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Class, religion and society in Limerick City, 1922-1939



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Abstract

This study focuses on the civil society which existed in Limerick City between the signing of the Treaty and the outbreak of the Second World War. The purpose of the thesis is to examine this civil society outside of the overtly political society. It contrasts the lifestyles of the working poor as opposed to the merchant class and the clubs and organizations which they belonged to by examining the housing crisis in the city, and particularly in Garryowen, in 1922 and the establishment of a police force by the merchant class in the city in 1922. The study also maps the rise and decline of the Gaelic League within the city as a cultural signifier

of national identity from the early heady days of the late nineteenth century to the gradual decline following independence in 1922. The Protestant imperial ethos and its decline, as well as the rise of the new Catholic middle class in the city, have also been examined through the medium of an elite boat club. The study also focuses on the temperance movement and its journey from its protestant roots to its dominance by Jesuits and the influence of the Redemptorist Archconfraternity of the Holy Family. One locality in the city, the Boherbuoy (An Bóthar Buí), fondly known as The Yellow Road, came in for special recognition for its influence on working-class rugby football as well as its allegiance to St Michael's Temperance Society, the Boherbuoy Brass and Reed Band and the Dominican Church. The connections between all of these organizations have been examined from the viewpoint of the social capital which they generated and the horizontal and vertical networks of association which operated within them. The study is based on research of archives both private and public. It has used local and national newspapers, journals and interviews with people who had memories of the period. It also includes reminiscences by the author of conversations with his father and grandfather who were involved in events of the period. Secondary sources were also frequently used and are contained in the bibliography.

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Garryowen

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