

PERSPECTIVES 1866 – 1945

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS OF HELPING CHILDREN

A journey of generosity and giving through the generations



Much of what has been covered in the period 1866 to 1945 has focused on particular aspects of the Society's work or individual recipients of its care. This has been done deliberately to avoid unnecessary statistics or long lists of prominent individuals in the Society's past. The purpose of this section is to give a little statistical background to the work as well as providing context on the events and economic background relating to the period between 1866 to 1945.

Numbers Helped & Finances 1875 – 1945 (Selected Years)

Year	Children 'On Roll'	Children Elected	Subscriptions £	Grants £
1875	1,852	407	6,169	6,169
1885	2,364	401	7,465	8,642
1895	2,661	460	8,530	10,329
1905	2,930	446	8,284	12,735
1915	2,752	516	8,185	14,669
1925	2,706	390	12,023	20,152
1935	2,068	330	8,160	18,748
1945	1,488	351	10,433	18,156

Notes

1. Numbers on the roll are the numbers being assisted at 31 December each year.
2. 'Elected' means the number who applied and were selected for help each year.
3. Subscriptions were supplemented by investment and other income.

A Changing Economic Environment 1866 - 1945

After the Famine there was economic expansion, growing agricultural incomes and improved living standards in Southern Ireland. There was however a severe downturn in the rural economy in the 1860's and agricultural depression after 1876. Emigration was also a major fact of southern life and although social inequality decreased this was due to death and emigration of the poor.

By 1880 there were modest gains in terms of economic progress. In the North from 1850 to 1880 living standards rose and subsistence crises were less devastating though industrial manufacturing cycles impacted the industrialising North. In the Society's Annual Reports commentators allude to the effect of these economic crises on subscriptions and level of grant assistance. Belfast emerged as an industrial powerhouse though there were associated levels of poverty and dislocation. In the period 1880 – 1920 the South made economic gains and the North was to move to become a reasonably advanced industrial society by 1900. As Ulster entered the First World War, however, the linen industry was shown to be vulnerable. After partition the North's staple industries were in a weak position.

There was growing unemployment and there was also economic hardships in the 1930's. During the Second World War the war economy in the North developed and there was some prosperity though before the conflict ended unemployment started to rise again and staple industries faced an uncertain future. In the South there was slow growth

in the 1930's and the wartime years were to create privations. Output in the economy decreased until 1942 when there was some limited recovery thereafter.

The Irish economic environment both North and South is a changeable one and it is intriguing that the Society's Annual Reports at times voice concerns about economic changes with contemporary commentators remarking on the effect these changes were having on subscriptions and grant expenditure alike. It is a reminder of the interplay of economic and social factors and the sensitivity of one to the other particularly in times when there was a less interventionist policy by government in both the economy and social care.

"At the last election, 53 orphans were refused admission from want of funds. Owing to small-pox, fear, and other causes, the death-rate in the community has during the past winter been exceptionally high."

Annual Report, 1871

KEY TIME LINE 1835 - 1945

YEAR	EVENT
1838	Irish Poor Law Act introduced
1845-51	The Great Famine
1854-56	The Crimean War
1860	Series of cold and wet seasons leads to agricultural depression
1866	The Presbyterian Orphan Society formed
1869	Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland
1879	An economic crisis followed by three years of bad harvests and agricultural depression
1898	Queen Victoria visits Ireland
1899-1902	Second Boer War
1901	Queen Victoria dies
1909	Old Age Pension introduced
1911	Unemployment Insurance and Health Insurance introduced
1912	Titanic sinks
1914-1918	First World War
1916	Easter Rising in Dublin; Battle of the Somme
1918	Flu epidemic reaches Britain
1919-1921	Irish War of Independence
1921	Anglo-Irish Treaty
1922-1923	Irish Civil War
1926	General Strike in Britain
1928	All women over 21 gain the right to vote
1929	Wall Street Crash sparks the Great Depression
1937	New Constitution in Ireland
1939-1945	Second World War