

*Celebrating a Century of  
Successful Co-operation*



Laying of  
Foundation Stone - 1908  
Fr. Murphy with trowel  
J.B. Kirby engineer  
with plans and  
founder members of  
Tipperary Co-op

# Tipperary Co-operative Creamery Ltd.

## A Brief History

### **Pre-creamery era**

For generations dairying has played a major role in the economy of Tipperary town and its environs.

In the pre-creamery era the dairy industry was home based, milk was skimmed and butter churned on the farm. The butter was then packed into a barrel (manufactured locally) called a firkin which had a capacity of approximately 70lbs. When the firkin was full, and this could take some time as the average herd size was 8 to 10 cows and average yield was less than 400 gallons per cow. The firkin was sold in the Butter Market in Tipperary town (Tipperary market in the mid 1800's was the second largest butter market in Ireland) or to one of the many butter merchants or agents in the town. All butter, surplus to the merchant's immediate needs, was sold on to the British market.

### **British Butter market 1850 - 1880.**

The period 1850-70 was known in England as the "Victorian Golden Age". The industrial revolution had at last brought benefits to workers, wages began to show an actual increase in purchasing power, resulting in an increased demand for consumer goods including dairy products.

In the post famine decades a sellers market existed and both quantity and price of butter exported from Ireland to Britain increased. In the period 1870-75 exports of Irish butter to Great Britain amounted to 600,000 cwts. (30,000 tons) annually. However Irish dominance as the premier supplier was not to last. By 1860 other European countries were beginning to enter the lucrative British market.

A rapid expansion in British imports of butter from mainland Europe (which was of better quality, fresher and more regular in supply, Irish producers having become complacent), between 1877 - 1879 brought about a veritable collapse in Irish butter prices. The seven month average price of first quality Cork butter tumbled from 137's. per cwt. in 1876 to only 100's in 1879, a 28% reduction in price.

### **Birth of the Creamery System of Butter making**

In March 1879 Dr. Gustav De Laval of Sweden put the first practical continuous cream separator on the market. The introduction of the centrifugal separator, coupled with a power driven churn, made butter making on a centralised or creamery basis possible. Soon milk separating creameries began to spring up all over Western Europe. Denmark took the lead in the establishment of creameries and between 1879 and 1882 a number of private or proprietary creameries were started in that country. In 1882 the organisation of co-operative creameries commenced in Denmark. The spread of milk separating creameries on the continent further improved the quality and consistency of butter reaching the British market, consequently increasing the pressure on Irish farm produced butter.

### **The Introduction of the Creamery System to Ireland**

From 1882 butter merchants, seeing the opportunities that the fledgling industry presented, started turning to the factory system of butter-making as a source of supply. They began to build creameries in the main dairying districts. With their existing knowledge of the butter trade and ready availability of capital the private sector had gained a strong foothold in the creamery industry before some concerned people such as Canon Richard Wolf Bagot and Horace Plunkett began to fear that if the proprietary creameries became dominant, once farm butter production was phased out, the farmers would lose control of their business and the price of milk could then be arbitrarily reduced.

### **The Co-Operative Creamery Movement**

The first farmer owned creamery in the British Isles was established in Hospital, Co. Limerick in 1884 by Canon Richard Wolf Bagot in conjunction with the local farming community. It operated as a joint stock company. Suppliers had the option of bringing cream (having skimmed the milk at home) or milk to the creamery. The creamery operated for three years before being taken over by Cleeves at the end of 1887.

The first Co-operative creamery in Ireland was established at Dromcolloger, Co. Limerick in 1889. The main organisers were W. L. Stokes, Limerick agent for the Co-operative Wholesale Society Manchester, and Robert Gibson another Limerick butter agent. It was operated under the umbrella of the English Co-operative Union. The Co-op operated for two years and was then taken over by a Mr. James O'Brien who ran it as a private concern for nineteen years.

### **Horace Curson Plunkett 1854-1932**

Horace Curson Plunkett, third son of Baron Dunsany was born on the 24th October 1854 at Sherborne, Gloucestershire. The family moved to Dunsany, Co. Meath in 1860. He attended Eton College from 1868 to 1872 and Oxford University from 1873 to 1878 where he took a 2nd class degree in history. From 1879 to 1889 he spent Spring and Summer on his extensive ranch in Wyoming, U.S.A. and the winters in Ireland.

Plunkett's time at Oxford coincided with a period of change and upheaval in social thinking and the influences he encountered stirred his social conscience His idealism was further strengthened by his experiences in America. By the time he returned permanently to Ireland in 1889 he had developed a practical social philosophy aimed at renewing Irish rural life through a strong Co-operative movement. Its aims are encapsulated in the slogan

***“Better Farming - Better Business — Better Living”***

Plunkett originally looked at a broad approach to the introduction of co-operation but by 1890 he had decided on a more specific approach. “There happens to be in Ireland a most important productive industry, which lends itself in a very striking manner to Co-operative organisation. I refer, I need hardly say to the business of dairying, which, if I am not much mistaken, is destined to do more to illustrate the advantages of industrial association than any other form of productive industry.”

During 1890 Plunkett and his assistant R. A. Anderson traversed the country (concentrating initially on the Golden Vale area) addressing meeting after meeting, preaching the ideals of combined effort. The year ended without success, no Co-operative was established since Dromcollogher. The breakthrough came for Plunkett when his friend Lord Monteagle convened a public meeting at Ballyhahill (West Limerick) schoolhouse on the 11th September 1890 for the purpose of establishing a co-operative creamery. The meeting accepted Plunkett's proposal and Ballyhahill creamery came into operation in 1891; by the year end fifteen Co-operative Creameries were in operation or in the process of going into production. Amongst the fifteen was the Glen of Aherlow, the first Co-op in Co. Tipperary.

### **Beginnings of the Creamery Industry in Tipperary Town**

On the 4th August 1897 the Condensed Milk Company, the largest proprietary dairy company in Ireland, with headquarters in Limerick City signed a lease agreement with the Rt. Hon. A. H. Smith-Barry which gave the company *A plot of land on the Fair Green of Tipperary, containing two statute acres, together with the right which landlord has to the water flowing from the Church Well into the millrace, and the right to enter adjoining lands of landlord and lay pipes to town sanitary sewers (if permitted), situated in the Parish of Cordangan, Barony of Clanwilliam, and County of Tipperary.*

The Condensed Milk Company immediately commenced building a factory of considerable proportions, being 300 feet long, 60 feet in width and 44 feet high; the building and the plant cost £30,000. The factory commenced operation in 1898.

Within a very short period the company began to extend its operations, eventually establishing a ring of feeder branch creameries right around Tipperary town. In time, if somewhat belatedly, the farmers of the locality came to worry at their lack of input into their business, and the dominant position of the Condensed Milk Company whose main concern was return to its shareholders, and not the farmers' milk price.

### **Tipperary Co-Operative Creamery**

In 1907 some local farmers met informally to discuss the possibility of forming a co-operative creamery with a view to taking control of their business into their own hands. In early April 1908 a public meeting was held in Patrick L. Ryan's auction rooms, Tipperary Town, attended by Charles Riddall (IAOS organiser). By the end of the month, the first ordinary business meeting of Tipperary Co-operative Creamery was held, at which a committee of fourteen was elected. Bank of Ireland was selected by ballot to be the society's treasurers, share capital subscribed reached £1,050. This was an impressive amount as the expected cost of the creamery was £1,500, and Charles Riddall anticipated a further £1,000 of share capital would be collected. In 1908 the foundation stone for the new creamery was laid on the site of the present store at O'Brien Street. The creamery commenced operation the following year. The society's turnover for the first year of trading was £13,000.

The period 1914-1920 was one of unprecedented prosperity for Irish agriculture. Prices trebled from a base of 100 in 1911-13 to 288 in 1920. The price paid to suppliers by the Co-op for butterfat increased from ls.-3d (7 cent) per lb. in April 1914 to

3s-4d (20 cent) per lb.in March 1920. The boom was followed by a veritable collapse, the beginning of the 1920's heralded a disastrous economic slump, which continued into the 1930's and early 40's (the price paid for butterfat by the society in March 1920 was not achieved again until the mid 1940's).

During these years, The Condensed Milk Company (Cleaves), who were also processing in Tipperary Town at Station Road (now headquarters of Tipperary Co-op), experienced financial difficulties and went into liquidation. In 1928 the Government intervened and the Company was taken into State ownership (The Dairy Disposal Board).

From 1918 to the 1940's, due to the economic pressures, a number of local creameries amalgamated with Tipperary Co-op: Alleen and Ballinard (1918), Carnahalla (1919), Donohill and Emlly (1920's), Aherlow, Dungrud and Ballygriffin (1940's).

The 50's and early 60's were periods of stagnation in the dairy industry and in the co-operative movement. It was the 1970's before we saw real movement in this area. In 1971 Borrisoleigh Co-op amalgamated with Tipperary Co-op and in 1972 the Society acquired the Dairy Disposal Company's interest in the Tipperary area. Also in 1972 a new powder plant, service block, intake unit and laboratory were built at Station Road and bulk milk collection was introduced.

Solohead Co-op joined Tipperary in 1974 and the closing of the Old Branch Network began. A new Administration block was built at Station Road in 1978.

The building of a Continental Cheese Factory began in 1980. Further upgrades to the trading stores occurred during the 1980's and in 1990 a new retail store complex was built on the grounds of the original creamery at O'Brien Street, Tipperary.

Throughout the 1990s we saw the purchase of a cheese packaging and distribution business in France (Tippagral, 1990), the purchase of a retail supermarket (1997) and the commencement of commercialisation of mushrooms (1999).

Since the turn of the millennium we have seen the continual growth and development of the Society and the Co-op's business units. Due to the expansion of the specialised markets established in the U.S.A. in 2002, a new cheese 'Cut and Pack' facility was built.

After almost twenty-six years of service the cheese plant was decommissioned and replaced by a new specialised continental cheese plant. The plant went into service in early 2007. In the same year, Tipperary Co-op continued the growth of its international operations with the purchase of a French cuisine food company, Perrine. This company provides innovative and original food concepts to food manufacturers, food service operators and retailer deli-counters.

For generations Tipperary Co-op has provided a way of life and a sustainable income stream for the local economy. The ethos of its founding fathers has a clear resonance for all those involved, as Tipperary Co-op embarks on a second century of service and leadership.



**Tipperary Co-op personnel at the Golden Jubilee, 1958.**

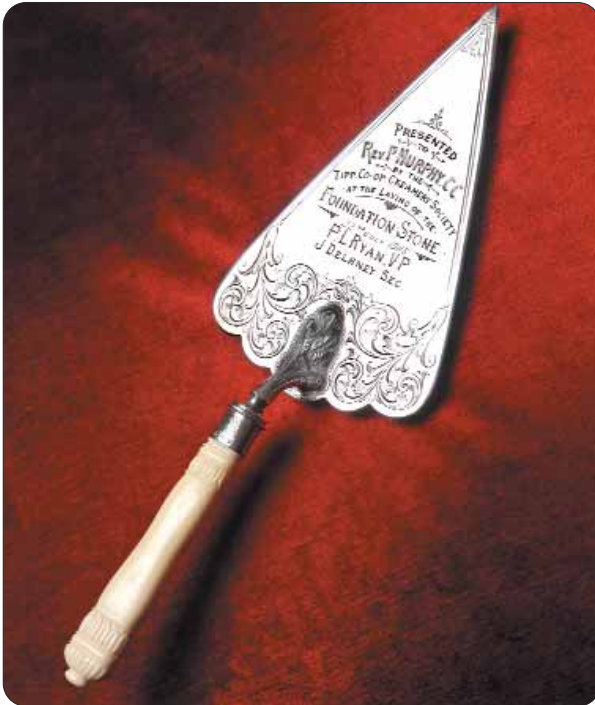
*Front Row: P. McCormack, M. Casey, F. Daly, W. Ryan, Second Row; Ml. Bourke, Jas Hourigan Sr., Canon R. Quinn, (Vice-Chairman), M. Lowry, E. O'Callaghan (manager), E. O'Dwyer (chairman), Rev. M. O'Dwyer, (C.C. Tipperary), D. Hanley, T. Hayes.*

*Third row: M. O'Connell, T. Barragry, M. Donovan, P. O'Dwyer, M. Doherty, Owen O'Neill, J. O'Connell, A. Doherty, Pat McCormack, Phil Ryan, George Furlong, James Ryan, Tom Hanley, Con Ryan, Thomas Long (auditor).*

*Back Row 1 to 11: James Hayes (Dungrud), Myles Lacey, D. Sheeran (Bank of Ireland), D. Heffernan, J.P. Carmody, J. McCarthy, J. Bourke, J. Ryan, W. Condon, D. Hogan, W. Purcell, J. Hanley, P. Grogan, Tim Doherty, John Doherty, Jas. Hourigan Jnr.*



*Original Tipperary Co-Op Creamery at O'Brien Street*



*Trowel presented to Rev. P. Murphy at the laying of the foundation stone*



*St. Ailbe's Creamery, Emly  
showing milk cans on the milk receiving platform.*



*Milk separator*



*Wooden butter churn*

*Before the advent of individual electric motors, all machines such as churns, separators and pumps were driven from a central shafting via pulleys and belt. The shaft, in turn, was powered by an oil or steam engine.*



*Dash churn*

# Family Tree - Tipperary Co-op

1908 - 2008

## Date of joining the group

**1918**

Alleen (1902)  
Ballinard (1901)

**1919**

Carnahalla (1900)

**1922**

Donohill (1902)

**1926**

Emly (1908)

**1940**

Ballygriffin (1906)

**1941**

Aherlow (1892)  
[Dungrud (1910),  
Acquired (1911)]

**1971**

Borrisoleigh (1908)

Templederry (1910)  
merged in 1934

Clodia (1911)  
merged in 1963

Cloncannon (1908)  
merged in 1964

**1974**

Solohead (1901)  
Clonbrick merged in 1921

## Acquisitions

**1972**

Dairy Disposal Co. Group  
in Tipperry  
Glenough, Annacarty,  
Blackbridge, Grantstown,  
Ballybrack, Clogher,  
Rossmore, Bansha,  
Kilmoyler, Grange.

**1990**

Davoine (France)  
Changed name to  
Tippagral S.A.

**1992**

Suttons (Goold's Cross)

**1997**

L & N Supermarket  
(Tipperary)

**2007**

Perrine - (France)  
French Snack Food Company

# *Chairmanships 1908-2008*



*1908 - 1919*  
*Rev. P. Murphy*



*1919 - 1943*  
*Patrick L. Ryan*



*1943 - 1962*  
*Edmond O'Dwyer*



*1962 - 1970*  
*John Bourke*



*1970 - 1976*  
*Denis Kelly*



*1976 - 1986*  
*Con Gavan*



*1986 - 1999*  
*Michael O'Brien*



*1999 - 2005*  
*Sean Murray*



*2005 - to date*  
*Matthew Quinlan*

**First Committee  
of  
Tipperary Co-operative Creamery Ltd.  
Founded 1908**

*Chairman:* Rev. P. Murphy, C.C.,  
*Vice-Chairman:* P.L. Ryan  
*Secretary:* J. Delaney

J. Bourke	J.J. Fitzgerald
T.F. Crowe	L. Hayes
M. Delaney	M. Lowry
C. Doherty	J. McCarthy
M. Doherty	E. O'Dwyer
J.J. Duggan	J. Walsh

**Board of Directors during 2008**

*Chairman:* Matthew Quinlan  
*Vice-Chairman:* Patrick O'Dwyer  
*Secretary:* Laurence O'Brien

Richard Donovan	Kevin Murray
Liam Fahey	Thomas O'Neill
Patrick Fahey	Timothy Ryan
Patrick Heffernan	William Ryan
John Hennessy	Seamus Tynan

# Present Advisory Committee

November 2008

Michael Bourke	Ann Kinane-Creamer	Matthew Quinlan
Thomas Bourke	Patrick Kinane	Timothy Quinlan
Brendan Breen	Richard Leahy	John Quirke
John Breen	John Loughman	Patrick Quirke
Peter Breen	Laurence Loughman	John Richardson
Martin Condon	Eugene McCormack	Robert Russell
David Conway	Michael McCormack	Thomas Russell
William Crosse	Patrick McCormack (Alleen)	Conor Ryan
Timothy Crotty	Patrick McCormack (Tipperary)	Daniel Ryan
William Dee	John Magner	Donal Ryan
Richard Donovan	Kevin Maher	Eamon Ryan
John Farrell	Niall Maher	James Ryan
Patrick Fahey	Stuart Maxwell	John M. Ryan (Emly)
Liam Fahey	William Meagher	Laurence J. Ryan
Michael J. Farrell	Patrick Merrick	Liam Ryan
John Fitzgerald	Alan Moloney	Michael Ryan (Borrisoleigh)
Patrick Fitzgerald	Kevin Murray	Michael Ryan (Clonbrick-Knockfela)
John Fogarty	Sean Murray	Michael Ryan (Solohead-Boherdota)
Seamus Frewen	Roger Moloney	Patrick Ryan (Bansha)
John Fryday	Patrick Nugent	Patrick Ryan (Donohill)
James Hayes	Laurence O'Brien	Seamus Ryan
Patrick Heffernan	Michael O'Connell	Timothy Ryan (Grantstown)
John Hennessy (Emly)	James O'Donnell	Timothy Ryan Jnr. (Solohead)
John Hennessy (Dungrud)	John O'Dwyer	Timothy Ryan (Borrisoleigh)
Patrick Hennessy	Patrick O'Dwyer	William Ryan
Walter Hennessy	Michael O'Dwyer	Michael Slattery
Kieran Hodgins	Thomas O'Dwyer (Bansha)	Seamus Tynan
Malachy Horan	Thomas O'Dwyer (Tipperary)	
Morgan Hughes	Thomas O'Neill	
James Julian	Daniel O'Neill	
Richard Kelly	Ted O'Sullivan	
Liam Kinane	Aidan Power	

# *List of General Managers*

Mr. Edward O'Callaghan

Mr. Frank Daly

Mr. P.J. Murphy

Mr. Maurice FitzGerald

Mr. Thomas O'Mahoney

Mr. Noel Horgan

Mr. Tim Dullea

Mr. Ted O'Connor

## **THE CREAMERY**

*The creamery clock looked down  
From its red corrugated tower,  
Built by the Condensed Milk Company  
Before Independence.*

*The snake of cars  
Stretching from east to west  
Met at the gate.  
Men talked of hay,  
The weather, crops  
And the price of cattle.*

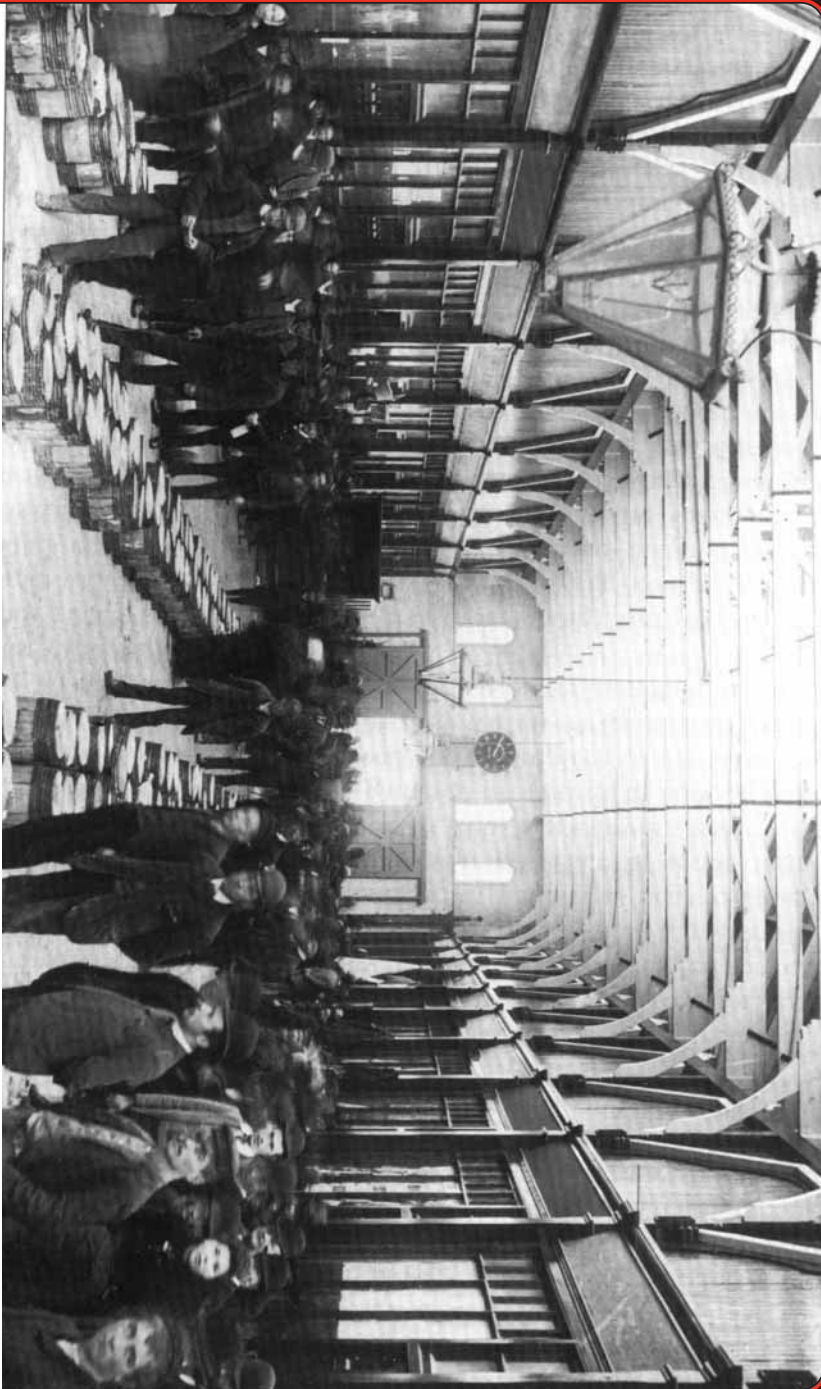
*Some smoked pipes  
Woodbines cut the throats of others:  
'Coffin nails' they called them.*

*The smell was of milk  
Fresh and separated,  
Sweet and sour  
Butter like slabs of gold  
Wrapped in parchment paper.*

*The creamery books  
Secure in the inside pockets  
Gallons totted down -  
Cheque at the end of the month.*

*Now it is a deserted place  
The creamery clock ticks away  
Silently to itself.*

Written by Maura Lynch (nee Ryan)  
The Bridge, Carhue



William O'Brien's Arcade, Tipperary Town, 1889,  
with rows of butter firkins