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**Women entrepreneurs and self-employed business-owners in
Ireland 1922-1972**

Volume 1

**Volume 1 of 2: Thesis
Volume 2: Transcripts of interviews**

Ph.D.

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January 2015

Summary of the Contents

This study set out to examine the prevalence of women entrepreneurs and self-employed business owners in Ireland in the early years of the Irish Free State. The historiography of Irish women has largely focussed on women as employees and workers, women's role within the home, the women's movement and women's contribution to the political life of the country. Little research has been conducted on Irish women as business owners and an impression prevailed that when women were involved in business ownership, it was more often as a result of widowhood, not as a result of their own endeavours.

The research involved an analysis of National data sources – the Census of Population, the Dissolved company files and some of the records of the Companies Registrations Office. This produced a comprehensive set of data which indicated the level to which women were involved as business owners and self-employed workers. It also highlighted the business sectors women operated in. A number of oral histories were conducted and these have supplemented the figures and provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of Irish business women at the time.

The thesis demonstrates that women did proactively establish and run business in Ireland in the early to mid-20th Century. Their motivations were varied and they were not a homogenous group. They operated in all sectors, but were concentrated in retailing, the hospitality sector and in textile and clothing manufacturing. They were proactive agents of economic activity and some had significant influence in their regions and beyond. The numbers engaged as business owners and self-employed workers declined towards the latter part of the period and possible reasons for this are explored. Ultimately, the findings challenge the received wisdom of the widowed business woman as guardian of the family business.

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby state that the work contained in this thesis that I now submit is entirely my own, save that of others which I have cited throughout the document. I have not obtained a degree from any other University or Institution previously on the basis of this work.

Therese Moylan,
MBA, MII Grad, BA

January 2015

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List of Abbreviations

CRO	Companies Registration Office
E	Employer
Emp agency	Employment Agency
LC	Limited Company
Mnfting	Manufacturing
N.A.I.	National Archives Ireland
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
OAW	Own account workers
SP	Sole Proprietor

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Women have always played an important role in the economic, cultural, social and political life of Ireland and over the past number of years there has been a significant body of research conducted in the area of women's history.¹ This study is situated in the economic context of women's history in Ireland in 20th-century Ireland. To date a substantial amount of the work produced in the realm of Irish women's economic contribution has dealt with women in the labour market.² This research will focus on the economic activity of Irish women in 20th-century Ireland in their role as employers and own-account workers for the period from the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922 up until 1972, which was the eve of Ireland's entry into the European Economic Community. The objectives of this research are to establish the extent to which women owned and ran businesses in early and mid-20th century Ireland and also the extent to which women worked for themselves in the same period. It also seeks to establish what types of businesses they owned and ran and what sectors they were involved in. It questions to what extent were women active as employers and own-account workers in the 50 year period after 1922. What were the nature and scale of their activities? What were the issues arising for women as a result of these endeavours?

¹ Maria Luddy, *Women in Ireland 1800-1918: a documentary history* (Cork: Cork University Press 1995); Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds.), *Women surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th century* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1990); Margaret MacCurtain, Mary O'Dowd and Maria Luddy, 'An agenda for women's history in Ireland 1500-1900', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 28 no. 109 (1992) pp.1-37; Myrtle Hill, *Women In Ireland: a century of change* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2003); Caitriona Clear, *Social change and everyday life in Ireland 1850-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A social history of women in Ireland 1870-1970* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2005).

² Mary Daly, *Women and work in Ireland* (Dublin: S.I.E.S.H, 1997) pp. 9-56; Bernadette Whelan, *Women and paid work in Ireland 1500-1930* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), p. 9.

In investigating the above questions the research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge currently being acquired in the area of Irish women's history and in particular will focus attention on the role of the female as an active participant in the business life of the country. It will challenge the "traditional view" of women's acquisition of business through familial connections and widowhood and challenge the notion that female ownership of business or self-employment was exceptional. It will uncover "examples/case studies" of such women that may still exist in living memory.

CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH THIS RESEARCH IS SITUATED

It is widely acknowledged that the study of women's history has been largely ignored by historians until the latter part of the twentieth century. In Ireland, women's history was championed in the 1970s by Margaret MacCurtain. The publication in 1978 of *Women in Irish Society: the historical dimension* by MacCurtain and Donnchadh Ó Corráin was the first collection of essays focusing on women in modern history. Since that time, a growing number of researchers have developed a substantial body of work in the area of women's history and these contributions are impacting on the way in which history is being presented and indeed understood.³ According to Luddy, "Irish women's history asks new questions of old sources, queries the very nature of historical study in the country and constitutes arguably the most important new field of Irish history to have emerged in the last 50 years".⁴

³ Luddy, *Women in Ireland 1800-1918: a documentary history*; Luddy and Murphy (eds.), *Women Surviving*; Hill, *Women In Ireland: a century of change*; Clear, *Social change and everyday life in Ireland 1850-1922* ; Whelan, *Women and paid work in Ireland*; Cullen Owens, *A social history of women in Ireland 1870-1970*.

⁴ Luddy, *Women in Ireland 1800-1918*, p. xx.

Hayes and Urquhart note that the development of Irish women's history is based on asking the simple question – what did women do in the past? and that in answering this “significant challenge to that which had previously been considered as historically important was posed”.⁵ They also point out that “women's history is more than writing about the “great women” of history (much like mainstream history is more than the “great man” approach)”.⁶

Writing in 1990, Luddy and Murphy make the case that Irish women's experience has differed from men's in each century and that it was impacted by issues such as class, culture, religion, opportunities to work, attitudes and beliefs about women.⁷ As well as alluding to the difference between men's and women's histories, they also acknowledge that women do not form a homogenous mass, either in Ireland or elsewhere thereby highlighting the need for different groups of women to be studied separately.

As was the experience internationally, initially Irish women's history focussed on what Gerda Lerner described as compensatory history, efforts which were important to acknowledge the contribution of famous women in the Irish historical process.⁸ It then moved towards a contributory history and began to uncover women's contributions to various political and social movements. Where Irish women's history departed somewhat from the international experience lay in the fact that social history as a discipline was underdeveloped in Ireland. Irish historians had tended to be biased towards political and nationalist history, a situation that reflects the concerns of

⁵ Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, *The Irish women's history reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 3.

⁶ Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, *Irish Women's History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004) p. 201.

⁷ Luddy and Murphy, *Women surviving*, p. 6.

⁸ Gerda Lerner, *The Majority finds its Past; placing women in history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 145.

historians, not just in the twentieth century. It has been dominated by the long struggle to achieve independence from England. P.S. O’Hegarty, writing in 1952 captured it rather lyrically as “the story of a people coming out of captivity, out of underground, finding every artery of national life occupied by her enemy, recovering them one by one and coming out at last in the full blaze of the sun”.⁹ This struggle was perceived as largely the domain of men and it is relatively recently that the role of women in the fight for independence is being acknowledged, Ward’s earlier work and McCoolle’s more recent research on the role of Irish women in the 1916 Rising and War of Independence being particularly relevant here.¹⁰

Luddy and Murphy note that the absence of women’s history in the formative education of generations of Irish people “leaves a gap in their appreciation of the role which women played and still play in the community and ignores their very great contribution to the formation of the Irish economy”. Ferriter observes that “the focus of scholars has been too narrow” and has given little attention to ordinary lives.¹¹

Despite the shortcomings of Irish history, women’s history research has flourished throughout the 1990s and into the present, with the development and integration of new frameworks which embrace a range of interdisciplinary approaches, serving to broaden the heretofore narrow focus of modern Irish history. There are now more programmes of study available to students of women’s history and the Women’s History Project surveyed

⁹ P.S. O’Hegarty, http://www.ricorso.net/rx/az-data/authors/o/OHegarty_PS/life.htm#life, accessed 26/9/2013.

¹⁰ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable revolutionaries: women and Irish nationalism* (London: Pluto Press 1989), pp. 40-198; S. McCoolle, *No Ordinary women: Irish female activists in the Revolutionary Years 1900-1923* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2003), pp. 258-278.

¹¹ Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London: Profile books, 2005), p. 22

and recorded the resources that are available for research activity on the history of women in Ireland.¹²

However, despite the increased research activity, the focus on female business and economic activity is relatively under researched. It is particularly worth noting that within the existing Irish literature on women's history there is almost no focus on the business or entrepreneurial activity of women. Broderick has no classification for women as entrepreneurs/business owners and the Yeats sisters who were very business orientated are classified for their "artistic temperaments".¹³ The Ó Céiríns' biographic dictionary *Women of Ireland* has only eight entries under the classification of "Business and Finance".¹⁴ They categorise the Yeats sisters in this category, as well as acknowledging them in the category of Visual Arts.

On the other hand, tantalising glimpses of business activity by women are evident in other sources. McCoolle's study of women activists in the 1916 Rising, War of Independence and Civil War contains profiles of some well known and lesser known women who were involved at the time.¹⁵ An examination of the profiles of the women included in McCoolle's book uncovers details about female business activity. Kathleen Browne was one of the first beet growers in south Wexford, Catalina McBride was involved in running Roebuck Jams, and was an agent for Irish Sweepstakes, Maire Comerford was a poultry farmer, Nora Connolly O'Brien was a dressmaker and newsagent, Kathleen Clarke was a retailer who on a number of

¹² Women's History Project, www.history.ireland.com/womenshistoryproject accessed 20/9/2013

¹³ M. Broderick, *Wild Irish Women: extraordinary Lives from History* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2002), p. 327

¹⁴ Kit Ó Céirín and Cyril Ó Céirín, *Women of Ireland: A biographical dictionary* (Dublin: Tír Eolas, 1996), p. 231.

¹⁵ McCoolle, *No Ordinary women*, pp. 26, 32, 53, 70, 80.

occasions had to turn her hand to various business ventures to keep the family economically viable, Charlotte Despard was the founder of Roebuck Jam Factory and Eilís and Sinead Robinson Keeley were shop owners.

But for some reason, women involved in business activity have been relatively ignored by scholars and writers alike and the emphasis in economic history to date has mainly involved looking at women and labour and women in paid employment. While this has undoubtedly made a very valuable contribution to our understanding of the lives of women in the past, it does not necessarily tell a complete story and this is the knowledge deficit that this research study seeks to address. The work will contribute to building a body of work in this area and will highlight the presence of females in business from a historical perspective.

METHODOLOGY

The research project involved three related activities. Firstly, the literature was reviewed in order to contextualise the research project, both in terms of women's history literature and the role of women in Irish life in the period under investigation. There is also an examination of the pertinent business history literature with a particular emphasis on the work done on the historic antecedents of female entrepreneurship. An understanding and critique of the frameworks utilised across the different disciplines of women's history, business history and entrepreneurship was important in terms of contextualising the Irish situation and in framing the key research questions.

Historical research activity involves a thorough examination of the relevant archives and this formed the second fundamental part of this study. The archival work commenced with a thorough examination of the pertinent Census data from the period. The Census collection forms in 1926 included questions on industrial status from which in particular the statistics for

unemployment were derived. The options were as follows 'employer', 'own-account worker', 'assisting relatives', 'employee' or 'out of work'. This work focused on the two categories of particular relevance, that of employer and own-account worker i.e. persons who employed others and therefore were likely to be running a business in doing so or persons who were working for themselves, i.e. were gainfully employed as a result of their own endeavours. The category employer excluded those who were employing domestic servants in their own homes. These two categories of employer and own-account worker were analysed for each Census year using the Industrial Status tables and were examined for each sector of the economy excluding agriculture. The findings provide a quantitative dataset for a 50 year period from which certain inferences can be made and trends identified.

To complement the quantitative data, other sources of existing material were also utilised. Private companies are required by law to register with the Companies Office and had to do for the period under investigation. In registering, companies supply details of shareholders and of directors. Technically, shareholders own private companies, so knowing who the shareholders are gives a good indication of who owns the company. Oftentimes in small private companies shareholders and directors were one and the same. However, being a shareholder alone does not necessarily mean that the shareholders are operating the company and often directors are more closely involved in the management of the entity. Nonetheless, an examination of the registration files of privately held companies is a good indicator of the gender of the person responsible for the company. It is neither technically nor physically possible to get access to and examine all of the files of all privately owned companies for the period of the study, but two sources were utilised to examine samples of this material. Firstly, the National Archives have the files of the private companies that were dissolved for the mid years of the 20th century from 1922 up until the late 1950s. A total of 2,367 files are available on the public record and a sample

of 680 dissolved in the years corresponding to the Census dates were examined and a database of these compiled in terms of providence of directors and shareholders. The analysis of this data supplements the quantitative data gleaned from the Census. Furthermore the Companies Registration Office is beginning to digitise these records and for the Census years was able to provide information on the provenance of owners of companies incorporated in those years. This provided some of the data for consideration for this study. Finally, in terms of quantitative analysis, data in relation to the registration of patents was utilised. While not all patents filed result in the formation of a company and/or the development of commercial business activity, the registration of a patent is often the first step in business formation.

An array of other archival sources was also examined with a view to uncovering material relating to female-owned businesses. The Business Records held in the National Archives were one such source and had some relevant records from women owned businesses from different regions of the country. Files from the Department of Industry and Commerce pertaining to the development of tourism, Trade Loan Guarantees, and the Control of Manufacturers Act were examined as were files from the Department of the Taoiseach. Some of these provided useful qualitative information which gives good insight into some of the issues facing women in different industrial sectors and how they interacted with the formal structures of the State.

As is well documented by scholars, archival research in relation to women's history research presents challenges primarily because the observations of women were not always seen as important and the written word of women

was not preserved to the same extent as the male written word.¹⁶ Bearing this in mind newspapers and popular magazines were examined as they can be a valuable source for reporting a good deal of information about women in any given period. They do come with a cautionary proviso because as Ryan notes, there are significant methodological questions of meaning and representation to be borne in mind when using this data source.¹⁷ Notwithstanding that, they provide some pertinent qualitative material that allows the story of women as employers and own-account managers to unfold.

The third component of this study was the use of oral history as a central methodological tool. As defined by Daniel Ritchie, oral history is “an active process in which interviewers seek out, record, and preserve people’s stories and observations”.¹⁸ While the development of the historical record in many societies over time had a strong reliance on oral tradition, recent Western practise has been dominated by a reliance on written documentation for source material.¹⁹ However, developments in the latter stages of the 20th century saw a return to the use of oral history as an important source in historical research and with this development a significant level of debate about its usefulness. The gathering of oral testimony is an interdisciplinary pursuit, used in sociology, anthropology, psychology and there are multiple perspectives on its usefulness as a technique and it is not proposed to examine the full arguments in detail here. Suffice to say that proponents of the method observe that it has allowed

¹⁶ Sylvie Vandecasteele-Schweitzer and Daniel Voldman, ‘The Oral sources for Women’s History’ in Michelle Perrot (ed), *Writing Women’s History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), p. 41.

¹⁷ Louise Ryan, ‘Leaving Home: Irish Press debates on female employment, domesticity and emigration to Britain in the 1930s’, *Women’s History Review*, vol. 12, no. 3 (2003), pp. 387-406.

¹⁸ D Ritchie, ‘Forward’, in J Jeffrey and G Edwall (eds.), *Memory and History: essays on recalling and interpreting experience* (Lanham Md: University Press of America, 1994), pp. v.

¹⁹ Paul Thompson, *Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 52.

for the inclusion of the experiences of groups of people who have heretofore been excluded from the historical record-the working class, indigenous groups and members of minorities.²⁰ Opponents argue that the method is subjective both in construction and in interpretation and overly reliant on memory, which it is claimed is variable and oftentimes unreliable.²¹

In an Irish context oral evidence and personal testimonies have been used successfully and can add significant value to interpreting and understanding Irish social history, but as outlined by Clear it is not without problems.²² Muldowney too discusses issues around memory and language which impact on oral history but acknowledges the long term value of the source while Elizabeth Kiely and Maire Leane advocate the use of other secondary sources to “supplement and better contextualise” the oral histories.²³

Paul Thompson, an expert in oral history articulated a range of areas where oral history is particularly useful, labour history, activism, political documentary, colonisation, social history and economic history.²⁴ Of particular note, he maintains, is the way in which oral evidence can contribute to the study of the entrepreneurs. This echoes Brian McKenzie’s view that entrepreneurship does not always lend itself to quantitative studies, as entrepreneurs love to tell their

²⁰ R Perks and A Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998). p. ix.

²¹ R Grele, 'Movement without aim: methodological and theoretical problems in oral history', in R Perks and A Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 39.

²² Caitriona Clear, *Women of the House: Women's household work in Ireland 1922-1961* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000), p. 216.

²³ Mary Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish women: an oral history* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), pp 1-238; Elizabeth Kiely and Maire Leane, *Irish women at work 1930-1960* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012), p. 9

²⁴ Thompson, *Voices of the Past*, p.83.

stories and are open to sharing them.²⁵ However, Thompson also notes that economic historians have been slow to collect life histories.²⁶

As a method, oral history has a particular application too for women's history and Joan Sangster notes that:

Asking why and how women explain, rationalise and make sense of their past offers insight into the social and material framework within which they operated, the perceived choices and cultural patterns they faced, and the complex relationship between individual consciousness and culture.²⁷

Penny Summerfield too, is an advocate of oral history and while acknowledging the problem of subjectivity in oral history she advocates that it is necessary for the historian:

to encompass within oral history analysis and interpretation, not only the voice that speaks for itself, but also the voices that speak to it, the discursive formulations from which understandings are selected and within which accounts are made.²⁸

The debate around the subjectivity vs. objectivity of oral history is reflective of what Brent Slife terms as a "global issue for science" in general. He goes onto note that:

no historical source is necessarily closer to what really happened than any other. Each has its own biased slant on reality and our history in this sense can be linked to the facts of recent science; namely intersubjective agreement of interpretation with the

²⁵ Brian McKenzie, 'Techniques for collecting verbal histories', in Helle and Ulhoi Neergaard, John Parm (ed.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2008), pp. 308-330.

²⁶ Thompson, *Voices of the Past* p. 83.

²⁷ Joan Sangster, 'Telling our stories: feminist debates and the use of oral history', in R Perks and A Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 88.

²⁸ P. Summerfield, *Reconstructing women's wartime lives: discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 15.

possibility of replacement by another intersubjective agreement down the line – and not what “actually” happened, apart from the perceptions of humans.²⁹

Alessandro Portelli talks about the interplay between oral and written sources, noting that they have commonalities as well as differences and that they have specific functions that one or the other can fill better.³⁰ The credibility of oral history as a source he maintains “may not lie in its adherence to fact but rather in its departure from it”, thus there is no such thing as “false” oral sources and believes that this source offers the opportunity to understand the past in new ways.³¹ This, according to Graham Smith, also gives an insight into “continuity and change given to events”.³²

In the context of this study, while some of those living and working in the first half of the period are dead by now, there existed the opportunity to interview the sons, daughters and other family members of women engaged in businesses then, and for the later stage of the period it was possible to speak directly to the originators. In advance of eliciting participants for the oral histories, the work of Thompson was reviewed and considered, as it provided a very useful checklist for preparation and conducting the work. Particular attention was paid to the setting up of the interview, gaining trust, making it easy for the participants to relax. The setting up of the interviews, maintaining a balance between structured and semi-structured questions was considered, the method of capturing data was organised and the importance of listening considered. As a

²⁹ Brent Slife, Comment on essay-reliability and validity in oral history: the case for memory', in J. Jeffrey and G. Edwall (eds.), *Memory and History: Essays on recalling and interpreting experience* (Lanham Md: University Press of America, 1994), p. 134.

³⁰ Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 64.

³¹ Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', p. 68.

³² Graham Smith, 'The making of oral history' <http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/index.html> accessed 14/4/2014).

pilot test an oral history was solicited early on in relation to the business activities of a woman who ran a business in Dublin's South City Markets – a colleague's grandmother had run this business for over 50 years and she recorded her mother's memories of this venture for this project. (The transcripts of all oral histories are contained in volume 2—see Jane). This pilot test was useful to establish the relevance of the questions and it helped to shape the remaining interviews. The narrative that emerged had references to other female businesswomen and highlighted that the individual in telling her own story could also pin point others. In all, a total of 19 interviews were conducted, which elicited a total of 24 individual oral histories. 18 of the interviews were recorded and the transcripts are included in Volume two. Table 1 summarises the salient hard facts in relation to the 19 participants—location, industry sector, marital status when starting the business, status of the company at start up, approximate age.

Using the Census Industrial classifications, the 24 histories of business women that emerged from the 19 interviews, divide into 7 based on businesses from Commerce and Finance, 3 from Manufacturing, 11 from Personal Services, and 3 from Professional Services. Geographically, there are 6 Dublin based, 4 from Waterford, 1 from Meath, 3 from Galway, 1 from Wicklow, 7 from Kerry, 1 from Sligo and 1 in Kildare. Of the 24, 15 (62.5%) started the business of their own accord; there were 2 (8.33%) joint start-ups – husband and wife beginning the business together; 2 (8.33%) inherited the business from family; 2 (8.33%) who married into the business; 1 (4.16%) inherited the business from non-family members; 1 (4.1%) who bought the business from a family member and 1 (4.16%) was set up by the family for the females. Of the total 15 (62.5%) were married at the time they set up and/or acquired the business, 8 (33.33%) were single and 1 (4.16%) was widowed. Thirteen started the company as a sole proprietor or sole trader, 4 set up as limited companies from the outset and 5 began life as a sole proprietor but as time progressed converted to limited company status. 19 of

the women went on to have children. For a short biographical summary of each oral history see Appendix A.

Having reviewed the testimonies and examined the transcripts a decision was taken for the purpose of this study, to focus on the businesses from Commerce and Finance, Manufacturing, and Personal Services. The data shows that these were the main areas of concentration of female business activity and as was the case with agriculture, it was deemed that Professional Services required separate consideration.

This decision to omit the Professional Service sector was driven by the recognition that, while in relative terms the numbers were small, the contribution of women as employers and own-account workers was significant and that the full exploration of the issues impacting on female entrepreneurs in this sector was probably beyond the scope of the current work. Three Professional Service oral histories are omitted from this study and they came from the areas of health, education and professional recruitment. They are indicative of the fact that for some women, as they acquired professional qualifications they identified entrepreneurial opportunities that allowed them to develop and run businesses that were directly related to their profession and this merits future investigation.

The implication of this decision is that a total of 21 businesses, 7 from Commerce and Finance, 3 from Manufacturing, 11 from Personal Services, form the basis for the oral evidence referred to in the text.

The solicitation of subjects and their subsequent participation came about in a number of ways. Firstly, some were made known to the researcher through personal connections i.e. colleagues and friends had a relative whose profile fitted the category required and they were prepared to share their story—5 interviews. Secondly, an appeal was made through the national papers and

through two national organisations that were directly working with the elderly, Age Action Ireland and Age and Opportunity—for the letters used to solicit these see Appendix B). This resulted in a further 4 interviews. Thirdly a direct approach was made to descendants who had been identified from some of the preliminary archive work and this resulted in a further 5 and finally the remaining 5 were referred by one of the participants. That final 5 interviewees reflect an aspect of the business life in the region, the majority of these, 4 out of the 5 were operating in the hospitality sector which has a history of female business owners. The research shows that this clustering effect for the hospitality sector is evident in other regions also. The interviews were conducted at a time and a place of the interviewees choosing. While allowing for different styles of recollection the interview questions were broadly the same and a copy of the questions is included in Appendix C. The transcripts were returned to the participant for their perusal, anonymity was offered to all who wished not be identified by their real name.

Table 1: Participants in Oral Histories.³³

Business	Location	Sector	Start up conditions	Status	Company status	Children
Fish poultry trading	Dublin	Commerce	Inherited from employers	M	SP	Y
Clothing	Dublin	Mnftng	Start up herself	M	SP to LC	Y
Education	Dublin	Profession	Start up herself	S	LC	Y
Shop & Pumps	Waterford	Commerce	Start up herself	M	SP	Y
Photography	Waterford	Personal service	Start up herself	S	SP	N
Confectioner	Waterford	Commerce	Start up herself	S	SP	N
Guest House	Waterford	Personal Service	Start up herself	M	SP	Y
Nursing Home	Sligo	Profession	Start up herself	S	SP	Y
Clothing factory	Dublin	Mnftng	Start up herself	S	LC	Y
Drapery shop	Meath	Commerce	Start up herself	M	SP to LC	Y
Drapery shop	Galway	Commerce	Joint start up	M	SP to LC	Y
Hotelier	Wicklow	Personal service	Inherited from family	M	LC	Y
Hotelier	Kerry	Personal service	Joint start up	M	SP to LC	Y
Retailing	Kerry	Commerce	Start up herself	M	SP	Y
Café and tearoom	Kerry	Personal service	Start up herself	M	SP	Y
Hotelier	Kerry	Personal service	Bought from family	M	SP to LC	Y
Hotelier	Kerry	Personal service	Married into it	M	SP	Y
Hotelier	Kerry	Personal service	Inherited from family	S	LC	N
Hotelier	Kerry	Personal service	Start up herself	W	SP	Y
Caterer	Kildare	Personal service	Start up herself	M	SP to LC	Y
Retailing	Galway	Commerce	Married into it	M	SP	Y
Retailing and guesthouse	Galway	Commerce and Personal service	Set up by family	S	SP	N
Emp agency	Dublin	Profession	Start up herself	S	LC	N
Knitting mnfacturer	Dublin	Mnftng	Start up herself	M	SP	Y

³³ Table compiled from interviews; transcripts of interviews except those in italics in volume 2. SP refers to a sole trader. LC refers to a limited company.

Women's History

The early stage of women's history was fuelled by growth in social history. Social history, as outlined by Laura Lee Downs has as its basis in macro structural forms of analysis, i.e. it examines social and economic structures as determinants of individual behaviour.³⁴ The work in this area began to shed light on the ordinary lives of people in historical times and saw a move away from the emphasis on elites. It also saw the recovery of other non-elite histories i.e. the history of workers both men and women, of agriculture and industrial production. It led to the development of a substantial body of work in the area of labour history.

Historians working in the early 20th century instrumental in the development of women's history include Ivy Pinchbeck in the UK, Mary Beard in the US and Leon Abensour in France. Their work laid the foundations for women's history as a discipline and contributed significantly to ensuring that a host of hidden histories, including women's were investigated. Pinchbeck's work, published in 1930 *Women's work and the Industrial revolution* was instrumental in debunking the notion that women only commenced work as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution.³⁵ In particular, she also portrayed a less than rosy view of a perceived golden age before the Industrial Revolution and demonstrated the reality of the monotonous and laborious task that sustaining a living and keeping family together was for women at that time. These early women historians showed that clearly women were active participants in economic life, not passive recipients as had been the perception.

³⁴ Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History* (Abingdon: Hodder Education, 2004), p. 5.

³⁵ Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women workers and the industrial revolution 1750-1850*. (New York: Cass and Co, 1969), p. 4.

Perhaps one of the most debated issues in women's history is the relevance of the dominant discourse of the 19th century in the interpretation of the histories being uncovered. The separate spheres notion was the historiographical suggestion of 19th century Britain and US, which sought to restrict women's activity to the private sphere (typically the home) while the male pursuits of politics and economy took place in a public domain which was not accessible to females. Interest in the separate spheres was abetted by research in the area of cultural anthropology where academics were looking towards interpreting cultures as if they functioned like language i.e. that cultures are closed structures based on an fundamental organisation of binary functions. Anthropologists had reported that there seemed to be a gendered division of "symbolic spaces" across a wide range of cultures that they studies and that this was shaped on the binary function of public (social) and private (domestic). The public/social was typified by male activity and domination whereas the private/domestic appeared to be the female domain.³⁶

The public/private spheres concept had very real applications in women's history and for many studies emanating from the mid 1970's to mid-1980's it provided a conceptual framework to analyse the experience of women in history. The fundamental liberation of the public/private framework was that it gave credibility to an examination of the domestic and the private, which heretofore were perceived as somewhat trivial. Without an examination of both sides of the framework history was in some way incomplete. It also allowed the spotlight to shine on the distinct and often varied worlds that women formed within the boundaries of the domestic.

One of the earliest proponents of the public/private analytical framework was Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, who examined the formation of

³⁶ Downs, *Writing gender history*, p. 44.

the English provincial middle class in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.³⁷ They maintained that the roots of middle-class formation lay in the separation of public space, which was ultimately male-dominated, and the increasingly, domesticated, feminised private realm. This book opened up the debate of the significance of the gender division as it affected society as a whole.

Writing about conditions in nineteenth century Britain Davidoff notes that by then a “cluster of forceful and widespread ideas about domesticity, the home and its role in making boundaries, between class and class factions had emerged”.³⁸ She goes on to say that the private became ever more associated with ideas about femininity.

However, despite the prominence of the public/private spheres framework and its influence in the early stages of the development of the discipline, the framework was not without its critics. Over time, a number of shortcomings were identified. It was held that the public/private reflected a class bias and that the experience of middle-class 19th century women was very far removed from the working class women who had to go out to work and whose ‘private’ domain (overcrowded, poorly constructed) in fact offered little privacy. Davidson claims that the term ‘women’ used in the separate spheres debate actually only describes middle-class women and that the power of the separate spheres models lies in a concept of women that is historically narrowly defined.³⁹

³⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. xv.

³⁸ Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds between : historical perspectives on gender and class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 3.

³⁹ Cathy N. Davidson, 'Preface: No more separate spheres!', *American Literature*, vol. 70, no. 3 (1998), pp. 443-63.

Amanda Vickery also critiques the separate spheres framework and articulates the view that, while without doubt the majority of women in 18th and 19th century Britain were primarily associated with homemaking this could be applied to almost any time or any culture, a fact which she maintains “robs the distinction of its analytical purchase”.⁴⁰ She goes on to note that in genteel Georgian United Kingdom, there were public constructions that did not correspond to a distinction between male and female worlds in the area of general entertainment, and that without a doubt, family was very often a public institution, shaping and influencing many legal and political decisions. She also notes how urban development of the period in question created platforms for female public interaction, places such as assembly rooms, concerts and public gardens.

Another criticism of the separate spheres framework is that it serves only to reinforce a prescriptive ideology of domesticity that came to prominence especially in the nineteenth century. This ideology is historically created and is very much linked to the rise of the middle class. Drawing from evidence presented in a range of published sermons, books, women’s magazines, Vickery notes that “a particularly crippling ideology of virtuous femininity was identified as newly constructed in the early to mid-nineteenth century”. The argument runs that with a growth in capitalism, the notion that a man needed the safe haven of home to return to, became a core value of middle class life.⁴¹

However, Vickery argues that if viewed from a different perspective, the constant references to the public/private ideology could be construed as a demonstration of concern for the fact that women were in fact active outside

⁴⁰ Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2 (1993), p. 383-414.

⁴¹ Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres?' p. 383-414.

the home, rather than “proof that they were so confined”.⁴² This raises the notion that women may in fact have been leaving their prescribed sphere rather than staying within it. Scott too articulates this criticism when she speaks about the separate spheres model as one which “conflate ideological precept and analytical category”.⁴³ It has obscured the actual history of women and also reproduced as fact the prescriptive ideologies of the nineteenth century.

Davidoff, writing in 1998 acknowledges that the separate spheres framework has come under considerable criticism and acknowledges that one cannot consider public/private without taking into account other social and economic divisions.⁴⁴ She goes on to say that the binary concepts of public and private are very complicated and that their meaning can vary according to the context and with each generation of new users. She proffers examples from middle-class 18th and 19th century of different publics within which women could function with differing emphasis of gender connotation i.e. public lectures. She notes also that religion was a sphere where the females of the vicar’s household played a vital role, often in quite a public context, and provided essential support across the communities in which they lived. So too was the case for females in Catholic religious life.⁴⁵ For the working class, the women gathered in many public arenas, the streets, the markets and at a later point in the municipal baths and washhouses.

⁴² Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres?' pp. 383-414.

⁴³ Joan W. Scott, 'Comment: conceptualising gender in American business history', *The Business History Review*, vol. 72, no. 2 (1998), p. 242-49.

⁴⁴ Leonare Davidoff, 'Gender and the "Great Divide"', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2003), pp. 11-27.

⁴⁵ Caitriona Clear, 'The limits of female autonomy: nuns in nineteenth century Ireland' in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds), *Women surviving: studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th centuries*, (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1990), p.16.

Davidson in disposing of the separate spheres model concludes her discussion by outlining a number of considerations that female historians and scholars need to be cognisant of.⁴⁶ She acknowledges that gender is an important category for analysis, but notes that we must specify what we mean when we use the term “gender”. It is also important to note that it is but one variable and does not exist by or of itself; it changes over time and is often shaped by other categories. An over reliance on gender as a sole motivating critical analysis often reduces the significance of other factors such as race and class. At the same time, adding other factors, such as race and class does not in any way lessen the importance of gender as a category of analysis.

Linda Kerber too, while acknowledging the contribution that separate spheres as a tool of analysis has made to women’s history, posits the notion that as property laws changed to give married women more control over their own earnings and property, this effectively challenged the ‘patriarchal corporate economy’ thereby destabilising the separate spheres concept.⁴⁷ The pursuit of business opportunities almost always takes place in public and the public/private spheres debate has relevance when considering why, how and where Irish businesswomen developed and operated their businesses.

Economic and social context

This study is concerned with the first fifty years following the formation of the Irish state and in order to understand the experience of self-employed women and women business owners it is important to examine the

⁴⁶ Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher, *No more separate spheres* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 10.

⁴⁷ Linda K. Kerber, 'Separate spheres, female worlds, woman's place: The rhetoric of Women's History', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 75, no. 1 (1988), pp. 9-39.

economic, social and political context within which they were operating. The general consensus on the economy is one of poor performance. Cormac Ó Gráda, reviewing the Irish economy since the 1920s notes that in the first three decades there was little growth in either output or income combined with high emigration.⁴⁸ This was followed by what he calls the ‘Golden Age’ of the 1960s, a period of growth and employment which was interrupted in the mid-1970s as global economic factors impacted on the State.

In the 1920s, the new government undoubtedly took a very cautious approach to the management of economic affairs and policy continued very much along the lines that had been advocated by the British Treasury. Daly situates the economic issues facing Ireland in the early 20th century in the political, social and economic developments of the 19th century.⁴⁹ From the Act of Union onwards, the Irish economy was closely linked with Britain’s - having a common currency, integrated banking and a shared Anglo Irish market. There was neither the appetite, nor indeed as Daly points out, the expertise within the new government to decouple the economies. The priority was to ensure political stability and security in the aftermath of the Civil War, and effectively there was no coherent, alternative economic policy. The Cumann na nGaedheal Party pursued a path of low taxation and the development of Ireland’s agricultural base.⁵⁰ They set up three commissions of experts to assist in the setting of economic policy-(The Commission on Agriculture, The Fiscal Inquiry Committee and the Banking Commission) who favoured the continuation of the status quo of close

⁴⁸ Cormac Ó Gráda, *A rocky road: the Irish economy since the 1920s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 1.

⁴⁹ Mary Daly, *Industrial development and Irish national identity 1922-1939*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992), p. 7.

⁵⁰ Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A new economic history 1780-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 385.

financial links with Britain, the development of agriculture and retaining free trade for the industrial sector.⁵¹ The emphasis on free trade ran somewhat contrary to the nationalist ideology which was very much rooted in a view of self-sufficiency for indigenous industry with a rejection of mass industrialisation. However, the opposition calls for increases in protection for certain sectors fell on deaf ears, despite the formation of a Tariff Commission which moved slowly and ruled to give limited protection to certain locally produced goods, leading Ó Gráda to comment that towards the end of the 1920s Ireland could claim to be one of the world's last free trading countries, as tariffs and quotas were widespread in many countries.⁵²

Policy changed when Fianna Fail came to power in 1932. They pursued an economic policy which promoted self-sufficiency and set about the development of a heavily protected indigenous manufacturing sector. The protectionist stance was abetted by the Economic War from 1932–1938, the setting up of the Industrial Credit company in 1933 and supported by the introduction of the Control of Manufactures Act 1932 and 1934 which required start-up companies who did not have a majority of Irish shareholders to apply for a licence to conduct business. The Act remained in force until the mid-1950s and during its lifespan a total of 224 licences had been granted.⁵³ There is some evidence that the policies worked, official data of the time points to a growth in employment and output during the period, but it would appear that some of the growth in employment came from the increase in construction in social housing, and that the domestic market was close to saturation point by the late 1930s.⁵⁴ The fledgling indigenous

⁵¹ Daly, *Industrial development and Irish national identity*, p. 16.

⁵² Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A new economic history*, p. 386.

⁵³ Mary Daly, 'An Irish Ireland for Business? The Control of Manufacturers Act 1932 and 1934', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 94 (1984), pp. 246–272.

⁵⁴ Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A new economic history*, p. 407.

industries were heavily focused on the domestic market and had never been geared towards export, a factor that ultimately contributed to their eventual demise during the free trade era of the late 1950s and 1960s.

The World War II period, referred to in Ireland as the Emergency, brought a distinct set of economic challenges, in particular around energy and food suppliers, resulting in economic stagnation over the period. A Department of Supplies was established with responsibility for the allocation of essential raw materials and food. The country was effectively closed off from world markets. While unemployment fell there were significant levels of emigration as the opportunities for work were better in Britain.⁵⁵ Basic food commodities were in short supply and health worsened due to infant mortality and tuberculosis (TB). This led to an initial fall-off in Fianna Fail support but as the war continued that changed as there was popular support for neutrality.⁵⁶ The immediate aftermath of the war was marked by a short lived recovery, with all sectors getting a lift. It was marked by an increase in output-once more most of it aimed at the domestic market.

The 1950s proved difficult years for Ireland, de Valera having inherited a Balance of Payments deficit of £62 million.⁵⁷ The budget of April 1952 was deflationary and had repercussions throughout the decade. Emigration was at its highest point since the 1880s, with about 400,000 people leaving the country during the decade.⁵⁸ Employment in industry fell, and Ireland, unlike other countries in Europe recorded a decrease in the total volume of

⁵⁵ Ó Gráda, *A rocky road*, p. 18.

⁵⁶ Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Five Crisis ', Central Bank of Ireland', *T.K. Whitaker Lecture* (Dublin, 2011), p. 19.

⁵⁷ Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2005), p. 224.

⁵⁸ Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland*, p. 222.

goods and services consumed.⁵⁹ By the late 1950s, things had begun to change, and while there is no overall consensus as to why this happened-a number of factors, including the publication in 1958 of Dr. Whitaker's document on economic development and Sean Lemass replacing de Valera as Taoiseach, growth of our trading partners and increasing movement towards the liberalisation of trade contributed. By 1962, Lemass was claiming that full employment had been achieved and throughout the 1960s Ireland moved towards greater urbanisation.⁶⁰

Women in Ireland from 1922 – 1971

The contribution of women to the formation of the State, in term of involvement in the Easter Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War has been well researched and documented in the past 20 years or so.⁶¹ In particular, the focus on equality and the role of women in the nationalist movement has been reviewed.⁶² However, the immediate legacy of the involvement of females in this era could be deemed disappointing in terms of impact on the everyday lives of females in the early years of the state. The key objective of the Cumann na nGaedheal government was to ensure stability and in doing so they adopted a conservative stance in terms of policy and approach to running the country and to that end, the traditional roles within the family were presented as the norm. Mary Muldowney notes that this reversion to traditional roles was consistent with patterns in Europe, when as men involved in the First World War returned home the reassertion

⁵⁹ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 485.

⁶⁰ Cormac Ó Gráda, *A Rocky Road: the Irish economy since the 1920s*, p. 29.

⁶¹ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: women and Irish nationalism* (London: Pluto Press 1989), pp. 40-198; McCool, *No Ordinary Women*, pp. 20-138.

⁶² Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A social history of women in Ireland 1870-1970*, p. 118.

of the status quo as it had existed before the War was equated with a return to normality.⁶³ Ferriter too acknowledges that:

Ireland was not unique in developing aspects of a gendered state in the 1920s, but should be seen as reflecting (albeit very stridently) a broader movement within European conservatism, as seen, for example, in the policies of pro-nationalism in France, and curtailment of access to contraception across Europe.⁶⁴

The new state, while having a Constitution that conferred equal rights for men and women introduced legislation which went against the spirit and thrust of equality. In 1926 the Civil Services Regulation (Amendment) Act placed restrictions on women's employment in the Civil Service. This gave the government the power to limit certain exams within the Civil Service on gender basis and gave them the authority to appoint directly. The 1927 Juries Act exempted women as a class from Jury duty, and following protestations from feminist activist of the time including Jenny Wyse Power this was amended to state that women, if they choose to would be allowed to serve. In 1929 the Censorship of Publications Act banned information on contraception, and in 1935 the Criminal Law Amendment Act banned the sale and importation of contraceptives. In 1936 the Conditions of Employment Act introduced legislation which permitted the Minister for Industry and Commerce to limit the number of women participating in any given industry. In 1937 the new Constitution *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, was introduced with Article 41 which gave prominence to woman's 'life within the home'.⁶⁵

⁶³ Mary Muldowney, 'We were conscious of the sort of people we mixed with: The State, social attitudes and the family in mid twentieth century Ireland', *History of the Family*, vol.13 (2008), p. 403.

⁶⁴ Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* p. 327.

⁶⁵ Maryann Valiulis, 'Power, gender and identity in the Irish Free State' in Joan Hoff; Moureen Coulter; Eavan Boland (eds), *Irish Women's Voices: past and present*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 118.

When considering this list of apparently restrictive legislation it is important to remember that this was in keeping with the wider turbulence of the 1920s and a perception of the moral deterioration of the world in general and of women in particular. Internationally, as well as nationally there was an idealisation of family, marriage and motherhood and by giving prominence to the woman in the home, the government was endeavouring to maintain Irish traditional family values and in some way present a badge of Irish moral respectability to the wider world.⁶⁶ Finola Kennedy challenges the view that de Valera and his adherence to Catholic teaching was solely responsible for the notion that the woman's place was in the home and she cites similar views being an integral part of the Beveridge Report in the UK in 1942.⁶⁷ Equally, Daly cautions that there:

is a danger that the freedom and status accorded to Irish women in early years of 20th century have been exaggerated and that in turn the repressive nature of the new Irish state may also have been overstated".⁶⁸

Table 2 gives an overview of the female population engaged in work and engaged in home duties from 1926 to 1971. At a glance this shows a significant increase in the number of females engaged in home duties, a rise of almost 12% with a decline over 3% in those gainfully employed. This could be interpreted as the ushering of "women out of paid work and back into the home" but as Clear notes the significant factor was not the rise in the proportion of women engaged in home duties, rather the decline in the proportion of females who were engaged in domestic service, illustrated by

⁶⁶ Maryann Valiulis, 'Engendering citizenship: Women's relationship to the state in Ireland and the United States in the post-suffrage period' in Mary O'Dowd and Maryann Valiulis (ed), *Women and Irish History: essays in honour of Margaret MacCurtain* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press 1997), p. 61.

⁶⁷ Finola Kennedy, *From Cottage to Crèche*, (Dublin: IPA, 2001), p. 6.

⁶⁸ Mary E. Daly, 'Women in the Irish Free State, 1922-39: The interaction between economics and ideology', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1995), pp. 99-116.

the fact that there were 72% fewer domestic servants in Ireland in 1961 than in 1926.⁶⁹

Table 2: Total female population engaged in home duties and gainfully employed⁷⁰

Year	Total Female Pop Aged 14 or over)	Home Duties		Gainfully employed	
1926	1,127,077	550,147	(48.81%)	342,894	(30.42%)
1936	1,072,204	552,176	(51.50%)	351,367	(32.77%)
1946	1,081,362	589,461	(54.51%)	334,863	(30.97%)
1951	1,061,672	582,364	(54.58%)	324,848	(30.60%)
1961	1,001,095	601,392	(60.07%)	286,579	(28.63%)
1966	1,020,980	614,919	(60.23%)	289,144	(28.32%)
1971	1,055,707	635,327	(60.18%)	287,867	(27.27%)

While aggregate data such as that above is useful in terms of garnering some general trends it is important to remember that the lived experiences of women varied differently, both within the home and outside of the home and Kennedy notes that:

family life was very different for the poor slum dwellers, the working class, the growing bourgeoisie in the towns and cities, as it was different also for the farm labourers, the small tenant farmers, the larger farmer proprietors and the substantial landed gentry in the rural areas.⁷¹

The issues surrounding the experiences of Irish women in the home are outlined by Clear and the distinction between different categories of class are well drawn by both Tony Farmar and by Kevin Kearns whose work on

⁶⁹ Caitriona Clear, *Women of the House: women's household work in Ireland 1922-1961*, pp. 13-15.

⁷⁰ *Census of Population, Occupation Tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

⁷¹ Kennedy, *From Cottage to Creche*, p. 57.

middle-class and working-class life in Dublin respectively give an insight into the differences in lifestyle within such categories.⁷² Kennedy records that in 1932 the average industrial wage was £126 per annum or less than £3 per week and that by 1963 the average industrial wage was £541, noting that in 1963 the cost of living was about three times its level in 1932.⁷³ When taken into consideration that the average industrial wage had risen more than four times in the same period it is clear that there was a real increase in living standards over the period.

Family size tended to be large, in fact the largest in Europe through much of the mid-20th century, and here too, the discrepancy between classes was apparent with Daly noting that the largest family sizes tended to be in households headed by farmers and unskilled and semi-skilled workers, with professional families and non-Catholics having fewer children.⁷⁴ The pattern continued into the 1960s, when there was a steady rise in the numbers getting married with a corresponding drop in the rate of births. Kennedy attributes the decline in family size to economic factors, arguing that as these grow and develop “they can dominate tradition and Church teaching, and while cultural background and history can slow down responses to these forces, they do not in the long run tend to override them”.⁷⁵ Daly too, makes the link between economic growth and falling fertility rates.⁷⁶

⁷² Clear, *Women of the House*; Tony Farmar, *Privileged lives: a social history of middle-class Ireland 1882-1989* (Dublin: A and E Farmer, 2010); Tony Farmar, *Ordinary lives: three generations of Irish middle-class experience 1907, 1932 1963* (Dublin: A and E Farmer, 1991); Kevin Kearns, *Dublin tenement life: an oral history* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994).

⁷³ Kennedy, *From Cottage to Creche*, p.60.

⁷⁴ Mary E. Daly, ‘Marriage, fertility and women’s lives in twentieth-century Ireland’ , *Women’s History Review*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2006), pp. 571- 85.

⁷⁵ Kennedy, *From Cottage to Creche*, p. 17.

⁷⁶ Daly, ‘Marriage, fertility and women’s lives in twentieth-century Ireland’ , p. 583.

For women in gainful employment, there is a continued pattern of decline evident in the figures noted in the table above, but Daly advises that these general figures hide important changes – a move away from domestic service, a shift from agriculture and employment within the family economy to waged employment in industry and service.⁷⁷ Opportunities existed in office and clerical support work, an occupation that had been previously the domain of men became largely the preserve of females following the introduction of the typewriter in the 1870s.⁷⁸ Employment in industry too grew, with women accounting for 59% of the total jobs that were created in protected industries in the 1930s.⁷⁹ Retailing provided employment throughout the period. The widening participation of females in education led to growing numbers of females becoming involved in the professions, with teaching and nursing providing the most likely openings for employment.⁸⁰ Elizabeth Kiely and Maire Leane’s oral history study of women at work between 1930 and 1960 in the Munster area depicts female workers as teachers, agricultural workers, civil servants, factory workers, nurses and domestic servants.⁸¹

In reviewing the aggregate data on women working it must be noted that there is a strong likelihood that the figures of women working, either for themselves or for others is underreported. Many women contributed substantially to the overall family income in the running of family

⁷⁷ Mary Daly, *Women and work in Ireland* (Dublin: Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1997), p. 6.

⁷⁸ Cullen Owens, *A social history of women in Ireland 1870–1970*, p. 231.

⁷⁹ Daly, *Women and work in Ireland*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, *Quiet Revolutionaries: Irish women in education, medicine and sport 1861-1964* (Dublin: History Press, 2011), p. 16.

⁸¹ Kiely and Leane, *Irish women at work 1930-1960*, pp. xi-xix.

businesses.⁸² Daly cautions that the Irish Census does not count women who were farmers' wives or who assisted in family business as economically active, thereby depressing the rates of female participation, particularly the rates of married women in the labour force.⁸³ This needs to be borne in mind when examining the role of females as business owners and as self-employed workers.

Defining Entrepreneurship

At the turn of the century in Ireland, women undoubtedly contributed to the family economy. What is more explicit and easily assessed is their contribution through paid labour and work by scholars re-affirms activities of this nature.⁸⁴ More difficult to uncover is the history of female entrepreneurs who engaged in business as owner/managers. In grappling with this issue it is important to define what is meant by entrepreneurship.

What is entrepreneurship? How does one define entrepreneurial activity and what is the definitive descriptor of an entrepreneur? These terms are ingrained in our business vocabulary and the benefits of entrepreneurship are lauded by politicians, policy makers, academics and the business community the world over. Despite its usage in common parlance and its central role in the economic process an examination of the literature reveals that entrepreneurship is difficult to define and its meaning can alter depending on the context in which it is used. Franco Amatori writing about entrepreneurship refers to it as an elusive phenomenon and notes that this contributes to confusion in the language around entrepreneurship which is

⁸² Cullen Owens, *A social history of women in Ireland 1870–1970*, p. 216.

⁸³ Daly, 'Women in the Irish Free State, 1922-39', pp. 99-115.

⁸⁴ Daly, 'Women and work in Ireland', pp. 99-115; Daly 'Women in the Irish Free State, 1922-39', p. 100; Kiely and Leane, *Irish women at work 1930–1960*, pp. 31-112.

evident in the academic writing on the topic.⁸⁵ The issue becomes even more complex when gender is considered as a variable in defining entrepreneurship.

The recognised founding father of entrepreneurship is Richard Cantillon, an Irish economist writing in 18th-Century France, who used the term entrepreneur to describe one who pursues profitable exchanges even when faced with uncertain market conditions.⁸⁶ He also is credited with suggesting that the entrepreneur is likely to be both a risk-taker, an innovator and of key importance in the development of the economy. Despite its emergence in the 18th century it was not until the 20th century that the concept of entrepreneurship gained recognition by main stream economists. A group of economists known as the Austrian School of writers emerged. These writers were some of the first to identify the entrepreneur as crucial to economic activity and it is their theories that now underpin much of the current theory on the entrepreneur.⁸⁷

Joseph Schumpeter, the founding father of the Austrian school is attributed as having a very significant influence on perceptions of entrepreneurship. He argues that the entrepreneur was an agent of great change, and coined the term “creative destruction” to describe a phenomenon that “replaced old forms of economic transaction with new forms in capitalist economies”.⁸⁸ The entrepreneur is an agent of great change who breaks away from known

⁸⁵ Franco Amatori, 'Entrepreneurship' in *Imprese e storia*, vol. 34 (2006), pp. 233-267.

⁸⁶ Jose Garcia-Ruiz and Pier Anglo Toninelli, *The Determinants of Entrepreneurship* (London: Pickering Chatto, 2010), p. 2.

⁸⁷ Martin Ricketts, 'Theories of entrepreneurship: historical development and critical assessment', in Mark Casson, Bernard Yeung, Anuradha Basu and Nigel Wadeson (eds), *The Oxford handbook of entrepreneurship*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 33-58.

⁸⁸ Geoffrey Jones and R Daniel Wadhvani, 'Entrepreneurship', in Geoffrey Jones and Daniel R Zeitlin (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of business history*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 3.

methods of operation and it is in the disruption of the competitive equilibrium that new process, products, innovations, and organisations emerge. Schumpeter's work had a major impact on the shaping of thinking about entrepreneurship and implicit in his theoretical framework is the association of entrepreneurship with growth orientated business ideals. His analysis left little room for the "more common low level" entrepreneurship in wholesale and retail trades.⁸⁹ Since the late 1950s the academic study of entrepreneurship has mushroomed, with research informed among others by economic, management, organisational behaviour, psychological and business history perspectives.

There has been a strong focus on entrepreneurship in terms of personality traits. Research has focused on the traits existing in the entrepreneur including a need for independence, a propensity for risk-taking, self-efficacy and a need for achievement. However more recently the field has evolved to focus more on behaviour approaches which seek to separate the personality of entrepreneur from his/her actions and behaviours; to ask the question, as William Gartner quite appropriately puts it, quoting Yeats, "how can we tell the dancer from the dance?"⁹⁰ Howard Stevenson sees entrepreneurship as a process by "which individuals, either on their own or inside organisations pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control".⁹¹ According to Mark Casson the insights from various economic perspectives on entrepreneurship can be "synthesised by identifying an

⁸⁹ Jones and Wadhvani, 'Entrepreneurship', p.3.

⁹⁰ B William Gartner, 'Who is an entrepreneur? is the wrong question', *American Journal of Small Business*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1988), pp. 11-32.

⁹¹ Terence Brown, P Davidsson, and Johan Wiklund, 'An operationalisation of Stevenson's conceptualisation of entrepreneurship as opportunity based firm behaviour', *Strategic Management Journal*, 22, no. 10 (2001), p. 953-68.

entrepreneurial function that is common to all approaches – the exercise of judgement in decision making”.⁹²

Another development in the field has been to dissociate the idea of entrepreneurship from the exclusive domain of the commercial. Entrepreneurs can occur in all walks of life and the definition cannot be confined to the idea of starting a business. Chris Steyaert and Jerome Katz in 2004 reflect upon the implications of “how to conceive entrepreneurship when considered as a societal rather than an economic phenomenon”. One of the implications of doing so is that entrepreneurship becomes associated with everyday activities “rather than actions of elitist groups of entrepreneurs”.⁹³

Entrepreneurship – implications for women’s history

For scholars working in the area of female entrepreneurship a consistent criticism is that entrepreneurship has become too readily identified with wealth creation and the growth of firms. Consequently this narrow focus excludes a range of activities, participants, organisations and achievements that are clearly entrepreneurial and have significant economic and societal benefits. Issues of definition have implications also for business historians and Alison Kay observes that there is little consensus in business history as to what entrepreneurship actually entails.⁹⁴ However, it is clear from the business history literature that historical entrepreneurship has been overly influenced by the Schumpeterian concept of entrepreneurs. Recent work

⁹² Casson, Yeung, Basu and Wadson, (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of entrepreneurship*, (2006). p. 3.

⁹³ Chris Steyaert and Jerome Katz, 'Reclaiming the space of entrepreneurship in society: geographical, discursive and social dimensions', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development: An International Journal*, 16, no. 3 (2004), pp. 179-96.

⁹⁴ Alison Kay, *The foundations of female entrepreneurship: enterprise, home and household in London c 1800-1870* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 124.

from historians focusing on women's labour and business activities has clearly demonstrated the gendered nature of the rational philosophy evident in business and challenges the exclusive nature of business and entrepreneurship.⁹⁵

According to Wendy Gamber "there is a glaring absence of women in the historiography of 20th century business and industry despite the fact that women have run businesses and engaged in various trades for centuries".⁹⁶ She notes that at least 10% of people engaged in business in urban areas in the 19th century are women. This tendency for women to run business reflects an age old tradition that was observable in Europe. She records that entrepreneurial endeavours include diverse activities such as selling of feminine finery, purveyors of food and lodging, keepers of houses of ill repute, proprietors of grocery and variety stores, dealers of books and newspapers, apothecaries, tobacconists, and jewellers, midwives, healers and fortune tellers, even silversmiths and lady embalmers. This figure aligns closely with Susie Steinbach's finding that between 1775 and 1787 over 11% of shopkeepers in Britain were women and during the nineteenth century 20% of all British firms were owned and operated by women, a fact that has received little or no attention.⁹⁷

Gamber outlines some of the reasons for the absence of females in the business histories. Firstly it would appear that scholars have unconsciously or otherwise, accepted the notion of 'business as a school of manhood' and this is one reason why it is so difficult to see women as the owners of

⁹⁵ Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating women: a history of women and business in the United States* (New York: Palgrave Publications, 1998), p. 2

⁹⁶ Wendy Gamber, 'A gendered enterprise: placing nineteenth-century businesswomen in history', *The Business History Review*, 72, no. 2 (1998), pp. 188-217.

⁹⁷ Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 49.

business concerns. The depiction of some women as enterprising, as innovative, as successful as their male counterparts leaves a portrait of exceptional women that unintentionally reinforces the notion that business is a masculine concern where there are exceptions, but that these exceptions prove the rule. Secondly to understand female contributions requires studying the history of small business, indeed the history of very small business which until recently has not been to the forefront for consideration by business historians. Finally those who have examined the workings of small business tend to embrace a relatively rigid definition of business, one that centres on the traditional idea of a firm, that of a tangible physical site of production. This overlooks the variety of entrepreneurial females.

Female enterprise lies at what Gamber describes as “at the murky boundaries of public and private, profit seeking and philanthropic, wage labour and entrepreneurship, legitimate and illegitimate enterprise”.⁹⁸ This defies easy categorization and makes the economic contributions difficult to assess. However, ignoring them brings unintended consequences – it leads to the exclusion of women, and perhaps of racial and ethnic minorities as well from the domain of business history. She observes that:

the business historians’ penchant for viewing their subjects as rational economic actors, guided only by the search for greater efficiency and more substantial profits, and sealed within the self-contained world of the firm, offers few clues for understanding the experiences of businesswomen – or business men.

Angel Kwolek-Folland who charted the history of women in business in the United States, writing in 1998 articulated the issue succinctly, noting that the presence of:

women’s organised economic activity challenges the assumptions of business history, forcing us to rethink

⁹⁸ Gamber, ‘A gendered enterprise: placing nineteenth-century businesswomen in history’, p. 193.

the nature of economic activity, when change occurred; and the legal, social and economic meanings of such concepts as entrepreneurship.⁹⁹

She notes that business historians themselves are in tune with the shortcomings of their approach, quoting Louis Galambos's call in 1991 that in order to incorporate business history into the main stream it has to be responsive to issues being raised by historians in other fields. He raises what he considers two “myths” which underpin much of the research undertaken by business historians the myth of rationalisations and the myth of corporate hegemony. The myth of rationalisation refers to the belief that businesses and business people are removed from human emotions that afflict the rest of the population, and the myth of corporate hegemony concerns the notion that business development takes place in a political vacuum. These myths combine, according to Galambos to obscure the interplay and workings of power.

Kwolek-Folland points out that women’s history deals with issues of how sex, gender, ethnicity, race and class have shaped the lives of both women and men. In contrast business history usually “assumes white, male and middle class as the neutral and for the most part, un-interrogated standard”.¹⁰⁰ Kay also critiques the traditional focus of business history in relation to entrepreneurship and concludes that it has left us with an extreme “typology of industrialists and innovators” and the implication that anything outside of this is not really entrepreneurship.¹⁰¹ She finds that there is little consensus in the broad field of business history as to what entrepreneurial activity actually entails. In the course of her own study on 19th century female entrepreneurship in London, she resists classifying female entrepreneurs believing it reductionist and simplistic to do so. For her, types

⁹⁹ Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating women*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating women*, p.3.

¹⁰¹ Kay, *The foundations of female entrepreneurship*, p. 124.

or typologies are “deliberate simplifications and abstraction”. Essentially, women, no more than men, are not a homogenous group. Her resistance to typologies is founded on the fact that they relegate females to a subgroup which by definition is outside of a main type of entrepreneurship. This main type of entrepreneurship “defines the norm as masculine and large scale”. Membership of the subgroup implies a failure to make the grade of business worthiness, and this in turns demeans the lived experience of female entrepreneurs and the real business experience of many in enterprise.

Kay notes that there are two contrasting entities contained in the word entrepreneur. At the simplest level it can be simply a descriptive term for a person engaged in owning and managing a business.¹⁰² However historians and academics have ascribed conceptual meaning to the term. Schumpeter, as noted earlier, defined the entrepreneur as the agent for changing an economy from a stable state to being progressive and expanding, putting the entrepreneur at the centre of economic growth. At the other end of the spectrum, Kay points to Habakkuk who reduced the entrepreneur to a more passive player, who responded to the economic forces within industries. Irrespective of which school of thought researchers subscribe to, in both cases the entrepreneur is given conceptual importance which Kay believes “has tended to overwhelm the descriptive dimension of the term entrepreneur in business history”. For Kay the result is that “we are left with a typology based on extreme innovators and industrialists, the natural extension of which being that anything else is not really entrepreneurship”.¹⁰³

An analysis of current research on female entrepreneurship reflects similar issues as raised by those who study female entrepreneurship in a historical

¹⁰² Kay, *The foundations of female entrepreneurship*, p. 125.

¹⁰³ Kay, *The foundations of female entrepreneurship*, p. 125.

context. Using discourse analysis, Helene Ahl analysed 81 articles on female entrepreneurship published from 1982 to 2000 and found that the current research constructed the female entrepreneur as something less than her male counterpart.¹⁰⁴ Common assumptions implicit in the research paradigm on female entrepreneurship today include an assumption that entrepreneurship is a good thing leading to economic growth, which Ahl maintains excludes alternative reasons for participating in entrepreneurship. It portrays women as lesser participants since their businesses on average do not perform as well as males on growth performance standard. It also assumes that entrepreneurship is a neutral concept, something that Gamber, Fay and Kwolek-Folland comment on.¹⁰⁵ There is an assumption of the division between a public and private sphere of life, which is applied predominantly to female entrepreneurs.

Ahl's argument is that even though the research would appear to celebrate female entrepreneurship, it is done in such a way that it reinforces women's secondary position in society. Eleanor Hamilton's findings on the role of women in founding and running family businesses reports that the literature commonly assumes that the individual founder is male and she notes that the stories of wives, sisters, daughters are rarely uncovered or heard. She goes on to note that "the 'invisibility' of the women contributes towards, and reinforces, a dominant discourse of entrepreneurship, which has been described as individualistic, gender-biased and discriminatory".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ H Ahl, 'Ways to study the text of entrepreneurship', *Scandinavian Academy of Management Conference* (Reykjavik, Iceland, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ Gamber, 'A gendered enterprise: placing nineteenth-century businesswomen in history', pp. 188-217; Fay, *The foundations of female entrepreneurship*, pp. 124-125; Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating Women*, pp. 2-11.

¹⁰⁶ Eleanor Hamilton, 'Whose story is it anyway? narrative accounts of the role of women in founding and establishing family businesses', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2006), pp. 253-71.

The economic and cultural environment outlined above provided the backdrop within which the subjects of this study set up and ran their businesses. The debates that inform the development of women's history, in particular the public/private spheres discourse has relevance when exploring how and why women developed and operated their businesses. So too has the classification of entrepreneurship and the role that women play in setting up and running commercial enterprises. This study is the first to undertake an examination of the history of businesswomen in Ireland in the mid-20th century. Existing quantitative data from the official records of the State solely focussed on women as business owners was examined, and Chapter two presents the data uncovered by this exercise. Chapters three, four and five explore women's contribution to the three prominent business sectors of Commerce and Finance, Manufacturing and Personal Services. The concluding chapter reflects on the combined findings and in highlighting their contribution to Irish and economic social history, restores Irish businesswomen to Irish women's history.

CHAPTER TWO: THE NATIONAL DATA 1922-1972

The purpose of this chapter is to endeavour to answer some basic questions: how many businesswomen were there operating in Ireland during the mid-20th century? What sectors did they operate in? What were the levels of self-employment at that time? In order to do so, a number of data sources were consulted and analysed. The main body of figures were derived from Census of Population data where information pertaining to female business ownership and self-employment was obtained. The Dissolved Companies files were also analysed and yielded information on female shareholders and female directorships. The Companies Office which is responsible for the filing of registered companies provided similar data from their digitised records. The findings from each source are outlined in detail here.

The Censuses

The Census of Population taken in any country provides valuable insights into the breakdown of the population in terms of age, occupation, conjugal status, as well as geographic and regional distribution. For the purpose of this analysis, the Census data from the period covering the first fifty years of the formation of the Free State was analysed. Information drawn from the volumes on Industrial and Occupation Status was used to create the tables outlined in this chapter.

The first Census after the formation of the State took place in April 1926. The Census relied heavily on practises in place in the UK for conducting such surveys. According to the General report on the Census of 1926, for the first time, a “complete and distinct occupational and industrial distribution of the population” was given.¹⁰⁷ The categories utilised in the Irish Census

¹⁰⁷ *Census of Population*, 1926 General Report, vol. 10, p. 23.

closely resemble those used in the British counterpart and a number of items were included which had not been previously used. For instance, additional questions were asked about the business of the employer and this in turn was used to compile statistics on industries. It also had for the first time industrial statistics from which figures about unemployment were derived from as well as questions on number of dependent children and area of land owned or tenanted by the house.

Thereafter, a Census of Population was held in 1936 and in 1946, with a change in the date line occurring in the 1950s. The data in a national census is useful not just internally in terms of highlighting regional and national issues, but also has a value internationally in terms of making comparisons across countries. To this end it was decided to bring the Irish Census date into line with international date lines which tended to occur on years ending in '0. Following the compilation of the 1946 data, the year most feasible to make this change was 1951. From then until 1971 the Census took place every 5 years, a practice which was disbanded in 1976 for economic reasons. The 1956 Census was kept relatively short and in the "interest of economy it was subsequently decided to restrict the compilation of the Census to the population by areas only."¹⁰⁸ Data included in this analysis spans the following Census dates—1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966 and 1971.

This chapter draws on both the volumes on Occupation and Industrial Status for the respective Census periods under investigation. There is a difference between the statistics of occupation and of industries. According to Mr. John Hooper, Director of Statistics at the Department of Industry and Commerce a person's occupation is defined "by the operation he/she performs in earning his/her living" whereas a person follows his or her occupation within a

¹⁰⁸ *Census of Population, 1956 Explanatory notes*, p. 5.

particular industry or service.¹⁰⁹ Some occupations are peculiar to particular industries, others straddle many i.e. clerk/administrative worker can be found in many different industries and services. Also, classification by occupation does not necessarily indicate that the respondent is employed at said occupation and the Industrial status tables give a better indication of employment status at the date in question.

The use of Census data for this kind of analysis requires one to be mindful that the Census is not a perfect instrument for comparative purposes. The difficulty in getting accurate data on women's work from census returns has been noted.¹¹⁰ However, as reported by M.D McCarthy the most important development in the early part of the 20th century in relation to Census collection was the clarification of "the concepts which formed the basis of the classification in relation to occupation and industry and the inclusion of questions designed to elicit data on personal occupation, on industry and on employment status".¹¹¹ The methodology for gathering the above data for 1926, 1936 and 1946 remained consistent, with a reduced Census taking place in 1951 and some changes in reporting tables in later years which have been taken into consideration, and so this allows us to establish some broad outline of trends. The Census data does provide some real insight in the occupations of women and a number of definite conclusions can be reached from this source.

¹⁰⁹ *Census of Population*, 1926, vol. 2, Occupations explanatory notes, p. v.

¹¹⁰ Daly, *Women and work in Ireland*, p. 2.

¹¹¹ MD McCarthy, 'The 1961 Census of Population', *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, vol. XX, Part IV, (1961), p. 73-93.

Overview of the population

When looking at the active adult population who take part in the economic life of the country, we are dealing with those in the population who are aged 12 or over in 1926. However, by 1936 this had moved to 14 years and it remained consistent at this age for the remaining Census years under review. Table 3 shows the population aged 14 years and over from 1926 to 1971. Of particular note is decline in the population during the period in question. The decline between 1926 and 1936 is partly explained by the fact that the age for the commencement of work moved from 12 to 14 years of age, however, it is a fact that the population in Ireland declined in the first half of the 20th century. Ó Gráda indicates that Ireland was one of only two countries in Europe that lost population for an extended period during this time frame.¹¹² A reluctance to marry and high emigration rates are given regularly cited as contributing to this. The population begins to show sustained growth from 1966 onwards. Total male population dropped by just under 1% in the years between 1926 and 1971, while the total female population rose marginally by 1.18%.

*Table 3: Total population figures and total population available to work.*¹¹³

Total population aged 12 + until 1936; 14+ thereafter					
Year	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males
1926	1465103	1506889	2971992	1127077	1156780
1936	1447966	1520454	2968420	1072204	1133315
1946	1460230	1494877	2955107	1081362	1101987
1961	1401792	1416549	2818341	1001095	997490
1966	1434970	1449032	2884002	1020980	1017903
1971	1482488	1495760	2978248	1055707	1049613

¹¹² Ó Gráda, *A rocky road: the Irish economy since the 1920s*, p. 192.

¹¹³ *Census of Population, Occupations 1926, 1936, 1946, 1961, 1966, 1971*.

In order to contextualise the figures for women who identified themselves as employers and own-account workers it is important to examine the number of women active outside the home. The Census data has a category “gainfully employed” and this accounts for all persons who were active outside of the home. Table 4 below indicates that in 1926, of the total number of women who were eligible to participate in economic activity, 30.5% were so engaged. By 1971 that figure had fallen by 71,370, a decline of 6.3%. in the 45 year period. As illustrated in Table 2 while there was a decline in real numbers of both females and males who were gainfully employed over the 45 year period, the relative position of females to males who were gainfully employed remained reasonably static, with a total decline for females of less than 1%, and a corresponding total gain for males of less than 1%.

*Table 4: Population in gainful employment, numbers and percentages.*¹¹⁴

	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males
1926	343,894	963,768	1,307,662	26.3	73.7
1936	351,367	987,718	1,339,085	26.2	73.8
1946	334,862	963,505	1,298,367	25.8	74.2
1956	324,848	947,190	1,272,038	25.5	74.5
1961	286,579	821,529	1,108,108	25.9	74.1
1966	289,144	829,060	1,118,204	25.9	74.1
1971	287,867	831,664	1,119,531	25.7	74.3

1.2 Employers and own-account workers

The purpose of this analysis is to focus in particular on females as business owners and as self-employment participants in the economy. The data in the Industrial Status volumes of the respective Census contain two categories

¹¹⁴ *Census of Population*, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971.

that serve to illustrate the levels of business ownership and self-employment – “employers” and “own-account workers”. Two points need to be noted here – there were no figures for the year 1956 as the Census was curtailed due to economic constraints and in 1971 this figure was merged – there was no distinction made between employers and those who worked on their own-account.

Table 5: Total number of females as employers or working on own-account. ¹¹⁵

Females	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Employers	16529	15271	13644	10211	6066	4 744	31974
Own account	62949	59292	51871	47327	40997	34115	0
Total	79478	74563	65515	57538	47063	38889	31974

What is immediately obvious from this table is that there is a significant decline of women as business owners and as workers on their own-account in the period from 1926 to 1971 and this appears to accelerate in the latter two decades. The decrease is just over 6% between 1926 and 1936, 12% between 1936 and 1946, 12% between 1946 and 1956. It was just over 18% between 1956 and 1961, 17% in the next 5 years, and a further 17% between 1966 and 1971. In total, the number of females who ran their own businesses or worked on their own-account decreased by almost 60%.

However, to fully appreciate the context and to seek some explanations for this trend it is important to view the data alongside the male experience. This is captured in Table 6.

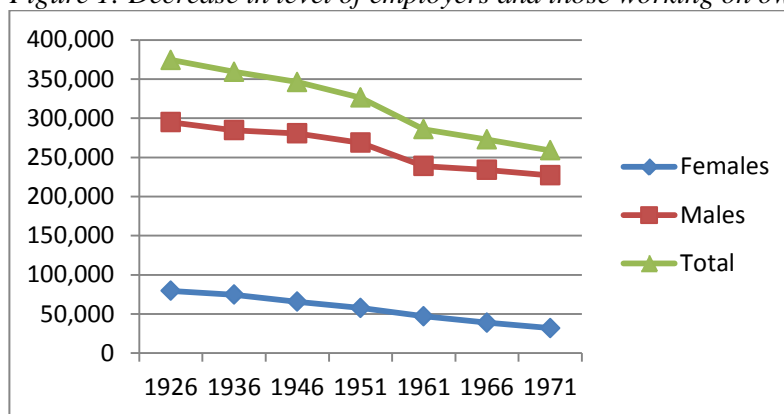
¹¹⁵ *Census of Population, Industrial status/ industries vols. employment status 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

Table 6: Total number of males as employers or working on own-account.¹¹⁶

Males	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Employer	62,599	59,481	60,383	47,558	26,587	22,570	226,929
Own account worker	232,340	225,120	220,240	221,248	212,290	211,353	
Total	294,939	284,601	280,623	268,806	238,877	233,923	226,929

While by no means as striking in size and scale, it is notable that the same trend line exists for males as for females. In percentage terms the male decline was as follows; 3.5% from 1926 – 1936, 1.4% from 1936-1946, 4.2% from 1946 – 1951, 11.1% from 1951-1961, 2.1% from 1961 to 1966 and by 3% from 1966 – 1971. In total, the number of males who ran their own businesses or worked on their own-account decreased by just over 23%. Taken cumulatively and depicted in Fig. 1, we can see that the total decrease of categories of employers and those who worked on their own-account was significant over the period, a decrease of 30.9% in total. In numeric terms, the loss of male employers and own-account workers was 68,010, and females, 47,504.

Figure 1: Decrease in level of employers and those working on own-account.¹¹⁷



¹¹⁶ Census of Population, Industrial status/industries, vols.1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.

¹¹⁷ Graph compiled from data extracted from Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.

It is important to interrogate the figures in depth before making strong assertions in relation to this trend. The figures presented above include employers and own-account workers who worked in agriculture, and therefore are likely to include farmers and agricultural based-workers, exclusive of labourers. This study seeks to examine female business ownership and self-employment that is not farm-based and in order to get a truer set of figures it is important to isolate and remove the figures pertaining to the agriculture sector.

What emerges from these figures is a story of decreasing involvement by both females and males in the agricultural sector. There is a drop of 29,877 (61.5%) in female employers and own-account workers in agriculture between 1926 and 1971, and a drop of 55,865 (25.2%) in males for the same period. The figures year on year for males and females are provided in Table 7 and Table 8. It is worth noting that the rate of decline in the figures for both females and males accelerates from 1946 onwards. The decline in gainful employment in agriculture for females has been pointed out by Clear who notes that this decline was underway from the late 19th century and increased in pace after 1946.¹¹⁸

*Table 7: Females as employers and own-account workers in agriculture.*¹¹⁹

Females	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Employers	10365	10004	8549	5632	2949	1939	18677
Own account workers	38189	36552	33538	30356	26214	21247	0
Total	48554	46556	42087	35988	29163	23186	18677

The male population involved in agriculture also declined and the pace of this decline accelerated after 1946.

¹¹⁸ Clear, *Women of the House*, p. 13.

Table 8: Males as employers and own-account workers in agriculture.¹²⁰

Males	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Employers	41593	40476	38925	27922	13891	9576	165726
OAW	179998	172738	171248	172713	168547	168946	0
Total	221591	213214	210173	200635	182438	178522	165726

When the overall figures for females and male employers and own-account workers for the agriculture sector are placed side by side, presented in Table 9 it is clear that males dominate the sector, over 80% in 1926 rising to almost 90% by 1971, indicating that females were leaving agriculture-based occupations at a higher rate than their male counterparts.

Table 9: Female and male employers and own-account workers agriculture only.¹²¹

	Females	Males	Total	Female	Males	
1926	48554	221,591	270145	17.97	82.03	100
1936	46556	213214	259770	17.92	82.08	100
1946	42087	210173	252269	16.68	83.32	100
1951	35988	200,635	236,623	15.21	84.79	100
1961	29163	182438	211601	13.78	86.22	100
1966	23186	178522	201708	11.49	88.51	100
1971	18861	165725	184586	10.22	89.78	100

Having removed the figures for the agriculture sector, it is now possible to look at the numbers for females and males who were both employers and own-account workers in all other sectors. This should give a definite indication of the numbers involved in running business or engaged in self-employment through some kind of commercial activity. What the figures

¹¹⁹ *Census of Population, Industrial status/ industries vols. 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

¹²⁰ *Census of Population, Industrial status/ industries vols. 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

¹²¹ *Census of Population, Industrial status/ industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

cannot do is give an insight into the size and scale of the commercial activity.

*Table 10: The level of female business owners and own-account workers outside of agriculture.*¹²²

Females	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Employers	6164	5267	5095	4579	3117	2805	0
Own-account	24760	22740	18333	16971	14783	12868	0
Total	30924	28007	23428	21550	17900	15673	13297

For females, what emerges is a continuing story of declining numbers illustrated in Table 10. Using this data in 1926 there were over 30,924 females running a business or self-employed. By 1971 this figure had reduced to 13,297, a significant reduction of 57%.

The male experience for the same period is represented in Table 11. Here again we note a decline in numbers of 12,145-however, at 16.5% for the period it is one which is substantially less than the female decline. It would also appear from the male table that there was a halt in the decline between 1966 and 1971 with an increase of just over 10% in that 5 year period. By contrast the decline continued apace for females.

*Table 11: The level of male business owners and own-account workers outside of agriculture*¹²³

Males	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Employers	21006	19005	21458	19636	12696	12994	0
Own-account	52342	52382	48992	48535	43743	42407	0
Total	73348	71387	70450	68171	56439	55401	61203

¹²² *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

¹²³ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

By looking at the two sets of figures, female and male together as depicted in Table 12 we can make some observations. The female participation in non- agriculture business is considerably higher than that noted above for agriculture. In 1926 females account for almost 30% of all employers and own-account workers, perhaps a little higher than might commonly be perceived. This indicates a sizeable level of economic activity on the part of the female population. By 1971 females account for just under 18%, a significant decline of almost 12%.

Even more significant are the levels of overall decline in the employer and own-account workers operating in the State – in 1971, there were 29,772 fewer people either working as employers or own-account workers than in 1926. This is shrinkage of 28.5%. Breaking down this figure we can see that the female share of this overall decline was 59% and the male share was 41%. Not alone are women less active as employers and own-account workers, but there is a very significant decline in activity for men also.

*Table 12: Females and males employers and own-account workers non agriculture compared.*¹²⁴

	Females	Males	Total	Female %	Males %	Total %
1926	30,924	73,348	104272	29.66	70.34	100
1936	28,007	71,387	99394	28.18	71.82	100
1946	23,428	70,450	93878	24.96	75.04	100
1951	21,550	68,171	89921	24.02	75.98	100
1961	17,900	56,439	74339	24.08	75.92	100
1966	15,673	55,401	71074	22.05	77.95	100
1971	13,297	61,203	74500	17.85	82.15	100

¹²⁴ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

A further breakdown of the figures also gives rise to some commentary. Table 13 outlines the numbers within the category “employer” only for the period 1926 – 1966 – unfortunately the two categories were combined for the 1971 census.

*Table 13: Female and male employers only compared.*¹²⁵

	Females	Males	Total	Female	Males	Total
						%
1926	6164	21,006	27170	22.69	77.31	100
1936	5267	19005	24272	21.70	78.30	100
1946	5095	21458	26553	19.19	80.81	100
1951	4579	19636	24215	18.91	81.09	100
1961	3117	12696	15813	19.71	80.29	100
1966	2805	12994	15799	17.75	82.25	100
1971	<i>Note figures not available for this category alone in 1971</i>					

This throws a slightly different light on the situation from a female perspective. Undoubtedly we continue to see a significant reduction in the number of employers – they went down from 27,170 to 15,799, a reduction of 11,371 which is a drop of nearly 42%. We see the reduction in female employers went from 6,164 to 2,805, a reduction of 3,359, a percentage reduction of just over 54%. Male employers reduce from 21,006 to 12,994, a reduction of 8,012 or 38%.

However the proportionate share of the figures for females does not reduce as significantly as the numeric decline. Female employers accounted for 22.69% of the overall total of employers in 1926, this had gone to just under 18% in 1966. This is equal to a swing of just under 5% between female and male employers -the level of female employers reduced by 4.94%, with a corresponding 4.94% increase in the number of male employers.

¹²⁵ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

Finally, before moving onto examining the sectors that female employers and own-account workers were involved in, one further analysis of the data is useful. By expressing the number of employers and own-account workers as a percentage of the population that was gainfully employed it is possible to establish the extent to which those in gainful employment, whether they were female or male, were likely to be commercially active. Table 14 gives the figures for both females and males-in the earlier stage of the period, the proportion of women active as employers or own-account workers was almost 9% of the gainfully employed female population as opposed to men which was 7.61% of the gainfully employed male population. As the numbers of females in all categories decrease over the period (i.e. numbers of gainfully employed, the numbers of employers and number of own-account workers), a subsequent decline in the proportion of employers and own-account workers is apparent, reducing to 4.62% in 1971. For males, the percentage figures remain consistent over the period.

*Table 14: Females and Males employers and own-account workers as % of gainfully employed.*¹²⁶

	Female* (E or OAW)	Female gainful employed	%	Male (E or OAW)	Male gainful employed	%
1926	30,924	343,894	8.99	73,348	963,768	7.61
1936	28,007	351,367	7.97	71,387	987,718	7.23
1946	23,428	334,862	7.00	70,450	963,505	7.31
1951	21,550	324,848	6.63	68,171	947,190	7.20
1961	17,900	286,579	6.25	56,439	821,529	6.87
1966	15,673	289,144	5.42	55,401	829,060	6.68
1971	13,297	287,867	4.62	61,203	831,664	7.36

- *E or OAW denotes employer, or own-account worker*

In all, the figures seem to indicate that being an employer or being an own-account worker was a difficult occupation in the formative years of the Irish

state for both females and males, with considerable shrinkage in the numbers irrespective of gender.

Sectoral Analysis

The figures presented above give a good overview of the headline trends but further investigation of the Industrial Status tables yields insights into where female employers and own-account workers were located.

The bulk of female employers and own-account workers occupied three main sectors as can be seen in Table 15 – manufacturing, commerce and finance and personal service. Manufacturing includes the production of food, textiles, clothing, metals and machinery, fertilisers, furniture, paper, pottery, and until 1951 included building, construction, gas and electricity.

Commerce and Finance is largely concerned with retailing and wholesaling and includes trading of all types, shop keepers, advertising agents, auctioneers, and until 1951 it also included insurance and finance. Personal Services covered lodging and boarding houses, hotels, restaurants and catering, public houses, undertaking, hairdressing. In 1926 Commerce and Finance is the biggest sector for females at 32.30%, followed by Manufacturing at 30.74%, and Personal Service at 27.86%. By 1971, Commerce remains the most significant sector accounting for 57.29%, Manufacturing is now down at 6.53% and Personal Services is at 19%.

¹²⁶ *Census of Population*, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.

Table 15: Female employers and own-account workers classified by industrial group.¹²⁷

Category	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Fishing	14		1	2	0	0	0
Mining	2		1	6	0		0
Mnfting	9,508	6,809	4,758	3,919	1,393	1,056	869
<i>Construction*</i>				21	3	5	19
<i>Electricity</i>				1			
Transport	48	58	71	101	1042	973	987
Commerce Finance	9,991	10,481	9,361	10907	10,977	9,195	7,618
<i>Insurance*</i>				18	6	13	126
Professions	2,503	2,914	2,918	2,165	1,329	1,051	956
Personal service *	8,616	7,557	6,100	4,146	3,014	3,229	2,525
Entertainment	118		175	194	127	141	167
Other Industries	124	188	43	70	9	10	30
Total	30,924	28,007	23,428	21,550	17,900	15,673	13,297

*Categories marked with asterisk were introduced in 1951 – construction was included in manufacturing up to that point.

How does this compare to the male experience? Male figures are provided in Table 16 and again we can see the dominance of the same sectors, Manufacturing, Commerce and Finance and Personal Services. For males in 1926, the breakdown in order of size is as follows Manufacturing was 39.62%, Commerce and Finance was 31.8% and Personal Services was 10.21%. By 1971, Manufacturing (including construction) accounted for 31.41%, Commerce had moved to 43.5%, and Personal Services is down to 5.15%.

¹²⁷ Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.

*Table 16: Male employers and own-account workers classified by industrial group.*¹²⁸

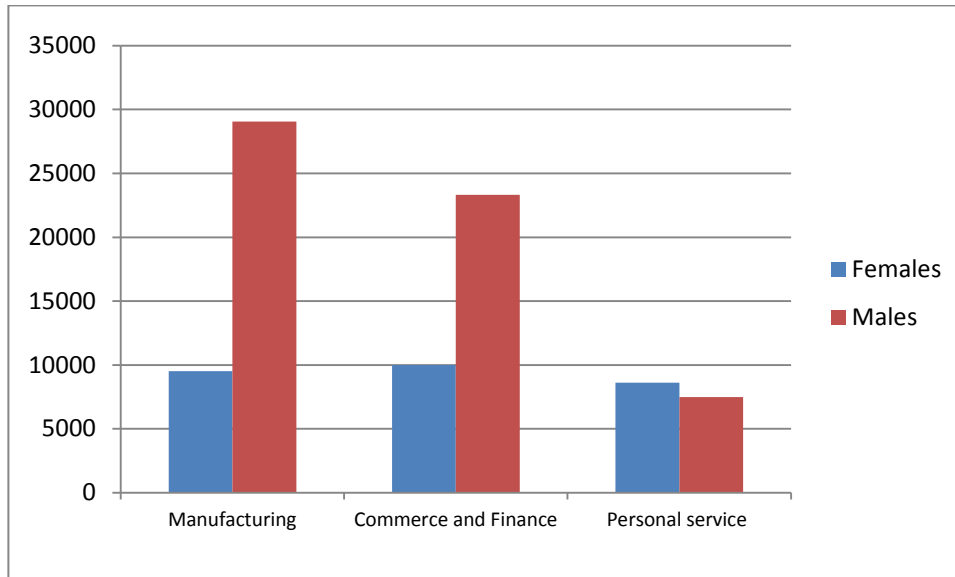
Category	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Fishing	4,090		2,656	1,953	1,155	1,073	0
Mining	67		125	477	219	136	104
Mnftng	29063	30069*	25333	17978	9,687	7,724	7,849
Construction				7,210	6,479	7,912	11,377
<i>Electricity and gas</i>				14	3		
Transport	4,813	4,723	5,350	4,776	3,447	3,597	4,522
Commerce and Finance	23330	23940	24120	26637	27239	26323	26623
<i>Insurance</i>				218	223	294	1150
Professions	3,831	3,995	4,485	4,633	4,530	4,713	5,241
Personal service *	7,492	7,437	6,866	2,689	2,501	2,733	3,153
Entertainment and sports	357		1,157	1,144	878	827	1,029
Other Industries	305	1,223	358	442	78	69	155
Total	73348	71,387	70,450	68,171	56,439	55,401	61,203

**Categories marked with asterisk were introduced in 1951 – construction was included in manufacturing up to that point.*

By looking at the total market size for each of these prominent sectors and identifying the share by gender the following picture emerges overall each sector has shrunk and within each sector, the female share has reduced relative to the male share.

¹²⁸ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

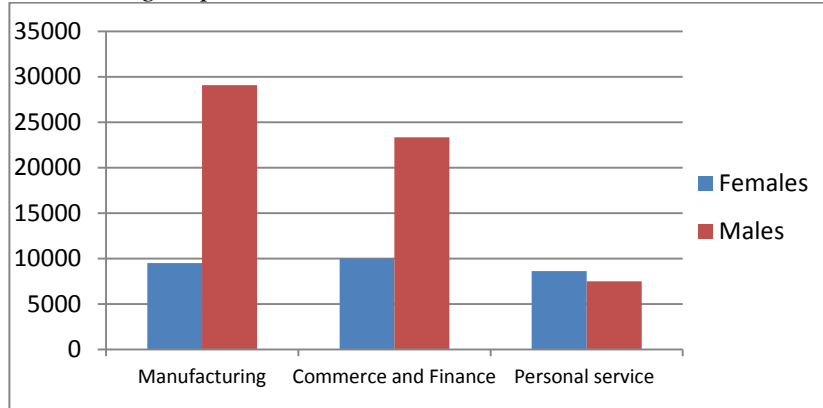
Figure 2: 1926 Female and male employers and owner managers in main industrial groups.¹²⁹



In 1926, as depicted in Figure 2, it is apparent that there is more female activity in the Personal Service sector, with considerable activity in both Manufacturing and Personal Service. By 1971, as shown in Figure 3, this has altered significantly with the Manufacturing and Personal Service sectors both declining overall. Female presence as employers and own-account workers in Manufacturing drops by 8,639 or just over 90% between 1926 and 1971, and in Personal Service for the same period by 6,091 or nearly 71%. The drop is 2,373, almost 24% in the Commerce and Finance sector.

¹²⁹ Graph compiled from data extracted from *Census of Population, Industrial status/ industries* vols.1926.

Figure 3: 1971 Female and male employers and owner managers in main industrial groups.¹³⁰



For males there were also significant changes in these areas – Manufacturing saw a drop of 9,837 or almost 34%, Personal services saw a decrease of 4,339 or almost 58% with an increase in Commerce and Finance of 3,293 or just over 14%. The totality of the picture is gained by looking at both the female and male experience together which is depicted in Table 17.

Table 17: Total number of employers and own-account workers by Industrial Group for 1926 and 1971.¹³¹

	Total 1926	Total 1971	Difference
Fishing	4,104	0	4104
Mining	69	104	-35
Manufacturing	38,571	8,718	29,859
Construction	0	11,396	-11396
Electricity and gas	0	0	0
Transport and Communications	4,861	5,509	-648
Commerce and Finance	33,321	34,241	-920
Insurance	0	1276	-1276
Professions	6,334	6,197	137
Personal service	16,108	5,678	10,430
Entertainment and sports	475	1,196	-721
Other Industries	429	185	244
Total	104,272	74,500	29,778

¹³⁰ Graph compiled from data extracted from *Census of Population, Industrial status/ industries* vols. 1971.

¹³¹ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries* vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1971.

In 1971 there were 18,457 less employers and own-account workers involved in Manufacturing, a drop of almost 48%, and 10,430 less in the Personal Services sector, a drop of almost 65%. There was a marginal increase in Commerce of just under 3%. The overall position of employers and own-account workers shows a decrease of 29,772 or 28.55% in the period between 1926 and 1971 and to a greater extent this happened across all the major Industrial groups. There is growth in Mining, Transport and Communication, and Commerce and Insurance but the gains are relatively small and do not offset the decline in the other areas. If the number of employers and the number of those working on their own-account are deemed to be indicators of entrepreneurial activity in the economy, the above figures demonstrate that Ireland in its early decades of statehood was not conducive to entrepreneurship for either men or women.

Key areas of activity for employers and own-account workers

A further analysis of each of the industrial sectors gives further insight into where employers and own-account workers were concentrated. The previous analysis has established the importance of three main sectors for employers and those working of their own-account – Manufacturing, Commerce and Finance and Personal Services. These sectors remain important throughout the period under study with some movement in terms of relative importance as shown in Table 18. While it has been established above that there was a total decline in the number of employers and own-account managers between 1926 and 1971, the relative importance of the three main sectors shifted over the 45 years, with Manufacturing decreasing by almost 10%, from 37% to 27%, Commerce and Finance increasing by 15% and Personal Services reducing by nearly 8%.

*Table 18: % of employers and own-account workers per sector, excluding agriculture.*¹³²

	Size of each sector	
	1926	1971
Fishing	3.94	
Mining	0.07	0.14
Manufacturing	36.99	11.7
Construction		15.3
Transport	4.66	7.39
Commerce and Finance	31.95	45.96
Insurance		1.71
Professions	6.07	8.32
Personal service	15.45	7.62
Entertainment and sports	0.46	1.61

Commerce and Finance was significant for both female and males and a large proportion of the overall numbers are made up of those involved in the retail and wholesale trade. Table 19 is derived from the Census tables which classify respondents by occupation and industrial status/employment status and shows the number of female and male employers and own-account workers who were involved in retailing and wholesaling. The earlier Census of 1926 and 1936 are worthy of note as they give a detailed breakdown of the types of retailers and wholesalers included in this category and they cover everything from traders in horses, sheep, pigs, eggs, coal, bread and cakes, grocery and provisions, tobacco, building materials, drapery and clothing stores, hawking and street selling and advertising agencies of whom 3 were female employers and 28 were female own-account workers in 1926. This listing is instructive insofar as we can see that the range and complexity of business and commercial activity is likely to vary considerably among the different type of retailers listed.

¹³² *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1971.*

*Table 19: Female and Male employer and own-account workers in retailing and wholesaling.*¹³³

Year	Total Female	Total Male	Overall Total	F as % of overall	Male as % of overall
1926	9965	23095	33060	30.14	69.86
1936	10437	20921	31358	33.28	66.72
1946	9327	23827	33154	28.13	71.87
1951	10907	26637	37544	29.05	70.95
1961	10977	27239	38216	28.72	71.28
1966	9195	26323	35518	25.89	74.11
1971	7618	26623	34241	22.25	77.75

What is very clear from the above is the importance of the retail and wholesale trade as a source of economic activity for the country in general. Female share of this activity falls by almost 8% from just over 30% to 22.25%-but the overall numbers increase by 1,181 with males increasing by almost 8%.

Manufacturing was another area of significant activity for both females and males and again the 1926 and 1936 Census tables in particular carry comprehensive listings of the different areas of manufacturing. This section includes manufacturers of food, drink and tobacco, textiles, clothing, woodworking, metals and machinery, fertilisers and chemicals, paper making, bricks, pottery and glass. It is important to point out that there is a female presence in all of the above areas. For instance, in 1926 there were 3 female employers involved in manufacturing bricks, pottery and glass, 122 female employers in the manufacture of food, drink and tobacco, 18 involved in the area of manufacturing furniture and fittings, and 16 in the manufacturing of metals and machinery. However, the most significant areas

¹³³ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

in terms of scale for females was in the clothing and textiles area of manufacturing and this continued throughout the 45 year period.

*Table 20: Female and Male employers and own-account workers in Manufacturing – clothing and textiles combined.*¹³⁴

Year	Total Female	Total Male	Overall Total	F as % of overall	Male as % of overall
1926	9138	8566	17704	51.62	48.38
1936	6521	7119	13640	47.81	52.19
1946	4425	6410	10835	40.84	59.16
1951	3671	5291	8962	40.96	59.04
1961	1307	2955	4262	30.67	69.33
1966	980	1968	2948	33.24	66.76
1971	755	1590	2345	32.20	67.80

In 1926, females accounted for almost 52% of the employers and own-account workers in the clothing and textiles sector. This had declined to 32.20% by 1971. This sector includes tailors, dressmakers, millinery, boots and shoemaking, flax and spinning, woollen manufacturing and hosiery, areas that traditionally offered employment as well as self-employment opportunities for female. While there were 361 female employers in the sector in 1926, many of the females were own-account workers. This is the case for males also, but a larger proportion of the men were employers at 1,518 and the remainder being male own-account workers.

Personal Service was an area of particular importance for females and in particular, the running of hotels, restaurants and lodging houses is dominated by female employers and own-account workers. In 1926 over half of the employers and own-account workers in hotels, lodging houses and restaurants were females. The figure remained consistent throughout the

¹³⁴ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

period and it is apparent that the impact of female involvement in the sector continued to be important throughout the mid-20th century.

*Table 21: Female and male employers and own-account workers – personal service.*¹³⁵

Year	Total Female	Total Male	Overall Total	F as % of overall	Male as % of overall
1926	8626	7492	16118	53.52	46.48
1936	7557	7437	14994	50.40	49.60
1946	6100	6866	12966	47.05	52.95
1951	4146	2689	6835	60.66	39.34
1961	3014	2501	5515	54.65	45.35
1966	3229	2733	5962	54.16	45.84
1971	3525	3153	6678	52.79	47.21

Related Factors

Is it possible to extract other pertinent data about the status of these women employers and owner managers? Each Census year, the data in relation to conjugal status was obtained and the details comparing the situation in 1926 with that in 1971 are presented in the next table. Table 22 contains the data for the females and males owners and own account workers broken down by their marital states for the years 1926 and 1971 and allows for a number of observations to be made.

¹³⁵ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

*Table 22: Female and male employers and own-account workers classified by industrial and conjugal status.*¹³⁶

Year	1926				1971			
	Female	Male	Female %	Male %	Female	Male	Female %	Male %
Married	10717	195242	13.48	66.2	5923	149108	18.52	65.71
Widow	45493	26152	57.24	8.87	15611	8289	48.82	3.65
Single	23268	73551	29.28	24.94	10440	69532	32.65	30.64
Total	79478	294945	100	100	31974	226929	100	100

In the case of females, a much higher proportion were widowed when compared with males for the same period. In 1926 over 57% of female employers and own-account workers were widowed as opposed to just under 9% for men. By 1971 there has been a reduction in that to 48.8% for females, with an increase in both married and single women taking on such roles between 1926 and 1971 – about 5% for married women, and 3% for single. It must be noted that these figures include women in agriculture – the Census data does not provide the breakdown by sector. However, it seems likely that widowhood had a significant impact on the overall economic condition and whether by choice or by necessity resulted in women taking on roles as either an employer or an own-account worker.

Finally it is worthwhile examining other areas of female and male engagement in an endeavour to understand movement within the population over the period in question. Two areas in particular are selected due to their relevance for females, those engaged in home duties and those engaged in the professions.

¹³⁶ *Census of Population, Occupation, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

Table 23: Females and males engaged in home duties.¹³⁷

Engaged in home duties		
Year	Female	Male
1926	550,147	1593
1936	552,176	1301
1946	589,461	1356
1951	582,364	1970
1961	601,392	1399
1966	614,919	1914
1971	635,327	3517

By 1971, there were 85,180 more females “engaged in home duties” than had been in 1926, an increase of almost 15.5%. Equally relevant is the fact that females have significantly increased their involvement in the professions. There were 21,109 more females working as professionals (nurses, teachers, nuns, accountants, solicitors etc.) in 1971 than in 1926, an increase of 71.5%. Men, too, increased their presence in the professions. This raises the possibility that perhaps as more opportunities opened up in the professions, less people, both female and male, pursued business ownership and self-employment as a means of earning a living.

¹³⁷ *Census of Population, Occupations, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

Table 24: Female and male professionals.¹³⁸

Professionals		
	Female	Male
1926	29505	25936
1936	32937	29161
1946	36806	34092
1951	38847	35807
1961	41176	37658
1966	44215	43184
1971	50614	52614

The Companies Registration Office Formation Data

Other pertinent data in relation to the prevalence of women in business in Ireland can be found in data from the Companies Registration Office (CRO). The basis for the formation of companies in Ireland was laid down in the UK Companies (Consolidation) Act 1908, which was subsequently amended by the Companies Act 1913 and the Companies (Particulars of Directors) Act 1917.¹³⁹ Under the 1922 Constitution, the laws of the State continued to operate as previously until such time as they were repealed or amended by the Oireachtas. The Companies Act 1913 was not repealed or amended for many years of the Free State, with the first major change coming with the adoption of the Companies Act 1963. The Act governs the established of private and public companies.

The first official data from the Irish Free State in relation to company incorporations was issued in 1925, with 1,512 companies being registered in the country. According to Healy, the Companies Office estimated the

¹³⁸ *Census of Population, Occupations, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

¹³⁹ Rowland Healy, 'Reflections on comparing the Irish and English Companies Act', *Journal of Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, vol XXIX, no. 11 (1954), p. 170.

number of companies registered in the country on the 31st of December 1922 to have been 1,500. This is not to infer that there were only 12 companies established in the period, but the net gain when dissolutions were offset with new formations was 12. By 1953 the number of companies on the Register was 7,027, an increase of over 400%.¹⁴⁰ The Companies Registration Office is the central repository of public statutory information on Irish companies and business names.¹⁴¹ As well as holding the records for current companies it also maintains the records for companies formed in the State in previous years. It is currently digitising the historic company records and when approached was able to supply some data on company incorporations for sample years for the period under investigation. The years corresponding to the Census years were studied – 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966 and 1977. When registering a company, details of the directors have to be submitted and from these it is possible to determine the gender of the directors. The following table is extracted from communications with the publication section of the CRO.¹⁴²

Table 25: Compilation of data from Companies Registration Data

Year	Total Available	No with female directors
1926	Limited data available	
1936	54	10 (18.51%)
1946	64	21 (32.81%)
1951	65	20 (30.76%)
1961	160	51 ((31.87%)
1966	282	108 (38.29%)
1971	108	33 ((30.55%)

¹⁴⁰ Healy, 'Reflections on comparing the Irish and English companies Act', p. 171.

¹⁴¹ CRO, <http://www.cro.ie/ena/about-cro.aspx/>, accessed 20/11/2014.

¹⁴² Email from the CRO, 14/06/2013.

A number of issues need to be borne in mind when looking at these figures. They are a sample only, and given that the total number of incorporations per year is not known, it is difficult to infer how representative the sample is. Also being a director does not necessarily imply ownership-technically ownership of a company is held by shareholders, on a proportionate basis determined by the number of shares he or she owns. Quite frequently, especially in small family firms, shareholders and directors are often one and the same. Being a shareholder or being a director does not always imply decision making and/or involvement in the management of the company, however, in small family firms it often does. These caveats prevent one from making absolute statements regarding ownership, but such figures do indicate a level of business ownership and involvement by females that resonates with the figures extracted from the Census data.

The Dissolved company files

A further investigation of available company data was also conducted. The National Archives house the dissolved company files for the 1930s, the 1940s and the 1950s and these files contain details of the directors as well as of the shareholders. In keeping with the examination of the previous data sets it was initially hoped to select the companies dissolved in the periods corresponding to the Census dates, however, because of the nature of the filing arrangements this proved difficult to do. Instead a sample of 661 files across three decades, the 1930s the 1940s and the 1950s were surveyed and the findings are summarised in the next table. A total of 2,367 files are held in the National Archives for this period.

Table 26: Structural composition of companies from the dissolved companies files from the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s.¹⁴³

Structure	Number	Percentage
Female only directors	9	1.36%
Male only directors	492	74.43%
Male and female directors	160	24.21%
Total	661	100%

These figures would seem to indicate that approximately 26% of private companies that were dissolved in the mid-twentieth century had either female shareholders or female directors involved in them. The next table lists the nine female only companies from these files and gives an indication of the sector and type of businesses that these women were running.

Of the female only director businesses, 6 out of the 9 were in Commerce and Finance (66.66%); 2 were in Manufacturing (22.22%) and one was a trust and investment company. The high numbers in Commerce and Finance is in keeping with the earlier reported findings from the Census data where there is evidence of strong female involvement. There are, however, no female only Personal Services companies, even though the data shows that this was a sector where women did operate businesses, leading to a conclusion that perhaps women were slow to adopt the legal status of a private company for their businesses in this sector.

¹⁴³ 'Dissolved companies files random selection', 1923 to 1958, (N.A.I., Business Records).

*Table 27: Details of companies and sectors for female only director companies as identified in the Dissolved Company Files from the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s.*¹⁴⁴

Date	Company name	NAI REF	Location	Type of Business	
1927	Castle Confect.	7421	Dublin	Confectioner	2
1933	The Shamrock Baby shop	8345	Dublin	Children's clothing and fancy goods	2
1936	V. O Sullivan Limited	D 8180		Chemists	2
1939	Joan Limited	9684	Dublin	Milliners	2
1946	The Abbey Loan Company	D 9640	Dublin	Financiers,	2
1949	Hawkes Medical	11362	Cork	Chemists and Druggists	2
1955	Fairway Publications Ltd	14622	Dublin	Publishers	2
1956	Ardbraccan Trust Ltd	D 13548	Dublin	Trust and Invest co	2
1957	Donald's Ltd	13049	Dublin	Draper	2

In the case of male only directors the sectors their companies were based in are as follows 182 out of 492 were in Commerce and Finance (36.99%); 154 out of 492 were in Manufacturing (31.30%); 11 out of 492 were in Personal services (2.24%); 16 out of 492 were in Professional services (3.25%) and 129 (26.21%) were categorised as others which would include entertainment, agricultural related and non-business companies.

For both male and female directors, the sectoral breakdown for their businesses was as follows 87 out of 160 in Commerce and Finance (54.37%); 37 out of 160 in Manufacturing (23.13%); 12 out of 160 in Personal Services (7.5%) and 24 out of 160 in Others (15%). Businesses that had female shareholders were to be found in the following sectors 104 out of 220 were in Commerce and Finance (47.27%); 56 out of 220 were in

¹⁴⁴ 'Dissolved companies files random selection', 1923 to 1958, (N.A.I., Business Records).

Manufacturing (25.45%); 10 out of 220 were in Personal services (4.54%) and 50 out of 220 were in others (22.73%). The next table gives the sectoral breakdown for the total.

*Table 28: Dissolved companies sectoral breakdown.*¹⁴⁵

Sector	Number and Percent
Commerce and Finance	275 (41.60%)
Manufacturing	193 (29.20%)
Personal Services	23 (3.48%)
Professional Services	16 (2.42%)
Others	154 (23.30%)

This breakdown differs from the sectoral breakdown identified in the Census insofar as the numbers of companies being dissolved in Personal Services is very small. The Census figures have pointed to a decline in the number of owner managers and own account workers in both Manufacturing and Personal Services during the period under review, and logically it might be expected that the rate of dissolution of companies in these sectors would be relatively high to reflect this fact – however this does not appear to be the case in Personal Services.

The locations of the businesses are given- however it is hard make definite judgements from the data as it was not uncommon for the registered office of a business to be at a location other than the place of operation of the business and in many instances that would be Dublin. The findings on this indicate that Dublin was the main location for private companies, 467 of the 661 dissolved companies were located in Dublin, 45 were in Cork. The next biggest region was 17 in Waterford, 15 in Limerick, 8 in Donegal, 7 in Drogheda, 7 In Galway, 7 in Dundalk and 2 in UK. Sligo, Mayo, Galway and Roscommon combined account for 19 as opposed to 516 along the east coast from Dundalk to Wexford.

¹⁴⁵ 'Dissolved companies files random selection', 1923 to 1958, (N.A.I., Dissolved company files).

These figures too come with the same shortcomings as the Companies Registration Office figures but it is reasonable to presume that not all of the women involved were either directors or shareholders and undoubtedly many of them would have operated the businesses. An example taken from the dissolved company files illustrates some of the difficulty involved in making definite judgements based on these figures alone. The company in question is Marshall Brothers who were based in 20 Old Abbey Street, Dublin.¹⁴⁶ This company was established in 1922—the founders were Francis John Marshall who is described as a Foreign Wine Merchant and agent in the Memorandum of Association, and Hugh Marshall, general merchant. The certificate of incorporation was dated 19th December 1922. Francis had a Dublin address, 47 Kildare Street, and Hugh's was in Bangor, Co. Down. Shareholders are as follows Francis John Marshall, Managing Director 400 ordinary shares; Hugh Marshall, General Merchant 400 ordinary shares; Joseph Bernard Marshall, Belfast, Assistant manager, 100 ordinary and Simon Patrick Marshall, Commercial Traveller 100 ordinary shares.

In 1925 there was a change of directors; Francis John Marshall's usual residence was noted as being in Belfast: his other business occupation was as Director of Marshall Brothers Belfast Limited, Wine merchants. Hugh Marshall resigned, Simon Patrick became a director in place of Hugh. Mary Marshall, who is described as a spinster and chemist assistant, was appointed to the Board. Her address was the same as Francis, John at 27 Atlantic Avenue, Belfast – (more than likely she was a relative, maybe she was his daughter). There is also a change in shareholding. Hugh's shares were transferred to Francis John, Joseph Marshalls were transferred to Francis John, and Simon Patrick transferred 80 of his shares to Francis John and 10 to Mary – he retained 10. Now the shareholding was as follows with Francis

¹⁴⁶ 'Marshall Brothers dissolved company file', 1958, (N.A.I., D 7134, Dissolved Companies files).

John Marshall, 980 ordinary shares, Simon Patrick Marshall, 10 ordinary shares and Mary Marshall, 10 ordinary shares. All were listed as residing in Belfast.

By 1926, Mary is listed as a director of Marshall Brothers, Belfast also. By 1928 her address was given as 2a Sandymount Green, Dublin and she was now listed as a Pharmaceutical Chemist and director of Marshall Bros Belfast. She was the only one with a Dublin address. F Marshall was still managing director. In 1931, there was another change. Therese Marshall was appointed a director in place of SP Marshall who resigned. Therese's address was also given as 2a Sandymount Green, Dublin. She was listed as Secretary of this company only and signs the 131 Copy of the Register of Directors or Managers – 22nd September 1931. Simon Marshall's 10 shares were transferred to Francis who in turn transferred them to Therese. The shareholding was as follows Francis John Marshall, 980 ordinary Mary Marshall, and Therese Marshall, 10 ordinary.

In 1937 there was a Special resolution 25th Feb 1937 “ that the capital of the company be increased by four thousand pounds divided into one thousand ordinary shares of one pound each and three thousand 6 1/2% non-cumulative preference shares of one pound each”. This resulted in Francis John getting 100 preference and Therese 600 and by 1938 the return read- Francis John Marshall, 980 ordinary and 100 preference, Mary Marshall, 10 ordinary, and Therese Marshall, 10 ordinary and 600 preference.

By 1940, the position was as above, with one change. Therese now had 900 preference shares. In 1942, the change of directors noted that Mary Marshall had a “change of name on marriage from Marshall to McCarthy, and for Therese, change of name on marriage from Marshall to Murphy. The address given for both was still 2a Sandymount Avenue. Also in 1942 there

was an increase in the “share capital of the company by five thousand pounds divided into three thousand ordinary shares of one pound each and two thousand 6.5% non-cumulative preference shares of one pound each. A new shareholder was on board, one Kieran Marshall with an address of 48 Haddington Road, Dublin, a clerk who had 100 preference shares.

Through the 1940s there are changes in shareholding-for instances by 1944 the position was that Francis John has 1479 ordinary and 200 preference shares with Mary holding 15 ordinary and 15 preference shares. Therese had 15 ordinary and 1300 preference shares while Kieran had 200 preference shares. In 1945 two new shareholders on board, Mrs Eileen Henry had 400 preference shares and William Gaffikin, manager of 20 Old Abbey Street owned 50 preference shares. Francis’s holding had increased to 500 preference and 1960 ordinary shares, Mary had 60 preference and 20 ordinary, and Therese held 1700 preference and 20 ordinary shares. The 1946 return showed the women as having separate addresses-Mary at 9 Ailesbury Park, and Therese at 30 Windmill Road, Crumlin. By 1949, Francis John resigns and Dermot Hugh McCarthy who was an accountant and has the same address as Mary McCarthy-9 Ailesbury Park, Dublin, Accountant became a director, Therese had moved to 7 Louglinstown Road, Dublin.

On the 1950 return the shareholding situation had changed significantly and Mary had 2615 preference and 1475 ordinary shares. Therese had 25 ordinary shares. Dermot had 1250 preference and 1000 ordinary shares and Francis, Kieran and Eileen had none. William Gaffikin had 200 preference shares. Dermot signed the return and was now company Secretary and Mary, Dermot and Therese remained on as directors. The company was dissolved in 1958.

This example illustrates the ebb and flow of business ownership in a family context over a period of 30 years and highlights the difficulty in making finite statements based on the data from just the figures on shareholdings/directorships alone. Originally based in Northern Ireland the company established a base in the Free State, and while originally an all-male concern it would appear that very quickly – within a four year period, the females became involved. It seems as if they moved to Dublin and operated the business on the ground there, one (Therese) presumably, based on her larger shareholding, having a more prominent role day to day. After a period of 20 years the balance of shareholding shifted, with one of the females and her husband appearing to take over.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt from the above analysis that women did have a significant presence in Irish economic life as employers and own-account workers. The data shows a female presence of almost 30% in 1926 and analysis of the main industrial sectors shows female activity in each of these categories. Indeed it also shows that there is a consistency in percentage terms of females in gainful employment across the period. However, it is difficult based on this data alone to make qualitative judgements on the nature, scale and scope of the activity that either females or males were involved in.

The levels of female activity in business at an ownership/management level is also borne out by the Companies Registration Office and the dissolved company files data with women accounting for between 25% and 30% of the shareholders and directors for the sample examined. This would seem to corroborate some of the findings in the Census, but the two sets of data are somewhat contradictory insofar as the companies registration s data does not indicate a discernible trend towards a reduction of female participation.

However this data provides a snapshot only of particular junctures in the period and pending the accessibility of the material, this source requires further investigation before conclusive statistics could be obtained.

It is also equally notable from the analysis that there is a decline in the number of women operating in the role of employer and own-account worker in the 45 years from 1926. In 1926 women accounted for almost 30% of the overall total but this figure declined by 1971 significantly to 17%. Numerically there is a significant fall off of 17,627 females in that period, but there is also a decline for males in the same period of 12,145 and a drop of 29,772 overall. This raises issues pertaining to the economic climate and conditions of the time which suggests that indigenous small business faced difficulties that impacted on overall performance of Irish business irrespective of gender.

The analysis shows as well as the decline in the number of employers, both male and female, that the number of own-account workers is also down for both male and females, suggesting that the sustainability of working on one's own behalf was problematic. The reduction in female and male activity as employers and own-account workers referred to before is reflected in the general employment trends for the same time frame. There was a falloff in the total number of females gainfully employed of 56,027 or 16.3% between 1926 and 1971. As noted before; there is also a fall off for men of 132,104 or 13.7%, once more indicating underling economic pressures of the period in question. These figures must also be read in the context of an overall falling population – at 2,818,341 the population in 1961 was at its lowest ever point for the country.

It is notable that the rate of decline in female owners and own account workers accelerates in the late 1950s and through the 1960s-this too requires further investigation. What was the motivation for females to be employers

or own-account workers in the earlier part of the 20th century, were there more opportunities as economic policy shifted and became more outward looking? Was the option of being an employer or own-account worker a matter of economic necessity, rather than of choice?

Female employers and own-account workers, while present across all sectors are heavily concentrated in two Industrial categories – retailing and personal services. Ireland had a low industrial base, as alluded to before, and males as well as females were very active within these categories. The figures, for both females and males raise issues about the impact of the protectionist economic policies pursued in the 1930's and 1940's which arguably did not demonstrably facilitate growth in actual numbers of businesses operating in this period.

The lack of an indigenous industrial base is evident and the figures from the Census demonstrate a high reliance on the services sector. When the figures for shopkeepers/retailers as illustrated in the data above, are extracted there is a significant presence of both male and female owner- managers throughout the period. However, it is notable that the number of male shopkeepers remained reasonably static over this time frame, whereas females became more dependent on this sector as a source of self-employment over the same period of time.

What the figures do not recognise is the role that women played in family business matters. The hidden nature of the contribution of females to the family economy and the fact that it was not officially reported indicate that the figures about female involvement in economic activity as outlined above are likely to be underestimated rather than overestimated.

The discussion above has concentrated solely on the figures as extracted from the Census and CRO data. It has sought to establish the level of activity

of female employers and own account workers that can be discerned from the data provided in the Census of Population taken in 1926 through to 1971. It has highlighted anomalies that exist within the data, and taken cognisance of the difficulties in using such data. It has not attempted to offer explanations from within the wider context of social, economic and cultural life in Ireland. However, the following chapters will offer additional insights and when reviewed in the context of the literature and the data just discussed, will give a more nuanced understanding of the female experience as an employer and a self-employed worker.

CHAPTER THREE: WOMEN IN COMMERCE AND FINANCE 1922-1972

The chapter will examine female business ownership in the Commerce and Finance category over the period in question. This is a separate heading in the Census and covers mainly wholesale and retail distribution and while the range and types of operations changed somewhat over the 50 years, there is a consistency across the category which allows an examination of female enterprise over time.

Overview

Retailing was a very important element within this category and in the Irish economy. It is apparent from the previous chapter that this was a significant sector of economic activity for both males and females. The range of retailing activities included small groceries, groceries and bars combined, wine and spirit merchants, furniture stores, hardware, sweets and confectionery, bakeries, butcheries, haberdasheries. It contained chemists, jewellers, bicycle shop owners, boot merchants, grain merchants and street traders. The size and scope of the outlets varied, and ranged from the very small to the very large. Rural towns all had a good number of traders and merchants; this is supported by evidence from local histories and recounted by Brown who describes towns as having a “small collection of shops which served as service centres for the inhabitants of small surrounding rural districts”.¹⁴⁷ He notes that the main forms of commerce in the towns of Ireland were family-owned concerns, mainly in retailing providing an increasing array of ready-made goods to the outlying populations. He also alludes to the role shopkeepers played in supplying credit, remarking that if they had not dispensed credit the farming community could not have survived.

¹⁴⁷ Terence Brown, *Ireland A social and cultural history 1922-2002* (London: Harper Collins, 2004), p. 78.

In 1926, the kind of business listed under the heading is sub divided into Trading and Finance—the Trading list is quite extensive and includes trading in horses, cattle and sheep, pigs, eggs and live poultry, grain and forage, coal, bread and cakes, sweets grocery and provisions, milk and dairy products, fresh meat, fish and dead poultry, vegetables and fruits, spirits and wines (not public houses), tobacco, building materials, drugs, druggists’ sundries, metals, metal goods and tools, cycles and motors, jewellery, watches and clocks, general drapery, boots and shoes, furniture, paper and stationery, as well as departmental stores, draper and clothing departmental stores, other and undefined departmental stores, hawking and street selling, auctioneering and valuing, advertising agencies, other and undefined trading. The finance section covers banking, insurance and pawn-broking, money lending and other finance. This list is collapsed for the 1936 Census, but expanded in 1946 as per the above listing. In 1951, a distinction is made between wholesale and retail trade and this is maintained through the 1961, 1966 and the 1971 returns. The provision of a high degree of detail in the trading category provides an insight into anywhere there was a concentration of female owners operating. It provides a comprehensive overview of the kind of trading that took place in the early 1920s and gives some indication of transitions retail trade over the period too.

Appendix D summarises the entire details of female employers and own-account workers within this sector as reported in the Census of 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, and 1971. It needs to be pointed out that the subcategories did not remain fully consistent for each Census year. 1951 saw a number of changes being instigated; wholesale and retail operations are separately accounted for. Insurance, banking and finance were separated and the category became just Commerce and finally, publicans are moved from Personal service over to Commerce. For consistency and comparative purposes, the figures for publicans have been extracted from the Personal

Service Census figures and included in the tables for the years 1926, 1936 and 1946. Notwithstanding these changes there remains a significant degree of consistency in the data which allows comparisons across the years. Table 29 is a shorted version of the entire table in Appendix D.

*Table 29: Breakdown of Female employers and own-account workers by types of businesses within the category Commerce and Finance.*¹⁴⁸

Activity	1926-	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Wholesale distribution	0	0	0	65	68	52	101
Retailing	0	9772	0	0	0	0	0
Eggs and Live Poultry	84	0	34	27	4	1	0
Coal	27	0	21	13	8	6	12
Bread and cakes	169	0	250	244	180	161	143
Sweets	1402	0	1252	1850	1328	1065	836
Grocery and Provision	2263	0	2434	2565	4287	3219	2349
Grocery and Public House	0	0	0	376	860	547	434
Public Houses	3060	2854	2495	2211	1555	1507	1399
Milk and Dairy Products	260	0	227	132	35	19	16
Fresh Meat	159	0	143	123	101	86	87
Fish and dead Poultry	174	0	61	25	34	27	0
Vegetables and Fruits	679	0	437	263	231	143	104
Tobacco	240	0	283	0	0	0	0
Building materials	5	0	4	7	9	8	6
Drugs, Druggists Sundries	50	0	164	192	292	308	283
General Drapery	1202	0	1071	1180	1149	946	915
Boots and shoes	78	0	55	68	92	71	0
Furniture	47	0	29	40	49	41	56
Paper and Stationery	324	0	320	113	94	63	45
Country general shops	0	0	0	193	25	54	48
Hawking and Street Selling	585	589	227	124	0	0	0
Auctioneering	12	7	11	16	26	63	0
Advertising Agencies	31	0	10	3	9	5	0
Other trading	1722	76	1926	771	167	447	468
Pawn broking, money lending	26	37	32	13	5	9	7
Advertising Agencies	0	0	0	0	0	0	4

¹⁴⁸ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

Females were most active in retail, rather than wholesale distribution businesses. Within retailing, there was a female presence in practically all of the different types of retailing businesses. They ran furniture shops, building supply stores, dealt in scrap metal, operated garages and bicycle shops. They were jewellers, traded in livestock and became involved in electrical goods as the demand for these increased over time. They were involved in egg and poultry production, an area which as Bourke noted traditionally associated with rural female enterprise endeavours in the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th century but its relative importance decreased as the decades progressed.¹⁴⁹ They were auctioneers and they ran advertising agencies.

However, they were clustered significantly in the area of grocery, drapery and grocery/publican combined, publicans as well as in sweet, tobacconists and newsagent shops which were initially presented in the 1926 and 1936 as separate categories, but combined after 1951. Studies from the late 19th Century have shown how shop-keeping evolved and was developing in the early part of the 20th century.¹⁵⁰ These types of shops were a feature of every town and village in Ireland and local histories give testament to their position across the regions.¹⁵¹ The only category that has no female as an employer is banking and this remains the situation for the entire period. It also has very few male employers either. However, women did practise as pawnbrokers and as money lenders— two such female pawnbrokers operating in Dublin were Mrs. Burland and Mrs. Garland who were mentioned in the file note on the need to update the Pawnbrokers Act in 1942.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Joanna Bourke, 'Women and poultry in Ireland 1891-1914', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 99 (1987), pp. 293-310.

¹⁵⁰ Clear, *Social change and everyday life in Ireland 1850 – 1922*, pp. 30-32.

¹⁵¹ Kieran Gavin, *Childhood memories of Moate in the mid-1940s*. (Westmeath: self-published, 2007), p. 17.

¹⁵² 'Memorandum from the Department of Justice, entitled Pawnbrokers Auctioneers', 4th March 1942, (NA1, S12742, Department of the Taoiseach).

The previous chapter has illustrated the scale of this category relative to others and Figure 2 indicated that both males as well as females were significant operators in Commerce and Finance. Table 30 shows the respective figures of both females and males operating in the most significant retail clusters and highlights clearly, that not alone were females clustered in the grocery, drapery and publican trades but that these were a very prominent area of economic activity for males as well, indicating that business and self-employment opportunities in Ireland at this time were availed of in the retail sector, with a high proportion of those opportunities located in grocery, drapery and publican trades.

*Table 30: Breakdown of female and male employers and own-account workers in Grocery, Drapery and Publican Trades.*¹⁵³

	Grocery and Provisions	Public Houses	Grocery and Pub combined	Sweets	General Drapery	Total
1926 F	2263	3060		1402	1202	7927
	3954	5596		573	1976	12099
M						
1946 F	2434	2495		1252	1071	7252
M	3911	4605		561	1804	10881
1951 F	2565	2211	376	1850	1180	8182
M	4239	4247	1125	1221	1599	12431
1961 F	4287	1555	860	1328	1149	9179
M	6096	3048	2174	1060	1504	13882
1966 F	3219	1507	547	1065	946	7284
M	5051	3568	1577	1006	1422	12624
1971 F	2349	1399	434	836	915	5933
M	4276	3991	1229	914	1612	12022

Note: the figures for grocery and pub combined are only available from 1951 onwards

When these figures are read in conjunction with the overall totals for Commerce and Finance they reveal the relative significance of the above forms of retailing for both males and females.

¹⁵³ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

*Table 31: Grocery, drapery and publicans expressed as % of overall Commerce and Finance sector.*¹⁵⁴

Year	Total Commerce and Finance	Total grocery, drapery and pub	% Grocery, drapery and pub	Total grocery, drapery and pubs Female	% of female	Total grocery, drapery and pubs Male	% of Male
1926	41977	20026	47.71	7927	39.58	12099	60.42
1936	41521		0.00				
1946	39939	18133	45.40	7252	39.99	10881	60.01
1951	37544	20613	54.90	8182	39.69	12431	60.31
1961	38216	23061	60.34	9179	39.80	13882	60.20
1966	35518	19908	56.05	7284	36.59	12624	63.41
1971	34241	17955	52.44	5933	33.04	12002	66.84

Note: the 1936 Census did not provide the breakdown for grocery, drapery and pubs

Grocers, publicans, drapers and sweet shop/tobacconists made up half of the retailing effort in the country for the period under examination – indeed it is probable that the early Census figures underestimate the figure as there is a large group of “other and undefined trading” which at its height was 5,300 in 1946 as opposed to 509 in 1961, the result presumably of Census enumerators becoming more adept at classifying types of businesses. It was an important niche for both male and female business enterprise activities.

The limitation of the above data is that it can give little or no feel for the size and scope of the businesses with the exception of the data provided in the 1951 Census which, using the number of employees as a criterion gives a tantalising glimpse into the possible scale of the businesses. As can be seen very clearly from the table, the vast majority of employers in mid- 20th century Ireland were running very small organisations.

¹⁵⁴ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

Table 32: Breakdown of Females and male employers classified by Industrial Groups and number of employees.¹⁵⁵

1951	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
	1 to 4		5 to 9		10 or more		Not stated	
Mnftng	261	2168	42	623	65	757	14	116
Construction	2	1173	3	532	2	630	8	60
Electricity		3		1		2		
Commerce	2513	7541	263	1512	86	633	47	176
Insurance	8	82	1	35		10		3
Transport, storage	61	369	1	48	3	32		18
Professions	83	1054	30	282	5	150	10	20
Personal service	811	670	117	198	48	128	42	34
Entertainment	22	218	8	69	3	50		13
Other	7	47	3	24	4	30	3	6
Totals	3768	13325	468	3324	216	2422	124	446

In 1951 almost 75% of all business within the Industrial groups listed above employ between 1 and 4 employees. For female businesses, 3,768 out of 4,756 or just over 82% employ this number, for men that figure at 13,325 out of 19,517 is just over 68% signifying perhaps that women were running smaller scale businesses than men.

Another potential lens through which to view the Commerce and Finance activity is provided by the Census of Distribution. The first Census of Distribution was undertaken in 1933. This emulated a practise undertaken in a number of countries at that time but was the first time that it was undertaken in Ireland or the UK, America having started the practice in the 1920s.¹⁵⁶ The purpose was to get a statistical handle on how retail and distribution business were performing and to yield information on the size,

¹⁵⁵ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1951.*

¹⁵⁶ Iris Douglas, 'Irish Free State Census of Distribution 1933', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 100, no. 1 (1937), pp. 96-99.

location, management, stocks of retail and distributive business complementing the range of information that the Irish Free state gathered with regard to economic activity in agriculture, manufacturing and transport. An examination of some of these surveys, from the 1930s, the 1950s and the late 1960s gives concrete economic data on the nature, size and structure of retail and wholesale businesses which supplements what had been garnered from the Census of Population.

B.F. Shields, in a paper on the Census of Distribution in 1938 outlined how the Census operated.¹⁵⁷ A total of 37,628 forms were completed – 82% completion rate from the 45,888 retail establishments sent the forms from a listed compiled by the Garda. He notes that heretofore there was no previous data on the number of shops in the country, other than from the 1926 Census of Population which lists employers and person working on their own-account in the wholesale and retail trade. For the purpose of the Census of Distribution, publicans and hotels and restaurants were also included in the survey.

The classification of shops was difficult as many were selling multiple lines of goods. The Census commenced with 34 classifications but this was reduced to 20 in compiling the data with a further reduction to 13 for larger towns.¹⁵⁸ It confirms some of the insights drawn above namely, that the retail and distributive sector was populated by a large number of small shops. In 1933 there were almost 46,000 shops in the country, inclusive of pubs and restaurants, a figure which equates to “one shop for every 65 persons, or to about 20 families”.¹⁵⁹ Consistent with this feature turnover for many shops was low. Two thirds of the shops had an annual turnover of less

¹⁵⁷ B.F Shields, 'The Irish Census of Distribution', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 101, no. 1 (1938), pp. 188-201.

¹⁵⁸ Shields, 'The Irish Census of Distribution', p. 190.

¹⁵⁹ Shields, 'The Irish Census of Distribution', p. 190.

than £1,000. Indeed, nearly half of these had a turnover of less than £500 per annum. Likewise, only 1% of the total number, 50 shops were doing an annual trade of £50,000 or more and not surprisingly, the majority of these were based in Dublin and Cork, followed by 5 in grocery and provision, 4 in coal. Wages paid at this time averaged on a scale from £40 to £130, and were directly linked to sales, with the smaller amounts being paid in shops in the £100- £500 turnover class.

From the data gathered, the mid-point annual turnover in grocery, provisions, public houses, sweets, tobacconists and newsagents was between £100 and £500; in public houses and grocery, cycles and automobiles, fresh meats, jewellery, hotels and restaurants it was between £500 and £1,000, and for drapery, coal, chemists, metals and metal goods a yearly turnover of from £1,000 and £2,500.¹⁶⁰ Aggregate retail sales were estimated at an annual expenditure of £21 per head of population, approximately 8/-per head per week. The average annual sales per shop was £1,655 and while undoubtedly retail businesses did significant annual turnover, many operators, particularly in the grocery, drapery and publican trades which were run by females as well as males, were small in scale and likely to be just about supporting a family rather than earning super profits.

Dublin as an important economic hub features in this first report, with shops in Dublin accounting for 33.5% of the trade and for 42% of the total wages. The average annual wage was £105.2. Male and female activity is discussed in terms of employment, not in terms of proprietorship and the breakdown was that 54.5% of those engaged in retail were males with 45.5% being females, with this distribution being consistent across different regions of the country. Shields also notes the role of family workers, with working proprietors accounting for 29.5% of the total and the proprietors' family

¹⁶⁰ Shields, 'The Irish Census of Distribution', p. 190.

making up 22.3%, thereby, over half of those involved in the retail and distributive trades were family members. In the larger shops non-family labour was more prevalent. Not surprisingly, in the retail cluster of grocery, drapery and public houses family labour ranged from 50 to 60%.

The next Census of Distribution took place in 1951 and once more Shields compiled a paper for the Royal Statistical Society.¹⁶¹ Similar issues in relation to the classification of shops within the sector were noted and he cautioned that the Census was wider in scope and did not apply the exact same descriptors of goods as in the previous one. In this survey 31,392 establishments responded, and of this figure 93.3% were either individually owned or a partnership and transacted 60% of the aggregated sales; 5.4% were private limited companies with 30.4% of the aggregate sales; just 0.8% were public companies with 7.3% of the aggregate sales, the rest being comprised of co-operatives.

Turnover had increased, mainly accounted for by the increase in the cost of living index which had moved from 149 in 1933 to 354 in 1951. Fifty-five percent of the total shops had an annual turnover of less than £2,500, and these were run in the main by proprietors and their families. For grocery, public houses and other food, drink and tobacco shops, the median sized business had a turnover of between £1,000 and £2,500. 41 individual shops had an annual trade of over £250,000 or more, 33 of these were located in Dublin and 4 in Cork. 13 of these shops were mainly involved in the sale of drapery goods. It was estimated that the average spend per head of population was almost £77 per annum or 29s.7d per head per week. This seemingly large increase can be attributed to the cost of living increases combined with the larger expenditure on certain items which were not as

¹⁶¹ B.F Shields, An analysis of the Irish Census of Distribution 1951', *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, vol. XX, Part I (1958), pp. 118-13.

common in the previous decade, for instance on cars and bicycles. By now, annual wages averaged on a scale from £105 to £321, and were directly linked to sales, with the smaller amounts being paid in shops in the £100-£500 turnover class, and the higher rate in those with the revenue of £250,000 or more.

Again the data does not provide details of ownership by gender, but the engagement of females and males in the sector remained similar to 1933, with 54.8% of males and 45.2% of females consistently being noted around the regions. Family members, either as proprietors or as unpaid member of families account for 40.8% but Shields warned against making direct comparisons with 1933 “as they do not exactly apply to the same descriptions of businesses in the two years”.¹⁶² However, he noted that family labour was clustered in retail businesses with a turnover of less than £1,000 per annum.

The two sets of data from the Census of Distribution read together give an impression of a widespread, small retail sector, with businesses, irrespective of the gender of the proprietor operating at subsistence level. Barriers to entry were low and there was a high degree of informality within the smaller businesses. This point was taken up in the discussions following the presentation of Shields’ paper in 1958, particularly in relation to grocery shops, where Mr James Mansfield, a contributor to the discussion, calculated that those shops with 3% would only stand to make a profit of £39 10s 0d. He was quite exercised by this and remarked:

These statistics not only highlight the excessive number of outlets in the retail food trade but also show that a very large number of such outlets are entirely uneconomic. It is unreasonable to think that any shop which had sales of less than £1,320 per

¹⁶² Shields, ‘An analysis of the Irish Census of Distribution 1951’, pp. 118-13.

annum could be considered an economic outlet. These uneconomic units siphon off some of the trade and therefore cause the loss of such trade to the more progressive and economically operated shops.¹⁶³

There was a Census again in 1956 with one also been undertaken in 1966. This volume reported a 75% response rate, with 25, 890.¹⁶⁴ Of this number, 12, 742 had annual sales of less than £5,000. Unlike the previous reports it gave the details of proprietorship by gender – females proprietors amounted to 10,699 and males 15,318, indicating that women owned just over 40% of the retail operations in the country. It also drew attention to the gap between urban and rural areas, with the eastern regions having the larger shops with higher turnover. Over 60% and up to 70% of shops in Connacht and Ulster turned over less than £5,000 per annum and this, while it can be attributed to scattered populations, also raised questions about whether these shops were being run on a part-time basis. Dublin, as a retail destination was mentioned – increasingly, it attracted out-of-town shoppers.¹⁶⁵

These government documents played a role in providing statistical data which informed Government planning and decision making and they assist the researcher in developing an overview of businesses within particular Industrial Groups. From these, it is clearly visible that women were actively involved as employers and own-account workers in the retail and distribution sector for the duration of the period being studied.

The position of grocery, drapery and publicans within this sector has been established in the data, but what of the lived experience of such women?

¹⁶³ Shields, 'An analysis of the Irish Census of Distribution 1951', pp.118-13.

¹⁶⁴ *Census of Distribution and Services* ',1966 Final Report' (Dublin: CSO, 1970). p. viii.

¹⁶⁵ J.J. Sexton, 'Retail Trade in Ireland-a study of its structure and an analysis of trade over the period 1956 -1966', *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, vol. xxii, no. 11 (1970), pp. 140-78.

What were their circumstances? What motivated them to conduct the trade that they did? It is evident from looking at surviving business records that the scale of many operations was small. At the outset of the period, a common theme emerges for grocers and provision merchants from the official records-many of the businesses were seeking compensation for damages incurred as a result of the War of Independence and the Civil War. Take the case of Mrs O'Shea-Leamy of 78a Summerhill whose premises were used during the War of Independence to such an extent that her business was lost.¹⁶⁶ The file on Mrs O'Shea-Leamy contains a letter written on her behalf by Jenny Wyse Power, who herself had set up a business in Henry Street, the Irish Farm Produce Company. The result of her application was that the President recommended that she get a grant of £200 which was paid out in May 1924.¹⁶⁷ However, her attempt to restart in business does not appear to have been very successful as Mrs O'Shea-Leamy wrote again to the President again seeking further assistance. A repayable loan of £40 was issued in this instance and was waived in 1938.

Another case, concerning the application of one James Barry of Passage West, County Cork in respect of an injury sustained by him while serving as a hired storehouse assistant in Haulbowline Dockyard explored the status of his wife in determining the validity of his claim.¹⁶⁸ The original letter of enquiry, dated 19th June 1925 to the Irish Free State comes from Downing Street, to the Governor General His Excellency Tim Healy, based at the Vice Regal Lodge in Dublin seeking his assistance to establish if Barry had secured employment since the 3rd December 1924, the date on which he was

¹⁶⁶ 'Letter to the Secretary, Department of the Taoiseach, from the Garda Siochana', 29 December 1928, (N.A.I., S7472, Department of Taoiseach).

¹⁶⁷ Marie O'Neill, *From Parnell to de Valera: A biography of Jennie Wyse Power 1858 to 1941*, (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1991), p. 47.

¹⁶⁸ Personal injuries claim of James Barry, Passage West, Cork', 1925-1926, (N.A.I., S4494, Department of the Taoiseach).

last examined in connection with his claim. Healy passed the letter to the President, who in turn passed it to the Department of External Affairs. A reply sent to Healy in July noted that Barry had not obtained any employment. A similar request came via the same route again on the 17th December asking if Barry has since got employment. The reply issued in February 1926 noted that he did not get employment, that he “assists his wife to some extent in the management of a small grocery business”. This prompts another exchange to establish if he or his wife owned the business, and what his services would be worth. The reply sent back in March to Healy states that:

the grocery business in which Barry assists belongs to his wife. Barry helps in the shop occasionally and does light work in the way of delivering parcels, packing etc. although the Police who have reported on the matter are in doubt as to the value of his services they state that there is another person in the same town engaged in a similar occupation for which he receives remuneration of 15/s–per week. If, therefore, Barry were serving an employer in his present capacity it may be taken that his services would not be worth more.¹⁶⁹

It is not noted in the file whether Barry was successful in his claim or not.

The case of Mrs Kate Morris from Lahinch and her application to the Special Relief Fund illustrates how close to penury some of the small businesses were.¹⁷⁰ Kate ran a retail business in the first two decades of the 20th century, supported the starting of a branch of Sinn Fein locally, sold stamps on their behalf and got into trouble with the RIC for doing so. According to Kate, the RIC started spreading stories that she was a spy. She tried to defend her name in court and lost, and had to pay costs. Eventually

¹⁶⁹ 'Copy despatch from the Governor General to the Secretary of State', 3rd February 1926, (N.A.I., S4494, Department of the Taoiseach).

¹⁷⁰ 'Letter from Kate Morris to President Cosgrave', 28th October 1926, (N.A.I. S7654, Department of the Taoiseach).

the business went down and she could not pay rent and was evicted. She moved to an old house near the sea which was flooded and made uninhabitable by the sea. She received a grant of £15 in 1925, followed by £35 in 1928.

The withdrawal of British troops from the Curragh as a result of Independence had an impact on business in the surrounding region. The concerns were raised to the Provisional government by a committee from Newbridge and the Curragh. In their deputation they estimated that about six hundred men, skilled and unskilled were employed on the camp and highlighted that these would not be absorbed into the local economy. They were calling for the new Irish Army to be headquartered in the Curragh. Business such as market gardens, dairy farming, carting, shop-keeping would be seriously affected by the withdrawal:

practically all our supplies in the matter of milk and fresh vegetables for the Curragh are supplied by people in the vicinity of the Curragh and Newbridge. The daily consumption of milk averages 250 gallons and it is supplied by nine different contractors, all from the Curragh area.¹⁷¹

They listed 8 contractors that provided supplies to the camp, 5 of whom were women-Mrs. O Connor, Mrs Denigan, P Tallon, William Doyle, John Buckley, Mrs. Foster, Mrs. Dobbyn, Mrs. Behan.

The single longest case for compensation surely must be that of Mrs Adelaide Repetto Byrne.¹⁷² She had a lease on a premise in 29 Henry Street, Dublin, which was destroyed in 1916. She got £1,100 under the Dublin

¹⁷¹ Letter to provisional government from a committee of residents from Newbridge and the Curragh regarding suppliers to the Curragh', 1925, (N.A.I. S4200, Department of the Taoiseach).

¹⁷² 'Letters to Taoiseach from Mr and Mrs Byrne ref compensation', 1928– 946, (N.A.I., S6636 Department of the Taoiseach).

Reconstruction Act 1924 and commenced building operations, added money of her own, could not complete it and asked that the Postmaster General to become joint security with her on mortgage of £1000 to the Dublin Corporation under terms of Dublin Reconstruction Act 1924-the Post Office Counsel declined. There are letters on file from her throughout the 1920s with her husband, Thomas taking over as correspondent in 1928. The file noted that there was a payment with conditions in 1933, but Mr. Byrne was not happy with the settlement and was still writing to the government in 1942, a full 26 years after the event.

Insurance records are a valuable source of information in relation to business and have been used successfully to profile female business activity in late 19th Century London.¹⁷³ The notes kept by one insurance agent, working as an agent for Norwich Union and selling mainly in the west and northwest, serve to reinforce existing findings about female retail business owners.¹⁷⁴ Over a 20 year period from the late 1920s to 1946 the agent recorded sales in the region and Table 33 presents an extract of the female business owners that he sold to, with details of their business type and the size of their life assurance policy. In some instances he also provided details of their status, in particular he noted if the woman is a widow. His references to spinsters were sporadic, not all single ladies had this descriptor applied to them. The table presents 55 policies—in a few cases the same name appears more than once as this person would seem to have bought policies at different times. It is of note that 22 of the total 55 were obviously identified as single, either by the use of Miss or listed as a spinster—38.18%; 9 are not identified as either married, single or widowed, 2 are identified as widows and the remainder, 23 or 41.81% were married women. In this part of the country where there was a low industrial base it is not a surprise to find that all of the

¹⁷³ Kay, *The foundations of female entrepreneurship*, pp. 33-53.

¹⁷⁴ 'Norwich Union Life Assurance Policy records', 1926-1946 (N.A.I., MF15).

business women in this sample operate both in Commerce and Finance and in Personal Services. Of the 55 businesses listed, 41 are operating either a grocery or drapery shop, or some kind of licenced premises. The others are hairdressers, confectioners, a dress designer, a costumier and one is described as a beauty specialist. Two are noted to be running the business with their husbands, one draper and one hotelier, and one policy was taken out by the mother of the named woman and she was listed as a merchant. One woman is listed as both a shopkeeper and farmer.

The amount that of life cover taken out, while not a specific business policy does probably relate to the relative means of the individuals assured and in this sample, the majority of policies fall in the range of £100 to £500. Ten women's lives were assured for £100, 1 for £150, 5 for £200, 2 for £250, 3 for £300, 1 for £400 and 24 had policies for £500. It is reasonable to assume that many of these businesses would fall under the small category of retailer identified by the first Census of Production. The addresses also indicate that there were a significant number of operators in what were relatively small towns, for instances there are 7 women on this list operating retail businesses in Swinford and perhaps it is not surprising that 4 of these were assuring their lives for just £100.

Table 33: Life Insurance Policy records of female customers.¹⁷⁵

YEAR		PLACE	OCCUPATION	SUM ASSURED	
1926	Mrs. Mary Julia Grealy	Roscommon	Grealy's hotel	700	1
1928	Mary Ferguson	Westport	Postmistress and grocer	150	4
1928	Mrs. Katie Diamond	Remyvle, Galway	Shopkeeper and farmer	1000	1
1928	Miss Agnes Kelly	[address unclear]	Drapery and hardware	500	2
1928	Miss Mary Egan	Foxford, Co. Mayo	Licensed trader	200	2
1929	Mrs. Teresa Mitchel	Ballina, Mayo	General Merchant wine and spirits	1000	1
1928	Mrs. Delia Connelly	Cashel, Glenamaddy, Galway	Shopkeeper (and widow)	500	3
1929	Mary O'Hagan	Swinford, Mayo	Spinster, grocer and confectioner	100	2
1929	Miss Mary Walsh	Newport, Mayo	Musical Instructoress	500	2
1929	Miss Catherine Joyce	Drumore West, Mayo	Drapery, Licensed premises	500	2
1929	Mrs. Catherine Begley	Ballymote, Sligo	Grocery and provisions, Licensed	500	1
1929	Mrs. Mary Clare Gallearey	Killala, Co. Mayo	General Merchant, licensed	1000	1
1931	Mrs. Kate Mahony	Swinford, Mayo	Shopkeeper, grocer	100	1
1932	Mrs. Katie Howley	Curry, Sligo	Merchant grocer and bar	500	1
1933	Mrs. Jane O'Kane	Ballina, Mayo	Chemist (widow)	500	3
1933	Miss Louisa Richardson	Carracastle, Ballaghaderren	General Merchant, licensed	500	2
1933	Ms. Mary Kate [?]	Swinford, Mayo	Grocery and provisions, Licensed	100	4
1934	Mary Ellen Hargadon	Twomelebourne, Sligo	Licensed premises	500	4
1934	Miss Louisa Richardson	Carracastle, Ballaghaderren	General Merchant, licensed	500	2
1934	Mrs. M.E McGowan	Cliffoney, Sligo	General Grocer	500	1
1935	Mrs. Catherine Begley	Ballymote, Sligo	Merchant, licensed premises	500	1
1936	Miss Agnes Moore	Swinford, Mayo	Hairdresser	100	2
1936	Mrs. Eileen Fergus	Ballina, Mayo	Coustumier	100	1
1937	Elizabeth Johnson	Ballymote, Sligo	Provision merchant, not licensed	250	4
1937	Mrs. Margaret Rowland	Ballina, Mayo	Wine and spirit Merchant	200	1
1937	Miss Mary Mulligan	Castle Street, Sligo	Draper	500	2
1937	Miss Mary Foley	Castle Street, Sligo	Draper	500	2
1937	Mrs. Annie Judge	Ballina, Mayo	Merchant, licensed premises	200	1
1937	Mary Teresa Byrne	Castlebar	Insured by mother, merchant	1085	4
1938	Miss Mary Kate Begley	Ballymote, Sligo	General Merchant Licenced	500	2
1938	Mrs Anne Cannon	Kiltimagh, Mayo	Grocery	500	1
1939	Mrs Kathleen McG[?]	Ballina, Mayo	Hairdresser	100	1
1939	Mrs. Elizabeth Duncan	Not provided	General Merchant Licenced	500	1
1939	Mrs. Martha Mathilda Hunt	Pound Street, Sligo	Wine and spirit Merchant	100	1
1940	Mrs. Ellen Ruane	Ballymote, Sligo	General Merchant Licenced	300	1
1940	Mrs. Frances McGovern		Hotel with husband, James	300	1
1940	Miss Bridget Pendergast		Draper	100	2
1940	Kathleen Walsh	Castlebar	Hairdresser	100	4
1941	Miss Christina Healy	Grattan Street, Sligo	Beauty Specialist	200	2
1942	Mary Catherine Curran	Rosess point, Sligo	Manageress, Egans Mineral Water Factory	300	4
1942	Mrs. Jane Coleman	Ballaghderren, Roscommon	Draper, with husband	1000	1
1942	Miss Barbara Begley	Swinford, Mayo	General merchant not licensed	500	2
1943	Mrs. Mulligan	Castle Street, Sligo	Draper	500	1
1943	Miss Feeley	Castle Street, Sligo	Draper	500	2
1943	Mrs. Eileen Byrne	Swinford, Mayo	General Merchant Licenced	400	1
1943	Mary Florence O'Hara	Foxford, Co. Mayo	Shopkeeper, spinster	500	2
1943	Mrs. Celia Dooher	Killala, Co. Mayo	General grocery licensed	500	1
1944	Miss Barbara Begley	Swinford, Mayo	Merchant, spinster	200	2
1944	Miss Elizabeth Mullarkey	Tubbercurry, Sligo	General Merchant Licenced	500	2
1944	Annie Chrisa Hogger[?]	Ballymote, Sligo	Private Hotel Proprietor - no licence	100	4
1944	Miss Josephine Murphy	Ballina, Mayo	Dress Designer	500	2
1945	Miss Annie Josephine Daly	Ballymahon, Longford	Licensed grocer	250	2
1945	Miss Isabell Heeran	Castle Street, Limerick	Confectioner	800	2
1945	Mary O'Connell	Ballina, Mayo	Draper	1000	4
1946	Mrs Rolfe	The Mall, Sligo	Newsagent	300	1

¹⁷⁵ List compiled from 'Norwich Union Life Assurance Policy records', 1926-1946 (N.A.I.,

Starting up

How did women come to be retail business owners and employers? The evidence is that women entered business in much the same way as men – they started businesses out of economic necessity, out of interest and a desire to achieve at something they were interested in, they were left businesses and/or acquired them through family networks and ties. Indeed the common perception is that the few women that were in business were there because of their family connections or because they had been widowed.¹⁷⁶ Kay noted that it remained a common assumption prior to the 20th century that women in business tended to be “widows and inheritors of businesses”.¹⁷⁷ Lambe writing about retailing in rural Tipperary at the turn of the 20th century notes that “women involved in business were, with a couple of exception, widows or shop assistants to their husbands”. John Tosh in discussing the uses of history talks about how history can challenge the notion of what is ‘natural’ and uses the example of the ‘entrepreneurial widow’ of 17th century England as a challenge to the traditional role of women.¹⁷⁸

Undoubtedly women who were left widowed are an important part of the history of women in business—the Census data showed that 57% of female employers in 1926 were widowed, and this figure dropped to just under 49% by 1971, but it is incorrect to say that widows were the only females who operated businesses in Ireland or to assume that just because they inherited the business they were unwilling participants. The oral histories collected demonstrate heterogeneity around the rationale for being in business. Jane

MF15).

¹⁷⁶ Miriam Lambe, 'At the cross: a shop in rural Tipperary 1880-1911', in Denis Galligan, Jim Cronin, Karin Holton, (ed.), *Irish fairs and markets: studies in local history* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001), p. 212.

¹⁷⁷ Kay, *The Foundation of Female Entrepreneurship*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (Harlow: Pearson, 2006), p. 44.

operated a very successful fish and poultry business in South City markets in Dublin for nearly 50 years from the early 1920s. She was apprenticed to that business in the early years of the first decade of the 20th century. The business was owned and run by a Protestant woman who had no children. She was impressed with the capabilities of her young apprentice who went onto to become manager of the shop. This woman handed the business on to Jane in the mid-1920s on the understanding that she would take care of herself and her husband in their old age. Jane's daughter recollects the early years of the handover and how her mother complied with request to care for the original owner during the 1920s and 1930s:

The handover of the business was very strange. What my mother was asked to do was to mind, and look after them for the rest of their days, so every Monday my father and mother would visit them, all their meat was sent out to them... The shop always closed on Monday. Monday was our closing day. So they always visited her on Monday. I don't know whether any money ever passed hands on this business, I don't think it ever did. But my mother then was responsible for her [*the previous owner*] holidays, so she would always send a taxi and send her off on a holiday down to the hotel that I was telling you about.¹⁷⁹

At the time of the handover, she was married to the buyer, so they ran it together, but the driving force behind growth and development was the female.

On the other hand, Mrs. McElhinney who established a drapery business in Athboy in Co. Meath in the mid-thirties set up her business out of interest and used an acquired skill set to do so. Her grandson recounts that:

Molly was born in 1915, so she would have been 22, but she sort of, had a background, her mother was sort of, a very good sewer, Mary Macken and that's

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Jane's daughter, Dublin, 16/3/2009; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 58-78, p. 65.

how she picked up the trade from her mother, just darning, making some clothes at home and that sort of thing. Around about 22 then, in 1937 she decided she would try and open a shop, small shop and that's the thing and made all her own clothes and...¹⁸⁰

Mary O' Flaherty was the woman responsible for opening up Parsons bookshop on Baggot Street in Dublin. It traded for 40 years and became a well-known literary landmark in the capital. Mary worked as a sales lady in Leon's in Grafton Street and was made redundant in 1947. She describes how she made the journey from redundancy to business ownership:

I didn't know what to do but before I got involved in work again, I decided to fulfil a long-time dream. I headed off to Monte Carlo, where I enjoyed the blue sea and the sunshine for three glorious months. When I returned before the end of 1947, I looked around for businesses for sale, as I now preferred to work for myself. Sitting in this lovely corner, with a commanding view of Baggot Street and that broad window sloping down from the Bridge, it was love at first sight.¹⁸¹

There is no doubt that Mary made a very conscious choice to pursue business ownership as a means of taking control of her own destiny. It is also likely that she had some private means behind her, as a sales lady in any retail outlet was unlikely to be able to afford to take three months off to travel.

Later into the period in 1960, Triona's start-up business experience was a combination of necessity and opportunity. She had to leave her job in the Waterford County Council due to the marriage bar, and when her husband

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Molly's grandson, Meath, 11/3/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 214-255-78, p. 215.

¹⁸¹ Brendan Lynch, *Parsons bookshop: At the heart of bohemian Dublin 1949-1989* (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2006), p. 3.

did not inherit the family farm, she had to consider how they were going to make a living:

my husband came out to the home farm to work, and then we got this field and I said, “we’ll build a house, a shop and petrol pumps”, so it took us a while to get planning permission but we went through it and there had been a shop over there.¹⁸²

There was a real imperative to make a living, and two businesses were born at the same time, retailing and farm contracting—the retail with petrol pumps was the business of the female, while her husband started his own agricultural contracting business at the same time. Triona was open to the opportunities presented by the increasing presence of the car in her locality and identified a gap in the market in the provision of petrol.

Widows did indeed operate retail businesses, but for many, assuming the responsibility and contributing to the business life of the family was not something new – in many instances they had been actively involved in the business prior to their husbands’ death. The case of Mrs. Duggan is a good example – she trained as a milliner and went to work in Millstreet, Co. Cork, where she met and married the only son of a local retail operator in the mid to late 1930s. The recollections of her daughter bear testament to the fact that she was involved in, and brought her own talents to bear on, the existing business that she married into:

In the Drapery Shop she was an efficient and personable businesswoman. She continued to design and make hats. Many a Saturday night I would watch her “whip up” a hat for Sunday morning Mass. She would be in that shop in the mornings, late at night, Sundays through Saturdays, as people were always showing up at odd hours in need of a pair of stockings, a sweater, a tie or a set of dishes. The sweaters of all kinds were fashioned by Maura, upstairs in a back room. This was called “The

¹⁸² Interview with Triona, 16/11/2012; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 311-331, p. 312.

Knitting Room.” The brand was Tubrid and they were sold far and wide to country folks as well as those in the town. Of course during all this time Mammy was also rearing all of us. My father, Con Duggan, died in 1947 while still in his forties and my mother became the sole parent and business operator...¹⁸³

This example highlights the intertwining of family members with the business and reflects what was reported in the Census of Distribution. In some cases, while the name over the door and on the paperwork was often that of the male head of the household, these businesses were often co-ventures, and this was very much the case in Galway when Anthony Ryan’s opened in 1909. The business was co-founded by a husband and wife team.¹⁸⁴ Originally from Sligo, Katherine Morrisson, known as Katie trained as a milliner in Enniskillen and worked as a draper’s assistant in McDonogh’s shop. She moved to work in Donnellons shop on Shop Street, Galway in 1906. When she moved to Galway she lived over the shop as was the practice at that stage. She met Anthony Ryan in Donnellons, he had trained with Forrests in Dublin (now Brown Thomas but formerly Switzers, one of the most prestigious department stores in the city). He was originally from Craughwell in Galway. He was of a very mathematical bent and worked in the office, she worked on the shop floor and in alterations.

In 1909, they got married and they set up Ryan’s, 3 years after she had moved to Galway. Ryan’s was located next door to Donnellons where they both had worked. She did all the buying, and he looked after the back end. They employed 6/8 female staff, who lived in and 3 men. As well as working in the shop and doing the buying she catered for all of the staff and

¹⁸³ Anne Duggan, 'Remembering Catherine Duggan' (<http://www.millstreet.ie/blog/2012/04/23/remembering-catherine-duggan>), accessed on 14-06-2013.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with daughter-in-law, Galway, 12/03/2013, see interview notes, vol. 2, pp. 1-2.

ran the house. She was reported to be a very hard working woman, and a key part of the business from the outset. Her husband died in 1936 and she continued to operate the business until her son was old enough to become involved. She remained actively involved right up until her death. Indeed it is the recollection of her grandson, that “Granny was the businesswoman, he was the PR man it seems.”¹⁸⁵

A similar story lies behind one of Galway’s most successful bookshops, which was co-founded by Maureen and Des Kenny in 1940.¹⁸⁶ Maureen was originally from Mohill in Leitrim where her family had a retail business, her mother was widowed and had to take over the business when her husband died. Maureen got a scholarship to University College Galway where she met her future husband and on graduation, wishing to stay in Galway, the pair decided to set up a bookshop. It operated originally as a lending library, stocked with books borrowed from friends and family and expanded over the years as both a second hand bookshop and a dealer in antiquarian books. In the 1940s and 1950s bookselling was not profitable enough to sustain the family in the early days and Des had to seek alternative work, until he was able to re-join the business in the 1960s. Maureen was an adept business woman and grew the business to the point where it became very well established and was a favourite haunt for anyone interested in Irish literature and books. She was the face of the business, known far and wide and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of publishing. She remained active in the business right into her eighties and was fully supportive of the move to transfer the book business online.

Damien Corless provides another example of a family retail business where a strong woman drove the operation. Kavanagh’s sweetshop in Dublin

¹⁸⁵ *City Tribune*, 28 August 2009.

¹⁸⁶ 'Renowned bookshop owner and promoter of Irish writers', *The Irish Times*, 29 March 2008.

opened for business in 1925 and continues to operate in the same location today. Eddie Kavanagh recalls:

The shop was opened by my grandfather Joseph Kavanagh and his wife Theresa, who'd have come to Dublin in the 1910s. The first of four shops they opened were in Aungier Street and Theresa was the driving force. She went in to put the bid on the ship to buy it, and in those days it wasn't the done thing for the woman to be in that role. They opened in 1925 and in those days it was an old-style grocery shop with a tea room at the back. A lot of the women weren't allowed into pubs so they went to tea rooms to socialise. They did a lot of sandwiches, a bit of hot food, tea, coffee...¹⁸⁷

Right through the period there are many public references to women as business owners both in their own right and in relation to their family business, particularly in published obituaries in local press. In 1922 Mrs. Nestor from Dunmore, Co. Galway, “was to him a loving and faithful wife and an ardent helper and promoter in the extensive trade he has established since going into business for himself.”¹⁸⁸ In the 1930 Mrs E Carroll was described as a “very successful business woman who carried on the business for many years after her husband had died”.¹⁸⁹ She ran an extensive bakery and grocery establishment on the High Street in Tuam and on retirement went to live in Dublin where her daughter and two sons had successful businesses of their own. She was described as a “woman of outstanding integrity”, “an exemplary Catholic”, and details are provided of her receiving Last Rites and two paragraphs dedicated to attendance at her funeral, a comment, no doubt, on her standing in the community. Mrs Jane Collins, Glenamaddy, who died in 1934 was a well-known general merchant

¹⁸⁷ Damian Corless, *You'll ruin your dinner-Sweet memories from Irish Childhood* (Dublin: Hachette Books, 2011), p. 222.

¹⁸⁸ *Connacht Tribune*, 1 April 1922.

¹⁸⁹ *Connacht Tribune*, 17 April 1937.

and draper and according to her obituary “it is the simple truth to say that she was one of the best-known business women in the west of Ireland”, who according to the obituary, showed a “remarkable capacity for business yet never lost her true gentlewomanliness”.¹⁹⁰ Miss Begley, who died in 1937, carried on a successful drapery business in Tuam for many years and “won the respect and esteem of the people in the town and surrounding areas.”¹⁹¹ In 1939 T. Toumey and Son a private company operating in Tralee and Carlow, offered a business for sale.¹⁹² They operated as a wholesale and retail wine and spirit merchant as well as a grocery and provision merchant. The first director is listed as Mrs. Mary Toumey. In 1949, Mrs. Sarah Margaret Fox of Claregalway was reputed to be “an excellent business woman in every respect”.¹⁹³ In 1969 Miss Helena O Halloran from Clifden was “very popular as an individual and as a business woman”.¹⁹⁴

Operations

So women came into business from many different contexts – married, single, widowed, with many different motivations – willing, able, interested, with a need to survive economically and many coped extremely well. What was it like to be a female retailer in Ireland during the period? Bridie was a retailer who operated in the south of the country from the mid-1930s onwards, and her daughter describes the original provisions shop run by her grandmother’s provision in the early decades of the twentieth century prior to Bridie taking it over:

¹⁹⁰ *Connacht Tribune* 25 August 1934.

¹⁹¹ *Connacht Tribute* 23 October 1937.

¹⁹² Classified Ad, *Irish Independent*, 30 August 1939.

¹⁹³ *Connacht Tribune* 1 October 1949.

¹⁹⁴ *Connacht Tribune* 7 February 1969.

they had a newsagents and a small grocer shop, and I told you what they sold there, they sold all the newspapers and particularly at the weekends they sold the *Kerryman*, the *Kerry Champion*, the *Killarney Echo* and the *Cork Weekly Examiner*.¹⁹⁵

She goes on to detail what was stocked:

They [*the customers*] used to come to the market where the car park is in Collins Street now across from the Hotel, that was a big market and they would bring hay and they would sell all of that and they would buy the paper and they'd read it for the following, until the following week and the reason they bought the *Cork Weekly Examiner* was, it was all the correspondence from Munster, that would be in a weekly paper you see, and they only came, the farmers only came to town at the weekends and they'd sell hay and oats and all of that you know. But my grandmother was here and she sold as I say, the newspapers and she sold tea, and sugar, Petri biscuits and Lifebuoy soap and Sunlight soap and American Dyes for dyeing clothes and Pear soap and, and American bacon that used to come in in big barrels from America and mostly pigs heads and crubeens and flitches of bacon and people would buy it at the weekends because that's the only time they had money.¹⁹⁶

Such a description illustrates the relationship of the shop with the community and also indicates the importance of the local newspaper in the rural community. This particular business operated as a newsagent and grocer from the late 19th century until well into the 1930s. At that time, the grandmother who ran the business was invalided and her daughter-in-law, Bridie made the decision to continue to run it as a retail operation. However, responding to changes that she observed, Bridie made a decision to change the direction of the business:

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Bridie's daughter, 9/04/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 116-131, p.116.

¹⁹⁶ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 118.

...in the 1930's a Jewish man that had an antique shop in Cork asked my mother – you see the grocery part of it and the American bacon was all gone at that stage and my mother was here because my grandmother was very old and he [*the Jewish man*] asked her to know would she rent the shop and she said no, and then he asked her to know would she sell on commission and she sold on commission and she knew a lot about antiques and then she started doing business for herself and he eventually dropped out and she continued the business and the newsagents until the late 1950's, but the American bacon and the salt and all of that was gone after the war.¹⁹⁷

Bridie gradually transitioned from grocery to antique dealing, a business in which over time she built up considerable success at:

She used to buy stuff anywhere, she used to go to auctions and she'd go to Dublin and there was, she did business with a lot of people in Dublin. There was, where Dunne's Stores is at the top of Grafton Street, that was almost a derelict business building and there was about 20 antique shops, half the size of there, just the corner and she used to buy an awful lot from some of those people, small pieces and one of them was a lovely lady, actually, a lovely lady, but they were lovely people doing small trades at that time. She used to stock silver, silver plate and brass, small pieces and she, in the silver plate she would have breakfast dishes, you know that revolve and you would put hot water under and all of that sort of stuff, and she kept Dresden and Chelsea and Spode and Staffordshire China plus the jugs, Venetian Glass, decanters and all of that, and she sold Belleek, and some old Bog oak that was hand carved ...¹⁹⁸

The antique business was not that common but groceries, groceries combined with public houses, and draperies were typically the kind of retail

¹⁹⁷ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 117.

¹⁹⁸ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 118.

outlets dotted around the country. Bridie's daughter summarises her mother's reason for going into business:

I'd say she just saw the opportunity, do you know, it was something different and I was about 8 or 10 at that time and my brother was 2 years older than me, it was something else, do you know, it was something new. There was never an antique shop in town.¹⁹⁹

For the sisters Nora and May, who ran a pub and grocery in a small rural town, the motivation to set up in business came about through changing family circumstances and a very calculated decision on the part of the sisters' father. One sister worked in Dublin and one of the sisters lived at home on the farm. When the time came for her brother to settle down and take over the farm, her father decided that he wanted his daughter to have a business. This happened in 1960. Her niece describes how the decision was made:

He weighed it up, Nora would be very solid, wouldn't have the experience of the business element but he felt the younger sister May would so he thought a certainty would be a pub because at least you'd make some living out of it, it just shows you the change in years, so they bought it and they had a pub, grocery and down the back they were able to keep the horses...²⁰⁰

Everybody came on board with the idea, May moved back from her job in Dublin, and they ran a successful business, sold it on in the seventies and moved on to run a guesthouse in Galway.

Describing the first business, the pub and grocery, their niece remembers:

that time the pub business would have been so different, like you had the regulars that came in but

¹⁹⁹ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 126.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Nora and May's niece, 18/06/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 267-292, p. 267.

then they weren't drinking themselves, but you had the regulars and you had the little snug then where you would have the woman would come in and have her little toddy or whatever, then the shop, you had sweets and you had the groceries so it, in any business that survived or that made any kind of a living, you had to have an awful lot of irons in the fire.²⁰¹

Another sister from the same family, Gráinne married in the 1946 and she and her husband set up in business in a neighbouring rural town. The business, a drapery and hardware store, plus a small haulage business and operated for the best part of 40 years. Gráinne was responsible for the drapery while her husband looked after the yard and the haulage business. Her daughter gives a good insight into the business life of a rural town in the 1950s when she was growing up:

in the town when I was young you had two dressmakers, now one of them would be a lady with a physical disability and a lot of people went into tailoring and dressmaking because at least they could work with their hands and they had their little business. And they, the tailor and the dressmakers did very well. We had a shoe-maker, we had blacksmiths even at that time.²⁰²

Women were resourceful and turned their hands at a number of ventures to make ends meet and operating in the same town was one such woman:

now this lady Mrs.X, she was a trained confectioner and we could walk down at any-time and you'd get homemade buns, iced buns, she'd have fruit cakes. She had all the sweets and ice cream. She also would provide meals for people, she'd do small weddings, she was one wonderful woman.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 268.

²⁰² Interview with Grainne's daughter, 18/06/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 267-292, p. 279.

²⁰³ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 284.

She goes on describe how the woman operating the grocery and pub combined made her living:

Mrs. J in this pub that is now unoccupied and owned by a man in America. She was the same, she had, there was grocery and where they, they wouldn't sell much groceries during the day but the guys that would come in for the few pints at night that is when they would bring home their bread, tea, butter and the basics...²⁰⁴

Her commentary also indicates that scale was an issue in the rural context and provides an insight into why the retail offerings were combined:

You had, five, or it must have had about seven pubs, but every pub would have had grocery or something else as well, they would have land, not an awful lot maybe but enough to keep a couple of cows, again nobody could survive on just one thing.²⁰⁵

Grocery shops in the city were similar to those in the country. Miss Cullen ran a grocery in North King Street in Dublin in the 1950s.²⁰⁶ Details from her business records contain of invoices from Hugh Moore and Alexanders Ltd, dated 1953 show that she purchased 1 dozen 10 oz C& B oxtail soup for 9 shillings 9 pence and ¼ dozen red Christmas candles at 3 shillings 4 pence. Cigarettes also feature- 400 Player cigarettes at 2 pound, 2 shillings, 6 pence and 400 woodbine at 1 pound 12 shillings 0 pence. Indeed cigarettes were the most regular order, and were often ordered by telephone. Other provisions bought by Miss Cullen included Fruitfield raspberry, blackcurrant and strawberry jam, Birds custard powder, Jam Jars, Jam Carton, Friendly matches, Batchelor's Beans, Methylated spirits, Bovril, Tide, Club biscuits, Thin arrowroot, Yorkshire relish, Chef salad crème, Cadbury milk chocolate, Saxa salt, a tin broken biscuits, Irel Coffee, Milroys Bars, Farola, Heinz sandwich spread and Bournvite.

²⁰⁴ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 284.

²⁰⁵ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 279.

²⁰⁶ 'Miss Cullen, North King Street, business records', 1953 (N.A.I., Dub 47, Business Records).

Shops opened for long hours, usually 6 days a week, scales had to be inspected yearly, prices had to be checked, often by the local Garda and then displayed for all to see. The oral histories gathered reflect what Shields reports in the Census– family member involvement, small numbers employed outside of the family, and many businesses being sole traders.²⁰⁷

The poultry and game business operated by Jane in the South City markets originally had many contracts to supply the big houses around Dublin, Carton, Powerscourt, Dunsany but in the 1920s following the political and social upheaval the customer base shifted:

My mother then must have decided that the business then had to expand and we supplied in, certainly in all my time we supplied the big hospitals the Mercy convents, the Christian Brothers, all the institutions all around the country.²⁰⁸

The business was substantial, and employed up to 14 people-two family members, wife and husband, six staff cutting and filleting in the back, perhaps two serving in the front, an office person plus some van drivers.

What about the drapery business? In the early part of the study it was common for drapers to either make up and sell their own clothes, or have an alteration service. In some cases the proprietor would make up all of the clothes, however, over time that changed. The early description of McElhinneys business, set up in 1937 by Molly in Athboy illustrates the difficulty that the statisticians had in compiling classifications for retail operations in the early Censuses of Distribution:

that's, downstairs was, on the right hand side when I was a kid was the ladies and the left hand side was

²⁰⁷ Shields, *An analysis of the Irish Census of Distribution 1951*, p.127.

²⁰⁸ Interview, 16/03/2009, vol. 2, p. 63.

mens', sort of boots, hardware, a few items like that, overalls, that sort of thing and some waders and that...²⁰⁹

Molly McElhinney like many drapers of the time, was both producing and selling the clothes in her shop during the 1930s:

She would have been making sort of bespoke stuff at that early age for those people attending races and she really liked the occasion wear, was really her forte, loved that end of the business...²¹⁰

Her motivation to begin was a combination of talent coupled with ambition. As a young woman in the early 1930s Molly had a talent for sewing and saw the opportunity to use that talent and when asked why she did it, her grandson replied "ah she was very ambitious". Molly was driven and wanted to succeed, and she constantly drove her business forward. She coupled her drapery shop with running a farm and both she operated on a business footing.

With the assistance of her sister she opened the shop during the day and spent much of the rest of her time running up the items required by her customers. A similar practise is recounted by Nellie's daughter in Dublin. Nellie began her business by acquiring a knitting machine in the late 1930s and supplying socks to charitable institutions. However in the 1940s she opened a drapery shop in the inner city of Dublin and like Molly McElhinney it was not uncommon to make and alter items for customers:

And then she was interested, in serving people's needs. So she also had a seamstress as well and she would take up clothes and do repairs to clothes. Then I think we were coming into war time and people found it very hard to buy things because they were so rationed. She would actually repair shirts and cut of the bottoms of the shirts and make collars out of

²⁰⁹ Interview with Molly's grandson, 11/03/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp 214-240, p. 215.

²¹⁰ Interview, 19/3/2013, vol. 2, p. 215.

them, and at one stage she was even turning coats for people because there was so little material available at the time. She had either one or two people on this work in the back of the shop.²¹¹

The operation of a business during the Emergency brought its own challenges for Irish retailers and had a very significant impact on the supply of basic foodstuffs. This had implications for grocery shops and following the passing of the Emergency Powers Act 1939 there are many reported instances of female retailers violating the Act. A typical case of the time involved of Mary McGrath, from Claremorris who was convicted by the Special Criminal Court, 24 October 1945. She had a number of retail offences, for instance selling tea contrary to Article II (2) of the Emergency Powers (Retail Distribution of Tea) Order, 1943 and bread soda at prohibited prices contrary to section 5 of the Emergency Powers Act, 1939. She received concurrent prison sentences of four and three months:

She was released on `entering into a recognisance of herself in the sum of £50' and `conditioned to keep the peace etc. for two years'.²¹²

Tea and tobacco were commonly either sold at illegal prices or at incorrect weights. In 1942, Magdalen Daly, the proprietor of a shop in Mullingar, in the County of Westmeath, “sold by retail to one Lizzie Farrell, a householder, 4 ounces of tea, the said Lizzie Farrell not being registered at the said shop as a customer”.²¹³ In 1945 Nora Igoe of Tuam, County Galway, convicted of selling tea at a prohibited price contrary to section 5 of the Emergency Powers Act.1939²¹⁴

²¹¹ Interview with Nellie’s daughter, 18/06/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 132-150, p. 142.

²¹² 'Statement in the case of Mary McGrath', 24/10/1945, (N.A.I., S13607, Department of the Taoiseach).

²¹³ 'List of offences against article 13 of the Emergency Powers Order 1941', 17/04/1941 (N.A.I., S13211, Department of the Taoiseach).

²¹⁴ 'Statement in the case of Nora Igoe', 24/10/1945 (N.A.I., S13607, Department of the Taoiseach).

The case of Mary Forde from Ballinrobe proved to be a little more complicated. Mary Forde was a business women and farmer with considerable holdings. She had 11 counts of overcharging for various commodities (sugar, butter etc) and on three counts of failure to keep the prescribed records and received a prison sentence. The file contains a memorandum for government in relation to a petition for mitigation of the sentence of imprisonment imposed by the Special Criminal Court:

Mary Forde is an unmarried woman of 52 years of age. She is the owner of a well-stocked grocery, bar and general hardware business at Cornmarket Street, Ballinrobe and in addition, she owns a 40 acre farm of fairly good land with a commodious house which was formerly the residence of Lord Kilmain. The police report that she is in very good financial circumstances and that she is a person of honourable character apart from her activities in the 'black market'. They add, however, that she does not appear to be quite normal; she is eccentric at times and there is a history of insanity in her family.²¹⁵

There followed a number of communications between the Minister for Justice, Industry and Commerce and the Attorney General on her case and the final outcome sanctioned a release of Miss Forde on the 27th March 1945. It was understood that no portion of the sum lodged by Miss Forde to the credit of the State would be refunded.

Table 34 gives the details of a sample of cases dealt with by the courts during the Emergency that pertain to female retailers. This is not to suggest that females were the only offenders, it just indicates that females in line with their male counterparts at times were not averse to bending the rules.

²¹⁵ 'Memorandum from Department of Justice to Government', 23/04/1945 (N.A.I. S13660, Department of the Taoiseach).

Table 34: Extracts from list of offences.²¹⁶

Mrs Kiernan, Edgewardstown	Cigarettes – selling too high Sweet Afton 5 prosecutions	20-5- 1942	Fined
Mrs. C Power	Cigarettes selling too high, also failed to give receipt	29-5- 1942	Fined Case against Miss L Hodgers, Assistant for overcharging and another for aiding and abetting Mrs. Power in declining to give receipt. Dismissed under Probation Act
Mrs. Kate Murphy	Feeding wheat to animals	2-6- 1942	Probation Act applied
Mrs. Ena Law and Albert Law trading as WA McCaldin, The Diamond, Monaghan	Manufacture of white bread	23-3- 1942	Convicted and both fined £1 and costs
Mrs. A O’Connell	Irregular cocoa sales condensed. Milk price order	5-3- 1942	Probation Act
Kathleen Walker Yellow House, Rathfarnham	Tea Price Order Irregular tea sales	17-4- 1942	Fined £2. £1.10 costs (Extensive business carried on yet poor people were deprived of tea ration)

Not all of the offences pertained to grocery provision: drapers too faced challenges in conducting business during this time. Kathleen Ryan of Anthony Ryan, Galway who at that stage was widowed was charged as follows:

That you Katherine Ryan (trading as Anthony Ryan between the 15th day of July 1943 and the 9th Day of November 1943 in the county of Louth being a registered purchase did purchase from James Gerard

²¹⁶ 'Lists of offences against various Emergency Powers Orders, 1941', 1942 (N.A.I., s11977B, Department of Taoiseach)

Wynne certain controlled goods to with 991/2 yards of suiting piece goods to the value of about £144.6.11 otherwise than in accordance with a buying permit, in contravention of Article 5(2) of Emergency Powers (Distribution of Textile Goods) order 1943 contrary to the Emergency Powers Acts, 1939 to 1942 and the emergency Powers (Continuance) Act, 1943.²¹⁷

Her son Patrick, who was being groomed to take over the business was charged with aiding and abetting his mother in the above instance.

The case of Annie Murphy indicates how difficult trading conditions for some operators continued to be after the Second World War. Mrs Murphy was charged with unlawfully curing bacon on her premises—she was sprinkling salt on trays of rashers in a store room off her shop, not the most effective way to cure bacon. The court heard that “she was a woman doing business in a small way and she had suffered considerable loss through having being put out of business”.²¹⁸

Running the business and combining it with regular household duties was common practice. Gráinne’s daughter remembers her mother had a very busy workload:

so her full job was the buying and the selling and keeping the staff on happy after that, and running the house and all that, I mean they were great, talk about multi-tasking, I mean they had no choice but to multi-task, then she had her hens as well and she’d keep her garden.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ N.A.I., S13412 Department of the Taoiseach.

²¹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 16 December 1948.

²¹⁹ Interview, 8/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 281.

Triona, who set up the shop and petrol pumps in the 1960s, was open from 9 in the morning until 9 or 10 o'clock at night, seven days a week. This was the case all year round. She recounts:

We were open Stephen's Day, we did very well on Stephen's Day, no one was open that time and you did well on Sundays because people weren't, shops weren't open on Sundays, they were the days to be open²²⁰

For Mrs McElhinney especially in the early days, when the business was making up the stock that they were selling through the shop there were two sides to the job. Her grandson describes how they operated at that time:

she made them at night, most of the time I think. Shop hours were normally 9 until about 5 so then in the evening, herself and her sister Roseanne, that came into the business a little bit later, both were very good seamstresses, and so, it was sort of a one-woman, two-woman show all the way through until the fifties.²²¹

Many of the retailers described above would typify the kind of concern highlighted by Shields in his review of the distribution Census, but some of the highest profile retail businesses in the country at the time had strong female involvement also. The Dublin store of Clery and Co. was taken over by Denis and Mary Guiney in 1941.²²² Mr. and Mrs. Guiney were the directors and Mrs. Guiney was described as "a keen business woman and takes an active part in the Talbot Street and O'Connell Street establishments". The Guineys had established a drapery business in Talbot Street in Dublin 20 years earlier. The Switzer group had at the helm Margaret Hamilton Reid as Chairman from 1956 to 1972.²²³ Her

²²⁰ Interview, 16/11/2012, vol.2, p. 324.

²²¹ Interview, 11/3/2013, vol.2, p. 216.

²²² *Irish Independent*, 14 August 1941.

²²³ 'Early feminist, sportswoman and business leader', *Irish Times*, 1 May 2010.

grandfather, Mr. John Hamilton Reid was co-founder of the store and she worked there all her life, becoming a member of the board at a young age. She was made Chairman in her forties and was the first Irish woman to become chair of a publically quoted Irish company. Under her guardianship as Chairman, Switzers expanded to include Cashes of Cork, Todds of Limerick and Moons of Galway. She had a strong ethical stance and Switzers had a rule not to stock items that might be “detrimental to humankind”. In 1979 she was conferred with the Order of Cavaliere by the Italian Ambassador for her efforts in promoting trade between Ireland and Italy.²²⁴

Cassidys also was a very well established firm in Dublin. Co-founded by a husband and wife team in 1918, it began life as a draper store in Dun Laoghaire, but expanded into garment making as well as retailing. In a profile of the female members of the Cassidy family in 1963, Kathleen Cassidy is acknowledged as the co-founder and had worked all her life alongside her husband.²²⁵ At that stage the company ran a number of shops around Dublin and had two factories also, employing 750 staff.

Shields’ observations about retailers not being systematic in maintaining records, raises a question about the formality and/or informality of retail business operations. As noted previously many were sole traders and the setting up in some forms of retailing was relatively easy as there were low start-up costs. Bridie, in setting up the antiques business had access to the premises which were attached to the family home, so incurred no overhead and the business operated as a sole trader. Jane who inherited the business and took it over as an established going concern in the 1920s was a sole trader too. She did structure the business as a limited company with herself

²²⁴ *Irish Times*, 1 March 1979.

²²⁵ 'A family affair', *Irish Independent*, 4 February 1963.

and her husband registered as Managing Directors and her three children who participated in the business as they grew up, were listed as three directors. Mrs McElhinney started small in the late 1930s and used the front rooms of the family home. In 1960 Triona's shop was structured as a sole trader and financed as part of the overall financing for the building of a new home:

...you got a loan to build the house and the shop was part of it. The petrol crowd put up the pumps for, because at that time, they were kinda different companies vying, I looked to a couple of companies I think, and I remember Esso turning me down because they said there were too many Essos which there's not, but anyway, I know there was a couple of companies but I dealt with Lovatts from Cork, but they paid for that and my first load of groceries I got on account, you had to pay... as opposed to the Cash and Carry, you paid at the end of the month.²²⁶

This business continued to operate a sole trader for the duration and there was a definite informality attached to the running of it:

But, you see, the only thing is of course, the reason that I didn't make any money is, anything we wanted we went out, I didn't keep a check of what was taken out of the shop. If you wanted tea you went out and you got it, so when I eventually I had to do books, I just had to assume a sum, but of course when the kids got big, too it was, you can be sure that the sweets and the things were going, and the drinks and t'was hard ...²²⁷

Other sources indicate a degree of informality in relation to the operation of retail type businesses. Corless's research on the sweet trade reports that there was no regulation of the sweet trade and that as a result "many enterprising householders simply converted a front room or living room into a makeshift

²²⁶ Interview, 16/11/2012, vol.2, p. 321.

²²⁷ Interview, 16/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 321.

shop”.²²⁸ These generally sold boiled sweets and toffees and sold sweets to children on their way to or from the cinema. His description of this kind of retail operation resonates with Benson’s penny capitalists and those described by Roberts.²²⁹

Likewise in an Irish context, Kiely and Leane’s oral histories of Irish women at work in the 1930s and 1940s include reminiscences of women setting up “small shops or restaurants in their own homes”:

Noreen recounted that her mother who had been widowed in 1918, was sufficiently enterprising to set up a sweet shop in her home to service the nearby cinema in Cahersiveen.²³⁰

Kearn’s oral histories about the lives of working-class Dubliners in the tenements also highlight small operations such as the one remembered by Alice Caulfield:

And one woman had a shop with a half-door and she’d sit inside looking over and she’d sell crab apples.²³¹

Prostitution and illicit sales of drink feature in these accounts also with women successfully involved in the running of these illegal businesses:

The most famous madam around the northside was Dolly Fawcett who ran the Cozy Kitchen on North King Street and the Café Continental in Bolton

²²⁸ Corless, *You'll ruin your dinner*, p. 36.

²²⁹ Elizabeth Roberts, *Women's work 1840-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 27; John Benson, *The Penny Capitalist: A Study of Nineteenth Century working class entrepreneurs* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), pp. 4-6.

²³⁰ Kiely and Leane, *Irish women at work 1930-1960*, p. 44.

²³¹ Kevin Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: an oral history* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994) p. 71.

Street, both know widely as prostitute pick-up places.²³²

There were also those who dealt in drink. In Dublin's infamous red-light district, "Monto", it was possible to get drink after hours and Timmy Kirwan describes how these operated:

And then you had the shebeens and the speak-easies, they were just for drink. See, there was no all-night drink at that time so what they done, they left the pubs and went into these places. After hours, after you were put out of the pubs, you'd go to these places if you had money and you'd ask for a drink.²³³

In particular he remembers:

There was a woman who sent all her sons off to the States and Canada to be educated out of the money she made off of the drink after hours

However, it is incorrect to infer that all retail businesses operated informally and/or to assume that the retail operations run by women did not abide by the rules and regulations of the day. Mrs. McElhinney grew the business and was cognisant with the need to regulate her affairs:

She would have had accountants, yeah, at the time. Benson Lawlor in Dublin, and then you know various ones have had advised her and probably business people around the time, like her own cousin there...²³⁴

She was also very aware of what the implications of succession and according to her grandson:

and in fairness she set it up in such a way, at the time Capital Gains Tax was big, she had a life policy at the time when she was, she had good advice and she was

²³² Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, p. 55.

²³³ Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, p. 69.

²³⁴ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 231.

clever enough herself because, you know she talked to accountants and she said I need to put a life policy in place for anything ever happened to me, that pays the Capital Gains Tax and she did.²³⁵

Even Triona who operated the petrol pumps and shop which she had opened in 1960 and did not always distinguish between the needs of the family and the needs of the business did acquire an accountant eventually and did become familiar with the requirements of the Revenue Commissioners. She recounts:

And for Turnover tax, I remember going into Lawlors hotel, crowded, telling us about turnover taxes and how to go about it, just the start of it you know.²³⁶

It is apparent as the decades progressed a higher degree of regulation came into operation, and businesses had to respond and adapt to a changing regulatory environment. Females, as well as males had to take these on board and manage their businesses in line with the requirements of the time.

Understanding the value of money and an appreciation of the need to reinvest in the business were hallmarks of the business life of Mrs. McElhinney. Instilling similar values in her children and grandchildren was second nature to her. Her grandson remembers:

she saved and she made money on the farm, and she ploughed the money back, on the farm back into her. I remember as kids, you know she bought us all a bullock, I remember at the time, she bought the bullock for £85 and then she, she got £165 and it went into the post office and we were allowed to take £5 out every year you know. And it wasn't that she was, she didn't mind what you did but that's what she recommended.²³⁷

²³⁵ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 229.

²³⁶ Interview, 16/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 321.

²³⁷ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 224.

Mrs. McElhinney too could see the potential of the business and moved her operation from its humble origins in the family home into a much more tailored premises:

She moved from the building where the men's shop are now, where x is in the middle of the town, she moved from there and then she moved to the left there to another building two doors down which was a business about three times but it was a purpose built only business without any sort of accommodation, family accommodation so she bought that.²³⁸

In doing so, she displayed many core characteristics of a good business person. She was not afraid of risk, was not averse to engaging with others and seeking advice and ultimately she was capable of making decisions:

Look that's the kind, she took that risk, she took the risk of opening the shop, like you know she listened to her own instinct and when she felt it was right, she'd do it and she would discuss it but at the end of the day, she was a determined woman...²³⁹

Lack of an in-depth knowledge was not a drawback for Bridie when she set up in the antiques business, she knew enough from her time selling antiques on commission, and then coupled with self-education she learnt from the other traders she dealt with. Her daughter describes how it was:

She read an awful lot, and every day that you meet somebody in that trade you learn something and she was a great listener, and she didn't, when she would go to this woman now, she was a lovely old lady, real old lady, they would have something and they would explain to you what it was, they would educate you because you were looking at something...²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 218.

²³⁹ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 227.

²⁴⁰ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 121.

However, not all women had the same degree of business acumen and their family members are able to identify some shortfalls in their skill set. Some had quite a simple approach to business and Bridie's daughter talks about this:

My mother wouldn't know anything about banking, nor did she want to know now. She didn't, knew nothing about a company and she didn't want to know. Where our house was concerned, our own house, if you needed it and you had the money buy it, if you needed it and hadn't the money, collect the money and buy it. But there was no never-never.²⁴¹

Triona, too, was upfront about her own business shortcomings and acknowledged that in the early days her accounts were "kinda erratic".²⁴² A consistent subject for many of the female shopkeepers was the importance of good customer service and the role of word-of-mouth in promoting the business. Marketing was limited, with some engaging in predominantly locally based advertising. Reputations were built on customer service, having a personal touch and an in-depth knowledge of the customer's needs. Gráinne's retail operation was firmly rooted in day to day good business sense:

It was word-of-mouth and they would say oh you'll get that in Xs you know, that was, and they were known as the shop that kept everything, I mean I can even remember even horse nails...²⁴³

Jane too built her business from the ground up. Her daughter says:

It was word and mouth, you sold good quality stuff and you sold it on that. Advertising was not a big thing in those days.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 120.

²⁴² Interview, 16/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 314.

²⁴³ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 227.

²⁴⁴ Interview, 16/03/2009, vol. 2, p. 76.

A key target market for Jane was religious institutions and she was very adept at maintaining her relationship with this particular group:

She knew all the convents, she knew their feast days, and their this-days, and their that-days, and their other days, and at Christmas she would always remember all these nuns, even though it was a big business, it was a very personal run business, she had a great personality, she had a great way with people. I think a big portion of her business was her.²⁴⁵

Mrs McElhinney developed good personal relationships too and used “to say her best promotion was word of mouth”. However, as time progressed and as television and radio became more widespread Mrs McElhinney would use these media to advertise her summer and winter sales which attracted many customers from all around the country. Underlying her whole approach to business was a keen awareness of the need for good customer relations and this culture, set up by herself pervades the organisation up to the present time. Her grandson describes her thinking:

customer service was a huge thing, she felt as well as the product and goods, you had to have good girls to sell the product, and you know chat them, the customer and she always told the girls if something is wrong for the customer, you know that will go out of here and they will tell 200 people at the wedding, whereas if you let someone out, maybe only 10 or 15 will know and we will get a good reputation, You know she always insisted on them not miss-selling, items to anybody, ‘cos she felt that was, really our reputation was built on looking after customers and buying the right items, right products was part of that.²⁴⁶

Training and development of staff was part of ensuring that this happened, she took charge of that herself and a new staff member would not be allowed

²⁴⁵ Interview, 16/03/2009, vol. 2, p. 78.

²⁴⁶ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 239.

to approach a customer until they had at least 6 months in the business under their belt.

Time and time again, in many types of retail businesses the issue of credit is to the fore when discussing how the business operated. Shopkeepers around the country throughout the period extended credit to their customers and it was a very important element of the rural economy. Bridie, in the antiques shop in the 1930s and the 1940s offered credit and her daughter recollects:

She gave credit, I think there are a couple of old books there and I think sometimes she had to put them against the wall to get them to pay up, but it was a long running account because they would buy stuff and they would then give you so much off you know, and the same with the papers, they would pay for the papers weekly or something like that and she gave some credit, but she was a very small operator but she gave credit.²⁴⁷

Gráinne also offered credit and her daughter describes how the family business operated a credit system right up until the 1980s:

even when I came home the ledger was, as I said far too large, because we had changed times, those times the people did not have an income, they did not get anything every week, that changed with the Small Farmers dole or whatever you'd like to call it, and then Children's Allowance improved and there were things like that...²⁴⁸

Credit was extended irrespective of the type of business and was a feature of business right though from the 1920s to the 1970s. Triona who was operating the shop and petrol pumps started in early 1960 recalls:

you know, they didn't have to have money. Now, I did have accounts, but you'd nearly know I can tell

²⁴⁷ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 118.

²⁴⁸ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 274.

you, I am sure I could go around the place and tell you 10, 20, 30 people that owe me money.²⁴⁹

She operated in close proximity to the creamery which operated a shop and they extended credit to the members, so it was important that she offered this facility.

Mrs. McElhinney was cognisant of the needs of her customers and her grandson recalls:

it was big, there was six months credit in the sixties and the seventies especially 'cos it was predominantly farming so when they sold their stock they would come in and settle their bills, and that's what they did.²⁵⁰

Credit had always been a feature of the business and through the 1940s and 1950s she had a system "little red books with all the different customers in, you know pound, shillings and pence". It was a system that operated on trust and Mrs. McElhinney's grandson goes on to say:

...that she was honest with them and she trusted people, that they would be honourable to their word. You know, people ran into difficult times, and as long as they rang her or told her she didn't mind, particularly say farmers, coming to Christmas. There was a big thing in the '70s and '80s fur coats, loved to buy fur coats, and she had a big fur department at the time and she didn't mind that, she knew how much it was, she, like she had cattle herself so she knew it was two bullocks to buy a fur coat or something like that, so she could equate the two things and she'd say I know Mr so and so wouldn't have that yet, but if he gives me half it now and then maybe half in March, and of course, he was delighted because he could get the wife a fur coat for Christmas, but he mightn't have paid for it at all, but

²⁴⁹ Interview, 16/1/2012, vol. 2, p. 319.

²⁵⁰ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 235.

that was between himself and Mrs. Mac, but then
he'd be good to his word...²⁵¹

In the case of McElhinneys, credit was extended not so much because the customers were hard up, but because they had cash flow problems. By contrast, for many of Gráinne's customers the credit extended was a means of managing a more meagre budget. Irrespective of the reasons that drove customers to seek credit, all of the retailers interviewed report offering the facility and the practice was part and parcel of running a retail operation in Ireland all through the decades of mid-20th century Ireland.

Undoubtedly the tracking of such activity tested the organisational ability of the shopkeeper. It was Shields' contention in compiling the Census of Production data that the "majority of the small retail firms do not keep systematic accounts" and this was likely to be the case.²⁵² However many compiled day books and logged their sales transactions. The record books of Mrs Gordon, a grocer in Wicklow, are a case in point. An analysis of a week of trade in 1955 provides an insight into the extent of the credit extended by her grocery at that time. What is apparent is that close to 12% of the total turnover are cash transactions, with the remaining 78% going down in the book as a credit transaction. This particular shop, like many of its counterparts sold a diverse range of goods, including bacon, coal, rashers, butter, coconut, flour, margarine, sugar, toilet rolls, cherries, cigarettes, Tide, matches, strawberry jam, soap, Dettol, Milk of Magnesia, sweets, many other foodstuffs as well as items such as 2 Gallons of oil, and a bag pig meal. Monday and Tuesday were the quietest trading days, with sales building during the week, peaking on Friday, presumably as people got paid and did their shopping in advance of the weekend.

²⁵¹ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 236.

²⁵² Shields, 'The Irish Census of Distribution', pp. 188-201.

Table 35: Mrs Gordon–Grocer’s Day Book March 1955.²⁵³

Date	Total Turnover	Cash Turnover
22/3/1955	£2 2s 7	£0 9s 7
Monday		
22/3/1955	£2 1s 4	£0 5s 6.5
Tuesday		
23/3/1955	£10 15s 9	£1 3s 1
Wednesday		
24/3/1955	£9 16s 6	£0 18s 6
Thursday		
25/3/1955	£20 18s 0	£1 17s 0.5
Friday		
26/3/1955	£11 16s 7	£2 6s 11
Saturday		
Total Turnover	£57 10s 9	£7 0s 8

However, while it might appear that the extension of credit put a significant burden on the shopkeeper, Gráinne’s daughter offers an alternative perspective:

...now that I know more I would say the thing about a shop is this, you have access to money, because while you were doing an awful lot of credit you were still being paid, you were getting suppliers giving you stuff for 30 or 60 days at another time, so you actually had cash so you were, you had a power to buy which gave the impression that you were very well to do, but you were putting off the evil day with payment but in the mean-time stuff was coming in, that’s my own interpretation of it.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ 'Mrs. Gordon Day Book', 22/03/1955, (N.A.I., Wick 10, Business Records).

²⁵⁴ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 280.

The array of goods sold meant that the shopkeeper had a significant number of suppliers to engage with. The business records of Mrs Timmons in Wicklow demonstrate that the grocer had relationships with a wide array of businesses.²⁵⁵ Appendix E contains a listing of the suppliers who invoiced Mrs. Timmons in the latter months of 1959. It indicates that Mrs. Timmons purchased from 32 different suppliers goods to the value of £498 11s 11p. It is reasonable to assume that the values of goods purchased were at their peak for the year, given that the Christmas provisions would have been purchased and sold onto customers over this time.

Collecting money owed and managing bad debts must have caused difficulty for retailers and the day book of Mrs Toomey which accounts for the years in the mid-1950s show the consideration that she gave to the phrasing of letters to her debtors.²⁵⁶ Written on the inside cover of the hardback day book is the following:

*To customers,
Just a little friendly reminder that enclosed a/c is
now due. We will appreciate your giving attention to
this matter at your earliest convenience.
Thanking you for your co-operation in this matter,
Yours faithfully*

She obviously gave consideration to alternatives as the same book contains another wording for the same message:

*To customers, a remittance for this account will be
esteemed a favour*

The book also logs records the dates of when people died, and when the priest and guard changed in the village. It would appear that this establishment was a grocer/publican combined and for three years credit was extended to Mrs. Flynn Senior for I glass of whiskey – once a week, 1954

²⁵⁵ 'Invoices from suppliers', September/ October 1955, (N.A.I., Wick 17/2, Business Records).

²⁵⁶ 'Mrs. Toomey Daybook', 1954, 1955, 1956, (N.A.I. Wick 16, Business Records).

and 1955. In 1956 RIP is marked beside the customer's name, indicating her death. It is probable that Mrs. Flynn visited town once a week to conduct her business and treated herself to a drink before she headed for home. It is obvious from the books on file that the volume of credit being offered was reducing by 1971 and what appear to be mainly milk accounts with regulars are recorded after this time.

Community Engagement

Another aspect regarding the flow of money through the retail sector is recounted by Gráinne's daughter and this relates to the exchange of foreign currency that was returned by emigrants to family members. She describes it thus:

...if you had someone in America that sent home, which I can distinctly remember the dollars, that's an interesting thing and the English pounds. The English pounds were in the, the till just as much as your, as your Irish money and at Christmas the dollars and the big thing was, I was sent to the bank with the dollars and to get the exact value and to get it written down so the people knew they were getting -it was an absolute code of strict honesty. They saw exactly what they got for the dollars.²⁵⁷

It was common for many rural people not to have a bank account and when they received money from family in the UK and the US they relied on the local retailer to exchange the money on their behalf. Shades of this experience can also be seen in Meath too and at times, the shopkeeper seemed to act as a banker. Molly McElhinney's grandson recalls people telling him about how his grandmother had assisted them when times were bad:

²⁵⁷ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 292.

They'd come to her, she was almost a bit of a banker, you know, help people out locally, and not just family, other people she knew to give them a turn.²⁵⁸

He goes on to say that:

it was interesting and people wouldn't go to the bank, they'd go to business people and ask them for a little bit of help, but then business people knew well that they wouldn't let them down...²⁵⁹

He also refers to the notion of barter, where a customer would settle a bill by providing a service rather than cash:

the other thing was, the barter system, and went on from that, where, but it was, and I think that too, it was a much tighter bond between the supplier, the shopkeeper and the customer, than now, and there was a serious sense of pride that you wouldn't let some-one down and you would pay your bills and if you fell on hard times, she was owed money for two or three years, but they would eventually fix up with her or do something for her, do the plumbing or do a job, that would clear the bill.²⁶⁰

Shopkeepers had standing in the community and these stories demonstrate that substantial trust could be build up between the retailer and the communities that they served. The importance of community is made manifest in other aspects of the women's lives also. Gráinne talks about her mother's network as being "just friends and neighbours" and she perceived that her mother was held in high regard in the community and for a rural retail operation this would have been important:

The community had great time for her, they knew that she knew what they needed being a very, very sensible person ...²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 237.

²⁵⁹ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 236.

²⁶⁰ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 237.

²⁶¹ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 282.

The local was very important for Bridie too, and her daughter describes a strong local community when she says:

The neighbours in our Street were the best and still
are the best neighbours this town could ever
have...²⁶²

Formal networks do not feature prominently in the oral histories of the retailers. However, there are recollections of charity work and community engagement by the women. According to her daughter Jane was very involved in fundraising for charities:

she was very outgoing and one of the things she did
and she passed it on to us, she was a very charitable
person and she ran many things during her life, she
used to do the dinners in Cork Street – Christmas
dinners for the people around Cork Street. They gave
a Christmas dinner every year...²⁶³

Mrs McElhinney, too, had a track record in this regard and she had a very strong association with the local hospital for whom she hosted a very successful fashion show annually. It was always well attended with up to a thousand people coming, and in the words of her grandson it was a “it was a good place to showcase in the Spring and the Autumn the stuff that was there, that was in the shop.” He goes on to say:

you know she was clever that way, unbeknownst to
her, she was doing networking, but she would have
probably saw it as social, doing things like that...²⁶⁴

Some of the formal organisations were not always directly related to the business area of the women involved. Molly McElhinney had some association with both Macra na Feirme and with the Irish Countrywomen’s Association (ICA), both of which would have reflected her interest in

²⁶² Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 126.

²⁶³ Interview, 16/03/2009, vol. 2, p. 72.

²⁶⁴ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 226.

agriculture, rather than drapery, and either one would also have provided her with access to her customers.

Perceptions – self and others

The provision of an education and of opportunities is recognised by many family members. In the case of the McElhineys' the grandson is very clear about the benefits that filtered through the generations:

We all grew up with a good set of values, and I suppose the thing about it was, was, we had very good, all did reasonably well in business. I suppose at the time, my mother's generation didn't get a chance to get educated but all of us, the following generation were all, like I'm an engineer, my other brother's an engineer, another one is a pharmacist, a physiotherapist, so we all got opportunities from the previous generation and probably the ability that there was a few pounds there to get around...²⁶⁵

He expands on the influence that was exerted on the family:

I think, I mean we all grew up with sort of understanding the values of money, the values of time, and you know none of us in any generation were lazy and it wasn't tolerated. Like you know, my grandmother, you know if you weren't out of bed by half seven Saturday morning, I always remember you were in trouble. That was it, there was no lying in and that sort of thing you know, and Sunday you probably got, if you weren't going to early Mass you could lie in, but I mean that was one. The second thing was, you know she, when she spent time with you it was always quality time, you know what I mean, and you respected her...²⁶⁶

For others it wasn't something that was given major consideration, it was just the way things were in the household. Bridie's daughter says:

²⁶⁵ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 231.

²⁶⁶ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 231.

We just took it as a way of life you know, because I don't understand young people, they are committing suicide and they are everything, we were taught to cope with any difficulty; it was a way of life, it was a cycle of life.²⁶⁷

Jane's daughter, on the other hand remembers her mother as "an extraordinary woman". She recollects that:

she had a wonderful way with people, she had a phenomenal memory. She never had to write anything down, she had her secretary Mrs Donnelly, but she had a phenomenal memory, she could remember orders and things, quite extraordinary.²⁶⁸

How did the husbands view their wives' occupations?—some did not necessarily approve at the outset of their wives ventures. Bridie's daughter puts it like this:

Oh yeah he was very separate from the business yes. I don't think he approved of it earlier, I don't think so, I don't know why but maybe he thought he wasn't providing for us but he was you know.²⁶⁹

However, she does reports a shift in the view of her father:

As regards my father it wasn't that he disapproved, it was all strange to him, but when he got around to realising that she was happy and that it was going somewhere, that she was going to do it anyway...²⁷⁰

For Triona, she and her husband both had to carve out a means of developing and sustaining an income when they got married and both started their business together. From the outset they were two separate businesses and her husband didn't get involved in the shop, she ran it, the children served in it, and her husband ran his business. Separate domains of

²⁶⁷ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 124.

²⁶⁸ Interview, 16/03/2009, vol. 2, p. 78.

²⁶⁹ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 123.

²⁷⁰ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 131.

responsibility also come through in the retail operation run by Gráinne and her husband-he looked after the yard, had a licence to do haulage for the county council and managed the hardware section, she looked after the drapery and was the focal point for customer service. Molly McElhinney too ran the business her way, her husband however did assist with deliveries to customers, but like many of the spouses he worked independently of the business.

Mrs McElhinney's grandson perceives his grandmother to be a risk taker, and one who was well respected in the community. He says:

But she was well got because a lot of people you know, she was,...I suppose she took risks. I mean, even at the time she married a Church of Ireland man which was not seen to be the thing to do at the time.²⁷¹

Marriage of a Catholic to a Church of Ireland man in the 1930s would not have been that common and her grandson sees her as having taken the risk taking from her personal life into her business life. Mrs. McElhinney was described as not being a socialite, and she had no time for racing even though many of her clients were acquiring attire to wear to race meetings. When she had free time she chose to spend it with her family.

There appears to have been a degree of acceptance of the role of women as employers and own-account workers in the areas of retailing and commerce. For instances, the magazines aimed at a female readership also featured businesswomen, not just in specific profiles but also as a potential lifestyle solution to particular problems. In 1936 *Woman's Life*, in response to a query from a woman who wanted to help her husband by making some money was given this advice:

²⁷¹ Interview, 11/03/2013, vol. 2, p. 226.

If you can knit really well you might be able to get some local shop to sell your work on commission. A little friend of who makes delicious jam and soda bread worked up a splendid connection for herself. If your talent lies in this connection you will first have to get someone to help you with door to door canvassing.²⁷²

And again in 1949, a fifty year old woman who was discontented now that her only child had married and she was left to her own devices sought advice about finding a job before she dried up physically and mentally. The reply was as follows:

Even though it is difficult for anyone of your age to find a job in business to-day, you have several assets to help you.... Good health, an emotionally stable temperament, some ambition and training. With these advantages, I think you are well equipped to make a satisfactory niche for yourself in the business world. Do the rounds of the employment agencies first, and having done that, think about starting some business for yourself. What do you do best? Would the young mothers in your district patronise a reliable baby-sitter, regular hours with regular pay? Don't be afraid to commercialise such homely talents as cooking, house-help, or minding children. Young wives in your district might be glad to hire you to help with their dinner-parties, children's parties, not only for your practical help but for your advice. Most businesses require capital, but many have started on the proverbial shoelace, and with a little organisation there is no reason why you should not combine your housekeeping knowledge with your office training and so start a tidy little business.²⁷³

²⁷² 'Earning money at home', *Woman's life*, 25 July 1936.

²⁷³ 'Mrs Wyse replies', *Woman's Life*, 8 October 1949.

Success

The small rural retailers did not necessarily have overt displays of affluence as a result of their activities but Gráinne's daughter captures the experience in this way:

You wouldn't have become a millionaire but you were able to keep your head above water and I keep explaining to people, they used to say 'oh, a yard of counter was better than a farm', this was the common belief that you would've made money in a shop...²⁷⁴

For Triona, the success of her business is described in this way:

can't say that any year we made a profit, but we definitely reared us, reared the six children and kept us going.²⁷⁵

For Mrs. McElhinney, the business grew from a home-based shop which was common in the 1930s to a specialist drapery business and in tandem, she started with about 8 or 10 acres of a farm which she had expanded to out 150 acres with 160 head of cattle by the time she died. In her later years, she also was in a position to take time out and to travel, in particular to the United States and once the Christmas sale was over she would take the month from mid-January to mid-February off to visit friends and family in the US.

A degree of social mobility is evident too in the story of Jane. Starting as an apprentice in the fish and poultry business that she eventually went on to own, she too was able to build a property portfolio which is remembered by her daughter:

She had the whole of one side of Smithfield, she had two shops on Dorset Street, she had two houses on Botanic Road, and she had a house up in York Street and got rid of that. A solicitor advised her to buy it.

²⁷⁴ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 281.

²⁷⁵ Interview, 16/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 321.

It was you know flats—very difficult but she had that. She had another place over the Southside..²⁷⁶

Jane travelled frequently, liked to buy jewellery, had her clothes made by a dressmaker who was reputed to dress “all the Minister’s wives”, and educated not just her children, but her grandchildren as well.

Likewise, there was evidence of dedicated leisure time with some cultural activities built in. Bridie remembers her parents:

they went away, when we were growing up, they used to go in the Autumn to Dublin for a week and they would go to a different show every night, to the Gaiety, the Royal anywhere, and they went to a different show every night.²⁷⁷

Gráinne was able to take a holiday too which benefited the family:

Mammy got a holiday yes, every year she got her holiday and we went with her, that was established, we went to Connemara and or we went to Salthill, so that was, they made sure that that was there, that had, built a caravan, a step-nephew from way back and that was brought over and left in Silver Strand, in the field there beside the sea and all of the family used it.²⁷⁸

In conclusion, this chapter confirms the role of women in the retailing sector, and indicates that it was an area in which women operated in substantial numbers. This has been already noted by others, as a feature of both nineteenth and twentieth century economic life in Ireland.²⁷⁹ What this analysis contributes to the overall understanding is an appreciation for the

²⁷⁶ Interview, 16/03/2009, vol. 2, p. 72.

²⁷⁷ Interview, 9/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 130.

²⁷⁸ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 276.

²⁷⁹ Clear, *Social change and everyday life in Ireland 1850–1922*, p. 31; Kiely and Leane, *Irish women at work*, p. 44.

scale of female involvement in retail business as proprietors, which was gleaned from a number of data sources. Throughout the mid-twentieth century the rate of ownership of such businesses ran at about 35% to 40%.²⁸⁰ It also highlights that it was not uncommon for women to start retail establishments from scratch, and that some family establishments were often co-founded. In some of the family instances, while ownership may not have been exclusively female, the survival and growth of the business was often driven by the female partner. The types of retail operations ranged from the very small to the very large, and while this section has not compared the lived experience of female retail business owners with that of males, it is likely that the challenges faced in terms of regulations, operations and drive to make profit were similar, irrespective of gender.

²⁸⁰ Shields, 'An analysis of the Irish Census of Distribution 1951', p. 127.

CHAPTER FOUR: WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING 1922-1972

Ireland's lack of an industrial base is well documented and according to Ó Gráda the Irish Free State economy performed poorly with tariff protection which was aimed at boosting Irish manufacturing contributing to a "stagnant, inefficient and largely inward-looking industrial sector".²⁸¹ Daly contends that from the outset the Irish government had to deal with in situ civil servants and a commercial class that were happy with the status quo and unwilling to change.²⁸² The initial economic focus of the Cumann na nGaedheal government was on the agriculture sector. Following the changeover in Government in 1932, the Fianna Fail aspiration to industrial self-sufficiency was highly ambitious and Daly maintains that the targets were set by inexperienced men who did not have the skill set to deliver on the objectives. This chapter will endeavour to evaluate female performance as business owners in the Manufacturing Sector from 1922–1971.

Overview

The manufacturing section in the Census of Population lists employers and owner-managers in the manufacture of food and drink, textiles, clothing, skins and leathers, woodworking which includes furniture and fittings, metals which takes in machines, implements and jewellery, vehicles, fertilisers which also included chemicals and paints, papermaking which included stationery, printing and bookbinding, building which also included decorating, contracting and works of construction, bricks, pottery and glass, gas, electricity and waterworks, and then an all-encompassing other or ill-defined industries. In 1951 and for subsequent censuses, building and construction was reported separately and for the purposes of this chapter, figures for construction and painting and decoration have been removed. The first striking feature about Table 36 is the almost total decline of female employers and own-account workers in

²⁸¹ Ó Gráda, *A rocky road: the Irish economy since the 1920s*, p. 1.

²⁸² Daly, *Industrial development and Irish national identity*, p. 15.

manufacturing over the first fifty years of the life of the Irish State. In 1926 there were 9,508 women involved either as employers or as own-account workers in some kind of manufacturing and by 1971 this was down to just 869, a total decline of over 90%.

*Table 36: Female owners and own-account workers in Manufacturing 1926–1971.*²⁸³

FEMALES							
Manufacturing	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Food	184	131	159	125	54	26	53
Drink	3	7	6	6			
Tobacco	1	0	0	1			
Textiles	761	190	69	195	145	93	119
Clothing	8356	6312	4336	3455	1159	886	635
Skins and leathers	21	19	20	21	3	1	1
Woodworking, furniture	67	51	47	18	11	12	11
Manufacturing metals	34	23	23	50	1	1	
Vehicles	2		3				
Fertilisers	2		1	3			1
Paper making, printing	53	37	55	25	9	13	15
Bricks, Pottery, Glass	4		4	5	3	10	19
Gas, electricity, water	0						
Other	20	39	35	15	8	14	15
Totals	9508	6809	4758	3919	1393	1056	869

A comparison within the different categories of manufacturing illustrates the demise. Looking at the food, drink and tobacco it is apparent that this decline in manufacturing took place in both female and male-owned businesses, albeit at a higher rate of decline for females.

²⁸³ Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.

*Table 37: Female and male employers and own-account workers in Food, Drink and Tobacco Manufacturing.*²⁸⁴

	Female	Female	Male	Male
	1926	1971	1926	1971
Grain Milling	15		186	46
Bread and Flour	151	53	531	285
Confectionery				
Biscuits			4	
Sweets and Jams	14		46	10
Bacon Curing			23	16
Creameries	2		19	
Other Food	2		23	15
Malting			17	
Brewing	1		23	
Distilling	1		14	
Mineral and Aerated waters	1		34	
Manufacture of other drinks			5	3
Tobacco	1		13	
Total	188	53	938	375

In 1971 the only area of food production in which women ran businesses was bread, flour making and confectionery. By 1971 males have exited from areas such as malting, brewing, distilling, biscuit making as well as tobacco manufacturing- indicative of how businesses in this sector had moved from indigenous ownership to increased non-indigenous ownership during the period.

²⁸⁴ Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols., employment status tables 1926, 1971.

Women employers were present across all subcategories in 1926—there were 8 in shoe forging, 1 in carriage building, 3 in general metal foundries, 7 in cabinet making and upholstery, 1 in cooperage, 9 printers, 5 in newspaper production, 7 in sawmills and joinery and 2 in chemical manufacturing. By 1971 this presence has completely contracted and they are mainly present in textiles and clothing combined which is demonstrably the most prevalent form of manufacturing for female employers. There are only 2 remaining in cabinet making and upholstery and 4 listed under printing, all the rest are clustered in food and clothing and textiles. The following table provides the details for textiles and clothing combined and again the overall decline in the sector for both female and males is pronounced.

*Table 38: Female and male employers and own-account workers in Textile and Clothing Manufacturing.*²⁸⁵

Textiles/Clothing	Females 1926	Females 1971	Males 1926	Males 1971
Spinning, linen, embroidery, lace	413		15	12
Woollen manufacturers	26	7	124	9
Hosiery	307	97	14	28
Other textile	15	15	91	31
Clothing				
Tailoring	281		3289	
Dressmaking	7583		44	
Shirts and Collar making	60		18	
Underclothing	15	3	9	6
Millinery	206		12	
Boots and Shoes	51		3947	2
Footwear repairs		2		603
Other clothing	160	630	15	764
Skins and leathers	21	1	988	135
Total	9138	755	8566	1590

There is no doubt that females had some advantages in setting up in business in the clothing and textiles businesses. Many females had acquired these skills as part of their overall formation—as noted previously, Mrs McElhinney’s grandson attests that Molly became very proficient at needlework at a young age and this was

²⁸⁵ Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables 1926, 1971.

instrumental in the way in which she set up her retail operation. In the early decades of drapery retailing in 20th century Ireland it was common for the proprietors to produce as well as sell garments and this is illustrated by this case and others-Mrs Ryan of Galway and Mrs Duggan of Millstreet in Cork.²⁸⁶ Mrs. Duggan, predominantly a retailer, fashioned a separate department called the “Knitting Room” where with her daughter, they designed, knit and marketed sweaters, branding them under the “Tubrid” label.

The Census of Production 1926 files in the Department of the Taoiseach refers to this trend describing how this business is carried on partly in factories and workshops and partly by workers in their own homes as well as in departments of retail businesses such as drapers and milliners.²⁸⁷ For the purposes of their calculations they omit businesses operating from their own homes, because they report that:

The making of articles of clothing in the businesses other than factories or workshops is not always constantly or regularly carried on; in some cases only occasional orders are received for the making, repairing or alteration of garments.

Ó Gráda has documented Irish industrial policy and performance since the 1920s and notes that not until de Valera came into power in 1932 when a policy of import substitution was vigorously pursued was there a spurt in manufacturing output and employment.²⁸⁸ However, the growth spurt through the thirties lasted only as long as it took to satisfy the local markets and very few manufacturing businesses were actively seeking markets abroad. The policy pursued by the Department of Industry and Commerce from the 1930s through to the 1950s relied on tariffs and the Control of Manufacturers Act 1932 which stipulated that all companies established in the

²⁸⁶ Duggan, 'Remembering Catherine Duggan'
(<http://www.millstreet.ie/blog/2012/04/23/remembering-catherine-duggan>)

²⁸⁷ Census of Production 1926, Preliminary report no. 19, 1928, (N.A.I., S3729, Department of Taoiseach).

²⁸⁸ Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A new economic history*, p. 407.

Irish Free State after 1 June 1932 which did not have a majority of native shareholders had to apply for a licence to conduct business, to ensure that there was enough manufacturing to supply local needs.

A particularly revealing insight into the industrialisation or lack thereof of the country after the formation of the Free State can be gained by looking at the Patent records for the country. A sample of 200 patents for the mid-years of the 20th century was examined with a view to ascertaining how many females were involved in patenting ideas. While registering a patent does not equate to the starting of a business, it does give some indication of intent, with innovative ideas often being the source of new company formations, and/or expansion of existing companies. The figures from the samples show that not only were women scarce on the patent index in those years, but there was also a significant dearth of Irish men applying for patents. A significant level of the applications is from foreign companies who are registering patents for the Irish market place. Table 39 summarises the results of this examination of the patents

*Table 39: Sample of Patents filed by females and males in Ireland 1927 – 1971.*²⁸⁹

Year	Patent Numbers	Female applications	Male applications	Joint applications
1927/1928	10001-10200	1	5	1
1936	14147–14300	1	11	
1946	1880-18	0	3	
1950s	2300-23100	1 (UK)	14	

Prior to 1927 there was no Patents registry for Ireland. The passing of the Industrial and Commercial Property (Protection) Act 1927 (as amended) became the statutory regulator of trade mark law in Ireland and remained in operation until 1963. The very first patent listed in the Irish Patent number

10021 dated January 3rd 1928 was filed by a woman, Hannah Mary Smith.²⁹⁰ Hannah was the administratrix of the estate of the late Owen Patrick Smith of the US and the patent was for a “starting cage for racing dogs and the like”. Mrs Clara Boag, with an address at Blackrock filed patent number 10021 for an improved traffic signal for road vehicles. There are a number of non-resident female applications in the first two years of operation—Mistress Martha Schwarzkopf from Berlin filed a patent for a puff for dry shampoo (10054), while Margaret Chichester with an address given for Holland and England filed for improvements in netted fabrics and devices producing same (10060). What appears to be either siblings or a husband and wife team of Michael O Connell and Mary Angela O Connell filed patent number 10059 in November 1927 for an “improved system for hanging window sashes”.

Textile and clothing manufacturing were tabulated separately in the Census of Population. Textiles in 1926 include flax spinning and poplin and silk manufacture, linen and cotton manufacture, lace hemming and embroidery, woollen manufacture, hosiery and other which included jute and hemp manufacturing. The number of female employers and own-account workers in this area is relatively small, 761 in 1926 and 119 by 1971. However it was a small sector for males too with 244 in 1926 and 80 in 1971—in fact it was dominated by females, with own-account workers particularly in lace accounting for a large number of females, 411 in 1926. Irish female involvement in textiles has a long history which predates the Famine, but the efforts of both the Irish Industries Association, Donegal Industrial Fund and the Congested District Board in the later part of the 19th Century and early 20th in different ways encouraged the development of Irish cottage industries which

²⁸⁹ *Register of Patents*, 1927, 1928, 1936, 1946, 1950, Irish Patents Office.

²⁹⁰ Irish Patents Office, 'Patents-a brief history', (http://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/student_patents.aspx), accessed 20/06/2013.

included spinning, weaving, and lacemaking.²⁹¹ One such figure was Miss Mahaffey who died in 1926 and was involved in the promotion of cottage industries.²⁹² She developed the patterns and the ideas, generated the orders and the items were executed by others, thousands of women knitted the items, mainly coats and jumpers. A key figure in the 20th century engaged in the development and promotion of Irish textile goods was Muriel Gahan, and she displayed keen entrepreneurial skills and business acumen in her pursuit of what was a lifelong interest in Irish textiles and Irish craft.²⁹³ Muriel was the daughter of Frederick Townsend Gahan, a civil engineer who worked with the Congested District Board in the west and north-west. Muriel began her life working for a company called “The Modern Decorator”, a firm of painters/decorators based in Dame Street in Dublin. This company was owned and managed by a woman, Ms. Ivy Hutton, who had a policy of employing only women. Through this she met Ms. Lucy Franks, honorary secretary of the Society of United Irishwomen (UI) which became the Irish Countrywomen’s Association (ICA) and she helped Lucy to set up the UI stand for the 1929 Spring Show at the RDS in Dublin. The stand was selling women’s work, including products from basket makers, knitters, spinners and weavers and awoke her interest in Irish produced crafts.

She was instrumental in setting up a depot in Dublin which would showcase and sell on the work of craft workers. The depot became as a non-profit private company, “The Country Workers” which opened a shop, the “Country Shop” at 23 St. Stephens Green. This operated for 48 years from 1930 to 1978. There were 5 directors, Muriel Gahan, Olivia (Livie) Hughes, Vida Lentaigne, Lucy Franks and Paddy Somerville-Large, and Muriel was Managing Director for the duration. While Muriel was never involved in the actual production of textiles, her efforts were very

²⁹¹ Janice Helland, *British and Irish home arts and industries 1880-1914* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), pp. 1-19.

²⁹² *The Irish Time*, 6 November 1926.

²⁹³ Geraldine Mitchell, *Deeds not words: the life and work of Muriel Gahan* (Dublin: Town House, 1997), pp. 81-135.

important in both keeping alive traditions that were on the wane in some regions and bringing the products to a wider market place and enabling those who would undoubtedly have been classed as own-account workers to make a living.

The tradition of lacemaking which has been well documented elsewhere also offered some opportunities to women.²⁹⁴ Lace work from Lucy Gordon's business, the Lace Depot, was selected by Mrs. Cosgrave, wife of President Cosgrave, to be the official gift to the wife of the visiting Australian Premier Mrs. Scullion in November 1930.²⁹⁵ Mrs. Scullion was presented with a scarf made from Carrickmacross lace which cost £10. The letterhead on file refers to Gordon's Pioneer Irish Lace Depot of 44 and 22 Mary Street, and elaborates to list what is produced which includes 'Irish Lace, Church, Vestments and Altar Linens, embroidered Tea and Tray Cloths, Elaborate Bedspreads, Damask Cloths and Napkins, Linen Handkerchiefs.'

As the figures from the Census indicate many involved in lace and embroidery were small operators and own-account workers. The description of one such venture in *Woman's Life* in 1945 illustrates how these women were likely to use their talents to commercial advantage. Under the heading 'You'll all want these' the writer is most supportive in the promotion of the work undertaken:

Mrs Arthur Ryan of Dungarvan has succeeded in making dinner-mats which are both attractive and hard wearing. She crochets them from a special type of cream coloured string and though they look like coarse lace they are thick enough to prevent hot dishes from marking the table, becoming immediately dual purpose. Another point in their favour is that they require little or no washing, Handbags and gloves are also made from this material, and very attractive they look too. Perhaps their best recommendation is the fact that these things, which are all hand-made, are so reasonable in

²⁹⁴ Helland, *British and Irish home arts and industries 1880-1914*, pp.1-19.

²⁹⁵ 'Letter from Lucy Gordon to President Cosgrave', 25/11/1930 (N.A.I., S6009/4, Department of the Taoiseach).

price, thirty shillings for a set of dinner mats and one pound for the handbags, so those of you who are on the look-out for unusual Christmas gifts, here are two more items for your list.²⁹⁶

Of more significance in terms of actual numbers is clothing manufacturing, as can be seen from Table 38. This category covered tailoring, dressmaking, shirt and collar making, underclothing, handkerchiefs, scarves and ties, millinery, skins and leathers, boot and shoe making plus others. There were 8,377 female employers and own-account workers in clothing in 1926, and by 1971 this had dropped to 636, a decline of just over 92%. For men, that figure was 8,323 in 1926 and it fell to 1510 in 1971, a fall of 82%. The almost total collapse of clothing manufacturing over the period mirrors significant changes in consumption patterns and economic conditions over the intervening 45 years.

Starting up

Setting up in clothing manufacturing happened in different ways for different females. Sheila who was born in Dublin around 1914, came from an urban working class background and her route into clothing manufacturing was not direct. After leaving school she worked in the local post office. She got pregnant and got married young at 18. Her husband was sickly for much of their time together, he eventually was diagnosed with tuberculosis and the need to earn a living fell largely on her shoulders. She became involved in manufacturing indirectly, and initially commenced her business life by setting up a retail operation circa 1932. From the outset she had a head for business and her son remembers how she got the initial idea for this business:

Those houses were being built and my mother went out to have a look at them one day, pushing the pram. Now she was eighteen or something, maybe nineteen and she was walking past down by the school and there was none of them let at this stage, they were all being built, half built and quarter built and you know, you can imagine, and it was a big building site and the back of it was, was not built yet,

²⁹⁶ Mainly for women, *Woman's Life*, 29 September 1945.

they did that in two phases or something. But she was walking down past the side entrance and she saw a shop for sale and she said to herself “now when those houses are built sure people will have to come down there in the mornings and go back up in the evenings and this would be a good shop for selling cigarettes and now and things like that.”²⁹⁷

She proceeded to the bank where she had a meeting with the bank manager.

According to her son the bank manager was impressed with her and lent her the money to open the shop. In tandem with the shop business, she became involved with the clothing business through her sister who worked in Arnotts shirt-making factory:

Now they were there, my father was a young fella, he’d come back from the work and they’d sit at the counter, and they’d be turning out shirt collars, at 6 pence a dozen, or something or thrupence a dozen, or a penny a dozen or something, under the counter when they were waiting for customers to come in. And the collars would come from the shirt factory.²⁹⁸

Her husband became very ill and had to go to a sanatorium and she was no longer able to keep the shop open. She sold it, made a profit, repaid her loan, and when her husband was released she returned to work and did a number of jobs in the clothing manufacturing business throughout the remainder of the 1930s, working in shirt making, coat making, developing skills in pattern making and developing her skills:

...so my mother anyway, learnt how to make, make linings, and then eventually, she started making the fronts of coats and the backs of the coats and then, became a pocket maker, making pockets and learnt the whole thing and eventually became a sample maker.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Interview with Sheila’s son, Dublin, 2/11/2012, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp.186-213 p. 192.

²⁹⁸ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 193.

²⁹⁹ Interview, 2/12/2012, vol. 2, p. 194.

As her skills developed she began to work from home in the evenings, as well as working in the factory during the day, taking orders and supplementing her income:

At this stage my mother was making dresses at home as well as working in the factory. In the evening times, she'd be, people would come for fittings and that. So she started making money, because all she was paid in the factory was buttons.³⁰⁰

Eventually she built up a strong reputation as a dressmaker and was able to give up the factory work and was working for herself all through the war years:

We moved there to an end house there, and they built a workroom in the back in the garden, now there was very little yard left, when this thing was build, but it was modern and she had about 5 machines in it, and she had about 5 workers.³⁰¹

By contrast, Dorothea always worked in the industry. She was born in 1924 and as a young girl went to the Grafton Academy. With the skills she had acquired she got a job in a factory in Dublin and was employed as a worker in the early 1940s. She proceeded from here to work with Cassidys who were impressed with her work:

...and I think they helped set her up in business at that time because ere, you know, they liked her work a lot and Cassidy's at that time were very good at that, if they liked something they would actually help you to set up in business in the manufacturing end...³⁰²

Her route into business was more straightforward, her husband-to-be had a premises available and family were supportive from the outset:

so he bought the house shop and my mother set up her first factory above that shop, either in the shop or above it and that is how she started off and I think his

³⁰⁰ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 194.

³⁰¹ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 190.

³⁰² Interview with Dorothea's son, Dublin, 27/2/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 293-310, p. 294.

brother lent them money to start the business off at the time and that would have been around 1948.³⁰³

The business was well established before she got married in the mid-1950s.

In the case of Nellie she began her first business from home. Her daughter talks about the initial business:

She started off actually by getting a knitting machine. It was a machine for knitting socks, a circular one. She had a particular contract with, I think it was called the Union up in James Street – it's now the James hospital, I think it was a workhouse but it was called the Union at that time³⁰⁴. There were particular types of socks that they needed so she used to make the socks for them. Then she got somebody else that worked, lived quite close and she used to make some socks as well, so between the two of them they built up the business. I remember we as children had to help her then because we used to have to finish off the socks as well, when we learnt how to sew and knit, and join the toes and finish them off for her.³⁰⁵

For Sheila economic necessity was the driver which led her to become the breadwinner and she opted to do this firstly by opening a retailing business, moving onto becoming a dressmaker and finally opening a clothing factory. According to her son, as a young woman with a husband and small child the family situation was difficult:

So they had absolutely nothing, now they were living in Elizabeth Street, in this house, with my father, my mother, 3 adults and another child and the grandmother. I don't know where we slept.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Interview, 27/2/2013, vol. 2, p. 294.

³⁰⁴ St. James Hospital was the site of the Dublin Union up until 1943. It then became St. Kevin's Hospital. see Brian Donnelly, 'Hospital records in the National Archives of Ireland' in *Journal of the Irish Society for Archives*, 15 (2008), p. 16.

³⁰⁵ Interview with Nellie's daughter, Dublin, 18/06/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 132150, p. 132.

³⁰⁶ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 191.

Nellie too had an economic imperative, one not driven out of total necessity but the need to supplement family income was important. She started small in the late 1930s initially to supplement her husband's wages. Her daughter describes the situation at that time:

Yes she started in the home. There was seven of us in the family and there wasn't that much income coming. My father was working as a theatre electrician in the Gaiety Theatre. Salaries were not very high so she had to supplement that in some way.³⁰⁷

She was supplementing the income to offer her children the best possible start in life, education was deemed to be very important and the children were offered the opportunity to pursue their interests, take music lessons, attend drama classes and these things could not be achieved on a single income earned by an electrician in the 1930s. Like Sheila, having developed a taste for business, she subsequently went onto run a shop and then to set up a knitting factory where she developed and designed her own brand called Ballerina knitwear.

In Dorothea's case it was different. She ran her manufacturing business from the late 1940s and ran it through to the mid-1970s and displayed a desire for self-improvement, tinged however with a feeling that she did not wish to conform completely to the norms of the day. According to her son:

... at that time they would have just went straight on and did a secretarial course and ended up in you know, in menial jobs, or not menial but jobs in companies and then would have got married, and she didn't want that, she wanted to make something of her life and she wanted to, obviously at that time in Dublin there was a lot of poverty and you know, now she wasn't from that kinda of thing, but she, you would see it and she wanted to try and better her life I think at the time, you know and she, I suppose she wanted to see that, you know women didn't get

³⁰⁷ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 132.

really much of a chance at that time and she wanted to kinda break that mould, but you had to be kind of tough.³⁰⁸

Operations

In the textile sector the manufacturing process centred round mills such as the Avoca Woollen mills. In keeping with the long history of woollen mills in Ireland, this particular venture was originally set up in 1723. It was taken over in 1927 by three sisters, Emily, Veronica and Winifred Wynne who injected new life into the business and are credited with introducing colour into the weaving process.³⁰⁹ They ran the business successfully until they were well in their nineties and expanded, gaining international recognition as they did so. A report in the *Milwaukee Journal* in April 1964 describes in detail their operation.³¹⁰ At this stage they were being assisted by their nephew and his wife, employing 20 in the factory and 5 in the showroom. The two surviving sisters, Winifred and Veronica were still doing the designs – following their demise it appears the business went downhill and was taken over in 1974 by the Pratt family who have since reinvigorated and expanded the business significantly.

A contemporaneous business of Avoca Handweavers was the Dun Emer Guild which was founded in 1902 by renowned designer Evelyn Gleeson. Gleeson was a key figure in the Arts and Crafts movement and was also associated with the Gaelic revival in the early part of the 20th century.³¹¹ Dun Emer was originally formed in conjunction with the Yeats sisters, but after a number of years Gleeson went on to develop the Dun Emer craft guild on her own while the Yeats sisters set up a separate publishing concern and traded as Cuala Press. By 1945, Dun Emer was being run by Gleeson's niece, Katherine MacCormack:

³⁰⁸ Interview 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 295.

³⁰⁹ 'Young collection from historic mill', *Irish Press*, 16 August 1993.

³¹⁰ 'Workers weave tale of Irish Tweed', *Milwaukee Journal*, 19 April 1964.

³¹¹ Ruth Devine, 'Evelyn Gleeson' in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 105.

The name Dun Emer has for long been associated with luxuriously thick carpets and rugs and the richly coloured embroideries executed in striking Celtic designs. Rugs and carpets made by the Dun Emer Guild give comfort and character to many of our Legations abroad and in the Vatican itself. With their highly skilled fingers, the seamstresses of this enterprise have embroidered on the most beautiful materials – cloth of gold and silk poplin – church vestments and altar cloths for many parts of the world, and also for international exhibitions.³¹²

By 1953 trading conditions were difficult and the company tried to access support via the Trade Loans scheme offered by the Government, a scheme which was described as follows in a memo from the trade loan files:

The Trade Loan arrangements generally were availed of only as a last resort when other methods of raising capital had proved fruitless or where the security available would not be acceptable by a Bank”.³¹³

The application from Dun Emer was made by ‘Miss MacCormack’ and records that the shareholders were Andrew Dillon, Carpet Manufacturer 50 preference and 100 ordinary shares Katherine Helen MacCormack, Textile Designer, 325 preference shares; Colm Ó Lochlainn, Printer, 100 ordinary shares; Andrew J. O Shaughnessy, Kilkenny Woollen Mills, 1020 ordinary; Hariette F. Simpson, 1300 ordinary.³¹⁴

Through the Trade Loan files it is also possible to get a glimpse of some of the challenges faced by woollen manufacturers. There is extensive correspondence in the case of Mrs Hurley of Reenascreena Woollen Mills in Roscraberry, Co. Cork which gives an insight into the issues she faced. She was a widow and the business was formerly run by her husband. The file notes:

She has been a number of years resident at that address and is in full control of the business formerly

³¹² ‘Mainly for women’, *Woman’s Life*, 17 February 1945.

³¹³ ‘Memo Trade Loans’, November 1925 (N.A.I., TID 1/2908, Trade Loan files).

³¹⁴ ‘Dun Emer application’, 1953 (N.A.I., TID 1/389, Trade Loan files).

carried on by her husband. In addition she is a general merchant farmer and postmistress. She is favourably regarded locally and although it is said that the sale of tweeds is going down she is regarded as being of good financial standing and has machinery etc. it is the opinion that she would honour any obligation which she would undertake...³¹⁵

Her letter of application attests that she operated the mill and had been operated by herself and her parents before her. Due to her family circumstances and her own physical disability, output for the past 6 years was low. She was now seeking capital to reignite the business. The mill had been leased by the Gaeltacht Services Branch during the Emergency. At that time imported yarns were scarce so they leased the mill to spin their own yarns, however once the imported yarns were available, the lease was not renewed. On a visit to Dublin for the Spring Show Mrs Hurley visited the Department of Industry and Commerce, where she provided additional information to the inspectors. She said she never kept accounts but did promise to forward details of her production and sales. A number of opportunities seem to have come her way during the war, and between November 1937 and October 1938 she exported £5,000 worth of material by parcel post to the British Army of Occupation of the Rhine and the American Forces in that area-however, she does not provide any detail as to how she acquired that contract. She mentioned her other business, a farm, shop, and corn grinding business and told them that she managed them all.

After due consideration, the advisory committee did not feel that she was a good risk, and she was turned down for the loan. The extracts from the minutes noted concerns in relation to her lack of accounts and the fact that she was running a number of businesses without forming a limited company. However, Mrs Hurley was tenacious and enlisted the assistance of the local clergy and the parish priest, Rev. W. J. Burke, CC from St. Peter's, Carrigfada, Rosscarbery, wrote to the Secretary, Trade Loan Section, at the Dept of Industry and Commerce:

³¹⁵ 'Reenascreena Woollen Mills ', 1953, (N.A.I., TID 1/2567, Trade Loan files).

I am most anxious that the Woollen Mills should again be brought into full production and indeed, I have done all I could to bring this about. I am now convinced that the only way this desirable object can be active is with the help of a trades loan.³¹⁶

He also wrote to his local TD, Mr. Jack Lynch to enlist his assistance and the application was further examined and she was requested to put together a new proposal:

Her discussion of her affairs was very frank. She has met with a lot of trouble through illness. Her late husband was an ex-Land commission Inspector who was no help to her and her family also suffered illness. The boy who is to operate the woollen mills is now twenty five and has just completed his training.³¹⁷

The trade loan files demonstrate that Mrs Hurley was not alone among textile manufacturers in seeking assistance via the Trade Loan scheme. On this file there is a letter from the Crock of Gold Ltd, Hand weavers and vegetable dyers based in Newtown Park Avenue in Dublin – signed by Maureen Daly, Managing Director of this business.

In 1928 Bantry Textiles in under the directorship of Joseph Brennan applied for a loan of £4,000 to acquire the premises, plant and machinery of the Bantry Woollen Mills which was in liquidation and also sought to acquire new machinery.³¹⁸ In 1934 the application from Boyle Hosiery would appear to have been from primarily a female venture as Hannah Boyle was named in all the documentation for the loan, but James Mansfield signed the letter of guarantee to the bank.³¹⁹ This loan was for

³¹⁶ 'Letter to Secretary, Trade Loans section from Fr. Burke', 1/6/1953, (N.A.I., TID 1/2567, Trade Loan files).

³¹⁷ 'Reenascreena Woollen Mills', 1953, (N.A.I., TID 1/2567, Trade Loan files).

³¹⁸ 'Bantry Woollen Mills application', 1928, (N.A.I., TID FD/10, Trade Loan files).

³¹⁹ 'Boyles Hosiery and Knitting ', 1934, (N.A.I., TID FD/ 11 Trade Loan files).

the purposes of adopting the premises and acquiring plant and machinery– the amount was relatively small at £500.

The Trade Loan files also contain details of companies from sectors other than textiles. Of 99 company files that were examined with applications in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, 16 (just over 16%) of them had females as either directors or company secretaries. The list is attached in Appendix F. While the principal occupation is not always clear from the records, at least 6 of these are in textile, clothing or shoe manufacturers.

Galway Woollen Mills was a privately owned company and its structure demonstrates that women were open to investing in regional commercial concerns. Dissolved in 1940, there were 5 male directors, but they issued 12,000 ordinary shares to 50 shareholders, of which a number were women Mrs. May McDonagh, of 2 Eyre Square, was a draper and held 200 shares, Margaret Simon and Kathleen Tierney of High Street were shopkeepers and had 200 shares, Julia O'Donoghue based in Quay Street, a shopkeeper held 150 shares, Alice Mary Corbett had no occupation and had 100 shares, Mary Carr and Mrs Kennedy were housekeepers and had 150 and 100 shares respectively.³²⁰

As is widely acknowledged a central tenet of Irish economic policy throughout the 1930s and 1940s was the substitution of home-based products for imports. This exercised the mind of Miss C. Wass of Charlemont Fashions, a business manufacturing afternoon frocks, blouses and day frocks in Exchequer Street in Dublin who wrote as follows to the Department of the Taoiseach in October 1947:

Dear Sir
The enclosed advertisement which appeared in the Evening Main[sic], September 30th 1947 has given scope for the following remarks. As a member of the Federation of Irish Manufacturers for the past five

³²⁰ 'Galway Woollen Mills', (N.A.I., D8758, Dissolved company files).

*years, I understand that the main aim of the said Federation, is, to foster Home Industry, and to bring about Home Industry at what-ever cost. The vast majority of Manufacturers in this country, irrespective of nationality, are doing their utmost to aim at this point, but one will ask the question "Are the heads of the Nation giving their co-operation" Well, the enclosed cutting, gives the reply. It is little reason why the Irish girls are leaving this country, when other countries are offering employment to our workers to product[sic] English-made garments to export to Eire. I, myself, am of English descent, yet I am not in favour of importing English-made garments when it is possible to produce the same garments here. Since 1929, I am a resident of this country, where I started business, in manufacturing and at present I find it impossible to get workers to carry on the manufacture. This instant may have come to your notice previously and I should now like to hear your remarks
Yours faithfully PP Charlemont Fashions Miss C. Wass³²¹*

Enclosed with the letter is an advertisement which describes the importation of garments from Berlestex, Bond Street and consigned to Clerys department store, O'Connell Street, Dublin. Unfortunately the file does not give much insight by way of follow up to this complaint, only containing an unsatisfactory letter of acknowledgement and a reference to the fact that 'the matter has been referred to the Department of Industry and Commerce for attention'.

Trading conditions for manufacturers could be difficult, and small operators faced many challenges as this letter to the Price Commissioners in 1938 indicates. Mrs Browne trading as Tricots Baby Wear, from Kimmage in Dublin was involved in knitwear production and found it difficult to compete with imported items as outlined in this letter:

³²¹ 'Letter from Miss Wass', 8/10/1947, (N.A.I., S11987b, Department of the Taoiseach).

*Dear sirs
I wish to draw you attention to tariff on Children
Woollens such as Cap coat and pullups sets[sic],
Boy jersey suits, Girls Jumpers. I have been making
a girls jumper 317/11 = per dozen, there is one
coming in from England 247 /11 per dozen duty
paid[sic] that is with the new 33%. So you see
dear Sirs it is very hard to hold out unless the 45% is
put back. It will be a case of closing down
I am yours
Faithfully
Mrs. J. Browne³²²*

The file contains a note from the Commissioners saying it is not an issue for the Price Commission, but the letter was forwarded to the Secretary, Department of Industry and Commerce, Trade and Industries branch for consideration. Trading would appear to have continued to be difficult and an article on the slump in the woollen trade in 1951 made reference to the impact that this had on businesses and claimed that “practically every Irish businesswoman had stockpiled heavily, but the shortage of money had caused a great reduction in sales”.³²³

Manufacturers also had to grapple with the quota restrictions and the associated paperwork. The Control of Imports Act 1934 meant that manufacturers had to apply to register to import certain fabrics and required licences to do so.³²⁴ The process was that the company indicated to the Department of Industry and Commerce that they wished to apply for a quota, and an inspector was sent to assess the company. In particular the inspector sought to establish if the firm was engaged in the making of garments; how many people were employed; what they manufactured; the output per week; the number of machines in use; how much they purchased from Irish mills in a

³²² 'Letter to Price Commissioners from Mrs. Brown', 1938 (N.A.I., IND 2000/12/986, Department of Industry and Commerce).

³²³ 'Slump hits woollen trade', *Irish Times*, 14 November 1951.

³²⁴ 'Applications for licence to import', 1934 (N.A.I., TIQ 36/80 2000/12, Department of Industry and Commerce files).

recent six month period. They also checked whether they made on their own behalf or if they did sub contract work for other concerns. The report of one inspector, T. Ó Súilleabháin, in 1960 on the business of Mai Doyle Ltd., located in Arran Quay, Dublin gives an insight into the operations of a clothing manufacturer. The company was involved in making shirts, pyjamas, and overalls which include jeans, pants and children's blouses. The shirts were sports and coarse, the pyjamas made from wool, cotton, and poplin. They made about 350 dozen items per week and they had 55 machines in use. There were 80 workers employed, 63 described as 'fully qualified'. There was a traveller and 2 clerical workers. 97% of the business 'consists of the firm's own cloth made up and supplied to all the principal shops in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Kilkenny and Ballina'. He goes on to note:

The firm has, in a recent six months period, purchased approximately 290,000 sq yards of material, with a total value of £45,000 but no woven woollen materials are included in these purchases from Irish Mills. Mrs. Doyle told me that she had, some years ago, a quota licence which authorised her to import terry towelling (beach, short wear and skirts), but it was withdrawn and she said that she now wished to re-apply for that licence.³²⁵

While the Inspector met both Mrs. Doyle and her husband in this instance the application was made by Mai Doyle, Company director and it is apparent from the file that she was the one making the decisions.

Similarly Mrs Winifred Gildea, trading during the 1950s under the name of The Balla Ladies Clothing Manufacturers at Balla, Co. Mayo and whose letterhead describes the business as 'Drapery and Millinery, High class Ladies' tailoring and General Outfitting Warehouse, Agent for Spirilla Corsets and Burtol's Dyers and Cleaners' also had to apply for licences to import goods to which a quota order

³²⁵ 'Report of Inspector', 24/3/1961 (N.A.I., TIQ 2000/12/ 2049, Department of Industry and Commerce files).

applies.³²⁶ She applied at regular intervals to import woven woollen and synthetic and artificial fabrics between 1956 and 1963.

These files also show the different array of family relationships that existed in manufacturing businesses, such as Vernon Modes Ltd located at 9a Fishamble Street in Dublin. This company sought a license (quota 13) for import of woven woollen and synthetic and artificial fabrics in April 1960 and because of it was the first time for the company to apply, an inspector was sent to investigate the firm. He reports that there are 8 males and 40 female employed, producing mainly coats, suits and frock, output was approx. 250 garments a week on average and there were 25 machines in use. This company did a very big contract business and the file notes the following figures for 1959:

Value of work done for Colette Modes Ltd =
£11,834; Value of work done for Dunne Stores Cork
= £1,890; Value of work done for Grafton
Warehouse Ltd = £560; Value of for done for Egans,
Henry Street = £3,500³²⁷

This company was operated by a male and female team and given their separate addresses one could assume that they were not a husband and wife team. They were Gerald Kron and Hilda Kron – he resided at 11 Rathdown Drive, Terenure, and she at 25 Vernon Grove Rathgar. She was Company Secretary.

In the case of Michael O’Shaughnessy, Bridge Street, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick the original application is by Michael O’Shaughnessy, 2nd Feb 1957, 3rd Feb 1959.³²⁸ By 1963 the application was being made by a Miss Ita O’Shaughnessy and here it is

³²⁶ 'Gildea application for licence to import', 1956-1963 (N.A.I., TIQ 2000/12/2044, Department of Industry and Commerce files).

³²⁷ 'Vernon Modes application for licence to import', April 1960 (N.A.I., TIQ 200/12/2048, Department of Industry and Commerce files).

³²⁸ 'O’Shaughnessy application for licence to import', 1957–1963 (N.A.I., TIQ 36/80 2000/12, Department of Industry and Commerce files).

reasonable to assume that the business was passed onto a daughter, or perhaps a spinster sister.

With reference to family relationships, the story of Sheila referred to earlier, demonstrates the interrelationships between family members. During her early life, from the point when her first child was born at 18 years of age, she operated as a sole trader and ran, firstly a successful corner shop, and then progressed to dress making where she successfully operated from home a workshop which employed 5 people. However, when faced with the prospect of her eldest son emigrating to Canada, she put up the money for him to form a company making children's coats. He remembers:

...my mother, they wouldn't know anything about companies for God's sake. But now, when I formed a company, yes, we formed a company my mother and myself ... And she moved over her workroom to the factory.³²⁹

This arrangement was in place until Sheila died and in her will she left the company to her son whose family continue to operate a clothing business, albeit as wholesaler rather than as a manufacturer currently.

Sheila's story also highlights the informal nature of doing business that was apparent in businesses operating in the Commerce and Finance sector also. Her son describes the business when it was operating from the home:

there was no tax paid on that, that was all cabbage, and my mother had queues of people, you know, Jesus, there was nothing, I mean, when you think of it a week's wages then was about 2 quid a week, so you can understand someone taking in on a Friday night, taking in £97 and counting out 97 pound notes and that was, okay, you had to pay your staff out of that, what's that-that was a 10, you still have 87 and that's on one night.³³⁰

³²⁹ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 206.

³³⁰ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 206.

The first time this business was registered was when mother and son joined forces and formed a private company in 1950-1951.

By contrast Dorothea's manufacturing company was formally established as a limited company in Dublin from the outset in 1948. However, her son recollects some elements of informal trading taking place:

and I would say it was more of a black economy then, because I can remember, she'd guys, sales guys would come around and they would buy these – she always had seconds, and they would buy the bags of seconds for cash and they would go off and sell them to the likes of Shaws and Todds and all these different places around the country, sorry not to the bigger shops, to the smaller kind of drapery shops who needed to buy their stuff cheaper, so it was a different era, so there was a huge amount of that going on, I can always remember the guys calling over to the factory and they'd go off with their four or five bags of seconds. There was two scales to the business, two levels to it.³³¹

Nellie too, describes her mother has being quite formal in her approach to the business:

She used to have a solicitor, and she had an accountant and she had to work all through all those things...³³²

However, the daughter believes:

but that time I think there wasn't so much emphasis on small businesses, from the point of view of kind of doing actual returns every year.³³³

³³¹ Interview, 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 300.

³³² Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 136.

³³³ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 136.

However, as with the Trade Loans and other incentives available in the formal economy, females proved adept at spotting the opportunity to avail of any supports that might have been available and in 1962 Rose McEneff who was a director of two Dublin based manufacturing companies applied for assistance to further her management education. She outlined her case in a letter to the Department:

*Dear Sir,
I am a Director of The Belfast Linen Company, of
19/21/ Exchequer Street, Dublin of which Emo
Limited is a subsidiary company. Emo Limited make
up entirely Table Cloths, Tray Cloth, D.T Sets,
Luncheon Sets, Guest Towels, Pillow and bolster
Sets, etc. I have been accepted by the Irish
Management Institute as a suitable candidate for the
9th Management Course (2 weeks) which commences
on October 15th to October 26th. The cost of the
course is 60 guineas and I wish to apply for technical
Assistance Grant of 50%. I might add that I only
draw £7 per week from the firm of which I will be at
a loss for the two weeks, owing to business being
bad. The business has done gone [sic] considerably
and I am satisfied that my attendance at the course
will have a very beneficial effect on the management
of the two concerns.
Thanking you,
Sincerely Yours,
Rose Mc Eneff, Director ³³⁴*

Rose got the grant, but according to a memo on file, at the last moment the IMI informed her that there was no vacancy on the course and suggested the next course to her. The grant was withdrawn, but she was encouraged to reapply “should you decide to attend any other training course, however, the question of a grant in respect of the cost, would, of course, be considered”.

Running these manufacturing businesses was complex, and involved either running a factory operation and/or sub-contracting out the work to other manufacturers. The files from the Department of Industry and Commerce shed some light on what was

³³⁴ 'Letter to Secretary, Department of Industry and Commerce', 24/9/1962 (N.A.I., INDC/IND/7/288, Department of Industry and Commerce).

involved. Irene Gilbert, who was a very prominent figure in Irish fashion history, was invited into the Department of Industry and Commerce in June 1958 to discuss her business and the industry in general.³³⁵ The file contains a report of that interview. Present was Mrs Ronald Law (Miss Irene Gilbert) of Irene Gilbert Ltd, 22 South Frederick Street, Dublin, and Mr Murphy and Mr Gahan from the Department. Miss Gilbert had received a letter from the Minister, indicating his interest in her work. The topic under discussion was developing export trade and in particular her activities and plans for the future. It is noted that she had lived in London where she was engaged in the hat trade. She came back to Dublin in 1947 where:

she continued with hats here, but after some time, she started designing clothes at premises in Mount Street. She has since changed to 22 South Frederick Street. In 1954 Coras Trachtala Teo approached her with a request that she should show in the United States a selection of garments styled by her. This she did and in one week she received orders to the value of £3,000. In 1957 her exports were in excess of 50% of her entire turnover and to date in 1958 she had exports of the order of £9,700.³³⁶

They discussed the problems facing her in the matters of working capital and manufacturing and showroom premises. Working capital was a problem in particular as she had to have models of work made for show in advance of receiving orders. The initial capital to set up her business was £6,000. As she made a favourable impact on the fashion world, a number of her friends had invested and the capital reached £17,000 – £20,000. The firm had 21 workers at that time, including a high-class tailor and four apprentices. At the meeting she asked for assistance with showing and exhibiting her garments. She also complained about delays in clearance by the customs authorities at Amien Street, looked for preferential treatment on air freight charges and asked about some assistance with taking on girls and training them. She

³³⁵ Robert O’Byrne, ‘Irene Gilbert’ in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds) *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 81-82.

³³⁶ Report of interview with Department of Industry and Commerce’, 16/6/1958, (N.A.I., INDC/IND/7/250, Department of Industry and Commerce).

was advised by the officials to deal with Córas Tráchtála on marketing, given details on technical assistance grants, was advised to discuss with bank issue of working capital –and given an undertaking that they would talk to the Customs officials. The memo also references an ‘arrangement whereby Dorothy Pinnock and Co Ltd. made blouses and skirts in line to the Irene Gilbert design for disposal by Irene Gilbert Ltd’. Dorothy Pinnock set up a clothes manufacturing business in Dublin which was operated by her family up until the late 1980s.³³⁷ Gilbert reported that she was happy with this side of her business. She believed that this could be extended to woollens.

Irene Gilbert also attended another interview at the Department on 10th December 1958 with Mr. Murphy and Mr. CA Barry. Her views were sought on exporting and the file notes:

it appeared to her that in order to obtain substantial exports it would be necessary to depart from haute couture in the direction of mass production. She had no intention of abandoning her haute couture but was planning to extend her business in conjunction with an Irish manufacturer of garments. Her idea was that the manufacturer would supply the premises, machines and staff for the making up the garments. She did not propose merely to edit these garments but rather that they should be made from her own designs.³³⁸

She was close to concluding an agreement along these lines with John Lucks of Mary Street. She needed some assistance with the finance of this new arrangement and she was advised by the officials to talk to the Industrial Credit Company. Gilbert had approached them some time ago, but was not successful.

³³⁷ 'Companies registration office details'_ <http://www.cro.ie/search/CompanyDetails.aspx?id=15437&type=C>, accessed 13/6/2014.

³³⁸ Report of interview with Department of Industry and Commerce', 16/6/1958, (N.A.I., INDC/IND/7/250, Department of Industry and Commerce).

The oral histories too give an insight into the drive, hard work and determination coupled with business skills that it took to run these businesses. Sheila worked long hours throughout the 1940s. Her son remembers the toil and graft as she combined family life with the requirements to keep her business going:

Yeah, oh she worked morning, noon and night, she'd, even when my brother was born, she worked until about 2 hours before he popped out, she was still in the work, and you see, they didn't go to hospital, she had the baby upstairs, two days later she was back in the workroom. She was that sort of woman you know...³³⁹

Dorothea was constantly thinking and innovating as she developed the business. She set up her production lines in the most efficient way while allowed her to compete in the marketplace:

she just changed the collars, cuffs, pockets and laces but she kept the length of the garment the same all the time, so she had no waste, virtually minimum waste so therefore she could sell the product at a much cheaper price.³⁴⁰

And she understood how to extract the most from her workforce:

she thought if you like, give them the incentive they'll do more, so she was a thinker, she thought ahead and eventually when she did her factory improved hugely.³⁴¹

She also was quick to adapt to the situations she found herself in and her son talks about one particular incident which had the potential to have a serious impact financially. However Dorothea had the wit to turn things around and ultimately had an unexpected successful outcome:

I think at one stage then she got conned into buying this false fur once and they sent her loads of it, reams

³³⁹ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 210.

³⁴⁰ Interview, 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 302.

³⁴¹ Interview, 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 298.

of it and she couldn't get out of the deal but she designed it up into these bomber jackets, three quarter length jackets and she made a fortune out of that, she sold the lot of them but she also did that kind of thing.³⁴²

Women and the fashion industry

Closely related to the existence of a clothing manufacturing industry in Ireland is the emergence of a fashion industry, which encompasses design, production, distribution and selling. The role of women in this industry has been documented by Robert O' Byrne and alongside icons of the Irish fashion scene that have gained public recognition for their contribution, such as Sybil Connolly, Irene Gilbert and Néillí Mulcahy. Sybil Connolly developed an international reputation as a designer, particularly in the United States.³⁴³ It is notable that there were a significant number of Irish women designers and producers instrumental in developing the Irish fashion industry, many of them located in Dublin.³⁴⁴ O'Byrne credits the emergence of the Irish fashion industry to a fashion show in May 1950 in which Irene Gilbert presented a number of dresses and suits designed by herself. Other notables during the 1950s and 1960s include Clodagh, Kay Petersen, Mary O'Donnell, Aine Lawlor and Sheila Mullally. While design was to the fore of their fame, all of them operated businesses for a significant period of time and many of these businesses were established and operated in the 1950s, a time of high emigration and high unemployment, and a period during which the total volume of goods and services consumed declined.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Interview 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 301.

³⁴³ Robert O'Byrne, 'Sybil Connolly' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 768-769.

³⁴⁴ Robert O'Byrne, *After a fashion: a history of the Irish fashion industry* (Dublin: Town House, 2000), pp 1-180.

³⁴⁵ Robert O'Byrne, 'Out of style, out of mind', *Irish Times*, 1 April, 2000.

However, while O'Byrne's spotlight shines on Irish fashion from the 1950s onwards, there is strong evidence of business activity by females in fashion well before this date and the relationship between making and selling – and the blurring of lines between production of fashion items and selling of same was very evident in the 1930s. As noted previously when Molly McElhinney set up her shop in 1937 she was making all of the clothes for her customers. This was also true of Kathleen Ryan who set up Cleo in 1936 in Dublin. Kathleen Ryan, nee Crowe started working in a shop in Tipperary town before she came to Dublin to work in Switzer's department store in 1912.³⁴⁶ She then moved to Ranelagh to work in a dressmaking and drapery business Cathcart, which was owned by two sisters. After her marriage, to help with family finances she set up as a dressmaker and in 1936 moved into premises in South Anne Street, formerly occupied by a South African woman called Cleo who had traded there. Initially the business focused on the making of garments for clients that Mrs Ryan knew from both her Switzers and Cathcart days, but in the 1940s the focus of the business turned towards knits and knitwear. It became famous for knitwear and it is still trading in today and the business is currently being run by Mrs Ryan's daughter and granddaughter.

The transition of Cleo into knitwear had significance for own-account workers as much of the supplies came from women knitters who operated out of their own homes. The census figures have illustrated that the numbers of own-account workers working in clothing and textiles was very significant in the 1930s and 1940s and many of these were likely to have been knitters supplying to shops in Dublin. During the Emergency, Mrs Ryan, who had become a widow at that stage, took lodgers to supplement

³⁴⁶ Hilary O'Kelly, *Cleo Irish clothes in a wider world*, (Dublin: Associated Editions, 2014), p. 18.

her income and one of her lodgers regularly holidayed in the west of Ireland and it was through him that she first sourced her knitters—which prompted her move from maker to supplier. At a similar time circa 1945 Muriel Gahan had started to source knitters from the Aran Islands as she was worried about the quality of work being promoted by Gaeltarra Éireann.³⁴⁷

An examination of the businesses on the street where Cleo commenced operations reveals the extent to which females were involved in the garment business at different levels in Ireland. In 1936 on South Anne Street, O’Kelly records the following types of female run businesses.³⁴⁸ Margaret McClure-hairdresser, Esther Morris-antique dealer, Peg and Clare Bobbet-costume and mantle makers, ‘Annette’ who specialised in picot edging, Mrs Howarth-cosmetics, Katherine Hayes-fur and gown salesroom, Miss Ledwidge-milliner, ‘Angeline’-hairdresser, Nonie O Meara-ladies underwear, Miss McIntyre-professional corsietiere, Miss Lily Bernstien-draper. Close by in Grafton Street was Slynnes’, run by Eileen Slyne who used to make regular trips to fashion shows in Paris and on her return would make up the latest fashions and have them on display in the store within days of their appearing in Paris. This business operated in Dublin until the mid-1970s. The business (*Cleo*) moved to Molesworth Street in 1950 and this location too was home to a number of female-owned establishments; Miss R Kennedy— art, needlework and fancy wool warehouse, Carmel Skeeahan—the Orchard Wedding Headdress, Mary Colwin—ladies dress designer and tailor.

According to O’Byrne, by the late 1950s Sybil Connolly was employing around 100 women; of whom about half were home-based either weaving tweed or hand-making lace.³⁴⁹ In 1952 Néillí Mulchahy opened a premises

³⁴⁷ Mitchell, *Deeds not words: the life and work of Muriel Gahan*, pp. 81-93.

³⁴⁸ O’Kelly, *Cleo Irish clothes in a wider world*, p. 17.

³⁴⁹ Robert O’Byrne, *After a fashion*, p. 26.

in South Frederick Street in Dublin and for some time shared the premises with milliner Elizabeth Fanagan.³⁵⁰ Irene Gilbert too operated a shop in South Frederick Street and worked with a selection of manufacturers to produce her designs. She used tweed in her designs, sourcing from the Wynne sisters of Avoca Handweavers among others. Clodagh ran a Dublin-based company until 1972, when she moved to New York and set up an interior design company. She was named one of the world's leading interior designers by Architectural Digest in 2005 and the company is still trading under her stewardship.³⁵¹ Kay Petersen traded as Anna Livia and was based in Dawson Street, Sheila Mullally established her business in Wellington Road, Dublin in 1964, having being a shareholder and heavily involved in Cork based manufacturing company Elizabeth James Models prior to that.³⁵² Aine Lawlor established her own label and specialised in evening wear and wedding dresses.

There were lesser known names in operation. The Spring Show and Horse show in the RDS was a great venue to showcase Irish produced product and services. A report in *Woman's Life* remarked on the stand taken by Revellon at the Horse Show in 1951. Revellon were the makers of 'those beautifully-cut brassieres which are completely Irish made and which are sought after by buyers all over the world'. Madame Pauline was the designer of the Revellon brassieres and received much comment on the quality of the product from the English and foreign visitors to the show who enquired whether they could buy the Revellon models abroad:

Many of them expressed surprise that such excellent styles should be Irish-made, and went on to enquire whether foreign workers were employed in making the garments. 'I told them' said Madame Pauline,

³⁵⁰ Robert O'Byrne, 'Irish fashion since 1950', *Irish Times*, 26 October 1996.

³⁵¹ Eleanor Flegg, 'Lighting up Broadway', *The Sunday Times*, 8 July 2007.

³⁵² 'Purchase of Cork firm', *Sunday Independent*, 16 January 1977.

“that only Irish girls are employed in my factory, and also that I found their work every bit as good as English and continental machinists”. If you are in any doubt as to Irish skill, examine the workmanship of one of these Revellon garments the next time you see them in the shops. You’ll be surprised, and very pleasantly, too!³⁵³

Woman’s Life, also had a feature about two young women, Madge Snee and Mary Grange and Madge was introduced as the proprietor of a wholesale manufacture of underwear under the name of Lucy Graye:

Designed by her and manufactured under her supervision, this underwear is already finding favour with the better class shops, and is obtainable in pure silks and nylons. The popularity of these garments is already practical proof of her clothes sense and ability.³⁵⁴

The files containing applications for licence to import without paying duty also demonstrate another dimension to the clothing manufacturing business. If the firm could show that the end products were exported they were entitled to import the fabrics without paying duty. A company called Lillian Roberts based in Davlon House, 20 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8 made numerous applications from March 1964.³⁵⁵ The directors for the company were E.I Davies, and L. Davies. E.I Davies, Eric was the Managing director. The second director is Lillian Davies, however, there was a receiver appointed to the company in April 1965 so the business must not have been successful in its operations.

A company called Ann Ltd gives an indication of the reach of some of the Irish fashion companies. The letterhead is Ann Ltd Haute Couture which

³⁵³ ‘At the Horse show’, *Woman’s Life*, 22 September 1951.

³⁵⁴ *Woman’s Life*, 21 October 1951.

³⁵⁵ ‘Lillian Roberts application for licence to import’, 1964 -1965, (N.A.I., IND/FTX/253/c 1, Department of Industry and Commerce).

would indicate that this was a private limited company. They operated at 51a Dawson Street. Patricia Short was the Managing Director, P.L Farrell was the secretary and it is not clear what gender Farrell is. They first made an application to obtain a licence to import without paying duty in 1950.³⁵⁶ Their last one was made in 1964. This company appear to have made bespoke suits and coats and have traded abroad-they included invoices for the overseas clients with their applications. The example of their export trade included Miss Forget, c/o Ardmore Studio, Bray dated 15th September 1960 – she bought a Mauve Tweed Suit for £38 17shillings for which 5 yards of material was used; Mrs Brando, c/o Shelbourne Hotel, on 7th September of the same year, bought a tweed suit for £36and 15shillings plus a grey tweed two-piece for £42.0.0 for which 12 yards of material was used; Mrs Davies of 2021 Bayside Drive, Corona, Delmar, Colorado, USA on the 18th of August, 1960 purchased a red tweed coat for £36 and 15shillings which used 8 yards material and Mrs Bradley Gaylord, c/o RMS Maurentonia, Cobh on the 4th of August, 1960 bought a blue tweed suit for 36 and 15shillings, 1 pence which required 6 yards of material.

Mrs. Florence Davenport trading as Margaret Blythe, does not appear to have been a limited company in that there are no directors listed on letterhead, nor does the word limited appear in connection with the company name.³⁵⁷ In the period from 1959 to 1965 she too sought licences to import without paying duty and her clients were in Omagh, Co. Tyrone, New Jersey, New York, Kent, and Victoria, Australia. She appears to have custom made an entire wardrobe for many of her clients, an example being Mrs V McCalmont who was based in Wiltshire, England. In May 1959 she bought a check coat, a white wool dress, a navy suit, a pink tweed coat lined with spot

³⁵⁶ 'Ann Ltd application for licence to import ', 1959-1964, (N.A.I., IND/FTX/1154, Department of Industry and Commerce).

³⁵⁷ 'Margaret Blythe application for licence to import', 1959-1965, (N.A.I., ind/ftx/826 Department of Industry and Commerce).

silk, pink spot frock to match, a pink silk suit, a grey wool dress, a striped wool blazer, a blue silk printed evening dress, a pink rose-printed wrapper, a red silk evening dress, a royal blue and black pleated dress, a black wool dress, and a blue and grey dress. In October 1959 she was supplied with a black taffeta dress with blue flowers, a red and black check wool dress, a blue wool dress, a blue coat wool, a green tweed $\frac{3}{4}$ coat and shirt to match. She purchased again in May 1960 – this time, a pink and grey silk print dress, a blue evening print dress, a grey and pink evening dress and a green print evening dress with double skirt.

When talking about the fashion business, it is also possible to identify service businesses apart from retailers, which grew up in a cluster providing essential services to the trade. Indeed in some instances it is a question of which came first – in particular this is pertinent to the establishment of the Grafton Academy of Dress Design. This institution, which is still operational, was founded in 1938 by Pauline Keller. Pauline always had a talent for drawing and designing and was a gifted water colourist. She also had an interest in clothes and fashion, however, when she approached Richard Nesbit of Arnotts about working with him, he told her to go to London and get some pattern making experience, which she did. The Grafton Academy was conceived by Pauline when she spent a year studying at the British Design Institute. She felt there was an opportunity to provide such training in Ireland and she had the details of the school worked out when she arrived back in Dublin. With financial backing from her father, a solicitor she set up in 6 Grafton Street. She was about 26 years old at that stage. Writing for the *Irish Times* in 1959 on what makes a couturier, Caroline Mitchell interviewed Pauline Clotworthy, (married name). Pauline felt that most of her graduates would be in a position to find work in Irish

companies and would not need to leave the country.³⁵⁸ Her contribution to the Irish Fashion industry is remembered in her obituary:

The Grafton Academy established fashion as a form demanding engineering and structure as a basic to finish and finesse. A roll of honour lists designers Richard Lewis, Ib Jorgenson, Louise Kennedy, Paul Costelloe, Glynys Robbins, Quinn and Donnelly and others as graduates. As Richard Lewis suggests, however, it was Pauline Clotworthy who as the pioneer and the graduates of the Grafton Academy serve as a testament to her heritage and to her skills and service now as the hallmark of Irish Fashion.³⁵⁹

Among the early graduates from Grafton Academy were Clodagh, Néillí Mulchahy and Aine Lawlor. Grafton Academy faced some competition from the 1940s onwards from the Dreadnought School of Dressmaking, a company set up by a Mrs. Bond from Southport that operated in Dublin well into the 1960s.³⁶⁰

Others also sought business opportunity in a similar field – Madge Snee, referred to earlier who operated the company Lucy Graye was obviously a potential serial entrepreneur. She launched another scheme in the early 1950s, in conjunction with Mary Grange, who was a dress designer and mannequin as reported in *Woman's Life* “a series of dress-making classes at their “School of Fashion” at Merrion Row in Dublin. Madge and Mary had a vision for a potential fulltime school of dressmaking where:

for an all in fee, girls could take a full day course over approximately six months or so and learn all the aspects of dressmaking. Country girls find it difficult to become apprentices in clothing factories and the very fact that factories must turn out the goods on schedule makes the apprenticeship somewhat sketchy. Not all girls wishing to become dressmakers

³⁵⁸ Caroline Mitchell, 'What goes to make a couturier?', *Irish Times*, 25 March 1959.

³⁵⁹ 'Pioneer in the demanding skills of fashion design', *Irish Times*, 19 February 2005.

³⁶⁰ *Irish Times* 18 February 1941.

feel they can take a full dress-designing course, but may like to become plain dressmakers in their home towns and villages if they could obtain adequate training.³⁶¹

Other support businesses in fashion included the provision of models, or mannequins as they were commonly referred to in the 1950s and the 1960s. Betty Whelan began her life as a model and spent time with modelling with Christian Dior in Paris in 1946.³⁶² Following this stint she came back to Dublin and set up the Betty Whelan Mannequin Agency in 1952. She subsequently opened a chain of four beauty salons around the city. A profile of Norma Griffin who established the Norma Griffin Mannequin Academy in 1949 in Dublin described another such venture. Born in Glasgow of Irish parents, Norma came to Dublin having trained in London. The article notes that:

In June of this year, Norma decided to open up her own Mannequin Academy, a school where girls can receive expert and efficient training in all aspects of fashion work. Deportment, beauty culture, and specialised classes are now in progress at the school in St. Stephen's Green, and I shall be very surprised if such a thing as a poor model is ever produced by this academy. For with a person like Norma one feels that she would never be satisfied with anything less than perfection... in others words, she's the real McCoy³⁶³.

Norma later married one of the Crosbies of the Cork business family, moved to Cork and set up a similar establishment there. The Dublin business was taken over in 1953 by Miriam Woodbyrne, who travelled to London, New York and Paris to inform herself of the latest trends in fashion and modelling and incorporated these ideas into the business, offering self-improvement

³⁶¹ *Woman's Life*, 20 October 1951.

³⁶² Kieran Fagan, 'Betty Whelan The lady who launched a thousand hats' made a lasting impression on all who knew her', *Irish Independent*, 1 July 2011.

³⁶³ *Woman's Life*, 8 October 1949.

and finishing courses, which were quickly taken up by middle class parents who were keen to have their daughters taught “how to present themselves as attractively as possible and to realise their full potential.”³⁶⁴ Another graduate of Norma’s, Mrs Lucy Cooper went on to found a mannequin school in Galway, where the aim was not just ‘produce mannequins, but to teach general deportment and beauty, culture and an intensive course is given in dieting, deportment, make-up etc.’.³⁶⁵ One of the students photographed in the magazine attending Mrs Cooper’s classes was a Helena Mahon, who ran a hackney service in Kinvara.

The above businesses, training and modelling, are not manufacturing businesses and would be classified either as personal or professional services. However, they developed in tandem with the fledgling fashion industry and are firmly rooted in the fashion industry that had begun to flourish through the 1950s and 1960s and were strongly influenced by businesswomen.

Other Manufacturing

The figures demonstrate that there was not a strong indigenous manufacturing base outside of textiles and clothing, with female participation as owners and own-account workers largely centred in these areas. However, there are incidents of female involvement in other manufacturing companies. During the war years, the specially created Department of Supplies reviewed each industry sector in relation to how dependent each industry was for its continuance on imports. They also tried to establish if imports could be substituted by local raw materials.³⁶⁶ The

³⁶⁴ ‘An Appreciation: Miriam Woodbyrne’, *Irish Times*, 2 April 2007.

³⁶⁵ ‘Mainly for women’, *Women’s Life*, 13 December 1952.

³⁶⁶ ‘Notes on conferences that took place in relation to industries in Ireland’, 1941(N.A.I., S12314, Department of Taoiseach files).

industries consulted included those producing nails and screws, margarine, soap, cardboard box making, candles, non-ferrous metals, hosiery, jams, tanning, paper making, electric lamps, shirts and overalls, boots and shoes, sacks and bags, agricultural machinery, soap making fats, brush making, waste paper, certain chemical substances, domestic fats and bones, domestic pottery and glazed tiles.

At these meetings there was present one female civil servant, a representative from the Industrial Research Council named Miss Laverty. However, there is only one female listed in the representatives from all the industries consulted – a Miss Duan from M. Duan and Company, merchants in waste paper who are referred to as Dublin’s largest merchants with branches in Cork and Limerick. Taken from the notes of a meeting of the body appointed to advise on the collection of waste paper is a contribution by Miss Duan, who stated that applicants for registration (of merchants) might be received from many persons or companies other than those presently operating. She cited the case of an Englishman, who while not registered, had taken a store for the collection of wastepaper in Dublin the day before. “The suggestion was put forward that before any applicant should be registered he should prove that he has a sorting store and a minimum staff of sorters”.³⁶⁷ While Ms Duan appeared to be adept at lobbying for her business and her industry, it is noteworthy that despite having strong presences in industries like hosiery or shirt making, females were not highly visible in lobbying and influencing government policy through this particular forum.

Woman’s Life profiles two Cork women who, in 1945 launched a line of cosmetic products that are ‘particularly suited to the Irish girl’s

³⁶⁷ 'Notes on conferences that took place in relation to industries in Ireland', 1941(N.A.I., S12314, Department of Taoiseach files).

requirements.³⁶⁸ Co-founder Madame Fayne, who established the business with a Mrs. Drumm claimed to know next to nothing about cosmetics when starting the business, as she was a full-time homemaker. However, when the idea for home-produced beauty preparations took root, she and her partner in business ‘scoured Europe and America for books on cosmetic chemistry and beauty formulae’.

Another enterprising Cork woman was Miss Gladys Leach who developed a business by making slides for cinema programme.³⁶⁹ In the 1940s Miss Leach was employed by the Savoy Cinema, and made the suggestion that during the organ interludes the experience would be better for customers by the provision of ‘neatly prepared slides with appropriate wording, as required by the organist’. From this humble beginning her reputation spread and she advanced to providing slides to advertise all kinds of products and services.

The files dealing with the Control of Imports Act contain the applications for registration from manufacturers for licences to import also provide some insights into other types of manufacturing concerns in which females were involved. In the 1940s Taylors Mills in Athenry, Galway had numerous applications for subsidies on wheaten meal and wholemeal list. Mrs. Annie Taylor was the owner with Charles Taylor listed as the proprietor.³⁷⁰ In 1961 Judith O’ Reilly was involved in producing dolls for the souvenir market and sought to import dolls masques duty-free since the dolls in question were bought mainly by tourists who took them out of the country.³⁷¹ This created

³⁶⁸ ‘Gossip, People Personalities, places’, *Woman’s Life*, 24 November 1945.

³⁶⁹ Finola, ‘Introducing Miss Gladys Leach’, *Women’s Life*, 24 November 1945.

³⁷⁰ ‘Taylors Corn and Saw Mills application for licence to import’, February 1942 (N.A.I., IND/E/1220/50/28, Department of Industry and Commerce).

³⁷¹ ‘Judith O’Reilly application for licence to import’, 1960-1967 (N.A.I., IND/FXT 985, Department of Industry and Commerce)

an on-going dialogue with the Department of Industry and Commerce, because while she sold through the duty-free shops in Shannon and Dublin airport as well as in the C.I.E hotels, there were some problems in distinguishing between what was sold in the home market through outlets such as Switzers and other stores.

In the mid-1950s, Miss Sheila Connolly was the owner and managing director of packing cases manufacturers and saw mills in Dublin from which the raw materials, (the wood used in the packing cases) came from.³⁷² She had 30 men working for her, and one female, her secretary. Her mother Mrs Connolly was reputed to have been one of the earliest female members of Dublin Chamber of Commerce. She took over her husband's building firm when he died and developed a reputation as a solid business woman when she expanded and reorganised the original business. She bought the packing firm in the 1920s. It was an old established business, set up in 1861 and on the death of Mrs. Connolly, Sheila took over as owner and manager.

On the publishing scene, a spat broke out between Mr. P McEvoy of the McEvoy Publishing Company Ltd, publisher of titles such as *Irish Industry*, *Irish Industrial Yearbook*, *Drapers Mirror*, and Miss Eva Jennings of Cliodhna Press.³⁷³ Miss Jennings published an information bulletin on the economy and culture of Ireland, entitled *Information on Ireland*. While not stated explicitly an impression was given that the Bulletin is officially sanctioned. Mr. McEvoy wrote to the Taoiseach in April 1950 seeking clarification with regard to this, and protested strongly as his "is a firm that receives no help whatever from government or other public funds in the carrying on of its business".

³⁷² Marie O'Reilly, 'I sketch your world', *Irish Independent*, 13 April 1956.

³⁷³ 'Bulletin of Information', 1959 (N.A.I., S14829, Department of Taoiseach).

Corless has documented a history of the sweetshop in Ireland during this period, where many proprietors were females and he also captured some of history of manufacturing of indigenous confectionery—an area where women had success too.³⁷⁴ Butlers Chocolates was founded in 1932. Marion Butler was born in 1889 and her father was a colonel in the British Army. She spent the early years of her childhood in India where her father was posted, returning to Ireland at the age of 5. She married in 1916 and during the 1920s she discovered a passion for making chocolates which she supplied mainly to family and friends.³⁷⁵ She enjoyed it so much that she decided to pursue it professionally and in 1932 she open a shop in Lad Lane in Dublin, where she made and sold her chocolates. She also operated a factory there and was a regular exhibitor at the RDS Horse Show.³⁷⁶ The business was called Chez Nous and the “French name differentiated them from confections traditionally associated with Irish and British markets”.³⁷⁷ She continued to operate the business up until her death in 1955 when the company was acquired by the family that operate the business to this day.

Another famous confectioner of the time, Urneys, was the result of strong female involvement at start-up. Urneys was co-founded by Eileen and Harry Gallagher.³⁷⁸ It began life originally in the back garden in their home in Co. Tyrone as a small cottage industry. After the first world war, demand for sweets was high and they opened a factory, but in 1922 a fire destroyed the building. Demand in the south, plus more favourable grant support and tax breaks prompted the couple to move the business down South and

³⁷⁴ Corless, *You'll ruin your dinner*, p. 51.

³⁷⁵ Email from Butlers chocolates, 15 November 2013.

³⁷⁶ ‘New mineral waters make debut’, *Irish times*, 6 August 1954.

³⁷⁷ Email from Butlers Chocolates, 15/11/2013.

³⁷⁸ ‘Sweet memories of Urney’s chocolates and the return of the Two and Two bar’, <http://strabanechronicle.com/2013/6> accessed 5/5/2014.

established a factory in Tallaght in 1923. Mrs. Gallagher was one of the original travellers for the business and her great-granddaughter in documenting the business felt that while it was really Eileen who started the business, over time her great-grandfather got much of the credit.³⁷⁹

1959 to 1960 saw a good deal of attention focusing on the issue of exporting horses live—and the granting of licences to do this.³⁸⁰ There was quite a bit of publicity in the British press on this issue, with talk of boycotting Ireland as a holiday destination, boycotting Irish goods until the practise of exporting live horses ceased. One female’s response to the issue was to establish the Irish Horse Abattoir Investment Company.³⁸¹ This venture, according to one report was “owned by women but run by men”.³⁸² Commenting on the issue in a debate in the Seanad Dr. O Donovan, Leas Cathaoirleach noted the formation of the company and reported that over £20,000 had been subscribed to this venture by ‘people of good will’, but he was pessimistic about the ‘results of this voluntary effort’.³⁸³ This pessimism had some foundation – in 1963 a loss of £1,671,145 was reported for the company.³⁸⁴

Community Engagement

How well connected these women were within the business community in which they operated is a question that results in mixed answers. Dorothea son says:

³⁷⁹ *Irish Independent*, 12 October 1976.

³⁸⁰ 'Horse export from Ireland', 1960 (N.A.I., 14314 C, Department of Taoiseach).

³⁸¹ 'Call for aid to Abattoir', *Irish Press*, 25 March 1961.

³⁸² Chris Glennon, 'Ragwort Ends work life', *Irish Farmers Journal*, 19 May 1962.

³⁸³ 'Campaign on horse exports again debated in Seanad', *Irish Independent*, 22 January 1960.

³⁸⁴ 'Abattoir's losses', *Irish Independent*, 18 December 1963.

she kept herself and ran her own business on that level and it was usually the manager that she got in would do the network for her.³⁸⁵

However, elsewhere in the conversation he says she took responsibility for selling herself and she was well known in the trade and had good relationships with key traders. In the course of the conversation he lists a significant number of well-known Dublin business people with whom she would have had solid relationships.

The lack of formal business networks for women at that time comes through from Nellie's story also. Her daughter when asked if her mother was part of any business networks has this to say:

It wouldn't have arisen too much, I don't think so, not in her line of business. We would have known the local shopkeeper around the corner and that sort of thing, but I wouldn't have thought that many other people in her line. She was very friendly, I remember with the Barnes, -in fact she had enrolled me to go and get an apprenticeship with them when I finished school. But then I changed and I went to the university instead, and she was very friendly with other suppliers. I remember now there were Jewish companies that were always very helpful to her as well supplying stuff to her and the Barnes were very good to her as well.³⁸⁶

The Barnes family were the owners of Glen Abbey, a successful knitwear and hosiery business and their support would have been important given the nature of her business. In the case of Sheila there is little evidence of her networks coming through her son's memories - once the business was formalised the son took over the selling side of the business and the mother was always involved in the day-to-day operations.

³⁸⁵ Interview, 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 301.

³⁸⁶ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 136.

The glimpses of interconnectedness of businesses in the fashion and clothing manufacturing sector hinted at in these stories is borne out by other sources.

According to Fagan:

even the physical layout of the city was affected by the indigenous rag trade. Between major shopping thoroughfares like Grafton Street and South Great George's Street, and with department stores like Kelleys and Pims long gone, a network of manufacturers, cutters and finishers flourished around Drury Street and South William Street,. North of the Liffey, the Henry Street hinterland extended beyond Capel Street into Green Street and Mary's Lane. And the beautiful young mannequins who modelled the latest creations from Sybil Connolly, Neilli Mulcahy, Raymond Kenna and later Ib Jorgensen were role models for a new generation of Irish women.³⁸⁷

The various personnel in the related businesses would have been known to one another and have collaborated and competed with one another. Neilli Mulcahy along with Irene Gilbert, Ib Jorgensen and Clodagh co-founded the Irish Haute Couture Group with a view to promoting and encouraging the Haute Couture end of the fashion business.³⁸⁸ The interchange between Irene Gilbert and the department officials described above also indicates that the officials were aware of the importance of female contribution to clothing manufacturing and fashion design.

However despite the presence of females in business, some of the formal institutions associated with the fashion trade such as the Drapers' Chamber of Trade appeared to have little female representation at the formal structures of their organisation and at the Annual meeting and dinner in 1940

³⁸⁷ Fagan, 'Betty Whelan', *Irish Independent*, 1 July 2011.

³⁸⁸ O'Byrne, *After a fashion: a history of the Irish Fashion industry*. p. 40

an all-male Council was elected and the reported list of attendees were all male.³⁸⁹

Perceptions – self and others

How were these women perceived, how did their families view them and how were they perceived by others? Some of the oral histories provide insight into these questions as do commentary that comes through the public press. Family perceptions do vary. Nellie's daughter says:

I think it was quite good, I think most of us were, we had to become quite sensible and we had to, you know be aware of what things cost and to make use of things really and to work...³⁹⁰

Her own life story was influenced by her mother's experience; she enjoyed working in the business with her mother from a young age and developed her own interest of business in the enterprises that her mother had established. She went on to establish in 1961 the first employment agency that provided temporary office staff to Irish companies.

The case of Sheila and her relationships was not quite as positive. Her first formal foray into a structured business environment was when her son was a grown man. They opened a factory together and he was very clear about the importance of their having separate roles. He was often on the road and travelled the country selling their products, partly because he had a flair for it, and partly because they would not have agreed were they working under the one roof all of the time. She had spent many years working as her own boss and had considerable experience and theirs was a fiery relationship:

She messed me up, she knew I had a date, she wouldn't leave the factory, I'd have to drive her home, I'd see my date standing there and by the time

³⁸⁹ Drapers Chamber of Trade, Annual meeting and dinner', *Irish Times*, 20 April 1940.

³⁹⁰ Interview, 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p. 135.

I'd got back my date would be gone. But there were always things like that – she was a difficult woman, but she was neurotic and she would tell you all the things that were wrong with me. But, I looking back at it, I did things that nobody would have done, all out of loyalty...³⁹¹

He also refers to the control that his mother exerted on the monetary affairs:

Oh every penny, every penny, until such time as we were producing in the factory. And even then, I didn't have any control of the money, I just took a nominal salary and it was always, when I go, the share of the factory would be yours.

For Dorothea's son there is an appreciation of the positives of how her business benefited the family:

at the time we had a privileged upbringing because of it in the latter years, about the '60's 70's.³⁹²

However, he has been left with a strong view about the importance of the mother in the home and in describing his own experience reflects on some degree of loss:

I suppose, we were lucky that our grandmother was right beside us so she was always there, she would feed us and she looked after us when we came home from school and we would get our dinners there, but I do think if your mother's not there you do miss that a bit growing up and I think it affects you in, I suppose your mother will make you do your homework, your mother will make you do things that probably your grandmother won't have the same instinct on or the house keeper or the girl at home, so I suppose you do miss that, and there is, I suppose there is a certain nurturing that can go astray if your mother is not there all the time and in those days fathers were not around you know that time, so it was a different era but it's, I think probably in hindsight you're nearly better off if they are at home,

³⁹¹ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 212.

³⁹² Interview 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 301.

from a just nurturing, education, just having your mother there I think is important.³⁹³

Notwithstanding the above, there is much admiration in his commentary for his mother and how she conducted her business affairs. He says:

...nothing would stop her, if she wanted to do something she did it and that was it. You know you have to be that way, it is a trait, I don't think I have it myself, but you have to have that kind of mentality, and I suppose there were other aspects. I suppose being a female at that time, you could play that part more to your benefit in certain things you know because I suppose you could, there were parts that you could use to gain ground over other males because obviously you didn't have to play the macho part but yet you could be steely tough underneath.³⁹⁴

He recounts how she refused to take no from a bank manager when she wanted a loan, she just kept approaching the next bank manager until she got the result she desired.

There are also some glimpses into the relationship between the husbands and wives in the oral histories. Nellie's husband had little knowledge of her business affairs and as her daughter recounts, this was as more a factor of his own situation rather than an attempt to keep him separate from the business:

Ah not at all, he didn't know how much was going on. You see he worked very hard, well at one time and he died much younger than she did, he died in 1961 just after I started the business. He wasn't at all involved in it, because you see he worked night times and then he'd be working in the morning as well. He would just come home at lunch time, have his lunch and then he would be gone back again in the evening. He would have been working Saturday nights and on some Sundays as well. So really we didn't see that much of him, he was always working...³⁹⁵

³⁹³ Interview 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 304.

³⁹⁴ Interview 27/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 304.

³⁹⁵ Interview 18/06/2013, vol. 2, p.150.

In Sheila's case, she was the one who generated the economic resources for the family and there is a sense that the husband, who was sickly, had little or no input or impact on the business. Dorothea's husband always had a job working in the Civil Service, independent of the business which was owned and operated by her. According to her son, the father would have helped with the books part-time but had no role in the day to day running of the company.

From the press it is apparent that from the 1950s onwards women in the clothing and manufacturing sector received much positive commentary. Indeed there were regular features about successful women in the fashion industry, with profiles of these women appearing in the fashion sections of the newspapers and this continued especially in the 1950s and 60s. A report in 1954 by Caroline Mitchell focussed on the success of female fashion businesses in New York such as Irene Gilbert, Sybil Connolly, Brendella Skirts which had been founded in Dun Laoghaire by the Fogarty Sisters.³⁹⁶ Una Lehane profiled the designer businesses based in South Frederick Street in Dublin including two females, Néllí Mulcahy and Áine Lawlor.³⁹⁷ Néllí at the time was a mother of two small children and it was reported that "she doesn't seem in the least daunted by her two-fold career of housewife and designer". The export success continued into the 1960s with Irene Gilbert, Dorothy Pinnock, and Elizabeth James all selling successfully in London also.³⁹⁸ Speaking to the Dublin business and professional women's club in 1968, Mr James Byrne of Córas Tráchtála acknowledged the role of women in design and stated that "no consideration of the significance of design in

³⁹⁶ Caroline Mitchell, 'Irish Clothes shown in New York', *Irish Times*, 15 May 1954.

³⁹⁷ Una Lehane, 'Three doors on Couture Street', *Irish Times*, 26 August 1959.

³⁹⁸ 'Irish Fashions on display in London', *Irish Times*, 25 May 1960.

the Irish economy would be complete without mention of the part played by women in its development”.³⁹⁹

Elsewhere an article about the aforementioned Miss Sheila Connolly who ran a packing case manufacturing business in 1950 described her as being “unobtrusively chic, brisk without being brusque”.⁴⁰⁰ The description of Mrs Fogarty in 1959 depicted a formidable business woman with strong ideas. Her business involved manufacturing under licence characters from the Walt Disney film ‘Darby O Gill and the Little People’:

Here, however the accepted attitude of a businesswoman ends, for in her relationship with her employees she reveals an unusual and human touch. To start with she employs only men in the workshop although she undertakes to market the work of their women folk provided it is done at home. “This is one of my principles,” she told me. “I am helping homes and families and bringing mothers away from their natural background is unnatural. The man is the family breadwinner”.⁴⁰¹

Success

The manufacturing businesses demonstrate progression, and the three women in this sample grew their businesses substantially with significant knock on financial benefits for themselves and their families. Dorothea’s son reports that “she did very well out of it” and that view is supported by her investments in later times. Dorothea expanded her factory and she bought an office block with the proceeds, and her son remembers that all the time while he was growing up the business was expanding. Even when the market began to decline and she had decided to cease trading the economic benefits from the business were accruing:

³⁹⁹ ‘High tribute to women designers’, *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1968.

⁴⁰⁰ Marie O’Reilly, ‘I sketch your world’, *Irish Independent*, 13 April 1956.

⁴⁰¹ ‘An Irishwoman’s diary’, *Irish Times*, 10 July 1959.

and I think by '74 or '76 she was going to put it into liquidation but she had built her, she had her properties which she then had the rents coming out of them at the time.⁴⁰²

Sheila, who had started her life in the north inner city of Dublin, built up a successful dressmaking business which she operated from home. In the process she was able to move properties at regular intervals going from sharing accommodation with her mother to living in a three-storey house with a basement from where she ran the business and employed 5 people. Other benefits included have a small holiday home by the seaside in the 1940s and the family used to go there at weekends as well as during the summer holiday time:

And then my father was offered a house on the railway line, it was an old creosote house, they used to do creosote sleepers, so we got that for a very nominal rent, but you had to walk up the railway tracks to get to it, but that was another thing. Then we bought a boat, for the Harbour, we bought a beachbox, we were getting on now, we moved out of the hut...⁴⁰³

Her younger children enjoyed the trappings of the family fortune, good schooling and extra-curricular activities. She eventually moved to the south side of Dublin city and bought properties in both Foxrock and Monkstown.

Nellie too moved from a home based operation as an own-account worker to running a successful knitting factory. This allowed the family to go from having rental accommodation to owning their own family home and at the end of the mother's business life she had acquired a property portfolio:

⁴⁰² Interview, 18/02/2013, vol. 2, p. 295.

⁴⁰³ Interview, 2/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 200.

she gave up the other business she started doing that, so the next thing we had another house, three or four houses and I had to look after all those with her.⁴⁰⁴

She also fulfilled her objective of giving her children opportunities to be educated and take additional lessons, such as elocution, drama and music. A number of her children went onto college, 2 of the girls did a Bachelor of Commerce Degree, one did Domestic Science degree and the boys did engineering.

Conclusion

The national statistical records, the business archives and the testimony of family and friends gives an insight into the activities, challenges and achievements of women in the manufacturing sector. There is evidence that women were involved in many different manufacturing types of business in particular in the early years of the 1920s and 1930s. However, by and large the story of women in manufacturing is undoubtedly heavily concentrated in the clothing, textile and garment industries and this declined over the period in question. Females were active participants in this arena, and operated both as employers and own-account workers but the decline was striking and own account workers moved out of the sector in numbers, possibly as a result of a combination of factors – increased levels of education, higher levels of emigration, and more opportunity for women as office workers and in the professions. Nevertheless, the business owners profiled here demonstrate that women who worked in manufacturing ran successful operations and some of them competed not just nationally, but found success on the international stage too.

⁴⁰⁴ Interview, 18/06/2013.vol. 2, p. 149.

CHAPTER FIVE: WOMEN IN PERSONAL SERVICE 1922-1972

Personal service is a significant sector for female participation in the workforce, both as owner managers and own-account workers as well as employees. Personal service sector in the 1926 Census includes Private Domestic Service, Lodging and Boarding Houses, Hotels and restaurants, Public Houses, Clubs, Laundries, Hairdressing, Undertaking, Charitable service and other personal services. In 1926 it was second to Agriculture as the sector providing most employment to females – 99,130 females worked in this sector, with a large majority of them, 75,611 being employed in private domestic service. By 1971, it is not as important for overall female employment and by then, the number of females in domestic service had fallen to 15,303.

Overview

The category remained relatively consistent across all these subcategories during each Census, the major change being that Public Houses were moved into Commerce and Finance in 1951 and in 1936 a distinction was made between hotel restaurants and general restaurants and a separate sub category was created for the latter. There was also a separate subcategory introduced for portrait and photographic studios in 1951 but this is discontinued in 1971. For the purpose of analysis in this chapter, public houses have been omitted as these were included in the section on Commerce and Finance. Table 40 gives a synopsis of the female owners and own-account workers across the subcategories of Personal Service for the period under review.

*Table 40: Females employers and own-account managers for Personal Services Sector.*⁴⁰⁵

Personal Services	1926 Female	1936 Females	1946 Female	1951 Female	1961 Female	1966 Female	1971 Female
Private domestic service			15	9			
Lodging and boarding houses	4393	4175	2124	2496	1018	1154	204
Hotels and restaurants/cafes	667		845	608	851	832	963
Clubs			2		2		
Laundries	220	149	47	26	11	6	27
Hairdressing	54	324	533	929	1095	1185	1258
Undertaking	11		16	15	11	10	6
Charitable Service			2	9		1	
Other Personal Services	211	55	21	20	13	25	67
Photography				32	13	16	
Total	5556	4703	3605	4144	3014	3229	2525

It is apparent that the most significant areas for female businesses are in the hotel and catering sector, with hairdressing growing in significance as time progresses. Lodging and boarding-houses were very significant in the earlier part of the century, but diminish in importance over time. At the turn of the century, lodging houses provided accommodation for the growing number of clerical and civil servants who were seeking opportunities in the towns and cities. Benson notes that the provision of accommodation was often seen as a means to greater financial security, or at a minimum a means of supplementing the overall family income and that trend continued into the 20th century.⁴⁰⁶ It is apparent from the 1926 Census that this was also a feature of the economic activity of Irish women.

⁴⁰⁵ *Census of Population, Industrial Status/Industries, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

⁴⁰⁶ Benson, *The Penny Capitalists*, p. 77.

What was the situation with regard to men as employers and own-account managers in the Personal Service Sector? They were present, but their presence exhibits slightly different patterns in different categories than the females as illustrated in the table below.

*Table 41 Male employers and own-account workers in Personal Services.*⁴⁰⁷

Personal Services	1926 Male	1936 Male	1946 Male	1951 Male	1961 Male	1966 Male	1971 Male
Private domestic service			1	59			
Lodging and boarding houses	288	949	196	301	88	59	26
Hotels and restaurants/ cafes	480		640	708	891	1110	1313
Clubs			4		1		
Laundries	18	26	35	35	28	39	146
Hairdressing	771	1059	944	915	886	888	854
Undertaking	95		146	148	115	118	3
Charitable Service			1	3	2		
Other Personal Services	244	441	294	339	297	296	811
Photographic studios				181	193	223	
Total	1896	2475	2261	2689	2501	2733	3153

Men are more active as hairdressers than females in the earlier part of the century. Again, Benson states that by far the most common type of personal service provided by working class males in the UK was the cutting of hair and the 1926 Census figure possibly indicates that such was the case here in Ireland too.⁴⁰⁸ However, women increasingly became involved in hairdressing – possibly as a result of changes in fashion, increased participation by women in the working force and increased consumption power, habits in relation to personal grooming changed and provided

⁴⁰⁷ *Census of Population*, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.

⁴⁰⁸ Benson, *The Penny Capitalist*, p. 85.

business opportunities for females, as well as for males with hairdressing skills. Females account for close on 60% of the total employers and own-account workers in hairdressing by 1971, as opposed to 1926 when men accounted for 93% of the total.

Men have a relatively small share of the lodging house category, with 288 males as landlords by comparison with 4,393 landladies operating in 1926. Looking at hotels and restaurants, which were a combined category until 1951 when they were reported separately in the Census, there were less males here too in 1926, however this was a trend that was reversed over the period in question.

*Table 42: Female and Male employers and own account workers in hotels and restaurants*⁴⁰⁹

	1926	1926	1946	1946	1951	1951	1961	1961	1966	1966	1971	1971
Personal Services	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Hotels and restaurants	667	480	845	640	378	422	576	515	590	594	706	710
Other Restaurants, cafes,					230	286	275	376	242	516	257	603
Total	667	480	845	640	608	708	851	891	832	1110	963	1313

There were 667 female employers and own-account workers in the hotel and restaurant sector in 1926, meaning that they accounted for just over 58% of the total. This had almost totally flipped by 1971—at that stage the overall number had increased with both more men and women operating as employers and own-account workers in greater numbers in the sector at that point. However men now accounted for just under 58% of the total. The figures offer no reasons for this, but they do need to be interpreted with a degree of caution—it is important to realise that what might be considered a

⁴⁰⁹ *Census of Population, Industrial Status/Industries, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

hotel in 1926 was likely to have been different to what was classed as a hotel in 1971. It was only with the passing of the Local Government Act 1925 that a hotel was defined for the first time in section 67 which dealt with the legislation that allowed the newly formed Irish Tourist Association contract with local authorities for funding for tourism advertising.⁴¹⁰ Heretofore, inns, public houses, even brothels were liberally using the term hotel to give a certain gravitas to their activities. Notwithstanding issues of classification it would appear that men became more dominant in the hotel and catering sector towards the later part of the century.

Indeed, this trend seems to be prevalent right across the personal services sector, where it would appear that there is a very significant falling-off in females as employers and own-account workers over time, with the exception of hairdressing, while males have increased as per the following table.

*Table 43: Females and Males employers and own-account workers in Personal Service.*⁴¹¹

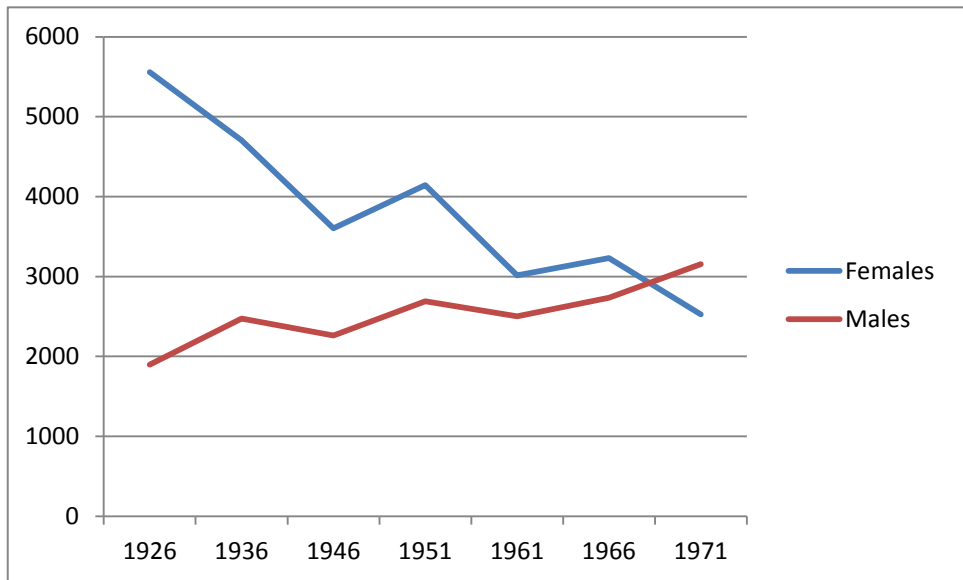
	Females	Males
1926	5556	1896
1936	4703	2475
1946	3605	2261
1951	4144	2689
1961	3014	2501
1966	3229	2733
1971	2525	3153

The starkness of these figures is best represented graphically as in Figure 4 which demonstrates a sharp fall-off in females accompanied by a steady rise in males.

⁴¹⁰ Irene Furlong, *Irish Tourism 1880-1980* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), p. 40.

⁴¹¹ *Census of Population, Occupation Tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

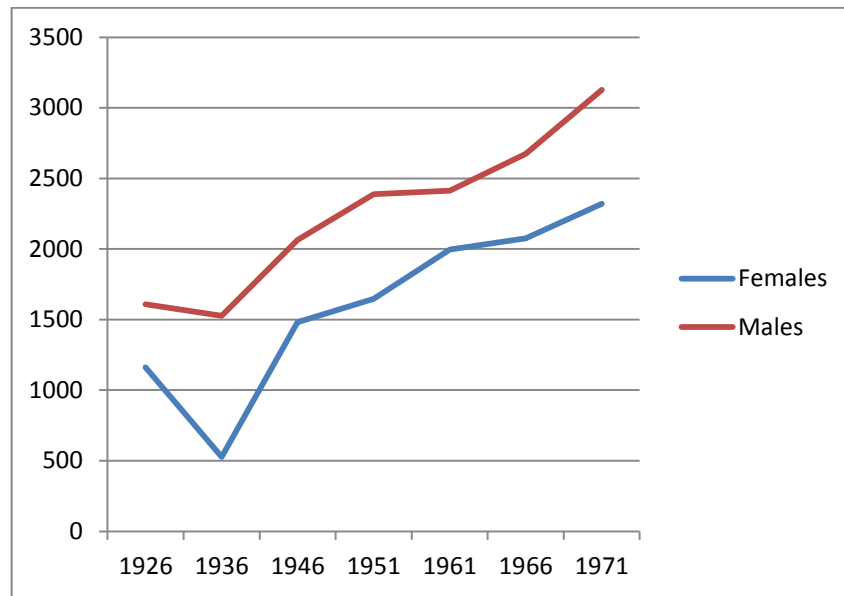
Fig 4: Female and male employers and own account workers in personal service sector 1926-1971.⁴¹²



However, one must look a little closer to get a true picture of what was happening in terms of employers. When the figures above are adjusted and the total number of employers shown with the own-account workers removed *for lodging houses*, the trend line for both females and males shows an increase. (see figure 5). Given that lodging houses was a personal service that became virtually extinct over the period, the trend line depicted in the figure 5 is probably a more realistic depiction of the relative position of female employers and own-account workers in the personal service sector relative to males; that is to say that the inclusion of lodging houses in Table 43 for the early years skews the position of female employers and own account workers

⁴¹² Graph compiled from data extracted from *Census of Population, Occupation Tables*, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.

Fig 5: Female and Male employers and own account workers in personal services with lodging house removed 1926-1971.⁴¹³



What is the situation when we separate the employers from own-account workers? Here the female employers in the service sector were greater than males in 1926, with 937 out of a total of 1589 they account for almost 59% of the total employers in the sector. By 1971 that number at 801 out of 1691 employers, females account for 47% of the total, and while this is less than in 1926 it still accounts for almost half of the employers during the time.

So it is reasonable to surmise that females were the largest employer and own-account workers for lodging houses, but this sub-category of Personal Service almost totally declined from the mid-20th century on. Female employers did decline in total in the period while male employers increased as illustrated in Table 44.

⁴¹³ Graph compiled from data extracted from *Census of Population, Occupation Tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971*.

Table 44: Female and Male employers in Personal Service sector.⁴¹⁴

	1926 Fem	1926 Male	1936 Fem	1936 Male	1946 Fem	1946 Male	1951 Fem	1951 Male	1961 Fem	1961 Male	1966 Female	1966 Male
Personal Services												
Private domestic service												
Lodging and boarding houses	493	50	1307	537	231	64	340	103	96	16	70	13
Hotels and restaurants	390	324			536	472	283	339	308	352	302	392
Other Restaurants, cafes,							111	174	117	165	100	231
Clubs					2	2						
Laundries	21	18	10	20	5	26	3	27	2	19	1	27
Hairdressing	16	207	96	278	193	266	256	257	236	149	310	155
Undertaking	9	43			12	69	13	65	5	37	5	23
Charitable Service					1		1	1			1	
Other Personal Services	8	10	14	65	1	20	3	22	1	16	4	29
Photography							8	42	2	26	8	20
Total	937	652	1427	900	981	919	1018	1030	767	780	801	890

Non-hotel and catering personal services

Other than hotels and restaurants, the sector encompasses hairdressers, laundries, undertakers and for the first time in 1951 the Census included a separate subcategory for portrait and commercial photographer. While relatively small as a percentage of overall personal services employers and own-account managers, the statistics above include perhaps the most famous female photographer of the time. Annie Brophy opened her studio in 1922

⁴¹⁴ *Census of Population, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1966, 1971.*

while still in her early twenties, operated from the same premises for over 50 years and for the entire period of this study. She had been apprenticed to an English photographer who set up in Waterford during the First World War years and on his retirement she set up on her own. Her niece is of the opinion that this venture would have had the full support of her mother and father:

and knowing the Brophy family as I know them, as Mary Rose would know, she would have done exactly what her parents told her, I am pretty sure of that and it was in the middle of the Civil War 1922 so I doubt if she would have decided 'I will clear off and do my own thing blah de blah de blah'. I am sure it wasn't like that, I'm sure it was that she was guided into that and advised that this was the thing to do and I would imagine it was coming from her parents together with a consultation with this Mr. Hughes, and he was gone then and she set up on her own.⁴¹⁵

She gained a reputation in the city very quickly and was a renowned portrait photographer. She did not appear to seek the limelight. The studio was based in the family home which she shared with her mother until her mother's death, two of her sisters and her younger brother who in time worked with her in the business. One of her sisters, Jossie, also operated her own business. She was a confectioner and operated her own shop in partnership with another female, May in Waterford right up until she was in her eighties. Both the sisters, Annie and Jossie set up and ran businesses that utilised their considerable natural talents. Annie was reputed to be very good at art at school and while apprenticed to Mr. Hughes developed her skills and natural talent. She was innovative, used colour in photography at an early stage, was very skilful at retouching photographs and always had a good eye to the photographic opportunity. When the wall of the jail collapsed in Waterford, Annie had the presence of mind to get a camera and her photographs provide

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Annie's nieces, Waterford, 24/1/2013; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 79-115, p. 82.

the only photographic record of the tragedy. Jossie's baked goods were very creative and according to her niece "there is a certain artistic element in that as well because the stuff that she turned out was divine to look at".⁴¹⁶

As noted the proprietors of many hotels and restaurants were female. One woman credited with opening a café with a bit of a difference in 1949 was Mrs Mai Garvey who opened Dublin's first café cinema in Grafton Street. This cinema showed news reels and for a shilling they served tea while they screened the news reel.⁴¹⁷ Prior to opening the café cinema Mrs Garvey was a hotel and restaurant proprietor. Other personal service businesses included laundries and a very well renowned Dublin laundry operated throughout most of the decades of the 20th century was founded by a woman. In 1926, the monthly magazine, *The Crystal* carried an article on Joan Kelso who had just set up a laundry.⁴¹⁸ The laundry operated for many years in Rathmines in Dublin. Women also ran employment agencies and the newspapers often carried advertisements from such agencies. The following extract from the National Archives holdings illustrates the point:

Situations Vacant' Section of the 'Limerick Leader',
10 October 1953, containing several advertisements
for recruitment agencies in both Dublin and
Limerick. The advertisements stress the Catholic
management of the agencies and offer employment
in Ireland and England. 'An established Catholic
Employment Bureau require girls for excellent
situations, England and Dublin, fares paid. Write
Miss Brophy's Bureau, 6 North Earl Street,
Dublin (75 years established-no booking fee
charged)... Attention-All Catholic girls seeking
employment in England should apply to Mrs Hynes,

⁴¹⁶ Interview, 24/1/2013, vol. 2, p. 95.

⁴¹⁷ Peteronella O'Flanagan, 'Woman opens Dublin's first news reel cinema', *Irish Press* 17 September 1949.

⁴¹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 2 March 1926

Universal Employment Bureau, 52 Lower O'Connell Street, Dublin. Vacancies in all parts of England, Wales etc., in private houses, hotels, colleges and school work; experience not necessary... time guaranteed to practice religious duties; girls met in Dublin and England. ⁴¹⁹

Mrs Hynes referred to above was the daughter of Mr Sean Brophy who operated an Employment bureau in Dublin. As a young women she went to work with her father and quickly set up and developed her own independent business in 1937 which she continued to operate all through her life, passing it on to her daughter who has run the business up to the current times. ⁴²⁰ It was originally known as the Universal Employment Bureau and then became the Molly Hynes Agency. Mrs. O'Keefe of High Street, Kilfinane was also running a similar agency. These advertisements are attached to files relating to queries on emigration in the Department of the Taoiseach.

Court reports contained insights into the positions and occupations of women. In 1931 the Kelly sisters in Ballinasloe operated an undertaking business and ended up in court when their landlord served them notice to quit. ⁴²¹ Their father had operated an undertaking business in the town for over 70 years and now the daughters continued the business. They had horses, hearses and cars housed in the disputed shed, one that the business had used for over 50 years. The judge refused the landlord possession of the property.

⁴¹⁹ 'Ad from Limerick Leader, filed in the Irish Labour Emigration file' (N.A.I, s11582e, Department of Taoiseach).

⁴²⁰ 'Hynes Agency', <http://www.hynesagency.ie/aboutus.html>, accessed on 6/6/2014.

⁴²¹ 'Insurance of apprentices', *The Connacht Tribune*, 26 September 1931.

In Galway Mrs. Warner de Bosch challenged her mother's will and had a deed signing her share of the family home set aside by the court.⁴²² The details in court reveal that the mother Mrs Warner was a business woman and that in 1964 she had developed a business called "Toothpack" which needed investment. Her daughter had at that time released her claim on the house to allow the mother raise money. The business "Toothpack" was a pack with toothbrush and tooth paste which travelling people could use and was reported to have generated considerable business. She is also attributed with a company called "Coldsuds" which she sold in 1964 but she continued to get £2,500 per annum because she originated the name Coldsuds. In making his judgement the judge stated that Mrs. Warner was always in financial difficulty—the article does not reveal what kind of business 'Coldsuds' was.

Hotel, Catering and tourism

As noted earlier, females were a very significant contributor to the hotel and catering sector, and right through the period there were almost as many female proprietors of hotels as there were male proprietors. Developments in the hotel and catering sector of the economy were closely aligned with developments within the tourist industry. When the attraction of visitors to the country became a focus of government policy it impacted on how many regions developed their hospitality sector and related businesses. As Ireland emerged from the War of Independence and Civil War coupled with the impact of the First World War, the earlier impact of people like F.W Crossley and the many small, local organisations that worked to promote tourism in the late 19th and early 20th century was eroded. Thus the

⁴²² *Connacht Tribune*, 9 February 1968.

challenges facing the Irish Free State in developing a tourism offering were significant.⁴²³

The first major development from the State was the establishment of the Irish Tourist Association in 1925 with responsibilities for promoting Ireland as a tourist destination. Then in 1939, the Irish Tourist Board (Bord Cuartaíochta na hÉireann) was established. This organisation was given the responsibility to grade and register and grade hotels and in 1946, following an influx of British visitors in a post-war boom in tourism, the Department of Industry and Commerce developed a Tourist Programme which included the upgrading of existing and the provision of new additional accommodation. The Irish Tourist Board was given responsibility for this, and an interim incorporated company was set up to develop these new hotels with a view to disposing them to private enterprise at the earliest possible stage. In 1955 Bord Fáilte was established.⁴²⁴

1925, as mentioned earlier was the first year that ‘hotel’ was defined and was deemed to be any premises with ten bedrooms and upwards which was for the exclusive accommodation of guests.⁴²⁵ The data from the directories published by the ITA contain details on guesthouses and hotels from across the country. 1936 and 1943 are particularly relevant to the period being studied. There are three categories of accommodation included in these directories; hotel which presumably tallies with the definition from 1925; unlicensed/private hotel which provide hotel accommodation without the bar, and finally boarding house/guest houses. While the gender of the hotel owners is not consistently listed, the gender for unlicensed premises and guest houses is usually apparent from the directory and there is a significant

⁴²³ Furlong, *Irish Tourism*, p 10.

⁴²⁴ 'Failte Ireland', <http://www.failteireland.ie/Utility/What-We-Do/Our-History.aspx>, accessed 13/6/2014.

⁴²⁵ Furlong, *Irish Tourism*, p.40.

level of female owners therein. The case of Bray is illustrated in table 44. In 1933 there were 19 premises listed under the category of private hotels, boarding house and apartments, 18 were owned by females. This number rose to 20 in 1943, and of these, 17 were owned by females.⁴²⁶ In other tourist destinations, the same trend appears, for instance in Dun Laoghaire in 1933 there were 7 private hotels and boarding houses listed, 5 run by females, this had reduced to 5 in 1943 and four of these were owned by women.

The advertisements in the various regional tourist directories also give an insight into the level of female ownership in the sector. The 1934 promotional pamphlet for Wicklow and Wexford carried 18 hotel advertisements and 8 were run by women and 1 was owned by a husband and wife team.⁴²⁷ They included The Cedars Private hotel run by Mrs. J Kelly, Vale View Hotel, Avoca where Mrs. Brown was the proprietress, Leicester Arms Hotel, Enniskerry owned by Mr. and Mrs Prosser, Holyrood Hotel in Bray owned by Miss K. Molloy, Wave Crest House, Bray owned by Miss E Dockery, White's Hotel, Wexford owned by Mary A. McCarthy, Wave Crest Hotel, Bray owned by Mrs. Graham, Globe Hotel, New Ross, which is described as being under the personal supervision of the proprietress and Summerhill Hotel, in Enniskerry owned by Miss M. Dunne. In a similar pamphlet promoting Ballycotton, there were 5 advertisements in total of which 3 were female-owned premises.⁴²⁸ Fawcetts Sea View Hotel owned by Mrs. Fawcett, The Garryvoe Hotel owned by Miss M Thompson, Proprietress, and Ardahinch Hotel owned by Mrs. Linehan.

⁴²⁶ *Irish Tourist Directory*, 1933 and 1943, (N.L.I., IR 9141).

⁴²⁷ *Official guide to Wicklow and Wexford*, Irish Tourist Association 1934 (N.L.I., IR 9141), p. 11.

⁴²⁸ *Official guide to Wicklow and Wexford*, pp. 1-20.

Salthill in Galway had 9 listed in 1933, 6 of which were female-run—the figures for premises had gone up to 28 in 1943 but it is unclear from this listing how many of the additional premises were owned by females. However, the prevalence of women in the hotel business in Salthill is borne out in other sources too. In an 1957 article on where to stay and eat when going to a GAA match in the newly opened Pearse Stadium in Salthill the following premises are given as options— Castle Hotel run by Mr and Mrs P. Ryan; Timree Hotel run by Mrs. Heffernan; the Warwick Hotel run by Mr. and Mrs. Keogh; Summerset Hotel managed by Mr. and Mrs Hussey; Kincora Hotel run by Miss Tannian; Grand Hotel run by Misses K and W. Martyn; Eglinton Hotel where the “late Mrs. Eglinton for many years its presiding genius, was one of the founders of the I.T.A.”; Rockland Hotel “under the management of the Misses Monahan” and Scotch House run by Miss Betty Gallagher.⁴²⁹ The same Miss Monahan featured in a court case where she had objected to the granting of a gaming licence to another local female business owner, Mrs. Marion Toft of Salthill who ran “The Arcade”.⁴³⁰ The judge granted the licence to Mrs. Toft on the conditions agreed with Miss Monahan’s wishes – that the juke box and windows close at 11pm and amusements cease at midnight except during race week.⁴³¹

With the formation of the Irish Tourist Board, serious efforts were made to improve both the quantity and quality of the accommodation. Furlong reports that by April 1945 there were 1,774 applications for registration with the ITB, of which 1,192 were registered.⁴³² There were three categories of grades for hotels and guest houses, A, B and C and at the commencement of the grading there were 90 grade A hotels, 261 grade B and 542 Grade C

⁴²⁹ 'Dining on the day of the match', *Connacht Tribune*, 15 June 1957.

⁴³⁰ *Connacht Tribune*, 26 July 1958.

⁴³¹ *Connacht Tribune*, 26 July 1958.

⁴³² Furlong, *Irish Tourism*, p. 116.

hotels, a total of 893 ITB recognised hotels. For guesthouses there was 11 Grade A guest houses, 87 Grade B and 187 grade C, a total of 285 guest houses in all.

She reports that in 1946 Eileen O'Halloran of Kinsale described her premises as a hotel but was prosecuted for contravening the relevant section of the Tourist Traffic Act 1939.⁴³³ Ensuring that the standards were implemented meant that the ITB appointed inspectors. A feature in *Woman's Life* in 1945 profiles one of the newly appointed Hotel Inspectors, Miss Kitty Kennedy.⁴³⁴ It contains a description of what were termed essential rules for hotels, which included having 'adequate dining and sitting room accommodation in respect of the number of guests they can accommodate'. The sitting room had to be separate, and bathrooms had to be at a ratio of one to every 5 bedrooms, and it was desirable to have hot and cold water in all of the bedrooms.

There was considerable resistance in some quarters to the raising of standards and at the time many male and female hotel owners did not consider that each guest was entitled to clean bed linen. One lady hotel owner in Tipperary told the inspectors that she solved the problem of clean linen by 'investing in plastic sheets and pillowcases, which only needed a wipe to be clean again' and was not impressed when she was told that this did not meet the required standard.⁴³⁵

⁴³³ Furlong, *Irish Tourism*, p. 116.

⁴³⁴ 'Mainly for Women', *Woman's Life*, 24 November 1945.

⁴³⁵ Furlong, *Irish Tourism*, p. 116.

Table 45: Hotel and guest houses for Bray 1933 and 1943 from ITA directories.⁴³⁶

1933	1943
Mrs. Breheny, 12 Main Street 4 rooms	Mrs Armstrong, Crescent, Meath Road 9 rooms
Miss Burke, Kinvara Esplanade 14 rooms	Upgraded to unlicensed hotel with 28 bedrooms , no mention of owner
Mrs. Campbell, Eden View, Herbert Road- board residence or apartments	Mrs. K Breen, St John's, Dublin Road, 5 rooms
Mrs. Crowe, 5 Goldsmith Terrace, Quinsboro Road 8 rooms	Mrs. Crowe 9 rooms
Miss Deacon, Belmont, Esplande 7 rooms	Belmont Private Hotel, no mention of Miss Deacon, 10 rooms
Mrs. Foley 4 Martello Terrace, Esplande 6 rooms	Mrs. T. Connolly, The Haven, 3 Fontenoy Tce, Esplande 4 rooms
Grand Hotel, 7 Goldsmith Tce, Quinsboro Road,* Miss Woods 9 rooms	Grand Hotel, no mention of Miss Woods 9 rooms
Miss Gunn, 7 Eglinton Road, 6 rooms	Mrs. Corcoran, St. Alban's, Meath Road 7 rooms
Mrs. Kavanagh, St Mary's, Meath Road 5 rooms	Dalmore, Sidmonton Rd, 12 rooms
Mrs. McGee, Stella Maris, 10 Fitzwilliam Tce. Esplanade 6 rooms	Mrs.F Donnelly, Edenvale, Esplande 8 rooms
Mrs. Mac Tighe, 36 Duncairn Avenue 5 rooms	Mrs. M. B Duggan, 5 Brennan's Tce, Esplande 9 rooms
Mrs. Murphy, Cliff House, Bray Head- farmhouse	Miss Catherine Gleeson, St. john's, Meath Road, 6 rooms
Mrs. O Dea, Massy Cottage, Killarney road 4 rooms	Miss Good,3 Mount Norris Villas 2 rooms
St. Albert Hotel, Meath road 6 rooms	Mrs. R Harris, Seaview House, Windgates 4 rooms
Miss Scraggs, Mellifont, Westbourne Tce 6 rooms	Mrs. Angela O'Brien, Danigean, 8 Sydenham Villas, 6 rooms
Mrs. Somers, 1 Richmond Tce, Meath road, 8 rooms	Mrs. E. Somers 8 rooms
Mrs Sproule, Dunraven, 5 Brennan's Terrace, Esplande 6 rooms	Rath na Seer, Esplande The Misses Thompson 10 rooms
Mrs Wiggins, Virginia, Meath Road 7 rooms	Mrs. S. Wiggins 8 rooms
Miss Wray, 2 Westview Tce, Adelaide Road – apartments to let	St. Anne's Private Hotel, Esplande 10 rooms Norah ryan
	Ms C and M. Whelan, Verona, Martello Tce,Esplande

⁴³⁶ Irish Tourist Directory, 1933 and 1943, (N.L.I., IR 9141).

Starting up

Women had always played a role in the provision of accommodation and familial connections and family networks play a significant role in how women become hoteliers. Hotel work and associated management training was a source of employment for young, single women and some of the hoteliers interviewed commenced their working life in this way. Many established hotels began their lives as coaching inns and the history of Mary's establishment in particular demonstrates a long tradition of female involvement as owners and managers for the best part of the 20th century, with the original woman inheriting it from her father, who handed it on in time to Mary and family. Mary was born in 1919 and early in her working life, as a young woman, she came and worked for a year or two as book-keeper in the hotel she eventually owned and ran for more than 50 years. She moved onto work in the Great Northern hotels, and eventually became the manager of one hotel in that group of hotels. While working as a book-keeper she had met the nephew of the hotel owner and in time she married him. Like many women of her generation, following her marriage she initially did not work. Her son recollects how she became more involved in the business that her husband's aunt ran:

and she didn't really work in the hotel for a few years, I think she was, had young children at the time, my sisters were born then and eh, then eventually she started helping my aunt in the hotel, she came back to the hotel, sort of part time while she had a young family, so that's situation grew then. My aunt was getting quite old, she was in her, she was in her nineties, she would have been in her seventies then, so my mother, so my great Aunt's role diminished and my mother's increased over the years.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁷ Interview with Mary's son, South-East, 19/3/2013; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 256-266, p. 257.

She worked in the hotel for over 20 years and when the aunt eventually died in the mid-1960s, the hotel was passed onto Mary and her family.

The story of Mary Huggard and her daughter Hilda as hoteliers has long lineage too. Originally from Wicklow Mary Huggard trained as a hotel manager and she moved to Waterville, Co. Kerry to run the Southern Lake Hotel. There she met and married Martin Huggard in 1912 – his family owned and ran the Bay View Hotel and according to her grandson:

and then my grandmother being a hotel manager went in, my grandfather kinda only ran the Bay View I'd say very casually you know, he was a bit laid back, and of course she ran it as a business, and she made a go of it because she was young, she was a trained hotel manager and she was keen to get on, so she ran that ...⁴³⁸

The experience and training stood her in good stead and over time, with the money she made from the successful operation of the first business she bought an additional six hotels, the Butler Arms in Waterville, the Royal Hotel in Valentia, the Carragh Lake and the Lake Hotel in Kerry, Ashford Castle in Mayo and Ballinahinch Castle in Galway, making the Huggard family most probably the first indigenous owner of a chain of hotels in Ireland. Mrs. Huggard's obituary reiterates the point made by her grandson stating:

If Mrs Huggard appeared to occupy a more prominent place than her husband this was because he himself desired that her special qualities should be exercised in the foreground, while he was content to play his part behind the scenes.⁴³⁹

In turn, Hilda Huggard, daughter of Mrs. Huggard inherited the Lake Hotel in Killarney with her three sisters and ran it for up to 50 years.

⁴³⁸ Interview with Mary's grandson, 10/4/2013; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 32-57, p. 34.

⁴³⁹ 'Mrs. Martin Huggard An Appreciation', *Irish Times*, 16 August 1968.

Training in the hotel sector was not uncommon for females, either as workers in hotels as in the case of Mary from the South East and Mrs Huggard above, but also in other forms of domestic training. In some instances this was a very deliberate course of action, with the intent that the females would become active in the business. Miss Moylette, of Downhill Hotel, in Ballina, Mayo, (21), did a course in Domestic Science at Sion Hill in Dublin and this gave her a foundation “which will enable her take on the management of the Hotel which she intends to expand”. Reporting on her birthday celebrations, *Woman’s Life* reports that her father presented her with “the symbolic gold key, giving her ownership”.⁴⁴⁰

Not all of the hotel proprietors interviewed benefited from the experience of hotel management training, but again family background did feature in the case of Una. She was born in 1916 on a farm in rural Kerry and had uncles working the hotel and bar trade in Killarney and Liverpool. At a young age, 15 or 16 she left the land and went to work as a servant for her aunt, who was running a hotel. Her son recounts her experience:

The lady, her aunt had a daughter who was obviously my mother’s first cousin, and the aunt recognized immediately that the daughter was not going to do the business, just an absolute disaster, she was a bit older than my mother but just she was a lady for high time, dancing and you know, that kind of, foolish, nothing wrong, but just a bit of that, and she immediately saw this and she, my mother was very ambitious and always wanted to get on and lively and all, and they came to some arrangement that she would sell the hotel to my mother at a reduced rate and ah, at a reduced price but also with a term to pay it a bit below...⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴⁰ 'Mainly for Women', *Women’s Life*, 3 March 1945.

⁴⁴¹ Interview with Una’s son, 10/4/2013; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 241-255, p. 241.

Una was just about 20 when she took over the hotel in 1936, and to do so she borrowed the money from the bank to pay her aunt.

Necessity too, was often a prime motivator for the hotelier in question.

Ellen was widowed and left with a family of nine children ranging in age from 18 down to 2 years of age. Her husband's dying instruction to his wife, was "whatever you do, educate the children".⁴⁴² Her husband, a doctor had little savings and her only resource was their home, which was a substantial house. Her daughter remembers:

So all she had was a house, a big house and no income and money was from what I hear incredibly tight so the only thing that she could think of doing was to start keeping people, hotel was too big a word, so she converted two rooms upstairs, one big one and one small one. She could only afford to furnish one so depending on what room was wanted the furniture moved between the two rooms and that was the start of her business.⁴⁴³

This business essentially began as a type of boarding-house in the late 1940s, but Ellen built it up to a guest house, adding some additional rooms when the money permitted. In the late 1950s she got a licence, opened a bar and from that it developed into a significant hotel.

Opportunity often presented itself as was the case for the founders of the Gleneagles hotel in Killarney. Mr. and Mrs. O' Donoghue were living over the shop, the family pharmacy business and this had some space limitations. On buying an older eight bedroomed house just out of town in 1957, they were asked by the local hotel in take in some guests and according to their grandson:

they took in guests and em, that gave them the idea to actually develop it as a hotel and my grandmother

⁴⁴² Interview with Ellen's daughter, 10/4/2013; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 151-163, p. 152.

⁴⁴³ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p.152.

then would have been the one to run the hotel business as such, cos my granddad continued as a Pharmacist running the pharmacy business in the town centre, and em, my grandmother then would have kind of operated from the hotel so, that would be, they bought the house in 1957 and it was fairly soon afterwards in 1958 they opened, they took their first guest in...⁴⁴⁴

In the early days, the Gleneagle was operated by Mrs. O Donoghue and in the words of her grandson:

even though both my grandparents were involved, like there was two distinct elements to the business, there was a shop in town that my granddad looked after and there was the business here. Now, the I suppose, I have no doubt that they ran it as a couple and that they would have consulted each other on big decisions, but in terms of the day to day, she was very much involved ...⁴⁴⁵

Her eldest son joined her in the hotel, he worked on the entertainment side of the business while Mrs. O Donoghue looked after the operations. Tourism was developing quickly in the region and the hotel developed in tandem with the industry and continues to be operated by the family today.

It is apparent from the Census and ITA data that guest houses were also an important part of the accommodation scene in Ireland too. Annie O' Brien in Tramore is a good example of a family-run guest house, she commenced shortly after her marriage in 1941 and operated the business into the 1980s. The house was large, with 5 bedrooms upstairs which were exclusively for the guests, and the living quarters for the family were downstairs. Her daughters remember the layout of the house:

... there were two bedrooms there that were literally dormitories, like this size, as big as this room here,

⁴⁴⁴ Interview with Sheila's grandson, 9/4/2013; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 186-213, p. 165.

⁴⁴⁵ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 181.

family rooms, and then she had four singles you know, and huge space and the next room was a double and a single, and the next one was a double and on the next floor was a double and another treble so if you got the right parties you could have fourteen people, so it would be anything from fourteen downwards.⁴⁴⁶

There is a strong sense from the recollections of the sisters of how closely embedded the business was with family life, and echoes the experience recounted by Ellen's daughter, particularly in the early days of her business as a guest house as opposed to as a hotel.

Such women and their contribution to tourism were given some coverage in the national press at the time. Anna Kelly wrote in the *Irish Press* about a landlady who served the tourist market in 1952. She claimed never to ask for a deposit 'believing that decent treatment brings out the best in people'. She ran an establishment that had 6 bedrooms and could cater for up to 16 people. She had hot and cold water in every room, had her sights set on expansion and had taken a second house which she hoped to fill. Kelly lauds her efforts:

It is landladies like those who are helping to build up a good tourist trade for the country. They realise the value of good and plentiful food, good beds and bedclothes and plenty of bedclothes too. They put their money back into the job and are satisfied with a reasonable profit.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Annie's daughters, 24/1/2013; see interview transcript, vol, 2, pp. 79-115, p. 109.

⁴⁴⁷ Anna Kelly, *Irish Press*, 7th March 1952.

Operational issues

There are many similarities in the oral testimony of the hoteliers that give an insight into the evolution of the industry over the years. Many of the hotels were initially small and developed in an ad hoc way, with rooms being added and altered as needs arose. This is described by Ellen's daughter:

the whole development wouldn't have been you know, done to a plan-do you know the way people go to a bank now for money, you have to have your business plan and all that sort of thing, that wasn't the way it was done you know,-we need three rooms – stick them on here to this wall and pay them off and then gosh, we could do with another two so that really was how it was...⁴⁴⁸

Others recollect how winter was quieter in terms of volume of guests but used to paint, prime and prepare the premises for the next season and undertake whatever alterations needed to be done.

How did these women build up their business and how did they attract guests to their premises? The oral records indicate that a significant amount of the development revolved around hard work and the building up of a solid reputation. Maggie operated a café in a tourist region in the South of the country and her granddaughter recollects that:

She was very hard working and when she was in her 80's she was still working here 9 til 6 every single day.⁴⁴⁹

This strong work ethic is common to many of the female hotel proprietors too. Mary's son recollects:

but she was full time here on almost a hundred percent of her time, she very rarely went anywhere else, didn't take many holidays, so it was eh, it was a

⁴⁴⁸ Interview, 11/4/2013, p. 155.

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with Maggie's grand-daughter, 10/04/2013; see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp. 19-31, p. 18.

vocation if you like with her really and eh, yeah she didn't have an awful lot of life out, a life outside this business really.⁴⁵⁰

The widow Ellen who worked in building up the business was according to her daughter "there, night and day". She employed a lady, Bridie, who lived in and was with the business for almost 30 years. Her daughter remembers her being up from 7 o'clock in the morning, cooking, and she would work until 12, 1 or 2 o'clock. She describes the kind of workload her mother and Bridie had:

They did all the cooking, they did all the laundry was done at home, things like making soap, have you ever seen, we had big, big vats and in the winter time, soap would be made and that would be for all the laundry and all the kitchen and all that sort of thing, that would all be done at home.⁴⁵¹

Bridie was from outside the town, a single girl and Ellen's daughter describes the way things were:

Now at that time staff lived in and Bridie really was, I suppose she was a single girl at home on a farm and you know there was no room at that time for a single girl, so she lived with us. She was there from the time I was two and she was there when I married so she was there for 25 nearly 30 years and used to go home for the holidays but lived in and she worked with my mother, non-stop...⁴⁵²

When the business evolved from a guest house to a hotel, Ellen's daughter returned home to work and run the bar, with the assistance of two other women.

⁴⁵⁰ Interview, 19/3/2013, vol. 2, p. 261.

⁴⁵¹ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 154.

⁴⁵² Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 154.

Cooking was carried out by many of the women, and was an important part of running a hotel. Una who had bought her hotel from her aunt in 1936 is remembered by her son as spending a long time in the kitchen:

and she was wonderful, solid food like you know, it wasn't, it wasn't you know anything classy, it was good solid food and she had a name for that...⁴⁵³

Cooking was not just the domain of the women in the business. Mrs Huggard who is remembered by her grandson as a very hard worker and as being “out doing all the, the working and you know, the driving force behind everything you know” also relates that all of his uncles and his father who all worked and were trained in the hotel industry all learnt how to cook. It was a necessary skill:

you know hotels that time like you could be out serving drink in the bar one minute and the next minute you could be inside cooking something in the kitchen, you know that's the way, you had to be able to turn your hand at anything you know.⁴⁵⁴

For most, it also involved an input of labour from family members, particularly children. Husbands are often described as not necessarily involved in the day to day operations. In Una's case, her husband was a teacher and maintained his own role, but “backed her to the hilt”. As time went on her children all worked for the business. Her son recounts the experience:

there was always work, we were never idle, there was no hardship, we took our holidays together and all that, she did it properly but when you worked you worked and when, when you went on holidays that was it. It wasn't the slavery that you hear spoken about, there was a place for everything, you know, it was properly done you know...⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 248.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview, 11/04/2013, vol. 2, p. 37.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 247.

For the Huggards, the entire family worked in the business at some stage, with the different family members taking on responsibility for the different hotels as they gained the experience and became older. In the case of Mrs. O'Donoghue as well as Mary who inherited the hotel from her husband's aunt, their husbands also worked in different professions, one as pharmacist and the other as a jeweler. According to Mrs. O Donoghue's grandson, all of his aunts and uncles had some involvement in the business, with his father eventually taking over. In Mary's case, her husband died at a relatively young age within a year his aunt, and this meant that Mary took on two businesses within a short time of each other, requiring her to keep two businesses afloat.

For Ellen assistance came from her daughter who was a paid employee of the hotel and worked with her for about 10 years before she got married. Her son then joined the business and eventually it was passed onto him.

The drive to improve and develop the business comes across from many of the participants. The women worked long and hard and often with a view towards growth and development. For Una her son remembers

I suppose when she went there, there were 10 bedrooms you know, and she kept building it and buying pieces at the back and kept just kept driving it on, driving it on all the time ...⁴⁵⁶

Not content with having developed one hotel and having got it to a particular standard, she then bought another hotel—again it was from a family member, a first cousin this time.

Mrs. Huggard was acknowledged nationally and internationally as a hotelier, and was respected as an authority on the industry as recounted by her

⁴⁵⁶ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 242.

grandson. This reputation was built on her success and as recounted by her grandson:

like she had seven hotels, I don't think there's any other woman in her day running seven hotels you know, and it was Ireland's first hotel chain as far as we know it, independent anyway, hotel chain.⁴⁵⁷

Ellen, while retaining the one business took it from very modest beginnings and as her daughter outlined:

in the, it was in the early 60's then she was able to buy the premises next door and expand, now and for all those she would have been able to borrow at the time, because there was a ready, once she had developed the cash flow and there was the bar generating business, so she did, she made an incredibly, em thriving business, small but thriving.⁴⁵⁸

At national level a number of endeavours in the post-war period were undertaken to develop the tourist industry. These included the buying and running of hotels by the tourist board, the development of targeted resorts, and the offering of loans to actual or prospective owners to upgrade facilities.⁴⁵⁹ These met with mixed results and initially applications were low but the records do show that some proprietors availed of the opportunities offered to improve their properties. The files contain examples of women who availed of the scheme and applied for loans from Bord Fáilte. Applicants had to submit a copy of their accounts, a statement of valuation from an auctioneer, plans for the work and quotations received.

Mrs. Rose Cafferty of Breffni Arms Hotel, Arva, Co. Cavan, applied for a loan for the construction extension modernisation or improvement of holiday

⁴⁵⁷ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 37.

⁴⁵⁸ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 155.

⁴⁵⁹ Furlong, *Irish Tourism 1880-1980*, p. 118.

accommodation. The amount was for £1,500. Rose was “building an extension of six single bedrooms; one bathroom; one toilet, linking the extension to the existing building; furnishing the six bedrooms. In 1956 Rose had sales of just over £4,894, her premise was valued at £4,000 and the work was going to cost her £1,613.⁴⁶⁰

Margaret Kennedy of the Galtee Hotel in Cahir in Tipperary too sought to improve the premises.⁴⁶¹ In 1956 she was looking for a loan of £12,000 for the ‘provision of new entrance and large hall, new dining room, new lounge bar, new kitchen and stores, new residents lounge and six additional bedrooms’. She was a spinster and in this case there are no accounts on this file. She was the owner of the hotel, and her brother John is “employed by the Borrower in the management of the Galtee Hotel – He was owed £1735 in undrawn salary, but he agreed to release his claim on this sum for the period (of the loan).

In 1958, Mrs. Mary Collins of “Stella Maris” Limerick also applied to Bord Fáilte for a loan, amount £6,500. She was seeking to modernise and improve the premises “to provide a hotel of 10 bedrooms/11 beds with three private bathrooms, lounge hall, kitchen and dining room, three bathrooms, linen store, public toilets, reception’.⁴⁶² Mrs. Collins was a widow, and had substantial assets including a property portfolio which lists 9 properties including the hotel. She had an investment in the Royal Cinema Limited of 6,000 shares totalling £16,500 and her total assets were valued at £40,648. According to the note submitted by her auditors, she held 50% of the issued

⁴⁶⁰ 'Application file, Breffni Arms', 1958 (N.A.I., IND TTA 11/1/68, Department of Industry and Commerce).

⁴⁶¹ 'Application file, Galtee Hotel', 1956 (N.A.I., IND TTA 11/1/47, Department of Industry and Commerce).

⁴⁶² 'Application file, Stella Maris', 1958 N.A.I., IND TTA 11/1/64, Department of Industry and Commerce).

capital of the Royal Cinema which was regarding profits averaging £5,000 per annum over the previous number of years.

There are also instances of joint applicants on file. Annie Hughes and James G. Thomas, of the National Hotel, Donegal town in 1959, looked for £2818.

This was for the purpose of:

building new extensions and alterations to the existing premises to provide new entrance hall, reception area, vestibule and new staircase, lounge bar and gent's toilet, extension to dining room. Linking of the two premises to provide a compact hotel of 13 registerable bedrooms (as compared to the existing 11 registered rooms).⁴⁶³

There is no indication as to what their relationship was, but the architects refer to the client as Mrs Hughes.

By comparison it is clear from the documentation that the application of Anthony St Clair Naylon and Alice St Clair Naylon, of Wicklow Hills House, Roundwood, was from a husband and wife.⁴⁶⁴ They sought a loan for £4,360 in 1959. She was acknowledged in the loan agreement as the full owner of the lands. This appeared to be a situation where a substantial family home was being converted into a hotel. They were reconstructing and improving the house, and putting in 11 guest bedrooms, 3 staff bedrooms, a bar, lounges, kitchen, bathroom, and toilets, dining room, linen-room as well as the equipment and conveniences necessary to complete the job.

For the O'Brien guest-house, there was some spinoff from the development of the Tramore Hydro and the national investment that was being directed

⁴⁶³ 'Application file, National Hotel', 1959, (N.A.I., IND 11/1/66, Department of Industry and Commerce).

⁴⁶⁴ 'Applications files, Wicklow Hills House, 1959, (N.A.I., IND 11/1/65, Department of Industry and Commerce).

towards the region. This brought about an increasing commercialisation of the business as Annie's daughter recounts:

Well I suppose in the early days people didn't do it as a commercial venture, but I suppose it subsidised the income as opposed to being a commercial venture and then as time went on I suppose people got a little more commercial about it and a little more competitive about it, other people were springing up around you...⁴⁶⁵

Seeking loans was one form of assistance; other types included compensation for disasters that occurred. One such claim was made by Mrs Susan Hurley of the Esplandade hotel in Youghal, Co. Cork.⁴⁶⁶ She wrote to Mr. Lemass on 12th March 1962 telling him about the damage caused by the recent storm and flooding. She outlined that this was going to have a serious impact on trade for the coming season and that the cost of repair would be in the region of £5,000. She goes on to request that he negotiate with the Minister for Finance for a state grant for this purpose. She also activated her local clergy to lobby on her behalf and a day later Canon Walsh who was parish priest of Youghal at the time wrote to Mr. Lemass also. She got the customary acknowledgement of the letter which was to be send onto the Department of Finance and this was followed on the 22nd of March with a letter from the Secretary of the Department outlining how the government were unable to accept liability. However, they offered advice to her in terms of how she could offset losses against her income tax, and how she could consider applying to her local authority who had some small amounts available for repairs after storm damage. Mrs. Hurley herself was a local councillor, and had been profiled in 1951 as the only woman delegate at the Congress of Municipal Authorities being held in Arklow.⁴⁶⁷ She was

⁴⁶⁵ Interview, 24/0/2013, vol. 2, p.109.

⁴⁶⁶ Letter to Mr. Lemass from Susan Hurley, 12/3/1962, (N.A.I., S11070E/94, Department of the Taoiseach).

⁴⁶⁷ 'The Week', *Irish Independent*, 29 September 1951.

described therein as a “successful business woman in her own right, with a hotel which she has built into Youghal’s finest”.

Not everyone was happy about the grading of hotels and the files contain correspondence from Mrs Murphy, of Dobbyn’s hotel in Tipperary, to Mr John A Costello in relation to the matter. In a hand written letter she outlines the efforts put into the hotel by her family:

When we bought Dobbyn's 18 years ago it was a derelict building. Turnover was £15 per week. With the help of my husband, son and daughter, we worked night and day to bring it up to its present condition. We have spent twelve thousand pounds of our own money in re-building alone.⁴⁶⁸

She was not impressed by the calibre of the inspectors who according to her 'are all under 40 years old with modern buildings in mind and no actual hotel experience'. Mr. Costello wrote back to her with a commitment to make enquiries regarding re-grading which he did. The official in Bord Fáilte replied that Dobbyn’s could not be up-graded as it lacked in many areas and stated that the deficiencies of ‘structure, furnishings and operations’ have been pointed out to the proprietor since 1953. Mr. Costello duly communicated this finding to Mrs. Murphy. She was not alone in railing against the imposition of grading and the efforts to improve standards and it has been recorded that many proprietors did not see the value in upgrading as they did not think that their existing clientele had any need of better facilities.⁴⁶⁹

Other personal service business related to the hospitality and tourism sector was catering and this is an area of definite female business activity. Women ran restaurants, coffee shops and tea rooms in many different regions in the

⁴⁶⁸ 'Letter to Mr. Costello from Mrs. Murphy', 6/10/1956 (N.A.I., S13987E.2, Department of Taoiseach).

⁴⁶⁹ Furlong, *Irish Tourism*, p. 115.

country. They did catering, and this ranged from the small to the very large. At the upper end of the scale, Mrs Lawlor of Naas was the dominant figure in Irish catering for the best part of 50 years, and her obituary noted that her “name was synonymous with catering on a grand scale”.⁴⁷⁰ She started her business in 1914, as was the case with many others, on a modest level, initially having a tea room in the Square in Naas. According to her granddaughter:

was the tea room she started and then went into accommodation, but she started it, I was reading through, off doing small, I think before that small little catering parties and from that.⁴⁷¹

Having had some success at the small catering, she set out to learn how to cook properly and took classes at the local technical college. While she had the hotel which developed on the main site in Kildare, it was as a caterer that she became nationally recognised for, and this was in no small part due to the high profile of the events for which she was the contracted caterer. It was in the 1920s that she assembled the equipment needed for outdoor catering on a large scale and at the same time she got a share of the contracting business for the RDS.⁴⁷² She shared this with the Mills catering business until they went out of business 10 years later and thereafter she had exclusive rights to the catering at the RDS, doing the Spring Show, the Horse show. She also did catering at the major racecourses, Punchestown, Tramore, Galway. In 1932, she was responsible for the catering at the Phoenix Park for the Eucharistic Congress and this was reported in the *Woman's Mirror*. The report entitled “women behind the scenes” starts in this way:

⁴⁷⁰ 'Mrs Lawlor of Naas dies at 88', *Irish Independent*, 29th September 1969.

⁴⁷¹ Interview with Mrs. Lawlor's granddaughter, 1/5/2013, see interview transcript, vol. 2, pp 3-17, p. 6.

⁴⁷² J Doran O'Reilly, 'An empire built on sandwiches', *Irish Independent*, 26 October 1966.

It is surprising, when one comes to think of it, how man's great enterprises are quietly worked from behind the scenes by women. Often times, the men appear to have it all their own way and often too (but we must whisper it) they are ready to take a lot of the credit for that which should go to us folk, but there are things in which, despite all men's cunning and business acumen, we women beat them all.⁴⁷³

It goes onto outline the 'colossal task' of catering for all of the pilgrims and how one of the main caterers for the event is Mrs. Bridget Lawlor, and lauds the brain that 'must work out all the details of that great scheme'.

The scale of Mrs. Lawlor's operation was very significant and to cater for some of the large outdoor events she could have in the region of up to 700 people working for her. Her granddaughter remembers how the logistics used to work:

And I remember she used to do the Galway Races, Tramore Races, The Curragh, like, and I remember like as a child, I mean all the women of Naas and the men but the women and they would say 'yahoo we are going on our holidays' and they would go in army trucks, they would be leaving their families and some of them would be leaving 12, 13 or 14 children behind and I mean, they were hard working people, but the break for them, apparently some of the workers, a lot of them have gone now but the crack they would have, they would be singing on the way back and down in these army trucks – you can visualize them, the canopies, the canvas, and the food.. But they had great crack and great camaraderie, and the staff were so loyal –⁴⁷⁴

As the business developed and her reputation grew she was often the caterer of choice for government events. In 1945 Mrs Lawlor wrote to the Secretary in Department of the Taoiseach enclosing sample menus and a price list for

⁴⁷³ *Woman's Mirror*, 25th June 1932.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview, 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 7.

refreshments for the reception for the inauguration of the President.⁴⁷⁵ Her letterhead describes her as 'Mrs Lawlor-Late Mayfair Catering Company, Sole Caterers to the Royal Dublin Society'. In 1952 there is a request to Mrs Lawlor among other caterers, from the Department requesting a quotation for a reception for the Presidential inauguration on June 25th, but Mrs Lawlor replied stating that the firm was not in a position to respond as they were booked out with prior engagements.⁴⁷⁶ She proved adept too at changing with the times and in 1962 she decided to quit catering for a number of racetracks due to the increased costs of wages and the fact that “the waiters were now asking for hotel accommodation for two-day meetings, instead of having tents on the racecourse as heretofore”.⁴⁷⁷

Commenting on the initiative of opening a business in difficult times *Woman's Life* had high praise for a new restaurant in Tralee, the Café Metropole.⁴⁷⁸ It is described as “a place to meet and entertain one's friends and business associates amid artistically arranged, and at the same time comfortable surroundings”. The owner was a lady by the name of Mrs Evans and the writer compared her restaurant favourable to any in the capital city. They note that the catering is of a high standard and that it is under the “direct supervision of the proprietress herself” who is highly experienced in all aspects of such a business. In 1949, the magazine reports on a business established in Dublin by immigrants Mrs Kendrick Huxham and her husband and their partner Mrs. Powel-Smith, who came to Dublin from London and started a restaurant.⁴⁷⁹ This was not an uncommon occurrence in Ireland, a

⁴⁷⁵ 'Sample menus from Mrs. Lawlor', 2/56/1945, (N.A.I., S13651, Department of the Taoiseach).

⁴⁷⁶ 'Letter to Secretary of Department from Mrs. Lawlor', 25th April 1952, (N.A.I., S15306, Department of the Taoiseach).

⁴⁷⁷ 'Caterer's decision', *Irish Independent*, 14 March 1962.

⁴⁷⁸ 'High standard of catering', *Woman's Life*, 30 August 1941.

⁴⁷⁹ 'Meet two ladies with novel ideas about restaurants', *Woman's Life*, 24 September 1949.

number of non-nationals took residence in Ireland, often became citizens and their involvement in business is evidenced on examination of the shareholdings of many registered private companies.

Mrs Huxham and Mrs Powel-Smith started their restaurant in Dublin in 1948. This was successful and they decided to open another one. Their story began when the trio met in 1936, set up a restaurant to cater for university students and young business people, called Economeals. The war brought the enterprise to an end and after a visit to Ireland where they saw better stock of supplies, they decided to come to Dublin. The restaurants were the Dog and Waffle in 40 St Richmond Street, and 13 Chatham Street. They then decided to 'provide at Chatham Street, four study-bed-sitting-rooms for students'. This venture was just getting off the ground and at the time that the article was written the company had 167 applications for the accommodation. The idea was that there would be a resident housekeeper to look after them and full board was to be charged at £2-15-0 a week. Mrs Huxham looked after the administration and general management end of the business, Mrs Powel-Smith was in charge of the menus, catering and the kitchen. Mr. Huxham was involved in the theatre. In 1951 a notice was published in the national papers announcing that the recent winding up notice brought against the Dog and Waffle Ltd. of Chatham street was dismissed and that they continued to serve 'good food in pleasant surroundings and at reasonable prices.'⁴⁸⁰ The company was sold at auction in December 1958.⁴⁸¹

The hard work ethic of the hoteliers was not uncommon. Mrs Lawlor too was reputed to be a very hard worker, and showed great attention to detail, and this was seen to be key in the growth development of the business. A

⁴⁸⁰ 'Special notices', *Irish Independent*, 25 January 1951.

⁴⁸¹ 'Property Mart', *Irish Independent*, 10 December 1958.

profile of her by J. Doran O' Reilly in the newspapers in 1966 reported that "one of the attributes that made that first and subsequent venture a success was Mrs Lawlor's attention to detail". This characteristic was something that she was very conscious of and she herself, when asked how she made a success of the business said:

I worked very hard, nothing comes easy and I am particularly, I am a very particular person and I give great concern, a great concern to detail.⁴⁸²

The attention to detail extended beyond the mere operational and was accompanied by a strong awareness of making sure that all aspects of the event ran like clockwork—her grand-daughter remembers:

"we would have catered for many proud occasions"—these are her own words I'm saying here – she catered for the Kildare Hunt, The Royal Dublin Society Horse Show, Punchestown Races, "in fact we did race meetings all over the country which I always attended to personally, the service and the seating was a very important aspect of these occasions as there was often a little diplomacy to be observed as to who would be sat beside whom".⁴⁸³

This was a lifetime characteristic, one which Mrs Lawlor employed right through her entire business life. She continued to operate the business up until her death, although at that stage her son was very involved with her. O' Reilly's article was written about two years before she died, she was in her eighties at that stage and was still actively running the business from her bed. She had been invalided for approximately five years but this did not curtail her involvement with the business. His description of her day gives a glimpse into why she became such a significant player in the catering industry:

Every morning, after an early breakfast she starts her days work. Four girls from her office attend at her

⁴⁸² *Irish Independent*, 26 October 1966.

⁴⁸³ Interview, 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 7.

bedside to read the morning correspondence, take her replies, discuss staff matters, plan the menus, order the meat, bread, general groceries and the replacements necessary for a vast catering concern. In the afternoon and nights, when she is not resting and sometimes when she dozes off asleep, especially after a fatiguing morning, a stream of motley visitors pass her bedside-an organiser of some big social function drops in to discuss plans, a horse trainer who knew her when she was queen of the race meetings renews acquaintance...⁴⁸⁴

However, hard work alone was not always enough to guarantee the success of a business and other strategies had to be employed to ensure that businesses survived. Marketing as it is conducted today was not evident and advertising appears to have been minimal and done locally. Mrs Lawlor whose catering business expanded significantly in the 1920s and 1930s did her advertising in quite a targeted way. Her granddaughter remembers:

so that's how she got to do the catering in Maynooth at all the ordinations and that's how she probably got the Ecumenical Service, she did the schools, she did Clongowes, Newbridge, anything up there she put her advertisements in all the religious places and everything, so that's a clever move.⁴⁸⁵

Maggie's Cafe relied on the local market and the promotional efforts were local:

I mean I know the kind of things my mother did would have been local, so I remember her doing wedding fairs and that kind of thing but nothing, nothing, nothing national no.⁴⁸⁶

Working in consultation with the Irish Tourist Board and its successor Bord Fáilte were important for those businesses that had a strong reliance on tourists. Women in these businesses demonstrated willingness and a

⁴⁸⁴ O'Reilly, *Irish Independent*, 26 October 1966.

⁴⁸⁵ Interview 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁶ Interview 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 28.

capability in interacting with the Tourist Board in order to further their own business. Una's son describes how, particularly after the Second World War and through the 1950s and 1960s the promotional efforts of the Tourist Board operated:

That time, obviously, that time it was all coach business, English coach business-yes they'd go to, we would have called them work shops where Bord Fáilte at the time have arranged a hotel in London and bring the Irish trade in and then they would bring Sheffield United, that was the name of a company, rather than the football club, and people like that you know Wallace Arnold you know, the tour companies in and make a marketplace, yeah, that was the way it was done.⁴⁸⁷

For the Gleneagle too, a relationship with the Tourist Board was important. In the earlier days, when the Tourist Board operated as a development agency grants and loans would have been availed of, and as Bord Fáilte evolved with more of a promotional role, here too the hotel had interactions with the agency:

you had the local tourist office here that they would have been trying to farm out business and probably being seen to be doing it as evenly and as fairly as they could em, you know it was more kind of along those basis, like having personal relationship with the local tourism promotion officer was where it came from I suppose.⁴⁸⁸

The Tourist Board were also useful to those running guests houses. As well as being on the published listings a relationship with the local tourist office was important. Deciding at what stage of the day to accept the booking was somewhat strategic in terms of gaining maximum occupancy for the night. Annie O' Brien was based in Tramore and operated her guest house from the

⁴⁸⁷ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 246

⁴⁸⁸ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 176.

1940s to the 1980s and her daughter outlines how the conversation with the tourist office played out during the height of the season:

in the days when the tourist office would ring –
“Mrs. O’Brien, have you accommodation for three
people or four people?” or whatever it was, and
she would be considering and then she would say
well what time is it, it’s five o’clock, four o’clock
and other people coming in later and she wouldn’t
let that room go if there was an extra bed that she
could get some, so at the back of it all was the brain
was ticking over and she would say ‘well no
Mary but ring me later on if you have a bigger party
in’, and she’d take the chance, she did it, do you
know because those were the days in the sixties
people were coming in in droves from England, in
droves, they were coming from everywhere ⁴⁸⁹

Bord Fáilte also acted as a conduit between the guest house and the consumer and would regularly get feedback, solicited and unsolicited which they passed onto the proprietors and Annie’s daughters remember letters from guests which were passed onto them from the tourist office.

For Mary who ran a very specific type of premises it was important that she establish a means of attracting people to the old world nature of the hotel and to this end she was a founding member of a national organisation to represent such premises.

The lack of advertising does not appear to have been a major hindrance and many of the business show a keen ability to identify different markets and to both develop and tailor their offering to an assortment of clientele. The visitors to the Lake Hotel in the 1940s are described by Hilda Huggard’s nephew:

They, they had people who came year in and year
out, they had a loyal following, a lot of them were
very wealthy, ‘twould be English people, like

⁴⁸⁹ Interview, 24/1/2013, vol. 2, p. 114.

when we started here you would have the, you would call it the dying gentry still coming over...⁴⁹⁰

The hotel had to be able to accommodate the interests of this group and given that they returned year on year, the establishment succeeded in looking after their interests. Hilda's nephew remembers how they would stay for two or three weeks, going fishing, golfing, horse-riding, how they would have morning tea, and a packed lunch if they were on a day out, returning for evening dinners and how "anything they did, they paid gillies, boats, like money was never an issue".

Ellen developed a number of different strategies for attracting guests. She had a steady stream of commercial travellers who used her hotel and did good business with what her daughters calls the 'bank girls':

That was a very common thing at the time, you know when bank staff moved to town, you see there were no flats or no apartments or anything like that so when they came to town they would be housed in a small hotel which would be reasonable accommodation and I remember upstairs there was a sitting room for the bank girls and we were not allowed next or near it. We didn't have a sitting room ourselves but we weren't allowed near that one. So that would have been steady kinda winter business so she was very enterprising in, in sussing out those kind of things.⁴⁹¹

The same establishment did very good business with the local GAA organisation, acting as the hotel base for the local county team, catering for the officials and running many functions and socials on behalf of the GAA. It was also a player in the tourist business, and regularly hosted walking tours, in particular tours from Switzerland. Wedding functions were also part and parcel of the services offered by the hotel, typically a wedding function

⁴⁹⁰ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 45.

⁴⁹¹ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 155.

was a morning/early noon simple affair, “always turkey and ham” for on average a group of 50 or 60 people and all the cooking would be done by Ellen with the assistance of her main helper, Bridie.

Una was adept at innovating to generate new business too. As well as having tourism business, she too paid attention to her local customers. Her son remembers:

Fishing was quite a big business, She, she in the wintertime she started the socials you know, these fisherman socials, yeah she’d have one a week or one a month or something you know...⁴⁹²

She also worked closely with the musical society and those involved in the arts and theatre in the area. In the Gleneagle, the important clients in the 1950s and into the 1960s were the UK touring groups. Mrs. O’ Donoghue’s grandson remembers:

nothing happened then until the UK started to get a bit of affluence back in the mid-fifties, and started to travel again you know and there was a big growth period in the UK, especially right through the fifties, and then you had the likes of Aer Lingus and the promotion of Ireland in the US and all that, so you had American tours starting to come in the early sixties...⁴⁹³

For Maggie’s Cafe, the tourist season was important too, with long hours and “absolute queues out the door all day long”.⁴⁹⁴ In addition the tearoom opened late at night and remained open after the cinema.

In Tramore, the O’Brien’s guest house had an unusual clientele who were very significant from a business perspective. Religious orders from the UK

⁴⁹² Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 244.

⁴⁹³ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 169.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 23.

holidayed in Tramore, and both the Christian Brothers and the Patrician order stayed annually with Mrs O'Brien, for a period from the forties until well into the sixties, when they stopped being sent on holidays as a community. Mrs. O'Brien's daughter remembers:

your house was turned into a monastery for the months of July and August and you had upward of between ten and twelve again depending on the breakdown of the community, the entire house was a monastery, you had no access to anywhere in the house, except you went in and out the back door, yes in and out downstairs, you were not allowed upstairs, that was verboten completely and every night at 10'o clock the prayers would be said in the sitting room and we would hear it all coming down.⁴⁹⁵

The daughters of the house recollect a clear distinction between the orders, the Christian Brothers were more serious, did not get the opportunity to visit home, and did not have any spending money whereas the Patricians with Irish connections got the opportunity to visit with their families before they returned from their holidays, engaged more with the family and played practical jokes on the children and appeared to have some access to their own money.

Most of the hotels ran bars and the importance of proper regulation and implementation of the national legislation played a role in their business life. Family members recollect some of the issues around the running of the bars; For Una, her son describes the business in the early days as being predominantly a bar "with rooms attached". Pride is unmistakable in the narratives:

The bar ...and it was, but it was a very well regulated you know, bar, to be honest it was very, very well

⁴⁹⁵ Interview, 24/1/2013 vol. 2, p. 111.

regulated, she was very, there was no, you know
what I am getting at...⁴⁹⁶

There is no question but that this was a well-run public house, with no
dubious carry-on allowed. And further on he notes:

,in that time the labouring man would be sitting at
the bar counter, the bank manager would be sitting at
the bar counter, the county engineer, there was
that kind of mix, so it wasn't, you know for any one
exclusive class, and I'm not saying there weren't
classes but you know what I am getting at?...⁴⁹⁷

For Ellen acquiring the bar licence was very important as it meant upgrading
from guest-house to hotel in doing so and allowed her to extend the range of
services she offered to her different customers. The bar was run by her
daughter who had trained in hotel work in Dublin and her sister (Ellen's
daughter) describes the trade:

...three very lively women and they ran a terrific
trade, now they were small, I'd be way, I'd nearly be
twice the height of *my sister*, she was a much smaller
person but she ruled that bar and they built up a great
trade, you know the bar trade was big at the time and
that was open from half, from 10 in the morning until
12/1 o'clock at night time, and they did that between
the three of them...⁴⁹⁸

As the Gleneagle developed it became very focussed on the entertainment
side of the business, and this required them to have proper dance hall
licences as well as maintaining the regular publicans licence. The Gleneagle
was unusual in that it had the bar licence and a dance hall, and when they
sought to sell drink at the dances this caused problems, ones which were
dealt with head on by Mrs. O' Donoghue and the rest of the family. Her
grandson recalls:

⁴⁹⁶ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 245.

⁴⁹⁷ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 250.

⁴⁹⁸ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 156.

We had a bar licence with the hotel and to start selling drink in, in the dance, that there was, there was war over that, oh fairly serious court cases and everything like. And obviously you know my father was aggressive in terms of pushing the agenda because he could see the business opportunities in it, but you know my grandmother's devotion to the Church wasn't going to stop her doing the, doing the right thing, if that's what the business required that's what the business required like you know...⁴⁹⁹

The local clergy were very much against the selling of drink at dance halls and tried to stop this development through the courts. The case for licencing dancehalls also met stiff opposition with Judge Johnson opposed to the granting exemptions on Sunday nights "as the making of such an order would impinge on my sense of public morality".⁵⁰⁰ However, Mrs. O'Donoghue and indeed many other hoteliers persisted and over time the practice of serving alcohol at dance halls became commonplace.

For those working in highly touristic areas a significant decline occurred in the late 1960s and the 1970s and this impacted on many female as well as male run establishments. The descriptions of the families involved give an indication of how badly hit the country was by the troubles in Northern Ireland and how immediate the impact was for businesses involved in the hospitality sector. O'Brien's guesthouse in Tramore report that:

'69 finished it but right through the sixties there was a huge British influx into Ireland, and American and indeed continental people as well, and it all started to go, and then suddenly with the Troubles the whole thing, it all started to go...⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 184.

⁵⁰⁰ 'Justice attitude to special exemptions on Sunday nights', *Kerryman*, 21 October 1961.

⁵⁰¹ Interview 24/1/2013, vol. 2, p. 114.

For there on in business was predominantly local and this continued through until the 1980s when Mrs. O'Brien retired from the business. In Kerry, at the Lake hotel run by Hilda Huggard:

It was when the 70's came along it kinda made everything different, and I think that's the time the place went way back here, and I know in the Butler Arms, and I know Charlie Chaplin used stay with my father for years, they became great friends and you know all their family used to send them to our place, we grew up with them as kids in Waterville, the Chaplins every summer, but in the 1970 when the Troubles started in the North they stopped coming, and even here a lot of the English stopped coming and business went bad...⁵⁰²

This business's 'dying gentry' as previously outlined was a big loss to the establishment and there followed a period of recession, and of transition of ownership from Hilda Huggard to her nephews and regeneration of the business.

In the Gleneagle, similar events had a very significant impact on the business:

up until 1973 when you had the Bloody Sunday (*sic*) and when the whole thing went through the floor, and the oil crisis and all that kind of think, that was a real hit to the business internationally and that's when we, we were very badly affected. Well our business up to then would have been very much English tourist...⁵⁰³

Community engagement

Four of the 6 female hotel owners identified in this study were located in the same region and it is evident from all of the interviewees that a spirit of co-operation and collaboration existed between them, rather than one of

⁵⁰² Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 46.

⁵⁰³ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 170.

outright competition. This clustering of female proprietors is not uncommon – a review of the ITA tourist directory from the thirties and forties shows significant clusters of female proprietors in many districts and particularly in seaside and scenic locations. Table 45 on page 210 contains extracts from the directories for Bray and shows that there is a significant cluster of women running business providing accommodation, from small two roomed guest houses to larger concerns. There is a strong likelihood that the women in Bray knew at least of one another, if not that they knew one another personally as was the case with the Kerry hotel owners—indeed, in some cases, they appear to have been friends. Una’s son talks about his mother’s relationships recollecting that she was quite friendly with at least two other female hoteliers in the region.

This is remembered by Ellen’s daughter too who maintains that her mother “would have been conscious of, of maintaining the links with other hoteliers in the town”. And Mrs. O Donoghue’s grandson notes:

and like among her best friends like, there was a small number of family businesses especially in the tourism side of things, and like they were all, have been her friends like you know and that would have been her network and eh, I’d say the women across all that would have been fairly strong, do you know...⁵⁰⁴

He also highlights the practicalities of the industry in the region at that time, where the hotels sought out different markets for themselves while maintaining a good business environment:

then there wasn’t a huge rivalry either, because everybody kinda found their level, because we were very much on the entertainment side of things we’d had a couple of other hotels would have concentrated on different, different markets like you know, especially the town centre hotels would

⁵⁰⁴ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 175.

have been more, maybe more business orientated and had a lot of commercial business thing and then like...⁵⁰⁵

This collaboration seems to have extended beyond the hospitality sector. Maggie's Café operated in the same region and her granddaughter describes how on the street where her grandmother had her business most people lived over their premises. This bred a sense of community, "so they were business partners and neighbours" and indeed customers of one another's businesses. However, not all hoteliers had this experience, at least not initially. When Hilda Huggard took over the Lake Hotel in Kerry as a young single woman in the 1940s, not all of the business community welcomed her with open arms. Her nephew was of the view that:

but again at that time in Killarney business people would have do you know, linked, there was great camaraderie. But when she came to Killarney first, I'm not sure if she, was she overly welcomed when she came first eh, and one of the main reasons, she was eh, being a woman and em, in a man's world, but she was tough, as tough as the men if not tougher, and eh, she had a lot of head to heads with local people, and I think after she gained great respect...⁵⁰⁶

Given the level of prominence of females in the hotel and hospitality industry it is reasonable to assume that they had a role to play at regional and national level in lobbying and overseeing the development of their industry. The reality seems to be somewhat mixed. Despite the level of female proprietorship in the sector, the newly founded ITA in 1925 had a board consisting of all men.⁵⁰⁷ However it subsumed the Munster based Irish Tourist Association which had been set up in 1924 and while the 14 directors were all male, 13 of this group's 95 members were female hotel

⁵⁰⁵ Interview, 9.4.2013, vol. 2, p. 175.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 40.

⁵⁰⁷ Furlong, *Irish Tourism 1880-1980*, p. 40.

proprietors based in the region.⁵⁰⁸ The structure of the boards of the official organisations, the ITA in 1925 to the Irish Tourist Board (ITB) in 1939 appear to have been made up of all males, with females as secretaries or administrators only. In the case of the ITB Furlong notes that in the main, with the exception of two, the “board members were not men of entrepreneurial experience”.⁵⁰⁹

However, the oral histories do give some indication that women were involved in the development of the sector, and in particular, Mrs. Mary Huggard was recognised as a person of significance in the sector. Her grandson recounts:

she was just, she was one of the founders of the Irish Tourist Board, em, the, anytime the government would do anything with tourism they would consult you know the top people, like she had seven hotels, I don't think there's any other woman in her day running seven hotels you know, and it was Ireland's first hotel chain as far as we know it, independent anyway, hotel chain, and you know Walt Disney came to meet her and you know the amount of hotels he built after, I'm not saying that he built them because of my grandmother in anyway, but he certainly came to meet her because he was very interested to know more, more about it you know...⁵¹⁰

In fact, Mrs. Mary Huggard was not a member of the ITB, however, she was a director on the board of Fáilte Teoranta, the limited company set up by the ITB in 1946 to manage a number of properties on its behalf.⁵¹¹ However, undoubtedly she was a recognised authority in the hotel sector and her

⁵⁰⁸ 'Irish Tourist Association Munster, Dissolved company files', 1925 (NA, BR/D/7282, Business Records).

⁵⁰⁹ Furlong, *Irish Tourism 1880-1980*, p. 68.

⁵¹⁰ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 37.

⁵¹¹ Furlong, *Irish Tourism*, p. 117.

obituary in the local newspaper is entitled “ was an outstanding figure in the development of Hotel Industry”.⁵¹² Her grandson notes:

but she was seen as a kind of an authority on the hotel industry in Ireland at that stage, and eh, she knew the Lemasses and she was very friendly with Sean Lemass and his wife.⁵¹³

Her sons and daughters were also held in high regard, and also contributed to the efforts undertaken nationally to improve and develop the tourist industry. Her son Noel did become a director of the Irish Tourist Board in 1950.⁵¹⁴ In the same year, her daughter Hilda, who ran the Lake Hotel was one of two women who were a member of a group brought together to look at developing a technical assistance programme in Travel, Hotels and Allied activities.⁵¹⁵ There were 18 members on this group, two women and the second female was Miss Honora Hayes, Proprietor, Ardhu House Hotel, Limerick. Part of their remit was to travel to the US, to look at trends and developments in the hotel industry and to compile a report and make recommendations to the Irish Tourist Board based on the findings. Hilda’s nephew makes the observation:

they learnt an awful lot of things and they looked at hotels, but when they came back a lot of recommendations after that would go around, because generally when you get audited by the Tourist Board you have, tick all the boxes, and a certain percentage I remember that time that they would come out with ideas saying you need to go this way and that way, the hotel industry was only developing really...⁵¹⁶

⁵¹² ‘Was outstanding figure in development of Hotel industry’, *Kerryman*, 17 August 1968.

⁵¹³ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 35.

⁵¹⁴ Furlong, *Irish Tourism*, p. 129.

⁵¹⁵ ‘Report to the Minister from the Irish Hotels Delegation to the US’, 15/1/1951, (N.A.I., S13087a, Department of Taoiseach).

⁵¹⁶ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 43-44.

His view was that some of the ideas did not always adapt well to the context of the Irish market and the Irish hotel industry, but that in order to satisfy the Tourist Board, hoteliers made changes that were not always the most suitable.

Another hotelier who impacted on the national scene was Mary who ran a hotel in the South East. She was instrumental in founding a national organisation, a body which as responsibility for marketing historic houses. While this organisation commenced life in the 1970s Mary had been involved in local tourism and in the Hotels Federation also. Her son recalls:

and my mother, she was very involved in various things, the Hotel Federation and the local branch of the Hotel Federation. She used to travel off to the meetings all around the place.⁵¹⁷

For the other female hoteliers, their endeavours were more local, and none of them would have demonstrated an active involvement in lobbying on the national scene. However many of them were involved in the local branches of the Hotel Federation, attending the annual functions and meetings.⁵¹⁸ It would also appear that as the decades progressed women became somewhat more active in public organisations, and the introduction of the Soroptimists to Ireland provided an outlet for business and professional women to meet outside of the context of their own businesses. Una became actively involved in the Soroptimists, becoming President as did Mrs. O Donoghue. A particular aspect of these women's life within the community is how they carried out their role as employer. The question of women as employers was not the main focus of this study, but there are some interesting glimpses of how women interacted with their employees. Many women employed other women

⁵¹⁷ Interview, 19/3/2013, vol. 2, p.257.

⁵¹⁸"Kerry Hotels Federation Annual Dinner', *Kerryman*, 21 December 1963.

and there are some indications of how these relationships evolved. The hotel, catering and personal service sector in general relied heavily on the labour of women. Terms and conditions were poor, and there is no doubt, that the success of some of the business profiled here benefited as a result of this. The practice of having workers, who catered for Mrs. Lawlor's company at outdoor events sleep in tents, continued until the early 1960s and while some of the workers saw these trips as an interlude from family duties, without this flexible and cheap labour, Mrs. Lawlor's business would not have succeeded to the extent that it did.⁵¹⁹

In the case of Ellen, she was heavily reliant on Bridie, 'a single girl' whose lived in and stayed with the business for over thirty years.⁵²⁰ Bridie's surname is not recollected, her personal life appears to be non-existent and while there is no sense that she was not valued for her input, her workload was undoubtedly heavy and had to be a contributory factor to the growth and development of the business. Other businesses had a strong reliance on family labour, sometimes paid, as in the case of Una: sometimes unpaid as in the case of Mary and Ellen. Without such inputs, it is unlikely that the female business owners would have been as successful as has been recollected. The input of unpaid labour, often from family members was already noted as a common feature in retailing businesses too⁵²¹

Perception – self and others

Perceptions too come across in the narratives and almost without exception there is a definite sense of pride among family members for what their

⁵¹⁹ Interview, 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 7.

⁵²⁰ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 154.

⁵²¹ Shields, 'An analysis of the Irish Census of Distribution 1951', pp. 118-13.

female relatives achieved. Ellen's daughter talks of her mother with definite admiration for what she achieved from a very adverse set of circumstances:

only just constant hard work is what brought her through and, and determination, she was fierce, she was a fiercely determined woman, she didn't, she didn't concede, you know if something needed to be done we'll do it, however we will manage it but it will be done.⁵²²

In the case of the O' Donoghues the grandson is of the view that his grandmother was the implementer of the ideas, having to deal with probably the practicalities and the pragmatic issues. He says:

the males in our family tend to be the visionaries, they tend to have all the great ideas and the females are the ones who have to actually carry out the work
⁵²³
....

Some family members appear in awe of their relative and see them as exceptional. Mrs. Lawlor's granddaughter says of her grandmother "So as time was going, I, she was an icon of her day and how she ran her business".⁵²⁴ For others, within their admiration is a sense that the women were operating unusually for their time and context. In the case of Mrs. Mary Huggard, her grandson has this to say:

I think what actually happened the roles were nearly reversed, that you know traditionally at the time men went out and they were working and the women stayed at home and cooked, it's gone the other way now as well in today's terms, but at that time, she was way ahead of her time, she was out doing all the, the working and you know, the driving force behind everything you know.⁵²⁵

⁵²² Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 163.

⁵²³ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 166.

⁵²⁴ Interview, 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 4.

⁵²⁵ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 36.

Playing a role in the pursuit of her business objectives also comes across in the stories related by the granddaughter of Maggie:

she was just so, just a huge character really and I would love watching her with the customers, with the Americans especially, she would just charm the life out of them, you know they loved her and they would come back every year to see her and people would come back and take photographs with my Granny and she wore like a housecoat so she looked like this, she looked like a cute little housewife in Ireland but like she was just way more dynamic than that, so she played, you know she kind of played the role yeah.⁵²⁶

The earlier quoted obituary of Mrs Huggard made reference to the role her husband played in her business life. However, the obituary also makes clear the esteem in which Mary Huggard was held within the industry and contains the following tribute:

Put Mrs. Huggard in charge of things for a few years and I will wager that there will be a sea-change in our Irish hotels.⁵²⁷

Maggie too, undoubtedly enjoyed support from her husband and her granddaughter remembers that her grandmother was “definitely the boss”.⁵²⁸

And for Una too, while her husband worked elsewhere, he gave her support:

My father just kept his job, backed her to the hilt, he was the quiet, silent strong type, my mother was driven, she was absolutely driven, just unbelievable, she was notorious as a real hard worker and that’s it.⁵²⁹

An ability to get on with people was obviously important in the hospitality sector and Una’s son remembers:

⁵²⁶ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 29.

⁵²⁷ 'Mrs. Martin Huggard An Appreciation', *Irish Times*, 16 August 1968.

⁵²⁸ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 21.

⁵²⁹ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 242.

and one thing about my mother, she could hold her place in any company. She could meet the Queen of England, and could meet the Queen of England and converse nicely, and the working man she would talk to him the same as she'd talk to me. And she had that exceptional gift absolutely.⁵³⁰

When asked about the impact that their female relatives had on the family as a result of their being involved in business, the responses varied. Mrs.

O'Donoghue's grandson assessment was:

it probably handed a fairly strong commercial consciousness, like you know, that I would always suspect everybody benefitted from, I would hope anyway.⁵³¹

Mrs Huggard's grandson felt that there were very strong benefits for the sons and daughters:

so they were all educated, they got a fantastic start in life, they all got private education, and you know, well looked after and she kept the whole thing going...⁵³²

Maggie's impact on family is not as emphatically positive – Her granddaughter feels that they had to 'dole out the children a lot' and that when her own mother become took over:

there was never like sitting down at 5 o'clock for dinner or you know someone making your dinner after school, it was all fairly busy ... and instead of going to the local school which is where my children now go, em we would, we were brought into town and sent to town, so we didn't really know our neighbours at home very well...⁵³³

But she can also appreciate the upside of the experience:

⁵³⁰ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 252.

⁵³¹ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 178.

⁵³² Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 51.

⁵³³ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 25-26.

like it was a great place to grow up as well, and exciting because we were always in the thick of it, running around, we had great freedom, we knew all the staff very well, there was always a buzz, the customers we knew them, and we were probably you know off to bring things to tables from a very early age, we grew up like, we got great experience so we all can cook, we all can like bake, we are all trained in the bakery – you know in that way we got great benefits.⁵³⁴

Una's son too has mixed feelings about the impact of her work on the family:

There was always a sense of loss when the season started I have to say and that from my own personal view, when the evenings get long, as a kid – that was it, you would love, love in the winter, you'd be having our dinner at home together, you know, that was it you know. The effect I suppose, there was always work, we were never idle...⁵³⁵

However, he could appreciate as well that there were benefits for the family:

there was no hardship, we took our holidays together and all that, she did it properly but when you worked you worked and when, when you went on holidays that was it.⁵³⁶

Likewise for Mary's children the impact was mixed:

and I suppose that's why we were, we went to boarding school because my mother couldn't have the time to, eh to eh you know to devote to her family the whole time...⁵³⁷

He alludes to the fact that the hotel business is something that can be intrinsically linked with all aspects of family life and remembers that:

⁵³⁴ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 26.

⁵³⁵ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 247.

⁵³⁶ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 247.

⁵³⁷ Interview, 19/3/2013, vol. 2, p. 262.

we worked here, basically all our student lives we did that, and eh, yeah it is hard to get away from it really, it is quite difficult in some ways to break away.⁵³⁸

Success

Success can be measured in terms of material possessions and goods but can also reflect other values such as status, self-improvement, the capability to look after family and the recollections of the participants are indicative of such broader values.

Annie Brophy took made a good living and according to her niece:

she lived well and she was a very generous of nature and she would have seen to it that all her family members were looked after ...⁵³⁹

So too for Mrs. Lawlor, who ran the largest outdoor catering company in the country. The fruits of her labour allowed her to indulge a hobby of hers, horse-breeding and she was the owner of some very successful through bred horses.

The hotel operators did well too. The Huggards undertook their expansion programme in the inter-war years at a time when the economic conditions were tough. According to her grandson:

so they made money when nobody, say in other parts of Ireland tourism would have been poor enough, they were making money...⁵⁴⁰

He also reported that his aunt Hilda through investment in stocks and shares, along with the profits derived from the business had money put away that

⁵³⁸ Interview 19/2/2014, vol. 2, p. 262.

⁵³⁹ Interview, 24/1/2013, vol. 2, p. 92.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 34.

she was able to live off when the down turn in tourism came in the late 1960s and 1970s.

For Ellen, who had started her business life as a penniless widow with a big house her daughter says of the business:

it was extremely successful, I mean she didn't go into chains or anything like that but she expanded her small business into quite a big hotel and it was debt free when she handed it over, you know, it was a very comfortable way to be able to live.⁵⁴¹

Mary's son talks about the amount of time that his mother put into her work and felt that she did not have much of a life outside of it, (despite the fact that she was a key member in the Tennis club, worked with the Irish Hotels Federation and the local tourism initiatives) but he has this to say about success:

she was very proud of the fact that she owned a hotel, absolutely and it was, I mean, in her family as well, it was considered, she was considered to be very successful, because she had risen from very modest background to become a hotel owner, so, I mean that was, she was very, very successful in those terms.⁵⁴²

Una's son felt his mother did not put great store on material gains; she did treat the family well, they always got paid for the work they did as youngsters and the family would always get a holiday and regular outings-a trip to Dublin for the Pantomime, but he says "she never took anything out of it you know, that was maybe a mistake, sure".⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 161.

⁵⁴² Interview, 19/3/2013, vol. 2, p. 264.

⁵⁴³ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 255.

Conclusion

While most of the focus of this chapter is on female entrepreneurs in the Personal Services category of economic activity women were active across all sectors. Mona Fosset nee Powell is attributed as a significant contributor to the famous family circus –which she took over running in the 1940s with her husband and was described as “the guiding light and an astute business woman”.⁵⁴⁴ The wife of Sean T. O Ceallaigh, second President of Ireland, was a business woman her own right.⁵⁴⁵ A trained public analyst she operated a laboratory in Dublin, employing five women graduates, one of whom, Miss O Neill took over the business when she became first lady. Another such woman was Kathleen O’Rourke, who founded the League of Health in the 1940s and went on to co-found the Central Rehabilitation Clinic with Lady Valerie Goulding in the 1950s.⁵⁴⁶

In 1945 St Walburgh’s a nursing home that specialised in the care of children was set up in Dublin by two sisters who were trained children’s nurses.⁵⁴⁷ Education too, was a source of self-employment and entrepreneurial endeavour for women. In 1922 in August, Miss McPhail of Ladies College based in Crosthwaite Park in Kingston informed her clients that she “will be at home to receive parents on and after Saturday next”.⁵⁴⁸ In 1924, the following was on offer-“German Lessons lady educated in German gives private tuition in Dublin”.⁵⁴⁹ She charged 2/6 for a lesson, 5/- for a

⁵⁴⁴ Tom Tobin, ‘The Circus wagons are rolling on’, *Irish Independent*, 25 October 1965.

⁵⁴⁵ Anna Kelly, ‘Bean-a-tige, Arus an Uactarain’, *Irish Press*, 25 June 1945.

⁵⁴⁶ Gossip’, *Woman’s Life*, 27th August 1949; Jacqueline Hayden, *Lady G, A biography of the Honourable Lady Goulding LLD* (Dublin: Town House, 1994), p.87.

⁵⁴⁷ Children’s nursing home’, *Women’s Life*, 17 February 1945.

⁵⁴⁸ ‘Classified Ad 52: Miss Miss McPhail Ladies College’, *Irish Times*, 31 January 1922.

⁵⁴⁹ ‘Classified ad: German Lessons’, *Irish Press*, 25 November 1936.

course of five. In 1935 another such advertisement reads “backward, elementary, advanced coach, (lady, protestant), visits, receives”.⁵⁵⁰ It is apparent from these and similar advertisements that women commercially offered their services in tutoring pupils across a range of subject areas, including language, music, and elocution.

Art and entertainment featured too. In 1939 the Theatre School of Dance and Mime with Miss Sarah Payne as director advertises itself as the only “school where the student can study the Classical Ballet side by side with the Nation Irish Dance tradition.”⁵⁵¹ For decades the Muriel Catt School of Dancing was operating in Dublin-advertising in the twenties as Muriel Catt, ‘successor to Misses Eykyn Ward’.⁵⁵² The announcement of the closure of this dancing school came in another classified advertisement fifty years on when Nadia Quick and Clare Douglas who had obviously taken over from Miss Catt closed the school.⁵⁵³ In 1947, Mollie MacDaniels Dance Orchestra who had “numerous county engagements in Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Galway, Cork, Tipperary” advertised their availability.⁵⁵⁴ There are several accounts of such endeavours and *Woman’s Life* often profiled such businesses. In 1945 reference is made to the distinguished dance teacher, Miss Erina Brady who was the principal of the Irish School of Dance based in Harcourt Street in Dublin.

The above are just some examples that demonstrate that women operated across many diverse sectors and established business in nursing and medical care, educational services, music and the arts, cinema theatres as well as

⁵⁵⁰ ‘Classified Ad: Coach’, *Irish Times*, 12 January 1935.

⁵⁵¹ ‘Classified Ad’, *Irish Times*, 19 August 1936.

⁵⁵² ‘Classified Ad’, *Irish Times*, 17 September 1923.

⁵⁵³ ‘Classified Ad’, *Irish Times*, 8 September 1979.

⁵⁵⁴ ‘Classified Ad’, *Irish Independent*, 14 November 1947.

establishing philanthropic organisations and charitable concerns many of whom have survived well into the late 20th and early 21st century. There were many more, but the exploration of the business lives of these women lies outside the remit of this study which focuses on the three main areas of economic activity outside agriculture—commerce and finance, manufacturing and personal services.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

From the outset the aims of this research were twofold- to establish the extent to which women owned and ran businesses or worked for themselves in early and mid-20th century Ireland and to establish what types of businesses they owned and ran and the sectors that they were involved in. The findings detailed in the work offer significant insights in relation to these objectives. What emerges from the combined study of the quantitative data, the archives and the oral histories is a clear indication of the level of entrepreneurial endeavour of females in Ireland which highlights the proactivity of women in business at that time.

Women were present

Women were present as managers and own-account workers in considerable numbers for the period in question. The interrogation of the relevant Census data clearly demonstrates that the number of women in business as owners or working for themselves relative to men and relative to the overall number was substantial. The figures for the non-agriculture based employers and own-account workers indicate that in 1926, just slightly under 30% were women, a figure that is somewhat higher than may be commonly perceived. This is higher too than reported in other studies on 19th Century women business owners who operated in the United States and Britain.⁵⁵⁵ Other sources of quantitative data also confirm this figure for Ireland-the analysis of dissolved company data for mid-20th century Ireland indicates figures in the region of 20–25% of such companies have female directors and shareholders. The sample companies registration s data yields higher results with the lowest level of female directorships of companies coming through at under 19% in 1936 rising to 38% in 1966.

⁵⁵⁵ Wendy Gamber, 'A gendered enterprise': pp. 188-217; Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760 -1914*, p. 4

The national data sources, the archival material and the oral histories all combine to demonstrate that women were present in the economic story of 20th century Ireland as employers and own-account workers. They ran set up, inherited, acquired, fell into businesses across the spectrum of sectors. They were present in all types of business but there was a preponderance of them in retailing, hotel and catering and in the clothing manufacturing businesses in the period being studied. It is important to note that these sectors were very important areas of entrepreneurial opportunities for males as well and reflect the low level of opportunity that was available within the overall economy due to the underdeveloped industrial base of the country in the mid-20th century.

However, it is unquestionable that, rather than growing throughout the mid-20th century as might be reasonably expected, the numbers of female employers and own-account workers declined. The figures show that there was a decline of over 57% between 1926 and 1971. It is also true that there was a significant decline in the number of male employers and own-account workers for the same period, albeit at a lesser rate—the total decline was 16.5% for the period.

When distinction is made between employers and own-account workers the emerging picture for females relative to males is not as stark as above. The reduction in female employers is still high, accounting for a reduction of nearly 54% for the 45 year period, while for men that reduction is almost 38%. When female employers are expressed as a percentage of the total employers in the State, the decline in share again is less stark, with a move of female employers from almost 23% share of the total number of employers in 1926 to just under 18% in 1966. When juxtaposed with the random samples of private company directorships taken from the CRO information detailed in the study, it would seem that the relative position of female employers to male employers did not radically change in the period, but looking at the overall figures it is possible to conclude that both female and male employers reduced from 27, 167 in 1926 to 15,829 in 1971—a

reduction of 42%, reflecting a wider economic and enterprise demise in the Irish Free State in its first fifty years in existence.

Female own-account workers as a single category reduced at a substantially higher rate than the male own-account workers. The analysis of the various sectors indicates that in particular, female own-account workers exited from manufacturing and from personal service. In particular lodging houses were a source of self-employment in the early decades of the century but this source of income generation became less popular as the years went by.

The declines outlined above do need to be contextualised in relation to the overall population trends—the female population aged 14 and over declined by 71,370 during the 45 years from 1926 to 1971, a decline of 6.33% and the male population at 107,167 by 9.26%. Those gainfully employed also saw a reduction in the period—females gainfully employed reduced by 16.29% and the males reduced by 13.70%.

So this reveals a story of falling population at working age for females and males, falling numbers in gainful employment for females and males and a fall-off in economic activity as measured by the number of both female and male employers and own-account workers operating in the economy. It indicates that the relative position of female employers to male employers decreases, and when female own-account workers and employers are categorised together there is a significant decrease in their numbers relative to males.

The data also provides a picture of the sectoral activity of female employers and own-account workers. In 1926, in order of importance for female enterprise activity was Commerce and Finance, followed by Manufacturing and Personal Service. This altered over the period, with Commerce and Finance becoming significantly more important, Personal Service moved up

and Manufacturing had declined. The male pattern placed Manufacturing first in 1926, Commerce and Finance was next, followed by Personal Service. By 1971, Commerce and Finance had become more important than Manufacturing and Personal Service remained last.

The importance of the figures lies in the fact that they reveal an aspect of the public life of women in Ireland that has not received any attention to date. The political contributions of women and their role as workers in the Irish economy have been well documented in recent years.⁵⁵⁶ The figures here, while not large relative to the overall population, are nonetheless significant and are well dispersed geographically. They indicate that women visibly contributed to the commercial development of certain sectors – retailing, clothing manufacturing and the hospitality industry, and indeed, as was evidenced by the oral histories, in some instances, they shaped and influenced the economic development of their own regional areas.

The received wisdom

Inherent in this data and evident from the oral histories, is a portrayal of females who were active agents and proactive developers of businesses in their own right. This concurs with Kay who noted that women were not “agents of great change individually” but they were entrepreneurial and contributed to the wider marketplace.⁵⁵⁷ This poses a direct challenge to a received wisdom which accounts for female entrepreneurial activity as a direct consequence of their family connection, particularly as a result of widowhood. Research from earlier centuries highlighted widows in business and John Tosh coined the term ‘the entrepreneurial widow’ and has drawn attention to the fact that many widows in

⁵⁵⁶ See footnote 1, 5, and 10.

⁵⁵⁷ Kay, *The foundation of female entrepreneurship*, p.125.

seventeenth and eighteenth century England ran their own businesses.⁵⁵⁸ Craig, Beachy and Owens writing about middle class women in 19th Century Europe note that “a widow’s continuance of her husband’s trade after his death was usually tolerated.”⁵⁵⁹

There is no doubt that significant proportions of the Irish business women were widows – in 1926 this figure was 57% and by 1971 this had decreased to 48%, a substantial number throughout the period. However, this leaves a considerable number of married women and single women operating businesses, a fact which is often overlooked. Accompanying the narrative of the widow is the underlying assumption that widows acted as guardians of the business, passively maintaining it until such a time as they could pass it onto a male heir. This is reinforced by what Robert Beachy terms as “the stereotype of the widow as the bridge between a prematurely departed husband and sons too young to assume control”.⁵⁶⁰

Beachy’s own work indicated that business widows have not always conformed to this stereotype and the lived experience of many women in this study would also suggest that this is not the case. The evidence shows that women started businesses as single women, and as married women independent from their husbands, or co-founded jointly with their husbands. Women both inherited businesses from their husbands when they died and women started businesses as a consequence of the death of their husbands, because they had no means of support and had to make some kind of living. The widows portrayed here give lie to the myth of passivity-evidence suggests that they were active in the

⁵⁵⁸ Tosh, *The pursuit of history*, p. 44

⁵⁵⁹ R. Beachy, B. Craig, and A. Owens, *Women, business and finance in nineteenth-century Europe* (UK:Berg, 2006), p. 2

⁵⁶⁰ Beachy, Craig, and Owens, *Women, business and finance in nineteenth-century Europe*), p. 16

business prior to their husbands dying (Mrs Duggan), they were capable of expanding the business and passed it onto daughters as well as sons (Mrs. Connolly) and were capable of starting out of economic necessity and growing a successful concern when faced with a particularly difficult set of circumstances (Ellen).

Motivation and homogeneity

The motivations varied from case to case. Undoubtedly necessity played a part in the setting up. Sheila in Dublin, in starting her shop and ultimately moving on to dressmaking and opening a clothing manufacturing business with her son had to become the income generator in her family due to her husband's illness and incapacity. Necessity too was driver for Ellen who had to use her only significant resource, a rather large house and from there availed of every opportunity to grow and develop a substantial hotel in her region. Nellie was driven to provide for her family, to ensure that they got an adequate education and that they had opportunities for extracurricular activities such as music and drama. Mrs. Lawlor presents a similar rationale and when interviewed in the mid-1960s for an article that appeared in *The Irish Catering Review* she reflected on why she started a business: "mainly to ensure the rearing and education of my two sons, farm life can be very hazardous".⁵⁶¹ Her husband was not making a success of the farm and she felt she had to take matters into her own hands to adequately provide for her family.

For Una, from the South, who worked hard to get off the land, the imperative was to have a different type of life to the one she was born into. Her son remembers vividly:

like stuck in the mud like you know, boggy land, you know, stony grey soils, you know that type of,

⁵⁶¹ Interview, 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 6.

misery and my mother had seen you see her uncles
you know, with their little hotels, and getting on well
and she, she was going on holidays to Liverpool and
saw that there was more to life than buckets.⁵⁶²

In the hotel business the same was true of Mrs. Mary Huggard; she was very driven and from the outset demonstrated the urge to succeed. She was the one who drove the expansion of the business, she was the one who was approached by owners of the Lake Hotel when they wanted to sell it and she was the one who was recognised both locally and nationally as the hotelier.

For some there is a definite sense that they pursued their business idea as a means of self-fulfillment and self-improvement. Mary who inherited the hotel from her relative is described by her son:

Just, she always wanted to improve herself and she was quite, she was, yeah she was a very driven individual, I don't know what her motivation was, I suppose she just, she felt a responsibility in certainly here, to take on the mantle of her predecessor and also to try and make the business as successful as possible.⁵⁶³

The influence of family impacted on the motivation of some women. This was very much the case for Annie Brophy in setting up her photographic studio. Her niece is in no doubt that the approval of her parents was critical, maintaining that she “was guided, absolutely, by parents”.⁵⁶⁴ This parental consent along with the encouragement of her mentor would have been influential in her decision to run her own studio. It is reasonable to assume that this would have applied too in the case of her sister Jossie who successfully operated a confectionery shop in the same town for an equally long period of time. Family too had a very direct say on the actions of Nora

⁵⁶² Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 251.

⁵⁶³ Interview, 19/3/2013, vol. 2, p. 259.

⁵⁶⁴ Interview, 24/1/2013, vol. 2, p. 82.

and May whose father was instrumental in making the decision to set them up.

Luck in the form of being in the right place at the right time, coupled with having the financial resources to capitalize on the opportunity was evident in the case of Mrs. O' Donoghue, who established the Gleneagles hotel in Killarney. Having bought a property with the intention of rearing her growing family and living there, Mrs. O' Donoghue unwittingly became involved in taking in guests for the local hotel when they had an influx of visitors.

It can be tempting to use a criterion such as motivation to classify female business owners – it is something that lends itself to a typology framework, and from the above examples one could propose that females fall into a number of types – for instances the necessity entrepreneur, the self-actualizing entrepreneur, the skills-based entrepreneur, the opportunist entrepreneur. What does this contribute to our overall knowledge? It is only useful insofar as it gives some insight into why the women commenced the business. It does as Kay points out lead to somewhat “reductionist and simplistic” interpretations of the “female entrepreneur”– and undoubtedly such typologies are not restricted or unique to females.⁵⁶⁵ There are arguably many male-originated businesses that came about as a result of straitened economic circumstances. The situation facing Sheila's son when he considered emigration, might deem him a “necessity” entrepreneur, but indeed based on his retelling of the events, such a label does not adequately reflect the complexity of the familial pressures that were influential in the decision to establish a business with his mother. The inherent danger in typologies is that it sets up a hierarchy, with the possibility of one type been judged as ‘norm’ and this can diminish the perceived value of one or other groups.

⁵⁶⁵ Kay, *The foundation of female entrepreneurship*, p. 124.

Oral Testimony

The use of oral histories elicited some useful insights into the lived experience of women business owners and own-account workers. It is acknowledged that there is a degree of self-selection in the oral histories that are included and as noted by Thompson “the self-selected group will rarely be fully representative of a community”.⁵⁶⁶ It is likely in this case that those putting their own story or their relatives’ story forward had a degree of pride in the accomplishments of the businesses and were keen to have them on the public record and indeed this concurs with McKenzie’s comment that entrepreneurs like to tell their stories.⁵⁶⁷ However, the oral histories were used in conjunction with other data and they served to complement and corroborate the evidence that was emerging from other sources.

A particular role that is often attributed to oral history is according to Graham Smith, the possibility of revealing change over time.⁵⁶⁸ In this study participants were recollecting businesses that were started and operated in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The narratives in the main reveal a significant degree of consistency over that period of time. Retailing was largely made up of small concerns – borne out also by the statistical data reported in the Census of Distribution, manufacturing was challenging but the hospitality sector presented opportunities. The focus of most of the concerns was on local markets with the exception of tourism-related businesses which did become more outward-focussed after the Second World War. The fashion industry too saw a growth in external orientation in

⁵⁶⁶ Paul Thompson, 'The Voice of the past', in R. Perks and A.Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, p. 27.

⁵⁶⁷ Brian McKenzie, 'Techniques for collecting verbal histories', in Helle and Ulhøi Neergaard, John Parm (ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods in entrepreneurship*, p. 310.

⁵⁶⁸ Graham Smith, 'The making of oral history' (<http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/index.html>) .

the 1950s and the 1960s. In the retail and personal services sector, there was a high level of family involvement/assistance in the running of the businesses throughout the entire period.

The narratives from the manufacturing and commerce and finance sectors in particular indicate that there was a degree of informality around the way in which some of the businesses were run. There are some hints of businesses operating at what Gamber referred to as the ‘murky boundaries of public and private’.⁵⁶⁹ Small retailers demonstrated a high degree of permeability and there was very close interlinking between business and the home life as this memory from Bridie’s daughter shows:

Well you see we lived here, so she was able to be in and out, and she would put on the dinner and she’d be in and out to the dinner you know...⁵⁷⁰

Triona’s retailing experience bears out Bridie’s recollection – even at a later stage in the century, the 1960s and 1970s the running of her retailing business was intimately linked to the rhythm of running the house and rearing the family. And for many of the home based workers, irrespective of what sector they were involved in, they were likely to be operating in a cash economy, with little or no formal accounting required. This is clearly the case with Sheila, and even as she expanded to employ 5 people for her dressmaking business this continued apace.

That is not to imply that all business were informal, the narratives show that many business worked entirely within the letter of the law, properly set up either as sole traders or as companies, and indeed a percentage of them moving from sole trader status to limited companies in the course of their lifetimes, and there is little doubt that their female operators ensured that

⁵⁶⁹ Gamber, ‘A gendered enterprise: placing nineteenth-century businesswomen in history’, pp. 188-217.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 123.

they were compliant with company law at the time. Nellie's daughter's memories of her mother's business articulated the point well. She recounts that her mother had a solicitor and an accountant and had to "work her way through all those things" but she is of the view that things were not as regulated in the early part of the 20th century as they became in the later stage.

These women were also clear as to how they could get maximise the operation of their business for the benefit of both themselves and their families and formal structures were availed of by Molly McElhinney to ensure the maximum benefits from a tax perspective for her family, but this was done towards the later part of the century.

However, there is a definite sense that as time progressed regulation and systems became more formal and there was a greater requirement from businesses to adhere to these. Triona illustrates this well-in the early years of her retail operation she was very relaxed about keeping tabs on the business but found herself employing an accountant and adhering more closely to formal requirements. In her case, while she successfully ran the business for more than 40 years, her final word on formal systems was "I'd swear I'd be still there but for the red tape about the Health".⁵⁷¹

It would also appear that as time moved on, business women had more opportunity to network in a formal sense. The histories identify women who made contributions in the tourism and hotel industry at national level through their involvement with bodies such as the Irish Tourism Board and the Irish Hotels Federation. The fashion and garment industry too had female operators whose advice was sought by government officials in relation to the direction and support that should be offered to that industry (Irene Gilbert). And while many did not come to attention at national level, the recollections of family

⁵⁷¹ Interview, 16/11/2012, vol. 2, p. 324.

members and indeed their own memories support a view of women who contributed to the local region, both at a business level, but also in terms of a wider social and cultural remit within their towns and regions.

Nellie's daughter indicates that her mother's network was among the local community:

Not really no, well we would have known you know, the local kind, of shopkeeper around the corner and that sort of thing really, but I wouldn't have thought that many other people in her line... ⁵⁷²

Una's son said she was not involved in a network, because "she was interested in doing her work, looking after her family and nothing else".

However, he goes on to state:

She never got, her only involvement in any organization was the Legion of Mary, Vincent de Paul and that type of stuff and then she got very involved in the Soroptimists. ⁵⁷³

Many worked in conjunction with local tourism ventures, established good relationships with the relevant local representatives. Some of the interviewees had some charitable endeavours attributed to them and examples of their activities are provided by relatives.

The women were involved in clubs and societies, such as the golf club and tennis club as well as the GAA, the ICA and local musical societies. Their rationale for involvement in these varied, for some of the women these were social outlets, for others they were cultivated for business purposes solely. In the later stages of the period, more females became involved in formal organisations, and the spread of the Soroptimists in the 1960s offered an outlet for networking to some of the subjects. As the level of regulation associated

⁵⁷² Interview, 18/6/2013, vol. 2, p. 136

⁵⁷³ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 246.

with running a business increased, some females found useful support through engaging with local trade networks.

What emerge from a deeper reading of the stories are women who were very involved in their own local communities and implicitly supported one another. Their modus operandi would appear to be collaborative in the main, rather than overtly competitive. Maggie's granddaughter captured this well when she described how people lived over their businesses and that they were neighbours and customers of one another. She says that among the businesses who supplied or were customers of her grandmother's business "it would have been the same thing, they would have had that relationship—you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours".⁵⁷⁴ Annie Brophy's niece puts it this way:

she would have been a good customer of all sorts of people but she wouldn't have been involved commercially with any of them there would have been no input, no investments...⁵⁷⁵

Mrs. Lawlor too was reputed to be supportive of her fellow businesswomen, with a commitment to buying produce locally and giving a hand up in instances where she could. Her granddaughter recounts:

I'm just thinking of a guy that always said that his grandmother had a pub across the way at the time, was it X, no why do I think it was, and he always said that my grandmother set his grandmother up...⁵⁷⁶

This theme of support among local businesses has already been documented in the analysis of the hospitality businesses discussed previously.

Effectively, what seemed to be in operation in that region was an informal network of women who were friends and through those friendships they

⁵⁷⁴ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 24.

⁵⁷⁵ Interview, 24/1/2013, vol. 2, p. 103.

⁵⁷⁶ Interview, 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 10.

gained support and shared experience about their businesses. The local support is not just limited to business activities; the narratives contain details of female involvement in the local sports and social clubs, and of these women bringing their business skills to bear on fundraising initiatives to improve amenities in their areas. Mary was involved in fundraising for additional tennis courts and Miss Hilda Huggard put her business up as security at a time when her local golf club was in difficulty.

What the oral histories suggests was a business practice that was largely co-operative in nature rather than competitive. However, it would be misleading to claim that in terms of gender, women were more collaborative than men in their approach to doing business as comparative oral histories were not part of this study.

Equally, it is not possible to be categorical that the increase in formal networking was as a result of more opportunities in the wider society at the latter stages of the time period, or to claim that there was a greater acceptance of women attending more formal organisations or networks-it could also be linked to the circumstances of the women's own lives. As children grew up and as businesses became more established and perhaps needed a little less attention these women may have had more time on their hands to pursue such interests.

There is also a consistency in the recollections of a "hardship" narrative and this has been recounted in most of the oral histories, reflecting perhaps what Clear posits is that the work of parents can give a strong sense of both identity and pride to children.⁵⁷⁷ An almost universal comment from all the participants centred on the level of time and the amount of hard work that was involved in building the business. Running a busy hotel in the height of

⁵⁷⁷ Clear, *Women of the house*, p. 210; Caitriona Clear, 'Hardship, help and happiness in oral history narratives of women's lives in Ireland, 1921-1961, *Oral History*, vol. 31, no. 2 (Autumn, 2003), pp. 33-42.

the season was a seven day a week job and Mrs. O'Donoghue's grandson remembers that his grandmother thought nothing of working seven days a week. There was a real pragmatism in the approach of these women; they were prepared to do what was necessary to effectively manage and to capitalise on the potential of their businesses. Mary's son remembers his mother's "phenomenal energy and ability to apply herself".⁵⁷⁸ Personal service businesses required constant attention and the women involved did not shirk from putting in long hours. The previous chapters have illustrated how hard these women worked, and for many that work ethic was a lifelong habit, with Ellen working day and night into her seventies until her son got married and took over, Mrs. Lawlor operating as an invalid running the business from her bed and Mrs. O' Donoghue still acting as the welcoming face of the business well into her eighties.

Summerfield has drawn attention to the fact that women "speaking for themselves through personal testimony are using language and so deploying cultural constructions".⁵⁷⁹ In the oral histories presented here, in the main it is family members speaking about their relative's life story and they too are using language in a particular way and are deploying cultural constructions. Two particular themes with clear resonances to the dominant discourses in Irish society at the time emerge strongly-the importance of family and the centrality of charity/church in the lives of the women. The maintenance of a balance between family and working life is described by a number of the participants and for some; there were high standards to be maintained. The proprietor of Maggie's Café's day is described by her granddaughter:

but she was up in the morning and made breakfast
for us, she came down worked and her lunch hour
she came up and made lunch, she made soup,
a main course and a dessert everyday and that's what
we grew up with and it was like everything properly

⁵⁷⁸ Interview, 19/3/2013, vol. 2, p. 261.

⁵⁷⁹ Summerfield, *Reconstructing women's wartime lives*, p. 11.

done with china and silver on the table and all of that, and she was a real stickler for everything being right and the same in the evening she would finish work and she would come up and cook dinner.⁵⁸⁰

Annie Brophy's niece has a similar recollection of her aunt, who operated her studio from the family home and who unfailingly everyday cooked mid-day dinner for her mother, and her siblings who returned from their places of work at lunchtime to the family home. Similar to the story recollected above standards were high:

but that was exactly how the dining table was, silver, silver sugar bowls, silver milk jugs. So the family sat down everyday to eat...⁵⁸¹

Ensuring that family was cared for was a top priority, but, in terms of hardship, it is somewhat tempered by the fact that the business women did employ staff. There are recollections of staff in the hotels and 'girls' assisting in shops, grandmothers giving support with rearing children, and in one case, children attending boarding school—all factors which would undoubtedly have assisted in managing the workload and in accommodating a balance between work and family life. It is also clear from a good number of the narratives, (Sheila, Gráinne, Molly, Una, Bridie,) that these women placed some value on leisure time—there are accounts of family holidays, trips to the Pantomime, expeditions to Dublin for cultural and shopping trips, all of which suggest too that while the work may have been hard there was also time dedicated to pleasure pursuits.

Staff featured to some extent, and in some of the oral histories, employees are referred to as "girls", (Ellen, Molly, Dorothea, Triona). The relationship is described in somewhat maternalistic terms, with Dorethea reportedly ensuring

⁵⁸⁰ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p 18.

⁵⁸¹ Interview, 24/1/2013, vol. 2, p. 94.

that her employees got mortgages and bought houses.⁵⁸² The hotel and catering businesses had a heavy reliance on female workers, who often worked long hours and in poor conditions, leading to a conjecture that perhaps it was a sector built on the labour of women and girls. The hard work of the women employed by Mrs. Lawlor and their contribution to her success has been alluded to earlier, and her granddaughter, while noting that they were well treated, can also appreciate that this practice implied hardship for the workers:

the first thing every morning all the staff had to have a good feed up, a big fry to get them through the day and a good meal at night, and the conditions they would have worked under, nobody nowadays would do it.⁵⁸³

While it is not possible to be conclusive the topic of business women's attitudes to, and relationship with their workers, the oral evidence presented here raises some interesting questions of dependence and interdependence between female business owners and their female employees.

The women's good standing in society was also emphasised. Regular attendance at Mass and being involved with charitable associations were recollected by family members. Jane cultivated her relationship with the religious orders for business purposes but also was involved in fundraising for local charities, Una was remembered for her involvement in the Legion of Mary and St. Vincent de Paul, Mrs. McElhinney had a reputation for fundraising too.

It is apparent too, from the oral histories that women exercised choice and exercised control over their lives. Work appeared to be an expected and an acceptable part of their life. They oftentimes demonstrated independence as decision-makers from their husbands as well as a capacity to work with them

⁵⁸² Interview, 27/2/2013, vol. 2, p. 298.

⁵⁸³ Interview, 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 8.

in business. They displayed drive and ambition and two of them had more than one business during their lives.

They were good business people in the main. A head for business was important and an ability to see where opportunity lay and how one might take advantage of particular situations was also useful. Not standing still and pursuing growth and development is a common thread in many narratives. Mrs Huggard's development of her family chain of hotels has been recorded, once she had established the reputation of the hotel into which she married she was quick to look around and acquire additional businesses which in turn were passed on to various members of her family to run. Within the manufacturing sector the females also pursued development, in the case of Sheila; she went from doing piecemeal collar turning as a sideline to her retail work, to running a significant home based dressmaking business to eventually opening a clothing factory in conjunction with her son. Nellie too started as a homemaker, knitting socks by machine to contract, developing it in such a way that she was able to involve her neighbour and finally opening a knitting factory, following a stint as a drapery shop owner.

As has already been mentioned, developments in the tourist industry and national moves to promote the sector had a knock on effect on hoteliers and guesthouse owners and many were more than up for the challenges and the opportunities that that presented. Una's son describes his mother's attitude saying "yeah she moved very fast, absolutely, that's one thing, she was mad for progress" and elsewhere he notes "she wanted progress, she never stopped, there was always gravel outside the hotel in the wintertime, you know".⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸⁴ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 255.

The oral histories indicate that joint start-ups occurred and were partnerships in the sense that the input of both parties was deemed critical to the success of the venture. Triona and Gráinne's stories both highlight this. Most of the women displayed varying degrees of solid business sense. There are good examples of astuteness around branding, operations and negotiations across all sectors. Many of the businesses lasted for a long time, in fact 15 of the businesses profiled here lasted for two or three generations and 10 of the business are still operational by family members. It must be borne in mind that this is possibly a function of the self-selection process for soliciting participants for this project and there is evidence in the dissolved companies files that plenty of female-owned business that did not last the test of time. However, the businesses are by no means cast in the Schumpeterian mould, critiqued for its capacity to exclude women's' businesses by Gamber, Kay and Kwolek-Folland⁵⁸⁵-but they undoubtedly have engaged in the entrepreneurial process which Stevenson and Jarillo described as "pursuing opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control".⁵⁸⁶ They appear to have more in common with what Casson termed "more common low level" entrepreneurship but this cannot be attributed solely to their gender-many Irish entrepreneurs, both male and female for the period fell into this category.⁵⁸⁷

The testimonies also show that women took their work and their position in their stride and for many, while there was undoubted pride in what they did and strong identification with their business, there is no sense that they thought that they were doing anything extraordinary. Subjects were questioned as to how they felt their relatives would describe themselves for

⁵⁸⁵ Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating women*, p. 1-11; Kay, *The foundation of female entrepreneurship*, p. 120-131; Gamber, 'A gendered enterprise: placing nineteenth-century businesswomen in history', pp.188-217.

⁵⁸⁶ Stevenson and Jarillo, *A Paradigm of Entrepreneurship*, pp. 17-27.

⁵⁸⁷ Casson, Yeung, Basu and Wadeson, (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of entrepreneurship*, p. 3.

the Census returns in an attempt to ascertain how the females may have perceived themselves. Mrs O Donoghue's grandson feels that his grandmother would have perceived herself as follows:

she would have, she would have seen herself as an hotelier, like you know, as I say in the way she operated...⁵⁸⁸

So to for Mary and her son says "she was very proud of the fact that she owned a hotel". And Una too was reckoned to identify with the role:

She, she, I'd say she put down hotelier, yeah she would, hotel keeper. Yeah, I'd say that would be the word, yeah...⁵⁸⁹

Mrs. Lawlor, when interviewed by the press in later life was very clear about what was important in making her a success at what she did. She said:

I am particularly, I am a very particular person and I give great concern a great concern to detail...⁵⁹⁰

For others the self-belief was tempered with humility and Ellen's daughter had this to say about her mother:

She had, she had no, no ideas of grandeur or importance at all, she was an extremely down to earth person, how would she have described herself?, hardworking, yeah...⁵⁹¹

Similarly Annie Brophy, who was garnering a reputation as a photographer demonstrated a degree of humility. Her niece tells story about how Annie was invited by a British magazine to go to London to photograph a major royal event, but she declined on the grounds that there would be no one home to cook her brother's dinner. Her niece recounts:

⁵⁸⁸ Interview, 9/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 180.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview, 10/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 249.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview, 1/5/2013, vol. 2, p. 17.

⁵⁹¹ Interview, 11/4/2013, vol. 2, p. 159.

it was a way of living, she didn't see herself as this wonderful icon or career diva or anything like that, she never saw herself like that. It was what she did.⁵⁹²

Mrs. McElhinney valued common sense. Over the decades the reputation of the business grew and attracted many customers from beyond her local area. She became the focus of some media attention and her grandson remembers:

But she was a bit shy of her own success, she wasn't, although she was successful, she wasn't mad about being interviewed, or she'd get nervous, for a thing like that, being interviewed, she'd just felt, she wanted to be successful for her children, to set them up, it wasn't anything for herself...⁵⁹³

Ambivalence of children comes through in the testimonies, especially in relation to the impact of the business on family life. As has been documented in previous chapters, Una's and Dorothea's sons both reported negative impacts, as did Maggie's granddaughter and Mary's son, however, they were all also at pains to portray positive effects too. In scenarios where the grandchildren recounted the histories, there is an impression of almost total positivity whereas the sons and daughters tend to display a more nuanced memory.

In conducting the interviews there were differences in styles of recollection. As the oral evidence was being used to corroborate other data a number of general pre-structured questions were asked. No two interviews were the same and while there was an attempt to adhere to this structure, participants did digress on occasions. In the case of three of the participants, their stories had been aired in the public domain on a number of occasions-a documentary has been made about Annie Brophy by TG4, Mrs. Lawlor's story was subject of a local history project and as noted by her grandson, Mrs. McElhinney's business had been

⁵⁹² Interview, 24/2/2013, vol. 2, p. 90.

⁵⁹³ Interview, 11/3/2013, vol. 2, p. 228.

profiled at regular intervals towards the end of her life.⁵⁹⁴ Mrs. Huggard, too had acquired a degree of public acknowledgement over the years. In these cases, the stories were very well known to the family members and recounted with real familiarity and with a definite sense of family ownership attached to them. For most others it was the first time that they had recounted their stories to a public audience. The overall experience in conducting the interviews would align with Ritchie's suggestion "that memory was less a photograph of the original image than a montage of images and suggestions" and the stories tended to follow a reasonable, chronological and coherent narrative, yielding memories that gave an insight into the lives of business women of the time.⁵⁹⁵

Almost without exception, the running of a business conferred a degree of social mobility, and provided increased opportunity for family members when the business succeeded. The provision of education for children was particularly important and given that all of the businesses recounted in the oral histories were set up before the introduction of free education to Ireland in 1967, this was a significant issue. The ability to finance secondary and possibly third level education was almost universally a strong motivator for the women concerned. However, the trappings of success went beyond the educational domain—lifestyle improvements are evident in many cases, greater opportunity for children in terms of extra-curricular activities, drama, language, riding, going on holidays, the acquisition of material goods and an overall general improvement in the living conditions reported. The accumulation of property as incomes rose was common, with some of the women acquiring substantial property portfolios and effectively becoming landladies over time. They made astute investments and they were very

⁵⁹⁴Trí Shúile an Chait' (TG4: Nemeton, 2010); Liam Kenny, 'Last dance before Lent'—100 years of Lawlor's of Naas', (*County Kildare on-line historical journal*) <http://www.kildare.ie/library/ehistory/2013/08>; Interview, 19/3/2013, vol. 2, p. 228.

⁵⁹⁵ Ritchie, 'Foreward', p. viii.

committed to providing opportunities for improvement for their family. They had lives within the home and business, but also engaged in their wider communities and regions and in some cases making significant contributions to the development of their industry. Their stories concur with Clear's assertion that during this period, many women "seem to have been turning their faces against the kind of old-fashioned patriarchy" and supports Daly's view that the repressive nature of women's experience may have been exaggerated.⁵⁹⁶

Separate Spheres

The relationship between the public and private domain of the subjects was interesting to explore and as has been shown, there is no doubt that some female businesses were undoubtedly an extension of home life. This does in some way support Davidoff and Hall's articulation of the public/private analytical framework.⁵⁹⁷ The use of the family home to develop a business occurred in the personal service area and many own-account workers located in the manufacturing sector were likely to have based their activities in the home. Indeed for some, particularly in the hotel sector, the very culture of the organisation was developed out of a sense of having guests in one's home, and the importance of customer service developed from the personal interaction between the founder and the regular visitors to the hotel. In the area of Commerce and Finance many businesses were co-located beside the family home. But the women studied had very active public lives, beyond the sphere of home and there was no reporting of censure of these activities from either family members or the wider society. So at the same time as the women had a tendency to give priority to the private, many also

⁵⁹⁶ Clear, *Women of the house: Women's household work in Ireland 1922-1961*, p. 202; Mary E. Daly, 'Women in the Irish Free State, 1922-39: The interaction between economics and ideology' in *Journal of Women's History*, vol 7, no. 1 (1995), pp. 99-116.

⁵⁹⁷ Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes*, pp. xiv-xlix.

paradoxically had an active public profile. Arguably, this was an unconscious aspect of their lives—it is apparent from the histories that they did what they had to do to make their situation work for themselves, their families and their businesses, straddling both the public and private domain in order to do so successfully. This finding supports the critique of separate spheres as a restrictive analytical tool.⁵⁹⁸

However, it must also be stated that despite their presence and contribution to public life, there is evidence that the public contributions were not overtly acknowledged. Female representation on national lobby groups and industrial organisations was relatively small considering the number of women that were active as either employers or own account workers in the different sectors.

The blurring of the private/public links also to the finding that many of the businesses highlighted in the study exhibited a high degree of informality. Retail operations that were located adjacent to the family home were particularly vulnerable to having the lines between formal business operations and family needs being blurred. And for many, the business was an extension of the family, omnipresent and discussions on how the business was doing were a feature of family life with the contribution of family members, spouses and children, sometimes paid, and sometimes unpaid, expected and demanded. There are examples of manufacturing concerns being located close to the family home and the wider family network, and in many cases, family members, sons and daughters were groomed and honed to take on the mantle of the business. However, it is probably not correct to depict this blurring of the private/public domain as a feature only of female-owned businesses, there is evidence from the data to indicate that irrespective of the gender of the owner, many businesses in the hospitality and retail sector relied heavily on family support.

⁵⁹⁸ Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres?', p. 383-414.; Davidson and Hatcher, *No more separate spheres*, pp. 7-28.

Professor Shields reporting on the Distribution trades in Ireland in 1951 draws attention to the significance of family labour in small retail businesses.⁵⁹⁹ Also the oral histories from businesses reveal that where there was a partnership between husband and wife there was constant interlinking of the businesses with overall family life. However, none of the participants expressed the kind of ideals that Mrs. Fogarty, who manufactured Disney characters under licence did when interviewed about her business in 1959. She had very strong views on the role of women and employed only men. She did not perceive any inconsistency with the fact that she made no excuse for operating a business outside of the home herself, while maintaining a policy to employ men only because 'bringing mothers away from their natural background is unnatural'.⁶⁰⁰ It is clear from her interview that she was not an advocate for the employment of women in any way but she did proffer that she would market the products of 'their womenfolk [her employees], provided it is done at home'.

Davidoff has pointed out how the ideology around the private has a strong association with ideas about femininity and this study indicates that there was support for maintaining the feminine while engaging in business for women in mid-20th century Ireland.⁶⁰¹ Looking at the wider social context within which female employers and own-account workers operated during the period of the study, it appears that there was a great deal of emphasis on the femininity of the women who engaged in such pursuits. Profiling of women in business did occur, the papers carried obituaries of businesswomen regularly and such narratives often allude to the businesswoman's contribution to her family, her support of her husband and her family, her charitable and Christian virtues before lauding her business acumen.

⁵⁹⁹ Shields, 'An analysis of the Irish Census of Distribution 1951', p. 125.

⁶⁰⁰ See footnote 393.

⁶⁰¹ Davidoff, *Worlds's between: Historical perspectives on gender and class*, p. 3.

Specialist magazines, targeted at women in general, while concentrating most of their reportage towards the woman in the home, did not ignore the fact that a proportion of their readership were engaged in activities beyond the home – *Woman's Life* regularly featured businesswomen in their pages, sometimes profiling services and products offered by their readers and on occasions counselling women to consider how they might use their skills and talents to procure additional income for themselves. Obviously these kinds of business suggestions had their origins in the home, but nonetheless, there was a sense that a woman could take advantage of her situation for monetary gain. The recollection of the family members of the female entrepreneurs cited in this study do not overly emphasis the femininity of the subjects with one just reporting how he felt his mother was able to use her gender to her advantage when doing business. This suggests that perhaps the issue of femininity was one that played out more in the media and in the formal public representations of female business owners. This mirrors Buddle's contention that "the media also did its part to represent self-employed women as overtly feminine".⁶⁰²

The overriding impression following the analysis of all the sources is that the history of business in Ireland is very much a history of small and family business. Women, albeit in the minority, nonetheless were substantial contributors as employers and own-account workers to the Irish economy in mid-20th century Ireland. The examination of the quantitative data of both females and males was illuminating in that it pointed to the similarities as much as to the differences that existed for both gender groups. This echoes Aston's findings from her examination of female business owners in 19th century England that rather than "male" and "female" businesses there were mainly "small businesses", whose business practices were very similar.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰² Melanie Buddle, 'You have to think like a man and act like a lady: businesswomen in British Columbia, 1920-80', *BC Studies*, no. 151 (2006), pp. 69-95, p. 73.

⁶⁰³ Jennifer Aston, 'Female business owners in Englan 1849-1901' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2012), p. 251.

Further research opportunities

This study is the first to have conducted an in-depth examination of the role of Irish women as employers and own-account workers in Ireland as it emerged as an independent nation. Indeed women in this category have not been researched in earlier periods of Irish history, unlike in the US and the UK where a body of work has been undertaken—in part possibly as a reaction to Ireland being a more agrarian than commercial and industrial society.⁶⁰⁴ However, as with all studies of this nature there are shortcomings, and in reflecting on these, attention is drawn to areas that offer potential for further research.

As the testimonies solicited were strongly concentrated on women who were employers and owner-managers, the possibility exists to design a study which engages solely with women who were own account-workers at that time. This would enhance the qualitative data herein and supplement the work of Kiely and Leane who have researched women as employees in a similar period.⁶⁰⁵

The chapters in this study have been laid out on a sector by sector basis. The oral histories that resulted from the call for participation naturally inclined themselves toward such a division also. However, the possible downside of such an approach is that sectoral nuances and differences are not drawn forth to as detailed a level as might be desirable. Each sector offers the potential to be explored in greater depth from the perspective of females who were employers and/or own-account workers therein. It might also prove useful to do such a study on a regional basis. The potential exists to examine female

⁶⁰⁴ Wendy Gamber, 'Reduced to science': gender, technology, and power in the American dressmaking trade, 1860-1910', *Technology and Culture*, vol. 36, no. 3 (1995), pp. 455-82.; Kay, *The foundation of female entrepreneurship*, pp 33-119; Aston, 'Female business owners in England', pp. 1-257; Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating women*, pp. 12-167.

⁶⁰⁵ Kiely and Leane, *Irish women at work 1930-1960*, pp. 31-112.

economic activity in both the agricultural and professional services sector also.

The data presented draws attention to both the similarities and the differences between female and male employers and own-account workers and there are strong indications that the history of business in Ireland is a history of small and family business. Again historical studies on this subject in an Irish context are relatively underdeveloped and this offers the potential for further work. The role and influence of women within the context of the family firm have received attention internationally and the same scope exists in an Irish context.⁶⁰⁶ And while the quantitative data here does include the male figures it would be valuable to solicit oral histories from male business owners operating in the same time period. In this way, it may be possible to make more conclusive judgements about if, and how, gender impacted on the operation of small business in Ireland.

This study points to some ambiguities and contradictions in relation to women and their networks within business. Within some sectors there is some evidence of women exerting influence and engaging at a high level to influence and lobby for their industry yet within many sectors with strong female presence, there is little evidence of women having a voice. A perusal of some of the trade magazines of the period gives an impression of “genderless” businesses, with little acknowledgement of the fact that many of the proprietors were females—*The Drapers Mirror* is a good example of this.⁶⁰⁷ However, the oral testimonies indicate that women did have networks, both formal and informal, consciously or unconsciously and that

⁶⁰⁶ Tom Ericsson, 'Women, family and small business in late nineteenth-century Sweden' in *History of the Family*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2001), pp. 225-39; Joanna Pepelasis Minoglou, 'Women and family capitalism in Greece, c.1780-1940', *Business History Review*, vol. 81, no 3 (2007), pp. 517-38.

⁶⁰⁷ *The Drapers Mirror*, 1949 (N.L.I., IR 689 D 2).

they tapped into this resource at intervals to support their businesses. A comparative study of male and female networks that operated in the period, both formal and informal organisations would contribute to broadening our view of the lived experience of Irish business people operating in mid-20th century Ireland.

Furthermore, the study raises questions about the nature of the relationship between female-business owners and female employees in the period. The hotel and catering sector, the retail sector and the manufacturing area, particularly the manufacturing of clothing, were all sectors with high levels with female employment and relatively poor working conditions. The scope exists to explore in more detail the complexities around dependency and interdependencies of the employer/employee relationship.

Finally, it has been shown that women were active participants in the economic life of the country—they were visibly there, they ran shops, pubs, factories and hotels. They developed good, successful businesses, they had networks, they were supportive of one another, they got coverage in the media and while there may be questions to be asked about the coverage and the depiction of the females therein, it still was not exceptional to see regular coverage of business women. So the concluding question becomes why it is that there remains an overriding impression that entrepreneurial women did not exist? This is a significant question and while this research has highlighted the presence of such women and revealed their enterprising experiences, more research is needed to explain why this perception endured.

Appendix A Biographies of participants

1. **Katie Ryan, Retailer**, Galway, born in 1879. Set up a retail operation with her husband in 1909. Had 5 children. Worked in the business up to the 1950s when her son took over. The business is now over 100 years in existence and is still in family hands. Interview daughter-in-law on 12/3/2013.
2. **Mrs. Lawlor, Caterers**, Kildare born in 1880. Established a small catering business and hotel in 1914. Married, two sons, set business up when her sons were small. Grew to substantial business, did all the catering for the RDS and numerous racetracks around the country. By the time of her death she was running a hotel, one of the most established catering businesses in the country, a 300 hundred acre farm and was owner of 15 races horses. The business was passed onto her son. Interviewed granddaughter on 1/5/2013.
3. **Maggie (alias), Café**, Southern Ireland, born c 1885. Set up in 1909. Taken over by current proprietor's grandmother Maggie—in the 1940s. Was joined in the business by her daughter in the 1970s. They jointly ran the business until Maggie died. Married, had two children. Business still in family hands. Interviewed granddaughter on 10/4/2013.
4. **Mary Huggard, Hotelier** Kerry born 1887. She trained in hotel management and moved to Waterville to run the Southern Lake Hotel. Married Martin Huggard who ran the Bay View Hotel. The Huggard family acquired a number of hotels in the region, the Caragh Lake, The Royal Hotel, Ashford Castle at the behest of the government and the Lake Hotel. A member of Fogra Fáilte, was a very well-known figure in the tourism industry and worked at national level to promote tourism. She was also involved in the Irish Hotels Federation. Seven children, Interviewed grandson on 11/04/2013.

5. **Jane (alias), Retailer**, Dublin, born in 1893. Took over fish and poultry business that was operating in the South City markets in 1922. Business was handed to her on the condition that she would take care of original owners in their old age. Married, had 3 children Business ran for over 40 years, and passed it onto her son-in-law in the mid-1970s. Interviewed daughter on 16/03/2009.
6. **Annie Brophy, photographer**, Waterford born in 1899. At the age of approximately 16 was apprenticed to a photographer. Set up her own studio in 1922. Ran her business there for over 50 years, closing it down in the early 1970s. She built up a substantial business as a portrait photographer, but also did weddings and commercial work. Single, no children. Interviewed nieces on 24/1/2013.
7. **Bridie (alias), Retailer** Kerry born c 1890, married into a family who operated a newsagent, general merchant shop and goods carrier. Took over and changed focus of business in 1930s. Developed a significant antique business, the first of its kind in her locality. Self-educated, read up on the trade. Married, six children. Interviewed daughter on 9/04/2013.
8. **Nellie (alias), Manufacturer** Dublin, c 1900. Started a small knitting business in 1937, based in her home. Then moved to Summerhill in North inner city Dublin in the early 1940s where she set up a drapery shop. Started a small knitting factory in the late 1940s, developing her own brand of lady's knitwear. Had 7 children. Developed property portfolio in later years. Interviewed daughter on 18/6/2013.
9. **Jossie Brophy, confectioner**, Waterford. Born in 1903, Jossie was a sister of Annie's and she also ran a business in the town—she operated a confectionary business in partnership with another woman. It was a business of great longevity and operated for most of Jossie's life. She was a

confectioner and baker and the business was called the Regal Cake shop. Jossie remained single and operated the business until she was in her eighties. Interviewed nieces on 24/1/2014.

10. **Ellen (alias), Hotelier, Kerry**, born c 1910, set up a guesthouse in late 1940s when her husband died. She commenced as a small guesthouse, but extended it to a full hotel with licence in the nineteen fifties. Had 9 children. She had regular loyal guests, locally and internationally and also built up a trade in catering for weddings. She operated the business up until the 1970s when she herself was in her seventies. Her son and his wife took over the business. Interviewed her daughter on 11/4/2013.
11. **Annie O'Brien, B and B owner, Waterford**, born c. 1910. Set up one of the first Bed and Breakfast Guest houses in Tramore in the 1940s. Ran the business until the late 1980s. The B and B could accommodate up to 14 people, depending on the set up. Had a family of four. Interviewed her daughters on 24/1/2013.
12. **Sheila O'Donoghue, Hotelier, Kerry**, born in 1910, set up in 1958. Small start-up but grew quickly. Had 6 children and one of her son's became actively involved in the business, he concentrated on developing the entertainment side which became an increasingly important side of the business. She operated the front of house and all of the accommodation side of the business and ran it exclusively for about 15 years. Remained involved in the business. Interviewed her grandson on 9/4/2014.
13. **Sheila (alias), Manufacturer, Dublin**, born in 1911. Set up a small shop in the early 1930s, ran it for 2 years or so. Went working in shirt factory, started dressmaking in the evenings. In the late 1930s she went into dressmaking full-time, and operated from home. Had 5 machinists working work her. Set up a limited company in 1950 with her eldest son

manufacturing children's coats. Had 4 children, remained involved in the business until she died. Interviewed her son on 2/11/2012.

14. **Molly McElhinney, Retailer**, Meath, born in 1915. Set up her shop in 1937. She initially started by making the fashions herself and this continued during the 1940s and into the 1950s. Over time she started buying stock, initially from Dublin but overtime expanding to buy from abroad. She grew the business significantly and developed a strong reputation for the shop as a fashion centre to which customers would travel from all over Ireland to get clothes for special occasions. An astute businesswoman, ran a farm as well as the business. Had eight children. Operated the business for over 50 years until her death in 1988. Interviewed grandson on 11/3/2013.
15. **Una (alias), Hotelier**, Kerry, born in 1916. Worked for aunt as maid servant in aunt's hotel. In 1936 she came to an arrangement with her aunt that the aunt would sell her the hotel at a good rate. Had 5 children. In the 1960s acquired another hotel. Son took over and she started a shop in later life. Interviewed her son on 10/4/2013.
16. **Hilda Huggard, Hotelier**, Kerry, born c. 1918, daughter of Mary Huggard. The family acquired the hotel in 1940 and she operated and ran the Lake Hotel for fifty years. Active figure in promoting tourism, particularly in the Killarney region where her hotel was located. Single, no children. Interviewed her nephew on 11/04/2014.
17. **Mary (alias), Hotelier**. South east, born in 1919. Trained in the hotel business, managed hotels prior to marriage. On marriage worked in her husband's family hotel business, taking it over in 1960s when it was willed to her. Ran it for her entire life. Interviewed her son on 19/3/2013.
18. **Gráinne (Alias), Retailers**, Galway 1922, born in the early 1920s. Following their marriage in 1946, Gráinne and her husband set up in

business together—a drapery and hardware shop as well as a small haulage business. Had 2 children. She was mainly responsible for the shop while her husband looked after the yard and the haulage side of the business. Ran it for over 40 years. Interviewed daughter on 18/6/2013.

19. **Nora and May (alias), Publicans and Guest house**, Galway, born 1914 and 1926 respectively. Father bought them a pub and grocery business in a rural town which they operated together for 12 years. Sold business, relocated and set up a very successful B and B in a nearby larger tourist destination which they ran up until the death of the Nora the eldest sister. Single, no children. Interviewed niece on 18/6/2013.
20. **Dorothea Rogan, Manufacturer**, Dublin, born 1924. Did a course in Grafton Academy. Worked for a number of manufacturers, then set-up a manufacturing factory in Dublin making housecoats in 1946. Operated the business until the late 1970s. Had 3 children. Interviewed son on 27/2/2013.
21. **Triona (alias), Retailer**, Waterford, born c 1935. Set up a shop and a petrol station in the early 1960s. Operated it for over forty years. Had 6 children. Interviewed her on 16/11/2012.

**Appendix B Letter – sent to newspapers and appropriate organisations
used to solicit oral testimonies and sample questionnaire**

Department of
Entrepreneurship
IADT
Kill Avenue
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin

Dear Reader,

In the news today we often hear of the importance of women in business, but what of times past? I am currently engaged in a PhD thesis on women who owned and managed their own business in Ireland in the period from 1922 – 1971 and am seeking assistance with this research. I would like to talk to anyone who either ran a business themselves in that period, or was related to, or closely connected to a woman who did. The location, size, scale, nature or sector of the business is not important. Men, as well as women, who have memories of mothers, grannies, aunts or sisters running a business, would be a great source of information too. These memories are very important to our understanding of the social and economic history of Ireland in the formative years of statehood and will complement what we know from the official records.

If you would like to participate in this project, I would be delighted to hear from you. I can be contacted by email at t.moylan3@nuigalway.ie ; by letter at the above address or by phone on 086-6070145. I promise I will answer all letters.

Yours sincerely,

Therese Moylan

Appendix C

Sample Questions

General

1. Age of female when she started it/took over?
2. Circumstances of female when she started it/took it over – e.g. married, single, widowed?
3. Had she children or not?
4. What was her religion?
5. Previous occupation and social status?
6. Urban based-major cities e.g. Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Galway, Limerick or was it a small town or rural endeavour?

Motivation

7. Any sense of why she might have started the business?

Operational

8. What kind of business was it and how did it operate?
9. What was the business's legal status – i.e. limited company, partnership, sole trader?
10. Describe the kind of business it was and how did it operate on a day to day basis?
11. Describe her role within the business?
12. Were there employees and if so, approximately how many?
13. Were other family members involved in the business and if so, in what capacity?
14. Was the business commercially successful – if so, what kind of evidence do you have that indicates this – i.e. investments portfolios, wealth accumulation, lifestyle, number of properties etc.?
15. How was the business financed – where did she get her finances from?
16. How did she promote the business?
17. How long did the business run for and did she run it for the length of her life?
18. How did it close – get passed on?

Social context

19. Any information on whether there were other female business owner/managers in her location and did she have much to do with them?
20. Was she involved in more than one business?
21. Did she associate with other business people in the area-either male or female i.e. chamber of commerce, local associations?

Impact on family

22. Any interesting stories, anecdotes, family lore associated with the business and how she operated it?
23. What was the impact on her family members?

**Appendix D Breakdown of female employers and own-account workers
by types of businesses within the category Commerce and Finance**

Activity	1926	1936	1946	1951	1961	1966	1971
Wholesale distribution				65	68	52	101
Trading in live animals	14		12	10	8	1	8
Retailing	9772						
Eggs and Live Poultry	84		34	27	4	1	
Wools, skins and leathers				1	3	1	
Grain and forage	45		26	12	5	7	3
Timber, scrap metal etc					11	6	
Coal	27		21	13	8	6	12
Bread and cakes	169		250	244	180	161	143
Sweets	1402		1252	1850	1328	1065	836
Grocery and Provision	2263		2434	2565	4287	3219	2349
Grocery and Public House				376	860	547	434
Public Houses	3060	2854	2495	2211	1555	1507	1399
Milk and Dairy Products	260		227	132	35	19	16
Fresh Meat	159		143	123	101	86	87
Fish and dead Poultry	174		61	25	34	27	
Vegetables and Fruits	679		437	263	231	143	104
Other food and drink					46	37	
Spirits and Wine	30		23	37			
Tobacco	240		283				
Building materials	5		4	7	9	8	6
Drugs, Druggists Sundries	50		164	192	292	308	283
Metal, metal goods and tools	169		90	119			
Electrical goods				8	141	125	110
Cycles and Motors	16		19	21	15	13	
Leather, sports and fancy goods				64	91	89	92
Jewellery, Watches and Clocks	18		23	28	20	31	37
General Drapery	1202		1071	1180	1149	946	915
Boots and shoes	78		55	68	92	71	
Furniture	47		29	40	49	41	56
Paper and Stationery	324		320	113	94	63	45
Motor garages					34	46	62
Motor spirits and lubricants			3				
Department Stores	147		172	6	0		4
Country general shops				193	25	54	48
Drapery department	5						
Other Departmental stores	8						
Hawking and Street Selling	585	589	227	124			
Auctioneering	12	7	11	16	26	63	

Advertising Agencies	31		10	3	9	5	
Other trading	1722	76	1926	771	167	447	468
B Finance Banking							
Insurance			2	5	1	4	12
Pawn broking, money lending, other finance	26	37	32	13	5	9	7
Auctioneering							59
Advertising Agencies							4
Other business services						44	
Total	13051	13335	11856	10925	10983	9208	7744

Note.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁸ *Census of Population*, Industrial status/industries vols. employment status tables, 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1961, 1961, 1966, 1971.

Appendix E Mrs Timmons' list of suppliers 1959

Date	Company	Pound	shilling	Pence
19/09/1959	W. & R Jacobs		14	
14/09/1959	Dowdall, O'Mahony and Co		17	4
17/09/1959	Kilkenny Co-operative Creamery	17	3	0
16/09/1959	Owen Fogarty	11	7	0
21/09/1959	Corcoran and Co	1	8	0
25/09/1959	Murray Limited	13	9	7
25/09;1959	Cerebos Limited	9	18	6
22/09/1959	Hurley and Co	17	12	11
07/10/1959	WP & R Odlum	3	0	9
30/09/1959	Alfred Bird and Sons	6	5	7
30/09/1959	O'Mara Limerick	12	18	9
05/10/1958	Suttons Tel el Kebir Dairy, Monkstown		14	8
29/09/1959	Owen Fogarty	10	6	3
24/09/1959	John Player	36	40	11
22/09/1959	Adam Scott and Co	8	2	
21/09/1959	Dowdall, O'Mahony and Co	0	17	4
24/09/1959	WP & R Odlum	3	4	5
24/09/1959	Lee and Co	21	99	1
	Modern Bakeries		10	0
16/10/1959	John Brennan and Co	3	11	8
05/10/1959	Dowdall, O'Mahony and Co	0	17	4
05/10/1959	O'Mara, Limerick	1	8	
05/10/1959	O'Mara, Limerick	0	15	
02/10/1959	Corcoran and co	1	8	
23/09/1959	Lever Brothers	14	19	5
26/10/1959	Shandon Castle factory	1	4	8
15/10/1959	Wm. Hogg and Co	21	7	
23/10/1959	John Brennan and Co	3	8	4
22/10/1959	Odlum (Sallins)	14	15	2
12/11/1959	O'Mara Limerick	12	6	9
14/11/1959	E. Morrin and Son	5	15	
14/11/1959	W & R Jacobs	1	10	
11/11/1959	E. Morrin and Son	4	1	6
01/07/1959	D. Molloy and Sons	40	0	0
13/11/1959	Esso Petroleum Company	17	18	4
09/11/1959	Corcoran and Co	1	7	2

06/11/1959	Mineral Waters Distributors Ltd	2	18	0
05/11/1959	Baker, Wardell and Co	26	5	
25/11/1959	Shirley, Spence and Belfard	35	13	8
30/11/1959	O'Mara Limerick	33	13	7
18/11/1959	William Ruddell	11	19	0
23/11/1959	Suttons Tel el Kebir Dairy, Monkstown	1	16	8
25/11/1959	Shirley, Spence and Belfard			
14/01/1960	Colgate Palmolive	8	9	4
09/12/1959	R&W Scott	14	11	9
16/01/1960	Esso Petroleum Company	17	18	4
12/01/1960	Shirley, Spence and Belfard	15	9	2
03/01/1960	W. Quinn	0	16	0
* Also deal with Guinness		467	619	179
Total		498	11	11

Note. ⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁹ 'Invoices from suppliers', September/ October 1955, (N.A.I., Wick 17/2, Business Records).

Appendix F Companies with female directors/ company secretaries applying for Trade Loans 1926-1953

TID Files		1925		Purpose	Amount	
Dun Emer Guild	Dublin	1/889	1926	Andrew Dillon, Carpet Man 50 preference, 100 ordinary Katherine Helen MacCormack, Textile Designer, 325 preference; Colm Ó Lochlainn, Printer, 100 ordinary; Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, Kilkenny Woollen Mills, 1020 ordinary; Hariette F. Simpson, 1300 ordinary; above all directors W Proctors, shareholder?	Carpets, hand-woven, embroidery by machine. Set up in 1902, Kitty MacCormack is the niece of Miss Gleeson, one of the founders of the Guild.	
Reenascreena Mills	Rosscarbery, Co Cork	TID 1/2567	1933	Mrs N. M. Hurley, Owner, Proprietress	Woollen Mills	
Boyles Hosiery and Knitting Co	Dungarvan	TID FD/11	1933	Hannah Boyle and James Mansfield	To adopt premises and acquire plant and machinery. Document of Indenture made on 29th November 1934 was between Hannah Boyle and the Bank, noting James Mansfield signed a joint and several letter of guarantee	500
Samuel E. Holmes	Dublin and Kildare	TID FD/1/35	1933	Eleanor J Holmes, Samuel Holmes, Directors and Kathleen Sullivan, Secretary	The acquisition and installation of plant and machinery for the manufacture of black bolts and the provision of working capital for the carrying on of such manufacture	3,000
Industrial Vehicles Ireland	Athy	TID FD/1/48	1934	Henry J. Hosie, Director, Laura J. Hosie, Director and Secretary	The provision of additional working capital	4,000
Kingswear clothing works	Limerick	TID FD/1/56	1934	Patrick King, Managing Director, Kathleen King, Married woman, secretary	Adaption of premises, acquisition of plant and machinery, provision of working capital	2,500
Limerick Shoes Ltd	Limerick	TID FD/1/58	1935	Mairéad Ní Dhálaigh	Acquire new building and erect a shoe and slipper factory	5,000
The Mayfair Confectionery Co	Kilcock	TID FD/1/60	1935	Erwin Strunz, Director, Elisabeth Strunz, Secretary	Working capital to expand	1,500
McGrath Bros Blinds Ltd	Dublin	TID FD/1/62	1936	Patrick B. McGrath, J. Plunkett Dillon, Director, Marion Warnock Secretary	Extension of premises, purchase of plant and machinery and provision of working capital	1,500

P Moylett and Co	Dublin	TID FD/1/71	1936	P Moylett, Florence Moylett	Reconstruction of premises, acquisition of plant and machinery, discharging of Messrs Moylett and co indebtedness and provision of working capital	8,500
James O'Flynn and Sons	Clare	TID FD/1/76	1937	James O'Flynn, Chairman, Ellen O'Flynn, Secretary	Extension of factory premises, acquisition of additional plant and machinery, and provision of working capital	10,000
J. F. O'Gorman	Clonmel	TID FD/1/77	1939	Catherine O'Gorman, Thomas O'Gorman, Directors, Thomas O'Gorman Secretary	The purchase from the liquidators of O'Gorman Brothers Ltd, Clonmel of certain lands, buildings plant and machinery subject to yearly rents and a tithe rent and to certain tenancies and to covenants on the part of the grantee and lessee and conditions in the grants contained, but otherwise free from all encumbrances	
Russell Bros	Portarlinton	TID FD/1/81	1952	Patrick McCormack, P.S. Ramsey [?], Directors, Beatrice Molloy, Secretary	Extension of existing premises, the purchase of additional plant and machinery for installation and provision of working capital	6,000
William P Ryan	Dublin	TID FD/1/82	1953	William P Ryan Director, Mary Ryan Director, Owen J. Murphy, Secretary	Alteration of premises, acquisition of additional plant and machinery and provision of working capital	2,000
Urney chocolates	Dublin	TID FD/1/94	1953	H.J. Gallagher, Managing Director, Nora Callahan, Secretary	Remodelling existing factory	11,100
Waterproofs Ltd	Cork	TID FD/1/98		Charles Edward Elwood, Joseph A Casey-directors Mary Frances Elwood, Secretary	The purchase by the company from The Celtex Proofing Company, of land, plant, building, machinery, fittings and fixed assets of the last mentioned company	1,500

Note. ⁶¹⁰

⁶¹⁰ Extracted from Trade Loan files, reference numbers included in table, (N.A.I., TID/ TID FD, Trade Loan files).

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