

Workhouse Link with Famine Times.

Will Children's Home be closed?

WHAT is to be the future of the old Tuam workhouse, which has been used for many years past as St. Mary's Children's Home?

That question arises from a proposal by the Department of Health to close down the Home, which was discussed at last Monday's meeting of the County Council.

Built in 1841, this was one of the first workhouses built in this part of the country, and in the Famine years it became so overcrowded that various extensions were made from time to time.

The contract for the workhouse was given in July, 1840, and it was to be completed by June, 1841. It was not opened until 1846, and was known as the Tuam "Trojan horse."

The cost of the buildings was £6,700, a huge sum in those days, and there was also £1,400 for fittings. The original grounds were over 7 acres in extent.

2,881 Paupers.

Designed to accommodate 800 people, this figure was trebled during the Famine years when, according to "The Life of Dr. Duggan," hundreds of dead and dying lay on the roadsides leading to this last refuge of a people pauperised and oppressed.

According to Thom's Directory, in 1851 there were 2,881 paupers in the Tuam Workhouse.

Temporary accommodation for famine victims was provided in sheds, and an old store near the present railway station was also pressed into service. But these poor people, dying from hunger, did not last long—they were buried in

The buildings were occupied by the British military during the war of independence, and later served as a barracks during the Civil War. Here, on April 11th, 1923, six members of the Republican forces were executed after the raid on Headford barracks. They were: Comdt. Frank Cunnane, Lieut. Sean McGuire, Lieut. Sean Newell, Volunteers Michael Monaghan, Martin Moylan and Seamus O'Maille.

Since 1927, the Children's Home has been under the care of the Bon Secours Sisters, who have as their special mission the care of the sick and orphans.

Department's 'Close down' Proposal.

On Monday last, the County Council, which had previously considered improvement plans for the Home, were informed of the Department's proposal to close it down.

The Secretary (Mr. L. O'Luanagh) said that originally it had been proposed to reconstruct the premises to make it safe for the children there, and at a subsequent conference in Tuam it had been agreed to carry out certain improvements. The Department, having considered the estimate, decided that it would be better to close the Home and transfer the children. In a letter last month to the County Manager, the Department stated that it was proposed to close the Home and transfer the occupants to similar centres in St. Peter's, Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath; St. Patrick's, Cabra, and Shanross Abbey, Roscrea.

Mr. M. Carty, T.D. (chairman)