A LIVERPOOL SHIPPING AGENT AND IRISH EMIGRATION IN THE 1850s: SOME NEWLY DISCOVERED DOCUMENTS

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WHILE there is a long tradition of Irish emigration, the greatest numbers left the country in the years during and immediately after the Famine of the 1840s. But despite the significance of this experience for every aspect of Irish life and society, reliable emigration statistics before the 1870s are notably scarce.¹

However, some fragments of new evidence have recently come to light which add a little more detail to some aspects of this historic population movement. This evidence consists of three groups of documents found amongst the personal papers of Mr Henry Boyd, a Liverpool shipping agent who actively assisted migrants travelling via Liverpool in the middle of the nineteenth century.² The first group of documents comprises seventeen tickets of the type issued to intending emigrants by shipping agents. A second group consists of ten letters; eight to Boyd concerning his co-operation with Vere Foster, a notable philanthropist, and his brother Sir Frederick, in their work of sponsoring Irish emigration; one letter from Boyd to a resident of Co. Louth on the same topic, and another from someone, probably a parish priest, to Boyd’s widow, concerning the possibility of help for an acquaintance interested in emigration.³ Finally, there are three miscellaneous documents—two handbills issued by Boyd advertising his services as shipping agent and a pamphlet written by Vere Foster requesting subscriptions to aid further emigration.⁴

In this paper it is proposed to analyse the contents of these documents for the information they contain on aspects of mid-nineteenth century Irish migration. However, an element of caution is necessary in the evaluation of these papers. Since the evidence utilised here is a collection which has survived by chance, it cannot be claimed that they reveal a ‘typical’ situation. Moreover, it appears that not all of the emigrants listed on the tickets
may have gone. In any case, the Fosters concentrated on assisting a particular type of would-be migrant, thus introducing a further bias into the situation. But since detailed evidence is difficult to come by, the results should have some value for students of the period if treated with appropriate reservations.

THE MIGRANTS

Here the intention is to examine some features of the migrants listed on the tickets. Seventeen tickets for a passage overseas have survived in this collection of papers (Table 1). These documents had to record the number of migrants who intended to sail, each family group or party being recorded on a single ticket. The details listed included the full name and age of each person; the cost of passage per person and for the total party; and the name, tonnage, destination and sailing date of the vessel on which they would sail. Details of the provisions which would be issued to passengers during the voyage were printed on every ticket, as required by a succession of British and American Passenger Acts (Plate 1; Table 2).

Of the seventeen tickets, five have the word ‘Void’ written across them, and it seems possible the parties listed may not have actually sailed (Table 1). In addition, one wonders how any tickets have survived at all on this side of the Atlantic in un-mutilated form in the hands of a shipping agent’s family. Strictly speaking, the counterfoils of the tickets should have been retained by a clerk at Liverpool and the main parts detached and given to passengers who would have presented them on boarding the ships. These difficulties appear insoluble at present, but even if all the tickets were, for some reason, invalid and none of these people did emigrate, the details they contain are still valuable for the light they throw on the sort of person who seriously desired to emigrate at this time.

In all, 71 individuals were listed on the tickets as would-be emigrants. Their age and sex structure stress the selective nature of migration: the mean age is 23 years, with a median of 20 years. Only twenty persons were over 25 years old and none of the females were over 45 (Fig. 1a). Fifty-three people were travelling as part of a family group, thirteen seem to have attached themselves to other families for the purposes of the voyage, since their surnames were different—though they could possibly have been in-laws—and only three appear to have gone alone. All, save one, were bound for North America and, of these, 56 were going to New York, eleven to Philadelphia and two to Quebec (Table 1).

There is no explicit statement on the tickets that the would-be
### TABLE 1 Details of Shipping Agents' Tickets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shipping Agent</th>
<th>Ticket Number</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>No. of Passengers</th>
<th>Sailing Date</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tapscott's American Emigration Office</td>
<td>88618</td>
<td>&quot;Tonawanda&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16 March 1855</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapscott's</td>
<td>88619</td>
<td>&quot;&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapscott's</td>
<td>88659</td>
<td>&quot;&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17 March 1855</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Change of sailing date?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Grinell&quot; Line of Packets</td>
<td>2388</td>
<td>&quot;Ontario&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10 April 1855</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>B115</td>
<td>&quot;Great Western&quot;</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29 May 1856</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Marked &quot;Void&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>B122</td>
<td>&quot;Excelsior&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 June 1856</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>Marked &quot;Void&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>B146</td>
<td>&quot;Aaron&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28 March 1857</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Marked &quot;Void&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapscott's</td>
<td>2558</td>
<td>&quot;West Point&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21 April 1857</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Marked &quot;Void&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>C117</td>
<td>&quot;Joseph Gilchrist&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 April 1857</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>C118</td>
<td>&quot;&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Marked &quot;Void&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahel &amp; Cortis’s Line of Packets. Passenger Office</td>
<td>H382</td>
<td>&quot;Northern Chief&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 May 1857</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>C155</td>
<td>&quot;Marquette&quot;</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4 June 1857</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Marked &quot;Void&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>C211</td>
<td>&quot;Panama&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7 July 1857</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>C236</td>
<td>&quot;Isaac Webb&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20 July 1857</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd</td>
<td>C263</td>
<td>&quot;Harvest Queen&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24 July 1857</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>No. ‘274’ written across original ticket number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. P. Mitchell’s American and Australian Packet Office*</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>&quot;South Carolina&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25 July 1857</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Boyd*</td>
<td>C274</td>
<td>&quot;South Carolina&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Change of sailing date?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These tickets both made out to same person.
TABLE 2 Details of Water and Provisions to be issued by the Ship’s Master as specified on Tapscott’s Tickets of March 1855 and March 1857

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Provisions</th>
<th>Ticket No. 886r8 of March 1855</th>
<th>Ticket No. 2558 of March 1857</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water (daily)</td>
<td>3 quarts</td>
<td>3 quarts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread or biscuit</td>
<td>2½ lbs.</td>
<td>3½ lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>1 lb. (wheaten)</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
<td>5 lbs.</td>
<td>1½ lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>2 lbs.</td>
<td>1½ lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>½ lb.</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>2 oz.*</td>
<td>2 oz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>2 oz.</td>
<td>2 oz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1½ lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustard</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>½ oz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or white pepper</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>¼ oz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinegar</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1 gill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* or 4 oz. cocoa or coffee. Bedding, and utensils for eating and drinking, must be provided by the passengers. At the option of the Master of the Ship, ½ lb. of Preserved Potatoes may be substituted for 2 lbs. of Potatoes or 3½ oz. Cocoa or Coffee roasted and ground for 2 oz. of tea.

migrants are Irish, but four considerations make this highly likely. First, as Coleman (1972) points out, the Irish were by far the largest single element in mid-nineteenth century migration from the United Kingdom. Second, almost all of them crossed to ports on the British mainland before finally embarking for overseas and the overwhelming majority left via Liverpool. In addition, Henry Boyd, who is mentioned as agent on ten of the seventeen tickets, had family connections with Co. Louth. Finally, that Boyd showed a particular interest in assisting Irish emigrants is borne out by his role as the shipping agent used by Vere Foster and his brother, Sir Frederick, in their work of sponsoring Irish emigration in the 1850s.

THE WORK OF VERE FOSTER

Of the ten letters found amongst Boyd’s documents, nine are directly connected with the Fosters’ work on emigration. The Fosters were an Anglo-Irish family of some distinction who had
Fig. 1a. AGE AND SEX STRUCTURE OF ALL MIGRANTS LISTED ON TICKETS

MALE

FEMALE

Figure IA AND IB

Fig. 1b. AGE STRUCTURE OF ALL PERSONS LISTED ON TICKETS PLUS THOSE SPONSORED BY FOSTERS

FIGURE IA AND IB
property in Ardee, Co. Louth, where the Boyd family had once lived. The most notable member was Vere Foster (1819-1900), an outstanding philanthropist who, on seeing the effects of the Famine of 1845-7, devoted his life to alleviating the condition of the Irish peasantry. He believed that their situation would be improved in the long term by landlords actually living on their estates and encouraging improved and intelligent use of the land by their tenants and by a national system of education. However, in the short term he believed emigration was a vital necessity. He saw this as the route whereby the young Irish peasantry could have a chance to develop their potential and enjoy their lives to the full in a more favoured land than Ireland. He believed the United States and, to a lesser extent, Canada, were the best destinations because the voyage was shorter than to Australia or New Zealand and employment openings were more numerous.

Foster was active in encouraging emigration during the 1850s and later during the 1880s when the harvest and trade conditions were poor. The documents discussed here all refer to the earlier period. He was assisted in his work by his elder brother, Sir Frederick, and received help and encouragement from public figures on both sides of the Atlantic, including his relative Lord Hobart, Lord Shaftesbury, Horace Greeley and Abraham Lincoln. Foster was particularly interested in encouraging the emigration of young women because, as he put it in his evidence to the Select Committee on Land Laws in Ireland in 1882, ‘... they are the least able to get themselves out, and because, as I say, they are generally the most liberal in sending home help to bring out their brothers and sisters, if they wish to go.’ A potential migrant was: ‘... specially selected on account of her poverty, good character, and industrious habits, with the expectation that she will herself take the remaining members of her family out of poverty.’ When he sent out his first party of 40 migrants, Foster stated that this was only after having ‘... previously obtained from the police of the district, from their clergy, and from their employers and others in the neighbourhood, satisfactory answers to my enquiries respecting their characters and industrious habits.’ He also frequently required them to pay a deposit of £1 as an indication of their serious intention to emigrate. These requirements may explain why in one of the letters to Boyd he lists seven girls who definitely ‘fail’ and one who might do so. Presumably they were unable to produce the necessary references or deposits.

Two of the letters give the name and age of a total of 30 persons whom the Fosters definitely decided to sponsor. The age and sex structure of this group graphically illustrate the selective
nature of the Fosters’ work. Of the thirty, twenty-nine were women. Ages are definitely given for twenty-five and estimated ages for another two. Mean age (including estimates) was 20 years 7 months, with a median and a mode of 20 years. When the age structure of this group is combined along with that of the ticketed migrants discussed above, a picture of overwhelming youthfulness emerges (Fig. 1b).

Vere Foster realised that most of the people he was trying to help were totally ignorant of the world outside their own local district. Consequently, they would know nothing about preparations necessary for emigration, where to buy tickets, how to get to Liverpool, how to get to the correct ships and all the provisions necessary for a voyage of unpredictable length. Furthermore, most of them were very poor. As a result, they would be vulnerable to every kind of accident and the activities of all sorts of confidence tricksters. Foster therefore did everything possible to smooth the way for his adopted charges. He not only chose the migrants personally, he also usually paid their fares and advanced them cash to buy provisions for the voyage. Consequently, we find Sir Frederick Foster writing to Henry Boyd on one occasion:

Mrs. Connor and family will probably not be ready to go yet, but if she does come you may advance her the value of £10 either in passage tickets to New York or in necessaries for the voyage.

The others (all girls) are to have their passages and tickets to Port Dover and though I have told them to get their own provisions and clothing yet as many of them are very poor indeed, I shall not grudge any thing which you think necessary at the last moment, either provisions or clothes—but you understand that if I offer it them beforehand their friends don’t come forward to help them at all. When they arrive at Port Dover they are to find their way themselves (seven miles) to Captain Fuller at Simcoe to whom I will write by next post. The Tiernans married couple only go to New York at my expense.

Your obedient
Frederick Foster. 13

It has been estimated that in the years 1849–57, the Fosters personally defrayed the expenses of 1,250 female emigrants and a small number of men and boys at a total cost of at least £10,000, or roughly £7 10s. od. each. Vere Foster also made considerable efforts to raise subscriptions from relations, friends and the general public, founding the Irish Female Emigration Fund in 1852 and later the Irish Pioneer Emigrant Fund.

He was a great believer in the role of publicity and the printed word in informing the would-be emigrants about the mechanics of migration and the conditions they were likely to encounter en route and in North America. His most famous publication was Work and Wages, a four-page pamphlet first published in 1852
which ran to several reprints and was packed with useful pieces of information on such things as the most suitable places for settlement, wage rates in North America, necessary preparations for the voyage, and probable costs of accommodation, land and travel. He was particularly anxious that any advertisements should be in a form easy for the potential emigrant to understand, with a strong local emphasis and he took care to distribute them through local contacts who had shown an interest in helping the cause. All this, together with his willingness to assist emigrants from any part of Great Britain and the response evoked by distribution of his leaflets, are illustrated by two letters to Henry Boyd.

Wimbledon, Surrey.
June 23, 1854.

Dear Sir,

I would rather have the advertisements appear as per copy [Foster’s emphasis] I sent, with addition of a local reference at the town where the paper is published. I have sent 600 of your small bills to as many correspondents applying for my tracts so I have 400 left.

I thank you for informing me of the notes.

I have received 926 applications by letter. There have been between 3000 and 4000 verbal applications in London, 3000 in Glasgow 1000 in Edinburgh 1500 at Northampton 1000 at Newcastle 200 in Dublin 2500 have been distributed in the villages about Norwich and there have been upwards of 1000 distributed in each of many at least 30 other towns.

Yours truly

Vere Foster.

I shall be always glad of hints as to effectual modes of advertisement. How about a copy of the red bill\textsuperscript{15} in some of the [indecipherable] London papers?

The extent of the publicity which Foster undertook is further emphasised by the closing sentences of Foster’s letter written to Boyd less than a fortnight later: ‘I have 200 of your bills left. I shall advertise only 3 weeks longer in the 43 papers. You might send me a few hundred more.’\textsuperscript{16}

In 1856 another pamphlet by Foster was published with the significant title \textit{Female Emigration}. This was directed not so much at would-be emigrants but at those who might be persuaded to subscribe towards an Emigration Fund. Thus he lists some of those who had subscribed to a collection he made in spring, 1852, including the Earl of Shaftesbury, Duke of Devonshire and Earl of Elgin and three Americans including Horace Greeley. He lists the destinations of the 105 emigrants who were dispatched by these funds and gives details of how the money was disbursed. He emphasises the fact that before emigration all the persons concerned had either lived in poverty or imposed a burden on the
Irish Emigration Documents

public purse—'Most of both men and women worked for their food alone, or lived on the charity of their neighbours and had members of their families in the workhouse.' However, he is now pleased to report:

'... the following facts most creditable to their industry and affectionate dispositions, and which, with the above remarks, will, I hope, satisfy my kind subscribers that their contributions have been judiciously applied, and will encourage the promotion of similar reproductive emigration from other distressed districts—for instance from the Western Highlands.

Of the 91 representatives of families above mentioned, 71 have sent from America £756 10s.

Besides sending passage tickets for 21 persons.

They have altogether been the means of taking out 86 additional persons.'

Foster then gave notice of his current concern, outlined how he was financing it, and appealed for further funds:

'I am now endeavouring to raise further subscriptions for the emigration of women exclusively [Foster’s emphasis]. I have hitherto collected £63 from 1,050 persons, and having added my own contribution, have, within the last month, sent to Western Canada four young women from the Ardee workhouse, and five more for the neighbourhood of Ardee, at an expense of £2 6s. for their journey from home to Liverpool; £6 15s. for outfit and other expenses at Liverpool; £30 7s. 6d. for their passage from New York to Canada West, £4 10s., being 10s. each in hand on arrival in New York, and £13 2s. 6d. for their passage tickets from New York to London, Canada West. Total, £57 1s.

Four more from Feckle, County Clare, will sail in a few days.

Persons approving of the proposal, are respectfully requested to collect subscriptions of from one penny upwards in aid, and to remit the amount in postage stamps or P.O. order, addressed to me, care of Lady A. Foster, Wimbledon, Surrey. In due course a further report will be published.

Wimbledon, July 1855.'

HENRY BOYD AS AN AGENT

The Henry Boyd amongst whose papers all these documents were discovered was a Liverpool broker or shipping agent for people seeking a passage on emigrant ships. Brokers did not actually own ships. They '... sold space in the packets and received from the shipping company a commission on each berth sold'. The temptations and opportunities to defraud the desperate, ignorant would-be emigrants were enormous and, of the three brokers’ firms he mentions—Tapscott’s, Hornden and Co., and George Saul—Coleman suggests that only the last appeared to be honest. However, it seems obvious that Henry Boyd should receive the same accolade, otherwise Foster, with his deep concern
M. A. Busteed

for the emigrants’ welfare and his shrewd knowledge of human nature, would not have used him as his chief agent, advertised and praised his services so widely or presumably accepted his claims for expenses incurred in aiding some of Foster’s emigrants. Thus for example in his pamphlet on *Female Emigration*, Foster adds a lengthy footnote after listing the destinations of the 105 emigrants who had departed in the spring of 1852:

‘The name of the ship agent employed was Mr. Henry Boyd of 7, Dublin-street, Liverpool, who acted towards the emigrants in the most satisfactory and friendly manner. I have known Mr. Henry Boyd well during the last six years, and I have sent many parties of passengers to America through his agency, and so has my brother Sir F. Foster. I can strongly recommend him as a thoroughly honest ship agent, very attentive to the interest of his passengers.

Vere Foster.

Liverpool, April 12, 1856.’

The newspaper *Dundalk Democrat* which had printed Foster’s pamphlet endorsed his recommendation of Boyd, describing him as ‘... a gentleman who, to our knowledge, is highly esteemed by all who know him.’

Some indication of the degree of Boyd’s concern is revealed by his letter of April, 1854:

7 Dublin Street,

Liverpool 19th April, 54.

Dear Sir,

Annexed you will find my accounts for the emigrants forwarded to N. York on the 2nd Inst. per Ship ‘Siddons’. I also enclose Sir Frederick Foster’s accounts up to the present. You will perceive by it that I had to pay £5-0-0 each for four of his passengers in the Siddons, not being advise of them at the same time that I arranged for yours. I have paid particular attention to Alice and Mary Quinn and have seen them comfortably situated on board. The weather has been very fine since the ship sailed. I have no doubts but she will make a quick passage.

Yours truly

Henry Boyd.

The Fosters obviously appreciated Boyd’s efforts to help them in their projects, Sir Frederick beginning one letter with the apologetic comment: ‘I am going to trouble you again about my emigrants and hope you will excuse me for changing my mind.’ Vere Foster seems to have been especially pleased to pass on to Boyd a letter of appreciation sent to him by some grateful passengers: ‘I have great pleasure in sending you the enclosed letter showing that your troubles and great kindness in the midst of your very busy occupations have not been thrown away, but are fully appreciated.’

The letter referred to is from three families originating from
Hitchin, Hertfordshire, one of the few groups of English emigrants who appear to have taken advantage of the Fosters' philanthropic activities. However, it shows the sort of danger all would-be emigrants were exposed to and underlines the important role which could be played by an honest and solicitous agent:

Board ship 'Garrick' Liverpool July 2/54.

Dear Sir,

According to your request we applied to Mr. Boyd to put us in the best way of proceeding a ship to emigrate to America and we cannot leave England without acknowledging the kindness shown to us by that gentleman, and we beg to say we firmly believe that Mr. B. study to the utmost the comfort of emigrants who apply to him. One of our party that was not ready to leave the country when we were for Liverpool, so that we went forward to procure passages for ourselves and him, but on his arrival in Liverpool was accosted at the railway station by what is termed a runner, who by a volume of falsehoods made him believe that we were started, led him away to an office, query, and there and then parted with all the money he possessed as the runner pretended for a ship that was to sail on the 30th June, but it afterwards proved she was not to sail till the 6th July, but we are happy to say that by the exertions of Mr. Boyd by applying to the Emigrant Office the party who duped him was compelled to refund the money, and our brother was relieved from the imposition, and allowed to take a berth in the same ship, so that you see, Sir, we have cause to be truly thankful to you for sending us to a gentleman who so sympathise with emigrants. . . . All we ask is that all who apply to you you will in your kindness direct them to Mr. Boyd, to whom too much praise cannot be given.

Yours & C.

(signed) H. Chaplin & Family,
George Hall & Do.
James Hall & Do.

from Hitchin
Herts.28

Henry Boyd died on 2 October 1858 and was buried in Ireland, but there is an indication that both his business as a Shipping Agent and his role as a friend and helper to migrants were carried on by his wife. A letter, probably from the parish priest of Ardee, brought a deserving case to her attention:

Ardee Ireland May 25th, 1859.

Dear Mrs. Boyd,

The boy concerning whom I wrote to you has changed his mind and is not at present going to emigrate. Indeed Mrs. McDonald had her fears on the matter that it was only the money he wished for. However perhaps he may yet go and you can retain the money till you again hear from me.

There is a widow and four children about emigrating to America from this town. She is going out to her Mother and brother and will not at all be a burthen to the state. However it appears the Government of America is very strict and will not at present take widows or small children. I thought perhaps you would be able to advise me how they
could be got off. If you undertake to have it done you must also secure a through ticket to Chicago. Please drop me a line saying whether you would be able to do so also when a vessel may be sailing in which you could secure berths two of the children are I think under age.

Yours

Very Sincerely


The reference to the strictness of the American authorities is borne out by a printed warning on the back of ‘Grinnell’s’ ticket no. 2388 (Table 1), and clearly the normal filtering effect of emigration was reinforced by a legislative barrier:

‘Notice to Emigrants.

According to the 3rd Section of an Act passed by the State of New York, 11th July 1851,—‘All Passengers are liable to be rejected by the Captain of the Ship, who, upon examination, are found to be lunatic, idiot, deaf, dumb, blind, married, or infirm, or above the age of 60 years, or widow with a child or children, or any woman without a husband, and with a child or children, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge, or who from any attending circumstances are likely to become a public charge or who, from sickness or disease existing at the time of departure, are likely soon to become a public charge.’

THE SHIPS, THE FOOD AND THE CONDITIONS ON THE VOYAGE

The experiences of emigrants crossing the Atlantic in the middle years of the nineteenth century have become well-known to the point of notoriety. The documents discussed here illustrate some aspects of the ships used on the voyage and the food distributed to the passengers.

By the 1850s most of the emigrant vessels were fully-rigged three-masted sailing ships with auxiliary steam engines driving side paddles or, more commonly, screw propellers. The ‘Great Western’ mentioned on Henry Boyd’s ticket no. B115 (Table 1) was I. K. Brunel’s first ship, originally launched in July 1827 and now ending her career on the North Atlantic emigrant run. By the early 1850s about 90 per cent of the vessels on this traffic were American and almost all the remainder were British. The American vessels were much better regulated by legislation and had a higher reputation for seaworthiness and comfort. Twelve different ships are named on the tickets for North America, with a further two (‘Siddons’ and ‘Henry Clay’) in correspondence. The average displacement of the 12 comes to 1,500 tons, about normal for emigrant vessels of the type sailing from Liverpool at this time. Coleman states that one of the favourite ruses of shipping agents to attract customers was to advertise the ships as being larger and by implication roomier
than they actually were.\textsuperscript{31} This practice is illustrated by an advertisement issued by one of the biggest firms, Tapscott's American Emigration Office, and reproduced by Coleman. It lists the packet 'West Point' as being of 2,000 tons whereas ticket no. 2558 issued by the same company for a voyage on 28 March 1857 gives a tonnage of only 1,000 tons (Table 1). Coleman's description of the Tapscott brothers as '...systematic villains, whose frauds begin with their advertisements'\textsuperscript{32} seems quite apt.

Another feature illuminated by the tickets is the food which each passenger was entitled to receive from the Master of the ship during the voyage. This was governed by a series of British and American Passenger Acts and the details of the supplies each passenger could expect were specified on the passenger ticket. Until 1855 the law only required captains to provide supplementary food—passengers were expected to bring most of the provisions needed for the voyage themselves. Moreover, under the British Acts the rations issued up to that year did not include meat, and rice was the only vegetable (Table 2). But experience soon showed that most of the migrants were too poor to buy any additional food and they relied solely on what was distributed during the voyage. Consequently, it was not uncommon for passengers to arrive in North America suffering from near-starvation and various deficiency diseases.\textsuperscript{33} Frequently, however, emigrants did not even receive the meagre rations specified by the Passenger Acts. To sample the experiences of the voyagers, Vere Foster had embarked incognito on an emigrant packet in 1850. He found that, in addition to the cramped conditions between decks and the mindless brutality of the crew, the issue of rations was not properly conducted. Despite what was stated on the contract tickets, the distribution was not at regular, reliable intervals. Moreover, on the occasions when food was issued he found they received more of one or two items than was due to them and, far more frequently, much less of others.\textsuperscript{34} The conditions, treatment and food he received seriously damaged Foster's health for several months and the memory of this probably explains the anxious tones in which his mother, Lady Albina Foster, wrote to Henry Boyd when her younger son had gone on one of his subsequent trips to North America:

Lady Albina Foster will be extremely obliged to Mr. Boyd if he will inform her by return of Post if her son Mr. Vere Foster arrived from New York in the Africa last week—not hearing from her son she fears some accident or illness which makes her very uneasy.

Westcombe
Wimbledon Park
Surrey
May 17, 1858.
Vere Foster described his experiences in a long letter to his brother, Sir Frederick. He passed this on to their cousin, Lord Hobart, who at that time was serving in the British Government at the Board of Trade, the department responsible for the regulation of shipping. The matter was raised in the House of Commons in February 1851, and the letter passed on to the Land and Emigration Commissioners. As a result of the Fosters' activities a Select Committee on the Passenger Acts was set up and Vere Foster's letter was published as a While Paper. Eventually in 1855 new Passenger Acts were passed by the British Parliament and American Congress which increased the amount and range of food to be issued during the trans-Atlantic voyage. For the first time meat and a variety of vegetables were to be provided and passengers were to be supplied with enough food to last the entire voyage (Table 2).

CONCLUSIONS

The documents examined here are notable for showing the filtering effects of the emigration process. They reveal the extreme youth of the emigrants, the interest of one individual philanthropist in assisting emigrants of a particular background, age and sex and they give some clue about the effects of legislation, particularly American, in excluding certain types and conditions of people. They also illustrate some of the practical difficulties encountered by the migrants—the uncertain condition of the ships and the food, the unreliability of some agents and the dangers from unscrupulous 'runners'. Above all, however, these documents show the vital role of people who choose to act as intermediaries in the emigration process. This is particularly important when the migrants are relatively young and poor, with a low level of literacy, ignorant of the world outside their own small home district, fleeing in desperation from an economy and society in the throes of an unexpected famine and embarking on dangerous voyages to strange countries thousands of miles away. In such circumstances the attitudes and activities of a Vere Foster or a Henry Boyd become crucial: they can provide information about general conditions in the country of destination, give advice on equipment and provisions necessary for the voyage, ease the path of the emigrants past bureaucratic difficulties, crooked agents and runners, finance the entire trip if they are so minded and generally help to dissipate the anxiety and fear of the unknown which must have deterred quite a few would-be migrants and terrified even those who were sufficiently desperate and courageous to undertake these lengthy sea voyages in the mid-nineteenth century.
There is no consensus amongst authors on the total who left Ireland in the years during and immediately after the Famine. R. D. Edwards, *An Atlas of Irish History* (1973), 224, suggests a figure of 2,750,000 for the years 1845-55, of which 2,000,000 went to North America and Australia and, presumably, the remaining 750,000 to Great Britain; T. W. Freeman, *Ireland: a General and Regional Geography*, (1972), 121, states that by 1851 there were 1,926,000 Irish-born in North America and Great Britain, without giving any further breakdown; C. Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-9*, (1962), 206, states that about 1,250,000 went to North America during the period of her study and ‘even more’ to Great Britain, thus giving a total of over 2,500,000; T. Coleman, *Passage to America: a history of emigrants from Great Britain and Ireland to America in the mid-nineteenth century*, (1972), 298, gives the figure of 892,000 Irish entering New York City during the years 1847-55 and states that two-thirds of all Irish immigrants into the U.S.A. came in via this port, giving a total of 1,338,000 entering the United States alone during these years; J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society* (1973), 6, states that close to 2,000,000 fled from Ireland between 1845 and 1855; F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, (1973), 123, notes that 221,000 left in 1851 for the U.S. alone and that by 1854 there were 1,000,000 Irish-born in North America and over 250,000 in Great Britain; finally, O. McDonagh, Chap. VI, ‘Irish Emigration to the United States of America and the British Colonies during the Famine’ in R. D. Edwards & T. D. Williams (eds), *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1947-52* (Dublin, 1956), 388, reproduces the Census figures for Irish emigration through Liverpool for the years 1845-55 inclusive. He draws particular attention to two points: first that towards the end of the period there was a tendency for emigrants from Ulster and Galway to travel via Glasgow and second that the assumption of 90 per cent of all emigrants from Liverpool being Irish was about 5 per cent too low for each of the years from 1845 to 1850 and 5 per cent too high for 1852-5. Nothing can be done about the first point, but amending the Census figures in accordance with his suggestions produces a total of 1,717,850 Irish emigrating via Liverpool to North America and the British colonies during the period 1845-55.

Even less reliable material exists for the remaining years of the 1850’s. Lyons, *op. cit.*, 123, states that in 1854 the emigration rate was still over 100,000 and seems to imply it remained close to this for most of the rest of the decade; Coleman, *op. cit.*, Appendix B, gives the following figures for all British emigration to North America during the years 1856-60: 1856—128,000; 1857—148,000; 1858—70,000; 1859—77,000; 1860—97,000. Assuming that at least 80 per cent of these were Irish, this gives the following figures for Irish emigration from the United Kingdom to North America during these years: 1856—102,400; 1857—118,400; 1858—56,000; 1859—61,600; 1860—77,600.

The most thorough analysis to date for the 1850s and subsequent years is found in C. Ó Gráda, ‘A Note on Nineteenth Century Irish Emigration Statistics’, *Population Studies*, 29, 1975, 143-9. He concludes that the most reliable statistics are those of the U.S. Emigration Authorities, compiled from returns made by ships’ captains on arrival in American ports from 1819 onwards. For 1852-60 their figures for Irish migrants to the U.S. are:
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1852—159,548; 1853—162,649; 1854—101,606; 1855—49,627; 1856—26,873; 1857—54,361; 1858—26,873; 1859—35,216; 1860—48,637 (Table I, 144). O Grada’s figures are taken from Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems: Reports (Dublin, 1956).

II: CORRESPONDENCE BELONGING TO MR HENRY BOYD

H. Boyd to Thos. Wm. Filgate, 19 April, 1854 (copy).
Vere Foster to Henry Boyd, 23 June, 1854.
Vere Foster to Henry Boyd, 4 July, 1854.
H. Chaplin, George Hall and James Hall to Vere Foster, 2 July, 1854—enclosed with above to Henry Boyd.
Sir Frederick Foster to Henry Boyd, 7 March. No year given, probably 1856.
Sir Frederick Foster to Henry Boyd, 1 April, 1856.
Sir Frederick Foster to Henry Boyd, undated. Definitely before 5 April, 1856.
Vere Foster to Henry Boyd, 5 April, 1856.
Lady Albina Foster to Henry Boyd, 17 May, 1858.

NOTES

1 See appendix I.
2 The documents remained in the Boyd family until 1977 when Miss Edith Jones, great grand-daughter, of Henry Boyd, kindly passed them on to the present author through Mr I. R. Wolseley, her great-nephew.
3 The writers, recipients and dates of the letters are listed in appendix II. Original spelling, grammar and punctuation are retained in letters here reproduced.
4 The pamphlet is entitled Female Emigration. Almost all of it was written by July 1855 but a postscript was added in April 1856. It was published by the Dundalk Democrat newspaper, probably some time in 1856.
6 Founder and first proprietor of the New York Herald Tribune newspaper; unsuccessful Democratic candidate for President in 1872.
7 Evidence to Select Committee on Land Laws (Ireland), Second Report, (1882), 252; quoted in McNeill, op. cit., 193.
8 McNeill, op. cit., 82.
9 Ibid., 57.
10 Vere Foster to Henry Boyd, 5 April 1856.
11 Sir Frederick Foster to Henry Boyd, 1 April 1856.
12 Port Dover is on the Ontario shore of Lake Erie.
13 Sir Frederick Foster to Henry Boyd, undated. Definitely before 5 April 1856.
14 McNeill, op. cit., 100.
15 A bill found amongst the papers is red and may be the one referred to.
16 Vere Foster to Henry Boyd, 4 July 1854.
17 V. Foster, Female Emigration (1856), 2.
18 Ibid., 2.
19 Ibid., 3.
20 Coleman, Passage to America (1972), 67.
21 Ibid., 67–72.
22 Henry Boyd to Thos. Wm. Filgate, Esq., Arthurstown, 19 April 1854 (copy).
23 Foster, Female Emigration, 3.
24 Ibid., 1.
25 H. Boyd to Thos. Wm. Filgate, Esq., Arthurstown, 19 April 1854. Arthurstown is 4½ miles north west of Ardee, Co. Louth. Filgate's identity is unknown to the present author. He may have been a friend or relation of the Fosters. The link between the Fosters and Henry Boyd may have dated from the time when the Boyd family had lived in the Ardee district of Co. Louth, where the Fosters had an estate. Perhaps they came to know and trust each other as neighbours and when Henry Boyd became a Liverpool shipping agent it seemed natural that the Fosters should use his services.
26 Sir Frederick Foster to Henry Boyd, 7 March; no year given, probably 1856.
27 Vere Foster to Henry Boyd, 4 July 1854.
28 Enclosed with above.
30 H. Boyd to Thos. Wm. Filgate, 19 April 1854.
31 Coleman, Passage to America, pp. 91–2.
32 Ibid., 69.
33 Ibid., 114–15.
34 McNeill, op. cit., 59 et seq.
35 Ibid., ch. 4.