

**Report into the history
of adoption in Ireland since 1922**

**and
Sean Ross Abbey,
Castlepollard, and Bessborough
Mother & Baby Homes**

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**Compiled by the members of
Adoption Rights Now**

**With cooperation, assistance and support
from the members of**

**Beyond Adoption Ireland
and
Open all Adoption Records Now**

PART ONE

Background

When the Irish Free State was founded after the War of Independence and a brief civil war in 1922, the Catholic Church already owned and ran a network of institutions to deal with all aspects of social life in Ireland. Industrial schools, public primary and secondary schools, hospitals, Magdalene Laundries and mental hospitals all fell under the Catholic Churches control as they finally won the sectarian war for converts and souls which had been raging with the Protestant churches since about 1800. The 'problem' of single, unmarried mother was dealt with by a network of church run institutions which existed across the country. By far the largest was Saint Patrick's Mother & Baby home on the Navan Road on the outskirts of the capital, Dublin. Over the years, homes of various sizes from large converted Manor Houses down to privately owned nursing homes in mid-sized terraced houses existed as need dictated across the country. Sinners would be hidden behind High Walls. People with special needs, orphans, even high spirited teenagers, and other minority groups, became de facto prisoners of a deeply judgemental, self righteous and arrogant church obsessed with sex and it's regulation.

The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary arrived in Ireland in 1922 within months of the end of the civil war. The Order claims they were invited across from their headquarters in England by the newly formed Irish Government to deal with the growing 'problem' of single mothers. They bought a 210 acre farm in Bessborough, County Cork and began operating a Mother and Baby home. The Order expanded in 1930 when they bought Conville House and grounds in Roscrea, County Tipperary which they renamed Sean Ross Abbey. In 1935 they bought the third and last of their homes; the old Manor House in Castlepollard, County Westmeath with over one hundred acres of land.

At the same time in 1935, Eamon de Valera had been Taoiseach (Prime Minister) for three years. De Valera was a deeply conservative and devout catholic who had seriously considered joining the priesthood during his late teens and early twenties. He firmly believed in absolute obedience to the will of the church. When the Sacred heart sisters applied for a large grant from the Irish Hospital Sweepstakes, it was issued without question. The nuns used it to build Saint Peters, a three story, 120 bed maternity hospital. The Order also converted the Manor house into a Convent with living quarters and offices and added a small chapel, Saint Josephs, between the Manor house and hospital which was attached by a corridor to the side of their Convent. De Valera's government also gave the sisters a "conversion grant" of £65,000 (a huge sum of money at the time). It is not known what the Sacred heart sisters did with this money as Saint Peters was custom built as a maternity hospital; they bought no medical equipment or drugs of any description. Cheap cots, beds, tables and chairs were the only furniture. Decoration consisted of religious statues.

De Valera let it be known to the church hierarchy in 1940 that he would be pleased to see his friend and colleague from Blackrock College, Holy Ghost Priest John Charles McQuaid from Cootehill in County Cavan, promoted to the position of Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of all Ireland. McQuaid held the

post from 1940 to 1972. Under his rule the church's worst qualities of that era grew steadily and it became deeply authoritarian, arrogant, sectarian and misogynist. McQuaid and de Valera formed a mutual partnership with the intention of turning Ireland into a conservative catholic county which would shine forth as a beacon to the rest of a world falling into Godlessness and Communism. In the manner of a Faustian pact, de Valera used the church to build his political power base while McQuaid underwrote or approved acts of repressive social legislation such as the Dance Halls Act, the Registration of Nursing Homes Act, and the Criminal Justice (amendment) Act which banned contraceptives. De Valera personally owned and controlled the largest newspaper group of the time, the Irish Press, while his Government ran the only Irish Radio Station. Censorship was strict and all pervasive. They divided the country up into their respective spheres of influence. The Catholic Church ran the social lives of the people while the Government ran the secular state dealing with external relations, transport and so forth. The two men were also responsible for the ethos of the staunchly Catholic orientated Irish Constitution (passed 1937) and its misogynist, anti-women's rights articles. In 1944 McQuaid had sanitary tampons banned for fear that "young women's passions might be aroused by the use of these new devices". These two deeply conservative catholics during separate and overlapping reigns, ruled for nearly forty years and essentially turned Ireland into an authoritarian Theocracy. From 1932 until well into the late 1960s when their power waned in the face of social liberalism, Ireland saw its critics predictions turn to reality as *Home rule became Rome rule*. For a considerable portion of their reign, approximately one per cent of the Irish population was effectively imprisoned in various types of institution ranging from orphanages and industrial schools to Magdalene Laundries and Mental Hospitals; more than any other country in the world (Holy Catholic Ireland pushed Stalinist Russia into second place). Before this era, the banned writer James Joyce had referred to Ireland and its relationship with the Catholic church as "Christ and Caesar hand in glove". McQuaid and de Valera brought this closeness to an unprecedented level. Each running their own little state within a state. In the early 1960s McQuaid commissioned an American Jesuit, Father Biever, to carry out a survey of public opinion. He reported back to McQuaid that Ireland was, "virtually a theocracy in which all significant legislation was vetted in advance by the clergy" (Coogan, p734). The Government paid the church generously for their services while the population was reduced to hunger, poverty and mass emigration. On average, at least 40,000 people a year left during the 1950s.

Saint Peter's served as a Mother & Baby Home, a maternity hospital for single mothers, for thirty five years. Expectant mothers nearly always arrived at Castlepollard accompanied by their mothers and carrying a letter of reference from their local parish priest. Girls were stripped of their names and clothes as soon as their mothers left; their hair was clipped short, they were given rough uniforms and heavy wooden shoes/clogs, and assigned a "house name". They were ordered not to talk to each other.

The sisters arrived to wake the girls before dawn every day and they would begin the daily routine of prayers and rosaries which carried on almost all day until bedtime. After a quick wash in cold water, their days began with a daily mass where priests preached fire and brimstone sermons alongside dire and graphic

warnings of the eternal hellfire which awaited those would not abase and humiliate themselves before the might of the church and repent of their sins. Pride and vanity were the enemy. Temptation. Lust. Sins of the flesh. The seven deadly sins. Mortal sins. Endless lectures from sisters and the priest reminded the inmates of their 'sins'. Many were victims of rape and incest. Some were Priests' housekeepers who were there because of their Priests behaviour. Pregnant girls often fainted during mass and were punished for their 'insolence' and 'disrespect'. Denied even the comfort of each others friendship and companionship during the day, the girls worked in silence or to the sound of prayers being endlessly repeated by the sisters. They were consistently underfed and almost universally refused even the most basic levels of healthcare and medical attention. They were not allowed wear bras to protect their sensitive nipples. Their pubic hair was shaved once a week by the mid-wife.

Castlepollard Mother & Baby never employed a doctor or nurse as far as is known. Just one mid-wife at time. The qualifications and experience of these mid-wife's is disputed, with considerable anecdotal evidence that they were unqualified or semi-qualified mothers who had given birth at Saint Peters and stayed on. At least one of them, Nurse Smith, had a dreadful reputation. All births were strictly natural. No painkilling drug of any description, or gas and air was ever used or allowed. No screaming or shouting was allowed. Sisters would regularly turn up during the delivery asking questions such as, "was it worth the five minutes pleasure?" and generally mocking and verbally abusing the women and girls during their labour. Anti-biotics were never used nor was stitching a girl who was torn after a difficult birth allowed.

Another practice of the Sacred Heart sisters in Castlepollard was to bully mothers into force feeding their babies solid food after six weeks. At the same time another Sacred Heart home, Sean Ross Abbey, was forcing mothers to breast feed their babies for a full year to save on baby food. Conditions varied according to the whims of the Reverent Mother in charge.

Some of the women were offered 'posts' at the hospital as children's nurses and told they would be properly trained as nurses in the future. None ever received any formal training during or after their stay. Some of the girls washed, cleaned, dusted and waxed the buildings. Most worked on the farm or in the commercial laundry attached to the back of the hospital. The girls were expected to stay for about two years to 'repay' the cost of their 'room and board' although many stayed with their children for up to four and in some cases, even five years. Forcing vulnerable girls to pay off fictional debts is an identical tactic to that used today by human traffickers who enslave innocent girls as sex slaves to also pay off fictional debts.

The Sacred Hearts in common with all other Catholic institutions made vast profits as they were operating with unpaid labour. The entire church and all of it's institutions were completely tax exempt. Saint Peter's laundry was washed by hand and when the sisters could find local contracts they took in the washing at full commercial rates. Alongside the Magdalene Laundries, Castlepollard and Sean Ross almost certainly had local Government contracts although no definitive proof of this has as yet emerged. The girls worked the farmlands of over 300 acres in Bessborough and Castlepollard. The produce was sold on at

full market value while hungry, pregnant girls saw none of the fruits of their labours. At one time the Local Authorities paid the sisters sixteen shillings per mother per week and two shillings and six pence per baby, for their care. The Sacred Heart sisters in common with all catholic institutions and the hierarchy consistently pleaded poverty and lobbied the Government for more money. They always had advance warnings of inspections and gave the home a make-over beforehand. However on the rare occasions when a Government inspector would actually confront the religious about conditions in any of their institutions, they used Government "under funding" as a ready made excuse. The Government subsidy was used to buy in the cheapest margarine to be bought, to be spread on bread, and handed to the girls as one or two of their three meals a day. Bessborough had it's own Farm Shop to sell it's produce at full market value. The girls were allowed two eggs a week. The sisters also solicited and received, generous 'donations' from natural and adoptive families usually amounting to multiples of weekly earnings. Well off families who could afford to pay, 'donated' £100 for 'private care' and a speedy exit; they were often in and out in as little as six weeks. The entire country and particularly the church itself was deeply class ridden at the time.

Saint Peter's hospital in Castlepollard is a grey, dull building designed by T.J. Cullen (1879-1947). It was built back to front. As you come up the driveway to the front of the Manor House, the back of the hospital appears on your left facing the drive. It is covered with pipes and the laundry extension sticks out. On the opposite side, the facade is plain but respectable. It was built this way to further empathise the girls shame. Hiding them around the back. Babies were kept in wards on the ground floor while mothers stayed on the second floor in dormitories. The third floor had two large, bare rooms at the back where all the births took place with mums and newborn babies remaining on the third floor for two to six weeks after the birth. The girls from well off families also stayed in their rooms on the third floor and were excused work. Parents who adopted children often speak of their children's underdevelopment when they collected them. The children were noticeably months behind the norm in speech and walking skills due to lack of attention. This was common with all children adopted from Catholic Mother & Baby homes. The Order of the Sacred Heart sisters referred to the babies as 'bastards' and 'illegitimate' but their particular favourite was 'the Spawn of Satan'. The co founders of ARN were born in Castlepollard and Sean Ross Abbey.

Numerous records show the nuns in both Mother & Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries phoned Gardai to recapture runaways and the Gardai dragged them back to their prisons. The local station in Castlepollard is directly across the road from the main entrance to Saint Peters. After being returned to the home they were locked into a room on the ground floor as punishment and often beaten. Their hair was clipped to almost nothing or sometimes roughly shaved. The Sacred Heart sisters remain steadfast at the time of writing (2013) that girls entered and remained in their 3 Mother & Baby homes voluntarily. In fact all the orders of nuns involved in adoption remain adamant that the inmates in their institutions entered and remained there voluntarily. But even if this fantasy were true, how can the issue of whether the inmates were prisoners or not, possibly negate the nuns and the church's duty-of-care towards vulnerable pregnant girls and their babies? There is no excuse for starving pregnant and denying them

medical treatment and equipment and neglecting their babies to death.

The little chapel in Castlepollard, Saint Josephs, saw at least fifteen marriages over the years. If a boyfriend of one of the girls showed up, the Reverent Mother would simply say; "Right! No time like the present!", send for the priest, and have the couple married on the spot. After a cup of tea and a slice of cake the happy couple were shown the door.

Two hundred and seventy eight babies from Castlepollard born between 1948 and 1973 were sent to America; about one in every four.

They are known as the 'Banished Babies'. This practise began when American airmen stationed in England after World War II discovered how easy it was to adopt babies in Ireland compared with the far stricter American system which also had a very limited number of babies available for adoption. The Castlepollard Banished are among a total of at least 2,132 babies and young children who were effectively sold to rich American Catholics by the sisters with the assistance of the Minister for External (Foreign) Affairs Eamon de Valera. De Valera illegally issued passports on the orders of Archbishop McQuaid and the nuns. This was child trafficking on an industrial scale. Some fifty babies of this total were sent to countries such as England, Germany, Libya, Egypt, the Philippines, India, Australia, South Africa and Venezuela. The furore caused among senior civil servants at De Valera's issuance of passports at the behest of McQuaid as well as the international press attention which ensued, was the underlying cause of the Adoption Act in 1952 which legalised the lucrative international baby trafficking market the nuns had discovered. The reporter and writer Mike Milotte has estimated that the church earned \$30 to \$50 million in today's money from the trade in babies. Overall the Sacred Heart sisters sent more babies than any other institution, 614. Father P.J. Reagan, the parish priest in Castlepollard and preacher of many of the fire and brimstones sermons in Saint Joseph's chapel was heavily involved with all the adoptions and particularly the foreign adoptions to America. Father Reagan also ran the Saint Claire's Adoption Society which handled many of the adoptions from both Castlepollard and Saint Clare's Mother & Baby home in nearby Stamullen from where 130 babies were sent to America.

The first Irish Adoption Act was written in accordance with McQuaid's preferences and was referred back and forth to him on several separate occasions for his "comments". De Valera's government passed this act in 1952, which legally branded babies born outside wedlock as "illegitimate" human beings and second class citizens. "Illegitimate" people were banned from joining the Garda (Irish police force) by the state and banned by the church from becoming priests without special papal dispensation. The act provides for the nuclear option of life long closed adoption and sealed records. The situation remains unchanged in Ireland to this day although the Government did legally abolish the term 'illegitimate' in 1987 and have also generously allowed adopted and illegitimate people to join the Garda.

From 1960 to 1973, in the three Sacred Heart run Mother & Baby Homes, there were at least 4 trials of experimental and/or modified vaccines carried out by a state employed Professor of medicine and a Doctor on behalf of the Borris Wellcome Foundation (now a part of GlaxoSmithKline). These trials were carried

out on control groups of babies up to 18 months old who were held in the Mother & Baby homes for up to a year and a half instead of being adopted. These trials were in direct contravention of the Constitution, the International CODEX guidelines, and the Doctor's own Hippocratic oaths. The Nuremburg Code issued during the trials of Nazi war criminals to prevent the type of experiments conducted by Nazi Doctors such as Josef Mengele ever re-occurring, was simply ignored by the Irish state. There was also a fifth trial in 1965 for which no one will take responsibility due to the fact that it was a disaster as the "test subjects" were accidentally adopted out shortly after the trial began. For thirteen years, the state and the Borris-Wellcome foundation (now part of GlaxoSmithKline) conspired to turn between 200 and 300 babies and young children into human lab rats in the three Sacred Heart Mother & Baby homes and other institutions and orphanages. After the trials, the conspirators simply walked away. The babies were adopted out without their adoptive parents being informed of the trials and without any form of monitoring or after-care whatsoever. After the trials were finished, Borris-Wellcome/GlaxoSmithKline built a manufacturing facility in Ireland. The Sacred Heart sisters continue to steadfastly deny they had any knowledge that vaccine trials were being carried out in their three Mother & Baby homes.

Six Castlepollard children are listed as test subjects in the Borris-Wellcome vaccine trials.

During its thirty five years in operation, some 2800 to 3000 babies were born in Castlepollard. 2,500 were adopted out and between 300 to 500 died although this figure could be higher (no one knows the actual numbers). The babies are buried in a small Angels Plot down a laneway, about quarter of a mile from the Manor house. They were buried by the workman after dark, without coffins, names, or in some cases, baptisms which would have meant a huge amount to their mothers in Holy catholic Ireland. The Angels Plot is still bordered by two of the original four high walls approximately 12 to 15 feet high.

The nuns ran down the numbers in Saint Peters from 1969 through 1970 and finally sold the entire complex to the Midlands Health Board, the local name at that time for the Government's Department of Health (now H.S.E.) in 1971.

In the early 1990s (at about the same time as the Irish public was learning about the clerical child abuse scandals and the horror of the Industrial schools and the Magdalene Laundries), the Sacred Heart nuns arranged for money to be sent to have the Castlepollard Angels Plot cleaned up. They also arranged for a small memorial stone to be erected. It is cheap limestone and the last word on the stone, 'cemetery', is misspelled as 'cemetary' (with an 'a' instead of an 'e').

As far as is known the sisters burned almost every record when they left and there may be only four ledgers left as the sum total of the lives of the 6,000 mothers and babies who passed through Castlepollard (although some 15,000 files now held by the Health Service Executive, it is unclear exactly what information they contain). Saint Peters is now used as a residential care centre for adults with learning difficulties. It will be run down and closed over the course of 2013. No one knows what will happen to the buildings and property after that.

Between 1940 and 1965, in the oldest Mother & Baby Home, Saint Patricks in

Dublin and its sister hospital Saint Kevin's, the bodies of at least 461 dead babies were 'donated' for routine dissection practice by medical students and/or research, to all the major medical teaching institutions in the state, including Trinity College Dublin, The College of Surgeons and UCD medical school where the same Professor Meehan and Doctor (later Professor) Hillary who conducted the vaccine trials worked.

In both the vaccine trials and the 'donations' of bodies, consent was neither sought from, nor granted by, either natural or adoptive parents. Nor were they even told the truth about their children, living or dead.

The McAleese Report showed almost one in every twenty five Magdalene inmates were transferred there from Mother & Baby homes.

From 1922 to 1952 all adoptions were technically long-term foster placements and only semi-legal at best and completely illegal at worst. This group of "de facto adoptees" are in the worst legal position of all as they are usually the victims of forged, fraudulent, or "missing" paperwork. Many other people have also been the victims of illegal adoptions since 1952. A team of Garda and civil servants are needed to deal with this issue as a matter of urgency and criminal charges should be brought against any individual shown to be involved whether for financial, ideological, or religious reasons.

Even though the heyday of the Adoption Industry has long passed, the survivors are still dealing with consequences. There are between fifty and sixty thousand surviving adoptees in Ireland today, most now middle aged or senior citizens. The women who lost their children to adoption are passing away without seeing or reconciling with their sons and daughters. Or even knowing if they are dead or alive. Thanks to the advent of the internet, adoptees and their natural mothers are re-uniting all the time; albeit in small numbers. Representative groups have formed and are becoming more outraged by the day as the full story of the Irish Adoption Machine is uncovered.

Adoptees in Ireland 2013 still cannot obtain their original birth certificates or medical files even when their lives are at risk. The stories among the adoptee community concerning unknown and unknowable medical histories and the problems it causes are legion. Worse still is the situation of people who were never told they were adopted or illegally adopted and unknowingly give false, misleading, and potentially lethal medical histories to medical staff when asked. The state continues its cover up of adoption by printing the legend 'Birth Certificate' on what are technically, extracts from the Adopted Children's Register. However one positive development is that Irish adoptees have figured out how to collate the public records to match Mothers of loss and their children. Detailed search and tracing guides are available on the internet. Private tracing is 100% legal in Ireland.

The system of social workers meant to help adoptees and natural mothers who wish to re-unite, is chronically oversubscribed and slow; it is often indifferent and at times it is downright hostile. Some of the social workers employed by the state are now or have in the past been sisters from the same orders who were responsible for running the Mother & Baby Homes.

In August 2011, seven adoptees returned to Castlepollard where the present day staff showed them around the Manor House (old convent), Saint Josephs chapel where they saw their baptism font, and the third floor of Saint Peter's hospital where they were born. They planted a tree in the Angels Plot in memory of their lost brothers and sisters. They were the first adoptees to return as a group in the forty years since it had ceased to operate as a Mother & Baby Home. A year later in August 2012, twenty four attended. They planted flowers and left naming stones (inspired by an attempt to do the same at Bessborough where the Sacred Heart sisters first granted and then abruptly withdrew their permission for a similar gathering without explanation). Another visit is planned for August the twenty fifth 2013. Some Castlepollard adoptees and Mothers have also formed a small private Facebook group.

From 1922 to the present, over 100,000 babies have been born to single mothers who were effectively forced to hand their babies over for adoption because of the direct influence of the church at all levels of Irish society. As proof that these adoptions were forced one need only glance at what is happening in contemporary Ireland. Over the last generation, the number of single women choosing to have babies outside of marriage has shot up and now runs into tens of thousands each year. Yet the numbers of children put up for closed adoption to non-family members in Ireland is probably between ten to twenty per year. In a civilised, relatively free society, women do *not* relinquish their babies.

PART TWO

Mortality Rates since 1922

Most disturbing of all is the mortality figures for the babies of single mothers both inside and outside of the High Walls. It is in these mortality rates that the influence and the consequences of the church's steel grip on Irish civil society, can be seen most clearly. They also clearly show successive Governments inability or unwillingness to interfere in any way; or their wholehearted support of the Church run institutions. Since 1922, the mortality rates for babies of single mothers has run considerably higher than the national average.

In the Mother & Baby homes the mortality rates are the most irrefutable, undeniable, hard evidence of the callous disregard the sisters had for the most vulnerable and innocent of the nation's citizens; frightened pregnant women and their babies, born and unborn. The Orders which ran the Mother & Baby Homes are steadfastly refusing to hand over their records to outsiders and can easily hide behind the closed adoption legislation as legal cover. Nor is any surprise that so many records have been destroyed in deliberate and "accidental" fires and floods. From what little there is left, here are some facts related to the three Sacred Heart Mother & Baby Homes and adoption in general in Ireland. It is a tragic and heartbreaking part of the human condition that some babies will die shortly before or after birth. These figures, known as 'mortality rates' are collated annually by the H.S.E. In Ireland since 1922, these figures ran at about 6% to 7% of babies sadly passing away, in 1922. In 2013 the figures have come down to about 3% to 4%. The Government have separated the figures for babies born inside and outside of wedlock since 1922. While our research is still underway, we have decided to release our preliminary findings at this time.

<u>Year</u>		<u>Mortality Rates</u>	
		<u>legitimate</u>	<u>Illegitimate</u>
1923	Born 559 (illegitimate)	5.9%	34.4%
1924	B529	6.5%	31.5%
1925	B477	6.2%	28.7%
1926	B553	6.7%	32.2%
1927	B506	6.4%	28.8%
1928	B549	6.0%	30.7%
1929	B546	6.3%	29.5%

Since Bessborough Mother & Baby Home was certified by the Government for

125 beds for unmarried mothers and 200 cots/beds for babies; and Saint Patrick's Mother & Baby Home in Dublin was certified for 149 beds for unmarried mothers and 560 cots/beds for babies; it is likely that most of these deaths of 'illegitimate' babies listed, occurred in these two institutions.

Sean Ross Abbey:

Maria Luddy, Professor of history at Warwick University, carried out research into Sean Ross Abbey which proved that of the 120 babies born in 1930, its opening year, 60 died.

1930	B120	D60	50%
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Private research into public records over the last two years by the members of Adoption Rights Now group has revealed the following mortality rates at Sean Ross Abbey:

1933	B165	D28	17%
1940	B144	D35	24.3%
1941	B130	D34	26.2%
1942	B167	D72	43.1%
1943	B141	D42	29.8%
1944	B 98	D33	33.7%
1945	B174	D48	27.6%
1946	B162	D30	18.5%
1947	B166	D16	9.6%
1948	B157	D15	9.6%
1949	B146	D (yet to be checked)	

In 1948, John Cunningham, Professor of Obstetrics and gynaecology at UCD, stated that the national infant mortality rates were 47 per 1000 babies born within marriage (4.7%) and 147 per 1000 babies born outside marriage (14.7%), over three times the rate. He also stated that this was "not a problem".

1947	(? not stated)	7%	14.7%
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The Sacred Heart sisters remaining at Sean Ross Abbey have reverted to calling it by its original name, Conville House, since they put it up for sale in 2012. A small campaign by adoptees born in SRA has succeeded in getting front page headlines in local newspapers, appearances on local radio stations and notices to the estate agents that any buyer who applies for any sort of planning permission will be facing numerous formal objections and calls for a forensic excavation of the grounds before any building work can commence. It is still for sale.

There were 4,800 children born in Sean Ross Abbey.

The Sean Ross Abbey Angels Plot contains at least 1000, to upwards of 1200 bodies. It is well tended and in the custody of the Government body, the Office of Public Works.

Bessborough:

1922 to 1996 (approximately): The Sacred Heart sisters and the H.S.E. refuse to release any facts or figures relating to this notorious Mother & Baby home. It is estimated that approximately eight to ten thousand babies upwards were born there although this figure could be well off.

In his autobiography, "To cure and to care" (Glendale 1989), Doctor James Deeny (Ireland's Chief Medical Officer from October 1944) describes how he turned up at Bessboro without warning after becoming alarmed at the high mortality rates from Cork. He traced the source to Bessborough. When he arrived he inspected the home but found nothing wrong. Then he insisted that some of the babies were unwrapped and he examined them. Each and every baby had green diarrhoea and purulent infections of the skin. While he does not specify the exact year, it can be narrowed down to approximately 1945 to 1948. The previous year in Bessboro according to Dr. Deenys' autobiography (page 85), 180 babies were born and "considerably more than 100 had died". A mortality rate of "considerably more than" 55%. Doctor Deeny was outraged and ordered Bessborough closed but this never happened. After some window dressing it continued to operate for at least another 40 years. Doctor Deeny managed to retain his job thanks to the support of the Papal Nuncio who was an American and horrified by Dr. Deeny's report.

1940s*	B160	D100+	55%+
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*approx. 1945 to 1948.

1944	B112	D50	44%
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(private research by ARN)

A few years later in August 1951 the sisters employed a young, newly qualified outside mid wife named June Goulding at their Bessborough Mother & Baby home. June remained for about nine months before leaving to get married in June 1952. Known to many Irish adoptees as 'Saint' June, this wonderful, compassionate lady did her level best in the context of the times to stand up to the nuns. During her nine months tenure, 52 babies were born and one passed away.

Aug 1951 to Jun 1952	Less than....	2%
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June promised herself she would write a book about her time in Bessborough and 'The light in the Window' was published in 1995. The names of all the 52 babies born in Bessborough during June's tenure are in ARN's possession.

The Bessborough Angels Plot may contain anything from 2000 bodies upwards. It is currently overgrown and littered. The last pictures which are available showed beer cans and vodka naggin bottles strewn around. The nuns still residing there refuse to allow adoptees to have a small gathering and a non religious memorial ceremony at the Angels Plot despite repeated requests from local adoptees.

Castlepollard:

Research into mortality rates at Castlepollard is presently at a very early stage. Freedom of Information requests have been ignored or refused by the H.S.E south who hold all remaining records including the main ledgers.

There were 2,800 to 3,000 babies upwards born in Castlepollard. The Angles Plot contains at least 300 to upwards of 500 bodies which would imply a mortality rate of at least 10.7% to 16.7% upwards over its 35 year life span.

Members of ARN researched the mortality rates for 1944 across the three Sacred Heart Mother & Baby homes and found the following figures that have been collated literally name by name. These figures were published in a national Sunday newspaper and when the reporter, Adelina Campos, put the mortality rates to the Sacred heart sisters in advance for their response, they replied that they were "not aware of these figures".

1944 Bessborough	B112 born	D50	44.6%
1944 Sean Ross Abbey	B110 born	D25	22.7%**
1944 Castlepollard	B120 born	D11	9.1%

** Later revised upwards to 33.7% as some of the 1943 births were registered in 1944, etc. etc.

NB: Because of the Registration of Maternity Homes Act 1934, Mother & baby homes did not have to register still births. These were notified to the old Department of Health rather than registered with the General Registry Office. Therefore the real mortality rates would be considerably higher than any listed above.

A clear and unambiguous pattern has emerged from our research. Many of the deaths occurred in Mother & Baby homes due to the fact that the sisters had no qualifications, training, or experience in nursing or midwifery. Babies were kept separated from their mothers and stayed in large single rooms which were often crowded and stuffy. As a result of the sisters poor understanding of basic nursing practices, epidemics were common. When one baby contracted an illness, it raced through the entire home endangering and killing born and unborn alike. These deadly epidemics happened over and over again and there are confirmed cases until at least the early 1960s, but the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts did not seek outside assistance or medical advice. Or if they did, they ignored it. Nor did any Mother & Baby home as far as is known seek any medical advice although it is probable some did at various times. If they did, they appear to have ignored the advice.

De Valera and other politicians before and after him never commented or intervened publicly or privately despite the fact that the Government was legally obliged to carry out regular inspections of the Mother & Baby homes. These inspections were in fact carried out, and from time to time Ministers and other Government officials visited these homes. All was satisfactory as far as they could see and they consistently praised the sisters for their wonderful work under difficult circumstances.

In the Mother & Baby Homes the mortality rates are the most incontrovertible, damning, conclusive and irrefutable evidence of the complete disregard the nuns had for the most vulnerable and innocent of the nation's children. It is not surprising that the religious orders which ran the Magdalene Laundries and the Mother & Baby Homes are steadfastly refusing to hand over their records to outsiders. Nor is any surprise that so many records have been destroyed in deliberate and "accidental" fires and floods.

We would like to make one point absolutely clear. These horrors cannot be blamed on a rogue nun or two, or even an order of nuns. The adoption industry was a cold blooded, calculated and well organised machine that was personally run by Archbishop McQuaid and shielded by Eamon de Valera for much of its existence. It involved many hundreds, if not thousands of nuns of various orders, and priests, bishops and archbishops, over its lifetime. This church run, state funded Adoption Machine waged a concerted, vicious, and savage war on the most vulnerable citizens of the Irish state. For decades. For generations.

Over 100,000 children have been formally, illegally, or legally adopted or long term fostered (de facto adoption before legal adoption in 1952) in Ireland since 1922. Overall mortality rates for the numbers of babies who died will never be known. Their names, if they even had names, will never be known. But the thousands who died due to wanton, wilful criminal neglect and cruelty, will not be forgotten. We who survived, will not forget our lost brothers and sisters nor the barbaric cruelty which directly led to their deaths. Our lost brothers and sisters were neglected to death by the thousand. We who survived will not forget them nor allow the truth to be buried in the Angels Plots along with the victims of the Adoption machine. We are not going away.

The mortality rates from the Mother & Baby homes speak clearly of the direct results of the nuns policies, practices, and attitudes towards unmarried mothers. While the exact numbers of babies born to single girls who died both inside and outside of the Mother & Baby homes may never be known, we can extrapolate working from what we now know. If we apply a cautious figure of mortality rates running at an average of less than three times the national average for the total of 100,000 Irish adoptees since 1922, a figure of upwards of ten thousand babies who died above and beyond the deaths which would have occurred naturally would be conservative. We are clearly stating on the record that at least ten thousand babies were neglected to death. We believe the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are responsible for at least 2,500 to 3,500 of these deaths and the evidence so far uncovered backs up this truth with incontrovertible facts and a clear pattern of neglecting babies and children to death.

These helpless, innocent victims were buried without coffins or ceremony in unmarked or barely marked graves. Many never had a name, a birth certificate, a death certificate or baptism. The behaviour of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid and the nuns who did his bidding are directly responsible for the most serious crimes in the history of the state, aided and abetted by successive Irish Governments and in particular the Fianna Fail political party. The Adoption Machine in Ireland is directly responsible for, and guilty of, the most truly evil crimes against humanity. A slaughter of the innocents. A war waged against pregnant girls as young as 12, including victims of rape and incest, and their babies. If these cold hard incontrovertible facts, which represent by far the most vile and evil crimes against humanity in the history of the Irish state since 1922, do not warrant a full public enquiry, what does? We have had tribunals of enquiry in Ireland into beef export insurance practises and the circumstances of political donations; in 2013, are the lives of ten thousand illegitimate Irish babies worth less than ten thousand slabs of beef?

The stated demands of Adoption Rights Now are:

- 1. A immediate full Public Enquiry into the vicious treatment of Mothers and babies, and the consequent high mortality rates, in Government and Catholic run institutions in Ireland since the foundation of the state in 1922.**
- 2. All adoption records to be opened immediately in line with international best practice.**
- 3. A sincere, genuine, heartfelt, unqualified apology to the hundreds of thousands of victims involved by both Church and State.**
- 4. The Adoption Authority of Ireland to be staffed entirely with adoptees and/or mothers of loss.**
- 5. The granting of full minority status to all adoptees.**
- 6. All Angels Plots in former Mother & Baby homes and Magdalene Laundries to be handed over to a trust committee of adoptees and natural mothers with guaranteed permanent access to these plots across church or public lands.**
- 7. The transfer of ownership of at least one former Magdalene Laundry and one Mother & Baby Home to the aforementioned Trust to be opened as a permanent memorial to all the victims of the Adoption Industry and the Magdalene Laundries.**
- 8. That the Government appoint a civil servant to work full time (and more than one if necessary) to investigate the circumstances of any illegal adoption which is brought to their attention and employ Garda and/or outside resources if necessary and make all results known to the victims of illegal adoption in full**

accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 10 (1): Family Reunification. In accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 1, applications by a child or his or her parents to enter or leave a State Party for the purpose of family reunification shall be dealt with by States Parties in a positive, humane and expeditious manner. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall entail no adverse consequences for the applicants and for the members of their family.

9. A good faith attempt by the church and nuns along with the Government to hand over every scrap of paper relating to historical adoption, the Magdalene Laundries, and the Mother & Baby homes in Ireland to a neutral third party until the future of such records can be agreed and legislated upon.

These demands are supported by Beyond Adoption Ireland, and, Open all Adoption Records Now.

The truth about the Adoption machine, the Catholic run and state funded institutions and adoption practises in Ireland, are the last, *and the worst*, dirty little secrets of Holy Catholic Ireland and it's savage war on single mothers and their babies. Thousands of babies and children were neglected to death. The truth will out. We who survived, are not going away.

We would also like to ask, as there appears to be no records, evidence or even anecdotal stories relating to them, what happened to the babies with special needs?

Paul Redmond
Chairperson, Adoption Rights Now

Clodagh Malone
Beyond Adoption Ireland

Siobhan McDonagh
Open all adoption record now

Source material/suggested further reading and viewing:

Books:

Banished Babies by Mike Milotte (New Island, second edition 2011). Very highly recommended.

Article by Mike Milotte in The Sunday Business Post magazine, 2nd of September 2012, pages 19, 20, 21 and 22.

The Light in the Window by June Goulding (Poolebeg Press 1998). Highly recommended.

Occasions of sin by Professor Diarmaid Ferriter (Profile Books 2009). Recommended.

Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment by Professor James Smith (Manchester University Press 2008). Highly recommended.

To Cure and to Care by Doctor James Deeny (Glendale 1989).

Research carried out by Professor Maria Luddy of Warwick University re infant mortality rates in Sean Ross Abbey 1930.

Suffer the little Children by Mary Raftery and Eoin O'Sullivan (New Island 1999) Highly recommended.

The Irish Gulag by Bruce Arnold (Gill & McMillan Ltd. 2009).

Secret Love by Phyllis Hamilton (Mainstream Publishing 1995).

Barnardo's information leaflet (Barnardos mid 1980s).

The lost child of Philomena Lee by Martin Sixsmith (Macmillan 2009).

Hannah's shame by Derek Leinster (self published 2005).

Destiny unknown by Derek Leinster (self published 2005).

These two books tell the story of what happened at the Protestant Mother & Baby home type institutions of the time through Derek's own story. He survived one such place and a dreadful childhood to become a champion of exposing the truth of the hellish Bethany Home in Dublin (1921 to 1979). Recommended. (While we would not presume to speak for our Protestant brothers and sisters who went through the same experiences as us, we admire and respect their fight for truth and justice and wish them well.)

Ireland in the twentieth century by Tim Pat Coogan (Arrow 2004). Highly recommended.

De Valera, long fellow, long shadow by Tim Pat Coogan (Arrow 1995) Recommended.

Freedom of Angels by Bernadette Fahy (O'Brien Press Ltd. 1999).

Coming together, An adoptee's story by Martha Shideler (Tiger eye publications 2011). A personal story which tells of the emptiness which many adoptees feel and the lengths to which some will go to find their natural families. Highly recommended.

Primal Wound by Nancy Verrier (Gateway Press Inc. 1993). Often called the adoptee's 'Bible'. A clear, lucid description in layman's terms of the emotional and psychological damage done by the very nature of adoption.

Private research by members of 'Adoption Rights Now' into public and publicly available records.

Films and documentaries:

Sinners (Dir. Aisling Walsh. BBC Northern Ireland 2002) Loosely based on/inspired by, June Gouldings' book about her time in Bessborough Mother & Baby Home. Harrowing, triggering, and true to life. Freely available on Youtube. Very highly recommended.

Primetime (RTE 1). An investigative series on Ireland's national television station which has exposed various aspects of the Mother & Baby homes including specials on the Banished Babies, the Vaccine trials, the Bethany home and more. Very highly recommended.

The Magdalene Sisters (Dir. Peter Mullen, 2002). Highly recommended.

Sex in a cold climate (Dir. Steve Humphries. Channel 4. 1998) Documentary about the Magdalene Laundries. Highly recommended.

Suffer the little Children (Directed, produced and written by Mary Raftery 1999). Three part documentary series about Ireland's Industrial and reformatory schools which touches on all aspects of Catholic institutions in Ireland. Very highly recommended.

Adoption stories. Irish documentary series on TV3 by Sharon Lawless telling the human stories behind adoption. Highly recommended.

Song for a raggy boy (Also directed by Aisling Walsh (Sinners). XV 2002)

Representative groups in Ireland:

**Adoption Rights Alliance
Adoption Rights Now
Beyond Adoption Ireland
Banished Babies
Adopted Illegally Ireland
Open all Adoption Records Now
The Bethany Home survivors group**

NB. All of the groups noted above are largely based on Facebook. Enter the words 'adoption' and 'Ireland' into the Facebook search box to see the 'signpost' page with full details, listings and links to all of the above groups and their websites.

“Single mothers are fallen women and grave sinners, whose children are the product of wickedness“.

– Father Cecil Barrett, Head of the Catholic Social Welfare Bureau, 1952. Archbishop McQuaid's right hand man and number two in the Adoption Machine in Ireland.

“I think that we are all agreed that the consensus opinion in our society is to the effect that adoption is better for the illegitimate baby than to be cared for by its mother“.

–Paddy Cooney, Minister for Justice, 1974.

“It is universally accepted that denial of access to information about one's origins is denial of a basic human right. That right is enshrined in the UN Children's Rights Convention and our own constitutional review group has recommended that article 41 of the constitution should be amended to make it abundantly clear that Ireland unequivocally subscribes to that view.”

–Francis Fitzgerald (now Minister for Children and responsible for adoption in Ireland) in the Dail whilst in opposition. Wednesday, 9th of April 1997. Dail Eireann, volume 477, #3, page 24 of 135.

PS. Eamon de Valera was registered at birth as George de Valero. He was born to a single mother in New York Nursery and Child's Hospital, Lexington Avenue, New York, USA, on the fourteenth of October 1882. It was a Foundling Home. De Valera was a bastard.

Contact: bladerunner@topmail.ie (secure e-mail)

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