



UTOPIA 7

Letterfrack

Clara

Gracehill

Sion Mills

Ballitore

Bessbrook

Portlaw

IRISH UTOPIAS

Drawing up the gazetteer of my book *Villages of Vision* I was astonished at the number of utopian religious communities that I found – until then I’d assumed that north America was the natural destination for those experimenting with utopian forms of living. I now realise that there was another stopping off point – Ireland – and that it was to offer fertile ground for a variety of self-contained settlements, all based upon the practical objectives of their faith. (I must confess that I had overlooked three of the seven that are studied in this account.)

The foundation of these ‘utopias’ would set new standards in moral, social, physical and economic terms. To offer a model was an appealing objective to congregations such as the Quakers and, soon, the resurgent Moravians, as they gained confidence and a wider acceptance in English society. Ireland, particularly where textile works were established as philanthropic industrial ventures, proved to be an ideal testing ground for some of these small ventures.

America might have offered the prospect of land and freedoms, attracting radical, break-away groups such as the Shakers (Mother Anne Lee came from Manchester) who were able to prosper and proselytise, but the settlements with which this account deals were focused on a fusion of

their ideals, both in faith and life, around the realities of daily life and the maintenance of modest prosperity.

My own firsthand knowledge of these settlements is confined to Gracehill, the only Moravian village in Ireland. It makes a natural contrast to the Shaker communities on the American eastern seaboard, where a rule of absolute celibacy led to a novel morphology of mirror-image buildings, shared by men and women who were never to encounter one another by accident. The rule, however, spelled their eventual demise.

Gracehill, like the largest English settlements of Fulneck (from the 1740s, near Leeds) and Fairfield (founded in 1785, near Manchester) was founded on egalitarian, family-centred and economically self sufficient principles, the better to achieve their Christian mission, and leading to their continuity, to this day.

The physical model of the Moravian village, beginning with its founding settlement in Herrnhut, Germany, and replicated, with vernacular nods towards local materials or domestic building types throughout its first group of model communities, is focused upon the key central buildings of chapel, school and houses for single brothers and sisters. The community placed music at the heart of its rituals while their work was both the means of sustaining themselves and a means of integrating their lives with those beyond the congregation. The landscape

in which the settlement is located, both that of working agriculture and that of the immediate surroundings, was crucial and at its very heart lay each burial ground.

Designed to give pleasure in life and a peaceful setting for death, they were planted with fine trees and laid out, with seats and walks, as elegant communal gardens. Only the presence of the stone slabs laid on the ground, identical gravestones with no more than a name and number, indicated that this was also a final resting place and provides the single most graphic illustration of the importance of equality to Moravian congregants. Utopia is spelled out in these now mature woodland burial places – just as the neat homogeneity of the architecture and the plan speaks of ideals translated into daily life.

Gillian Darley

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THE QUAKERS IN EARLY IRISH SOCIAL REFORM

This essay posits that the Quakers were the first middle class in Ireland. Perhaps due to their ties with the French Revolution, were also well positioned to reform the social structure of sectarian divided eighteenth century Ireland.

Ballitore

Location: Co. Kildare

Date: 1680s-1700

Religious Denomination: Quaker

Size/Population: Current Population 338.

Brief History: Ballitore is the earliest Quaker village established in Ireland, dating from the late 17th Century. A school was founded here in 1726 by Abraham Shackleton (a Quaker) as a multi-denominational institute. This aligned itself to the ideals of the Quakers, who were accepting of other religions and so it along with its liberal curriculum attracted students from all over the world. Ballitore is widely known due to Mary Leadbeater and her "Annals of Ballitore" where she recorded her life. In it we learn that Ballitore was "a hotbed of political, social, religious and humanist debate" and also of its affiliations with the French Revolution (Corrigan, Kavanagh, & Kiely, 2009).

"the golden age is not behind us but in front of us and that will be realised by the perfection of the social order"

Henri de Saint-Simon



fig. 1.1 Quaker Meeting House

Prior to the Enlightenment, the story of Utopia was one of the mind, originating from ideas of universal justice and rational morality. It never directly acted as a political tool but existed in the background - "largely as an object of contemplation" (Rowe & Koetter, 1984). Rowe and Koetter suggest that this "spartan Utopia" was dead even before the French Revolution - in its place was the "Activist Utopia", an object of reform for the entire social order. They propose that the basis of the activist utopia of the Post-Enlightenment was first stimulated by Newtonian Rationalism and inherently this caused the Enlightenment to be "anti-religious" with Condorcet pleading for

"...a world of free men who will recognise no master other than their own reason, where tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid hypocritical instruments, will exist only in history or in the theatre"

(Anthony Pagden, 2013)

Regardless of this, it is interesting to note that this did not seem to apply in an Irish context. Much of the work of the Quakers in Ireland and abroad would appear to predate the work of early socialists such as Robert Owen in New Lanark or happened in lieu of the Revolutionists in France. My intentions here are to draw attention to the work of the Quakers at Ballitore, Co. Kildare and the possibility that they may have occupied a formerly absent class in Irish society - that of the middle class; then to notice their philanthropic actions in a country of political turmoil and sectarian divide and, later, to comment upon the formation of Ballitore as an ascetic Utopia of the Post-Enlightenment. Were the Quakers "enlightened beings" as Marquis de Condorcet suggests of his learned counterparts in 1794 during the French Revolution (Pagden, 2013)?

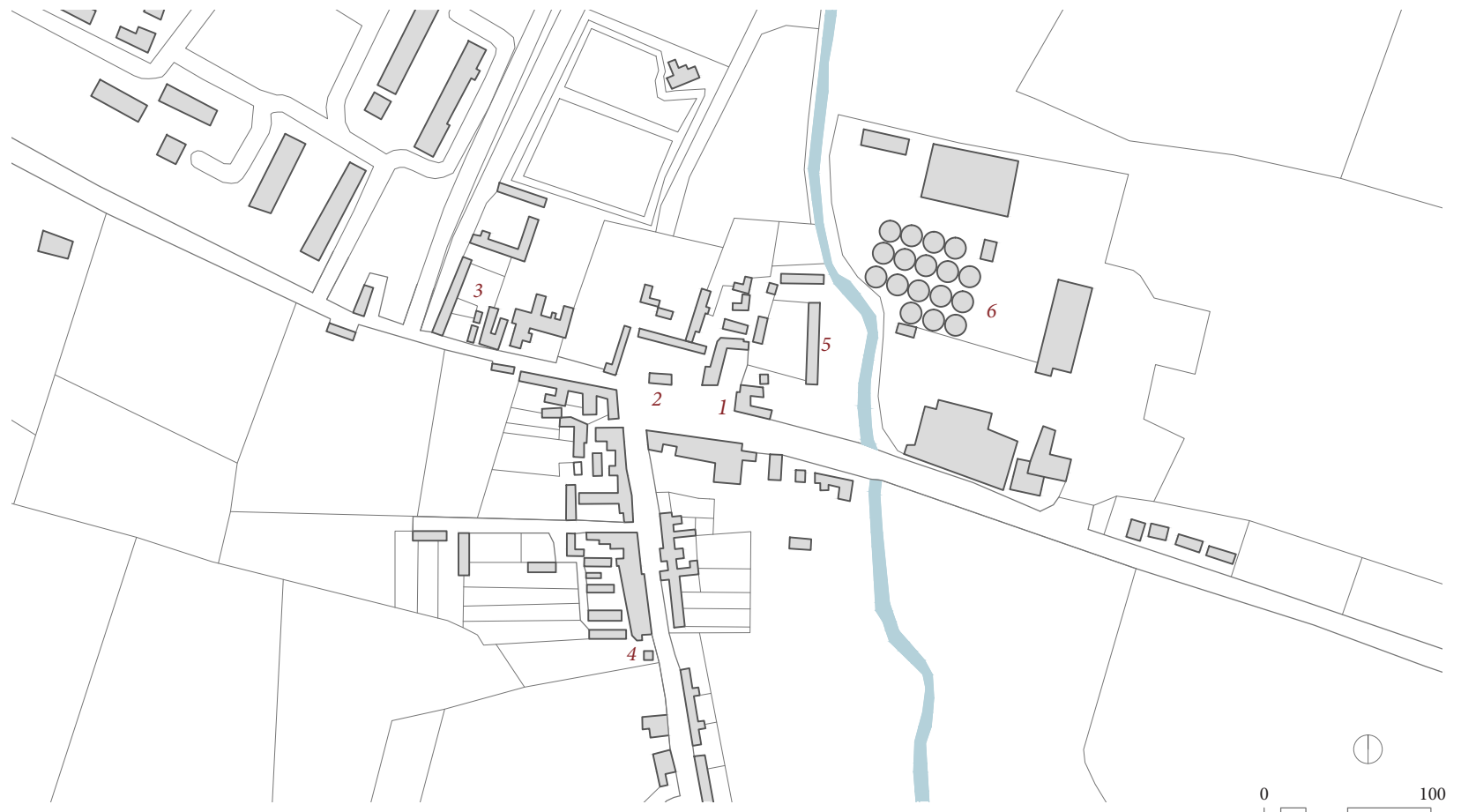
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) was founded in the 1650s by George Fox, an egalitarian man who demanded religious perfection and purity. The publication of leaflets and contributions to political and social discussion by women, and particularly by Mary Leadbeater in Ballitore, highlights that these egalitarian principles were not merely exercises in tokenism. Mary Leadbeater in *The Annals of Ballitore* makes us aware that she and her Quaker counterparts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were continuously aware of the situation in France and were acutely conscious of the Revolution and the subsequent French Constitution. The first article of the resultant constitution *The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* states that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). This is almost a duplication of the principles the Quakers were founded on over a century and a half earlier. To have had their innate tenets repeated by influential eighteenth century thinkers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau must surely have been instrumental in the Quakers capacity to contribute to a "political, social, religious and humanist debate on the rights of men and women, the rights of the poor and the wealthy and, most importantly, the duties of Christians towards their fellow man and woman" (Corrigan, Kavanagh, & Kiely, *The Annals of Ballitore*, 2009). By engaging in social reform the Quakers were involved in the creation of a utopia of the Post-Enlightenment, perhaps forming the blueprint for future Quaker settlements in Ireland. Their actions, manifesting as social reform through a Quaker ideology were not undermined even at a time when the Enlightenment favoured reason above all other human sensibilities.

Abraham Shackleton (the grandfather of Mary Leadbeater) founded a school in Ballitore in 1726, opening its doors to the community regardless of religion or class, and even those who could not afford it

BALLITORE, CO. KILDARE

fig. 1.2 Ballitore
c.2005

1. Mary Leadbeater House
2. Market Building
3. Former Site of School
4. Quaker Meeting House
5. The Tannery
6. New Glanbia Factory



(Corrigan, Kavanagh, & Kiely, *The Annals of Ballitore*, 2009). The Quaker's attitude with respect to education, as well as being formed by their own ideals - may also have been coloured by writings emerging at the beginning of the Enlightenment, particularly John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* published in 1693. In this he discusses the notion that all social classes are born with the same mind and could be formed by education (McManus, 2002); this anticipates the writings of Robert Owen in the early nineteenth century, particularly his *A New View of Society* where perhaps a little more eloquently he demands that

"...any general character from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means"

(Owen, 1991)

The Quakers in Ballitore, occupying a point in history somewhere between these two publications, consistently sought to improve the lives of the peasantry. This places the Quakers in an important role in Irish history, as otherwise most Catholics would have received their education in hedge schools due to the Penal Laws.

A major influence on Mary Leadbeater was her cousin, Robert Grubb - who was a frequent visitor to France in the wake of the Revolution. He planned to set up a Technical College there and even received the support of the revolutionary government (Corrigan, Kavanagh, & Kiely, *The Annals of Ballitore*, 2009). Mary and her husband intended moving there to be involved in the project and, while this never materialised, it highlights the Quaker's commitment to the idea of a classless society, a social order founded on liberty, equality and fraternity where each individual is judged independently of their social or religious situation.

It is important to shine light upon the political and social context which the Quakers operated in during the eighteenth century in Ireland. In 1720, six years before the opening of the Abraham Shackleton School

in Ballitore, the enactment of the law 'Sixth of George I' was passed, affirming the right to make English laws binding in Ireland contributing further to the existing political and sectarian divide in the country, which lasted into the twentieth century (Dudley Edwards, 1981). These problems had already been deeply rooted in Protestant and Catholic Irish cultures since the Reformation, the former expressing this through letters to Tory newspapers and the latter through violence in secret agrarian societies (Donnelly & Miller, 1998). It is extremely evident in Mary Leadbeater's *Annals*, the complexity of the social structure which existed not only in Ballitore but throughout Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was a great divide between Catholics and Protestants, the resultant conflicts of which proved to be fatal in many instances.

Alan Butler (Librarian at Ballitore Quaker Library and Museum) noted in conversation that the Quakers may have been the first middle class in Ireland. In the eighteenth century, the town of Ballitore was still the location of a somewhat complex class structure - the Anglo-Irish, upper class Protestants - who were "disinterested in their peasant neighbours" (Corrigan, Kavanagh, & Kiely, *The Annals of Ballitore*, 2009), The Irish peasant-class Catholics - ground down by the Penal Laws, and finally the Irish Quakers - a new addition to the complex social structure. Mary and her husband were close friends with Malachi Delany, a Catholic heavily involved with the United Irishmen, who were bearers of the Enlightenment. At an early stage, like the Quakers, the United Irishmen focused on disseminating the messages through pamphlets, newspapers, broadsheets and public readings on a large scale. The ideas of John Locke, Rousseau and Voltaire were used to highlight the political and social prejudices in Irish society. In 1794, the organisation was suppressed by the government but by the middle of the decade, radicals within the movement grouped together to develop a military structure in preparation for an armed revolution. While both the United Irishmen and the Quakers could be regarded as products of the Enlightenment, their methods of practicing and spreading these beliefs became fundamentally different,

the former through means of violence and aggression and the latter through promotion of education, the circulation of pamphlets and the provision of aid to the peasantry. Ultimately, the aims of the United Irishmen and the Quakers differed, and the Rebellion of 1798 wreaked havoc on the small village of Ballitore.

The existence of the Quakers as a tolerant religious organisation ensured a compassionate contribution to the lives of the families in Ballitore. Mary Leadbeater and her husband forfeited their plans for a life in France subsequent to the Rebellion of 1798, where they would have been at the centre of revolutionary debate - remaining in Ballitore instead to continue their philanthropy and implementing social reform. As the new middle class, the Quakers situated themselves within a complex social structure, placing themselves between Protestants and Catholics but never taking sides. By establishing themselves within Ballitore and shaking the social order, they created a utopia of the Post-Enlightenment and a blueprint for subsequent Quaker villages in Ireland.

Andrew Ó Murchú

Key Sources: *The Annals of Ballitore* by Mary Leadbeater (2009), *Irish Popular Culture 1650 - 1850* by J. S. Donnelly and K. A. Miller (1998), *A New View of Society and Other Writings* by Robert Owen (1991), *Collage City* by C. Rowe and F. Koetter (1984), *The Enlightenment and Why it Still Matters* by Anthony Pagden (2013), *In Our Time, George Fox and the Quakers* Podcasts, K. Peters, J. Champion and J. Coffey interviewed by M. Bragg (2012)

Images Courtesy of: www.localstudies.wordpress.com (Opposite Below), (fig. 1.1) www.quakers-in-ireland.ie

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF MORAVIAN VILLAGES

An Examination of the Orthogonal Planning of Gracehill and similar Moravian Villages in Europe

Gracehill

Location: Co. Antrim

Date: 1765

Religious Denomination: Moravian

Size/Population: Current Population 500.

Brief History: The Moravian faith dates from the 15th century Prague when John Hus preached for reform in the Catholic church, and in this time of reformation in Europe the Moravians emerged. In the 1719 Count Nicholas Von Zinzendorf agreed to help Protestants effected by the 30 year war, and it was this interaction that would begin the new chapter of the Moravian Church in Herrnhut, Germany and worldwide.

Missionaries were sent from Germany to preach the christian faith, some of the Moravians stoped in London on their way to America and the Moravian faith took root in England. John Cennick converted to the Moravian church before he was invited to speak in Dublin and then Northern Ireland. He was a great speaker and him and his supporters worked hard to gather support and create a permanent settlement. Cennick died in 1755 but his followers kept working and acquired land close to Ballymena, Co. Antrim. The foundation stone for the church was placed on March 12th 1765 and it was from here the village of Gracehill was to develop.



fig. 2.2 Herrnhut

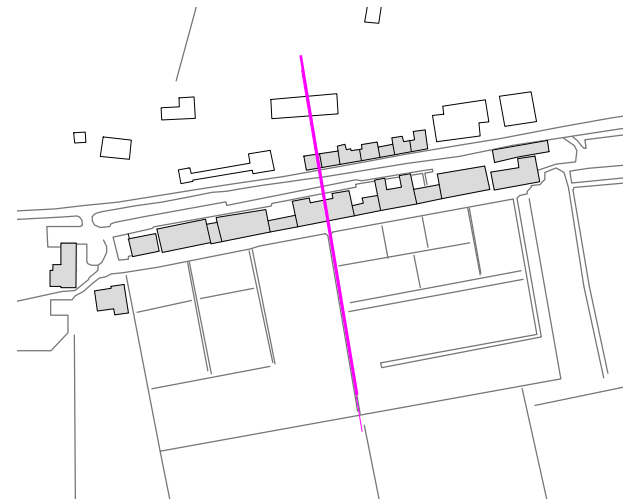


fig. 2.3 Fulneck

The Moravians, like the Quakers, were advanced in their thinking towards the role of females in the community. In this period of the 18th century, Zinzendorf and other protestant thinkers were questioning the gender of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit). Zinzendorf and the Moravians thought the Holy Spirit was a female figure because it had feminine characteristics and it created a family structure of Mother, Father and Son in the Trinity. Similar to the Quakers the Moravians also allowed women to preach, and the work of Anna Nitschmann in America helped convert many women to the church. As most other religious missionaries groups were dominated by an all male hierarchy, the Moravians were seen as a place of opportunity for women to have some independence and authority (Fogleman: 2007). The Moravians structured their community into a series of groups based on age, gender and marital status which were called choirs and membership was obligatory. These families were set up to prevent families threatening the greater *community of God*. It was within these choirs that individuals experienced the opportunity of independence and the possibility of gaining authority. There were infant, boys, girls, single brothers, single sisters, married, widows and widowers choirs.

The Moravians believed in separating gender, so males and females live separate lives in the community until marriage. The single sisters and single brothers each had a separate choir house often placed either side of the chapel to help prevent interaction, “a single brother could not lift an eye, much less a hand, to a single sister without permission of the elders”(Armytage: 2006). This division of sex and family groups continued into death as *God's Acre* (the Moravian term for graveyard) was divided on gender lines, emphasizing the importance of the larger family of God over earthly families. Unusually for the 18th century, the Moravians believed strongly in educating both boys and girls, and education is at the heart of Gracehill. The village had the first girls boarding school in Ireland and girls came from all over Ireland to attend the school. The communities have a strong tradition of manufacturing while farming the lands for their

own consumption and the Moravian settlements were economically successful. The money raised by established villages would be sent to help support the foundation of new settlements or the spreading of the faith. In Gracehill, the women became accomplished lace makers, while “in the early days they had their own farm, brought in the harvest and cut turf”(White: 1997). The men became mostly involved in weaving but also ran a bakery and maintained a fire engine. Each member received a fixed wage with the profits being retained by the community.

“..economic self-sufficiency was the objective – and was so successful in many instances that it proved to be the greatest problem in sustaining the religious side of the communities”
(Darley: 1985)

This control of financial affairs is one of the reasons for the longevity of many of the Moravian settlements.

The first Moravian settlement was on Zinzendorf's estate in Herrnhut, Germany (*see fig 2.2*) but it “evolved as the Moravians created their social system, and as a result its streetscape developed without a regular pattern. Its rectilinear streets, however helped bring a sense of order to the town” (Hendricks: 2013). The town developed to contain all the program that is now standard in the later villages, the square is the key feature off which the chapel is centrally located, choir houses for single sisters, widows, and single brothers, a guest house, a post office, store, a tobacco manufactory, an orphanage, the boys boarding school, and a tavern located on the main road to attract customers. They placed *God's Acre* (graveyard) outside of the town at the foot of a hill. The village of Herrnhut is still the centre of the Moravian faith in Europe and is a mecca for those interested in the Moravian history and culture. In 1738 Herrnhut had reached eight hundred inhabitants and so it was time to relocate some of the members, so Herrnhag (*Lords Grove*) was built with a “great attention to symmetry and regular road pattern” (Hendricks: 2013) this was possible because the elements had been established at Herrnhut and had the benefit of having a population available to move into the community on completion.

GRACEHILL, CO. ANTRIM

fig. 2.1 Gracehill
c.1829-41

1. Square
2. Church
3. Sisters Choir
4. Brothers Choir
5. Girls Boarding School
6. Boys School
7. Village Shop
8. Weaving Factory
9. Gods Acre



fig 2.4 Fairfield



The Moravians in 1753 had to abandon the village due to political and religious controversy. After this date subsequent settlements were to be all based on the two towns, Niesky, Saxony built in 1742 and Gnadenburg, Lower Silesia built in 1743.

Gracehill is a significant example of Moravian Planning. The Moravians used an established template of elements which they adapted to each unique site. Gracehill is laid out around a square with the church on the centre of the west side of the park. The church is the centre of the community and the village arranges itself of the axis (see fig. 2.1). I have observed that the Moravians split their villages along the short axis of the church and this invisible line divides the male and female program. The east side of the square is open to the river and view towards the castle. In the square is a pond feed from springs. The Moravians believed that Jesus is the one and only master, the water is symbolic of life and represents Christ as the giver of life (Jessen: 2009).

The church is on axis with the pond and has a strong visual link towards the river. The settlement is divided on the short axis of the church with women to the north and men to the south. Beside the church on the northern side is the sisters choir house that later became the girl's school, on the north edge of the square is the original girl's boarding school and the inn which was the only building in the town that served alcohol. The inn was mainly used by visiting families of the school children. On the southern side of the square are the boy's school, village shop and weaving building and on the south side of the church was the brothers choir house. *God's Acre* is situated to the rear of the church and the divide of gender continued into death as you enter the grave yard women are buried on the right and men on the left. When a woman dies she is carried out the female door of the church and down female lane leading to the graveyard and buried on the female side of the grave. Likewise if a man died he would use the male equivalent. There is also a possible link being made by the original planners as the church faces roughly east, to face the village back to Herrnhut in Germany (Johnston: 2015).

Fulneck is the first British settlement built in 1744. Fulneck is built on a steep slope that falls towards the river therefore for topographical reasons a square was not possible on the site, so the settlement developed as a terrace along the road leading to Pudsey. The church is central in the plan and like Gracehill the genders are separated off the church's short axis, with women on the right (east) side of the church and the men to the left (see fig.2.3). The choir house are at either sides of the church with their respective workshops attached, *God's Acre* is placed off the gender axis that breaks up the village but within the grounds the graves are divided by gender which follows common practice. The female side filled up faster than the male side so some sisters were buried in the brother's side before a new section could be opened, and by the 19th century there were some double graves and children and parents buried together (Smith: 2015). In older maps there is a pond in front of the single sister's house but it is no longer there. The village faces towards the river and its land. Below the village by the river's edge is a patch of forestry that is called *sister's wood* and this suggests the female influence on the land surrounding Fulneck.

Fairfield, close to Manchester, is the last Moravian settlement built in Britain, founded in 1785 and designed as the centre for Moravian evangelical work in the Manchester area. The orthogonal plans associated with Moravian Planning is clearly evident here, the land the settlement was built on is flat and this would have given the planners great freedom. The village has been surrounded by devolvement over the years and has lost most of the land that would have supported the community. Fairfield is also divided by gender from the axis of the church (see fig. 2.4). The female program placed on the right (east) of the church and male on the left (west). The church faces onto a green that leads to the graveyard which is different from Gracehill and Fulneck, and from my examination there isn't a connection being made with water natural or manmade. In the street names you can see the gender divide that existed, there is a sister's street and a brethren's court on the respective sides of the axis.

The architectural style in each village the Morvians established varied, but the quality of the construction is always high. Often in the early stages of a village's development, craftsmen were called over from Germany or other settlements to aid in the construction. It is this exchange of knowledge on the first buildings which has meant that the church in Gracehill is similar architecturally to other churches in England and Germany. The hipped roof on the church is probably both a symbolic link to the first church and a practical sharing of construction techniques. All the buildings in Gracehill are built using local stone but brick is occasionally introduced around windows to give a finer appearance. The art of brick making wasn't used in the area before the settlement so the locals had to quickly acquire the skills. The finish is either exposed stone or a traditional lime render. In the boys school the timber was imported from Norway, but the local technique of cherry caulking is used, this technique is when small pebbles is placed into the pointing. The joinery on the doors and windows is very fine and of a high quality for the time.

In these Moravian villages the division of community based on age and gender has led to an interesting organisation of the plan and the placement of buildings. Also within the plans you can start to see links with the international settlements in the similarity of building plan and orientation. There is also wider links that help influence the arrangement like topography, view/access to water and links back to Herrnhut. Gracehill is a complete example of Moravian planning and shows how the sect's theological background is manifested in the physical built form.

Michelle Diver

Key Sources: "And will you there a city build" Christopher E. Hendricks(2009). *Heavens Below*, W.H.G Armytage (1968). *Jesus is female*, Aaron Spencer Fogleman(2007). *A history of Gracehill Moravian settlement*, Rosalie White (1997). *The Moravians: building for a higher purpose*, Gillian Darley (1998). Sally Ann Johnston, *Gracehill Tours*. Hillary Smith, *Fulneck Musum*.

MEMORY AND PLACE

“...In the grip of rigid images and precise delineations, the urban imagination lost vitality. In particular, what is missing in modern urbanism is a sense of time ...the city understood as process, its imagery changing through use, an urban imagination formed by anticipation...” (Sennett: 2007)

Clara

Location: Co. Offaly

Religious Denomination: Quaker


Significant Dates (1800- present):
1825 R. Goodbody settles in Clara
1826 Brusna mills established
1839-50 Charlestown expansion
1864 Clashawaun Jute factory village


Significant Names:
Goodbody
Armstrong

Size/Population:
1149 (1839)
2100 (1873)
3001 (2006)

Geographically, Clara sat upon a flat plain protected by rich farmland that bordered its edges, from the large expanse of raised red bog then widespread across the Irish midlands. Clara owed much of its historical prosperity to its location, the junction of two major roads. This allowed access to passing trade, a direct route between Tullamore and Athlone and a connection of Kilbeggan with Ferbane. Many small industries had sprung up and grown to meet the demand of the local populace.

“A place is always the site of cultural appropriation and historical transformation, the site of dwelling...Architecture as the spatial synthesis ...of forms and materials but also of social cultural and historical forces and elements...” (Riceur: 2002)





The adaptive nature of the ‘city’ and the layering of time are often overlooked in the research of planned towns and villages. The Utopian model may not always be a physical manifestation but may lie in the memory and validity of its convictions. Cooperative living generates ritualistic tendencies that embed memory into a place beyond the original conception. This influence on the immediate context is hard to evaluate beyond the initial dissemination of Utopia and thus the various models are frequently presented as an idealised moment in time, narrow instances where their merit and beauty is restricted to the image of their origin or completion. They are examined in retrospect, through images and the lens of manifestos. It was not until Clara, Co. Offaly, the subject of this study, was examined in its entirety not solely its utopian roots, observing these historical layers simultaneously, that the impact of such sophisticated intervention becomes apparent.

Although Clara illustrates many layers of planning in its history, (initially a typical Irish rural settlement ... Jacobean plantation... gradual growth ... Quaker involvement...rapid commercial advancements... etc.) there is a visible overlap and transition of these layers. There is a lasting memory of each instance in history evident in its physical construction and layout. This manifestation of a utopian archetype in Clara is in direct opposition with many international case studies produced contemporaneously, which are often reasonably intact in their entirety. In the typical Utopian village, planning was often swift and without restriction of pre-existing settlements. In this Irish context motives are often more humble, tentative and rarely executed completely, shaped by that which precedes.

What is a unique condition of Clara even among the Irish examples is that, long before the mills were built, there was an existing collective memory, an existing history, and an existing sense of place. This social memory was influential in the way the mills, and associated housing, were established yet now it is impossible to visualise Clara without them. It is this characteristic of stratification which makes Clara such a fascinating study. It was never quite definitively a ‘planned’ town, meaning in its entirety, but an accretive mass of rich plans and influences. This

issue of transience and layering is perhaps more difficult to dissect but nonetheless generates a complexity in the interpretation of planned settlements, one that reflects its condition within a constant evolving urban context. Yet how has this translated into the memory of the town? What role has memory in the sense of building place? How strong an impact does it have to solidify a presence, a permanent grain, even long after the buildings have vanished or are no longer fit for purpose?

“...The city itself is the collective memory of its people and like memory it is associated with objects and places. This relationship between the locus and the citizens then becomes the city’s predominant image ... In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it...”
(Aldo Rossi: 1988)

“...Who made this town?..” A question posed to a small boy by Michael McCarthy for his book ‘Priests and People in Ireland’ (Goodbody: 2011) for which the answer was “...Mr. Goodbody made most of it...” That was dated to 1902 when the Goodbody reign had long been established in the memories of most of the population of Clara, as owners of all the larger houses and principal employers of the neighbourhood. The initial Goodbody building and industrial activities gradually spread to the fields south of the river and thus extended the towns boundaries of not only Charlestown but also with the building of the Jute works at Clashawaun (see fig. 3.2).

Robert Goodbody moved from Mountmellick in 1825 into the miller’s house at Charlestown, which stood in the shadow of the six storey mill. The mills in Clara underwent various name changes but at the time of purchase these mills were known as Brusna Mills. These were among the four major mills present in Clara at this time- Brusna, Erry, Street (Clara) and Stirabout. These mills were essentially the epicentres of the growth and were noticeable distinctions of Clara’s planned characteristics. Robert Goodbody started to reinvest a substantial amount of the milling profits into the existing mills and new projects in Clara and Tullamore for his younger children. For example into housing, Inchmore, Drayton Villa, Ballycumber (experimental workers



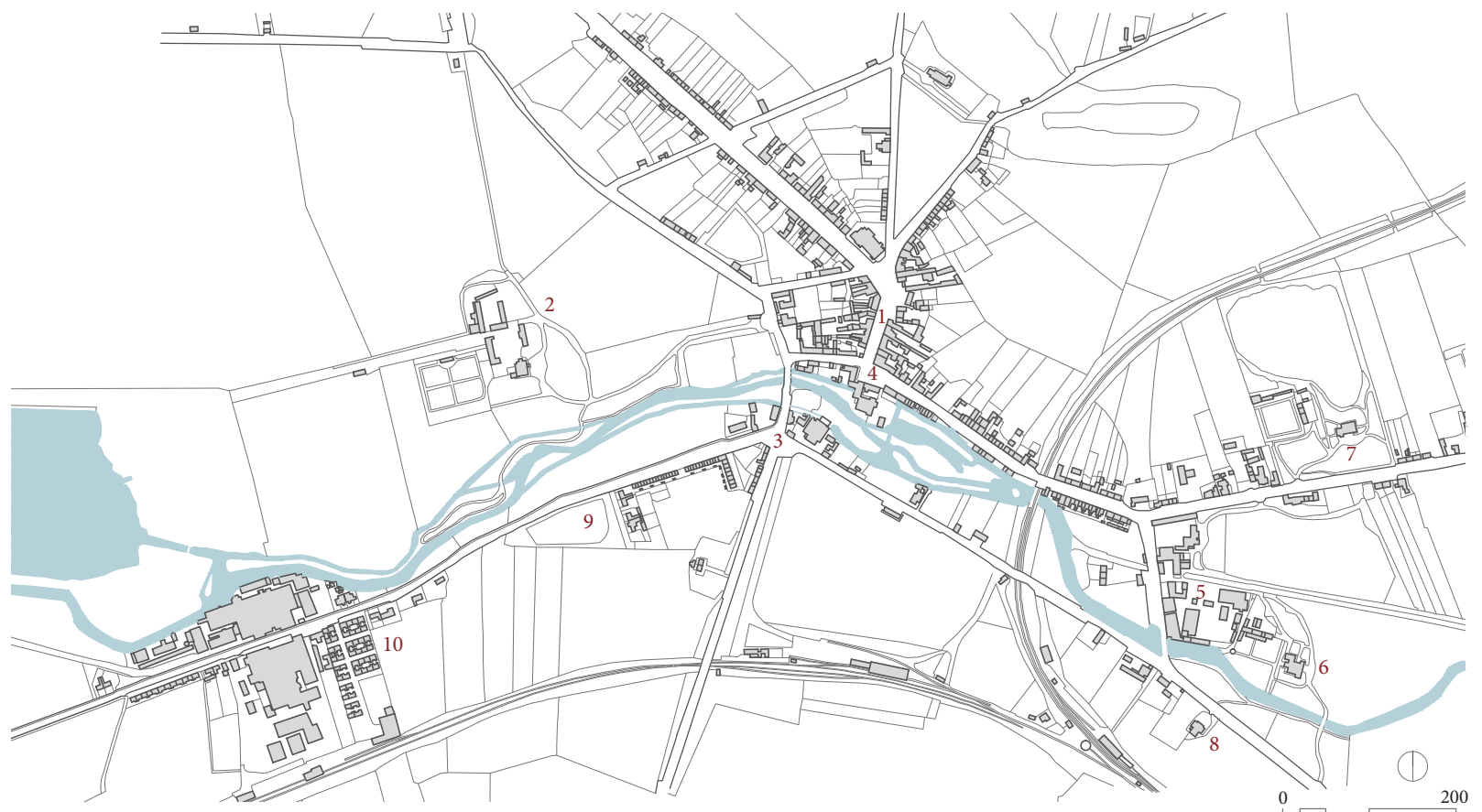
fig. 3.1 Charlestown Mill

CLARA, CO. OFFALY

fig. 3.2 Clara
c.1910

1. Main Street
2. Clara House
3. Erry Mill
4. Street Mill
5. Charlestown
6. Inchmore House
7. Drayton Villa
8. Quaker meeting House
9. Ballycumber housing
10. Clashawaun Jute Factory

fig. 3.3 Clashawaun Mill



houses) as well as additions to the mills and factories and to the town in general, gas works, school etc. As a result Clara became one of the fastest growing Irish towns of the time, providing much needed local employment in the aftermath of the Famine. It was during this period that the 'planned' elements become more apparent, that of which constitutes the existing town's features.

Perhaps one of the most significant milestones in Clara's development was the match of Lydia Clibborn to Jonathan Goodbody. The social and industrial experiments instigated by her relatives, the Malcomsons (Portlaw) and the Richardsons (Bessbrook), were widely known in Quaker circles. These connections were to be inspiration for the Goodbody's to build the Clashawaun Jute factory in the 1860's. Deciding to experiment with workers housing, the Goodbodys constructed a village of 44 cottages. Clashawaun is perhaps the most striking adaption visible in the town's form. Every aspect of this built, even the landscape, was designed in accordance to benefit working life and workers welfare. In 1873 they were enlarged and improved the complex to 120 cottages. There is strong evidence that these houses used the same roof system that other utopian ventures were adopting at the time from Portlaw, seen in Niamh Denny's article featured. There was also evidence of a projected plan for the town so that these nuclei would expand and a link of building mass would form to join the town centre, as was the case with Charlestown.

"...Monuments make the memory of a site more attainable, which is something that should be strived for..."
(Sébastien Marot: 2003)

As described by Sébastien Marot in his book 'Sub-Urbanism and the Art of Memory' the monument is the simplest way of relating memory to a place or form. Yet applying 'monument' status to familiar objects in the landscape is quite frequent in an Irish context. There are monuments which were intentionally constructed to project memory as ceremony, or those which inadvertently acquired a passive character that generate memory. This is not often considered when discussing certain typologies - mills, the 'shed', which are usually associated with transience. Clara best encompasses this

latter condition, for example, Erry, Clashawaun and Charlestown are now rusted metal shells, hollow and stained concrete façades. When considered on the surface, they do not reflect their importance, yet the mills even though in physical decay hold strong significance in the plan and reading of Clara, slowly being reincorporated and eroded with various injections of activity. Some have become monuments in the landscape that determine the mental geography, acting as mnemonic indicators that help navigate through the town and distinguish the boundaries and edge that may not be evident in the map or plan of the town. The memory of these places precedes that of image, for which it serves as a framework and a support medium. Memories trigger other memories and a mental image of the town can be conjured in an instance using these buildings.

These mills retain a presence and dominance in the town, but this is not necessarily evident in the physical reading of the street. They bear no prominent attitude to the streetscape but melt into the grain and life of the town. Niall McCullough describes buildings in the Irish countryside as inevitably becoming absorbed by nature. Outlines become blurred before disappearing, 'a sense of masonry behind screens of leaves' (McCullough: 2014). One could argue that this effect however is not restricted to a natural surround. There is clear evidence of the same phenomenon occurring in urban settings. This layering became meshed into the fabric of the town as they expanded and therefore woven into the fabric of the town's memory.

This relationship explores the need for place to be constantly renegotiated between its inhabitants and memory. Buildings as historical dwellings are missives of time, destined for decay. Since the seventeenth century and the epoch of the baroque, we have become accustomed to "...inhabiting the potentialities of the ruin..." (Iain Chambers: 2002).

The perception of said place will inevitably become altered, 'forgotten' and 'misunderstood' as the accretive process of addition in the built environment is reflective in the psychological. These 'mental barnacles' will gain meaning through a selective reconstruction of these 'ruins', a sense of place behind screens of memory.

"...The city becomes a shifting accumulation of traces a palimpsest to be reworked... rewritten again and again. ..."
(Iain Chambers: 2002)

This article began with a quote from urban theory explored in the work of Richard Sennett. Urbanism is still largely dominated by operating with abstractions, translating towns and cities to statistics and diagrams in order to understand them. As a result, a severe reduction of their actuality, which is totally insufficient in depicting an accurate urban and emotional condition. This returns to our treatment of the utopian ideal and that memory and a layering of time proves to be the most rewarding depiction of place *'...The city understood as process...'* is imperative in understanding the meaning of place. Clara demonstrates the industrial and economic traces of its Utopian history, and although in reality have been diluted, remains a testament in memory of its inhabitants.

Andrew Sterritt



fig. 3.4 Erry Mill

Key Sources: *The Goodbodys- Millers, Merchants and Manufacturers- The Story of an Irish Quaker Family* by Goodbody, M. (2011), *Palimpsest: Intervention and Change in Irish Architecture* by McCullough, N. (2014) *The Unknown City, Contesting Architecture and Social Space* by Borden, I. Kerr, J. Rendell J. (2002), *The Architecture of the City* by Rossi, A. (1988), *Sub-Urbanism and the Art of Memory* by Marot, S. (2003) *Seven American Utopias* by Dolares Hayden, (1976)

THE PORTLAW ROOF TRUSS

A Historic and Architectural Investigation of the Portlaw Roof

Portlaw

Location: Co. Waterford

Date: 1825

Religious Denomination: Quaker

Size/Population: Prior to 1825 the population was about 395. During the seventeen successful years of the Malcolmsons Industry the population grew to 4000

Brief History: Portlaw is a 19th century industrial town which first developed around 1825 with the arrival of a firm called David Malcolmson & Sons. The firm was made up of David Malcolmson, successful Quaker entrepreneur and his three sons whose business was heavily influenced by Quaker principles. The Malcolmsons took a utilitarian and philanthropic approach to their business ensuring that all workers were well looked after and were provided with safe working conditions. By the 1850s the factories success rates had flourished which put pressure on the Malcolmsons to provide suitable housing and a sense of community for the village of Portlaw. Along with his architect John Skipton Mulvany, David Malcolmson devised a strategy for a new urban plan. This layout was designed to be functional rather than aesthetic and provided the workers with specific houses which were unique in character from the others in the village.

The Portlaw Roof is a distinctive architectural feature of the small town of Portlaw, County Waterford. Standing at the centre of the main square in Portlaw, the long generous streets radiate out in four main directions, each one neatly lined with terraces of workers cottages, exhibiting the distinctive characteristic that differentiates Portlaw from other planned villages. This article undertakes a first-hand investigation into the roof structure of the historic workers cottages, colloquially known as the Portlaw Truss, and traces its origins and use throughout Ireland and abroad.

Portlaw consists of a central square from which four wide streets emerge, creating three distinctive triangular urban forms which can be seen on the map on the next page (see fig 4.3). The layout was intended to be functional rather than aesthetic to accommodate the large numbers coming and going to the cotton factory, which was a direct consequence of the pragmatic characteristics of the Malcolmsons. David Malcolmson took a humanitarian and philanthropic approach to developments and community life in Portlaw. He had a vision for the community to be economically viable and autonomous. Not only did he provide housing for his employees and their families, basic infrastructure like gas and water pumps were located strategically in the town for each family use. Portlaw quickly became a thriving village with a number of public houses, shops and groceries appearing.

The Malcolmsons provided two types of housing for their employees. Each house had a private yard and a large plot of land to the rear so that the families could grow vegetables and become self-supporting. The first dwelling type was a single story workers cottage with a typical three bay façade and timber sash windows. The second was a two story workers house with a two bay façade of similar characteristics. All of the workers housing in Portlaw are easily identifiable by their shallow arched tarred roof, an architectural feature unique to this village.

The roof is constructed with a series of ‘bowstring’ trusses. The trusses are formed by timber latticework approximately 30mm X 30mm in thickness and fixed to a top and bottom member on both sides with the top member being curved. The timber used was a red pine, which was imported from the Baltic States by the Malcolmsons for their shipping industry in Waterford City. It is a slow growing timber with a tight grain. The majority of the timber went into the manufacturing of boats, and the excess was used in Portlaw for the construction of the

roof trusses. Similar to constructing the ribs of a ship, the timber was curved through a steaming process while being pinned into shape on the ground with a series of pegs. Afterwards, the straight bottom member was fixed into place and the small timber lattice work was nailed on for reinforcement. The process was simple and cost effective. After the trusses were erected, a timber decking would have been laid and covered with calico, a type of cloth that was manufactured in the factory in Portlaw. To protect the structure from the elements, a layer of tar was applied which was a by-product from the gas works in the village (see fig. 4.4). Straw was used as insulation which was covered in a layer of mortar made of sand and lime as a type of fireproofing, a method that was ahead of its time.

The success of Portlaw as an urban centre grew in parallel to the success of the cotton industry. The philanthropic and humanitarian approach the Malcolmsons took towards working and living conditions within the village earned them a lot of respect but also attracted people for all over the country to visit and learn from the outcomes. As a result, workers houses with their trademark ‘Portlaw Roof’ truss can be found dotted around a handful of villages in Ireland and is traceable as far as Germany. I undertook a first-hand exploration to uncover the location and development of the Portlaw Truss took and in doing so found a body of information of historic and architectural value.

Bessbrook, Co Armagh is the one village of particular interest with its close marital and professional links to Portlaw. The Richardson’s arrived in Bessbrook in 1845 after purchasing an old mill which had been abandoned when a fire had destroyed it in 1839. The Richardson’s were a successful Quaker family with strong links to the Malcolmsons of Portlaw and so ideas and philosophies about urban planning and the linen trade were shared. The Richardson’s borrowed the concept of a Model Village and an idea of good social planning from Portlaw and developed Bessbrook into a thriving milling community. During the development of the village housing and the extension of the factory, workers cottages were built to accommodate the labour force in the local quarry. These houses were constructed in the same manner as those in Portlaw and obtained the same barrel roof structure. They were built prior to 1860 and it is said that when Sophia Malcolmson arrived to Bessbrook as a bride she asked if the curved roofs would be incorporated into the workers houses to remind



fig.4.1 Limekiln Lane, Harolds Cross, Co. Dublin.

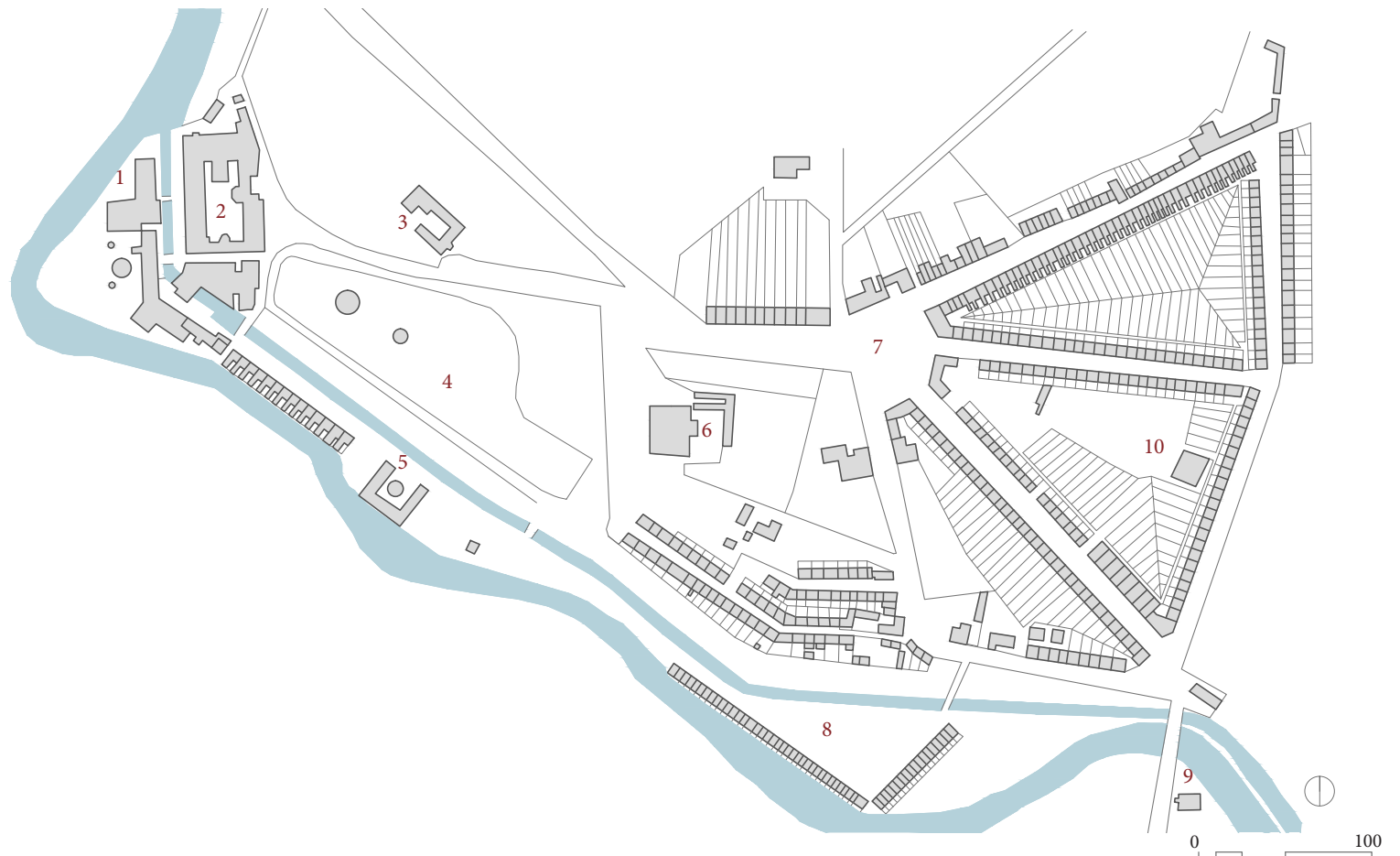


fig. 4.2 Shamrock Terrace, Blarney, Co. Cork.

PORTLAW, CO. WATERFORD

fig. 4.3 Portlaw
c. 1870

1. Weaving Sheds
2. Spinning Mill
3. Mayfield House
4. Mill Pond
5. Gas House
6. School Courthouse
7. Market Square
8. Green Island
9. Presbyterian Church
10. Hospital



her of her home village of Portlaw. These houses were located on Quarry Row, High Street and Flynntown but unfortunately no longer exist as they were demolished in the early seventies to make way for modern housing.

Blarney, Co Cork is home to the world famous Blarney Woollen Mills which dates back to 1751 when Timothy Mahony set up a small timber mill along the river in Blarney. In 1824, the wooden structure was replaced by a new stone mill building and was taken over by Mahony's grandson, Martin Mahony, who developed 'Martin Mahony and Brothers Limited'. Within ten years of its new opening, the mill was recorded to have employed over 120 people and by 1892 this number rose to over 750. Workers houses were developed beside the factory around 1860 which were courtesy of Martin Mahony. The form of these houses are identical to the workers houses provided by the Malcolmsons in Portlaw around 1853 and can be easily identified with the use of the Portlaw Roof Truss. There are strong similarities between Blarney and Portlaw which suggest that the Mahony's were influenced by the developments made by the Malcolmsons through business and trade endeavours.

Harold's Cross, Co Dublin: A cotton mill in Harold's Cross was built in 1808 along the river Poddle, which became known as Greenmount Spinning Manufactory. After getting into financial difficulties the mill was taken over by a branch of the Pim family in 1814, who were successful Quakers associated with many prosperous businesses including railway, wool, brewing and malting. The mill employed a substantial number of people, both male and female, and became the biggest employer in the locality during the 19th and 20th centuries. By 1849 the mill had doubled in size, and the expansion included the construction of designated workers cottages along Greenmount lane and Limekiln lane. These cottages were single story with a shallow barrelled roof and closely resembled the single story cottages that the Malcolmsons had built in Portlaw about twenty five years previous. Both coming from a Quaker and industrial background it is likely that ideas and concepts in providing workers houses were shared amongst the Quaker industrial

families. Seeing the success of Portlaw over the years there is strong evidence that suggests that the Pim's adopted the form of the cottages to provide economical and efficient workers cottages for their employees at Harold's Cross.

Herne, Germany: Following on from the success at Portlaw, the Malcolmsons business empire grew at an extraordinary rate. In 1843 they founded Neptune Iron Works, a shipyard in Waterford and had a growing fleet of ships, in addition to their corn mills, warehouses and spinning factories all along the River Suir. Nevertheless, in 1853 an opportunity arose to become involved in a venture in the mining industry in Germany. William Thomas Mulvany, brother of architect John Skipton Mulvany (who was involved in the urban development of Portlaw), was the manager of Hibernia Mining Company located near the village of Gelsenkirchen. Through this relationship, David Malcolmson became one of the main shareholders in the company and so it is not surprising to find that the Portlaw workers cottages were used to house employees of the mining community. There is evidence that the 'Portlaw Roof' influenced the form of workers houses in the Shamrock mine located in Herne, which were described locally as elongated houses with vaulted roofs.

Other examples of the Portlaw Roof Truss in Ireland can be found in Clonmel, Co Tipperary, Carrick-On-Suir, Co Tipperary, Clara, Co Offaly which all have interlinked business relationships. A more recent development of the structure emerged in Belfast and became known as the Belfast Truss. This truss uses a comparable concept and is similar in form to the earlier Portlaw Truss. The first known reference to the Belfast Truss is recorded in "The Dublin Builder" 1866" described as a "wooden bowstring girder in which the diagonal bracings [...] are arranged to meet in a right angle at the regularly spaced purlins on the bow" (Gould: 2001). Unlike in Portlaw where the bowstring truss was used extensively in housing, the Belfast truss was mainly used for large span factories. This type of roof construction became popular during a time of rapid development in Belfast as an affordable, reliable and structurally dependable roofing method.

This investigation explores the historic and geographical story of the workers houses in Portlaw and more specifically the local methods of construction. The spread of the Portlaw Truss demonstrates the links that Quaker villages had through personal, marital and business relationships. The characteristic of Portlaw's roovescape is a reminder of the unique architectural heritage the village is proud of.

Niamh Denny

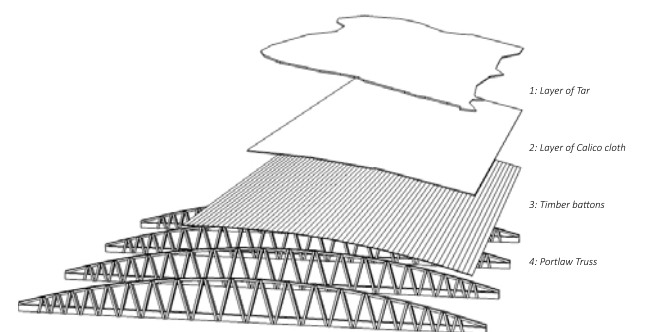


fig. 4.4 Layering of the Portlaw Roof

Key Sources: Verbal conversation with local historian Mr William Power (2015), Portlaw A Nineteenth Century Industrial Village, Tina Foran (1988), An Irishman with a dream in 19th century Germany, Limerick Leader (2004), A Historical Perspective on the Belfast Truss Roof, M H GOULD, (2001).

SOCIAL, URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL INNOVATIONS

An exploration of infrastructure and housing developments in the model villages of Bessbrook and Portlaw.

Bessbrook

Location: Co. Armagh

Date: 1845

Religious Denomination: Quaker

Size/Population:
1937 - 2,355
2011 - 2,579

Brief History: James Nicholson Richardson was the founder of the firm which came to Bessbrook in 1845, running the linen mill industry in partnership with some of his seven sons and John Owden.

John Grubb Richardson established Bessbrook, and it was he who conceived the ideal of a Model Village and developed it to his Quaker and Temperance principles. By 1863 he was the sole owner of entire business, works and village of Bessbrook. It was here that he made his home at The Woodhouse in the grounds of Derramore, “and watched the village grow, with a paternal eye, and a constant care for its social and moral welfare.” (Bessbrook: The Model Village 1845-1945, 2000)

The village of Bessbrook was widely regarded internationally and was a key precedent in the establishment of English model industrial towns.

“...Comfortable habitations, neat gardens, good fences, good farming, moral and religious influences in the household, fair wages for the labourers ... all these conditions to be firmly yet lovingly enforced on tenants and on labourers.”

Extract from a letter addressed to John G. Richardson (Familia: Ulster Genealogical Review, 1993)

Developments in housing and social infrastructure within planned villages in Ireland were often closely aligned to the advancements in manufacturing and industry brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The success of these planned towns, and the improvement of the quality of life of their inhabitants, often depended on an industrialist with a philanthropic agenda. In order to explore the effect of improvements in social and economic organisation on economic productivity I have compared the development of two planned industrial Irish towns, Bessbrook and Portlaw. Both of these towns were established by Quaker families in the mid-19th century, the Malcomsons in the case of Portlaw, and the Richardsons in Bessbrook.

The compassion of the utopian industrialists and their desire to respond to human needs in addition to their philanthropic, capitalist and pragmatic objectives drove them to build these healthier environments for their employees. The focus on good quality architecture and the development of social infrastructure meant that the standard of living for the workers and members of the community was higher in these villages than elsewhere. These villages were utopian in their attempts to offer an improved quality of life through better living and working conditions.

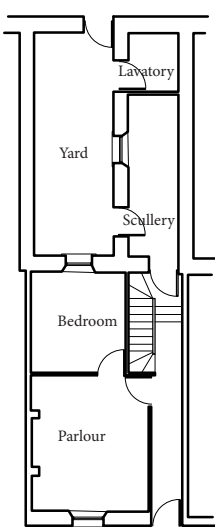
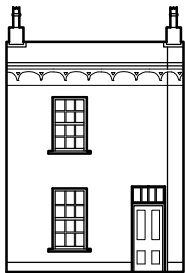
“Certainly the warring forces of expediency and conscientiousness fought a hard battle, but on evidence it is clear that good materials were used for building, the cottages were built to last, and they used certain recent inventions, but their contribution to reform was their attention to education and recreation. They were not content to employ mere sweated labour in their factories and mills”.

(Darley:2007)

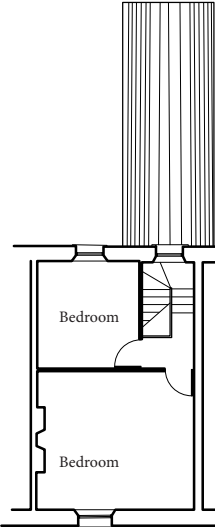
In both Portlaw and Bessbrook the villages were established to serve textile mills. The Richardsons and Malcomsons were linked through marriage and business relationships. Portlaw slightly predates Bessbrook, and it is clear that John Grubb Richardson’s building of Bessbrook was strongly influenced by Portlaw. Both families were wealthy industrialists and displayed an ambition to improve the quality of life of their workers. The typical workers houses in both villages were terraced single and two storey houses. (fig. 5.2 and fig. 5.3)

In Portlaw the organisation of the interior of the house consists of a hallway off which the bedrooms and entrance parlour are accessed and which leads out into a yard where there is a scullery and private lavatory. During winter months the houses are heated by the fireplaces in each room and with the 12ft ceilings in each house, in the warmer summer months the rooms are spacious and aired.

In Bessbrook, College Square is bordered on three sides by approximately 30 mill workers’ houses. The centre of the square has a bowling green and children’s play area, while located on each corner of the entrance to the square is the primary school and the town hall (“The Institute”). The plan of the house is quite simple with a parlour on the ground level which would have been heated by the large fireplace and one bedroom, and two more bedrooms upstairs. Towards the back of the house there is a small scullery through which one can access the yard and lavatory. (fig. 5.3) The practical and efficient nature of the planning of these workers houses can also be seen in

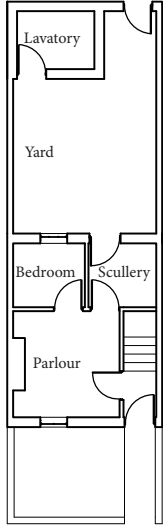


Ground Floor

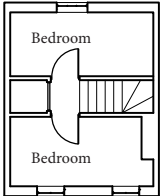


First Floor

fig. 5.2 Two-Storey Dwelling, Brown Street, Portlaw



Ground Floor



First Floor

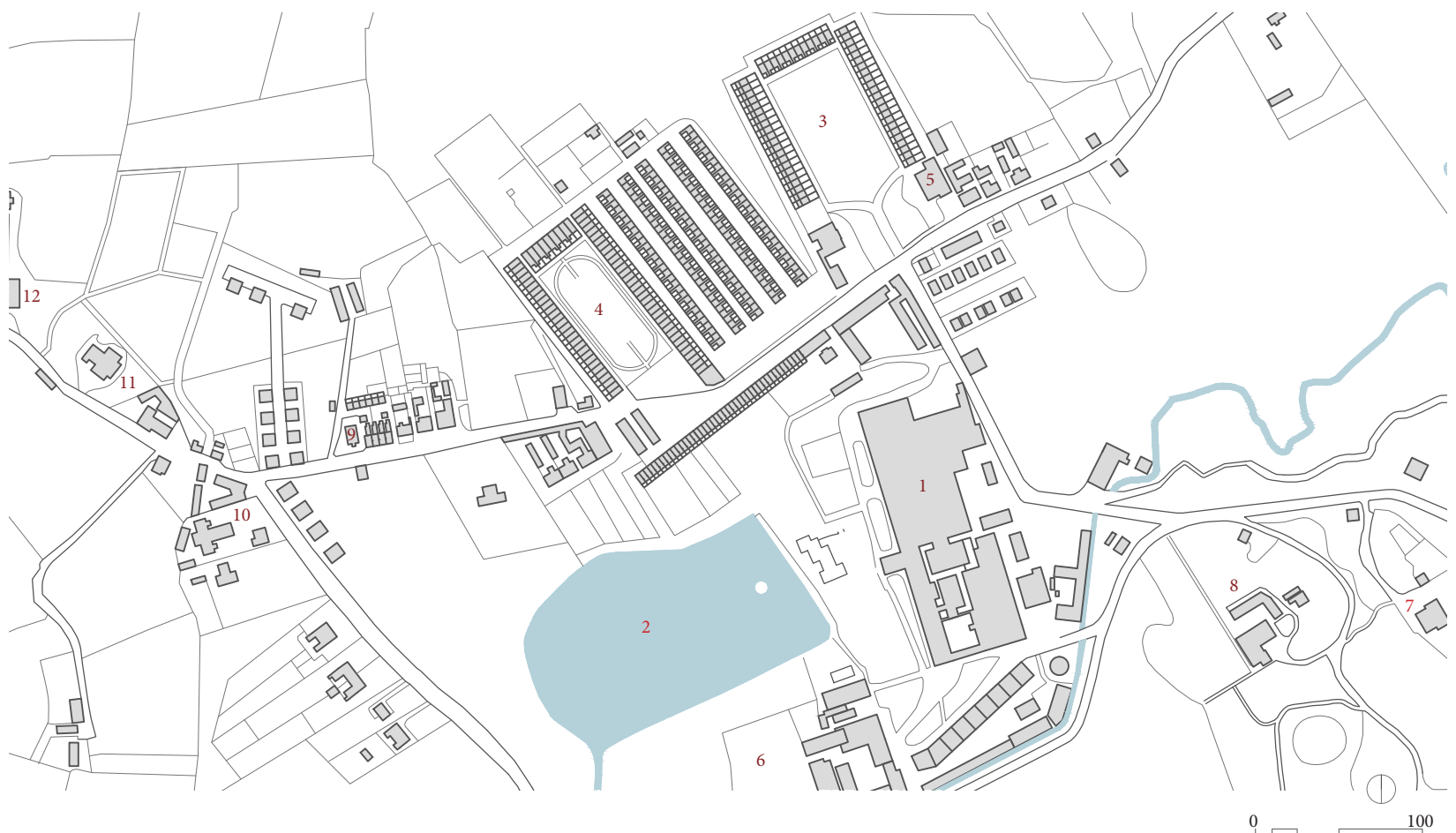
fig. 5.3 Two-Storey Dwelling, College Square, Bessbrook



BESSBROOK, CO. ARMAGH

fig. 5.1 Bessbrook
c. 1995

- 1 - Flax Spinning & Weaving Mills
- 2 - Mill Pond
- 3 - College Square
- 4 - Charlemont Square
- 5 - Town Hall 'The Institute'
- 6 - Bleach Green
- 7 - Friends Meeting House
- 8 - Derramore House (Richardson Home)
- 9 - Methodist Church
- 10 - Roman Catholic Church
- 11 - Church of Ireland
- 12 - Presbyterian Church



the planning of the mill housing in Portlaw - the houses are of a reasonable size allowing the design to be used repetitively in the town planning, and with the placement of a chimney between two houses on a terrace each dwelling had the benefit of a fire in each room to keep it warm in winter.

The radial urban structure of Portlaw consists of wide streets that converge into a central public space where the towns commercial and community activities took place. (See previous article on Portlaw by Niamh Denny fig. 4.3) The urban structure of Bessbrook, in contrast, is rectilinear in form. (fig. 5.1) Portlaw's radial roads all converge at the mill, this was planned on the basis of efficiency for the workers, minimising the travel distance between their cottages and the mill. (Previous article fig. 4.3) In Bessbrook however, the rectilinear urban design serves to emphasise the importance of the shared open space to the daily lives of the mill workers and their

families. The houses are organised to accommodate open space and amenities for the occupants of the town.

While the proportion of private garden space per house in Bessbrook is a lot less than that in Portlaw there is provision of significant shared outdoor space. The houses of College Green are built to surround on three sides a cricket pitch and bowling green. (fig. 5.1 labelled 3+4) More of an emphasis is placed on the sharing of public space in Bessbrook, whereas Portlaw favours the larger private garden with less shared outdoor space. Due to the nature of the triangular urban structure, however, the allocation of garden space in Portlaw is not equal. Housing at the centre of the block has a much greater garden area than that of a house at either end of the block. (Previous article fig. 4.3)

The Richardson's social experiment at Bessbrook was widely known at the time as a great example of town planning and is believed to have influenced George Cadbury in his planning of Bournville. (Familia: Ulster Genealogical Review, 1993) In addition to Bournville, the influence of Bessbrook and its ideas can be seen on later settlements such as Titus Salt at Saltaire, Lever at Port Sunlight and Rowntree at New Earswick. The Quaker community had a strong interest and conviction in demonstrating what they believed to be the way forward at a national level, as regards economic development and

social reform.

J.S. Curl claimed that the work of the Richardsons was of 'great importance in the nineteenth century reform movement' and 'an example to Cadbury and pre-dates Saltaire, Victoria and all the famous mid-Victorian model villages and towns'. (Curl:1983)

Salt began developments at Saltaire in 1852 and provided housing for the 3000 workers employed in his textile mills. Cadbury then built the town of Bournville, 1879, which accommodated 2000 families and was established as a model for similar towns elsewhere. (Johnson:1976)

Bournville was then followed by Port Sunlight built by the Lever Brothers in 1886 on Merseyside. Port Sunlight was a low density development with interior gardens and recreational spaces for children. These examples show how Utopian ideas are often driven by benevolence, paternalism and a desire to reform society and build better towns and communities. "The fundamental purpose of urban design is to provide a framework to guide the development of the citizen." (Buchanan:2013)

Bessbrook and Portlaw were critical precedents in the establishment of the better known English Quaker village. Their success lies in their pragmatic yet humane planning, and a holistic interest in the lives of their employees, demonstrated through religious tolerance and provision of good quality housing, outdoor spaces, public buildings, amenities, social spaces, schools and Quaker meeting houses. These aspects demonstrate the underlying Quaker ideology in the establishment of the towns of Bessbrook and Portlaw.

Hannah Crehan



fig. 5.4 Interior of Mill Housing, Bessbrook



fig. 5.5 Exterior of Mill Housing, Bessbrook

Key Sources: *Villages of Vision: A Study of Strange Utopias* by Gillian Darley (2007), *Bessbrook: The Model Village 1845-1945* The Bessbrook Spinning Co., Ltd and J. N. Richardson, Sons & Owden, Ltd. (2000), *Familia: Ulster Genealogical Review* by Ulster Historical Foundation (1993), *The Buildings of Ireland: South Ulster: Armagh, Cavan and Monaghan* by Mulligan, K. V. (2013), *Portlaw A Nineteenth Century Industrial Village* by Foran, T. (1988)

RELIGIOUS AND UTOPIAN SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY

An investigation into the presence of Religious and Utopian Socialist ideologies within planned villages of the early 19th century; which focuses on New Lanark and Sion Mills.

Sion Mills

Location: Co. Tyrone

Date: 1835

Religious Denomination: Presbyterian

Size/Population: Current Population 2050. Population peaked at the end of the 19th century with over 3000 people working in the mills.

Brief History: The village was founded by the Herdman brothers following their industrial ventures in Belfast city. The brothers were influenced by Robert Owen and believed in setting up a model planned industrial village, based on the ethos of Presbyterianism. The town was set up on the River Mourne, where the strong flow of the river gave the mill the power they needed to get started. The mill was set up during the time of the Great Famine and provided much relief for Donegal and Tyrone. The mill was closed after 170 years in business in 2004.

"... We have inspected manufactories of much greater extent than the 'Sion Mills', but have never witnessed with greater gratification the practical and efficient working of a fine moral system."

Mrs. Samuel Hall, the Parliamentary
Gazetteer 1846

Religious and Utopian ideologies were often critical factors in the establishment of planned towns of the early nineteenth century, both had a substantial impact on these villages in terms of their planning and further on their permanence. Sion Mills in Co. Tyrone founded in 1835, was one of those villages and the main focus of this article. To examine Sion Mills in terms of its position within planned towns of this period I will compare it with New Lanark in Scotland founded in 1768 and taken over by Robert Owen in 1800. Utopian Socialism is an underlying ideological ethos in both villages, however, each village differs in their approach and influences.

Utopian Socialism is a term used to describe the socialist movements by people such as Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Henri de Saint-Simon, that came about during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century following the Industrial Revolution. The physical nature of the Sion Mills and New Lanark is quite different but their socialist agenda was similar, they were both informed by Utopian Socialism. Utopian thinking has been implicit in some of the ground-breaking town plans and architecture of the sixteenth century onwards. In 'Utopia: Decline and fall?' Colin Rowe discusses this evolution of Utopia. He presents the idea that 'Classical Utopias' which were fuelled by the Christian message were evident pre-Enlightenment. (Rowe: 1978) However, they were ephemeral in nature and held as an unachievable ideal, rather than a practical proposal. After the Enlightenment, the ideal city changed in nature becoming as Rowe describes an 'Activist Utopia'. In this vision the Utopia was radical in its attitude towards social change, actively changing the way in which towns and architecture were planned. (Rowe: 1978).

'Sion' Mills was established as a model Utopian Christian village. The word 'Sion' has a strong association with the understanding of Utopia, originating from the biblical term 'Zion', meaning City of God (Ferguson: 2010). Robert Owen was also highly influential on the Herdman brothers. It was both a 'Classical Utopia' because of its strong religious ethos and an 'Active Utopia' because the Herdmans were interested in Utopian Socialism but they were also industrialists. The village was an innovative illustration of planning that would have been used as an example for other villages to follow. New Lanark could be classified under the heading of an 'Activist Utopia'.

Robert Owen paved the way for social change as an immediate reaction to contemporary conditions such as poor social and living conditions at the time. In the 19th century children under the age of twelve were working under horrifying conditions. Sion Mills was established in this era, it also provides a link to the 'Classical Utopian' ideals that Rowe discussed. Its Christian message was a unifying force within the village of Sion Mills, as they encouraged many forms of Christianity. The Herdmans were Presbyterian but allowed all forms of religion to practice within the village.

Robert Owen- having lived in Manchester and led a team of workers under his management- knew first-hand the results of unhealthy environments and cruel treatment. He put all his energy and thinking into informing a better solution at New Lanark. (Owen: 1813) He led a movement of Utopian Socialists which became known as Owenism. Later on he continued this movement in America by setting up New Harmony. The objectives were clear; to create a better environment for its workers and better education through non-sectarian means.

"...I know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any, misery, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundredfold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment, except ignorance, to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal."

(W.H.G. Armytage: 1961)

The Herdman brothers were influenced by Robert Owen and their first act as proprietor of the mill was to create a clean safe environment and provide support facilities that the workers of the mill would need. (Ferguson: 2010) The village of Sion Mills grew around the mill. During a visit in 1823 –just over ten years before Sion Mills was built- to the Rotunda in Dublin Owen was given a 'royal welcome.' (Bolger: 1977) He "...expounded his ideas on mutual co-operation and the new moral world." (Bolger: 1977) He influenced hundreds if not thousands of the peasant and working class as well as industrialists such as the Herdmans.

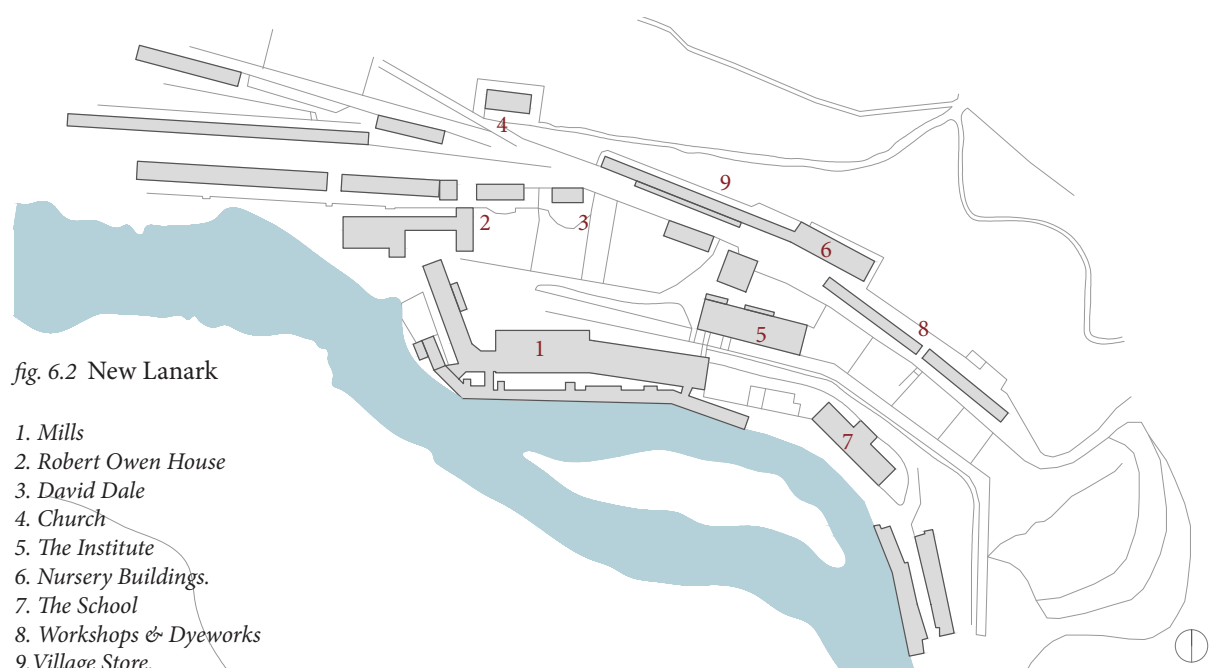


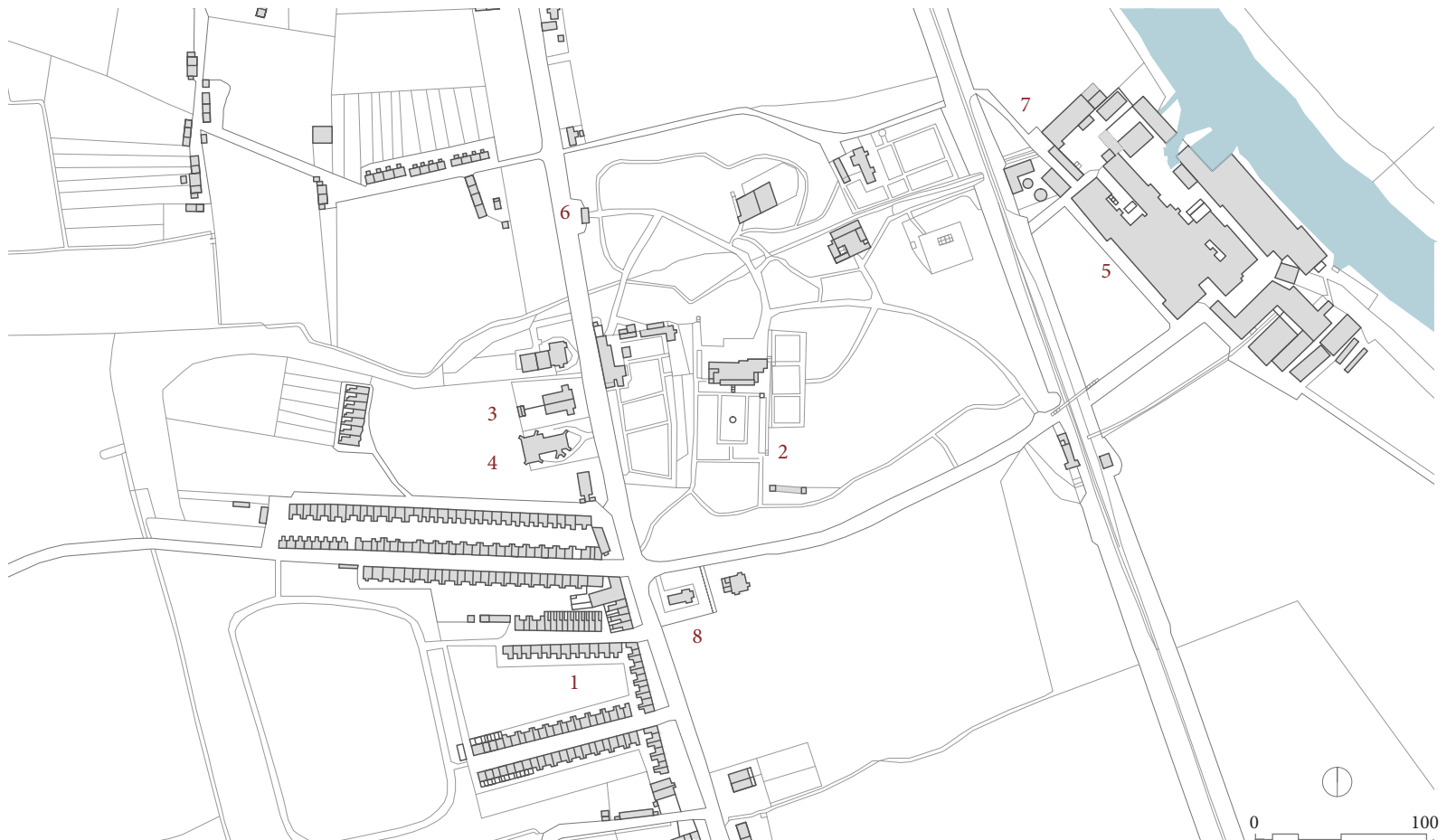
fig. 6.2 New Lanark

1. Mills
2. Robert Owen House
3. David Dale
4. Church
5. The Institute
6. Nursery Buildings.
7. The School
8. Workshops & Dyeworks
9. Village Store.

SION MILLS, CO. TYRONE

fig. 6.1 Sion Mills
c.1905

1. Housing
2. Sion House
3. School
4. Presbyterian Church
5. Mills
6. Gatelodge
7. Recreation Hall
8. St. Saviours Church



In some respects Utopian Socialism in New Lanark was in conflict with religion for authority. As Robert Owen himself was an atheist, his views had been set out from the initial stages of his role as manager of the village. (Owen: 1813) The financial support that funded the new wave of social change within New Lanark came from Quaker businessmen. This relationship became a disadvantage to Owen, whose expertise came under scrutiny for a number of reasons; including his choice of curriculum within the education of the young. (New Lanark Conservation Trust: N.D) The villagers' religious ethos also differed from that of Owen and became a point of conflict in the initial stages of the village. All established religions and religious sects were, he said, "...great repulsive powers of society..." while any of them prevailed they would be a "...permanent obstacle to the peace, progress in knowledge, charity and love and happiness of the human race." (Bolger: 1977) this further separated Owen from his final goal of a Utopian settlement as he was unable to pursue it alone. This is something that Dolores Hayden discusses in more detail in her book "Seven American Utopias". Following Owens departure from New Lanark to America the village declined until it eventually went into ruin. Later ventures, such as New Harmony, met a similar fate.

In their urban plans Sion Mills and New Lanark differ greatly. Although they are both situated along a rivers edge, the planning took two different directions which overlap at certain points. In New Lanark Robert Owen lived very much at the heart of the village alongside the housing for the workers and the actual mill. Note on the New Lanark map (fig. 6.2) that Owen's house is at the centre of the village, a key location in observing the life of the community. However in Sion Mills, Sion House is set back from the road as seen in the map from 1905 (see fig. 6.1). Although still within a short distance from the mills and the workers housing, it is separated from the village by its formal gardens and parkland. It is not, however, in an observational position. Sion House sits between the Flax Mill and the rest of the village. During a tour of the village, you take the route from the mills to the workers housing and you are very much aware that you

are passing the house of the Proprietor.

It might be argued that Robert Owen felt he very much needed to observe the workers of his village of New Lanark, as he was the strong character which held the village together. (Darley: 2007) He saw that religion divided the community rather than uniting them "Considerable jealousies existed on account of one religious sect possessing a decided preference over the others." (Owens: 1991, p 29) On the other hand religion was an influence that kept the community together in Sion Mills. "The Presbyterian Church ...was the first to be built in the village in 1866 and the Herdman family matched the congregation pound for pound to finance its construction." (Ferguson: 2010 p 22). They believed that their workers should have some kind of religion. "They endeavoured to create a god-fearing, moral, educated, integrated and temperate community." (Ferguson: 2010 p24). In addition, the Herdman brothers not only encouraged religion, they also encouraged integration between all religions. They had the first ever integrated school within Northern Ireland. (Sion Mills: Masters of Irish Linen 2009) The establishment of several different religious buildings within the community showed a tolerance for religion.

This religious tolerance influenced the planning of the village quite heavily. As you can see in the maps from 1905 the churches run along the main spine of the village, creating node points and form the majority of public buildings within the industrial village. As a result, religion can only be assumed to be of great importance within everyday life. In contrast, in New Lanark the Church, otherwise referenced as the Village Hall, sits towards to back of the village, at a distance from workers and their homes.

The ideological foundation of Sion Mills and New Lanark were unusual at the time and combined both pragmatic and Utopian principles. In most cases these have been a part of Utopian and rational visions. It is possible to argue that Sion Mills survived because it had both a strong religious ethos and an economical success within

its industry. The Utopian Socialist intentions, which the Herdmans introduced from the outset of village planning, had a permanent effect on the lives of the workers. For Sion Mills, as Gillian Darley describes in Villages of Vision, its "...firmest basis, however, for idealistic experiment was religion." (Gillian Darley: 2007)

"What is the function of ideal planning to-day, when so often realization disappoints? It is to uphold normative principles, to transcend the more trivial day-to-day requirements, and to maintain architecture as an art by giving it a lasting aesthetic significance."

(Helen Rosenau: 1983)

Alice Clarke



fig. 6.3 Sion Mills flax mills

Key Sources: *The Irish Co-operative movement* by Patrick Bolger (1977), *Heavens below* by W.H. Armytage, (1968) *A New View of Society* by Robert Owen. (1991) *Seven American Utopias* by Dolares Hayden, (1976), *Collage City* by Colin Rowe (1978), *The Ideal City* by Helen Rosenau (1983), *Sion Mills: historic Irish Linen Village* by Sion Mills Buildings Preservation Trust (2010).

A FAMINE RELIEF VILLAGE

A Relief Village built around Individuals and Fair Wages rather than Institutions and Charity.

Letterfrack

Location: Co. Galway

Date: 1849

Religious Denomination: Quaker

Size/Population: Population before the village's conception in 1841 was 188. Following the departure of the village founders, the Ellises, in 1871 the population was 196. Most of Connemara recorded population losses during the famine not rises.

Brief History:

Letterfrack was formed by James and Mary Ellis of Bradford, England. The couple had been successful factory owners in England and were looking for an opportunity to return their accumulated wealth to society. After visiting Letterfrack they quickly understood that their acute business skills and agriculture experience would be of particular use in Letterfrack.

The village was part of a wider famine relief effort by the Quaker Central Relief Committee. Quaker ideology involved helping the poor and encouraging philanthropic endeavours. The Quakers are widely acknowledged to have played a very significant role in alleviating the horrific affects of the famine in Ireland.

"That Friends as a body should occupy their right place in any united effort that the emergency may require. The government relief measures will not solve the problem without the aid of individuals and local bodies." - Joseph Bewley on the famine



Letterfrack's creation was a direct reaction to the Great Famine of Ireland of 1845. It was a form of relief conceived by the religious group, the Quakers, to help with the devastation of the food crisis. Unlike other planned towns, the village works as a series of contextual additions to an already existing settlement. This piece of research attempts to understand the motivations and methods behind the village's conception, and it will also compare the famine relief approach of the Quakers to the famine relief approach of the State.

Letterfrack has a very unique location as it sits on the periphery of Western Europe. The photograph below explains the village's context. The village is encompassed by a dramatic landscape with the Atlantic Ocean on the western edge of the village and the famous Diamond Hill to the right. Access to the village, is along coastal and mountain valley roads. These roads negotiate the valleys of the mountain ranges and circle around the bog and marsh land of the area. The landscape is inhospitable and raw but the village of Letterfrack sits as a haven surrounded by these immense feats of nature. It is very much a natural place for human settlement in the austere but beautiful area. This dramatic landscape gives Letterfrack it's very particular narrative.

The political and social climate that existed before the Quaker involvement in Letterfrack directly affected its creation. The west of Ireland in the 18th century was considered an anarchic part of Europe and many parts had little or no connection to the government. This problem of isolation was increased when the Act of Union of 1801 was passed. This law involved moving the leadership of Ireland to the city of London. Unification between Ireland and Great Britain left the west of Ireland at an ungovernable distance from London. The economy of Letterfrack was also largely agrarian with most of the population living self sufficiently. What the inhabitants produced was what they consumed and a trade economy was non-existent. These events all lead to an undeveloped unstructured economy. So when the Great Famine of 1845 struck it had particularly devastating effects on the west of Ireland and the area surrounding Letterfrack.

When the London government learned of the Irish Famine they were slow to take steps to relieve the desolation. Substantial intervention only arrived in the second year. This slow action was due to bureaucracy and a lack of understanding of the plight of Ireland. When significant action finally arrived it was in the form of additional workhouses and work programs.

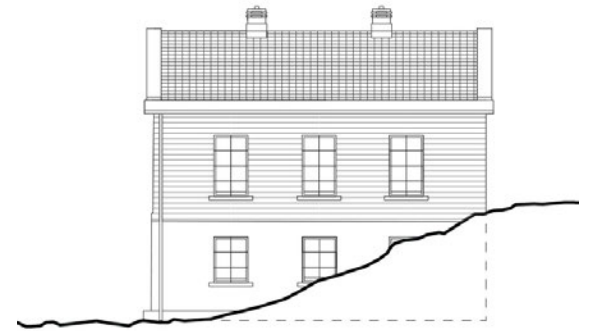


fig. 7.2 James and Mary Ellis's home massed into the Letterfrack Landscape.

The famine workhouses were places designed to be as unappealing as possible so that only the very desperate would avail. They were also places of extreme discipline where families were sub-divided and stripped of their homes. Occupants were organised into four dorms - men, women, girls and boys. Pictured in the image (fig 7.4) is the girls dormitory at Carrickmacross workhouse. This dormitory would have housed over 500 hundred young women at a time. Again, this social construct was a way to oppress the culture and religion of the natives and strip them of any sense of individuality. The government saw the poor as a statistical problem rather than a story of families and communities.

One group particularly disturbed by the Governments methods of action was the religious group The Society of Friends or Quakers. The Quakers saw the State's methods in complete contradiction with their religious values. Quakers of the time believed in a society of 'individuals' and self determination. They also believed in creating communities based around families, which was a stark contrast to the social organisation of the workhouses. This strong reaction to the state relief compelled two Quakers named James and Mary Ellis to form the village of Letterfrack. Letterfrack developed as a reaction against the segregated life and the un-contextual planning of the Workhouse programs. James and Mary Ellis were motivated to create a village that could help itself, where they could teach the inhabitants to become productive disciplined members of a society.

"He was determined to become a resident Irish landlord and to try become a practical illustration of the possibility of improving the physical and moral condition of the roughest Irish labourer by physical and moral instruction."

(Johnson, 2000)



fig. 7.3 Family based Workers' Housing in Letterfrack.

LETTERFRACK, CO. GALWAY

fig. 7.1 Letterfrack
c.1849-57

1. Housing
2. Ellis Home
3. School/Meeting House
4. Cattle Shed
5. Dispensary
6. Temperance Hotel
7. Shop



fig. 7.4 Girls Dormitory in Carrickmacross Workhouse.

In Letterfrack building positions were dictated by their context and the settlements existing layout. The Ellises chose not to place their buildings in formal relationships to one another, this was to reduce the impact of their intervention. This approach was a way of expressing to the community that, unlike the State's Workhouse of the same time, their mission was not to disrupt existing communities but rather to contribute to a more positive way of life and build upon the existing social and physical structures.

In fig. 7.2 is the Ellis Home. The architecture of their home was modest in detailing and is massed so that its large floor area nestles into the landscape of the mountains. From the drawing we can see how the section of the house cuts into the foot of the mountain. The dotted line is the internal space in the house. The intention of the massing

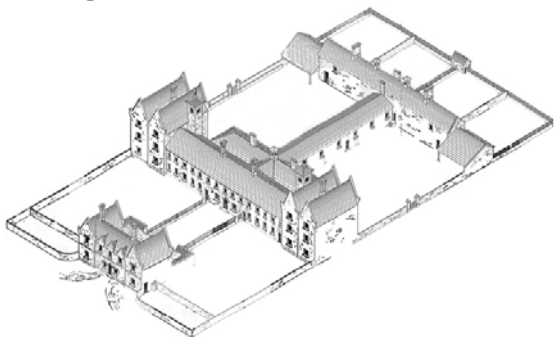


fig. 7.5 Standardised repeated Workhouse plan.

is to integrate the building into the surroundings.

In fig. 7.3 we see the way of life being expressed in the Architecture. Instead of constructing large scale dormitory style buildings similar to the workhouses the couple chose to construct a terrace of individual family homes. The homes are nestled into the hills of Letterfrack. Each home is expressed as a separate house as it negotiates the terrain of the slope. A way of life much different to the communal living of the workhouse dormitories.

In fig. 7.5 is the State's standardised workhouse format which was imposed onto different sites across Ireland. The Workhouses were placed regardless of context. Their plans involved stripping large areas of all vegetation and existing buildings. The design was intended to intimidate and it was believed that discipline could be achieved through the power of a building.

The plans and elevations of the workhouse articulate a language of confinement, contrast to the individuality of Letterfrack. James and Mary Ellis had a different attitude towards nature. Upon arrival in Letterfrack, the Ellises immediately started to work the land. Planting trees was a way of improving the land and again reducing the severity of their intervention.

"James Ellis began immediately improving the land. Employing 80 men, he drained the bogland, planted thousands of trees, constructed walls gardens and roads."
(Johnson, 2000)

The 'Ellis Wood Nature Trail' still survives today and has been given the status of a national park. The Wood stands as a testament to the forward looking Ellis'.

Letterfrack's objective was to create a type of life that encouraged hard work and a village that facilitated family living. They set about creating a self sustaining economy based on fair wages and respect. The Ellises rarely offered charity as they believed it encouraged dependence. As a village Letterfrack really became about creating a certain way of life and the project of Letterfrack was a reaction against state policy. The Ellises and the Quakers did



fig. 7.6 Ellis home sited next to idealic Letterfrack Landscape.

not believe in communal living as they felt it intruded on individuals lives. They were not interested in the segregation of the poor into formal workhouses but instead saw the poor as a productive part of society. They saw their role as contributing to an already existing community. They wanted to improve life in Letterfrack not re-plan it or reinvent it. They wanted to assist the poor in a pragmatic, empathetic manner. As a reflection of this James Ellis was compassionately known as 'Good Mister Ellis' long after the couple had left. Also Letterfrack's population grew during the famine a testament to the Ellises success.

In contrast to this the State's workhouse relief was in many ways unsuccessful. They created buildings which they hoped would solve the problems of the poor. In reality the workhouses of Ireland resulted in greater complications. They spread disease, fragmented families and most importantly, stripped individuals of their liberty.

Ronan Lonergan

Key Sources: *Background and Quaker Famine relief in Letterfrack* by Joan Johnson (2000), *Quaker relief work in Ireland's Great Hunger* by Robin B. Goodbody (1968) *A Visit to Connemara* by James Hack Tuke (1991) *Workhouse Archive Carrickmacross*

QUAKER INFLUENCE

“Were all superfluities and the desire of outward greatness laid aside, and the right use of things universally attended to, such a number of people might be employed in things useful, as that moderate labour with the blessing of Heaven would answer all good purposes relating to people and their animals, and a sufficient number have time to attend to proper affairs of civil society”

John Woolman 1763 Quaker preacher, pacifist and abolitionist.

The Quakers emerged as the middle class of late 18th century Ireland with a set of values not only about their relationship with God but also with society and a developing sense of social justice as a reaction to those conflicted times. The foundation of Quaker beliefs too was born out of the social concerns of 17th century England, in particular as a reaction to the snobbery and hypocrisy of the ruling classes and clergy.

The heart of Quaker ethics is summed up by simplicity - outwardly in the shunning of superfluities of dress, speech, behaviour and possessions. Inwardly simplicity is spiritual detachment from the things of this world. In essence this is a removal of the clutter of life, both physical and mental which tend to obscure our vision of reality. Clarity of thought and precision of action are the desired outcomes of this sense

of discipline, a discipline of less-is-more. It is out of this that we see the development of settlements like Ballitore and the architecture of Meeting Houses such as in Churchtown, Dublin and Edenderry.

How well would these civic and personal values translate into the settlements and buildings of today? As we are often left grappling for any sense of meaning in much of our contemporary settlement designs, could the concerns of the twenty first century - like equality and ecology - find there way into the design of new settlements?

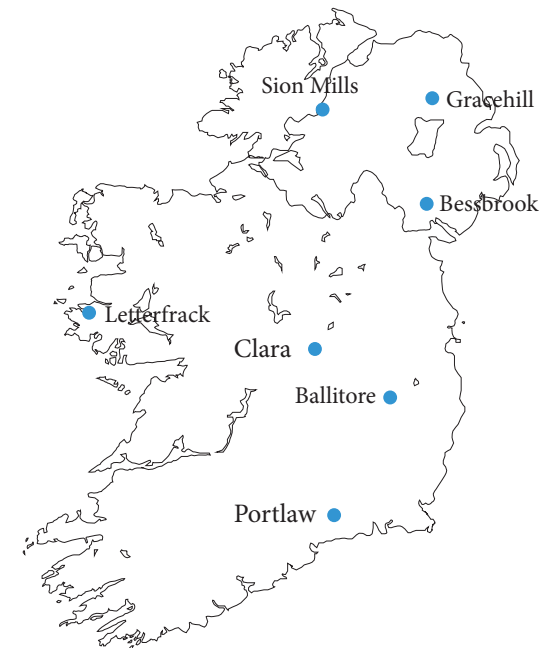
Somewhat like the development of Ballitore, the Eco-village at Cloughjordan (originally a Cromwellian protestant settlement in Tipperary) was founded by a largely well-informed middle class looking to establish a community of like-minded individuals. A community, which is at one level integrated into the existing town structure and at another, is an idealised settlement based on principles of social and ecological sustainability. It is not a Quaker settlement although there is Quaker involvement there too; the architecture at times has nothing of the simplicity of a less-is-more (actually, a core ideal of sustainable design) but, on budgets that tightened post Celtic tiger, civic infrastructures and eco-structures became the corner stones of the development and a charter of values became the core tenet of participation.

As the Eco-village matures and grows the relative success of this value based settlement design can

be more easily assessed; certainly though a sense of community and purpose are clearly evident - if we can only say as much for our future developments as building in Ireland starts again.

Mike Haslam

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AFTERWORD

The genesis of this seminar group's work was a broad study of Utopian planning in Irish settlements. As a proto- colony, Ireland was often the testing ground for political and social experiments. The morphology of Irish towns and villages, from plantation settlements (the London Guild towns and villages of the Londonderry Plantations being the most complete example), to estate towns, to religious and political utopian villages, often reveal radical political, social and urban agendas.

We narrowed the focus of our research to smaller urban settlements, specifically those founded with a dominant religious ethos. Following the English Reformation and the establishment of many radical religious sects in the 16th and 17th century, a number of persecuted religious groups established communities in the American and Irish Plantations. Non-conformist sects and Scottish Presbyterians in particular, made a large proportion of Ulster planters (three of the seven villages studied here are located in Ulster).

Through preliminary research, each student identified one village to study; we visited the villages, researched and mapped them, while studying international precedents and the theoretical underpinnings of Utopian ideologies. The Society of Friends (Quakers) were involved in the majority of the studied planned towns, and were often associated with manufacturing or industrial enterprises. The Quakers refusal to take oaths denied them entry to most professions,

this aligned high standards of education meant they often succeeded very well in manufacturing businesses. The Quakers ethical outlook, humane social agenda and their religious tolerance is evident in the villages studied here at Portlaw, Bessbrook, Clara, Ballitore and Letterfrack. The impact of social utopianism is evident at the Presbyterian model village at Sion Mills, and Gracehill is a unique case-study as Ireland's only Moravian planned village.

The visitor to Gracehill, Sion Mills, Bessbrook or Portlaw is left with a strong impression of their difference; the atypical orthogonal planning, row housing and uniformity of architectural language stand in contrast to the organic, ad-hoc character of most Irish villages. Their unusual ideological origins are evident in their physical forms and Utopian and model villages undoubtedly enrich Ireland's urban and architectural heritage.

The subject is far from exhausted with many worthy candidates such as the Quaker influenced town of Mountmellick and the Rev. Nangle's Protestant Missionary Settlement at Achill Island regrettably omitted. The Owenite village at Ralahine Co. Clare and Gandon's plan for Swiss craftsmen at New Geneva, Waterford also offer tantalizing prospects for further study. The articles published here are edited extracts from the students' more comprehensive dissertations. Our intention is to continue this research into utopian planned villages, with proposed studies into plantation and estate towns and villages.

Miriam Delaney, DIT
UTOPIA 7 group tutor

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