

**‘So the door is always open’: How did the Waterford Association London  
maintain county identity amongst Waterford immigrants to London,  
1955-1969?**

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## **Abstract**

Irish immigrants left for Britain due to a range of reasons; these included economic factors, such as severe unemployment at home, escapism and the perceived proximity of opportunity. This dissertation explores how not only Irishness, but also county identity was a significant factor in the immigrant experience for some when they arrived. It investigates this regional identity to challenge set notions of immigrants as one homogenous national group. It looks at this regional identity by focusing on the county associations that started to emerge in post-war London. These are useful as a way of looking at this regionality among Irish immigrants as they promoted and attempted to maintain county identity through their activities. The Waterford Association London is used here as a case study to examine the approach of county associations in keeping connections alive with the county they had left. It was found that this specific association used ties to Irish institutions imbued with specific Waterford characteristics, such as the Catholic Church and the Gaelic Athletic Association, to create an imagined Waterford in London. They also looked after their own through welfare activities and developed camaraderie through social and cultural events. These activities may have maintained a sense of a Waterford community in London among some Waterford immigrants, especially members. However, some of the values that they perceived should be maintained were often conservative in nature, for example the traditional role of women and the church within the organisation. Membership figures and attendance at events ranged in the hundreds, though this was not a particularly large amount relative to the overall number of Irish immigrants who came to London. Thus, joining these associations or being reminded of county identity was not for everyone. However, for those that did get involved it kept a door open on an important part of their identity.

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## **Personal statement**

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open university or any other University or institution. Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A883.

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## **Abbreviations**

CICA	Council of Irish County Associations
GAA	The Gaelic Athletic Association
LMU AIB	London Metropolitan University, Archives of the Irish in Britain
TD	Teachta Dála (member of the Irish Parliament Dáil Éireann)
WAL	Waterford Association London but also represents the earlier name of the organisation before 1967, the Waterford Men's Association London

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

Immigrants in history are often defined solely by their national identity, this dissertation seeks to question such a narrative. Instead, the significance of regional identity in immigrants' experiences is examined. For this, the dissertation focuses on Irish immigrants to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. It uses county structures within Ireland as a basis for this regionality and looks at how county associations created sub-cultures within the Irish immigrant community during this period based on perceived values and identities maintained from these different counties. It specifically explores the history of one of these associations, the Waterford Association London, between 1955 and 1969 to help illuminate and explore these issues. The main question of this dissertation investigates how county associations like the Waterford Association London (WAL) maintained this county identity with immigrants from the county. As a secondary question, this study will look at how common this regional or county identity was among Irish and more specifically, Waterford immigrants in London during this period by looking at membership numbers, attendance at events and the range of activities conducted by these county associations.

The WAL was established in 1955. It sprang from a need to give support to people from County Waterford when they arrived and subsequently settled in London. A broader history of the WAL during this period has not previously been carried out. It is hoped that by researching this topic, there will be a better understanding of the experiences of Irish and more specifically Waterford immigrants to Britain in this period. One of the other main motivations was to look at history from below. A chance to look at histories of immigrants that were often marginalised in the historical cannon.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter one includes the methodology and historiography for this dissertation. In chapter two a background is given to Irish immigration to Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. Push and pull factors are considered and discussed for Irish immigrants as a whole and then more specifically for those from Waterford. In chapter three the origins and activities of different Irish county associations in London are assessed to show the importance of intercounty networks. In chapter four, the ideals and objectives of the WAL are investigated, along with

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<sup>1</sup> John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History*, 7th edn (Routledge, 2015), p. 60.



its role in maintaining religious, sporting and cultural allegiances to the county. The use of welfare and social events are also analysed to examine how Waterford identity was promoted. Furthermore, this chapter investigates the numbers that attended these activities and explores the role of gender and class within the organisation.

## *1.1 Methodology*

For this dissertation, a range of primary sources were used to illustrate the extent of intercounty allegiances among Irish and Waterford immigrants. Much primary source information originates from documents created by the intercounty associations during the 1950s and 1960s. The Archives of the Irish in Britain at the London Metropolitan University has been a useful source for researching these documents. These archives hold many documents that are specific to the WAL including original constitutions from 1956 and 1967, newsletters and various correspondences. A selection of these were available online on the archive website. However, visits to the actual archives were of immense importance to view a wider range of sources and to avoid the potential selection bias implicit in putting some documents online. This ensured a more thorough investigation of documents that may have been deemed less important by the archivist like receipts, tickets and other ephemera.

As there was a wide range of sources from different county associations, this research looked at a sample of documents from these associations. The focus of this research concentrated on documents from the WAL to gain a glimpse of the workings of one of what became thirty-two county associations by early 1960s. Although there were other Waterford associations within Britain during this period such as the Waterford Association of Birmingham, the focus was on the London association due to the accessibility and range of documents available. The choices of 'Waterford' and 'London' also gave the research a particular personal resonance and interest.

The period from 1955 to the end of 1969 is the main period chosen to research. This encompasses the time when most county associations like the WAL were set up and exerted most influence. Moreover, the duration is sufficient to gauge changes and continuity to county associations over several years. Furthermore, there are some periods within this time frame which provide more documents like the late 1950s and late 1960s and some other periods where information is uneven or missing entirely, especially during the early 1960s. A lot of the archive documents that have been retained in the London Metropolitan University have

come from former members of the WAL during this period such as Mary Allen who was given some of this documentation by former Chairperson Jim Griffin.<sup>2</sup> Inevitably there has been some selectivity and perhaps luck in what has been retained and lasted. Thus, the potential bias in what has been preserved in the archives must also be considered.

Information from these documents has been triangulated and supplemented with reports and photos of the county associations' activities and in particular, WAL activities from a variety of newspapers like the *Irish Press*, *The Irish Times*, *Munster Express*, *Waterford News and Star*, *Dungarvan Leader* and *Dungarvan Observer*. Here the potential bias in reports should be considered, especially as county associations like the WAL often used these as a means of promoting their associations.<sup>3</sup> Added to this, documentaries like *The Irish in England* (with interviews from immigrants involved in county associations) and memoirs like Waterford born Donal Foley's *Three Villages* and other previously recorded interviews have been used to give individual and often alternative reflections from Irish/Waterford immigrants during this period. It is hoped that the consideration of these sources creates a sense of how county identity was maintained and where allegiance lay for some immigrants during this time. The validity of using such a small sample of individual immigrant views could quite rightly be questioned as only representing a small section of those immigrants who had arrived in Britain. Furthermore, Cowling believed that all autobiographies are misleading.<sup>4</sup> However, it is often through memoirs or oral histories that the inner thoughts and emotions of immigrants are revealed.<sup>5</sup> Analysing the primary sources considers how values surrounding issues like welfare, religion, politics, gender and class during this period were enforced and maintained by the WAL.

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<sup>2</sup> London Metropolitan University, Archives of the Irish in Britain, AIB/ICA/16 Box 53, Note about provenance.

<sup>3</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/21 Box 7, WAL constitution 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Cowling, *The impact of Labour, 1920-1924* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> street: faith and community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven, 2002), p. 150.

## 1.2 Literature review

The historiography of immigrants has often focused on the wider perspectives linked to nationalities and larger ethnic groupings.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, more specific studies of Irish immigrants have looked at Irish immigrants as a more homogenous group.<sup>7</sup> Historians of Irish immigrants have more recently explored how these immigrants are not only defined by their national identity but how other characteristics like regionality help explain their often-varied experiences. Academic work from historians like Ridge, Nyhan, Scully, Wills, Garcia and Delaney suggests that these inter-county affiliations were more important than previously assumed.

John T. Ridge's work looks at county associations in New York from their birth in the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, he comments on Waterford County associations that were present in the early 1870s in New York.<sup>9</sup> While this falls outside the geographic and chronological focus on Waterford immigrants to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s it can nonetheless act as an interesting comparison of regionalised immigration within different countries. Like Ridge, Miryam Nyhan has researched mainly from the point of view of county associations in America, more specifically looking at how these associations functioned in New York from 1945 to 1965.<sup>10</sup> She finds that they often attempted to recreate aspects of their home county within their new country of residence.<sup>11</sup> In further studies she found members of these associations often acted with a collective identity.<sup>12</sup> While there is more overlap between her time frame and that of this study than there is between Ridge's work and this study, the overlap does not cover the years 1965-69 and the geographical context is different.

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<sup>6</sup> Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British society, 1871-1971* (Macmillan, 1988), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, *The Irish in Britain, 1815–1939* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1989), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> John T. Ridge, 'Irish county societies in New York, 1880-1914', in *The New York Irish*, ed. by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 275-300.

<sup>9</sup> Ridge, 'Irish county societies in New York, 1880-1914', p. 279.

<sup>10</sup> Miriam Nyhan, 'County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965', *New York Irish History* 22.3 (2008), pp. 27-36 (p. 27).

<sup>11</sup> Nyhan, 'County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965', p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Miriam Nyhan, 'Associational behaviour in context: Irish immigrant origins of identity in the diaspora' *American Journal of Irish Studies*, 8 (2011), pp. 138-147.

Looking at Britain, the heterogeneous identity of Irish immigrants, if recognised by historians, is more likely to examine factors such as religion, gender and class rather than regionality.<sup>13</sup> However, some historians and writers on Irish immigrants in the post-war period have mentioned how regionality may have been more important than previously assumed in shaping experiences. Enda Delaney refers to county associations in Britain more directly, claiming that they wanted to foster regional identities by being social outlets and offering welfare to those from their county while also making the counterargument that some Irish immigrants had nothing to do with these organisations.<sup>14</sup> However as O'Connell mentions, Delaney's lack of primary sources to base this assertion on is problematic.<sup>15</sup> The brevity of his discussion of county associations leaves a gap for a more in-depth discussion of these groups. Moreover, this work by Delaney from 2007 on post-war Irish immigrants to Britain has now been succeeded in chronology by Scully 2013, Garcia 2016 and Wills 2017.

Marc Scully has also discussed the importance of linking Irish immigrant identity to that of their county of origin.<sup>16</sup> His work fits in well with the geographical focus of this study, specifically looking at the Irish in England. However, while he does use examples of the Irish county associations in the 1950s and 1960s to illustrate county identity, he also widens this to look at later periods right up to the experiences of more recent Irish immigrants to Britain.<sup>17</sup> As a result, some examples and discussions in his work fall outside the period focused on in this study. Nonetheless, Scully's point that the role of county identity in the Irish immigrant experience has been overlooked is one that this study aims to redress using the case study of the WAL.<sup>18</sup>

Clair Wills argues when discussing post-war immigration to Britain, that the British merely saw the Irish as just Irish whereas Irish labourers often drew clear distinctions between urban

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<sup>13</sup> Donald MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*, 2nd edn (Macmillan, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 172.

<sup>15</sup> Sean O'Connell, review of Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (2007), *Irish Historical Studies*, 36 (2009), pp. 471-473 (p. 472).

<sup>16</sup> Marc Scully, 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks: County identity, 'authenticity' and the Irish diaspora', *Irish Studies Review*, 21.2 (2013), pp. 143-163.

<sup>17</sup> Scully, 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks', p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> Scully, 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks', p. 161.

Dubliners and rural ‘cluchies’ from the countryside.<sup>19</sup> Esteves persuasively argues how Wills skilfully uses autobiographical sources to illuminate Irish experiences.<sup>20</sup> Wills discusses how county prejudice affected how much money an Irish labourer could earn saying that the ‘gangers’ (foreman) would not give work to individuals who were not from their county.<sup>21</sup> Wills also illustrated that violence and fighting during this period could be along tribal lines.<sup>22</sup> She also touches briefly on county associations’ contributions to providing different types of dances and events even noting ‘Waterford events’ but does not explore in-depth the relevance of these events to promoting county identity.<sup>23</sup>

Miki Gracia has attempted the most complete historical discussion of the role of these county associations thus far. Her work is more concentrated on London, giving a background to the county associations' origins in the late 1940s and 1950s.<sup>24</sup> She also promulgates the idea, like Delaney, that they filled a need for Irish immigrants to meet and help their own communities, in this way helping to maintain county identity. But she goes further than Delaney in arguing that, despite its small size, the clannish nature of Ireland compared to England led to an enhanced, more defined regionality through accents, dialects and customs.<sup>25</sup> She argues that this meant county affiliations often felt like family ones for some Irish immigrants and that it was important to have connections to this.<sup>26</sup> Notably, while mentioning other county associations, there is no reference to the WAL.

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<sup>19</sup> Clair Wills, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (Penguin, 2017), p. 356.

<sup>20</sup> Olivier Esteves, review of Clair Wills, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (2017), *Annales Histoire Sciences Sociales*, 76.4 (2021), pp. 863-865.

<sup>21</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 137.

<sup>22</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 132.

<sup>23</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 132.

<sup>24</sup> Miki Garcia, *Rebuilding London: Irish Migrants in Post-War Britain* (The History Press, 2016), p.175.

<sup>25</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>26</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

## Chapter 2 Push and pull factors for Waterford and Irish immigrants to Britain



\*TEXT REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\*

As the poet Cavafy recognised above, the immigrant may never be free or want to be free of their past countries, counties or cities. Enda Delaney comments that it is not as simple as leaving a country and then an immigrant merely adapting to their new one. He argues that there is a constant battle going on between absorbing the new cultures and values and maintaining old ones.<sup>2</sup> Clair Wills also promulgates the idea of both constantly looking back to the old country while at the same time trying to move forward and make a life in the new country where the immigrant has settled.<sup>3</sup> As she notes about her own mother, an Irish immigrant to London, though her life was in England, ‘Ireland remained alive in her’.<sup>4</sup> For Irish immigrants it may have been more specific than just what ‘remained’ from Ireland but also what ‘remained’ from the region or county they left.

This chapter examines some of the push and pull factors that made people emigrate from Ireland and more specifically Waterford during this period. It will investigate how mainly economic conditions in both Waterford and Ireland affected the decisions people made around emigration during the 1950s and 1960s. Fitzgerald and Lambkin argued that push and pull factors are often based around variations in these economic conditions, usually high unemployment in the homeland versus employment opportunities in the land being migrated

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<sup>1</sup> C. P. Cavafy, *The City’ from C. P. Cavafy: Collected Poems*. trans. by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (Princeton University press, 1992), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, (Oxford University press, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Clair Wills, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (Penguin, 2017), p. 354.

<sup>4</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 354.

to.<sup>5</sup> To understand the experiences of these immigrants one must not only look at their lives in London but also explore the circumstances that they left in Ireland. Their part in Irish history did not necessarily stop once they left. Delaney argues that national history has often been ‘myopic’ to anything which falls outside its national borders and argues persuasively that a more transnational view of history needs to be embraced.<sup>6</sup> However, he cautions that looking at a bigger transnational picture can be fraught with added complexity as well as the danger of overlooking the importance of the context of particular places to the immigrant's story.<sup>7</sup> This is why investigating the push factors of not only Ireland but also the push factors and context of the County Waterford is immensely important.

## 2.1 *The pull of Britain*

The Irish have had a long tradition of immigration to Britain. Although there had been significant immigration beforehand, the Irish Famine during the 1840s and 1850s drove larger numbers of Irish to Britain mainly seeking employment.<sup>8</sup> Statistics suggest that almost four in ten Irish people born after the famine would emigrate and make new lives in another country.<sup>9</sup> Shifting patterns of emigration continued into the twentieth century, fluctuating in numbers but becoming woven into the fabric of limited choices available for many of those coming of age in Ireland.<sup>10</sup> During and after the Second World War, Wills makes the point that Irish labour was greatly needed in Britain.<sup>11</sup> Thousands of immigrants came from Ireland to Britain, the men mainly helping in construction and building the new motorway system whereas the women worked on assembly lines in factories as well as in areas that required more education like nursing or teaching.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History 1607-2007* (Macmillan, 2008), p. 302.

<sup>6</sup> Enda Delaney, ‘Directions in historiography: Our island story? Towards a transnational history of late modern Ireland’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 37.148 (2011), pp. 599-621 (p. 600).

<sup>7</sup> Delaney, ‘Directions in historiography’, p. 620.

<sup>8</sup> Donald MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750–1939*, 2nd edn (Macmillan, 2010), p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Delaney, ‘Directions in historiography’, p. 601.

<sup>10</sup> Delaney, ‘Directions in historiography’, p. 601.

<sup>11</sup> Clair Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> William J. Smyth, ‘Ireland and Northern Ireland’, in *The Encyclopaedia of European Migration and Minorities*, ed. by Bade, Emmer, Lucassen and Oltmer, pp. 27-33.

These were some of the economic pull factors that attracted the Irish to Britain. But added to this was often the pull of escape and anonymity from a country that some saw as restrictive and confining.<sup>13</sup> Bill McGraynor who fled the experiences of an abusive industrial school commented ‘I never went to the Irish clubs, see I always had it in my head that people would ask questions’.<sup>14</sup> The Irish who emigrated as a means of escape were probably not as inclined to make connections to those from their home counties as it may have meant being too close, too parochial in connecting them to the cultural and social experiences they wanted to avoid. Another immigrant to London during this period Donal MacAmlaigh felt that coming to London was an exciting adventure coming from 1950s Ireland, the sense of the otherworldly was present recalling ‘I used to look up at the moon and think that’s the same moon that they see at home. A different place, not just a different country’.<sup>15</sup> It was also easier for the Irish, compared to other immigrants, to come to Britain as they were still guaranteed free movement of travel through the provision of a common travel area.<sup>16</sup>

For some, emigration from Ireland to Britain often felt temporary or transitory in nature. Wills comments that Irish immigrants only needed five pounds and a long weekend to go back home, many going regularly during the holidays.<sup>17</sup> Jim Griffin WAL member in the 1960s said you could regularly have a most ‘enjoyable holiday’ back in Ireland while remaining working in London.<sup>18</sup> In fact, some like Waterford native James Shanahan had come to London in 1963 to visit his brother on holiday and as he said ‘see, I forgot to go back, like a lot of people I thought the grass was greener, didn’t I’.<sup>19</sup> However, some like Mary Allen were left disappointed when they initially arrived in London. Her first impressions of London were that ‘everything was so dirty and grimy and closed in and I was so home sick

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<sup>13</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, ‘De Valera’s Ireland, 1932-58’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History*, ed. Alvin Jackson (Oxford Academic, 2013), pp. 670-691 (p. 687).

<sup>14</sup> *The Forgotten Irish*, TV3, 29 April 2009, 8pm.

<sup>15</sup> *The Irish in England Part 1*, Channel 4, 16 October 1983, 9.20pm.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard Ryan, ‘The Common Travel Area between Britain and Ireland’, *The Modern Law Review* 64.6 (2001), pp. 855-874 (p. 855).

<sup>17</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 229.

<sup>18</sup> ‘City chatter’, *Munster Express*, 25 August 1967, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> *The Forgotten Irish*, TV3, 29 April 2009, 8pm.



that all I wanted to do was turn around and go home'.<sup>20</sup> The pull of work, opportunities and excitement in London was often negated by the counter pull of home, in this case Waterford.

## 2.2 *The Irish push factors*

'It was as though I had only just found out what they had known for years: Ireland was a banjaxed country.' recalls Waterford immigrant, George O'Brien, as he left for London during this period.<sup>21</sup> The period from 1955 to 1969 was certainly one of mixed economic fortunes for Ireland. The 1950s and especially the later years of the decade which saw the birth of the WAL were characterised by a lack of jobs and economic security. Between 1949 and 1956 gross domestic product had only grown by eight percent in Ireland compared to twenty-one percent in Britain.<sup>22</sup> There was a continued steady decline in the number of people in employment, and especially in those working in areas like agriculture which declined from 597,000 workers in 1946 to 378,000 by 1961.<sup>23</sup> Harrison comments that many that immigrated came from rural areas.<sup>24</sup> This may indicate that many who emigrated from Waterford also came from the rural parts of the county. Lyons states that net emigration had increased in Ireland to 212,003 for the period 1956-61, three times the pre-war rates and higher than any other period in the twentieth century before this.<sup>25</sup> This is similar to Ferriter's assertion that one of the only ways to overcome poverty was to emigrate, stating that between 1951 and 1961 the numbers emigrating had swollen to over half a million.<sup>26</sup> In 1957 alone 60,000 Irish emigrated.<sup>27</sup> Eighty percent of these immigrants usually going to Britain.<sup>28</sup> These numbers illustrate how during this period, those in power were unable or unwilling to tackle

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<sup>20</sup> *The Irish in England Part 1*, Channel 4, 16 October 1983, 9.20pm.

<sup>21</sup> George O'Brien, *Dancehall Days* (Lilliput press, 1988), p. 165.

<sup>22</sup> F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (Fontana Press, 1971), p. 624.

<sup>23</sup> Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p. 624.

<sup>24</sup> Gerry Harrison, *The Scattering: A History of the London Irish Centre, 1954-2004* (Historical Publications, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p. 624.

<sup>26</sup> Ferriter, 'De Valera's Ireland', p. 687.

<sup>27</sup> Ferriter, 'De Valera's Ireland', p. 687.

<sup>28</sup> Grainne O'Keeffe-Vigneron, 'Celebrating Irishness in London' in *The Irish Celebrating Festive and Tragic Overtones*, ed. by Marie-Claire Considère-Charon, Philippe Laplace, Michel Savaric, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 180-191 (p. 181).

Ireland's social and economic problems.<sup>29</sup> Ferriter argues that this was a by-product of a rejection of more socialist ideas, led mainly by the Catholic church.<sup>30</sup> Patrick Magee, an Irish priest in London during this period, commented that emigration 'was necessary, they all could not exist in Ireland'.<sup>31</sup> For some, emigration was seen as a solution to Ireland's problems.

In May 1958 T. K. Whitaker, the secretary of the Department of Finance presented his development report for the Irish economy to the government named, *Economic Development*. Lyons describes this as revolutionary and 'a watershed in the modern economic history of the country.'<sup>32</sup> He argues persuasively that it had a dual function as both looking forward to a better economic future for the country and an indictment of the economic policies of the previous forty years which had led to the mass emigration seen so starkly in the late 1950s.<sup>33</sup> The implementation of this plan under Sean Lemass' government (1959-1966) led to the gross national product growing on average by over four percent per year. However, Girvan is more critical of Lemass' legacy and notes that because comparatively speaking the Irish economy performed better in the 1960s than the 1950s, Lemass' tenure is seen in perhaps an overly positive light.<sup>34</sup> But nonetheless it appears changes were evident that would allow Irish people to stay and find work in their own country. *The Irish Times* reported in November 1962 that unemployment had fallen by over eight percent from the previous year.<sup>35</sup> The article goes further to point out that when compared to similar figures in 1957 unemployment assistance had reduced by thirty-five percent.<sup>36</sup> By 1966 the census was showing that the population within the Republic of Ireland had actually grown and that emigration had fallen from the net rate of 14.8 per 1000 from 1956-61 to 5.7 between 1961 and 1966.<sup>37</sup> Exports in 1968 were up by sixteen percent on 1967 figures.<sup>38</sup> R. F. Foster similarly argues that

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<sup>29</sup> Ferriter, 'De Valera's Ireland', p. 687.

<sup>30</sup> Ferriter, 'De Valera's Ireland', p. 687.

<sup>31</sup> *The Irish in England part 1*, Channel 4, 16 October 1983, 9.20pm.

<sup>32</sup> Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p. 628.

<sup>33</sup> Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p. 628.

<sup>34</sup> Brian Girvan, 'The Lemass Legacy and the Making of Contemporary Ireland, 1958–2011', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History*, ed. Alvin Jackson (Oxford Academic, 2013), pp. 726-742 (p. 729).

<sup>35</sup> 'Big Fall in Numbers Unemployed', *The Irish Times*, 14 November 1962, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> 'Big Fall in Numbers Unemployed', *The Irish Times*, 14 November 1962, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p. 630.

<sup>38</sup> 'Overseas selling', *The Irish Times*, 1 January 1969, p. 13.

Whitaker's formula had begun to work with 350 new foreign companies setting up in Ireland from 1960-1969.<sup>39</sup> As will be discussed later, this improvement is reflected in the height of membership and number of county associations in the late 1950s and early 1960s compared to evidence that some associations were beginning to struggle for numbers and perhaps relevance in the late 1960s. What was good for Ireland at least in terms of its economy and modernisation was ironically never good for the sustainability of county associations as in general, Irish people were less likely to emigrate.

### 2.3 *Waterford immigrants – the push factors*

As the founder members of the WAL came together in London in September 1955 for the first meeting of the then Waterford's Men's Association, the problems of unemployment seemed more acute in County Waterford than in many other areas of Ireland.<sup>40</sup> Waterford city had the second highest number of unemployed within the Munster area.<sup>41</sup> Addressing a hundred unemployed men and women outside the employment exchange in Waterford in July 1957 local man James Duggan called for organisations to represent the desperate situation of the unemployed: 'a dejecting thing, how do you expect someone to live on thirty-eight shillings a week with seven children [..... ] we don't want charity from St. Vincent's De Paul, we want work'.<sup>42</sup> In May 1958, a meeting of Irish unions discussed the need for the city of Waterford and the Irish state to tackle the problems regarding the lack of employment in the building trade.<sup>43</sup> Thus, many of these out-of-work builders may have been lured to the building sites of Britain. While in the same month, the National Waste Paper Co Ltd at Granagh, Waterford, announced it was suspending operations with the loss of all jobs.<sup>44</sup> In June 1958 Waterford's Teachta Dála (TD) Thaddeus Lynch argued that the ruling Fianna Fail party had lost Waterford exports of bacon and live pigs and lost out on other factories locating in the county.<sup>45</sup> Again, this gives an insight into problems at the time, but as ever, political bias may

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<sup>39</sup> R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (Penguin, 1988), p. 579.

<sup>40</sup> London Metropolitan University, Archives of the Irish in Britian, AIB/ICA/1 Box 5, Twenty-first anniversary leaflet WAL.

<sup>41</sup> 'Numbers of Unemployed Analysed', *The Irish Times*, 19 November 1955, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> 'Organisation for unemployed', *The Irish Times*, 21 June 1957, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> 'State Urged to Provide Work', *The Irish Times*, 10 May 1958, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> 'Wastepaper Factory to Close', *The Irish Times*, 23 May 1958, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> 'Proposal for Better North-South Trading', *The Irish Times*, 18 June 1958, p. 8.

cloud where the real blame lay. Fianna Fail had only the previous year replaced Lynch's own Fianna Gael party's coalition led government from 1954 to 1957. Lyons remarks that this coalition's tenure had a bleak existence.<sup>46</sup> In addition to economic difficulties, other issues such as housing shortages and tuberculosis were still prominent throughout the county.<sup>82</sup>

However, by the 1960s there were positive signs resulting from the changes that Lemass' government was beginning to implement. In 1961 £8000 was provided to Waterford from central government for employment schemes.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, throughout the county industries were beginning to expand like the Waterford Co-op Society that produced dairy products or the Kilmeaden Cheese factory which opened in 1965. As these industries drew their raw materials from the local countryside, they in turn helped Waterford farmers.<sup>48</sup> By 1967 in a debate in the Dail the prospect of £400,000 being provided by the government for industrial estates in Galway and Waterford was discussed.<sup>49</sup> A letter from the Mayor of Waterford to the WAL dated 12 October 1967 claims he might be unable to attend their annual dinner dance as he 'cannot miss the formal opening of the Lisduggan industrial estate.'<sup>50</sup> Moreover, at a speech given by the then Taoiseach Jack Lynch in Cork in that same year, the president of the Cork chamber of commerce, a Mr Eric Sutton commented that Waterford had taken a lead on Cork in terms of industry.<sup>51</sup> William Keneally TD for Waterford in 1968 excitedly commented at the WAL's twelfth annual dinner dance that 'great strides were being made in Waterford in industrial development and that building was taking place in the fields around the city where people once roamed'.<sup>52</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s many Waterford people who once 'roamed' its fields had gone on to roam the streets of London. By the late 1960s, some would come back again from London to roam the new factories in those fields and some would not return but 'always end up' roaming the fields they had left behind.

In conclusion, the circumstances of high unemployment in Waterford and Ireland in the late 1950s led many to leave Ireland for better opportunities in London. However, some left for

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<sup>46</sup> Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p. 580.

<sup>47</sup> 'Emergency Work schemes' *The Irish Times*, 15th June 1961, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> P. Power, *History of Waterford: City and County* (DE Paor, 1998) p. 295.

<sup>49</sup> 'Yesterday in the Dail', *The Irish Times*, 25 October 1967, p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 67, Letter from Mayor 1967.

<sup>51</sup> 'Census of Distribution Planned', *The Irish Times*, 4 Feb 1967, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> 'Twelfth annual dinner dance', *Waterford News and Star*, 08 November 1968, p. 14.

different reasons such as adventure or to escape the conservative values predominant in Waterford and Ireland at the time. By the late 1960s the economic situation in both Waterford and Ireland was beginning to change and emigration numbers began to recede. The next chapter will examine how some of these newly arrived Irish immigrants in London became involved with Irish county associations. These associations hoped to make them feel a sense of their home counties psychologically even though they had left these counties physically.

## Chapter 3 The county associations

'I feel more of a foreigner with them than I do with foreigners themselves'.<sup>1</sup> Donal MacAmlaigh's quote about Irish immigrants from other counties illustrates an implicit need for organisations that drew together members from their respective counties. This chapter will investigate how this longing for maintaining some county identity was evident in immigrants not only from Waterford but immigrants from other Irish counties who resided in London. It will look at how county associations attempted to keep connections to their counties alive. Examining the origins of not only London county associations but those that also started earlier in America.

### 3.1 *The origins of counties and county associations*

County identity itself, Scully argues, was shaped into its more present formats in the early seventeenth century by English colonialism often for administrative purposes and to repress rebellions.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century the importance of the county as a point of reference for identity had been well established.<sup>3</sup> The significance of kinship within an area was rooted in Irish society where slang, dialects and customs varied considerably between localities and counties.<sup>4</sup> Ridge comments that this organised need for regional county identity happened much earlier with Irish immigrants in America than Britain with the first Irish county associations being organised as early as the 1840s in New York.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Garcia says that county associations in America were well established before their formation in Britain.<sup>6</sup> In 1900 there were thirty-two such county organisations in Manhattan alone, some larger counties like Cork and Kerry had upwards of 500 members each.<sup>7</sup> By the post-war

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<sup>1</sup> Donal MacAmlaigh, *An Irish Navy-The Diary of an Exile*, trans. by Valentin Iremonger (Collins Press, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Marc Scully, 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks: County identity, 'authenticity' and the Irish diaspora', *Irish Studies Review*, 21.2 (2013), pp. 143-163 (p. 146).

<sup>3</sup> Scully, 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks', p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Miki Garcia, *Rebuilding London: Irish Migrants in Post-War Britain* (The History Press, 2016), p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> John T. Ridge, 'Irish county societies in New York, 1880-1914', in *The New York Irish*, ed. by Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 275-300 (p. 278).

<sup>6</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>7</sup> Ridge, 'Irish county societies in New York, 1880-1914', p. 280.

period just as Irish county associations began to grow in Britain, the membership of county associations in New York began to dwindle as the number of Irish immigrants settling here began to diminish.<sup>8</sup> However, Nyhan finds that by the mid-1950s in New York, the associations of larger counties like Cork still had between 350 and 400 members.<sup>9</sup>

Scully argues that the evidence of the beginnings of county associations in Britain is less clear before the 1950s.<sup>10</sup> However, Garcia notes that the first county association for Irish immigrants in Britain was set up for Donegal immigrants in London in 1947.<sup>11</sup> These associations often gave their members a sense of belonging where they could get news from back home and speak in regional dialects (both Donegal and Waterford had Gaeltachts at this time).<sup>12</sup> Their purpose, at least initially, was often to help immigrants from their own counties coming to places like London to find firstly accommodation and then work.<sup>13</sup> Their other main aim was to maintain county links through cultural and social activities.<sup>14</sup>

The Council of Irish County Associations (CICA) in London was formed in 1953 to manage and coordinate the activities of these various county associations in London.<sup>15</sup> In some cases, these county associations also cared for those from the county with welfare issues when unemployed, ill or even helped with funeral costs.<sup>16</sup> Doris Daly who was involved with the CICA commented that these associations:

Started off initially for people from a particular village or town meeting in the church or church hall, having a drink or a chat. Perhaps one of them was ill or killed on a building site so a benefit dance was held to raise money to return the remains to Ireland and from things like this the different counties' associations really grew.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Miriam Nyhan, 'County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965', *New York Irish History* 22.3 (2008), pp. 27-36 (p. 29).

<sup>9</sup> Nyhan, 'County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965', p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Scully, 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks', p. 147.

<sup>11</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>12</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>13</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>14</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>15</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>17</sup> *The Irish in England part 1*, Channel 4, 16 October 1983, 9.20pm.

Donal Foley, a Waterford immigrant who worked as a journalist in London, said that by the 1950s the biggest number of new societies for Irish immigrants were the county associations and that they were ‘born of a need for a particular identity in the large anonymous community of Britain’.<sup>18</sup> The identity in this case was rooted in the region or county they came from.

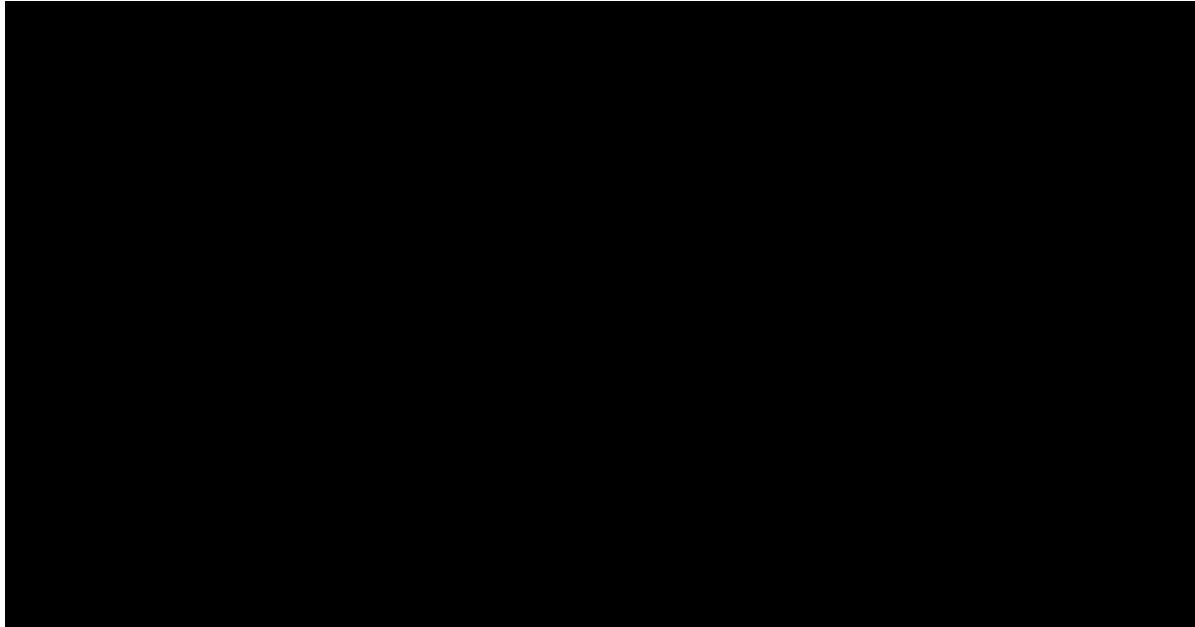


FIG. 3.1 Dancers at the united counties dance in November 1956. Source: ‘United Counties Dance’, *The Irish Times*, 10 November 1956, p. 7. **\*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

As Penny Tinkler argues, it is important to reflect on the intended meaning of a photograph.<sup>19</sup> In FIG. 3.1 it appears that the CICA is using the image to promote the popularity and excitement of the county associations in Irish newspapers. This was one of the first dances organised by the CICA. It had the support of sixteen county associations who were based in London at the time with the newly founded WAL being one of them.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it showed that social activities were seen as an effective way of promoting both Irish and county regional identity. By 1958 the WAL committee stated that they were now

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<sup>18</sup> Donal Foley, *Three Villages* (Ballylough Books, 2003), p. 103.

<sup>19</sup> Penny Tinkler, *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research* (Sage, 2014), p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> ‘United Counties Dance’, *The Irish Times*, 10 November 1956, p. 7.



fully affiliated and recognised by the CICA as the ‘only official representative for all Waterford people city and county in London’.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2 *The range of regional county identities*

Nyhan argues, when examining New York county associations, that some of their operations and goals were similar but that they were not homogeneous.<sup>22</sup> Evidence suggests concerns and activities of the different county associations in London were often varied and regionalised despite the CICA co-ordinating some activities. Associations representing Northern Irish counties like the Fermanagh Association London had concerns in 1957 about getting new industrial projects set up in Fermanagh. As a result, they hoped to set up an industrial friendly society under what they called the ‘McCarron plan’.<sup>23</sup>

In early 1959 *The Irish Times* reported that there were now twenty-one associations with over 3000 members extending across most parts of London.<sup>24</sup> However, by 1961 the Irish population in Britain was over 945,000, with a substantial percentage of these in London.<sup>25</sup> This shows that these associations were not for everyone. However, their appeal continued to widen. Mr. Michael Quinn, Chairman of the CICA, attending the WAL annual dinner dance in 1962 commented that the ‘counties association movement had spread and that it recognised no border in London’.<sup>26</sup> This seemed to suggest that all thirty-two counties in Ireland both south and north of the border were welcome. Wills comments on how in a single month in 1964 the Irish centre held a variety of county themed events: ‘a Cork men’s social, a Mayo men’s bacon and cabbage supper dance, the Roscommon association dance and the Galway association bacon and cabbage supper’.<sup>27</sup> Some of the county association events became a who’s who of the county and the place to be if you wanted to meet certain people from your county. The presence of the Bishop of Cloyne and the parish priest from Inniscarra at the

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<sup>21</sup> ‘They met after terrifying thunderstorms’, *Munster Express*, 19 September 1958, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Nyhan, ‘County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965’, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Profits will aid Waterford people’, *The Irish Times*, 12 October 1957, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> ‘London letter’, *The Irish Times*, 19 February 1959, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Grainne O’Keeffe-Vigneron, ‘Celebrating Irishness in London’ in *The Irish Celebrating Festive and Tragic Overtones*, ed. by Marie-Claire Considère-Charon, Philippe Laplace, Michel Savaric, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 180-191 (p. 181).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Waterford men’s night in London’, *Munster Express*, 16 November 1962, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Clair Wills, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (Penguin, 2017) p. 128.

Cork men's social in 1964 seem to indicate that it was necessary to have some sort of local moral guardians at these events to make sure they stayed within the realms of perceived decency.<sup>28</sup> At the Piccadilly hotel in 1965 for the Cork association's annual dinner were, Cork native and future Irish Taoiseach, Jack Lynch and Secretary of State George Brown.<sup>29</sup>

Despite regional county differences and concerns, counties often worked for each other's benefit. A letter thanking the WAL from the Meath Association for donating to support the wife of their vice chairman who had recently died demonstrates that county associations did not operate in isolation but often there was a sense of cooperation present between them.<sup>30</sup> One of the main social activities organised by the CICA was the intercounty quiz. This allowed networking and connections to be developed among county associations, but at the same time promoted competitiveness and pride in their counties' accomplishments, thus enhancing county identity. The 1968 intercounty quiz final was between the Cavan Association London and the WAL.<sup>31</sup> This inter county rivalry is something that Nyhan also notes with county associations in New York.<sup>32</sup>

During the period of peak membership of the associations in the early 1960s all thirty-two counties had an association.<sup>33</sup> However, some soon disappeared towards the end of the 1960s as better economic conditions began to act as an incentive for both emigration to reduce and immigrants to return home.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, some associations struggled during the late 1960s. In a letter to the WAL from 1968 the Tipperary Association London indicates that it has only just reformed, indicating a lack of numbers or interest may have been a problem.<sup>35</sup> In addition, a letter from 1968 from the CICA expresses frustration and disappointment saying only eighteen associations supported one of their dinner dances and raffle draws.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, a June 1969 Limerick Association London newsletter talks excitedly about their annual trip to Brighton and how they were sending out 200 copies of the newsletter each month. However,

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<sup>28</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 129.

<sup>29</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 129.

<sup>30</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 67, Letter to Meath Association 1968.

<sup>31</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 67, CICA newsletter May 1969.

<sup>32</sup> Nyhan, 'County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965', p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>34</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>35</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Letter from Tipperary Association 1968.

<sup>36</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 67, Letter from CICA 1968.

the strength of the association is undercut by the concern that less than one hundred people renewed their membership for 1969.<sup>37</sup> A seventy-seven year old member of the Limerick association said some of the reasons for this may be that in Ireland there were ‘improvements in roads and housing’ and that ‘things seem to be shaping up well over there’.<sup>38</sup> As mentioned in chapter two, economic improvements had begun to influence Irish emigration patterns. Nyhan notes that because of this county associations were constantly worried about recruiting members.<sup>39</sup> Scully comments that while during the 1950s and 1960s these county associations were at their most popular and important in immigrant lives, towards the end of this period their influence on Irish immigrants began to dwindle.<sup>40</sup> A newsletter from the CICA from April 1969 appealed for more people to join associations.<sup>41</sup> This included calls for getting more ‘lady members as they would recruit their boyfriends as well’ and another idea is for county beauty contests like a Miss Donegal or a Miss Cork.<sup>42</sup> What seems at first an enlightened idea in getting more women involved in county associations becomes in the end a declaration of their second-class citizenship in the eyes of the CICA. As Wills comments, the role of gender could be significant in the different experiences of Irish immigrants.<sup>43</sup>

Many county associations used the London Irish Centre in Camden as their base. The CICA seems to have acted as a conduit to organising the use of the Irish centre. A letter dated 23 November 1969 discusses which Saturday had been allocated to which county association for the following year, for example 7 March for the WAL.<sup>44</sup> Despite shared premises, different county associations still had some different preoccupations depending on the values, histories and identities of their counties. A letter from November 1969 from the Wexford Association London discusses the second annual Kennedy brother march and annual concert (John F. and Robert Kennedy’s great grandfather had come from New Ross in county

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<sup>37</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Limerick association newsletter June 1969.

<sup>38</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Limerick association newsletter June 1969.

<sup>39</sup> Nyhan, ‘County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965’, p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> Scully ‘BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks’, p. 143.

<sup>41</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 67, CICA newsletter May 1969.

<sup>42</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 67, CICA newsletter April 1969.

<sup>43</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 92.

<sup>44</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Letter form CICA to WAL November 1969.

Wexford).<sup>45</sup> Further letters to the WAL in 1969 are evident of other individual county activities, for example the Tipperary association discussing their Tipp Thousands draw.<sup>46</sup>

Remaining non-political was a goal of the CICA and many county associations, this can be seen in a letter to the WAL from the CICA in 1969 asking them to ‘raise money to alleviate the hardship for people in the Bogside in Derry’ but stressed that ‘being a non-political association some people may get the impression of political favourites towards the nationalist cause but that it was strictly a Christian approach’.<sup>47</sup> Politics, whether they wanted it to or not, certainly shaped the values of these associations. Doris Daly said that the county associations and the CICA had to be seen to be non-political because ‘when the English heard the words Irish and politics together, they thought terrorism, so they had to avoid any official association with politics’.<sup>48</sup> Prejudices like these still existed for Irish immigrants in London and would only become more intensified with the beginnings of the troubles in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s.<sup>49</sup> To maintain the identities and values of a county, they sometimes could not be overly explicit about them.

In conclusion, county associations emerged in post-war Britain as it was felt there was a need to accommodate not only a shared sense of Irishness but a more local, regionalised sense of county identity. With the large numbers of Irish arriving in London in the 1950s this inspired these organisations to set up to protect their own. By the late 1960s these associations were beginning to be affected by the economic and political changes back in Ireland. The membership numbers taken as a percentage of overall Irish immigrant numbers was not particularly high, but the range of activities and events indicates a significant impact on the Irish community in London at the time. These events and activities showed how they hoped to maintain their own individual county identity. Sometimes this county identity was even expressed in competitive rivalry with other county associations. In the next chapter, the WAL’s methods in expressing and maintaining what it believed to be Waterford’s own individual county identity throughout this period will be analysed.

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<sup>45</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Letter form Wexford Association London November 1969.

<sup>46</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Letter form Tipperary association London November 1969.

<sup>47</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Letter form CICA to WAL November 1969.

<sup>48</sup> *The Irish in England part 1*, Channel 4, 16 October 1983, 9.20pm.

<sup>49</sup> R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (Penguin, 1988), p. 588.

## Chapter 4 The WAL – maintaining Waterford identity

‘Ó do bhíosá lá i Portláirge, fall dow fall dee fall-lah dad-eye-um. Bhí fion is punch ar chlár ann.’<sup>1</sup> During this period, the Clancy brothers recorded the traditional Gaelic folk song ‘Port Lairge’. This was a rambunctious version of an ode to the pleasures of a day drinking in Waterford. Not surprisingly, it was in a pub in Camden, London, in September 1955 that several Waterford people came together to form what was originally to be called the Waterford Men’s Association London.<sup>2</sup> This was an association that looked to construct a county identity that dreamed of the days they had spent in Waterford and imagined how they could reinforce this connection with their fellow Deise (Waterford native) in London.

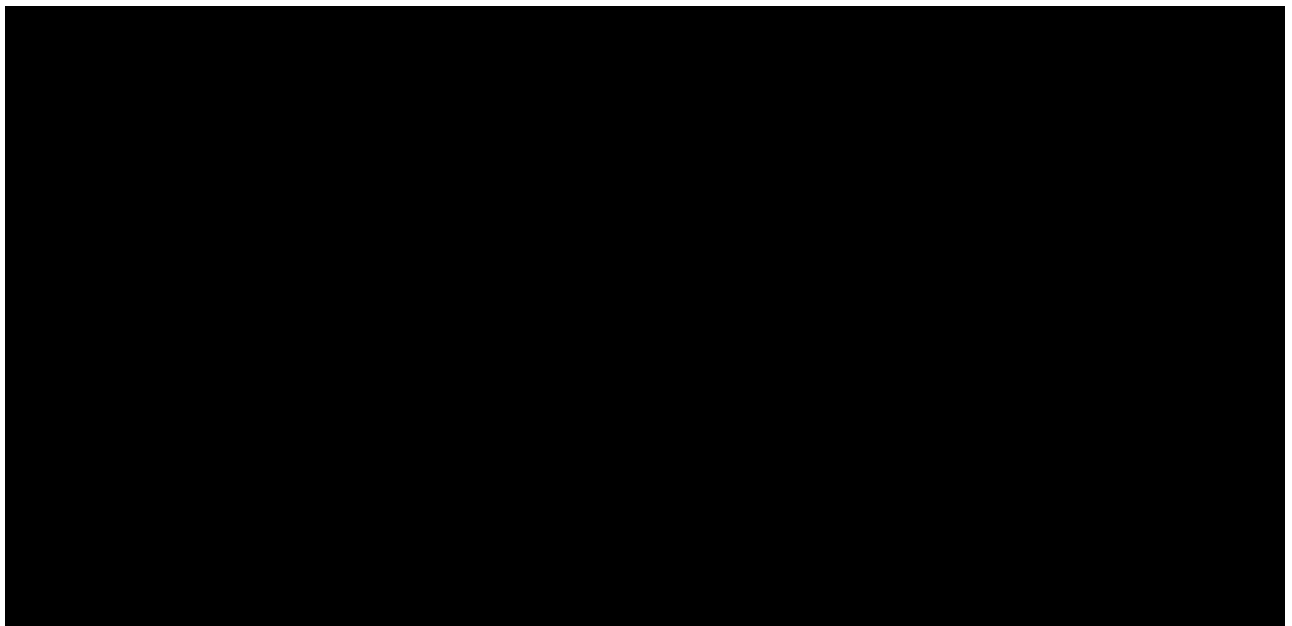


FIG. 4.1 The founder members of the Waterford Men’s Association London. Source: LMU AIB/ICA/1 Box 5, Twenty-first anniversary leaflet WAL. **\*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

FIG. 4.1 above shows the founder members of the Waterford Men’s Association London. As can be observed from the photo everyone is male and probably middle aged including the

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<sup>1</sup> The Clancy Brothers, ‘Port Lairge’, from *A Spontaneous Performance Recording!* (CBS, 1961). Lyric translation from Irish- Oh, I was one day in Waterford, there was wine and punch on the table there.

<sup>2</sup> London Metropolitan University, Archives of the Irish in Britain, AIB/ICA/1 Box 5, Twenty-first anniversary leaflet WAL.

initial chairman, Larry Cunningham (front row right hand corner).<sup>3</sup> Foster comments that the position of women both economically and legally in Ireland throughout this period was still restrictive with a marriage bar in the public service and only five percent of married women registered in the workforce.<sup>4</sup> Sandbrook notes similar limits in Britain in the late 1950s with women from working and middle-class backgrounds still expected to fill the roles of homemakers and mothers.<sup>5</sup> The WAL carried these gender values from Waterford and Ireland but there was little to challenge their orthodoxy in Britain in the first few years of the association. The very naming of the association as a men's one is suggestive of the role and importance of women as being an afterthought even though the objective, stated in their subsequent 1956 constitution was 'the promotion of the interests of Waterford people in London' not just Waterford men.<sup>6</sup> However, as noted above these interests were filtered through a particularly male and perhaps middle-aged perspective. The sort of an imagined Waterford these immigrants carried with them influenced what they wanted to maintain and create in London. As Benedict Anderson points out, all communities are essentially imagined and that their differences lie in how they are imagined.<sup>7</sup> For Irish immigrants, Wills persuasively argues that having lost their place in the town or village they came from they attempted to 'recreate a nostalgic version of it, a kind of badge of home' in Britain.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter will look to investigate how these interests were perceived and those 'badges' created by committee members running the WAL to maintain Waterford County identity in London. It will argue that Irish institutions with specific Waterford outlooks, like the Catholic Church and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), helped shape the organisation during this period. The chapter will then go on to explore how the WAL used welfare and social activities to foster a close sense of Waterford community identity among its members. The

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<sup>3</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/1 Box 5, Twenty-first anniversary leaflet WAL.

<sup>4</sup> R. F., Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (Penguin, 1988), p. 581.

<sup>5</sup> Dominic, Sandbrook, *White Heat: A history of Britain in the swinging sixties 1964-1970* (Abacus, 2006), p.689.

<sup>6</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/21 Box 7, WAL constitution 1956.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (Verso, 2016), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Clair Wills, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (Penguin, 2017), p. 229.

investigation of these activities will also be used to gauge the popularity of the association during this time.

#### 4.1 *The WAL and the church*

During 1956 the association already had 120 paid members.<sup>9</sup> The Association was growing steadily and for an organisation just beginning this was a sizeable number. On the 19 April 1956, the annual general meeting of the WAL reported about this increasing membership and advised that ‘new arrivals from Waterford should immediately contact the clergy in the districts where they will reside’.<sup>10</sup> WAL member Mary Allen reported having a similar experience when she first arrived. As she recounts, she was immediately ‘taken to the church to meet the local priest’.<sup>11</sup> From the early days of the Association the Catholic Church’s importance in the lives of Waterford immigrants is clearly emphasised. Wills makes the point that the church continued to be of significance for Irish immigrants in Britain in this period because it was a place where they could not only regularly meet up but also because it was a reminder of home.<sup>12</sup>

Connections to one order in the Catholic church had a particular Waterford identity to it. Edmund Rice opened the first Christian Brothers school for the poor of Waterford in 1804. The Christian Brothers would go on to be not just synonymous with education in Waterford but throughout Ireland and different parts of the world.<sup>13</sup> The Christian Brothers often offered the only educational avenue for some poorer children in Ireland. However, as Foster writes the social changes in Ireland in the 1960s were even more pronounced than the economic ones and one of these was through the provision of free post-primary education that began to open alternative educational routes for those less well off.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, the WAL was still keen to highlight these links with the Christian Brothers. For example, the Sunday after the annual dinner dance in 1962 the WAL organised a special mass to be said at St. Augustine’s church in Hammersmith to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of Edmund Rice. The

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<sup>9</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/1 Box 5, Twenty-first anniversary leaflet WAL.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Waterford men in Britain’, *The Irish Times* 5 May 1956, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> *The Irish in England Part 1*, Channel 4, 16 October 1983, 9.20pm.

<sup>12</sup> Wills, *Lover and Strangers*, p. 126.

<sup>13</sup> P. Power, *History of Waterford* (De Paor, 1998), p. 128.

<sup>14</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 580.

*Munster Express* reporting on the event noted how Rice's organisation had 'fitted out tens of thousands of Waterford boys for the battle of life'.<sup>15</sup> However, some came to subsequently view orders like the Christian Brothers of giving them battles of a different sort. Michael Brazil, a former Chairman of the WAL recalled many years after this event (in the 1990s when attitudes to the Church in Ireland began to change) the Christian Brother's brutality: 'he hit me and banged my head against the board. I had a mark around my head as a souvenir of that incident'.<sup>16</sup> The shiny imagined badge of the Christian Brothers that the WAL wanted to promote was in reality more marked and dented. At one particular social event in October 1963 the chairman Willie Barron mentioned how the WAL would be donating five pounds to the Christian Brothers' building fund and commented on the great work the Christian Brothers had done in education with many members being ex-Christian Brothers' students.<sup>17</sup> As Delaney mentions, the county associations often acted with a perceived moral purpose and wanted to be seen as a 'respectable face of Irish immigration for public consumption'.<sup>18</sup> The power of institutions like the Catholic Church often controlled this notion of respectability when the reality was often more complicated.

Connections with the Catholic Church were strong and were perhaps still stronger throughout the late 1960s. In the redrafting of the WAL constitution in 1967, the main objective was now more specifically religious than the original aim of 'promoting Waterford interests'. It now stated the importance of the 'social and Christian welfare of its members'.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis on the Christian element being noteworthy and appearing to strengthen links to the church. However, another key change in this revised version of the constitution finally began to recognise the role of women within the association, meaning that the 'Men's' part of the association's name was dropped to become now simply the Waterford Association London.<sup>20</sup> As Foucault notes, language is power and changes in how it is perceived represent cultural shifts.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 'Waterford men's night in London', *Munster Express*, 16 November 1962, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Across the Irish Sea*, ed. by Pam Schweitzer (Exchange Theatre Trust, 1991), p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> 'The Waterford men's association', *Munster Express*, 25 October 1963, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, (Oxford University press 2007), p. 173.

<sup>19</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/16 Box 53, WAL Constitution 1967.

<sup>20</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/16 Box 53, WAL Constitution 1967.

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Gallimard, 1968), p. 320.



There seems to be less evidence of deference to other religious institutions that at least had sizeable minorities within the county during this period such as the Protestant Church of Ireland. There are some instances of attempting to be more inclusive of these Protestant minorities - William Cecil De Pauley, the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cashel, Emily, Waterford and Lismore were among the guests invited to one annual dinner dance, indicating that there was a desire for religious balance.<sup>22</sup> However, interactions were nearly always Catholic in nature. At the 1968 annual dinner dance, Michael Russell, Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore urged Waterford people in London to join the WAL and that the purpose of the WAL was to ‘extend the hand of friendship and encouragement to Waterford people who came to live in the city and [...] act in the Christian tradition you were brought up in’.<sup>23</sup> This evidence of the role of the Catholic church within the WAL appears to not comply with one of the stated aims of the original constitution of being non-sectarian.<sup>24</sup> This mirrors Nyhan’s research on county associations in New York having close links with the Catholic Church despite also stating to be non-sectarian.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Scully notes that county associations in England flouted their non-sectarian pretence by having priests as members.<sup>26</sup> In the WAL, Catholic priests were directly involved in the association, Father Michael Enright was president of the association in the 1960s.<sup>27</sup> With religion there were obvious biases that the WAL felt were necessary to uphold Waterford values and interests.

#### 4.2 *The GAA and hidden politics*

‘The fires of victory blazed along the hilltops and highlands, at the crossroads and at street corners as hurling mad people celebrated on Sunday evening’.<sup>28</sup> As is evident above from the front-page headline of the *Dungarvan Observer* newspaper after the victory of the Waterford

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<sup>22</sup> ‘City chatter’, *Munster Express*, 25 August 1967, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Dinner Dance’, *Waterford News and Star*, 08 November 1968, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/21 Box 7, WAL constitution 1956.

<sup>25</sup> Miriam Nyhan, ‘County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965’, *New York Irish History* 22.3(2008), pp. 27-36 (p. 33).

<sup>26</sup> Marc Scully, ‘BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks: County identity, ‘authenticity’ and the Irish diaspora’, *Irish Studies Review*, 21.2 (2013), pp. 143-163 (p. 147).

<sup>27</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/16 Box 53, Newsletter November 1968.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Waterford Win’, *Dungarvan observer*, 10 October 1959, p. 1.

team in the 1959 All-Ireland Hurling final, the GAA sport of hurling had a special place in County Waterford history in the 1950s. Perhaps, nothing better encapsulates the sense of shared joy at this time in County Waterford identity. Moreover, there was probably no more explicit manifestation of this county identity than in the intercounty rivalry that existed in the All-Ireland GAA Championships. Scully persuasively argues that after the establishment of the GAA in 1884, the county as a key point of identification for Irish people was confirmed.<sup>29</sup>

The relationship of the WAL with the GAA was deeply entwined into its very fabric. The WAL upheld the influence of what had become another dominant institution within Ireland at this time, making constant connections to it during this period. Corry argues that the GAA itself was a strong cultural connection for immigrants, giving them solace.<sup>30</sup> This connection with the WAL is seen in the anticipation surrounding the above All-Ireland Hurling final replay with Kilkenny in October 1959. The WAL discussed how members could attend and it was suggested that the WAL would provide some means of transport for the match, offering to arrange to fly members and friends on Saturday 3 October for the match on Sunday and return them on Monday.<sup>31</sup> Donal Foley commented that Irish immigrants in London followed the ‘fortunes of the local county team with far greater intensity than if they were at home’. He suggested it was a ‘reaction against the anonymity of the big city’.<sup>32</sup> In addition, members could now also enjoy GAA matches in London itself. Delaney comments that by the mid-1960s there were about sixty GAA clubs in existence in Britain with most of these being based in London.<sup>33</sup>

For some, although sporting in nature, the GAA was often seen as covertly political in its aims in terms of a more nationalist agenda.<sup>34</sup> However, there was clearer evidence that the WAL contravened its supposed non-political status as declared in its original constitution.<sup>35</sup> In 1961, the WAL demonstrated political partisanship in being the only county association to

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<sup>29</sup> Scully, ‘BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks’, p. 146.

<sup>30</sup> Eoghan Corry, *An illustrated history of the GAA* (Gill & Macmillan, 2005), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/16 Box 53, WAL newsletter September 1959.

<sup>32</sup> Donal Foley, *Three Villages* (Ballylough Books, 2003), p. 81.

<sup>33</sup> Delaney, ‘The Irish in Post war Britain’, p. 174.

<sup>34</sup> Neal Garnham, ‘Accounting for the Early Success of the Gaelic Athletic Association’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 34.13 (2004), pp. 65-78 (p. 65).

<sup>35</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/21 Box 7, WAL constitution 1956.

object to a resolution passed by the CICA that Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh should be invited to the Republic of Ireland. The strength of feeling at least from the chairman E.W. Flynn at the time is evident in the statement they sent to the *Munster Express* newspaper for publication: ‘The Waterford Men's Association London, wish it to be known that we disassociate ourselves completely from the Dublin resolution moved and carried at that meeting.’<sup>36</sup> This may show a strong nationalist sentiment within the WAL or at least they wanted it perceived that way. Nyhan notes that county associations' political views could be dependent or often swayed by a few prominent individuals within the organisation.<sup>37</sup> She also argued that the prominence of politics within county associations also depended on the geographical and historical context of the county.<sup>38</sup>

Many members of the WAL were also prominent in GAA circles including Willie Baron, Chairman of the organisation in the 1960s. He had previously played intercounty hurling for Waterford, playing in a senior All-Ireland Hurling final with Waterford in 1938.<sup>39</sup> Another member at this time, Johnny Regan, had played as a goalie for the Waterford County team.<sup>40</sup> The Waterford GAA clearly had influence that spread throughout the association.

However, even with the GAA'S considerable influence, other sports were still recognised. For example the Waterford United football team had regular reports of matches in newsletters and Michael Bolger, Secretary of Waterford United, was often invited to events.<sup>41</sup> This recognition by the WAL of these other sports was despite the GAA still having rule twenty-seven (which lasted from 1905 -1971) which prohibited GAA players from playing or watching what were known as ‘foreign games’ – specifically rugby, football, cricket and hockey.<sup>42</sup> What was most important for the WAL seemed to be that it was the sporting achievements of Waterford people being celebrated regardless of the sport. This pride in

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Waterford Men's London Association’, *Munster Express*, 31 March 1961, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Nyhan, ‘County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965’, p. 32.

<sup>38</sup> Nyhan, ‘County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965’, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Mayor Griffin will be there’, *Munster Express*, 04 August 1961, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Annual dance’, *Munster Express*, 07 December 1962, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Latest from London’, *Munster Express*, 19 August 1966, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Rouse, The politics of culture and sport in Ireland: a history of the GAA ban on foreign games 1884-1971, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 10.3 (1993), pp. 333-360 (p. 334).

achievement, it was felt, could give Waterford immigrants a pride in a shared county identity as they navigated the hurdles of immigrant life in London.

### 4.3 *Welfare*

By the late 1950s the WAL had further cemented the connection to the county by attaining the approval of the city fathers of Waterford city to use the Waterford Coat of Arms.<sup>43</sup> Using this as inspiration, it named its first journal in 1957 *Urbs Intacta*, taking the Latin motto from the bottom banner on the Waterford coat of arms, which translated as the ‘city remains unconquered’.<sup>44</sup> However, by 1957 the WAL itself had usurpers at the gates. They were now not the only ones who claimed to represent Waterford citizens in London. The County Waterford Social Club had been formed due to a split within the organisation which was instigated by Michael Morrissey along with fellow WAL founder N. Noonan, the rival organisation often organised events that helped Waterford immigrants in terms of welfare.<sup>45</sup> Despite this split, the WAL also demonstrated many examples of how they reached out and helped the Waterford community in London. In September 1958 they organised a benefit dance, supported by over 200 people, held to help a recent widow of Mr. David O’ Connor who originally hailed from Dungarvan, County Waterford.<sup>46</sup> The welfare function of these county associations was clearly identified by Garcia in being integral to their aims of supporting Irish immigrants along regional lines.<sup>47</sup> For the WAL, welfare had not only become tribal and regional but a competitive weapon to win over and conquer the Deise in London.

Jim Griffin recalled that in the 1950s the WAL were the first county association to give money to the Irish Centre based in Camden in the form of one hundred pounds.<sup>48</sup> The London Irish Centre had been set up a year before the WAL. Harrison argues that it aimed to help

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<sup>43</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/1 Box 5, Twenty-first anniversary leaflet WAL.

<sup>44</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/1 Box 5, Twenty-first anniversary leaflet WAL.

<sup>45</sup> ‘In a few lines’, *Munster Express*, 25 January 1957, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> ‘They met after terrifying thunderstorms’, *Munster Express*, 19 September 1958, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Mika, Garcia, *Rebuilding London: Irish Migrants in Post-War Britain* (The History Press, 2016), p. 175.

<sup>48</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/1 Box 5, Twenty-first anniversary leaflet WAL.

Irish immigrants to London with employment, accommodation and other welfare issues.<sup>49</sup> In terms of welfare, the WAL often worked closely with the London Irish Centre. A letter to the WAL from the London Irish Centre welfare officer in February 1967 indicates this co-operation in action with a Waterford immigrant who had arrived in January but due to bad health had not acquired a job.<sup>50</sup> The London Irish Centre was enquiring if it was possible for the WAL to pay for a ticket to get him home as the immigrant was a Waterford native.<sup>51</sup> The WAL duly complied and in a letter dated 8 March 1967 they discussed having paid the six pounds for his return fare.<sup>52</sup> It was clear evidence of the compassion and care that the WAL administered to one of their own along county lines, working alongside other bodies like the London Irish Centre.

The importance of welfare had become increasingly recognised within the organisation with the new stated aims on the 1967 WAL Constitution explicitly mentioning the importance of the welfare of Waterford immigrants in London.<sup>53</sup> At the 1968 annual dinner dance the Waterford Mayor, Mr. W. Jones, commended the WAL for its welfare and charity work saying ‘this would be creditable among any group but when it belonged to those who had been the victims of a lack of opportunity, it was all the more worthy.’<sup>54</sup> As December 1968 came, discussion of the annual Christmas party took place, where the WAL promised cakes, toys and a gift for each child, while further discussion revolved around the bacon and cabbage dinner to be attended by 200 people at the Irish Centre on 21 December where the proceeds were to go to the poor and aged of the diocese.<sup>55</sup> These types of evidence of compassion and comradeship drew members of the WAL together in a shared notion of what being a good Waterford citizen meant. Anderson persuasively makes the point that it is often ‘comradeship’ that lies at the heart of what makes an ‘imagined community’.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Gerry Harrison, *The Scattering: A History of the London Irish Centre* (Historical Publications, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 2, Letter from the Irish Centre.

<sup>51</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 2, Letter from the Irish Centre.

<sup>52</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 2, WAL response to Irish Centre.

<sup>53</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/16 Box 53, WAL Constitution 1967.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Twelfth annual dinner dance’, *Waterford News and Star*, 08 November 1968, p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/16 Box 53, Letter to member from Jim Griffin.

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

Nyhan mentions, in relation to the New York County associations in this period, about the importance of finding jobs and accommodation for their fellow county men and sometimes women.<sup>57</sup> This is not as directly evident with the WAL, perhaps because jobs and accommodation were already in place before immigrants left Waterford or the Irish centre and church provided a lot of the help in this regard. Moreover, a lot of this was probably done through informal networking.<sup>58</sup> It was possible for members of the WAL that this networking occurred during organised social events and activities so may not be explicitly evident in the archives. Unusually, one example in relation to jobs that is present in the archives is a letter to the WAL dated January 1969 from Murphy's Engineers LTD who appealed to the association to procure Waterford workers as they needed 'twelve fitters for a six-month contract in Waterford' that they couldn't source in Waterford.<sup>59</sup> This also perhaps expresses the change mentioned earlier in economic fortunes in Ireland and especially Waterford during the late 1960s compared to the late 1950s. Here, the WAL seemingly acted not only as a carer for those from Waterford in London but a conduit to get those same immigrants back home to Waterford again.

Often the welfare provided was not only for those immigrants in London but also for the Waterford citizens and especially charities back in Waterford itself. Much of this aligns with the idea that county associations in London often raised money for charities back home in their own counties.<sup>60</sup> Much of the correspondence with organisations from Waterford relates to thanking the WAL for money donated. One letter acknowledged a cheque for ten pounds from the WAL for St. John's School Dungarvan that worked with children with special needs, while another letter from December 1969 from the matron of the Waterford Hospice thanked the WAL for the receipt of twenty-five pounds for clothing apparel, cigarettes and 'other luxuries'.<sup>61</sup> As Waterford citizens dealt with the difficulties of life or the difficulties of approaching the end of life, the WAL was embracing their care and maintaining links to the county.

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<sup>57</sup> Nyhan, 'County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965', p. 31.

<sup>58</sup> Nyhan, 'County Associations in Irish New York, 1945-1965', p. 31.

<sup>59</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 2, Letter from Murphy Engineers LTD to WAL.

<sup>60</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 173.

<sup>61</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Letter from Waterford Hospice and letter from St. Johns.

#### 4.4 *Social and cultural events*

‘The bogtrotter is a better man for work, play and imbibing than the Dublin jackeen.’<sup>62</sup> The title of a debate in 1956 between the WAL and the Dublin Association London indicates how differently both counties saw themselves. The often-derogatory terms are used in jest here, for the rural ‘bogtrotter’ from Waterford and the city dwelling ‘jackeen’ from Dublin. Certainly, there is much evidence of the WAL’s activities revolving around play (like the debate above) and imbibing. Whether they were better at these than those from Dublin remains open to conjecture.

These activities and events involving play and imbibing needed to be promoted and reported on. The WAL regularly used local Waterford papers like the *Dungarvan Observer*, *Dungarvan Leader*, *Munster Express* and the *Waterford News and Star* to advance the association and its activities which in turn fed into the values and myths of the county they hoped to preserve in London. Fitzgerald and Lambkin have argued persuasively that newspapers acted as a mechanism in influencing migration patterns by the flow of information from the ‘receiving country to the sending country’.<sup>63</sup> In their original 1956 constitution the importance of this relationship was recognised in stating ‘the press officers shall keep the Waterford and Irish national newspapers up to date with news and activities.’<sup>64</sup> This also acted as a way of promoting the WAL in Waterford to potential new members who might find themselves in London in the future. Garcia found similar use of newspapers in this way by the Leitrim association during this period.<sup>65</sup> In the 21 September 1956 edition of the *Munster Express* the WAL thanked the paper for the continued publicity they had given the association.<sup>66</sup> Donal Foley notes that county association activities did not go unnoticed in Ireland during this period with full reports illustrated with pictures.<sup>67</sup> As a journalist he often reported on different county association events finding them boringly similar rather than differentiated by region, one time skipping an event and making up what a particular bishop

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<sup>62</sup> ‘Debate’, *Munster Express*, 14 December 1956, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History 1607-2007* (Macmillan, 2008), p. 302.

<sup>64</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/21 Box 7, WAL constitution 1956.

<sup>65</sup> Garcia, *Rebuilding London*, p. 175.

<sup>66</sup> ‘In a few lines’, *Munster Express*, 21 September 1956, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Foley, *Three Villages*, p. 104.

had said because he felt they all said the same thing, the next day the unaware bishop congratulated him on his report.<sup>68</sup> However, the audience for these reports wasn't just in Waterford. Members were often urged to support these local newspapers by buying them in London at the Emerald Bookshop in Vauxhall or if not, they were told they could ask relatives to send them copies.<sup>69</sup> By calling on members to read these newspapers the WAL was making members aware of the importance of keeping abreast of happenings at home so as not to lose this sense of Waterford in the happenings of London.

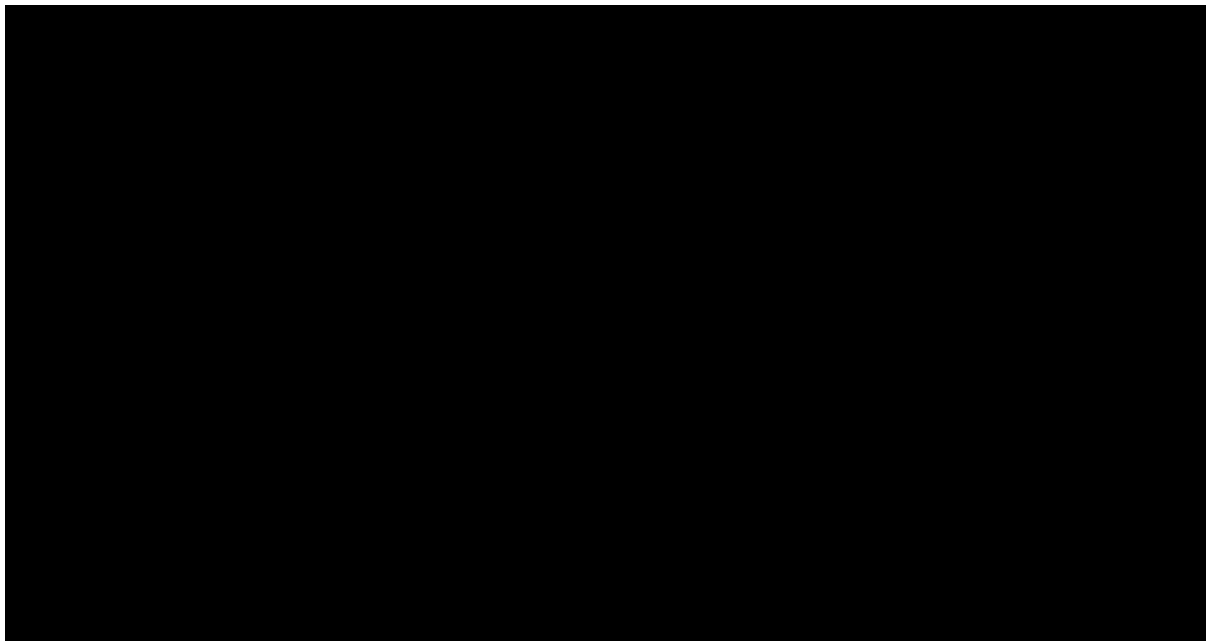


FIG. 4.2 Members of the WAL on a seaside trip to Littlehampton in July 1957. Source: 'It's the outing season' 20 July 1957; *The Irish Times*, p. 7. **\*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\***

Many outings reported on were run for members to encourage more social cohesion between members. Maya Banbury found shared leisure activities allowed Irish immigrants in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s to reconnect home on 'psychological, cultural and

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<sup>68</sup> Foley, *Three Villages*, p. 105.

<sup>69</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/16 Box 53, Newsletter March 1959.



emotional levels'.<sup>70</sup> Outings seem to have been a popular pursuit for the WAL especially in the late 1950s. These trips may have been seen as a way for not only Waterford natives to get together but also (as evidenced from FIG. 4.2 above) involve their younger family members as well. It mentioned in the original constitution that the 'children of Waterford parents are honorary members until they are sixteen'.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps the idea may have been present that Waterford values and culture could also be passed down to second generation immigrants as well.

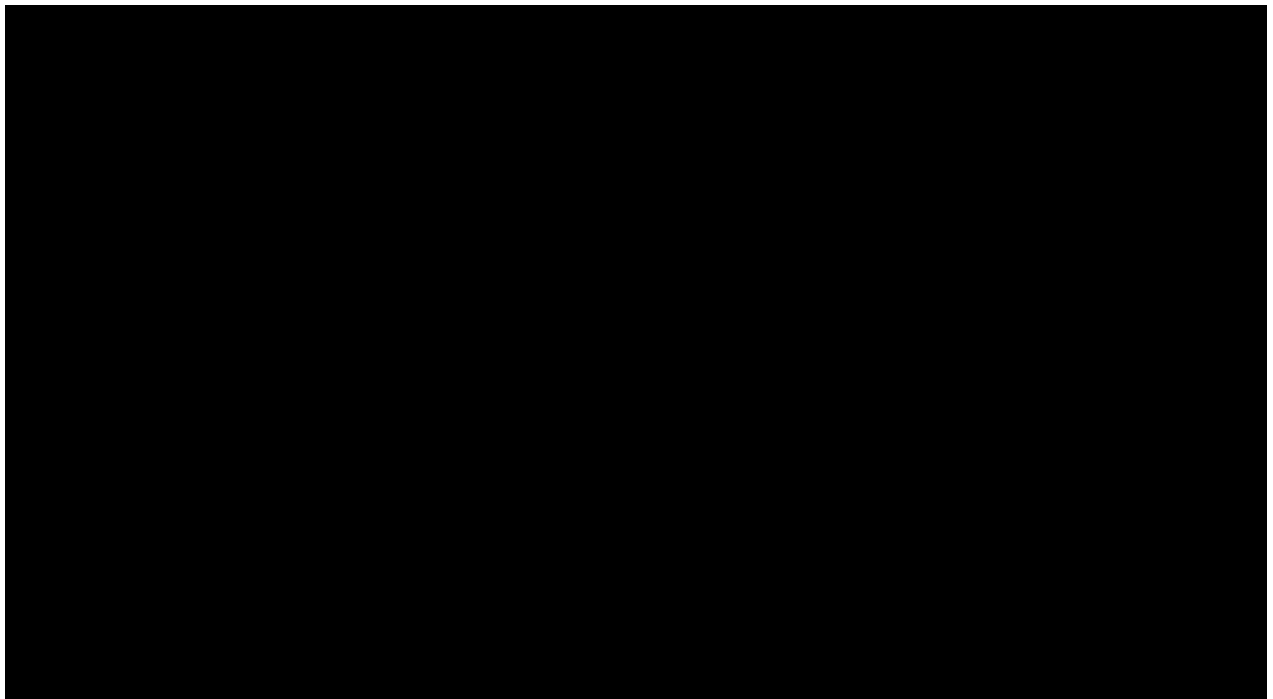


FIG. 4.3 Members of the WAL in the 1965 St. Patrick's Day parade in London. Source: 'St. Patrick's Day parade', *Munster Express*, 26 March, 1965, p. 3. \*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\*

FIG 4.3 above illustrates how members could celebrate St. Patrick and reconnect to what it meant to be Irish but also by marching behind the WAL banner they were encouraged to show the strength of the association and reconnect to what it meant to be from Waterford. The celebration of specific Waterford historical figures was also often used by the WAL to stake a

<sup>70</sup> Angela Maye-Banbury, 'All the world's a stage: How Irish immigrants negotiated life in England in the 1950s/1960s using Goffman's theory of impression management', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 29.1 (2021), pp. 32-53 (p. 49).

<sup>71</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/21 Box 7, WAL constitution 1956.

claim and connection to Waterford culture. In September 1965, on the hundredth anniversary of the death of Waterford born opera composer William Vincent Wallace the WAL presented the William Vincent Wallace challenge trophy to the Mayor of Waterford for the Waterford Light Opera Festival. This was a solid silver trophy with the musical inscription of the opening and closing bars from Wallace's London debuted opera *Maritana* with the inscription from the opera 'in happy moments'.<sup>72</sup> Carmel O' Regan from the WAL who had designed the trophy said it would 'help revive interest in Wallace and also help introduce him to younger people.'<sup>73</sup> In its celebration of its famous dead, the WAL was showing that Waterford was still alive outside its borders to those who choose to venture beyond its villages, towns and city, beyond its rivers, mountains and coast.

Despite better economic conditions in Waterford by the mid-1960s, many Waterford people were still enticed by the prospect of better and 'happier moments' in London. By the WAL annual dinner dance in October 1966 estimates were of '370 patrons attending', however it would not have been true to say that all those attending were fully paid members or even still living in London.<sup>74</sup> An invitation to one of these events in July 1968 to successful Waterford singer Val Doonican may indicate that the WAL was more accepting of a more conservative style when it came to music and culture.<sup>75</sup> Wills refers to Doonican's popularity in Britain as reinforcing dangerous Irish caricatures.<sup>76</sup> Conversely, there appears to be no evidence in the archives of invitations to Waterford entertainers like Patrick Campbell- Lyons who it could be argued were more reflective of the youthful zeitgeist of the time with his psychedelic rock band Nirvana.<sup>77</sup> Many Waterford immigrants to London like Campbell- Lyons may have had more individual agency due to the shifting social dynamics of the late 1960s in Britain than previous immigrants to create futures unbound by the Waterford values and identities of their past.<sup>78</sup> Scully mentions that membership in county associations was not universal for every

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<sup>72</sup> 'The Wallace Trophy', *Waterford News and Star*, 24 September 1965, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> 'The Wallace Trophy', *Waterford News and Star*, 24 September 1965, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> 'Bishop may attend', *Waterford News and Star*, 27 May 1966, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 2, Letter from Val Doonican 1968.

<sup>76</sup> Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p. 154.

<sup>77</sup> *Rainbow chaser*, dir. by Conor Heffernan (Ireland, 2011).

<sup>78</sup> David Kynaston, *A Northern Wind: Britain 1962-65* (Bloomsbury, 2023), p. 248.

Irish immigrant and that some were probably put off and disidentified with the type of regional Irishness they encouraged.<sup>79</sup>

However, the degree of individual agency that Waterford immigrants had may have been dependent on class. Sandbrook comments that it was all well and good to be the counterculture in the sixties but usually only the middle-class could afford to do so.<sup>80</sup> Donal Foley argued in his memoir that there were clear class divisions apparent in the Irish societies in London.<sup>81</sup> He recalled societies like the Irish Club and NUI Club seeing themselves as a class above the county associations and it was rare that the professional classes attended county association events.<sup>82</sup> This is similar to O’Keeffe-Vigneron who says that county associations were more working class in nature.<sup>83</sup> Hickman makes the persuasive point that the retention of Irish identity among immigrants itself had a close correlation to class, suggesting that there was stronger affiliation with types of Irish identity if the individual was working class and was involved in social and cultural activities.<sup>84</sup> Thus, upper middle-class professionals may have had less need for the support and links of associations like the WAL.

Relationships with prominent Waterford businesses were also being maintained through social events. The tickets for the WAL annual raffle from July 1968 promoted prizes such as a vase from Waterford Crystal Glass and a ten-inch colorcast frying pan from Waterford Iron Founders.<sup>85</sup> As the Mayor of Waterford Mr. W. Jones commented at the annual dinner dance in November 1968, the WAL was ‘all the time engaged in keeping wide open all the channels with home [.....] and it was a moving and impressive experience to see a living bit of Waterford in London.’<sup>86</sup> This event was reported as being ‘completely sold out’. Guests included the Bishop of Waterford (who despite the sold-out status made a plea for members to

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<sup>79</sup> Scully, ‘BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks’, p. 147-148.

<sup>80</sup> Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 523.

<sup>81</sup> Foley, *Three villages*, p. 83.

<sup>82</sup> Foley, *Three villages*, p. 83.

<sup>83</sup> Grainne O’Keeffe-Vigneron, ‘Celebrating Irishness in London’ in *The Irish Celebrating Festive and Tragic Overtones*, ed. by Marie-Claire Considère-Charon, Philippe Laplace, Michel Savaric, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 180-191 (p. 183).

<sup>84</sup> Mary J. Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity: The state, the Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain*, (Avebury, 1995), p. 234.

<sup>85</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, WAL raffle tickets 20 July 1968.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Twelfth annual dinner dance’, *Waterford News and Star*, 08 November 1968, p. 14.

join), The Marquis of Waterford and local Waterford TD William Keneally.<sup>87</sup> However, these social events were not always the happy, cohesive affairs that were portrayed in the press by the WAL. A letter from one Committee member dated 5 August 1969 revealed tensions at the heart of the organisation. In the letter he offers his resignation saying, on an outing to the similarly named village of Waterford in Hertfordshire, he was insulted by a fellow committee member who he claimed made ‘threats upon my person and cast aspersions upon my character for no apparent reason.’<sup>88</sup> Letters like these showed cracks on the facade of the happy harmonious relationships between all WAL members. It undercut the notion that just because immigrants came from the same county that they were always in harmony.

One of the social highlights for the WAL during the late sixties must surely have been their organisation of the reunion dinner of Waterford associations held on 23 August 1969 in the Tower hotel, in Waterford itself. It demonstrated that the WAL was not alone in maintaining and showing the importance of regional identity for immigrants from Waterford. Invitations went out to Waterford associations in New York, Birmingham, Coventry, Dublin and of course WAL members. The WAL promoted that ‘everybody who is a Waterford somebody will be there’ and that members of the associations needed to book quickly as ‘only 200 tickets available’.<sup>89</sup> In the end 225 attended.<sup>90</sup> The consumption of alcohol is something about which these events were often built around. The bill for over seventy-five pounds for alcohol for the reunion, including seventy-four bottles of wine, was evidence of the perceived importance of alcohol to make a good night in terms of Waterford culture.<sup>91</sup> This aligned with attitudes prevalent at the time about the ‘drunken Irish’.<sup>92</sup> In imagining Waterford in London, the WAL did not shy away from embracing these stereotypes.

In March 1961 the Clancy Brothers performed the song ‘Port Lairge’ on the *Ed Sullivan show* in New York. The staging of the performance portrayed many stereotypes of an imagined Ireland; rigid Irish dancers, a little white windswept cottage, and the Clancy

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<sup>87</sup> ‘Twelfth annual dinner dance’, *Waterford News and Star*, 08 November 1968, p. 14.

<sup>88</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Letter from committee member 1969.

<sup>89</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Invites to reunion dance 1969.

<sup>90</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Bill from Tower Hotel.

<sup>91</sup> LMU AIB/ICA/19 Box 68, Bill from Tower Hotel and letter to Tower Hotel.

<sup>92</sup> Alice Mauger ‘A great race of drinkers? Irish interpretations of alcoholism and drinking stereotypes 1945-1975’, *Medical history*, 65.1 (2021), pp. 70-89 (p. 71).

Brothers themselves uniformly wearing white woollen Aran sweaters.<sup>93</sup> Like this the WAL often attempted to maintain Waterford identity by staging a stereotypical performance of ‘a living bit of Waterford’ in London. This was created through their fealty to a specific type of Waterford Catholicism, embedding a Waterford GAA outlook that aligned with a politically nationalist viewpoint, one where women’s roles were reduced and where the important role of the pub and alcohol was evident at its birth and at the ‘Waterford reunion’ at the close of this period. By taking certain elements of what they believed to be Waterford they created an imagined one whose reflection was perhaps often stuck in their certainties of an imagined Waterford past and thus limited by this. Furthermore, this maintenance of an identity through Catholicism and nationalism often went against the aims of the association to be non-sectarian and non-political. However, it was in their development and maintenance of a ‘comradeship’ through welfare and other social activities that the WAL demonstrated most how being from a region or county can be important and even transformative in an immigrant's experience and identity. While not for every Waterford immigrant, significant membership and attendance at social events (although this as a percentage of Waterford immigrants to London is harder to ascertain) and the range of activities shows that for some, county identity was important.

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<sup>93</sup> ‘Clancy Brothers & Tommy Makem (feat. The McNiff Dancers), Port Lairge’, *The Ed Sullivan Show*, CBS, 12 March 1961.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the main question of this dissertation was how county associations like the Waterford Association London maintained county identity with immigrants from the county. The evidence presented shows that county associations in London had sometimes diverse ways of maintaining county identity borne out of the individual contexts of their home counties. The WAL used several methods to maintain links with Waterford for immigrants in London. Welfare is one of the clearest examples with numerous initiatives for Waterford immigrants in need in London, but welfare also kept alive direct connections with charities and organisations back in the county. Other areas county identity was maintained can be seen in how the Waterford Catholic Church's presence was incorporated into not only having the honorary president being part of the association but by 1967 having religious wording embedded into the main objectives present in their constitution. The pride in many in the association with connections with specific orders that had strong Waterford links like the Christian Brothers is seen in donations and the close ties with many being former students. This religious bias seemed to contrast with the initial objectives of being non-sectarian. Maintaining Waterford identity through sport was evidenced in the GAA's influence in the WAL. This was expressed through the distinct characteristics that had evolved especially within Waterford County hurling. The former players as committee members and the victories of the intercounty hurling team were two elements that were used to create a particular Waterford GAA impact within the organisation. While newspapers, especially those in Waterford, were used to make those back home aware of how the WAL was maintaining Waterford identity in London. Furthermore, strong links to Waterford businesses and politics preserved channels for immigrants to use Waterford identity to allow them to open future opportunities. However, the expression of nationalistic political sentiments seemed to again contravene its stated non-political status.

In promoting a shared sense of culture and history the WAL was looking to the past to create an identity in the present. However, some of the values were often stuck in the past or of an imagined Waterford often conservative in nature, accepting of gender roles where the interests of all Waterford immigrants in London were not always being met. The WAL's use of social events allowed for networking between Waterford immigrants often in large numbers. It also allowed for a sense of comradeship to develop as members talked of shared values and experiences they had gained back in Waterford. Such events allowed for a

celebration of the people and activities that the WAL felt embodied these values. These events were often the glue that stuck the disparate elements of Waterford identity together.

The secondary question about how common this regional or county identity was among these immigrants is certainly harder to ascertain but by looking at the amount of county associations in London, membership numbers, range of activities and attendance at events gives an idea of those that were more expressive in this identity. As evidenced, membership for county associations was over 3000 members in London by the end of the 1950s, with 120 members registered in the early years of WAL. By the 1960s all thirty-two counties at one stage had associations and events for the WAL could number 200 to 300 plus attendees. The percentage who were members of these county associations like the WAL was probably not a massively large percentage of those who had immigrated to London and by the late 1960s some associations experienced difficulties attracting members due to changing economic conditions in Ireland. However, the amount and range of activities the WAL and other county associations were involved in shows that for a sizeable amount of them, regional county identity may have been important. For some, driven to London by a lack of opportunities and high unemployment at home in Ireland, especially in the late 1950s, it may have given them a sense of belonging to something bigger that was rooted in something smaller but more nuanced than mere Irishness. Of course, county identity was not to all Irish immigrants' liking and some rejected the imposition of values and identities they wished to leave back in their counties of origin.

For those who were proud to express this county identity, maintaining connections was vital. Mary Allen, about to leave for London again after a trip back to Waterford, said:

We stay in a house belonging to my sister in the little village where I grew up but when we are leaving to come back, I never want to close the door. I always asked my other sister who lived up the road to come down and stand in the door. I get quite emotional about it. I say I cannot bear to close the door [.....] so the door is always open.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the WAL was not only in keeping a door open that maintained connections to Waterford but in opening its own doors. In maintaining care and showing compassion to those from Waterford who struggled, in allowing Waterford people in London to reconnect

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<sup>1</sup> *The Irish in England Part 1*, Channel 4, 16 October 1983, 9.20pm.

and in helping these descendants of a Deise tribe to not just look back to Waterford but also look forward carrying a county consciousness into a future in London.

Due to the scope of this dissertation, it was not possible to follow up in detail on the idea of the WAL's imagined Waterford by having a more in-depth comparison with the real county Waterford during the Late 1950s and 1960s. Future research could address this gap by looking at how closely the values and activities of the WAL aligned with the county itself. Also, more primary research could be carried out with Waterford immigrants from this period to gain a wider perspective of how they felt about their county identity and how well they assimilated into their environment in London.

Recommendations for future research could look at case studies of other county associations during this period to explore how differences in county identities affected immigrants in different ways. As mentioned, there were at one stage thirty-two county associations during the 1960s in London, so there is a lot of scope to examine some of the other thirty-one county associations in more detail. Another area to explore could be to look at other Waterford associations in different geographical locations during this period for example the Waterford Association Birmingham and how this different geographical context may have led to differing issues and different ways of maintaining Waterford identity. Further research could also investigate the WAL during other times of increased emigration from Ireland like the 1980s and what happened to this Waterford identity due to increased political tensions at the time. Finally, in a wider context, the importance and maintenance of regional identity for immigrants to Britain could be researched for more regions from more countries. Looking at this would give a far greater understanding of these immigrants' backgrounds and what influenced their decisions once they had arrived in Britain.



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