

Population Trends in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ireland: A Local Study

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Abstract: The investigation of Irish demographic trends in the half century following the Famine has generally been conducted using figures relating to large areas. In this paper an attempt is made to examine the applicability of some of the hypotheses that have been developed in this context to the demographic changes that occurred in one particular community and which have been investigated in the course of local-level anthropological research.

I

It is well known nowadays that many of the most salient features of Irish rural life in the early twentieth century – such as the match, a late age at marriage, the payment of dowry, impartible inheritance and the stem family – came to prominence as a response to the changed circumstances of the peasantry in the nineteenth century. These changes are held to have had broader demographic consequences, and Cousens (1964) and those who have sought to develop or refine his thesis, (McKenna 1974, 1978; Walsh, 1970) have identified two broad types of demographic pattern following the Famine. The first of these is a continuation of a pre-Famine pattern of population growth, high rates of marriage and of natural increase, at least until the late 1870s; the second is held to be the typical post-Famine pattern of population decline and declining marriage rates.

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Much of the discussion of the development of the post-Famine demographic patterns has been concerned with large areas, for which data have been relatively grossly aggregated. For example, much of the discussion has dealt with county level statistics or, in the case of Cousen's work (1961, 1964), with Poor Law Unions. On this basis it is generally agreed that pre-Famine patterns of high marriage rates and high fertility persisted much longer in the west of Ireland than in the east. In the west the move towards the post-Famine patterns did not begin until the 1870s, possibly as a result of the agricultural depression that occurred late in this decade, whereas in the east the move began much earlier, possibly before the Famine. Gibbon and Curtin (1979, p. 443) have suggested that these represent "two poles of post-Famine adjustment", and that it was during the period 1845-1880 (that is, between these poles) that the bulk of the country began to experience the change from pre- to post-Famine patterns. Indeed, they suggest that for the counties of Clare, Cork, Limerick and Tipperary the agricultural crisis of 1859-1863 may have been crucial in inducing this change.

One question raised by these studies is the degree of variation in the emergence of these patterns that might be discovered within counties or Poor Law Unions if the data could be disaggregated further. Hannan and Hardiman (1978) have suggested that there were major differences in nuptiality between occupational groups which are obscured by the aggregation of official statistics. Similarly, it seems quite plausible to suggest that differences between more local areas in the adoption of these post-Famine patterns may have been similarly obscured. To the degree that Poor Law Unions or counties were not homogeneous with regard to the economic circumstances that gave rise to the post-Famine patterns, then we should expect to find local differences in these patterns.

In this paper we present some preliminary evidence which very strongly suggests that such differences could be found within local areas. We also seek to demonstrate that through the close analysis of a particular relatively small area, one can obtain insights into what the post-Famine demographic changes involved. For example, it is well known that as well as regional variations in post-Famine demography there were also, at the national level, variations between occupational groups. The numbers of labourers, cottiers and very small farmers declined markedly, while the rest of the farmer population increased (Lee, 1973, p. 2; Lyons, 1979, pp. 52-54). A second aim of this paper, then, is to discover evidence for such occupational variations at the local level.

II

The data used here were collected during fieldwork in 1977-78 in an

area of two contiguous District Electoral Divisions in County Kerry, covering about twelve square miles, that we call "Carrigbeg". The population of Carrigbeg in 1978 was, according to my own census, 852: this compares with 1,375 in 1901 and 2,815 in 1841. Overall, the post-Famine period has seen a steady decline in population here, halted only after 1966. The area is primarily agricultural, and farm sizes range from under 10 to 100 acres, though in the Upland areas of Carrigbeg, hill grazing, usually held as commonage among the residents of a particular townland, extends to several hundred acres. Today farms in the Lowland area of Carrigbeg specialise in commercial milk production, while the Upland farmers keep sheep. In addition, a small number of farmers on poor land are engaged in small-scale cattle production. The incidence of these three types of farming relates very strongly to a broad topographical distinction between three areas: the fertile limestone Lowland (comprising 11 townlands), the Upland area (all the land above 200 feet; 11 townlands) and, between the two, the Intermediate area of generally poor quality soils (4 townlands).

The development of agriculture specialisation within the area is a recent phenomenon. Until thirty years ago agriculture was mixed, with every farm keeping a variety of livestock and growing a number of crops, both root and cereal. While the growth of specialisation has acted to increase income differences between farmers, and so to emphasise their stratification, there were important and pervasive distinctions within the community before this. In the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these distinctions existed not only between landlord and tenant, but also within the indigenous population. One useful index of this was the employment of farm servants. In 1901, out of 251 households, 39 (16 per cent) employed servants; in 1911, 27 out of 248 households (11 per cent) had them. The bulk of these servants' employers were indigenous farmers who had properties of considerably more than average valuation. For example, in 1911 those farms employing servants had a mean valuation of £36.61; a random sample of 50 other farms had a mean valuation of £11.31 (Breen, 1983, p. 93). The servants themselves were drawn from the families of small farmers or labourers either within Carrigbeg or the surrounding parishes. Households with servants were significantly over-represented in the Lowland area, while households providing servants tended to be relatively more numerous in the Intermediate and, particularly, the Upland areas. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the small farm economy of these areas received additional support, not only from servanthood and local labour on large farms by the younger members of the household, but from seasonal migratory labour. This involved the movement of men from Carrigbeg – indeed from the whole of the Iveragh and Dingle peninsulae¹ – to Tralee, to be hired by the

1 This movement is also referred to in Sayers (1978, pp. 15-16).

farmers of North Kerry, for the potato harvest. This persisted until the introduction of the horse drawn potato digger in the early years of this century.

Between the servant-employing and servant-providing families was a body of "middle peasantry" who, in general, neither hired nor provided servants. Very broadly speaking then, we have three topographical areas and three classes of farmer, between which there was some correspondence, though this was not exact. While small farms could be found throughout Carrigbeg, they were disproportionately represented in the Upland areas, while large farms tended to be found in the Lowland. We show, in this paper, that the Upland and Lowland areas in the late nineteenth century displayed demographic patterns that were, respectively, pre-Famine and post-Famine in nature.² In other words, within this relatively small area could be found differences more usually associated with regional comparisons.

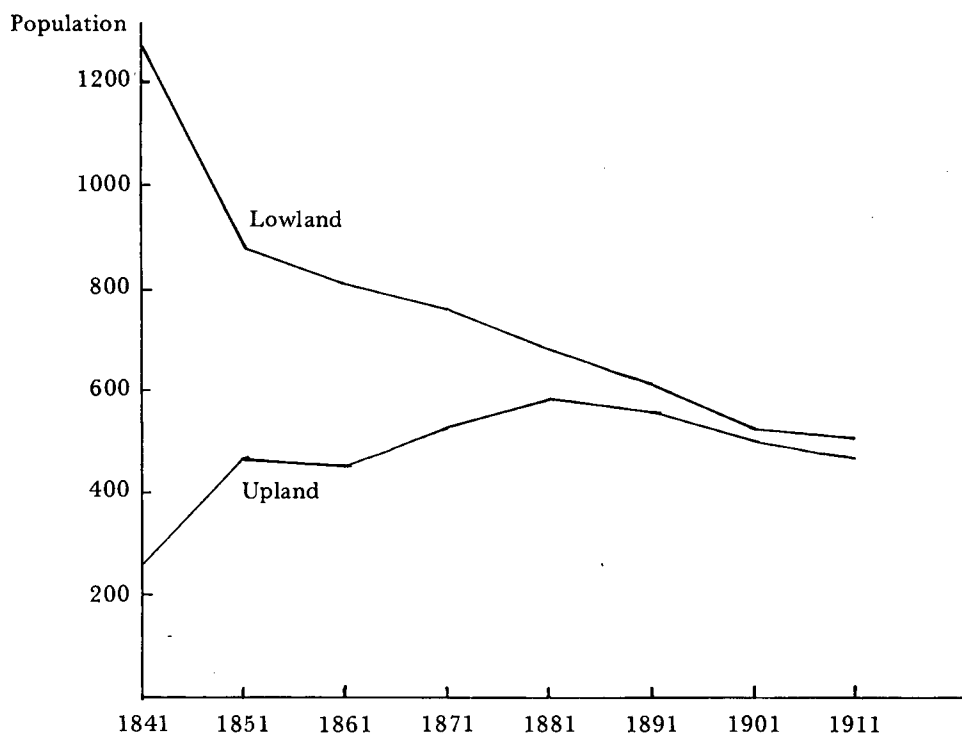
III

The graph (Figure 1) showing the population change in these two areas of Carrigbeg over the period 1841-1911 displays a remarkable pattern (the figures on which this graph is based are shown in Table 1). During the intercensal period 1841-1851, spanning the Famine years, the Lowland area was losing population at a rate of 4 per cent per year. On the other hand, the Upland area was increasing in population at a rate of 6 per cent per year, and the number of occupied houses here almost doubled from 41 to 81.

Cousens (1964, p. 319) has suggested that a change in the number of holdings in the immediate post-Famine period constituted a "fundamental difference" between the west of Ireland (where smallholdings of under 30 acres increased) and the east (where they declined through amalgamation). He attributes the difference to the desire of landlords in the west — where much marginal land had gone out of cultivation during the Famine — to let such holdings, since this was more profitable than using the land for rough grazing.

A straightforward application of this explanation to account for the demographic changes in the Uplands of Carrigbeg is implausible. The greatest increase in the number of households in this area occurred not between 1851 and 1861 but over the 1841-1851 period. The direct application of Cousens's argument would thus require that land fell out of cultivation, was then brought back under cultivation, and finally was re-tenanted, all within the period between the first years of the Famine and 1851. However, a closer

2 "Pre- and post-Famine" patterns refer, at their most basic, to, on the one hand, an increasing and, on the other, a decreasing population. However, these gross changes were the result of other differences — in fertility, nuptiality, emigration, and so on — between the areas that showed these patterns. In this study we are concerned only with these gross changes.

Figure 1: *Population change in lowland and upland areas of Carrigbeg, 1841-1911*

Source: Census of Ireland, 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911.

Table 1: *Mean household size and house numbers, 1841-1911*

	Upland			Lowland		
	Population	MHS	Houses	Population	MHS	Houses
1841	259	6.32	41	1,260	6.3*	200*
1851	464	5.73	81	881	6.38	138
1861	454	5.22	87	803	6.08	132
1871	532	6.41	83	750	6.05	124
1881	578	6.35	91	681	5.97	114
1891	558	6.27	89	616	5.55	111
1901	507	6.04	84	533	4.98	107
1911	482	5.67	85	513	4.93	104

*Estimated. The number of houses was 192 plus those houses in one part of a Lowland townland, subsequently partitioned into Upper and Lower portions, but reported as one in 1841. The population was 1,246 plus the additional estimate of 14.

Source: As Figure 1.

examination of the population and household changes in the Upland indicate that a modification of Cousens's thesis would better account for the increase of population in this area. The high rate of Upland population growth (higher than could plausibly be accounted for by natural increase alone) suggests the introduction of new tenants into this area, perhaps coincident with continued partible inheritance among the existing population. However, the fall in Mean Household Size (MHS: shown in Table 1) between 1841 and 1851 is not great enough to warrant the supposition that partible inheritance accounts for a majority of this change. Rather it appears that quite large households (as opposed to the proliferation of small households one would expect under partible inheritance) were being newly established in the area. If we examine the household and population changes in each of the eleven Upland townlands (Table 2) then we find that of the five unpopulated townlands in 1841, three had between them in 1851 a population of 114 in 20 houses. In addition, the largest Upland townland (labelled J) doubled in population and in house numbers in the period. These figures suggest that land which had not been previously tenanted (or, at any rate, was not tenanted in 1841) was being brought into cultivation, not after, but during, the Famine, and this movement of population accounts for the increase in population and households in the Upland over the 1841-1851 decade. We might also note that even excluding these four townlands (i.e., A, C, H and J), the population of the Upland area declined only slightly, from 154 in 1841 to 136 in 1851. Whether this was because the Famine was not experienced as severely in this area as elsewhere (for whatever reason) or because of the movement of new tenants into Upland townlands other than the four identified is impossible to know.

Table 2: *Population and house numbers of upland townlands, 1841 and 1851*

<i>Townland</i>	<i>Population</i>		<i>Houses</i>	
	<i>1841</i>	<i>1851</i>	<i>1841</i>	<i>1851</i>
A	0	49	0	9
B	13	10	2	1
C	0	45	0	8
D	36	23	4	2
E	21	3	2	1
F	34	32	4	5
G	0	0	0	0
H	0	20	0	3
I	0	0	0	0
J	105	214	21	40
K	50	68	8	12

Source: Census of Ireland, 1841, 1851.

The 1841-61 period of growth in the number of Upland households saw a divergence in MHS between this area and the Lowland. In 1841, MHS was approximately equal between the two areas. It declined up to 1861 in Carrigbeg as a whole, but because of the more rapid decline in the Uplands, it was, by this time, smallest here. Between 1861 and 1881, MHS, population and the number of households continued to decline in the Lowland. In the same period, population continued to grow in the Uplands, but without the addition of new households, so that by 1871 MHS here reached – and indeed slightly exceeded – its pre-Famine level. After 1881, the trends of population and MHS were downward in both areas, though the number of households in the Upland showed only a very small change.³

Comparing the two areas over the years 1841-1881, it is clear that each fared very differently early in this period, and that this had far-reaching consequences. The effect of the Famine on the Upland area was to increase population and households and so impart a momentum that persisted until about 1881, enabling the area to retain an increasing population and large households, not consistent with general post-Famine demographic patterns. The position of the Lowland was in marked contrast. Here the demographic patterns were more akin to those one would expect of the post-Famine arrangements – declining population, a decreasing number of houses and contraction of those that remained.

Our initial supposition on examining these figures was that the different demographic patterns may have been the result of differences in the rate of adoption of the post-Famine behavioural changes, specifically the retention, in the Upland area, of some degree of partible inheritance, after this had vanished from the Lowland. Further investigation, however, revealed that this was not so. The evidence we can glean from the valuation records for the period indicate that, at least from the 1850s onwards, there were no significant differences between Upland and Lowland inheritance patterns. In all areas of Carrigbeg, the devolution of property took the form of impartible inheritance.

Of far more significance was the occupational structure of the populations of these two areas. Using valuation records it is possible to discover the number of farm holdings in each area of Carrigbeg during this period and also to estimate the proportion of farm households at any given time.⁴ These

3 We are, of course, limited in what we can say about the causes of these changes in MHS; for example, to what extent they reflect changes in factors such as the age structure of families, marriage rates, family size, or the extent to which kin not of the nuclear family or even unrelated individuals were included within households. Investigation of these issues would require information on the composition of individual households: such information unfortunately does not exist.

4 These are available at the Valuation Office, Dublin. The number of holdings above two acres was drawn from these records, and the number of farm households was estimated from the number of tenants whose holding, if above two acres, had a dwelling on it.

results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. In both areas, the total amount of cultivated land remained constant over the 1859-1914/1917 period. An increase in holdings above two acres would thus suggest farm fragmentation (or, less likely, amalgamation of holdings under two acres, which are considered too small to be counted as farms in the present instance) while a decrease would suggest concentration. In both areas the number of holdings over two acres increased between 1882 and 1914/1917, but this is accounted for, in large part, by the purchase and division of formerly untenanted land from landlords in the first decade of this century. In the 1859-1882 period, although the number of holdings increased in the Uplands and decreased in the Lowland, these differences are not significant.

Table 3: *Number of farm holdings above two acres, 1851-1914/1917 **

	<i>Upland</i>	<i>Lowland</i>
1859	55	67
1882	58	65
1914/1917	68	75

Source: Valuation records, Valuation Office, Dublin.

* The valuation records for each District Electoral Division were revised at different times; thus while the records for both DEDs in Carrigbeg were updated in 1882, one of them was updated again in 1914, the other in 1917.

Table 4: *Number of farm and non-farm households and changes in the percentage of non-farm households, 1859-1914/1917*

		<i>Farm households (a)</i>	<i>Non-farm households (b)</i>	<i>Ratio of farm to total households (a)/(a) + (b)</i>	<i>Change in percentage of non-farm households</i>
Upland	1859	53	34	.61	—
	1882	55	36	.60	+6
	1914/17	63	22	.74	-39
Lowland	1859	63	69	.48	—
	1882	62	52	.54	-25
	1914/17	65	39	.63	-25

Source: Valuation records and Census of Ireland, 1861, 1881, 1911.

Considerably more interest attaches to Table 4, which shows that in the Upland area the change in the number of households in the period 1859-1914/1917 was the result of a modest growth in the number of farm households and a decline in the number of non-farm households. In the Lowland in 1859, farm households accounted for a little under half of all houses,

and although the number of farm households remained almost the same until 1914/1917, by 1882 they accounted for over half and by 1914/1917 almost two-thirds of total households. In the Uplands, by contrast, farm households consistently accounted for a greater proportion of the total, and, in the period 1859-1882, when the overall number of households stayed the same, this proportion did not vary. After 1882, however, this proportion increased greatly. In this period the decline of non-farm households was quite dramatic as Table 4 shows. Indeed, this decline exceeded the rate of decline in the Lowland: in this respect at least, the Upland areas, though starting later on the post-Famine trends were making up for lost time. Thus, to the degree that the post-Famine demographic patterns entailed a decline in the number of houses, this was confined exclusively to the non-farm population. What proportion of the overall loss of population was accounted for in this way cannot be known definitely, but we can hazard some estimates, if we are willing to make some assumptions about the relative size of farm and non-farm households. Such estimates are shown in Table 5.⁵ They suggest that a large proportion of the decline in population in all periods (except the 1882-1914/1917 period in the Lowland) was due to the loss of these non-farm households. The loss of population not accounted for in this way, however, must have been due to a decline in the population of the remaining non-farm and farm households. Estimates partitioning this loss are shown in Table 6,⁶ together with a summary of the total loss of population over this period. Tables 5 and 6 reveal that, on the basis of these estimates, the overall loss of population entailed by the post-Famine demographic pattern was substantially drawn from the non-farm sector in both the Upland and Lowland areas.

5 Using the census returns of 1901 and 1911, MHS of all non-farm households was estimated. The decline in MHS for non-farm households as a proportion of MHS for all households over the period 1901-1911 was then extrapolated back to 1861 to provide an estimate of MHS for non-farm households which was then used to weight the decrease in these households. The estimated 1871 MHS was used for the 1859-1882 period, the 1901 (i.e., actual) MHS was used for the 1882-1914/1917 period. We can, therefore, have a reasonable degree of confidence in the later estimates. Furthermore, the changes in household numbers in the earlier period lend plausibility to the belief that a large proportion of the loss of population in the Lowland must have come from the non-farm sector.

6 These estimates were arrived at by partitioning the remaining decline according to the ratio of the decline in non-farm MHS to the decline in MHS between 1881 and 1911. This exercise was carried out only for the later period.

Table 5: *Estimated proportion of loss of population accounted for by the loss of non-farm households*

	<i>Upland</i>	<i>Lowland</i>
1859-1882	—	106/ 122 (.87)
1882-1911	65/ 96 (.68)	51/ 168 (.3)

Source: As Table 4.

Table 6: *Loss of population 1882-1911*

	<i>Total loss = (i)+(ii)</i>		<i>(i) Loss from decline in number of houses</i>		<i>(ii) Loss from surviving households</i>	
	<i>Upland</i>	<i>Lowland</i>	<i>Upland</i>	<i>Lowland</i>	<i>Upland</i>	<i>Lowland</i>
Farm	23	67	15	0	8	67
Non-farm	73	101	50	51	23	50
	<u>96</u>	<u>168</u>				

IV

This finding raises the question of what sorts of families, having what types of occupation, made up the non-farm sector of the population. It appears that in the immediate post-Famine period there were, according to the valuation records, a considerable number of sub-tenants in both these areas, whose holdings consisted of either a house or a house and a very small amount of land. Their immediate lessors were other indigenous farmers. This group appears to have suffered a very heavy decline during the late nineteenth century. If we turn to the censuses of the early twentieth century we do, however, find members of this group still remaining, and it seems that they consisted of three distinct types of household. First were those who were related to their lessor, most commonly as parents. Such households frequently contained, as well as the parents of the lessor, his siblings, who are generally accredited with an occupation such as "Labourer" or "Domestic Servant". A few households are also found headed by collaterals (siblings or uncles) of the lessor. A second group consisted of households headed by farm labourers; the assumption here is that they were employed by their lessor. A final group consisted of those households headed by neither kin nor

farm labourers. These were craftsmen, teachers and small business people (egg dealers and fishmongers, for example). A similar group was found in the Lowland area as immediate tenants of the landlord; these included blacksmiths, masons, tailors, carpenters and weavers, postmen, teachers, shopkeepers and publicans. In addition, there were a number of farm labourers in a similar position. It would seem then that farmers' kin and farmers' labourers — who were not resident in the farmer's household but were resident on his land — were two groups in Carrigbeg which suffered a marked decline in the wake of the Famine.

V

The results so far obtained in this study present us with at least two problems. Initially, we must account for the differences between the Lowland and Upland in their broad demographic trends after the Famine: why was there decline in the one and not in the other — and why, after about 1880 — did the Upland begin to adopt trends like those of the Lowland? Secondly, we must explain why the decline — at least after 1859 — was experienced by the non-farm sector rather than the farm sector, and why this sector was, apparently, able to maintain itself virtually unchanged in the Upland until 1880 but not in the Lowland.

Before addressing either of these questions, however, our first concern must be to explore in more detail, if possible, the increase in population in the Upland area during the 1841-1851 period, since much of the difference in the demographic experience of the two areas after 1851 must be directly or otherwise attributable to this phenomenon. Again, however, the reliance of our study on valuation records sets limits to the extent to which this can be done. A number of issues are raised by such a population increase under what might reasonably be considered adverse circumstances, and particularly by the relatively large scale tenantry (or possibly retentancy) of Upland townlands. For example: from where did the incoming households originate; were their members related to longer established Upland residents; did their entry have a disruptive effect (for example by taking over land which may previously have been available as commonage); and, above all, was this a movement carried out as part of a landlord's policy or merely with his acquiescence? Clearly, to answer these queries would require a much more complete data base; using valuation records the most we can do is to determine whether these were farm or non-farm households.

If we examine Griffith's Valuation (1852) we find that of those households in the three townlands (A, C and H in Table 2) which had no recorded population in 1841 but were populated in 1851, 15 out of 21⁷ were farm

⁷ Readers will note the small discrepancy between the figures for the number of households given in the valuation record and those given in the census.

households and these were direct tenants of the local landlord. The remaining six householders were sub-tenants of particular individual farmers: in the majority of cases the duplication of surnames between tenants and sub-tenants suggests that they may well have been kin. In townland J, which so conspicuously increased in population, there were, according to Griffith's valuation, 39 households, of which all were farms, with the exception of four sub-tenants of farmers and four direct non-farmer tenants of the landlord (a different landlord from the landlord of townlands A, C and H). Thus, the establishing of new households in the Upland area in the 1841-1851 period was largely constituted by the establishing of new farms.

Turning now to an account of why there were differences in the population trends in the Lowland and Upland areas even after the period of rapid Upland growth, we can first consider an argument advanced to explain the regional differences in demographic patterns after the Famine within the national context. This is that the staples of the western small farm economy – mutton, beef and potatoes (and also butter) – recovered in price quite rapidly after 1850, thus allowing the western region to experience pre-Famine population patterns (see, for example, Walsh 1970, p. 160). However, in the late 1870s prices for these commodities fell, precipitating an agricultural crisis and a subsequent depression, which lasted almost until the turn of the century. This crisis initiated the move, in the western region, towards post-Famine behavioural patterns of late marriage and so on, leading to a post-Famine demographic pattern.

With some modification, this argument can be applied to Carrigbeg. A plausible adaptation of it is as follows: in 1851, 1,700 acres in Carrigbeg were recorded as being under crops; by 1927 the comparable figure was 511 acres.⁸ A large part of this fall seems to have been due to the decline of tillage in the Lowland, which would have caused the demand for farm labour to lessen. This may have entailed the demise of the resident married labourer in favour of unmarried servants or the locally available non-resident labourers who were, as stated earlier, drawn overwhelmingly from the Upland region. There was no comparable decline in resident labourers in the Upland for the simple reason that they were never there in sufficient numbers; this was not an area suited to tillage and the farms were, in the majority of cases, too poor to warrant hired labour. In this area the non-farm sector consisted primarily of farmers' kin who had a house on these farmers' land. These households survived in part through the cultivation of tiny plots, and in the main, through local labouring. Such a pattern would account for the

8 These figures are taken from the Agricultural Censuses of 1851 and 1927, from which information at DED level is available at the Central Statistics Office, Dublin. While there were agricultural censuses taken between these dates, information from them is not available at DED level.

confining of the loss of population in the immediate post-Famine period to the non-farm sector of the Lowland (see Table 5). This was a period in which the farm labouring class was disappearing, and what remained of the demand for labour was being met by those non-inheriting children of farmers who were remaining as local residents.

If this was the pattern, what happened in the late 1870s or 1880s to change it? The agricultural crisis of this time must have affected both Upland (in the decline in mutton and beef prices particularly) and Lowland (in the decline in butter and beef prices — the commodities into which farmers here had been moving after 1850). In the latter area this may have caused a further reduction in the demand for farm labour, reflected not only in the continued loss of resident labourers but in a decline in demand for non-resident labour (i.e., drawn largely from dependent children and non-heirs in the Upland) and finally, a loss of population from among the farm families themselves, which is noticeable in the Lowland in this period. In the Upland the crisis may have lessened the willingness of farmers to permit collateral kin to reside on their land, as land became, under pressure of falling prices, of greater value to them and as these collaterals became less able to support themselves as the demand for their labour diminished.

VI

We have shown that the Upland area of Carrigbeg displayed demographic patterns that were very similar to those usually considered "pre-Famine" and thought to be characteristic of the west of Ireland in the post-Famine period. The Lowland area, on the other hand, displayed "post-Famine" patterns. After about 1880, the Upland began to adopt these patterns too. The difference between the two in the earlier years, however, was not related to a difference in inheritance practices on farms; rather, we can posit two major factors. The first is the large increase in population and households in the Upland area during the Famine period; the favourable demography of the area for the ensuing twenty or thirty years must have been due, in great part, to this. Second, are the differences in the occupational structure of the two areas. It was shown that the post-Famine adjustments in both areas of Carrigbeg had their major effect (in terms of net population change) on the non-farmer, rather than the farmer sector of society. Specifically, in the Lowlands where the non-farm sector was far larger, the losses were sustained, primarily, by the agricultural labour class. Since this class was under-represented in the Uplands, this trend could not extend to that area.

Finally, we suggest that the undertaking of small scale studies, of which the present paper reports a particularly modest example, has much to

commend it in terms of increasing our knowledge of post-Famine demography.⁹ This holds especially when, as we noted earlier, nationally available data, whilst in many respects of high quality, are deficient in certain crucial dimensions. More particularly, the present paper has sought to shed light on two issues. First, we have tried to show that at the local level, there held a relationship between economic organisation and demographic trends comparable to that noted at the regional level by Cousens and others. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the paper has shown that within the predominant pattern (in this case a "post-Famine" pattern) there existed important variation both between localities and between occupational groups.

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9 Indeed, as we have argued elsewhere (Breen 1982, p. 100) we believe that certain other problematic areas of Irish social history – and in particular the question of the class or classless nature of post-Famine rural society – can be most fruitfully approached through local-level studies.