

Cappamore Cooperative Creamery

Conservation Based Research & Analysis Report



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Murroe
Co. Limerick

Table of Contents

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 1.0 | CONSULTANT BRIEF | 4 |
| 2.0 | METHODOLOGY | 4 |
| 3.0 | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 4 |
| 4.0 | INTRODUCTION TO CAPPAMORE CREAMERY | 5 |
| 5.0 | ANCIENT LINEAGE | 7 |
| 6.0 | BUTTER | 8 |
| 7.0 | MINUTE BOOKS | 10 |
| 7.1 | <i>Minute Book 1917 – 1923</i> | 10 |
| 7.2 | <i>Minute Book 1943 – 1949</i> | 13 |
| 7.3 | <i>Minute Book 1949–1958</i> | 14 |
| 7.4 | <i>Minute Book 1958 – 1966</i> | 15 |
| 7.5 | <i>Minute Book 1966–1972</i> | 17 |
| 7.6 | <i>Minute Book 1973–1974</i> | 19 |
| 8.0 | EXTRACT FROM WORKS BY THE CAPPAMORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY | 19 |
| 8.1 | <i>Cappamore: A Parish History</i> | 19 |
| 8.2 | <i>Cappamore Creamery 1958–70</i> | 20 |
| 9.0 | INTERVIEWS | 23 |
| 9.1 | <i>Tom McCarthy (Cappamore Creamery Manager 1951 – 1988)</i> | 23 |
| 9.2 | <i>Una McNamara - Employee</i> | 25 |
| 9.3 | <i>Willie Birrane - Employee</i> | 25 |
| 9.5 | <i>Herbert Gow – Former Supplier to Cappamore and Abington</i> | 26 |
| 9.6 | <i>Notes written down by John Crowe (Secretary, Cappamore Creamery)</i> | 26 |
| 9.7 | <i>Notes of Meeting with Ms Mary Riordan</i> | 27 |
| 10.0 | APPENDICES | 28 |
| 10.1 | <i>Information provided by Mr Tom Cassidy</i> | 28 |
| 10.2 | <i>Extract from The Rise and Fall of the Local Creameries, by Eugene O'Riordan</i> | 29 |
| 10.3 | <i>The Coming Of The Creameries</i> | 30 |
| 10.4 | <i>Dromcollogher</i> | 30 |
| 10.5 | <i>Irish Agricultural Co-Operatives: An Overview</i> | 31 |
| 10.7 | <i>Rural Ireland, The Agricultural Scene - Murroe/Boher for 200 years</i> | 37 |
| 10.8 | <i>Record Place Map – 1924</i> | 39 |
| 10.9 | <i>Rural Place Map – 1983</i> | 40 |
| 10.10 | <i>Digital Photographs – Schedule and Index</i> | 41 |
| 10.11 | <i>Survey Drawings (1 – 19)</i> | 42 |

TABLE OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1 - Photograph circa 1960..... | 5 |
| Figure 2 - Ordnance Survey 1840..... | 5 |
| Figure 3 -Photograph Circa 1950's | 6 |
| Figure 4 - Copy of Bill Head dated March 1920 | 7 |
| Figure 5 - Butter Wrapper..... | 9 |
| Figure 6 - Willie Birrane and Ted McNamara on site..... | 26 |
| Figure 7 - Ted McNamara and Herbert Gow March 2004..... | 27 |

1.0 Consultant Brief

Cappamore Development Association commissioned this report to record the creamery building prior to demolition and redevelopment of the site. The brief included: -

- Preparation of full site plan/set of survey drawing at 1:100 scale, showing the use of the buildings, stages of construction, materials used etc.
- A record of the structure as it is at February/March 2004, including archive quality photographs
- Copies of available old photographs and other historical documentation
- Brief report on - social context and history and development of the creamery/coop including interviews of any past workers.

2.0 Methodology

The work involved the following:-

1. Site survey and detailed inspection
2. Archival and library search
3. Detailed analysis of Minute Books
4. Interview with former employees and Manager
5. Site visit with former employee to establish the functional layout

3.0 Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge the help and assistance of the following people and organisations who helped in numerous ways in the preparation of this report:-

Mr Oliver Dillon, Mr Pat Fogarty and Mr Noel Gleeson - Cappamore Development Association.

Mr William Birrane, Mrs Una McNamara – former employees of Cooperative

Mr Thomas McCarthy – former Manager of Cooperative

Mr Herbert Gow – former supplier to Cooperative

Mr Tom Cassidy – Conservation Officer, Limerick County Council

Ms Mary Riordan – Limerick Civic Trust

Mrs Agnes Coleman - Cappamore Historical Society

Mr Eamonn A Looney - Secretary Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd

Mr John Hayes and Mrs Anna Hayes, Bridge Street Cappamore

Mr David Humphrey's, Main Street, Cappamore

4.0 Introduction to Cappamore Creamery

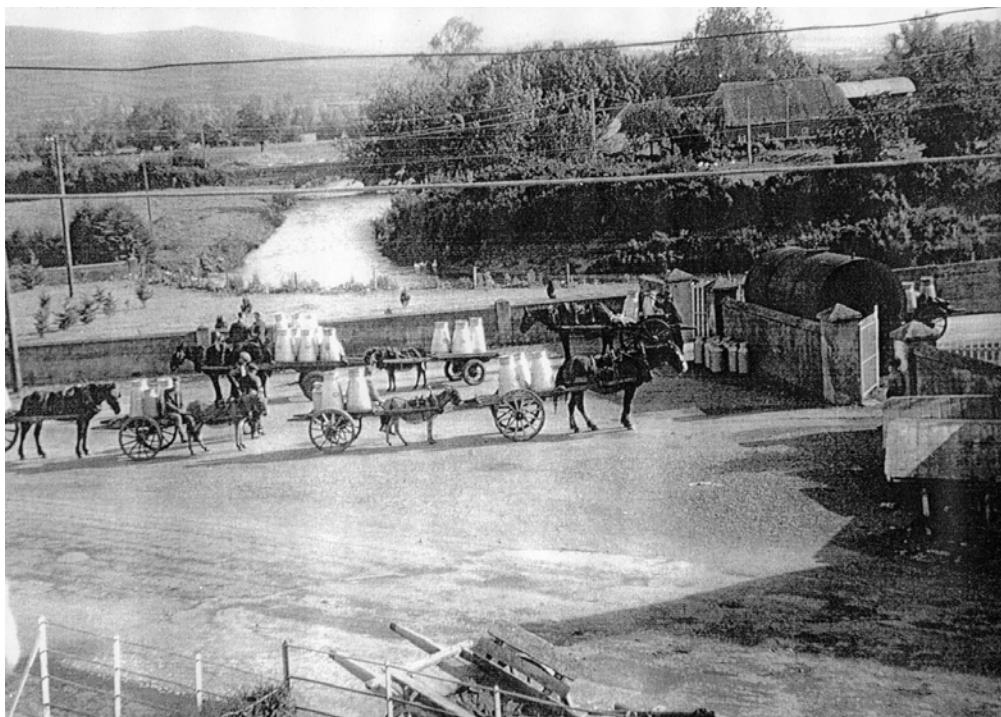


Figure 1 - Photograph circa 1960¹

Cappamore is situated in county Limerick about 13 miles south east of Limerick City. The village is situated near the banks of the river Mulcairn (An Mhaoilchearn), generally referred to as the Mulkear river. Cappamore is recorded in the ordnance survey of 1840 which was carried out under the guidance of Captain Stotherd and Lieutenant Durnford and was engraved in 1844 under direction of Captain Larcom. The survey records a field (about half of which the creamery was eventually built upon) with a pathway passing through it and ending near a small building near the river about three hundred metres from where the entrance to the creamery stood.



Figure 2 - Ordnance Survey 1840 (OSI Lic No. AR 0064604 – © OSI Gov. Ireland)

¹ Courtesy of John & Anna Hayes, Bridge Street Cappamore

The revised Ordnance Survey of 1924 (Appendices) records the then creamery buildings which were almost entirely what became the central block (as later additional buildings were added on the east, south, and western sides) with a yard space for circulation around the dairy and small mill. Refer to copy of correspondence on headed paper, dated 23rd March 1920 (Figure 4) which shows the original creamery and the original name was Cappamore Co-operative Agricultural & Dairy Society Ltd.

Cappamore creamery was founded in 1902 and amalgamated with Ballyclough in 1974. Ballyclough Co-operative Creamery Ltd., and Dairygold Co-operative Society Ltd (Dairygold) amalgamated in 1990. Dairygold was the successor to Mitchelstown Co-operative. Mitchelstown was a multipurpose co-operative society involved in a wide range of manufacturing and trading activities including milk processing, grain trading, sale of farm inputs and requisites, and retail trading.

Writing in *Cappamore: Yearbook 2002* Bernard Kennedy² who worked at Cappamore creamery wrote, "*The creamery went into decline and a huge slice of the social life of the village went out of existence to become a folk memory.*" Care has to be taken with the words folk memory for there is a view that folk history is not real history in the same manner which views traditional, folk or jazz music as a lower category of endeavour than western classical music. True folk memory is closely aligned with an accurate feeling of events that occurred in the past, whereas what is termed factual history rarely records the equally fundamental dimension of emotion and feeling and the part they play in shaping of events. A balanced history offers as wide a perspective as is possible none the less in the realization that it is still only a sculpture of views based on the anatomy of dates, individuals, events, geography and climate.

The buildings of Cappamore creamery now stand derelict, some have become structurally dangerous, and the overall site is one of dereliction. However, a thorough examination of the buildings, interviews with some of those who worked at the creamery, in conjunction with a reading of the Co-operative's minutes enables one to offer an illustration of some of its history. A history that was shared by many other towns and villages in the country.



Figure 3 -Photograph Circa 1950's³

Cappamore creamery echoes a great deal of the shape and sound of the politics, economics and social milieu of late 19th century and twentieth century Ireland. It was built before the advent of anti-biotics

² Bernard Kennedy:- Cappamore Historic Society Yearbook 2002

³ Courtesy of John & Anna Hayes, Bridge Street Cappamore

and came to a close as an independent entity prior to genetic engineering. Subjects covered in the minutes range through warble fly, inorganic fertilisers, machinery, mastitis control, bovine TB, audits, amalgamations, share allocations, personnel dismissals, financial compensations, worker conditions, quality of milk, health, marriages, deaths, war – both civil and international, transport, theft, strikes, management, a weave of relations and relationships that spun from Cork to Belfast and further afield to Scotland, Denmark, France, Denmark, USA, Australia and New Zealand.

Many of those who experienced directly the conditions of the small farmers of rural Ireland in the first half of the 20th century will recall the poverty and the difficulties of trying to make ends meet. There is a tendency in some quarters to romanticise Ireland's rural past, but for substantial numbers of people the conditions were often very difficult with emigration the only option for many. Hard winters could be devastating for poor farmers as there was often not enough food to feed the animals, starvation and death frequently followed. The grind of poverty played havoc on many small holdings. However bad the conditions were at times, without the advent of the co-operative movement, it is probably so, that events for many farming families would have been a great deal worse. The founding brethren of the co-operative movement in Ireland realised that without a cooperative concentrated effort the small and even middle sized farmer would rapidly cease to exist.

The Co-operative movement was an extraordinary effort of endeavour. Its initial impulse was borne out of necessity even in some cases desperation. Faced with the need for survival and the hope for a better standard of life, farmers had to come together and co-operate. This was not always easy and the history of the Cappamore Creamery was not without its periods of difficulty. The fact that the business survived for nearly a hundred years is a tribute to its founders, subsequent management committee's, employees, and to its last manager Mr Tom McCarthy who made strenuous efforts to forge new relationships and business deals with dairy interests in Dublin.



Figure 4 - Copy of Bill Head dated March 1920

5.0 Ancient Lineage

Viewing contemporary Ireland it is understandable that a majority of the younger population have no memory and a restricted historical view of the vital importance of agriculture both upon the Irish landscape and the psyche of the nation. The study of Cappamore creamery offers not just a hint of a life style and methods of working now ceased. Its inception and function has its roots far back in ancient Ireland, within a heritage although uniquely Irish, is also universal, for the story of the cow and

one of her chief products milk has renonance in many countries throughout the world. Bernard Kennedy touches on an aspect of this lineage when he wrote, "... *the cream was transferred via chutes from vats where the gentle action caused the cream to break and butter grains to form. This was fasinating to me and I can well understand the mystery that has surrounded the process of butter making from ancient times...*"⁴

Fergus Kelly wrote, "*There is undoubtedly something miraculous about the sudden solidification of butter churning, and it is not surprising that many rituals and beliefs have become associated with butter-making.*"⁵ Cappamore creamery was initially and fundamentally concerned with milk and milk-products, ie cream, butter, buttermilk, cheese, and for a limited period ice-cream⁶. Although milk remained the core of its business, as time went by operations were expanded to include a grain mill, machine hire, and hardware. It is to be noted that for a major period of the creamery's operating life the butter maker's postion was deemed to be of central importance, second only to that of the manager.

There are few countries in the world were the cow and her products was held in such high esteem as in Ireland. The animal attained a cult status in Celtic mythology.

A. T. Lucas in his classic textbook *Cattle in Ancient Ireland* wrote: -

*“.. that in ancient Irish society cows were not merely one kind of domestic animal but were of such overweening importance that they almost had a status as members of society. Virtually everyone in that society was preoccupied with cows. They were in the mental foreground of king and peasant, cleric and layman, warrior and poet, young and old, men and women, and they touched the lives of everyone from sunrise to sunset and from birth to death. This is evident in the works of Irish chroniclers, hagiographers, historians, poets and of everyone who put quill to paper in the country over the thousand years from the seventh to the seventeenth century. Everything these people, in their several capacities in their different times, have written in annals, law texts, lives of saints, historical narratives, eulogistic poems and in tales and anecdotes in prose and verse teems with allusions to cows. And it must be emphasised that these thousands of allusions are not to cattle in general but specifically to cows as yielders of milk.”*⁷

Fergus Kelly noted that it is clear from sources available to contemporary scholarship that "*the relationship between cattle and people was viewed as having significance beyond the purely economic one.*" He relates how cattle are prominent in Irish mythology, were associated with both the supernatural and spiritual realms, their well-being was fundamental to economic, political and social stability.

*“An intimate relationship with cattle is also reflected in various expressions and appellations. The use of the word *lóeg* ‘calf’ as a term of endearment among humans is well attested, and there is even mention of a bell named *Bóbán Coímegein* ‘Kevin’s Calf’. In a phrase very much out of tune with twentieth-century piety, the Blessed Virgin Mary is addressed as *Bó Bhithbliocht* ‘Ever-milking Cow’.*⁸

6.0 Butter

The origins of the making of butter are not known. There exists an improbable folk tale that central Asian nomads accidentally churned milk. The Vikings the Celts, and the Normans are credited with popularising the use of butter in Northern Europe, where it became a fundamental part of diet. However getting properly preserved butter of good quality and consistent standard remained a problem until the 20th century.

⁴ Bernard Kennedy *Cappamore History Society Yearbook 2003*

⁵ Fergus Kelly *Early Irish farming School Of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute For Advanced Studies 2000* pps 325–326

⁶ Cappamore Cream Ore – mid 1940's. Source Mr David Humphrey's, Main Street Cappamore

⁷ A. T. Lucas *Cattle in Ancient Ireland* Boethius Press, Kilkenny, Ireland, p. 1–2.

⁸ Fergus Kelly *Early Irish farming School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute For Advanced Studies 2000*, pps 28–29.

“The first stage in the production of butter (imp) is to keep a quantity of cream for a week or so in a cool place. The cream must then be churned until it separates into butter and butter milk (Bláthach). The lumps of butter are strained off, washed, and pressed into butter-pats, for which the old Irish term is mescán. Our sources indicate that the regular method of churning (maistred) involved the use of churn-dash (loinid) and a wooden churn (cuinneóc)”.⁹

The story of butter is closely linked with the use of salt. Before the advent of refrigeration, unsalted butter quickly became rancid. Even butter sold as “sweet” was slightly salted. The salt was used to preserve the butter rather than for taste, and many medieval writers offer recipes for desalting butter before use.

“In the Middle Ages, yellow flowers of various species were salted and kept in earthen pots and beaten to extract a juice to colour butter that had lost its carotene. Later after Columbus’s voyages, annatto seeds were used. These seeds are still used by large American dairies, not to conceal rancid butter but because they believe the consumer wants a consistent dark yellow colour.”¹⁰

Through the centuries the English passed laws against selling rancid butter and in 1662 a law was passed by the English parliament endeavouring to establish standards.



Figure 5 - Butter Wrapper¹¹

The struggle to produce consistent quality butter is a striking feature of the early decades of Cappamore creamery in this it was reflecting the Irish Dairy Industry as a whole. The Limerick Leader recounts many instances of meetings, discussions, and parliamentary correspondence on the subject of producing standard quality butter. At a meeting of the Limerick Branch of the Irish Dairy Association held at the Markets Office the following exchange took place: -

“The Chairman alluded to the recommendation of fixing the standard of Irish pickle butter at 16% water. The pickle put into Irish butter was one of its peculiarities. The salt put into the

⁹ Ibid p. 325

¹⁰ Mark Kurlansky *Salt A World History* Vintage 2003. p.187

¹¹ Courtesy of John & Anna Hayes, Bridge Street Cappamore

article was palatable and good, and was preferred by the workman, who was obliged to labour in close atmospheres such as mills and factories, to an article which had no pickle and was accordingly tasteless. Irish salt butter sold in preferences to the other kind in several districts of the North of England, and one of the reasons of this was because the pickle gave to the article a pungent flavour that suited the stomachs of the people who were obliged to work in close fetid atmosphere... The Danish butter, which excludes pickle, may all be very well for people in fresh air and could drive around in their carriages. He held that this lowering of the percentage was favouring one class against the other.

Mr Gibson said this fixing of a standard was for the purpose of crushing out home manufacture in Ireland. It was altogether fixed in order to force the farmer to sell his milk to the creameries, and it was well known that no farmer, at certain times of the year, could get his butter down to 16%.

Mr. Loffmark did not agree with Mr. Gibson on this point... ¹²

7.0 Minute Books

It was considered vital to get access to the original minute books of the cooperative to fill in much of the history and development of the cooperative and the buildings. Mr Eamonn A Looney - Secretary Dairygold Cooperative Society Ltd, kindly arranged to make the books available at this offices in Mallow. Mr Ted McNamara, research consultant spent two days going through the minute books, focusing on the details relating to the buildings¹³ and noted that they deserve a detailed study as much more than the running of the cooperative is recorded – the whole social, economic, and cultural history of Cappamore can be extracted from the minutes.

Set out below are extracts from the minute books (Minute Book of Cappamore Co-Operative Agricultural and Dairy Society Ltd.) covering the period's:-

- 1917 – 23
- 1943 – 49
- 1949 – 58
- 1958 – 66
- 1966 – 72
- 1973 – 74

The minute books for the period prior to 1917 and for 1924 to 1942 were not available for viewing.¹⁴

7.1 Minute Book 1917 – 1923

October 1917

Committee members were: President-M. O'Connell, and included J. Blackwell, C.O'Brien, W.O'Brien, W. Crowe and W. Crowe, G.Godfrey, T.Gleeson, M. Keating, W. Kennedy, T.E. Llyod, W. Maher, D. O'Malley, R. Ryan,

March 1918

Puzzle – Companies work for profit: where does the profit go?

March 19th 1918

Amalgamation with Glosa Creamery agreed at a Special General Meeting.

May 1919

¹² Limerick Leader, Wednesday February 26, 1902.

¹³ This was due to the fact that our focus was on the buildings as it is the actual structures that are going to be demolished and as full an understanding of them as possible needs to be achieved before they are demolished.

¹⁴ Refer to Letter from Eamonn A Looney in Appendices

Mr Dee took up duties as creamery manager

May 15th 1919

Mr O'Connell explained to the staff that Mr Dee was their new master and they had now to take orders from him. Also that they were not to be paid for box making any more as they were in future to be paid a weekly wage which was to cover all work.

May 22nd 1919

Mr David Fitz Gibbon was appointed assistant manager and general worker on condition that he gives satisfaction to the manager. His weekly wage to be 30 shillings

June 19th 1919

Mr Dee criticised the condition of the milk coming to dairy especially from the committee who should be the first to bring clean sweet milk.

August 1919

Mr Dee complained that some of the milk received at the dairy was in a shocking state and that the cheese especially was bound to suffer. He suggested that some Committee members attend reception in the morning to see the state of the milk for themselves,

December 12th 1919

It was noted that it was important to have a rack for test bottles in the cheese house. Mr Dee stated one had been installed.

August 18th 1919

Mr Scott the Departments Inspector informed committee that the quality of some of the cheese manufactured at Cappamore was inferior. He indicated that this was caused either by tainted milk, carelessness of the cheese maker, or a combination of both.

November 23rd 1919

The Committee decided that milk should be refused from families that have disease until milk analysed or a certificate of immunity from disease begot from doctor.

Doctor advised that milk should be pasteurised to 190 degrees. Members questioned if milk pasteurised would be separable.

Stale milk or milk from tainted sources would not in future be accepted

February 25th 1920

A telegram was read from Mr Scott (who was to attend the meeting to advise about alterations in the cheese house and Dairy) stating that he was not able to attend the meeting.

Mr Lloyd said he had met with Mr Scott who outlined the alterations for the Cheese house. The Committee approved of having the construction work undertaken at once and suggested names of tradesmen whom they considered qualified to undertake the work.

Mr Dee showed Committee some drawings of Gas Producer Engines one of which he hoped to erect in the dairy in the near future, the cost of which £900 appeared large but would recoup its cost in a few years

June 11th 1920

Mr Dee the creamery manager's salary increased to £320 per annum. Cheese maker's salary 48 shillings weekly. It was noted that the water supply from well insufficient for needs of creamery.

The Committee had under consideration the purchase of a new suction gas engine. The manager pointed out that the present boiler was not able to produce enough steam for cheese house and dairy at

the same time, and stated that there was a big loss through the separators not being able to skim properly for want of speed from engine.

Manager indicated that there would be a substantial saving of coal by installing one of the gas suction engines which had already been installed in many of the neighbouring creameries.

July 1st 1920

Decided unanimously to order a Gas Producer Engine of 44-horse power at a cost of £1,013 as per specification.

July 13th 1920

The cheese maker Miss Mooney offered a present of £2 by the Committee as a result of the Society's winning first prize for cheese at Belfast show.

October 13th 1920

A letter was read from the National Gas Engine Co., stating that the engine for the Society was ready for dispatch and enclosing bill for £1025 of which £700 should be sent in part payment before the engine could be dispatched. It was decided, because of the dangerous times, it would be best to take advice from the I.A.O.S whether or not to pay such a large sum of money as the engine could be wrecked.

October 23rd 1920

Committee decided to proceed with the ordering of the engine

December 1920

Committee overruled manager and instructed him to proceed at once with purchase of engine.

Manager informed Committee that he had not proceeded with purchase as he has received advice from a dairy official that because of uncertain and dangerous times to delay purchase

August 1921

The manager stated that old milk heater had broken down and a new one should be bought the cost of which would be between £170 and £200. He also mentioned that it was a pity the way power was going to waste when it could be utilised in such a useful way as working a grinding mill or the electric lighting of the town. A lengthy discussion followed as to the difficulties involved in building. Finally the manager was directed to proceed with the work of building the concrete walls for mill house and to make enquiries and to make enquiries as to the most suitable type of milling machine and its cost.

September 1921

Erection of new mill house and installation of mill discussed. The creamery manager stated that the mill would be suitable for grinding Indian corn, which he considered, would be of great benefit to the local community.

December 13, 1921

Delay in finishing mill house. Manager sought instruction as to what type of mill should be purchased. After consideration he was instructed to procure mill, which would grind and sift three (3) qualities of Indian meal –coarse, middle cut and fine.

October 17th 1922

The manager stated that the churn was worn out and that there was a loss owing to the leakage of cream. A new churn of larger size was needed as soon as possible. However purchase and placement of churn would take some time owing to delays with railways and structural alterations that would need to take place before the churn could be put in position, the cost of a new churn would be in the vicinity of £200. The Committee gave consent to proceed with purchase.

December 1922

Contract for new churn awarded at cost of £200.00

March 19th 1923

Cheque for £38-19-5 forwarded to Mr Richard Bourke in final settlement of his account as per audit of accounts of May 31 1919. (Mr Bourke manager of the creamery had been dismissed for incompetence by a majority of shareholders at a special shareholders meeting in June 1918.)

June 12th 1923 manager complained over shortage of spring water in wells. Stated that boring was the only remedy. He would send samples from each well to professor Heuston for analysis.

June 27th 1923

A great shortage of spring water experienced. The cost of boring estimated between £1000-£1,500 deemed prohibitive especially as it would not bring about substantive relief.

7.2 Minute Book 1943 – 1949

July 1943

The minute book records that Thomas E. Lloyd was the Chairman of the Societies committee and that Michael O' Connell was Vice-Chairman and that the following were members; C. Ryan, J. Ryan, J. O' Malley, M. Berkery, W. O'Brien, P. Campbell, J.A. Maher. Glosha representatives were P. Glesson and J. Duggan. Manager W. J. Dee, secretary J. Crowe.

May 1st 1947

The Committee unanimously decided to discontinue with new store extension and also to dispense with services of store manager and accountant Mr A. Cunningham.

May 14th 1947

Mr Maher inquired about heap of turf in the creamery yard, saying it appeared to be of the worst type, Mr Dee said that this turf was better than good turf for raising steam.

May 30th 1943 Special Shareholders General meeting held in Thomond Hall Cappamore.

The following members were listed as attending.

T. McNamara, M. O'Connell, T. E. Llyod, J. Ryan, J. O' Malley, J. Campbell, M. Buckley, P. Campbell, J. A. Maher, D. Hayes, D. O' Malley, J. Duggan, P. Glesson, M. Berkery, W. O' Brien, J. J. Mc Carthy, M. Glesson, J. J. O'Malley (Dromalty), P. O'Brien (T), W. Ryan (K), R. Keogh, J. McNmara, D. Ryan, J. Ryan (M), J. Lonergan, P. McNmara, R. J. Devane, W. Creamer, W. Franklin, P. Blackwell, M. Ryan, J. Finucane, P. Hickey, J. Ryan, J. Holmes, W. Glesson, P. Glesson, J. Doyle, W. Fitzgibbon, T. O'Briem, M. Fogarty, P. Bray, J. Doyle, M? O' Callaghan, Mr Dee (Manager), Mr Franklin (Accountant)

September 1943

Committee felt that the whole business of the creamery needed to be drastically overhauled and the competence of the manager was discussed.

December 28th 1945

Following a close vote it was decided to continue and expand the Societies store business dealing in goods such ad hardware, seeds, manures, etc. it was decided to add extra buildings.

March 3rd 1946

It was decided to appoint a store manager a Mr A. Cunningham.

May 29th 1948

Mr O' Driscoll appointed manager of the creamery on a salary of £400.00 per annum.

June 11th 1948

Mr Campbell suggested moving the office to the front of creamery and the manager agreed to make inquiries from local contractors re-cost etc.

July 12th 1948

With regard to the building of a new office Mr O'Driscoll showed two tenders received.

(1) Mr M. Madden, Doon Road, for £581-14-7

(2) Mr E. Ryan, Clonteen, £400.00

The Committee agreed that Manager interview Mr Ryan to receive more definite specifications and seek reductions in cost.

October 13th 1948

The building of a new office was postponed in favour of the erection of a storehouse, which the manager stated was more necessary.

December 12th 1948

Because of a lack of storage it was agreed to build a store by the boundary wall where young trees are planted. The manager stated that there would be room for a building 40Ft by 20Ft.

April 14th 1949

Manager's salary increased to £600.00 per annum.

7.3 Minute Book 1949-1958

February 9th 1951

New double pan weighing scales installed on the milk platform at cost of £240.00. The old scales were installed at Gloscha.

April 1951

New creamery manager Mr Tom McCarthy from Kanturk selected on ballot by Committee. There were 42 applications for the position. Salary £500 per annum.

July 16 1952

Manager informed Committee that he had taken preliminary steps with the County council to acquire waste strip of land situated between the sewage pumping plant and Crowe's field and had offered £20 for same. Committee informed manager to do what he considered best on this matter of land procurement.

December 11th 1952

Manager was directed to take steps to purchase a suitable mill machine and to carry out necessary improvements to the mill-house.

October 1952

Manager considering of adding small extension to the office.

December 19th 1952

Manager's salary increased to £800 per annum.

January 1953

Manager stated that a good new mill including motor suitable for Cappamore would cost in the vicinity of £700.

August 10th 1953

New mill had arrived and would be installed in the course of a week.

Manager outlined how he had got into and consolidated his position in the Dublin milk trade. He explained that he was paying a commission of one penny per gallon to the agent responsible for his entry into this valuable market.

January 14, 1954

Communication from Department of agriculture following an inspection of the creamery recommended that apart from the usual lime washing, painting, cleaning, that the floor of the separating department be re-laid, and that the dividing wall between the dairy and the separating department be removed.

April 11th, 1955

Manager advised that the creamery be connected to the town water supply. The rate of charge being a yearly rent of £2.00 and 1/9 per 1,000 gallons.

September 1955

Purchase of Sterne Freezing machine, which was considered essential for operations. The cost being £2,975.

November 11th 1955

Manager stated that he was taking steps to procure a permanent pasteuriser's licence for the creamery from the Department of Agriculture to counteract influence exerted on Department by certain creameries possessing permanent licences who wanted to monopolise milk trade with Dublin.

June 12th 1956

Decision made to install an oil fuel boiler.

January 12th 1956

Decision made to buy new pasteuriser

July 10th 1957

In connection with the increased profit which the manager attributed to the market that he had secured in Dublin for cream. He related his efforts to get into the market and how he succeeded getting a Mr Lennox who is handling the major part of the Dublin cream business to take an appreciable amount of cream from Cappamore each week, over £4000 worth was sold in June at a profit of 2/3 per gallon.

April 11th 1958

Committee agreed with manager that a butter cold store was essential and it was ordered to be built. Estimated cost £1,100.

June 10th 1958

Manager gave a report on fitting out of new office for the newly appointed typist. This development entailed putting a sewage pipe through the Secretary's land. The secretary of the society accepted £20 as compensation. The manager also referred to a septic tank, which may have to be built. The Secretary was not amenable to having the tank sited on his land,

7.4 Minute Book 1958 – 1966

March 4th, 1959

**Activities of Society for past twelve months
Balance Sheet and statement of accounts 1958
Submitted at the monthly committee meeting March 4, 1959**

We received a total of 1,256, 577 gallons of milk during the year as against 1,201,827 gallons for the previous year. This consisted of 1,083,179 gallons from suppliers as against 1,118,392 for the previous year. From Dublin 119,191 as against 83,435 and 54,207 from creameries.

The milk was utilised as follows:-

| | |
|---|---------|
| Butter making | 655,372 |
| Cream production sold to Dublin and England | 334,766 |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Liquid milk to Dublin | 195,008 |
| Miloko | 6,000 |
| Lansdowne | 59,546 |

A considerable quantity of skim milk was also sold to Lansdowne, Dromkeen and Cement Ltd. You will note from the above figures that 119,191 gallons from Dublin were purchased during the year and the price of this milk was at the rate of 1/7 per gallon, delivered.

During the year we also supplied 195,008 gallons to Dublin, most of which was at the rate of 2/8 per gallon, delivered. Of this quantity 54,207 gallons had to be purchased from other creameries.

November 10th, 1958

The repair of the dairy roof was discussed, estimated cost £2,227.

At the monthly Committee of March 4th 1959 the balance sheet and statement for 1958 was presented it listed the following works,

1. The Chimney which was considered in a dangerous condition due to the fact that the concrete cap was cracked had to be re-capped with brick. It was re-fitted with new iron supports and a new lightening conductor. The chimney was also pointed and painted.
2. A new 2,200 G.P.H. Pasteuriser was fitted together with a stainless steel receiving tank and all new S.S. piping from the receiving tank to the skim outlet.
3. A one (1) ton mixer was erected together with a new elevator and the old mill was changed so as to allow more space in the ground floor of the mill room. The mill was fitted with all new parts and a new starter. In completing this job, the old corner was removed to allow more space for lorries.
4. A new electric lift was erected for removing road tanks and all this new area together with the lower portion of the yard was concreted allowing an ideal space for the operating of road tankers.
5. A new cold store was built and fitted with a modern deep freeze unit. This enabled all butter to be cold stored.
6. A new office was erected and fitted with both toilet and all necessary equipment.
7. The office floors were tiled.
8. A new sewage line was laid in Mr Crowe's field.

April 10th, 1959

A storehouse in front of skim milk outlet to be built required to house lorries etc.

March 21st 1960

Announced at Shareholders Annual General Meeting that a new store was built and the surrounding yard enclosed. A new stainless steel 1,000 lb. Milk scales was purchased.

April 1960 (monthly meeting)

Dairy ceiling finished, wall plastered, new addition to cream platform.

January 11th 1961

Committee agreed the following repairs; Continuation of new ceiling from butter making and cream room to include new milk and separating department. Moving old churn to make room for the new churn that is on order. Building small extension in front of Creamery to contain fuse panel, electric wiring etc of the Creamery and also testing room.

March 1961 (General Shareholders Meeting)

Building of new walls surrounding the creamery. New ceiling in Dairy and ventilators installed. Addition of cream room and purchase of Vat from Mitchelson. New stainless steel cream piping.

April 10th 1961

Replacement of electrical wiring throughout Creamery going ahead.

June 9th 1961

New cold store almost completed and new churn installed.

July 11th 1961

Manager stated that he expected new cold store to be in operation before next monthly meeting that will leave the deep freeze store free to handle 2,000 boxes of butter from the beginning of 1962.

September 8th 1961

A generator purchased for £170.00 to keep the Creamery operating in case of electric breakdown or electricians strike.

September 1961

Plastering of Creamery gable and walls to be completed.

October 1961

Manager endeavouring to buy small plot of land adjacent to Creamery entrance.

7.5 Minute Book 1966-1972

July 1966

Following a discussion on the danger of an E.S.B. power failure. It was agreed to purchase a new 70 H.P. generator. The estimated cost for this was £1,400. The old generator was sold for £200.00

October 10th

The mill was almost finished and a 200 H.P. transformer was being installed on a pole by E.S.B. free of charge.

January 1967

The Committee voted to amalgamate with Birdhill Co-operative Society.

March 20th 1967

Annual General meeting.

Manager suggested that consideration be given to further expansion of the milking and compounding unit, as it was considered that existing buildings were unsuitable from the point of view of location and were also deemed to be grossly inadequate.

Two stainless steel cream vats with total capacity of 3,000 gallons purchased in replacing four (4) old vats, which had total capacity of 1,600.

10th May 1967

This vote was confirmed at special shareholders meeting.

June 26, 1967

Negotiation with Abington Creamery with regards to amalgamation. Abington requested for representatives to be placed on committee however Cappamore offered two the same as with other Branch Societies.

July 10, 1967

Abington negotiations with Abington continue. However reported to meeting that little progress was being made.

September 25 1967

Negotiations with Abington were discussed at length. As last resort it was agreed to offer three (3) representative places to Abington.

October 11th 1967

Manager proposed that a more respectable entrance be built at the creamery fronting the road. Total cost submitted by contractor was £916 inclusive of two wide gates. The gates costing £150.00

December 1967

The entrance gates were being widened and the wall would be given the necessary finish.

January 31 1968

Special shareholders meeting voted to amalgamate with Abington.

March 28 1968

Annual general meeting. Announced that the negotiations with Abington were unsuccessful. During this meeting it was announced that the quantity of cream sold 73,635 gallons in 1967 was a big drop in the volume sold (135,668 gallons) in 1966. This big drop in cream sales is due to a major change on the part of Hughes Brothers Ltd., to the use of condensed whole milk instead of cream, and condensed skim powder as ingredients for their ice-cream. This company was purchased by an American firm about two-years ago, and as a result many changes have taken place. The change from cream to condensed milk was one of those changes.

March 1968

Mr Herbert Gow milk supplier to Abington requested that his milk be taken in at Cappamore. This was approved by the Society.

November 11th 1968

After exhaustive trials manager decided to return a continuous butter maker as the trial period for testing the machine was coming to an end.

December 9th 1968

Manager reported that staff five (5) day week was to be implemented commencing 1st December 1969.

November 10th 1969

Purchase of a good Silkeborg Timber Churn from centenary Creamery at a price of £1,500. Two coolers bought for £900.00 One then sold to Borrisoleigh for £700.

October 8th 1970

Having advertised for an office girl the Manager said that Miss Una Duggan, who had applied, appeared the best for the position.

April 1972

Manager informed Shareholders Annual meeting that as a result of the bank strike he was holding half-million pounds but in spite of this situation he had not one bad debt.

April 11th 1966

The manager gave details how the societies new milling compound unit would work when in operation. It would be mostly automatic with a substantial saving in bulk buying. The project had been fortunate with a suitable site available, a promise of a substantial grant of £6,000, and a large saving on the purchase of Blanchardstown Mills machinery.

Report for year ended 31st December 1966

A total of 5,258,913 gallons of milk was received during the year as against 4,635,186 gallons in 1965.

This was made up as follows: -

Received from Bridgetown, Birdhill,

Bunratty and Abington 2,931,861 Gallons

Received from Cappamore, Glosa,

and Rearcross 1,433,223

Received from Dublin 893,829

| | |
|-------|-----------|
| Total | 5,258,913 |
|-------|-----------|

This milk was utilised as follows: -

For Butter making and cream production 3,845,157 Gallons

For Manufacturing – Lansdowne – etc. ... 1,404,793

For liquid milk Trade 8,963

The big outlets for milk were Lansdowne, Urneys, Dungarven and Hughes brothers.

October 9th 1972

Manager said societies storage space was not adequate for present needs and outlined inquiries he had made with a view to remedying the position. Tom Buckley's land beside the mill would be very suitable, but there was a difficulty about the question of title.

7.6 Minute Book 1973-1974

November 1973

Creamery office broken into and the safe forced open. Steps taken to prevent recurrence. Burglar alarm installed and a strong room built.

An agreement reached with Tom Buckley on acquiring a plot of land adjoining mill. The title to the land had not yet been fully resolved, but in the meantime an annual rent of £200 was to be paid.

July 3rd 1974

A special resolution of the society was passed unanimously "That Ballyclough Co-op Creamery Ltd., Annacotty Co-op Creamery Ltd., Cappamore Co-p Agricultural and dairy Society Ltd, and Dromkeen Co-p Agricultural and dairy Society Ltd., shall be amalgamated.

The name of the Amalgamated Society shall be Ballyclough Co-op Creamery Ltd."

July 18 1974

The present committee would cease to function upon amalgamation but two (2) members will be allowed onto the new Amalgamated Co-op as representatives of Cappamore, there would also be two from Glosa, two from Rearcross, and two from Birdhill.

8.0 Extract From Works by the Cappamore Historical Society

8.1 Cappamore: A Parish History¹⁵

The following account is an extract from the Parish History produced by the Cappamore Historical Society. We acknowledge their contribution to the report and are grateful for their assistance.

"According to Grand Jury presentations of 1896 the butter markets were held on Monday and Thursday in Cappamore. The people of cappamore have a long struggled with the land for a livelihood. This was traditionally a dairy farming area, with some farmers growing crops such as oats and barley.....

The late 1800's saw the start of developments in the farming industry with the opening of the first Creamery in Cappamore which was run by a Danish Company. It was situated in Lynch's yard, at Bridge Street and was known as Cullen's creamery. It was managed by a Mr Peterson, a native of Denmark who was married to Mary McCarthy of Bridge Street.

¹⁵ Cappamore Historical Society Publication, 1992

When it closed down the property was purchased by William Lynch, Senior, who built a residence there. It had a branch at Closha. Vester Cuarde was a creamery Manager resident in Cappamore in 1896 but we do not know where his employment was. Cappamore Agricultural and Dairy Society was formed in 1902 and the creamery was established then. Cappamore took over Glosha Creamery in 1928. The Society increased its turnover from £50,000 in 1951 to £1.5 million in 1973. Production was low in Cappamore following the war. The milk supply was also small - approximately .75 million gallons per year. Rearcross and Birdhill Creameries amalgamated with Cappamore, increasing total milk intake to approximately 2.5 million gallons.

In 1970 a considerable business was developed supplying milk and cream to Dublin for the retail trade. Previous to his milk and cream were transported to Dublin for the retail trade. Previous to this milk and cream were transported to Dublin in 20 gallon tanks by train. This was an inefficient and time-consuming business as the tanks had to be returned and individually cleaned. Cappamore Creamery introduced the first tank trucks in Limerick ensuring highest hygiene standards for the developing market. C. 1966 a new mill was built in Cappamore which was capable of producing 40 tonnes of foodstuff a day. It employed 4 – 6 people depending on how busy it was.With the developments of markets in Dublin, approximately 30 people were employed in Cappamore and its branches, including truck drivers. This in turn created a 'spin-off' industry e.g. truck servicing. The new mill supplied feedstuffs to farmers at keener prices. Creamery Managers who served in Cappamore were Mr. Bill Dee and Mr. Tom McCarthy.

Ireland's entry to the European Economic Community in 1973 led to major developments in farming. By 1974 Cappamore Creamery had new stores and offices, modern stainless equipment and a good fleet of trucks. Farmers were encouraged to improve their holdings. A farm building service was set up and credit was offered to farmers at low or no interest rates to install silos, ice bank coolers etc.

The Cappamore Co-Operative was steadily developing and after much consideration it was decided together with Dromkeen, Annacotty and Bunratty Creameries, to amalgamate with Ballyclough Co-OP. Creamery whose headquarters were at Mallow. This guaranteed the farmers of the area more security, a good milk price with an assured outlet at all times and access to the barley growing areas of Cork. Cappamore Co-operative Agricultural and Dairy Society were entitled to a representation of eight members on the committee of the amalgamated.

For a number of years after 1974 the mill was in full production. But a much larger and more modern mill was built in Mallow to cater for a wider range of products. As this was more cost-effective than the Cappamore mill it was decided to alter the mill premises to a modern Hardware and general Purpose store which opened on June 10th, 1889 dealing in all farm requirements with a view to creating a more profitable and necessary service in the East Limerick area.

From 1986 to 1988 another big change took place where milk was collected from farms in bulk refrigerated tanks. This was the end of an era for the small creamery and also the end of an important social process as the farmers no longer met each morning as they delivered their milk to the creamery Many people passed messages to family and friends at the Creamery which indeed lessened the load of the postman but we may also remember that most homes did not have a telephone service in those days."

8.2 Cappamore Creamery 1958-70¹⁶

My association with cappamore creamery started in the autumn of 1960 when I joined the workforce as an apprentice buttermaker. Registered in 1902 just ten years after the first co-operative creamery in Dromcollogher. Cappamore CA&Ds was to survive for just over seventy years as an independent entity serving the community by processing the milk

¹⁶ Article by Bernard Kennedy in the Cappamore Historical Society Yearbook 2002

produced by the farmers and milling small amounts of corn grown locally, also providing feed, fertiliser and general farm supplies.

When I finished school, I was recommended by Tom O'Donoghue, was interviewed and accepted as an apprentice. The terms were that you would work for twenty six weeks without pay, and at the end of this term you would be assessed and examined by a Department Inspector in the rudiments of the trade and if successful gain an appointment as an assistant to the head buttermaker, John Hickey. So I started out on a working career that has spanned five decades and brought me into contact with diverse characters that broadened my education in the university of life.

On my journey to work on the first day I past fourteen occupied homes from my home to the outskirts of the village today there are thirty seven on this stretch of road an indication of the changing face of the countryside. Milk was supplied from seven farms, today only one milk producer remains.....

...and if my memory serves me right, we had nine milk suppliers living in the village.

The staff on my first day included "The Boss" Tom McCarthy, Assistant Jim Galvin, in the office carmel O'Malley, Boilerman Mickey Ryan (R), Separator and platform Tom Donoghue, Stephen Ryan (AL) and Mick Joe Ryan (R), Buttermaker John Hickey, Mill & Stores Michael McCormack & John Cunningham, in charge of skim milk and lorry loading Dan O'Neill and drivers Owen Cunningham and Tom Mulcahy.

The creamery was a hive of activity from early morning. Mickey got the boiler going early and ensured there was steam up well before eight. This was produced by an oil fired boiler but we were often regaled with stories of shortages of coal and the use of turf during the war. Up to the mid fifties all the plant was driven by a steam engine that powered a drive shaft which ran the entire length of the dairy with belt drives running down to the various pieces of equipment. This shaft was still in use in the sixties then driven by an electric motor so, when production was in full swing there was a maze of belts running. All these belts were subject to loosen and loose their torque from time to time which called for fast action from the operator to apply corrective action to keep the show on the road until production was finished for the day when the belt was shortened.

John Hickey who was an excellent time-keeper and was always in early to load the churns thus providing space for the cream being produced on the day. When I started, the cream was transferred via chutes from the vats where it had been cooled, rested, and ripened overnight, to the churns where the gentle action caused the cream to break and butter grains to form. This was fascinating to me and I can well understand the mystery that has surrounded the process of butter making from ancient times and the rites, customs, and sayings which have come down to the present day e.g. Long churning makes bad butter. When the vats were emptied they were scaled and made ready and we were often put under pressure on summer mornings when Tom or Mickey would shout into the dairy that the cream was on its way. The cream was pumped to a cooler which was fed from an ice bank which had been built up over night and as the cream flowed over the surface it was cooled and thence to the vat via a chute the cooling was continued in the vat by means of an anchor coil which gently agitated the cream until the desired temperature was reached.

Up to the late fifties butter was packed in timber boxes 56lbs., these were assembled from flats and wax was applied to the finished box and they were lined with two layers of vegetable parchment. Later these were displaced by fibre board cartons which were manufactured in Limerick by The Co-op Agency Society, thus bringing to an end the colourful life of the "Butterbox" which had diverse uses in the life of the community.

Cream was brought in from Gloscha, Rearcross, Birdhill, Bridgetown, Bunratty and Newmarket on Fergus on a daily basis during the sixties and all the butter was manufactured in the central creamery, this was a fore runner of the amalgamations that were to come when all the independent creameries in the region joined to create the giant Ballyclough,

Mitchelstown and Golden Vale Societies, ironically all Cork based, so that Limerick being one of the premier milk producing areas was left without a manufacturing facility to handle the produce of its milk producers, and indeed recent times have seen Mitchelstown and Ballyclough merged to form Dairygold and Kerry Group have acquired Golden Vale.

In the sixties the national consumption of butter on the home market was almost forty thousand tons. This has diminished, with the advent of substitute spreads, to around sixteen thousand tonnes with very few butter brands surviving. Most of the butter marketed today is under the kerrygold label, a far cry from the time when all creameries sold butter under their own name and indeed Cappamore was no exception packing butter in 1lb and 2lb rolls in a very distinctive parchment wrapper which proclaimed that it was the produce of Cappamore CA&DS Reg. No. C277. This mark was also on all butter boxes produced by the society, thereby giving traceability back to the creamery in the event of complaint.

John Hickey oversaw the dairy as the cream was been churned into rolls which were hand wrapped and packed into boxes for sale to the local shops and distribution to the branch creameries. At peak times we made five churns of butter six days a week and sometimes we had to churn on Sunday. Cappamore creamery was a progressive outfit at this time and a market was secured to supply cream, milk and butter to the Dublin market so he lorry fleet was expanded and Mick Joe English, Willie Hynes, Sean Fox joined the staff and drove lorries. Willie Birrane, Martin Fitzgibbon came in as general workers and were employed throughout the operation. Tommy Ryan, Jerry O Donoghue, Willie Coleman, Michael McNamara, Kathleen Leahy, Marie O Malley, Margaret Powell also joined to make up a dedicated team. Connie Hayes also worked in the dairy during school holidays. Phil Doyle and Willie Glesson joined as Assistant Managers in Rearross and Gloscha while Jim Quigley and Mick Caplis were in Rearcross. Michael Kennedy became Assistant manager when Jim Galvin became Manager at Annacotty. Local hauliers were employed at peak times to augment the fleet and a regular haulier came from Dublin to take Cream to Hughes Brothers and Butter to United Dairies.....

Milk testing for butterfat was done twice monthly on composite samples which were taken daily and preserved until the appointed day samples were brought in from Gloscha and Rearcross and tested. Mick Glesson always came from Gloscha to help with testing.

.....(In the morning) When Jim Galvin mounted the steps and the door (of the dairy) was thrown open (for delivery of milk), the supplier came up and presented his book which was filled in, giving him his weight in LBs. of milk he had delivered, his entitlement of skim milk and if he wanted butter, this was also marked in at this time. Thus the day began and as each supplier pulled away from the platform the next one came along.....

From time to time a Department of Agriculture inspector came to the platform and examined the farmers carts and performed an organilipidic assessment of the milk supplied. This same official also did random checks on the butterfat samples thus ensuring that the suppliers got their due.

Sediment testing was introduced in the sixties and the milk was sampled with what was called a Gun, which took a sample and this milk was forced through a filter pad giving an indication of the hygienic production regime being employed by the producer. In the early sixties, a two tier system was introduced for the payment of milk thus ensuring a higher return to suppliers up to 7 thousand gallons. There was a premium of 2 old pence per gallon paid and when you think that there were 240 of the said pennies in £1, it was not a fortune to any producer but there was a debate in the Dail and the cost to the exchequer was put at £6 per year. However this scheme was short lived and the Methylene Blue test came on stream with suppliers qualifying for a quality premium if their milk met with the requirements this premium was on a phased basis with milk samples being examined at ½ hourly intervals up to 3 hours at which the maximum was paid. This initiative was responsible for an overnight raising of standards; farmers put in ice bank coolers and took all precautions to achieve quality standards.

A feature of daily life in Cappamore at that time was the women of the village who came each morning for skim milk for baking and pig fattening. They were very industrious and boosted their incomes by fattening pigs for Clover Meats and also providing a pig for the Stan. When the intake for the day was over, lorries were loaded for their various destinations and the drivers had a cup of tea and were ready to hit the road.....

The milling and stores were busy with most farmers having a few pigs for fattening and rearing calves. A new mill was erected in 1966 where the store is now. This mill was capable of producing forty tons of rations per day and markets were sourced to ensure that every was “busy” and the mill worked at full capacity.

Amalgamating in the early seventies and the advent of milk collection ex farm meant the creamery went into decline and a huge slice of the social life of the village went out of existence to become a folk memory.

9.0 Interviews

9.1 Tom McCarthy (Cappamore Creamery Manager 1951 – 1988).

Mr Ted McNamara carried out this interview, on Friday 12th March 2004 at the home of Mr Tom McCarthy in Crecora, Co. Limerick. The interview notes are set out here as a record of the interview. It is highly recommended that the Cappamore Historical Society undertake a more comprehensive interview with Mr McCarthy at some time in the near future.

“I took up my position in Cappamore in 1951 and retired in 1988. I came on fair day. The fair was going on up the street when I arrived.”

“I was determined to raise the quality and production standard of our butter.”¹⁷

Specific Points of Note: -

1. All butter was registered so that it could be traceable. Being responsible for the butter was part of conditions of sale.
2. There were teak churns for making butter at Cappamore. Inside the churn were six rollers. Three sets of two. These rollers kept revolving during the butter making process. When the grain of butter was forming it was also being washed.
3. When Tom arrived there was one teak churn functioning this he kept and eventually after a great deal of searching he managed to purchase another from centenary creamery beyond Thurles. The original teak churn could make forty boxes of butter and the second teak churn (of purchase 2nd hand) could manufacture sixty, Sometimes four churns a day were made. However it should be noted that he never worked both churns to full capacity (the most that he loaded to make from the new was fifty boxes at any one time) nonetheless the creamery was capable of producing up to four hundred boxes per day.
4. When he first arrived there was a plague of rats at the creamery. This he blamed on the mill that was there at that time. However it should be noted that the mill was not originally part of the creamery and Tom was determined to move it out of the creamery area as soon as possible, he hired a company from Limerick to exterminate the rats both in the creamery and along the both sides of the river bank. This was eventually done. On occasions the rats returned but never on the same scale and he made sure that whenever they reappeared they were dealt with promptly.

¹⁷ Tom McCarthy’s first priority in Cappamore

5. When he first arrived he found that the creamery was both in management and in efficiency not in a good state indeed he had been warned by several colleagues not to take up the position in Cappamore because of its state. However he saw this as a challenge.
6. Gradually Tom closed down as much of the mill as was possible and built an entirely new mill outside the Creamery boundary in 1961. He had the dairy area extended back into the mill and for a time in the mill area he had installed a *continuous butter-making* machine. However this was for experimental making reasons, The machine being provided free of charge by Irish Agricultural Wholesale Society. However he was not impressed with the quality of product of this machine and eventually passed it back to the society. However he stressed this was one of the early editions of this type of machinery and gradually their manufacture was improved so that today all commercial quality controlled butter in Ireland is made from *continuous* process.
7. In comparison with to day individual cow milk yield was very low around four hundred gallons per cow per year as against 1000 (average) today.
8. Legal composition of butter 16% moisture, 2% salt.
9. "Early on I came to the realisation that to make the creamery profitable we had to sell our milk product in Dublin. We would not survive selling in the Limerick area. I met with W. J. Lennox an independent agent based in Baggot St., who bought and resold cream from all over the southern part of the country. He was prepared to purchase as much as I could produce however he stressed that the milk product would have to be of the highest quality and delivered on time. I gave him my word and I kept it. So to get the milk yield to Dublin I could not rely on the trains from the junction (Limerick Jct.) so I purchased a new lorry. It was one of the first milk tank trucks in Munster. There was a small lorry in the creamery when I came but there was no tank on it. The milk used to go up in twenty gallons churns on the train but by the time the milk got to Dublin it would be already going off or if not a few hours later. The churns needed to be returned washed refilled and sent back it could not be done in the time scale and the train schedule. Later I persuaded Lennox to also send truck of his own from Dublin to ferry supplies to the city"
10. We sold milk to several dairies in Dublin The Hughes Brothers HB, Dublin Dairies, Merville? Craighie Brothers? I bought milk from other creameries to keep up supply.
11. Our own creameries were:- Glosha, Birdhill, & Rearcross. We also bought milk from the independent creameries at Bunratty, NewMarket-on-Fergus, and less frequently from Toher, Annacotty, and Abington. The milk supplied was churned into cream and what was left over was made into butter and sold to United Irish Packers in Dublin. This was a very lucrative arrangement for the creamery.
12. Tom had come to an arrangement with Mr Gallagher of United Irish Packers circa mid-1960's to supply that company's milk needs.
13. The early continuous machines 'had loose moisture' and as a result was not well received in Dublin. This is one of the reasons that I stuck with the teak vats and the older method of butter making. We were one of the last creameries in Ireland to continue to use this method and when Tony O'Reilly was in Board BÁINNE he had the Cappamore butter churning process filmed¹⁸.
14. With regards to the amalgamations Tom indicated that he was in favour of amalgamation however he felt that it could have been done in a different manner and it would have been more beneficial in the long run for Cappamore and Abington if they had joined together.
15. With regards to co-operative minutes he thought it unlikely that any would have survived but if they had they would in all possibility be stored at Mallow (DairyGold Co-operative Society).

¹⁸ Tom could not recall which year that this was done only that the film crew arrived on show-day usually a half-day at the creamery, but staff had to remain on site until filming was completed. He received no subsequent information concerning the film.

9.2 Una McNamara - Employee

The following are notes made during conversations with Mrs Una McNamara (nee Duggan) who worked in the office in the creamery and continues to work for Dairygold - Thursday 11th March at Cappamore Dairygold premises and her home in Lacka Doon, and via telephone Saturday March 13th 2004).

She recommended that the following should be interviewed¹⁹: Willie Birrane, John Cunningham, Bernard Kennedy, Eddie Campbell. Unfortunately one of the those that we may have found most helpful with regards to whereabouts of minute documentation, John Crowe the Creamery Secretary for many years died on 1st November 2003. Una informed us that at times the co-op had up to thirty-four employees. Tom McCarthy was a highly respected manager and ran the creamery as a business. He tried (sometimes against strong opposition) to be innovative and continuously endeavoured to develop and upgrade operations. She recalled tentative explorations taking place with French interests to redevelop cheese production at the plant but nothing came of this. "The highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene were implemented."

9.3 Willie Birrane - Employee

(Interviewed at his home on Thursday afternoon 11th March, and also during visit to creamery site Saturday 13th March 2004 for verification of building lay out.

1. Willie took up employment at the creamery in 1962 and retired in 1984.
2. Work started around 6.30 AM and finished at 5.30PM
3. John Crowe had a right of way through the creamery yard. He asserted this right once a year.
"He would arrive on his tractor and I would open the gate, crowe's gate as we called it to allow him to pass through. The key for the gate was kept at john McCarthy's office."
4. Willie and Michael Leahy put up the sign denoting the date of the creamery and its name circa 1967 – 1968.
5. Grain came from Ranks in Limerick usually twice a week and oil was also delivered from that city 2/3 times per week. The creamery was already using oil when I arrived but during the WWII turf was used. Coal was used.
6. Cream went to Dublin in about 150 churns twice a week also 500 boxes of butter in 28 lb boxes



¹⁹ Due to time restrictions it only proved possible to interview Mr Willie Birrane

Figure 6 - Willie Birrane and Ted McNamara on site

9.5 Herbert Gow – Former Supplier to Cappamore and Abington

Mr Herbert Gow of Glenstal was interviewed as he had written an account of the creamery at Abington published in the Murroe Year Book 2003. Refer to Appendices 10.7. He was very helpful in proving background information and pointing us in the right direction with regards sources of information he accessed during his research.

9.6 Notes written down by John Crowe (Secretary, Cappamore Creamery)

These notes²⁰ were provided by Noel Gleeson (Cappamore Development Association) and were written down by John Crowe.

Part I.

There were many small private creameries around at the turn of the 20th century. In Cappamore you had one run by Maypole and Cleeves who owned several in East Limerick. These creameries monopolised the dairy industry and naturally controlled and fixed the price of milk. So as you know the worm turns and the farmers of the Cappamore district met over several meetings and eventually formed a co-operative named the Cappamore Co-Op. Agricultural and Dairy Society Limited.

A committee was elected with members from the district represented. The Committee members were usually available to report to monthly meetings. Meetings were held with the view to having any genuine problems put to right.

The first step was to get finance. Ordinary shares were issued to the dairy farmers who wished to supply their milk to the co-operative. Farmers were asked to take one share for each cow in his bawn of cows - £1 each share.

The secretary elected by the committee was responsible for keeping the share ledger up to date and calling meetings.

A committee meeting was held around mid-month, to decide on price to be paid for milk received the previous month giving full consideration to the managers report.

The second step was to appoint a manager who was responsible for all the financial dealings and keeping the co-operative in a viable condition.

The creamery took in the milk converted it to butter and provided the farmer with the residue left after the butter was manufactured to feed his calves and pigs.

There was no electricity in the early days so coal was used to get up steam.

Part II.

I was appointed secretary to replace my father William Crowe on his death in March 1942. William Crowe had been secretary since the foundation of the creamery in the early nineteen hundreds. The members at that time (1942) to the best of my memory were as follows;

Chairman: Thomas E. Lloyd "Bru House, Limerick, Vice Chairman: Cornelius Ryan, Towerhill, Cappamore. Members: James Ryan, Dromalty, Cappamore. James O'Malley, Dromsally, James Blackwell, Dromsally, Michael O'Connell, Castlegarde Cappamore, Michael Berkery, Ballyvoreen, James A. Maher, Killuragh, Cappamore, William O'Brien, Farnane, Cappamore, Patrick Glesson, Bilboa, Patrick Campbell, Towerhill.

Maurice Glesson, Cullina, and Patrick Duggan Bilboa were two members representing Glossha Auxillary. Glossha creamery joined Cappamore in 1928 on condition that all milk suppliers (Glossha) took shares in Cappamore Society. Terms were three (3) shares per cow or £1 per gallon of milk supplied at peak.

William Dee was central manager at Cappamore until 1948 but retired for health reasons.

²⁰ The originals were returned to Noel Gleeson

Thomas McCarthy was eventually appointed manager and under his control Cappamore creamery expanded to become one of the leading creameries in the South with an expanding store trade. It was joined by Rearcross, Birdhill, and Bunratty creameries.



Figure 7 - Ted McNamara and Herbert Gow March 2004

9.7 Notes of Meeting with Ms Mary Riordan²¹

Mary Riordan who is currently undertaking research and recording on the creameries of Limerick provided the following information: -

1. In 1902 the Maypole Company owned 16 creameries in East Limerick.
2. The Dáil Debates 30 July 1927 record that Glosha Auxiliary station was transferred to the Co-Operative Society by the Dairy Disposal Board.
3. Tom's Directory of 1933 also mentions the transfer of Glosha to Cappamore.

²¹ Limerick Civic Trust, Bishops Palace, Limerick

10.0 Appendices

10.1 Information provided by Mr Tom Cassidy²²

Some notes on early co-operation in Limerick

The first two co-operative diaries in Ireland were in Co. Limerick.

Dromcollogher was established in 1899 with the help of the Co-operative Wholesale Society from England who had various depots nearby.

Ballyhahill was established in 1891 with the help of Thomas Spring-Rice K.P., Lord Monteagle of Brandon, who lived nearby at Mount Trenchard, Foynes.

Lord Monteagle was an early associate of the Hon. Horace Plunkett and his associates had targeted the Golden Vale in the mission to establish farmer co-operatives. Apathy and suspicion marked their efforts. The following is a selected extract from field worker R. A. Anderson's account of an event in Rathkeale:

“Once when I thought that I had planted a creamery within the precincts of the town of Rathkeale, my co-operative applecart was upset by a local solicitor, who....gravely informed me that our programme would not suit Rathkeale. “Rathkeale” said he pompously “is a nationalist town - nationalist to the backbone and every pound of butter made in this creamery must be made on nationalist principles, or it shan’t be made at all.” This sentiment was applauded loudly and the proceedings terminated.”

In July 1891, a conference of the 13 dairy societies then established was held in Newcastle west. The conference was reported in the Freeman’s Journal on the 9th July 1891 with an editorial warning to the Co-operative Movement not to bypass the Irish middleman. Plunkett’s reply that this indeed was the Cooperative intention, to market their own butter themselves, was printed in the edition of the 13th July 1891.

In 1893 16 co-op creameries came together to form the Irish Cooperative Society Ltd., with headquarters in Limerick to market Irish butter on the English market. The Agency established its English headquarters in Manchester to compete against the CWS. At the turn of the century it was the major exporter of Irish butter. In 1971 it changed its name to Irish Co-operative Society Ltd., and now manufactures packaging under the style of Europacks Corrugated cases at Galvone Industrial Park, Limerick City.

By 1894 there were 33 co-operatives. Of these 16 or half were in Co. Limerick: Altavilla, Ardagh, Ardpatick, Athea, Ballyhahill, Bulgaden, Castlemahon, Clounagh, Dromcollogher, Feenagh, Glenwilliam, Granagh, Glin Grange, Newcastle West, Shanagolden.

On the 18th April 1894 during the R.D.S. Spring Show the inaugural meeting of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society took place in the Antient Rooms in Great Brunswick St., Dublin. Lord Monteagle sent the following message.

*43 Emperors Gate
London SW*

I regret very much that I am unavoidably prevented from attending. Having been associated with Mr. Plunkett from the outset in the Co-operative Dairy Movement, I have watched with ever growing confidence and with never ceasing wonder not only the success of the enterprise commercially, but the social and educational effect this new departure has upon the farmers by teaching them the benefits at once of self reliance and mutual aid - of business principles and scientific methods. The development of the co-operative principle where it is already at work and the extension of this “new departure” into other districts and other branches of agricultural industry, which are the objects of the new society, seem to be fraught with greater promise for the country than any other enterprise I see afoot, and I heartily promise every assistance in my power.”

²² Conservation Officer Limerick County Council

Lord Monteagle became a member of the first committee of the Irish Agricultural Society. On Plunketts resignation as President of the IAOS in 1900 Lord Monteagle became President. He served as president until 1905 and was the first of many limerick men to serve on the council of the IAOS later ICOS. Their contribution is recorded in the centennial book of ICOS Fruits of a century published in 1994.

Limerick women also contributed to the early development of cooperatives, locally and nationally. In the early 1900s Alice and Mary Spring-Rice, sister and daughter respectively of Lord Monteagle, organised and managed poultry societies in Co. Limerick notably in Rathkeale, Shanagolden and Foynes. They were contributers to the Irish Homestead, magazine of the co-operative movement and members of the United Irishwomen, a co-operative for the improvement of living conditions through home enterprise (In 1935 the Organisation changed its name to the Irish Country-womens's Association). The poultry societies prospered as separate cooperatives up to 1924 when they amalgamated with the principal agricultural co-operatives. (At the time Mary Spring Rice co-operator and nationalist gun runner lay dying from tuberculosis in Foynes). However the seed they had sown in the area was to grow into the leading and most progressive poultry enterprise in the country from the 50s to the 80s, Castlemahon Co-op.

10.2 Extract from The Rise and Fall of the Local Creameries, by Eugene O'Riordan

The first creameries were started at the end of the last century, and the beginning of this one (19th&20th). The first was a Co-op. Creamery at Droumcollogher, Co Limerick.

The setting of Co-Op creameries was pioneered by a man called Horace Plunkett, after whom the Irish Co-Operative Society (I.C.O.S.) (the umbrella organisation of the Co-Op movement) was founded. The idea was that the farmers would join together and take shares in, and set up, and run the business at a central point, employing a creamery manager, where the farmers would bring their milk to have it seperated, that is to havethe cream takem from it, and churned into butter, and the skim milk, about 80% of the whole, returned to the farmer, as excellent feeding for calves and pigs.

At the creamery every farmer had a number, and had a pass card bearing that number, on which would be recorded his daily milk supply for every day in one month period. Also there was kept at the creamery a bottle for every supplier, bearing his number, and in which was kept a sample from every days supply, to be tested at the end of the month for butterfat, and butterfat only, as this was the only thing that mattered at that time.

The price he received for his milk varied according to butterfat content. The supplier was paid for his milk about three weeks after the end of the month, for all the previous months supply.

The creamery was an advance from the farmer seperating his milk at home, and indeed from the older method of skimming the cream from the milk and making their own butter.

The creameries were slow to catch on, indeed some parts of the country none at all. In the early part of this century (20th) we had Co-Ops. In Drinagh, Clondrohid, Muskerry Lisarda, ballyclogh, Mitchelstown, Kilcorney among others. There were a number of small Co-Ops., and private creameries existed too, near each other, and because of poaching of milk, and competing with one another, got into financial difficulties.

Arising from that, and the fact that there were no creameries in some areas, the Government of the day set up a Semi-State Company call 'Dairy Disposal Board' to set up, and operate creameries in the said areas.

The idea was, as the name Disposal Board implied, that when these creameries were organised they would be handed back to the farmers, however this did not happen. There were seventeen groups of these creameries, principally in Kerry and Clare, with a few in Tipperary, and four in Cork - Tarelton, Coachford, Aughadow and Catletown Bere. They were controlled and run by a Board of Directors, principally made up of civil servants creamery managers.

This board was set up in 1926, and from that time until 1966 when, from pressure from the I.C.M.S.A. and the N.F.A., consultative committees were set up, which consisted of one delegate elected by each branch, to met from time to time with the Head Manager.

10.3 The Coming Of The Creameries²³

The production of butter on the farms had been a great help to the farmers of County Limerick but now changes came. The following paragraph from John O'Donovan's book indicates what happened:

"Prior to 1850 Ireland, because of proximity, controlled the British market, which also needed only comparatively small imported supplies. When the market increased its demand, other countries began to come in and soon learned to study its tastes and to attempt to supply corresponding article. The result of the Prussia-Denmark war of 1865 was the remote cause of the change in methods which resulted in Irish firkin butter being driven off the markets. The Danes were faced with ruin and adopted winter dairying and reorganisation of their industry as the only practical method of overcoming the difficulties of their situation. They were thus enabled to place a mild-cured uniform product on the British market all the year around. The separator was introduced in 1879 and co-operative dairies sprang up in the next decade, rendering Irish methods still more obsolete. France, Holland and Sweden followed Denmark in the adoption of new methods. The London market was naturally, the first field which the continental producers attacked. The year 1867 appears to have been the first year of intense competition as the question attracted much attention in Ireland and was discussed at many meeting's of farmers."

In 1879, an International Dairy Show was held in Dublin at which a Laval cream separator worked by steam power was demonstrated. After this exhibition, a pioneer in the person of Canon Bagot fitted out a travelling dairy to show the new methods to the farmers. From our point of view, the interesting thing is that Canon Bagot succeeded in establishing a creamery on joint stock principles at Hospital, County Limerick, in 1884. There were other shareholders besides the farmers who supplied the milk and it was not a co-operative undertaking in the modern sense. Another of these butter factories was set up in Galbally in 1885.

Still much of the butter produced continued to be made on the farms. The newly formed co-operative movement in England, were interested in getting butter supplies for their members in that country and established depots for buying butter in Tipperary as early as 1866 and before 1870, two more at Killmallock and Limerick.

The representative of the English Co-operative Wholesale Society in Limerick, W. L. Stokes, was successful in starting the first co-operative creamery at Dromcollogher in 1889. Sir Horace Plunkett now came on the scene and took up the cause of co-operation vigorously. Through his friendship with Lord Monteagle, he was able to start creameries at Ballyhahill, Shanagolden and Ardagh in 1889 and 1890. Other early societies were those at Clounagh, Feenagh, Fealebridge, Glenwilliam and Glin.

On 9th March 1891, the first conference of dairy co-operative societies was held at Newcastle West. A further conference was held in June of the same year at Limerick, when fifteen societies were represented. The field however was not altogether left to co-operatives, a number of creameries were built and put into operation by the C. W. S. and other proprietors. The result was the whole county was soon covered with a network of creameries, some of them being placed too close together. This led to difficulties later on but the big social change which really came from this development was the transfer of buttermaking from the farms to the creamery. The transport of milk to the creamery became one of the regular tasks of the farmer or his workers. It was a major change in the life of the people, and its full social implications need a deeper study, than they have so far received.

10.4 Dromcollogher²⁴

Dromcollogher situated some nine miles south-east of Newcastle-West, and about one mile from the county Cork border was Irelands first co-operative creamery registered on June 6th 1889. It did not survive for long, but it became an example for the rest of the country, attesting to the benefits of the co-operative movement. From the small initiative taken by fifty Dromcollogher farmers in adapting

²³ From: Limerick Rural Survey 1958 – 1964, ed. by Rev. Jeremiah Newman – Maynooth College, Muintir Na Tíre Rural Publications Tipperary, Ireland 1964

²⁴ Extract from Ballyhoura Development Local Ireland: Local Limerick. Sourced on Internet.

Horace Plunkett's policy of "Better farming, better business, and better living" has grew the multimillion-pound co-operative movement, as it still exists in Ireland today.

The following is an extract from *An analysis of Toher Creamery in its Infancy (1902 – 1909)*, by J. Walsh, K. Ryan, A. Ryan, C. Ryan This was researched and written in response to a competition sponsored by The Irish Times - The Young Historian Awards. As with Cappamore Toher Co. Limerick was established in 1902.

In 1889 Wil Stokes the representative of the Co-operative wholesale society in Limerick and Robert Gibson, a butter merchant had succeeded under the advise and guidance of the Co-Operative union in establishing Irelands first creamery at Dromcollogher in West Limerick. The Co-opertaive Union provided "a model code of rules and an admirable constitution" for this Co-Operative which was to provide the constitutional basis for subsequent creamery co-opertaives.

After about two years the Drumcollogher society faltered as a result of poor management, but it prospered long enough to provide a model and showpiece and to "enable Horace Plunkett to hitch on to it his more ambitious programme."

10.5 Irish Agricultural Co-Operatives: An Overview

Comprehensive extract from the above entitled discussion paper.

(Olive McCarthy, Robert Briscoe, Michael Ward, Centre for Co-Operative Studies Discussion papers, University College Cork).

Introduction

Agriculture is of central importance to the Irish economy, accounting for approximately 11% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 13% of total employment. In 1991, there were over 170,000 agricultural farms in Ireland with an average size of 65 acres. Milk and beef production together represent almost 70% of all agricultural production in the country. The total amount of milk produced and processed in Ireland is 5.23 million tonnes with a total of 45,000 suppliers.

At the turn of the century, rural Ireland was a landscape of peasant farmers producing primarily for local consumption; today, rural business produces primarily for export and is dominated by a handful of billion-transnational exporters. The co-operative movement has played a major role in this transformation. Co-operatives hold a substantial share of the market for the most sectors of food processing as well as farm input supply.

The percentage market share of agricultural co-operatives can be broken down as follows:

- 97% of dairy processing
- 30% of beef processing
- 30% of lamb processing
- 70% of pig meat processing
- 60% of fertiliser manufacturing
- 40% of veterinary medicine sales
- 70% of grain purchasing
- 65% of the animal feed sector
- 65% of total livestock sales
- 85% of the artificial insemination sector

Agricultural co-operatives in Ireland are predominantly dairy co-operatives, although meat and mart (livestock) co-operatives also make up a large proportion of the total number of agricultural co-ops. Irish dairy co-operatives are multi-purpose in nature. Although dairy processing is their prime activity, it is not their own activity. They also engage in grain handling and storage, meat processing, farm supplies, and so on.

In 1995, there were 36 dairy co-operative societies in Ireland with a total of 89,333 members and directly employing more than 28,000 people. Mart co-ops numbered 34, and had over 47,000 members and 1,443 employees.

Historical Overview

Co-operatives in Ireland were *children of distress*. The nineteenth century was a time of extreme hardship for Irish farmers, a time of grinding poverty and exploitation by landlords and *gombeen* men. Ireland was primarily rural, a land of tiny farms. Rural poverty was rampant. Farmers urgently needed help to improve their standards of production and marketing, to get access to good quality farm supplies at reasonable prices, and access to credit to keep them going to keep them going during the off-season. For too long, they had depended on landlords and traders to market and sell their produce with little or no return to the farmer. A strategy was needed to enable farmers to take control of their industry and redesign it in the interests of producers. In fact, it has been argued that it was not economic benefits alone that prompted the establishment of co-operatives, but a desire to have a business structure in which the farmer had direct control. The degree to which the co-operative structure has facilitated this need for farmer control in Ireland is an issue under intense discussion in the 1990s.

The first agricultural co-operative was established at Dromcollogher, County Limerick in 1889 by Sir Horace Plunkett. Plunkett saw co-operation as the way to improve the overall quality of life in rural Ireland. His motto was, “**Better farming, Better business, Better living.**” He and his associates had seen how co-operative creameries had raised farming standards in Denmark since 1882 and believed that the co-operative idea could also be an effective remedy for the problems faced by Irish farmers. By 1891, 16 co-operative creameries had been set up in Ireland. In 1984, the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS, now known as ICOS) was formed to promote the methods of agricultural co-operation not only to members of the 50 or so co-operative creameries of the time but also to the wider agricultural community. By 1905, the number of co-operative creameries had grown to 275.

Credit co-operatives also gained a foothold in Ireland at this time. They were undermined, however, by the agricultural co-operatives themselves, which also extended credit to their members. The credit co-ops died out in the 1920s but re-emerged in the 1950s in the form of credit unions although these were more in response to urban than to rural poverty.

The Years 1900–1920

The first two decades of the 20th century were a time of great vitality and prosperity for Irish agricultural co-operatives...

Co-operative creameries were established in nearly every district of southern and north-eastern Ireland as a result of a major organising campaign at local level. These creameries were built by the farmers themselves with their own money. World-wide interest in the Irish co-operative movement was keen and many came to Ireland to study the structures and methods of Irish co-operation. In 1900 there were 374 co-operative societies of all types in Ireland, and by 1913 this had grown to almost 1,000, one half of which were creameries. Already, most of these co-operatives creameries had developed into multi-purpose agricultural societies.

Economic Depression

But the period of prosperity was not to last. The end of the First World War saw the disappearance of the large demand for food and clothing for troops. Increased supplies from other countries coupled with reduced purchasing power at home strangled the Irish economy. In the 1920's, co-operatives faced severe financial difficulties, aggravated by the fact that many had extended unlimited credit to farmers during the prosperous years between 1900 and 1920. In addition, co-operative consciousness declined as farmers tried to maximise individual income in a depressed economy. Although approximately 55% of the male labour force in Ireland were employed in farming, the sense of co-

operative organisation began to die away. The War of Independence from Britain had also had a devastating impact on the co-operative creameries.

After independence, it was increasingly recognised that the economic wealth of Ireland lay in its dairy industry and milk wars were waged between co-operative and private creameries, as they fought over market share. The Irish government recognised, however, that dairying could be developed more efficiently through co-operation than through intercine wars, and intervened in 1928 to form the Dairy Disposal Board Company, the aim of which was to take-over private creameries and bring about some rationalisation of their activities.

However, there was little improvement in the situation as the economic depression throughout the world brought the co-operative movement to low ebb. To compound matters, the original co-operative founders had died and the co-operative philosophy they expounded began to be forgotten. It was not until the 1950s, with the ending of the Second World War, that Ireland began to emerge from its economic gloom. Farming had been kept alive and it had provided much local employment. Agricultural output and incomes had remained reasonably stable throughout the period although was severely inhibited. Ireland had 160 dairy co-operatives at this time ranging in size from half a million to five million gallons. Twenty per cent of all milk production was handled by the Dairy Disposal Company, but most remained in private ownership. Butter was the main product being manufactured.

Renewed Co-operative Interest

From the mid 1950s to the 1960s agricultural co-operatives in Ireland expanded again, but the new growth focused on livestock and the establishment of co-operative livestock marts as a more effective replacement for the old village fairs. Co-operative endeavour was also focused on the establishment of grain co-ops and stores particularly as a result of the innovative discovery of a new high yielding barley. Existing dairy co-operatives diversified their interests into grain handling and storage facilities. This, in turn, led to milling and animal feed compounding by several co-operatives. Pig breeding and fattening co-operatives also began to emerge at this time. O'Leary (1983) points out that '*most of the co-operative growth developed around the existing co-op creameries, if not directly then at least by encouragement and often by financial help and management advice from the existing co-ops*'²⁵.

Moves toward merger

The Knapp Report of 1964 is considered by many to be a watershed in Irish agricultural co-operation. This report was adopted by the Irish Minister for Agriculture after consultation with IAOS. (It was) ... carried out by Joseph Knapp....²⁶

Knapp criticised the lack of co-operative education and proper communication structures in Irish co-operatives. He felt that Irish co-operative managers were running their co-ops as if they were private companies. His main recommendation was that the dairy processing industry should be rationalised through amalgamation into bigger and better co-operatives.

Ireland was at this time anticipating its entry into the European Community and there had been a new awakening to the commercial and economic aspects of farming. In the early 1960s many of Ireland's 160 dairy co-operatives were very small and sold their milk on to bigger co-operatives for processing. In February 1966, on the strength of the Knapp Report, the IAOS released its first major proposals for the rationalisation of co-operative creameries. These proposals were updated in 1972 to encourage further amalgamations. Many neighbouring co-operatives took the plunge and amalgamated to form bigger organisations although many of these amalgamations did not necessarily make geographical sense.

25 In Carla Keating (Ed.) Plunkett and Co-operatives: Past, Present and Future. Cork: Bank of Ireland Centre for Co-operative Studies p.119

26 Dr Joe Knapp from the Farmer Co-operative Service of the USA Dept. of Agriculture, following this major review, the IAOS initiated a rationalisation programme for the dairy industry in 1966.

Amalgamation Vs. Rationalisation?

The original idea of rationalisation through amalgamation was to direct milk supplies from a sensible geographical area to an accessible milk processing co-operative plant. However, this was not always easy to do. Many milk-supplying co-operatives sold milk to processing-co-operatives located some distance away. This meant that the somewhat arbitrary geography of amalgamated co-operatives did not always result in more rational operations.

Such anomalies inspired considerable debate within the movement as to the wisdom of amalgamation as a way of rationalising. Those arguing against merger tried to show that amalgamation did not always result in rationalisation, particularly in the short and medium terms, as the process of adjustment within the new co-operatives often proved a tortuous affair. Amalgamation involved considerable change in membership and organisation structures. The members of constituent co-operative often sought to ensure their local interests were represented within the merged group, thereby working against the original reasons for amalgamation. The directors of constituent co-ops were simply lumped together into huge, unwieldy boards. Communications with ordinary farmer members became more of a problem, leading to member apathy and disenchantment.

On the other hand, advocates of amalgamation argued that well designed mergers would mean that processing facilities could be expanded allowing for larger scale operations, tightly centralised control, better communication, cost savings in terms of economies of scale and reduced transport costs, and more cost-effective co-operation between co-operatives.

In 1981, a detailed study of eighteen smaller co-operatives in the North east of Ireland found that a high proportion of the managers and directors interviewed were doubtful about the advantages of merger. In general, they were keen to maintain a sense of local identity and favoured less drastic approaches to rationalisation and consolidation such as the setting up of federal co-operatives and joint ventures to achieve bargaining power and enjoy economies of scale. Rather than merging for the sake of merging, it was felt that the way to organise co-operation between co-operatives was to start by identifying specific objectives for working together. Appropriate organisational tools could then be designed to achieve specific rationalisation objectives while retaining much of the local co-operative structure which was valued by members and stimulated loyalty to the co-operative movement. Little detailed consideration was given to such proposals, however, and merger proceeded apace.

Co-operators continued to voice quiet misgivings about the merger stampede. O'Leary (1983) summarised some of the main concerns of the dissenters.

"Up to now the dairy co-operative movement has not achieved the objective of concentrating all the processing industry in very large plants. Also, it has not yet clearly shown that biggest is best. Neither has it succeeded in establishing co-operative societies imbued with the idealism or desire to achieve the basic principles of a good co-operative of which growth and commercial success is an important part but not everything."

Some of the amalgamated dairy co-operatives have become huge commercial enterprises. They own vast assets including diverse processing plants and modern factories and extensive transport fleets. They have modern management and administration operations, good financial practices and modern marketing techniques. However, they have not yet been able to perform any better than relatively small co-operatives in terms of higher unit financial returns."

By the late 1970s, the Irish dairy co-operative structure had been radically altered through amalgamation. Four categories of co-operative had emerged...

The Big Six handling approximately 80– 100 million gallons of milk each per annum and together accounting for 60% of Ireland's total milk supply.

Six medium sized co-operatives, each with a milk supply of approximately 30 million gallons of milk per annum and constituting about 20% of total milk supplies.

A group of ten co-operatives, each with a milk supply ranging from 10 – 20 gallons per annum, representing about 13% of total milk supply.

Twenty very small non-manufacturing co-operative creameries.

The period from 1970 to 1990 was one of amalgamation, merger, take over, and joint venture. Some of the Irish co-operatives formed strategic alliances with multinational food processors, bolstering the bargaining power of Irish co-operatives. The twelve largest societies invested heavily in plant equipment in order to process an increasing milk supply throughout the country, particularly as price supports were available to Irish milk producers. However, these increases began to be reversed as a result of policy changes within the EEC that restricted milk output and reduced price supports. This led to planned rationalisation in processing facilities and investment instead in new product and market development on a co-operative basis.

In the 1980's it had begun to be recognised that Irish agricultural co-operatives were not being adequately controlled by their members and that the members' level of understanding of the co-operative ethos was very low. Ward et al (1982) in their study of co-operatives in the North eastern part of Ireland concluded that poor access to information, autocratic management, and member apathy were the root causes of these problems.

Mergers between co-operatives continued throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's. Virtually no new agricultural co-ops were being formed. According to the 1993 ICOS Annual Report, this was not because farmers lacked interest in the co-operative structure, but because they recognised the scale of operation was of vital importance in many activities of the agri-food sector. The report went on to state that "*the formation of new societies in this sector will only take place in very specialised circumstances. New developments are more likely to be undertaken by existing multi-purpose co-operatives which are already of a significantly large scale.*"

These sentiments were echoed in the foreword to the ICOS Annual Report.

Members Vs Investors: the spectre of demutualisation

Some of the other significant issues affecting Irish agricultural co-operatives in the 1980s and 1990s related to capitalisation. Major questions confronting the larger, merged co-operatives included the following.

1. How to raise sufficient capital to achieve the size and scale of operations necessary to trade internationally.
2. How to ensure that the value of members' share holdings could grow in size to reflect the increased scale of their co-operative businesses.

The first problem, that of *raising sufficient capital*, is linked to the second problem of *keeping members happy with the return on their investment*. Clearly, co-ops are going to find it hard to raise capital from their members, if the members feel that their share capital is dead money which does not grow even when the business is prospering. And this indeed seems to have been the case in the typical Irish co-operative. Members saw their co-op getting bigger and bigger, investing more and more in modern plant, making bigger profits, and paying higher salaries to managers, yet at the same time there was virtually no growth in the value of their share capital and no flow of dividends to reward them as owners of the business. In such circumstances, members would have no incentive to invest more than the minimum required to be a shareholder.

But the situation was even worse than this, for in most co-ops it was possible for a farmer to use the services of the co-op without having to become a shareholder. This meant that there was virtually no economic incentive for the farmer to invest anything in the co-op with which he did business. The inevitable result was that a substantial proportion of milk suppliers refused to become shareholders and contributed nothing to the co-operative's capital. This situation had come about because the typical dairy co-operative retained virtually all of its profits as unallocated capital.

By contrast, the practice in the typical North American co-operative was to allocate profits to members' share accounts in proportion to the use they made of the co-operative services. This had the triple benefits of:-

- rewarding farmers when they used the co-op,
- building members share capital and
- retaining distributed profits within the co-operative.

Under such conditions, farmers would have every incentive

- to become shareholders
- to make maximum use of the co-op's services, and

- to invest adequate capital to ensure the continued the growth and competitiveness of the business.

In Ireland, however, because of the failure of Irish co-ops to reward members for using the business, the actual value of co-operative shares typically bore no resemblance to the actual value of the co-operative's assets. This in turn eliminated economic incentives for farmers to invest in their co-operative. To raise additional capital, several of the larger co-operatives abandoned co-operative principles by setting up their own public limited company (PLC), selling the co-operative's assets to that company, distributing some of the shares to members, and selling substantial proportions of the PLC's shares to the general public via the stock exchange.

The first example of co-operative taking the PLC route in Ireland in June, 1986, when Kerry Co-operative Creameries Ltd. Exchanged its assets for a majority shareholding in a public limited company (PLC) as a means of raising finance to assist in acquisitions. Kerry Co-operative received 90 million B ordinary shares. The Kerry Group proceeded to engage in a series of placings of A ordinary shares, which are tradable on the stock exchange, to raise the much needed finance. At this time, Kerry Co-operative had about 6,000 shareholders, about 1,000 of whom were not active.

Bailieboro Co-Operative, with a membership of 4,000 shareholders (only half of whom were active) went a step further in 1988 when it terminated its co-operative operation completely and sold its business to a publicly quoted company, again to raise finance for expansion. This was as a direct result of the low value of the co-operative share and the failure of the co-operative to allocate its profits to individual members in proportion to use of the business.....

Non-user members and non-member users

Another of the issues that has contributed to the rise of the Co-operative PLC is the tendency in Irish co-operative movement for a separation to develop between users and members. Members who ceased to supply the co-operative with milk over the years have all too often been allowed to remain as shareholders. This has led to the phenomenon whereby many co-operative shareholders are inactive members of the co-operative. Conversely, some suppliers of the co-operative have been allowed to supply the co-operative although they are not members of the co-operative although the rules require them to be so. For example, in a 1989 survey of 15 dairy co-operatives in Ireland, with a total of 71,587 shareholders, only 35,558 were active milk suppliers. The remaining shareholders were either inactive, dead, or non-traceable.

Had the co-operatives been allocating bonus shares in proportion to usage, the user/member problem would not have arisen. Allocation of bonus shares to users of the co-op would automatically enable them to accumulate sufficient investment to become members.....

10.6 Sir Horace Plunkett 1854–1932²⁷

Horace Plunkett helped to establish the first co-operative creamery in 1889. He felt that if farmers were to prosper they needed to come together in business organisations. Together with R. A. Andersen, Reverend Tom Finlay SJ and Lord Monteagle and some other friends and associates he promoted the establishment of co-operative creameries and co-operative agricultural societies.

By 1894, despite opposition from commercial interests there were 33 co-operatives established and Plunkett recognised the need to establish his work on a more formal basis. On April 18th, 1894, the inaugural meeting of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society - known as IAOS - was held. This name would remain until 1979, when it was changed to ICOS. Upon joining the European Economic Community (EEC), the IAOS became a member of COGECA (European Association of Agricultural and Fishing Co-operatives).

The numbers of co-operatives in Ireland grew to 1,114 by 1920. Creameries and agriculture societies were the first to be established but they were closely followed by the setting up of Agricultural co-operatives.

Right Honourable Sir Horace Curzon Plunkett one of the pioneers of the Irish co-operative movement and innovators of agricultural management was born in Gloucestershire. He was the third son of the

²⁷ Notes from various sources

16th Lord Dunsany. He was educated at Eton and Oxford. Partially for reasons of health he went to America where he established himself successfully as a rancher in Powder Valley, Wyoming, where he remained for ten years. He returned to Ireland in 1888. He was concerned by the poor Irish farming methods of the day and when the export of Irish butter dramatically collapsed under intense pressure from Danish exports he established the Irish Co-operative movement to rectify the situation and put Irish agriculture on a more competitive footing. In 1891 he was appointed to Congested Districts Board. He helped form the IAOS in 1894. In 1895 he established the Recess Committee which led to the establishment of Department of Agriculture (and Technical Instruction) and given government form under the Agriculture and Technical instruction Act of 1899. He wrote *Ireland in the New Century* 1904, an autobiography *Noblesse Oblige* 1908, *Plain Talk to Irish farmers* 1910, *An Appeal to Ulster Not to Desert Ireland* 1914, *Home Rule & Conscription* 1918 and *Irish Chaos: The British Cause and the Irish Cure* 1920. He supported Home Rule but sought moderation, and became a senator in the Irish Free State Parliament. He established a model farm in Foxrock but his house here was burned down during the civil war. He spent the last years of his life in England and died at Weybridge, 1932.

10.7 Rural Ireland, The Agricultural Scene - Murroe/Boher for 200 years

(The following is extracted from an article written by Herbert Gow, which article while dealing specifically with the Abington Co-operative Agricultural and Dairy Society offers a general background to the formation of the Co-operatives).

I am attempting to write a little about the Agricultural Scene of this area, as it developed roughly over the 200 years past...

I write of agriculture having a huge influence on the Irish scene, without much reference to the Political or religious influences of that period, even though very important also in our nations development. Agriculture is presently deemed important to the Irish economy, but not nowadays affecting our lifestyle and development as it used to be in recent past...

Early Agricultural Development

The Agr. Story of the Co-Op Movement was a struggle in every sense of the word; an uphill battle faced the early Co-Operative Pioneers. Preaching an acceptance of an Ideal, based on self discipline, self sacrifice and loyalty in a period of violent political, economic and social upheaval, demanded courage and determination. The Co-Op Ideal was not well attuned to the struggle for men's minds against far more glamorous claims...

Irish Agriculture went through extraordinary structural changes, before, during and after the famine period, being influenced by changes in Britain, Europe, and the New World. The man with a major influence and vision at this time in the agricultural scene was Horace Plunkett. He outlined in his thesis "*Ireland in the New Century*", the new future in co-operation. The division of large holdings into small units would not bring prosperity on its own, it was a myth, a stop-gap solution for a bigger problem. He argued foreign competition in home and world markets was not going to disappear, but rather intensify, he argued Irish agriculture must reform itself or perish. Small holders had no future separately. The new countries Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand were now in 1880 developing vast tracts of land of the new world, worked with huge new machines.... Their produce and food Britain imported in large quantities.. of such uniform and quality of which Irish Agriculture could not do in its present state at this period without co-operation....

The famine 1845–1847 was a major set back, but was only the worst of a succession of famines, which highlighted a fundamental failure of the Irish economy, to industrialise and urbanise on a scale, sufficient to provide employment, for its rapidly expanding labour (hence the Immigrant ship). The majority of landlords made a special effort. A number established small scale manufacturing enterprises in rural areas such as the flax industry (e.g. Murroe mid 1820), but they withered away (except in Northern Ireland) deprived of the stimulus of a growing prosperous home market.....

Mass Emigration between 1845 – 1910 - New Land acts 1885 – 1903

In Ireland, there was mass rural emigration (Likewise from Britain, Scotland and Wales), between 1845 – 1910. The rural labour population fell from 700,000 to 300,000. In this period the number of small thatched cabins or cottiers in rural Ireland with less than five acres fell from 300,000 to 60,000. Farm holdings between 5 and 15 acres fell from 310,000 to 154,000. From 1850 tillage output dropped due to imports of grain to Britain from the New World. Livestock and dairying increased, due to increased prices, lower labour costs, and more grassland available. In 1870 owner occupied land was 3% and by 1916 it was almost 70%. This change of ownership was due to emigration and a series of Land Acts passed by the English parliament.

During the Plantations the English Feudal System replaced the Irish Clan System. In 1869 the Protestant Church ceased to be the official Church Of Ireland. The land acts of 1870 fell short of redressing the wrongs of Irish tenants. In 1885 a bill was passed into law providing 5 million pounds for tenants to buy their lands from Landlords. In 1891 a further 30 million pounds was passed and in 1898 a further act was passed. Little was accomplished until the 1903 Land Act, by chief secretary Wydham, provided a loan to tenants for land purchase of 100 million pounds plus a 12% bonus to encourage landlords to sell. The great bulk of landlords sold, being almost broke anyway. The agreement was repayment of loans in yearly instalments extending over 68 years, each instalment somewhat less than previous rent, and they now having full ownership...

10.8 Record Place Map – 1924

10.9 Rural Place Map – 1983

10.10 Digital Photographs – Schedule and Index

10.11 Survey Drawings (1 – 19)