

A BRIEF NOTE ON CLONAKILTY'S LINEN HALL

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Fig. 1: Sheehy's bakery and the old Linen Hall, Clonakilty, 1930s. Photo courtesy of the late Justin Houlihan, given to me by his brother Patrick Houlihan.

This photograph (Fig. 1 and front cover), taken in the mid-1930s, is of Morgan Sheehy's new bakery and confectionery at the corner of Connolly Street and Casement Street, Clonakilty. It shows a bread van surrounded by a group of people (the man in the foreground is Michael John Crowley), while in the background the buildings reveal some interesting architectural features.

To the far left can be seen the remainder of the two-storey façade of the old Linen Hall, with its incised upper panels and corniced capping (Fig. 1). The original façade extended to the corner of Casement Street (then Oliver's Lane) and contained three incised panels; in the 1930s, Morgan Sheehy altered this by building a single-storey bakery and confectionery with a plastered shopfront and canted corner (Fig. 1).¹ These alterations were recalled in February 2013 by Cornelius (Nealie) O'Neill (b. 1923) who was a resident of Casement Street until 1981. He also remembered that Morgan Sheehy had a coal and scrap-metal business at the other end of the premises, next to Shanley's public house on Connolly Street. In between was a yard, accessed through a large timber gate and used as a Friday market which contained stalls where people traded all sorts of goods, including fowl.

In 1944, Thomas Houlihan purchased the entire premises from Morgan Sheehy and developed it into a large bakery and confectionery. He later added a second storey to Morgan Sheehy's 1930s' single-storey canted corner (Fig. 2). This newer portion of the premises is often mistakenly taken as the Linen Hall and it disguises the extent of the Linen Hall building which once occupied the entire site (Fig. 3).

The Linen Hall was built in 1817 to cater for Clonakilty's extensive linen trade and to accommodate the dealers who attended the weekly market, which was then the largest in Munster.² In the 1820s nearly a thousand looms existed in Clonakilty.³ In a report on the building in 2011, by architectural historian Jane O'Halloran, it was noted that Barrack Hill, Bog Road, Clogheen, Lamb Street and Long Quay were occupied 'by busy weavers, the products of whose looms were profitably disposed of in the Linen Hall'. The decline of the linen industry in Clonakilty is suggested in *Slater's Directory* of 1846.⁴ By 1859 Clonakilty's Linen Hall is recorded in the records of the Valuation Office as a 'Butter Market and yard' and in 1874 it is recorded as Walsh & Co. 'Offices Mineral Water manufactory & Yard'.⁵ Part of the property is also listed as a 'Weigh House', probably in existence since the time of the linen market



Fig. 2: Tourists at Wheel of Fortune, Clonakilty, 1950s. In background note new two-storey corner extension on Houlihan's bakery.

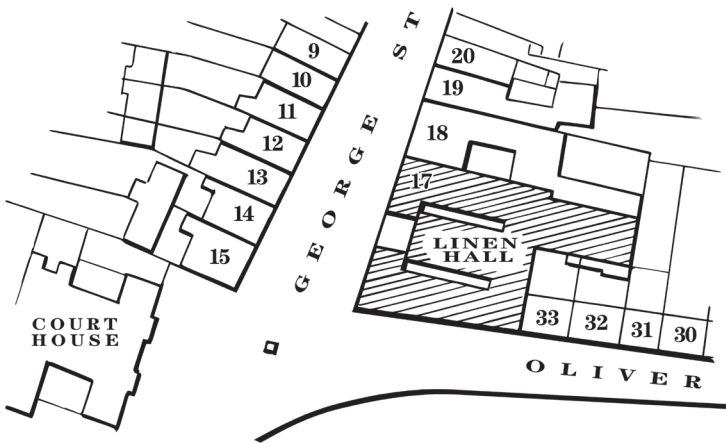


Fig. 3: Map showing extent of the Linen Hall premises prior to 1930s' alterations (Map: author, after Ordnance Survey 1st ed. map, 1841).

and butter market. By 1896 the property was in three parts: offices, house and store, and is described as ‘dilapidated’.⁶ In 1912, designs were submitted to Clonakilty Urban District Council by Timoleague-born architect Joseph A. McCarthy for the erection of a new town hall on the ‘Butter Market or disused Bridewell sites’;⁷ however, an article in the *Southern Star* in 1915 confirms that the dilapidated Linen Hall was then still standing.⁸

This writer would be grateful for further information on the unidentified people in the photographs or images of the Linen Hall before the physical integrity and memory of the building partially melted away in the period after 1915 and before the alterations of the 1930s; these could even include family photographs where the building features in the background. It is anticipated that a more detailed account of the Linen Hall and the linen industry in Clonakilty will feature in a future issue of this journal.

(Endnotes)

1 ‘Cant’ in architecture refers to an angled line or surface which removes a right-angled corner. The result is a straight front and angled sides.

2 Besnard, P. 1817. *Minutes of the Trustees of the Linen and Hemp Manufacturers of Ireland Containing the Report of a Tour of Inspection through the Provinces of Leinster, Munster & Connaught*. Dublin, p. 34.

3 Interview with Dr Elmore. 1827. ‘Population of Great Britain and Ireland: third report of the emigration committee’. *The Monthly Magazine: New Series* 4, no. 24, p. 566; see also O’Leary, this volume.

4 *Slater’s National Commercial Directory of Ireland*, 1846, p. 174, <http://www.failteromhat.com/slater/0043.pdf> [accessed 28/11/15]; see also Anon., ‘Population of Great Britain and Ireland’, p. 566.

Slater’s National Commercial Directory of Ireland, 1846, p. 174, <http://www.failteromhat.com/slater/0043.pdf> [accessed 28/11/15].

5 *Cancelled Land Books*, Valuation Office, Dublin.

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7 *Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720–1940*, <http://www.dia.ie/works/view/10467/building/CO.+CORK%2C+CLONAKILTY%2C+TOWN+HALL+%28PROPOSED%29> [accessed 28/11/15]. The bridewell was located behind the present courthouse on Gaol Street.

8 *Southern Star*, 11 Sept. 1915.