

## Ulster Historical Foundation June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Belfast

Crofton Research Log

County Mayo – findings in file cabinet – miscellaneous articles

### ***In-letters to Relief Commission, Dublin, from Barony Relief Committees, Co. Mayo RLFC 3/2/21***

**No. 5** Bundle of letters and papers including letter from T O'Donel, Secretary, Aughagower and Islandeady Relief Committee to Sir Randolph Routh, Commissariat Office, Dublin Castle, 7 November 1846, letter including a copy of a resolution by the Aughagower and Islandeady Relief Committee submission to the Lord Lieutenant. Proposed by Domnick I. Bourke Esquire, seconded by Rev. Richard Henry, P[arish] P[riest].

“For instance, in the parishes of Islandeady and Aughagower situated in the barony of Burrishoole where there are 6,000 unemployed persons, no more than 1,000 are at present employed and unless more works are directed to be commenced immediately the consequences to the starving population will be really frightful.” [signed] Thomas Ormsby, Chairman, Francis O'Donel, Secretary

Rev. Peter Conway, Roman Catholic curate, Partree, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, to W. Stanley Esquire, 21 January 1847, letter acknowledging his letter with the information that the Lord Lieutenant had been pleased to grant a donation of 54 (pounds sterling) in aid of the subscription that he had collected locally. He asked that the money be sent as soon as possible along with an order on the meal depot at Westport.

“The people all over this neighbourhood are in a frightful state; no meal can pass from Westport to the interior of the country without being plundered by the starving people...”

Letter from Rev. Peter Ward, Parish Priest of Aughagower to W. Stanley Esquire, secretary, 8 February 1847, written from Ashfield.

“Permit to state for the information of the Commissary General relative to the soup boilers which are intended for relief distribution on the west coast of Ireland that after paying due attention to the subject of soup kitchens I am come to the conclusion that as a system of relief for the starving poor in this parish such would not answer. The extend of the parish 21 Irish miles long and from 4 to 7 miles broad with a large population, all with but few exceptions, requiring relief and at this period of the year when all hands should be employed at their small farms, if it be intended that we would have any tillage next year, should be rather encouraged to attend at home. The people beside would rather perish by starvation than attend at soup houses, as number have already died of starvation and would not be induced to go into the poor house. We should consider the machinery and other expenses attendant on this soup system and see if it were not better to give the people meal which one person would carry home for several families and at a trifling expense.....The soil is barren and the land mountainous; there is no resident proprietor; the clergy of the Law (?) church do not reside; there can be no relief for the

people except what may be done by the government. There is no police station in the entire parish. Still the people are peaceable as yet; their number will be much diminished by famine unless soon relieved.”

**No. 8** Sir Richard O'Donnell, Newport House, Co. Mayo, to [Sir Randolph Routh]. 15 September 1846.

“I regret to have to inform you that in the districts of Newport, Achill and Ballycroy, the very greatest want of food prevails, and to so alarming an extent that I really know no how for the present I can provide the food for the use of my own family.

I write therefore to request that the Government may without delay send provisions into Newport, Achill and Ballycroy, and I shall provide in each locality a store free of expense, or if the Government will sell a cargo of meal to me at the present price of Indian meal, I have no objection to purchase it for the use of the people. Having thus far done my duty to alleviate as far as in my power the distress of those, many of whom possess the means to purchase food if it is to be had. I leave the facts with you, and I am confident if prompt measure are not immediately taken to meet our necessities that the very worst consequences will be the result as the meal is not in the country and almost all the mills of the country are idle for want of water.”

**No. 14** Letter from James Conry and John Bole, Secretaries of the Castlebar Relief Committee, 5 Feb 1847.

“...they are very much in want of boilers for making soup...in consequence of which they have been reluctantly compelled to give other relief to man of the suffering poor. Their present soup kitchen accommodation enables them to supply daily about 1,200 with soup, while the number of person on their relief lists amount to 5,000 and upwards....”

Note: Although these letters attempt to show the suffering in county Mayo in the late 1840's it is known that the famine effects were not in decline until the early 1850's. Poverty and adverse living situations continued into the 1860's.

**An excellent Radio Broadcast series on the Irish famine has recently been released co-produced by Ireland and New York. This would tie in directly to your families' experiences and emigration. See <http://www.rte.ie/radio1/blightednation/>**