

**The Evolution of Limerick City's
Fife and Drum Band Tradition
1840 to 1935**

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Candidate's Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work, based on research in primary and secondary sources.

Candidate: _____

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Date: _____

Abstract

This thesis examines the evolution and activity of fife and drum bands in Limerick city between 1840 and 1935. The topic was chosen because of the author's involvement in St Mary's Fife and Drum Band since 1976 and because of the cultural and social contribution the bands have made to the life of Limerick city, a subject which is virtually unexplored up to now.

The stages of the development of the bands are discussed over a period of 95 years, from their foundation in the temperance movement of the 1840s, the period of O'Connell, to Parnell and on to the formation of the Free State. The changes in instrumentation, uniforms, accommodation and organisational ability is discussed, and how this has developed over the decades. Equally important is the growing political involvement of the bands, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century until they abandoned politics in 1935.

The sources used are mainly newspapers, local and national, as the only band records are those of St Mary's Band, which are very valuable in this thesis as they survive from 1922. Oral interviews, while pertaining mostly to the period after 1935, provide some valuable evidence, given as it is by people who have long experience of the fife and drum tradition in Limerick. The pride and passion involved in playing and supporting these bands, especially in discussion of competition and of past members is very evident in both the oral and documentary sources, and this alone is justification for the study.

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For all bandmasters, a 'Limerick':

A tutor who tooted the flute,
Was teaching two tooters to toot,
Said the two to the tooter, is it harder to toot, or
To tutor two tutors to toot. (Anon)

Introduction

This study examines the fife and drum bands that have been part of Limerick city since the 1840s, focussing on the St Mary's Band as this is the only surviving fife and drum band in the city in the twenty-first century. A fife and drum band is a combination of wind instrumentation by flutes (fifes), and drums. The band marches with the drums to the front, usually led by a drum major, and with the fifes behind. The fife and drum band generally plays in marching time, and usually in step with the musical piece being played. The average fife and drum band has four side drummers to the front, a bass drummer, and between fourteen and twenty flute players. There is a strong marching band tradition in Limerick city, ranging from fife and drum bands to brass and reed bands, and also including pipe bands, and some of these still exist in the city today in 2017: St Mary's Fife and Drum Band, Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band, the Southside Marching Band, the Redemptorist Centre of Music Band, City of Limerick Pipe Band and the Christian Brothers' Schools Pipe Band are the prominent functioning bands in the city now. There are also the St John's Brass and Reed and the Sammy Benson Brass Band which still exist but are not at present parading.

The starting point for the fife and drum bands was during the period of the temperance movement in the 1840s and their high point was from the 1880s to the 1930s, though, as the following chapters discuss, other bands existed at other times in different parts of the city. What makes St Mary's case unique is that there has been a fife and drum band in this parish since the 1830s, with the present band formed in 1885 and having its membership records and minutes surviving since 1922. This is why this band holds such a prominent place in this thesis. This author has been in the St Mary's Fife and Drum Band for over forty years, and has had contact and shared experiences with others who were members of the band since the 1920s and 1930s – forming a link and continuity with the original and founding members of the band

whom some of the older members would have known. Also, because of their interest in the fife and drum tradition, some members of bands now defunct joined St Mary's Band when their own bands folded, and this provides us with information on several other bands which once existed in the city.

As a member of the St Mary's Band, and currently its band master, I felt it was natural to take it as a research topic, especially since fife and drum bands in the Republic of Ireland have not been researched in terms of their influences on the social and cultural life of a city like Limerick. From the time of Fr Mathew's temperance crusade in the 1840s and his idea that musical expression would help to keep people, especially young men, away from the public house, and also from the fact that Limerick was an army town whose population was used to listening to and viewing army regimental bands at various stages in the city's streets, there was plenty of band activity to research, as well as seeing how the changing political climate in Ireland after the Act of Union, and especially after the Famine, provided opportunities for marching bands to be formed within the civilian population.

In a tight-knit urban area made up of four or five parishes, having a band within the parish or community gave a sense of pride and achievement to the ordinary working people of that community. St Mary's Parish is the oldest Limerick parish – and an island parish within the city of Limerick – and this has enforced its parochial character, something which is obvious even today when locals are identified as being from 'the Parish'. The fact that I have a familial background in 'the Parish' going back to the 1840s makes this subject especially significant to me, and this interest has increased as my research has uncovered my own family and other families we know in the historical record. It was for this reason that my initial foray into the history of fife and drum bands, my undergraduate dissertation, concentrated on the St Mary's Fife and Drum band within living memory, a dissertation that was built to a great extent on oral interviews. This in turn made me think of researching the band – and other bands like it – more

broadly, especially as some of those I initially interviewed passed away in the few years after I had spoken to them.

The background of Limerick city should be outlined here. It had a population that averaged forty-eight thousand over the course of the century from 1840 to 1950.¹ Its economy was manufacture-based, especially in the production of bacon and clothing, its port was large and busy up to the 1950s, and the fact that it was a garrison town meant that other employment was available either in the armed forces or in the provisions industry that supplied the city's barracks as well as the retail shops in the city. Further employment was available to small fishing communities on the Abbey and Shannon rivers up to the 1930s, those pursuing this occupation being closely associated with some of the city's bands. The area of the city was quite small, i.e. twenty acres (approx.) and until the clearance of the city's lanes and old streets from the 1920s onwards, the small tight-knit communities provided a milieu in which the locality-based bands flourished.²

These bands were mainly based in the working class areas of the city – 'the Parish' (St Mary's), St John's, St Munchin's and the Yellow Road (the Edward Street and Parnell Street area) also known as Boherbuoy. The fife and drum bands in the city were especially geared to working class membership, some positions of authority being held by those with trades or in clerical employment. Until the late twentieth century the bands were entirely male in their membership, though this was not so much a rule as the custom of the time. In St Mary's Band the first female members joined in the millennium year of 2000. The important thing about these bands was that they were low-cost in terms of establishment and instrumentation, in contrast to the brass and reed bands, and could march and make themselves heard, even with a

¹ Ruth Guiry, 'Public Health and Housing in Limerick City, 1850-1935 A Geographical Analysis' Unpublished MA thesis, Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick).2013, p. 44.

² Ibid.

limited repertoire, so therefore they were attractive to those whose musical knowledge (at least initially) was limited.

Literature Review.

Limerick and its fife and drum bands became part of the social and political life of the city in the nineteenth century. In evaluating the impact of fife and drum bands, this study is contextualised against the background of the wider scholarship on military and civilian bands, urban history, associational culture, and popular politicisation. The time period of the study (1840 to 1935) is focused upon because this period saw Limerick civilian bands closely involved in the political life of the city, becoming supporters of rival political factions and taking part in local political demonstrations, especially those promoting a nationalist and Catholic agenda. Studies on the social composition of, and participation in, the civilian working classes in marching bands are sparse, though the importance of music in the social life of the population of both Britain and Ireland has been discussed by a number of social and music historians. Stokes, in his 1997 study of music and identity, discusses how music can reflect a sense of place, along with expressing nationality, class and identity through portraying a sense of place, of locality. Also discussed in this book is the broad taste for music (other than indigenous music) in what are termed the Celtic regions, and this is question of taste and identity is relevant to local civilian bands in Limerick especially from the 1880s when band contests became popular.³ Kelly and Comerford's edited volume on associationalism in Ireland discusses how the working man either in sport, music, theatre and politics became more involved in what can be described as the 'public sphere' – a theme that is taken up in the Limerick context in this thesis.⁴ In a different context, Borgonovo, as part of his study of Cork bands from 1845 to 1918, depicts how some civilian bands combined a love of music with a

³ Martin Stokes, *Ethnicity, Identity and Music*, (Oxford, 1997).

⁴ Jennifer Kelly, R V Comerford (Eds), *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad*, (Dublin, 2010).

certain political identity which came across in their appearance and their repertoire: they were not unlike the military in terms of uniforms, marching techniques and martial tunes played, and in these aspects their inter-play between leisure time and political activities was obvious.⁵ This combination of music, leisure and politics is also evident in the Limerick bands' participation in political rallies such as the Manchester Martyrs demonstrations, as described in Mac Giolla Choille's article on the organisation of and participants in the initial demonstrations in Limerick in 1867.⁶ The involvement of bands in religious events, though not discussed in other works, is evident in the Limerick context where, as shown in 2012, by Godson, the Arch-Confraternity run by the Redemptorist community had in its ranks many male band members, with the local bands playing a prominent part in processions and celebrations.⁷

As this study looks in detail at the impact of the temperance movement of the 1840s on the establishment of bands in Limerick city, works on the temperance movement throughout the island have been very useful in putting the Limerick scene in context. But it is also important to look outside Limerick and determine the motivation behind what has been described by many researchers as the 'temperance phenomenon'. There have been several studies of the temperance movement in Ireland, its social background and the way in which it became involved in politics. Malcolm's work on the movement throughout the island over the course of the nineteenth century was followed by Kerrigan's case study of temperance in Galway and his book on the relationship of Fr Mathew with the movement of the 1840s. Townend's similar work discusses the interaction between the temperance movement and the Irish catholic clergy generally

⁵ John Borgonovo, 'Politics as Leisure: Brass Bands in Cork, 1845–1918' in Lecann Lane, William Murphy, (eds.), *Leisure and Irish in the Nineteenth Century*, (Liverpool, 2016).

⁶ Brendan Mac Giolla Choille, 'Mourning The Martyrs', *Old Limerick Journal*, vol 22, no.27, pp 29-44.

⁷ Lisa Godson, 'Display, sacramentalism and devotion: the medals of the archconfraternity of the Holy Family, 1922-39', in Colm Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), pp 121-122.

A more general analysis of the evolution of music in Ireland up to the late 1990s from the mid-nineteenth century is presented by White. In this work, the collection and preservation of Irish traditional music from Edward Bunting to Thomas Davis in the post-Union decades is discussed, as are similar developments after the Famine. This preservation contributed to a growing ‘perception of music as an agent of nationalist culture’, a theme which is discussed in this thesis in relation to the Limerick fife and drum bands.⁸

Different aspects of civilian bands in Britain are examined in a number of works, and suggest that the British and Limerick marching band scenes are comparable. Because the civilian bands of Limerick and other Irish cities owed a lot to military example, it was necessary to consult works on the development of military music. Farmer’s work, written in 1912, provides very useful information on the evolution of the brass band movement in Britain and this is supplemented by the much more recent work by Adkins examining the structures of a military band.⁹ The large number of Limerick men who joined the army and were involved in army bands means that the works of Sterns and MacQuale give insights into the social background and experiences of Irish soldiers, insights that help us to understand the attitude of those Limerick men that signed up for military service in the Great War and at other times.¹⁰ The influence of these military bands on the civilian bands in relation to the choice of instruments and the development of uniforms is also important to consider, and such context is found in Cassin-Scott and Fabb’s study of military band uniforms and on Barty-King’s and Hall’s works on drums and instrumentation generally.¹¹

⁸ Richard Pine (Eds), Harry White, *Music Politics and the Irish Imagination, in Music in Ireland 1848-1998*, Thomas Davis Lectures, (Dublin, 1998), p. 30.

⁹ Henry George Farmer, *The rise and development of Military music*, (London, 1912), H. E. Adkins, *Treatise on the military band*, (London, 1977).

¹⁰ Peter N. Sterns, Irish Soldiers in the British Army 1792-1922 Suborned or Subordinate, ‘*Journal of Irish History*, vol 17, no. 1, (1993), pp 31-64, Brendan McQuale, *March away my brothers, Irish soldiers and their music in the Great War*, (Dublin, 2011).

¹¹ Jack Cassin-Scott, John Fabb, *Military bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset, 1978), Hugh Barty-King, *The Drum*, (London, 1988), Major Mike Hall, *With Trumpet Drum & Fife, a short treatise covering the rise and fall of military musical instruments on the Battlefield*, (Birmingham, 2013).

Newsome's work from 1998 is well referenced by many studies of the British brass band movement and the development of such bands over a hundred years. The development of brass instrumentation and band competitions in the mid-nineteenth century in Britain appears similar to the progression of fife and drum bands in Ireland a few decades later.¹² Newsome's, along with the more recent Odello study of the structures involved in organising British brass band competitions, suggests that British band contests more than likely influenced the organisation of fife and drum contests in the Irish context. Easier access to instruments made it possible for civilian bands to develop and become musically proficient. The publication of fife and drum band music marches and compositions from the 1830s in Britain is discussed by Newsome, while White and Myers' history of flute making by Boosey and Company is an in-depth study of the development of all wind instrumentation in Britain, a development which had a knock on effect in Ireland. It stresses, in particular, details such as the numbering of manufactured flutes, a practice which can determine age of instruments and the materials such as African blackwood used in their manufacture. It also shows how British Army regiments purchased instruments from Boosey & Co., instruments which more than likely ended up in the hands of civilian bands all over Britain and Ireland, including (as the present research shows) Limerick's St Mary's Band.¹³

Herbert and Barlow's work on the connections between music and the military is a more recent and comprehensive study on the military bands of Britain and their functions both in the army and in wider society, and helped this author in determining how the military bands evolved, and how civilians in Limerick gained their expertise in music from army musicians, as well as learning about instrumentation and band formation. As a background to exploring the Limerick

¹² Henry Newsome. *Brass Roots A hundred years of Brass Bands and their music, 1836-1936*. (Aldershot, 1998). Denise Odello, 'British Brass band periodicals and the construction of a movement', *Victorian periodicals review*, vol 47, (2014), pp 432-453.

¹³ Kelly J White, Arnold Myers, 'Woodwind instruments of Boosey & Company', *The Galpin Society Journal*, vol 57 (May, 2004), pp. 62-80, 208-214.

bandsmen who joined the British army, Dooley's work in 1995 examines Irish men's (especially Roman Catholics') participation in the British army from the 1870s to 1916. This is an in-depth study of the economic, political and religious conflicts that Irish men as Catholics and nationalists had to contend with when joining the British Army.¹⁴ This theme is further researched in Murphy's study which examines the changing attitudes of the Irish nationalist population generally, especially during Victoria's long reign which covers a large part of this research.¹⁵

Dawson details the Dublin bands and their exploits in the late nineteenth century, reflecting in the Irish context some of Newsome's findings for Britain. He explores the evolution of fife and drum band contests in which Dublin bands, along with bands from the main Irish metropolitan areas participated, and concludes that as in the case of Limerick it was the military bands that were the mainstays of marching band music in Dublin until Father Mathew's temperance society bands came to the fore in the 1840s. It was not until the 1880s that the bands became prominent in competition and that more attention was given to organisational structures so that bands could survive and become more successful.¹⁶ Cooke's work on the Cork Barrack Street Band is especially useful in tracing the evolution of a marching band in the provincial Irish urban context, discussing the organisational structure of this longstanding band and its involvement in Cork cultural society, an experience which is comparable to that of the Limerick bands.¹⁷

The connection between music and popular violence, detailed in Lane's work on inter-band confrontations in post-Parnellite Cork indicates that Irish cities were not unlike each other

¹⁴ Thomas P Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers? The Times and World of a Southern Catholic Irish man (1876-1916), Enlisting in the British Army During the First World War*, (Liverpool, 1995).

¹⁵ James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty Nationalism and Monarchy in Ireland during the reign of Queen Victoria*, (Cork, 2001).

¹⁶ Timothy Dawson. 'The City Music and City Bands' *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Dublin, 1972), pp 102-116.

¹⁷ Richard T. Cooke. *Cork's Barrack Street Band, Ireland's Oldest Amateur Musical Institution*, (Cork, 1992).

in terms of popular involvement in violent disorder, whether motivated by political tensions or simply by a search for excitement, which bears out the truth of the saying that where there is a band there is a crowd.¹⁸ The emotional power of music, and its links with local identity are explored especially in the history of St Patrick's Fife and Drum Band, Wexford which, though not as detailed as Cooke's work, is helpful in providing insights into a band in a smaller urban centre in the south east of Ireland and into that band's passion for the fife and drum tradition. Though not immediately relevant to this study, Republic of Ireland contests beginning in the late 1950s are detailed in this book, along with some historical photographs of this band.¹⁹ Further insights into the links between political loyalties, local pride, musical ability and the techniques of instrument making are provided by Ramsay's study on identity and the emotive place of marching bands in the culture of Northern Ireland.²⁰ Concentrating on instrumentation, Hastings explains the Lambeg Drum tradition and gives a detailed explanation on the customs surrounding marches and processions along with the insights of instrument makers, drummers and band members passionate about their tradition.²¹

Limerick bands and their music have been given less attention in the literature. In the local context Hannon explains the context and Limerick connections of the famous tune 'Garryowen', a piece that figured prominently in the Limerick band repertoire right through the period studied. The locally produced centenary booklet and 125th Anniversary commemorative publications of St Mary's Band provide the only history of Limerick bands available and are valuable photographic and informative references.²² The competition successes of this band display an insight into the pride of place these accomplishments have on

¹⁸ Fintan Lane, 'Music and violence in working-class Cork: the "band nuisance", 1879-1882' in *Saothar*, vol. 24 (1999), pp 17-31.

¹⁹ *St Patrick's fife and Drum band Wexford, 1893-1993*, (Wexford, 1993).

²⁰ Gordon Ramsey. *Music, Emotion and identity in Ulster Marching Bands*, (Oxford, 2010).

²¹ Gary Hastings. *With Fife and Drum music, memories and customs of an Irish tradition*, (Belfast, 2003).

²² *St Mary's Prize Band centenary booklet 1885-1985*, (Limerick, 1985), *St Mary's Prize Band 1885-2010 125th Anniversary Book*, (Limerick, 2010).

the band membership. Along with competition success, family continuity is also vital to the identity of a band, individuals such as band conductors, band officers and prominent members, and details as to their family connections, give a sense of continuity in the organisation. This sense of identity and continuity is reflected in notices from family members in the anniversary books, notices commemorating past members and acknowledging their band contribution to the history of the band. That this particular band had the foresight to preserve its memorabilia and band records both reflects its longevity and provides valuable resource to the social historian.

The Limerick bands cannot be fully understood without a good knowledge of the social and political developments in the city. The necessary social context is given in a number of works. Though the bands' gains from local philanthropy were minimal after the demise of the temperance movement, Meehan's detailed work provides the social context in which bands developed by outlining the development of organisations that were comparable to temperance societies in Limerick from 1850 to 1900.²³ Religious and social context is also provided by Keane's thesis on religion and society in the 1920s, which gives an informative account of Limerick's Redemptorist Archconfraternity. This body, while dealt with only briefly in the present study, was particularly relevant to band members since so many were also members of this confraternity. Moreover, the bands themselves were a central part of confraternity parades, processions and the public celebrations surrounding the annual novena for which Limerick was famous.²⁴

In the local Limerick setting, the most helpful discussion of the geographical and social context – and of the areas where bands were based since the 1840s – is in Guiry's work on

²³ Mortimer Meehan, 'Philanthropy, self-help and Religion in Limerick City 1850-1900'. MA. Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, (University of Limerick 2009).

²⁴ Thomas Keane, 'Class, Religion and Society in Limerick City, 1922-1939', unpublished PhD thesis, Mary Immaculate College, (University of Limerick, 2016).

social conditions in the city, especially in relation to the housing of the working classes from among whom band membership was mostly drawn.²⁵ In a different social and historical context, McNamara's work provides comparative insights into the music and socialising activities of the upper echelons of Limerick city society in the 1830s and '40s – precisely the time that the temperance bands were established among the city's working classes.²⁶ The work of McGrath, one of the first researchers to highlight the fife and drum bands in the city, stands out as setting the foundation for my own work on the bands, and even more so on the bands' involvement in the political scene in the city from the 1880s to the 1950s. His treatment of the social status of the membership was detailed but due to the increased access to electronic resources this present study was able to give a more accurate background of both the occupations and addresses of the Limerick bands' membership. This was particularly valuable when comparing the No.9 and St Mary's bands, both based in St Mary's Parish.²⁷ Coming from a band background helped this author understand the concepts of marching, of the music played and of the musical structure of a fife and drum band. This personal experience allows for the making of comparisons with bands outside Limerick, such as those of Milton Keynes, England, discussed in Finnegan's work focusing on how the community through work done by ordinary people in the locality can organise and participate in a musical culture.²⁸

Personal memoir also contributes to an understanding of bands in the period under review. In the context of the United States, Clark's study of Connecticut's fife and drum tradition includes many personal memoirs and, while more modern than the present study on Limerick, gives an insight into how band members are taught the rudiments of fife playing and drumming which

²⁵ Ruth Guiry, 'Public Health and Housing in Limerick City, 1850-1935 A Geographical Analysis' M.A. Mary Immaculate College, (University of Limerick, 2013).

²⁶ Sarah McNamara, 'Making the middle – class mind: middle - class culture in Limerick 1830-40', Unpublished PhD thesis, Mary Immaculate College, (University of Limerick, 2010).

²⁷ John McGrath, 'Sociability and Socio-economic conditions in St Mary's Parish, Limerick, 1890-1950'. M.A. Mary Immaculate College, (University of Limerick, 2006).

²⁸ Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians Music-Making in an English Town*, (Cambridge, 1989).

had been passed down over the generations. What stands out in this book is how tight knit communities take pride in their local band. Competitions play a big part in these bands' yearly programs and gatherings at the many band musters – something that has developed into becoming a part of Connecticut's cultural tradition.²⁹ In the British context, Ward's book on two centuries of music in Dunstable and District, England, traces the history of the brass band movement in Britain and how its local band developed from a military tradition in the district to become a civilian band. Family association is central to this band, along with instrumental development, the pride in the band being reflected in the many newspaper articles of the bands achievements in band competitions and local events. Members of this band played in local dance and jazz bands, not unlike the experience of Limerick musicians who broadened their horizons in the local dance band scene as discussed in this thesis.³⁰ A Limerick personal memoir, Hamilton's recollections of his youth when taught by bandmaster Raleigh in the Thomondgate Band, applies to a period later than that covered in this thesis. However, it is included here as it does provide some retrospective perspectives on the Limerick marching band scene which are useful in examining the older bands, especially the prestige of individual bandmasters and descriptions of pre-1939 Thomondgate and its environs.³¹ Similarly, Clancy's memoir of the Abbey fishermen provides social insights into the background of civilian bands, giving a detailed account of those band members who were involved in the local fishing communities in the 1920s and '30s (the closing point of this thesis) and their reaction to the threat posed by the Shannon Scheme to their traditional source of employment.³² Though not the original founding members of the band, the members of his fishing group were the catalyst

²⁹ James Clark, *Connecticut's Fife and drum tradition*, (Middletown, 2011).

³⁰ Anthony J. Ward, *Strike Up the Band two centuries of music in Dunstable and District*, (Dunstable, 2003).

³¹ Bob Hamilton, 'Mikey Raleigh's Band', *Old Limerick Journal*, No.12 Autumn 1982, pp 28-29

³² Jackie Clancy, *My Life on the river, An Abbey Fisherman's Stories*, (Texas, 2010).

behind the building of St Mary's Band's new band hall in the 1920s, their financial and moral support helping to account for this band's survival into the present day.

The literature on the political background of Limerick city is especially useful, with Kennedy's study of the Limerick City Militia providing a basis for a local military history in the late eighteenth century.³³ Moloney's work on the impact of World War I on Limerick gives a useful analysis of army recruitment among the city's low earners who made up most of those enlisting, and many of whom were in the local bands.³⁴ Moloney's other work on the political climate of constitutional nationalism in the early twentieth century provides a helpful analysis of what is the most turbulent period of the bands' history, when they split into opposing camps based on rival political loyalties.³⁵ Davie's work on late nineteenth century Manchester is a valuable as a comparative study of violent activities of the young male populace in this city.³⁶ Potter's chronological work on the governing of Limerick through the Corporation/Council helps to provide an understanding of city government and of how those individuals and groups who participated in that government were viewed by the broader Limerick city population during the period researched in this thesis.³⁷

Primary Sources

The detailed examination of local and national newspapers was essential in tracing the progress (and decline) of bands in the city since the 1840s, as well as their activities in the social and political life of the city. Especially useful are the many references to the temperance movement's activities in Limerick, which match with the descriptions in the outrage reports in

³³ Kieran Kennedy, 'The Limerick City Militia 1798', *Old Limerick Journal*, vol 35, (Limerick, 1998), pp 16-19.

³⁴ Tadgh Moloney, *The Impact of World War One on Limerick*, (Cambridge, 2013).

³⁵ Tadgh Moloney, *Limerick Constitutional Nationalism, 1898-1918, Change and Continuity*, (Cambridge, 2010).

³⁶ Andrew Davies, 'Youth Gangs, Masculinity and Violence in Late Victorian Manchester and Salford' *Journal of Social History*, vol. 32, no. 2, (Oxford, 1998), pp 309-335.

³⁷ Mathew Potter, *The Government and the people of Limerick, The history of Limerick Corporation / City Council 1197-2006*, (Limerick, 2006).

the National Archives of Ireland. Local newspaper accounts from the *Limerick Reporter*, a very pro-temperance and repeal paper, along with those from the loyalist *Limerick Chronicle*, give a valuable insight in the temperance movement at this time: these proved very valuable sources in tracing the identity of individuals, something that was helped by further research in census records and church records which helped to determine address, occupations and social class. Newspaper reports of annual general meetings were very useful in gaining insight into the bands of both the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that are discussed in the study. The *Limerick Leader* from the 1890s was especially detailed in its reporting of local bands and though nationalist in its leanings, contrasted nicely with the *Limerick Chronicle* to add balance to reporting on band activities. Later during the First World War in which many local bandsmen participated letters home from soldiers to local newspapers provided a valuable insight into the trauma of war and the yearning for their family and home comforts.

The archive of St Mary's Band is very important in my research, giving information into how a band could survive over many decades. These records show just how unusual it was for a band to have its own hall (built through its own efforts in 1922), and how important this accommodation was, in turn, in helping the band to preserve its records. These records provide interesting comparisons with the accounts of temperance society and bands published in local papers in the 1840s and later, showing that the financial outlay for bands such as instrumentation, bandmaster, hire of hall etc. were as much an issue then as for bands today. The openness of the St Mary's Band committee in giving me access to these records, and their foresight in setting up a museum and archive which preserves the records of not only this band but also that of some other bands in the city, has made this study possible. None of this research would have been possible without the structures set up to this end, especially this setting up of a permanent home for the band and its records along with photographs and memorabilia such as drums and recordings of fife and drum bands now defunct in Limerick.

Oral Interviews

While oral interviews played a major part of my undergraduate research on St Mary's band this study beginning from the 1840s made the use of many of these interviews irrelevant as they were more of an oral tradition rather than an oral history, i.e. they are based on stories handed down through the generations rather than memories of lived experience of individuals. Four of these interviews are used in this study as the interviewees had a relevance to the early twentieth century period.

Patrick Casey (born in 1917) joined St Mary's Band in the early 1930s and was born in the old Abbey area adjoining St Mary's band hall and had personal contact with the members of the band of that period, some of whom were founder members. Casey had familial links with the band through an uncle who was connected to the band in the early 1900s. A mineral water manufacturer by trade he was also a founder member of the local St Mary's Rugby football club in the 1940s, which took over from the defunct Abbey Rugby Club of which many St Mary's bandsmen were members in the early nineteenth century. Casey was also an All-Ireland contest winner in 1935 with the St Mary's scout pipe band as a drummer.³⁸

The father of Paschal O'Grady (born in 1932) was a committee member of St Mary's Hall and very much involved in the fundraising and initial dances run in the hall when it was built in 1922. He lived opposite St Mary's Hall. O'Grady was a professional comedic entertainer with 'Tom and Paschal', a duo that had connections with St Mary's Hall from the early 1960s. His recollection of his father describing his role in the organisation of dances in the hall in the 1920s was a useful resource, especially as a professional entertainer himself he had a clear understanding of this role. The style of dancing, along with newspaper reports of

³⁸ Interview with Patrick Casey, 6 September 2013.

functions in the band hall give an understanding of his father's role in the dance hall, both as an M.C. and a dance steward up to the 1930s.³⁹

Aidan Hurley (born in 1939) of St Mary's Band was initially a member of Michael Raleigh's band, (St Michael's Band) and the last surviving member of the now defunct Sarsfield Band. He was taught his music by Michael Raleigh, band master and a World War One veteran, famous for his youth bands in the city. Aidan had a clear recollection of the now demolished Sarsfield Band Room and its dance hall. Hurley was employed by Limerick City Council and recalled in his interview the old Sarsfield band members who in his youth were also previously members of the Limerick Corporation Workers fife and drum band which existed in various forms from the 1890s to 1930s. The fact that Hurley played in bands now defunct and came in contact with the band members of previous generations made him a valuable interviewee.⁴⁰

Pastor Alvin Mullan (born in 1945) has over sixty years of participation in fife and drum bands in Northern Ireland. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather have British Army and fife and drum links going back over 150 years. A collector of flutes, drums and fife and drum music he is the founder of the fife and drum band museum in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, and a researcher of bands both in the north and south of Ireland. Mullan has bequeathed to his museum a music archive of band marches from the early nineteenth century, some of which are still played by part music bands in Ireland presently.⁴¹

³⁹ Interview with Paschal O'Grady, 16 January 2014.

⁴⁰ Interview with Aidan Hurley 25 January 2014.

⁴¹ Interview with Alvin Mullan 7 January 2015.

Contribution to Scholarship.

This study of Limerick city in the period from the 1840s to 1930s is original and raises a number of questions in relation to the social and political history of the period. It is by no means a comprehensive study of the period but it lays the foundation for further study of this formative time in the city's history. By asking how and why Limerick's bands played an increasingly prominent role in the social life of the city, the study makes suggestions as to why popular culture and associationalism evolved in the city. It considers the importance of locality in the formation of popular identity, asking whether divisions that were apparently political were, in fact, based on long-standing rivalries between neighbouring areas, something that became particularly obvious from the time of the Parnell split until the formation of the new state.

The study also considers how participation in a band might contribute to a locality's and an individual's sense of self-respect and confidence, largely since band members, especially in the more long-surviving bands, were provided with an educational and cultural opportunity – a place in which to learn the rudiments of music, to express themselves musically, and sometimes to attain a very musical high standard. The Limerick experience also raises questions as to how the public demonstration of this musical ability contributed to the local and individual sense of identity: how did parading give bands and their members a social outlet through which they could express pride in their parish or neighbourhood, display their talents to the public and gain respectability within their own communities? The study also considers the role of competition between bands, asking whether these competitions, both local and national, contributed to local pride by putting the victorious band and its locality on the map – something that adds to our understanding of the formation of regional and local identity.

This study also raises questions in relation to popular politicisation, especially within the working classes of Irish towns and cities, as well as the interlinking of music and religious identity. Did bands, by becoming involved in religious processions and devotional events, become an essential part of devotional Catholicism developing from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and reaching its peak in the new state established in 1922? This reality was particularly obvious in the intensely Catholic Limerick city, but was also an essential part of society generally in southern Ireland. Even more importantly, the role of bands on political occasions ranging from nationalist funerals to the demonstrations held to honour leading public figures makes us consider how politics became interlinked with the expression of local identity among those who had up to then been considered to be *outside* the political sphere.

Thesis layout

The layout of the thesis is thematic; the subject matter of the chapters being as follows:

Chapter One gives a brief history of Limerick's temperance movement, asking how cultural organisations like temperance bands became engulfed in politics and whether they laid the foundations for later civilian marching bands.

Chapter Two asks whether politics played a role in the development of Limerick city's fife and drum bands, and whether nationalist or local identity was more influential in the activities of the bands.

Chapter Three examines Limerick's position as a garrison town, asking what, precisely, was the influence of the army on the local fife and drum bands in terms of music and style of uniform.

Chapter Four considers what factors ensured the survival of an individual fife and drum band, what was involved in learning the music, how teachers and accommodation were procured, and how the bands were financed.

Chapter Five focuses on the role of organised competition (a) in the development of the Limerick bands and their repertoires, and (b) in building the bands' pride in their immediate locality and in the city.

Overall, the thesis asks why and how Limerick's civilian fife and drum bands developed in the century after 1840, how musicianship advanced, and how the bands developed a sense of local identity within the communities in which they were set up.

Chapter 1: The Temperance Movement and Bands

This Chapter discusses the beginning of the temperance movement in Limerick and the beginnings of local civilian bands. Bands were influenced by the marching techniques and formations of the predominant military bands in Limerick city. The sobriety of the local civilian working class population was a concern for philanthropic citizens of the wealthier classes. Respectability was a theme emphasised in the many newspapers of the time and alcohol consumption was linked to lack of morality and cleanliness amongst the working classes. The bands gave men the opportunity for social interaction other than the public house and this was the beginning of organised structures within bands with committees looking after the financial and musical development. Music was seen as a form of united celebration in local parish communities especially at local parish soir e with popular indigenous music coming to the fore. The bands then became identifiable at local and national temperance and political demonstrations. Bands were a feature of rallies in favour of Repeal and became associated with Daniel O’Connell as well as the temperance movement founder in Ireland Father Theobald Mathew.

Limerick’s Temperance beginnings

Up to the 1830s the public theatre of Limerick city’s streets was dominated by military bands.¹

There were reports of Limerick in the 1760s of ‘bands of music belonging to the army’ at the ‘throwing the dart ceremony’ of Mayor Thomas Smyth, attended by many of the local populace.² In 1840 the 84th Regiment, accompanied by their band, went on a six mile march around the city before returning to their quarters, Irish marches being played to appease the

¹*Limerick Reporter* 13 March, 21 December 1840. There were reports that the 84th Regiment accompanied by their band went on a six-mile march around the city and back to their quarters.

²John Archdeacon Begley, *The Diocese of Limerick: from 1691 to the present time*, (Limerick, 1938), p.114. *Limerick Reporter*, 20 August 1841; *Nation*, 14 April 1843; *Cork Examiner*, 10 April 1844; *Limerick Leader*, 12 March 1956; *Limerick Chronicle*, 2 September 1967. The throwing of the dart ceremony derived from a charter in 1609 from King James of England showing that the holder of the office of Mayor is also Admiral of the River Shannon ‘as extends three miles north-east of the city as to the mouth of the main sea.’

sensitivities of the local populace. It was reported of the 42nd Regiment Band that left the city for another station in the same year that the ‘frequency with which the citizens were so often amused by the popular airs of their splendid band passing through our streets will not be forgotten.’³ In the 1840s, this musical mantle was taken up by local temperance bands that played a wealth of national and popular airs to enthusiastic audiences and members of the elite alike, St Mary’s Temperance Band playing ‘several airs’ to large crowds when the Earl of Limerick visited the city in 1845 and being presented with a £5 donation when they had finished the performance.⁴

Alcohol and Sobriety

Temperance bands like St. Mary’s flourished in the early 1840s because this was a period of hope and national anticipation. The bands helped stimulate the morale of the local temperance societies, whose members in the 1840s elevated themselves to unite as a sober and unified force that in turn encouraged popular support of social and political reform.⁵ Contemporary Limerick newspaper reporting of temperance soirées and gatherings presented an air of theatrics and joviality, indicating that the public demonstrations of the temperance movement provided a form of entertainment to which the working class of Limerick had no access previous to the 1830s and 1840s. Along with the exuberant sociability of the soirées which included music, dancing and food, these gatherings had a political theme, enthusiastically acknowledging the Royal family, along with Fr Mathew and Daniel O’Connell, but also expressing their Irish nationality.⁶

³ *Limerick Reporter*, 13 March 1840. This band played ‘the sound of the far-famed ‘Pibroch’, telling a tale of their highland ancestors’. <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scotlandssongs/about/songs/pibroch/>, accessed 25 August 2016,. The pibroch is played on the Highland bagpipes only, by a solo piper, and is considered one of the most difficult genres of music in the piping repertoire.

⁴ *Kerry Examiner*, 23 September 1845.

⁵ *Limerick Chronicle*, 11 January 1834, Elizabeth Malcolm, *Ireland sober, Ireland free* (Dublin, 1986), p.56.

⁶ *Limerick Chronicle*, 25 April 1840; *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 November 1841; *Limerick Reporter*, 4 January 1842. Various newspaper reports described elaborate feasts of mutton and lamb along with toasts to Royalty, the

McMahon, writing on the history of drinking patterns in Ireland, concluded that ‘the middle to late 1820s and the middle to late 1830s were periods of record consumption’, especially of spirits.⁷ This was certainly true of Limerick city where in 1838 *Deane’s Trade Directory* registered one brewery, six porter and ale dealers, six wine merchants and 120 spirit retailers.⁸ Some studies of drunkenness in primitive societies suggest that social organization determines drinking behaviour, so that in Ireland weak social organization and rigid family structure contributed to the tolerance of heavy drinking.⁹ Whether this is true for early nineteenth century Limerick is unclear, but the fact that in the poorer districts of Broad Street and Mary Street the 1838 directory listed eleven spirit retailers suggests that the greatest level of alcohol consumption and the status associated with hard drinking as an integral part of male identity was among the city’s poorer and working classes.¹⁰ The Poor Enquiry published in 1836 indicated even higher numbers of outlets for selling drink, stating that within Limerick there were 350 licenced spirit shops, an ‘overwhelming disproportion to the amount of population’, and that like everywhere in Ireland at the time, whiskey was the preferred drink of the poor.¹¹

The temperance movement of the 1830s which tackled the issue of alcohol over-consumption was not a new phenomenon nor was it unique to Ireland, as the first local

Lord Lieutenant, and dignitaries present. Music and dancing to bands, violinists, and pipers concluded proceedings. The rhetoric of respectability, cleanliness and indications how well people were attired and looked so well and healthy came from the reports of the soirées.

⁷ Dorren McMahon. ‘Which Kind of Paddy?’ A Survey of the Literature on the History, Sociology and Anthropology of Alcohol and the Irish,’ *UCD Geary institute discussion paper series*. (Dublin 2008), p. 6.

⁸ *Deane’s Trade and Street Directory* (Limerick, 1838).

⁹ McMahon, ‘Which Kind of Paddy?’, p. 2.

¹⁰ Bridget Mary Cunningham, ‘A Case-study of Alcohol Consumption and of the Irish Public House in late Modernity’, PhD thesis, (National University of Ireland, Maynooth), 2013, pp 8, 115. Social drinking takes place within a spatial context that is appropriate to the community in which it is situated, the geographic location of the public house, to consumer preferences and to the life-stage position of drinkers.

¹¹ *Royal commission on Condition of the poorer classes in Ireland, Appendix C. Part 1, (State of Poor and Charitable Institutions in Provincial Towns)* H. C. 1836 (37) xxxi.1, p. 89; Malcolm, *Ireland sober, Ireland free*, p.26. The commission also reported that many consumers of ‘Ardent Spirits’ in the city were women, with one publican in Limerick selling nine pounds’ worth of whiskey in one morning, principally to women. This report more than likely includes the city and outlying areas as well.

temperance society was set up in Moreau, Saratoga County, New York in 1808, while temperance did not become a force in Ireland until 1829.¹² Members of the early temperance movements pledged to abstain from the consumption of spirits, though they were free to consume beer and wine in moderation.¹³ The first Limerick city temperance society in 1831 was formed 'on the basis of total abstinence from the use of ardent spirits requiring from each candidate for admission a pledge to that effect, being convinced that the reformation of the confirmed, habitual drunkard, was not practicable by any other means.'¹⁴ At some stage in the 1830s, temperance leaders made a decision to move from an anti-spirits position to total abstinence.

Respectability

The idea of fostering respectability was a vital part of the temperance movement throughout the island. The first rule of the Mechanics' Institute Temperance Society in Galway stipulated that no one could be a member of the society unless he had a certificate showing he had taken the pledge from Father Mathew or any of the Catholic clergymen of the town who were appointed to distribute the medals.¹⁵ The Limerick Temperance Society targeted the working and lower middle class with the aim of fostering self-help and respectability. The committee organised lectures and contributed to the establishment of a library and deposited the members'

¹² Ireland's first temperance association was established in 1817 in Skibbereen, County Cork. John Allen Krout, *The Origins of Prohibition*, (New York, 1925), p.78; John F. Quinn 'The 'Vagabond Friar': Father Mathew's Difficulties with the Irish Bishops, 1840-1856', *Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 78, no. 4 (Oct 1992), p.542.

¹³ John F. Quinn, 'The "Vagabond Friar": Father Mathew's Difficulties with the Irish Bishops, 1840-1856' *Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 78, no. 4 (Oct 1992), p. 543; Elizabeth Malcolm, *Ireland sober Ireland free, Drink and Temperance in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, (Dublin, 1986), pp 21-56, *Limerick Evening Post and Clare Sentinel* 12 August 1831.

¹⁴ *Limerick Evening Post*, 30 November 1832. These society members contributed to a savings fund and could withdraw funds when needed. The cholera epidemic had a drastic effect on this society with membership falling drastically with the secretary James Purcell writing to Catholic Bishop John Ryan with the society's concerns.

¹⁵ Colm Kerrigan, 'Temperance and Politics in Pre-Famine Galway', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 43 (1991), p. 83.

sixpence weekly membership into a savings account for them, providing a financial cushion for their families on their death.¹⁶

From the late eighteenth century, voluntary philanthropic and charitable associations were an essential part of social and cultural life in urban areas, and their increasing numbers and influence can be attributed in no small way to the quickening pace of urbanisation at this time.¹⁷ An examination of the local newspapers of the 1830s-40s reveals many voluntary associations operating in Limerick city, among which the new temperance societies can be included. McNamara's study of these organisations lists them in four overlapping categories: 'philanthropic and charitable societies that catered for the needs of the middle classes themselves; associations related to the protection of business and property while the fourth category represented those which were political in nature.'¹⁸ The temperance societies – like contemporary movements for educational reform – had a strong religious tone but this was initially Protestant and specifically Quaker rather than Catholic.¹⁹ However, when Fr Theobald Mathew launched his particular movement in the later 1830s, he proved to some extent an exception to the denominational character of temperance. 'In the interest of non-sectarianism, [he] separated morality from religion by refusing to subject his societies to formal ecclesiastical control, and glossed over the important differences between Catholic and Protestant understanding of temperance theory and practice.'²⁰ This meant he was not popular amongst

¹⁶ *Saunders's News-Letter*, 21 October 1830; *Limerick Evening Post*, 30 November 1832; *Limerick Chronicle*, 11 January 1834, Malcolm, *Ireland sober, Ireland free*, p.56.

¹⁷ Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1995), p. 41.

¹⁸ Sarah McNamara, 'Making the middle class mind: middle class culture in Limerick 1830-40', Unpublished PhD thesis, Mary Immaculate College, (University of Limerick, 2010), p. 171. McNamara goes on to state that it is difficult to define the specific nature of many of the Limerick examples due to their aims extending across a number of spheres. Some of the political societies were also overtly religious in character and dining clubs 'merged sociability with charity.' There were also the Catholic confraternities and of course the temperance movement which was led by the catholic clergy.

¹⁹ Paul Townend, 'Heretical Plants of Irish Growth: Catholic Critics of Mathewite Temperance' *Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 4 (Oct 2005), p. 617.

²⁰ McMahan. 'Which Kind of Paddy?' p. 5. Advertising a charity sermon for the female and male poor schools of St Munchin's Parish, the Catholic parish priest, Fr Richard Walsh, appealed to prospective subscribers on the basis that charity confers a two-fold blessing – it blesses the giver and the receiver, and there can be no doubt but its value is enhanced when its exalted object is to enlighten the ignorant, to bend them to virtue from their

some fellow clergy for adopting such a non-denominational approach to temperance. Keane in his study of the Redemptorist community and their confraternity structures in Limerick stated that Rev. Joseph Prost who was appointed superior of the Redemptorist Order had a somewhat unfavourable view of Mathew, believing that his movement was ‘but an imitation of the Protestant temperance societies in North America.’²¹

But those who patronised the Limerick temperance movement – Catholic clergymen and medical men, as well as a number of merchants and employers – saw temperance mainly in two ways: partly it was a way of increasing the health benefits to be gained from the elimination of alcohol consumption, but it was also a way of promoting the virtue of hard work among the city’s workforce.²² In other words, as some historians have seen it, the temperance movement was an effort by the social elite to maintain its own grip on power, seeing it as a cheap solution to all of Ireland’s problems. If the poor would stop drinking they would no longer be poor and thus would cease to be a burden on the city’s charities and other such resources, allowing charitable organisations to use their resources for other causes such as health and education.²³ The promotion of temperance was also seen as reducing ‘absenteeism and instability’ amongst workers and while this was most clearly expressed in Victorian England, these concerns also appear to have been in the minds of Limerick employers.²⁴ In October 1834 such was the serious concern about workers’ drinking habits that Limerick’s

youth, to form their moral habits, and thus dispose them to be useful members of society, and ultimately to arrive at the sublime end of their creation. St Munchin’s parish is in the Thomondgate area of Limerick City.

²¹ Thomas Keane, ‘Class, Religion and Society in Limerick City, 1922-1939’, unpublished PhD thesis, Mary Immaculate College, (University of Limerick, 2016), pp 139-140. Prost was an Austrian born Redemptorist who was the first Redemptorist to establish a mission in Limerick. Keane went on to say that his ‘attitude towards the temperance movement in Ireland is indicative of the strategy which the Redemptorist’s used to promote spirituality in the people.’

²² *Saunders’s News-Letter*, 21 October 1830. *Limerick Evening Post*, 30 November 1832. This society was based at 50 William Street, Limerick.

²³ McMahon, ‘Which Kind of Paddy?’ p. 7; Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A new economic history 1780-1939*, (Oxford 1995), p. 8. Another reason for benevolence was self-preservation and when cholera struck, the wealthy were advised that their best safeguard was to help the poor

²⁴ Lilian Lewis Shiman, *Crusade against Drink in Victorian England*, (New York, 1988), p. 2. Shiman also shows that ‘Saint Monday, once an accepted hangover day was no longer sanctioned. Drinking decreased the efficiency of the working classes and therefore undesirable according to a number of anti-drink supporters’.

Mayor made an appeal to employers to pay employees on Friday night or Saturday morning to prevent Sabbath violations.²⁵ The following month local Limerick Quaker merchant, John Abel, advocated total abstinence and extolled the benefits of providing workers with coffee instead of beer. In an appeal to other employers to follow his example, Abel wrote a public letter to the local newspapers, describing how, when he urgently needed a well sunk, he supplied the workers with a pint of hot, strong, well-boiled coffee every five to six hours. Abel noted the high caffeine intake gave workers energy and clarity of mind and ability to work day and night for seventy-seven hours straight, which must have been beneficial to his business activities.²⁶

Respectability was a theme reiterated in the many reports of temperance meetings, with reference to how members, because of their avoidance of alcohol and drunken behaviour, were well attired and conducted themselves in an orderly way. The temperance societies were therefore seen to ‘operate for the benefit of the community, the “public” and society.’ Mathew’s movement progressed steadily. Bretherton states that ‘the year 1839 was the last good year for the distillers: in 1840 the amount of whiskey produced fell by over three million gallons. An article in the *Limerick Reporter* in 1840 took great satisfaction from the fact that due to the exertions of the Fr Mathew, ‘several of the most extensive distilleries in the South of Ireland will not resume work this season, if ever.’ The breweries’ production rates also fell dramatically – from one million barrels in 1837 to 500,000 in 1843.²⁷

Under Father Mathew’s guidance, his disciples formed a vast network of active local temperance societies, complete with meeting halls, reading rooms, burial societies and – central to this study – musical bands, whose purpose was to draw people away from the public house.

²⁵*Limerick Times*, 30 October 1834.

²⁶*Limerick Times*, 3 November 1834.

²⁷ George Bretherton, ‘The Irish Temperance movement 1829-47’, PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 1978, p. 259

It was not uncommon for bands in Cork to parade at night along with a large following of temperance supporters ‘with the strong hope of weaning the people away from the public houses; or entice those to follow who huddled in rags on the filthy pavements having spent all or sold all for whisky.’²⁸ And when the music stopped playing, peace still prevailed: a similar positive report on the success of temperance appeared in a Limerick newspaper following the St Patrick’s Day celebrations in 1845, which stated that ‘the city was crowded with thousands from the surrounding rural districts. All was peace and quietness, sobriety and order. Not a single case of drunkenness or a breach of peace have we heard of.’ However, the real success of the movement is actually difficult to gauge though it seems to have reduced drastically the levels of drunkenness in the city. Certainly, the 1845 situation was in marked contrast to the situation four years earlier in 1841 when it was reported that up to fifty ‘drunken delinquents’ were before the magistrates’ court in the city on each of the days in Christmas week.²⁹

Popular Enthusiasm

There was no doubting the enthusiasm of the city’s population for the new movement. Local newspapers reports show adjoining parishes mainly in the older parts of the city such as St Mary’s, St John’s and St Munchin’s all had temperance societies and bands. The Limerick press was very positive in reporting Fr Mathew and the temperance cause, especially the *Limerick Reporter* which had a segment on the temperance movement almost daily from the late 1830s to the mid-1840s. Such was the popularity of Mathew and his temperance crusade in Limerick that thousands were reported to have gathered in 1839 and taken the pledge to abstain from all intoxicating liquors, believing that their lives would be changed for the better. The enthusiasm for temperance membership in St Mary’s Parish led to two temperance

²⁸ Richard T. Cooke, *Cork’s Barrack Street Band: Ireland’s oldest amateur institution*, (Cork, 1992), p. 22

²⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 18 March 1845. The author contrasted this situation to ‘days of old.’

societies being formed – the original St Mary’s Temperance Society was based in their rooms in Merchant’s Quay and the later St Francis Society was based in Athlunkard Street.³⁰

The mass enthusiasm for the movement continued in the following year when the Mungret Street Temperance Society was reported to have over one thousand members since its inception six months earlier. Even miracle cures were credited to Mathew in Limerick: in 1842 when he administered the pledge to a pledge breaker named Moynihan in Barrington’s Hospital, Moynihan, who had suffered paralysis, was reported to have been cured by Mathew’s blessing.³¹ Pressure to keep the pledge was also built on community solidarity, coming not only from the organisers of the movement but from neighbours and workmates, and those that broke the temperance pledge were often treated with disdain by their local communities as was the case of three ‘ruffians’ in St Mary’s parish in Limerick who broke the pledge and were sent to Cork, sixty miles away, to become members once more.³²

The merging of music and pastime with temperance was probably the most successful aspects of the movement. As most organised sports and popular leisure organisations did not operate in Limerick until the 1880s, the working classes of the city in the pre-famine decades were without many organised recreations.³³ The setting up of bands in association with each of the local temperance societies was to provide this recreation. As McGrath states, ‘There was nothing for the young working class people in the city and country to do apart from go to the pub. So [Fr Mathew] wanted to... try and start some pastimes for them. And that’s where it all

³⁰ *Limerick Reporter*, 4, 18 January 1842, 3 January 1843. St Mary’s temperance society was based in their rooms in Merchant’s Quay and the other parish society of St Francis was based in Athlunkard Street.

³¹ *Limerick Reporter*, 20 October 1840; *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 January 1842; Paul Townend, ‘Temperance, Father Mathew, and the Irish Clergy’, *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1999), p. 114. Such was the influence of Fr Mathew that when visiting Limerick his carriage was stopped by police in William Street and Mathew delivered the temperance pledge to two prisoners on drunk charges who were subsequently released.

³² *Limerick Reporter*, 12 June 1840. It was also reported by this pro-temperance newspaper that the miscreants were ‘saved from the infliction of summary vengeance – regular lynch law, on the spot.’

³³ Tom Hayes, ‘A virtuous alliance: muscular and musical Christianity in late nineteenth century Limerick’, in Liam Irwin et al (Eds), *Limerick History and Society*, (Dublin 2009), pp 28-29.

started. They were all very much working class people in these bands.³⁴ It is clear that Mathew discovered band membership for temperance movement members to be an engaging pursuit – and one which attracted new members far more than did any educational activity. One of Mathew’s early biographers, John Francis Maguire, stated that those bands were very dear to Fr Mathew and he felt that

it was a lot easier to interest a robust lad in the delights of the trumpet, the tuba, or the big bass drum, especially as a lack of training or musical aptitude was not thought in the least a hindrance, than to introduce him to the more sober and contemplative pleasures of the temperance reading room.³⁵

Mathew’s establishment of the temperance bands may have been unwise from a financial point of view. One of his early biographers, J. B. Shiel, lamented the sums expended ‘in the institution of Temperance Bands and the purchase of musical instruments. The object of introducing a taste for music was no doubt, to produce a spirit of harmony and benevolence, yet, some are of the opinion that it would have been as well for the welfare of the temperance cause if such bands never existed.’³⁶ Mathew himself admitted that the bands ‘receive little help from the public. I am unable to offer them much assistance. Here I must remark that the annual expense of a band, including the pay of a music master is £20.’³⁷ The few figures available for Limerick suggest the same expenditure, especially from 1839 onwards with newspaper reports of his making subscriptions to temperance societies to ‘purchase instruments for an amateur band.’³⁸ Mathew’s benevolence to Limerick bands was reported in June 1840 when he gave £20

³⁴ Interview with John McGrath, 25 January 2014.

³⁵ George Bretherton, ‘The Irish Temperance movement 1829-47’, PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 1978, p. 259.

³⁶ John Barclay Sheil, *History of the Temperance movement in Ireland*, (Dublin, 1843), p. 9.

³⁷ Aiveen Kearney, ‘Temperance bands and their significance in nineteenth Century Ireland’. Unpublished MA thesis University College Cork 1981, p. 32

³⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 September 1840. Mathew was reported to have given twelve pounds to support the Cootehill band and ten pounds to a band in Cashel.

to St Michael's temperance society to with half of this sum to form a band and the 'rest divided between St John's, St Mary's and St Patrick's societies.'³⁹

Spread of the Bands

However, temperance bands were to become a distinctive feature of the movement and over a period of twenty years in the mid-nineteenth century many towns and villages throughout the country had their own bands. A temperance procession in Cork on Easter Monday 1842 was reportedly attended by fifty-five temperance societies with forty-two bands.⁴⁰ Travel writer John Silk Buckingham in a letter to a friend described 'the organisation and conduct of Father Mathew's temperance meeting at Ardmore on Sunday 25 September 1842'⁴¹ with 'more than three hundred temperance bands, well dressed in uniforms, well-furnished with instruments, and so full of zeal in the cause that they march twenty and thirty miles to attend a meeting.'⁴² This was music with a moral purpose and was to develop over time as an example of the Irish penchant for linking musical bands with other – either religious or political – causes.

This inter-relationship through music gave many of the working classes in Limerick an associational opportunity that did not exist for many in the city in the early nineteenth century. There was also a practical benefit. Employers and householders looking for trades people or servants and labourers in the later 1830s were encouraged to apply to the temperance society committee, adding practical advantages to membership.⁴³ The membership of a band within

³⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 26 June, 22 December 1840, During a visit to Newcastlewest Co. Limerick Mathew left £30 to be 'appropriated the following manner, £15 for Newcastlewest musical band and the other £15 to be divided between Askeaton, Rathkeale and Ballingarry bands.' *Limerick Reporter*, 21 December 1840. The Glin temperance society thanked named subscribers, including the Knight of Glin, for the purchase of musical instruments for their band.

⁴⁰ Cooke, *Corks Barrack Street Band*, p.28. Cooke's list of bands that attended were all from Cork City and County. It can also be reasoned that the high number of bands in Cork was due to the fact that Mathew's temperance crusade had commenced initially in Cork.

⁴¹ Colm Kerrigan, 'Father Theobald Mathew in Ardmore Co. Waterford', *Ardmore Journal*, 8 February 2011.

⁴² Kearney, 'Temperance bands and their significance', p. 10.

⁴³ *Limerick Star and Evening Post*, 12 August 1834. This clearly was in the interest of middle class employers to have a sober and productive workforce.

the temperance movement doubled this image of respectability on the part of the individual member. In Britain it was maintained that getting the working classes exposed to music as a social activity ‘was a desirable pastime because it would provide an alternative to drinking and promote a strong work ethic through the disciplined routine of practice.’⁴⁴

In Limerick being in a temperance band was seen as one sign of an individual’s wish for self-improvement, since to be thus involved meant that one possessed the necessary discipline both to practice the music and to adhere to the rules of the temperance movement. St John’s, St Patrick’s and St Mary’s Bands were all reported on in the local press in March 1843 as increasing in membership, and were seen as indicators of ‘increasing comforts as far as appearances may be judged of.’⁴⁵ This image of respectability had a unifying effect on local communities, not only in Limerick, and in many towns and districts temperance halls were opened and temperance musical bands were formed.⁴⁶ This led to meetings at soirées, parades and entertainments such as musical gatherings in company with other societies from different areas and counties.⁴⁷ The educational aspect merged with the musical involvement: St John’s Temperance Society initially had its reading rooms in Charlotte Quay which attracted the patronage of ‘several liberal gentlemen’ who undertook to help the society establish a band: ‘they should receive unsolicited assistance to forward the expensive undertaking in which they

⁴⁴ Denise Odello, ‘British Brass band periodicals and the construction of a movement’, *Victorian periodicals Review*, vol. 47, 2014, p. 432.

⁴⁵ *Limerick Reporter*, 17 March 1843.

⁴⁶ *Limerick Reporter*, 1 June 1841. Doon Co. Limerick was reported to have fine temperance rooms and band when the Ballybunion Co. Kerry society came to visit them. The visit included a tree planting ceremony in front of the temperance rooms.

⁴⁷ *Kerry Evening Post*, 26 August 1840; *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 April 1842; *Cork Examiner*, 25 November 1844. The Limerick and Kilrush societies exchanged visits to each other in the early 1840s. George Bretherton, ‘Against the flowing tide: Whisky and the Temperance in the making of Modern Ireland’, in Susanna Barrows, and Robin Room (eds.), *Drinking Behaviour and Belief in Modern History*, (California, 1991), p. 150. ‘Soirées were considerably more elaborate affairs than tea parties and were meant to rival the country balls that the unreconstructed aristocracy still attended.’

are engaged of purchasing musical instruments, and having a band instructed on a large scale, worthy of such a city as Limerick, always distinguished for liberality and patriotism.’⁴⁸

The stress on respectability and observance of the rules was fundamental to the temperance bands. A letter to the *Limerick Reporter* from a John Griffin 72 George Street Limerick stated ‘Much of the prosperity of a society depends on the efficiency of its rules, and a clear system of its accounts, which should be as plain and as simple as possible, so as to admit of their being easily kept and checked.’⁴⁹ A breach of the St Mary’s Temperance Band rules in 1842 led to a letter in the local paper ‘to caution the public against encouraging or supporting by subscription or otherwise, in the name of St Mary’s society, some ill-disposed persons lately belonging to their band, who refusing their pledged obedience to the rules of the society, have in consequence been rejected there from.’⁵⁰ In England temperance bands were responsible for the spread of popular music throughout the 1830s and 1840s. Even though the music played by the bands was initially limited in variety and badly arranged, it did familiarise those involved with a variety of music: ‘it was divided into four main categories: European ‘national melodies’

⁴⁸ *Limerick Reporter*, 4, 18 January 1842, 3 January 1843.

⁴⁹ *Limerick Reporter* 19 March 1841, 25 March 1842. The regulations of Fr Mathew’s Teetotal Temperance Society were as follows:

1. No one admitted to these rooms but a subscriber.
2. No one permitted to be a subscriber to these rooms but members of the above named society.
3. The committee rooms are to be closed during service on Sundays.
4. No resolution of the committee to be considered valid, until approved of by the very Rev. President.
5. Five members to constitute a meeting, who are to move one of the persons present to the chair, who is to preside for the preservation of order.
6. No agent from temperance or other societies to be permitted to speak or interfere, unless recommended by the Very Reverend President, or the clergyman of the parish.
7. No religious or political controversy to be allowed on any account.
8. No tracts to be received by the committee, until they have been read and approved by the Very Reverend President, or the clergyman of the parish.
9. No public processions of the Total Abstinence Society, without the approbation of the clergymen of the district.
10. No person even suspected of being a member of any illegal association, or of being bound by combination oaths, to be allowed to become a subscriber to the room, without the approbation of the clergymen of the district.
11. That a sub-committee be appointed in every parish, to visit, once a week, the members of the Total Abstinence Society, and to report their conduct at the general meeting of the committee.
12. That for the accommodation of the poor, the subscriptions to be as low as possible, so that no Tee-Totaler may be excluded from the room, on the account of poverty.

⁵⁰ *Limerick Reporter*, 22 July 1842. The letter was signed by P. McMahon, Secretary of St Mary’s Temperance Society.

including English; classical music; and religious music.’⁵¹ Russell identifies three broad categories of popular musical activity emerging between 1840 and 1914, promoted by ‘moral crusaders, philanthropists, educationalists and reformers who sought to instil certain habits of mind and body into the English working classes.’⁵²

In Limerick in the 1850s the encouragement of formal but controlled organisation and self-education was fostered by the Limerick Catholic Young Men’s society, founded, by Rev. Richard Baptist O’Brien, a curate in St Mary’s parish, to promote ‘the development of religious, moral and literary education in our native city.’⁵³ To judge from contemporary newspaper accounts of Irish temperance band performances, their main function, while including the educational and religious aspects, was a little different, i.e. to provide background music for festive occasions and public gatherings of various kinds. The repertoire used seems to have consisted of short, light pieces with religious and moderate Irish nationalist connotations. Some of the Irish marches reported were ‘St Patrick’s Day’, ‘Rory O’Moore’, ‘Garryowen’ and the hymn ‘See the conquering heroes’.⁵⁴

It must be noted that biographers of Fr Mathew and his temperance cause were very critical of the musical ability of the bands. It would seem that the temperance bands employed whatever instruments were available, which meant that no standard instrumentation or repertoire was developed, especially early in their formation. Johann Kohl, a German traveller in Ireland, during a visit to Cork in the 1840s noted ‘one of the most frightful attempts at music which the temperance bands who march through the streets of Cork in the evening, are in the habit of making.’⁵⁵ Newspaper reports of the period from many parts of the island were equally

⁵¹ Kearney, ‘Temperance bands and their significance’, p. 23.

⁵² Dave Russell, *Popular music in England 1840-1914* (Manchester, 1987), p. 12.

⁵³ *Limerick Reporter*, 22 April 1856.

⁵⁴ *Limerick Reporter*, 19, 26 May 1841.

⁵⁵ Johann George, Kohl. *Travels in Ireland*, Pt. II, (Belfast, 2013), p. 49. Kohl went on to describe how ‘the band in the gallery played Irish and English national melodies, but without the least regard to time, although the leader kept beating it most diligently.’

uncomplimentary about the musical standard of temperance bands. At a temperance gathering in Galway, according to the admittedly anti-O'Connellite *Galway Standard*, 'the Loughrea Temperance Band joined [an O'Connellite procession] at Renmore, and they, and other temperance bands, combined with that of the Parent Temperance Society to render disloyal airs in miserable style.'⁵⁶ Fr Mathew's reasons for favouring the bands, irrespective of their musical prowess, are humorously expressed by biographer Frank Mathew: 'He judged his temperance bands by his own unworldly standard, and they were musical to him when to most they were horrible.'⁵⁷

Limerick newspaper reports did not convey any negativity towards temperance bands' abilities in the 1840s, instead expressing delight at the musical airs played.⁵⁸ At a St Mary's soirée it was reported that 'the room was tastefully fitted up, and well lighted, and the enlivening notes of the society's band, with the addition of the Irish pipes and a couple of violins greatly gladdened the proceedings.'⁵⁹ A Mungret Street temperance soirée attended by the leading Catholic clergy of the city, politicians and the bands of St John's and St Mary's parishes, was described as being on 'a scale of unprecedented magnificence, at their beautiful commodious rooms in Mungret Street. It far exceeded anything of its kind hitherto given in this part of Ireland.' At their elaborate soirées bands were complimented in toasts to 'their delightful strains, adding all the magic of melody to a scene of pure and unmixed happiness, and of moral and social relaxation'⁶⁰ However, it must be observed that at the many soirées

⁵⁶ *Galway Standard*, 30 June 1843.

⁵⁷ Frank J. Mathew, *Fr Mathew: His life and times* (London 1890), p.113. 'He loved to hear his bandsmen each work zealously at his instrument with an entire disregard for harmony, or to watch some burly black-smith furiously pommelling the big drum. It was not their music but their zeal that delighted him.'

⁵⁸ *Limerick Reporter*, 17 February 1843, this paper described the 'advantage of temperance bands – the beauty and pathos of our Irish melodies, and traced the revival of our ancient music to Fr Mathew, and the glorious movement in this country.' *Limerick Reporter* 16 June 1843, *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 9 Nov 1848.

⁵⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 4 January 1841.

⁶⁰ *Limerick Reporter*, 4 February 1840; *Freeman's Journal*, 14 April 1842. Another interesting feature was the display of full-length portraits of the Queen, Prince Albert, and Father Matthew in the Temperance rooms.

held in Limerick there were always in attendance some instrumentalists such as violinists and pipers – external to the bands – to ‘add to the musical enjoyment’ or perhaps to make up for the lack of competence of the bands, whose marching music was not suitable as entertainment for middle and upper class diners and dancers performing waltzes.⁶¹

The bands’ lack of musical competency did not, therefore, stop what could be described as the rise of the band phenomenon. Precisely because of middle class patronage and because many Catholic priests, despite their initial misgivings, became active supporters and organisers of temperance societies and bands, membership of such a band gave workingmen in early nineteenth century Limerick city a rare opportunity for cross-class socialising.⁶² As the positions of authority such as society president and secretary were initially held by the local clergy, membership of the society’s band allowed working class men to briefly rub shoulders with their ‘betters’.⁶³ When the reliance on clerical direction was reduced, especially later in the century through the increasing accessibility of organised sport, theatrical groups, friendly societies, and political associations the working man got more opportunities for regular and more assertive involvement in the public sphere ‘in other words formal voluntary activity.’⁶⁴ But the trend was already visible in the 1840s in a letter to Mathew from a county Limerick group of teetotallers who wrote to Matthew complaining that their local priest, Fr. O’Donovan had taken their bass drum, and they threatened to hand back their medals and certificates if it was not returned as they paid for it out of their own money.⁶⁵ Similarly, St Mary’s Temperance Society Band, like other bands in the city, introduced formal organisation and associationalism to the working men of the parish. A court case taken in 1843 by the President of the St Mary’s

⁶¹ *Limerick Reporter*, 4 January 1842. As well as the band, Mr Pat Shanahan, violinist, and his son played at the St John’s soirée.

⁶² Malcolm, *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free*, p.123; Townend, ‘Temperance, Father Mathew, and the Irish Clergy’, p.114.

⁶³ *Limerick Reporter*, 19 January, 4 June 1841. Rev James Quinn (St John’s) and Rev M. Brahan, (St Mary’s) were the leading clergy and chairman of both Limerick temperance societies.

⁶⁴ Jennifer Kelly and R. V. Comerford (eds.), *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad*, (Dublin, 2010), p. 1.

⁶⁵ *Limerick Chronicle*, 30 July 1843. Bretherton, *Irish Temperance Movement 1829-47*, p. 276.

Temperance Society, four years after its foundation, outlines the sophisticated structure of this society, indicating the employment of a competent bandmaster, and the financial know-how involved in the purchase of instruments and rent of practice rooms.

From this reporting of the court case it is clear that the band was formally constituted with rules signed up to by the members. This society was, of course, hierarchically organised, led by Fr John Nolan as President and a Mr O'Brien as permanent instructor of the band, and more than likely (though the details are not available) supported by a committee. Subscriptions from the band members and the wider community of temperance society members helped purchase the instruments and rent the practice rooms.⁶⁶ A disagreement on who actually owned the instruments occurred when four members refused to return instruments to the band, with the judge stating that because members through subscriptions had helped purchase them they were not the sole property of the society – a decision in favour of individual working men rather than the organisation or its middle-class management.⁶⁷

Temperance and political demonstrations

In Limerick city, as in other urban centres, the political displacement of the local Protestant elite through Emancipation and municipal reform involved the development of a new popular political assertiveness.⁶⁸ This new popular assertiveness in turn prompted the increased use of music at popular events, something that was replicated nationally with ‘thousands of the lower orders, with green colours and proceeded by drums and fifes march[ing] in military array.’ As early as 1828, the anti-Emancipation *Limerick Chronicle* contemptuously described how on ‘last Sunday public decency and moral feeling was grossly outraged by a public procession of

⁶⁶ *Limerick Reporter*, 26 June, 21, 22 December 1840, 27 July 1841. Shanagolden Temperance Society, thanked subscribers to their band instrument fund.

⁶⁷ *Limerick Reporter* 26 May 1840. St Mary's Band members presented Rev Nolan with a gold snuff box in 1840 as a token of appreciation.

⁶⁸ Fintan Lane, *Politics, Society and the Middle Class in Modern Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 58.

vagabonds, with a green flag, green branches, various coloured ribbons, and other fantastic insignia, parading the principal streets of this city, with music, and an idle rabble.’⁶⁹

This type of popular demonstration became the norm over the following two decades, with temperance bands regularly involved. A St Patrick’s Day procession planned for March 1840 had no local band to play when the 38th Regiment’s band was restricted by an order ‘against giving bands of regiments for any public purposes of procession, &c.’⁷⁰ This provided the first real opening for the temperance bands to become directly involved in public processions, those in Limerick being first reported at a political demonstration in October 1840 when O’Connell visited the city. The trade associations were prominent in this demonstration, the bands accompanying them being those of the city temperance societies. In the demonstration also were members of county temperance societies from Adare, Croom and Bruff with ‘their local bands of music’, and the temperance society from Kilrush in neighbouring Co. Clare with its particular band.⁷¹

However, it was not until later 1841 that bands really came to prominence in public demonstrations. Those in existence before then seem to have been small bands with fewer than ten members.⁷² When Mathew visited Limerick in January 1841, only one unnamed band was mentioned, along with the presidents of St Mary’s and St John’s temperance societies.⁷³ Later in October, however, the report of Mathew’s visit to Limerick listed participation by five

⁶⁹ *Limerick Chronicle*, 17 September 1828; *Westmeath Journal*, 18 September 1828.

⁷⁰ *Limerick Reporter*, 13, 17 March 1840, initially a County and City Staff band was ‘to enliven n the procession’ but whether this was the army or a civilian band is undetermined. Without a band ‘frieze coated votaries of temperance had in requisition Irish and Highland pipers, and tambouring men in abundance.’ *Limerick Reporter*, 20 March 1840, a temperance band was reported in Rathkeale Co. Limerick for a parade.

⁷¹ *Limerick Reporter*, 3 December 1839, 9 October 1840; *Limerick Chronicle*, 4 December 1839; *Limerick Standard*, 3 December 1839. It must also be noted that at the well reported visit of Mathew to Limerick in 1839 ‘when thousands took the pledge’ no civilian bands were reported in Limerick at that time.

⁷² *Limerick Reporter*, 23 June 1840. The Pallaskenry Band was reported to have eight members. *The Dublin Weekly Herald*, 5 June 1841, had a report from the Liverpool branch of the Cork Total Abstinence society where a British Army Sergeant who was based in Limerick stated that there were three temperance bands in the city and recommended the support of the bands.

⁷³ *Dublin Morning Register*, 7 January 1841. This could be an amalgamation of both societies musically.

societies, each along with a band.⁷⁴ Band participation seems to fluctuate over this decade from peaks of six bands in the city with county bands representing their local area at gatherings. St John's and St Mary's temperance bands were the most consistently reported as participating in processions over this period and ironically in 2017 there is still a band in these parishes, while there are none in the other city parishes.⁷⁵ On St Patrick's Day 1842 three temperance bands marched along with trade societies, though they marched under their own temperance banners and not those of the trades.⁷⁶ The number of Limerick city temperance bands peaked in July 1842 when six bands from the city were reported in Murroe for the visit of Fr Mathew and five from surrounding areas along with the local Murroe band who 'performed with judgement and power selections from Haydn and Mozart.'⁷⁷ It was reported in the *Cork Examiner* in September 1842 that there could be 'at present three hundred temperance bands in Ireland.'⁷⁸ If the newspaper accounts of bands in Limerick city and county are correct there may have been as many as twenty-four temperance bands of varying standards and size in Limerick in the latter end of 1842, with that number increasing, mainly in the county, to thirty-two by 1843.⁷⁹ The following maps list the temperance bands in Limerick city and county according to newspaper reports, especially those of the *Limerick Reporter*, up to December 1843.

⁷⁴ *Limerick Reporter*, 15 October 1841; *Cork Examiner*, 18 October 1841.

⁷⁵ *Limerick Reporter*, 4 January, 26 November 1841. Three Temperance society soirées were reported: St Mary's and St John's were attended by bands as well as accompanying musicians such as pipers and violinists, and St Michael's had no band – just violins and pipers. *Limerick Reporter*, 11 March 1842. St John's accounts state that £45 spent on instruments for the band and £26 for bandmaster wages (six months).

⁷⁶ *Limerick Reporter*, 18 March 1842. St Mary's, St Patrick's and St John's bands marched in this parade. Thomondgate, St Michael's and St Francis Societies marched but did not have bands.

⁷⁷ *Limerick Reporter*, 5 July 1842; *Freeman's Journal*, 7 July 1842; *Cork Examiner*, 8 July 1842. The six Limerick City bands reported were St Mary's, St John's, St Patrick's, St Michaels, Mungret Street and the Academy Band. *Limerick Reporter*, 1 November 1842. These bands again were reported to participate at the Mayor's parade in the city.

⁷⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 26 September 1842.

⁷⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 17 November 1843.

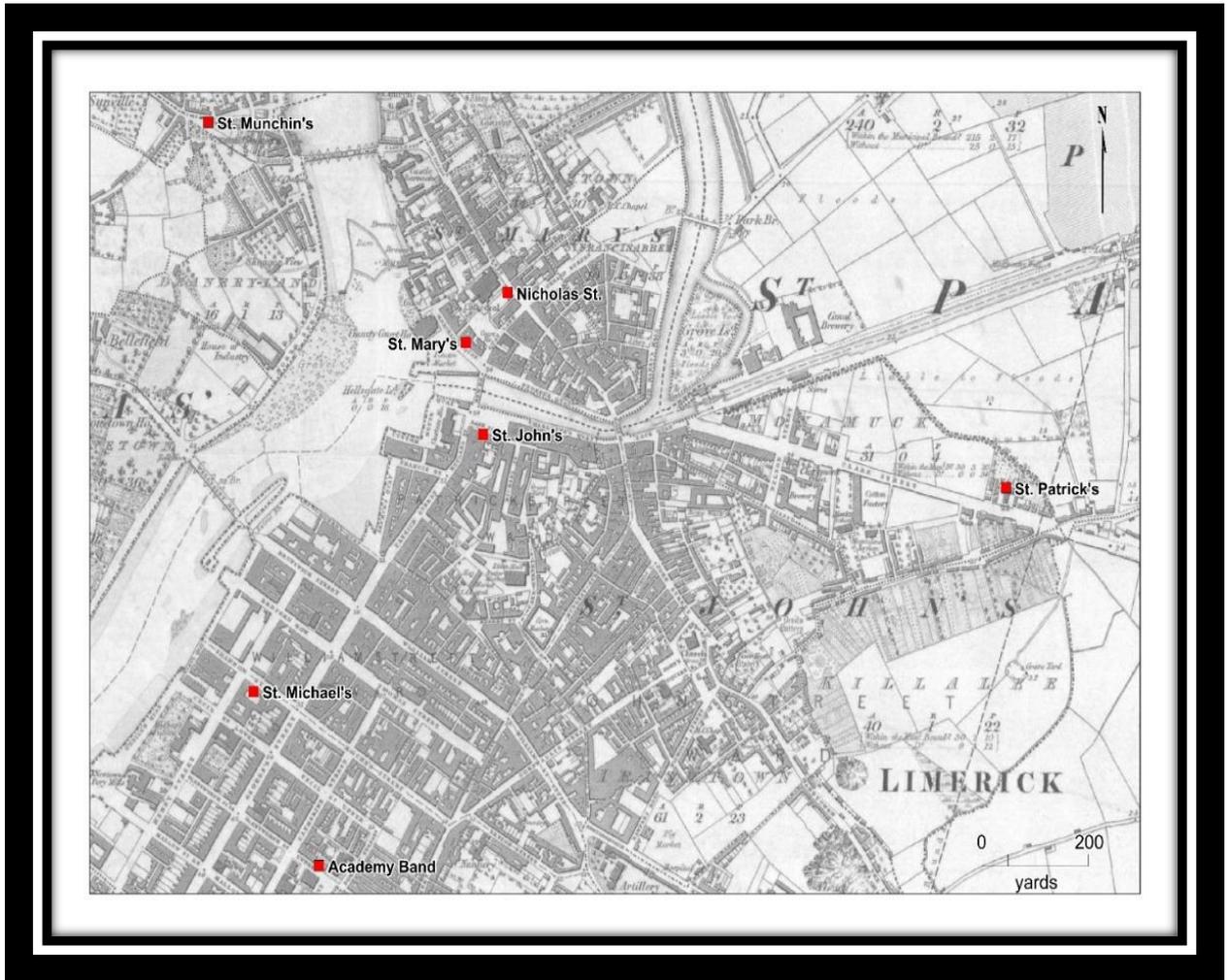


Figure 1: Location of Limerick City Temperance Bands 1840s.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Derived from contemporary newspaper reports.



Figure 2: Location of County Limerick Bands 1840s.⁸¹

O’Connell’s Repeal campaign, like his earlier campaign for Catholic Emancipation, linked national identity with Catholicism so tightly that it became the identifying trademark of what it meant to be ‘Irish.’⁸² In his creation of these mass movements, O’Connell realized the appeal of a musical band and was quick to encourage the attendance of bands at his rallies. Since most musical bands were temperance bands, and since the mass following of Repeal was almost identical to that of temperance, it was inevitable that temperance bands became aligned to the Repeal movement.⁸³

⁸¹ Derived from contemporary newspaper reports.

⁸² Jay P. Dolan, ‘The Irish Parish’ *U.S. Catholic Historian*, (Reform and Renewal, Essays in Honour of David J. O’Brien), vol. 25, no. 2, Spring 2007, p. 16.

⁸³ Malcolm, *Ireland sober, Ireland free*, pp, 132-33. The temperance bands were important additions at O’Connell’s meeting ‘as their sobriety and orderly behaviour advertised Ireland’s capacity for responsible self-government.’

‘He disliked O’Connell and his brand of nationalism, and it broke his heart to see his temperance bands marching off to repeal meetings.’⁸⁴ Mathew wrote to teetotal leaders throughout the country, urging them to take whatever action was needed to keep bands away from political gatherings, stating that ‘the easiest way is to keep the musical instruments away from the Repealers, for if they were to perform at any of their meetings it would be ruinous to teetotalism.’⁸⁵ In a letter to his friend, Rev. D. B. Delany, chaplain to the Dublin House of Industry,⁸⁶ Mathew requested Delany ‘to give notice to the teetotallers that their bands cannot attend at political meetings without violating one of the fundamental rules of the temperance society.’⁸⁷ Furthermore, he was afraid that government might suppress the temperance movement if it appeared to be closely affiliated with Repeal.⁸⁸ In fact, Mathew’s attempts to separate temperance and repeal were futile since temperance societies and their bands were either unable or unwilling to distinguish between the two movements. In its financial report of 1842, St John’s Temperance Society in Limerick saw no paradox in supporting temperance and repeal at the same time, and expended ten pounds on the framing and gilding of a pair of pictures of Fr Mathew and Daniel O’Connell for their reading room.⁸⁹ With average artisan wages £1.2s a week for fully employed coopers in Limerick in this period this was a considerable sum expended.⁹⁰

It is clear that political neutrality was fundamental to the temperance cause as initially envisaged by Mathew, but this did not stop the politically opportunistic O’Connell. By getting

⁸⁴ Bretherton, *Against the flowing tide*, p.159.

⁸⁵ Bretherton, *Irish Temperance Movement*, p. 276.

⁸⁶ Maurice O’Connell, *The correspondence of Daniel O’Connell 1837-40*, (Dublin), p.191. O’Connell’s influence was used to get Delany the appointment of Catholic Chaplain ‘so that inmates may have at all hours that spiritual assistance which the humanity of the government has intended for them when it provided a salary for its chaplain.’

⁸⁷ *Freeman’s Journal*, 26 June 1841.

⁸⁸ John F. Quinn, ‘The ‘Vagabond Friar’: Father Mathew’s Difficulties with the Irish Bishops, 1840-1856’ *Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 78, no. 4 (Oct 1992). p. 548.

⁸⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 11 March 1840.

⁹⁰ *Limerick Reporter*, 5 December 1845.

temperance bands to complement his own rallies, much to the irritation of Mathew, he was also assuming the mantle of temperance advocate when it suited his Repeal campaign.⁹¹ One of many contradictions for O'Connell's temperance advocacy is that he had invested two thousand pounds in his son's brewery business in Dublin in 1833 and then blamed teetotalism in 1841 when the business collapsed.⁹² It is evident that O'Connell was trying to link Repeal and temperance together. Music and bands helped those advocating repeal of the Union through playing rousing national airs. A popular ballad called 'The Glorious Repeal' meeting at Tara hill began a description of that meeting by emphasising the presence of temperance bands:

On Tara hill the other day,
Five hundred thousand did assemble,
Teetotallers' bands did sweetly play,
Our foes for to make tremble.⁹³

It is clear that 'O'Connell's gatherings produced some of the most sophisticated political theatre seen in Europe up to that point.'⁹⁴ O'Connell declared that he would never have ventured to hold his monster meetings were it not that he had teetotallers for his policemen.⁹⁵

I believe that Father Mathew was sent by God to bless Ireland with virtue, in order that she might be then fit for freedom. Liquor brings false courage. I tell you that there is not

⁹¹ Charles Gavin Duffy, *Young Ireland, A Fragment of Irish History 1840 - 1845*, (Dublin, 1880), pp 344-7, describes the journey to one such rally, and indicates the role played by bands on such occasions. The route lay through a succession of hamlets, villages and towns, and the houses were decorated with banners or evergreens. The local muster headed by its local band immediately took its place in the procession, on horseback or in vehicles. Around the base of the hill the bands and banners were mustered. Each town was preceded by its band in the national uniform of green and white. The bands amounted to forty, equipment sufficient for an army; the banners were past counting.

⁹² Malcolm, *Ireland sober Ireland Free*, p. 127. Malcolm states that O'Connell was a strong supporter of the drinks industry especially in the 1830s when attempts were made to limit publicans' licences, hours of sale etc.

⁹³ Townend, *Father Mathew Temperance and Irish identity*, p. 220.

⁹⁴ John Borgonovo, 'Politics as leisure, Brass bands in Cork 1845-1918', in Leeann Lane and William Murphy, (eds.), *Leisure and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century*, (Liverpool, 2016), pp 29-30. Borgonovo states that the 'meetings centred on elaborate processions of tens of thousands that echoed British Judicial, regal and military parades. Participants were semi-militarised, marching in order, wearing uniforms and often accompanying cavalry bodies. All the while bands played martial tunes on drums, fifes, and pipes.

⁹⁵ Mathew, *Father Mathew his life and times*, p. 73.

an enemy in the world that could fight with my Irish teetotallers. Teetotalism therefore is a foundation stone of the edifice of Irish liberty.⁹⁶

O'Connell was not alone in this belief. The Black temperance movement of the same decades in America recognized that intemperance threatened black progress and it emphasized the dangers that drinking posed to the nation's health and to its social, civil, and religious institutions.⁹⁷ O'Connell was harnessing popular power 'which was novel in the sense of being organised along unmistakably modern lines of political expression.'⁹⁸ In 1838 he had a clear sense of the positive effects the temperance movement had on the populace: 'the country is quite tranquil, to say nothing of the hundred thousand men who have resolutely and perseveringly given up the use of all intoxicating liquors.'⁹⁹

Dawson contends that while Fr Mathew was not in favour of temperance bands becoming associated with the Repeal movement, Chief Secretary Lord Elliot writing to Sir Robert Peel who looked on Fr Mathew with 'suspicion and mistrust', assured Peel that the political opinions of temperance Repealers were not approved of by Fr. Mathew. Mathew and his predecessors in the temperance campaign had a clear message and that was to get those working and middle classes to have a way of saving themselves from destitution and this had nothing to do with politics. Elliot was in effect telling Peel to direct his suspicion more on O'Connell than Mathew. 'They love Fr. Mathew', he wrote, 'but obey O'Connell.'¹⁰⁰

It is clear that a large number of temperance society members were also part of the Repeal movement, though there was little official overlap between the movements. The County

⁹⁶ Lawrence McCaffrey, *Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year*, (Kentucky 1966), pp 22-23.

⁹⁷ Donald Yacovone, 'The Transformation of the Black Temperance Movement, 1827-1854': *Journal of the Early Republic*, vol. 8, no. 3 (Autumn 1988), p. 284. The Black Temperance advocates felt that 'Moral reform would cause slavery, prejudice, and intemperance to disappear.'

⁹⁸ Patrick J. O'Connor, *All Ireland is in and about Rathkeale*, (Cork, 1996), p.119.

⁹⁹ Maurice R. O'Connell, *The correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, vol. vi, (Dublin), 1837-1840, p. 287.

¹⁰⁰ Timothy Dawson, 'The City Music and City Bands', *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 25, no. 3, (Jun 1972), p.105. Colm Kerrigan, *Fr Mathew and the Irish Temperance movement 1838-1849*. (Cork, 1992), p.119. While Fr Mathew was anxious to be neutral in politics, in 1841 he ordered temperance bands 'not to attend any political meeting or play in public until the general election will have terminated.'

Inspector for the West Riding of Galway found no connection between the Repeal associations and temperance societies ‘other than that many members of the latter were also Repealers.’¹⁰¹ This assertion certainly had credence and many newspaper reports from 1840 to 1845 also expressed this belief.¹⁰² However, in the case of the temperance bands – as opposed to the broader temperance movement – the link with repeal seems to have been close enough. Temperance bands were clearly linked to politics in Limerick from the early 1840s. The local Catholic clergy seem to have regarded the bands as an extension of the repeal movement, so much so that the Limerick Musical Academy Band was criticised by Rev Fr. Nolan of St Mary’s for not attending a temperance banquet to which they had been invited. The band found it necessary to explain that ‘their directors are bound by the rules of the Institution to prohibit the Academy Band from playing on any occasion which may even be suspected of connection with politics.’¹⁰³

In 1845 the St Mary’s, St John’s and the Volunteer bands were all described in the local pro-O’Connell *Limerick Reporter* as Repeal bands, so it would seem that Mathew’s fears of his bands becoming fully aligned to the Repeal movement had come to pass in that city.¹⁰⁴ There was little Mathew could do to distance himself from O’Connell, especially after October, 1840, when O’Connell took the total abstinence pledge, and thereafter he felt fully entitled to participate in temperance activities.¹⁰⁵ Along with temperance bands playing at political rallies, another aspect of bands’ increasing political involvement that upset Mathew – though

¹⁰¹ Kerrigan, ‘Temperance and Politics in Pre-Famine Galway’, p. 89.

¹⁰² *Dublin Evening Mail*, 20 March 1840. Reports of St Patrick’s Day parade in Limerick in 1840 described a political display ‘and upon this occasion the party (Repeal) seemed to throw off all disguise, and to exhibit themselves to the gaze of the public as part and parcel of Mr O’Connell’s 500,000 fighting men.

¹⁰³ *Limerick Chronicle*, 6 October 1838; *Limerick Reporter*, 22 October 1841. The Academy Band was formed in 1838 by a group of gentlemen in Limerick as firstly ‘a band for the public amusement of citizens and secondly so that that musical education would ‘displace vicious habits’ and rescue children from a ‘low life of dissipation.’

¹⁰⁴ *Limerick Reporter*, 18 March 1845.

¹⁰⁵ Quinn ‘The "Vagabond Friar"’, pp 548-549. On Easter Monday 1842 O’Connell marched alongside Mathew – to the latter’s chagrin – in the annual temperance procession in Cork. After eighteen months, O’Connell excused himself from the pledge, claiming that he had to consume alcohol for medicinal reasons.

apparently not in relation to Limerick – was the practice of playing music on the Sabbath, disrupting services in churches and disturbing the peace.¹⁰⁶ This led to disgruntlement in various parts of the country, causing Mathew in a letter to the *Cork Examiner* in 1842 to acknowledge that the great majority of teetotallers were Roman Catholic, but that was because the majority of the population was Catholic.¹⁰⁷ Mathew, however, was adamant that the bands should not cause offence in relation to the Sabbath and later that year he severely reprimanded the Castlebar Temperance Band for what he saw as the disgraceful shouting and obscenities while a service was being conducted in the local Protestant church.¹⁰⁸ So many complaints regarding the temperance bands playing on Sundays were received that Dublin Castle saw fit to publish the law advisor's opinion on the subject:

It is a criminal offence to disturb a congregation engaged in celebrating divine service. Therefore, though the police should not interfere with the temperance band so long as it does not come so near the church as to disturb the congregation, they should prevent it playing within the quiet of the church. In case any of the performers shall refuse to comply with the desire of the police, they should be held to bail for disturbing Divine worship, and sent to the sessions for trial.¹⁰⁹

As will be discussed in later chapters, the temperance movement gave future bands an insight, though basic, into how to procure instruments, set up committees, have premises for

¹⁰⁶ *Kerry Evening Post*, 2 October 1841; *Limerick Reporter*, 14 May 1842. A letter from Dublin Castle proclaimed that 'persons disturbing Divine Services are punishable, as far as a misdemeanour and that constabulary have power to remove persons so creating annoyance.' *Cork Examiner*, 13 January 1843; *Cork Constitution* 7 April 1843; *Leinster Express*, 26 August 1843. It is clear that all the complaints on bands playing on the Sabbath came from loyal papers such as the *Kerry Evening Post* and the *Cork Constitution*.

¹⁰⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 13 April 1842; *Limerick Reporter*, 15 April 1842. Mathew stated that 'we Roman Catholics after in general devoting the afternoon of Saturday, and the forenoon of Sunday, to religious observances do not deem it a desecration of the Sabbath for such as have been caring for their bread by the sweat of their brows during the week, to recreate themselves innocently during the remainder of the day. We should be allowed to enjoy our Gospel liberty'.

¹⁰⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 7 October 1842. Mathew stated that the 'members of the society are of all political and religious creeds. One of the fundamental rules is to permit everyone to adhere to his own opinions on those momentous points upon which men have ever differed and will continue to differ to the end of time.'

¹⁰⁹ Kearney, 'Temperance bands and their significance', p.43.

practice and employ bandmasters with proper musical experience.¹¹⁰ But we are not entirely sure as to what was in their repertoire. A letter to the *Dublin Monthly Magazine*, as well as encouraging bands to play more musically, suggested that favourite national airs arranged for wind instrument bands should be published in the magazine to provide band masters engaged in the instruction of temperance bands with music to pass on to pupils for whom sheet music would otherwise be out of reach because of its high price.¹¹¹ Similarly, Thomas Davis in the *Nation* launched in 1842, and the subsequent *Spirit of the Nation* publication, urged the reversal of Anglicisation which ‘calumniated intellect, language, music and literature by punishing as treason Irish traditional conversation.’¹¹² In a clear political intrusion into temperance bands’ mind set, Davis portrayed the temperance societies and their bands as political conduits for this new cultural nationalism:

We are now putting in their reach a number of new and noble airs, and others so scarce as to be little known, and so beautiful as to deserve to be known by everyone. Will not the temperance bands learn to play these airs, and the young men, ay, and the young women of the temperance societies, learn to sing our songs and chorus them till village and valley ring.¹¹³

From newspaper reports of the time it can be ascertained that the Limerick bands’ repertoire was something of which Davis would have approved since it included more national (Irish) and religious tunes than classical and European melodies. While newspaper reports described the music played by the bands vaguely as ‘national airs’, the use of national could be considered to have the potential to politicise. March tunes reported as popular within the bands’

¹¹⁰ *Limerick Chronicle*, 30 July 1843, *Limerick Reporter*, 11 March 1842. Examples of arrangements in place for bands in St Mary’s and St John’s parishes are given in financial accounts in local newspapers in the 1840s.

¹¹¹ *Cork Examiner*, 26 September 1842. Reports of Limerick bands either playing at temperance soirées, St Patrick’s Day parades, or general parading were reported to be playing joyful national airs.

¹¹² Richard Davis, *The Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin 1987), p.2. Harry White, *The Keeper’s Recital Music and cultural history in Ireland 1770-1970*, (Cork, 1998), p. 56. Jean-Christopher Penet, ‘Thomas Davis, "The Nation" and the Irish Language’ *Irish Quarterly Review*, vol. 96, no. 384, (Winter 2007), p. 433.

¹¹³ Thomas Davis. *The Spirit of the Nation Ballads and Songs by the writers of the Nation*, (Dublin, 1861). Gerry Smyth, *Music in Irish Cultural History*, (Dublin, 2009), p. 59.

repertoires were ‘Clare’s Dragoons’, ‘Step Together’ and ‘A Nation once again’¹¹⁴ Alternative tunes could be found in local music shops in Limerick for bands wanting to play more sedate music, but these still echoed the popular sense of identity. Corbett’s music shop in Limerick, which advertised musical instruments for temperance bands, also stocked specially composed music pieces approved by Fr Mathew. One March piece was named ‘The Teetotallers March.’¹¹⁵

It was not surprising that hostile newspapers saw the new political involvement of the temperance bands as a dangerous development. The *Dublin Daily Mail*, extremely anti-O’Connell and suspicious of the temperance movement, had proclaimed that membership of the temperance bands indicated political insubordination, pointing out that while the temperance bands played ‘St Patrick’s Day’, they also ‘shouted treason if the *Shan Van Vocht* came breathed on the blast of a temperance trumpet.’¹¹⁶ The *Mail* also disparaged the election of the ‘popish’ new Mayor of Waterford whose election was accompanied by a temperance band, ‘significantly dressed in their gay demi-cavalry uniform’ – an indication that temperance was associated with the threat of militancy. The Tipperary temperance band when visiting Limerick was reported by the Loyalist *Limerick Chronicle* to have reversed the Queen’s crown on their banner. In a letter to the *Limerick Reporter* the band denied that they even had a crown on the banner.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Harry White, *The Keepers Recital, Music and cultural history in Ireland 1770-1970*, (Cork, 1998), p.60. *Limerick Reporter* 19 March 1841. Tipperary bands were reported on St Patrick’s Day as playing the following Irish Airs, ‘Patrick’s Day’, ‘Rory O’Moore’, ‘Garryowen’ and ‘Sprig of [Shillelagh]’.

¹¹⁵ *Limerick Reporter*, 12 June 1840.

¹¹⁶ *Freeman’s Journal* 12 January 1843. It was reasoned ‘Being Irish men, they best understood Irish music and most delighted in it.’

¹¹⁷ *Limerick Chronicle*, 8 February 1843. *Limerick Reporter*, 14 January 1843.

Decline of Temperance Bands

There are many differences among historians as to the exact timing of the decline of the temperance movement and temperance bands. Cities like Dublin and Cork had approximately thirty-one and twenty-seven bands respectively in the early 1840s. However, at some stage over the thirteen year period between 1833 and 1846, most of the bands ceased to function.¹¹⁸

There were many aspects to the demise of the temperance movement in general in the mid-1840s. The Great Famine 1845-48 had a more disastrous effect on the population than alcohol abuse ever had, and Mathew's health was beginning to fade at this time. He also had gone deeply into debt and this impacted seriously on his campaign.¹¹⁹ Townend states that 'it did remain strong in a few areas into the 1850s,' and suggests that another reason for the decline is that despite the enormous popularity of the movement, many of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church considered the temperance movement 'with caution, concern, dismay and even hatred'.¹²⁰ Criticism was also expressed in relation to the movement not constructing a *formal* national framework of temperance associations.¹²¹ It can be argued that Mathew saw teetotalism as a way of social reform since a sober populace had many benefits for both the individual and the nation. It was the haphazard way the movement was organised – 'his financial irresponsibility, his failure to endorse Repeal or the anti-slavery cause, and his pandering to popular superstition,' was indicative of the task of this type of organisation being too much for one man.'¹²²

¹¹⁸ Aiveen Kearney, 'Temperance bands and their significance in nineteenth century Ireland'. Unpublished MA thesis, (University College Cork), 1981, p. 77.

¹¹⁹ Quinn 'Vagabond Friar', p. 544. Quinn also states that the hierarchy ceased supporting him: 'When Mathew was ascendant, episcopal opposition did not affect him very much; however, when Mathew was more vulnerable in the late 1840's, the bishops' hostility hurt him and the temperance movement considerably'.

¹²⁰ Townend, *Father Mathew Temperance and Irish identity*, p. 235.

¹²¹ Malcolm. *Ireland Sober Ireland Free-*, p. 147.

¹²² Malcolm. *Ireland Sober Ireland Free*, p. 149.

When O'Connell's Repeal movement failed, the temperance movement became divided on its attitude to repeal which, Kearney states, was 'no longer a national issue, it lost the support of the clergy and with that a large section of the population.'¹²³ Not all areas had a badly run temperance movement, and in fact the structures of temperance societies in Limerick suggest well organised societies, publishing annual accounts and elaborate rule structures in local newspapers.¹²⁴ In the latter part of the 1840s reports of pledge breaking were becoming commonplace, and temperance meetings were no longer attracting huge crowds. Soon Mathew's health began to fail, forcing him to restrict his activities.¹²⁵ It would appear there was a determined sense of purpose in Irish political life in the 1840s that was keeping the bands together and once this was lost they became disenchanted. Along with the effects of the famine, which disrupted both Mathew's campaign and Daniel O'Connell's political movement, the wave of death and emigration, meant a readjustment of band structures in Ireland. There was no national framework that could support bands to keep membership and standards afloat at this time. The temperance societies were all local based and funded locally with no national organisational support. Having one leader for such a broad membership put a lot of pressure on Mathew. The famine, especially in the rural parts of Ireland, gave people more to worry about than temperance and their local band. It is clear that the famine disrupted the temperance society's objectives to get their members to completely give up alcohol completely. In urban areas it was bands based in a parish or areas with had a strong populace tended to survive during and after the famine.

It was apparent that the initial undertaking of temperance societies was to develop intellect, teach new skills, and build character and to generally promote individual self-

¹²³ Kearney, 'Temperance bands and their significance', p. 69.

¹²⁴ *Limerick Reporter* 11 March 1842. It was not uncommon for temperance societies to publish expenditure accounts mainly in the early 1840s and also acknowledge charitable donations.

¹²⁵ Quinn, 'Vagabond Friar', p. 544.

improvement. The movement became an agency of sociability and part-time provider of entertainment and recreation as well as a promoter of spiritual development. Outside political forces such as Repeal distracted the populace from devoting all their energy to the society and Mathew could not control this. The civilian bands were utilised by political as well as reform movements, to provide an added attraction at their respective rallies.

It must be noted that by 1850 Limerick still had four temperance societies, with associated bands, and with sizeable memberships – though not as high as in the previous decade. At a soirée held by the St John’s Society Rooms on Charlotte Quay, the walls were hung with a mixture of political and non-political portraits – Fr Mathew and O’Connell and exiled patriots Mitchel, Meagher and O’Brien. Strongly nationalist sentiments were expressed by some of those participating, one member agreeing to toast the Royal family but not the government. A Mr O’Carroll stated to loud cheers that ‘the people of this country were not loyal to this Government, and thought it best honestly for men to express their real feelings.’¹²⁶ While there was no mention of bands at this soirée, in Limerick it is clear that bands did survive in various parishes in the city and still had some political involvement. St Mary’s Temperance Band played out at the inauguration of Laurence Quinlivan as Mayor of the city in December 1849 while the bands of St John’s and St Mary’s were still marching under the temperance banner in the 1850s, which meant that some organisational features were still intact.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ The precise identity of this individual could not be found. *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, 8 October 1851. This St John’s Society rooms based in Charlotte Quay was described as brilliantly lit by gas with portraits hung of Fr Mathew and O’Connell and exiled patriots Mitchel, Meagher and O’Brien. Malcolm, *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free*, p.152. Gov.UK, Past Prime Ministers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers>, accessed 12 September 2016. Lord John Russell was Prime minister at this period and the Whig party were in government.

¹²⁷ Mathew Potter, *First Citizens of the Treaty City: the Mayors and Mayoralty of Limerick 1197-2007*, (Limerick, 2007), pp 112-113. *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, 10 February 1849, 2 January 1850. St John’s Temperance Brass and Reed band was also reported active during this period. *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, 8 October 1850, The Askeaton Temperance society was reported as having a membership of 250 working class men and women present at a meeting in the premises of the steam Mills of J. N. Russell.

Conclusion

It is clear that Mathew's temperance movement was a facilitator in the organisation of local civilian bands in Limerick. Temperance was not the only social change shaping the thoughts and ideas of the local population. Nationalism and nationhood, whichever form they take, use many cultural labels. Religion, language, dress, customs and music show others who comprises the in-group and help to express national, religious and local identity and bands have a clear role in this cultural expression. However, while Mathew's intention was that the bands should offer a recreational outlet other than the public house, a more rational and organised structure was needed if lasting success was to be achieved. Finances and places to practice and socialise were needed for a band to survive. Competitions and proper tuition might have helped in getting members to appreciate the band as more than a recruiting device for temperance and Repeal. Yet, for all their weaknesses, civilian marching bands were, through the temperance movement, given a template which helped those that survived the turbulent mid-1800s and those that were to be formed in later decades of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 2: Local and National Identity

This chapter discusses how marching bands in Limerick became closely involved in nationalist politics and – even more importantly – in the local sense of identity in the city from the 1840s until the late 1920s. It traces the parish divisions within Limerick and the way that each area or parish developed its own band and examines the social background of band membership. Limerick consisted of a number of communities, some clearly marked as parishes and others defined as districts (with unofficial but popularly understood boundaries) such as Boherbuoy and Thomondgate. As in other Irish urban centres, Limerick had its distinct localities to which people could trace their roots and within which they could feel part of an indigenous community. According to the 1901 census 79.82 per cent of the population had been born in the city, only ten per cent born in other counties, and approximately another four per cent born in Great Britain most of whom were, more than likely, attached to the British army forces based in the city's barracks.¹ The involvement of the bands in religious celebrations is also discussed, as is the way that the presence of the military in the city shaped popular musical tastes and inspired the formation of civilian bands, and discusses how the growth in popular nationalism from the 1850s onwards may have influenced these bands. The decade of the Parnellite split (1890-1900) is given special attention because it proved very divisive for the Limerick city bands, and the chapter concludes by tracing changing political attitudes among the bands from the emergence of more militant nationalism in the early twentieth century until a decade after the setting up of the new state.

¹ *Census of Ireland, 1901. Part I. Area, houses, and population: also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people*, vol. II. Province of Munster. no. 1. County of Limerick, HC. 1902, vol 124, CXXIV, CXXV, Cd. 1058, p.82.

Limerick city had a history of conflict in the nineteenth century. Some disturbances were the result of trade societies' protests against those who hired non-union workers, though these disturbances could spill out into the local community; others were food riots or politically motivated, while others were simply played out between different localities within the city.² This was not unique to Limerick: rioting and conflict amongst youths in Manchester was a contentious topic in the 1890s, especially for those in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations, for whom gang membership offered an alternative form of masculine identity.³ Cork, too had its inter-locality riots, between groups from the north and south sides of the river, but also between rival neighbouring lanes.⁴ So Limerick fitted into a broader cultural pattern. St Mary's Parish, which is one of the clearest examples of such a community, is based on an island surrounded by the two branches of the Abbey River and can only be reached by four bridges. Two of the bridges, namely Mathew Bridge and Baal's Bridge, separated the city from this island parish, and these were the contentious points of crossing between opposing territories.⁵

² John McGrath, 'Riots in Limerick, 1820-1900' in William Sheehan and Maura Cronin, (eds), *Riotous Assemblies* (Cork, 2011), p.153. McGrath indicates that riots over food and political disagreements, though very violent affairs involving hundreds, led to a much lower death toll (just six in total) than might be expected.

³ Andrew Davies 'Youth Gangs, Masculinity and Violence in Late Victorian Manchester and Salford' *Journal of Social History*, vol. 32, no. 2, (Oxford, 1998), p.352. Significantly, although conflicts do not appear to have been structured by sectarian allegiances, many prominent 'scuttlers' had Irish Catholic backgrounds. Again, however, this is unsurprising. Irish Catholics faced widespread discrimination in local labour markets and were over-represented in the ranks of unskilled manual workers

⁴ Fintan Lane, 'The band nuisance', *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, no. 2, 1999, p. 29.

⁵ *Limerick Chronicle* 12 September 1895. Visitors from the Amnesty Association to the Number 9 band room in Nicholas Street, to make arrangements for a band attendance, were attacked by stone throwers at Mary Street corner when making their return journey via Mathew Bridge.

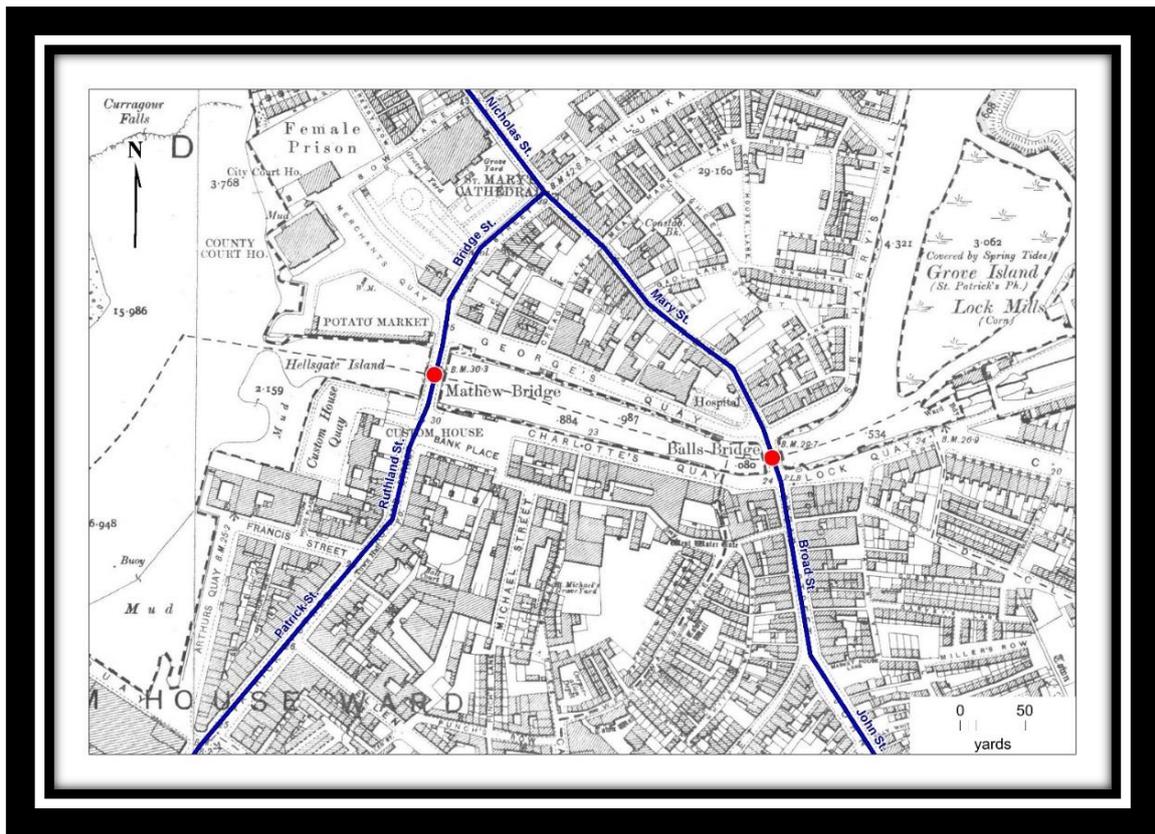


Figure 3: Boundaries between St Mary's Parish and Limerick city centre (also main marching routes.)

As this map shows, some contentious districts discussed in the Limerick city context are the two bridges (marked with red dots), that separate the St Mary's parish / King's Island areas and marked the access points to this Island parish from the city centre.

Local identity within an area or parish was strengthened as more voluntary and independently organised bands were formed from the 1850s on. Bands were formed in these local areas which often led to tumultuous relations between the musical organisations and between the localities themselves. As discussed in Chapter One, each parish in the city had a band during the temperance movement's existence in the 1840s. Many folded during the famine period with just St John's and St Mary's society's having bands. From the 1850s onwards a number of locality based civilian bands existed in the city.⁶ The Boherbuoy Brass

⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 9 December 1867. *The Irishman*, 3 April 1875. Newspaper perusal reveals the Boherbuoy Band, St Mary's (Englishtown) Band Thomondgate Band, Mechanics' Institute Band and St John's Band in existence in the 1860s-1870s periods.

and Reed band, also known as the Limerick No. 1 Band, was formed in the Parnell Street area in 1850.⁷ An article on the papal brigade by John Sheehan, one of the principal organisers of band contests in Limerick in the first few decades of the twentieth century, affirmed that in 1860 there was a fife and drum band in St Mary's parish and a Brass Band in St John's parish.⁸ Philanthropic and nationalist societies such as the Ancient Order of Foresters and organisations of skilled workers like the Congregated Trades (also referred to as the Mechanic Institute) formed their own bands in the 1870s to represent their societies.⁹ By the 1880s St John's parish had two fife and drum bands – the St John's and Sarsfield Bands – as well as the St John's Brass and Reed band (also known as the Victuallers' Band as it was initially formed by that society in the area around the city's bacon factories). St Mary's Band which appeared under different appellations since its temperance band days was reported from the 1860s variously as the Mary Street Fife and Drum Band, and the Englishtown band until 1885 when it was formed again under the name St Mary's Fife and Drum band.¹⁰ Along with other bands in the city, the band took the title of 'prize band' when it won a national title from the 1890s onwards. As discussed elsewhere in this study, another fife and drum band named the Number 9 Fife and Drum Band was formed in the Nicholas Street area of St Mary's parish which adjoined Mary Street areas where St Mary's band was based. The name Number 9 came about to signify the bands allegiance to the nine members of the Irish Home Rule party who sided with Parnell during what was initially termed the Parnellite split.¹¹ St Mary's boy scouts later had a pipe band which won a National pipers title in the 1930s and in 1976 a pipe band was formed in

⁷ Boherbuoy Band. <http://www.boherbuoyband.com/#!history>. Accessed 12 April 2016. 'The Boherbuoy Band was formed in 1850, in a stable in Hifle's Row, between 15 and 16 Parnell Street, right in the middle of the 1848 movement. Even though the band a number of ex-British Army Band musicians, it played a part in this and in many of the other Nationalistic movements.'

⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 26 May 1926. In a parade seeing off the troops to the train station, 'By the left, quick march', and off they went, led by St. Mary's Flute Band and St. John's Workingmen's Brass Band playing 'Garryowen'.

⁹ John McGrath, 'Music and Politics: Marching Bands in Late Nineteenth-Century Limerick', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, vol. 46, (Limerick, 2006), p. 98.

¹⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 9 December 1867. *The Irishman*, 3 April 1875.

¹¹ Joe Malone, 'Crosby Row' *Old Limerick Journal*, Jim Kemmy (Ed), vol 10 (Spring, 1982), p.37

Assumpta Park area of the parish, but it disbanded in the 1990s.¹² Other fife and drum bands were formed in the early 1880s such as the Carey's Road Fife and Drum Band in the Boherbuoy area of the city, the St Dominic's Fife and Drum Band in the Glentworth Street area and the Nelson Street Fife and Drum Band near the city railway station, now Parnell Street.¹³ The following map (Figure 4) indicates the fife and drum bands in Limerick and where they were based from the 1880s to the 1940s.

As the twentieth century progressed, youth fife and drum bands were formed in St Munchin's parish in the 1930s and 40s, and in the late 1970s a band named the Queen of Peace Fife and Drum band was established in the Janesboro' area of the city, not too far from where the Carey's Road Fife and Drum band had been formed one hundred years earlier. This band had a novel way to raise fund for instruments by having four hundred founding members who each gave £5.00 each which enabled the band to purchase instruments within a few weeks.¹⁴

¹² Rev Thomas Grealy, (Editor), *St Mary's Church Golden Jubilee 1932-1982*, (Limerick, 1932), p.61. Founded by local man Charlie Curran. This band was initially a girls pipe band with boys later joining. The band won a Munster title in 1976.

¹³ *Limerick Reporter*, 2 November 1887, *Limerick Leader* 23 September 1909, *Limerick Chronicle*, 26 June 1894.

¹⁴ Contest Programme, Republic of Ireland Senior Fife and Drum Championship 30 October 1988 (Waterford, 1988)

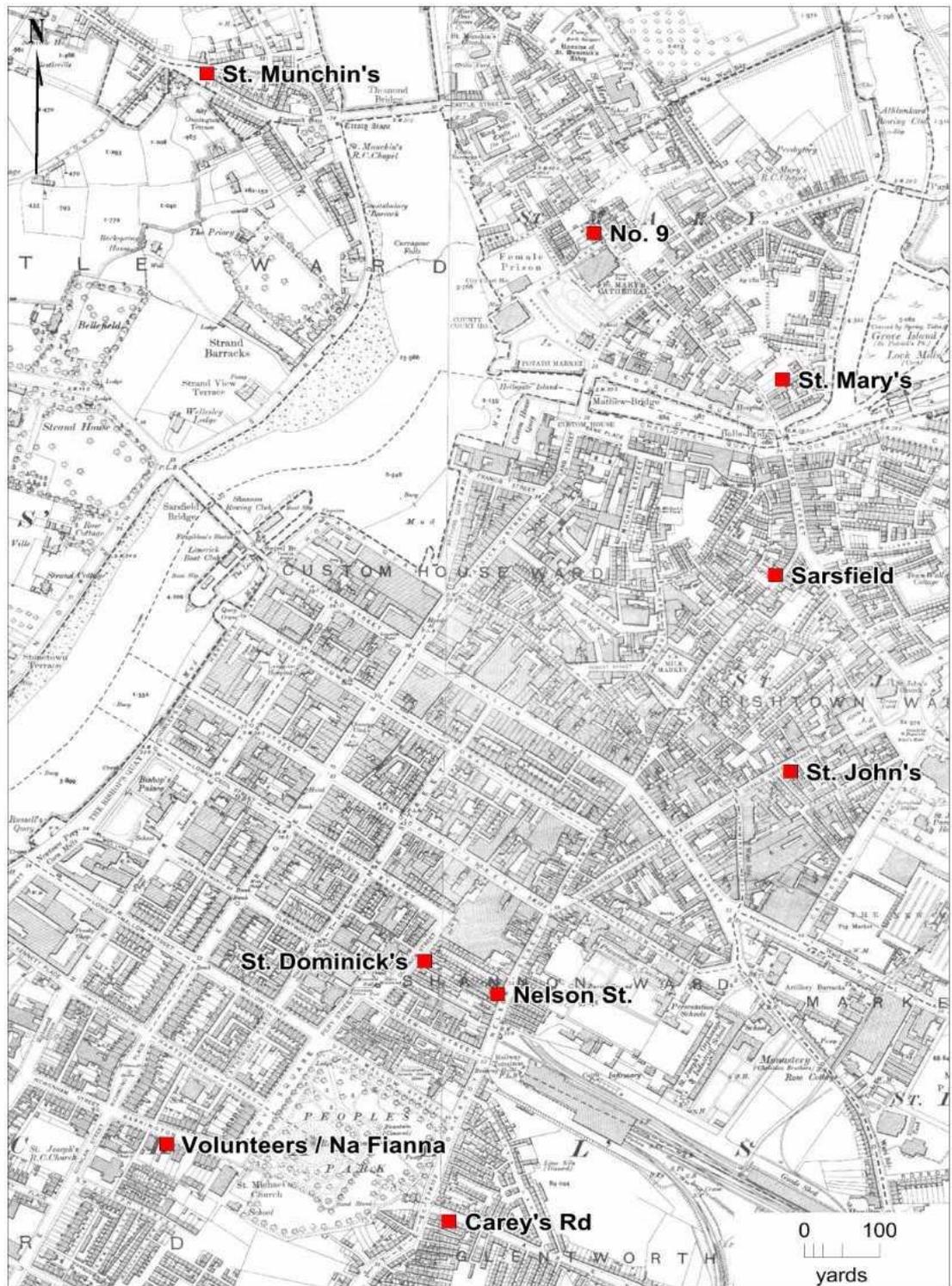
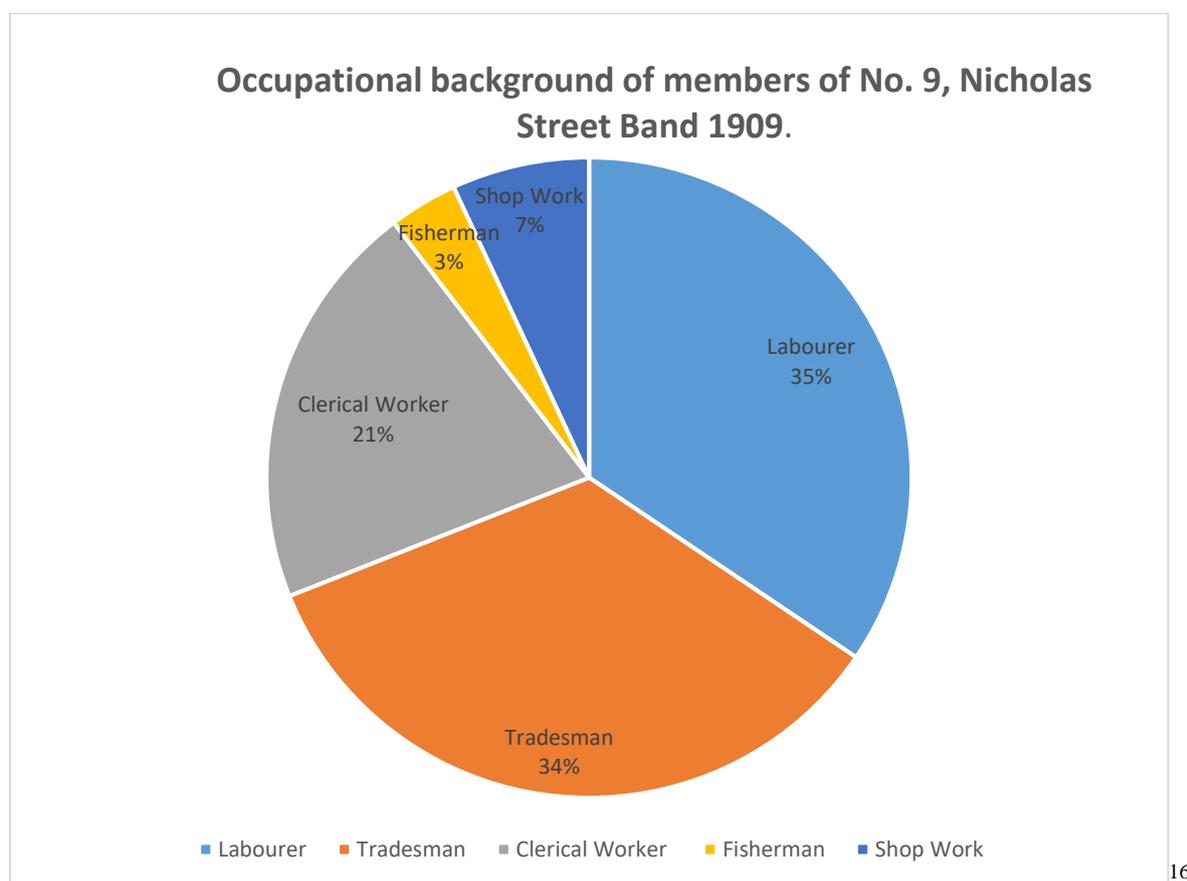


Figure 4: Fife and Drum Bands in Limerick City from 1880 to 1940

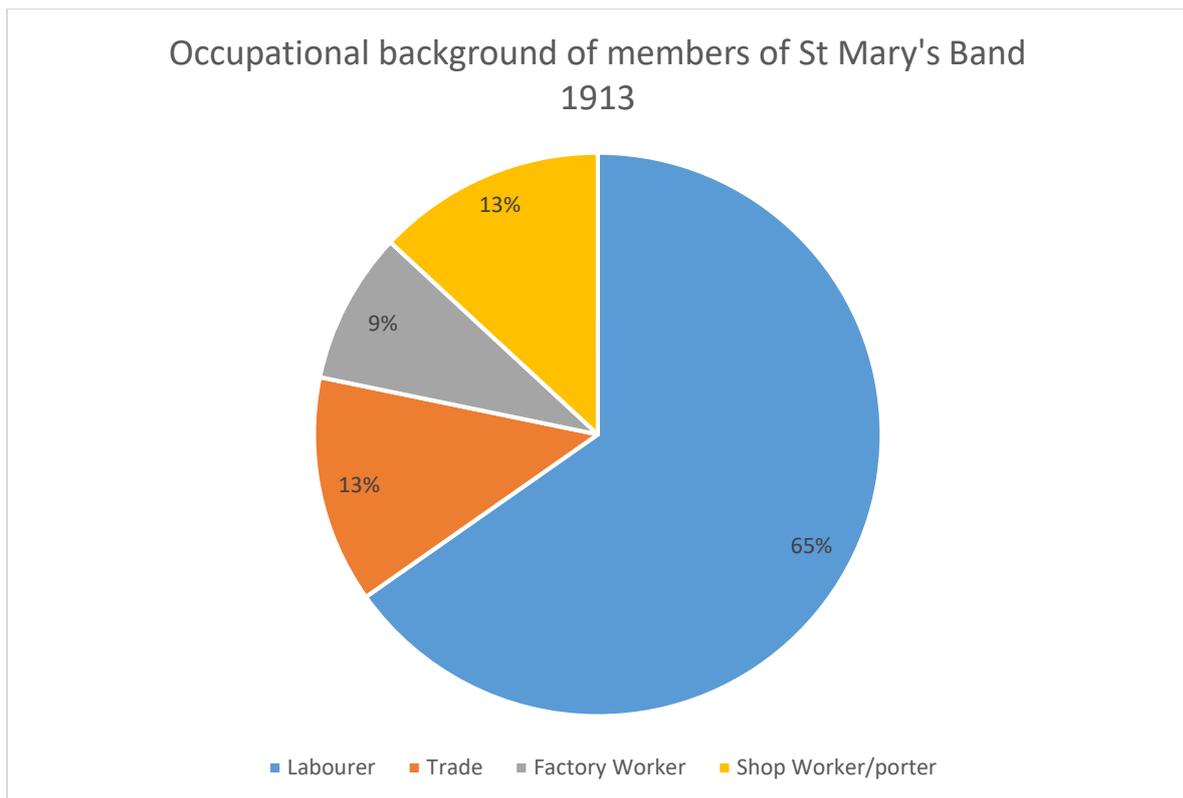
Location and social class:

Therefore, the Limerick bands were dotted throughout the city by the early twentieth century, in both working class and slightly more prosperous areas. Guiry's study of housing in the various parishes in Limerick gives an insight into the valuation of where the bands were located. St Dominick's Band, located near the railway station, was based in an area of relatively high valuation rates while St Mary's, the Nicholas Street No. 9 and Sarsfield Bands were based in the older parts of the city with low valuation lanes and tenements.¹⁵ But the membership, irrespective of the location, was predominantly working class.



¹⁵ Ruth Guiry, p.126

¹⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 11 October 1909. General Meeting of the Number 9 Band 1909, name of members' present were used as guide for employment graph. Census of Ireland 1901, 1911.<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/1901/1911>, accessed 12 December 2016.



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It is clear that St Mary's band in the 1890s was male, with the occupations of members listed mainly as general labourers, but from the early 1920s a large number of fishermen who fished the Abbey River (separating the Parish from the city centre) joined, so the band became identified in the public mind with the Abbey Fishermen.¹⁸ This influx of fishermen was due to 'Todsie' McNamara, an Abbey Fisherman and a trustee of the Ancient Guild of Abbey Fishermen, joining the band.¹⁹ A perusal of the 1901/1911 census shows that Fishermen were also prominent in the Sarsfield Band, but these were Town Wall rather than Abbey Fishermen. Town Wall name comes from houses that were built up against the Old City Walls in the St

¹⁷ St Mary's Prize Band celebrating 125 Years 1885-2010 (Limerick, 2010), p.23. A 1913 Photograph of St Mary's Band <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/1901/1911>, accessed 21 January 2016.

¹⁸ Names of St Mary's band membership listed on Census of Ireland 1901, 1911.

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/> accessed 20 February 2015. The bands occupational composition would change in the beginning of the 1920s when Patrick (Todsie) McNamara no relation to P J McNamara became President. This will be discussed in a later chapter.

¹⁹ Jackie Clancy. *My Life on the river, An Abbey Fisherman's Stories*, (Ireland, 2010), p. 2. Clancy, an Abbey Fisherman wrote his memoirs and a history of the Abbey Fishermen's guild in 1939. Due to the building of the Shannon Scheme the livelihoods of the fishermen were totally disrupted and the end came when fishing on these parts of the Shannon was made illegal in 1937. Patrick 'Todsie' McNamara. who had previously played a prominent role in the purchase of river sections of the Shannon from Corbally Mill Dam up to Doonass in County Clare in the early 1900, features prominently in this recollection.

John's Parish area where these fishermen predominantly lived in the early twentieth century. Patrick Elligott, who was secretary of the band in the early 1900s, came from a town wall fishing family.²⁰ These fishermen fished the lower Shannon rather than the Abbey fishermen who worked upriver.²¹ But just as in the St Mary's Band, the occupational profile of the Sarsfield Band was mixed: its officers included, as well as the fishermen, labourers, dock labourers, pork butchers and carters or draymen.²²

The bands were all clearly identified with a particular area within the city, usually being given the name of the street or parish in which they operated. St Munchin's Fife and Drum Band in the Thomondgate area of the city was active in the late 1930s: Thomas Naughton, present member of St Mary's Band, grew up in the Thomondgate area and remembers the old St Munchin's Band Hall in New Road Thomondgate.²³ This location can be confirmed from sympathy notices posted in the newspapers by the band for deceased bandsmen or their family members, and which show members living in the Clancy Strand and New Road areas of St Munchin's Parish.²⁴ This consciousness of local links and the unwillingness to be identified with any other locality was evident in other bands, too. When Michael Raleigh in 1938 departed from the Thomondgate Band and formed the St Michael's Band in Francis Street, he emphasised in a letter to the *Limerick Leader* that one band had nothing to do with the other.²⁵

²⁰ Census of Ireland 1901, 1911. www.census.nationalarchives.ie, 1901/1911 accessed 20 October 2016. The Elligotts' address in 1901 was 11 Town Wall in the John's Gate (Irish Town) area of Limerick.

²¹ Jackie Clancy. *My Life on the river, An Abbey Fisherman's Stories*, (Ireland, 2010), pp 75-76. Clancy states that the town wall fishermen would have worked for the Lax Weir Company who paid the fishermen on a seasonal basis. Like the Abbey fishermen their way of life ended after the 1935 fisheries act which put an end to the Lax Weir Company.

²² www.census.nationalarchives.ie, 1901/11 accessed 20 October 2016.

²³ Thomas Naughton to the author.

²⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 30 April 1938, 11 June 1938, 3 August 1938, 19 September 1938, 2 January 1939, 5 April 1939, 6 May 1939, 26 August 1939. Death records of Thomas Tobin, John Stackpoole, Edward O'Farrell, Bonaventure Dynan and Hannah Costello, all connected to St Munchin's Band. <https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/civil-search.jsp>, Limerick civil Records 1938/39, accessed 23 March 1939.

²⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 28 May 1938.

St Mary's Band was based in various premises in St Mary's Parish in the first few decades of its formation. According to band tradition, St Mary's Band was formed in 1885 in a building referred to in band folklore as the 'Yellow Driller' situated at 1 Old Church Street in the King's Island area of the city.²⁶ McGrath suggested that the band was founded by ex-members of a former Englishtown fife and drum band based in St Mary's Parish, with mainly young boys joining the band at this stage.²⁷ This is more than likely the case: a report of the band's involvement in a band contest in 1887 described it as 'a young band still learning their trade.'²⁸ The band then moved to various premises in Barrington's Mall (George's Quay), and Fish Gate Lane – but always staying within the boundaries of the parish.²⁹ The band may have moved from one premises to another in the same street. By the early 1920s, the band was situated in a small band room at 3, Fish Lane with few facilities. This room had previously been occupied by a Patrick Troy who, according to the records for 1922, was a member of St Mary's Band.³⁰ When Patrick 'Todsie' McNamara became president of the band in this period, he had the foresight to encourage the committee to purchase a plot of ground in Mary Street to build a new hall – still operating in the early twenty-first century and, as the plaque in the band dance hall shows a major source of pride to the locality.³¹

²⁶ St Mary's Prize Band, centenary booklet, (Limerick, 1985), p.7.

²⁷ John McGrath p.18, McGrath bases this assertion with a perusal of the 1901 census and the names mentioned in the band centenary book in 1985 of members who formed the band in 1885.

²⁸ *Munster News*, 28 September 1887, 21 August 1889, the band seems to have being in a stronger position towards the end of the 1880s taking part in many nationalist demonstrations such as the Sarsfield.

Demonstration, commemorating of the two-hundred-year anniversary of the Williamite siege of Limerick.

²⁹ *St Mary's prize band celebrating 100 years 1885-2010* (Limerick, 2010), p.7. Census of Ireland 1901, 1911.

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/1911>, accessed 23 September 2014. The band room was in No. 3 Fish Lane and this was formally the home of band member Patrick Troy who had moved to No. 2 Fish Lane.

³⁰ Census of Ireland 1901, 1911, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/1911>, accessed 23 September 2014. This house was previously occupied by a Patrick Troy who was a member of St Mary's from records of the band from 1922.

³¹ *St Mary's prize band celebrating 100 years 1885-2010* (Limerick, 2010), p. 28. St Mary's Band Account Book 1924-1927; St Mary's Band *Minute Book* Annual General Meeting 1 January 1922. According to Michael Bourke, President of St Mary's Band in 1985, another room called the 'Lyric' in Mary Street was used by the band even when the hall was built. The account book gives no address for this building except the band was paying rent to a C. Hayes for this room for a few years after the building of their new hall. It was first proposed by Patrick Sarsfield and seconded by Martin Davis that 'we build a new band room'. The initial site proposed for the new hall was a site owned by a Mr Molloy but it could not be sold due to a Molloy family dispute. Then it was proposed to purchase Hasset's ground in Mary Street. This was successful with Mr Hasset willing to sell the site and not the stores.



Figure 5, marble plaque erected in 1924 in new dance hall. As well as the indigenous committee those who helped raise funds in New York are inscribed.³²

This sense of local solidarity through band activity is also obvious in the remembrance of deceased members, with notices appearing in newspapers offering condolences to members who have lost family members and also playing at Masses for deceased members in the month of November of each year.³³

SARFIELD PRIZE BAND

At a meeting of Sarsfield Prize Band the following resolution was passed:—
 "That we, the members of the above Band, tender our deepest sympathy to Mr. Jeremiah Doyle and family on the death of his wife." All members stood as a mark of respect.

Figure 6. Sympathy notice from Sarsfield Band 1936.³⁴

³² When a dispute as to the ownership of the hall broke out in the later 1930s between the band and 'Todsie' McNamara, this plaque proved that the hall was built by the members of the band and was therefore owned by the band and the trustees and committee *in situ*.

³³ *Limerick Leader*, 8 January 1894.

³⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 29 February 1936.

The relationships developed with other band members can be important and lifelong. Funerals offered recognition to a band member's achievements both musically and in society, and this was often reported in local newspapers. In 1895 a member of the Sarsfield Band John Downes was given a prominent feature in the *Limerick Leader* quoted as a city nationalist. Though a labouring man, who passed away at just 36 years of age, his funeral was described as 'a form of procession, preceded by the Sarsfield Fife and Drum Band, with muffled drums, playing solemn and appropriate airs. The coffin was carried shoulder high *en route* to the graveyard by fellow nationalists of the deceased.'³⁵ An unorthodox way of use for a funeral procession – this time in a labour dispute context – took place in 1916 the Limerick Corporation Employees' Fife and Drum Band played a 'Dead March' outside the residence of several members of Limerick Corporation in a dispute over not getting an increase in wages.³⁶ Even though emigrating in the 1920s to New York Patrick Quigley formally of St Mary's Band, when he died in 1986, his remains were brought back to Limerick to be buried in Old Mount St Lawrence Cemetery. It was significant that, sixty years after he had left the city, the band membership gave his cortege a guard of honour in full uniform.³⁷

³⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 23 August 1895.

https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1895. Accessed 11 October 1895. It must be noted that the *Limerick Leader* was a nationalist pro-Parnell newspaper as was the Sarsfield band pro-Parnell. *Limerick Leader*, 29 November 1893. This paper was always promoting the national credential of members of the bands aligned to the Parnellite cause when mentioning Thomas O'Brien conductor of the Boherbuoy Band as a 'sturdy nationalist.'

³⁶ *Fermanagh Herald*, 18 March 1916. *Donegal News* 18 March 1916.

³⁷ St Mary's Band Minute Book 28 August 1986. The Chairman Michael Bourke stated to the committee in proposing a vote of sympathy to the wife and family of Patrick (Madley) Quigley who died in the USA, his remains were brought home to Limerick for burial. Bourke stated 'when he himself joined the band Paddy Quigley was then treasurer of the band, the year 1925, he was also the last of the members of the hall whose names were inserted on a [marble] plaque in the hall in 1924' which marked the occasion of building the new dance hall.

Band and Religious occasions.

Another essential part of public display by bands was their participation in religious events. The Arch-Confraternity of the Holy Family had a large male membership in Limerick with many bandsmen being members of the confraternity. From the 1860s despite the largess of the Redemptorist church two meetings a week were needed to cater for the men who joined the confraternity. Godson estimates that the Limerick confraternity had an 'all-male membership of about six thousand in 1920, rising to about eight thousand in 1939.'³⁸ The bands contributed to the public impact of the confraternity through their role in marshalling the men to the Redemptorist church on the occasion of religious celebrations. Processions and marching bands gave a clear indication that Limerick both inside and outside the church manifested a Catholic ethos which was clear to locals and visitors alike. From newspaper reports and the existing accounts of St Mary's band, Limerick bands association with their local church became more prominent after the formation of the Irish Free State.³⁹ Parish feast days, Corpus Christi processions and the erection of Marion Shrines local Limerick bands were visible in their participation.⁴⁰ The *Limerick Leader* had many reports of the processions led by bands. There is an example of this in 1926 when the Boy's Division of the confraternity was headed by the Christian Brothers' Industrial School Brass Band while St Michael's (Tuesday's Division) was attended by the Boherbuoy Prize Brass and Reed Band and halfway through by the Sarsfield Prize Fife and Drum Band. St John's (Monday Division) was headed by St John's Workingmen's Brass Band and halfway through were accompanied by St Mary's Fife and Drum Band.⁴¹ Processions and marching bands gave a clear indication that Limerick both

³⁸ Lisa Godson, 'Display, sacramentalism and devotion: the medals of the archconfraternity of the Holy Family, 1922-39', in Colm Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), p. 6.

³⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 22 May 1926. St Mary's band minute books 1922-1950, *St Mary's Prize Band 125 Anniversary Book 1885-2010*, (Limerick, 2010), p. 99.

⁴⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 22 August 1936, 17 June 1939, Sean Curtin, *The Marian Year 1954-2004*, (Limerick, 2004), pp 1-104.

⁴¹ *Limerick Leader*, 22 May 1926.

inside and outside the church manifested a Catholic ethos which was clear to locals and visitors alike. Godson's estimate of a membership of between six and eight thousand in the 1920s, compared to the census figures of 19,045 men in the city, suggests that one third of all adult males were members of the confraternity.⁴²

National identity

Parallel to the development of Limerick's parish and locality-based bands was the development of popular politicisation within the city – the new popular politics, reflecting those throughout the island generally, being shaped by religion and by conflicting attitudes to the crown and the Act of Union of 1800.⁴³ Popular political attitudes did not change overnight as was evident in local reactions to the crown over the course of the century. At the height of O'Connell's campaigns in 1841, Queen Victoria's birthday was reported in Limerick as a celebration 'with the usual loyal demonstrations of joyous attachment, with the bells of the Cathedral merrily pealing and large banners floated from the windows of the temperance societies.'⁴⁴ Murphy asserts that the monarchy, though not having any real political power, was 'popular in Ireland and because it was seen to symbolize a future for Ireland as a contented part of the United Kingdom that was anathema to nationalists.'⁴⁵ This attachment to the Queen changed over subsequent decades with black flags being draped on Daniel O'Connell's statue in the city's Crescent by the time of her Jubilee in 1897 with memories of the Famine and her perceived

⁴² Lisa Godson, 'Display, sacramentalism and devotion: the medals of the archconfraternity of the Holy Family, 1922-39', in Colm Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012), pp 6-7. This included a boy's section of approximately two thousand members.

⁴³ Alan Phylan, 'The Brunswick Clubs: rise, contradictions and abyss', in *Old Limerick Journal*, Winter edition 2004, pp 25-34; C. D. A. Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant Kingdom: A Study of the Irish Ancient Regime*, (Dublin 1994), p. 16; Jacqueline, Hill. 'Irish Identities Before and After the Act of Union' *Radharc*, vol. 2 (Nov 2001), p. 66.

⁴⁴ *Limerick Chronicle* 22 April 1841. The Twentieth Regiment Band played in full review at the Military Road. There were no reports of civilian bands playing in celebration. *Kerry Evening Post*, 22 May 1841.

⁴⁵ James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty Nationalism and Monarchy in Ireland during the reign of Queen Victoria*, (Cork, 2001), p. 12.

role as the 'Famine Queen' being unearthed. Anti-monarchy sentiments were expressed by nationalist politicians such as John Redmond, William O'Brien and John Dillon at a meeting of the Irish party in Dublin in 1902 with strong reference to the famine and the taxes and wealth taken from Ireland by British governments.⁴⁶ On the other hand, Edward VII's accession to the throne on the death of Victoria was greeted with local celebrations.⁴⁷ But local opinion was divided: black flags bearing inscriptions 'Remember 98, 48, 67' were draped over telegraph wires and a store holding fireworks for celebrating the coronation was broken into and damaged, and there was a heated debate at the Limerick Council election for the Mayoralty when Councillor Bradshaw made a proposal 'that councillors [are] pledged not to attend the coronation or other Royal functions or accept titles during their year of office.' This was not unique to Limerick: McMahon states that 'nationalists of the generation born in the 1870s played prominent parts in the Irish independence movement immediately before and after 1916... [as a] reaction to what they considered to be the insidious Anglicisation of Ireland.'⁴⁸ Sligo council also proposed in 1902 that before any Mayor was elected he should pledge 'that during his year of office he would not accept any favour of any representative from the English Government in Ireland or take part in any ceremony connected with the Kings coronation.'⁴⁹

As was the case with the temperance bands in the 1840s, musical bands continued to be essential participants in the different political parades and rallies that took place in Limerick city over the course of the nineteenth century. What they played, and the public reaction to it, showed what the political sympathies of the time were. Along with other organisations such as sporting clubs and politics, bands 'provided spectacle; represented localities, values and

⁴⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 23 June 1897; *Cork Examiner* 11 August 1902.

⁴⁷ Ludlow Exhibition 'photograph exhibition of John Riddell's work' City Hall Limerick, on display 26 February 2015. Pictorial evidence depicts this explicitly with banners pronouncing 'God save the King' in O'Connell Street and large crowds observing parades of Army bands and troops.

⁴⁸ Deidre McMahon, 'Ireland and the Empire-Commonwealth, 1900-1948' in Judith M. Brown, WM, Roger Lewis, (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, *The Twentieth Century*, (Oxford, 2001), p. 138;

⁴⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 20 January 1902; *Freeman's Journal*, 24 January 1902.

political movements; they were vital means of voluntary association, provided recreational opportunities; led public and private celebrations [and demonstrations], and they enjoyed a not considerable educational role.⁵⁰ The part played by military bands in reflecting political attitudes was obvious in Limerick, a garrison city which had five military establishments located at the New Barracks [now Sarsfield Barracks], King John's Castle, St John's barracks, Strand Barracks and the Ordnance Barracks.⁵¹ The location of the military barracks and their main marching routes in the city is displayed in the map (figure 8).

⁵⁰ Hayes, 'A virtuous alliance', p. 515.

⁵¹ *Limerick Chronicle*, 6 September 1994.

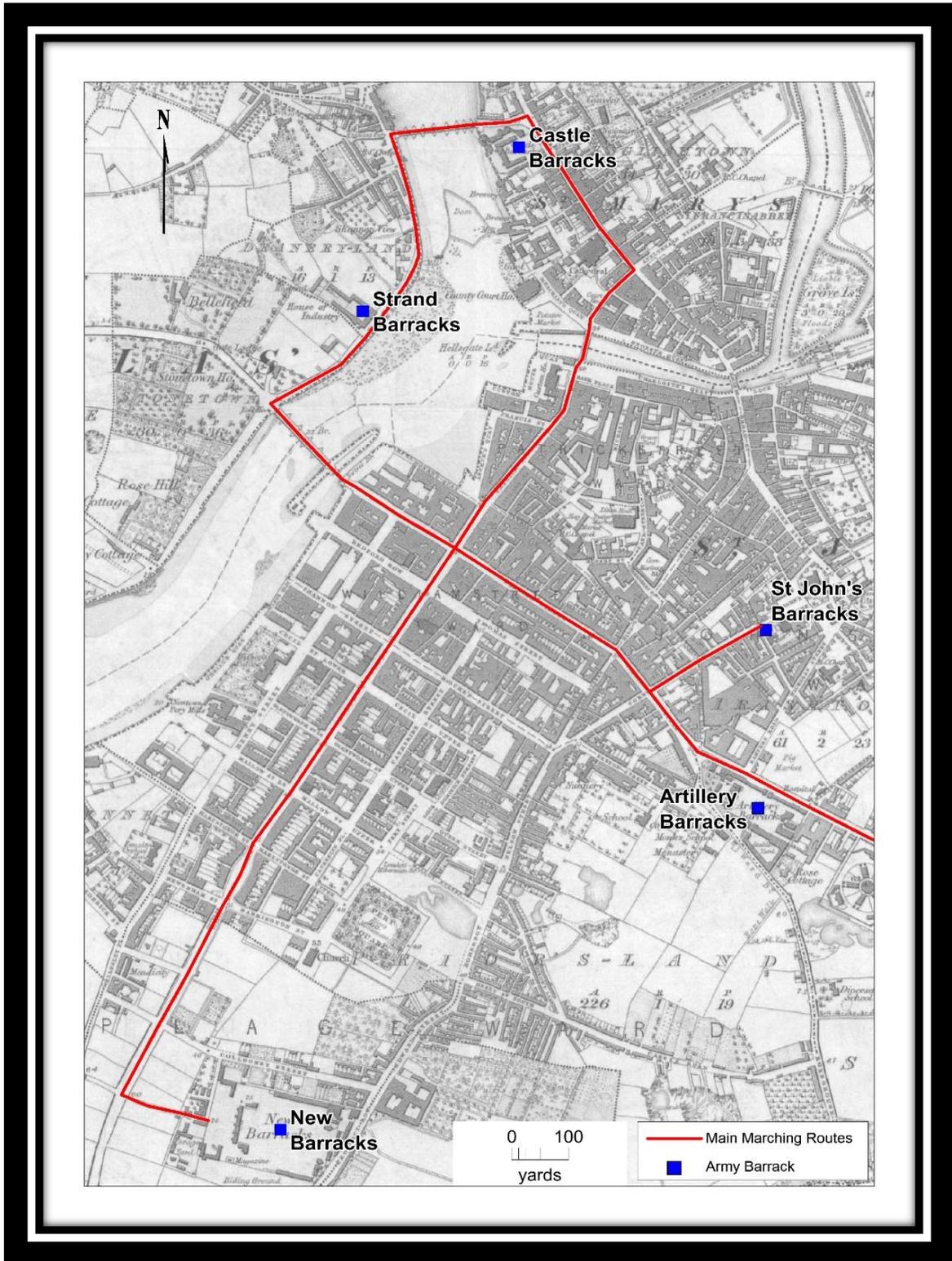


Figure 7: Location of military barracks in Limerick with main city marching routes 1840s.

With military regiments came regimental bands. ‘Elite Limerick depended for its musical edification on a local professional musician cohort, local militia bands, and on the many bands that accompanied regular army regiments posted in the city.’⁵² But enjoyment of the military bands was not confined to the elite: these bands were also a source of entertainment and pride for all classes of society just as were the bands of temperance societies, trade union bands, political or parish bands.⁵³ Public exposure to marching tunes through the street-parading of regimental military bands was frequent: large crowds followed the bands of the 66th Foot and the First Royals from the Royal Barracks to the Castle. Much to the delight of the citizens the bands played various national airs – showing that there was no contradiction between enjoyment of a military band and a sense of Irish identity.⁵⁴

The public demand for military band music continued through the century: in 1893 a band promenade was erected in Lansdowne near Limerick’s Ennis Road and various army regiments played there in the summer months with large crowds attending.⁵⁵ Besides, there was no obvious tension between military and local civilian bands. Two years after the Lansdowne band promenade was erected, St Mary’s Fife and Drum Band performed there after winning an All-Ireland band contest, and several thousand spectators attended.⁵⁶ It is evident from newspaper reports that military bands frequently played at fetes, regattas and concerts in Limerick City. The community of the Good Shepherd Nuns of Clare Street thanked those who in 1883 made their concert and bazaar so successful, including the band of the 2nd Battalion of

⁵² Hayes, ‘A virtuous alliance’, p. 516.

⁵³ *Limerick Reporter*, 21 June 1844. The band of the 30th division based in the Castle Barracks was reported to play in its troops ‘from the Blackboy Pike by their own fine band accompanied by crowds of civilians.’

⁵⁴ *Limerick Reporter*, 11 August 1843; *Limerick Leader*, 24 October 1895. It could also be a dangerous pastime following army marching bands as reported for one young Limerick boy of eleven years who was killed when the Band of the Royal Irish Regiment spooked a horse attached to a parcel van which mounted a footpath and killed the boy.

⁵⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 14 July 1893. At the inaugural night the band of the Manchester Regiment played a wide selection of music including the Irish piece ‘Eileen A Roon’. It was hoped to add fireworks to the display as the entertainment continued over the summer months.

⁵⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 28 September 1895.

the Oxfordshire Light Infantry.⁵⁷ To raise funds for charitable works at their bazaars and concerts it would be safe to presume the nuns needed a military band to draw those more affluent in society to attend and donate to their cause.⁵⁸ On the other hand, just as attitudes to the crown were changing, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the presence of military bands in Limerick was becoming more contentious, culminating in a City Council debate in 1906 on the lack of local bands playing at festivals and regattas.⁵⁹ The GAA was one of the first bodies to discourage the involvement of military bands at public events, emphasising in a notice advertising a sports day in Limerick in 1886 that ‘bands attending would be non-military.’⁶⁰ A Civilian band contest for Brass and Reed bands was held as entertainment for this event.

As the Boer Wars of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century roused anti-English feelings among more extreme nationalists, there was a parallel hostility to the parading by military bands in the city. The fact that as many as thirty thousand Irish men were in the British army fighting the Boers did not stop objectors in Limerick putting up posters condemning army bands playing in the city. In 1901 the Limerick Young Ireland Society issued a strongly worded poster objecting to the Yorkshire Light Infantry Band playing at boat races at the Shannon Rowing Club under the auspices of the local Jesuit College. The statement read that ‘Irishmen should not employ a band of South African Murderers.’⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 6 November 1883.

⁵⁸ *Limerick Chronicle*, 23, 30 January, 8 February 1879, 21 December 1909. The band of the 5th Royal Munster Fusiliers played at the rink Club at the afternoon and evening. A rink club was organised in 1876-1917 and was often used by private members on specific days with a military band entertaining them. We can only surmise that the more affluent patrons separated themselves from the rest of the local population. Martin Walsh ‘The hidden history of the Limerick Skating Rink, *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 45, (Winter, 2011), p. 52. This was a roller skating rink located at Clontarf Place, Limerick.

⁵⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 24 January 1906.

⁶⁰ *Limerick Chronicle*, 26 August 1886.

⁶¹ David Fitzpatrick, *Militarism in Ireland 1900-1922*, in Thomas Bartlett, Keith Jeffery (eds), *A Military History of Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1996), p. 380; *Cork Examiner*, 20 May 1901; *Limerick Leader*, 19 September 1901. The Young Ireland Society attempted to boycott the Irish Guards Band when they visited Limerick in August 1901.

The music played by the military bands was also becoming a matter of contention, and this was obvious even within the conflicting attitudes of soldiers themselves. The diversity of national and religious identity was a source of contention amongst Irishmen in the British Army, even when abroad in distant parts of the empire. In 1901 St Patrick's Day fell on a Sunday. Belfast born James McConville recalls a scene of grudging acceptance of the Irish troops' wish to celebrate the day in Fort William, Calcutta. The Church of England soldiers paraded at 11am for service under command of Irishman, Major 'Jackey' Brown. When the band struck up an ordinary march, Brown stopped them and made them play 'St Patrick's Day'. The Catholics from the veranda were watching the parade and raised a little cheer. But a number of the Church of England soldiers would not keep step to the tune. Their orange sentiments, as one memoir put it, gave them to think that 'St Patrick's Day' was a Popish tune.⁶²

Outside the army, there were close links between music and popular politicisation. Harry White believes that 'it was the famine more than any other event in Irish history which determined the meaning of musical recovery in the second half of the nineteenth century since the devastation of death and emigration left a population in need of cultural preservation and this could best be done through music.'⁶³ Contemporary comment made a similar point. In 1887, for example, a letter writer to the *Celtic Times* made a call for each parish club of the G.A.A., to have a band which would play at games 'to promote feelings of friendship and good-fellowship amongst the players' whilst providing 'delightful entertainment to the spectators in the intervals between the contests.'⁶⁴ The music played by Limerick bands will be discussed in Chapter 5.

⁶² Alexander Bubb. 'The Life of the Irish Soldier in India: Representations and Self-Representations, 1857-1922'. *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 46, (2012), p. 780.

⁶³ Harry White, 'Music, politics and the Irish imagination', Richard Pine (ed.), *Music in Ireland 1848-1998*, (Dublin, 1998), p. 31.

⁶⁴ *Celtic Times*, 26 February 1887.

In the previous chapter reference was made to temperance bands becoming more independent and attending Repeal meetings despite the objections by their leader Fr Mathew, and this trend became more pronounced in the second half of the century when bands in the city increasingly paraded with nationalistic symbols, these symbols along with the music playing an important representational role in relation to faith, history and nationality. Parading – the main public activity of marching bands – can play a symbolic role in the cultural life of a community. Parades and the bands participating in them provided spectacle, represented localities, values and political movements, as well as fostering a popular sense of participation in public and private celebrations.⁶⁵ In the first half of the nineteenth century Limerick city's temperance society bands played a major role in the public celebration of Ireland's patron saint. The emergence of the temperance bands all over Ireland led to great interest in St Patrick's Day Processions with the *Limerick Reporter* conveying reports parades of different modes all over Ireland as well as Limerick. With all the local Temperance Band's taking part emphasis on 'festivity and rational enjoyment, instead of the annual scenes of riot, disorder, and drunkenness, for which Patrick's Days were before remarkable.'⁶⁶

On St Patrick's Eve 1845 it was reported that St Mary's, St John's and the Volunteer Band played that evening until 10 o'clock.⁶⁷ Nearly sixty years later in 1903, the establishment of St Patrick's Day as a national holiday by act of parliament with the assistance of constitutional politicians both nationalist and unionist, was another step in the resurgence of a particular form of Irish national identity. Bands had become increasingly prominent at these parades from the 1840s onwards, with St Mary's, St Patrick's and St John's Bands parading on St Patrick's Day 1842, while St Mary's, St John's and the Volunteer Bands attended at a St

⁶⁵ Hayes, 'A virtuous alliance'. p. 515.

⁶⁶ *Limerick Reporter*, 16 March 1841.

⁶⁷ *Limerick Reporter*, 18 March 1845. Temperance bands marched through the streets, 'performing the soul-stirring airs of Old Ireland.'

Patrick's Day parade in 1845.⁶⁸ On St Patrick's Day 1860 the Royal Limerick County Band advertised a weather permitting programme of music to be played in Pery Square one of the more affluent areas of the city. The programme of music advertised was:

March, 'St Patrick's Day', Anon.

March, 'Hubucodonsen', Verdi.

Selection, 'Irish Air's', Werner.

Waltz, 'Mundy', Laurent.

Troop, 'Kathleen Mavouneen', Anon.

Quadrilles, 'Hibernian', Godfrey.

Troop, 'Sly Patrick', Anon.

Finale National Anthem.⁶⁹

All the Limerick bands participated in St Patrick's Day parades from 1903.⁷⁰ When St Mary's Band marched in the New York St Patrick's Day parade in 1992 it was stated that they had finally fulfilled a commitment made at a general meeting in 1922 when it was proposed that the band go to New York for the St Patrick's Day parade of that year. But Limerick was a turbulent place in 1922 due to the civil war and financially it was not feasible for the band at this time. Seventy years later they were able to fulfil their commitment.⁷¹

Successive political processions in Limerick in the later nineteenth century articulated a particular sense of social, local and national identity. In the Limerick context, where the population was over ninety per cent Roman Catholic, this identity was strongly Catholic, and this coloured the attitudes of the bands and their membership.⁷² For instance, the Limerick

⁶⁸ *Limerick Reporter*, 18 March 1842; 18 March 1845; 17 March 1848, Temperance bands were reported as marching on St Patrick's Day in 1848.

⁶⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 16 March 1860. This band used the opportunity to appeal for subscriptions for their band fund.

⁷⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 16 March 1910, 19 March 1932, In 1932 a parade organised for the fifteenth centenary of St Patrick's arrival in Ireland was attended by five city bands. 24 March 1934, 12 March 1949, 16 March 1955, 19 March 1960.

⁷¹ *St Mary's Prize Band celebrating 125 Years 1885-2010*, (Limerick, 2010), p.104. St Mary's also marched in the Meridan and New Haven St Patrick's Day parades in Connecticut in 1992.

⁷² Census 1901, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/> *Census of Ireland 1901, City of Limerick, religious denominations of the population.*

branch of the Irish Papal Brigade of 1860 was organised chiefly in St Mary's Parish by local curate Fr. Timothy Shanahan, and seems to have involved band members from that parish as well as from Boherbuoy area and St. John's Parish.⁷³

For the members of a band involved in recreational or politically motivated activities, the companionship involved not only in marching together but also of travelling from Limerick or other places in a group for a common political or (at least) recreational purpose could prove lasting. The exchange of news and political ideas in the conversations taking place on the special excursion trains helped to enforce the excitement and symbolism of the event attended. One could also be sure is that many of those young impressionable band members conversing in the 'national spirit' and the hopes of 'national independence' could be turned into fervent political activism.⁷⁴

The many different political demonstrations that took place over the course of the decades, especially from the 1860s onwards, saw the participation of Limerick bands. Distance and expense may have proved a difficulty on occasions: while there were reports of Cork bands attending the Terence Bellew McManus funeral when his remains arrived in that city from New York in 1861, and that Dublin bands attended the burial in Glasnevin cemetery, it was not reported that any Limerick bands took part.⁷⁵ However, when demonstrations were held locally, participation was enthusiastic. One prominent commemoration every November was for the Manchester Martyrs. The hanging of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien in 1867 led to 'mock' funeral processions and parades in many cities in Ireland and Britain. The executions had an impact on

⁷³ Des Ryan, 'The Pope's Emigrants', *Old Limerick Journal*, Winter edition 2003, pp 17-22; *Munster News*, 24 October 1860; *Limerick Leader* 26 May 1926. This is evidenced by Ryan when a meeting was held in the Old Exchange Nicholas Street to assist in the movement to bring the survivors of the Irish Brigade home.

⁷⁴ Brian Jenkins, *The Fenian Problem: insurgency and terrorism in a liberal state 1858-1874*, (Liverpool, 2008), p. 4.

⁷⁵ *Limerick Reporter*, 27 September 1861; *Cork Examiner*, 31 October 1861; *Dublin Weekly Nation*, 9 November 1861.

the minds of nationalists all over Ireland and Limerick was the scene of one of the largest organised demonstrations in 1867.

The first Limerick demonstration in that year was mainly organised by the trade societies in Limerick whose organising committee detailed their members to approach local band leaders to have their musicians play at the procession. But even then, the matter of expense could prove a problem: a band based in the Irishtown was reported to have its instruments in a pawn office in the Irishtown and could not get them out.⁷⁶ The Boherbuoy Band and the English-town Fife and Drum Band (St Mary's) played at this first Limerick Manchester Martyrs' procession.⁷⁷ This demonstration led to an annual affair that lasted well into the twentieth century and local bands were prominent throughout and represented on organising committees, and the trial speech of one of the 'Martyrs' William P. Allen inspired the song 'God Save Ireland' which became a national tune played by bands.⁷⁸ Parades and demonstrations gave bands an opportunity to not only express their national allegiances but their musical ability as well. Reports of parades in the 1880s state a multitude of bands attending Manchester Martyr demonstrations with one in 1885 having nine bands parading.⁷⁹ In 1885 The Boherbuoy and St John's Workingmen's Brass and Reed Bands along with the Sarsfield and St Mary's Fife and Drum Bands played out for a memorial to the Manchester Martyrs.⁸⁰ A 1900 delegate committee meeting chaired by the Mayor Alderman John Daly

⁷⁶ Brendan Mac Giolla Choille, 'Mourning The Martyrs', *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 22, no. 27, pp 29-44. The 'Irishtown' was the Broad Street area of St John's Parish. Organised mainly by the trade societies of Limerick the proposer of the parade, John Upton, proposed that 'steps be taken by this large meeting to show the deep and heartfelt regret felt by all for the cruel deaths of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien as noble martyrs in the cause of poor suffering Ireland; and that the better to carry this into effect the Trades and people of Limerick march in Solemn funeral procession on Sunday week.'

⁷⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 9 December 1867.

⁷⁸ Robert Justin Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, (London, 1983), p.156; *Freeman's Journal*, 26 November 1895. The St Mary's, Number 9, and Sarsfield Fife and Drum Bands along with Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band played in a large procession to the memorial at Mount St Lawrence graveyard in 1895.

⁷⁹ John McGrath 'Sociability and socio-economic conditions in St Mary's Parish, Limerick 1890-1950', unpublished MA thesis, Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick) 2006, p.18; *Munster News*, 25 November 1885.

⁸⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 25 November 1929.

included Patrick McNamara, bandmaster from St Mary's Band, and Thomas Dillon from the Boherbuoy Band.⁸¹ But other political occasions presented equal opportunities for the bands to make their presence felt publicly: one of the biggest gathering of bands in the 1880s occurred in 1884 when up to fifteen bands were reported at the conferring of the Freedom of Limerick to Charles Dawson and Michael Davitt. It is more than likely bands came from other counties to participate at this occasion.⁸²

Fenianism was particularly strong in Limerick where John Daly emerged as one of the leaders of an ill-prepared Fenian Rising in 1867. After a period in exile in America, he returned home to reinvigorate the Irish Republican Brotherhood and to promote its aims among the general public.⁸³ At the many Amnesty meetings in Limerick in the 1890s, local bands were prominent attenders: at the Amnesty Demonstration in 1893, held specifically to campaign for the release of John Daly, and at which Maud Gonne spoke, the band representation went far beyond the city: present were the local Boherbuoy Brass Band, and the St Mary's, Garryowen, Independent, and Sarsfield Fife and Drum Bands; the Kilfinane Band from the county; the Ennis Fife and Drum Band; the Barrack Street and Butter Exchange Bands from Cork; the Tipperary Brass Band; and the Tralee Brass Band and Corporation Fife and Drum Band from Kerry.⁸⁴

When municipal reform transformed the local government system between 1840 and 1842 through the Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Act, 1840 there emerged in Limerick, as elsewhere, a municipal council led by Catholic middle-class merchants, large shopkeepers and business owners who replaced the Protestant merchant elite which, though a minority, had

⁸¹ *Cork Examiner*, 17 November 1900; *Limerick Leader*, 26 November 1906, 25 November 1939, 2 December 1967. The centenary of the Martyr's anniversary was attended by the Boherbuoy and St John's Brass and Reed Bands but the annual demonstration diminished after this.

⁸² *Munster News*, 12 April 1884.

⁸³ John Daly biography, <http://limerick1916.ul.ie/john-daly-the-fenian/>, accessed 9 May 2017.

⁸⁴ *Flag of Ireland*, 23 September 1893.

exercised political power in the city since 1651.⁸⁵ The bands immediately became involved in the popular reaction to the change: a symbolic demonstration occurred in 1841 which was reported by the *Limerick Chronicle* which, while not naming the bands (which were more than likely the local temperance bands) described massed bands and ‘a great concourse of mourners’ marching solemnly behind a hearse which contained an enormous coffin. At the Town Hall the coffin was burned to mark the death of ‘municipal graft and corruption by consigning the remains of the old corporation to purifying flames.’⁸⁶ The Mayor, Charles Smyth Vereker, not popular with the demonstrators, was reported as stopping the Amateur Band in George’s Street (now O’Connell Street) and ordering them to refrain from playing ‘Garryowen’ while marching through the streets – an attempt to prevent the expression of popular political triumphalism.⁸⁷ In similar vein, half a century later, a protest held in Limerick in 1887 against the imprisonment of William O’Brien MP (in relation to the Plan of Campaign) was attended by the Victuallers’ Band, St John’s, St Mary’s, and the Carey’s Road Fife and Drum Bands, as well as the Boherbuoy and Foresters’ Brass and Reed Bands.⁸⁸ In honour of the bi-centenary of Patrick Sarsfield’s involvement in the campaign surrounding the Siege of Limerick, a demonstration was held in St John’s Cathedral attended by St Mary’s fife and Drum Band along with the St John’s (Victuallers), Boherbuoy and Foresters’ Brass Bands.⁸⁹ The linking of processions, band participation and political identity became even closer during the career of Charles Stewart Parnell who emerged as the leader of Irish nationalism in the 1880s and whose pro-Home Rule Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power in Westminster.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Mathew Potter, *The Government and the people of Limerick, The History of Limerick Corporation/City Council 1197-2006*, (Limerick, 2006), pp 298-299.

⁸⁶ *Limerick Chronicle*, 10 August 1841, 17 September 1917.

⁸⁷ *Limerick Reporter*, 13 August 1841. Mathew Potter, *First Citizens of the Treaty City, The Mayors and Mayoralty of Limerick 1197-2007*, pp 77-107. Vereker was succeeded by Martin Honan the first Catholic Mayor and was the first Catholic Mayor since the Treaty of Limerick, p.108.

⁸⁸ *Limerick Reporter*, 2 November 1887.

⁸⁹ *Munster News*, 21 August 1899.

⁹⁰ *Munster News*, 10 January 1891.

But band involvement in political demonstrations could also show the division rather than the unity within nationalist opinion, and these conflicting views in relation to the various political movements often led to hostility – not just between locals and army, but between the bands themselves. For instance, as Home Rule came into competition with separatist nationalism in the 1870s, there were indications that political division could wreck popular unity, at least among the Limerick bands. On the night before a major Home Rule meeting in 1876, the divisions between the supporters of moderate Home Rule and the separatist element in the city led to attacks on the participating bands. The band rooms of both the Mechanics' Institute and Foresters' Society were broken into by a number of the 'advanced nationalists' of the city, led by John Daly, who was later imprisoned on charges of involvement in the IRB's dynamiting campaign in Britain. In both band rooms the instruments were damaged in order to prevent the bands' attendance at the Home Rule gathering. In the end the Foresters borrowed the instruments of the recently formed Thomondgate Band so they could play, but the 'understanding that their presence at the event and their music really mattered speaks of the importance of the links between culture and politics.'⁹¹

It was in the early 1890s, however, that the most bitter political divisions made themselves felt among Limerick city bands as the relationships between the bands and other organisations, and between the bands themselves, were particularly affected by the divorce suit against Parnell. This split in 1891 affected many organisations in Ireland and is a prime example of how a society and its many clubs and organisations can be divided through political

⁹¹ Thomas Hayes. 'From ludicrous to logical: the transformation of sport in North Munster, 1850–1890', unpublished PhD Thesis, Mary Immaculate College, 2009. p 282. *Cork Examiner*, 17, 18, April 1876; *Limerick Chronicle*, 15, 18, 20 April 1876, 2 August 1884. This was a meeting when Isaac Butt visited Limerick for a parade and meeting at the O'Connell monument on 18 April. There was a violent attack on the Boherbuoy Band at the monument by who were described 'a small body of nationalists'. They were reported as 'Dalyites' supporters of John Daly while having respect for Butt would not associate themselves with the Home Rule Movement. John Daly and his brother Edward were arrested and a man named McInerney was under house arrest due to injuries. Almost a decade later in 1884 the Loyalist *Limerick Chronicle* recalled this event as the 'Battle of the Crescent' and was presented as revealing the true nature of the Parnellite ambition for Ireland.

allegiances. But it is difficult to make out exactly how the city was divided, since the impression that Parnellism dominated local politics may simply be due to the publicity given to it the Parnellite side by the *Limerick Leader* newspaper. The *Leader* was set up as a Parnellite Party newspaper by Jeremiah Buckley who was himself a staunch Parnellite and though it soon collapsed, to be revived in the early years of the twentieth century, its reports in favour of Parnellism may blur the realities of the time.⁹²

The split had a major effect on GAA clubs in the city. The total number of city clubs, reported as totalling ninety in 1887, fell to an all-time low of nine in 1892 because of the disruption caused by the split.⁹³ The bands numbers did not fall at this time though they did take different sides. Criostóir Ó Floinn in his memoir of life in mid-twentieth century Limerick expresses a view that ‘Parnell did irreparable damage to the cause of music in Ireland because many a band was disrupted and many a fine instrument broken during the faction fights between the opposing sides.’⁹⁴ Initially it looked as if the divisions would not affect the city’s bands as the visit of Parnell to Limerick in January 1891 was an event attended by most of the Limerick bands except the St John’s Victualler’s Band.⁹⁵ It is not known why St John’s Band did not attend Parnell’s Limerick visit but its fellow parish band the pro- Parnell Sarsfield Fife and Drum Band clearly took offence, and relations between the two bands deteriorated quickly.⁹⁶ It was soon after this that Limerick city bands began to define themselves distinctly

⁹² Tadgh Moloney, *Limerick Constitutional Nationalism, 1898-1918 Change and Continuity*. (Cambridge, 2010), p.13. The fact that the Number 9 Band had many printers /compositors in its fold, could account for why this band had such prominent and positive coverage in the *Limerick Leader*. *Limerick Leader*, 10 January 1894. What newspaper one read was a divisive reason for an assault in a Thomondgate public house between a Parnell supporter who read the *Limerick Leader* and a *Freeman’s Journal* reader.

⁹³ Paul Anglim, *Limerick GAA year book 2012*, (Limerick 2012), p.13; Seamus Ó Cheallaigh and Sean Murphy, *One Hundred years of Glory: A History of Limerick G.A.A. 1884 1984*, (Limerick, 1984), pp 34-35. In 1893, Limerick not having ten affiliated clubs, lost its right to a representative on the GAA executive.

⁹⁴ Criostóir Ó Floinn, *There is an Isle* (Cork, 1998) p.126; *Limerick Chronicle*, 3 March 1891. In Kilrush Co. Clare what was described as a McCarthyite Band had their instruments stolen and drums torn to shreds in what was reported to be retaliation against a similar act by a Parnellite band in the town.

⁹⁵ *Munster News*, 10 January 1891. 14 January 1891. The *Munster News* published a letter where St John’s Band was threatened in an abusive way by the Sarsfield band and this could be seen as the catalyst for the disturbances between the Limerick City Bands.

⁹⁶ *Munster News*, 14 January 1891.

as either pro or anti-Parnell. This split saw the formation of new bands such as the pro-Parnell No. 9 Fife and Drum Band in St Mary's Parish in Limerick.⁹⁷ The existing St Mary's Band took an anti-Parnellite stance although up to December 1890 they, along with the St John's Fife and Drum Band, were present in support of John Redmond when he visited Limerick deputising for Parnell who was detained in London. Father David Humphries⁹⁸ known as a militant pro-Land League parish priest speaking in Tipperary clearly was not impressed with the support that Parnell was getting in Limerick, stating that

he would be ashamed to be a Limerick man only he knew that the men of Limerick did not know what they were doing. The men of Limerick would not knowingly betray their country, and the real explanation of their present conduct was that they had got no leader. Limerick was a ship without a rudder at the mercy of every political adventurer who came their way.⁹⁹

This priest's objections to Parnell and his affair was not surprising and this could have aligned many Catholics to the anti-Parnellite cause. Callanan presents this 'collusive idiom of church and nation' as a major legacy of Parnell's opponent, T. M. Healy, which 'defined the Irish nation in terms of a Catholic nationalist pro-prietorial consensus.'¹⁰⁰ This fusion of Catholicism, national identity and localism seems to have operated in the context of the Limerick bands. A letter from a St Mary's Parishioner to the *Limerick Leader* condemned local St Mary's curate Fr O'Connor who on the altar called those who bought the *Daily Irish Independent* (the pro-Parnellite newspaper) as 'as a lot of half-educated wenchies' and exhorted

⁹⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 26 February 1894. It was reported that a subscription fund was started and 'it is a good sign of the times to find a healthy independent opinion existing in the district (Englishtown) named.

⁹⁸ Lewis Perry Curtis, *Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland 1880-1892*, (London, 1963), p. 254.

⁹⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 15 December 1890; *Limerick Chronicle*, 16 December 1890. This meeting in Tipperary was to declare support for the Irish Parliamentary Party and its leader Justin McCarthy. Fr Humphreys went on to declare 'was there any thunder and lightning left in the modern Sinai, or was Mr Parnell to be allowed to erect a statue to the goddess of adultery on the banks of the Shannon.'

¹⁰⁰ Frank Callanan 'Clerical Dictation' Reflections on the Catholic Church and the Parnell Split', *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. 45, 1990, p. 66.

the women present not to allow their children to read the *Independent*.¹⁰¹ It can also be maintained that some bands held the moral ground on Parnell and ‘it was his morality, rather than his policies that seemed on trial’ and this more than likely played heavily on a mainly Catholic support base which was long in existence – at least as far back as 1860 when, as already discussed, local curate, Fr. Shanahan, organised a branch of the Papal Brigade in the parish.¹⁰² This suggests a strong bond between church and population in St Mary’s Parish, so perhaps it can be assumed (though it cannot be proven) that this bond was the reason for the strong anti- Parnellite stance shown in the parish in the 1890s – and for the anti-Parnellite direction taken by the local band.

Parnell’s funeral and the subsequent anniversary was attended by Limerick bands who had supported him during the turbulent last few years of his life. The Number 9 Nicholas Street Band went to Dublin for Parnell’s funeral, and to his anniversary for many years afterwards, and were prominent within Limerick in raising funds for the Parnell monument in Dublin.¹⁰³ On the 1892 anniversary of Parnell’s death the Sarsfield Fife and Drum and the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Bands attended with over 650 Limerick people making the journey by special train from Limerick to Dublin.¹⁰⁴

This Parnellite trend continued even as the effects of the split faded during subsequent years: the Sarsfield and Boherbuoy Bands, along with other bands from Tipperary, Kilfinane, Hospital, Killmallock, Knocklong, Herbertstown, Caherconlish, Pallasgreen and Killeely going to Killeely in east Limerick for a demonstration to be addressed by the previously Parnellite John Redmond and other MPs.¹⁰⁵ The Boherbuoy and Sarsfield Bands similarly went

¹⁰¹ *Limerick Leader*, 12 March 1894.

¹⁰² J. C. Beckett, *The making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923*, (London, 1972). p. 403; Des Ryan, ‘The Pope’s Emigrants’, *Old Limerick Journal*, Winter edition 2003, pp 17-22; *Munster News*, 24 October 1860.

¹⁰³ *Limerick Leader*, 11 October 1909.

¹⁰⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 10 October 1892.

¹⁰⁵ *Limerick Leader* 13 April 1906.

to Ennis for the anniversary of Major Willie Redmond in 1926.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, the divisions of the previous decade were really dying out by 1910 as the unifying force of the Home Rule came into play, and when John Redmond again visited Limerick in 1910, the demonstration was attended not only the (formerly Parnellite) Boherbuoy No. 1 Brass and Reed Band, and the Sarsfield and Number 9 Fife and Drum Bands, but also the formerly anti-Parnellite St Mary's Band.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 2 June 1926.

¹⁰⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 12 September 1910.

Political and local divisions.

Inglis has pointed out how a common trait in social communication in Ireland is to ask a person about their place of origin:

In Ireland, one of the most common communication probes – after asking people their name – is to ask them where they are from. Place is seen as a major social indicator, of culture, class, nationality, urbanity and so forth. It is part of the multiplicity of signs that enable individuals to socially and culturally [associate].¹⁰⁸

The importance of one's place of origin is certainly clear in the case of Limerick city as this usually identifies the individual's culture, class, whether their background is urban or rural, and even the identity of their parish or townland. This matter of place of origin is one of the multiplicity of signs that enable individuals to co-exist socially and culturally, establishing both differences and boundaries and the strength of the links between individuals and localities.

In the Limerick context in the nineteenth century, locality of origin combined with political allegiance to draw the city's bands into violent confrontations, not only between the bands and the police, but between the bands themselves whenever they met each other on parade or on occasions when they simply went out of their way to deliberately provoke each other.¹⁰⁹ In general, the rival band allegiances in the city were as follows: St John's and St Mary's Bands were anti-Parnellite while the Boherbuoy, Sarsfield and Nicholas Street (Number 9) Bands were pro-Parnellite.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Tom Inglis, 'Local belonging, identities and sense of place in contemporary Ireland', no. 4, in the Discussion Series: *Politics and Identity*, University College Dublin, p. 3.
http://www.ucd.ie/ibis/publications/discussionpapers/localbelongingidentitiesandsenseofplaceincontemporaryireland/p&d_discussion_paper_4.pdf

¹⁰⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 24 April 1882; *Flag of Ireland*, 29 April, 6 May 1882. Threats were also made to burn and blow up the William Street police barracks at a time of heightened political tensions in the city.

¹¹⁰ *Limerick Chronicle*, 14 June 1899. The Boherbuoy Brass Band and the Sarsfield Fife and Drum Band, located at Boherbuoy and Mungret Street respectively, were allied to the Parnellite cause, while St Mary's Band located in Mary Street and the Victuallers' band located in Cornwallis Street (later Gerald Griffin Street), took an anti-Parnellite stand.

It was unwise for a band to pass through a rival area or parish in the decades immediately following the Parnellite split unless that band reflected the political viewpoint of the territory through which it passed. Along with political and local division in a small city (2,074 acres with a population of 37,155 in 1891) helps to explain the riots and confrontations between bands in Limerick at this period.¹¹¹ Already existing inter-locality rivalry was exacerbated by political rivalry to cause conflicts which the local police had to control.¹¹² The bridges, being the boundary line (See Figure 3 above), were the contentious points for rowdy behaviour. Those arrested and charged with riotous behaviour appear not to have been the members of the local bands, but the bands' ability to gather crowds and to provoke the animosity of the rivals was the catalyst for those in the wider population wishing to misbehave to do so. Election rows – and elections provided the perfect opportunity to get involved in violence – were regularly reported in areas of the city such as Nicholas Street, Mary Street and the Irishtown areas.¹¹³ Barrington's Hospital in St Mary's parish was reported to be busy with patients either suffering from head wounds from stones or police batons.¹¹⁴

Violence particularly escalated around the time of the elections, as when in 1892 following the victory for the anti-Parnellite Irish Federation. The jubilant St Mary's Band marched towards Mathew Bridge where the paper described how 'stone throwing occurred' with a St Mary's man badly injured, and 'several parts of the city were in absolute riot.'¹¹⁵ After that, St Mary's men deliberately marched through the rival (Parnellite) Boherbuoy district, accompanied by a crowd – a sure recipe for the conflict that ensued – until the police

¹¹¹ Ruth Guiry, 'Public Health and Housing in Limerick City, 1850-1935: A Geographical Analysis' M.A. Mary Immaculate College, (University of Limerick, 2013), p. 12.

¹¹² *Limerick Chronicle*, 17 September 1895.

¹¹³ *Flag of Ireland*, 24 August 1889, 3 December 1892. In late 1892 the Boherbuoy Nationalist Band and the Sarsfield Band were proceeding to the town hall with tar barrels to celebrate a nationalist victory when the members of the Federationist St Mary's Band broke windows of the Municipal Buildings with stones and also threw stones at the Boherbuoy Band.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Limerick Chronicle*, 9 July 1892.

calmed the situation and the band returned to its rooms with some of its instruments damaged and others lost to the attackers. This was deliberate provocation and a breaking of boundaries. Later in the evening the Parnellite Boherbuoy Band Room was visited by the Sarsfield Band (also Parnellite) where it was decided to seek retribution for the encroachment into Parnellite territory by making a return visit to the home turf of St Mary's Band. The *Cork Examiner* report gives a detailed account of the Sarsfield Band's march into St Mary's Band's territory (Englishtown) after their meeting with the Boherbuoy Band:

The Sarsfield Band then proceeded down George's Street, [now O'Connell Street] and over Sarsfield Bridge, accompanied by about one thousand persons, and marched round the Strand and over Thomond Bridge into Nicholas Street. The police anticipated a repetition of the proceedings in the earlier part of the afternoon, and a party of about twenty men, in charge of District-Inspector Lawless and Head-Constable McBrinn immediately went by way of Mathew Bridge, with a view of intercepting the band, and before they proceeded through the Englishtown into Mary Street, they met the band near the Castle Barracks and tried to dissuade the people from proceeding further. In the meantime, an opposing crowd assembled in Nicholas Street and the adjoining lanes and if the band persisted in passing through, a row of some magnitude appeared to be inevitable. The Sarsfield Band, at the solicitation of the police, decided upon going through Creagh Lane, and thus avoiding the collision. The crowd, however, attempted to pass the entrance to this lane and proceed as initially intended.¹¹⁶

Despite Police forbearance the opposing crowds exchanged missiles and the police charged with their batons to defuse the situation. Many injuries were reported from the nearby Barrington's Hospital. Later in August a crowd from the Mary Street (St Mary's Band) area in what seemed a revenge attack broke windows with bricks and stones in the Broad Street area,

¹¹⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 13 June 1892.

Sarsfield Band territory, causing a lot of damage and distress.¹¹⁷ One band that was born directly out of the Parnellite split in St Mary's Parish the Number 9 Fife and Drum Band in Nicholas Street. The Number 9 Band is known from oral tradition as being formed specifically because of the split in Parnellism, when 'the divided loyalties of the bandsmen of St Mary's led to the formation of Number 9 Band in honour of the nine members who sided with Parnell in London.'¹¹⁸ McGrath's analysis of the membership of the band from cross-referencing the 1901 and 1911 census with newspaper reports shows, however, that locality (in terms of rival but neighbouring streets) was almost as important as political loyalty, since the band's membership was from the Nicholas Street / Crosby Row area, and therefore quite distinct from and opposite to the Abbey / Mary Street locality where St Mary's Band operated. This account is supported by the first references of the Number 9 Band in 1894 that identified it as 'St Mary's *Independent* Band [my italics].' This could be seen as a way for the Parnellites to take control of the St Mary's Band name and therefore lay claim to the local allegiance of the parish.¹¹⁹

The divisions continued into the mid-1890s. When, during the election in January 1895, a meeting of the anti-Parnellite Irish National Federation was held in their rooms in Henry Street attended by Francis O'Keefe MP, St Mary's Nationalist fife and drum band attended and then marched back to their own band room 'playing patriotic airs' and followed by a large enthusiastic crowd.¹²⁰ St Mary's Band remained well connected to the Irish National Federation and six months later waited late into the night for news of a Galway victory in an election in July 1895 for anti-Parnellite candidate Denis Kilbride. It was reported on this occasion that up to two thousand people marched with the band through the city streets celebrating his

¹¹⁷ *Dublin Daily Express*, 16 August 1892. *Limerick Chronicle*, 26 November 1892, *Flag of Ireland*, 3 December 1892. A report of an attack on the Boherbuoy and Sarsfield bands (Nationalist or Parnellite) by St Mary's Band (Federation or anti-Parnellite) with stones, near the Municipal buildings in Limerick after the municipal election.

¹¹⁸ Joe Malone, 'Crosbie Row', *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 10, Spring 1982, p. 37.

¹¹⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 13 July, 12 November 1894.

¹²⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 5 January 1895.

victory.¹²¹ Cork's band riots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not dissimilar to those in Limerick, politics playing the same part in both cities, though Lane, who has studied band rioting in Cork concluded that that it was boredom rather than political enthusiasm that led many young men and women in Cork to follow bands and take part in the ensuing riots, one young man declaring before magistrates that the reason he was fighting was that there was 'no other excitement on a Sunday except by exercising their arms by casting stones.'¹²²

¹²¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 30 July 1895. Paul Redmond, 'Denis Kilbride M.P. 1848-1924', Unpublished MA Thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth, (July, 2003), p.1. Denis Kilbride was MP for three different constituencies in the period 1887 to 1918. He was a member of the Irish Parliamentary Party, which represented Irish national ideals in the House of Commons at Westminster until the general election of 1918.

¹²² Lane, 'The band nuisance', p. 29. One young man declared before magistrates that the reason he was fighting was that there was 'no other excitement on a Sunday except by exercising their arms by casting stones.'

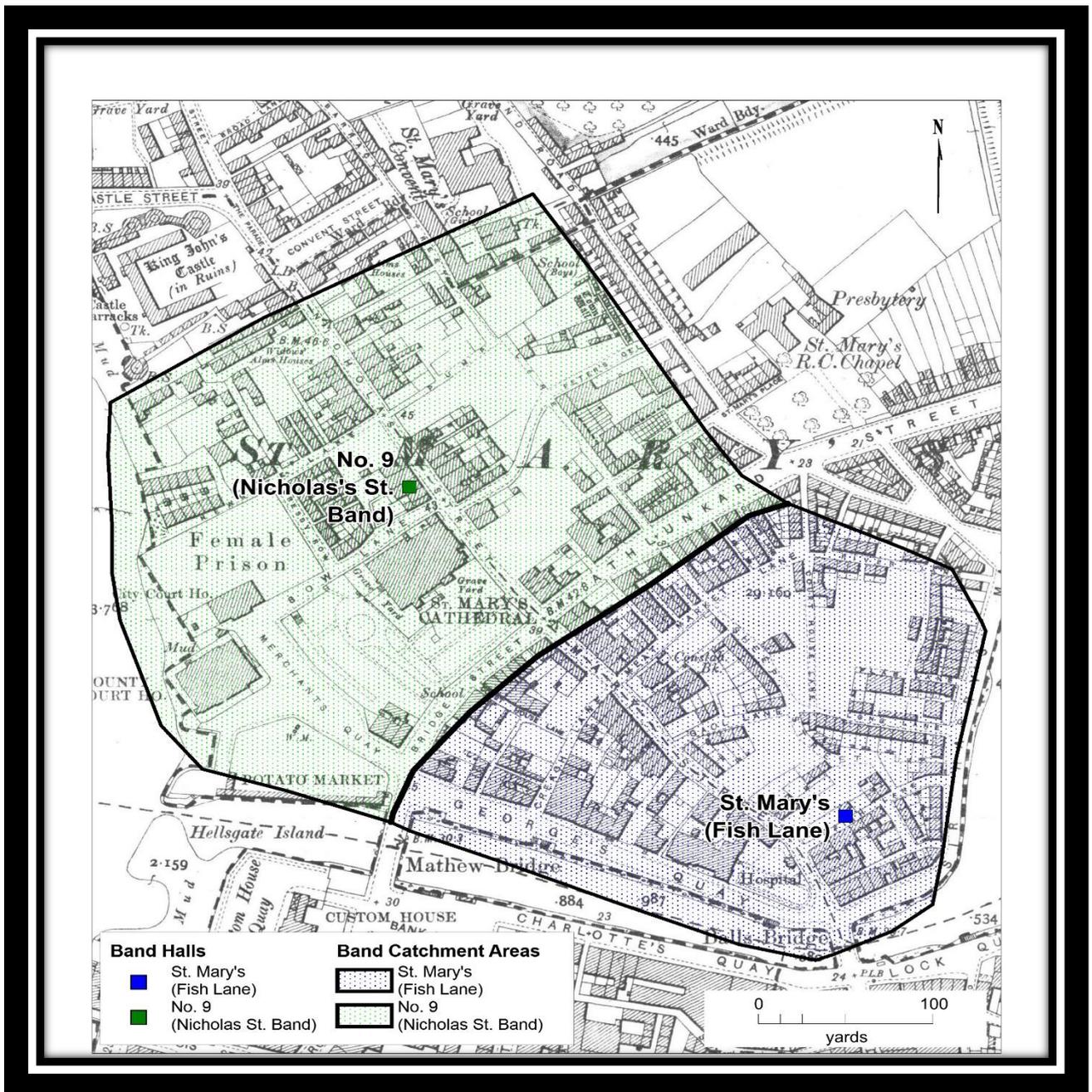


Figure 8: The catchment area of St Mary's and the Number 9 Band in the same parish 1890-1910.

One member of the 1895 St Mary's Band, Thomas Quan, was at the 1909 Number 9 Band Annual General Meeting, so this proves that at least one St Mary's Band member left the fold and supported Parnell. Quan lived in Pump Lane off Nicholas Street, close to the No. Band Hall.¹²³ Parish or locality boundaries on their own do not adequately explain intense place-

¹²³ *St Mary's Prize Band 1885-2010*. (Limerick, 2010), p. 11.
<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/results1901>.

based rivalry. Places and local identity are not monolithic but can be internally divided – between different streets or lanes or along the lines of residents’ occupations:

Often competing cultural, social and economic goals exist in borderlands, and thus communities reinforce their distinct identities, institutions and bounded localities in order to survive. Such collective identification and patterns of loyalty easily restrict people's behaviour. Institutions (both formal and informal) form the structures controlling communication and spatial inter-action.¹²⁴

This was precisely the case with the St. Mary’s Band (with its band room in Fish Lane just off Mary Street) and the Number 9 (with its rooms in Nicholas Street). Note map above of St Mary’s parish and the two band halls. While Mary Street and Nicholas Street were two politically opposed localities, they were mere yards apart, which makes an analysis of the social composition of the members of St Mary’s and the Number 9 bands both interesting and revealing. Existing documentary and oral history research presents the two bands as consisting of ‘primarily unskilled workers along with some fishermen’.

The violence may have been directed at – or provoked by – the bands, but it spilled over into the wider community and it was not uncommon for those living in either Parnellite or anti-Parnellite areas and not of the same political persuasion to be assaulted or have their windows broken, especially during election times when tensions ran higher than usual.¹²⁵ This was not, of course, confined to Limerick as many bands nationally experienced the same political divisions. In Cork, too, the very bitter enmity deriving from the Parnellite split had ‘filtered down to working class level not only through press and clerical pronouncements but also through highly politicalised bands.’¹²⁶ A band’s heading to or from the train was an

¹²⁴ Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen, ‘The End of Violence and Introduction of 'Real' Politics: Tensions in Peaceful Northern Ireland’, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 83, no. 3, 2001, p. 121.

¹²⁵ Moloney, *Limerick Constitutional Nationalism*, pp 22-23.

¹²⁶ Maura Cronin, *Country Class or craft?* (Cork, 1994), p.153.

opportunity for riot, as happened in 1895 when the Boherbuoy Band was attacked at Mathew Bridge returning from a day's excursion. Several missiles were thrown and some band members injured.¹²⁷

This danger of confrontation was so great that practical measures were taken by the bands themselves to avoid head-on collisions. In 1895 when both the politically opposed Sarsfield and St Mary's Bands travelled to Dublin to compete in the All-Ireland championship, each band left by a different train. The political affiliations of the Sarsfield Band – and the successful avoidance of confrontation were clearly reported in the newspaper:

They were played off by the Boherbuoy No 1 band, the Number 9 band and the Nelson Street Fife and Drum Band, [Pro-Parnell]. St Mary's left on the 9.10 train 'There were no demonstrations at their departure, hostile or otherwise. They were escorted to the station by Sergeant Hickey and a party of police.'¹²⁸

On other occasions the reputation and musical skill of the band could be used as a sanction. When members of the St Mary's Band (or their supporters) were accused in 1895 of attacking some 'inoffensive citizens' outside the *Limerick Leader* office, there was a major exchange of correspondence in the *Limerick Leader* between the band's president and the editor to ensure that the band was cleared of involvement and therefore not prohibited from participating in the forthcoming band contest in Dublin.¹²⁹

But inter-band confrontation was actually not continuous. The fife and drum bands in the city seemed to have a cordial relationship in the summer of 1894 with bands visiting each other on the occasion of St John's Eve – the traditional popular mid-summer celebration – in

¹²⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 2 September 1895.

¹²⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 23 September 1895.

¹²⁹ *Limerick Leader* 10 September 1894, 29 July 1895, In a letter to the editor of the *Limerick Leader* a suggestion was made for both the St Mary's Band and the Sarsfield Band to amalgamate for the All Ireland Band Contest in 1895 under the name 'Treaty Stone Band'. The Author Mr Thomas O'Shea did not understand the atmosphere of both musical and political idealisms of both bands at this time.

the city. St Mary's band 'serenaded the members of St John's Temperance Society at their rooms under the 'watchful eye' of Head Constable Feeney who 'looked after the interests of the peace.' Good relations were obvious again in 1896 when, in a joint demonstration for the local advanced nationalist, John Daly, the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band and the No. 9 Fife and Drum Bands and Sarsfield Fife and Drum Bands (pro-Parnellite), and the anti-Parnellite St Mary's all accompanied John Daly to Kilrush in County Clare for a rally.¹³⁰

John Daly played a role not only in local Limerick politics but in shaping opinion among the city's bands. Daly, one of Limerick's most influential public men in the early twentieth century, 'was particularly conscious of the publicity of the local musical bands' in drawing crowds to meetings especially at election time.¹³¹ Local resentment against Daly's arrest in Liverpool and imprisonment in Portland Prison on dynamiting charges in April 1893, went some way towards papering over the inter-band divisions following the Parnellite split.¹³² This increasingly anti-English sentiment – tied in with a strong sense of localism – was expressed by St Mary's bandsman and later bandmaster, Patrick Salmon, who published an acrostic poem in the *Limerick Leader* in support of Daly, then a prisoner in Portland:

Joy unto those who fight the cause
Of Erin's exiled son,
Him who is now crushed by British Laws,
Not for crimes he has done.
Despair not in thy lonely cell'
All Ireland hears thy wail
Limerick yet shall see thy proud soul, and
You free from Britain's chain.¹³³

¹³⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 26 October 1896.

¹³¹ Moloney, *Limerick Constitutional Nationalism*, p. 29; McGrath 'Sociability and socio-economic conditions in St Mary's Parish', p. 30.

¹³² Des Long, 'John Daly and Na Fianna Éireann in Limerick 1912-16', *Old Limerick Journal*, Jim Kemmy, (Ed) vol46, (Winter, 2012), p.28.

¹³³ *Limerick Leader*, 18 April 1894. The poem was signed 'by Patrick Salmon, King's Island, Limerick.'

Whether this was a band specifically founded for political purposes or whether it was using the name of Daly to fund a bands reorganisation is difficult to ascertain. In 1895 an attempt was made to form a band named the John Daly Fife and Drum Band. This was a reformation of the St John Fife and Drum band which had its instruments destroyed in an attack on its band hall in 1888. The John Daly band was ‘formed by members of the old St John’s Fife and Drum Band, which had struggled since its instruments were destroyed during a clash with the R.I.C. in 1888.’¹³⁴ It would seem that reforming again under John Daly’s name gave the band a better chance of success in raising subscriptions to purchase instruments.¹³⁵ But the fate of the new band indicates that a suitable political alignment alone was not enough to guarantee a band’s survival. There had to be sufficient demand for it in the parish or district, and it would have to be able to compete or co-exist with any previously existing band. The John Daly Band failed by not being able to compete with the existing Sarsfield Fife and Drum Band which was based in St John’s Parish and very strong and well established in 1895.

As a result, it was difficult to establish a new fife and drum band where one already existed and the John Daly Band’s time was short lived. Perhaps locality was more important than politics, and even some of the inter-band confrontations at the height of the violence of the mid-1890s seem to have been more inter-locality than political: in 1895, following a harmonious visit to St Mary’s Band Hall by the Nelson Street Band Parnellite band, the return journey through Gerald Griffin Street, home to the St John’s Victuallers Band, was the occasion of a serious attack with injury to bandsmen and instrument. This led to a retaliatory attack by the Nelson Street supporters on the St John’s Band room, where instruments were destroyed and major damage done. It would seem from the ensuing court case, however, that this attack on St John’s band was less a matter of political disagreement than of locality-based rivalry – a

¹³⁴ McGrath, ‘Sociability and socio-economic conditions in St Mary’s Parish’, p. 28: *Limerick Leader*, 22 July 1895.

¹³⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 22 July, 12 August, 21, 26 August 1895.

clash between supporters of bands that were clearly identified with rival parishes, one on either side of the river.¹³⁶

Local could even outweigh class divisions, as the brief political career of Patrick McNamara, the bandmaster of St Mary's Band at the end of the 1890s, demonstrates. It must be noted that St Mary's Band in the 1890s was entirely male, with the main occupation of its membership listed as general labourer.¹³⁷ This meant that when the local Labour Party (which was really more nationalist than labour) was led by John Daly it might have been expected to gain support from St Mary's Band and the parish generally. The opposite was actually the case. St Mary's Band at a public meeting in their band room proposed McNamara for the position of District Councillor for the Abbey Ward in the 1899 election under the newly reformed municipal system, but were met by strong opposition from John Daly's party, which turned him down as an election candidate at a meeting in the Mechanics' Institute, the centre of the city's trade unions. This rejection of their local man was not taken lightly by the band and their president John O'Sullivan, himself a general labourer, wrote about the local Labour Party's slight to the band's candidate and pointed out (correctly) that the power of the new Labour Party was really centred in a few individuals centred around Daly:

St Mary's Prize Band, it is needless to say, led the way in every fight to the interest of the working classes. It is the interests of working men of Limerick that the 'ring' who

¹³⁶ *Limerick Chronicle*, 26 June 1894; *Limerick Leader*, 25 June 1895; *Cork Examiner*, 10 September 1895 The three young men charged with breaking into St John's Band Hall and damaging instruments were from the Nelson Street and Edward Street areas, home to the Nelson Street and Boherbuoy bands. This damage had a major impact on St John's Band and it took many years for funds to be raised to get the band functioning again although after great debate in the council chamber St John's was awarded a sum of £50.00 as compensation for losses incurred. On another occasion, St Mary's Band was attacked in Nicholas Street by stone throwers while marching. This is the area where the No. 9 band was based, so more than likely the stone throwers were either supporters or members of this band.

¹³⁷ Census of Ireland 1901, 1911. <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/> accessed 20 February 2015. The bands occupational composition would change in the beginning of the 1920s when Patrick (Todsie) McNamara no relation to P J McNamara became President. This is discussed in a later chapter.2.

have inspired to boss the show should be smashed and that every man's opinion must be recognised whether he is a trade unionist or not.¹³⁸

St Mary's band was becoming disillusioned by those in the labour movement whom they had previously supported, and when two official Labour candidates were put forward in the Abbey Ward at a meeting in the Mechanics Institute, the Labour Elector Association painted the St Mary's Band candidate as a traitor to the labour cause.¹³⁹ The dispute was based more on class than on locality divisions: it was class-based in that McNamara came from a labouring background and lived in a house in Meat Market Lane, as against the Labour Party's candidates who were skilled artisans. One of these, John Moroney, was a plasterer, while the other, Patrick Keane, was a baker who lived in a large six-roomed house in Ahern's Row in St Mary's Parish.¹⁴⁰

Interestingly, when the band's candidate, McNamara, appealed to the Abbey Ward electorate, he did so on entirely local loyalties: 'I was born and brought up in the midst of the electors, my every action is known to them. I feel that I am too well known to make it necessary to say any more on this score.'¹⁴¹ He actually went on to win the election as an Independent Labour candidate, and the *Limerick Leader* reported significantly that 'the sweeping victory of Mr P McNamara in the Abbey ward was, perhaps, somewhat unexpected, but the fact of his having the cordial support of the popular St Mary's Prize Band practically assured his success.'¹⁴² This local element in McNamara's campaign came across in both his speeches and in the celebrations following his electoral success.¹⁴³ McNamara was certainly setting a new

¹³⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 10 March 1899. Under the Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1898, boards of poor law guardians continued in existence though much modified. Under the new legislation, the operational areas of the Board of Guardians were divided between the urban councils and one or more Rural District Councils.

¹³⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 7 April 1899.

¹⁴⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 13 March 1899. Patrick Keane, John Moroney, Census of Ireland 1901, 1911. <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/1901>. Accessed 22 September 2016.

¹⁴¹ *Limerick Leader*, 13 March 1899.

¹⁴² *Limerick Leader*, 7 April 1899.

¹⁴³ *Limerick Leader*, 13 March 1899. *Limerick Leader*, 10 April 1899.

precedent; bands' playing out for successful District Council elections was not uncommon but unusual for a band member to be elected.¹⁴⁴

As well as being bandmaster of the local band McNamara was now a District Councillor and a Poor Law Guardian. As a member of the Outdoor Relief Committee he identified himself with his fellow working class parishioners, stressing that 'as a humble labouring man myself, I am in touch with the wants and requirements of the poor.'¹⁴⁵ McNamara set about on a campaign as a Poor Law Guardian by issuing relief to outdoor hawkers, something for which he was often criticised by members of the Labour Party who claimed that the money was going to those 'whose character did not justify them to get it' and who, according to the local police, were using it for drink.¹⁴⁶ In response, McNamara stated 'with regard to persons whom he had recommended for relief, he only did it in cases that were deserving, and he knew more about the condition of the people than did the police' – stressing that he was a 'man of the people' among whom he lived.¹⁴⁷

Pipes or fifes?

Even when the worst tensions resulting from the Parnellite split and the municipal elections of later in the decade had faded, other political tensions had an effect on the Limerick city bands. One such tension involved the debate from the early twentieth century onwards as to what form nationalist bands should take. McGrath suggests that in their attitude to the city's brass and fife and drum bands, cultural nationalists in Limerick questioned the nature and suitability of these bands for a nationalist community and later for a newly independent state. It was no longer enough that these bands played Irish music and attended nationalist meetings and processions:

¹⁴⁴ *Cork Examiner* 29 March, 15 April 1899; *Munster Express*, 4 March 1899.

¹⁴⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 13 March 1899.

¹⁴⁶ *Limerick Leader* 10 May 1899; John McGrath, 'Sociability and Socio-economic conditions in St Mary's Parish, Limerick 1890-1950', p. 45

¹⁴⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 10 Nov 1899.

what was repeatedly called for now was a pipe band. Their criticism was that ‘fife and drum bands, as well as brass and reed bands, were not authentically Gaelic and owed their origins, directly or indirectly to military bands’ – specifically British military bands.¹⁴⁸ Even though, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, Limerick bands had long played what can be termed ‘national airs’, the playing of traditional music on pipes was clearly now being seen as the way to evoke patriotic sentiments and nationalistic fervour.¹⁴⁹ Fife and drum bands were the popular choice for marching band enthusiasts in the first decade of the twentieth century in Limerick even after anger was expressed in the local press in 1909 ‘that Limerick had an abject lesson [sic] in real Irish music when a Pipers’ Band playing ‘Brian Boru’s march’ marched in the city.’¹⁵⁰ An appeal was made by a number of young men in the city for money to assist in forming a pipe band was made to John Sheehan, a band contest organiser in the city, who asked that anyone interested in joining a pipe band drop a postcard to his home.¹⁵¹ Whether connected to this attempt or not is unclear, but a ‘for sale’ advertisement selling eight Irish pipes, two side drums and a bass drum ‘only six months old’ was put in the *Limerick Leader* in November 1913 so attempts to form a pipe band in Limerick in the years coming up to the First World War was not successful.¹⁵²

But the fife and drum bands remained the most popular: in 1910 the St Dominick’s Fife and Drum band was formed in the city which served the Dominick, Glentworth and Parnell Street areas. The following year the Limerick Corporation Employees’ Society Fife and Drum

¹⁴⁸ McGrath, ‘Sociability and Socio-economic conditions in St Mary’s Parish’, p. 62.

¹⁴⁹ *Limerick Leader* 21 March 1904. A letter after the St Patrick’s Day parade in Limerick gave an expression of nationalist feelings on the bands in Limerick on 1904. ‘The absence of distinctively Irish music from the procession was much to be regretted. It was to be expected that the two local Irish Piper’s Clubs would at least turn out a band between them.’

¹⁵⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 9 August 1909. In a clearly biased letter writer states that the contrast between the pipe and fife bands is marked, ‘the former is harmonised, soft and musical with its Brian Boru march; the latter, while a splendid combination of its kind is not so sweet.’

¹⁵¹ *Limerick Leader*, 9 November 1909, 18 November 1910. John Sheehan’s involvement in music activities in the city is discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁵² *Limerick Leader*, 27 February 1911. 19 November 1911.

Band was formed.¹⁵³ It is clear that the fife and drum tradition was strong in Limerick at this time and the availability of tutors familiar with the music were plentiful at this period plus the moderate cost of forming a fife and drum band in contrast to pipes and brass instruments must have been a factor in the decisions of the organisers. 'By autumn 1922 both military and pipe bands were well represented in the army, and these bands located in different centres throughout the country, by chance rather than design, could claim to be the first bands in the national army.'¹⁵⁴ Fife and drum bands were able to adapt by playing traditional Irish music and well as a European as a means for expressing a traditional value, community solidarity. While a marching band is one of the most recognisable facets of military music. Civilian bands were well able to engage with this image of military music and had the ability to perform when marching and parading.

The Volunteer movement and band

The Irish Volunteers were set up in 1913 to lend nationalist support to the Home Rule Bill then going through parliament. The Limerick branch of the Irish Volunteers was founded on 25 January 1914 and located its offices at No. 1, Hartstonge Street, a middle-class location just off the main thoroughfare, O'Connell Street. Among its most prominent members were Con Colbert and John Daly's nephew Edward (Ned) Daly.¹⁵⁵ It would seem that in the early twentieth century local bands generally remained loyal to the cause of Home Rule, and with the outbreak of war and John Redmond's support of the war effort, many band members joined the British army.¹⁵⁶ When leaders of the Irish Volunteers, amongst whom were notables such

¹⁵³ *Limerick Leader*, 16 January 1911, 17 February 1911. This band had the support and sponsorship of Limerick Corporation in raising the initial funds to start the band.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph P. Ryan 'The Army School of Music 1922-1940: Its formation and evolution with a critical assessment of the compositions of its first director, Wilhelm Fritz Brase, Master of Arts Degree (St Patrick's College, Maynooth), 1987. p. 40.

¹⁵⁵ Limerick Volunteers, <http://limerick1916.ul.ie/the-irish-volunteers/>, accessed 8 May 2017.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers? The Times and World of a Southern Catholic Irish man (1876-1916), Enlisting in the British Army during the First World War*, (Liverpool, 1995), pp 128-131.

Dooley's study gives some clear insights into political and local identity and loyalty during the First World War.

as Eamon De Valera and Patrick Pearse, visited Limerick in 1915 the parade in which they were involved as attacked mainly by women whose husbands were in the army at war. It took police and local priests to calm the crowd and get the volunteers safely to the Railway Station.¹⁵⁷ This unpopularity could be the reason why the Volunteers decided to form their own band. The lack of support from local bands was confirmed by former volunteer Jeremiah Cronin:

I must state here that the Irish Volunteers were not at all popular and we could not induce any city band to accompany us on parades; so we got our own band together and, after a lot of hard work, we succeeded in having a fairly good combination. The man responsible was a musician by the name of Thomas Glynn, who was a personal companion to John Daly.¹⁵⁸

The formation of the Limerick Volunteers' Fife and Drum Band did not have widespread support from the existing city bands. According to their bandmaster, Tom Glynn, 'at that time none of the local bands had sympathy with the Volunteer movement and the officers and men asked me to train a band, which I did.'¹⁵⁹ The Limerick Volunteers came from a cross-section of the community having a membership including artisans, clerks, shopkeepers, teachers, shop assistants and labourers as members. The organisation also provided a meeting ground for members of various political and cultural organisations – the Gaelic League, Sinn Féin and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, as well as individuals who had come through Na Fianna (the National Boy Scouts).¹⁶⁰ A perusal of the Irish Bureau of Military History records shows a statement from Michael Hartney who recalled how this band was formed in the 1913-14 period.

¹⁵⁷ *Limerick Chronicle, Cork Examiner*, 25 May 1915.

¹⁵⁸ (Bureau of Military History, Witness Statement (hereafter BMH, WS) WS1423, Irish Bureau of Military History Jeremiah Cronin, 20 Catherine Street, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 12 April 1966.

¹⁶⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 6 August 1952. This information came from a three-part *Limerick Leader* segment of a lecture given by James Gubbins in 1952. Gubbins went on to state that the city rugby and rowing club members were part of the Volunteer movement, with the GAA members mainly joining in 1918 due to the conscription crisis.

Hartney states that ‘the editors of the local press – *Limerick Leader*, *Limerick Chronicle* and *Munster News* – were strongly pro-Redmond and lost no time heaping ridicule on the Irish Volunteers whom they described as pro-German and ‘tin pike’ soldiers’. He went on to say that,

time justified the action of those who remained loyal to the constitution of the Irish Volunteers. There were four bands in Limerick, all of which gave their support to the Redmondites, and we had to start a band of our own, which played national airs during route marches.¹⁶¹

Jeremiah Cronin’s witness statement confirmed Houlihan’s assertions about how unpopular the Irish Volunteers were amongst the local bands in Limerick in 1915-16: ‘I must state here that the Irish Volunteers were not at all popular and we could not induce any city band to accompany us on parades.’¹⁶² With the Easter Rising by the Volunteers in 1916 and the executions that followed the political opinion on the volunteers had changed not only in Limerick but country wide. In 1922 when the new state not without conflict was founded, the popularity of the fife and drum bands continued at both local and national level. When Beggar’s Bush Barracks in Dublin was handed over to the Free State Army, the civilian O’Connell fife and drum band was engaged to play the troops to Mass at St. Patrick’s Church, Ringsend, on Sunday mornings. The O’Connell Band’s involvement was discontinued when the army formed its own band in Collins Barracks, the Dublin Command Fife and Drum Band, under the Command of Capt. Tommy O’Doherty. This band formed in the army at that time, ceased to exist when Col. Fritz Brase founded the Army School of Music in 1923. The No. 1 Army

¹⁶¹ BMH.WS1415 Irish Bureau of Military History Michael Hartney 14 Prospect Villas, Rosbrien, Limerick, p.1

¹⁶² BMH.WS1423 Irish Bureau of Military History Jeremiah Cronin 20 Catherine Street, Limerick, p. 8

Band was a Brass Band formed in 1923 and gave its first public performance under the direction of Colonel Fritz Brase at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, in October of that year.¹⁶³

Bands and republican sympathies after 1916

St Mary's Band was also classed as a nationalist band in 1916 and reported as playing 'A nation once again' at a sports day in Roxboro, Limerick.¹⁶⁴ At anti-conscription meetings bands were reported to attend with five local bands attending in May 1918.¹⁶⁵ There was also some band participation in labour-related demonstrations as when the local trade societies held a meeting in the Markets Field in 1918 to publicise the bad housing conditions in the city and 'to improve the condition of the working class and those dependent on them.' It was significant that a combination of bands from the city itself and from the outlying areas attended – Boherbuoy and St John's Brass and Reed Bands, Brian Boru Pipers' Band, St Mary's Fife and Drum Bands, and the Ballybrown Fife and Drum Band from five miles outside the city.¹⁶⁶ Band participation in memorial parades, particularly focussed on the 1916 Rising, became more frequent after the establishment of the independent Irish state, bands including St Mary's Band attending the many Republican commemorations in the city that developed in the 1920s, especially for those men who, as the now admiring *Limerick Leader* put it, 'made the sacrifices

¹⁶³ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 August 1923; *Irish Independent*, 2 December 1940. (Obituary notice Col. Fritz Brase.) Fritz Brase, a graduate of the Leipzig Conservatoire and of the Royal Academy of Music in Berlin, was to have a major influence on the role of army band music in Ireland for many decades. He was a gifted musician and a prolific composer born near Hanover in 1875 who, having enrolled in a military band at the age of eighteen as flügelhorn player, had received the title of 'Royal Musical Director' by 1909. In 1911 he was awarded the most prestigious military musical position in Germany, bandmaster of Kaiser Wilhelm II's Prussian Guards First Regiment in Berlin. Following Germany's defeat in the First World War, this imperial band was dissolved and Brase had been conducting and composing music in various theatres immediately prior to the invitation by the Irish government to Ireland in 1923. He was recommended to the Irish Government as a conductor and composer 'on the highest pinnacle, even in the most musical nation of the world' and his 'unique' experience as a top military band instructor, which was 'of most concern' to the Irish army school of music project, was 'one of the deciding factors in bringing about his appointment'.

¹⁶⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 6 November 1916.

¹⁶⁵ *Limerick Leader* 3 May 1918, 24 May 1918. Boherbuoy and St John's Brass and Reed Bands attended this demonstration. The chairman of the meeting was Trades Committee Chairman John Cronin, a Carpenter by trade, who was also President of the Strike Committee of the Limerick Soviet in 1919.

¹⁶⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 5 August 1918.

on Easter Week'. One such event was organised in the city by Sinn Féin during Easter Week 1925, at which an oration was delivered by future Taoiseach, Sean Lemass TD.¹⁶⁷ Another 1916 commemorative parade and meeting took place in Easter Week of 1929, attended by the Boherbuoy and St Mary's Bands.¹⁶⁸

Against this background of growing republican sympathy, one area of contention for the new government after 1922 – but also for local bands – was the remembrance services held on the weekend preceding Armistice Day on 11 November.¹⁶⁹ For many years after the ending of the Great War, particularly up to the mid-1930s, the remembrance services in Dublin were set amidst a volatile political atmosphere there and, indeed, throughout the rest of the country.¹⁷⁰ In Limerick these parades, organised by Royal British Legion's local branch set up in 1922, proved equally controversial.¹⁷¹ Band involvement was patchy: though the Boherbuoy Band did attend many commemorations, it was the Sarsfield Band that was the main participant in the annual remembrance ceremonies, and was the only band reported as playing out for the Limerick War memorial unveiling ceremony in 1929, apparently because many of its members (as will be noted in Chapter 3) had themselves served in the army during the war.¹⁷² The band, as a result, experienced a difficult time due to its participation at these parades, including having their band hall in Mungret Street broken into in 1927, the floor torn up and the band's

¹⁶⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 15 April 1925.

¹⁶⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 20 April 1916; 30 March 1929. In Easter Week of 1929, the Boherbuoy, Sarsfield and Brian Boru Pipers attended the commemoration.

¹⁶⁹ John P. McCarthy, *Kevin O' Higgins Builder of the Irish State* (Dublin, 2006), p. 387. In November of 1926, the Irish Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Kevin O'Higgins laid a wreath at the Cenotaph in London. On 10 July the following year, while walking alone from his home to a noon Mass at the parish church in Booterstown, Co. Dublin, O'Higgins was killed by anti-treaty IRA gunmen.

¹⁷⁰ Tom Bourke, <http://www.greatwar.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/To-Hell-with-the-Free-State.pdf> accessed 20 September 2016, p. 3.

¹⁷¹ Royal British Legion. <http://rbl-limerick.webs.com/branchhistory>. accessed 28 September 2016. 'The branch first came into being in 1922, making it one of the oldest in the organisation. Although founded in the wake of the turmoil of the War of Independence (Anglo-Irish War) and during the birth pains of the fledgling Irish Free-State, these early years saw the branch flourish with as many as 400-500 members. While this may perhaps reflect the magnitude of the city's sense of loss to the First World War, it may be a greater testimony to the very real needs of Limerick veterans and their families for fellowship and practical support in a very poor city.

¹⁷² *Limerick Leader*, 9 November 1929.

drums destroyed. The members of the band were reported to have received threatening letters warning them not to take part in the remembrance parade. In defiance of this threat, the bands men borrowed a set of drums and took part in the ceremony in Limerick.¹⁷³

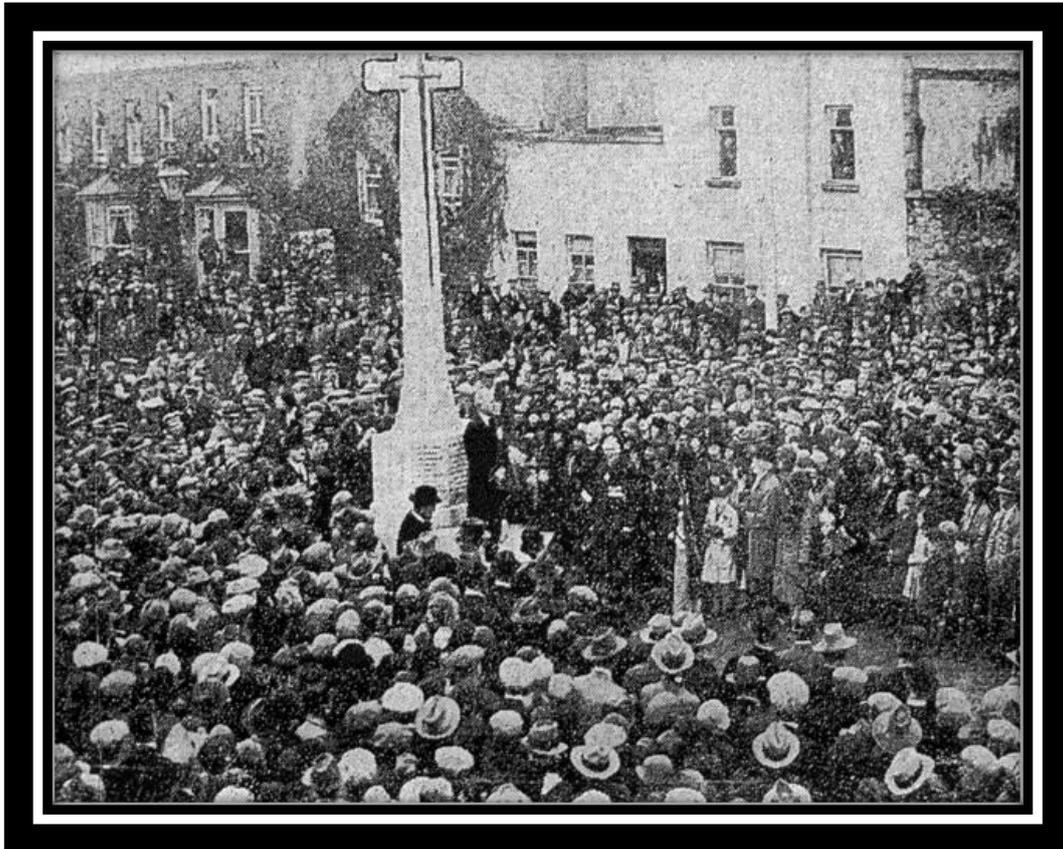


Figure 9: Unveiling of War memorial Limerick, 1929.¹⁷⁴

A poem written by former Sarsfield Band member, Jack McManus, in 1977 as well as outlining the history of the band includes some verses showing its pride in its members' role in the Great War, a pride that survived even into a period when the effort of the soldiers of 1914-18 got little public appreciation:

¹⁷³ *Limerick Leader*, 7, 14 November 1927; *The Irish Independent*, 7 November 1927. The committee were later to lodge a claim for £100 damages to instruments which included one Bass Drum, two flutes, one piccolo and four side drums.

¹⁷⁴ Royal British Legion, Limerick Branch. <http://rbl-limerick.webs.com/> accessed 28 September 2016. *Limerick Leader*, 7 August 1957. In August 1957, the Limerick War Memorial was blown up and so began a steady decline in the membership. The outbreak of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland after 1969 accelerated this, ultimately leading to the closure of the branch and sale of the Legion Club in the city. A new War Memorial in Pery Square, dedicated to those who lost their lives in 1914-18 and 1939-45, was erected in the 1970s. *Limerick Leader*, 16 October 1963. In this report the Legion then had its offices in 23 Thomas Street.

But in 1914 the Great War broke out,
 And the band boys mostly all went away,
 On the battlefields of Flanders their music did play,
 They were at Mons and the Somme, at the hell, Sulva Bay,
 In all fronts of the War where they fought and they played,
 The Munster Fusiliers were never dismayed.
 And in 1919 the Great War was o'er,
 And back to old Limerick the boys came once more,
 To take up again a bandsman's loved chore,
 But in 1919 the Black and Tans came and there wasn't much fun,
 With martial law and the curfew and the sight of the gun.¹⁷⁵

With the demise of the Sarsfield Band in the 1950s¹⁷⁶ the presence of a local band at the Remembrance Day commemoration was sporadic and the only local band that continued to attend was the Boherbuoy Band.¹⁷⁷ In August 1957, the Limerick War Memorial was blown up and so began a steady decline in the membership.¹⁷⁸ Running parallel to this increasingly hostile attitude, the aging of the membership of the Limerick branch of the British Legion led to the closure of the branch and sale of its club in the city in the 1960s, though the Legion continued to have an office in the city.¹⁷⁹ Although a new War memorial was erected in the 1970s, the emotions roused by the outbreak of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland after 1969

¹⁷⁵ Authors own collection. Two verses of a poem written by Jack McManus 30 July 1977.

¹⁷⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 24 November 1958. A letter from a Limerick exile from Newport in Wales made an appeal for Limerick people to try and save the Sarsfield Band which, according to this letter, folded in 1958.

¹⁷⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 16 October 1963, 5 November 1966, 9 November 1968, 8 November 1969. No band name was given, just a mention that 'band will attend' on these dates. In 1968 St John's Brass and Reed Band attended.

¹⁷⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 7 August 1957. John Ring, a retired Sargent Major and secretary of the British Legion, stated that 'It is regrettable that this should happened, the memorial had no political significance and was merely there to commemorate our Limerick men who were killed in the First World War and Second World War.'

¹⁷⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 16 October 1963, 2 June 1992. In 1992 the Legion had its offices in 23 Thomas Street.

and the fading of memories of locality and family participation in the war, public and band interest in war commemorations was at a low ebb. When a plaque was unveiled by Mayor Jim Kemmy in 1992 to mark the seventieth anniversary of the disbandment of the British Army Irish regiments on the formation of the New Free State government in 1922, no Limerick band was reported as attending on this occasion.¹⁸⁰ In 2014, the first time since the band's formation in 1885, St Mary's Fife and Drum Band attended the Remembrance Day commemoration. This was mainly because three band members had died in the First World War and, in the growing willingness to remember the war and its dead, the band wanted to commemorate them and lay a wreath in their honour. St Mary's Band has played at each Remembrance Sunday since 2014.¹⁸¹

Post-treaty politics:

The Anglo-Irish Treaty caused deep divisions within nationalist Ireland but its impact on Limerick's bands is difficult to ascertain. St Mary's Band, though it is not clear whether it had a unified attitude to the Anglo-Irish Treaty, seems to have taken the anti-treaty side. For over twenty years, since the Parnellite split and since bandmaster P. J. McNamara's brief period as a District Councillor in the late 1890s, the band had been quiet on the political front. Now with 'Todsie' McNamara, a firm admirer of De Valera, as its president it supported the anti-treaty campaign.¹⁸² The Irish Civil War did impact on the band. The local upheaval caused by the conflict affected construction of the new band room in 1922 and fundraising activities were interrupted in July 1922 with the words 'War, War' inserted in the financial accounts.

¹⁸⁰ Royal British Legion, Limerick Branch. <http://rbl-limerick.webs.com/branchhistory.htm>, accessed 9 May 2017; *Limerick Chronicle*, 2 June 1992.

¹⁸¹ Personal experience of the author, who is Bandmaster of St Mary's Fife and Drum Band and a member of the Committee. Kevin Myers states that while the story of the Great War was 'told by families in Istanbul, and Calais, Milan and Manchester, it is a tale that was once not told in Ireland. But those days are over.' Brendan McQuale, *March away my brothers*, (Dublin, 2011), Foreword by Kevin Myers, not paginated.

¹⁸² *Limerick Leader*, 21 May 1924. The President, Patrick 'Todsie' McNamara of Sheep Street was listed amongst the many nominators of the anti-Treaty candidate, Tadgh Crowley, in the by-election of 1924.

His death brought the effects of the conflict into both the band and the local community as he and his two brothers, Michael and Joseph Hanley were members of the band since it had been based in Fish Lane, and he appears in the membership book of 1922 and the accounts book as a seller of fund raising concert tickets and subscribing to the hall every week up to his death.¹⁸⁴

Other members of the band are mentioned in the band's membership book for 1922-23 as 'in jail' or in the 'army'.¹⁸⁵ While the records did not define whether the army referred to was the Free State Army or the anti-Treaty forces, it might be concluded that most, if not all, of St Mary's Band took the anti-Treaty side and that therefore members were not inclined to join Óglaigh na hÉireann, the army of the new Irish Free State, which in 1923 was advertising in the local press for fifty thousand men to join.¹⁸⁶ When the band president and his sons Patrick Jnr. and James were arrested following the shooting of a water baliff at Plassey – as part of a fishing dispute – in their house were found rifle and revolver ammunition as well some gelignite, more than likely remnants of the previous few years' involvement in the civil war conflict.¹⁸⁷

Under 'Todsie' McNamara's authoritative leadership, St Mary's Band continued through the 1920s to support De Valera and – after 1926 – the Fianna Fáil party and was to the forefront any time De Valera visited Limerick in the 1920s.¹⁸⁸ From newspaper reports it seems that the only bands present at public meetings were St Mary's Band and St Michael's Pipe Band – which seem to have also cooperated with one another in non-political matters relating

¹⁸⁴ *St Mary's prize band celebrating 100 years 1885-2010*, (Limerick, 2010), p. 62; St Mary's Band membership and account book July 1922.

¹⁸⁵ St Mary's Band membership and account book July 1922.

¹⁸⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 1 January 1923.

¹⁸⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 6 July 1925.

¹⁸⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 15 April 1925. St Mary's Band Account Book, 10 June 1927. St Mary's paid a subscription of two pounds to Fianna Fail in 1927.

to band business in the city.¹⁸⁹ Other bands in the city seemed to take a non-political stance during and in the immediate aftermath of the civil war, playing in concerts, recitals and band contests rather than at political rallies.¹⁹⁰ But there are some hints of opposing political stances, the Sarsfield Band and St Joseph's Industrial School Band offering some musical support to William Cosgrave in 1923, though there is no indication of whether this was through political sympathy or for financial gain.¹⁹¹

Significantly, according to band lore, 'Todsie' McNamara, the pro-De Valera president of St Mary's turned sour towards Fianna Fáil in the 1930s as a result of the economic fall-out of the Shannon Scheme. McNamara was an Abbey Fisherman and as a trustee in the Ancient Guild of Abbey Fishermen had played a prominent role in the purchase of sections of the river Shannon from Corbally Mill Dam up to Doonass, Co. Clare, in the early 1900s.¹⁹² Life certainly changed for the Abbey Fishermen when the Shannon Electricity Bill became law in June 1925 and a contract was signed between the Free State Government and the German company of Siemen's Schuckert.¹⁹³ Due to the building of the Hydro Electric Shannon Scheme and the consequent diversion of the Shannon River to the new hydro dam, and despite promises by Fianna Fáil that the Abbey Fishermen would be protected, the livelihoods of the fishermen were disrupted and their fishing was made illegal in 1937.¹⁹⁴ When the promises made by the party to the Abbey fishermen did not materialise, the St Mary's Band support for Fianna Fáil diminished noticeably, partly because of band President McNamara's influence, but also because of the number of Abbey fisherman in the band's general membership. From a perusal

¹⁸⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 26 May 1924. *Accounts Book St Mary's Band*, (1923). These two bands had alliances formed as the St Michael's Pipe band were listed as patrons of St Mary's Band Hall on the list of subscribers and concert ticket holders in fundraising for St Mary's new Hall. This is a sign of Inter-band cooperation.

¹⁹⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 19 June 1923.

¹⁹¹ *Limerick Leader*, 23, 29 May 1922, 19 May 1924.

¹⁹² Jackie Clancy. *My Life on the river, An Abbey Fisherman's Stories*, (Texas, 2010), p. 2. Clancy, an Abbey fisherman wrote his memoirs and a history of the Abbey Fishermen's guild in 1939. Patrick 'Todsie' McNamara features prominently in this recollection and the demise of the fishermen's source of revenue in the 1930s.

¹⁹³ Michael McCarthy *High Tension, Life on the Shannon Scheme*, (Dublin, 2004), p. 27.

¹⁹⁴ McCarthy *High Tension, Life on the Shannon Scheme*, pp 163-164.

of the membership book of St Mary's Band from 1922 to 1932, and from this author's personal knowledge as a longstanding member of the band, at least a third of band membership was an Abbey fishermen.¹⁹⁵

However, the tendency towards political alignment by bands seems to have been decreasing by the late 1930s. This approach had already been taken by Cork's Barrack Street Band which decided to 'leave politics to the politicians and to make a determined effort to unite, not separate' This non-political stance would have come from a proposal at the Barrack Street Bands AGM in 1935 when it was proposed that the band would take no further part in politics which was unanimously passed.¹⁹⁶ When the new Thomond Fife and Drum Band (Mickey Raleigh's Band) was set up in the Thomondgate area of St Munchin's Parish in 1935, it deliberately took the lead from Cork, with a firm rule that the band was to take no part in politics.¹⁹⁷

Conclusion

Limerick in the nineteenth century was not a very large city, its population averaging forty to fifty thousand at its highest point, and the city's area being a mere twenty acres.¹⁹⁸ At one level, this made for considerable local unity: Limerick was proud of its military tradition and many of its civilian bands were formed following the example of the regimental bands that were a constant feature of city life. This military influence produced a city-wide appreciation of marches, and although a more nationalistic repertoire developed later in the nineteenth century, the tradition of playing military marching music remained unaltered into the twenty-first century. Religion, too, acted as a unifying force, especially in the later nineteenth and early

¹⁹⁵ St Mary's Band Membership Book 1922-1932.

¹⁹⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 29 March 1935.

¹⁹⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 25 June 1935.

¹⁹⁸ Ruth Guiry, 'Public Health and Housing in Limerick City, 1850-1935 A Geographical Analysis' Unpublished MA thesis, Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick).2013, p. 44.

twentieth century when devotional Catholicism in the form of the Redemptorist Archconfraternity provided occasions when the bands took a prominent part in public devotions and processions. Militant nationalism provided another opportunity for Limerick band solidarity, the bands all participating in Fenian funerals and especially in the Manchester Martyrs commemoration each November. However, this small size did not prevent the emergence of several competing senses of identity that were played out in the form of conflict between different localities and their marching bands. The local rivalries between ‘advanced’ separatist nationalists and the constitutional Home Rule movement from the early 1870s onwards led to violent confrontations involving the bands.

At times it is difficult to work out whether these divisions were political or territorial: the local rivalries between St Mary’s Parish (north-west of the Abbey River) and the parishes of St Michaels and St. John’s on the south-east were not essentially political, but they were sharpened with the Parnellite split in 1890 – a division which lasted for over a decade and led to pitched battles between enemy bands and their supporters, especially on the city’s bridges – the boundary between the rival territories. As the Limerick city bands were founded on the basis of parish or locality, this led to extremely intense local loyalties and rivalries. These loyalties were made less sharp through the bands’ all being Catholic, as seen in their involvement in religious celebrations like those of the Archconfraternity. They were also lessened by the identification of the bands with various nationalist movements from Repeal to Home Rule. But political division was also there, and could be sharpened by the local loyalties between the bands and their parishes and this was very clear following the Parnellite split in 1890.

Some divisions seem to have been social rather than political: the St Mary’s Band support for Patrick McNamara, the Independent Labour candidate in the local elections of 1899 suggests that social background (and the bands were largely working class in membership) was more

important than political alignment. In fact, political allegiances as shown by the bands and their supporters prove very difficult to pinpoint: Limerick bands remained proud of their military tradition and some continued to play at Remembrance Day commemorations well after the establishment of the Free State. On the other hand, most seem to have taken a far more sympathetic attitude to separatist republicanism, especially after the 1916 rebellion, while the Civil War divisions seem also to have been played out within the bands. There was also another division between the bands, many of whose members supported the British war effort in 1914-1918, while others backed the cultural nationalist and republican groups that came to the fore in the period. These differences were eliminated with the rise of support for republicanism after 1916 and especially when the new state was founded, though other differences arose in the Civil War. The bands seem to have abandoned political involvement following the 1930s, especially with the controversy caused by the Shannon Scheme, which made many disillusioned with political parties, and became more involved in local activities and concentrated on parish social events and national parades.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 25 June 1935.

Chapter 3. The Army Connection

This chapter examines the influence of the British army on the local civilian bands in Limerick. It is generally accepted the musical standards of civilian fife and drum bands have been influenced by British Army bands.¹ This is not unlikely since the British Army was stationed in centres all over Ireland in the nineteenth century and accompanying all regiments were brass and fife and drum bands ‘composed of professional fulltime musicians, who normally took part in other military activities.’² Joining the army was common in a limited employment market and local men returned home from military service to found or join civilian bands, bringing back their new found musical and marching skillset obtained while enlisted in the army. The chapter discusses the impact of army bands’ involvement in recruiting rallies and asks whether this, along with other public displays, ensured Limerick’s popular familiarity with military music and marching techniques. Though civilian bands did not purchase uniforms until the twentieth century, the army influence is demonstrated by photographic evidence of neat dress and a smartly outfitted drum major. The chapter goes on to outline the importance of competition, band contests becoming popular amongst civilian bands at the latter end of the nineteenth century and discusses the resulting high standards of musicianship, changes in quality of instrumentation and growing commitment by band members.

¹ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2013), p.159.

² Jack Cassin-Scott, John Fabb, *Military bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset 1978), p.26; ‘In England drums and fifes evolved in about the reign of Henry VIII following the continental military music started by King Francis I of France. The assignment of drums and fifes to each company of foot in the English army at St Quentin was ordered in 1557. Though later revoked by James II the fifes were reinstated in 1747 by the then Commander in chief ‘The Duke of Cumberland’, Barty-King, *The Drum*, p. 96. In Henry VIII’s favourite ship the Mary Rose when it capsized off Spithead on 1545 were three three-holed ‘tabor pipes’ and a small leather covered side drum with its wooden stick. These were discovered when the ship was raised in 1982. p.33. Gordon Ramsey, *Music, Emotion and identity in Ulster Marching Bands*, (Oxford 2010), p.85.

Limerick in the nineteenth century was a garrison town with many British army regiments stationed in the city and surrounding areas.³ In 1844 there were five barracks in Limerick city with well over a thousand troops of various ranks, and this does not include the various regiments and barracks in the county.⁴ Accompanying these regiments were various brass and fife and drum bands which added pomp and colour whenever they marched through the streets of the city. These bands, especially in the nineteenth century, were conspicuous by their presence at many exhibitions and social occasions such as regattas, introducing the local population to a military music culture.

³ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2013), p.11. 'The term British Army can only legitimately be employed from 1707, the year of the Act of Union with Scotland', pp 2-3.

⁴ Military History Limerick.

<http://www.limerickcity.ie/Library/LocalStudies/LocalStudiesFiles/M/MilitaryHistory/>, accessed 10 March 2017. This report showing the number and distribution of troops in the Limerick Military district was prepared for Major-General Lord Downes, K.C. B., G.O.C., Limerick 1844.



Figure 11: Royal Irish Constabulary marching through George's Street, Limerick, 1908. ⁵

Army bands and recruiting:

Within an expanding British Empire especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, imagery, music and discipline together played a vital role in drawing men to the army, and the army itself was well aware of the power of music in attracting new recruits. The recruiting parties – and especially their bands – that visited various towns in Ireland with their impressive uniforms and rousing music had a great influence in encouraging young men to join the army. One description of recruiting in Enniskillen in 1899 shows just how young men were attracted by the sights and sounds of the event:

⁵ National Library of Ireland, No. ROY, 05289, accessed 9 March 2017. The young boys marching behind the police expresses even at a young age the influence of marching techniques on the local populace. The outside child is marching in step along with the uniformed force.

The recruiting party - members of the regiment stationed here - usually fell in about 2 o'clock. There were two rows of non-commissioned officers (sergeants) in front, with swords drawn and ribbons streaming from their caps then came the band playing spirit-stirring airs, a few rows of corporals forming the rear. Their appearance was quite imposing and invariably attracted a large crowd of stalwart peasant lads, as well as town youths and others. And it was certainly calculated to inspire a military enthusiasm in the breasts of the people and many a fine young fellow, becoming enamoured of the service, was induced to accompany the party to the barracks and finally take the shilling.⁶

Whether effective or not, the musically driven recruitment drive by regiments must have played some part in convincing young men to move in the direction of a military career, and it was taken seriously by the regiments. The failure of a recruiting drive in Newry in the 1850s was blamed on the local Louth Militia's neglecting 'to play spirited music or to hold themselves in a pristine martial manner.'⁷ Of course, rousing music was not always a guarantee of recruitment. Just at the same time as the Newry drive was failing, a similar lack of success was evident in Limerick where despite the Militia Band playing through the streets and gathering a large crowd, 'the fine hearty free young lads did not evince much disposition to take 'the shilling.' – although as the report in this case came from the nationalist *Limerick Reporter* it may have downplayed the success of the recruiting effort.⁸ Some military bands, to make their music more rousing, and possibly more attractive to potential recruits, began to change their style of playing by adding bugles which 'performed in the manner of duets, the bugle playing one bar, the fifes and drums performing the next. The *Cork Examiner* reported satirically that

⁶ *The Times*, 1 November 1899.

⁷ *Newry Examiner*, 24 January 1855.

⁸ *Limerick Reporter*, 20 January 1857. Desmond & Jean Bowen, *Heroic Option, The Irish in the British Army*, (Barnsley 2005), pp 75-76. James O'Malley of Galway has told how, as a boy he was entranced with splendid well-proportioned, brave looking soldiers, gaily dressed' marching with their bands in the city.

band music was used ‘in the hope we suppose of successfully rousing the martial spirit of the hearers.’⁹ The pattern of recruiting helped by band music did not change over the following half-century. As early as 1825 it was reported that a bugler of the Third Dragoon Guards and a regimental band of the 19th Foot paraded Limerick’s city streets looking for recruits.¹⁰ Limerick in 1854 had the ‘72nd Highland Regiment with full band parading the city, beating up for recruits of which they have obtained a few.’¹¹ In the previous March a letter which was received at a meeting of the Limerick Board of Guardians stated that a recruiting officer should visit the workhouse and enlist paupers.¹² The pattern had not changed fundamentally six decades later when, in 1915, a Sinn Fein leaflet complained that Irishmen were being,

recruited into the ‘enemy's army’ not by the recruiting sergeant's shilling only, but by a cunning appeal to our traditional courage and a wicked attempt to fill our young men with wondering admiration of marching men and military bands and make them long to show their inherent valour on a real field of battle.¹³

The complaint was accurate enough: there was brisk recruiting of about three hundred men at the recruiting office in Cruise’s Hotel Limerick and the band of the Irish Guards were reported as being in the city to assist in the recruiting drive.¹⁴ In Tralee two months later the fife and

⁹ *The Cork Examiner*, 5 November 1859.

¹⁰ *Limerick Chronicle*, 11 January 1825. *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 December 1826 the band and bugles of the 24th Regiment were reported looking for recruits in the city.

¹¹ *Limerick Reporter*, 21 November 1854.

¹² *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, 18 March 1854.

¹³ Peter Karsten, ‘Irish Soldiers in the British Army, 1792-1922: Suborned or Subordinate?’ *Journal of Social History*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1983), p.39. *Limerick Leader*, 5 November 1915. Titled ‘The recruiting drain’ this article stated ‘Limerick has done as much as any city in the United Kingdom in the way of supplying troops to the British Army. Even before the formation of the local recruiting committee many hundreds had joined the colours and many of them were National Volunteers. Up to Tuesday last some 40 recruits were enrolled. They were all types of manhood and suitable for any fighting force.’

¹⁴ *Dublin Daily Express*, 5 April 1915. *Derry Journal*, 5 April 1915. *Limerick Leader* 21 April 1915, Reported large crowds outside Cruises Hotel, cheering the new Royal Munster Fusiliers recruits as they presented themselves. ‘It is perhaps the first time in Irish history that such demonstrations have been witnessed.’

drum band of the Munster Fusiliers attended ‘to help promote the immediate enlistment of the youth of the county.’¹⁵

Maintaining control:

‘Military spectacle simultaneously presented a cautionary threat and an attraction to the civilian population.’ It helped the military in its role of maintaining public order by conveying military strength and invincibility.¹⁶ But as well as controlling the civilian population, military ceremony also played a part in maintaining discipline within the army itself. By the 1790s most European armies used fifes and drums to call orders and to accompany marching.¹⁷ ‘The musical duties of the military fifer were to play for marching and also give the soldiers signals during battle’.¹⁸ The fifes provided the melody to march the soldiers into battle; the drums played the role of intimidating the enemy. Adkins states that ‘music has been the accompaniment to feats of arms, serving the two-fold purpose of inspiring the troops to fight, and as a method of conveying orders and commands’.¹⁹ Regiments on the march were always led by the fifes and drums. From this author’s experience over three decades of involvement in a civilian band, it is easier to keep time when playing if marching and keeping in step.²⁰ Marching to step was initially brought in to ‘calculate the travel of soldiers on the march with

¹⁵ *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, 26 June 1915. *Southern Star*, 26 June 1915. Recruiting with a military band reported in Bantry Co. Cork.

¹⁶ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2013), p. 218. ‘Military spectacle simultaneously presented a cautionary threat and an attraction to the civilian population.’ It helped the military in its role of maintaining public order by conveying the strength and military coherence, p.218.

¹⁷ Henry George Farmer, *The Rise & Development of Military music*, (London, 1912), Farmer cites Machiavelli as recommending ‘the ancient Greek method of employing flutes or fifes for the better regulation of the stepping together of troops.’ p.29. It would seem that most military musicians were soldiers who were required to be potentially effective; they were trained to fight or to do other work that supported combat, p.65.

¹⁸ Stanley Sadie, *The new grove dictionary of musical instruments*, (New York, 1984), p. 741.

¹⁹ H. E. Adkins, *Treatise on the military band*, (London, 1977), p.1. The band’s music was used in battles to excite passions in troops which many orators would fail to inspire. Jack Cassin-Scott, John Fabb, *Military Bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset, 1978), It also had other military duties such as, in the seventeenth century when armies wintered and billeted in towns and villages until spring offensive. Local Inn keepers had to turn off their beer taps by 10pm, ‘This was notified to the soldiers by a ‘Drummers’ Tattoo’, an officer, sergeant with drummer who beat the call for soldiers to return to billets, p. 27.

²⁰ Derek Mulcahy, author of this thesis and member of St Mary’s Band since 1976. In Limerick on St Patrick’s Day parades the Limerick Civil Defence always requested to march behind St Mary’s Fife and Drum band so as to keep in step and march at a nice pace.

greater accuracy rather than for decorative purposes.’ By the start of the nineteenth century the visual aspect of ‘a carefully choreographed parade was widely appreciated in the British military, and consequently exactitude in the exercise of the cadence in drumming, became an even greater priority.’²¹ Many manuals of drumming marching and with music were published in the nineteenth century and updated over decades and still used today by fife and drum bands.

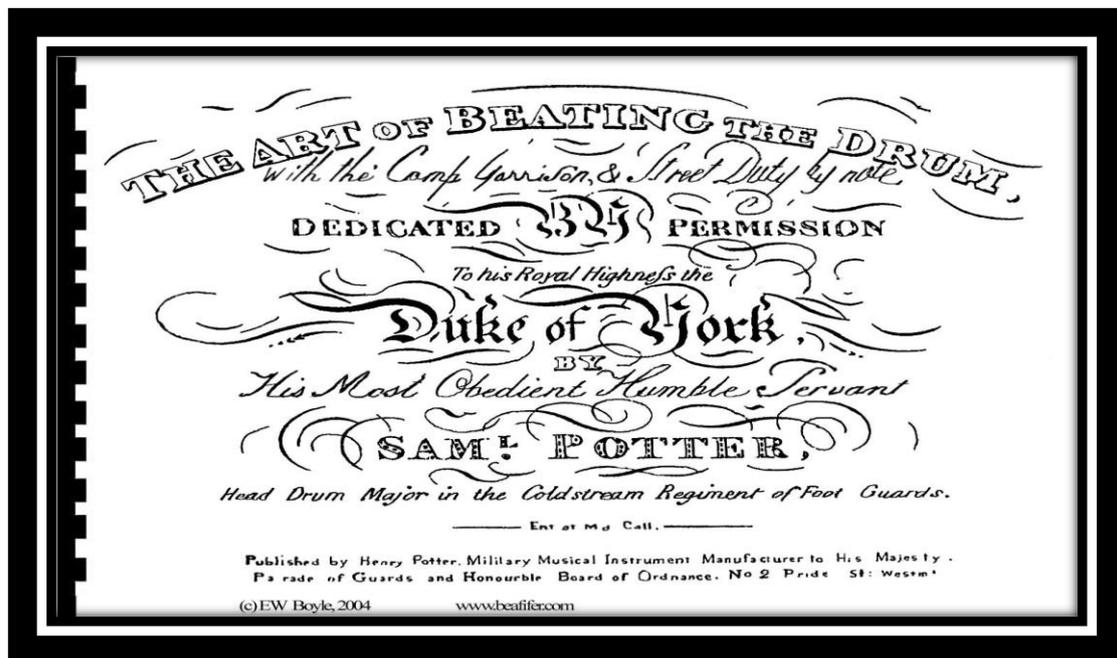


Figure 12, Potter’s *Art of beating the drum*, 1815.

Samuel Potter’s manual in 1817 *Art of beating the drum* (see illustration above) was one of the first published manuals on the art of marching to a drum beat. His introduction gave a basic but detailed guide to drumming in a band:

The first thing previous to a boy practising on the drum is to place him perfectly upright, and place his left foot in the hollow of the right foot, then put the drum sticks into his

²¹ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2013), pp 24-25.

hands - the right hand stick to be [grasped] with the whole hand about two inches from the top (or more if required), as drum sticks are not all of the same weight, similar to grasping a sword or stick when going to play back-sword. The left to be held between the thumbs and fore finger of the left hand close in the hollow, the top towards the wrist leaving the top of the stick as much out of the hand as the other, resting it resembling a pen when going to write, only with this exception between the first joints of the second and third fingers.²²



Figure 13: *Drum Major Manual* circa 1910.²³

These manuals came into the hands of army band members and were thus brought home to civilian bands who could, in order to teach band members, copy them on to music manuscript paper which could either be drawn manually (as evident from material surviving in the St

²² Samuel Potters 'Art of beating the Drum', introduction, www.beafifer.com/potterdrum.htm, accessed 19 May 2017

²³ This manual would have been a modernised version of the nineteenth century manuals since Samuel Potters 'The art of Beating the drum with the camp, garrison, & Street Duty, which he published in 1817.

Mary's Band archive) or ordered from Potters of London or local music shops such as Piggott's in Georges Street and Bernard's in Rutland Street. and Corbett.²⁴

The music of army bands also had a role in raising the morale of the soldiers, especially in camp, to 'vary the dreary monotony of cantonment life and help to dispel the depression consequent thereon.'²⁵ Many of the diary entries of the soldiers in the First World War 'refer to the concerts and sing-songs that took place in the trenches, perhaps accompanied by a squeeze box or harmonica, and also behind the lines during periods of rest.'²⁶ A letter to the *Limerick Chronicle* in 1915 from a Private Costelloe of the Royal Munster Fusiliers requested: 'If someone would send us a melodeon to help keep the boys in good trim. As you know the Irish lads are very fond of music, especially these long cold winter nights.'²⁷ The best face was shown to public figures visiting the front, often with music as part of the reception: Nationalist leader John Redmond visited France in 1915 observing the conditions soldiers suffered in the trenches. Visiting the Munster Fusiliers on the 17 November, as he arrived, a green flag fluttered in the breeze, and the band struck up 'The Wearing of the Green'. After the inspection, the regiment formed a square and, from its centre, Redmond addressed the Battalion.²⁸

²⁴ *Guy's Limerick Directory*, (1912), p.27.

²⁵ Lieut. J Mackenzie Rogan, 'Regimental Bands: Their history and Role of usefulness, *The Musical Times*, vol 54, no.839, (1913), p. 29. This was a summary of a lecture given by Mackenzie, band master of the Brigade of Guards [date, venue of lecture?]

²⁶ Brendan MacQuaile, *March away my brothers, Irish soldiers and their music in the Great War*, (Dublin 2011), p. 18.

²⁷ Des Ryan, 'The second Munster's in France 1914-18', *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 24, (French edition 1989), p.164, *Limerick Chronicle*, 27 October 1914, 31 July 1915; *Limerick Leader*, 12 June 1915. Two Munster Fusiliers prisoners from Limerick, Lyddy and McManus, made an appeal as prisoners in Limburg Germany for cigarettes, tobacco, cocoa, sugar, milk, syrup and tinned foodstuffs to be sent to them. In a postcard to his mother Joseph O'Driscoll, of Little Barrington Street, wrote, 'Just a line to let you know I am alive and well. We have been captured by the Germans. There are about 140 killed, and about 50 wounded. The rest are alive but prisoners. If you want to write, my address will be Lance-Corporal O'Driscoll, Prisoner, German Army.' Other letters home spoke of the bravery of Limerick soldiers and one from a Drummer Hassett describing how, though losing many men, his 1st Battalion Munster's captured Turkish positions at Sedul Bahr. Hassett and his brother were wounded in this battle and spoke of going back to fight again.

²⁸ *Limerick Chronicle*, 27 November 1915. Des Ryan, 'The Second Munster's 1914-18 part two', *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 20, (1986), p. 37.

In the daily life of the army, the band was part of the average soldier's life – not just of those who played in it – as obvious in one ceremony that took place up to the middle of the nineteenth century. When a soldier was discharged with ignominy he was drummed out of his regiment:

When the adjutant read out a sentence the provost sergeant then cut off his collar and cap badges, tore off the soldier's straps and his buttons and the prisoner and escort marched down the ranks while the drums and fifes played 'The Rogue's March'... The sentence was repeated at intervals and when the prisoner reached the barrack gates he was ejected, then the smallest drummer boy administering a kick to his posterior as the gates were shut.²⁹

In Cork a soldier of the 24th Regiment was drummed out of the barracks for desertion with the band playing the 'Rogue's March'.³⁰ Another role for regimental band drummers occurred in Dublin in 1865 two soldiers who had gone absent from their regiment for two days were flogged by the drummers.³¹ It is not clear whether this use of a musical band as part of disciplinary code was a regular feature within the military stationed in Limerick, though here members of the regimental band had other similar duties. A soldier stationed at Boherbuoy Barracks in 1858 was given fifty lashes for attempting to stab his corporal. This was carried out by two drummers who delivered twenty five lashes each.³²

²⁹ Jack Cassin-Scott, John Fabb, *Military Bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset, 1978), p. 29.

³⁰ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 7 April 1862.

³¹ *Cork Examiner*, 11 April 1865.

³² *Dublin Weekly Nation*, 21 August 1858.



Figure 14: Welsh Fusiliers with goat mascot Limerick circa early 1900s. ³³

The close integration of army and civilian life in Limerick is obvious in how some aspects of the actual practice of drumming out spread from the army to the factory floor. This happened in 1844 – and was recorded in the local press – when two men employed by Mr John Egan, at his hair factory at Robert Street, having violated their temperance pledge, had the ignominy of being drummed out of his premises. ‘He sent for drum and fife belonging to the Mungret Street Temperance Society on yesterday morning and had them publically drummed out of his concerns in the presence of some hundreds.’ It was also reported that fellow workers threw a pail of water on them as they departed.³⁴ Interestingly – and this shows the civilian familiarity with military custom – the *Limerick Reporter* also accredited ‘the brother of one of the pledge breakers as playing ‘The Rouge’s March’ on the fife while the ceremony of expulsion was

³³ Jim Kemmy (ed.), *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 6, (Spring, 1981), cover page.

³⁴ *Limerick Reporter*, 9 Jan. 1844; *Cork Examiner* 4 March 1842, In Cork a private in the 86th Regiment John Collins was drummed out of Barracks with a Halter around his neck and pulled by colleagues. He was charged with robbery.

being carried into effect. Egan was given great praise for setting this precedent which the report recommended that other employers of Limerick should imitate in the case of those that violated their pledges.

Military bands and public displays

Military bands were conspicuous in the city of Limerick through the nineteenth century at many social occasions. Hayes describes how ‘utilisation of the Union flag, the playing of the ‘God Save the Queen’, and invitations to military bands to perform at sports events’ were a regular event throughout the century.³⁵ These events included sales of work, exhibitions, regattas and – later in the century – rugby matches, where their sounds, marching style, and imagery lent panache and drama to the occasion.³⁶ A report of the visit of the American Ambassador to Limerick in 1851 described large crowds watching him leave the city docks on a boat to Mount Trenchard to dine at Lord Monteagle’s house. Two further boats were engaged to accommodate the bands of the 63rd Regiment of Foot and the 52nd Foot who played for His Excellency and the company. The newspaper noted how ‘delightful [it was] to witness the admirable manner in which they went down the river, with flags flying, the bands playing, the utmost enthusiasm animating all classes.’³⁷ Regattas and sporting occasions in the city with military bands were reported widely in the city.³⁸ Hayes’ study of sport in North Munster described sporting occasions in the city when ‘a refreshment tent on the ground would not be out of place, and the

³⁵ Hayes, ‘From ludicrous to logical’, p. 296.

³⁶ Jack Cassin-Scott, John Fabb, *Military bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset, 1978), p.26. The assignment of drums and fifes to each company of foot in the English army at St Quentin was ordered in 1557. Though later revoked by James II the fifes were reinstated in 1747 by the then Commander in chief ‘The Duke of Cumberland’, p. 26. Hugh Barty-King, *The Drum*, (London, 1988), In Henry VIII’s favourite ship the *Mary Rose* when it capsized off Spithead on 1545 were three three-holed ‘tabor pipes’ and a small leather covered side drum with its wooden stick. These were discovered when the ship was raised in 1982, p. 33.

³⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 22 September 1851. Jim Kemmy, ‘A Letter to Lord Monteagle’, *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 27, (1992), p. 22. Lord Monteagle was a liberal peer who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1835 to 1839. As well as helping tenants from his own estate at Shanagolden Co. Limerick to emigrate, he campaigned vigorously in favour of government - assisted emigration to the colonies as a remedy for Ireland’s problems of poverty and overpopulation.

³⁸ *Limerick Chronicle*, 15 Nov 1873.

sweet strains of a military band would add greatly to the pleasures of the day, while in Skibbereen, Co. Cork in 1898 it reported that 'an efficient band' attended a sporting event.³⁹ At the Ireland-Wales International Rugby Match in Limerick in the same year the newspapers stressed that the local civilian Boherbuoy Band played the Welsh team from the station to their base in Cruises Royal Hotel while 'the splendid band of the Royal Irish Regiment was on the ground from one o'clock.'⁴⁰



Figure 15, Royal Welsh Fusiliers with mascot pre 1922.⁴¹

As illustrated in the above photograph, visual evidence from the late nineteenth century reveals military life and drum bands leading parades, going to church occasions, or moving between different barracks in the city, so the public were very much aware of both the music and the

³⁹ Thomas Hayes, 'From ludicrous to logical', p. 45; *Cork Examiner*, 27 June 1898.

⁴⁰ John Curtin, 'The rugby international at Limerick, 1898' *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 35, (Winter, 1998), p. 43.

⁴¹ Army Band Limerick, http://museum.limerick.ie/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/10455, accessed 22 May 2017. Welsh Fusiliers with their fife and drum band leaving St Mary's Cathedral Limerick and marching back to barracks.

presence of the bands.⁴² Towards the end of the nineteenth century musical performances in public places seem to have become more frequent, with no need for a special occasion to bring out the bands. In Cork it was proposed that the military and civilian bands play alternatively at the band promenade in the Corn Market area of the city, simply for the amusement of the public.⁴³

The involvement of military bands in such public displays did become a little less acceptable as the century drew to a close. In 1886 an advertisement advertising a band contest at a GAA-organised event in the Markets Field emphasised that the bands competing would be non-military.⁴⁴ In 1901 the Limerick Young Ireland Society issued a poster against the band of the Yorkshire Light Infantry being engaged for the scratch races to be held by the Shannon Rowing club. It was stated on the poster, ‘Irishmen should not employ a band of South African murderers’ in reference to the Boer War.⁴⁵

But, in general, local bands participated alongside the military bands in public displays even when such nationalist opposition to military bands grew, local bands continued to play alongside military bands and, during World War I, to show their support for the war effort. In April 1915, large crowds and local bands turned out for the arrival of the Irish Guards Band in Limerick.⁴⁶ On July 1915 when Sergeant Michael O’Leary VC of the Irish Guards visited Limerick, his appearance attracted a large crowd and bands to a meeting held in O’Connell Monument – as a soldier that won the Victoria Cross (the highest award that can be attained in the British Armed Forces) his presence was both an encouragement for local men to enlist and

⁴² Photographs of the Welsh Fusiliers Band <http://museum.limerick.ie/index.php/Search/Index?search=band> accessed 26 May 2015.

⁴³ *Cork Examiner*, 22 October 1895.

⁴⁴ *Limerick Chronicle*, 26 August 1886. As stated previously, this was the first band contests organised in the Markets Field.

⁴⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 20 May 1901. *Limerick Leader*, 19 September 1900. The Young Irelanders in 1900 also approached the Limerick Race company to have civilian bands instead of military ones at race meetings.

⁴⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 21 April 1915. *Limerick Chronicle*, 22 April 1915.

an expression of local pride.⁴⁷ Two years later, when the Irish Canadian Rangers Regiment visited Limerick in 1917 on their way to France, they were greeted at the railway station by the Leinster Regiment and three local civilian bands – the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band, and the St Mary’s and Sarsfield Fife and Drum Bands.⁴⁸ At a banquet for the Canadians in Cleeves’ condensed milk factory, the local bands were reported by an English journalist – probably not overly impressed by the bands’ musical ability, though endeavouring to be complimentary – stated that the bands played with ‘delightful Hibernian upside downness’ and concluded with ‘Auld Lang’s Syne.’⁴⁹



Figure 16: Three civilian Limerick bands leading the Canadian Rangers through Limerick 1917.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Limerick Chronicle*, 17 July 1915.

⁴⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 5 February 1917.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Limerick visit of Irish Canadian Rangers 1917, <https://limerickww1.wordpress.com/photo-gallery/irish-canadian-rangers-visit-limerick-1917/> accessed 17 February 2017. From this author’s perusal and newspaper accounts though not certain it would seem the Boherbuoy and St John’s Brass and Reed Bands and the Sarsfield Fife and Drum Band are in this photograph.

This continuing identification of working class bands with British military glory rested on the longstanding experience of that working class with army life. In fact, on the occasion of the Canadian Rangers' visit in 1917, a poignant reunion of a mother and son took place at the railway station when Lance Corporal Daly who had emigrated to Canada years previously and then joined the Canadian Rangers met and hugged his mother and was later released for the day to spend time with his family.⁵¹ While this author cannot discover an exact number of local band members participating in the First World War (except where this is explicitly stated in the band's records, Moloney in discussing the Boherbuoy Brass Band, St Mary's Fife and Drum and Sarsfield Fife and Drum Bands makes the following calculation in relation to Limerick bandsmen's enlistment:

The former two had 22 and 34 Limerick men respectively serving with the colours while the latter had between 20 and 30 serving. Another [band] the Number 9 [fife and drum band] was practically depleted of its numbers.⁵²

There is, however, some memory of the Sarsfield Band's links with the war. Despite the fact that no photographs or records of the Sarsfield Band survive from the early 1900s, making it difficult to ascertain the participation of its members in the First World War effort, it has been confirmed to this author that Tom O'Flynn (brother to Sarsfield Band conductor, Danny O'Flynn) was a member of the band when he died at Passchendaele in 1917. Ó Floinn describes how,

On night he died, (Tom Flynn) 10 November [1917] and seven other Limerick men were killed in the same night attack in the mud at Passchendaele. It is possible that one or other of them might, like Tom, have been members of the Sarsfield [Band] because my mother told us that he joined up 'with his pals', as was the custom everywhere.⁵³

⁵¹ *Limerick Leader*, 5 February 1917.

⁵² Tadgh Moloney, *The Impact of World War One on Limerick*, (Cambridge, 2013), p.52

⁵³ Letter to author from Críostóir Ó Floinn, 1 June 2017.

It was often confirmed to this author by ex-Sarsfield Band members who later joined St Mary's band that many members of the Sarsfield Band were reputedly veterans of the Great War.⁵⁴

It is recorded in the records of St Mary's Fife and Drum Band that three of its members died in the First World War – Joseph Salmon, John McNamara, and Michael Davis, all as members of the Royal Munster Fusiliers.⁵⁵ A resolution at a special meeting of St Mary's Band in the *Limerick Chronicle* appeared in July 1915,

that we, the members of St Mary's Fife and Drum Band, having learnt with sincere sorrow of the death of our fellow bandsman, Michael Davis, Munster Fusiliers, wish to place on record our high appreciation of his services while a member of the band, and our sincere regret at his early demise while fighting at the front, and beg to convey to his relatives the expression of our deepest sorrow and sympathy in their sad bereavement.⁵⁶

Local pride in army:

The civilian population of Limerick were well acquainted with the life of the military. Local Limerick involvement in the army dated to the later eighteenth century when, following the removal of the formal ban on Catholics bearing arms in 1793, Irishmen had entered the British forces in large numbers. William Vesey Fitzgerald (then, Member for Clare) took the opportunity to make this point when his speech to the House of Commons in 1814 was interrupted by Wellington's entry to the House after the Battle of Waterloo. Vesey Fitzgerald told the assembly that

You owe to Ireland that Great Captain [Wellington] who has led you to victory....

Ireland has bled; Ireland has opened her sluice gates in your cause, and if Britain is

⁵⁴ Personal knowledge of the author as member of St Mary's Band since the 1970s.

⁵⁵ St Mary's Prize Band celebrating 125 years 1885-2010, (Limerick, 2010), p.19.

⁵⁶ *Limerick Chronicle*, 24 July 1915.

justly glorious in the battle she fought, Ireland has a right to participate in her triumph....

Let us not forget how Ireland has manned your fleets.⁵⁷

Public interest in the army was kept up by press reports on the British military's exploits in different parts of the world and this was of considerable interest to Irish as well as British newspaper editors and readers, and the Limerick press was no exception.⁵⁸ In 1854 there was considerable coverage on whether Britain and France should intervene to protect Turkey from 'the grasping policy of Russia', there were detailed reports of the war in Italy in 1859, while in 1870 the Franco-Prussian war and the raising of the blockade of Paris was big news.⁵⁹

Some families had longstanding links with the army. Ridden states that prominent Limerick families such as the Spring Rice, Barrington, de Vere and Bourke families had army involvement over a few generations. Richard Bourke of Castleconnell, for example, 'supplemented his estate income through his career as a soldier and then as a colonial governor,' and many of the women in these families married military men as well as professionals and administrators.⁶⁰

Further down in the ranks, as Bartlett calculates, by 1830 there were more Irishmen than Englishmen in the British Army.⁶¹ A letter sent by a Limerick soldier Dan O'Sullivan in 1850 was published in the *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, describing how difficult life was for a soldier in Crimea. The conditions of war were aptly described to his family with a mention that his hardships not improved since his previous letter. He mentioned thirty shillings coming

⁵⁷ Jenifer Ridden, 'Making good citizens, National Identity, Religion, and Liberalism among the Irish Elite c. 1800-1850' PhD Thesis, (University of London, 1998), p .275

⁵⁸ *Limerick Reporter*, 21 February 1854, Many local newspapers had reports of the exploits of the British Army in many parts of the world which must have being of interest to those who had family members in the army.

⁵⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 3 March 1854. 27 May 1859, *Cork Constitution*, 21 December 1870.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.11. Hazel King 'Sir Richard Bourke his life and work' *Old Limerick Journal*, Sir Richard Bourke of Thornfield Lisnagry Co. Limerick, a Lieutenant General who had served as Governor of New South Wales in the 1830s, held estates in Co. Limerick and Tipperary and is buried in Stradbally Castleconnell Co. Limerick.

⁶¹ Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation*, (Dublin 1992), pp 322-23. Bartlett has estimated that from 1793 to 1815, some 200,000 Irish recruits joined the British army and navy: this was in addition to those who served in Ireland as members of the (largely Catholic) militia and the (almost entirely Protestant) yeomanry.

soon from him and hoped to survive and ‘tell my poor mother to keep her spirits, should I live to go home I will make her laugh again. Continue to pray for me dead or alive.’⁶²

Regiments or companies with a close Irish or local connection were a source of great local pride: the Limerick Militia took part in the Battle of Coloney in 1798 and those who participated were awarded a silver medal with the Limerick coat of arms at the front, inscribed ‘Corporation and people of Limerick, while popular songs were printed locally in their honour by Goggin’s printing house in Quay Lane.’⁶³ With the passage of the nineteenth century, the setting up of specifically Irish regiments ensured a particularly regional attachment to the army – Royal Dublin Fusiliers, (102nd and 103rd of Foot), Royal Irish Regiment (18th of Foot), Prince of Wales Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians), (100th and 109th of Foot), Connaught Rangers (88th and 94th of Foot), South Irish Horse (Reserve) and, of great importance in the Limerick region, the Royal Munster Fusiliers (100th and 109th of Foot).⁶⁴ Moloney’s research on Limerick recruitment in the war effort up to 1916 arrives ‘at a conservative estimate [that] over six hundred National Volunteers had joined the colours and it is to the Irish Brigade they went.’⁶⁵ The *Limerick Leader* at this time (1916) estimated ‘of the city regiment of the National Volunteers between four and five hundred serving with the colours.’⁶⁶

⁶² *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, 22 November 1854. A perusal of the military records available through Ancestry.com shows many Daniel O’Sullivan’s in the Crimea at this time but one was from Limerick, Regimental No. 792, who enlisted in Buttevant Co. Cork and was from St Michael’s Parish, Limerick, age 17 years and six months when enlisting in 1849.

⁶³ Oliver Snoddy, ‘The Limerick City Militia and the Battle of Coloonev, 1798’, *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, vol. 6, no. 3, (Limerick, 1964), p.117. Kieran Kennedy, ‘The Limerick City Militia 1798’, *Old Limerick Journal*, vol 35, (Limerick, 1998), p.16. ‘The militia was created as an auxiliary to the standing army, and the principal duty envisaged for them was to provide the initial opposition to an invading force.

⁶⁴ Brigadier, A. E. C. Bredin, *A History of the Irish Soldier*, (Belfast, 1987), p.549. Interview with Paul Teague 16 May 2013, the colours and some of the drums from all the Irish regiments were taken to Windsor castle and hung up in Windsor Castle. The King had said he will always safeguard them and when Windsor Castle started to burn down in 1996 one of the first things that were taken out was the colours. And it was the order of the Queen to get them out because the King had said that he would always prize them and he gave that promise. This came to the fore with the identifiable regret on the demise of these regiments in 1922 when the five Irish regiments were disbanded upon the foundation of the Free State’s army.

⁶⁵ Tadgh Moloney, *The Impact of World War One on Limerick*, (Cambridge, 2013), p.51.

⁶⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 19 May 1916.

Such a sense of local participation in the war effort led to an enthusiastic welcome for the Lord Lieutenant when he visited the city in 1915. The Boherbuoy and St John's Brass and Reed Bands and the Sarsfield and St Mary's Fife and Drum Bands lined the procession route when he came to the city, as well as troops of the 3rd Leinster's and 3rd Munster Fusiliers based in Fermoy, and the streets were crowded with local people with cheers and waving of hats and handkerchiefs.⁶⁷ Such pride in a local or regional regiment may account for high levels of enlistment, though other more human factors can also be found. There were, of course, also financial incentives to join the army:

The British infantry private's pay, food, clothing, lodging and medical expenses in 1886 was valued by British authorities at 40 pounds per annum; the Corporal's at fifty-one pounds, the sergeants at sixty-nine pounds and the colour sergeants at eighty-nine pounds. In comparison, 1880-81 the average Irish labourer in 1880-81 earned twenty-five pounds a year that is if they got a full week's work.⁶⁸

Other men joined the army because of family tradition. This was the case with Drum Major Joseph Hickey who followed his father John a former bandmaster in the British army. Born in No. 9 Edward Street in Limerick in 1884, Hickey was shot by a Turkish sniper while assisting in the burial of one of his buglers during the Gallipoli campaign. He was aged 32.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Limerick Chronicle*, 17 August 1915. *Limerick Leader* 18 August 1915, While the *Leader* reported on the visit it did not have the enthusiastic detail of the '*Loyalist*' Chronicle.

⁶⁸ Peter N. Sterns, 'Irish Soldiers in the British Army 1792-1922 Suborned or Subordinate,' *Journal of Irish History*, vol 17, no. 1, (1993), p.39.

⁶⁹ Birth Records. <https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/irish-records,civil> records. Birth certificate of Joseph Hickey displayed his father, John, as an army pensioner and bandmaster. John Hickey passed away in 1899 at 60 Clare Street Limerick. Accessed 8 February 2017.



Figure 17: Drum Major Joseph Hickey of Limerick.⁷⁰

Still others joined up almost by accident: Limerick man W. Patterson explained his reason for making the long journey, quite alone, from Limerick to Woolwich as a drummer boy in the Royal Horse Artillery in the 1880s: ‘I wanted to get away from the family to earn my own living and not to be a burden to my parents, who already had seven children.’⁷¹ Bubb intimated that Patterson’s father was an ex-army man and wanted his son to find an apprenticeship in a trade but the ‘army did offer an escape from the drudgery of a existence.’⁷² This author’s grand-uncle from family folklore ran away from home to go to Nenagh Co. Tipperary to join the Royal Leinster regiment. A boisterous young lad who got into some minor mischief at a young

⁷⁰ Royal Munster Fusiliers. <http://www.royalmunsterfusiliers.org/a5drums1.htm>. Accessed 3 June 2016. The photographer’s caption reads: as follows ‘Drums 1st Royal. Munster Fusiliers, Nowshera North West Frontier India, about to Beat Retreat. The battalion was stationed at Nowshera, early to mid-1912. The Drum Major is Joseph Hickey, Regimental No. 5680, of Limerick Ireland.’

⁷¹ Alexander Bubb, ‘The Life of the Irish Soldier in India: Representations and Self-Representations, 1857–1922’, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 46, (2012), pp 769-813.

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 775.

age he went on an adventure which eventually led to his death in France in 1915 in the First World War.⁷³

Whatever the original motivation for enlistment, the large proportion of Irish (and Limerick) men in the army ensured that military life, discipline and music were familiar to a large part of the civilian population. Besides, serving soldiers were drawn from every level of Irish society. Agricultural labourers were the most common group represented in the late nineteenth century army, followed by servants and ‘navvies’ – that is to say, a host of non-propertied men.⁷⁴ In fact, as many as one in six adult males over the course of the nineteenth century may have spent time in uniform, this military experience exposing these soldiers to military bands and music and marching style.

Many thousands of musicians passed through the army and navy in the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ It can be assumed that many were Irish born, but the records do not allow us to follow this in any detail. ‘Even after the very early nineteenth century, when the British military establishment formally recognised the advantages of bands of music, bandsmen were listed simply as soldiers or sailors in formal records, and bandmasters were not listed as all.’⁷⁶ Criostóir Ó Floinn claimed that ‘civilian bands had the same provenance [as army bands], being formed by ex-soldiers and their pupils in every parish.’⁷⁷ Although we seldom find *direct* evidence for Limerick band members enlisting in the army, and though the general recruitment rate in the city does not seem to have been reduced by the growing nationalist objections to

⁷³ Told in the author’s family.

⁷⁴ Peter Karsten, ‘Irish Soldiers in the British Army, 1792-1922: Suborned or Subordinate?’ *Journal of Social History*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1983), p. 37.

⁷⁵ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2013), p.129 The Author’s state that ‘By the middle of the nineteenth century, perhaps sometimes before the military accounted for what was probably the greatest expansion of the supply of literate and competent musical performers that the British music profession had experienced.’ pp 1-2.

⁷⁶ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & The British Military in the long nineteenth century*, (Oxford 2013), p.

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⁷⁷ Criostoir Ó Floinn, *There is an Isle*, p. 126.

Irishmen joining the British army from the late 1890s, it is clear that many local bandmen were ex-British Army men who had served in the late 1800s early 1900s.⁷⁸

A number of members of local Limerick bands can be identified definitely as former military men. Edgar (Ned) Power born India, one of the founding members of St Dominick's fife and drum band Limerick band came from an army background.⁷⁹ Another similar individual was Thomas McNamara of St Mary's Band, born in 1884, who left Limerick for Liverpool and went to sea as a ship's fireman. His adventurous life shows how a young boy from Limerick could travel the world and end up with a fireman's pension in New York. While he was working as a fireman on the White Star Liner, *Cedric*, at the outbreak of World War I, this ship was requisitioned as an armed merchant cruiser and became part of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. McNamara ended up joining the British army on 20 August 1917 as a Sapper and served in France, Italy and Greece. At the end of the War he was honourably discharged on 10 May 1919 and awarded the 1914 star, commonly called the 'Mons Star', British War medal, Merchant Marine War Medal and the victory medal.⁸⁰

This army experience led to their introduction to music through either being members of army bands or marching to their rhythm and beat, forging a musical connection between the civilian bands and the bands of the British Army. One of the first bandmasters in St Mary's Band was Patrick 'Patsy' McNamara who played in the All-Ireland championship winning band in 1895.⁸¹ Patrick Casey, who joined St Mary's in the 1930s and who got his information from those in the band who knew McNamara, gave an account that shows how this military influence on the local bands has passed down into recent memory.⁸² Casey described

⁷⁸ McMahan, 'Ireland and the Empire-Commonwealth, 1900-1948', p. 138.

⁷⁹ *Limerick Chronicle*, 6 May 1972.

⁸⁰ *Remember Limerick*, Limerick Men's Benevolent and Social association booklet, (New York, 1965).

⁸¹ *St Mary's prize band celebrating 100 years 1885-2010* (Limerick 2010), p.11.

⁸² (Author's note), Casey also lived across the road in Long Lane, St Mary's Parish, Limerick from McNamara's sister Mary Hanrahan, nee McNamara.

McNamara as a member of the Munster Fusiliers when they were stationed in Fermoy in the late 1880s ‘Oh he was. He married a woman from Fermoy, a Cork woman, and went to America after winning the All-Ireland. Oh, he was a Professor of Music. He was a regimental sergeant I’m telling you.’⁸³ Other sources claim that McNamara was in the 2nd Leinster Regiment and not the Munster Fusiliers as assumed by Patrick Casey, but in either case the military link is significant.⁸⁴ This military link also explains where the early conductors such as Patsy McNamara learnt their music to such a high standard. As young recruits in the British Army most learnt their music from the Drum Major who was the person who was in charge of band matters and teaching.⁸⁵

This army experience was beneficial when members came back to the bands and passed on their newfound musical knowledge to other members. This was a common phenomenon after World War I, and not only in Ireland. Ed Palmer of the East Hampton fife and drum band was selected as a drummer for his army regiment’s drum and bugle corps. ‘Returning to East Hampton in 1918, he participated in the corps continuously thereafter, and he took it on himself to train a new generation when the ranks of drummers began to thin in the 1930s.’⁸⁶ Though his circumstances were different, Patrick Salmon, a noted bandmaster from St Mary’s Parish in Limerick, also owed his music to the army. He acquired his musical training from a tutor based in the barracks at King John’s Castle. Salmon was unable to join the City Militia due to an eye injury but such was his enthusiasm to learn that the tutor took pity on him and gave him a musical and academic education.⁸⁷ It was not unusual for the army to educate a young boy in

⁸³ Patrick Casey interviewed by Derek Mulcahy 6 September 2013.

⁸⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 1 May 1976.

⁸⁵ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2013), p.21.

⁸⁶ Clark, James, *Connecticut’s Fife and Drum Tradition*, Wesleyan University Press 2011 p.133

⁸⁷ *St Mary’s prize band celebrating 100 years 1885-2010* (Limerick 2010), p.17. *The Times*, 20 December 1856. The teaching of young boys by the military in music was not unique to Limerick. By the middle of the nineteenth century regimental schools in Britain began to offer instrumental instruction. This resulted in reports of concerts ‘to demonstrate the successful result of the musical instruction of NCO’s, men and boys at the establishment.’

music, though this tuition (unlike what happened in Salmon's case) was usually combined with army duties. This is exemplified by John Marshall, an orphan, picked up by a regiment on manoeuvres in Swindon in 1893 whilst following the troops. He was later educated in the 'Gordons' Boys School' and became a bugler and drummer in the 1st Coldstream guards. For his part, Salmon subsequently taught fife and drum bands in Clare, Cork and Tipperary as well as advising bands all over the country, sending them music and tips on the organisation of fife and drum bands.⁸⁸

There are other Limerick bandsmen that we know served in the British army. Limerick band master Mikey Raleigh who was a major teacher of fife and drum bands – and a founder of bands – from the 1920s to the 1950s in various parts of the city. After being demobbed he joined the newly formed Irish Free State Army and during the Civil War was shot outside his mother's house in Borrisoleigh in County Tipperary after surviving the First World War unscathed, which resulted in his losing a leg.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Alvin Mullan 7 January 2015. Jack Cassin – Scott, John Fabb, *Military bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset 1978), p. 91.

⁸⁹ Aidan Hurley 25 January 2014. 'And he was coming out of his mother's house lit up a cigarette and never smoked no more there was a shot went off and as I say the civil war was on, And ah he was very bitter about it in this sense in that he went through four years of war in France and Belgium you name it and got scratches all right but never, but never wounded in a, in a bad way but here he comes back to Ireland and coming off of North Wall in 1920 to being demobbed in Ireland we say coming off they, they wanted people to go in to the army here in the free state and ah so you were saying there was no work in Ireland so you can go into the Army. So he joined up and next ah as I say in the troubles he loses his leg you know. But he was bitter about that he says the finest of men that came back from a war and they were sick from war and they come back to another war that went on for two years but he says the difference there was that you had cousins fighting cousins and brothers fighting brothers and you had you know.'

Uniforms

The populace of Limerick was accustomed to military pageantry. Crowds in large numbers are stated to have followed uniformed military bands in the city at various times when parading in the city.⁹⁰ It was reported of the 42nd Regiment Band who left the city in 1840 for another station that the ‘frequency with which the citizens were so often amused by the popular airs of their splendid band passing through our streets will not be forgotten.’⁹¹ As stated in earlier chapters military bands played at various junctures in the city and the local populace could hear them play as exemplified at the promenade on the Ennis Road Limerick in the 1890s.⁹² This may explain why army-type uniforms came to be worn by civilian bands. It is clear from both photographic and published evidence right up to the recent past that this military model, with its emphasis on uniformity, is what influenced the dress of the civilian flute bands.

‘A relationship between images and the exercise of power clearly existed which became increasingly important as the century progressed. Here as with so many features of military life, regimental pride and the rivalries it generated fuelled the ambition to look good.’⁹³ When uniform and rousing music combined, the effect was even more powerful. ‘Nobody can fail to be thrilled by the overwhelming sound and glittering sight of a military band in all its pageantry with rich splendid uniforms and highly polished instruments.’⁹⁴ This pageantry and display was

⁹⁰ *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, 11 August 1852. Crowds followed the band of the 14th Regiment who played the 31st Regiment to the Railway Terminus.

⁹¹ *Limerick Reporter*, 13 March 1840. This band played ‘the sound of the far-famed ‘Pibroch’, telling a tale of their highland ancestors. <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scotlandssongs/about/songs/pibroch/>, accessed 25 August 2016, Pibroch is played on the Highland bagpipes only, by a solo piper, and is considered one of the most difficult genres of music in the piping repertoire.

⁹² *Limerick Leader* 14 July 1893. At the inaugural night the band of the Manchester Regiment played a wide selection of music including the Irish piece ‘Eileen A Roon’. It was hoped to add fireworks to the display as the entertainment continued over the summer months.

⁹³ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford 2013), p.218.

⁹⁴ Jack Cassin-Scott, John Fabb, *Military Bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset, 1978), (inside sleeve cover).

a feature of military life at which the British Army excelled, especially from the early 1880s onwards as regimental and regimental band uniforms became more and more exotic.⁹⁵

In Limerick the uniforms of the army, the military and militia⁹⁶ were visible attractions to the local populace due to their eye-catching appearance in parades and to the way families with men-folk in the army became familiar with the details of the soldier's dress. Local press reports added to this familiarity with, and pride in, the way in which uniform and musical prowess marked off the individual regiment (or local organisation). Newspapers when reporting on army or civilian bands always seemed to make a comment on the uniform of the band, conscious of how the uniform added colour and panache to an occasion 'Nobody can fail to be thrilled by the over-whelming sound and glittering sight of a military band in all its pageantry with rich splendid uniforms and highly polished instruments.'⁹⁷ 'A relationship between images and the exercise of power clearly existed which became increasingly important as the century progressed. Here as with so many features of military life, regimental pride and the rivalries it generated fuelled the ambition to look good.'⁹⁸ 'The 1881-1914 period saw the sustaining of the most magnificent full dress uniform, and the development of many drummers' accoutrements besides swords such as dress cords, regimental staves, the acorns worn on Foot Guards' staves when drum majors wore state dress.'⁹⁹ This capacity of the uniform to attract

⁹⁵ Barty-King, *The Drum*, p. 95. 'The 1881-1914 period saw the sustaining of the most magnificent full dress uniform, and the development of many drummers' accoutrements besides swords such as dress cords, regimental staves, the acorns worn on Foot Guards' staves when drum majors wore state dress.'

⁹⁶ Major Mike Hall, *With Trumpet, Drum & Fife*, (West Midlands 2013), p. 92. Historically the British Army's 'Red Coat' came from the Ordnance issued on the 15 February 1645, when Cromwell was empowered to raise twelve regiments for his New Model Army at the taxpayers' expense. These new regiments were for the first time uniformly dressed in Red. By the end of the seventeenth century attempts by order were made to standardise uniforms with changes to sleeves, cuffs, breeches etc. but 'during the reign of George II a publication of 1742 consisted of colour plates of all the regiments which furnished a proper though cumbersome detailed order of dress. This book was called *A representation of the clothing of his Majesty's Household and all the forces upon the establishments of Great Britain and Ireland*. This book was also known as *The Cumberland Book* due to the extensive input of the Duke of Cumberland.

⁹⁷ Jack Cassin-Scott, John Fabb, *Military Bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset, 1978), (inside sleeve cover).

⁹⁸ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2013), p.218.

⁹⁹ King, *The Drum*, p. 95.

public admiration was not lost on civilian bands, especially if they included ex-army band members in their ranks, who perceived this as normal dress for a marching band. This is especially obvious in the case of the local Limerick fife and drum bands formed from the 1850s onwards and which were obviously influenced by the British infantry bands that passed so frequently through the city:

Regiments on the march were always led by the fifes and drums. It is always easier to march to a band, and to keep in step. The bandsmen had the same equipment as the other soldiers, minus the ammunition pouches on the waist belts. The bands men's sword was worn in place of the bayonet.¹⁰⁰

Again, as in the case of the military bands, the dress of the civilian bands was commented upon by the local press. The temperance bands of St Mary's and St John's were reported to be 'attired in a handsome uniform', when Fr Mathew visited Limerick in January 1846.¹⁰¹ At the William Smith O'Brien demonstration in June 1846 the St Mary's, St Francis and St John's Bands, as well as the Volunteer Repeal Band and the Kilrush Band from Clare, were reported to be wearing band uniforms. Whether this wearing of uniforms was the norm at this stage, however, is unclear since other bands were reported to have attended but their uniforms were not mentioned.¹⁰² Cost was obviously the determining factor: the expense of a new uniform was unrealistic for civilian bands in the 1840s. As discussed earlier in this study, the Limerick bands were formed by local working class men on limited incomes and so the expense of a new uniform was unrealistic for some civilian bands even in the late 1800s, although some bands did manage the expense.¹⁰³ For instance, at the 1894 inauguration of the Mayor of Limerick,

¹⁰⁰ Jack Cassin – Scott, John Fabb, *Military bands and their uniforms*, (Dorset, 1978), p. 88.

¹⁰¹ *Limerick Reporter*, January 6 1846. Emphasis on temperance band uniforms was more predominantly reported from 1846.

¹⁰² *Limerick Reporter*, June 12 1846. *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, June 13 1846, St Mary's Temperance band are reported to wear 'a blue uniform with their caps trimmed with gold lace.' St John's band was reported to be placed on a boat placed on wheels, and drawn by four horses with outriders.

¹⁰³ *Limerick Reporter* May 30 1856, In a celebration of the Queen's birthday in Limerick the regimental band and the military are described by the *Reporter*, 'Yesterday the day was exceedingly fine and a bright sun

Bryan O'Donnell, the local press made a point of reporting that the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed band which played at the occasion was attired in its new green uniform.¹⁰⁴ In the early 1890s, companies advertised the sale of full band uniforms, (tunic and trousers) at the price of 12s. 6d.¹⁰⁵ The quality of this uniform was not stated, but it appears that the uniform had neither braid nor decoration, unlike that of the Arklow '98 Band which in 1898 advertised for tenders for uniforms, both 'tunic and trousers in green cloth and cuffs with braid on both trousers and tunic.'¹⁰⁶ The apparently low price in the advertisements is in contrast to the experience of the Boherbuoy Band in Limerick which acquired three tenders to price the making of their band uniform in 1893, with Cannock and Company of Limerick winning the contract at £2.13.9d per suit.¹⁰⁷ The Cork Butter Exchange Band emphasised local loyalties in their purchase of uniforms, with the local Merchant Tailor P. J. Sugrue Grand Parade being Cork-based and promising that the 'material will be of Cork Manufacture.'¹⁰⁸

Industries in Limerick were not inclined to sponsor bands in the nineteenth century unlike Englishman John Foster, owner of the Black Dyke Mills, who organized a band in 1855 and provided uniforms, rehearsal space, instruments, and lessons.¹⁰⁹ But leading local figures and landowners in the county did act as band patrons: the Murroe Band on a visit to Waterford were praised for their Khaki style uniforms with 'Boer Hats with a large green rosette on each side and their uniforms faced with green, which had been presented by Sir Charles Barrington of

brought out into full relief the uniform and arms of the military and imparted a liveliness and picturesqueness to the scene.'

¹⁰⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 2 January 1894.

¹⁰⁵ *United Ireland*, 16 April 1892.

¹⁰⁶ *Wicklow People*, 2 April 1898.

¹⁰⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 8 December 1893, 15 December 1893. The other tenders were William Todd & Co. and McBirneys & Co.

¹⁰⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 20 March 1902. (Guy's) City & County Almanac and Directory, (Cork, 1903), p.279.

¹⁰⁹ Denise Odello, 'British Brass band periodicals and the construction of a movement', *Victorian periodicals Review*, vol 47, no.3, (2002) p.433.

nearby Glenstal Abbey.¹¹⁰ Charles Barrington was also reported to have donated the Bass Drum to the Ahane Band a few miles distant.¹¹¹



Figure 18: Patrick Brinn, St Mary's Band, 1920s. ¹¹²

However, what seemed to be a feature of all bands – whether able to afford a full uniform or not – was a band cap. Another item that could substitute for full uniform was a sash.¹¹³ While black and white pictorial evidence does not allow for identifying the colour of sashes, they were more than likely green in colour evoking their nationalistic leanings. At least, the sashes

¹¹⁰ *Munster Express*, 1 September 1900. This bands drum major had an old staff carved with ‘symbolic figures’ whose provenance was not known to band members.

¹¹¹ limerickslife.com/Ahane-band/, accessed 14 March 2017.

¹¹² St Mary’s band museum photograph, accessed 10 February 2017. Patrick Brinn went to the expense of getting a photograph portrait of himself in a military style band uniform. *Limerick Leader*, 18 February 1929. Brinn was later to die in an accident on the building of the Shannon scheme leaving a widow and six children.

¹¹³ St Mary’s Prize Band Museum Photograph collection, Authors photograph collection. Discuss this in more detail in the text. www.waterfordcountyimages.org/exhibit/web/BasicImageSearch/ accessed 19 May 2016, picture of Modeligo fife and drum band circa 1910. *Flag of Ireland*, 24 August 1889. The wearing of colourful sashes was well reported at many gatherings especially by the Trade societies. At a demonstration in honour of Patrick Sarsfield, the Masons society was reported to wear ‘green and gold rosettes with green sashes.’

advertised on nationalist leaning newspapers described their makeup as being of ‘rich green satin ornamented with gold and harp.’¹¹⁴ As depicted in the photograph below this band uniformity is the sash worn across the right shoulder with neat dress of instrumentalists.



Figure 19: Ahane Fife and Drum Band County Limerick with Sashes 1911.¹¹⁵

A late nineteenth century addition to both the Sarsfield and St Mary’s Fife and Drum Bands was the staff major dressed in a decorative tunic and hat and holding a staff – copying the British Army’s drum major who carried his staff in front of the band when on parade. Whether this individual was the only band member wearing uniform is not clear: many photographs of Limerick bands from the 1890s to the 1930s show the Staff Major (who was also called the Drum Major) as the only one in uniform, with a tasselled tunic and holding a staff or mace.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *The Irishman*, 1 March 1879. *Munster Express* 6 June 1895.

¹¹⁵ Ahane Fife and Drum Band, <http://limerickslife.com/ahane-band>. Accessed 18 February 2017. The sash worn by the band members was green, white and gold with the words Ahane Band emblazoned on it.

¹¹⁶ St Mary’s Prize Band Museum, 26 September 2014.

While bands did not have the finances to purchase military style uniforms, they seem to have stretched to ensuring that the Staff Major was always the one member of the band dressed in a distinctive style. This is an obvious link with the custom of military bands: the Staff Major in both army and civilian bands was seen as an imposing figure who gave the band great dignity and bearing, though he also had the vital practical task of signalling the band when to start and when to finish a march. There were subtle differences, however, between the military and civilian Staff Major: while his duties in the civilian band were mainly to keep the band in step and time, his army duties were more specialised and not just ceremonial, with a financial increment for every young boy he trained,

The drum major is to be very attentive to the dress, behaviour and morals of the drummers and fifers, and to report any regularity or impropriety. He is responsible that they attend the regimental school, as well as that their drums and other appointments are kept in proper condition. He is to be paid one guinea for every boy he completes in his beatings.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Trevor Herbert, Helen Barlow, *Music & the British Military in the long Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2013), p.21.



Figure 20: St Mary's Band July 1898.¹¹⁸

As can be seen from this picture of St Mary's Band taken in July 1898, the band members are dressed in civilian clothes. While most members have individual band caps the Staff Major at the back of the picture is dressed in a distinctive uniform.¹¹⁹ Other early photographs of Limerick bands show the staff major with a tasselled tunic holding a staff or mace.¹²⁰ The Staff Major was, to some extent, the visual manifestation of the band's sense of identity and respectability – something that continued well into the twentieth century. This realisation was behind the Fife and Drum Contest at the Exhibition of Irish arts and Manufacturers in 1882 when a prize a 'poplin embroidered scarf' was allocated for the neatest uniform of Staff Majors.¹²¹ The contest was a tie between the Harp and Shamrock and St Kevin's fife and drum bands Dublin. No Limerick bands attended with all bands from Dublin.¹²² A uniform for the

¹¹⁸ St Mary's Prize Band museum, 10 June 2016.

¹¹⁹ St Mary's Prize Band museum, 10 June 2016. This picture was not in the band archives until August 2015 when St Mary's band visited the USA and it was given to the author by William Cobert, a grandson of Thomas McNamara, who is in the photograph. (Young boy front left).

¹²⁰ St Mary's Prize Band Museum, 26 September 2014.

¹²¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 October 1882.

¹²² *Freeman's Journal*, 1 November 1882.

conductor of the winning band at a fife and Drum contest in Thurles Feis in 1907 was the prize donated by local tailor Mr Pollard.¹²³

A *Limerick Leader* report in 1911 highlighted the purchase of a new staff for the Limerick Corporation's fife and drum band: purchased for the band by a local solicitor and member of the Limerick Board of Guardians J. P. Lynch and displayed in Todd's department store window – one of the most prominent businesses on the city's principal street.¹²⁴ Two decades later, the uniform of the Staff Major continued to be a concern for local bands: St Mary's Band Staff Major, Bob Bowman who led the band in the 1930s had a green tunic known familiarly amongst band members as the 'green linnet'.¹²⁵ By this stage, it appears that local bands were better able to afford a uniform for members other than the Staff Major, purchased new uniforms. Both the Sarsfield Band and St Mary's Band by now wore a military style uniform, (something still evident today in St. Mary's, the city's last surviving fife and drum band), but with the dark green colour emphasising their Irish nationalist credentials.¹²⁶ There was now a growing emphasis on a smart appearance: an order from St Mary's Band committee was posted in their band hall that all members must wear their uniform at band parades – suggesting that some members found it difficult to move away from the more casual attitudes of the past and adjust to wearing a uniform.¹²⁷ Whether it was shyness or that individuals just did not like the style of uniform is unknown but Patrick Casey, showing a 1935 photograph of St Mary's Band to this author, explained that there were members missing in that photograph who played in the band that day but would not sit for the photo. He intimated

¹²³ *Limerick Leader*, June 14 1907.

¹²⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 17 November 1911, 31 May 1911, J.P Lynch purchased the staff for the United Corporation Employees society's new fife and drum band. It is not known other than his sponsorship of his connection with this band.

¹²⁵ Patrick Casey, 6 September 2013.

¹²⁶ St Mary's Band Uniform, (1930s), picture of Sarsfield Band on display in St Mary's Prize Band Museum, viewed by author 26 Sept 2014.

¹²⁷ St Mary's band committee minutes, 16 April 1933. It would seem that some members found it difficult to adjust to wearing a uniform.

that they did not like to get their photograph taken.¹²⁸ A plausible reason for their reluctance to be photographed on this particular occasion comes from St Mary's Band folklore: some band members were former Abbey Fishermen who now by law were not allowed to fish on the Shannon so took to poaching. It was reasoned that they did not like to be photographed in case they were identified.

The military legacy to civilian bands was also apparent in the emblazonment on the drums. Hall's study of musical instruments on the battlefield sees the original use of the drum as 'an aristocratic status symbol. Its size and magnificence when beaten by in a nobleman's retinue notified all who stood and gaped of the degree of respect which was due to him.'¹²⁹ From the seventeenth century onwards, army regiments emblazoned their drums with regimental and royal crests, emphasising loyalty to both king and regiment.¹³⁰ If aristocratic status or military prowess and loyalty was part of early drum emblazonment, that on civilian bands in Limerick, while inheriting the idea of emblazonment from the earlier forms, focussed on local heroes, nationalist symbols and the musical prowess of the individual band. The military legacy is apparent today in the uniform of the last surviving Limerick fife and drum band, St Mary's Prize Band. It does resemble a military uniform and the emblazonment on the drums (See Figure 26 below) is not unlike those of British army regiments that display battle and regimental crests.

¹²⁸ Author's note. This photograph was taken just over a decade after the civil war, whether that was a reason for photographic shyness is hypothetical but Casey intimated more a nervousness /shyness of the camera pose.

¹²⁹ Major Mike Hall, *With Trumpet, Drum & Fife*, (West Midlands 2013), p.29.

¹³⁰ Barty-King, *The Drum*, p. 27. As far back as the 1660s drum emblazing became common in the British Army with the regimental crest, the colonel's arms or the royal arms emblazoned on the wooden side of the drum. Permission for painting the drums was granted to the Royal Regiment of Guards by warrant when they returned from France in 1662.



Figure 21, St Mary's Band side and Bass Drum 1991.¹³¹

If aristocratic status was part of the early drum emblazonment, then local pride was the feature of the late nineteenth and twentieth century, with St Mary's displaying the tricolour and the Irish Harp along with a list of band contest wins over the decades since its formation in 1885. Localism is also represented on St Mary's drum with the Treaty Stone as the band logo. The Treaty Stone is depicted on the bass drums, something which can be discerned from band photographs from 1894, while two tri-colour flags are on the bass drum in a 1923 photograph of the band taken outside the new band hall.¹³² Up to the late 1920s and early 1930s it was just the bass drum that had emblazonments, but from then onwards all the drums were emblazed. This emblazonment consisted mainly of the band logos, flags and lists of contest wins. A surviving Sarsfield Band side drum (now kept in the St Mary's Band museum) has an emblazoned depiction of Patrick Sarsfield along with contest wins – along with the year and the location of the contest.¹³³

¹³¹ Authors own collection.

¹³² *St Mary's prize Band celebrating 125 years*, (Limerick, 2010), p.25.

¹³³ St Mary's Prize Band Drums and Munster Fusilier Band Drum, on display in St Mary's Band museum. Viewed 2 May 2016.

Conclusion

The influence of the army and of military bands on the formation of civilian bands in Limerick is significant. The population of the city was very much accustomed to the music and ritual of military bands that paraded through the city on important occasions, played at bazaars and charity events, and marched from one barrack to another in the course of duty. The appearance of these bands was impressive: their marching and music gave an impression of discipline and control and they were used by the army as a method of recruiting right through the century. The population of Limerick was also very familiar with the army and its bands through the fact that many local men were in the ranks of the army and were part of the mass recruiting that happened, especially between 1914 and 1918. This meant that there was great local pride in the army and in its bands and that the instruments and uniforms of military bands were taken as a model when local civilian bands were formed, and the marching music of the army bands became a major part of the Limerick civilian bands' repertoire. The army influence went beyond the appearance and presentation of the civilian band: the discipline of practice and a demand for skilled musicianship was encouraged through this military legacy, and was further consolidated when band contests came to be organised and became an essential part of a band's annual programme of events.

Chapter 4: Bands and Organisational Ability

As discussed in Chapter One, the temperance movement influenced how a band could survive, and even prosper, once efficient organisational structures were put in place. Band practice, tuition, improved instrumentation and the acquisition of rehearsal rooms were all deemed imperative for a band to be a successful organisation. This chapter explores how certain measures were required for a band to become financially viable, one of the most important being the establishment of structures such as committees in order to enable the fund raising essential to survival. A range of fundraising methods are discussed, especially door to door collections and the organisation of dances in band halls, as well as the increasing capacity to purchase new instruments and music books, both locally and from music publishers in England. The chapter also discusses how certain band members supplemented their income and rose to local and wider prominence by using their musical skills to play in dance bands or to become full time music masters either in Limerick city or beyond.

The appeal of playing in a marching band was linked with both a love of music and an awareness of the sense of belonging which was provided by the experience of associating with others of like mind, not unlike some nationalists recognising the monarchy but seeking a ‘separable constitutional position of Ireland in the United Kingdom.’¹ Bands with good organisational ability offered a structured, hierarchical setting with rules and also provided equal opportunities for members to participate in the running of the band’s activities. It could be said that there are, and were, many reasons to join a band. In the 1830s and 40s, as discussed in Chapter 1, many band members joined because they were also committed to the temperance movement and music was seen as a popular alternative to drinking alcohol. The bands in this

¹ James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty Nationalism and Monarchy in Ireland during the reign of Queen Victoria*, (Cork, 2001), p.25.

period were amateur organisations with members coming from the working classes of the city parishes. Others joined because a band was based in their locality and as discussed in Chapter 2, this localism could be aligned with a political stance such as was the case with the bands that took the pro- or anti-Parnell sides in the 1890s or (though to a lesser extent) went pro- or anti-treaty following the War of Independence. As bands were based within individual communities, the members could take part collectively in local events such as sporting occasions, church celebrations and community events. More so, on a personal level, it is something unique to be a part of a band and to experience the delight of playing and appreciating music, while at the same time membership provides an opportunity to be part of a communal group which is not individualistic but whose members work collectively with each other.

Learning the music:

Regular practice was essential to the development of a band. In 1909 it was also proposed that in order to make the Number 9 Nicholas Street Band ‘a credit not only to the city by the Shannon shore but to the whole of Ireland’ that regular band practice be organised twice weekly, on Tuesday and Friday nights at 9 pm – possibly implying that previous practice attendance and duration was not sufficient for the band to be successful.² In this case, the new commitment seems to have paid off: the band was able in October 1909 to enter the November band contest in Limerick as a senior band.³ There were two categories – Senior and Junior – in band competitions and it was common for a band to declare whether it was a senior or junior band at various times of its existence, depending on its circumstances at the time. A band contest in Limerick in 1910 listed Limerick’s Sarsfield and St Mary’s Bands as playing in the

² *Limerick Leader*, 27 August 1909. This could be a sign that previous practice attendance and duration was not efficient enough for the band to be successful.

³ *Limerick Leader*, 11 October 1909. From photographic evidence of this period it was comparable to the Sarsfield and St Mary’s Bands at the time with up to thirty band members.

Junior Contest, with the Number 9 Band playing in the Senior Contest.⁴ Bands were at different standards of musicianship at various times of their existence. Those bands at a rebuilding stage used Junior band contests to give members experience of playing in competition and if a young band wanted to build up to a senior band standard it understood the method of practice and standards needed for such competitions.

The local bands were ultimately responsible for providing music teaching to their own members so as to bring them up the standard for participating in both public performances and competition. While the records about this topic are extremely scarce, it appears that local civilian bands found their teachers wherever they could. Some bands called in professional teachers: for instance, the city's Academy Band, as will be discussed later in this chapter, was formed in 1838 and attracted (at least in the eyes of the contemporary local press) some of the most musically talented young men in the city, who totalled over thirty members during the course of the band's existence. These were taught by a Mr Nagle, the only information available on this music teacher being that he was attached to 'a Musical Academy' based in Glentworth Street and later O'Connell Street.⁵ In the case of many other bands (as discussed in Chapter 3), music was initially learned from fellow band members, especially those with army band experience. This pattern of chancing on a good teacher had not changed by the early twentieth century: Michael Bourke, President of St Mary's Band in 1985, remembered how in the mid-1920s he learned his music from bandmaster Patrick Salmon in a location called the 'Lyric' in Mary Street for some time after the building of the band's new hall.⁶ From perusal of St Mary's Band Account Book for the 1920s this room for some reason called the 'Lyric' was rented up to 1925 at a fee of two shillings a week. Despite further research in contemporary newspapers

⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 22 November 1909. The O'Connell Band Dublin won the Junior contest and the Dublin Corporation Band won the senior contest. Eight bands from Dublin came to Limerick for this contest.

⁵ *Limerick Reporter*, 12 February 1841, 10, 12 May 1842

⁶ *St Mary's prize band celebrating 100 years*, p.28; St Mary's Band Account Book 1924-1927.

and trade directories, no address has been found for this ‘Lyric’, which was more than likely a single room rented while construction of the new band hall was in process. This room continued to be used even when the new band hall was built and its use only ceased when the bigger dance hall, built in 1924, freed up more space for band practice. The last rent was paid for the room called ‘the Lyric’ was according, to St Mary’s Band Account Book on 27 June 1926.⁷ Teaching and conducting bands was a talent that some band members who were in fife and drum bands from the 1880s to 1920s could pass on and bandsmen such as Patrick Salmon and Christy Nash of St Mary’s and Danny O’Flynn and Michael Raleigh formally of Sarsfield band and St Mary’s were able to pass on their knowledge of fife and drum bands.⁸

Financial Issues:

When joining a band, members made commitments – to learn new skills in both instrumentation and music reading, to give their time, and also to make financial commitments. Procuring a teacher was just one of the factors vital to the survival of a band since the considerable financial cost of a band had also be taken into account. Firstly, there was obviously the need to buy instruments. While instrumentation would change, especially from the 1880s, the main instrument of the fife and drum temperance bands was a simple fife and a side drum – the provision of which was a much less expensive venture than forming a brass and reed band. Yet even these more modest requirements included, on average, of four side drummers, a bass drummer, a symbol/triangle player and sixteen flute players.⁹ In 1843 St Mary’s Temperance Society paid the sum of £35 2s 7d for flutes and other unspecified instruments while St John’s Temperance Society in its accounts for 1842 outlined the cost of

⁷ St Mary’s Band Account Book, 27 June 1926. There is no hint of an address of where this room ‘Lyric’ was in Mary Street. All those associated with the band at this time are now deceased.

⁸ Bob Hamilton, ‘Mikey Raleigh’s Band’, *Old Limerick Journal*, No.12 Autumn 1982, pp 28-29. Críostóir Ó Floinn, *There is an Isle*, pp 132-133. Raleigh was a veteran of the First World War and was previously a member of St Mary’s Band and then the Sarsfield Band. He then left the Sarsfield Band and formed his own youth bands in the city.

⁹ Henry Potter & Co, *Band Guide*, circa early 1900s, St Mary’s Prize Band museum, accessed 12 May 2017.

musical instruments for their band at £45.¹⁰ The economic spin-off especially for local music stores locally was obvious: Corbett's music store in the city's Patrick Street became the main supplier of band instruments in Limerick in the mid-1800s, advertising musical instruments and sheet music suitable for temperance bands at this time, while the number of music booklets available increased.¹¹

As stated in Chapter One, Corbett's music shop in Limerick, which advertised musical instruments for temperance bands, was the main supplier in the city for instruments and music for temperance bands in the mid-nineteenth century.¹²



Figure 22, Fife stamped Corbett & Sons. Circa 1840s.¹³

By the 1890s, however, it seems that most local Limerick bands now purchased their instruments from Murdoch & Company's music store based at 39 Patrick Street. A testimonial from the St Mary's band chairman, John O'Halloran and Secretary, D. O'Brien, testimonial stated

On behalf of St Mary's Band, it affords me great pleasure to add our testimonial and that of many others to the superior quality of the drums and various instruments supplied by you since December 1886. We would strongly recommend all who intend forming a

¹⁰ *Limerick Reporter*, 11 March 1842, *Limerick Chronicle*, 30 July 1843.

¹¹ *Limerick Reporter*, 12 June, 8 November 1840.

¹² *Limerick Reporter*, 12 June 1840

¹³ Fife Corbett's music store, <http://museum.limerick.ie/index.php/Search/Index?search=band> accessed 22 May 2016.

band to patronise your house as we believe that for high class goods at moderate prices yours are second to none. We may add, at the recent held contest in Limerick we got second place.¹⁴

In the early 1920s the custom of the Limerick bands seems to have spread to companies in Britain: St Mary's Band secretary's book lists several London music publishing companies' addresses such as Potter & Co and Boosey and Hawkes, from which companies instruments and music parts could be purchased and it was mostly from Potter's that they purchased the marches to play at band outings and competitions.¹⁵ Some music sheets and books came to the bands indirectly – e.g. from individual members who had been in an army band, or had connections with someone who was. The march music book illustrated below, for example, is long in the possession of St Mary's Band, but was originally owned by a local member of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. Scale books were bought from Potters, suggesting that by now band members had considerable musical knowledge and basic music theory, as well as competency at playing a flute or drum. This suggests that literacy in music was spreading among Limerick city's working men and that the financial situation of the bands was now, by the late nineteenth century, fairly healthy. It would seem that the procurement of both music and instruments continued with companies like Potters and Hawkes in London post World War One.

¹⁴ *Flag of Ireland*, 1 February 1890. Testimonials were submitted from St John's and Boherbuoy bands Limerick as well as bands from Glin, Galbally, Killbreedy, Adare, Foynes, Tipperary and Kilrush. Francis Guy's Directory of Munster, p. 665.

¹⁵ St Mary's Prize Band archives, secretary's book, accessed 9 June 2016.

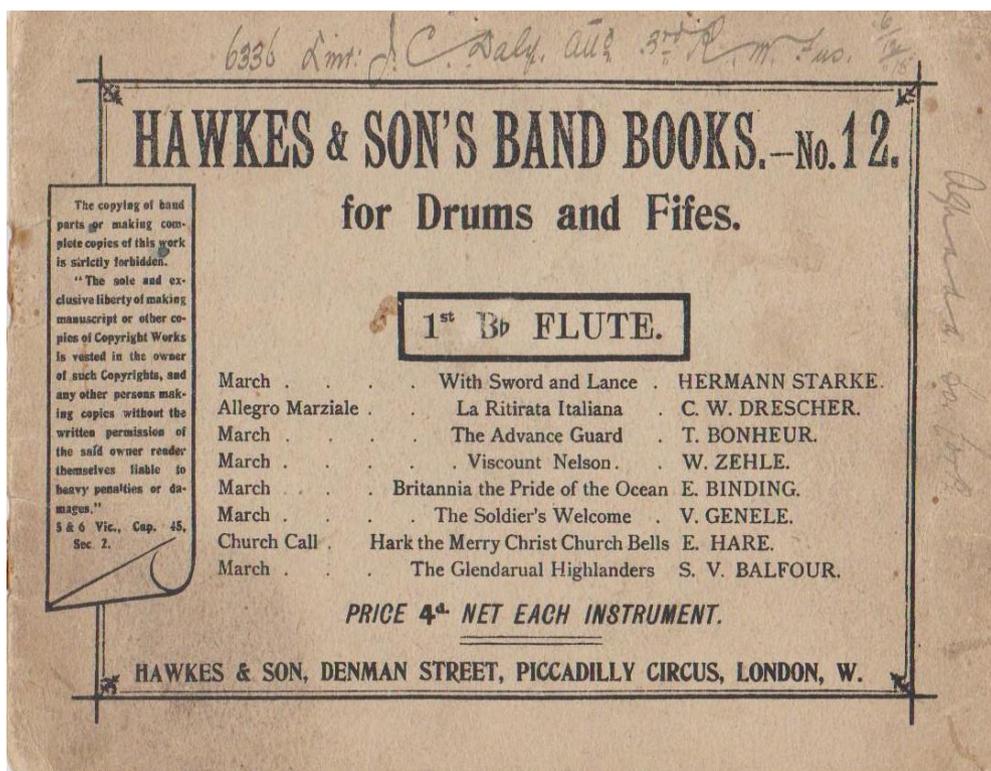


Figure 23: March Music Book of John C. Daly, Limerick. Royal Munster Fusiliers.¹⁶

While there have been civilian fife and drum bands in Limerick since the 1840s, musical and organisational ability matured over the following decades to lead to a more structured band form by the later years of the nineteenth century. This was obvious in the increasing influence of military bands on the repertoire and style of the local bands, their adoption of new and more streamlined instruments, and their increasing involvement in band competitions at national level (which will be discussed in Chapter 5).

The hiring of a rehearsal room (with the additional costs of heat and light), payment of a competent band master and the purchase of sheet music were other expenses which had to be met by members for the band to come into existence and to survive. In the early 1840s, St John's paid £26 as a half year's wages for the band master, while St Mary's paid £30.19s to a Mr Murray for instructing them, which, along with room rental and the purchase of instruments

¹⁶ *March Music Book*, courtesy of Thomas Naughton of St Mary's Fife and Drum Band.

and music books, totalled over £80.¹⁷ From records available St Mary's band paid their bandmaster in 1923 £2.10. It was reduced in 1926 to £1-19s-3d.¹⁸

Considerable organisational skills were required to deal with these financial matters, as well with as the musical aspects of the band. In the early stages of the bands' formation in the 1840s, the patronage of a temperance society (as in the case of St John's Temperance Society) provided organisational backing. Fr Mathew himself, as seen in Chapter 1, provided the finance needed by many bands.¹⁹ Sometimes the support came from within the local elite: the Academy Youth Band, mentioned earlier and also known as the City Amateur Band, and apparently aligned in some way to a Limerick musical academy, was formed in 1838 with the support of 'a group of gentlemen' in Limerick, possibly members of the city's Masonic Lodge. It was intended firstly as 'a band for the public amusement of citizens' and secondly as providing a musical education that would 'displace vicious habits' and rescue children from a 'low life of dissipation.'²⁰ Its masonic origins were suggested by its staging a concert performance for the masonic body at the Queen Street Theatre (now Davis Street.) – its conductor and music teacher being Mr Nagle, 'one of the brethren' and again in 1842 'under the patronage of the masonic society.'²¹

Politically-directed bands could also attract some higher class patronage. One county band does appear to have been patronised by a gentleman of means: this as the new band formed in Limerick in 1843 and appropriately named 'The Repeal Volunteer Band' of the County and City of Limerick. This band had ample financial assistance to purchase

¹⁷ *Limerick Reporter*, 11 March 1840; 5 December 1845, *Limerick Chronicle*, 30 July 1843. To compare wages of artisans and Labourers a considerable expense was spent on framed pictures. Coopers wages were £1 2s 9d per week. *Dublin Evening Post*, Labourers in 1840 were reported to be making 6d to 8d a week.

¹⁸ Account Book, St Mary's band, 6 May 1923, 9 February 1926.

¹⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 26 June 1840. Fr Mathew gave financial aid to St Michaels, St John's, St Mary's and St Patrick's temperance societies bands of Limerick.

²⁰ *Limerick Chronicle*, 6 October 1838.

²¹ *Limerick Reporter*, 15 September 1840, 10 May 1842,

instruments, one generous supporter being James Kelly of Castleconnell, a prominent Repealer and wealthy landowner.²² In general, however, most bands had to do their own fundraising. St Mary's and St John's Temperance Societies were keen to keep raising funds to make their bands viable, St John's fund raising appeal in 1841 emphasising the need to bring in support 'on a large scale worthy of a city as Limerick, always distinguished for liberality and patriotism.'²³ A decade later, the financial needs of the society's band continued, members of the society being appointed in 1850 to raise funds to 'solicit funds from their fellow citizens' for the society's band. It was felt by the committee that 'a local band is sadly needed and would contribute much to dissipate the gloom that occasionally clouds the city'.²⁴

Fund-raising

Even bands with some individual military connection found it necessary to fund raise among the public: in 1860 funds were raised by public subscription for the Royal Limerick County Band which consisted of a bandmaster and nineteen musicians, and nine of whose members were reported to be permanent members of Regiments. Emphasising that this band 'would be a benefit to the city and county', the appeal stressed the respectable nature of the band by indicating that funds were to be received and acknowledged by the Mayor, W. Fitzgerald.²⁵ The need for public support continued among the working class civilian bands right through the period studied, as when the Sarsfield Band looked to the public to raise funds to attend the All-Ireland band contest in Dublin in 1895.²⁶ In the opening years of the twentieth century Limerick city bands made a major drive to put themselves on a secure organisational and financial footing. A wide variety of fundraising methods were used over the first six decades

²² *Limerick Reporter*, 11 August 1843.

²³ *Limerick Reporter*, 4 January, 26 November 1841, 11 March 1842. St John's accounts state £45 spent on instruments for the band and £26 for bandmaster wages (six months).

²⁴ *Limerick and Clare Examiner*, 17 August 1850.

²⁵ *Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator*, 9 March 1860.

²⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 16 September 1895.

of the twentieth century. The intersection of music with sporting activities led to two novel methods of fundraising in aid of the Number 9 Band with hurling and tug-of-war contests which took place in the local Markets Field.²⁷ First used as a GAA ground in the 1880s when, in 1886 ‘one of the first Gaelic sports held under the rules of the GAA’ was held on 19 September, followed by a band contest on 2 October 1886.²⁸ This space became a venue for sporting activities including cycling, rugby and soccer, activities which continue up to present day when the venue is now occupied by Limerick FC.²⁹

Bands played an important role in the socio-cultural life of their local communities, a role which went far beyond fund-raising for their own needs. Stokes argues that the ‘music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them.’³⁰ This was certainly recognised by bands in nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland as they intermingled with their local communities especially when they gave recitals, mainly in the summer, to entertain the local communities.³¹ But it must be recognised that this community identification with a band could also have a fundraising function and it was not uncommon for bands to raise funds through running entertainment nights which performed the double function of providing public entertainment and the collection of funds: St Mary’s had done this for many year by the end of the nineteenth century, while the Sarsfield Band, as shown in newspaper reports, used recitals along with flag days for fundraising.³²

Local theatres and halls were used for these events: by 1914 with the opening of local cinemas, another venue was made available. An enterprising benefit in aid of the Sarsfield

²⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 10 February 1906.

²⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 7 December 1974.

²⁹ *Limerick Post*, 6 June 2015.

³⁰ Martin Stokes, *Ethnicity, Identity and Music*, (Oxford, 1997) p. 5.

³¹ *Limerick Leader*, 16 August 1925. The Sarsfield Band played on a Sunday which was ‘very much appreciated by the townspeople.’

³² *Limerick Leader*, 6 February 1899, 13 September 1911.

Band took place in the ‘Abbey Kinema’ [sic] George’s Quay in 1914 where ‘a full list of the world’s best pictures’ took place and the band gave a recital as well. The band was to have a relationship with this cinema house for at least a decade, performing at night in between film showings.³³ House to house collections were frequently used by St. Mary’s and the Sarsfield Band, while St Dominick’s Fife and Drum Band in 1910 encouraged further subscriptions by publishing lists of subscribers in the local papers, with those that gave the largest subscription at the top of the list.³⁴ Two decades later, Mickey Raleigh’s Band found it a challenge for an amateur band to purchase instruments and get a band hall for practice sessions:

At first our time was spent in fundraising. Some unusual but effective techniques were brought to the task. A talented [band member] was launched into an enthusiastic recital whenever a door was knocked upon or a person approached, and asked for a donation for the band. The tune ‘Clare’s Dragoons’ was played to the words - ‘Only two more flutes, for Mikey Raleigh’s Band, and that’s all we want.’³⁵

This author recollects his uncle, James Hogan, formally of Ellen Street, when visiting Limerick from Canada in 2002, singing the Mikey Raleigh Band song with fond recollection as his brother Michael, who emigrated later to New Zealand, was a drummer in the band. It was a well-known song to many brought up in Limerick in the 1930s and 1940s due to the many fundraising activities of the band. Mikey Raleigh, before leading the St Michael’s Band was bandmaster of the Thomondgate Band in St Munchin’s parish. In 1935 the committee of the Thomondgate Band had to make a newspaper appeal to the public (see illustration below) in order to purchase extra instruments and uniforms.³⁶

³³ *Limerick Leader*, 6 June 1914, 20 December 1924.

³⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 6 February 1899, 23 September 1910, 13 September 1911.

³⁵ Bob Hamilton, ‘Mikey Raleigh’s Band’, *Old Limerick Journal*, no. 12, Autumn 1982, p.28.

³⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 27 April 1938. Michael Raleigh co-signed this letter.

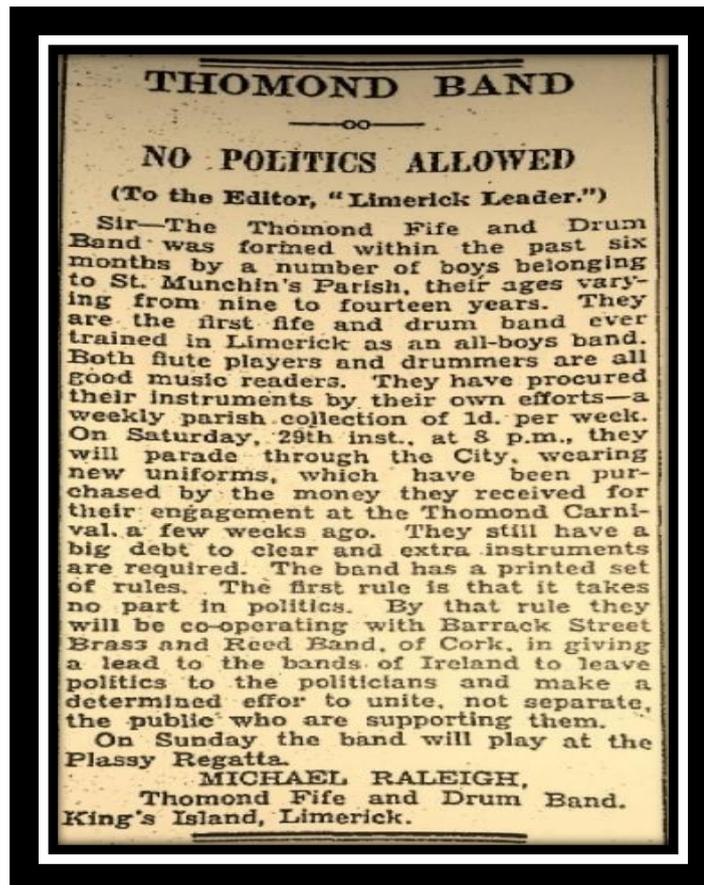


Figure 24, Letter to *Limerick Leader*, 25 June 1935.

In the case of all bands, these collections were carried out locally, i.e. within the immediate neighbourhood in which the band operated: in relation to St Mary's Band, McGrath described the funding source as follows:

You can see where the income [was] coming from, that it [came] from a particular part of the city. They relied upon...the greater Abbey area... And people contributed, people who had members in the band, people who didn't have members in the band. Which further gives the impression that this [was] their community hall.³⁷

The account books of St Mary's Band for the 1920s confirm that in the case of that band all the areas from which subscriptions came were within the St Mary's parish boundaries.³⁸ A letter signed by the three band officers was delivered to households in St Mary's parish in 1922:

³⁷ Interview with John McGrath, 29 July 2013.

³⁸ Account Book, *St Mary's Band*, 8 January 1922.

‘The Committee of St Mary’s band are reluctantly compelled to appeal once more to the generosity of the people of St Mary’s parish and ask them to increase their weekly subscription to build our new band room’ – and the effort was doubled by appeals in the local newspapers:

To the editor.

Sir – It seems that the great effort made by St. Mary’s Band to build a suitable band room, has been overlooked by many citizens who would appreciate good music amongst us. It is only a matter of bringing the buildings Committee’s great efforts before the public, who I am sure will do everything possible to assist financially those energetic young men who are labouring so well to make music in our city what it is always and hope will surpass in the near future.

Yours etc.,

A well-wisher.³⁹

The present St Mary’s Band Hall opened in late 1922 and as well as for the band practices it was used (among other things) for public dances. One of the earliest dances held in the hall was the Barrington’s Hospital Staff Dance in 1925 and other important functions were to follow, so much so that the hall became too small for the purpose.’ Therefore, not long after the building of the new hall it was decided by the committee to purchase a vacant site next to the band hall and to build a spacious new dance hall on the site. The drive to build a new hall was obviously intended to provide a base for the band, but it was also linked to the financial opportunities presented by the increasing number of dances being organised by St Mary’s. In 1926 St Mary’s new hall was running dances on Wednesday Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, as well as a Sunday evening dance.⁴⁰ A perusal of local newspapers indicates that local dance halls such as St Mary’s did not actually advertise in the local press in the 1920s. Perhaps

³⁹ *Limerick Chronicle* 1 July 1922.

⁴⁰ Account Book St Mary’s, St Mary’s band account book January 5 – 12, 1926.

there was not any need for such advertising, since this was the time when a growing number of dance venues was established to cater for the increase in the popularity of public dancing as a leisure activity, and Limerick marching bands were quick to realise this potential revenue opportunity.⁴¹

The acquisition of permanent premises also provided additional recreational facilities for band members. When St Mary's new dance hall was built in 1924 a decision was made to put three billiard tables in the adjoining hall, built in 1922. This became a focal point for the young men of the parish to play billiards and snooker and was a popular venue up to its closure in the late 1990s. 'Billiards was all the rage in the early days' with snooker not becoming popular until the 1930s.⁴² Bi-annually there were snooker competitions sponsored by the band committee, firstly the snooker Christmas Handicap which entailed the less skilled patrons with up to a twenty points handicap advantage which was the best of three frames. The Championship Cup was played during the months preceding the summer where the most skilful players came to the fore.⁴³ A caretaker was employed when the billiard hall was up and running in 1925. Strict organisation was needed in the running of the hall. Gerry Clancy, as well as being on the committee, was the caretaker in a full-time capacity of the Billiard Hall and Dance Hall. When he passed away in 1997, Clancy was an Abbey fisherman and was the last link between the Abbey fishermen and the St Mary's Band that had its band room in Fish Lane.⁴⁴

From the early twentieth century onwards, this awareness of the need for a permanent premises and for ongoing fund-raising was evident in the case of a number of Limerick city

⁴¹ Barbara O'Connor, *The Irish Dancing Cultural Politics and identities, 1900-2000*, (Cork, 2013), p.61.

O'Connor states that 'very soon after the treaty was signed in 1922 and the 1920s saw the increasing domination of the American-British ballroom repertory in dancing in Ireland, p. 61.

⁴² St Mary's Centenary Booklet 1885-1985, p.29.

⁴³ Ibid pp 29-39.

⁴⁴ St Mary's Prize Band 1885-2010 125th Anniversary Book, (Limerick, 2010), p.126. Authors note, as a patron of the billiard hall in this authors in the late 1970s-80s, Clancy kept a strict rule on those patrons' in the hall and tolerated no bad language or boisterous behaviour which was not easy with energetic young men as clientele who had the utmost respect for him.

bands. In August 1909 the Number 9 Band, based at 6 St Nicholas Street in the old Englishtown area of the city, held an ‘important meeting’ stressing the need for restructuring. Finances were given a priority and there was a proposal to reorganise Sunday night dances in their band hall to raise funds.⁴⁵ Over the following decades, not only the Number 9, but also the Sarsfield and St. Mary’s Bands, all ran dances in their halls as a method of raising funds for the band and also as a social outlet for their area. In fact, surviving account records from St Mary’s Band show that dance bands were hired for dances from the early 1920s up to as late as the close of the 1960s.⁴⁶

Band Halls and their functions

The importance of the hall as a fund raising facility was recognised at a reorganisation meeting of the Nicholas Street No.9 Band in 1909, where it was decided to have the dance associated with the band reopened on the next Sunday at 8pm with Mr John McNamara, the president, to be appointed M.C. for the season.⁴⁷ St Mary’s Band Hall, too, was used for many purposes since it was constructed, including medical, cultural and educational activities. Along with other large halls based in the four main parishes of the city St Mary’s hall was used to supplement the limited facilities available at the city centre dispensary in Gerald Griffin Street, the hall being the venue for administering diphtheria immunisation as advertised in the *Limerick leader* in 1935.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 27 August 1909. The *Leader* at this period published many reports of this band – more so than for any other band – which may be explained by the fact that many members of that band were printer-compositors

⁴⁶ St Mary’s Band Account Books, Jan. 1922- Dec. 1969.

⁴⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 27 August 1909. At that meeting local children got permission to use the hall for a play that evening.

⁴⁸ Maura Cronin, “‘You’d be cured while you’d be waiting’”: remembering the Limerick City Dispensary, 1930-72’ in John Cunningham and Niall Ó Cíosáin (eds), *Culture and society in Ireland since 1750: essays in honour of Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh* (Dublin, 2015), pp 393-413.

CORPORATION OF LIMERICK.

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

The Diphtheria Immunisation Scheme is now drawing to a close. Parents are requested to bring all children under 5 years to the afternoon Clinics. It is necessary to start the inoculations at once if they are to be completed under the scheme.

The Clinics are as follows:—

MONDAY—ST. MUNCHIN'S TEMPERANCE HALL.
TUESDAY—ST. JOHN'S OLD TEMPERANCE HALL.
WEDNESDAY—ST. MARY'S BAND HALL.
THURSDAY—LEAMY'S SCHOOL (SS. MICHAEL'S AND JOSEPH).

At 3 o'clock Each Day.

During the past eight weeks 16,000 cases have occurred in England. Recent outbreaks in several counties of Ireland lead us to fear a recurrence of the epidemic in Limerick. Every case of Diphtheria is a possible death. Diphtheria cases during 1932 and 1933 cost the city over £9,000 for maintenance alone. 11,280 injections have been given in Limerick without ill effect during the last four months.

The inoculations are safe, painless and free.
 By inoculation 9 out of every 10 children are rendered immune to the disease for life.

J. P. GERAGHTY,
City Manager and Town Clerk.

City Hall, Limerick,
30th January, 1935.

Figure 25. *Limerick Leader*, 30 January 1935.

Eight years earlier, the hall was used for cultural purposes when in October 1927 a local Jesuit priest, Fr. O'Donoghue S.J., gave a lecture on old Limerick,

Father O' Donoghue traced the story of St. Mary's parish from its early days, dealing with the people, its ancient houses, fortifications and its religious foundations. Every stage of its history was illustrated by beautiful lantern slides, many of them of priceless value as they were made from photos of buildings that have long disappeared.⁴⁹

From newspaper accounts it seems that a full house attended this event and a perusal of the band account books show no income for this event which implies the hall was given *gratis*.⁵⁰

It is interesting to note that Father Francis Browne famous Jesuit photographer had given lantern slide lectures in both the Jesuit Mungret and Crescent Colleges in Limerick some years before and it could be assumed that some of O'Donoghue's slides were from the Browne

⁴⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 31 October 1927.

⁵⁰ St Mary's band account book October 1927. The only item of significance is the payment of nine shillings for what was described as a 1200w 230v Madga Lamp. This is a large light lamp which could have being used with the Lantern for the slide show.

collection.⁵¹ Because the subject was ‘Old Limerick’ – which was the St Mary’s parish area of the city – the only sufficiently large venue available was the St Mary’s Band hall. Another similar event in the band hall was the performance by local tenor, Paddy O’Donovan Reid, who recorded in the hall in 1929. The Parlophone Gramophone Company made two recordings in St Mary’s Hall in 1929, one being with O’Donovan Reid and the other was with the Sarsfield Band that played an arrangement of Irish airs called ‘Old Erin’, arranged by band conductor Danny O’Flynn.⁵²

But the use of the halls for dances remained the most constant source of income, not only for the band itself but for nearly every organisation in St Mary’s Parish and Limerick city generally.⁵³ The importance of dances as a social outlet for the city’s population is highlighted by such dances being held on weeknights as well as at weekends, with members of the band hall stewarding these events. From the later nineteenth and early twentieth century in rural Ireland house dances had been part of a lifestyle rooted in an agrarian setting and were not formally organised as dances were in the urban areas.⁵⁴ But the two sorts of dance were not that far apart: P. J. McNamara, former bandmaster of St Mary’s Band in the 1890s and early 1900s, when domiciled in New York in the 1920s, recollected playing at barn dances in Crusheen Co. Clare under the auspices of the local priest, Fr O’Meara. This was part of his duty as conductor of the local band, being expected to get involved in community endeavours

⁵¹ *Limerick Leader* 26 November 1923, 9 January 1924, 12 November 1924, 20 October 1927. Many of the Lantern slide lectures in Limerick were given by Catholic priests from the Franciscan and Jesuit orders of their work overseas or on various religious sites such as Rome and Lourdes. There were also fundraising lantern slide shows raising funds for the building of the new St Munchin’s Church.

⁵² *Limerick Leader*, 10 February 1951, *St Mary’s Prize Band 1885-1985, 100th Anniversary booklet*, p.8. Copies of these recordings can be observed in St Mary’s Prize Band museum.

⁵³ *St Mary’s Prize Band 1885-2010 125th Anniversary Book* (2010) p.59

⁵⁴ Gerard Dooley, ‘Entertainment in Independent Ireland: Evolution of Irish parochial versus commercial dance hall culture,’ *History Studies*, vol 3, p. 48. These dances were common on occasions of harvest collection and days such as the eve of St Bridget’s day. Also during Ireland’s transition to independence Dooley states that ‘they were an ideal place to hold IRA battalion meetings under cover of music and revelry during the War of Independence.’

in Crusheen.⁵⁵ There was a similar sense of obligation for members of city bands and an emphasis on the role of stewards and their responsibilities at dances is exemplified by the recollections of Paschal O’Grady whose father, Stephen, was a dance steward in St Mary’s dance hall in the 1920s. He recalls his father telling him what some of his duties entailed stopping couples from dancing in ways which could be termed inappropriate in the context of the time:

At that time, most dance halls were sort of controlled by the parishes, the clergy had their say in it and there was a thing at the time called ‘dipping’ and I think it was got to do with the tango you know. ‘Dom-dat-do-do’ (Humming). you know he’d have to tap them on the shoulder, like the Rock and Roll. No jitterbugging – you remember that – which came out later.⁵⁶

Dances became ‘one of the most important areas of matchmaking’ because of the ‘sense of social freedom’ they gave to young people to meet those of the opposite sex.⁵⁷ But opportunities for what was interpreted as inappropriate or promiscuous behaviour also emerged when conditions for casual acquaintanceship developed and as dance halls were scenes where both sexes could interact, they were regarded with some suspicion in the strongly Catholic ethos of the period. No drink was served in dance halls like St Mary’s Hall but this not lessen the suspicions of the more conservative elements of society as to their effect on young people. This was a theme reiterated by Dr Keane, Catholic Bishop of Limerick, in 1924, more than likely worried at the emergence of dance halls in the city. While not looking for the abolition

⁵⁵ Letter from Patrick McNamara to his brother Michael, 11 February 1924. This letter was obtained by the author from Barry McNamara grandson of Michael. Patrick McNamara was the bandmaster of the Crusheen fife and drum band and along with his brother Michael played at local dances in the Crusheen area.

⁵⁶ Interview with Paschal O’Grady 16 January 2014.

⁵⁷ Gerard Dooley ‘Entertainment in independent Ireland: Evolution of Irish parochial versus commercial dance hall culture,’ *History Studies*, vol. 13, (1999), p. 49.

of dance halls, he claimed that safeguards needed to be put in place ‘to prevent such forms of entertainment crossing into indecency.’⁵⁸

‘Dancehalls could be seen as one of the primary self-contained units of space in which artefacts such as décor, music, lighting, combined to create a romantic ambience and were important props in the unfolding of the staged dramas of everyday life.’⁵⁹

The description of St Mary’s hall in 1924 fits this closely:

With electric light throughout, the premises are fitted with the most up to date appliances, and having a floor space of 120 feet by 65 feet, the main portion which will be used for dancing, concerts and re-unions etc., has an artistic-ornamental, separate entrance gate while at the opposite end is a dais for the orchestra.⁶⁰

Visuals were important in the design of halls, paintings and mirrors being an essential feature of the Sarsfield Band dance hall while photographic evidence also shows large mirrors in St Mary’s hall.⁶¹ From surviving records of St Mary’s hall these dances were well organised affairs with rules for orchestras and those stewarding important for successful organisation. This can also be determined by the headed letter paper with St Mary’s dance hall printed on top which projected a sense of professionalism and efficiency.⁶²

A dance hall that was in marked contrast to St Mary’s was built on the outskirts of Limerick in 1926 around the local hurling team called the ‘Faugh a’ Bealachs’ and came to be known as ‘The Faughs’. ‘built by young men from the area as a place for people from the Ballysimon and Monaleen communities to gather. It became a very popular spot for people from the surrounding area to gather for a dance on a Wednesday night, from 8.00 pm to 11.00 pm. In the 1930s there was a resident dance band led by Denny O’Dwyer, Ted Hayes

⁵⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 10 November 1924.

⁵⁹ Barbara O’Connor, *The Irish Dancing Cultural Politics and identities, 1900-2000*, (Cork, 2013), p. 61.

⁶⁰ *St Mary’s Prize Band 1885-1985, 100th Anniversary booklet*, p.10.

⁶¹ Interview with Aidan Hurley 25 January 2015. Photographic evidence also shows large mirrors in St Mary’s hall.

⁶² *St Mary’s Prize Band 1885-1985, 100th Anniversary booklet*, p.10, p.60.

(Drummer), Paddy Ryan (Banjo) and Paulie Mackey (Saxophone). The band mainly played formal ballroom dancing music – waltzes, foxtrots, tangos and the like and, as with all dancehalls at the time, the men sat on the right side of the hall and the women on the left.



Figure 26 The 'Faugh' Dancehall, Ballysimon Road , Limerick, 1930s.⁶³

An interesting insight into the attitudes to dance halls is given in a quote from the 'Faugh' dance hall owner in the 1930s 'telling everyone to make their way straight home after the dance and not give his hall a bad name.'⁶⁴

⁶³ Photograph authors collection.

⁶⁴ <https://limerickdancehalls.wordpress.com>. Accessed 25 November 2016. It quickly became a very popular spot for people from the surrounding area to gather for a dance. Dances took place on a Wednesday night and a Sunday night, running from 8.00pm to 11.00pm. In the 1930s there was a resident dance band led by Denny O'Dwyer, Ted Hayes (Drummer), Paddy Ryan (Banjo) and Paulie Mackey (Saxophone). The band would mainly play formal ballroom dancing music – waltzes, foxtrots, tangos and the like. As with all dancehalls at the time, the men would sit on the right side of the hall and the women on the left.



Figure 27. Benefit night for the Sarsfield family in St Mary's Hall, 1934.

In February 1935 the Public Dance Halls act was enacted.⁶⁵ Some at the time called this a repressive act because it had a huge cultural change in rural Ireland and the death knell of the house dance which played a great part in the social life of small communities.⁶⁶ However, this seems to have had little effect on the popularity of dances in the city. Large halls such as St Mary's drew up contracts with the band leaders to guarantee a six-member band adhering to rules agreed as depicted in a memo from St Mary's Hall in 1935.

⁶⁵ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1935>. Accessed, 25 November 2016.

⁶⁶ Gerard Dooley. 'Entertainment in Independent Ireland: Evolution of Irish parochial versus commercial dance hall culture,' *History Studies*, vol 3, p. 54; Barbara O'Connor, *The Irish Dancing Cultural Politics and identities, 1900-2000*, (Cork, 2013), p.59. The regulation due mainly from antipathy against the dances from religious and moral crusaders, 'should have unwittingly been instrumental in encouraging forms of governance that were more centralised, more rational and more bureaucratic – in effect more modern.', p. 59. It can be assumed that those in power in the new Irish Free State favoured social and cultural conservatism. O'Connor asserts that the state saw a benefit in the regulation of dance halls and 'began to make a profit in the form of an entertainment tax that was introduced in 1932 and continued intermittently until 1962.

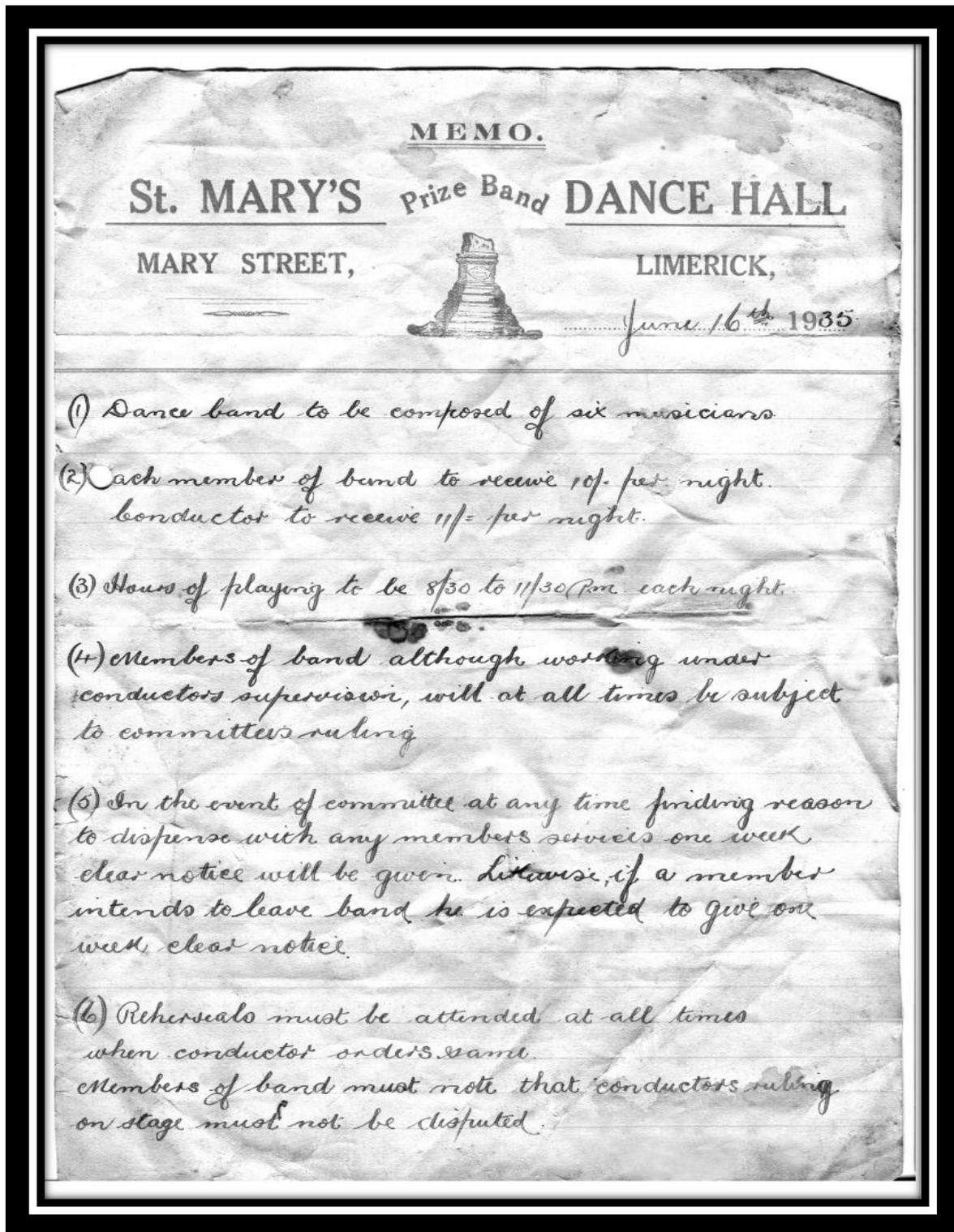


Figure 28, Memo outlining Rules for Dance bands playing in St Mary's Hall 1935.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ St Mary's Prize Band 125 Anniversary Book 1885-2010, (Limerick, 2010), p.60.

From the 1930s band leaders and the dance halls worked together and a direct relationship was developed between the hall and band leader. Dance bands were contracted to St Mary's hall under strict rules laid down by the committee. Remuneration per night, as stated in the memo above, was eleven shillings for the conductor and ten shillings for the musicians and the band had to have six musicians in total. St Mary's Band committee was developing into a professional, sophisticated organisation using special headed notepaper, possibly helped by the fact that its secretary of the time, Tom Glynn, was himself a professional music teacher based in Nicholas Street and owner of a music shop in the city.⁶⁸ From this memo it appears that ultimate authority lay with the band hall committee, and within the band the leader had a lot of responsibility, being paid one shilling more per dance night

Commitment and Divisions

Because so many fundraising activities were involved, those who joined the band without really committing to membership could cause friction and frustration to more steadfast members, with senior members often diligent in reminding younger members of their band's achievements as a way of increasing their commitment.⁶⁹ Being in a band like St Mary's entailed a lot more than going to practice and playing in public. Once members became involved in the committee, they also became involved in a host of other activities, such as the organisation of social and financial activities. Running dances every week, for instance, took a great deal of organising and commitment for members. There were two different types of membership – band membership and hall membership and from the minute books of St Mary's Band, it is clear that becoming a member of the band hall involved much more than did being a member of the band. It was expected that a member of the hall needed to be available for duties such as stewarding dances and other fundraising activities. This was an immense

⁶⁸ *St Mary's All Ireland Prize Band centenary booklet 1885-1985*, p.35.

⁶⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 11 October 1909.

commitment for a member as by 1926 St Mary's ran dances four times weekly – on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.⁷⁰ If a member did not fulfil these duties without a reasonable excuse for their absence, then they were either fined – as much as five shillings – or expelled.⁷¹ Three young band members were fined for 'misconduct' during a dance in the new hall in 1923. This brought practical problems. Not all St Mary's members were members of the band but, rather, members of the hall. A band member did not have to be a member of the hall but if they were, they had to adhere to the rules regarding collections and dance night duty. This had implications for the band proper, as some members who were fined for rule-breaking might then not turn up for the band due to a grievance with the committee.⁷²

In a band, there was a thin line between effective and over-centralised authority, and the actual situation varied from one band to the next. The Sarsfield Band, newspaper accounts indicate, seemed to change its chairman every year though the secretary and Treasurer held office for a longer period of time.⁷³ The written records of St Mary's Band and Hall survive from 1922 when the band moved from Fish Lane to Mary Street. It is evident that when Patrick 'Todsie' McNamara became president a more structured and disciplined approach to running the affairs of the Band and Hall is evident – though this may have had negative effects in the long-term.⁷⁴ Band folklore has it that McNamara approached the committee of St Mary's Band sometime before 1920 and is quoted as having said, 'Make me President and I will build ye a new band hall.'⁷⁵ If the band folklore is accurate in this, there is no doubt that McNamara made good his promise. It would seem he had an authoritarian approach and from a perusal of the minute books it is clear that under his leadership, discipline was considered vitally important

⁷⁰ *St Mary's Band Account Book* 5 - 12 January 1926.

⁷¹ *St Mary's Band Minute Book*, 19 June 1923. (Proposal: to fine members 5/- if they do not turn up for hall duties).

⁷² *St Mary's Band Account Book*, 1923; *St Mary's Band Minute Book*, 25 March 1923.

⁷³ *Limerick Leader*, 19 September 1894, 7 September 1925, 12 January 1931.

⁷⁴ John McGrath interviewed by Derek Mulcahy, 29 July 2013.

⁷⁵ This was said by the older members of the band and passed on to the present author by Colm McGrath, Secretary of St Mary's Band. Colm was a member of the band from 1956 to 2009.

if the band was to achieve its goal of building a new band hall and also continuing to be a successful musical organisation. From the period of his presidency of over twenty-five years, according to Michael Bourke who served as an officer on committees with McNamara, this was achieved. The new hall was built in two stages – in 1922 and 1924 – and the band won ten national band contests during his presidency up to 1942.⁷⁶

However, divisions began to develop in the chain of command of St Mary's Band in the 1930s, starting with the band's disillusionment with Fianna Fáil in the early 1930s due the party's failure to fulfil promises made regarding the financial settlement for the Abbey Fishermen in relation to the Shannon hydro-electric scheme and in which 'Todsie' McNamara had played a major part. In October 1938 a now sixty-four-year-old McNamara began to lose interest in the band hall in whose building he had played such a prominent part.⁷⁷ A ruling at a half-yearly AGM in 1932 resulted in Rule Number Eight – 'The President's decision is final on all matters' – being deleted from the band's rule book.⁷⁸ The band with its younger energetic committee and membership may have been becoming resentful of his authoritarian approach, or of the fact that he was not attending meetings of the band of which he was president, and McNamara's role began to diminish.

Musical Opportunity

Those band members that were talented and skilful could use their musical ability in many contexts outside the band. After learning to play a musical instrument and music theory, bandsmen used this skill to supplement their incomes. As discussed in previous chapters many learned their music theory when in the army and, on leaving, passed this on to bands they either formed or joined in their own localities. Those civilian bands that wanted to progress and improve had to appoint a competent bandmaster and, beginning with the temperance bands or

⁷⁶ *St Mary's All-Ireland Prize Band Centenary Booklet 1885-1985*, (Limerick, 1985), pp 7-12

⁷⁷ Jackie Clancy, *My Life on the river, An Abbey Fisherman's Stories*, (Texas, 2010), pp 106-07.

⁷⁸ Minute Book 1932, *St Mary's Band*, 4 June 1932 Minute Book.

the 1840s, many bandsmen became so proficient they were able to teach other bands and gain remuneration for this. St Mary's Temperance band in the late 1840s, for instance, remunerated their bandmaster for his services, paying him £26 per half-year.⁷⁹

In the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many fife and drum bands began to advertise in national and local papers looking for bandmasters. Many Limerick bandmasters decided to broaden their horizons and take up positions in bands other than their own, both locally and nationally. P. J. McNamara of St Mary's Band from 1895 to approx. 1906 provides an example of how a competent bandmaster could broaden his horizons and gain an additional a source of income. McNamara was pinpointed in the 1901 census as being in King's County (now Offaly) and his occupation was listed as Music Master and District Councillor (D.C.).⁸⁰ Despite having commitments as an elected local representative in Limerick city, and as bandmaster of St Mary's Band, he took the opportunity to teach music a long distance from his native city.

Most newspaper reports on McNamara describe him as a former All Ireland winning bandmaster of St Mary's Fife and Drum Band of Limerick and this, as well as his musical ability, must have gained him the reputation necessary in order to teach bands in so many places. He appears in newspaper reports from the early 1900s as bandmaster of a number of fife and drum bands in Co. Cork (Castlemartyr Fife and Drum Band, the St Patrick's Catholic Young Men's Society Prize Band Mallow and the O'Brien and Davis Drum, Fife and Bugle Band, Mallow).⁸¹ He was also reported locally as bandmaster to the Limerick Christian

⁷⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 11 March 1842.

⁸⁰ <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/1901> accessed February 5 2015. *Cork Examiner* 25 June 1900, 23 September 1903. McNamara was elected as a district councillor in Limerick and highlighted this role to the enumerator. His role as a music teacher more than likely brought him to Clara Co. Offaly as a music teacher of a local band. He was a roving teacher as he is reported him based in Castlemartyr in Cork in March express 1900 and in 1903 he was teaching a band in Mallow Co Cork.

⁸¹ *Cork Examiner*, 25 June 1900, McNamara is reported as bandmaster of the Castlemartyr band in Cork. *Cork Examiner*, 23 September 1903, 10 March 1904. McNamara received a testimonial from the public bodies of Mallow for his services to the local bands.

Brothers' Orphanage School Band, the Limerick Corporation Workers' Band, the County Limerick Boher Band (sixteen kilometres east of the city) and two Co. Clare bands in Crusheen and Bodyke.⁸² This holding of band master positions in multiple bands became a valuable source of income for talented musicians such as McNamara and fellow parishioner and St Mary's bandsman, Patrick Salmon, who in 1903 also became bandmaster of St Mary's Fife and Drum Band in Middleton, Co. Cork.⁸³ While McNamara was a single man at this stage of his career it was more feasible for him to move around more freely from place to place. As a former British army man who travelled to many far-off places, moving from county to county teaching bands would not have daunted him. For Patrick Salmon, a married man with a family, this must have been more difficult. Salmon moved his family to Nenagh Co. Tipperary in the early 1900s where he became bandmaster to bands in the Nenagh and Tipperary areas.⁸⁴ These posts were probably procured through answering newspaper advertisement for bandmasters with remuneration, something that was common in every county newspaper from the 1890s to the 1920s.⁸⁵ Without the account books of any of the bands surviving for this time it is difficult to ascertain what remuneration bandmasters were getting, but in the 1920s St Mary's Band was paying its bandmaster Patrick Salmon £2.10s shillings per week for his services.⁸⁶

Becoming a bandmaster of fife and drum bands had an economic benefit but also through self-promotion and the reputation of their former achievements bandmasters were able to gain respectability and status. As the advancement of P. J. McNamara of St Mary's Band as a notable conductor/bandmaster the term 'All Ireland Prize winning bandmaster' appeared in

⁸² *Nenagh News*, 17 March 1900, McNamara was reported as bandmaster of the Crusheen Band. *Limerick Leader*, 1 May 1976.

⁸³ *Cork Examiner*, 22 May 1903.

⁸⁴ Patrick Salmon and family. <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/1911>, accessed February 5 2015. *Borrisoleigh and Ileigh, A photographic history of Borrisoleigh and Ileigh*, (2005), p.60. Salmon was also bandmaster of the Borrisoleigh fife and drum band Tipperary in 1905.

⁸⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 19 September 1899. Castlemartyr fife and drum band looking for a bandmaster to state his terms.

⁸⁶ *St Mary's band account book*, 22 January 1922.

most newspaper reports of McNamara's endeavours in the late 1890s and early 1900s.⁸⁷ Whether this was the result of McNamara's own use of promotional language is open to conjecture but it also carried on into newspaper reports of his work as a musical teacher later in New York.⁸⁸ Being a bandmaster of a prize winning band must have held some considerable social capital at the time. McNamara was titled 'Honorary Bandmaster of St Mary's Prize Band (All Ireland)' in Mallow in 1904. In appreciation for his excellent work for bands in Mallow, 'the national and public bodies of Mallow' presented him with a 'gilt-framed testimonial on parchment, signed by J.J. Fitzgerald, Chairman of the Urban District Council of Mallow.'⁸⁹

Danny O'Flynn was another successful bandmaster and conductor of fife and drum bands in Limerick. As well as conducting the Sarsfield Band to first place in the All-Ireland contests of 1908, 1915, 1924, at the Tailteann Games in Dublin in 1926 and 1929, and again in 1932. He conducted St Mary's Band to championship wins in Limerick (1909), Waterford (1910) and again in Limerick in 1911 and 1912.⁹⁰ He was also appointed bandmaster of the Limerick Corporation Workers' Fife and Drum Band, where he was employed as a carman.⁹¹ What makes O'Flynn's more remarkable was that he had no formal training in music but taught himself.

⁸⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 30 September 1895, *Nenagh News*, 17 March 1900, *Cork Examiner*, 25 June 1900.

⁸⁸ *Irish American Weekly*, (New York), 20 November 1909.

⁸⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 10 March 1904. www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/northcorkcounty, accessed 3 April 2017.

⁹⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 10 February 1951. He later conducted the Sarsfield band to contest wins in 1924, 26, 29 and 1932.

⁹¹ *Limerick Leader*, 10 February 1951.



Figure 29, Danny O Flynn, Conductor Sarsfield Band.⁹²

Another noted St Mary's bandmaster who took to teaching bands outside Limerick City was Patrick Salmon. According to Paddy Casey who was a member of St Mary's Band in the 1930s and 40s when Salmon was bandmaster, Salmon born in 1870 in St Mary's Parish, acquired his musical teaching from a tutor based in the Army Barracks at King John's Castle, Limerick. As a youth he attempted to join the local the City Militia as a band boy but was turned down due to an eye injury 'but such was his enthusiasm to learn that the tutor took pity on him and gave

⁹² *St Mary's Prize Band 1885-2010 125th Anniversary Book*, (Limerick, 2010), p.12.

him a musical and academic education.⁹³ Salmon later taught fife and drum Bands in Clare, Cork and Tipperary as well as composing music such as the Irish selection, *Walls of Limerick*, which was published by Potters of London and is still played by fife and drum bands in the twenty-first century.⁹⁴ Salmon was also helping bands all over the country and sending them music and tips on fife and drum playing.⁹⁵ He was an arranger of music both for bands he conducted and other bands. Casey stated he arranged music parts for the Murroe Fife and Drum band County Limerick.⁹⁶ According to Alvin Mullan of Enniskillen, himself a researcher of fife and drum bands in south-west Ulster, Salmon's expertise spread as far as the Fermanagh region:

From what I am told, he [Salmon] made a living teaching flute bands. Ah, some years ago we were researching the flute bands of Fermanagh and we went to a village called Derrylin right on the border and, ah, there was a parish band, Catholic parish band in Derrylin at the time, part music as taught by a man called McGuire. And we called with his son and I said to him your father taught this band he must have had a very good knowledge of music. He said 'Yes, he had' and I said, 'Did he get his music from Potters, [London music manuscript store]?' 'No', he said, 'my father corresponded with a man from Limerick.' And I said, 'Are we talking about Paddy Salmon?' and he said, 'Yes, we are. And'. he says, .I have a letter here that he wrote to my father.'⁹⁷

Salmon's brother Joseph was a young drummer in St Mary's band which won the All-Ireland Contest in 1895. The transatlantic coming together of individual performers was determined by Joseph, who emigrated to New York in 1903 and was listed as a musician in the 1910 United

⁹³ Paddy Casey 6 September 2013, *St Mary's prize band celebrating 100 years 1885-2010* (Limerick, 2010), p.17. *The Times*, 20 December 1856. This resulted in reports of concerts 'to demonstrate the successful result of the musical instruction of NCO's, men and boys at the establishment.'

⁹⁴ Interview with Alvin Mullan 7 January 2015.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Paddy Casey 6 September 2013.

⁹⁷ Alvin Mullan, 7 January 2015.

States census.⁹⁸ In 1923 he collaborated with P. J. McNamara, his former bandmaster in St Mary's, at the Limerick Men's Association Annual Games at Celtic Park, where Salmon conducted the field music and McNamara led the dance music.⁹⁹

Having a musical involvement clearly trumped over the economic background of band members determined to make use of their musical abilities and talents. It gave them a status and a respect from their peers that is still talked about today.¹⁰⁰ John Clarke born in Newgate Lane, St Mary's Parish, in 1891 joined the Number 9 Fife and Drum Band at a young age, initially learning his music from bandmaster Cronin in the Nicholas Street band hall. Clarke, in an autobiographical article in the *Limerick Leader* in 1967, enhanced his musical ability by studying music under music teacher Moane who was instructing bands and orchestras in Limerick at this period. Clarke then left the Number 9 Band and joined the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band and later helped reorganise the St John's Brass and Reed Band after its split from St John's Temperance Society. Due to the wide variety of instrumentation they used, many band members, mainly from brass and reed bands, played in dance bands from the 1930s onwards. Bud Clancy, one of the last of the Abbey Fishermen and one of Limerick's most famous dance band leaders, recalled that 'music was a source of pride to the people. One man I knew played in his band and in the morning took off his dickey bow, put on his old clothes and swept the streets of Limerick...that was his job.'¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ancestry. com, 1910 USA Federal Census Manhattan New York, accessed 5 January 2017.

⁹⁹ *Irish American Weekly*, (New York), 9 June 1913.

¹⁰⁰ Authors note, the descendants of the McNamara's are visiting Limerick in May 2017 to present a violin and piccolo to St Mary's band museum from Patrick (P J) and Thomas McNamara former members used in their recordings made in New York in the 1920s.

¹⁰¹ Frank Hamilton, 'The life and times of Bud Clancy', Frank Hamilton (ed.), *Limerick in days gone by*, (Limerick, 1978), p. 10. Interview with Bud Clancy, p. 9.

Diaspora and local bands:

Vital to the funding of local bands was the help given by Limerick locals who had emigrated, especially to the United States. One surviving letter from St Mary's bandsman, Patrick McNamara, to his brother Michael as late as 1924 gives a rare indication of the world-wide dispersal of Limerick men who joined the British Army and shows how their experiences led them to settle in different countries, their musical ability in some cases giving them the chance of a livelihood on leaving the ranks. By the mid-1920s Patrick was living in New York and was a self-employed music teacher and conductor.¹⁰² He wrote to his brother Michael, then a British Army recruiting sergeant who lived in England, and expressed his emotions in relation to missing his native home and family: 'Fate and destiny is sometimes cruel to part us that were once a loyal and loving family... 'Tis certainly one queer world and life's uncertainty – here today and away tomorrow.' Significantly, the previous and final time the brothers had met was in Africa during the Boer War.¹⁰³ Here we have valuable insights into the way in which involvement in military campaigns worldwide strengthened Limerick men's identification with Britain and the empire while at the same time not eliminating their identification with their own locality and – in some places – with the musical activities of that locality.

These links between home and diaspora were central to the building up of St Mary's Band, in particular. Through the connections between president, Patrick 'Todsie' McNamara, and ex-band members who had emigrated to New York, a committee was formed in the latter city to raise funds for the band's proposed dance hall. Michael Bourke, President of the Band in 1985, explained this in the Band centenary publication:

¹⁰² United States of America Census, <http://www.mic.ul.ie/library/Pages/OnlineDatabasesA.aspx>, accessed 5 February 2015.

¹⁰³ Copy of the Letter was given to the author by Barry McNamara grandson of Michael McNamara. Michael McNamara stayed in the army, became a British Army recruitment officer and had a long and distinguished career.

In 1923, ‘Todsie’ initiated the construction of the adjoining big hall. It was completed in 1924 largely through the efforts of a committee in America headed by [Jim] ‘Munchin’ Clancy – a great friend of Todsie – and Mickey Frawley, and they were supported in their efforts by Limerick emigrants who very generously sent donations home to help finance the building.’¹⁰⁴

The diaspora and their contacts with the parish helped in no small part to keep the band flourishing to this day. The members who had emigrated to the United States settled mainly in the Brooklyn area of New York and minute books of the 1920s outline the contact of the band with the members who had emigrated. Three addresses on the treasurer’s book of 1926 are Michael Frawley, James Clancy and Pat O’Dwyer all based in Brooklyn New York. These men are in the 1920 census of New York, O’Dwyer having emigrated in 1896, Clancy in 1900 and Frawley in 1904. Along with the McNamara brothers Thomas and Patrick, discussed in earlier chapters, there was in Brooklyn and its environs in the early 1900s a wide community of Limerick men – many of them bandsmen.¹⁰⁵ The St Mary’s Band treasurer, Patrick Quigley, emigrated to the USA in 1927, being helped by a presentation of £5.00 from the band – not unusual in the case of members who were emigrating.¹⁰⁶ Quigley, now married, was listed in the 1930 census as living in West 100th Street Manhattan New York, employed as a kitchen helper in a hospital.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *St Mary’s Prize Band 1885-2010 125th Anniversary Book* (Limerick, 2010), p. 28. Michael Bourke joined St Mary’s Band at fifteen years of age in 1925.

¹⁰⁵ 1920 United States Federal Census, ancestrylibrary.com.libraryproxy.mic.ul.ie, accessed 16 May 2017.

¹⁰⁶ St Mary’s Band Account Book 23 August 1927.

¹⁰⁷ 1930 United States Federal Census, ancestrylibrary.com.libraryproxy.mic.ul.ie, accessed 16 May 2017.



Figure 30, St Mary's Band New York Band Committee 1924.¹⁰⁸

The importance of financial and moral help from former band members who had emigrated was considerable. The emigrant band members were connected to the Limerick Men's Association in New York and dances were organised there to raise funds for St Mary's. These set up a New York-based branch of the St Mary's Band committee, of which P. J. McNamara, a former bandmaster of St Mary's Band, now a dance band leader and professor of music, was secretary. The money raised was sent to Patrick 'Todsey' McNamara's home in Sheep Street and then paid into the funds of the band to help complete the building works, supplementing the income from dances held in the hall to pay off the building costs.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Back Row L to R. J. Jordan, Dave Scanlon, Joe Clancy (Tres), P. Dwyer, P. V. McCoy, P. Jordan, Tim Carrig, Jas Corbett, T. Blake, W. Collopy, J. Gleeson, M. Roache, Ed Byrnes, T. Mahoney, Jas West, (Chairman), Helen Blake, P. McNamara (Sec), M. Sheehan, (Pres Limerick men's Association), M. Frawley. An interesting point was that Tim Carrig was a former member of the Crusheen County Clare Fife and Drum Band, who also emigrated to New York, and was connected to P. J. McNamara as he was bandmaster of the Crusheen Band in the 1900s.

¹⁰⁹ Derek Mulcahy, (Author), joined St Mary's band in January 1976. In the late 1960s dances had ceased for a few years and the 1924 hall was then leased to St Mary's Parish council for Bingo sessions. The hall built in 1922 was still used as a Billiard room with three tables and a full time caretaker was employed since 1938.

The importance of Limerick men abroad financing the building of St Mary's Band's dance hall provides a sense of diaspora loyalty to home – to Limerick and St Mary's Parish – and to their former band comrades, which evokes a sense of the culture and identity that prompted them to help finance the organisation at home. This draw of home continued to be strong. The previously mentioned Patrick Quigley, an accordion player who occasionally played for dances when the new hall opened in 1922, and the St Mary's treasurer from 1924 until he emigrated to Brooklyn in 1927, is a case in point.

Conclusion

The organisation of a civilian marching band required skill and experience. The most obvious requirement was to be able to teach the music to new recruits, and this was done in a number of ways from availing of the expertise of former military men to employing a teacher from inside or outside the ranks of the band itself. Over the years, several gifted teachers transmitted their skills and their love of music to generation of Limerick's young men through the band structure. The financial management of the band was also vital as instruments had to be bought and, in order to give the band, the best possible image before the public, uniforms had to be purchased. Along with this was the expense of paying the teacher and renting the band room. The fund raising that had to be carried out for this was of many types but the running of dances, especially from the late nineteenth century, was probably the most prominent. The input of the diaspora was important financially for St Mary's Band and the success of band members abroad using their musical skills not only helped them to better their prospects abroad, but also enabled them to support the band at home. This in turn led to the need for better accommodation for the band – and here the Sarsfield and St Mary's Bands did best, each of them having their band hall combined with dance hall by the 1920s. Such organisation meant that band membership required not only musical ability but also a willingness to be involved in many activities apart

from the music – leading to a strong sense of commitment to both the band and its locality. These dance halls, varying in size and range of facilities, and run by both bands and sporting organisations in Limerick from the 1920s, deserve a study in their own right. They were valuable social outlets for those living in their vicinity as well as playing a vital role in raising funds for their parent organisations. St Mary’s as a dance hall survived up to the end of the showband scene in the 1970s and still being utilised as a bingo hall up to 2000, thereafter being used for educational purposes as a Gaelscoil.

Chapter 5: Music and Competition

This chapter discusses how well organised and financially viable bands could achieve success in national and local competition along with, examining the music played and discusses how it helped to express various senses of identity on the part of the bands. Irish national tunes helped the bands and their follower's express nationalistic sentiments, this choice of tunes often proving contentious issue at times of political tension. From the mid-nineteenth century, nationalist newspapers began to print what were described as 'national melodies' and bands were encouraged to incorporate these tunes into their music repertoire. The rising standard of musicianship is also discussed: from the 1880s local civilian bandmasters began to arrange music suitable to their band's individual standard. Instrumentation and the improvement of same from the mid-1800s is also discussed since it helped bands improve musically, to be more harmonious in their playing, and therefore to play pieces beyond the capacity of the simple fife used by the temperance bands. This improvement in skills and extension of repertoire is evident in Limerick fife and drum bands from the 1880s onwards. The issue of military contribution to the musical ability of the bands is also discussed, with emphasis put on those band members that had spent time in the British army bands and subsequently brought back music and instruments as well as the information on new marches and selections.

While there have been civilian fife and drum bands in Limerick since the 1840s, the musical ability to form a band and learn the rudiments of music had to come from somewhere and be nurtured into a combination that could win national and local prizes. As stated in earlier chapters, while famine and emigration were blamed for the demise of temperance bands in the late 1840s, lack of competitive outings for bands could also have helped to cause their demise. Newspaper research shows that the majority of contests, both local and national, occurred during the periods 1880s to late 1920s. These contests were well organised affairs and became

a central feature for many fife and drum bands. This could also be considered the blue ribbon period for fife and drum bands, especially in regard to high musical standards. The standards set in relation to performance techniques and rules for contest participation were set in place in the 1880s and these still exist today.

While the Limerick civilian bands initially concentrated on marching music, their repertoires were far broader than this. The marches were, of course, part of the band tradition since traditionally marching tunes gave armies an identifiable source of inspiration when in battle. The American army found the tune ‘Yankee Doodle’ gave them impetus at the battles in the 1770s at Bunker Hill and later at Saratoga. It would seem over time this tune initially seen as an insult to opposing armies later became a tune of national enlivenment and pride.¹ Similarly, Irish born soldiers in the British army identified themselves through their national music and songs. The tunes ‘St Patrick’s Day’ and ‘Garryowen’ – tunes still played by fife and drum bands including Limerick’s St Mary’s Band up to present times – were reported as being played by the band of the 87th Regiment after a battle in Tarfira Spain in 1811 when the town was defended against the French.² The march ‘Garryowen’ – which was always seen as a Limerick tune – was written about 1770-1780 in praise of the moneyed young hooligans who escaped the discipline of sheriffs and mayors and ran riot in Limerick at this period. At a civic feast Dublin in 1811 for the Sheriff the band present played ‘Garryowen’ in his honour.³ The tune later gained popularity in the United States, especially after General Custer’s 7th cavalry adopted it.⁴ Decades later in the 1860s the Seventh Cavalry's official history described the unit as imbued with the ‘Garryowen Esprit’:

¹ Lewis Winstock, *Songs and music of the Redcoats 1642-1902*, (London 1979), pp 69-73. This tune was initially a British Redcoat tune written around 1775 by Dr Richard Shuckburg ‘in derision of the odd looking colonials who had come to help the British regulars fight the French,’ p. 70.

² Winstock, *Songs and music*, p.101; *St Mary’s Prize Band 1885-2010 CD Recording* (Limerick, 2010).

³ *Saunders News-Letter*, 12 October 1811.

⁴ Winstock, *Songs and music*, pp 104-05. *Brighton Gazette*, 9 April 1863. A report of a military parade in Brighton stated that along with other military bands ‘was heard Hibernia’s sons followed, sweetly discoursing ‘The four leaved Shamrock’, or telling of ‘Garryowen and Glory’.’

We are the boys who take delight in smashing the Limerick lamps when lighting,
Through the streets like sporters fighting, and tearing all before us,
Instead of Spa we'll drink brown ale, and pay the reckoning on the nail,
No man for debt shall go to gaol, from Garryowen in glory.⁵

There is very little contemporary reporting of the exact tunes and marches that bands played in Limerick though 'Garryowen', popular countrywide, did appear in the repertoire. At O'Connellite demonstrations in Limerick the names of tunes played by bands were not mentioned except to state that they were 'patriotic' or 'national tunes'.⁶ When O'Connell visited Limerick in 1828 there is rare detail on one of the tunes played: it was reported that upon a cart with a decorative tree was 'a piper playing patriotic airs' of which 'Garryowen' was one.⁷

The march 'St Patrick's Day', whose power reputedly really only came to the fore after the Zulu war in 1879⁸, was actually, along with 'Garryowen', one of the most popular played by local bands on public occasions. On St Patrick's Day 1841 in Nenagh the local bands were reported as playing 'Patrick's Day', Rory [O'Moore]', 'Garryowen' and 'Sprig of [Shillelagh]'.⁹ When Batty's Circus came to Limerick in 1841 the circus band got abuse from the attendance in Queen Street (now Davis street) for 'not playing the national air "Garryowen"'.¹⁰ A report of a dispute between the Limerick and Nottingham Militia Regiments

⁵ Judy Daubenmier, 'Empty Saddles: Desertion from the Dashing U.S. Cavalry', *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, vol. 54, no. 3, pp 4-5; Kevin Hannon, 'Garryowen', *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 1, December 1979, p. 37.

⁶ *Limerick Reporter*, 3 December 1839, 9 October 1840; *Limerick Chronicle*, 4 December 1839; *Limerick Standard*, 3 December 1839. O'Connell visited Limerick in 1839 with many bands from city and county attending.

⁷ *Limerick Evening Post*, 8 July 1828.

⁸ Winstock, *Songs & Music of the Redcoats*, p. 226. 'The Zulus after being defeated at Ulundi and their Kingdom were broken up into eight tribes under a chief. A crisis arose, which music helped first to create and then dispel. General Sir Evelyn Wood had called a meeting of some of the chiefs and intending to impress them and their warriors he ordered the band to play 'God save the Queen' and the troops to cheer. Either the sombre national anthem or the rousing 'Hurrah' upset the Zulu's. The chiefs kept the upset Zulus calm and to clear the air the bandmaster was ordered to play a lively tune, and being an Irishman he obliged with 'St Patrick's Day' and in less than five minutes the whole of the dusky hosts were sway to and dancing to the music... all in the best of humours.

⁹ *Limerick Reporter*, 19 March 1841.

¹⁰ *Limerick Reporter*, 15 June 1841. Batty's was a touring circus from England.

in Dublin was solved by the bands of each regiment playing ‘God save the King’ together and each band playing the others regimental song which was ‘Garryowen’ played by the Nottingham’s and ‘The British Grenadiers’ played by the Limerick Militia.¹¹ An article in the local press in 1926 recalled the sounds of a parade seeing off the volunteers of the Papal Brigade on 4 June 1860 to the train station: ‘By the left, quick march’, and off they went, led by St. Mary’s Flute Band and St. John’s Workingmen’s Brass Band playing ‘Garryowen’.¹²

The tunes played by the civilian fife and drum bands emanating from the temperance movement in the 1840s were initially simple pieces. While newspaper reports vaguely described the music played by the bands vaguely as ‘national airs’, one reason for the non-reporting of the tunes played was the objectionable nature of what were termed seditious national (Irish) tunes. The playing of such tunes did not go unnoticed by government, the many nineteenth century Irish Party Procession Acts being introduced in an attempt to control parades – both loyalist and nationalist – and to control the divisive aspects of these parades, such as banners, speeches and bands of music playing politically sensitive tunes.¹³ This awareness of the disruptive effects of music was not confined to what bands played, since ballad singers singing seditious songs were also watched by the authorities.¹⁴ A Maurice O’Connell was brought before the magistrate’s court in Limerick in 1843 for ‘collect[ing] a large crowd, and [singing] ballads or songs ...of a seditious and most inflammatory nature. Unfortunately the details of the songs were not reported, any more than the tunes played in political demonstrations.’¹⁵

¹¹ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 14 October 1841.

¹² *Limerick Chronicle*, 6 June 1860, *Limerick Leader*, 26 May 1926

¹³ Neil P. Maddox, ‘A melancholy record: the story of the nineteenth century Irish party procession acts, *Irish Jurist*, 2010, p. 242.

¹⁴ Maura Murphy, ‘The ballad singer and the role of the seditious ballad: Dublin Castle’s View’, *Ulster Folklife* vol. 25, 1979, pp.79-102.

¹⁵ *Limerick Reporter*, 17 November 1843. New Bridge, <http://limerickslife.com/mathew-bridge/> accessed 30 May 2015, According to Sharon Slater the bridge now called Mathew bridge built in 1846 replaced what was

In Limerick examples of the tunes played by local temperance bands were detailed in a petition to the Lord Lieutenant in Dublin Castle in relation to the restrictions placed on bands by legislation. The tone of the letter, while expressing total adherence to the laws set down by government, especially the law against what was termed ‘party colours’ and ‘party tunes’, argued that green was the national colour and the tunes played such as ‘Patrick’s Day’, ‘Garryowen’, ‘The Land of the West’ and ‘Rory O’Moore’ were old Irish tunes and should not be defined as ‘party tunes’.¹⁶ But it seems that in order to keep in tune with the law, alternative tunes could be found in local music shops in Limerick for bands wanting to play more sedate music. Corbett’s music shop in Limerick, for instance, advertised not only musical instruments for temperance bands, but also specially composed music pieces approved by Fr Mathew.¹⁷

By this time, the march tunes popular in the bands’ repertoires included not only ‘Garryowen’ and ‘Patrick’s Day’ but also those introduced in Young Ireland’s *Nation* newspaper – ‘Clare’s Dragoons’ ‘and ‘A Nation once again.’¹⁸ While these may have had nationalist undertones, their main attraction to the bands was probably that they were short simple tunes played in march-time. These tunes, usually in the key of G or D, were easily played on the fife with the tunes/marches accompanied by drums. ‘The first section of a tune is played only by the lead drummer or ‘tip’. This is referred to as single time. The section is then repeated with all the drummers playing the same rhythm in unison. This is referred to as double time’, which can have a dynamic effect on the way marches are expressed.¹⁹ As the century passed and the finances and expertise of the bands improved (See Chapter 4), other

called the ‘New Bridge’ built in 1761 when the old City walls were knocked for the expansion of the city in the 1760s.

¹⁶ Outrage Reports 17/12750, 13 July 1840. Letter from Daniel McNamara Secretary of the Limerick Temperance Association John Street Limerick.

¹⁷ *Limerick Reporter*, 12 June 1840

¹⁸ Harry White, *The Keepers Recital, Music and cultural history in Ireland 1770-1970*, (Cork, 1998), p.60. *Limerick Reporter*, 19 March 1841.

¹⁹ Gordon Ramsey, ‘Band practice: class, taste and Identity, in Ulster Loyalist Flute Bands’, *Ethnomusicology Ireland*, p. 3.

helps to playing became available. In the opening years of the twentieth century, scale cards for flute, appropriate to a fife and drum band, were produced by Potter's music store London and could be purchased by bands for 2s per dozen which was an affordable sum, and given to new band members to learn the fingering of flute and scales.

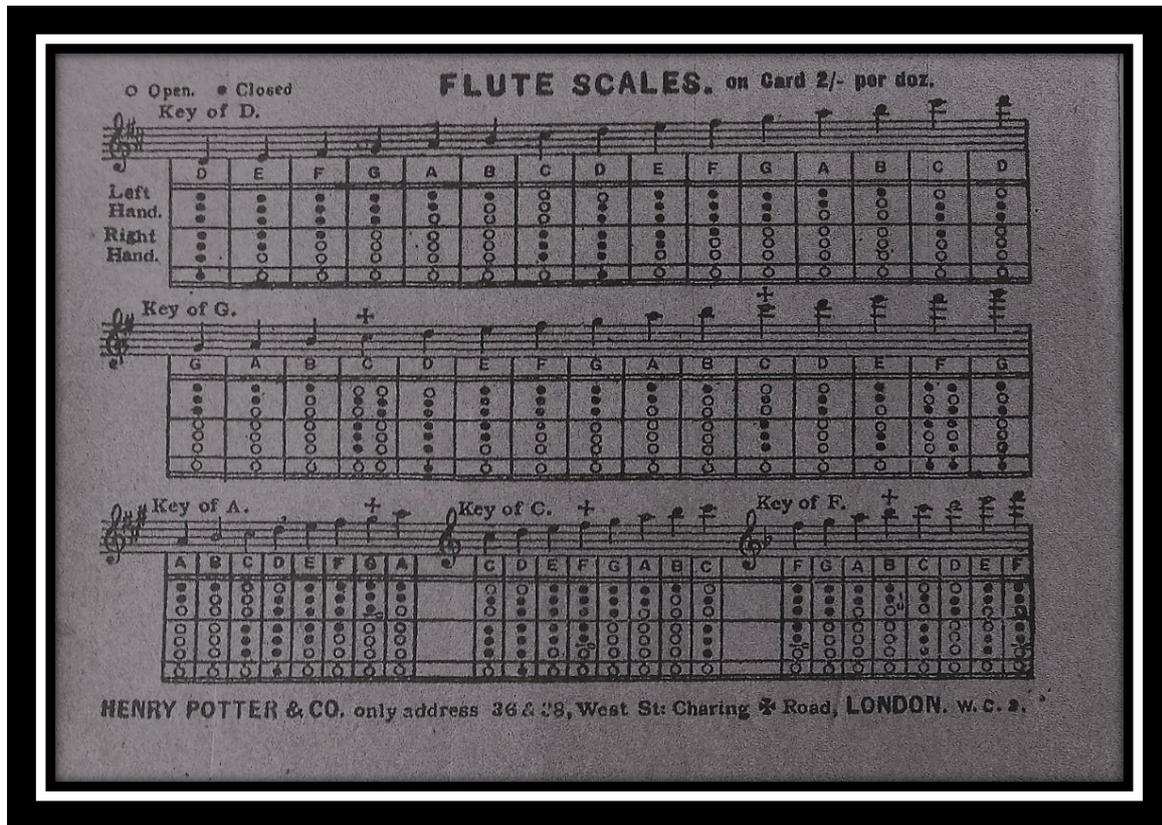


Figure 31, Flute scale card Potters of London circa early 1900s.²⁰

The continued presence of the army bands in the city, and the personal links between them and the local bands, meant that the music adopted not only by the local bands but by the public generally was a reflection of what was played by the military bands – both fife and drum and Brass and reed military music and marching tunes, but also other pieces popular throughout the Empire. At the Ireland-Wales rugby match in 1898, for instance, the Royal Irish Regiment's band programme showed how the organisers and the band represented the complex identities

²⁰ Author's own collection.

celebrated in the event – loyalty to crown and empire in ‘God Save the Queen’, a recognition of Welshness and Irishness in unthreatening ‘Reminiscences of Wales’, ‘Reminiscences of Ireland’ and ‘Kathleen Mavourneen.’²¹

Nationalistic tunes

More overtly nationalistic tunes did figure in the repertoire of the local bands. One of the most important collections of melodies appeared in the 1840s, in the Dublin periodical, *The Citizen or Dublin Monthly Magazine*.²² Thomas Davis, co-editor of the *Nation*, the *Dublin Monthly Magazine* and *The spirit of the nation*, contributed to the promotion of Irish music through his newspapers and his writings²³ Davis’s dream was of a united Ireland – incorporating political and cultural unity. The indoctrination of ‘national music and poetry’ formed a large part of his plan to educate Irish people towards what he saw as the country’s national heritage. The music editor of the *Citizen* was Henry Hudson (1798–1889), a Dublin dentist who was one of a group of important mid-nineteenth-century collectors of Irish music from the oral tradition. His manuscripts, which are now held in a number of repositories, contain over nine hundred tunes, including some which he composed himself in traditional idiom.²⁴

Davis’s printed Irish tunes with music scores in his papers and these tunes became accessible to amateur musicians in the bands. Davis was sharply aware of temperance societies’ need for both access to ‘national melodies’ as music for their bands, but also that the scales in this music should be suitable for all instruments, suggesting the adoption of tunes such as ‘Molly McAlpin’, ‘Remember the glories of Brien [sic] the Brave’ and ‘Ailleen [Eileen] Aroon’.²⁵ Davis considered that these tunes were historically significant in terms of Irish

²¹ John Curtin, ‘The rugby international at Limerick, 1898’ *Old Limerick Journal*, vol. 35, (Winter 1998), p. 43.

²² *Dublin Monthly Magazine*, <http://www.itma.ie/digitallibrary/print-collection/citizen> accessed 11 Nov 2014.

²³ *The Irish Monthly*, January, 1891.

²⁴ https://www.itma.ie/Features/Printed_Collections. Accessed 20 June 2016.

²⁵ *The Dublin Monthly Magazine*, July-December 1842.

national identity, but he was also aware that their playing must be made accessible for bands with a limited range of instruments, and that composing these tunes arranged in a way that suited brass and fife and drum bands was essential to the creation of a wide audience in the promotion of Irish musical culture. Under the heading Temperance Band Music,

in the notices to correspondents last month we mentioned our willingness to meet their views by publishing in the Dublin Monthly Magazine, arrangements for wind instruments of our favourite national melodies, and also to give in the letter-press an account of the scales and [clefs] of the instruments generally employed in the temperance bands. We have now great pleasure in presenting to our readers the fulfilment of the first part of the plan by the publication of ‘Molly McAlpin,’ perhaps more known by Moore’s words ‘remember the glories of Brien the brave’ and ‘Aileen Aroon’. The arrangements are for flute, piccolo, or octave flute, three [clarinets], two horns, cornopean, trumpet and two trombones.²⁶

Davis seems to have made a lasting contribution to the repertoire of local civilian bands. In the Limerick band context tunes such as ‘Eileen A Roon’ are still played in the early twenty-first century by the St Mary’s Band and the current arrangement was written by Jim Daly former bandmaster of the band in the 1970s.²⁷ Though their music is not entirely suitable for marching bands, music collection publications other than the work of Davis – such as the George Petrie’s (c. 1790–1866), *Collection of the ancient music of Ireland* and Edward Bunting’s (1773-1843) *Irish Music Manuscripts* – were possible sources from which bandmasters could garner music scores for marching bands. This, however, is not directly provable in the case of the Limerick bands.²⁸

²⁶ *Dublin Monthly Magazine*, July-December 1842.

²⁷ Author’s own collection. Daly was also a former band master of the Sarsfield band in the 1940-50s.

²⁸ George Petrie, Edward Bunting, Irish Traditional Music Archive. <http://www.itma.ie/digitallibrary/print-collection>, accessed 31 May 2015.

From perusal of newspapers up to the 1880s it is safe to assume that the repertoire of the local civilian fife and drum bands that mainly played at temperance processions, St Patrick's Day parades, and later at Land League meetings and Home Rule rallies, included predominately marches such as 'St Patrick's Day', 'Garryowen', 'God save Ireland', 'A nation once again' and 'Rory O'Moore' with Handel's 'See the conquering Hero' as popular by the end of the century as when the temperance movement was in its heyday. Ryan asserts that temperance bands were playing 'music with a moral purpose and [this] is just one example of the Irish predilection for associating bands and causes.' Playing to their strengths these bands 'employed whatever instruments were available which meant that no standard instrumentation or repertoire developed.'²⁹

However, the repertoire of bands broadened as nationalism or a more assertive type emerged later in the century. But such tunes could be a source of trouble, especially in times of political tension – as in the aftermath of the Fenian Rising of 1867.³⁰ Zimmerman states that in the 1870s '[seditious] songs were still numerous and influential, contributing to the long accumulation of political passions'.³¹ This was the case in 1871 when Cork's Blackpool Temperance Band visited Limerick and their music (obviously politically provocative) brought the attention of the local police upon them and the large crowd of local followers when they paraded through the city streets. One participating band, aptly named the Star of Freedom Fife and Drum Band, had their drums, fifes and staff confiscated by police for playing 'nationalist airs' and when the accompanying crowd whistled 'Harvey Duff' at the police, the latter eventually charged the bands and confiscated the instruments.³² The political excitement was

²⁹ Joseph J. Ryan, 'The Army School of Music 1922 – 1940 It's formation and evolution with a critical assessment of the compositions of its first director, Wilhelm Fritz Brase', Master of Arts Degree, National University of Ireland, (Dublin, 1987), p.29.

³⁰ Shin-Ichi Takagami, 'The Fenian Rising in Dublin, March 1867' *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 29, no. 115 (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 340-362

³¹ Georges Denis Zimmermann, *Political Street Ballads and Rebel Songs 1780-1900*, (Dublin, 1967), p.59

³² Dion Boucicault. www.theatrehistory.com/irish/shaughraun.htm. Accessed, 27 September 2016. The term 'Harvey Duff' is one given to a police informer in Dion Boucicault's 1874 play 'The Shaughraun'.

increased with the crowd's pro-Fenian calls of 'cheers for the Irish Republic' and 'come now, Tipperary Boys!' 'Come now Tipperary Boys' could be a reference to the Ballycohey incident. This was a violent protest against Landlord William Scully and his methods by tenants which took place on 14 August 1868 in the vicinity of Shronell in the parish of Lattin-Cullen, some four miles outside Tipperary town.³³ In the following decade, an unnamed fife and drum band was involved in stone throwing at Limericks William Street RIC Barracks after a Parnell release demonstration.³⁴ While members of the Foresters' Brass Band and Boherbuoy Band were later mentioned in a court case, the magistrate was not satisfied with the assertion that these bands (which were brass rather than fife and drum bands and therefore difficult to confuse with one another) were involved.³⁵

The cultural nationalist movement of the later nineteenth century also affected the bands' repertoire. A letter to the *Celtic Times* in 1887 emphasised that the choice of tunes was an important factor when employing bands to play at GAA games. The repertoire should be 'adapted to the Irish character, and by listening to sweet Irish airs, which are ever so effectual in keeping the sacred fire of patriotism burning brightly in every true Irishman's breast.' A decade later a call was made for Limerick bands to put into force what was decided in Dublin by the Dublin Young Ireland League for amateur bands to perform 'Irish music'. In 1912 Dublin bands under the instruction of the All-Ireland Fife and Drum Band Association proposed and passed a motion that in the procession from the Mansion House 'all bands are requested to play selections, marches etc., at different points they are allotted to. No music to

³³ E.D. Steele, *Irish land and British politics: tenant-right and nationality 1865-1870*, (Cambridge, 1974), p. 71. Steele asserts, with some exaggeration, that Ballycohey was 'one of the most fateful incidents in nineteenth century Irish, and Anglo-Irish, history.'

³⁴ F.S.L. Lyons, *The Fall of Parnell 1890-91*, (London, 1960), p. 11. Parnell was imprisoned from what was determined by the British Government Parnell's attempt to sabotage Gladstone's proposals on a Land Act for Ireland

³⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 22 August 1871. *Freeman's Journal*, 17 April 1882; *Munster News*, 13 June 1877, 27 October 1886. The Foresters' Band was formed in 1873 and was prominent up to the mid-1880s.

be played while gentlemen are addressing the crowds. The song ‘A Nation once again’ to be taken up with the masses of people.’³⁶ The same tendency was also becoming visible in Limerick where, in November 1916, ‘A Nation Once Again’ was played at the conclusion of the Roxboro’ sports day by St Mary’s Fife and Drum Band.³⁷ Tunes such as ‘Wrap the green flag around me boys’, and ‘Kelly the Boy From Killane,’ were added to bands’ repertoires in the early twentieth century.³⁸

This belief in the link between music and identity was also evident at a public meeting in Limerick’s Town Hall in 1906 when nationalistic sentiments came to the fore in claims that the employment of military bands led to a lack of support for local bands that were playing to a very high standard, and that the military bands’ music was anti-national. Mr John Crowe declared that ‘It was degrading for an Irishman to listen to music from such a source.’ It was claimed that the audience would only listen to foreign music being played though, ironically, the local bands were as likely as the army bands to play these marches written by British army men such as Albert Shrimpton and William Turpin – though complemented by national Irish marches and tunes.³⁹

Apart from the situation at religious processions and celebrations, where hymns would have been played, most fife and drum band tunes/repertoires did not change for various events up to present times. From this author’s experience of fife and drum bands from Limerick, Waterford and Wexford from the 1970s onwards, the repertoire of Irish tunes/marches played by bands is not unlike those of the temperance bands of the 1840s and the civilian bands from

³⁶ *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 March 1912.

³⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 6 November 1916.

³⁸ St Mary’s Band music library (accessed 4 May 2017). Although the only date on some music parts is 1936, arranged by A. McNamara, from this author’s interaction with members of St Mary’s Band who joined the band in the 1920, it seems that marches have been part of the band’s repertoire for decades before the 1930s.

³⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 24 January 1906; Fife and Drum Museum, <http://www.fifeanddrummuseum.com>. Accessed 13 October 2016. Drum Major Albert Shrimpton was a prolific march writer in the early twentieth century and a member of the Coldstream Guards. His marches are still part of the programmes of the three-part music bands in Limerick, Waterford and Wexford that survive in the Republic of Ireland to date.

the 1880s – ‘St Patrick’s Day’, ‘Garryowen’, ‘Eileen a Roon’, ‘Rakes of Mallow’, ‘Memory of the Dead’, ‘Clare’s Dragoons’ and ‘The Boys of Wexford’.⁴⁰

Band Music Arrangements:

But even if nationalistic tunes entered the repertoire of the local bands, it was inevitable that as they were marching bands themselves, the influence of the military bands’ would exercise a clear influence on the airs and marches played by city civilian bands.⁴¹ In the late 1890s and early 1900s these civilian bands began to incorporate into their repertoires a number of march arrangements by British composers such as William Turpin, Kenneth Alford and Albert Shrimpton – marches that are still played in Limerick today by St Mary’s Band.⁴²

By the early twentieth century Limerick bands were well acquainted with the sources from which to get the necessary sheet music for these marches.⁴³ Patrick Salmon, former bandmaster of St Mary’s band, as well as composing marches for the bands he conducted, had an Irish selection, the *Walls of Limerick*, which was published by Potters of London and is still played by fife and drum bands in the twenty-first century.⁴⁴ What was equally important was having a bandmaster who could write music to suit the band. As the local bands developed over decades, such competent bandmasters were employed to organise and develop the bands to play musically and proficiently. The bandmaster wrote music suitable to the standard of musicians available to him. This can be observed in the hand written music manuscripts that

⁴⁰ St Mary’s Band music library, accessed 30 May 2017.

⁴¹ *The Irishman*, 5 November 1859. The band of the Scots Greys attended the Munster Ball along with the Mayor and many civilian guests.

⁴² Lieut. J Mackenzie Rogan, ‘Regimental Bands: Their history and Role of usefulness, *The Musical Times*, vol. 54, no.839, 1913, p. 29; Albert Shrimpton, <http://www.fifeanddrummuseum.com/albert-shrimpton-61-c.asp>. Shrimpton was a Drum-Major born in 1890 who joined the Coldstream Guards at the age of fourteen years and eight months in Sept 1903. He is understood to have been a natural gifted musician and wrote his first march at age eighteen. ‘When he was a Lance Corporal those who knew him reports that he would sit at a table in Wellington Barracks and churn out a march in an afternoon and when short of cash, he would swiftly sell it to Potters for some £3 (when daily pay might have been 6 pence).’

⁴³ *Potters music catalogue*, St Mary’s Prize Band museum, accessed 6 June 2014

⁴⁴ Alvin Mullan interviewed by Derek Mulcahy 7 January 2015.

still survive in St Mary's Band archive, with pieces composed by the band's own bandmasters such as Patrick Salmon and Gus McNamara as well as bandmasters from other bands, such as Michael Raleigh and Danny O'Flynn.⁴⁵ Other bandmasters arranged marches for their own local band only, and those that survive in St Mary's Band archive are from the 1920s onwards. Danny O'Flynn of the Sarsfield Band arranged an Irish selection of Irish airs for a gramophone recording in 1929.⁴⁶



Figure 32. Sarsfield Band record 1929, St Mary's band museum.

⁴⁵ St Mary's Band music archive.

⁴⁶ Aidan Hurley, formally member of the Sarsfield Band. Gramophone Record St Mary's Band Museum, accessed 31 May 2015.

In 1929 a Parlophone-Columbia recording unit came to Ireland for the first time. ‘Based in Dublin, the unit recorded some forty individuals and groups performing music (and speech) of several genres, including Irish traditional music. The recording trip resulted in thirty-eight 78s, issued in an E3000 series. Surviving copies are rare and are often, badly worn.’⁴⁷

While this account of the Parlophone recording unit coming to Ireland in 1929 and issuing recordings in the E3000 series, of which the Sarsfield band is E3622 (see of record pictured in Figure 40 above) it has always been stated to this author in St Mary’s Band and by ex-Sarsfield Band members, that the recording was made in St Mary’s Band hall in 1929.⁴⁸

In the 1930s, Gus McNamara, band master of St Mary’s Band arranged selections of Irish marches which are still played by the band today. These tunes were more than likely marches played by the band since its formation but now put on manuscript form with each sections of the band having a clear and distinctive part. The names of some of the arrangements are *The Green Flag*, *The Emigrant*, and *The Foggy Dew*. As an example of the comprehensiveness of such marching arrangements, the selection of tunes on the *The Green Flag* includes ‘Kelly the boy from Killane’, ‘The Harp that once through Tara Halls’, ‘The Green Flag’, and ‘Memory of the Dead’.⁴⁹ Firstly, the tunes chosen to form arrangements for fife and drum bands had to be given considerable thought by the arranger. The tunes had to be indigenous and therefore easily recognisable Irish tunes which were almost guaranteed to be popular amongst both band members and their local audience. Secondly, the abilities of the band members had to be taken into account, since for marching bands more melodic tunes with

⁴⁷ Parlophone recording company in Ireland 1929. <http://www.itma.ie/digitalibrary/playlist/parlophone-irish-78s-1929>. In the ITMA archive are other Limerick performers the fiddle and flute duet of Miss O’Rourke and Mr Neiland of Limerick; the accordion player Sam Madden of Limerick; the Halpin Trio (fiddles & piano) and fiddle player Treasa Ní Ailpín of Limerick. The Ní Ailpín recording is numbered 3627.

⁴⁸ Author’s personal recollections.

⁴⁹ St Mary’s Band Archive.

high octave notes are easier to memorise in the case of more competent players, while those of a low octave are chosen for those less capable of playing the high pitched notes.

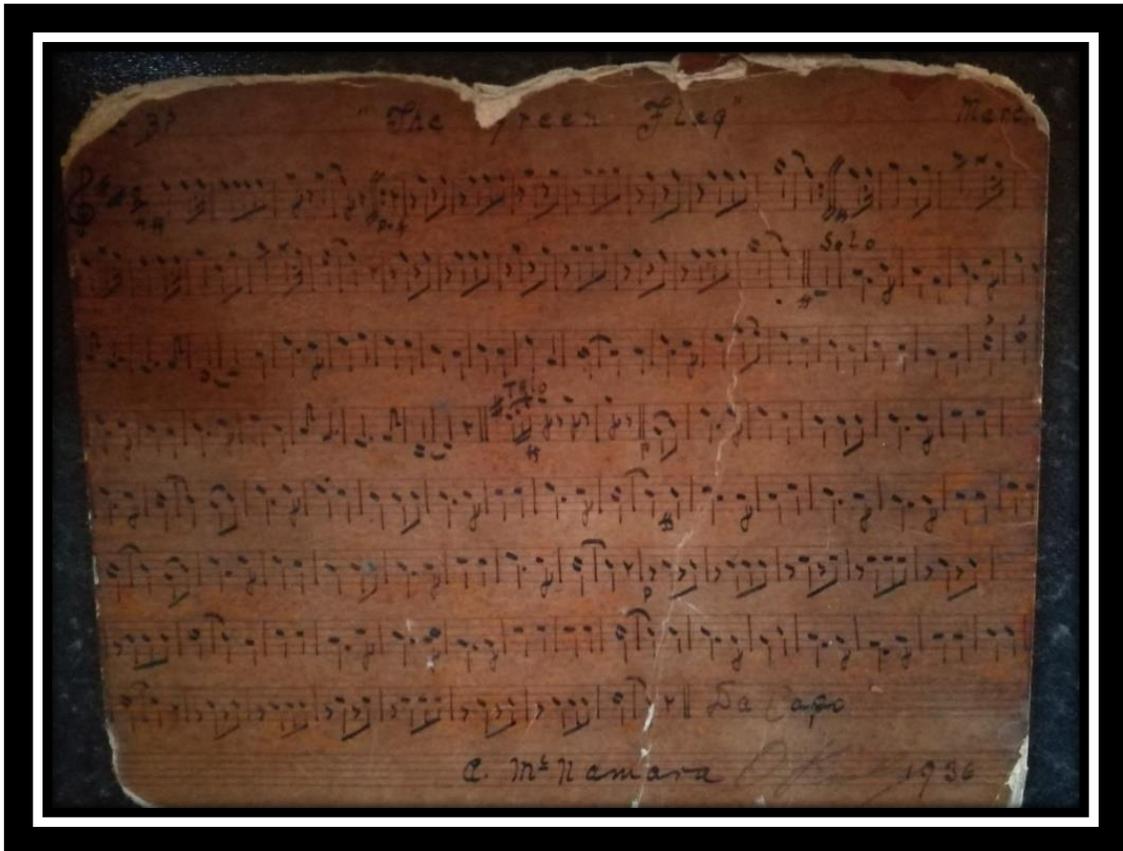


Figure 33, 'The Green Flag', 2nd flute part, arranged by Augustine McNamara, St Mary's Band 1936.⁵⁰

Instrumentation

Ramsay states that the change in the style of band flutes came from 'processes of industrialisation and globalisation.'⁵¹ While this probably had more effect on brass bands, with their use of valve instruments, new technology impacted on fife and drum bands also, by helping in the development of all instruments, especially in terms of mass production which made instruments cheaper to produce and to buy. In the early 1850s, Boosey and Company of London musical instrument makers and suppliers started to develop new military musical

⁵⁰ Author's own collection.

⁵¹ Paper given by Gordon Ramsey at the Fifth ICTM Ireland Annual Conference, 'Ensemble/Playing Together', Limerick, 26-28 Feb. 2010. *Ethnomusicology Ireland* 1, 2011, not paginated.

instruments and this enabled bands to play in different keys and harmony. Boosey's production of wind instruments began in 1851 with 1856 seeing the beginning of the production of flutes.⁵²

The most important development from the point of view of fife and drum bands was the change from the fife to the new marching band flutes. The new flutes were equipped with up to six metal keys and were

produced in a range of different musical keys, which allowed bands to develop a full range of harmonies. The use of harmony also led to the growth of musical literacy. The bands that followed this path were known as 'part-music' bands, because they played in part-harmony.⁵³

The B-flat flute, being playable in different keys and in harmony, replaced the true fife as a military instrument in Britain from c.1850, though on the Continent the fife continued to serve for routine calls up to the First World War.⁵⁴ In 1887 the British Army replaced the traditional fife with this marching band flute, thereby influencing in turn the way civilian bands perceived how their bands should evolve in the future.⁵⁵ This change in instrument had a direct influence on the sort of music played: part-music which was more harmonious and enabled the playing of different sections of music – very different to the former playing of the melody alone. This was also different from the method of playing traditional tunes by ear in that it involved both the reading of sheet music and the use of harmony, the latter of which was facilitated by the new flutes which enabled the bandsmen to use a wider range of tones and keys.

⁵² Kelly J. White and Arnold Myers, 'Woodwind instruments of Boosey & Company', *Galpin Society Journal*, vol. 5, May 2004, p. 67.

⁵³ Ramsey, 'Band practice: Class, taste and identity in Ulster Loyalist flute bands', *Ethnomusicology Ireland*, Vol. 1 (2011), p. 5.

⁵⁴ Anthony Baines, *Woodwind instruments and their history*, (London, 1956), p. 210.

⁵⁵ Gordon Ramsey, (2011) *Ethnomusicology Ireland ICTM Ireland Annual Conference, 'Ensemble/Playing Together'*, Limerick, 26--28 Feb. 2010.

As ascertained from their earliest band photographs, St Mary's Prize Band and the Sarsfield Band Limerick had these six-key new flutes in the 1890s.⁵⁶ This change of instrument meant they were able, like many other civilian bands in the early 1900s, to adapt from melody to part music. To begin with they played 1st, 2nd, 3rd and F flute parts. Some had also F and Eb piccolos. At the top of the flute range was the popular Crown AZ model introduced by Hawkes & Sons of London, advertised as being 'simply the best ever made'. This model was made in the full range of F and Eb piccolo, Bb, F, Eb and Bb bass. Crown AZ Bb flutes are still very much sought after, even today, but are rather difficult to obtain.⁵⁷ Woods used in the body of woodwind instruments included rosewood, black-wood cocoa, African black-wood, and violet wood. The materials used for key work included brass, German silver, and silver.⁵⁸ These instruments were made to very high quality standards and still in the early twenty-first century are highly sought-after instruments. They can fetch from £500 to £1000 on auction sites depending on condition.⁵⁹

The lack of any minute or account books for the 1890s when the new flutes that made this type of playing possible were being introduced in Limerick, and which St Mary's Band purchased, makes it difficult to decide whether the supplier was still Murdoch & Co. of Patrick Street, Limerick, or whether a new supplier had been found. St Mary's Band certainly purchased flutes from Piggott's Limerick music shop in 1923 for £5 and paid 4s.6d for engraving them.⁶⁰ They purchased three crown AZ B-flat flutes in November 1926 for £13.10s from Hawkes and Sons of London. The address book of the band at this time had Hawkes &

⁵⁶ *St Mary's prize band celebrating 125 years*, p. 9; *Flag of Ireland*, 1 February 1890. Testimonial from St Mary's Band to Murdoch's.

⁵⁷ Fife and Drum Museum Enniskillen Co. Fermanagh, <http://www.fifeanddrummuseum.com/from-fife-to-flute-by-w-a-mullan>, accessed 15, June 2015.

⁵⁸ Kelly J White a, Arnold Myers, 'Woodwind instruments of Boosey & Company', *The Galpin Society Journal*, vol 57 (May, 2004), pp. 62-80, 208-21

⁵⁹ EBay Hawkes flute, <http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Hawkes-and-Son-Crown-AZ-Flute-with-Case-old-military-band-flute-/200939596500>. This flute sold for £620, 9 July 2013.

⁶⁰ Engraving the flutes usually involved marking them with the name of the band and an individual number so that the band could have an identifiable mark on instruments purchased and given to band members.

Sons based at Denmark Street, Piccadilly Circus London WC1.⁶¹ Another interesting address in this book is that of the harbour master of the Great Southern Railway in Rosslare Harbour, Wexford, which indicates that purchase of instruments and music from London music stores was not uncommon for St Mary's Band. Along with the music books purchased from Potters of London, price lists of the instruments available came attached to the music booklets. A good quality six-key Potter's flute in the early 1900s cost £1.1s while the F Flute cost £1.10s – no small sum at a time when a carpenter-joiner's wages in Limerick were thirty to thirty-two shillings per week.⁶²

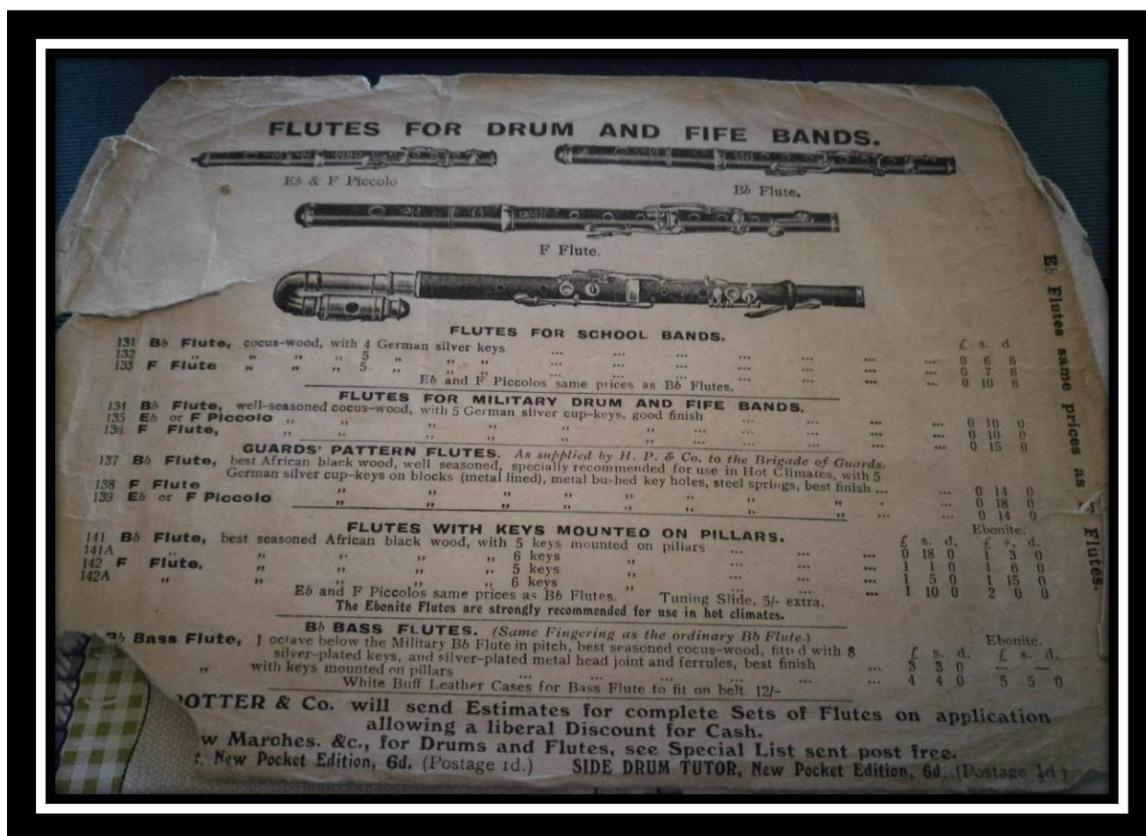


Figure 34. Potters & Co, price list for flutes circa 1910.⁶³

⁶¹ St Mary's Band Account Books, January 1923 and 1926-28. The address of Henry Potter & Sons 36-38 Charing Cross Road London was in this book. This company, as well as selling instruments, sold marches from its music catalogue for Fife and Drum Bands. Another address of a firm with which the band dealt was Lawrence Wright Music Co. Denmark Street, Charing Cross Road, London.

⁶² *Limerick Leader*, 9 May 1898.

⁶³ Authors own collection.

The fact that many band members in bands in Ireland in the present day have these instruments, passed down from generation to generation shows, as well as the quality of the instrument, just how highly they were prized when they first came on the scene. This writer has a Crown AZ flute with the letters LCB inscribed on its side which probably means Limerick Corporation [Workers'] Band which existed in the early part of the twentieth century – the band now long gone, but the flute remaining.⁶⁴

The instrumentation of most fife and drum bands consists of the wind instrument (flute) and drums. 'The band flutes are all transposing instruments conforming with the general rule for woodwind transposition, the six finger note being written as D in every case'.⁶⁵ The instrument described simply as a 'flute' belongs to a large diverse and widely distributed family which includes any hollow object that can produce sound when the player blows air across a hole in its surface, or over an internal edge such as those in tin whistles and recorders.⁶⁶ The military bands in the late nineteenth century had a combination of different keyed instruments such as B flutes, Eb piccolo or F piccolo, F flutes, and Bb and Eb bass flutes'.⁶⁷ In Limerick most of the civilian and predominantly the youth (boy) fife and drum bands just used the fife or the one-keyed Bb flat flute as the principal melody instrument with some harmonisation achieved by playing second or third flutes on these instruments. This was then augmented by a bass drum and side drums.⁶⁸ Access to these newer instruments was vital in making it possible for local bands to compete in the increasingly popular inter-band contests which were organised with music scores arranged to suit the fife and drum bands.⁶⁹ In Limerick the main fife and drum bands such as St Mary's, Sarsfield and Number 9 Bands used these flutes which enabled

⁶⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 10 February 1951.

⁶⁵ Baines, *Woodwind instruments*, p. 59.

⁶⁶ Ardal Powell, *the Flute* (Yale, 2002). p.1

⁶⁷ Baines, *Woodwind instruments and their history*, p. 61

⁶⁸ Gary Hastings, *With Fife and Drum music, memories and customs of an Irish tradition*, (Belfast, 2003). 'Fifes are roughly cigar-shaped, their widest point is at the embouchure (blowhole) and they taper at each end'.

⁶⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 20 December 1898

them to compete particularly successfully in these national competitions from the 1890s onwards.

Competition and Band contests

While famine, political division and emigration can be determined as causing the demise of temperance bands in the late 1840s, lack of competitive opportunities for bands may also be responsible for leading to their demise. The incentive towards competition, however, was helped by the strong influence of military bands. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is clear that these military bands made a strong impression on local civilian bands both musically and visually with their impressive marching styles and uniforms. It is clear that fife and drum bands, in particular, evolved from this military tradition throughout the whole island.⁷⁰

Ex-Army band members brought back to the local scene the new-found musical skills they acquired while in the British army. This is exemplified by the career of Patrick J. McNamara, bandmaster of St Mary's Band in 1895 when they won the All- Ireland contest in Dublin and was held in high esteem for his musical directorship.⁷¹ McNamara had served in the 2nd Leinster Regiment in the late 1880s early 1890s as a corporal and was a leader in the pipers' section of this regiment.⁷² He was clearly a very talented musician and highly regarded by his peers. McNamara gained his experience in the army and was able to transfer these musical skills to his local fife and drum band in St Mary's Parish. Cheap train tickets were advertised from stations in Tipperary, Killaloe, Nenagh, Ennis, Newcastlewest, Foynes, and intermediate stations for the band contest in Limerick in 1909.⁷³

⁷⁰ Fifes and Drums, <http://www.culturenorthernireland.org/features/music/fifes-and-drums>. accessed 19 September 2015. The Corps of Drums led soldiers in the British Army from 1748. Irishmen joined up in garrison towns such as Limerick, Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Dublin, and Londonderry, and learned to play the fife and drum. When they came out of the army they formed civilian flute bands and the tradition has flourished until the present day

⁷¹ *Limerick Leader*, 30 September 1895.

⁷² *Limerick Leader*, 1 May 1976.

⁷³ *Limerick Leader*, 7 April 1909.

Civilian bands, north and south, local, nationalist and loyalist included became familiar with concert style band playing by listening to the army bands playing at various events, and Limerick was no exception to this through the century.⁷⁴ The influence of the military style of playing was further increased by the growing number of band contests between the late 1800s and early 1900s at which military bandmasters adjudicated the fife and drum contests. The 1895 contest at the Rotunda in Dublin, for instance, was adjudicated by three judges, two from military regiments and one from the Royal Hibernian School in Dublin's Phoenix Park.⁷⁵ Not only were these contests a way for bands to compete at a national and local level, but their participation, and especially their adjudication by experienced army band masters meant that the style of playing improved.

This was clear in a report by John O'Donnell, a band contest organiser in Dublin in 1887, on 'The state of national bands in Ireland' which looked to the idea of organised contests to improve the standards and instrumentation of bands. This report by O'Donnell was aimed at the bands themselves and their need to improve musically.⁷⁶ It was clearly felt that bands at this period, no matter how much enthusiasm they showed, were underfunded and without the capacity to produce proper music arrangements – a result of being without properly qualified instructors. A shortage of good instruments was another major problem. As most bands were supported largely by the contribution of their members, they were not able to keep up a supply of good instruments, and in some cases in order to repair what was available to them, they had to economise by not employing a teacher. The result was that the bands were not only in a bad condition in terms of musical ability and instrumentation, but were likely, before long, to break

⁷⁴ *Limerick Reporter*, 21 August 1855, *The Irishman*, 5 November 1859; *Limerick Chronicle*, 15 Nov 1873; *Limerick Leader*, 21 April 1915.

⁷⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 24 September 1895. It was reported that three military bandmasters were the judges at this competition. Michael Quane, 'The Royal Military School Phoenix Park Dublin', *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 18, no.2, 1963, pp 45-55. This was a military school in Dublin founded in 1769 in aid of orphans and the children of soldiers.

⁷⁶ Timothy Dawson, 'The City Music and City Bands', *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 25, no. 3, June 1972, p.106.

up. It was recommended, therefore, that those organising band contests should give instruments as prizes to the winning bands as an incentive, thereby helping to facilitate bands' arrangement of pieces. In this way, the contests would, it was hoped, raise the standards of bands all over Ireland where,

in some localities where generous patrons were to be found, it is said that half the money is wasted by purchasing the wrong instruments. Then the matter is made worse by all the members, whether they play flutes, piccolos, cornets, or trombones, simply learning the melody of some piece, and playing it, without the slightest attempt at arrangement.⁷⁷

The suggestion was taken up, and at a contest for fife and drum bands in Dublin in 1882, while the third prize was a silver medal, the first and second prizes were, respectively, a big drum with heraldic design valued £12 and a set of five keyed flutes valued at £6, both manufactured by G. Butler, O'Connell Bridge.⁷⁸

After the 1895 All-Ireland contest the wide differentiation in marks between the winning bands and those not successful led to a Cork journalist expressing a view that

a bad fife and drum band may be very bad indeed, and one or two of these have prejudiced the public mind in some degree against all their kind. But a well organised and trained band of this class can produce the most inspiring and pleasing of music.⁷⁹

An opportunity to improve the quality of playing and to increase the number of occasions when bands could give quality public performances was provided by the growing number of exhibitions of Irish arts and manufactures from the 1880s onwards. gradually, a competitive element was introduced. Initially, however, the impact was limited geographically, with the competing bands drawn almost totally from the Dublin metropolitan area.⁸⁰ The competitions

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 107

⁷⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 October 1882, 8 November 1882, 24 September 1895. St Mary's Band Limerick was presented with a Butler Drum when they won a contest in Dublin in 1885. *Flag of Ireland*, 14 February 1885. George Butler was an instrument supplier based in Dublin since 1832.

⁷⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 20 August 1895.

⁸⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 October 1882.

at this stage were mainly organised for brass and reed bands and, as stated above, the first well-organised contest for fife and drum bands took place in 1882 at the Exhibition of Irish arts and Manufacturers. On this occasion, no Limerick bands participated.⁸¹ While further band contests were organised at events outside Dublin in the 1880s, such as at the Cork Industrial Exhibition in 1883 where events were organised for brass and reed bands, army and civilian bands competing in separate competitions.⁸²

Munster-Connacht
EXHIBITION

Owing to the GREAT SUCCESS and by
GENERAL REQUEST the Committee
have decided
TO CONTINUE OPEN DURING OCTOBER.

Limerick Week.

TO-NIGHT,
Boherbuoy Band at 8 p m
TO-MORROW NIGHT,
Workmen's Band at 8 p m
WEDNESDAY NIGHT,
Grand Tattoo by City Bands
THURSDAY,
Sarsfield Prize Band
Presentation of Baton and Obseques.
FRIDAY,
St. Mary's and No. 9 Band
Presentation of Gold Medals to Champion
Dancers of Ireland.
SATURDAY NIGHT,
Massed Bands
(Boherbuoy and Industrial School).
Torchlight Drill and Fireworks Display.

EVERY NIGHT DURING THE WEEK
At 8 p m in the Main Hall,
Mandoline Band, Handbell Ringers,
Champion Irish Dances, &
Irish War Pipes.

Week Commencing 8th October,
Important Engagement of the
SHIRISSIMA BAND,
Ladies' Japanese Orchestra and Concert Party.

Figure 35. Munster Connaught Exhibition Limerick 1906.⁸³

⁸¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 8 November 1882.

⁸² *Cork Examiner*, 19 September 1883.

⁸³ *Limerick Leader*, 1 October 1906.

The number of contests for fife and drum bands outside Dublin increased from the early 1900s onwards. Feiseanna and later GAA club competitions provided further opportunities to organise band contests, both as a source of popular entertainment and as a way of attracting patrons to the event being held. In 1908, for instance, Killmallock GAA organised a sports day which included a fife and drum band contest.⁸⁴ But the art and manufacture exhibitions provided the main opportunity for competition.

Though paid public performances by local bands continued at these exhibitions – Limerick’s Sarsfield Band played at the International Exhibition in Dublin in 1907 receiving £11.3s as their fee for the day⁸⁵ – a clear pattern developed from 1900 to 1930 whereby participating in contests played an integral part of membership of a fife and drum band. There was increasing popular support for such contests in the south of Ireland with, for instance, a letter writer to the *Cork Examiner* in 1901 encouraging the organisers of the Cork Exhibition in that year to hold one:

I would like to see the lovers of music catered for. There are numbers of first-class bands in Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales and these should be brought over to let the people of Cork judge which is the best band in the United Kingdom.⁸⁶

The writer specifically complained about the lack of a fife and drum band contest when there were so many good bands ‘down south’, singling out the Douglas and Parnell’s Bands in Cork, as well as St Mary’s of Limerick. The band contests that were developing therefore provided three benefits at once: entertainment was provided for the public; competition enabled fife and drum bands to express local identity and pride; and bands were encouraged to develop their musical prowess since the practice involved encouraged them to excel in order to compete with

⁸⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 2 November 1882. *Limerick Leader*, 10 July 1908.

⁸⁵ Ken Finlay, *The Biggest Show in Town, record of the International Exhibition*, (Dublin, 2007), p.146. *Dublin Daily Express*, 25 September 1907.

⁸⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 1 November 1901. The writer also complained about no mention of a fife and drum band contest when there are so many good bands down south such as St Mary’s Limerick and Douglas or Parnells of Cork.

neighbouring bands from their own localities or from other cities and counties. This opportunity for formal competition was in contrast to the public performances associated with parades, which had up to now been the principal activity for most fife and drum bands in Limerick. This was now a time to participate in a competitive context and be judged on musical performance, these contests taking place in what can be termed neutral venues such as large halls, open air venues. The 1895 contests were held in the Round Room of the Rotunda, Dublin, and other venues such as Jones' Road (Croke Park), Dublin; the Mardyke, Cork; the Court House Grounds (or city park), Waterford.⁸⁷

Participation in competitions also involved the building of a repertoire far broader than the selection of marches normally played by the bands. Firstly, it was necessary if bands from different parts of the island – and different political outlooks – were competing, to avoid contentious pieces. Band competition musical arrangements of Irish melodies, therefore, tended to be politically neutral, such as the fantasia of Irish airs by Stanislas Elliot called 'A Four Leafed Shamrock', the test piece in the 1895 All-Ireland contest in the Rotunda in Dublin, won by St Mary's Band from Limerick.⁸⁸ In a particularly hard-fought contest in, when St Mary's came second to an excellent band from Belfast. there were some ironies attached to St Mary's Band's approach as before the test piece they played a difficult introductory piece, an Irish air called 'Hibernia', while the winning band from Belfast played 'The Walls of Limerick', composed by none other than St Mary's Bandmaster, Paddy Salmon.⁸⁹

Mostly, contest pieces included 'traditional arrangements of classical pieces and medleys from musicals and contemporary popular music. At contests and performances, the bands – especially those of the brass league – tackle modern compositions, which allow them to display

⁸⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 20 September 1895; *Freeman's Journal*, 24 September 1885; *Cork Examiner*, 21 August 1906, 2 March 1928.

⁸⁸ *St Mary's Prize Band celebrating 100 years 1885-1985*, (Limerick, 1985) p. 10

⁸⁹ Interview with Paddy Casey, 6 September 2013.

their virtuosity.⁹⁰ The musical form the contest took was usually a classical piece, opera or Irish melodies arranged for fife and drum bands. The band generally had a choice piece to play as a warm-up, and then the designated contest piece.⁹¹ In 1898, for instance, the contest pieces played at the Rotunda Dublin included Donizetti's 'Marino Faliero' and Balfe's 'Siege of Rochelle' arranged to suit the fife and drum bands.⁹² At the Waterford competition of 1906, the test piece for the Senior Competition was 'Gems of Irish Melody', and those at Limerick in the same competitions in 1907 and 1908 in Limerick were 'Optional' [sic] and 'Emerald Isle' respectively.⁹³ In 1938 at a contest in Dublin's Mansion House, the test piece was 'The Works of Mozart'.⁹⁴ St Mary's music archive includes many pieces arranged for fife and drum bands that the band has played in contests since the 1890s, such as pieces from *Il Trovatore*, *La Boheme*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Bohemian Girl*, *Gems of Ireland*, *Lily of Killarney* and *The Colleen Bawn*.⁹⁵

Competition also gave rise to more streamlined rules in relation to organisation and playing. Newspaper reports show that the majority of band contests, both local and national, occurred during the period between the 1880s and the late 1920s. These contests were well organised affairs and became a central feature of the activities of many fife and drum bands. This could also be considered the blue ribbon period for fife and drum bands in regard to high musical standards. The standards set for performance techniques and the rules for contest participation were shaped in this period and the fact that these same standards and rules exist

⁹⁰ Katy Radford, 'Drum Rolls and Gender Roles in Protestant Marching Bands in Belfast', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2001), p.44

⁹¹ *St Mary's Prize Band celebrating 100 years*, p. 10.

⁹² *Freeman's Journal*, 20 December 1898

⁹³ *Freeman's Journal*, 20 December 1909.

⁹⁴ Patrick Casey interview with Derek Mulcahy, 6 September 2013; St Mary's Band Minute Book, 30 May 1932. As referred to in previous chapters Salmon in 1932 was an experienced bandmaster of fife and drum bands in Munster and beyond. He had a contentious relationship with the band President 'Todsey' McNamara and this can be discerned from band minutes when the committee, in the absence of the President, discussed whether Salmon should play with the band in the forthcoming 1932 band contest. The committee left the decision to the President who they said had expelled him as a member previously. This could be determined as a reason the band President was so keen to get a conductor in initially and not have Salmon as conductor.

⁹⁵ St Mary's Band music archive, accessed 15 May 2015.

today is proof of how well grounded they were. The rules for a fife and drum band contest in Limerick in 1909 (below) show how the type of music to be played, the sequence of selecting participants within the band, and the matter of competition fees were all carefully laid out to ensure efficiency and high standards:

1. Bands competing should not be more than twenty performers, but including bandmaster.
2. The contest piece will be posted four clear weeks to competing bands before date of contest.
3. Professional gentleman shall act as judge, whose decision will be final.
4. A representative of each band shall attend at the draw as to the order in which each band will perform.
5. Three bands will compete or there will be no contest. Four bands to compete for second prize.
6. Bands must not be composed of men serving in the army. This rule does not apply to militia or reserve men.
7. Bands not turning up to contest will not be refunded any portion of fee.
8. Entry form with 10s, to be forwarded to the secretary on or before 16th October 1909.⁹⁶

These rules for contests were strictly adhered to and any divergence from required instrumentation and notation often led to disqualification, so rival bands were eager to highlight any deviation from the rules by competitors.

This, however, meant that what was meant to ensure the smooth running of the competition could lead to bitter controversies. Such a controversy arose when St Mary's Band won the All-Ireland contest in 1911 in Limerick's Markets Field when competing against four Dublin Bands and two Tipperary bands, one each from Roscrea and Clonmel. While St Mary's had originally come second to the Dublin-based O'Connell Band, the Dublin band was

⁹⁶ *Limerick Leader*, 11 September 1909.

disqualified due to its changing the notation in the bass section to suit its instruments, something which was not allowed in the contest rules. Competition was sharp and tempers were high: the Dublin bands, derisively labelled in the *Limerick Leader* as ‘metropolitan folk’, marked their disapproval by becoming demonstrative when the result was announced.⁹⁷ A similar clash over the interpretation of rules had happened in Dublin in 1899 when the Butter Exchange Band from Cork refused to compete in band contest due to rule changes that allowed ‘semi-professionals to compete against amateurs’ because it felt that the Dublin bands were using this new rule ‘as the only means of wresting the laurels from the Cork bands.’⁹⁸ In 1910 yet another controversy broke in the Limerick papers when the Number 9 (Nicholas Street) Band president, Joseph McNamara, pointed out to the organisers of a Dublin contests that they had allowed ‘a band of soldiers’ to play in one of the competing Dublin bands in opposition to the Sarsfield Band. This was in breach of the rules drawn up at Limerick in the previous year which had prohibited serving soldiers from playing in civilian band competitions. McNamara also claimed that the Dublin band had more than the maximum of twenty members allowed by the same rules.⁹⁹

Limerick fife and drum bands started participating regularly in contests from the 1890s onwards. This was helped not only by the improvement of instrumentation (discussed earlier), which gave the bands greater performing skills, but also by advances in transportation as reasonably-priced train travel helped bands all over Ireland to go to competitions which, up to the late 1890s, were mainly held in Dublin. While it is advertised that special trains were laid on for band contests, no fare prices can be determined, though average fare prices to Dublin in

⁹⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 19 June 1911. The St Mary’s Band was conducted by Danny O’Flynn.

⁹⁸ *Cork Examiner* 23 March 1899. This band felt that the Dublin bands were using this new rule ‘as the only means of wresting the laurels from the Cork bands’.

⁹⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 18 August, 30 September 1910. Neither Limerick band had any success in this contest, Dublin bands winning both senior and junior contests. In the following month the Sarsfield Band won a band contest in which they competed in Limerick itself.

the 1890s was between 10s and 20s depending on class of carriage.¹⁰⁰ There were other moves at national level which also helped: the formation of the Irish National Fife and Drum Band Association in 1895 gave impetus to bands all over Ireland to compete and improve their musical ability in competition.¹⁰¹ The inaugural contest under the Association's direction was held in Dublin's Rotunda in 1895 when, along with local Dublin bands, the Sarsfield and St Mary's Bands from Limerick competed, while representing Cork were the Number 2 Barrack Street and the Fair Lane (Parnell Guard) Bands.¹⁰² From newspaper reports of the time it is clear that a great deal of organisation went into these contests both in terms of settling on a venue and arranging transportation such as train transfers to each competition. A network of organisers in the main urban centres linked up with those in Dublin: in Cork one of the main organisers was Charles Manners, director of Moody-Manners Opera Company, and in Limerick John Sheahan, a member of St John's Band, based in Cathedral Place, was the main organiser.¹⁰³ There were many contests taking place in different parts of the country at various times of the year and it is difficult to determine which were All-Ireland contests and which were local affairs open to bands country-wide, though it is probably safe to presume they were national contests except on those occasions when a competition was participated in by exclusively local bands.

From newspaper reports it appears that the Sarsfield Band, St Mary's Prize Band and the Number 9 Nicholas Street band were the most successful Limerick bands in national competitions at this time.¹⁰⁴ Sarsfield Band, in particular, had a national reputation, winning honours on many occasions. The band won in Waterford in 1906, and in Limerick in 1907 and

¹⁰⁰ *Munster Express*, 21 April 1894; *Evening Herald*, 15 June 1895.

¹⁰¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 19 November 1895.

¹⁰² *Cork Examiner*, 20 August 1895.

¹⁰³ *Cork Examiner*, 7 February 1906; Census of Ireland 1901 and 1911. John Sheehan, Lr. Gerald Griffin Street contest organiser, Limerick, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/1901,Limerick>, accessed 15 September 1901/1911.

¹⁰⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 19 September 1894; *Limerick Reporter*, 16 September 1895, *Cork Examiner*, 21 August 1906, 22 November 1909.

1908. The 1908 contest was one of three contests in Waterford, Dublin and Limerick where Limerick bands competed. The Limerick contest was won by a Waterford band, with bands also from Tipperary competing.¹⁰⁵ Band contests were organised in most of the major cities and towns in Ireland from the 1890s to the 1920s and were open to bands from all over Ireland, though the geographic range was narrower than that in reality. From newspaper reports it seems that the Dublin contests were mainly attended by bands from Dublin with bands from Cork, Limerick, Waterford and other towns occasionally competing.¹⁰⁶

In 1910, ‘a fife and drum contest open to all-Ireland’ was held in Dublin in which Limerick’s Sarsfield and Number 9 Fife and Drum Bands competed.¹⁰⁷ With eight bands in the senior grade, including the Limerick bands, and ten in the junior grade, this contest was actually quite representative: it was attended by bands from centres in three of the four provinces – Belfast, Armagh, Dublin, Wexford, Cork and Limerick. The table below lists the competitions won by the two longest surviving fife and drum bands in Limerick. For a historical record contests wins after 1930s are recorded. It must be noted that the contests won by St Mary’s from 1963 onwards were Republic of Ireland contests, with bands competing from Waterford, Wexford and Dublin. Unfortunately, all the Cork fife and drum bands had disbanded by the 1960s and the O’Connell Band in Dublin was then the only surviving band in that city and finally disbanded in the early 1970s.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 20 December 1909.

¹⁰⁶ *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 October 1882, 10 December 1904; *Limerick Leader*, 22 April 1912.

¹⁰⁷ *Freeman’s Journal*, 2 August 1910.

¹⁰⁸ *St Mary’s Prize Band celebrating 125 years*, p.91, Information from Br Bonaventure Ward OFM on his life experience with bands.

Sarsfield Band		St Mary's Band	
Year	Venue	Year	Venue
1895	Limerick	1895	Dublin
1903	Killmallock	1908	Limerick
1904	Killmallock	1909	Limerick
1906	Limerick	1927	Limerick
1906	Waterford	1928	Limerick
1907	Waterford (June)	1930	Cork
1907	Waterford (November)	1931	Cork
1908	Newry 2nd	1947	
1908	Limerick	1963	Wexford
1910	Limerick	1964	Limerick
1924	Dublin 2nd	1965	Dublin
1926	Carrick-On-Suir	1975	Waterford
1929	Cork	1986	Wexford
1932	Dublin	1988	Waterford

Figure 44: St Mary's and Sarsfield Bands' contest wins. 1895-1988

Contest participation occurrences.

With such intense competition, it was not uncommon for tensions to arise, on some occasions, bands brought in guest conductors to prepare them for band contests. In the effort to gain a victory over bands from other centres (as in the case of the Limerick St Mary's rivalry with the Dublin O'Connell Band), local bands that were usually in sharp competition with one another could co-operate against the outsider. Most guest conductors were brought in from local brass and reed bands. When the Limerick Corporation Workers' Band was set up in 1911 for instance, its first conductor was the very successful Danny O'Flynn from the Sarsfield Band,

who also was an employee of Limerick Corporation at this time.¹⁰⁹ For the 1895 band contests in Dublin, Stephen Collins from St John's (Victuallers' Band) conducted St Mary's while Thomas O'Brien from the Boherbuoy Number 1 band conducted the Sarsfield Band.¹¹⁰

This cooperation between bands in Limerick was an important catalyst for the success of the bands in competition. Sarsfield Band bandmaster Daniel O'Flynn conducted St Mary's Band to success in contests in 1909, 1910 and 1911. He was one of the most successful local fife and drum conductors conducting the Sarsfield Band to a succession of All Ireland championship wins in Limerick (1915), Dublin (1924), Carrick-on-Suir (1926) Cork (1929) and Dublin (1929).¹¹¹ On all occasions the marks gained were impressive, especially in 1926 when the band was awarded ninety-eight out of a possible one hundred marks.¹¹² The adjudicator, Colonel Fritz Brasse, Director of the Army School of Music, "having warmly shaken the hand, of the Limerick conductor, said, 'The performance given by your band shows that you, the conductor, possess musical ability of a very high degree'" – something remembered and repeated in the local Limerick press a quarter century later.¹¹³

Apart from inter-locality rivalry and the disagreement over rules interpretation, other problems in these All-Ireland band contests were caused by weather conditions which, because these were mostly open air contests, could be a testing experience for band members. This was especially so when trying to read music parts. Limerick fife and drum bands started participating in contests from the 1890s with many contests held in open-air venues such as sports fields. The Markets Field in Limerick was a prominent venue for contests, attracting large numbers of spectators – often in the thousands.¹¹⁴ A contest attended by the Sarsfield

¹⁰⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 10 February 1951

¹¹⁰ *Limerick Leader*, 20 Sept 1895.

¹¹¹ *Limerick Leader*, 10 February 1951. A drum and photograph in St Mary's Band museum list the Sarsfield Band honours list, confirming the contests won by the band.

¹¹² *Limerick Leader*, 1 September 1926.

¹¹³ *Limerick Leader*, 10 February 1951.

¹¹⁴ *Limerick Leader* 22 November 1909.

Band in Dublin's Jones Road (Croke Park) in 1910 was an open air contest, held in unfavourable conditions due to incessant rain on the day. The newspaper report gave a distinct account of the conditions for the competing bands:

The difficulties under which they laboured from a rainy afternoon to a very rainy evening placed them at a great disadvantage. The band stand was not placed in a good position for those anxious to hear, and, what was worst of all for the performers, it was uncovered, and, standing in the drizzling downpour must have certainly tended to damp their ardour.¹¹⁵

Things had not changed twenty years later in 1928 when Michael Bourke described playing at a band contest held at the Mardyke in Cork: when St Mary's Band were first to play the test piece, rain and wind caused their music parts to be soaked and blown away, causing severe discomfort to the band. The contest organisers then allowed the other contestants to play under the stand. Despite objections by St Mary's and requests that they be allowed to play again under the stand, they were not allowed, thereby losing the contest by two points to the O'Connell band Dublin.¹¹⁶

This use of the local newspapers, and especially of the letter pages, to let the public know the progress and achievements of their band was something that continued on from the nineteenth century. The elucidation of pride in the musical prowess of the bands and the honour brought to Limerick by its bands competing in contests and winning prizes is exemplified by the Number 9 Band, informing the public that they had entered a band contest in Dublin and hoped to emulate the recent success of the Sarsfield Band in Waterford so as to 'see the musical prestige of Limerick maintained'.¹¹⁷ St Dominick's Fife and Drum Band won first prize in Carrick-on-Suir against strong Wexford opposition in 1911, the conductor William Moran,

¹¹⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 2 August 1910.

¹¹⁶ *St Mary's Prize Band celebrating 125 years*, p. 29.

¹¹⁷ *Limerick Leader*, 17 February 1908.

making sure to point out in the *Limerick Leader* that this was a notable achievement as St Dominick's were only founded a year previously.¹¹⁸ St Dominick's got first prize at a contest for brass and reed, fife and drum and pipe bands in the Markets Field in October 1912 though it must be admitted that on this occasion no other Limerick bands participated, with St Dominick's getting a walkover in the fife and drum contest due to Kilkenny, Tralee and Dublin bands failing to put in an appearance.¹¹⁹ It would seem that major band contests, apart from small local affairs, stopped during World War I and again during the latter part of the War of Independence and the Civil War between 1920 and 1923

As discussed in previous chapters the demise of fife and drum bands can be traced to changes in demography in towns and cities with people moving to new housing estates being built from the 1930s onwards.¹²⁰ But what was also undermining the bands was the availability of other forms of amusement and leisure for young working men – especially, since the 1920s, the increasingly popular rugby. This was highlighted at the St Mary's Band Annual General Meeting in 1923 when the president, 'Todsie' McNamara, annoyed by members' absence from practice as they became involved in rugby, asked those present – 'Is this to be a band or a football team, [with] some members leaving for [the] Abbey Rugby Football team!'¹²¹

These competitions helped to infuse a musical discipline in participants which, with teamwork and skill, gave them a common musical bond. By practicing, they honed their new-found skills in music to be confident in performing before audiences and competing against their peers. This commitment to musical practice also led to an expression of identity and political idealism. A winning band brought honour to its city and community and this capacity to do credit to the locality was emphasised in press reporting on winning bands. When the St

¹¹⁸ *Limerick Leader*, 29 September 1911.

¹¹⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 28 October 1912.

¹²⁰ Guiry, 'Public health and housing', pp 42-48.

¹²¹ St Mary's Band Minute Book 1923.

Mary's Band won the All-Ireland Band Contest in 1895, this was reported in the press far beyond Limerick, the Dublin-based *Freeman's Journal* describing how the members of the band, 'together with their numerous friends were very jubilant when they heard of their triumph and when they return to Limerick, justly proud of their victory, they will doubtless be received by their fellow citizens.'¹²²

The quality of the musicianship of the Limerick city bands improved greatly over the course of the nineteenth century until by the 1880s several of them were noted for their high quality playing. This came across in the increasing number and range of the music they played: while marches were obviously most frequently played, their repertoire included a large number of classical pieces as well as Irish airs learned over the previous half century. Many of the bandmasters were highly skilled in the arranging of pieces, and these are thankfully preserved in the archive of St Mary's Band, letting us see what a high level of musical ability was in those bands. The rise in quality was also due to the acquiring of improved instruments, especially the much improved Hawkes and Potter made flutes/fifes which became more available by the close of the nineteenth century. But probably the single most important reason for the rising quality of the Limerick bands' music was the increasing frequency of competition. From the 1880s onwards, though the trend actually began before that, the chance to compete against other bands from Limerick itself and from all over Ireland meant that bands now pushed themselves to attain the highest possible quality of playing – and this power of competition is evident in the number of stories and memories passed down within the bands' membership of the victories that they won.

Fife and drum contests on a national scale diminished in the late 1930s and it was not until 1959 that band contests were held again in the Republic of Ireland. One possible reason

¹²² *Freeman's Journal*, 24 September 1895; *Cork Examiner*, 25 September 1895; *Limerick Leader*, 23, 26 September 1895.

for the demise of many local marching bands in the city was the departure from the city of the (mostly younger) men who ensured the renewal of band membership from one decade to the next. Emigration – to both Britain and the United States – played its part in this membership drain, as did army recruitment (and the ensuing high casualty rate) during both World Wars, but especially that of 1914-1918. The importance of emigration in this regard is evident in the in the St Mary's Band membership book from the early 1920s onwards, as some members are put down as 'lapsed' and the names of others are followed by the entry 'England', implying they had to go Britain for work. This can be deduced as the cause of many bands' collapse in this period and the reason for the decline of fife and drum contests in the period. Contests resumed in 1924 and continued up to the end of the 1930s, as can be determined by the table above listing the Limerick bands' contest wins. No contests were held after the late 1930s and in the St Mary's Band membership book, a few members are put down as 'lapsed' and the names of others are followed by the entry 'England', implying they had to go Britain for work. This can be deduced as the cause of many bands' collapse in this period and the reason for the decline of fife and drum contests then, although a number of pipe band contests were held in the 1940s.¹²³ It was not until 1959 that band contests were held again in the Republic of Ireland.¹²⁴ Tracing the fortunes of Limerick city bands from 1910 to the 1940s, the situation was that Limerick city had between four and six fife and drum bands. In the 1950s there were two bands, in the 1960s and up to 1979 there was just one band, and from 1979 to 1993 two bands. In one present times (2017) only fife and drum band survives – St Mary's.

The following is a list of civilian fife and drum bands in Limerick city over the course of their existence in Limerick City from 1885 onwards.

¹²³ *Evening Herald*, 23 August 1940, 29 May 1943, *Sunday Independent*, 25 August 1944,

¹²⁴ *Munster Express*, 19 June 1959.

St Mary's Band	1885 to the present
Sarsfield Band	1888-1959
No.9 Nicholas Street Band	1890-1920 (approx.), attempted revival 1940-1941
St Dominick's Band	1908-1916
Fianna Éireann/Volunteers Band	Circa 1915-1920
Carey's Road Band	Circa, 1890-1910
Nelson Street Band	Circa 1895-1910
Thomondgate Band (Mikey Raleigh)	1936-1940
St Munchin's Band	1940-1944
St Michael's Band (Mikey Raleigh)	1940-1950 (approx.)
Queen of Peace Fife and Drum Band	1979-1993

Figure 36: The lifespan of Limerick city fife and drum bands 1885-2017

The demise of fife and drum bands country-wide was obvious in Limerick in the latter half of the twentieth century. Sometimes it proves difficult to trace the fortunes of an individual band, as, for instance, in trying to find out what happened to the Thomondgate Band in the early 1940s before Michael Raleigh went on to form St Michael's Fife and Drum Band. It is also clear that any band trained by Michael Raleigh, though having a parish or district name, was also known as 'Michael Raleigh's Band' and this can cause confusion in determining both the time periods of each band and which band was which. In one case, the resurrection of the name of a band that no longer and existed makes it difficult to track events: a letter appeared in the *Limerick Leader* in March 1941 stating that the Thomondgate Band ceased to exist and was now to be called the Number 9 Band, attributing this change to the numerous requests received to reform the Number 9 Nicholas Street Band that had folded over twenty years earlier – but the revival attempt does not seem to have worked.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 22 March 1941. The letter was signed by Secretary William Kennedy, a painter by trade, who originally came from Nelson Street (now Parnell Street) which was the same area as discussed in Chapter Two where many members of the old Number 9 Band came from.

Conclusion.

This study of fife and drum bands in Limerick over the period 1840 to 1935 provides insights into, and raises questions about, the role of music and popular associationalism in the social and political life of Irish provincial cities. Fife and drum bands were small, voluntary organisations made up of amateur instrumentalists. They flourished particularly between the 1870s and the 1930s, and were to be found in even the smallest and most isolated communities throughout the English-speaking world.¹ Limerick was no exception to this: since the 1840s there has been a strong presence of civilian marching bands in the city, initially both brass and reed bands and flute bands and, from the early twentieth century, pipe bands. This thesis, tracing the development of marching bands in Limerick over the course of almost a century, serves to throw some light on the development of popular musical culture not just in one provincial city but, more generally, in urban Ireland. It also contributes to our understanding of the gradual entry of working men into the public sphere. Such a public role has been discussed by historians in relation to the opening to such individuals of fields as varied as sport, theatre attendance and politics: this thesis explores their increasing public involvement through the medium of music.²

As an aspect of non-sporting, voluntary associational culture, Limerick marching bands are just as enduring as, and have many similarities with, other cultural organisations in the city over the period studied. The influence of the bands was out of all proportion to the size of their membership: from the mid-nineteenth century, bands in Limerick averaged between only fifteen and thirty members each, but their musical activity led eventually to political engagement. The bands and their members, while having little or no authoritative voice in the

¹ Duncan Bythell, 'Class, Community, and Culture: The Case of the Brass Band in Newcastle', *Labour History*, no. 67 (1994), pp. 144-155.

² Jennifer Kelly, R V Comerford (eds), *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad*, (Dublin, 2010), p.2.

city's decision-making quarters, began through the medium of music to build for themselves an identifiable role in the city's public life, a role that was appreciated by their peers.

Therefore, this study explores what is often an unrecognised part of Limerick's cultural history and heritage, based in local areas and run by those living in the locality. From the fourth decade of the nineteenth century onwards, ordinary people in the city – working class and lower middle class – have organised and experienced the benefits of these musical associations, something that required (and still requires) commitment in terms of personal time and resources. As this thesis has suggested, Limerick bands' developing musical infrastructure led them over the course of almost a century to become prominent in the cultural life of the city. Developing from the temperance bands of the 1830s and '40s the civilian bands became organised entities developing a set of processes and structures such as committees, band halls and music tuition, in which members had an input in terms of both organisation and musical participation.

In this, Limerick was following a general pattern of band organisation throughout the United Kingdom in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – a pattern that encouraged increased skills in musical performance through availing of existing links between the civilian population and the military – links facilitated through the high rate of enlistment of Irish working class men in the army. This is not, of course, unique to Limerick: it is also evident in the case of Cork's Barrack Street Band, set up in 1837 as a temperance band, which established a formal tuition system by enlisting the help of military bandsmen from nearby military barracks.³ This was not unlike the case of the Limerick Sarsfield Band which had strong links to the Limerick branch of the Royal British Legion since many band members were in the British army up to the First World War. Other bands such as St Mary's Band had similar links and this is illustrated by the McNamara brothers who used the musical experience gained in

³ Richard T. Cooke, *Cork's Barrack Street Band: Ireland's oldest amateur institution*, (Cork, 1992), p.28.

their time in the army to become band conductors and recording musicians, with one brother, Michael, making a career in the British Army up to his retirement. Therefore, the importance of army life's impact on local life in Ireland goes beyond the personal experience of soldiers on the front, and is evident also in the development of popular musical culture.

Developing popular associationalism is also evident in the evolution of the Limerick bands: an increasingly sophisticated organisation was especially obvious from the 1880s onwards, the survival of the records of the St Mary's Band, and especially of its minutes from the 1920s onwards, showing that a great deal of thought was put into the establishment of formal structures, structures that were not dominated by the local elite but by elements within the locality. This was not very different to the situation in other cities in the United Kingdom, as evident in the English context in the case of the Dunstable and District bands in Bedfordshire, whose structures were built on the local community.⁴ This increasingly sophisticated organising capacity was also evident in the bands set up in other Irish urban centres. The fife and drum bands in Waterford and Wexford (founded in 1885 and 1893 respectively), had a clear-cut set of rules for committee membership and procedures which ensured efficient organisation and success in competition. But this awareness of the need to organise was not just a late nineteenth century phenomenon: it actually went back to the origins of the bands, as shown by the temperance societies' published newspaper accounts outlining their expenditure on their bands in the 1840s, something that became much more frequent from the 1880s onwards.

What does seem to have developed as the century passed was the identification between band and place – something noted by other Borgonovo and Lane in relation to Cork working class bands.⁵ This importance of place in the shaping of popular identity is especially clear in the

⁴ Anthony J. Ward, *Strike Up the Band, two centuries of music in Dunstable and District*, (Bedfordshire, 2008).

⁵ Borgonovo, 'Politics as leisure', pp 23-40. Lane, 'Music and violence in working class Cork', pp 17-31

links between Limerick bands and firstly, the city itself. This comes across especially in the importance attached to achieving victory for the local band and local urban centre in island-wide band competitions, especially from the later nineteenth century onwards. In the case of the Barrack Street Band in Cork, for instance, the band's victory in many national brass and reed band contests over the course of the century raised the profile not only of the band itself, but also of the city itself in relation to other cities within the United Kingdom.⁶ The rivalry between the bands of different urban centres (for instance, Dublin and Limerick) became particularly noticeable from the late nineteenth century onwards as bands' musical ability and their access to good quality instrumentation developed far beyond what had existed over the previous half-century. These competitions became a popular outlet for band members and attracted supporters from their communities especially from the 1880s to the 1920s, and a major factor in the development of a local sense of identity. Just as the band contests in Britain developed as the British railway system spread, something which enabled bands to compete in competitions countrywide, so in the Irish context special trains (widely advertised in the newspapers) were organised to facilitate band contest activity, support at local level, and inter-city rivalry.⁷

In Britain, musical rivalry reflected competing senses of place, class and identity at a more local level where, as Finnegan stresses, a working class community can develop a musical culture.⁸ In Ireland also, from the 1840s onwards, bands as voluntary organisations became part of this type of local associational culture. This was especially evident at Limerick temperance society soirées in the 1840s when local musicians such as pipers and violinists attended to supplement the performance of the band, and this continued for almost a century

⁶ Cooke, *Cork's Barrack Street Band*.

⁷ Dave Russell, *Popular music in England 1840-1914, A social History*, (Manchester, 1987); *Limerick Leader*, 7 April 1909.

⁸ Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians Music-Making in an English Town*, (Cambridge, 1989).

when, for instance, at various functions in St Mary's Band Hall in the 1920s local artistes complemented the band.

In the case of Limerick city, the common bond between band members, and between the band and the wider society of its particular locality, has been evident from at least the 1880s, and perhaps even further back, though the records are less informative for the earlier decades. This sense of local and community solidarity came across in a number of ways. When members died or suffered a family bereavement, public expressions of sympathy were published in the local newspapers on behalf of the band committee and members. Funerals of band members were treated as ceremonial affairs, the band marching in the funeral cortege, playing appropriate solemn music and with the drums draped with black mourning material, this emphasis on respectability and of respect for oneself and others being traceable back to the ethos of the temperance movement. Another aspect of the bands in this regard was the practice of paying out death benefit to a deceased member's widow – reflecting the practice of contemporary trade unions and friendly societies – in order to ensure a 'respectable' burial and to give some material support to a family closely associated with the band. The local band, therefore, was a significant factor in the growth of local identity.

Involvement in a marching band ensured that the individual and the locality were drawn into a wider sense of identity. Firstly, as White suggests, music and national identity were closely linked.⁹ By the later nineteenth century, participation in a marching band was – like sport – seen as another form of nation-building, and as combating social exclusion and contributing to public order.¹⁰ But there was also a still wider sense of identity that went with musical involvement – i.e. the musical community's Irishness *but* within the broader society of the United Kingdom. Competitions and contests ensured that this broader sense of participation

⁹ White, *Keepers Recital, Music and cultural history in Ireland*, p.60.

¹⁰ Paul Rouse, *Sport and Ireland: A History*, (Oxford, 2015), p.5.

was not just temporary. Competitions for brass bands in Britain from the 1850s onwards, especially the great national band contests in Crystal Palace (originating in 1860) attended for decades afterwards by bands from all over Britain, were influential in shaping Irish band contest organisation and participation the contests contributing in the Irish context to the organisation of competitions for both brass and fife and drum bands.¹¹ But local identity proved the most powerful force within these competitions: from the 1880s to the late 1920s such band competitions were organised frequently in the major urban centres in Ireland such as Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford, while more localised contests were organised in smaller rural towns. All such occasions provided popular outlets for both bands and spectators, with large crowds reported as attending these competitions. The sense of local pride is clearly shown in contemporary newspaper reports where the coverage given ensured that local supporters engaged with a bands' success and through the context were given a public arena in which to express pride in their band's – and their locality's – achievements.

Musical expertise and repertoire were also helped by these band competitions. The Limerick city bands' musical prowess certainly advanced with the growth of improvements to instrumentation. Five- and six-keyed instruments, in contrast to the old one-keyed fife, gave fife and drum bands the opportunity to play a wide range of music such as operettas, arrangements of Irish music, and counter melody marches which were written in various parts to provide a harmonious sound, rather than being confined to the single melody music which was the norm in previous decades. Through these developments we can trace not only musicians' increased ability but also changing tastes in music at popular level. In contrast to the restricted number of hymns and Irish airs that were played by the temperance bands in the 1840s was the much broader repertoire performed at band contests from the 1880s onwards –

pieces from works such as the ‘Siege of Rochelle’ and Balfe’s ‘Bohemian Girl’ figuring beside some of the older favourites.

Tracing the development of the marching bands also gives some insights into new patterns of consumerism in urban Ireland. There was an obvious increase in the purchasing power of the bands as the century passed, and the pattern of their purchasing in terms of sheet music, instruments and uniforms also suggests that local businesses supplying musical goods found it more difficult to compete with those in the broader United Kingdom as the decades passed. As this study shows, from the 1830s until late in the century, instruments had been purchased from local music stores and then, in the early twentieth century the pattern changed: as established from surviving St Mary’s Band records of the 1920s, music and instruments were now increasingly purchased directly from London based manufacturers. This was probably because the music arranged for fife and drum bands proved more attractive to bands when it was available from the music companies that made the instruments and published the music, but it also suggests that local music-sellers were being undercut by British companies carrying a broader range of items. Further research, however, is necessary to follow this issue into the twentieth century.

Where band uniforms were purchased is less certain, the available sources suggesting that economic nationalism – or economic localism – played a part here. Local manufacture of uniforms was important and was emphasised in fundraising campaigns in the early twentieth century in the case of Cork’s Butter Exchange Band which emphasised local loyalties and economic nationalism in its purchase of uniforms and Irish manufactured cloth.¹² The Limerick situation is less clear: again in the early twentieth century local newspaper reports show some local bands using various fundraising methods for uniforms, with the local department stores

¹² *Cork Examiner*, 20 March 1902

such as William Todd & Co. and Cannock's tendering for these contracts. The support of the local in terms of uniforms (unlike instrument and sheet music buying) continued well into the twentieth century: local Limerick companies were employed to make uniforms for local bands with St Mary's bands new uniform made by Cannock & Co. in the 1960s and by Shannon Clothing in the 1990s showing this continuity in the bands' support of local manufacture.¹³

If uniform purchasing patterns remained largely stable over the course of time, the style of band uniforms, however, did evolve over the period studied, showing an increased sophistication and improved purchasing power on the part of the Limerick bands. The uniform of the early bands was minimal, with caps and sashes more than likely homemade (though distinctive), the drum major being the only bandsman in full uniform. From photographic evidence of Limerick's fife and drum bands in the first two decades of the twentieth century smart dress with a uniform cap was the norm until the 1930s when bands began to wear a full regimental style uniform. Brass and Reed bands had a full uniform a decade or so earlier. Here again the importance of military influence is evident: Limerick bands were increasingly influenced by the army bands that marched through the city at various times, their visual influence with an imposing drum major, coloured uniforms, and upbeat music combining to impress bystanders.

Appearance in terms of uniform and general turn-out seems to have been more than a matter of following fashion, but reflected changes in the self-confidence and independence of the bands, which in turn reflected the decreasing dependence of the bands on individual patrons from a higher class as the century progressed. The method of funding bands in Limerick city shows just such an adaptation over the course of the century studied. Father Mathew had initially subscribed to the local temperance societies to help fund their society bands and in

¹³ *St Mary's Band Records, 1960-1995.*

rural Limerick it was reported local landlords such as Lord Barrington helped finance uniforms for the Murroe fife and drum band. In the case of St Mary's Band, the record of organising collections to buy new instruments is similar to that of other Limerick city bands, since it was based on funding initially by the local temperance society – dominated by the local Catholic clergy and by philanthropic individuals. From the 1880s onwards, in contrast, its financial support came from within its own locality through door-to-door collections – still a situation of dependence, but now dependence on the band members' social equals. Later in the early 1920s St Mary's Band enjoyed even more financial independence, becoming self-financing by running dances in its band hall and increasing its income by leasing its rooms to other organisations for similar functions. The Sarsfield Band showed a similar commercial enterprise – far removed from the dependence of the earlier decades – when it teamed up in the 1920s with a local cinema business to play during film intervals in raising funds to build its band hall. But bands were never fully independent financially and their combined independence and dependency was obvious in the way in which, even by the early twentieth century, they publicly expressed gratitude to those who had subscribed to their funds. Bands used local newspapers to thank subscribers, even naming subscribers and the amount they donated – exactly the same method as had been used in the 1840s when they were far more dependent on elite support.¹⁴

Bands, it must be emphasised, cannot be understood apart from the locality in which they were established. In the context of Limerick city, fund-raising and local pride (already discussed above) proved inseparable. In Limerick's tight-knit communities, and in St Mary's Parish, in particular, locally-centred pride was particularly obvious, the band's identity and that of 'the Parish' being one and the same. This is especially evident in the fund-raising of finances in the 1920s to build a band hall. This campaign emphasised the power of localism, and a localism that was not just about the parish as a whole, but about the individual streets that made up the

¹⁴ *Limerick Leader*, 23 September 1910, *Limerick Reporter*, 27 July 1841.

parish. Different areas of St Mary's parish were organised as collecting points, each area competing with the others to establish itself as the most successful fund raiser. But the second level of place-identity – and probably the more important – is that which distinguished the band from one locality in the city from those of other localities – a sense of distinctiveness that was increased when one's local band included personalities that brought pride to their local community either through their musical ability or their capacity as teachers of the younger members.

Bands also played a part in increasing sociability within a local community, especially when a band had the ability and opportunity to set up its own premises in which local events and celebrations could take place. Success in doing so showed that a band had both financial means and influence: this was the case with St Mary's Band in 1922 and with the Sarsfield Band in 1927 which were distinguished from the other city bands in their ability to build their own band hall rather than leasing accommodation from another group or individual. This, in turn, enforced local pride as the halls became not just centres in which the band practiced, but became known throughout the city as venues for dances and gatherings – a function that has continued in the case of St Mary's Band Hall into the twenty-first century, long after the cut-off point of the present study.

But these halls' role as social hubs in the community was not confined just to the locality: in fact, the bands bridged the gap between home and the diaspora. This is particularly true of St Mary's Band which has in both the past and the present benefitted from the generosity of the diaspora, i.e. former band members that emigrated to New York from the late nineteenth century onwards and can be identified from band photographs from the 1890s and band records such as the treasurer's address book of the 1920s. The link is still publicly acknowledged by a marble plaque in the band hall acknowledging a special committee formed under the auspices of the New York Limerick men's Association to raise funds for the new band hall in the home

parish. Further research is necessary to discover whether in this matter, the Limerick bands such as St Mary's and St John's Bands were typical of many bands of their time. It is likely that many other local bands bridged this divide between home and diaspora, associating themselves with their local county association in cities such as New York and keeping former members who had emigrated in touch with home through encouraging them to help in funding band projects such as a band halls and instrumentation.¹⁵

Sport is the activity most associated with the cultivation of local and regional pride in the Irish context. This is as true in Limerick city as elsewhere in the island, where the ongoing publication by local rugby and GAA clubs of illustrated jubilee and centenary booklets expresses how recreational associationalism is strongly connected to a city, locality or parish. This is also obvious in the case of local musical bands: the band halls themselves are a celebration of the band's and locality's record, championship winning bands in framed photographs lining the walls – not unlike the display of cup-winning sporting teams' photographs in club houses. Other ways used by the bands – as by sporting clubs – demonstrate the local pride that has characterised their development since the 1840s. Right up to the twenty-first century, the importance of locality is evident within the two main bands that still remain in the city – the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band (based on the south side of the city) and – the main subject of the present thesis – St Mary's Band based in 'the Parish' on King's Island. Band members in the early twenty-first century are aware and proud of this local tradition and this is emphasised in the bands' histories and in local folk memory and in individuals' memories and tales of involvement in the bands. Pride in their musical performance characterised those who founded and continued to direct the bands, especially from the 1880s onwards, who made sure that their particular band created a musical culture in both the city as a whole and in their own smaller locality within that city – something proudly remembered in

¹⁵ *St Mary's Prize Band Centenary Booklet*, (Limerick, 1985).

the title of St Mary's *Prize* Band, in the listing of wins on drums, in photographs and other band memorabilia, and in the personal reminiscences of members.

It is difficult to discuss any form of associationalism in the context of Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries without touching on politics. Just like sporting associations, musical bands (already shaped by personalities, history, tradition and religion) could not avoid political involvement.¹⁶ From the 1880s onwards, the Limerick marching bands became deeply involved in mutual confrontation not only in relation to band competitions but also as a result of their differing political viewpoints. It was no accident that this political tension was sharpened in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Not only did the immediate issue of the Parnellite split and its aftermath affect almost all recreational organisations, but the question of national identity caused internal soul-searching for bands as cultural organisations now that their Irish and Anglo-Irish identities came into conflict with each other. This was not entirely new: it had started initially in the temperance era when some of the music played by the Limerick city bands was seen by government as seditious and inflammatory, and this impression was also enforced by their use of colour as symbol – especially green sashes and flags. This internal tension was not, of course, unique to Limerick. Political tension of this sort was as evident within associational groups within the diaspora as it was at home, as was seen in San Francisco in 1861 in Irish Associations' wrangling over the planning of Terence Bellew McManus funeral.¹⁷ In fact, in more recent times, it matches the interwoven political loyalties, local pride and pride in musical ability that Ramsay describes in relation to the tradition of Ulster marching bands.¹⁸

¹⁶ Paul Rouse, *Sport & Ireland, A History*, (Oxford, 2015), p.205.

¹⁷ Thomas J. Brophy, Rivalry Between Irish Associations in San Francisco over the second Funeral of Terence Bellew McManus, 1861, in Jennifer Kelly, R.V. Comerford, *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad*, (Dublin, 2010).

¹⁸ Gordon Ramsey, *Music, Emotion and identity in Ulster Marching Bands*, (Oxford, 2010).

But whether these rivalries and tensions were at heart political, cultural or local, still remains difficult to decide. The political stance taken by the Limerick bands from the 1880s to the 1930s – whatever the orientation – was resolute. The St Mary’s Band’s rivalries with the Number 9 and Sarsfield Bands, mainly due to political rather than musical differences in the post-Parnellite decade, is particularly relevant here since political and locality-based hostility overlapped. The differences were particularly blurred on the occasions when animosities between the rivals frequently reached crisis point as parading bands (and their followers) met at the interface between the hostile territories, parishes or streets. This is evident after St Mary’s Band won the All-Ireland in Dublin in 1895 and its supporters were violently dispossessed of tar barrels in the Mungret Street area (home to Sarsfield Band) which they wanted to light when, following their success in the 1895 band contest, they marched home from the city’s train station. While this rivalry was initially musical (as both bands had played in this particular competition), the political divide is apparent in newspaper reports of this period, with St Mary’s band supporting Timothy Michael Healy and the Number 9 Band backing Charles Stuart Parnell in the Parnellite split.¹⁹ Again, this was not unique to Limerick. Lane’s and Borgonovo’s works on Cork city bands’ local and political loyalties, present a similar picture of urban working class areas ready to do battle with one another on matters as varied as party-politics, musical rivalry, and the ‘trespass’ of one band into another band’s area.²⁰

The experience of the Limerick city bands is also part of the Irish urban working class move towards more organised and ordered public involvement. While political allegiances proved disruptive in the four to five decades after 1880, this disruption was paralleled by a trend among the bands towards a more disciplined and ordered administration of their organisations. This

¹⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 3 September 1895.

²⁰ John Borgonovo, ‘Politics as leisure: brass bands in Cork 1845-1918’, in Leeann Lane and William Murphy, (eds.), *Leisure and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century*, (Liverpool, 2016), pp 23-40. Fintan Lane, ‘Music and violence in working class Cork: the ‘Band Nuisance’, *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society*, vol. 24, (1999), pp 17-31.

became even more evident in the case of St Mary's Band from the 1920s onwards. Clear rules were set down by band committees and the demand that members take a more serious approach to band duties – other than playing music – helped bands to succeed as public associational bodies. As already discussed, the building of band rooms, some with dance halls, gave bands a permanent base which assisted in their public image and their confidence in competition, St Mary's and the Sarsfield Bands each having an impressive band room and hall. Using these halls for public dances helped raise funds that allowed the bands to be successful competitors in band contests, to purchase uniforms and instruments (less expensive than those required by brass and reed bands, but still costing a great deal of money), and to provide entertainment for those in the local community that were not themselves band members. The bands therefore generated social capital by giving the local community a focal point for socialising which they may not have had before. To achieve this, bands became more organised and independent entities run by committees with a president or chairman as the leading light, along with the secretary who performed the vital task of writing to local papers regarding the affairs of the band. In other words, the band had established itself firmly as a solid and acceptable actor in the public sphere.

The high point of the marching bands was from the 1880s to the start of World War One, the period when band contests were most popular and when, at least in Limerick, the bands were most active in participating in political demonstrations. Thereafter, however, the bands – or at least the excitement generated by band contests – seems to have lost momentum. Political changes in the early 1920s – especially the partition of the island – meant a lack of contact between the bands of north and south, which had a detrimental impact on contests run on an All-Ireland basis. Political change had a further impact on the activities of bands in the south after the formation of the Free State government since fife and drum bands, now seen as a link

to the British Army, became less popular, and this fall from favour was underlined as the newly formed Irish army music corps was made up of Brass and Pipe bands.

There were points throughout the 1930s and 1940s (outside the limits of the present study) when band contests were revived in the Irish Free State, but the years from 1914 to the late 1920s seem to have been one of decline. This is especially obvious when one examines the evidence of a single photograph of St Mary's Band, taken in 1912, which highlight some of the problems bands had in keeping up membership numbers at this time. This photograph from 1912 shows twenty-four members, but a similar photograph taken a decade later in 1922 shows only six of these members remaining within the larger group.²¹ The disappearance of so many members of a small group in the space of ten years is significant: while some members may simply have ceased to play with the band, through either emigration or sickness, wider developments of the time such as World War One, the War of Independence and Civil War took at least eighteen of the band out of a membership of twenty-four. Three members are known to have died in the First World War and two members in the War of Independence and Civil War.

The emigration of many members to Britain and the United States in the early 1900s, as suggested in the membership books of St Mary's Band, had an impact on continuity. Besides, dependence on single individuals such as band masters Patrick Salmon and Patrick McNamara in St Mary's and Danny O'Flynn of the Sarsfield Band, brought its own problems. The bands seemed to have slump periods when such individuals left, only coming back to full strength again when another talented member came to the fore to guide the band musically. Though not discussed in this study, since the issue is more relevant to the period from 1930 onwards, demographics also played their part in the decline of the bands. In Limerick, as in other Irish

²¹ *St Mary's Prize Band 1885-2010*, (Limerick, 2010).

towns and cities, people moved progressively to new housing estates, taking members away from the local tight-knit communities where the bands had flourished from the 1880s. The bands that survived to the present were the ones with a solid presence in the form of a band hall and the accompanying income, and therefore able to have a continuity in membership. They also survived because, as the concluding part of this study suggests, they backed away from politics. They therefore avoided one of the most divisive factors that had affected them in the years between 1880 and the early 1920s, concentrating instead on developing their facilities and musical activities.

Many aspects of the Limerick bands, and of St Mary's Band, in the decades after 1930 remain to be researched – the use of the band hall(s) and their role within the local community, the social patterns of the dances held in these halls, the changing nature of fund-raising and the development and change in repertoire and musicianship. Equally significant are the ways in which changing residential patterns and emigration especially post 1930s impacted on local band membership, and how the setting up of Limerick-born communities in the United States helped to develop a new band network (including band trips) between the 'old world' and the diaspora, and helping to build up new sources of band history in the shape of photographs and items brought back to St Mary's by the descendants of those band members who had emigrated.²²

The role of the bands in promoting the confidence of individuals cannot be ignored. With improved organisation came opportunities for bands to develop musically and to participate in competitions that allowed them to reach a wider audience, something which not only enhanced the band's reputation but also contributed to the self-worth of the members. While not rich in material terms these individuals were enriched socially through membership of their local band.

²² *Visitors Book*, St Mary's Band Museum.

As was the case in Britain, civilian bands in Limerick and other Irish towns and cities were made up of amateurs in the sense that they were employed in (and probably derived most of their income from) occupations other than playing music.²³ But despite these limited means and this non-professional musical involvement, the working man through his involvement in a band – especially one that marched through the city to mark important events – was given a purpose to dress well so as to ensure that his public persona and that of his fellow band members was associated with dependability and respectability. Críostóir Ó Floinn’s description of his father, a coal delivery man, coming home from work with a blackened face, cleaning himself up, and dressing in a white shirt when leaving to play in a dance band at weekends puts this into context. Not only did this, along with teaching music and conducting other bands, provide an opportunity to talented band members to use their musical knowledge to earn extra remuneration, but it gave them a deserved status as skilful musicians within their own communities and beyond. Ultimately, this was what the Limerick city bands were about. Political issues were all-consuming at times, and local loyalties were even more powerful, while family tensions could affect the relationships within bands. But most important of all was the music – and the capacity of the individual to play that music well.

²³ Michael J. Lomas, ‘Secular Civilian Amateur Wind Bands in Southern England in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’ *The Galpin society Journal*, vol 45 (1992), pp 78-98.

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