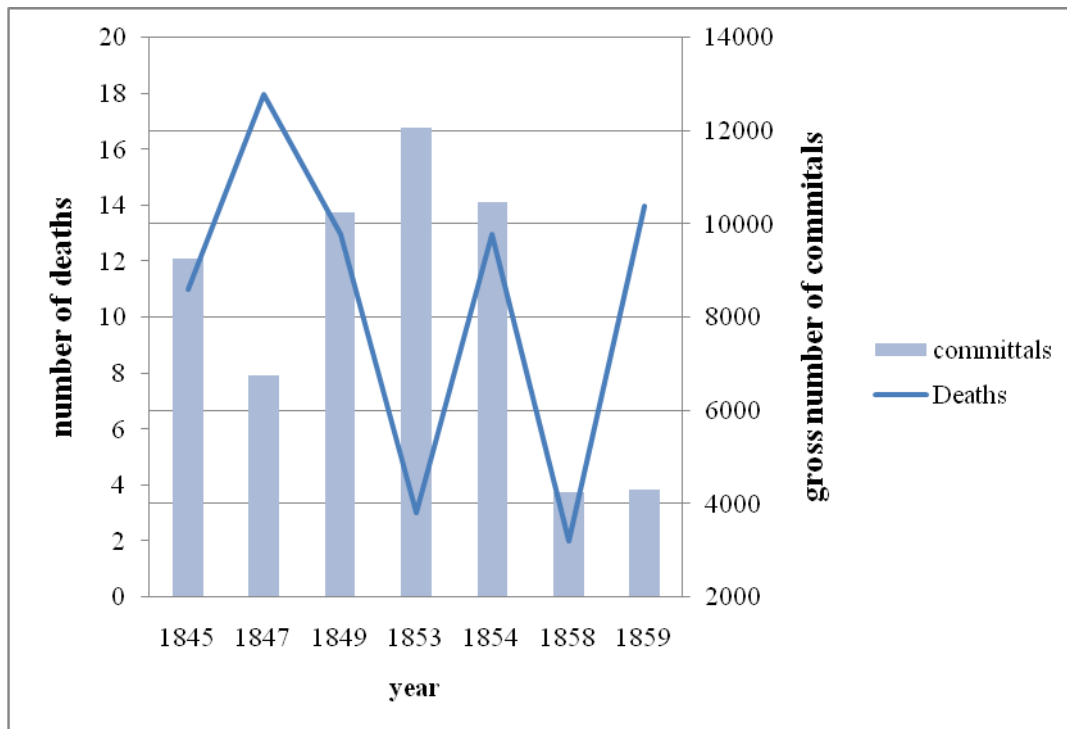
The medical officers were the only officers in the prison that could increase the diet of the inmates, on grounds of sickness or mental illness. Grangegorman penitentiary had its own infirmary. Patients in the hospital were cared for by the physician and surgeon of city jails. Throughout the reports, the high standard of care provided for in the hospital was praised by the inspectors-general, and in 1846 they go as far to say that ‘I do believe there is no hospital establishment in the kingdom better attended to.’⁸³ In 1840, the physician and surgeon of the city jails, Dr Harty and Surgeon Reid, were summoned before the grand jury. The grand jury accused the medical officers of unnecessary expense in the treatment of inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary. Dr Harty defended his actions by stating that ‘his duty was to take care of human life and the law gave him power to make any orders on the apothecary for that purpose which his conscience told him necessary.’⁸⁴ He further stated that in cases of midwifery if the ordinary attendant was not sufficient he called for a professional gentleman instead. This, as well as table 2, suggests that the hospital in Grangegorman penitentiary was well attended to by the medical officers.

Table 3 provides an example of the death rates in Grangegorman penitentiary in comparison to the number of committals there. Unsurprisingly, the highest death rate was at the height of famine in 1847 at eighteen inmates. This is a low number of fatalities, especially if we consider that many inmates who entered the prison were probably half starved, and had pre-existing diseases associated with poor health, poor living conditions and poor diet. This table demonstrates that the death rate in Grangegorman penitentiary was relatively low and that the death rate in Grangegorman penitentiary fluctuated during this period, from three deaths in 1853 to thirteen in 1854. There are no obvious reasons for this fluctuation.

⁸³ *I.G. twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 26.

⁸⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 30 Apr. 1840.

Table 3
Deaths in Grangegorman female penitentiary in comparison to gross number of committals, 1845-1859



Source: *I.G. reports, 1845-59*

In 1850, there were 578 deaths in all the penal institution in Ireland, this fell to ninety-eight in 1855, and to thirty-eight in 1858. The number of deaths rises to sixty-five in 1859. There were forty-eight inmates, who died, in 1860. It is pointed out that twenty-nine of those who died in 1860 were mentally ill.⁸⁵ This is used as a means of justification by the authorities for the death rates.

The inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary were treated for a wide range of diseases. Some of the most common diseases were fever, apoplexy (a stroke caused by a brain haemorrhage), dysentery, disease of heart or liver, consumption (tuberculosis), bronchitis, scrofula (tuberculosis of the neck), dropsy (edema, a build of fluid in the body), debility

⁸⁵ *I.G. thirty-ninth report, 1860, p. xxx.*

(feebleness), rheumatism and catarrh (build-up of mucus). Malingering (pretence of illness to avoid work), pregnancy and abortion were listed as disease in Grangegorman penitentiary in 1853.⁸⁶ In 1855, there were fifty-seven cases of venereal diseases in Grangegorman penitentiary. Some other diseases treated in that year were ulcers, hysteria, anthrax and epilepsy.⁸⁷

Inmates were also permitted to exercise. In the earlier years of the prison, the prisoners were permitted half an hour daily exercise, in the yard in their respective classes. For classes under separate confinement, this was done in succession. The remaining classes were organised into a single file, this was done in the presence of the matron. However, by 1849 due to the difficulty of acquiring jobs for the prisoners, they were permitted a half hour of exercise after each meal and for a brief time before lock up at night.

Intermediate refuges

The focus on reform did not just stop at the prison gates. There were calls for a more extensive and far reaching system of intermediate refuges to house released females who were destitute and penitent on their release. It was hoped that these refuges would aid prisoners upon their release and help to prevent them from returning to crime. It was claimed by Mrs Rawlins that some inmates who were received by a refuge had been restored to society as reformed characters.⁸⁸ However, this was likely an exaggeration by the head matron. The lack of these asylums was blamed for many thefts and petty offences committed

⁸⁶ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 40.

⁸⁷ *I.G. thirty-fourth report, 1855*, p. 45.

⁸⁸ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 7.

in the big cities and towns.⁸⁹ It was hoped that a prisoner's reform could be reinforced in these refuges.

Even by 1844, it was obvious that Ireland's intermediate services were lacking in comparison to other countries. By 1844, England had three asylums for destitute and penitent males and females. Two refuges existed in Dublin for female inmates. These were supported by private subscription and by the work of inmates only. These asylums could receive only between twenty and thirty inmates at any one time.⁹⁰

A problem with these homes was the extremely religious aspects of them. These refuges were primarily operated by religious groups. It was thought that the inmates would have a better chance of reintegrating into society if they were said to be reformed and remorseful on the word of chaplains, governors and matrons.⁹¹ This made these asylums undesirable to many of the females in Grangegorman penitentiary. The inspectors-general recommended that a house be set up for females by parliament, and not by religious groups.⁹² State-funded refuges would have solved the problem of over-zealous religious sentiment in refuges. There were other benefits to government funded refuges; the state would have more control and they could be monitored and regulated.⁹³ However, nothing was to be done by the state on this front.

In conclusion, the prisons of the 1800s were neglected and corrupted, and the inmates were treated inhumanely. However, through the work of penal reformers, the nineteenth century became an era of penal reform. The 'moral reform' of prisoners, based on discipline,

⁸⁹ *I.G. twenty-third report, 1844*, p. v.

⁹⁰ *I.G. twenty-third report, 1844*, p. vi.

⁹¹ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 2.

⁹² *I.G. twenty-second report, 1843*, p. 8.

⁹³ *I.G. seventeenth report, 1838*, p. 18.

hard work and moral instruction formed the foundation of the new system. However, ‘moral reform’ was an unrealistic and misguided expectation and was ultimately futile as poverty and not immorality was the dominant cause of crime at this time. Prison was essentially an institution for the poor and many used prison as a survival tool. The Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826 enabled the establishment of Grangegorman female penitentiary, the first exclusively female prison in the British Isles. This act improved the conditions for inmates and attempted to regulate the penal system in Ireland. However, the conditions in prisons in Ireland differed greatly. The ‘separate system’ was the ideal method of discipline in the penal system but in many prisons accommodation was insufficient to enable its implementation. The key to any successful discipline system were efficient officers, however officers were not trained. The officers in Grangegorman penitentiary imposed a strict daily routine on the inmates there. Intermediate refuges were established to reinforce the ‘moral reform’ of released prisoners. The next chapter examines the inmates of Grangegorman penitentiary, who were confined there, the crimes that they committed, and the sentences that they received.

Chapter II

The inmates of Grangegorman female penitentiary, 1836-60

This chapter examines the inmates who were received into Grangegorman female penitentiary and the reasons for their committal during the period 1836-60. Grangegorman inmates committed all types of crimes, from disorderly conduct and drunkenness to violent assault and bigamy. 'Common night walker', that is, prostitution and vagrancy, were crimes that also appeared frequently in the Grangegorman prison registers. Inmates usually received short-term sentences for their crimes which facilitated recidivism within the Irish penal system. Some of the inmates were troublesome; they resented their confinement and suffered harsh punishments from the penal authorities. The plight of the mentally ill inmates, who were a constant part of prison life during this period, and the reasons for their incarceration, are also examined. Finally, this chapter briefly looks at the untried and convicts who were also part of the women's penal system in Ireland.

Crimes and sentences of inmates

The most common crimes that were committed by the inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary were larceny, disturbing the peace, assault (common and violent) and drunkenness. Drunkenness was a common crime among the inmates there and it was necessary to keep a separate registry book. In 1851, the prison officers in County Antrim jail stated that females only drank alcohol as a release from despair and shame.¹ This demonstrates the belief that females drank only to cope with their poverty and criminal lifestyles and helps to explain why so many females were committed for drunkenness. Other crimes included absconding, being in possession of stolen goods, breaking glass, deserting her child, trespassing, selling of spirits unlicensed, pawning illegally and uttering base coins, that is, fraud.

¹ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 66.

The following are examples of more dramatic crimes that were committed by inmates in Grangegorman female penitentiary from 1836-60. Mary Doyle, aged twenty-two, received six months in Grangegorman penitentiary for concealing the birth of a child, resulting in infanticide. Eliza Cummins, aged twenty, received two months in Grangegorman penitentiary for deserting her child. Attempting to commit suicide was a crime punishable by imprisonment at this time. Anne Brien, aged twenty-nine, attempted to drown herself and received one week in Grangegorman penitentiary. Anne Valentine received one month for the same 'crime'. In 1851, one inmate was convicted of bigamy, while another was committed for child stealing.² Mary Anne Kelly, aged twenty-nine, was committed to Grangegorman penitentiary on the 17 March 1862. She was due for trial for causing the death of Thomas Davis: she set his clothes on fire. She apparently did this because she was intoxicated.³ Bridget Robinson was placed on trial in 1859 for violently assaulting Mary Flanagan. They were drinking together when a disagreement broke out. Robinson stuck a key into Flanagan's eye causing her to lose her eye. Robinson had been imprisoned for assault before, and the recorder sentenced her to two years' hard labour in Grangegorman penitentiary.⁴ Teresa O'Brien was convicted of breaking into a house and stealing a coat. She had thirteen prior convictions. She had been sentenced to seven years' transportation before this case. The recorder sentenced her to four years' penal servitude.⁵

Table 4 provides a further sample of the name, age, crime and sentence of the inmates who were committed to Grangegorman penitentiary, 1836-60.

² *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 55.

³ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Nov. 1840.

⁴ *Irish Times*, 2 Apr. 1859.

⁵ *Irish Times*, 2 Apr. 1859.

Table 4
Sample of inmates committed to Grangegorman female penitentiary, 1836-60

Name	Age	Crime	Sentence
Anne Byrne	15	Disturbing the peace	6 days
Anne Tyrell	16	Assault	14 days
C. Lawlor	60	Felony/paper	3 months
Catherine Ryan	15	Felony/butter	6 months
D. Walker	44	Attempting to scald her husband	3 months
Eliza Patterson	45	Riot and assault	14 days hard labour
Ellen Sullivan	19	Vagrant	1 month
Judith O'Brien	60	Disturbing the peace	1 month
Maria Byrne	21	Unsound mind	Unspecified
Maria Carter	23	Common night walker	7 days
M. Berlingham	27	Indecently exposed	1 month
Mary Walsh	19	Uttering base coin	6 months

Source: Prison Records: Grangegorman Female Prison general registry 1836-1860 available in NAI (on microfilm).

For a larger sample, see appendix 3. In table 4, Maria Byrne was presumably committed under the Dangerous Lunatics Act of 1838. Under this act, Maria could be confined as an inmate in prison until a medical officer deemed her to be ‘harmless’. The medical officer then had to refer the case to the lord lieutenant as only he could discharge an inmate. Eliza Patterson was sentenced to fourteen days with hard labour. Hard labour was an additional punishment to imprisonment and usually involved the inmates being employed at back-breaking work, such as on the tread-wheel. A tread-wheel was a wheel rotated by the weight of people walking forward on the inside of its periphery. It usually was used to pump water.⁶ They were not paid any of the profits of their labour, unlike regular prisoners.

The crime of ‘common night walker’ frequently appears in the Grangegorman female penitentiary register. The term suggests that these women were not employed in brothels but were opportunistic prostitutes soliciting in the streets; not surprisingly they featured among

⁶ ‘Tread-wheel’ in *OED* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1989).

the repeat offenders to prisons. Prostitution, as a career, held obvious health risks. The historian Maria Luddy points out that females employed in this type of work were exposing themselves to venereal diseases and pregnancy.⁷ However, most prostitutes were desperately poor and prostitution was for many, the only means of making a livelihood when they could not find work, or if they were abandoned by their spouse.⁸ Prostitution was thus unsurprisingly blamed for high rates of re-committals among females. The County Armagh jail experienced a rise in prostitution due to the presence of the militia in the town.⁹ Prostitutes in Waterford city jail were seen as responsible for high recidivism rates and were described as ‘unfortunate creatures’ who were immune to reform and discipline.¹⁰ The jails in County Armagh, Fermanagh and Louth blamed prostitution for high numbers of reoffending females also. The County Tyrone jail had the same problem with prostitution which kept the rate of recidivism among female inmates high.¹¹

Women who resorted to prostitution were seen by society as morally contagious and thus likely to corrupt other inmates. In 1846, in County Fermanagh jail at Enniskillen, the female quarters of the prison were described as in a dire condition. All inmates were classed together such as prostitutes with debtors, as well as the untried. The same complaint applied to the County of Louth jail at Dundalk and the jail at Drogheda as well as the County Roscommon jail.¹² The penal authorities believed that such indiscriminate housing of female inmates would cause the corruption of young and first time offenders, and the possibility that they too would enter into prostitution and crime.

⁷ Maria Luddy, ‘Prostitution and rescue work in nineteenth-century Ireland’ in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds.), *Women surviving: studies in Irish women’s history in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Guernsey, 1990), p. 51.

⁸ Maria Luddy, ‘Women and the pave: prostitution in Ireland’ in *History Ireland*, xvi, no. 3 (2008) p. 17.

⁹ *I.G. thirty-fourth report, 1855*, p. 62.

¹⁰ *I.G. thirty-seventh report, 1858*, p. 239; p. 314.

¹¹ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 122; p. 151; p. 172; p. 207.

¹² *I.G. twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 45; p. 54; p. 56; p. 66.

Vagrancy became a common crime once it was criminalised under the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act, 1847. A vagrant referred to someone with no settled home or regular work, who wandered from place to place.¹³ They maintained themselves by begging and sometimes by opportunistic crime. Committals for vagrancy had a separate registry book in Grangegorman penitentiary because of the large numbers. The passing of this act flooded the already burdened prison resources, especially during the Famine. The primary aim of this act was to remove the masses of destitute people begging on the streets, and to prevent them from travelling to other localities. Under this act anyone could legally apprehend any vagrant person. However, vagrancy was the only survival option for thousands of starving, homeless and destitute people.

As with prostitution, vagrancy was blamed for high rates of recidivism within the Irish prison system. In 1848, on the day of the inspector-general's visit, ninety-six adults and twenty-one children were committed to Grangegorman penitentiary. They were described as filthy and exposed to infectious diseases.¹⁴ In 1849, vagrants were generally committed for fourteen days. Some were committed for twenty-four hours only: in this instance, they did not receive any food, unless under special circumstances.¹⁵ This was to act as a deterrent. In the same year, in Grangegorman penitentiary, there was a high rate of recidivism among the vagrant classes. The total number of committals for vagrancy in that year was 4,562: this was committed among 2,206 individuals.¹⁶ This suggests that the prison system was failing to deter people from re-offending. There were limited options opened to vagrants and they were a common feature within the Irish penal system.

¹³ 'Vagrant' in *OED* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1989).

¹⁴ *I.G. twenty-seventh report, 1848*, p. 37.

¹⁵ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 28.

¹⁶ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 57.

Vagrants were treated very sternly by the penal authorities. The penal authorities attempted to reduce the numbers of vagrants in Grangegorman penitentiary by forcing them to do the most ‘irksome and laborious’ tasks, such as hand scutching (the process of beating flax to remove the straw)¹⁷ and cloving (splitting flax fibres).¹⁸ These tasks were deemed as so repugnant and harsh that the doctor in Grangegorman penitentiary had to approve the physical capability of each vagrant.¹⁹ In 1850, in Richmond male penitentiary, vagrants whether old, infirm or children were employed at stone breaking. Vagrants had to fulfil their fair share of the labour, which was determined by their bodily strength, or as punishment their dinner allowance was halved.²⁰ Despite this, the number of vagrants continued to rise.

The length of sentence endured by inmates in Grangegorman female penitentiary during this period was usually short-term, as their crimes primarily consisted of minor offences. Felonies received longer sentences than misdemeanours. Felonies included more serious crimes and crimes against property, such as larceny. Misdemeanours were minor crimes such as disturbing the peace and received very short sentences. Assault was classed as a misdemeanour at this time. Sentences for felonies and misdemeanours ranged from two years’ imprisonment to twenty-four hours. However, long sentences were rarely imposed. In 1849, six out of a total of 3,362 committals to Grangegorman penitentiary were for two years’ imprisonment. A mere three inmates were sentenced to eighteen months. In contrast, 800 inmates were sentenced to one month’s imprisonment, 731 were sentenced to seven days, while 667 were sentenced to forty-eight hours.²¹ Those convicted of disturbing/breach of the peace generally received a short sentence of one week to one month. The crime of assault generally received a short sentence ranging from one week to a month. The Summary

¹⁷ ‘Scutching’ in *OED* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1989).

¹⁸ ‘Cleave’ in *OED* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1989).

¹⁹ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1852*, p. 57.

²⁰ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. xvi.

²¹ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 28.

Jurisdiction (Ireland) Act, 1851²² stated that common assault should not receive a sentence exceeding two months and violent assault should not receive a sentence exceeding three months. Offences against property, such as destroying any gardens or vegetable patch, a felony, could receive a sentence not exceeding six months.

Recidivism

Recidivism was a major problem in Grangegorman female penitentiary as it was throughout the prison system in Ireland during this period. Short sentences not only facilitated recidivism, but made attempts at education or instruction futile.

Table 5
Grangegorman female penitentiary recidivism chart, 1846

Name	Age	Felony	Misdemeanours
Eliza Brady	29	0	97
Mary A Humphreys	30	0	97
Anne Kelly/Hollywood	39	2	96
Eliza Moran	34	1	92
Mary A Casey	27	1	82
Fanny Smith	36	0	82
Mary Doyle	33	2	81
Mary Egan	39	0	81
Julia Quinn	30	1	76
Emily Browne	29	1	74
Sarah Forbes	32	2	71
Catherine Dunne/Wilson	31	2	70
Anne Carr	37	1	70
Sarah Graham	27	1	68
Maria Wilkinson	29	2	66
Norah Moore	28	2	63
Mary Fay	26	1	61
Catherine Doyle/Walsh	26	0	50
Maria Henry	28	1	49
Emily Hughes	18	0	31

Source: *I.G. Twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 25.

²² 14 & 15 Vict., c. 92 (7 Aug. 1851), Summary Jurisdiction (Ireland) Act, 1851.

In 1846, the inspector-general compiled a list of the number of times some inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary had been committed to jail; a selection of his findings is presented as table 5. He also provided statistics on how often inmates committed to Grangegorman penitentiary in 1846 had been committed to jail since 1837. To note a few of these returns: 234 inmates were imprisoned twice before, 116 inmates were imprisoned three times, while ninety-six inmates were imprisoned four times. There was one inmate who was imprisoned 101 times, while another inmate had been imprisoned no fewer than 124 times.²³ Several of the prisoners who were confined in Grangegorman penitentiary on the day of the visit of the inspectors-general in 1847, were imprisoned up to eighty and even up to 115 times before.²⁴ In the 1850 report, the inspectors-general compiled another list of the worst inmates for re-offending, a sample is provided in table 6. It is interesting to note that Mary Humphreys appears in both charts.

Table 6
Grangegorman female penitentiary recidivism chart, 1850

Name	Age	How often imprisoned
Mary Egan	47	121
Anne Carr	41	117
Mary Humphreys	33	114
Sarah Nolan	37	114
Catherine Cooper	37	112
Emily Browne	36	106
Mary A Daly	41	99
Eliza Holden	28	94
Anne Caulfield	33	85
Catherine Kelly	97	63
Agnes Dowd	26	79
Catherine Flynn	24	69
Emily Hughes	23	68
Catherine Connor	22	65

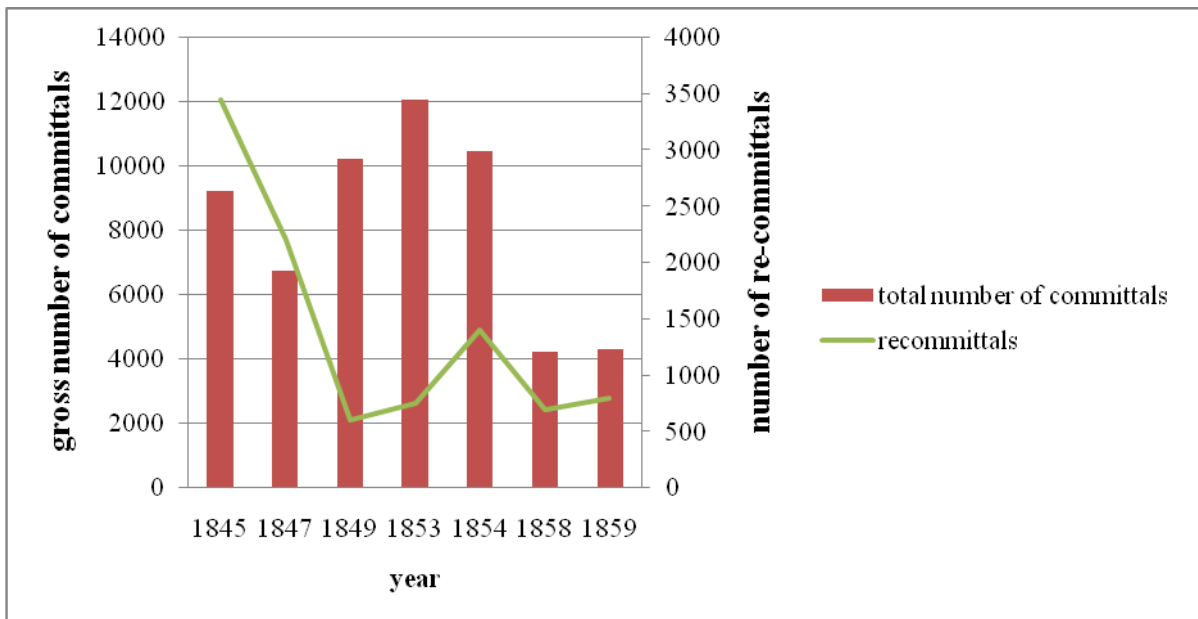
Source: *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. 11

²³ *I.G. twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 25.

²⁴ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 38.

Table 7 compares the gross total number of committals to Grangegorman female penitentiary to the total number of re-committals. The rate of recidivism was at its height during the Famine. Although the total number of committals in 1845 and 1847 was fewer than the following ten years, crime was committed by a concentrated number of individuals. From 1849-54, the number of committals increased but the rate of recidivism decreased. By 1858 the number of committals had decreased dramatically, however the rates of recidivism remained at a high level in Grangegorman female penitentiary.

Table 7
Comparison of gross number of committals to Grangegorman female penitentiary and the number of re-committals, 1845-59



Source: I.G. reports, 1845-59

The high rates of recidivism can be attributed, in some measure at least, to females who used the prisons as a means of survival. Short sentences made it easier for females to use the prison system as a survival strategy. In 1849, in Queen's County jail at Maryborough there were several females committed for absconding from the workhouse in possession of workhouse clothing. Five other female prisoners admitted to committing petty larceny and

breaking windows for the purpose of being sent to jail.²⁵ They had been discharged from the workhouse as they were deemed able to work. Thus females used the prison for shelter and food when they could no longer use the workhouse. In the same year, there were 230 released prisoners from Grangegorman female penitentiary who were returned to their original place of origin, or into the care of relatives. There were sixteen of these prisoners who subsequently returned to Dublin, and to prison in the city.²⁶ This implies that these women preferred an independent lifestyle, and were willing to break the law and return to prison to gain it, or used prison as a means of survival. Without the option of prison many females would not have been able to live independently and would have had to rely on the care of relatives or the workhouse. There is every likelihood that some would have died from the want of sustenance and shelter.

Troublesome inmates

The nineteenth-century solution to high rates of recidivism and overcrowding in the penal system was harsher treatment of inmates. Refractory inmates were those who were disobedient to prison officers, and generally unruly. These inmates resisted attempts at moral reform. In 1851, the inspectors-general stated that loud and disorderly inmates were broken into submission when confined in silence and isolation under the 'separate system'.²⁷ Thus by this time, the penal authorities' main objective was to subdue disorderly inmates rather than reform them. In 1854, three cells in different yards were erected for the purpose of solitary punishment. These proved to be effective for punishing disobedient inmates, and were used as a deterrent to other refractory inmates.²⁸ Dark cells were used for the punishment of refractory inmates: in 1837 there were twenty-two dark cells in Grangegorman female

²⁵ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 94.

²⁶ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 58.

²⁷ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 23.

²⁸ *I.G. thirty-third report, 1854*, p. xvi.

penitentiary.²⁹ Henry Mayhew and John Binny visited Millbank prison, London, in 1862. They described dark cells as small and pitch black. The prisoners were said to be visited at every hour, in case they managed to harm themselves, or be sick.³⁰

Inmates in Grangegorman female penitentiary were usually punished by reduced food rations or by confinement in a dark or solitary cell. In 1853, there were 283 inmates who were punished in Grangegorman penitentiary. Of these 220 had their diet reduced. A further sixty-three were subjected to unspecified, other punishments.³¹ In 1856, thirty-six refractory inmates were confined in a dark cell, while 176 suffered other punishments.³² In 1858, there were 169 punishments: sixteen of these were confinement in a dark cell while the remaining was classed as other punishments. Other punishments seemed to be the bread and water diet for various periods ranging from one to three days. Five unfortunate inmates were on this diet for one month. There were sixteen inmates confined in a dark cell; one inmate confined for three days, while the remaining fifteen were confined for one day. There were fourteen inmates who were handcuffed; three of these inmates were handcuffed for ten hours, while the remaining eleven were handcuffed for times ranging from one to seven hours.³³ Although it was not stated what these inmates did to be punished, likely reasons were that these inmates used bad language, talked back to the officers or got into fights with other inmates.

Mentally ill inmates

Another category of inmate confined in Grangegorman female penitentiary was the mentally ill. In the nineteenth century, those who were deemed to be mentally ill were commonly

²⁹ *I.G. sixteenth report, 1837*, p. 20.

³⁰ Henry Mayhew and John Binny, *The criminal prisons of London and scenes of prison life* (London, 1862), p. 258.

³¹ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 38.

³² *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 319.

³³ *I.G. thirty-seventh report, 1858*, p. 343.

referred to as ‘lunatics’. There is no way of assessing the mental stability of those classed as ‘lunatics’ and the historian must treat the records with some scepticism. Mental illness was often confused with immorality and generally any deviant behaviour in the nineteenth century. Thus it is certain that among those confined as lunatics were women with no mental illnesses but were simply eccentric, non-conformist, independent thinking, belligerent or otherwise ‘different’.³⁴ Mentally ill inmates could be confined in jails under the Criminal Lunatics (Ireland) Act, 1838.³⁵ This act more commonly referred to as the Dangerous Lunatics Act (DLA) stated that any two justices of the peace could request a surgeon, physician or apothecary to examine any person believed to have a deranged mind or the intention to commit a crime; if found to be a ‘dangerous lunatic’ then he or she could be committed to jail. Thus someone could be classed as a ‘dangerous lunatic’ without ever committing any dangerous action. Once in jail they could be confined for an unspecified length of time until deemed to be ‘recovered’.

Not all criminal ‘lunatics’ were committed to prison or even to an asylum. In 1852, Margaret Burges aged twenty-one was committed into Grangegorman female penitentiary to await trial for stealing clothes off children. She was found not guilty and was acquitted on the grounds of insanity. She was ordered into the care of her uncle.³⁶

The Central Criminal Lunatic Asylum (Ireland) Act, 1845³⁷ attempted to remove the ‘harmless lunatics’ from the penal system, so that only ‘dangerous or criminal lunatics’ would be confined in the jails. More asylums were built throughout the country to accommodate this. However, this act reinforced the legitimacy of magistrates to commit

³⁴ Peter McCandless ‘Liberty and lunacy: the Victorians and wrongful confinement’ in *Journal of Social History*, xi, no. 3 (1978), p. 367.

³⁵ 1 & 2 Vict., c. 27 (11 June 1838), Criminal Lunatics (Ireland) Act, 1838.

³⁶ Prison Records: Grangegorman female penitentiary general registry 1852-1852: book 1/9/55 available in NAI.

³⁷ 8 & 9 Vict., c. 107 (8 Aug. 1845), Central Criminal Lunatic Asylum (Ireland) Act, 1845

dangerous lunatics to jail. The same act stated that when the central asylum (for the ‘criminal lunatics’) was built that the lord lieutenant had the power to transfer the criminal mentally ill there. The Criminal Lunatics Act of 1838 was altered slightly to include that a person could only be declared a ‘dangerous lunatic’ under oath. The district asylums were now to receive as many ‘lunatic’ poor as they could accommodate, the previous lunacy act of 1821 having capped the number of patients at 150.

The lord lieutenant had the authority to discharge a person committed as a ‘dangerous lunatic’, if it was proven that he or she was recovered. However, it was difficult for a mentally ill inmate to secure release from prison. In 1848, in County Leitrim jail, one female inmate was deemed to be recovered from her lunacy by the medical officer. The governor complained that he had written on no fewer than three occasions to a magistrate for the permission to release her. However, he never received any such pardon.³⁸ In 1850, there was one mentally ill male inmate who had been confined in County Monaghan jail for nine years.³⁹ In 1850, in County Limerick jail, there were a number of inmates who were classed as ‘dangerous lunatics’ but were in fact described by the inspectors-general as ‘harmless idiots’.⁴⁰ In County Wexford jail in 1860, an elderly man who was blind and feeble with a calm temperament was mistakenly classed as a ‘dangerous lunatic’.⁴¹ These inmates should have been transferred to the district asylum. In 1852, in County Meath jail, there was one mentally ill female inmate who had been committed there in April 1839.⁴²

³⁸ *I.G. twenty-seventh report, 1848*, p. 52.

³⁹ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. 91.

⁴¹ *I.G. thirty-ninth report, 1860*, p. xliii; p. 233; p. 290.

⁴² *I.G. thirty-first report, 1852*, p. 118.

There were numerous causes for lunacy. The historian Mark Finnane emphasises that ‘the nature of insanity [...] remained inexplicable throughout the nineteenth century.’⁴³ A commissioners’ report in 1844 (England and Wales), listed the causes of insanity for paupers as intemperance, poverty and destitution, grief, disappointment and insufficient sustenance.⁴⁴ This shows that in the nineteenth century there was no real understanding of mental illness and that it was interlinked with poverty, immorality and crime.

A very wide range of symptoms or conditions, as well as deviation from norms, were perceived in the nineteenth century as signs of lunacy. The 1844 commissioners’ report (England and Wales) listed explanations for the various types of lunacy.⁴⁵ Mania covered a broad range of so-called symptoms. It referred to persons displaying irrational, hurried, confused or vehement behaviour. Dementia was seen as a type of lunacy: it referred to someone who retained their intellect but acted confused or disorderly. Melancholia referred to people who were intellectually intact but were low in spirits and indifferent to life. ‘Moral insanity’ described a person whose moral feelings were unsound and disordered. The commissioners further commented that females were usually diagnosed with this type of lunacy. These women’s supposed moral perversions were said to be connected to ‘hysterical and sexual excitement’.⁴⁶ Congenital idiocy and imbecility referred to people whose intellectual faculties had not been fully developed. This meant that such people were unable to care for themselves properly and to operate in society without supervision. It is probable people classed with this type of lunacy simply had learning difficulties. Paralysis was also seen as a symptom of lunacy. It was believed at the time that paralysis indicated an incurable and hopeless case: ‘general paralysis of the insane’ was caused by a mental disturbance. It

⁴³ Mark Finnane, *Insanity and the insane in post-famine Ireland* (New Jersey, 1981), p. 150.

⁴⁴ *Report of the metropolitan commissioners in lunacy, to the lord chancellor*, p. 115-6, H.L. 1844 (001), xxvi, 1 (henceforth cited as *Report into lunacy, 1844*).

⁴⁵ *Report into lunacy, 1844*, pp 103-13.

⁴⁶ *Report into lunacy, 1844*, p. 108.

was thought that males generally suffered from this particular type of insanity as a consequence of leading debauched lives. Paralysis could in fact be a late stage symptom of syphilis. Epilepsy was associated with insanity. However, it was acknowledged that some epileptics were not insane during the intervals of their paroxysmal attacks. *Delirium Tremens* was also classed as lunacy in the nineteenth century. This condition occurs from a severe alcohol withdrawal. It involves muscular shaking, confusion and delirium.

Although there was no proper medical treatment for lunacy at this time, there were numerous opinions on how to aid the recovery of mentally ill inmates. One method was to build up bodily strength through diet and medicinal alcohol (liquor, porter, malt, ale and wine). Reading and writing and other arts were suggested as possible treatments for insanity. Religious works were recommended to be studied as such works instructed the inmate in their religion.⁴⁷ Another treatment for lunacy was moral treatment, similar to what was recommended for the reform of criminal inmates. A warm and dry atmosphere to provide comfort and to help improve the patient's bodily circulation as well as cleanliness and exercise were key methods of recovery. However, the commissioners note that patients were generally kept in their cells.⁴⁸ In the nineteenth century, lunatics were portrayed as violent and impulsive thus it can be assumed that penal officers were reluctant to provide them with much freedom of movement. The commissioners' report noted that medicine was only occasionally administered to the patients. The main concern was seclusion and safe custody with little or no attempt to restore them to society.⁴⁹ This implies that those in charge of the mentally ill were doubtful of their patients' recovery and that the removal of the mentally ill from regular society was their main objective.

⁴⁷ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 59.

⁴⁸ *Report into lunacy, 1844*, pp 120-1.

⁴⁹ *Report into lunacy, 1844*, pp 115-6.

The presence of mentally ill inmates in prisons was seen as a distressing and embarrassing situation.⁵⁰ The penal authorities feared that if they were not removed, prisons would inevitably become lunatic asylums for the dangerous lunatics.⁵¹ Mentally ill inmates were a burden on prison resources and it was generally accepted that it would be near impossible for mentally ill inmates to improve within the prison environment. Prisons were simply not equipped to deal with them. However, prisons and the workhouses were the only institutions able to receive mentally ill inmates if the asylums were too full to take them or if their families did not have the means to send them to a private asylum.

Mentally ill inmates were mistreated in the penal system. In County Wexford jail, in 1844 the mentally ill inmates were described as being in a 'wretched state', cramped into dark and ill ventilated cells and a 'loathsome and disgusting sight'.⁵² In the same prison there were an unusual high number of punishments inflicted on mentally ill inmates. These punishments included bread and water diet and solitary confinement.⁵³ In December 1856, a mentally ill female inmate in County Leitrim jail was transferred to the district lunatic asylum in Sligo. She died very soon after her arrival to the asylum. It would seem that the staff members in the asylum were suspicious of the treatment of this patient in the prison and reported the case. The testimony and allegations of officers in Leitrim were conflicted.⁵⁴ It is possible that the prison officers had mistreated her and fearful of her demise arranged for her to be sent to the asylum. The injuries sustained by this inmate must have been substantial to raise the suspicions of the officers in the district asylum.

⁵⁰ *I.G. twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 55; p. 66.

⁵¹ *I.G. twenty first report, 1842*, p. 8.

⁵² *I.G. twenty-third report, 1844*, p. 80.

⁵³ *I.G. twenty-third report, 1844*, pp 83-4.

⁵⁴ *I.G. thirty-sixth report, 1857*, p. 32.

There were a significant number of mentally ill inmates in Grangegorman female penitentiary throughout the time studied, 1836-60. In Grangegorman penitentiary in 1841, there was one class of ‘lunatics’. They were allocated nine cells and were kept completely separated from the other inmates.⁵⁵ In the same year, fifteen inmates who were originally committed for misdemeanours were found to be ‘lunatics’.⁵⁶ Plausible reasons for this was that these inmates were extremely refractory, deviated from nineteenth-century norms, and had learning difficulties or epilepsy. Table 8 details the number of lunatic inmates who were confined in Grangegorman female penitentiary from 1843-56, if any was recovered, moved to an asylum, or died.

Table 8
Lunatics in Grangegorman female penitentiary, 1843-56

Year	Number of lunatic inmates	recovered	moved to an asylum	Number of lunatics who died
1843	56	19	4	4
1846	52	0	0	0
1849	133	55	8	8
1851	124	42	52	2
1852	86	25	54	1
1853	64	31	11	1
1856	26	0	0	0

Source: I.G. reports 1843-1856

Despite steps to construct more asylums in Ireland in the 1840s and 1850s, a large number of mentally ill inmates remained in the penal system. This was because there was no change in legislation to prevent dangerous lunatics from being committed to prisons. Also there was not enough accommodation in the asylums for pauper lunatics. In 1856, there were two classes of lunatics in Grangegorman penitentiary as there were no rooms available in Richmond

⁵⁵ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 31.

⁵⁶ *I.G. twenty-second report, 1843*, p. 22.

asylum. In 1856, the inspectors-general stated that another class matron was needed to assist the matron in charge of the mentally ill class.⁵⁷ There were only twenty-six lunatics in Grangegorman penitentiary and this was a relatively small number in comparison to previous years. It is hard to fathom why the inspectors-general were so concerned at the number of mentally ill inmates. One possible reason was that two matrons had resigned their posts in Grangegorman penitentiary, and thus they were short staffed in 1856.⁵⁸

Table 8 shows that there was a suspiciously high number of lunatic inmates who were declared cured in Grangegorman female penitentiary. In 1849, no fewer than fifty-five lunatic inmates were declared as cured from their insanity. However, the inspectors-general made no comment on it. Did the prison authorities, simply want rid of these ‘nuisances’ from their care? The care of the mentally ill inmates in prison cost the prison authorities extra money. This included diet, clothing, bedding and medical care. It is reasonable to assume that prisoners who were declared recovered from their lunacy were the most passive and submissive.

The historian Oonagh Walsh’s research offered another dimension to the issue of recovery. She found in the asylums that she examined, a higher percentage of female patients were released than male patients. Female inmates also spent shorter times in the asylums.⁵⁹ This was because females were seen as more susceptible to moral causes for lunacy, such as poverty-related stress and grief.⁶⁰ Walsh found that at this time the authorities were surprisingly sympathetic to cases of infanticide. They blamed the stigma of conceiving a

⁵⁷ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 319; pp 322-3

⁵⁸ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 322.

⁵⁹ Oonagh Walsh, ‘Gender and Insanity in nineteenth-century Ireland’ in Jonathon Andrews and Anne Digby (eds.), *Sex and seclusion, class and custody: perspectives on gender and class in the history of British and Irish psychiatry* (New York, 2004), p. 74.

⁶⁰ Walsh, ‘Gender and Insanity’ eds., Andrews & Digby, p. 76.

child out of wedlock as the cause of insanity. Thus the lunacy occurred only because of an unbearable amount of stress, and the patient could recover once the cause of stress was removed.⁶¹ Another reason for the high number of inmates who were declared recovered in Grangegorman penitentiary was offered by the historian Anne Shepherd. She argues that in the nineteenth century, the weakness of character found in females made them prone to mental illness but that this very weakness made them more susceptible to recovery.⁶²

The treatment of lunatics seemed to be a paradox in the nineteenth century. In 1846, the condition of the lunatic department was depicted as heart rending, but despite this the mentally ill inmates were stated as being treated humanely, and as being as comfortable as possible.⁶³ In 1847, the lunatic department in Grangegorman penitentiary was described as tranquil and clean and a credit to the matron, considering the little resources available to her.⁶⁴ The low death rate in Grangegorman penitentiary seems to support the contention that the mentally ill were cared for adequately. However, any hike in deaths was usually attributed to mentally ill inmates. This illustrates the nineteenth-century perception that lunatics were unhealthy, mentally and physically, and thus predisposed to an early death. The condition of mania was perceived to be possibly fatal due to constant restlessness and exhaustion.⁶⁵ The mentally ill inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary were given the basic amount of food required to recover. They were permitted a better quality of diet, on medical grounds, than ordinary inmates. In Grangegorman penitentiary in 1845, the mentally ill inmates received a diet of four ounces of meal in stir-about, half pound of bread and a pint of new milk for breakfast. For dinner they received two pounds of potatoes, half pound of bread, half pint of

⁶¹ Walsh, 'Gender and insanity' eds., Andrews & Digby, p. 80.

⁶² Anne Shepherd, 'The female patient experience in two late-nineteenth-Century Surrey asylums' in Jonathon Andrews and Anne Digby (eds.), *Sex and seclusion, class and custody: perspectives on gender and class in the history of British and Irish psychiatry* (New York, 2004), p. 243.

⁶³ *I.G. twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 27.

⁶⁴ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 42.

⁶⁵ *Report into lunacy, 1844*, p. 104.

new milk and a half pint of buttermilk. Three times a week they were permitted a half pound of beef and soup. Some prisoners, under the directions of the medical officers, were permitted to receive tea, wine and other medical comforts.⁶⁶ Thus although it seems that some effort was made to care for mentally ill inmates humanely in Grangegorman penitentiary, it was generally accepted that their quality of life was lower than that of the other inmates.

The officers and the regular inmates in charge of looking after the mentally ill inmates were not trained. During this period there was usually only one matron over this department at a time. In Grangegorman penitentiary, in 1846, Mrs Kennedy, the then matron in charge of the mentally ill class, and her assistant, were in charge of fifty-two inmates on the day of inspection. These inmates were kept separated from the rest of the prisoners. The matron's job was described as arduous and distressing.⁶⁷ In 1859, in County Tipperary jail, despite the fact that mentally ill inmates were confined there, they did not have qualified staff members to care for them.⁶⁸ In the nineteenth century, working as the officer in charge of the lunatic department was seen as a very demanding and stressful job. The mentally ill females confined in County Meath prison were described as the worst characters and the matron's health was apparently suffering under the strain of her duties. She was said to be anxious to retire.⁶⁹ Despite this in 1849, the matron over the lunatic department in Grangegorman penitentiary was paid only £25 per annum. This was less than the other matrons, who generally received £30 to £40.⁷⁰ By 1856, the matron over the 'lunatics' was paid the same as the class officers, £30 or £40 per annum.⁷¹

⁶⁶ *I.G. twenty-fourth report, 1845*, p. 15.

⁶⁷ *I.G. twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 27.

⁶⁸ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 301.

⁶⁹ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 121.

⁷⁰ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 30.

⁷¹ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 321.

Female inmates were often put in charge of the mentally ill inmates. In 1854, in County Wicklow jail, there were seven mentally ill inmates present there with two inmates caring for them.⁷² The female inmates cared for both male and female mentally ill inmates. In 1859, in County Donegal jail, the prison officers were under immense pressure trying to care for the number of mentally ill inmates present there. The education and employment of the regular prisoners was neglected as they were required to care for and supervise the mentally ill inmates.⁷³ The male inmates were instructed from 10am to 1pm each day while the female inmates were supposed to be instructed from 12 noon to 2pm each day. However, while the male instruction was not interrupted, a large number of the female inmates were removed from their instruction to attend to the mentally ill inmates. In 1859, in County Wexford jail, a large number of prisoners were forced to care for the mentally ill inmates. This had an obvious effect on industry in the prison. However, it only applied to female employment, as the male inmates were described as ‘industrious’. Thus the care of mentally ill inmates was forced on to the female inmates alone. There were twenty dangerous lunatics who were male and five dangerous lunatics who were female confined in Wexford jail in that year, all cared for by female inmates.⁷⁴ The use of the term ‘dangerous’ implies that restraints were used. There is no evidence to suggest that these inmates were trained or instructed in any way in the care of the mentally ill.

Other prisoners

Another category of inmate to be found at Grangegorman penitentiary was the untried. These inmates were suspected of a crime but had to await trial for sentencing. There were a large number of untried inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary. Some untried prisoners appeared in

⁷² *I.G. thirty-third report, 1854*, p. 217.

⁷³ *I.G. thirty-sixth report, 1857*, pp 139-40.

⁷⁴ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 326; p. 323; p. 331.

the general registry. In the crime column, 'further evidence' or 'further examination' was sometimes recorded. In Grangegorman penitentiary in 1851, there were no fewer than 672 untried inmates confined there for an unspecified length of time.⁷⁵ Of these, 539 were awaiting their trial while 133 were being kept for further evidence.

In addition to the city prisoners all of the females under the sentence of transportation, were sent to the convict depot in Grangegorman female penitentiary from 1836-59, before they embarked Female convicts were housed separately from the city prisoners, and their accounts were kept entirely separate from the prison's main accounts. The expenses of the convict department were defrayed by the central government. The purpose of sending convicts to Grangegorman depot was to prepare them for their transportation by providing them with moral instruction and advice.⁷⁶ The convicts received instruction in their respective religion. The moral teaching given to convicts was to help to reform their character and make them regret their crimes, while the advice given to them was supposed to help them settle in to a new life, free of crime, abroad. In 1842, thirty convicts were housed in Grangegorman convict depot.⁷⁷ It was reported that some of the convicts had their children with them but the number of children was not stated. However, to give some idea of the number, there were seventy-one children received in Grangegorman convict depot in 1843: they were accompanying 246 women. There were 132 convicts and forty-nine children who embarked in April of that year while a further 109 remained in confinement. The remaining four convicts had their sentences commuted.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 55.

⁷⁶ *I.G. nineteenth report, 1840*, p. 20.

⁷⁷ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ *I.G. twenty-second report, 1843*, p. 26.

The Penal Servitude Act, 1853⁷⁹ effectively replaced transportation with imprisonment. This act stated that no person could be transported unless it was for life or more than fourteen years. Any person who had been sentenced for less than fourteen years' transportation was to be confined under sentence of penal servitude. Any person under sentence of penal servitude could be confined anywhere within the British Empire but not necessarily in a prison. Under this act, it was possible for any person sentenced to life transportation to be given penal servitude for life instead. Transportation officially ended in 1868. There were calls for convicts and those under the sentence of penal servitude to be moved from Grangegorman convict depot. Fort Westmoreland on Spike Island became a government depot for convicts in 1847.⁸⁰ In 1859, the convict depot in Grangegorman was handed to the board of superintendents from the government. There were eighty-two cells and six day rooms, which were freed up by the removal of the convicts from the depot in Grangegorman.⁸¹

In conclusion, the inmates in Grangegorman female penitentiary committed all different types of crime. The most common crimes included drunkenness, larceny and disorderly behaviour. 'Common night walker' and vagrancy were also crimes that appeared on the prison registers. These crimes were treated differently from other crimes. This was because 'common night walkers' were seen as immoral while vagrants were seen as spreading disease. Inmates generally received very short sentences as their crime mostly consisted of petty offences. Felonies (including larceny) received longer terms of imprisonment than misdemeanours. Short sentences facilitated recidivism. Recidivism was a major problem in Irish prisons as many poor females used to prison as a survival tool. This suggests that the discipline system in the prison was a failure, and it did not act as a sufficient

⁷⁹ 16 & 17 Vict., c. 99 (30 Aug. 1853), Penal Servitude Act, 1853.

⁸⁰ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 11.

⁸¹ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, pp 352-3.

deterrent. To combat high rates of recidivism the penal authorities inflicted harsher punishments onto refractory inmates. Punishments in Grangegorman penitentiary consisted of reduced diet and solitary confinement of inmates. Mentally ill inmates were a significant group of inmates in Grangegorman female penitentiary. Legislation enabled mentally ill inmates to be confined in prisons even if they had never committed a crime. The causes of lunacy were broad and there were numerous symptoms associated with it: anyone who deviated from the norms could be classed as a 'lunatic' during the nineteenth century. Definite parallels can be drawn between the attempt to reform criminal inmates in jail and attempts to aid the recovery of mentally ill inmates. The aim in the treatment of both was to facilitate their return to main stream society. The untried and convicts were also constant aspects in Grangegorman female penitentiary and must be included to provide a comprehensive history of the prison.

Chapter III

Juvenile offenders and destitute children in the Irish prison system, 1836-60

This chapter examines a specific category of inmate: destitute and criminal juveniles. Juveniles became a distinct group in the Irish prison system during this period, 1836-60, when there was an evident shift in prison policy away from older criminals towards juveniles. There were also non-criminal juveniles confined within the prison system. Many juveniles were left orphaned and destitute by the Famine as their parents or relatives had died, or they were separated from them. These juveniles had little chance of survival and turned to vagrancy and crime. This chapter looks at how society and the state perceived destitute and criminal juveniles and how they dealt with juvenile crime. Children of the poor were believed to be destined to a life of crime and were treated as criminals despite the fact they had committed no crime. Finally, with the spot-light turned on the reform of juveniles, reformatories came under scrutiny as possible means of reformation.

Shift of reform towards juveniles and reasons for juvenile crime

The age that constituted a juvenile in the nineteenth century was debatable. The Juvenile Offenders (Ireland) Act, 1848¹ stated that juveniles referred to those under the age of fourteen years. The Larceny Act, 1850² increased the age of a juvenile to sixteen years. An enquiry into the state of prison discipline in England and Wales in 1850 recommended that no person under the age of nine should be held accountable for a felony or misdemeanour.³ The following year the Summary Jurisdiction (Ireland) Act, 1851⁴ amended the age of a juvenile

¹ 11 & 12 Vict., c. 59 (14 Aug. 1848), Juvenile Offenders (Ireland) Act, 1848.

² 13 & 14 Vict., c. 37 (29 July 1850), Larceny Act, 1850.

³ *Report from the select committee on prison discipline together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, p. xix, H.C. 1850 (632), xvii, 1 (henceforth cited as *Report on prison discipline, 1850*).

⁴ 14 & 15 Vict., c. 92 (7 Aug. 1851), Summary Jurisdiction (Ireland) Act, 1851.

back to fourteen years. In 1853, the inspectors-general of Irish prisons split juveniles into two categories: ten years and under and eleven to sixteen years.⁵ In 1858, the inspectors-general divided juveniles into three categories: aged ten years and under, aged eleven to sixteen years and aged seventeen to twenty years.⁶ These examples emphasise the inconsistency surrounding the age of a juvenile during this period. For the purposes of this thesis the term juvenile includes young children also.

As the nineteenth century progressed, there was an evident shift of public attention to the treatment of destitute and criminal juveniles. This can be seen through official enquiries and new legislation, as well as through the reports of the inspectors-general which increasingly dedicated larger sections of their reports to juvenile crime, and its causes. The change occurred as the authorities were concerned with the high rates of recidivism within the penal system. The reform of older and more hardened offenders had failed but reformers believed that juveniles could still be rescued through ‘moral reform’. It was thought that crime had to be stopped at its source and the penal authorities believed that the most hardened criminals were once juvenile offenders who had matured within the penal system.⁷

A further reason for this change was parentage: increasingly, attention was turned to the family life of juveniles. ‘Neglectful parents’ who failed to teach their children morals were blamed for a large section of juvenile crime.⁸ In reality, these were poor parents who were desperately trying to provide for their children. It was thought that crime was passed

⁵ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. xvi.

⁶ *I.G. thirty-seventh report, 1858*, p. 340.

⁷ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 20.

⁸ Joseph Adshead, ‘On juvenile criminals, reformatories, and the means of rendering the perishing and dangerous classes serviceable to the state’ in *Knowsley Pamphlet Collection*, (1856), p. 4.

down from the parents to child.⁹ In 1832, James Palmer suggested that by ensuring the care of deserted and orphaned children by legislation, there could be hope of ridding the lower classes of their supposed vices.¹⁰ In a report into criminal and destitute juveniles in 1852 (England and Wales), Matthew Davenport Hill, Esq., penal reformer and recorder of prisoners in Birmingham, stated that it was illegitimate children, orphans, foundlings and step-children as well as the children of the very poor that formed the different classes of juvenile criminals. Moral destitution was the common factor. He wrongly suggested that idleness was the cause of crime: poverty was. Mr John Ellis, conductor of the ragged school in Brook Street, London, incorrectly maintained that the cause of juvenile crime was their parents - usually the mother.¹¹ Captain W. J. William, inspector-general of prisons in England, offered a more practical assessment of juvenile crime. He stated it was the circumstances of the parents, and not neglect, that was the cause of juvenile crime. He provided the example of a father who worked long hours to support his family and his wife was unable to control the children alone. They resorted to tying their children to the bedstead to prevent them from roaming the streets.¹² This can be seen as a class issue as lower class parents who worked long hours were seen as incapable of keeping their children under control.¹³

Short-term imprisonment of juvenile offenders was blamed for the increase in juvenile crime during this period. The penal authorities believed that jail was a deterrent

⁹ Margaret May, 'Innocence and experience: the evolution of the concept of juvenile delinquency in the mid-nineteenth-century' in *Victorian Studies*, xvii, no. 1, *The Victorian Child* (1973), pp 19-20.

¹⁰ James Palmer, 'A treatise on the modern system of governing gaols, penitentiaries and houses of correction, with a view to moral improvement and reformation of character: also, a detail of duties of each department of a prison, together with observations on the state of prison discipline at home and abroad, and on the management of lunatic asylums' in *Hume tracts* (1832), available at (<http://www.jstor.org>), p. 16.

¹¹ *Report from the select committee on criminal and destitute juveniles; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, p. 36; p. 199, H.C. 1852 (515), vii.1 (henceforth cited as *Report on juvenile and destitute children, 1852*).

¹² *Report on criminal and destitute juveniles, 1852*, p. 9.

¹³ *I.G. thirty-fourth report, 1855*, p. 9.

whereas jail for the poor juveniles was about survival. The authorities believed that short-term sentences failed to impose any lasting impression on inmates.¹⁴ It was also thought that short-term imprisonment nurtured future criminals. In 1850, the inspectors-general argued that juveniles corrupted by their own criminal parents needed long sentences to inculcate reform or they would be ‘shamed’ out of any reform by their parents.¹⁵ This suggested that the authorities believed that poor parents encouraged their children to commit crime. In 1847, there was a nine year old boy confined in Newgate prison, Dublin. The boy was sentenced to one year’s imprisonment for burglary; he had served two previous short-term sentences. The inspectors-general believed that this boy had made criminal alliances during his previous incarcerations which led him to commit the burglary.¹⁶

Destitution was the main motive for juvenile crime: many juveniles were left orphaned or abandoned by Famine. In 1847 in County Mayo jail in Castlebar, there were a high number of young children confined for stealing food. The workhouse was too full to receive them and they begged and stole to survive.¹⁷ In 1849, in County Clare jail, there were a number of young boys confined for petty theft: two brothers, aged eight and nine were sentenced to one month’s imprisonment for stealing a few beans from a field and were ‘[...] fitter objects for the workhouse than a gaol.’¹⁸ These boys were probably orphaned. The inspectors-general complained that there was a problem with young juveniles who were troublesome in the workhouses for the purposes of being transferred to prison: prison inmates received larger food portions. They insisted that transferring disruptive juveniles to prisons only served to encourage others. The inspectors-general suggested that juvenile boys should

¹⁴ *I.G. thirty-fourth report, 1855*, p. 46.

¹⁵ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. xix.

¹⁶ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 34.

¹⁷ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 68.

¹⁸ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 72.

be whipped and returned to the workhouse or that the diet in prisons be reduced.¹⁹ The cases of these children represented a large section of Irish society who resorted to crime to survive. The solutions offered by the inspectors-general were too harsh.

The inspectors-general compiled tables of statistics concerning juveniles in prisons. Table 9 provides details on juveniles in Grangegorman penitentiary in 1853. Many juveniles were without parents or were from single-parent families and many had also absconded from their parents. This suggests that many juveniles had to support themselves.

Table 9
The parentage, residence, education and religion of juveniles in Grangegorman, 1853

Parentage	Aged 10 and under	Ages 11 to 16	Aged 17 to 20
Without parents	9	197	308
Without father	37	109	127
Without mother	3	54	108
Step-children	3	15	9
Illegitimate	0	2	0
Abandoned by parents	3	25	20
Absconded from parents	0	49	228
Residence			
Belonging to county/borough	38	146	228
Belonging to other localities	33	367	512
Education			
Wholly illiterate	67	323	335
Know Alphabet	0	0	0
Read imperfectly	2	147	247
Read and write	2	43	158
Religion			
Protestant	2	27	59
Presbyterian	0	0	0
Roman Catholic	69	186	681

Source: *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 367.

¹⁹ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 8.

Diet

In 1849, it was acknowledged that all inmates, regardless of age, were legally entitled to the same rations within the penal system.²⁰ This was blamed for encouraging crime among juveniles who were destitute. In 1849, a new reduced diet was introduced in the hope of reducing crime. Inmates were divided into three groups, first class (male), second class (female) and the third class (males and females under 10 years). The third class diet consisted of five ounces of meal in stir-about and half a pint of new milk for breakfast. Dinner was ten ounces of bread and half a pint of new milk, while supper was four ounces of bread and one and a half naggin of new milk. Inmates whose imprisonment did not exceed one month were on a different diet. The third class diet in this instance consisted of three ounces of meal in stir-about and half a pint of milk for breakfast. Dinner was ten ounces of bread and half a pint of new milk. Supper was four ounces of bread and one and a half naggin of new milk.²¹

In 1854, the penal authorities were still concerned about the diet of juveniles in prisons, as inmates over the age of ten could legally receive adult rations. The inspectors-general suggested that inmates under the age of fifteen should have their rations reduced to correspond with the workhouse diet.²² This suggestion was approved by the Queen's bench and juveniles under the age of fifteen were to receive five ounces of oatmeal and a half pint of new milk for breakfast, no less than eight ounces of brown bread and one pint of soup for dinner and four ounces of brown bread for supper. Potatoes could be substituted for stir-about or for bread in each meal to the quantity of two pounds for breakfast, three pounds for dinner and one pound for supper. Inmates under the age of fifteen, who were confined for less than

²⁰ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. ix.

²¹ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. xii; p. xiii.

²² *I.G. thirty-third report, 1854*, p. xiv.

one calendar month, received the same reduced diet.²³ This shows that juveniles received the minimum sustenance in prisons in Ireland.

Non-criminal juveniles

There were non-criminal juveniles confined in the penal system in Ireland. In the inspectors-general's reports, young vagrants were often referred to as children. In this section, children refer to those who were received into the prison with their mothers. In Grangegorman, it was common for young children to be received into the prison with their mothers. Non-criminal children were a largely neglected group, and their presence in the prison system was not generally commented upon by penal reformers. In 1851, the inspectors-general acknowledged that this group was the only class of inmates who were confined in prisons but were not mentioned in the prison acts of 1826.²⁴

There is no doubt that inmates' children over the age of infancy were a common and accepted feature in Grangegorman. Unfortunately the ages of the children were not provided in the reports and the children of inmates were not recorded in the prison general register. Children who were received into the prison with their mothers were instructed in the prison school.²⁵ In 1839, there were nine cells allocated to children in Grangegorman.²⁶ This implies that these children were separated from their mothers. These cells were deducted from the number of cells available to criminal inmates thus it is clear that these children had not committed any crime. The report did not state how many children were to a cell. However, it can be assumed that there was more than one. In 1840, in Grangegorman, all children over

²³ *I.G. thirty-fourth report, 1855*, p. xviii; p. xix.

²⁴ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 28; p. 33.

²⁵ *I.G. sixteenth report, 1837*, p. 8; p. 21.

²⁶ *I.G. eighteenth report, 1839*, p. 20.

infancy were placed into a separate class under a matron, fed and instructed.²⁷ Children were separated from their mothers to discourage mothers from committing crime which was a very cruel practice.

Table 10 details the number of inmates nursing children, the number of children, and the daily average of children confined in Grangegorman. In 1837, the inmates who were nursing infants (nurses) were kept in a separate class from the other inmates.²⁸ In 1847, there were seven children in Grangegorman, one of whom was in the hospital. The other six children were in a class with nine adults (five felons and four misdemeanants).²⁹ Thus the separate class for the children of inmates was short lived, presumably due to the high number of committals into the prison.

Table 10
Number of inmates nursing children, children, and the daily average of children in Grangegorman, 1837-53.

Year	Number of females nursing infants	Number of children	Average daily number of children
1837	19	37	n/a
1840	22	n/a	n/a
1843	11	n/a	n/a
1847	n/a	7	n/a
1848	n/a	62	n/a
1849	n/a	n/a	25
1851	20	n/a	n/a
1852	36	n/a	n/a
1853	47	52	46

Source: I.G. reports, 1837-1853

In 1847-9, during the Famine, there was an understandable lack of statistics on the number of children present in the prison. This was probably because the number in this group was so

²⁷ *I.G. nineteenth report, 1840*, p. 20.

²⁸ *I.G. seventeenth report, 1838*, p. 17.

²⁹ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 40.

large that it was too difficult for the penal authorities to keep records. In 1853, the highest daily number of children confined in Grangegorman was ninety-seven.³⁰ In 1859, it was reported that the room designated for inmates who were nursing infants was malodorous. However, the inspectors stated that this was to be expected with this class of inmate.³¹ This comment implies that the needs of inmates nursing infants were neglected by the prison officers as were the basic needs of young children in terms of the proper disposal and cleaning of linen which was used at the time as diapers.

There are numerous reasons for the presence of children within the penal system. Some magistrates committed children into prison with their mothers. In 1852, in County Kilkenny jail, the inspectors-general complained that some magistrates committed children as old as three to be received with their mother into jail. Although this practice was said to be humane, it was pointed out that it was not a legal practice. However, the main complaint was that it had the potential to encourage mothers to commit crime.³² Prison would provide food, shelter and medical care, however basic, for both mother and child; they could take advantage of this at the state's expense.

Non-criminal children received medical care in prison. During the year 1840 fifty-five children were confined in the prison hospital in Grangegorman. From 1 October 1840 to 1 October 1841, twenty-four children were treated by the prison physician, while thirty-one children were treated by the prison surgeon.³³ In the year 1843, in Grangegorman, there were twenty-three children who were treated by the physician while three children were treated by

³⁰ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 35; p. 39.

³¹ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 60; p. 352.

³² *I.G. thirty-first report, 1852*, p. 192.

³³ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 30.

the surgeon. It was reported that eight children died.³⁴ The causes of the deaths were not provided in the reports. Two children died in 1845.³⁵ Twenty-eight children were treated by the physician in 1850.³⁶ So it can be surmised that this was a very vulnerable group of young children.

However, it seems that some prisons were not provided with extra means to support non-criminal children and their treatment depended on the respective board of superintendents who granted money to the prisons. The inspectors-general's reports stated that the cost of maintaining prisoners did not include prisoners' children.³⁷ It did not say by what means the children were maintained. In 1841, in Grangegorm, it was reported that an extra diet of bread and milk was used daily for children on medical orders.³⁸ In 1846, in Mallow bridewell, the jailer complained that he was not supplied with any means to support the children of the inmates that he was 'compelled' to receive.³⁹ In 1849, in County Tyrone jail, it was reported that infants under the age of two, received eight ounces of bread and half pint of sweet milk per day.⁴⁰ In 1851, in County Roscommon jail, the inmates who had children pleaded desperately for an allowance of food for them.⁴¹

Non-criminal children seemed to have been treated like criminals in at least some of the prisons. Queen's County (Laois) jail in 1848 the children were classed with the untried prisoners.⁴² In County Roscommon jail in 1850, there were fourteen children in confinement on the day of inspection. Fifteen female inmates and their children were obliged to sleep in

³⁴ *I.G. twenty-second report, 1843*, p. 23.

³⁵ *I.G. twenty-fourth report, 1845*, p. 14.

³⁶ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. 12.

³⁷ *I.G. twenty-second report, 1843*, p. 25.

³⁸ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 29.

³⁹ *I.G. twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 78.

⁴⁰ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 67.

⁴¹ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 129.

⁴² *I.G. twenty-seventh report, 1848*, p. 95.

refractory cells on the male side of the bridewell. The cells were furnished with some loose straw. Oddly all but one of the cells in the female department was empty. Thus there was no reason for the female inmates to be crowded together. In County Kilkenny jail in 1850, it was reported that children were confined in a dark apartment which was occasionally damp.⁴³ This must have affected the children's health. The following year in the same prison, there were six female inmates who had children with them on the day of inspection. The children were described as wretched looking. However, the inspectors-general stated that the matron and her assistant treated the children with compassion.⁴⁴ Of course this was unlikely the case: the staff in prison would have been on their best behaviour during the inspections and the inspectors-general were generally lenient in their reports.

Perceptions of criminal and destitute juveniles

The state believed that they were obliged to instil moral values in juveniles, if their parents failed to do so.⁴⁵ In 1856, Joseph Adshead, prison theorist, argued that neglectful and criminal parents, effectively forfeited their rights as parents, and the state should step in to instruct, discipline and care for their children.⁴⁶ In 1881, Sir John Lentaigne, stated that 'it is the duty of parents and guardians to correct their children and prevent them from becoming hateful to society and when parents neglect to restrain their children, I am of the opinion that the executive should intervene.'⁴⁷ Not only does this show the justification of the state to intervene in private family life for the betterment of society, but it also highlights that the treatment of juveniles was an on-going debate throughout the nineteenth century. Lentaigne served on many government bodies and thus was well respected within Dublin Castle. These

⁴³ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. 47; p. 82.

⁴⁴ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1850*, p. 129; p. 185.

⁴⁵ May, 'Innocence and experience' p. 8.

⁴⁶ Adshead, 'On juvenile criminals' pp 48-9.

⁴⁷ John Lentaigne, 'The treatment and punishment of young offenders' in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, viii, no. lxiii (1881/1885), p. xxxiii.

included his positions as inspector-general of prisons from 1854 to 1877, inspector of reform and industrial schools from 1870 to 1886, and commissioner of national education from 1861 to 1886. He was president of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland from 1877 to 1878.⁴⁸

There was widespread concern over the number of destitute juveniles without parental supervision on the streets of Dublin and society was given a prime role in solving this problem. In 1847, the inspectors-general declared that the only way of reducing crime in the city of Dublin, was for citizens to care for the numerous destitute juveniles wandering the streets.⁴⁹ During the Famine orphaned or abandoned juveniles travelled to Dublin in the hope of getting into the workhouse or a fever hospital: many were vagrants and resorted to crime for survival. The inspectors-general claimed that the majority of beggars were under the age of twenty-one.⁵⁰ In 1848, in Grangegorman, on the day of inspection, there were twenty-one juveniles received into the prison as vagrants. They were described as filthy and most likely diseased.⁵¹ In 1852, in Richmond male penitentiary, Dublin, out of the 3,481 committals for vagrancy, 1,136 of these were under the age of sixteen years and 767 were aged between sixteen and twenty years. Juveniles were attracted to the cities to make a living through honest and opportunistic means.⁵² Although not all committed crime, there was an assumption that a life of crime was inevitable for these 'friendless and abandoned creatures.'⁵³ Table 9 highlights that the majority of juveniles confined in Grangegorman in 1853 had travelled to Dublin from different localities. This suggests that they were orphaned and vagrants. In 1856, there were as many as 5,327 juveniles committed for short terms in

⁴⁸ Enda Leaney, 'Lentaigne, John Francis O'Neill', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds.), *dictionary of Irish biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

⁴⁹ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ *I.G. thirty-first report, 1852*, p. 28.

⁵¹ *I.G. twenty-seventh report, 1848*, p. 37.

⁵² *I.G. thirty-first report, 1852*, p. 28.

⁵³ *I.G. twenty-second report, 1843*, p. 22.

Grangegorman. Many were vagrants who used the prison as a substitute home and repeatedly returned there.⁵⁴ There were few resources available to destitute children.⁵⁵ The workhouses were the only institution where the poor had easy access to relief.⁵⁶ However, this was not a statutory right. The prisons, as discussed in chapter II also provided shelter and food, though securing admission required some ingenuity on the part of a juvenile on his or her own.

Methods of reform

Destitution and criminality were explicitly linked at this time and new notions on the reform of juveniles were two fold. Juveniles who had committed crime needed to be punished and reformed, while any new system had to reform those who were supposedly predisposed to commit crime. The ideal aim of penal reformers was to prevent offenders from entering into crime, and to rescue those who had already offended. This aspiration was very unrealistic. There were numerous factors that were believed to assist the reform of juveniles.

Classification was a key method of reform for juveniles so as to avoid the corruption of juvenile offenders by hardened criminals. Classification meant the separation of particular groups within the penal system. However, classification varied considerably from prison to prison. In 1852, in County Roscommon jail, there was no classification in the female department, even between young and old offenders.⁵⁷ However, in County Tipperary jail, male and female juveniles were kept separated from the adult prisoners.⁵⁸ In County Waterford jail in 1857, it was stated that the males were classified, and male juveniles were kept separated from the adult males. Meanwhile, in the female department, there was no

⁵⁴ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 1.

⁵⁵ 10 & 11 Vict., c. 7 (26 Feb. 1847), Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 1847.

⁵⁶ Jane Barnes, *Irish industrial schools 1868-1908* (Dublin, 1989), p. 1.

⁵⁷ *I.G. thirty-first report, 1852*, pp 23-4.

⁵⁸ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 245.

classification of inmates.⁵⁹ This shows that female juveniles were classed with older inmates, while male inmates tended to be separated from adult males.

The 'separate system' was the ideal method of juvenile reform. As single cells were limited in Grangegorman, inmates were classed in order of preference. In 1839, the class first in line to receive separate accommodation were young offenders, who were committed for between one and eight months.⁶⁰ The class second in line were first time offenders. It is safe to assume that this class primarily consisted of younger rather than older offenders. In 1847, the inspectors-general stated that in Grangegorman the 'separate system' was imposed on the juvenile offenders and severe recidivists. It was hoped that the 'separate system' would act as a reform method for juveniles on their first offence.⁶¹ In 1851, there were forty-five cells suitable for 'separate system' available in Grangegorman which were occupied by those on their first offence.⁶² These inmates were most likely juveniles. In 1853, in Grangegorman, a modified 'separate system' was applied to sixty-three inmates, primarily juveniles, first committals and old offenders.⁶³

However, the effect of the separation system on juvenile offenders was a debatable issue during this period. In 1848, Dr Purdon of the Belfast Bridewell and House of Correction claimed that young offenders were rarely affected by separate confinement and were not affected by it. The only exception to this was if the inmate was previously morally corrupted.⁶⁴ He was referring here to young offenders who used crime as a way of life or those with criminal parents. In 1850, there were a number of juvenile offenders under the

⁵⁹ *I.G. thirty-sixth report, 1857*, p. 179.

⁶⁰ *I.G. eighteenth report, 1839*, p. 20.

⁶¹ *I.G. twenty-sixth, 1847*, p. 39.

⁶² *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 54.

⁶³ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. xix.

⁶⁴ *I.G. twenty-seventh report, 1848*, p. 42.

‘separate system’ in County Kildare jail. The officers in this jail determined that the separate system had no physical or mental consequences for juvenile offenders.⁶⁵ However, in the following year, in County Antrim jail, it was argued by the inspectors-general that the ‘separate system’ was unnecessarily harsh for those aged between fourteen and nineteen years as diet, exercise and fresh air were required for their successful reform.⁶⁶

Education was another principal method for the reform of juveniles. In 1844, the inspectors-general stated that there was a decrease in crimes by juveniles under the age of sixteen, in the last four years, from a total of 23,833 in 1840: 11, 194 convicted and 12, 639 acquitted to a total of 19,448 in 1844: 8,042 convicted and 11,406 acquitted. This decrease was attributed to the creation of a national school system established in Ireland in 1831.⁶⁷ In 1846, the inspectors-general stated that if young offenders received moderate discipline, daily schooling and instruction in a viable trade, there would be hardly any recidivism.⁶⁸ However, this assumption was flawed. Table 9 suggests that many juveniles confined in Grangegorman in 1853 had very little schooling as many were illiterate. This assumption also failed to realise that poverty and not a lack of education was the dominant cause of juvenile crime.

Religious instruction permeated education within the prison system. Moral and religious instruction, were key elements of nineteenth century efforts at juvenile reform.⁶⁹ However, there were fears of proselytism occurring through education and moral instruction. For this reason the religion of each inmate was recorded and they were to be tended to by their respective chaplain. Each class in Grangegorman penitentiary was supplied with bibles and prayer books. Prisoners who could not read received the cards for letters to learn

⁶⁵ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, pp 77-8.

⁶⁶ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 66.

⁶⁷ *I.G. twenty-third report, 1844*, p. 17; p. 99.

⁶⁸ *I.G. twenty-fifth report, 1846*, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Palmer, ‘A treatise on the modern system of governing gaols’ p. 25.

spellings, and the first, second and third books of lessons of the National Board of Education.⁷⁰ One way of perceiving nineteenth-century education was as a means of moralising the poor, while ingraining upper and middle class norms and behaviour on them through instruction.⁷¹ In 1841, the inspectors-general stated that ‘too much vigilance cannot be exercised in an attempt to educate such persons [juveniles] into fitness for society.’⁷² The emphasis on education can be further explained in 1881/1885 by John Lentaigne, ‘on the mothers of a nation the character and habits of the future generations of the people depend.’⁷³ The home was where men learnt to be ‘honest, truthful, sober, cleanly, thrifty and industrious.’⁷⁴ He subscribes to the notion that poor children were not adequately raised by their parents.

Education was an important feature of the life of a juvenile in Grangegorman during the 1850s, while the education of older offenders was neglected. In 1851, school instruction in Grangegorman was not provided for inmates who were already able to read or to any prisoner over the age of twenty-four. No inmate with the exception of the very young was instructed if his or her imprisonment was less than two weeks.⁷⁵ In 1852, it was reported that inmates, primarily juveniles, received five hours of schooling daily from a schoolmistress in Grangegorman.⁷⁶ In 1856, the juveniles in Grangegorman were reported to have been instructed in reading, writing, arithmetic and geography. The school in Grangegorman was newly established under the national school board at this time and a schoolmistress had been appointed. The average daily number attending the school was thirty-five.⁷⁷ In 1859, the

⁷⁰ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 30.

⁷¹ Anne Digby and Peter Searby, *Children, school and society in nineteenth-century England* (London, 1981), pp 23-4.

⁷² *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 27.

⁷³ Lentaigne, ‘The treatment and punishment of young offenders’ p. xxxix.

⁷⁴ Lentaigne, ‘The treatment and punishment of young offenders’ p. xxxix.

⁷⁵ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 59.

⁷⁶ *I.G. thirty-first report, 1852*, p. 59.

⁷⁷ *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 320.

average daily number attending the school was a mere twenty pupils. A total of 551 pupils attended school in 1859. There were 2,642 criminal committals in that year (vagrant, inebriates and lunatics were not included).⁷⁸ The only explanation for the small number of inmates attending school was that juvenile offenders only were permitted to attend.

There were inconsistencies in the education of male and female inmates and the standard of education diverged greatly from prison to prison. In County Westmeath jail, the male juvenile classes were instructed for three hours daily by a schoolmaster appointed by the board of education. In contrast, females of all ages received only one hour of instruction under the matron and her assistant.⁷⁹ Thus not only did the female inmates receive less instruction but they did not receive it from a schoolmistress under the national school board. In 1850, in County Roscommon jail, no inmates received an education.⁸⁰ In 1851, in County Kildare jail, prisoners received two hours daily instruction. In the female department the school matron provided two hours of rudimentary instruction to female juveniles. In the same year, in County Waterford jail, instruction was given to male inmates, with special attention to male juveniles for four hours' daily. This was done by a schoolmaster. The female inmates only occasionally received elementary instruction from a matron.⁸¹ In County Monaghan jail, in 1856, female inmates were instructed in reading, whereas the male adults and juveniles were instructed in reading, writing and arithmetic.⁸² A solution to this was to establish institutions devoted to instructing juveniles in education and industry.

There was a fear that juveniles would return to crime, if left unsupervised. In 1849, there were calls for an asylum for juveniles and females instead of them being 'thrown

⁷⁸ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 351; p. 353.

⁷⁹ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 69.

⁸⁰ *I.G. twenty-ninth report, 1850*, p. 45.

⁸¹ *I.G. thirtieth report, 1851*, p. 167; p. 179; p. 217.

⁸² *I.G. thirty-fifth report, 1856*, p. 104.

destitute upon the world' and forced to return to old habits.⁸³ Many prisons lacked the facilities for the 'separate system' and instruction varied considerably, coupled with fears that juveniles would be corrupted within the penal system. It became obvious that new institutions had to be developed to implement the two-fold system of reform. Even within prisons where juveniles were classified, short-term sentences made any attempt at reform useless. Thus the idea of reformatories and industrial schools was nurtured. It was hoped by those in favour of reform, that if refuges for destitute children were erected throughout the country, they would be saved from a life of 'guilt, misery and punishment.'⁸⁴

Ireland was behind the times in relation to juvenile reform. In 1839, at Mettrai in France, a 'colony penitentiary' was established for juvenile boys. This agricultural colony educated and instructed boys. This system of juvenile reform was seen as a success. Similarly, there was a home established in Holland, for homeless and pauper children, in 1820. In England, there was a juvenile prison established at Parkhurst in 1837.⁸⁵ A reformatory school for destitute juveniles were opened by the Philanthropic Society in 1849. Juvenile prisons, such as Parkhurst, and reformatory schools like Redhill, punished and reformed juveniles who had committed crime. This reform was through industrial and educational instruction, under strict supervision.⁸⁶ Ireland had no such juvenile facilities at this time. Mary Carpenter, educationalist and penal reformer, in her book *Reformatory schools for the children of the dangerous and perishing classes and for juvenile offenders* (London, 1851), advocated that children should be not punished as a mode of reform but that reformatory schools should offer instruction, moderate discipline and care. She stated that

⁸³ I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849, p. 38.

⁸⁴ I.G. twenty-second report, 1843, p. 22.

⁸⁵ Joseph Robins, *Lost Children: a study of charity children in Dublin, 1700-1900* (Dublin, 1980), p. 295.

⁸⁶ I.G. thirty-first report, 1852, p. 34.

‘[...] love should be the ruling feature of the treatment of these children [...]’.⁸⁷ In essence, Carpenter argues that juveniles should be sent to a reformatory, if they had already committed a crime or to an industrial school to prevent them from committing crime.⁸⁸ The Youthful Offenders (Great Britain) Act, 1854⁸⁹ stated that any person under the age of sixteen could be sent to a reformatory by magistrates for no less than two years and no more than five. The Reformatory, etc., Schools Act, 1856⁹⁰ of Great Britain regulated reformatories and industrial schools and enabled magistrates to send young offenders to such schools. In 1853, the inspectors-general of prisons in Ireland recommended that a refuge similar to the institutions in France should be established in Ireland. These shelters would ideally offer food, clothing and shelter and the recipient would reimburse the refuge by carrying out work for the institution. The other solution that the inspectors offered was to send the juveniles to live under the protection of benevolent individuals.⁹¹

However, reformatories were not legislated for in Ireland until 1858. The delay can be attributed to proselytising concerns and recovery from the Famine. To deal with the contentious issue of religion under the Reformatory (Ireland) Act, 1858⁹² juveniles had to be sent to a reformatory that was managed by someone of their own religion. However, under this act the managers of the reformatories were under no obligation to admit juveniles and did so at their own discretion. Managers of the reformatories could legally refuse to re-admit juveniles once they were seen as corrupted by inmates in prisons. Managers could also refuse juveniles because of the nature of their crimes and previous criminal charges. The grounds for refusal were based on the bad moral character of the juvenile and managers claimed that

⁸⁷ Robins, *Lost children* p. 296.

⁸⁸ Robins, *Lost children* p. 296.

⁸⁹ 17 & 18 Vict., c. 86 (10 Aug. 1854), Youthful Offenders, Great Britain Act, 1854.

⁹⁰ 19 & 20 Vict., c. 109 (29 July 1856), Reformatory, etc., Schools Act, 1856.

⁹¹ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 34.

⁹² 21 & 22 Vict., c. 103. (2 Aug. 1858), Reformatory Schools (Ireland) Act, 1858.

they did not want the bad influences of hardened juveniles in their reformatory. Managers had no authority to punish the juveniles under their charge. The reformatory schools (Ireland) act of 1858 stated that if offenders were troublesome in the reformatory, they could be sent to any prison for a term that did not exceed six months. Ideally this would be under the separate system or at least under strict classification. However, these conditions were not implemented in many prisons: this gave the managers of the reformatories a right to refuse re-admittance.

Whether juveniles should be firstly sent to a prison for discipline was a contentious issue. Some believed that the juveniles were hardened by their association with adult criminals, while others believed a stay in prison softened them to reform in reformatories.⁹³ On the one hand, it was stressed that juveniles needed to be clearly punished. Imprisonment before admittance into the reformatory schools was suggested as the only effective way of doing this.⁹⁴ On the other hand, imprisonment could corrupt impressionable juveniles and hinder their chance of being accepted into a reformatory. In 1856, a Mr Maguire claimed, in a speech about the reformatory school bill for Scotland, to British parliament, that committal to a jail was ‘contaminating and depraving’ to juveniles.⁹⁵ In 1859, James Gordon, from Dublin, aged just eleven, was sentenced to fourteen days of imprisonment and four years in Gleecree reformatory, for stealing a purse. This sentence was said to be given to save him from a life of crime.⁹⁶ Gordon had stolen a purse from a woman and hidden it. The purse was recovered with the 12s. still contained in it.

⁹³ Adshead, ‘On juvenile criminals’ p. 21.

⁹⁴ May, ‘Innocence and experience’ p. 26.

⁹⁵ *The Nation*, 22 Mar. 1856.

⁹⁶ *Irish Times*, 20 Sept. 1859.

Industrial schools were not legislated for in Ireland until the Industrial Schools Act (Ireland), 1868.⁹⁷ Under this act, justices or magistrates could send destitute children under the age of fourteen who were found begging, homeless, destitute, orphaned or with parents under sentence of penal servitude or imprisonment or in the company of known thieves, to an industrial school. They could also be temporarily confined in a workhouse. Children under the age of twelve, who had committed a crime with the exception of a felony, could be treated under the provisions of this act, and sent to an industrial school. Children could only be sent to an industrial school whose manager was of the same religion.

In conclusion, this chapter examined the presence of criminal and destitute children in the Irish penal system in the nineteenth century. Within the prison reform movement, there was a marked shift of attention from older offenders to juveniles. This shift in concern can be attributed to high rates of recidivism and to upper and middle class prejudices against the poor and their parentage. However, in reality, juveniles used the prison system as a survival tool. Many juveniles were vagrants who were constantly in and out of the prison. There were also a significant number of very young non-criminal children confined in prison who were received with their mothers. To deter juveniles from committing crime, their diet was frequently reduced. Destitute juveniles were perceived as a problem for state and society. It was thought that juvenile crime indicated a future association with hardened criminals. Destitute juveniles were seen as predisposed to crime. The idea developed that an institution needed to be created not only to reform criminal children, but to prevent destitute children from committing crime. The 'separate system' and education were the principal methods of reform. As the numbers of juvenile criminals continued to rise, an alternative solution had to be devised. Reformatories and industrial schools became the focus of reform. However,

⁹⁷ 31 & 32 Vict., c. 25 (29 May 1868), Industrial Schools Act (Ireland), 1868.

Ireland was lagging behind in comparison to other countries. A system of reformatories for criminal juveniles and industrial schools for destitute children was eventually established in Ireland in 1858 and 1868 respectively.

Chapter IV

Richmond male penitentiary: a comparative study, 1836-60

This chapter offers a comparative study of Richmond male penitentiary and Grangegorman female penitentiary. Richmond opened its doors in 1820. The female inmates in Richmond penitentiary were removed to Grangegorman penitentiary in 1836. The daily routine endured by the prisoners in Richmond penitentiary and the degree to which the Prisons Act of 1826 was implemented will be examined. How the treatment of male and female prisoners as well as juvenile and the mentally ill inmates compared between both institutions is also analysed in this chapter. Competent prison officers were essential for a successful discipline system and the proficiency of officers in Richmond penitentiary is scrutinised, at least in so far as the records allow.

Conditions in Richmond penitentiary, 1836-60

As in Grangegorman penitentiary, Richmond penitentiary seemed to be reasonably well maintained during this period, 1836-60. In 1837, Richmond penitentiary was expanded and an additional building was completed.¹ This provided more space for prisoners. In 1839, Richmond penitentiary was reported to be 'in order and cleanliness'.² In 1847, the cells in Richmond penitentiary were described as well-ventilated, roomy and clean: however, the hot water pipes which warmed the corridors were insufficient to heat the cells. There was a problem also with the amount of clean water available; the tread-mill pumped water from a canal into a large cistern, but the pipes that stemmed from the cistern were too small to supply the amount of water needed.³ This led to a situation in which there was insufficient

¹ *I.G. sixteenth report, 1837*, p. 19.

² *I.G. eighteenth report, 1839*, pp 21-3.

³ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 37.

water for the prisoners as well as officers, to wash themselves and even more importantly in terms of basic sanitary, such as insufficient water for the disposal of sewage. However, by 1857, there was apparently an abundance of water and the sewage system was effective. Lighting and heating in several cells had been improved also.⁴

The Irish Prisons Act of 1826 was not always adhered to in Richmond penitentiary during this period. In 1839, the inmates confined in the new building in Richmond penitentiary were not employed as required under the Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826.⁵ In 1847, in Richmond penitentiary inmates serving long sentences were clothed only: those imprisoned for short-terms were ‘left in their own filthy rags’. The inspectors-general complained that this system was not only illegal, but put the health of other prisoners at risk as well as ruining the bedding. They suggested that all inmates, at least those confined over twenty-four hours, should be clothed and their ‘dirty rags’ be washed. The inspectors-general stated that less than half inmates were provided with prison dress in Richmond penitentiary at this time.⁶

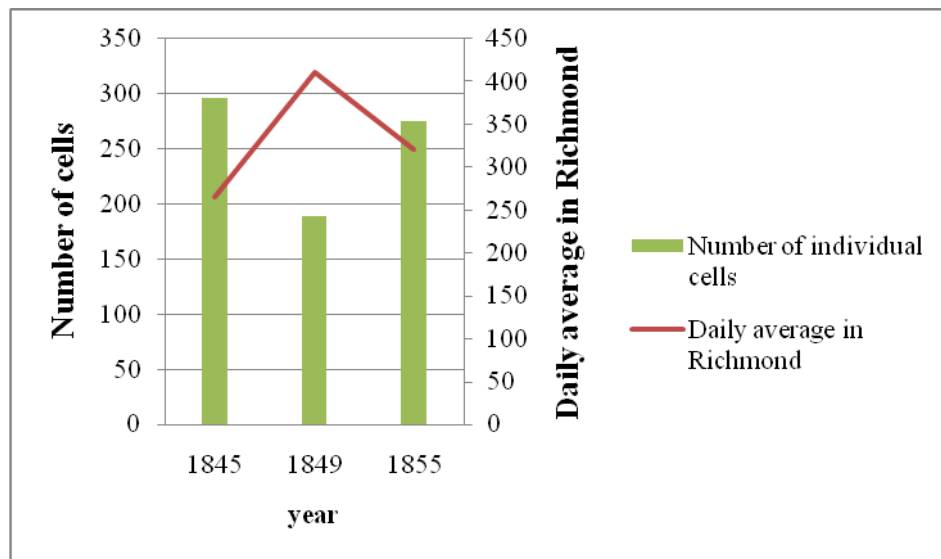
Table 11 compares the daily average number of inmates in Richmond penitentiary to the accommodation available there from 1845-55. This table shows that the accommodation was insufficient for the high number of committals to Richmond. The corresponding table for Grangegorman penitentiary, table 1, compares the daily average of inmates in Grangegorman to the accommodation there: both institutions had the same problem with inadequate accommodation for the high number of committals.

⁴ *I.G. thirty-sixth report, 1857, p. 207.*

⁵ *I.G. eighteenth report, 1839, p. 22.*

⁶ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847, p. 35*

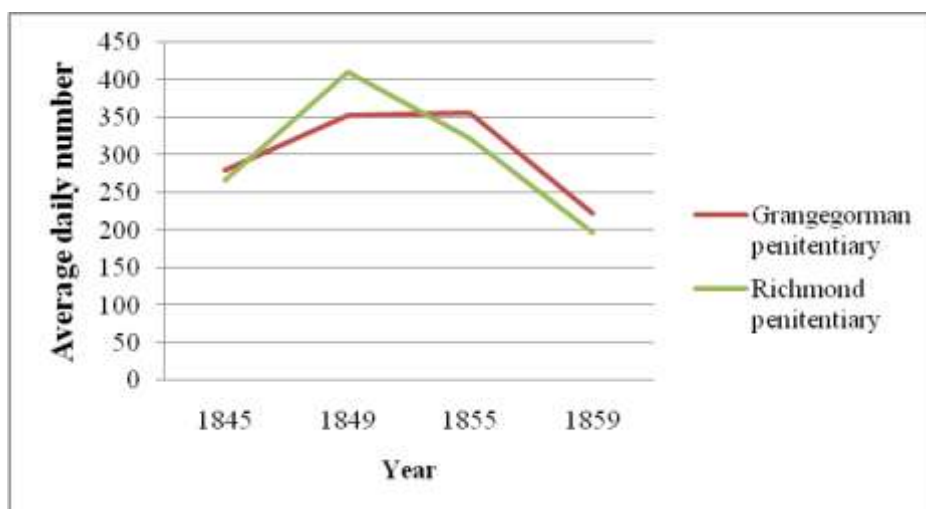
Table 11
The number of cells in Richmond penitentiary in comparison to the daily average of inmates, 1845-55



Source: I.G. reports, 1845-55.

Table 12 compares the daily average of inmates in Richmond penitentiary to Grangegorman penitentiary. Richmond had a higher daily average of inmates than Grangegorman penitentiary; however, Richmond's daily average declined more sharply in the immediate aftermath of the Famine, than in Grangegorman.

Table 12
The daily average number of inmates in Grangegorman and Richmond penitentiaries, 1845-59



Source: I.G. reports, 1845-59.

It was believed in the nineteenth century that a system of moral and industrial instruction combined with discipline and separation, would decrease male crime as was maintained in respect to female crime. As table 11 shows there were insufficient cells for the high number of inmates to allow for the separate confinement of inmates in Richmond, as in Grangegorman, a rule of silence was enforced between inmates who were in association with other inmates. In the original building in Richmond penitentiary, most of the cells lacked the requirement for the 'separate system'.⁷ The new cells that were erected in 1837 were however suitable for separate confinement.

Short-sentences were seen as a hindrance to the 'moral reform' of inmates in Richmond penitentiary, as they were in Grangegorman. The inspectors-general stated that for inmates who were serving sentences less than two months there was no possibility of 'moral reform'. However, the 'severity' of solitary confinement, should act as a deterrent.⁸ In 1842, surprisingly, one wing of the new building was allotted to inmates imprisoned for drunkenness. The rest of the building was used for misdemeanants under short sentences.⁹ The inspectors-general suggested that felons, who committed more serious crimes and received longer sentences, should be in separation, rather than the misdemeanants.¹⁰

Recidivism was not as big a problem in Richmond penitentiary as it was in Grangegorman penitentiary. For the reason, the inspectors-general did not provide as much information on recidivism in Richmond, as they did in Grangegorman penitentiary. Table 13 compares the number of re-committals to Richmond to the gross number of committals, 1845-55.

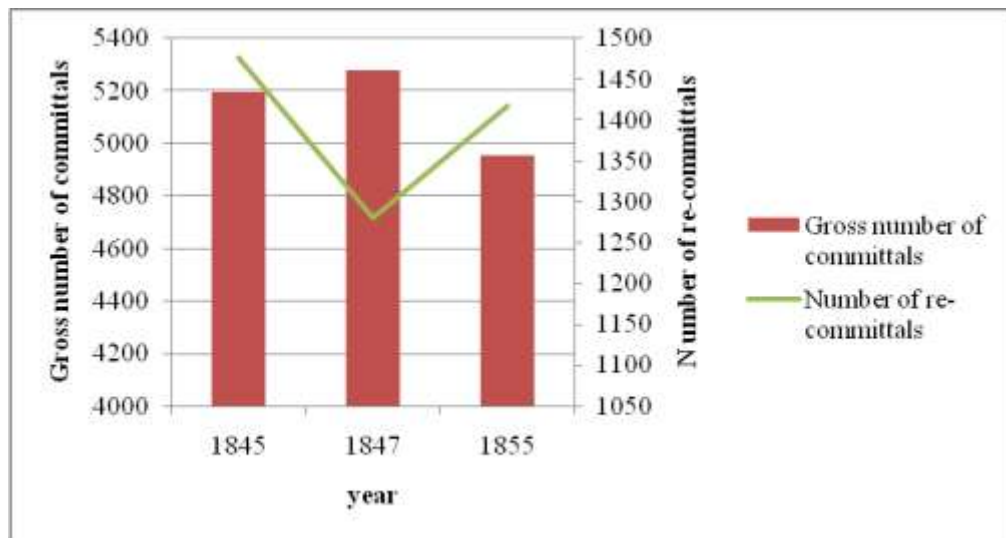
⁷ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 17.

⁸ *I.G. eighteenth report, 1839*, p. 22.

⁹ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *I.G. twenty first report, 1842*, pp 16-7.

Table 13
The gross number of committals to Richmond penitentiary in comparison to the number of re-committals, 1845-55



Source: *I.G. reports 1845-55*

The corresponding table for Grangegorman penitentiary, table 7 in chapter II compares the gross number of committals to Grangegorman in comparison to the number of re-committals. These tables highlight that recidivism was worse among female inmates than it was among male inmates. In 1857, seven inmates who were committed to Richmond penitentiary had been in prison four or more times before, while twenty inmates had been committed to prison three times before. Fifty inmates had been committed twice before, while 193 inmates had been committed to prison once before.¹¹ In 1859, there were 2,648 inmates confined in Richmond for the year: the majority of inmates were first-time committals. Only one inmate in the year had been committed to prison four times or more.¹² Tables 4 and 5 in Chapter II show the high rate of recidivism in Grangegorman penitentiary. The low rate of recidivism in Richmond in comparison to Grangegorman suggests that females were more likely to re-offend than males and thus relied more heavily on the prison system as a means of survival.

¹¹ *I.G. thirty-sixth report, 1857*, pp 205-6.

¹² *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 342.

The recidivism which was occurring in Richmond penitentiary was blamed on juvenile offenders by the penal authorities.¹³

To act as a deterrent to inmates for re-offending and to maintain the internal discipline system, refractory inmates in Richmond were punished. Punishments included: reduced diet, solitary confinement and the tread-wheel. In 1839, there were four solitary cells in Richmond which were used as punishment for refractory inmates.¹⁴ In 1849, seventy-one inmates were confined in solitary confinement on a diet of bread and water, from one to three days: ten inmates suffered this punishment for ten days. The bread and water diet consisted of one pound of bread per day. There were 590 inmates who had their food rations halved. Thirty-five inmates, who damaged property in the prison, had their milk allowance cut, until the cost of the damage was repaid. The half diet consisted of four ounces of stir-about and a quarter pint of milk for breakfast and seven ounces of bread and half pint of milk for dinner.¹⁵ This was an extremely low diet. In 1853, 1,776 inmates received punishments. These punishments included confinement in solitary confinement on bread and water or on half rations for periods ranging from one to three days: one prisoner was in solitary confinement on the bread and water diet for fourteen days. There were 297 inmates who were on reduced rations for one day, while still at employment. There were forty-nine inmates who were in solitary confinement without a reduced diet. Other inmates in solitary confinement received half rations at breakfast or at dinner.¹⁶ In 1859, four new dark cells were built while five other cells were adapted for the punishment of inmates.¹⁷ Although refractory inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary received the same punishments as the inmates in Richmond,

¹³ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1857*, p. 206.

¹⁴ *I.G. eighteenth report, 1839*, pp 21-2.

¹⁵ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, pp 22-3.

¹⁶ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 21.

¹⁷ *I.G. thirty-sixth report, 1857*, p. 207.

punishments in Richmond seemed to be more numerous, harsher and continued for longer periods.

Daily lives of Richmond inmates

The daily routine in Richmond penitentiary was similar to that of Grangegorman penitentiary: industry, education as well as health care and diet were important aspects of life in Richmond. During the period 1836-60, the inmates in Richmond penitentiary tended to be employed at more varied and skilled industry than the females in Grangegorman penitentiary. However, industry in Richmond tended to be more physically demanding. The inmates in Richmond penitentiary were employed in numerous industries, including: weaving, washing, cooking, gardening, bush-making, oakum picking and stone breaking. The trades in the Richmond included: tailor, shoemaker, carpenter, painter, baker, plasterer and labourer. Grangegorman inmates were primarily employed in the laundry, plain work and prison duties although inmates there were also employed at oakum picking.

As in Grangegorman penitentiary, the profitable industry of inmates was important to the management of Richmond penitentiary. In 1842, the governor of Richmond had difficulties in obtaining profitable work for his inmates. However, the grand juries would not consent to instructing inmates in a trade at a loss.¹⁸ In the same year, the inspectors-general suggested that sheds be erected for frequent re-offenders and incorrigible inmates, to break bones for manure and stones for the streets; they suggested that this type of work was profitable and an effective means of punishment for these inmates.¹⁹ This type of work would have been very physically demanding. In 1847, inmates were primarily employed at making the clothing for the prison. The products which were not needed for the prison went on sale to

¹⁸ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 16.

¹⁹ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 17.

the public. Prisoners received a share of profits as outlined under the prisons act of 1826 (see chapter I).²⁰ In 1859, the inspectors-general recommended that gas be extended to the interior of the cells so as to enable the inmates to continue working in the dark winter evenings.²¹ In the same year, the governor of Richmond appealed to the board of superintendents to permit the association of inmates for industry purposes. As the case in Grangegorman penitentiary, the inspectors-general maintained that profit should be the happy outcome of the prevention of idleness; profit was not to be the driving aim. The governor's request was rejected by the board of superintendence.²² This illuminates conflict in the penal system as on one hand 'moral reform' of inmates was the main objective, while on the other turning a profit was as a priority in order to maintain the prison.

There were inmates in Richmond who were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour. In 1847, the inmates sentenced to hard labour in Richmond were employed on the tread-wheel and at stone breaking. In 1847, there were twenty-seven felons working on the tread-mill, while seventy-eight inmates were breaking stones.²³ In 1849, on the day of inspection in Richmond, there were forty-nine inmates in the tread-mill class.²⁴ New stalls had been added to the tread-mill to prevent the inmates from seeing and communicating with one another.²⁵ The capstan mill was used for inmates serving hard labour sentences: it consisted of a wheel with levers stemming from it, which were pushed by inmates walking around it.²⁶ In 1853, there were sixty-one inmates employed on the capstan mill.²⁷ The inspectors-general complained that some inmates who were serving hard labour sentences

²⁰ *I.G. twenty-sixth report 1847*, pp 36-7.

²¹ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 344.

²² *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, pp 343-4.

²³ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, pp 36-7.

²⁴ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 21.

²⁵ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 23.

²⁶ 'Capstan' in *OED* (2nd, ed., Oxford, 1989).

²⁷ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 22.

were temporarily excused from this labour, under the orders of the medical officers. However, it was common that inmates did not return to hard labour employment after their recovery.²⁸ This suggests that hard labour had a damaging effect on the health of the inmate. In contrast, the inmates in Grangegorman, who were serving hard labour sentences, were usually employed at the same industry as the regular inmates.²⁹

Shot-drill was another employment in Richmond penitentiary which was intended for those on hard labour and for the punishment of disorderly inmates. A cannon ball was lifted by the inmate on to his chest and passed along a line, then he had to drop the cannon ball and pick it back up again on command; this was done continuously.³⁰ The inspectors-general stated that if any were unable to carry out this labour with nine pounds then they should be exempt from their sentences. In 1853, the medical officers in Richmond prohibited shot-drill for inmates under the age of sixteen years. However, the inspectors-general claimed that there was no legitimate basis for this. There was no fixed weight for the balls and it was suggested that balls over ten pounds should be prohibited.³¹

Similar to Grangegorman penitentiary, the school in Richmond focused on young inmates in this period, 1836-60 and was reported to have been efficiently managed. In 1842, the inspectors-general described the school in Richmond as ‘an excellent school’. It was under a qualified schoolmaster. In the same year, twenty-seven boys who when committed were illiterate and had reportedly left the prison being able to read, some could also write and

²⁸ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, pp 344-5.

²⁹ *I.G. twentieth report, 1841*, p. 28.

³⁰ Henry Mayhew and John Binny, *The criminal prisons of London and scenes of prison life* (London, 1862), pp 308-09.

³¹ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 33.

do arithmetic.³² In 1845, Mr Hamill, the schoolmaster at that time, was reported to be zealous and efficient.³³ The books used in school in Richmond included the Dublin Spelling book, first, second and third parts; the National School Reading Book, third and fourth books; Thomson's and Gough's arithmetic, Murray's grammar, Pinnock's geography, maps and Protestant and Catholic catechisms. The books used in the school were those published by the Board of National Education.³⁴ The commissioners of education in Ireland, established in 1831, published a very successful selection of books: these books were religious but remained dogmatically neutral to suit Roman Catholics and Protestants.³⁵ There were two classes attending school in Richmond: the first class was taught daily from 10am to 1pm while the second class was from 1pm to 3pm. In 1853, in Richmond, all juvenile inmates aged sixteen and under attended school from 10am to 1:30pm daily. They received religious instruction also for thirty minutes after dinner. In 1859, only juveniles were in the school in Richmond. However, juveniles who were to be sent to a reformatory after their imprisonment were not permitted to attend the prison school; presumably this was because the inmates were in association during school hours and it was feared that they would be corrupted by other inmates. The instruction that Richmond inmates received was probably very basic.

There was a hospital in Richmond penitentiary; similar to Grangegorman it was reported to be 'excellent'. It was managed by the medical officers of the city jails, the same medical officers as in Grangegorman penitentiary.³⁶ In 1847, the hospital department was described by the inspectors-general as 'large, airy, wholesome and clean'.³⁷ In 1853, the hospital in Richmond contained six wards, and two rooms with sixty-two beds: three of these

³² *I.G. twenty first report, 1842*, p. 18.

³³ *I.G. twenty-fourth report, 1845*, p. 13.

³⁴ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 23.

³⁵ D. H. Akenson, 'Pre-university education, 1782-1870' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A history of Ireland, V Ireland under the union, 1 1801-70* (9 vols, Oxford, 2010), v, p. 532.

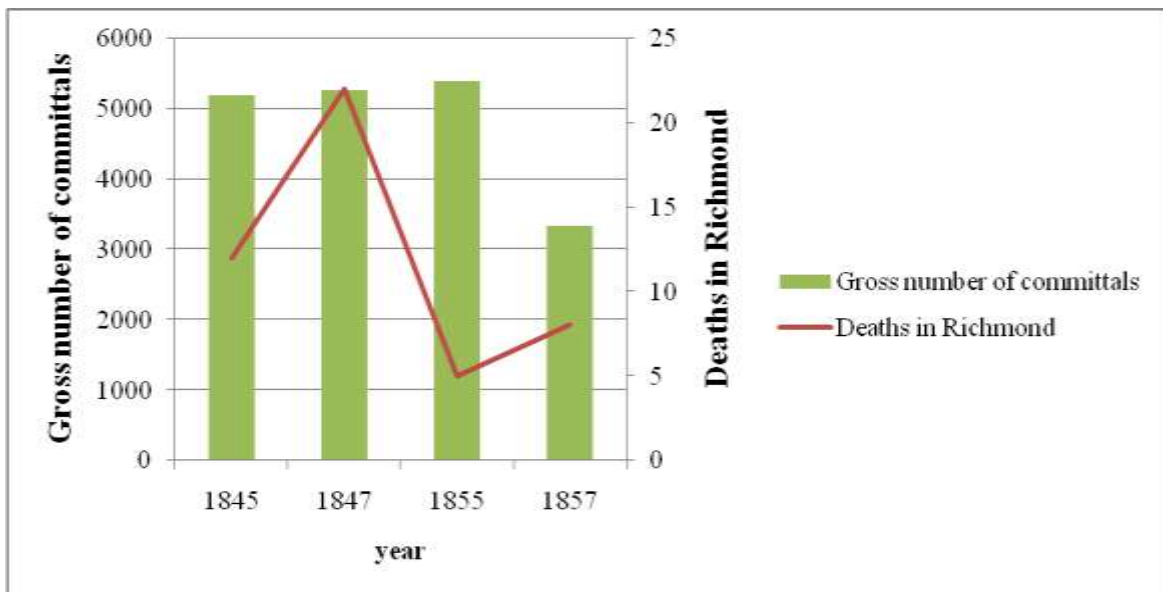
³⁶ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 18.

³⁷ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 37.

rooms were for surgical patients, two were for the physician and one was set aside for mentally ill inmates. There were two small rooms for any cases requiring isolation such as inmates with contagious diseases.

Table 14 details the number of deaths in Richmond in comparison to the gross number of committals there from 1845-57. The table shows that the deaths in Richmond, as in Grangegorman penitentiary, were relatively low. In chapter I table 3 offers a comparison of deaths in Grangegorman to the gross number of committals there. As table 14 shows, there were a large number of deaths in 1847 in comparison to the other years; this was at the height of the Famine in Ireland and thus was unsurprising.

Table 14
Deaths in Richmond penitentiary in comparison to the gross number of committals, 1845-57



Source: I.G. reports, 1845-57

There were numerous diseases treated in Richmond. These included fever, bronchitis, diarrhoea, rheumatic and nervous diseases. Surgical cases included venereal diseases, ulcers,

abscesses, scrofulous diseases, urinary, genital and rectum diseases, *delirium tremens*, as well as cancerous diseases.

As in Grangegorman penitentiary, the diet in Richmond was seen as an incentive for inmates to commit crime, and was reduced as a means of discouraging crime. In 1847, in Richmond, the diet was seven ounces of stir-about with one pint of buttermilk for breakfast. Dinner was one pound of bread and one pint of sweet milk for six days, dinner on Sunday was one pound of bread and one quarter of ox-head soup.³⁸ In 1853, in Richmond, there were fears of cholera. The medical officers advised that the diet be modified: this included gruel being replaced by milk. However, on the advice of the medical officers the gruel was not re-introduced as a high number of inmates had suffered from upset bowels resulting from it.³⁹ In 1849, the diet was again reduced in Richmond: prisoners aged ten years and over received a diet of eight ounces of oatmeal stir-about only and a half pint of milk for breakfast and dinner consisted of ten ounces of bread and one pint of milk. Prisoners under the age of ten received five ounces of oatmeal stir-about and one quarter pint of milk at breakfast and ten ounces of bread and a half pint of milk for dinner, as well as four ounces of bread and one quarter pint of milk for supper. In 1859, another change came to the diet: those over the age of sixteen years only were to receive adult rations.⁴⁰ Male inmates, like female inmates, received the minimum amount of sustenance within the Irish penal system

³⁸ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 35; p. 37.

³⁹ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 25.

⁴⁰ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 346.

Juveniles

As in Grangegorman penitentiary, juveniles were a constant feature in Richmond. In 1842, there were three classes of juveniles in Richmond penitentiary.⁴¹ In 1847, there were seventy-three juveniles present in Richmond on the day of inspection. Juveniles ate their meals together but under strict supervision.⁴² The inspectors-general noted that short sentences for juveniles meant that they were released too soon for reform to be inculcated and they returned to 'dishonest means' for survival.⁴³ In 1849, there were seventy-seven inmates in Richmond on the day of inspection.⁴⁴ The juveniles were kept apart from the adult prisoners.⁴⁵ Out of the total number of 3,742 committals for felonies and misdemeanours in 1849, twenty inmates were aged ten years or under, 445 inmates were aged eleven to fifteen years, while 1,499 inmates were aged sixteen to twenty years.⁴⁶ In 1853, the inspectors-general claimed that some of the juvenile inmates were incorrigible and had rejected moral and religious instruction. These inmates were kept in single cells with the exception of meal times, exercise and work hours. Inmates who frequently re-offended were kept separately for the first and last week of their sentence, with the exception of exercise periods.⁴⁷

Mentally ill inmates

Mentally ill inmates were a constant part of life in Richmond penitentiary. Not only were they present in the prison but as with inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary, regular inmates were employed as their carers. In 1842, although the mentally ill inmates were reported to have been treated humanely, it was said to be impossible to provide much means of

⁴¹ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 18.

⁴² *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 35.

⁴³ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, pp 35-6.

⁴⁴ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 21.

⁴⁵ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, pp 22-3.

⁴⁶ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 26.

⁴⁷ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, p. 18.

recovery.⁴⁸ The wards that the mentally ill slept in were described as large, airy and clean. The mentally ill inmates were said to have been well looked after and the warden was assisted by three prisoners to care for these unfortunate inmates.⁴⁹ In 1849, there was one class of mentally ill inmates in Richmond on the morning of inspection that contained thirteen inmates. However, a further nineteen inmates were confined in this class as ‘keepers’. This shows that inmates were expected to care for the mentally ill inmates all night and day.⁵⁰ In the reports, information concerning mentally ill inmates in Richmond penitentiary was not as readily available as it was for Grangegorman penitentiary. Table 15 provides details of mentally ill inmates confined in Richmond from 1849-55.

Table 15
Lunatics in Richmond penitentiary, 1849-55

Year	Lunatics in Richmond penitentiary	recovered	died	sent to an asylum
1849	96	25	4	0
1853	64	3	2	44
1855	34	2	1	29

Source: I.G. reports 1849-55.

Table 8 in chapter II details mentally ill inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary. Although there were more mentally ill inmates confined in Grangegorman penitentiary, there seemed to be a higher number of inmates who were deemed to be recovered there. This was because females were seen as more susceptible to ‘moral reform’ than males at this time. Moral reasons such as stress and grief were seen as causing mental illness in female while it was

⁴⁸ *I.G. twenty-first report, 1842*, p. 18.

⁴⁹ *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 21.

thought that physical reasons such as a bump on the head or alcoholism caused mental illnesses in males which were harder to recover from.⁵¹

Officers

The officers in Richmond imposed the strict daily routine onto the inmates confined there. In 1847, the officers in Richmond were listed as the governor, Mr Purdon, deputy-governor, Mr Cooper, clerk and nineteen other officers (such as class officers and school officer). There were external officers such as the chaplain, local inspector and medical officers. The internal officers received rations of bread, milk, coals, soap and candles. The school master, clerk and watchmen were not allowed a ration of coals.⁵² The salaries enjoyed by the higher ranking officers were substantial. In 1859, the governor of Richmond penitentiary was paid £400, the deputy governor received £90, the schoolmaster and the master of works were each paid £65, the first-class warders were paid £56 while second-class warders were received £54 per year.⁵³ In the same year, the female officers in Grangegorman female penitentiary were paid less than the officers in Richmond penitentiary: the class matrons received between £30-40, while the head matron received £200.⁵⁴ In 1853, one half of the salary of the local inspector and the medical officers were paid by Grangegorman: each prison paid £100 each to the local inspector and £150 to the surgeon and the same to the physician. Each officer in Richmond was allowed sixteen ounces of bread and fourteen pints of milk, a half-pound of soup and three-quarter pounds of candles per week. In cells with a fire, one pound was included for coal and for the prison uniform.⁵⁵ The internal officers were permitted soap and fuel, one

⁵¹ Oonagh Walsh, 'Gender and Insanity in nineteenth-century Ireland' in Jonathon Andrews and Anne Digby (eds.), *Sex and seclusion, class and custody: perspectives on gender and class in the history of British and Irish psychiatry* (New York, 2004), p. 76.

⁵² *I.G. twenty-sixth report, 1847*, p. 37.

⁵³ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 347.

⁵⁴ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 355.

⁵⁵ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, pp 28-9.

quarter of milk daily and sixteen pounds of bread weekly. Warders were provided with fire-arms and uniforms.⁵⁶ The officers in Richmond seemed to be well paid and received generous rations.

The inspectors-general stated that the separation of prisoners was useful only if a system of industrial training and school instruction was implemented humanely and zealously by penal officers.⁵⁷ However, Richmond had problems with incompetent and corrupt officers. In 1845, the neatness and cleanliness of some of the most ‘incurable’ inmates was neglected by the officers.⁵⁸ In 1849, the inspectors-general stated that some officers were used to a system of laxity and were incompetent for the job. They suggested that the older officers be replaced and insubordinate officers be warned against their behaviour.⁵⁹ In 1853, two warders were dismissed as well as two hospital officers because the medical officers found them to be incompetent for the job. Another two officers were under probation. The board of superintendents discovered that the master of works and the weaving master had established a business partnership in manufacturing mats; both were subsequently dismissed.⁶⁰

In conclusion, Richmond penitentiary seemed to be in relatively good condition during the period 1836-60. However, not all the conditions outlined in the Prisons Act of 1826, were adhered to in Richmond. As in Grangegorman penitentiary, there was insufficient accommodation in Richmond to cope with high numbers of committals. There were many similarities between the treatment of female inmates in Grangegorman and the male inmates in Richmond. The inmates in both institutions had a strict daily routine imposed on them,

⁵⁶ *I.G. thirty-eighth report, 1859*, p. 349.

⁵⁷ *I.G. twenty first report, 1842*, pp 16-7.

⁵⁸ *I.G. twenty-fourth report, 1845*, p. 13.

⁵⁹ *I.G. twenty-eighth report, 1849*, p. 24.

⁶⁰ *I.G. thirty-second report, 1853*, pp 28-9.

including industry and education. The male inmates seemed to be employed at more varied and skilled trades than female inmates. However, males in Richmond penitentiary seemed to have a harsher regime than female inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary, as they were employed at more physical and demanding labour, such as the tread-wheel, capstan mill and shot-drill. The hospital care in Richmond seemed to be of a good standard; the relatively low death rate in Richmond penitentiary as in Grangegorman penitentiary supports this. Male inmates, like female inmates, received the minimum amount of sustenance in the penal system. As in Grangegorman penitentiary, the good character of the officers in charge of the inmates in Richmond penitentiary was fundamental to the success of the discipline system there; the exposure of some of the officers as corrupt in the 1840s and 1850s makes one speculate as to what the inmates suffered but which does not feature in the official records.

Conclusion

This thesis is a study of crime in pre-Famine, Famine and post-Famine Ireland. The period 1836-60 was an era of penal reform in Ireland; there was an attempt to regulate prisons and conditions generally improved for inmates. However, the prison system came under immense pressure due to the extent of destitution caused by the Famine, 1845-9. Irish prisons were flooded with poor, desperate and starving people during the Famine who used prisons as a refuge for survival. The mentally ill, juveniles and non-criminal children were also confined in significant numbers in Irish prisons during this period. A comparative analysis with male inmates in Richmond penitentiary to female inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary highlights the similarities and differences between their treatment.

The Irish Prisons Act of 1826 was ground-breaking legislation that made a sincere attempt to improve conditions for prison inmates and to create a uniform and regulated prison system in Ireland. Conditions in many prisons did improve for inmates, however, conditions varied significantly, as each prison was under the control of its respective board of superintendents. The inspectors-general were provided for under the Prisons (Ireland) Act, 1826; they had a regulatory role within the prison system. The inspectors-general provided very detailed reports of the individual prisons in Ireland and also made a general statement on the conditions in prisons. In places their reports were vague and very lenient, and although it is hard to ascertain the effect that their reports had on the penal system; they clearly took their role very seriously.

This research had revealed that prison was a key institution for the poor. Many inmates, especially females and juveniles, used the prison as a means of survival: prisons offered food, shelter, medical care and prison clothing. These were basic necessities which

many destitute and desperate people were lacking outside prison walls. For many the prison was the difference between life and death. The high rate of recidivism within Grangegorman supports this assessment. Although there were genuine attempts by the state to diminish crime rates through the ideology of ‘moral reform’ of inmates in the nineteenth century, ultimately these attempts were misguided and futile as poverty was the dominant cause of crime at this time. It was fruitless to try to dissuade people from returning to prison when their survival options outside were so limited.

A surprisingly large number of mentally ill inmates were part of life in Grangegorman penitentiary and Richmond throughout this period of study. The term ‘lunatic’ is problematic as anyone who deviated from nineteenth-century norms could be deemed as a ‘lunatic’ at this time. There were a suspiciously high number of mentally ill inmates deemed as recovered from their lunacy in Grangegorman penitentiary. A reason for this was that the management in Grangegorman simply wanted rid of mentally ill inmates from under their care. It was believed also that female mental illness usually stemmed from moral causes, such as poverty-related stress or grief. This type of mental illness was seen as only temporary, as once the trigger was removed the inmate could ‘recover’.

The shift of attention from the reform of adults to the rescue and reform of juveniles was evident during this period, 1836-60. This shift occurred as a consequence of overcrowding, soaring crime rates and high rates of recidivism during and immediately after the Famine. It was believed by the prison authorities that a problem with juvenile crime indicated a future problem with adult crime: it was imperative to reform young offenders before they developed into adult criminals. There was an assumption at this time that destitute children

would inevitably turn to crime and poor juveniles were treated very similarly to criminal juveniles by the state.

This research found that there were a number of non-criminal children who were received into prison with their mothers. These children were largely neglected and overlooked by penal reformers and authorities. There were non-criminal children over the age of infancy who were confined in Grangegorman penitentiary. The treatment of these children depended on the prison in which they were confined and the humanity of the local prison officers. This is a significant new finding.

A comparative analysis of the treatment of male inmates in Richmond penitentiary with females in Grangegorman penitentiary has revealed that both were treated similarly. In both institutions inmates had to endure a strict daily routine: industry and school were important features of inmate life. However, there were some key differences between the treatment of male and female inmates. In Richmond, the inmates were employed at more physical and demanding labour. Although some of the punishments in Richmond and Grangegorman penitentiary were the same: reduced diet and solitary confinement, punishment for male inmates seemed to be more numerous, severe and generally lasted longer. Males on hard labour had to endure very demanding tasks such as the tread-mill, capstan mill and shot-drill. Male prisoners were also taught more trades than female inmates. The employment of females seemed to be restricted to the laundry, cooking and cleaning; in Richmond some at least were instructed in skilled trades such as shoemaking and tailoring.

In conclusion, nineteenth-century prisons were complex institutions. Although conditions varied considerably between each institution, prisons served an important role in

the life of the poor in nineteenth-century Ireland. The prison housed a variety of inmates, including the mentally ill, juveniles and non-criminal children. This research provided a comprehensive study of female inmates in Grangegorman penitentiary and a comparison to male inmates in Richmond penitentiary, in nineteenth-century Ireland. The prison was one of the institutions that incarcerated the poor; the other institutions included the workhouses and the mental asylums. The prison was another place for dumping the poor, the mentally ill, the vagrant and the mendicant. In shedding light upon the inmate of prisons, this thesis has thrown light on the hard lives endured by the poor.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Currency conversion table

1840			2005		2012	
Pounds(£)	Shillings(s.)	Pence(d.)	Pounds(£)	Pence(p)	Euro(€)	Cent (c)
1			44	10	52	85
10			441	0	528	46
25			1,102	50	1,321	14
50			2,205	0	2,642	28
100			4,410	0	5,284	56
150			6,615	0	7,926	83
200			8,822	0	10,571	51
	1		2	21	2	65
		1	0	18		22

Source: conversion from pounds, shillings and pence (1840) to pounds and pence (2005), *currency convertor* available at The National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>) (01 Feb. 2012).

Source: conversion from pounds and pence (2005) to euro and cent (2012), *the currency convertor* available CoinMill (http://coinmill.com/EUR_GBP.html) (01 Feb. 2012).

Please note that this is rough conversion. Exchange rates do fluctuate. The euro figures are not a direct conversion from pounds (1840) but are converted from the pound sterling figures (2005).

Appendix 2

Measurement table

	Kilograms(kg)	Grams(g)	Litre (l)
Pounds(lbs)			
1	0.453		
2	0.907		
4	1.814		
Ounces (oz)			
1		28.35	
5		141.748	
10		283.495	
Pint (UK)			
0.5 (1/2)			0.284
0.75 (3/4)			0.426
1			0.568
2			1.136
Naggin³⁴⁶			
1 (1/4 pint)			0.142

Source: for weights, *online mass and weight converter*, (<http://www.convert-me.com/en/convert/weight>) (01 Feb. 2012).

Source: for liquids, *conversion of measurement units*, (<http://www.convertunits.com/from/pint+%5BUK%5D/to/liter>) (01 Feb. 2012).

³⁴⁶ 'Naggin' in *OED* (3rd ed., Oxford, 2003).

Appendix 3 (i)

Inmates committed to Grangegorman

Name		Age	Occupation	Crime	Sentence	Education	Religion
Begley	Margaret	39	None	Common night walker	24 hours	None	Catholic
Brady	Eleanor	17	Dealer	Felony/umbrella	3 months	None	Catholic
Brady	Mary	21	Plain worker	Felony Shirt	1 month	None	Catholic
Breton	Eliza	20	None	Disorderly	1 month	Read	Protestant
Brien	Anne	29	None	Attempting suicide	1 week	Read	Catholic
Burke	Margret	20	Bonnet maker	Uttering base coin	12 months	R&W	Catholic
Byrne	Bridget	44	Servant	Disorderly servant	1 week	R&W	Catholic
Byrne	Mary	21	None	Malicious trespass	14 days	None	Catholic
Byrne	Mary	20	None	Assault	7 days	None	Catholic
Byrne	Eliza	17	None	Disorderly	1 month	None	Catholic
Byrne	Mary	13	None	Disturbing the peace	1 week	R&W	Catholic
Byrne	Mary	12	None	Felony of shawl	6 months	None	Catholic
Byrne	Ellen	30	None	Common night walker	48 hours	Read	Catholic
Canning	Margret	20	None	Passing goods	2 months	R&W	Catholic
Corrigan	Bridget	18	Plain worker	In possession of two shirts	48 hours	None	Catholic
Casey	Eliza	12	None	Larceny/hen	3 months	None	Catholic
Cassidy	Margret	17	Plain worker	Disturbing the peace	1 month	R&W	Catholic
Clarke	Mary	21	Plain worker	Assault	14 days	Read	Catholic
Clarke	Bridget	15	None	Felony/ lead	1 week solitary	None	Catholic
Compton	Mary	17	Dressmaker	In possession of base coin	6 months	None	Catholic
Connolly	Bridget	16	None	Disturbing the peace	24 hours	None	Catholic
Connor	Catherine	21	None	Disorderly	1 month	None	Catholic
Cummins	Eliza	20	Servant	Deserting her child	2 months	None	Catholic
Davis	Sarah	23	washer	Uttering base coin	6months	None	Catholic
Denham	Bridget	16	None	Drunkenness	24 hours	None	Catholic
Doherty	Mary	17	None	In possession/children wearing apparel	1 month	None	Catholic
Dolan	Bridget	18	None	Disorderly	14 days	None	Catholic
Doyle	Anne	27	None	Obtaining groceries under false pretences	3 months	None	Catholic
Doyle	Mary	21	None	Disturbing the peace	48 hours	None	Catholic
Dunne	Elizabeth	65	none	Drunkenness	24 hours	Read	Catholic
Dunne	Catherine	18	None	Felony/watch	3 months	Read	Catholic
Fay	Sarah	21	None	Felony/waist coat	3 months	R&W	Protestant

Appendix 3 (ii)

Name		Age	Occupation	Crime	Sentence	Education	Religion
Fry	Eliza	20	None	Disorderly	7 days	None	Catholic
George	Elizabeth	19	Dressmaker	Felony/wearing apparel	3 months	R&W	Protestant
Haggerty	Ellen	19	None	Disturbing the peace	14 days	R&W	Catholic
Haggerty	Ellen	18	None	Disturbing the peace	1 month	None	Catholic
Healy	Julia	19	None	Passing a coat	14 days	None	Catholic
Hughes	Susan	15	None	Drunkenness	24 hours	None	Catholic
James	Mary A	26	None	Common night walker	48 hours	Read	Catholic
Kavanagh	Catherine	17	None	Felony/lead	1 week solitary	Read	Protestant
Kearns	Isabella	18	None	Disturbing the peace	1 month	Read	Catholic
Kelly	Maria	21	None	Drunkenness	24 hours	R&W	Protestant
Kelly	Mary	20	None	Drunkenness	24 hours	None	Catholic
Kelly/Killeen	Mary	20	Servant	Felony/coat and money	3 months	Read	Catholic
Law	Bridget	18	None	Felony/iron chain	2 months	Read	Catholic
Maguire	Maria	20	Hay maker	Drunkenness	24 hours	R&W	Catholic
Mansfield	Catherine	21	None	Assault	14 days	Read	Protestant
Markey	Elizabeth	17	None	Destitute	not listed	None	Catholic
Martin	Margaret	16	None	Passing of veil	14 days	Read	Catholic
McQuade	Mary	17	None	Disturbing the peace	14days	Read	Catholic
McCanavan	Margret	19	None	Felony/Shirt	14 days	None	Catholic
McCoy	Anne	20	Bonnet maker	Felony/tumbler	1 month	None	Catholic
McDermott	Charlotte	20	None	In possession of a hen	1 week	R&W	Catholic
Montgomery	Mary	20	None	Disturbing the peace	1 month	None	Protestant
Mortor	Margaret	20	None	Disorderly	1 month	Read	Catholic
Murphy	Elizabeth	21	Hay maker	Breaking Glass	14 days	Read	Protestant

Appendix 3 (iii)

Name		Age	Occupation	Crime	Sentence	Education	Religion
Murphy	Elizabeth	20	Dressmaker	Disturbing the peace	14 days	R&W	Catholic
Murphy	Kate	20	None	Disorderly	48 hours	Read	Catholic
Nolan	Eliza	22	None	Common night walker	48 hours	None	Catholic
O'Shaughnessy	Sarah	17	None	Passing goods	14 days	R&W	Catholic
Phillips	Margaret	60	None	Felony/craft	3 months	Read	Catholic
Purdon	Jeannette	20	None	Disturbing the peace	24 hours	None	Catholic
Reilly	Margret	18	None	Felony/pot	6 months	Read	Catholic
Roche	Honora	20	Servant	In possession of base coin	6 months	None	Catholic
Ryan	Ellen	14	None	Felony/lead	1 week solitary	None	Catholic
Sheeran	Mary	17	None	Disturbing the peace	1 month	Read	Catholic
Shernan	Mary	21	None	Drunkenness	24 hours	None	Catholic
Sloane	Esther	12	None	Felony/shirt	3 months	None	Catholic
Smith	Maria	14	None	Felony/pillowcase	3 months	Read	Catholic
Toole	Catherine	17	None	Disturbing the peace	24 hours	None	Catholic
Walsh	Ann	12	None	Felony/butter	3 months	None	Catholic
Walsh	Catherine	20	News Vender	Disturbing the peace	21 days	Read	Catholic
Ward	Jane	19	None	Felony/wearing apparel	6 months	Read	Catholic
Warren	Anne	21	None	Disturbing the peace	7 days	R&W	Protestant
Wethwell	Catherine	36	None	Dangerous lunatic	not recorded	R&W	Protestant
White	Flora	12	None	Felony Shirt	3 months	None	Catholic
Williams	Mary	50	None	Disturbing the peace	1 month	Read	Protestant
Williams	Mary	29	None	Assault	14 days	Read	Catholic

Source: Prison Records: Grangegorman Female Prison general registry 1836-1860 available in NAI (on microfilm).

R&W = read and write