

Introduction

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Poverty and its relief have always gone hand in hand. For as long as society has recognized the needy, it has also had a wide variety of philanthropic organizations designed to feed, clothe, and improve the lot of the poor. From the first organized instances of fellow-feeling and responsibility, as expressed in the tradition of alms-giving in the early Islamic world, and the creation of alms-houses in Europe from the tenth century onwards, a sense of duty for the less fortunate characterizes human society.¹ But it was the rapid social development wrought by the Industrial Revolution, and the creation of more complex urban as well as rural societies, that signalled dramatic developments in the world of philanthropy. The nineteenth century may truly be described as the century of philanthropy, as across Europe voluntary organizations developed without precedent, and addressed an overwhelming range of needs. The emergence of a class system inevitably produced an underclass, and included those who were marginalized from birth through poverty and congenital disability, or became so as a result of economic upheaval, illness or old age. New categories of workers and the introduction of a waged economy threw non-productive members of society into sharp relief, and voluntary groups sprang up to assist injured workmen, orphans, distressed gentlewomen, widows, the handicapped, the elderly of both sexes, and religious converts abandoned by their families. All categories, at every stage of the life cycle, were represented.

Scholarly interest in philanthropy in the western world was part of the general academic engagement with non-canonical histories, born of the 'history from below' movement of the 1960s and 70s. Individual institutional histories had, of course, always celebrated anniversaries and centenaries, but the new studies used the archives of various institutions to contextualize the involvement of, for example, women workers, or organized religion, in the alleviation of poverty.² The field expanded rapidly to include work on the role of philanthropy in Empire, and to emphasize the centrality of class as an organizing principle in most Victorian and Edwardian relief systems. The relationships between philanthropic administrators and those they supported were increasingly analysed, and the complex interactions between 'giver' and 'recipient' were examined to offer deeper understandings of social, gender and political relations.³

¹ Individuals had a religious obligation to help the needy, ensuring that the fulfilment of this duty benefited both parties. Thierry Kochuyt, 'God, gifts and poor people: on charity in Islam', *Social Compass*, 56:1 (Mar. 2009), pp 98–116. ² The early work of Frank Prochaska had an enormous influence upon the development of this field. *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1980). ³ The large-scale involvement of

This volume includes studies of a range of efforts to improve the lot of the poor in nineteenth-century Ireland, and extends the range of analysis in the field of philanthropy studies. This is evident in the general move by contributors away from an emphasis upon the role of women as philanthropists, which has tended to dominate Irish work to date. The pioneering work of Maria Luddy precipitated two decades of fruitful research into philanthropy and charity in Ireland, which had focused particularly on the voluntary efforts of women.⁴ The work reflected a growing interest in women's history in Ireland, and also the reality that a substantial proportion of the archives relating to organized activities by groups of Irishwomen involved philanthropic work.⁵ The work undertaken by nuns in nursing and education, which, for the most part, was voluntary and broadly philanthropic, represented some of the earliest professional advances for women.⁶ Moreover, the fullest records were those left by the middle classes, creating an inherent bias towards the unpaid work of educated, literate women.⁷

This volume concerns itself with the exercise of philanthropy, rather than the world of charity, although some essays (on estate philanthropy in particular) contain elements of both. Charity refers for the most part to one-off or very specific donations in cash or kind, to address an immediate crisis. Thus, for example, when Lord Longford's agent bestowed clothing and funds on his tenants, he was alleviating acute starvation and deprivation. But when he then offered passage money, or made loans for improvements to dwellings, or to increase his tenants' livestock holdings, he was a philanthropist in the truest sense, providing persons with the tools for self-

middle-class women in philanthropy ensures that research into their activities continues. Recent works by scholars including Gabrielle Mearns, 'Appropriate fields of action: nineteenth-century representations of the female philanthropist and the parochial sphere' (PhD, University of Warwick, 2012) demonstrates the continuing interest in the association between philanthropy and perceptions of appropriate roles for women. ⁴ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995). Other works have focused upon specific philanthropic fields, or on the associations between philanthropy and female professional advance. Siobhan Nelson, *Say little, do much: nursing, nuns, and hospitals in the nineteenth century* (Philadelphia, 2001); Caroline Skehill, 'An examination of the transition from philanthropy to professional social work in Ireland', *Research on Social Work Practice*, 10:6 (2000), pp 688–704. Recent works have examined the role of the professed religious in philanthropy at home and abroad, including John Belchem, 'Priests, publicans and the Irish poor: ethnic enterprise and migrant networks in mid-nineteenth-century Liverpool', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 23:2–3 (2005), pp 207–31. ⁵ Margaret Preston, *Charitable words: women, philanthropy and the language of charity in nineteenth-century Dublin* (Westport, CT, 2004); Oonagh Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin: philanthropy, politics and education in the early twentieth century* (Dublin, 2004). ⁶ Maria Luddy, 'Religion, philanthropy and the State in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Ireland' in Hugh Cunningham and Joanna Innes (eds), *Charity, philanthropy and reform: from the 1690s to 1850* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp 148–67. ⁷ The work of scholars such as Martha Vicinus helped to consolidate an early focus upon the use of voluntary work as a means of expanding middle-class women's spheres. *Independent women: work and community for single women, 1850–1920* (Chicago, 1988).

improvement. Similarly, the efforts of the Guinness Trust to offer high standards of accommodation to their workers were made in the hope that it would result in a general rise in the broader quality of life. Not all philanthropy addressed material needs, however. The opening of the Royal Hibernian Academy exhibition in Dublin to less affluent visitors reflected a consciousness of the importance of intellectual stimulation for society generally, an example of municipal obligation that became increasingly important towards the end of the nineteenth century. The growth of Mechanics Institutes and Carnegie Libraries also facilitated the autodidact, and held out the prospect of self-improvement for all.

Of course, many of the initiatives examined in the chapters of this volume also had significant benefits for the apparently benevolent philanthropist. On the most obvious level, encouraging tenants on unprofitable holdings to emigrate had significant attractions for landowners: the surrendered land could be offered to more reliable families, or turned to greater profit through grazing or large-scale cultivation. In addition to the aristocratic obligation to succour the poor, all philanthropists gained satisfaction from the fulfilment of their Christian duty, an element faithfully stressed in every call for donations by charitable organizations. Furthermore, on the evidence of much of the research in this volume, the State was often a beneficiary of philanthropic largesse, albeit less obviously and more tangentially than needy individual recipients. Philanthropic intervention enabled the State to save funds that would otherwise have been expended on the support of asylums and workhouses, or through the public health costs of inadequate housing or education. It is an often neglected element in philanthropy studies, where the benefits of charity are more often sought in the advantages to organizers or recipients. But the rapid decline of estate philanthropy, as demonstrated on the Clonbrock estate with the advent of the poor law in the late 1830s, is a clear example of the manner in which private charity filled a need more appropriately the responsibility of the modern State. Similarly, the competition between Protestant and Catholic institutions for the care of the intellectually disabled ensured that the State did not have to support individuals who would be a life-long burden.

The contributions in this volume are based partly on presentations made at the annual conference of the Society for the Study of Nineteenth-Century Ireland (SSNCI), which was held at University College Cork in 2010, and partly upon specially commissioned articles, and the volume includes work by emerging scholars as well as established academics. Taken as a whole, the book reveals new emphases in the field: in contrast to a great deal of earlier writing, there is little on the role of religion in philanthropy, nor on the mainstream Christian impetus behind many charitable organizations. It represents a broadening of the field from the first works on fallen women, mainstream Church organizations with conversionist or proselytizing impulses, to the education and medical missionaries, at home and abroad in the service of Empire. The theme of 'philanthropy' allows for a wide range of approaches to the topic, including State and voluntary philanthropy; poor relief; formal and informal systems of assistance on landed estates; housing schemes for the poor, and

subsidized exhibitions for the education of the working classes. It reflects the varied nature of charitable relief in nineteenth-century Ireland, and the contrast between nineteenth-century attitudes towards the important role philanthropy played in Irish society and the twenty-first century faith in State-sponsored relief. The book as a whole reflects the manner in which academic studies of philanthropy have developed. These chapters largely eschew religion as an organizing principle, and religious constraints as an analytical tool, with the exception of the chapter on intellectual disability. Religious obligation underpins most, if not all, of the philanthropic initiatives examined here (most emerge from an individual or collective awareness of Christian duty), but few have an explicitly religious agenda such as conversion or church attendance. In that sense, it is a snapshot of both trends in scholarship and of the influence of large-scale research projects undertaken in Ireland in recent years. One suspects that it is no coincidence that this volume includes three papers on estate philanthropy: the 'Landed Estates' project at NUI Galway, as well as the programme of research in local history at NUI Maynooth, have at the very least raised awareness of the social history value of Irish estate papers.⁸

The volume opens with an examination of philanthropic endeavour in Ireland prior to the establishment of the poor law, which rapidly replaced existing systems of voluntary support for the poor. Mel Cousins' 'Philanthropy and poor relief before the poor law, 1801–30' scrutinizes the often-fluid nature of public and private funding in this period, and examines the interaction between the rather miserly public provision newly available to Ireland, with the subjective and erratic system of private provision that had prevailed to the end of the eighteenth century. Despite its limitations, Cousins identifies the start of a State acceptance of responsibility for the poor, which marks an important moment of transition in Ireland towards democracy. The chapter reveals a convoluted system of separate sources of support, often with competing ideologies and ambitions. However, an increasing State involvement in the care of the needy may be seen in the work of the House of Industry, as well as the tentative emergence of a national system of support. This is consolidated by the establishment of the poor law in 1838, which, despite its shortcomings during the Famine, was a step towards a modern State in which government recognized its social responsibilities, and a minimal entitlement of its citizens to survival.

Chapter two retains the early nineteenth-century focus, and provides an analysis of one of the first significant conceptualizations of poverty and its possible alleviation. Laurence M. Geary's '“The best relief the poor can receive is from themselves”': the Society for Promoting the Comforts of the Poor' engages with early attempts to encourage self-help among the poorest in Ireland. Drawing upon similar associations in England and Germany, the SPCP in Ireland articulated an ambitious faith in the broader possibilities of philanthropy. Their foundational premise suggests a liberal attitude towards the poor that is unusual in this period. The organizers resolutely refused to attribute any moral implication to poverty, nor did they subscribe to a

⁸ See: landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/ for full details of this project.

belief system that accepted ‘the poor ye shall always have with you’. Rather, the organization stressed that there was no moral failure in poverty, nor virtue in wealth, but that individuals at either end of the economic scale could lead equally valid and valuable lives. The Society placed significant emphasis upon the dignity of the individual. This was to be achieved by assisting the poor to improve their lot if they wished, but equally to permit them to raise their living standards without significantly altering their social status. Their promotion of Friendly Societies was intended to foster a sense of community as well as individual responsibility, and to elide the divisions between rich and poor, while accepting the reality of economic disadvantage.

Eoin McLaughlin’s ‘Charitable loan fund societies in Ireland, c.1820–1914’ is a topical examination of surprisingly large-scale lending to the poor in nineteenth-century Ireland. Intended to assist the ‘industrious poor’ towards greater prosperity through unsecured small loans, the scheme grew to an extraordinary degree in the century’s early decades, lending the equivalent of €283 million by 1845. It began as a consequence of the purely philanthropic impulse to collect funds for Famine relief in the 1820s, but grew into a profitable enterprise, a precursor of many modern charities that are, in fact, highly profitable businesses. Surplus funds were to be loaned to impoverished individuals who could be trusted to invest them in practical schemes for economic self-improvement, and offered a practical alternative to the monolithic Bank of Ireland, which was singularly uninterested in the limited banking affairs of the poor. The CLFS offered rare opportunities towards substantial self-improvement, at low rates of interest for loans, and relatively high for savings, and for the first decades operated successfully. But an increasing tendency to ignore their own regulations, combined with reckless lending to ineligible customers and illegal and often exploitative loan terms, ensured that the CLFS had ceased to be philanthropic bodies in the true sense of the word by the century’s end.

Section Two of the volume focuses upon the philanthropy of the landed gentry, to their rural estate tenants, and their urban workers. It opens with Conor McNamara’s ‘“The monster misery of Ireland”: landlord paternalism and the 1822 famine in the West’, an examination of the manner in which the 1822 Famine precipitated an extremely vulnerable class into utter destitution. The essay serves as a useful reminder of the fact that the Great Famine of mid-century had many precursors, and that many landlords were well practised in seasonal and periodic philanthropy. However, the response to the 1822 disaster suggests that traditional quasi-feudal attitudes were beginning to change: McNamara indicates how some landlords seized the opportunity of the crisis to offer conditional philanthropy, which allowed them to rid themselves of permanently dependent tenants, and take advantage of the increasingly sophisticated international transport system to ensure that they would not eventually return. It is an interesting example of the negotiated nature of philanthropy on landed estates, which is very different in character from a more distant urban charity. Despite the economic disparity between recipient and donor, there was mutual understanding of the unwritten rules of dependence and

responsibility, and the negotiations between tenants and agents indicate the importance of personal knowledge of character and circumstances in mediating philanthropy.

Kevin Mc Kenna's 'Charity, paternalism and power on the Clonbrock Estates, County Galway, 1834–44' continues the theme of pre-Famine landlord responsibility, and examines the impact of the poor law on the traditional landlord-tenant relationship. The crucial decade that followed the introduction of the poor law saw a permanent erosion of well-established patterns of estate philanthropy, where tenants appealed for assistance with the expectation of success, and landlords, however reluctantly, recognized their obligations to a people who teetered permanently on the brink of economic disaster. The introduction of the poor law, however, fundamentally altered expectations: landlords such as Clonbrock in Galway, who had accepted their paternalistic duty to their tenants, now looked to the State to assume that traditional role. Despite a lengthy period of adjustment, when tenants still turned to their landlords for a variety of support, the philanthropic relationship had changed irrevocably. The creation of the poor law, and the financial burden it placed upon landlords, eroded long traditions of unregulated philanthropy in Ireland, and it remained to be seen if the new system would represent an improvement for either party.

The third contribution on the theme of landlord philanthropy expands the study to include an engagement with the issue of elite relief activity and its broader significance. Drawing upon the models used to interrogate similar activity in England, Joanne McEntee's 'Pecuniary assistance for poverty and emigration: the politics of landed estate management and philanthropy in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland' seeks to explore the significance of philanthropic activity as a means of maintaining social order. It also confirms the persistence of estate philanthropy after the introduction of the poor law, despite a determined effort on the part of landlords to place responsibility for the poor firmly with the State. This study of the Shirley Estate in County Monaghan and the Farnham Estate in County Cavan indicates the sophisticated levels of negotiation that took place between landlords and tenants, and the enduring sense of obligation that both sides recognized as an essential element in the landlord-tenant relationship. These three chapters raise questions regarding the nature of philanthropy itself: when relief is an integral element in the landlord-tenant relationship, and the parameters of charitable responsibility are openly accepted by each partner, is the extension of funds or support in kind actually charitable, or part of a sophisticated social contract?

The final contribution in this section extends the range of landed philanthropy in both chronological and regional terms. Linda King's "'Guinness is good for you": experiments in workers' housing and public amenities by the Guinness Brewery and Guinness/Iveagh Trust, 1872–1915' addresses the substantial role played by the Guinness family in the provision of high-quality housing for the Dublin poor. The financial commitment was enormous – the equivalent of almost €81 million in contemporary terms – and the project was one of the most ambitious philanthropic interventions in nineteenth-century Ireland. King examines the precedents upon

which the Guinness/Iveagh schemes drew, and the articulated belief that model housing schemes would not merely offer a decent standard of accommodation for suitable tenants, but would act as exemplars for ideal urban communities, where tenants recognized their social and moral responsibilities to each other as well as to their benefactors. These obligations were reinforced in the early years by a system of surveillance and inspection by agents acting for the Trust, something that was an intermittent cause of resentment among the residents. But this is not to say that the schemes operated as straightforward mechanisms of control, in which a resentful workforce reluctantly agreed to the imposition of rules in order to keep their homes. The developments were remarkably progressive and liberal in their design, and provided an exceptionally high standard of living in a city with appalling infant mortality rates, and universally recognized poor public health provisions. Demand was high, ensuring that a crucial secondary prerogative was met: the occupants enjoyed better health, and were more productive workers in Guinness' industries, than were their counterparts in other Dublin industries.

Our third section addresses the roles of women and children as both philanthropic agents and subjects. Oonagh Walsh's "'A person of the second order': the plight of the intellectually disabled in nineteenth-century Ireland" opens with an examination of the manner in which the Intellectually Disabled became a specific focus for philanthropists in the second half of the nineteenth century. This group emerged as worthy objects of support for a number of reasons: they became more visible in an increasingly literate society, where a premium was placed upon the ability to undertake productive, paid employment. They were also viewed with increasing concern by the medical profession, and by the State, which in the early decades of the eugenics movement worried about the weakening effect the feeble-minded in particular might have upon future generations. There was also, of course, a genuine and well-founded anxiety about their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, especially in urban areas, and a recognition that they required specialist intervention. But perhaps the key element in driving care for the Intellectually Disabled was religious philanthropic rivalry. When Dr Stewart's Institution was founded in Dublin in 1869, it provoked an immediate response from the Catholic Church, which feared that these wholly innocent individuals would become unwitting converts to Protestantism. The entry of the Daughters of Charity to their field of care established a conceptualization of the cohort that persisted for over one hundred years, and saw a virtual monopoly of Catholic provision for this group for the same period of time. Moreover, as the following chapter also indicates, the care of vulnerable children in Ireland was conceived in institutional terms, with a virtual absence of the sheltered communities and boarding-out systems that developed in England and Scotland in particular.

Sarah-Anne Buckley's "'Saver of the children': the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Ireland, 1889–1921" continues the theme of philanthropy and children, but examines a rather different cohort, those who came to the attention of the newly established NSPCC for reasons of neglect or abuse. The

early years of the Society confirms the increasing importance granted to childhood in late nineteenth-century Irish society, and a recognition that an older acceptance of high mortality rates, chronic ill-health, and the neglect and even active abuse of offspring was no longer viable. But as Buckley's chapter indicates, the philanthropists who drove the establishment of the Society, and their supporters, often approached the children as potentially criminal, dangerous, or even in some way complicit in their often appalling circumstances. Class presumption played an important role in determining the outcome of investigations, and the early inspectors (who were middle class) proved perhaps all too willing to remove children from families to industrial schools, and mothers to inebriate homes, without seeking to question the underlying economic, political and gender problems that created such difficult circumstances. Indeed, Ireland's ultimately destructive dependence upon industrial and reform schools may be seen to have its origins in organizations such as the NSPCC, which, while undoubtedly exerting a positive influence in terms of its attention to the quality of children's lives, also set a philanthropic precedent of institutional care that arguably had a detrimental effect on the lives of many.

Middle-class women had been at the forefront of philanthropic endeavour from the early nineteenth-century, and represented an enormous unpaid workforce throughout Britain and Ireland. Their efforts have often been dismissed as inquisitive interference, but Mary Piersé's 'From lace making to social activism: the resourcefulness of campaigning women philanthropists' discusses two crucial aspects of female charitable effort that significantly advanced women's positions in nineteenth-century Ireland. Women campaigners such as Susan Lloyd made strategic use of philanthropic work to advance women's political positions, and gather the vital political experience that was needed to justify women's formal participation on public boards. But they also significantly advanced the economic position of women, by re-establishing dormant industries, including lace making, which had an exclusively female workforce. Theirs was an early example of the importance of 'self-help' that underpinned other philanthropic efforts, but the results were more successful, because they produced significant and direct economic benefits. Like the modern micro-finance schemes in the developing world, these women philanthropists understood the importance of equipping women in deprived communities with the means of economic advancement, knowing that they would use the funds to support families and reap a much broader advantage than through the employment of men. The philanthropists pragmatically accepted the realities of class, while stressing the opportunities available to ambitious and focused female workers for significant economic improvement.

Our final section, on cultural philanthropy, broadens the conception of what constitutes 'doing good' on an organized voluntary basis. Not all philanthropic initiatives addressed material wants, or sought to ensure that the working classes or agricultural labourers remained firmly in their appropriate socio-economic groups. As Philip McEvansoney's 'Cultural philanthropy in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland' shows, there were also voluntary initiatives that recognized intellectual needs, and

made high art available to all and not merely the elite. Like Mary Pierse's chapter, however, the impulse was not without benefit to the philanthropists. The Royal Hibernian Academy had seen a catastrophic decline in visitor numbers to its annual exhibition, and was facing a substantial deficit. The decision was made to 'democratize' the consumption of high art, by ensuring that the general public could afford to view the paintings. The large-scale attendance of members of the 'operative classes' as a result of the first experimental cut-price entry charges was a tremendous success, resulting in a sharp increase in visitors, and providing an essential revenue boost for the RHA. The enthusiasm with which the initiative was greeted ensured that the strategy was repeated, and was indeed turned to even greater philanthropic ends, when an exhibition of old masters was arranged by the Royal Irish Art Union in 1847 in order to raise funds for famine relief. The RIAU had itself been in decline, but seized the opportunity to respond to the horrors of the Great Famine, and also to reassert its own cultural significance in the face of declining public interest in its activities. Thus philanthropy served two distinct purposes, the broadening of access to high culture, and the survival of prestigious, though poorly resourced, institutions. This chapter raises another intriguing element of philanthropic work: some of the prime beneficiaries of the reduced entry fees to artistic exhibitions were not the awed working-classes, but the more affluent and financially shrewd middle-classes. They had formerly paid their shilling entry but now prudently waited for the bargain penny days, apparently indifferent to the social cachet of viewing paintings alongside the wealthier members of Dublin society. It is an early instance of an issue that bedevilled and bemused many charitable organizations, the fact that the most vigorous applicants for relief were often those with some resources.

Our volume concludes with John Wilson Foster's 'Doing good and being bad in Victorian Ireland: some literary and evolutionary perspectives'. Reading the philanthropic relationship not as a straightforward transaction between poor and privileged, but as a constantly evolving expression of Anglo-Irish relations, the chapter examines the means through which philanthropic efforts informed the works of travellers, clerics and commentators, and contributed to a consolidation of ethnic stereotypes. The range of representation was considerable, from the shiftless peasant, through the grasping gombeen man, to the fading aristocracy, and informed literary representations of Ireland from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. The novels reflect the moral judgements made by philanthropists of their subjects, and offered an imaginative space within which authors (especially women writers) challenged gender, class and religious conventions. Startling critiques of 'good works' were often embedded in late nineteenth-century female-authored novels, with the saintly do-gooders articulating radical critiques of philanthropy itself, as well as of those who received it. Foster identifies a broadly gendered division between the authors who challenged philanthropic motivations (often female) and those who read poverty, and the Irish who endured it, in socio-biological terms (often male). Deprivation and its causes thus produced creative writing that incorporated influences as diverse as royal

commissions, pulpit politics, and Darwin's *Origin of species*, to produce literature that expressed the often unguarded dislike and suspicion of both sides of the philanthropic relationship. As the chapters in this volume indicate, the kindest of philanthropic gestures often masked less obvious social, economic and political objectives.