

# SOME EARLY SCHOOLS OF KILKENNY

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**I**N 1784, two very remarkable free schools were set up in Chapel Lane, Kilkenny. It was the period immediately after the first official relaxation of the Penal Laws against education in 1782. Two years before, a grammar school had been established for Catholics at nearby Burrell's Hall. This catered for the better-class Catholics.

The free schools in Chapel Lane catered for the poorer, and the poverty was bad indeed, with social and moral evils resulting from it. The Relief Act of 1782 was an attempt to bring illegal education under some form of government control. It was welcomed by the Catholic authorities because it enabled those too to have schools. They were compelled to have a licence from the Protestant ordinary for the setting up of schools. The Chapel Lane schools may or may not have had it: there is no indication.

In 1795 a test case in England decided that it was not needed for elementary schools. And again in England it was never accepted as binding on laymen. Dr. Troy, however, writing of the foundation of Burrell's Hall, implied that it was binding on laymen in Ireland: "The Education Bill does not regard the clergy as such, but is confined to schoolmasters," he said. The licence ceased to be legally necessary in 1792—it was demanded in fact. We know that the Presentation Convent sought and was granted licence in 1801; Burrell's Hall had one later, and so it is likely that these schools may have had it.

The area chosen for the schools was a stronghold of Catholic education and life at the time. Burrell's Hall was nearby. The Presentation Convent was set up a few years later. There was the earlier school on the site of Burrell's Hall which Edmund Ignatius Rice attended. This earlier school was indirectly linked with those under discussion through the person of Father Richard O'Donnell. There are other schools known of in the Wellington Square-Chapel

Lane area, all clustered around the Bishop's residence and church. The Free schools under discussion were under the supervision of the priests in St. Mary's. With the exception of Father O'Donnell, all the other priests were attached to St. Mary's.

They were controlled by a committee belonging to a Society for Educating poor Roman Catholic children. It was a period of intense competition for the education of poor Catholics. Various non-Catholic agencies were at work, and the development of this school shows consciousness of these.

The original committee had seven members, but almost immediately it was raised to 12, with three priests and the bishop. All the priests were interested in education. The bishop was Dr. Troy. He was promoted to Dublin in 1786, but continued to be a member and to pay his subscription. Rev. Dr. Molloy was P.P. of St. Mary's. He built the old cathedral and the town house about 1774.

When Burrell's Hall was opened as an academy, it was placed under his immediate supervision. Rev. Dr. Dunne was one of the directors of the Burrell's Hall Academy (along with Dr. Lanigan). He was ordained in Paris in 1769; was appointed C.C. St. Mary's in 1772, and in 1787 became Bishop of Ossory. The other priest member of the committee was Father O'Donnell.

He was a remarkable man. At this time he was P.P., St. John's. It would appear from some entries in the accounts that he owned some property, on which the school was built. We know that he had organised a group of men into a semi-monastic body, members of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. Later on he had acquired a house in Maudlin Street and was preparing it for his community in 1811, the year in which he died. This house was taken over by Dr. Marum to house the ecclesiastical students of St. Kieran's.

Apparently he was brought into the committee because of his interest in the education of the poor of Kilkenny, and perhaps also because of his interest in the property.

The society seems to have been made up of members who paid 1/- on entry and 8/8 a year, and of subscribers

who gave a guinea (£1/2/9). In 1785 there were 23 members and subscribers. Not all of these were Catholic. By 1828 the membership had grown to 318. Members could nominate children to the schools.

Admission to the society was by ballot, three black balls to exclude. Nine members made a quorum. A general meeting was held once a quarter in the chapel of St. Mary's and a weekly meeting of the committee in the Widow Madden's House. Members were fined  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for any tendency to an oath "even the oath of Faith," during club hours. The rule brought some revenue! The names of the members show the old and comparatively wealthy families of Kilkenny rallying round.

They were clearly interconnected by blood and marriage. Many of them had received continental education themselves and members of families living away from Kilkenny were obviously canvassed for support.

The first mistress was Ann Fitzgerald. In 1786, Margaret Lanigan was appointed in place of the "late Ann" and, on being appointed, was ordered to pay a guinea to Ann's sister. There are other instances of payment being made to such relatives of teachers. In 1788 the schoolmaster, Dennis O'Brien, was expelled for misconduct, and a special committee was appointed to select a successor. They selected one Patrick Moran.

At the end of the same year, "on account of the number of boys applying for instruction," Father O'Donnell and Mr. Madden (the treasurer) were nominated to select an usher (assistant). At the same time a lady named Mary Saunders was employed in the girls' school to give tuition. In the beginning the mistress and the master received £3/15/0 a quarter, and soon after this was raised to £5. In addition, both were given two guineas as a gratuity for special care. In 1786, O'Brien was given his gratuity, but it was voted to be the last he would get.

The only resources the schools had were the contributions of subscribers. In 1785 it was decided to ask a loan of two guineas from each of the 21 members. This was used for building materials. Timber cost about £69, so that the building must have been extensive. The debt thus

contracted was paid back in 1786. Rent was paid to Father O'Donnell. When the school began a table 12 feet long was bought, and two forms the same length. In addition, six forms nine feet long were bought.

This furniture would indicate that the arrangement of the school was that common elsewhere at the time. It is similar to that described in Burrell's Hall and to that shown in contemporary prints. It appears too that the method of teaching was that of rehearsing. In 1794 both schools were painted and slated.

The work done in the school can be reconstructed from references to books bought. The work of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was probably the prototype. They were taught to read and write, but with a view to religion. Primers were bought in large numbers. Fleury's Catechism is mentioned. This was a translation by a French priest which "imparted religious truths by means of brief consecutive and interesting narratives from the Old and New Testaments." "True Wisdom" is also mentioned. This was a collection of considerations for every day of the week by Father Paul Segnary, originally written in Latin. It was very popular and was published in Ireland in both English and Irish. "Think Well On't," a book of recollections by Challoner in Irish and English. "Paths of Paradise" and prayer books indicate that the content of the course was mainly religious. Butler's Catechism occurs often. Occasionally the "Poor Man's Catechism" is mentioned. This was a text book of religion for the less instructed, originally published anonymously. The author was Rev. John Mannock, O.S.B., of Downside. Inside schools, this was read to the children while they were sewing. It was a synopsis of religion, meditations, etc. It is interesting that the approach of the book is very similar to the style recommended by the latest experts in modern catechesis. An extraordinary number of Testaments were bought for the pupils.

Later on, various attempts were made to foster linen and linen weaving in Kilkenny. The Pockocke School is well-known. In 1818 the Presentation Convent were given 30 wheels and six reels by the Linen Board to introduce

spinning there. A local committee was formed to promote the linen trade. They got 50 wheels and eight reels. Dr. Marum gave a room at Chapel Lane for the use of the lady who was to instruct. The spinning school at Chapel Lane opened August, 1818.

For the girls' school, as well as books, blue worsted, white worsted and yarn turn up quite regularly in the accounts. Obviously they were given training in sewing. Later on, a Mrs. Pilsbury had sheets, blankets, ropes and mats for a bed bought for her. Soon after, spools, bobbins, a doubling mill (or twisting mill) and canterberry wheels were bought for her. Apparently she taught spinning or weaving.

In 1788 some of these articles were sold again, and her name disappears as if the teaching was discontinued. From the books bought, both for boys and girls, it might be concluded. I think, that the pupils could read when they came to school. It is clear, too, that no attempt was made to give what we call a professional education. Apparently, too, there was a holiday from July to October.

Income to meet expenditure was derived, as I said, mainly from members' subscriptions and also from donations and gifts (12 vols. of Butler's Lives of the Saints were given in 1786 by a Patrick Martin of Dublin) and occasional legacies. An interesting group of subscribers lived in Cadiz. A Mr. Ryan of Cadiz contributed five guineas in 1785 and, on subsequent occasions, two. In 1785, also, a group of five persons from Cadiz sent 10 guineas. They were two Langtons, two Butlers and a Murphy. The Murphy continued to subscribe. A Langton of Cadiz was a benefactor of St. Mary's Church.

There was close business connections between the south-east of Ireland and Andalusia in trading and carrying. This would necessitate factors and agents being permanently at Cadiz.

There was a tradition among the merchant classes there of helping education. The Pope had given leave to the fishermen of Portugal, Galicia and Biscay to fish on Sundays and feast-days for the benefit of the Irish colleges in Lisbon and Salamanca.

In 1619, Pope Paul V, on petition of the Rector of the Irish College, Seville, Father Richard Conway, S.J., of New Ross, gave permission for four years to all the fishermen of Andalusia to fish on six Sundays or feast-days, the fruit of their labours to be given to the Irish College, Seville. The Irish merchants of Seville and Cadiz also undertook to pay a percentage on every pipe of wine exported to the British Isles to the College.

In the ordination lists of Seville, Kilkenny names occur. William Shee, of Lisdowney, was ordained priest in 1750. Dermot Murphy ordained for Kilkenny, 1750. In 1723 dimissorial letters were directed to Bishop Malaquias Dulani to ordain Lucas Carlos Casnibro, son of Lucas Casnibro and Margarita Aylward to Minor Orders. (The Ryans of Kilkenny and Knaresboro were cousins).

On the income side of the accounts there is one peculiar recurring entry where five property lots appear each year, bringing revenue for the schools of £6/16/6. Details of these lots are given. They appear to be property all belonging to members, totalling 125 feet, fronting on to High Street. There was income, too, derived from a house in Red Lane.

In 1790, £61 was deposited with Dr. Lanigan, the bishop, and this was made up to £100 by the members and subsequently placed in Loughnane's bank. A very faithful benefactor all this time was Mrs. Archdekin, who gave a regular sizeable donation, and, after her death, apparently arranged for an annual sum to be paid from her estate.

In 1786 an interesting entry occurs. An apprenticeship fee (£4/11/0) was paid with James Doyle. This was the first of what became an important part of school expenditure in the years following. Very many apprenticeship fees were paid. In 1790, Mr. Archdekin donated £80 to pay such fees, and 18 were paid at the same price. Very occasionally, too, girls' apprenticeship fees were paid.

It would seem that the schools undertook this as part of their ordinary work. Clothes were bought for some of the pupils and apprentices, and occasionally sums were paid for supporting orphans. In the years following 1805, the bills for clothes got quite big and in 1825 and the years

after 40 to 50 suits are mentioned. By this time the scheme of apprenticing boys had ceased as a regular practice, though occasional instances continued to turn up.

In 1791, the school had expanded and two ushers were employed. There was an assistant also in the girls' school, five teachers in all. In that year all teachers got a premium in addition to their salaries. These premiums were paid in 1794 and 1795. In 1796 a Miss Lambe got a small fee for schooling two children; it would appear from the terms used that these were under the normal age.

In 1802 mention is made for the first time of Father Reynolds in connection with the schools. This is the man of whom Banim speaks as giving absolution to condemned men from the window in High Street. He had been teacher of classics in the Lay College of Maynooth from 1799 and returned in 1802 to Saint Mary's, where he stayed till 1810. Immediately on his return to Kilkenny he began to collect for the help of the school.

With a Rev. Mr. Kenna, he collected, in September, 1802, £5/4/0 "less a bad 9/- note." In 1804 he preached a very successful charity sermon for the school which brought in £83/12/3. Bad silver received on the occasion amounted to £1/19/0. Advertising this sermon cost £1/1/8 and distribution of handbills cost 1/4d. The salaries of the master and mistress at this time were £20, and the ushers got £11/7/6.

The charity sermon became a regular source of additional income from this time. In 1806 it produced over £95, and the bad silver was down to 6/3d. worth. In 1807, the masters got £50 in salary and the mistress £15. By this time the mistress had no assistant.

No doubt the nearby Presentation Convent was doing some of the work previously done by the girls' school.

This year also there was another change. A salary was given to the secretary and a proportion of the money collected for the school was given to him in addition. This system lasted till the end of the school. Apparently it gave results. In 1808, collections were £132. and in 1810, £133. The sermon produced £67.

In 1809, £104/15/11 was invested in Grand Canal Debentures. In 1814 interest on Debentures is returned at £9, the only return given. In 1811 it appears that the girls' school had ceased to function, as there is no mention of a mistress. The master had no assistant then. Other schools had grown up. The monastery at Burrell's Hall was still functioning.

In 1818, it would appear from the books that there was a demand for a different type of education. Books on arithmetic and book-keeping now figure. This was in keeping with the demands of the time. There was still only one master. The 1825 Report mentions the school, says that a priest attended daily and gives the number of boys attending as 280, which imposed a heavy task on Mr. Barry, the schoolmaster.

If the same Report is reliable in one particular, and this school was conducted as other R.C. free schools, it was conducted on the Lancastrian plan which would enable him to handle such a number. From 1833 on, the school got a decreasing amount from the annual charity sermon, and in 1833 it began accepting help from the National Board.

The 1835 Report mentions it as having 405 boys on the books and an average of 100 attending. It says the school was diminishing. It taught reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, mathematics and geography.

The last entry in the account books is for 1836. The master's salary that year was £12; the National school salary was from £10 to £30, though it was rarely it passed £15. In 1837 there were a total of 37 schools erected for the four parishes of Kilkenny—2,638 children on books. This was the only one drawing help from National Board.

## List of Subscribers to Charity School Society for 1793-1796

ARKWRIGHT, Thomas	BRAZIL, James, Rose Inn Street.
ARCHDEKIN, Miss Mary, Patrick St.	BRENAN, John, Coalmarket.
BERGIN, John, John Street.	BRENAN, Mrs. John, Coalmarket.
BERGIN, John, High Street.	BRENAN, Michael, Coalmarket.
BERGIN, Martin, High Street.	BRENAN, Rev. Thomas, Galmoy.
BOURK, Mrs., Mt. James.	BRYAN, James, Jenkinstown.
BOWDEN, Daniel, Shambles.	BOLGER, Thos., Pennyfeather Lane.
BLAKE, Patrick, Backlane.	BUTLER, John, Sheestown.





- BUTLER, Mrs. John, Sheestown.  
 BUTLER, Walter, Kilmocar.  
 BYRNE, Rev. Mr., P.P., Butts.  
 BYRNE, Charles, Ballyspellan.  
 BYRNE, Felix, High Street.  
 BYRNE, Mrs. Felix, High Street.  
 BYRNE, Gregory, Dublin.  
 BYRNE, Patrick, Glashare Castle.  
 BYRNE, Mrs. Jane, Glashare Castle.  
 BLANGOIS, Mr., Castle.  
 BUTLER, Richard, Bregagh.  
 BUTLER, Richard, High Street.  
 BRENNAN, Charles, Coalmarket.  
 BRENNAN, Mr., Clara.  
 BLUNT, William, Mustard Garden.  
 BRENAN, Mrs. Patt.  
 BYRNE, Mrs., William Street.  
 CAHILL, Edward, Coalmarket.  
 CAHILL, James, Castle.  
 CAHILL, Mrs. John, High Street.  
 CAHILL, Joseph, Dublin.  
 CALLAGHAN, Edward, Coalmarket.  
 CALLAGHAN, James, St. James' Outgate.  
 CAMPION, Patrick, High Street.  
 CLOHOSEY, Patrick, Lee's Lane.  
 CODY, Dennis, Butts.  
 COLCLOUGH, Adam, Castle Blunden.  
 COLLES, Mrs. Millmount.  
 COMERFORD, John, Parade.  
 COMERFORD, John, High Street.  
 COMERFORD, Patrick, Carrick.  
 CORMICK, Denis, Clomanty.  
 CORMICK, Martin, Parade.  
 CORMICK, Michael, Coolagh.  
 CORRIGAN, Daniel, Coalmarket.  
 CUGGY, John, Blackmill.  
 CULLEN, Rev. D., P.P., Rathdowney.  
 CLANCY, Michael, Backlane.  
 CASHIN, Bridget, High Street.  
 CARRAGAN, Thomas, Coalmarket.  
 COSTELLO, P., Derry.  
 CUMMINS, George, Green Street.  
 CASHIN, Denis.  
 DELANEY, Miss, High Street.  
 De NEEFE, Nicholas, High St.  
 DILLON, Michael, Dublin.  
 DOLY, Lewis, High Street.  
 DOLY, Mrs. Lewis, High Street.  
 DOWLING, James, Parade.  
 DOWLING, James, Walkin's Outgate.  
 DOYLE, Edmund, Coalmarket.  
 DUNPHY, Martin, Naas.  
 DUNN, James, St. James' Outgate.  
 DUNN, Kieran, Parade.  
 DUNN, Thomas, Shambles.  
 DUNN, John, Chapel Lane.  
 DEMPSY, Patt.  
 DOWLING, Michael, Ormond Mills.  
 ELLIOT, Mrs. John Street.  
 FENNELL, Martin, High Street.  
 FENNELL, William, Walkin Street.  
 FINN, Mrs. Catherine, High Street.  
 FINN, Michael, High Street.  
 FITZGERALD, Rev. Andrew, Black Abbey.  
 FITZGERALD, Rev. William.  
 FITZGERALD, Edward, Dublin.  
 FITZPATRICK, Daniel, Freshford.  
 FITZPATRICK, Mrs., Freshford.  
 FITZPATRICK, Mrs. Jane.  
 FITZPATRICK, John, Urlingford.  
 FITZPATRICK, Joseph, Freshford.  
 FITZPATRICK, John, Ballyroe.  
 FITZPATRICK, John, High Street.  
 FITZPATRICK, Emanuel, Tholsel.  
 FITZPATRICK, Nicholas, High St.  
 FITZPATRICK, Mrs. N., High St.  
 FOLEY, Mr., Freshford.  
 FOGARTY, Matt, High Street.  
 FARRELL, John, Taylor, Poyntz's Lane.  
 GALWAY, Richard, Patrick Street.  
 GELTENAN, Denis, Castle.  
 GRACE, Rev. R., P.P., Ballycallan.  
 GREY, Mrs., Francis St., Dublin.  
 HART, Rev. Peter.  
 HART, Edward, St. James's Green.  
 HART, Nicholas, Dublin.  
 HAW, Peter.  
 HENNESSY, John, James' Street.  
 HERON, Mr., Patrick Street.  
 HOUGHTON, Mrs. Mary, Balliane.  
 HOYNE, William, Garretreen.  
 HENNESSY, Martin, Coalmarket.  
 HACKETT, James.  
 HART, William, James Street.  
 HEALY, Michael, Grocer, High St.  
 KAVANAGH, James, Coalmarket.  
 KEARY, Jerom, Academy.  
 KEARY, Mrs. Mary, High Street.  
 KEARY, William, High Street.  
 KEHOE, Edward, Green Street.  
 KELLY, Rev. Henry.  
 KELLY, Nicholas, Coalmarket.  
 KELLY, Patrick, High Street.  
 KIERAVAN, Nicholas, High Street.  
 KILREA, Thomas, Corner Canal.  
 KINCHELA, John, John Street.  
 KNARESBRO, Mrs. E., Patrick St.  
 KEOUGH, Nicholas.  
 KINCHELA, Lewis, John Street.  
 KAVANAGH, Rev. Charles.  
 KELLY, Dudley, William Street.  
 LANIGAN, Right Rev., Bishop of Ossory.  
 LAFFAN, James, John Street.  
 LAFFAN, Miss Anastacia, John St.  
 LAFFAN, Mrs. Kieran, Waterford.  
 LALOR, John, Ballyragget.

- LANGTON, Miss Jane, High St.  
 LANIGAN, Rev. William.  
 LANIGAN, Mrs.  
 LAPPARELL, Francis.  
 LAPPARELL, John.  
 LEECHE, Mrs. High Street.  
 LOUGHNAN, Connel, Irishtown.  
 LOUGHNAN, Mrs. C., Irishtown.  
 LYONS, John, near Coalmarket.  
 LARRISY, Rev. Mr., P.P., St. Patrick's.
- LAWRENCE, Joseph.  
 LANGTON, Mr., Danville.  
 LANGTON, Miss Alice, Danville.  
 MADDEN, Edmund, High Street.  
 MADDEN, Mrs., High Street.  
 MADDEN, Mrs. Judith.  
 MAGEE, James.  
 MAGHER, Mrs.  
 MAGHER, Mrs., Thurles.  
 MAHER, John, High Street.  
 MAGHER, Thomas, Dublin.  
 MAGHER, William, Freshford.  
 MAGENNIS, Mr., Castle.  
 MAGUIRE, Frank, Shambles.  
 MURPHY, Barnaby, Cadiz.  
 MAHER, John, Freshford.  
 MANSFIELD, Rev. Dr., Academy.  
 MARA, Jeffery, High Street.  
 MARTIN, John, High Street.  
 McLOUGHLIN, Pat., Coalmarket.  
 McLOUGHLIN, Mrs., Coalmarket.  
 MORTIMER, James, Coalmarket.  
 MURPHY, Bryan, John Street.  
 MURPHY, John, High Street.  
 MURPHY, Mrs. Mary, High St.  
 MEIGHAN, Mrs. Joanna, High St.  
 MURPHY, John, Irishtown.  
 MURPHY, Philip, High Street.  
 MURPHY, Mrs. Ann, High Street.  
 MURRAY, Emanuel, Coalmarket.  
 MURRAY, Mrs. E., Coalmarket.  
 MURRAY, Patrick, High Street.  
 MURPHY, Miss, Irishtown.  
 MURPHY, Edward, Cadiz.  
 MAGRATH, Rev. Patrick, Academy.  
 MAGRATH, Patt, Shambles.  
 McLOUGHLIN, Michael, Coalmarket.  
 McLOUGHLIN, Edmund, Irishtown.  
 MURPHY, Thomas, Grocer, High St.  
 MULHALL, Edmund, Grocer, High Street.
- O'NEILL, Robert, Slip.  
 PEACON, Richard, Coalmarket.  
 PETITPREZ, Charles, High Street.  
 PHELAN, Michael, High Street.  
 PHELAN, Patrick, Chapel Lane.  
 PHELAN, Patrick, Castle Blunden.  
 PURCELL, James, Altamont.  
 PURCELL, Mrs. James, Altamont.  
 PHELAN, Michael, Watergate.  
 PRATT, Timothy, Chapel Lane.  
 QUIRKE, Miss Frances, Coalmarket.  
 QUINLIN, Martin, High Street.  
 RATICAN, Mrs.  
 READ, John, Flood Street.  
 RYAN, Derby, jun., Thomastown.  
 RYAN, Edmund, M.D., Backlane.  
 RYAN, Mrs., of Danganmore, High Street.  
 RYAN, Jerom, Waterford.  
 RYAN, Miss Mary, Backlane (now Mrs. Brennan, Limerick).  
 RYAN, Dr. Michael, High Street.  
 RYAN, John, Coalmarket.  
 RYAN, Philip, Baker, Coalmarket.  
 RYAN, Mrs. Philip, Coalmarket.  
 RYAN, M., High Street.  
 ROTH, Michael, Dublin.  
 REYNOLDS, Rev. Laurence.  
 READ, Robert  
 RYAN, Peter, Backlane.  
 SCOTT, Barnaby, High Street.  
 SCOTT, Matthew, Ormond Mills.  
 SCOTT, Mrs. M., Ormond Mills.  
 SCOTT, Miss Polly, High Street.  
 SEIX, Mrs. Margaret, High Street.  
 SHANIGAR, Mr., Chapel Lane.  
 SHANIGAR, Mrs. Chapel Lane.  
 SHEARMAN, John, Coalmarket.  
 SHEARMAN, Robert, High Street.  
 SHEE, Miss Dymna  
 SHEE, Miss Mary  
 SHEE, Martin, St. Patrick's Gate.  
 SMITHWICK, John, High Street.  
 SUMMERS, Daniel.  
 SWEETMAN, Denis, High Street.  
 SHEE, Doctor.  
 SHEE, Mrs., Thomastown.  
 STAPLETON, Edward, Ballyragget.  
 SHERIDAN, Jeremiah, Backlane.  
 SMITHWICK, Michael, High Street.  
 SAUNDER, Patt., Taylor, Chapel Lane.
- NUGENT, Mrs. Barbara, Dublin.  
 NUGENT, John, Thomastown.  
 O'DONNELL, Rev. Richard, P.P., St. John's.
- O'CONNOR, Rev. John, Dublin.  
 O'CONNOR, Bartholemew, William Street.
- OLDFIELD, Mrs., High Street.  
 O'NEILL, James, High Street.  
 O'DONNELL, James, Attorney.
- TROY, Most Rev. Doctor, Archbishop of Dublin.  
 TROY, Patt.  
 VAILLE, Mrs., Patrick Street.  
 VERNEJOL, Mr., High Street.  
 WALSH, James, Dame St., Dublin.  
 WOGAN, Patrick, Old Bridge, Dublin.
- WALSH, Charles, Walkin Street.  
 WALSH, James, Grocer, High St.