

CHAPTER VII

Conversion and coercion – The poor majority – High rents – Dianiel O’Cary – Irish immigration to America – Penal laws – Relief Act – American War of Independence – Agricultural crisis – New cotton weaving machinery – United people – New agitation – Act of Union – Absentee landlords – Old ways broken - O’ Ciardha= Carey & Kearey.

In the mid 1750s, the poor majority in Ireland lived in utmost poverty. Their accommodation was squalid and their diets made up of potato, turnips and a little wheat, milk and on rare occasions beef. The population was increasing at an enormous rate... It was only the narrow coastal plain, which provided a market economy - where they managed to sell some of its produce. The poorer folk, living further inland - up in the hills, depended on a subsistence economy. High rents were increasingly being left unpaid, which generated debts - the result of which meant evictions. The property owners forced the poor to pay an ever-increasing amount for rent; the interest rates on owed money continued to rise. The whole system discouraged improvements in property and proper farm management, particularly towards land drainage and any sort of saving – as a cushion for poor harvests. It was a self-generating national disaster, which seemed to be unstoppable – and as it turned out, was!

About this time Dianiel O’Cary, adopted the Protestant religion and, wishing to anglicise his name still further - in order to make a distinction between the families, asked for a meeting with the then head of the family, to declare an oath whereby he would reassume the spelling of Keary - removing the prefix O and the use of C. Many of the Irish began to look beyond their local areas for employment. The more adventurous found that America and the Caribbean offered them more.

America became an important land for Irish immigrant labour. The life appealed too many - for its religious nonconformity and political independence. The American war of Independence started in 1775 and was an inspiration to many of the Irish poor to get back at the English.

O’Halloran, an Irish historian, writing in 1778 gave O’Meara as a Lord Chief of an ancient house, descended from the O’Briens. Many of the O’Ciardha clan joined in his service with the Irish Brigade. A number of the clan then started to use the anglicised form of O’Carey, or O’Cary more often at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Margaret Keary’s second son ³Thomas Padrick married Julia, daughter of Roderick Murphy of Castledermot in Kildare, who had four sons the eldest being named □ Thomas, as was the custom. He was the first of this family to stop using the prefix ‘O’ and to begin using the name of Keary. He married Mary, daughter of John Keogh of Castlepollard, an agricultural town in Westmeath, in 1815; that died in Dublin in 1836, interred in the churchyard of Artane.

In the late 1770s, there was a widespread agricultural crisis. This was not the first time that this problem, with the national food crop, had occurred - poor harvests, low cattle prices, high cost of wheat, potatoes and milk. All this, had been felt before. The massive problem for Ireland was that the population relied upon a staple crop of potatoes – where the English relied upon bread as the staple diet the Irish relied upon potatoes. Corn was relatively simple to import and had a better shelf life. Potatoes needed careful handling from a suitable source and weight for weight was wasteful – it was also a difficult commodity to ship.

The enclosure movement caused further resentment, rents increased yet again and there was a decline in wages - inflation was rife. A number of militant movements raised popular passions - to influence the landowners and government - to reduce rents... all to no avail. Taxation, tithes, rents and church dues were a continual grievance.

Commercial cotton spinning and weaving was introduced into Ireland in 1777. Three years later modern machines and expertise – brought over from England, established an enterprise, which

gave employment to many unemployed folk in towns and villages... This was the start to the great Irish linen industry.

The latest steam engines were imported from England to provide power for many of the mills... no longer did the manufacturers have to rely upon water to drive their wheels. These engines required coal and allied services that in themselves created new business ventures..., which prospered, initiating further capital expenditure. Heavy industries like mining, iron and steel producers, pottery manufactures, tanning, glass ware and coach building all needed raw materials... delivered by road, canal, river and ports... These large building projects needed capital investment. Investors saw the opportunity to make a profit – they could see the outcome of an abundance of cheap labour and the profitability created by those first cotton mills.

This was the time rural populations in village and town showed a remarkable turn inwards – towards uniting - engaging in shared interests. These rural folk were in the main Catholics and spoke Gaelic, keenly aware that the city workers were ‘a set apart’ from their life in the village. Sporting events, fairs, markets, wakes, funerals, cockfights, hunting and field events abounded. These gatherings united people and stimulated political thought. Gradually the unrest grew until eventually nightly political meetings arranged. In Tipperary, Neath and Limerick under the pretext of hurling and playing football, crowds gathered, bands played, shouts were heard and fights broke out...these events confirmed Catholic strength and highlighted resident disaffection. Protestants feared the worst barricaded their houses on fair days and remained indoors. United Irishmen and Orangemen took to using these outings to start airing grievances, which always led to fights.

Thomas, son of Christopher Carey, and brother of William, Mathew and James...owned a newspaper in Dublin. He was sympathetic to the cause of united free Ireland printing stories about absentee landlords and the terrible conditions rural folk were living in. These articles produced attacks from The Establishment who accused him of printing seditious stories. Thomas was tried at the Kings Bench and acquitted. The ruling body continued to hound him and force his printing business to close down.

The whole family were involved in the printing trade as either reporters or tradesmen. Mathew Carey 1785-1824, became internationally known as a publisher. Born in Dublin in 1760 he was indentured to serve his apprenticeship as a letterpress printer and to make up the sticks of type to be clamped into the forme. Later, befriended by Benjamin Franklin, immigrated to America where he married Miss Flavahan, devoting all his energies to the publication of the Douay Version of the Bible, founding the first American Sunday School Society and becoming one of America’s greatest publishers.

Dublin, by the turn of the century was the second biggest city in the British Isles. The most industrious and wealthy areas of Ireland were those closest to the English mainland; and in the middle of that coastline was Dublin, the seat of power - the legal centre and administrative capital. Its population contained the greatest number of professionals, guildsmen, artisans, journeymen and apprentices. This power gives a reason why Dublin was the centre of such unrest and revolution. The final straw was the drought of 1781.

Later, a marvellous engineering scheme put into place, the construction of a great canal and series of locks to join Dublin to the River Shannon. This feat opened up the interior and controlled water distribution to the central plains eliminating the fear of future droughts. Ireland was now an independent country but sharing a common monarch... in reality, many ties were there to check true self-government, which was never workable.

In 1790, the Act of Union saw London replace Dublin as the centre of political power for the Irish. By 1797, The United Irishmen were a powerful force in Leinster and plans were made to have a general uprising. Oaths were taken to ensure a committed gathering, which included trades people,

shopkeepers and many of the middle class. The Orange Order objected and mass atrocities were perpetuated.

In the 1800s, Kilkeary Parish was reported, by Ireland's Ordnance Survey, as lying to the north of Co Tipperary between Nenagh, CloghJordan and Templemore and bounded to the east by Clonlisk in Kings. St. Ciardha's Church [Cill Cheire] lay near the centre of the Barony of Upper Ormond, situated one and a half miles southeast of Toomevara. [The barony contained 14 Parishes] It was described as 'a small parish chiefly under cultivation with the nearby village of Toomevara, declaring 790 inhabitants, its nearest large settlement. Fairs held on Whit-Monday, July 27th, September 29th and November 4th. for cattle, corn and butter.

In 1818, although there were a number of the family who used the Keary spelling this was the first time that 'ey' was used in Ireland and it is to Patrick and Mary [nee Lonergan] we find recorded, initiating the event. Unfortunately, it did not last long; they removed the 'e' five years later.

With the passing of a few more years Carey [with or without the 'e'], Carew and Keary, seem to be an almost interchangeable choice by family members recorded in the Powerstown RC register. By the 1850s, Griffith's Primary Valuation gives 68 Kear[e]y households in all of Ireland...

Powerstown lies in the civil parish of Kilgrant in the barony of Iffa and Offa East between Clonmel and the village of Kilsheelan. As in North Tipperary, Offaly and Westmeath, these spellings became common variants of O'Ciardha.

It is difficult from this distance to comprehend the importance the spelling makes to the use of one's name. However, records prove that it does... prompted no doubt by strong reasons at the time. Even today, some family members feel free to use the Gaelic form whilst others use the anglicized version.

The amount of farmland in Ireland was now unable to feed the expanding population. This fact occurred in almost all regions not just in the rich more industrial sectors with the greatest labour force. The problems stemmed from the way land was controlled by rents and tithes. Tenure was restricted so that farmers budgeted and planned for short-term gain. This did not bode well for economic rotation of crops; the construction of land drainage ditches; the removal of stone from the fields or the latest views on animal husbandry; the use of better soil management to increase fertility was much talked about.

The landowners, the landlords and the absentee property agents, skimmed the cream off the milk – the profits off the country's wealth. Most of the money found its way towards the rich English boroughs and aristocracy. It was a case of negligence, ignorance and lack of care on the part of local and national government in both England and Ireland. The potatoes blight finished off what poor economy had started.

It is believed by many that in the middle of the nineteenth century people lived close to where they were born - and never left the village. Records disprove that view. Even without those facts, reality dictates that that would be impossible. This was the age of large families. A large percentage of young people not long out of school would have to travel far to find and be trained for work. Local recourses could not sustain such large numbers and houses were in short supply. By 1851, over fifty per-cent of the population was living more than a couple of miles from their birthplace. The advent of the bicycle made travelling to work easier and the coming of the railways added to the distance travelled.

It was the growth of towns and cities, which drew the migrant workforce. It was not just the need to earn money or to find housing it was exciting for the young and the job options more varied.

O'Hart's Irish Pedigrees of 1887, pp499, gives the 'Keary' family as [MacCeachraigh] of Galway as distinct from Carey. [*Mac and Mc means the same as O – son of*] Keating's history gives the family as being numerous in Mayo and Sligo and recites: 'there are other anglicized forms of the

Gaelic name: the extinct Mac Fhiachra or Mac Fhearadhaigh, formally both of Tyrone and Galway, the synonym of Kerin [O'Ceirin or O'Ciarain] in Mayo and Cork. The English form of Mac Giolla Céire [*giolla means boy*] being further corrupted in Carr – [O'Carra and Mac Giolla Chathair] in Galway and Donegal... and Mac Chathair in Co. Donegal. Carey is more likely to be found in Cork, Kerry and Tipperary'.

There are a small number of Gaelic Irish, mainly in Cork, Galway and Dublin, who still use the old family name of O'Ciardha. However, those who use Keary [recorded today by the place named Kilkeary] rather than Carey are based in southwest Ireland and Dublin. When the Normans, Parliamentarians and Anglo-Irish forced the Gaelic Irish off their ancient clan lands, it was to mainly western areas they went, Galway, Kerry and Cork.

It would seem that it was mainly immigrants to America, England and its Empire, at the turn of the eighteenth century, who used Kear[e]y... this more Anglicized form. Those worldwide who use the Carey form are however, more numerous.

Dublin was a setting off point for the immigrants, mostly to land at Liverpool. From there was a regular coach service to London and other chief cities where there was work to be found. If London bound then it was to Westminster, and as likely as not, *The Rookeries*' where cheap lodging was to be found – perhaps with relatives. Thomas Kearey arrived there in about 1816 with his bag of tools... ready to start a new life...