

GENERAL REPORT OF THE CENSUS OF POPULATION, 1926.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

A brief but excellent account of the several attempts prior to 1821 at estimating the population of Ireland was given in the General Report of the Census of 1821, from which most of the following particulars have been derived. The first estimate worthy of notice was that of Sir William Petty, who, in the course of his great territorial survey of Ireland, reckoned the number of families at 200,000, and, setting the average number of persons per family at from 5 to 6, estimated the population of Ireland in 1672 at 1,100,000. He classified the 200,000 families as follows:—

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| “ Such as have no fixed Hearths | ... | ... | 160,000 |
| Such as have but one Chimney | ... | ... | 24,000 |
| Such as have more than one ... | ... | ... | 16,000 |
| | | | <hr/> |
| | | | 200,000 ” |
| | | | <hr/> |

Sir William Petty also gave particulars regarding the occupations of about 400,000 persons, including “ Those employed in tillage and their wives 100,000 ; “ Cowherds and shephèrds, etc., and their wives 120,000 ; Taylors and their wives “ 45,000 ; Workers of wool and their wives 30,000 ; Trades of fancy and ornaments “ and their wives 48,000 ” ; etc.

The result of an attempt made by a Captain South for the year 1695 is given in the Transactions of the Royal Society of London. The Census Commissioners of 1821 state that it is not easy from the brief and unsatisfactory memoranda given to ascertain the value of the data upon which the calculation rests. The total population is stated by him to be 1,034,102.

Mr. Dobbs in an essay published in 1731 gives an account of the number of houses in 1712, 1718, 1725 and 1726 based upon the returns of the Hearth-money Collectors. The estimates of the population for these years given in the following Table (p. 2) were based on an average of six persons to a house.

In the year 1731 an inquiry was instituted by the House of Lords, Ireland, for ascertaining the population through the medium of both the Magistracy and the Established Clergy. The Census Commissioners for 1821 state that the result of an inquiry made by either of these bodies must be deemed far from satisfactory because “ large tracts of the country were not subject to the jurisdiction of the former of those “ classes, or to the influence of the latter.” The population was stated to have been 2,010,221.

Estimates based on the returns of the Hearth-money Collectors were made for the years 1754, 1767, 1777 and 1785. In 1788 an inquiry was made by Mr. Gervais

Parker Bushe, one of the Commissioners of the Revenue, the result of which is published in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. It also was based upon the returns of the Hearth-money Collectors which Mr. Bushe stated were much in need of correction and amendment. His estimate of the population for 1788 was 4,040,000.

The Hearth-money returns were also used for an estimate made in a return of the Irish House of Commons in 1791. The population was estimated at 4,206,612.

In the following year Dr. Beaufort published his Ecclesiastical Map of Ireland. In the Memoir which accompanied it an estimate of the population of each county is given. The total for 1792 amounts to 4,088,226.

In 1805 Major Newenham endeavoured to correct the inaccuracies of the Hearth-money returns. His corrected estimate was 5,395,456.

In the General Report on the Census of 1821 the following account of the incomplete Census of 1813 was given :—

“ In 1812 an Act passed for taking an account of the Population of Ireland, and of the Increase or Diminution thereof ; it was chiefly copied from that of 1810 for Great Britain ; to the provisions of which it adhered in all the practical details, more closely than the different circumstances of the two Islands would justify. At the expiration of two years employed in endeavouring to accomplish the object of the Legislature, it was found, on examining the Returns, that out of the forty Counties and Counties of Cities and Towns into which Ireland is divided, ten only furnished complete Returns ; in four, no steps whatever were taken in pursuance of the Act ; and those of the remaining twenty-six were inaccurate or defective. The Act therefore may be considered to have been wholly inoperative as to its main object, that of ascertaining the number of Souls by actual Enumeration. By the aid of comparative calculations founded on previous inquiries and on the partial results of the Act, the amount of the Population in 1813 has been conjectured to be 5,937,856.”

In the following table are given these various estimates of the population of Ireland and the dates to which they refer :—

| <i>Date.</i> | <i>How ascertained.</i> | <i>Population.</i> |
|--------------|--|--------------------|
| 1672 | Sir William Petty | 1,100,000 |
| 1695 | Captain South | 1,034,102 |
| 1712 | Thomas Dobbs, Esq. | 2,099,094 |
| 1718 | The same | 2,169,048 |
| 1725 | The same | 2,317,374 |
| 1726 | The same | 2,309,106 |
| 1731 | Established Clergy | 2,010,221 |
| 1754 | Hearth-money Collectors | 2,372,634 |
| 1767 | The same | 2,544,276 |
| 1777 | The same | 2,690,556 |
| 1785 | The same | 2,845,932 |
| 1788 | Gervais Parker Bushe, Esq. | 4,040,000 |
| 1791 | Hearth-money Collectors | 4,206,612 |
| 1792 | The Rev. Doctor Beaufort | 4,088,226 |
| 1805 | Thomas Newenham, Esq. | 5,395,456 |
| 1813 | Incomplete Census under Act of 1812 | 5,937,856 |

Censuses from 1821.

The first proper Census of Ireland was taken in the year 1821 under an Act of 1815, which provided that the Census should be taken under the superintendence of the Bench of Magistrates in each county instead of the Grand Jurics who had charge of the Census under the Act of 1812. The Magistrates were allotted the nomination

of the Enumerators, and they were instructed to give preference to such persons as local tax collectors who might be considered to have a good knowledge of the people and of the sub-divisions of the country.

The taking of the Census commenced on the 28th May, 1821. Prior to that date, however, returns were furnished by the Magistrates giving an account of the sub-divisions of the country according to which the Enumerators were to proceed. These divisions comprised counties, baronies, parishes and townlands. The Magistrates, according to the Act, were to decide whether an account should be taken by baronies or by parishes. Some counties adopted the former method, but the result proved that enumeration by parishes was the more satisfactory. In the 1821 Census period it is stated that in many cases the Enumerators had been instructed "to take care "to execute their duty in the mildest and most inoffensive manner possible, complying, as far as can be done, consistently with their duty, with the feelings of the "people and never having recourse to the powers conferred by the legislature, except "in cases of the most urgent necessity." Nevertheless, they experienced "determined hostility" to their proceedings. This hostility was removed by the Census authorities securing the co-operation of the Clergy of the different denominations, and it was stated that this collaboration proved eminently successful.

The Enumerators were required to give the following particulars with regard to the population:—(a) Number of storeys in house, (b) Names of inhabitants, (c) Ages, (d) Occupation, (e) Number of acres, and (f) Observations. In the report of the Census as finally published the following information is given for each parish, town, barony and county:—(i) Houses (Number of houses inhabited and families therein). Uninhabited buildings, (ii) Persons, males and females and total, (iii) Occupations, sub-divided into four groups, (iv) Number of male and female population in schools.

The Census of 1831 was taken in a similar manner to that of 1821. It is worth noting, however, that as the Enumerators expected to be paid, and many were actually paid, on the basis of the population enumerated, the population returns at this Census have always been regarded as somewhat exaggerated, although to what extent is not known nor can it be conjectured. The same territorial divisions were used in the published returns as in 1821, but more detailed information was given with regard to occupations (see Chapter III).

The remarkable Census of 1841 merits particular attention even these days, not only because many of the features introduced at this enumeration have been used at all subsequent Censuses, but also because of its intrinsic excellence. This was the first Census at which the Family Form was used (instead of the Enumerator's Notebooks and *vivâ voce* interrogation), and also the first at which the police acted as Enumerators. The scope of the inquiry was greatly extended, questions being asked relating to (a) name and surname, (b) age, (c) sex, (d) relation to head of house, (e) condition as to marriage and duration of marriage, (f) occupation, (g) education, (h) birth-place, (i) number of persons employed in agriculture, number of days' labour, and wages given by farmers, (j) particulars of members of the family alive but absent from home, (k) particulars of persons residing with family who died during the previous ten years, (l) particulars (on Form B) of house, including (i) built or building, (ii) material of which built, (iii) nature of dwelling, (iv) number of rooms, (v) number of family, (m) agricultural statistics.

The published returns marked an enormous advance in scope, manner of presentation, interest and in statistical technique. Perhaps the most important improvement was with regard to the statistics of occupations, described in some detail in Chapter III. The territorial divisions used were the same as in the two previous Censuses. In the "civic" and "rural" districts of each county the population was classified by

(a) years of age, (b) age and education, (c) age and conjugal condition, and (d) number of families in each house. The distinction between civic and rural areas of the country, of fundamental importance for the purposes of social and vital statistics, was explicitly recognised for the first time at this Census. The "Tables of Deaths" (in which the deaths in each county in each of the ten years preceding the Census were classified by ages and causes of death) as well as tables relating to births and marriages, were published, as the Census Commissioners state, to supply the want of a "General Registry" in Ireland. (Actually the compulsory registration of births, marriages and deaths in Ireland was inaugurated in 1864.) These tables of deaths were prefaced by a remarkable report by Surgeon (afterwards Sir William) Wilde, in which there is a most interesting and etymologically valuable examination of the Irish names of diseases.

Other notable features of the 1841 Census are (1) the Life Tables for the Civic and Rural Districts of the country and for Dublin City, amongst the first ever constructed anywhere, and (2) the inquiry into the Fecundity of Marriages, also pioneer work, which showed for each age of husband and age of wife at marriage, the number of male and female children born and the number per 100 marriages in the provinces and large towns, (3) tables of overseas emigration during the ten intercensal years specifying particulars of embarkation and destination, (4) charts indicating densities of population, of housing, etc., (5) agricultural statistics classified by sizes of holdings. It is possible, of course, to criticise the methods of some of these inquiries and their results, indeed the Commissioners themselves were their own severe critics; but after a passage of nearly a century no student of this great Census can fail to recognise the statistical virtuosity of the Census-takers judged by the standards of any age. The Commissioners for the 1841 Census were W. Tighe Hamilton, Henry J. Brownrigg and Thomas A. Larcom. This was the first Census for which Census Commissioners were appointed. The Commissioner system was used at each of the subsequent Censuses from 1851 to 1911, but was discontinued for the Census of 1926.

In 1851, the Census was taken in a similar manner to that of 1841, but the scope was somewhat extended to include questions with regard to school attendance, Irish language, sickness and a set of forms were used for dealing with persons in institutions. For the first time the population, the number of houses and the area of each of the 66,700 townlands were published (in Part I of the Census). The Census Commissioners pay tribute to the assistance which the Assistant Commissioner (Surgeon Wilde) received from Dr. O'Donovan and Mr. Eugene O'Curry in all matters pertaining to the Irish language. Indicating the imperfections of their tables of deaths, the Commissioners again stressed the need for a Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

The Census of 1861 is remarkable principally for the introduction into the Family Form of a question relative to "Religious Profession."

The practice of issuing Census publications in the form of County Books was first adopted in 1871 and continued up to and including 1911. In 1881, questions in regard to deaths in the family were abandoned, as such inquiry was rendered unnecessary by the inauguration of the compulsory registration system. The questions with regard to the duration of marriage and number of absent members were also dropped. The inquiry with regard to the Irish language was extended in this year.

There was little or no change introduced in 1891. In 1901 there were special difficulties on account of the complete re-arrangement of territorial divisions consequent upon the passing of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898. This also involved the re-arrangement of the 1891 figures, for purposes of comparison. In 1901 also tables relating to tenements and houses of less than five rooms were first published. There was also a special Land Census which showed for each class of valuation (a) the

number of holdings classified by size, (b) the numbers of families, persons and houses, outoffices and farmsteadings in each Poor Law Union, County, etc.

In 1911, the principal innovation was the inquiry with regard to fertility of marriage compiled from the following questions on the Family Form :—(a) duration of marriage, (b) number of children born to the marriage and (c) number of children still living, and the results were published in much detail, to show for each age group of husband and wife the number of children born to the marriage and the number of surviving children. The Land Census was repeated.

The Census of 1926.

A Census of the population of Saorstát Eireann was taken on the 18th April, 1926, under the powers given by the Statistics Act, 1926, and the Statistics (Census of Population) Order, 1926, and was entrusted to the Statistics Branch of the Department of Industry and Commerce. In addition to the particulars required at the previous Census questions were asked relating to (a) "business of employer" (in addition to the usual personal occupation questions) from which statistics with regard to industries were compiled, (b) number of dependent children, (c) industrial status ("employer," "own account," "assisting relative," "employee," "out of work") from which in particular the statistics of unemployment were derived, and (d) area of land owned or tenanted by the household. A copy of the Family Schedule used is reproduced in Appendix B with the other principal forms used in the Census. The Family Schedule (Form A) and the Memorandum of Instructions (Memorandum A) were printed bilingually in Irish and English.

The schedules for completion by the head of each family or institution were distributed to every household in the country by the Garda Síochána, about a week before the date to which the Census referred, and were collected by them as soon as possible after the Census date. At the time of the collection the Gardai roughly scrutinised each return to ensure that it was correctly prepared, and in some cases assisted in the preparation of the returns.

Prior to the date of the Census a certain amount of publicity work was done with the object of explaining, to persons whose duty it was to make the returns, how the schedule should be completed and to ensure that all the returns would be properly compiled and furnished. Circulars were sent to the Clergy of all denominations, the heads of Chambers of Commerce and the principal officials of Trade and Labour organisations, requesting them to refer to the coming Census on every possible occasion in public. The teachers in the National Primary Schools under the Department of Education were authorised to give instructions to all the children attending their schools with reference to the Census schedule, and the manner in which it should be completed. Advertisements were inserted in the Press throughout the country and opportunity was taken when possible to have lectures delivered by one of the chief officials connected with the Census. On the evening before Census night and on the actual night an explanation of the schedule and instructions as to how it should be completed was broadcasted by wireless.

The Census schedules (Forms A) when collected by the Garda Síochána, were assembled by them in portfolios according to districts, the separate schedules being placed in sequence according to the locality of the house to which the schedules referred. Special returns compiled by the Garda Síochána (Form B) were interleaved in the portfolios between each batch of schedules relating to a townland in rural areas and to a street in urban areas, and it was from these summaries that the completeness of the Census was checked. The Garda Síochána compiled simple summaries (Form C) of the numbers of males and females enumerated on the returns included in the portfolios and transmitted them together with the portfolio of returns to the Census Office.

A Preliminary Report of the numbers of the population was compiled from the last-named summaries and was published in the month of August, 1926, within four months of the date on which the Census was taken.

An installation of Powers' statistical machinery was used for the compilation of the Census. The Census schedules having been scrutinised, the information contained thereon was translated into code numbers and transferred by means of punched holes to "machine cards." These punched cards were passed through sorting and counting machines and the results recorded on summaries which formed the basis of the tables prepared for publication. The "Powers'" installation used consisted of 12 Automatic Key Punches, 9 3-Bank Multiple Counting Sorters and 3 ordinary Counting Sorters, and were hired at a monthly rental per machine. A staff of 21 girls was employed for punching the cards and checking them against the original documents, whilst the sorting and counting machines were operated by 12 male clerks assisted by 12 junior male clerks. The coding of the information on the original schedules and the recording and tabulation of results were done by a clerical staff which varied according as the volume of work increased or decreased. Including the 21 girls engaged for the punching operations, the maximum number of clerks employed on the Census was 83.

The scheme of publication provided for the issue of the following volumes, arranged according to subject :—

Vol. I.—Population, Area and Valuation by Units of Area.

Vol. II.—Occupations.

Vol. III.—

Part 1.—Religions.

Part 2.—Birthplaces

Vol. IV.—Housing.

Vol. V.—

Part 1.—Ages, Orphanhood and Conjugal Conditions, classified by Areas only.

Part 2.—Ages and Conjugal Conditions classified by Occupations and Industries.

Vol. VI.—Industrial Status.

Vol. VII.—Industries.

Vol. VIII.—Irish Language.

Vol. IX.—Dependency.

Vol. X.—General Report.

In each of the subject volumes the relevant particulars are given in geographical detail. The territorial divisions generally used are Provinces, Counties and County Boroughs, Urban and Rural Districts (the latter, following the Local Government Act of 1925, were no longer administrative divisions but were retained for convenience for Census purposes) Dispensary Districts, District Electoral Divisions. The population of Townlands are available in the office records but have not been published. In Volume I the populations of the Parliamentary Divisions are given. In certain of the other subject volumes, quite considerable geographical detail is entered into, but it varies from subject to subject : in the case of the Irish language and Religions particulars for District Electoral Divisions are given.