UCD CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH

WORKING PAPER SERIES

2008

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WP08/22

October 2008

UCD SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
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HOW THE POOR (AND NOT-SO-POOR) SAVED:

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[1] Paper presented to the International Congress on the History of Savings Banks, Murcia, 16-18 October 2008. The author thanks the organizers and participants for their comments.

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The savings bank was one of several schemes conjured by social reformers in industrializing Britain to encourage the poor to greater thrift. Such schemes were particularly directed at 'industrious and frugal' servants and tradesmen, and more generally at those who might be reduced to destitution by unemployment, illness, or old age. Saving for a rainy day might have been second nature to the businessman and the farmer; not so the labourer or the servant. One early proponent claimed that saving was not 'an intuitive faculty of the mind', but needed to be taught, like reading and writing.[1]

From humble beginnings in a cottage in lowland Scotland in 1810, savings banks spread rapidly throughout the U.K. The concept also quickly caught on in the United States. In both hemispheres it became fashionable for the rich and powerful to help savings banks as patrons or part-time managers.[2] In Ireland too the banks relied on local elites, usually ecumenical in composition, to provide the initiative and to act as trustees or managers.[3] The desire to make the poor industrious was coupled with a self-interested concern to reduce the nuisances of street begging and 'the evils of the system of poor laws'.[4] The link between saving and pauperism made some of those targeted by the philanthropists suspicious. Confusing intent and outcome, they saw the banks as a sinister ploy to keep down wages and abolish the poor laws.

In both the U.K. and the U.S. the new institutions won legislative support. As a confidence building measure, in 1816 the London parliament stipulated that the banks' savings be re-deposited with the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt, who would pay a generous 3d per cent per diem or 4.55 per cent per annum on them.[5] In order to prevent abuse by the not-so-poor, depositors were limited to investments of £50 per annum in

Ireland and £100 in Britain. Against the objection that the legislation had not been demanded by those whom it sought to protect, its leading proponent George Rose M.P. argued that 'both the principle and the detail of such an institution was beyond the common ideas of persons engaged in daily and manual labour'[6].

The new banks promised their clients three things: a relatively attractive return on their savings, considerable liquidity, and security. In time they would spawn a large, mainly commemorative and celebratory historiography, written for the most part by either past employees or specially commissioned authors. Four decades ago, however, 'outsider' Albert Fishlow struck an iconoclastic note when he characterised the early savings banks in England as not living up to the aims of their philanthropic founders. His critique, though striking at the time, was not new: the accusation was common in the early decades of the savings bank movement. Fishlow, however, was the first to effectively marshal quantitative data to show that in England at least comfortably off people savers quickly 'captured' the new institutions for their own gains.[7] In America, it would seem, it was a different story, for more than a decade ago George Alter, Claudia Goldin, and Elyse Rotella described the deposits held in the very different setting of antebellum Philadelphia as 'the savings of ordinary Americans'.[8]

This paper offers a comparative perspective on savings behaviour in the U.K. and the U.S. It marshals both aggregate data and the individual-level records of two very different savings banks.[9] These are the Thurles Savings Bank, located in southern Ireland, and the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank (or EISB), located in New York's lower Manhattan. The two banks could not have been more different in some respects. One held only four thousand accounts during its existence, while the other held over ten thousand in its first decade. Most clients of one were country people, while the other was located across the street from New York's city hall. One lasted only four decades, but the other is still thriving after 150 years. In both cases, however, in the mid-nineteenth century the majority of account-holders were Irishmen and Irishwomen. Contrasting economic and institutional contexts combined to produce very different savings banks.

Part 2 of this paper outlines the early history of savings banks on both sides of the Atlantic. Part 3 describes the records of the TSB and the EISB. Part 4 describes the savings behaviour they imply. Part 5 profiles the savers, with Fishlow's critique in mind. Part 6 concludes.

2. BEGINNINGS AND DIFFUSION

By the end of 1818 Great Britain contained nearly five hundred savings banks. The rate of growth tapered off thereafter, and most of the savings banks still in existence in mid-century had been established by the early 1820s.[10] Ireland's first successful bank opened for business in Belfast in January 1816. Diffusion lagged Britain by only a year or two, but the Irish savings bank network was essentially in place by the mid-1820s.[11] Of the seventy-four banks still open in late 1846 forty-six had been created in 1816-25, a further twenty-one in 1826-35, and only seven from 1836 on. The spread in Ireland was less spectacular than in Britain. On the eve of the Great Famine (1846-1852) Ireland contained more than twice as many people as Scotland but only half as many savings banks; England and Wales had less than double Ireland's population, but six times as many savings banks. Alternatively, while England and Wales had about £1.7 deposited per inhabitant, Ireland had only £0.3. Nonetheless in late 1846 the £2.9 million held by 93,853 depositors in seventy-four Irish savings banks exceeded by £0.3 million the total held in private deposits in the Bank of Ireland, then by far the largest of Ireland's joint-stock banks.[12] In Ireland as in the rest of the U.K. account-holders were disproportionately urban, with the four main cities holding two-fifths of all accounts.

The growth of the savings bank network in the U.S. was more gradual at first. News from Great Britain was a key element in moves afoot in late 1816 to create banks in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston.[13] In the U.S. savings banks still numbered only 61 in 1840, but there were 108 by 1850 and 278 by 1860. While the 1850s was a decade of crisis for the savings bank movement in the U.K., it was a crucial decade in their spread on the other side of the Atlantic. In New York City the Bank for Savings (established in 1819) still held 73 per cent of all accounts and 53 per cent of savings as late as 1848, but a wave of new savings banks drove those percentages down to 24 and 21 by 1861. By 1860 New York City's nineteen savings banks held deposits of over $40 million, or $50 (about £10) per inhabitant, dwarfing the average deposited per inhabitant in Ireland or in Britain around the same time. Most banks were located in New England and in the Middle Atlantic states: vast swathes of the west and south still contained none.[14]

As in the U.K. the promoters of the new savings banks tended to be people of considerable standing.[15] Moreover, the same individualist philanthropy that underpinned middle-class support for the banks in the U.K. was also at work in the New World. Evangelical fervour was sometimes behind the efforts to help the poor help themselves: several of those who encouraged seamen to 'save' as directors of the Seamen's Bank were also directors of a society aimed at 'saving' seamen, while the advent of the Provident Institution for Savings in Boston was presaged in a small weekly called *The Christian Disciple*.[16] Yet clergymen (and landowners) were less to the fore in establishing and running banks in the New World setting than in the Old. Even when—as in the case of the EISB—clergymen were instrumental in a bank's foundation, they tended to keep well away from its management or day-to-day operations.

The elites who created and managed the early savings banks saw themselves (or, in some cases, merely presented themselves) moral crusaders who regarded their creations as vehicles for moral reform. Though philanthropy was the dominant factor, some promoted savings banks with an eye to personal gain. This was certainly more a factor in the U.S. than in the U.K. Some of the main movers behind the New York Bank for Savings (established in 1819) were also supporters of the capital-starved Erie Canal project. In the first decade or so of its existence the bank's savers in effect subsidised canal building.[17] Several promoters of the Bowery Bank also combined 'philanthropy' with financial gain. The short-lived Knickerbocker Savings Bank performed the same role for the Knickerbocker Bank, and when the latter failed in 1854 it dragged the former down with it.[18]

In America savings banks, individually chartered under state law, were given greater discretion over the range of assets held and the rate of interest paid. In 1818 the state of Maryland granted the Savings Bank of Baltimore a charter giving it complete discretion over its portfolio. In 1831-2 New York State gave the Poughkeepsie Savings Bank and the Brooklyn Savings Bank legal permission to lend on bond and property mortgages. Such lending would bulk large later, though runs sparked by the panics of 1837, 1854, and 1857 taught the banks to be cautious.

Another significant difference between U.S. and U.K. savings banks was the far higher interest rate paid by the former on deposits. In mid-century 5-6 per cent was typical, almost double the rate paid by the typical U.K. savings bank. The higher return on bonds and mortgage loans in the New World allowed (or forced) American banks to be more generous to their depositors, though it also left them more vulnerable to panics. However, the margin between lending and borrowing rates (about one per cent) in the U.S. was greater than the margin taken up by operating costs in the U.K.[19]

3. *NEW YORK, THURLES, AND BEYOND*

The EISB began to accept deposits in rented premises at 51 Chambers Street (across the road from New York's City Hall) on 30th September 1850.

An outgrowth of the Irish Emigrant Society, the bank was the brainchild of the Catholic bishop of New York, John Joseph Hughes, and a group of leading Irish-born businessmen. Hughes, born in Ireland in 1797, had lived in the U.S. since 1817. For a community mostly new to urban life and to savings banks, his influence probably lent the new institution the credibility it needed to survive.

New York was already a world-class city by this time. Its port was responsible for 36 per cent of U.S. imports and 69 per cent of exports.[20] On the eve of the civil war over one in five of its population of eight hundred thousand was Irish-born, and the Irish formed an even higher proportion of its labour force. In the early years the EISB's depositors were overwhelmingly Irish, many of them recent immigrants, but as it expanded it became a more cosmopolitan institution. By the mid-1850s German immigrants, many of them Jewish, and Irish-Americans accounted for about one-tenth of the accounts. On the eve of the civil war the EISB had ten thousand depositors, or about one in twenty of the Irish-born population of New York and Brooklyn, but a much higher proportion of those in the age-groups supplying most of the savers.[21]

The Thurles Savings Bank was located in one of the main towns in Tipperary, Ireland's largest inland county. Tipperary's economy was dominated by agriculture: on the eve of the Great Famine (1846-52) its male labour force of 125,000 included 26,000 farmers and 70,000 farm labourers.[22] Thurles then contained nearly eight thousand people. Its industrial base was narrow and depended on agricultural raw materials, while its commercial banking needs were met by branches of the National Bank and the Tipperary Bank.[23] Its 'big chapel', built at a cost of £10,000 in the 1800s had standing-room accommodation for seven to eight thousand persons, while its workhouse served an area of nearly two hundred square miles around the town from 1842 on.

Thurles was poor relative to other Tipperary towns: John Henry Newman (the future Cardinal Newman) described it after a visit in 1851 as 'squalid', and scuppered plans to seat the proposed Catholic University there. Yet its rapid population growth in the pre-famine period—from 6,040 in 1821 to 7,523 in 1841—implies progress of sorts. By the same token the impact of the Famine on Thurles and the surrounding area was severe. Between 1841 and 1851 nearly three thousand people died in the town's workhouse. The population of the town fell in the 1850s, and then stagnated at around five thousand between 1861 and 1881. It bears noting that housing conditions were better and literacy rates higher in the surrounding and neighbouring parishes than in Thurles.[24]

The Thurles Savings Bank (hereinafter TSB) was established in 1829, some years after the main wave of Irish savings banks, and lasted until 1871. The decision to create the bank was taken at a meeting on 8 October 1829 of 'those Gentlemen who are disposed to lend their Aid...for the Benefit of the Town and Neighbourhood '. The bank opened for business two months later. Its trustees and managers were mainly local clergymen, landed proprietors, and professional people.[25] The TSB was fortunate in its personnel, both unpaid and paid. Most of its officers were long serving. Between 1829 and 1859 it had only three treasurers (after which the National Bank fulfilled the function), and a local shopkeeper and stationer served as part-time actuary from beginning to end, on a salary that varied with the volume of business. However, only a minority of the twenty trustees nominated at the outset played any significant part in TSB's operations, and some seem never to have attended a quarterly trustees' meeting. In effect at any one time the bank was run by a group of six to eight people, and attendance at the trustees' quarterly meetings rarely exceeded five or six.

The savings banks' annual returns as reported in *Thom's Almanac* offer some indispensable comparative perspective on the TSB. They suggest that on the eve of the famine the bank was representative of banks in towns its size, both within Tipperary and in Ireland as a whole. According to *Thom's* on 20 November 1846 the TSB had £31,815 deposited in 892 accounts. The average sum on deposit, £35 13s 4d, was on the high side, exceeded by only seven of a total of seventy-six banks (the average for the country as a whole was £30 8s). A feature was the particularly high percentage of savers in the £20-£50 bracket: 52 per cent of all accounts in Thurles, against 38 per cent nationally in November 1846. The TSB was badly hit by contagion-induced panics in 1848 and 1856, but it was greater competition from joint stock banks and the post office savings bank in the 1860s that led to its quiet demise.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SAVERS AND ACCOUNTS

Some of the differences between the TSB and the EISB were a function of relative size. The TSB opened for only two hours a week, while the EISB was open six days a week. The TSB relied in the main on unpaid workers, while the EISB employed salaried staff. The TSB borrowed a room used mainly for other purposes, while the EISB boasted a proper banking office. The ledgers of the two banks reveal other similarities and differences. Uniquely for Ireland, the records of TSB survive almost in their entirety.[26] The earliest transactions of the bank are of special interest. Rather inauspiciously, on its opening day (14 December 1829) the bank attracted no custom though three trustees opened accounts with token deposits of £1 each. A week later one Bridget Shea became the first real customer, and she accompanied her deposit of £30 with three others of the same amount for other family members. A week later one Michael Mullally of Thurles deposited £7. Bridget Shea returned with another £30 on 4 January 1830, this time in the name of a nine-year old niece, while one trustee opened another trust account for his two year-old son Thomas. Thereafter deposits by founding trustees became rarer and those of the likes of Bridget Ryan more typical.[27] Over its lifetime the TSB received £187,057 10s 6d in deposits. In all

4,213 accounts were opened in the names of individuals, as well as another fifty-one representing voluntary organisations or charitable institutions. More than half of the accounts were opened before the end of 1845.

Both openings and closing were subject to clustering, mainly prompted by exogenous events. In March 1835 twenty-three accounts closed, a monthly total equalled in April 1840 and February 1845, but not exceeded until April 1847, when fifty-four accounts closed. The 1835 closures may have been prompted by establishment of a branch of the National Bank in the town, and those of April 1840 by the opening of a branch of the Tipperary Bank. If the 105 closures in January 1871 are excluded, the highest monthly totals of closures were caused by panics in the spring of 1848 and in early 1856.

Several features of the TSB accounts are noteworthy. Male accounts outnumbered female, though not strikingly so (by 2,387 to 1,826). The average opening balance in male accounts exceeded that in female by £19 14s to £17 8s: a very slender margin, given the big gender gap in earnings in nineteenth-century Ireland. Since the number of transactions per account was small a significant share of the withdrawing and depositing of money was done through opening and closing accounts.

A striking feature is that more than one-third of the opening deposits were for exactly the maximum permitted sum of £30 (Figure 1). Savers opening their accounts with a deposit of less than £2 included three labourers, thirty-eight servants, seven bakers, and two farmers. Savers opening with an even £30 included seven labourers, eight servants, one baker, 311 farmers, and 296 other members identified as belong to farming households.

Accounts held in trust were an important feature of the TSB. Most were in the names of farmers, farmers' wives, or their grown-up sons and daughters. The practice of opening (and, in due course, closing) several trust accounts on the same day in the names of family members presented a way round the regulation that no single account be augmented by more that £30 in a single year. It is also significant that the opening deposits in trust accounts tended to be bigger than average. Only 8.5 per cent of them were of £5 or under, compared to 18.5 per cent of all opening deposits. Moreover, nearly three-fifths (57.2 per cent) of the opening deposits of exactly £30 were trust accounts, and a much higher proportion of trust accounts (52.6 per cent) were at the upper limit of £30. The occupational backgrounds of about one-third of those acting as trustees are given, and about half of them were farmers or farmers' wives.

Trust accounts accounted for over one third of all accounts. The average opening balance of a trust account was considerably larger than that of other accounts (£23 against £16.5). In the ledgers a clear majority of trustees are noted as related to the accounts they supported; and the great majority of these were parents. As might be expected, certain occupations featured disproportionately among the trustees. Thus priestly trustees outnumbered priestly depositors by over two to one. While some priests acted for kinfolk, most did so for female parishioners. Gentlemen, corn-dealers, medical practitioners, and chemists, most of whom operated trust accounts for family members and kinfolk, were also strongly represented. The number of farmer trustees described as such also outnumbered the number of farmer accounts (by 640 to 574). However, there were only eight servant trustees against 215 servant accounts, six labourer trustees against eighty-three labourer accounts, and seventeen police trustees against eighty-six police accounts. The bank also held the accounts of about fifty charitable associations and societies (mainly religious), and of several schools and dispensaries.

In the 1829-1846 period annual deposits usually exceeded withdrawals. However, in 1834-36 there were substantial withdrawals (£11,265 against £14,340 deposited). This was probably due to the opening of a branch of the National Bank in the town in 1835 and a branch of the Agricultural and Commercial Bank in the following year. The opening of a branch of the new

Tipperary Bank in 1840 may also have some drawn accounts away from the TSB.

By the end of the 1850s, the focus of this study, the EISB held twice as many accounts as the TSB would hold in its lifetime, and was sixth biggest of New York's eighteen savings banks. Its rapid growth was briefly interrupted by two contagion-driven panics in 1854 and 1857. Whereas farmers and their dependents dominated in the TSB, the account holders of the EISB were more representative of New York's Irish community, if not of the city as a whole.[28] The survival of both banks' records invites closer analysis of the similarities and differences between them.

3.1. Seasonality

The opening and closing of accounts in Tipperary were subject to marked seasonality. Openings peaked in March (when 13.3 per cent of all accounts were opened) and were at a minimum in September (4.3 per cent). Seasonality was more marked before the famine: the coefficient of variation over the twelve months, monthly totals weighted for month length, was 0.38 in 1830-45 and 0.27 in 1846-70. Seasonality in opening accounts was more pronounced among farmers and their kin, though labourers' accounts were also subject to marked seasonality in this respect. Spinsters too were inclined to open accounts in the early part of the year, perhaps reflecting hiring practices. Closings were also subject to seasonality, though less so than openings, and here exogenous events were more a disturbing force. The peaks in closings in March-April (when over 22.3 per cent accounts closed) are partly due to the timing of the panics of 1848 and 1856. Closings were fewest in August (six per cent of the total).

In the case of the EISB drafts were subject to much more seasonality than deposits, with two major peaks in January and July. Deposits also peaked in July, though much less spectacularly. The number of accounts opened and closed also varied somewhat seasonally. We still lack a full understanding of these patterns, but the striking bi-annual peaks in withdrawals are a reflection of a form of 'coupon-clipping': a significant number of depositors regularly withdrew interest payments due without touching the principal. It is worth noting that the seasonal pattern of withdrawals from the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society studied by George Alter, Claudia Goldin, and Elyse Rotella[29] was quite different.

3.2. Geography

The impact of geography on the banks' clienteles is also of interest. Most TSB account-holders would have made their way to their bank by foot or by horse and car: public transport would have been of little use. This kept the catchment area of the bank relatively small. Over two-fifths of all account holders lived in the parish of Thurles or at most two or three miles from the bank. Another thirty-eight per cent lived in the ring of five parishes surrounding the town. A further thirteen per cent lived in an outer ring of seven parishes within eight to ten miles of the town.[30] The remaining six per cent either lived further away or gave no identifiable addresses. Distance also influenced the average number of deposits and withdrawals. The averages in Thurles itself (5.8 and 2.3, respectively) were double those in the outer ring of parishes (2.5 and 1.2). The average annual number of transactions was subject to a shoe-leather effect: account holders in the town of Thurles itself were much more likely to visit the bank than those living in its hinterland.

In New York too distance mattered. Half of all depositors lived below Houston Street, or within a mile or two of the bank. Another 22 per cent lived on Manhattan north of Houston, while further fourteen per cent more gave addresses in Brooklyn, New Jersey, or Staten Island, and six per cent lived in upstate New York. The number of transactions varied with distance, though less so than in Thurles. Though accounts outside the immediate neighbourhood of the EISB were subject to fewer deposits or withdrawals (9.3 versus 10.3), though they were held for about two months longer on average.

3.3. Age and Gender

The TSB's actuary noted the ages of many account holders in the pre-famine period, though hardly any after 1845. Age data for the 1860s survive in the EISB's 'signature books'. The very different age distributions in Table 1 are in part the product of the different demographic profiles of the two communities, but also a by-product of practise of TSB account holders of opening extra accounts in the names of children and juveniles in order to circumvent the rules on maximum deposits (see below). The predominance of immigrants among EISB savers also probably explains why in Philadelphia account holders were considerably younger than in New York.[31]

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The gender of savers is also of interest. In Ireland it seems that most savers were men, though the female share was almost certainly boosted by middle-class households operating several accounts in order to get around rules limiting deposit size. A list of claimants for compensation in the wake of the collapse of St. Peter's Parish Savings Bank suggests that the majority of its depositors were women. This must be partly a reflection of Dublin's demography, where women accounted for 58.2 per cent of those in their twenties, 56.4 per cent of those in their thirties, and 55.3 per cent of those in their forties. Women were particularly numerous among the smaller account-holders. Over two-thirds of those depositors holding £20 or less were women, but women accounted for only fifty-six per cent of those holding £30 or more.[32]

4. ACCUMULATE, ACCUMULATE?

To what extent did account-holders use the savings banks as vehicles of accumulation? The EISB accounts suggest a range of savings patterns.

Some savers made small and frequent deposits and allowed them to accumulate. Others made substantial and frequent deposits and withdrawals, never allowing more than a small balance to remain at Chambers Street. Still more simply allowed an initial balance to accumulate interest or withdrew the interest as it accrued. Compare the case of Ann Murphy who, inexplicably, withdrew the $85 she had deposited on 9 August 1854 a day later, and that of Mary Kelly, a washerwoman, who deposited $140 in February 1855 and withdrew $500 in May 1869, after making many withdrawals and deposits in the bank. Table 2 shows that the image of account holders building up nest eggs, which they then withdrew as they made an investment *in situ* or as they moved to another place, was far from being the norm. Fifty-four per cent of women account holders and fifty-five per cent of the men had added less than ten dollars to their original deposits when the account was closed. By this definition of saving the two biggest savers in our database, a priest and a farmer, lived in upstate New York, while the biggest female saver was a Manhattan boarding-house keeper who added $735 to her account over a six-month period. Nor, in contrast with the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, do findings reveal that women savers were more likely to accumulate nest eggs than men.

[TABLES 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE]

In the early years the median opening deposit in the EISB was $70, not an insignificant sum (about one-third of a male laborer's annual income in 1850). About one deposit in four was under $30, while the single biggest deposit was $5,850.[33] As might be expected, on average women deposited less than men (see Table 3). Seventy-one per cent of women's initial deposits were less than $100, but only fifty-two per cent of men's. The median opening deposits by provincial origin in Ireland (Ulster $80, Munster $50, Leinster $70, Connacht $73) loosely reflected the relative wealth of the provinces, while the medians for the main non-Irish account holders were German $76, British $70, and American $90. The median unskilled worker began with $65, the median semi-skilled with $70, and the median professional with $100. The median housewife (i.e. a married woman declaring no occupation, or merely that of her husband) opened her account with $75.[34] Such numbers imply that many account-holders had already acquired the saving habit before the creation of the EISB.

Two EISB accounts in five closed within one year of opening, and nearly another one in five within two years, while only one account in three was kept open for more than three years.[35] The median number of deposits was two, and the median number of withdrawals was three. Overall, in this respect our analysis replicates Alter *et al.*'s finding for Philadelphia in 1850 of accounts opened as 'relatively large in size, brief in duration, and inactive'.[36]

Table 4 describes the results of an analysis of the determinants of saving patterns of EISB account holders in the 1850s. The covariates on which we have information concern family status, occupation, country of birth, and years in the United States when the account was opened. The coefficients measure marginal effects. Thus, for example, in column [2] the measured effect of being a woman (*FEMALE*) on the size of the opening deposit (*STDEPOSIT*) is -$41.163, while the effect of living outside New York (*OUTNYC*) on total deposits (*TOTALDEP*) in column [3] is $112.82. It is apparent that the numbers of deposits and withdrawals made (*NODEPS* and *NOWITHS*) were mainly functions of the duration of the account and its starting size. However, labourers, semi-skilled workers, professionals, and housewives made considerably more deposits and fewer withdrawals than the presumably heterogeneous control group of those listing no occupation or too young to have one. British-born account holders made fewer deposits and more withdrawals than the rest, though this effect lessened with the length of their stay in America. (*gbyus*). The impact of nationality on the first deposit is marked: in this respect being Irish-, British-, and German-born reduced the mean sum deposited by between seventy and one hundred dollars. However, length of stay (*daysopen*) moderated the impact of place of birth: a decade's stay increased the opening German deposit by $103, and the opening Irish deposit by $33. Note too the strong negative impact of gender n both opening deposit and total sum deposited. Column [6] suggests that housewives (*houswife*) were more likely to accumulate through the EISB, and immigrants (*irl*, *gb*, *ger*, *othereur*) less likely to do so.

The picture in Thurles too is of rather inactive accounts, with an average of one or two transactions a year, with the number of lodgements typically exceeding withdrawals. Here we focus on the pre-famine period, when the bank was most active. The average closing balance exceeded the average opening balance in all occupational categories. This suggests that the bank was used as a vehicle for accumulation. The average account was held for about four years, with little variation here across occupations or parishes. However, it was not unknown for account-holders to close their accounts and re-open another later. Few robust patterns emerge from an analysis of saving patterns in Thurles (Table 5). However, being female, a spinster, or a minor were associated with bigger than average opening balances (of £2.8, £3.8, and £6.2, respectively), while being a clergyman or a member of farming family (other than a farmer) meant a smaller opening balance. Trust accounts were bigger and the maximum amount held in them tended to be bigger. Trust accounts held in the names of minors (*mintrst*), farming family members (*farfamtr*), and spinsters (*spintrst*) were used to save.

[TABLES 4 AND 5 ABOUT HERE]

5. *TARGETTING THE POOR?*

The early supporters of savings banks everywhere, both inside and outside the legislature, identified with the industrious poor.[37] From the outset critics pointed to the difficulty of preventing the wealthy from free riding on a system intended for the poor. Such criticisms soon reached the floor of the House of Commons. In 1822 economist David Ricardo M.P., initially an ardent supporter of savings banks, proposed an impractical scheme that would lock up accumulated savings until old age, and yield a much lower rate of interest. Joseph Hume M.P. and Thomas Atwood M.P. became persistent and influential critics of the fiscal burden of savings banks. Defenders of generous interest payments asserted the 'improved morality of the lower orders'.[38]

In due course legislation took the criticisms on board by reducing the rate of interest and the maximum deposit per account. In 1824 the maximum deposit in the first year was reduced to £50 and that in further years to £30. In 1828 the ceiling on savings accounts was reduced to £150, and the rate of interest paid by the National Debt Commissioners on savings bank deposits cut from the original 4.56 per cent to 3.8 per cent in 1828. It was cut further to 3.25 per cent in 1844, enabling most savings banks to pay account holders between 2.75 and 3 per cent. Given near zero inflation and the lack of alternative outlets for small savings, this was still an attractive rate of return. Yet in 1850 expert witnesses before a select committee on middle and working class saving declared that savings banks were still little used by working men.[39]

Anxious to rebut such criticism and place the U.K. banks in a favourable light, their historian Oliver Horne asserted that 'a few cases of deposit by persons for whom the savings bank… was not intended, can easily be magnified out of all proportion', and claimed that 'from a quarter to a half, in the early days, were domestic servants, the remainder mainly artisans, small tradesmen, women, and children'. Horne, whose otherwise very useful study is marred by its apologetic tone, admitted that labourers were few, but 'the number of richer people depositing was not substantial', and 'the statutory limits of deposit prevented any serious abuse'.[40]

So how wide was the gap between aspiration and practice? The profiles of account holders by occupational group in mid-century, described in Table 7, are particularly telling in this respect. Had the savings banks been mainly about 'encouraging and rewarding the industry and self-denial of the working classes'[41], savers in categories IV (labourers, servants, journeymen), and V (domestic servants, nurses, dressmakers, and female artisans) should have dominated. In England and Wales these two combined accounted for 43 per cent of deposits and 39 per cent of accounts. In Scotland they accounted for 40 and 38 per cent. In Ireland, however, they accounted for only 20 and 26 per cent, respectively. Variations in the structure of the labour force cannot account for the difference. Tradesmen (a category which includes farmers) and women without a reported occupation were proportionately more important in Ireland. Since Irish labourers and servants were much poorer than their English or Welsh peers, it is perhaps reassuring to find that those who did save, saved less. However, the high averages in Irish trust accounts and in the accounts of minors are striking, as are those of gentlemen and professionals. The high average sums deposited would suggest that in both England and Ireland money which would otherwise have been deposited in joint-stock or country banks was diverted into the savings banks.[42]

Scotland's savings banks came closest to fulfilling their founders' mission. The occupational profile of savers was significantly more proletarian than south of the border, though it remains true that even in Scotland factory workers tended to shun the banks. In 1856 15 per cent of 'active' depositors in the massive Savings Bank of Glasgow were servants, seven per cent unskilled labourers, five per cent female warehouse workers and seamstresses, twenty-four per cent 'mechanics' or artisans, sixteen per cent minors, and nine per cent clerks and warehousemen. While only three per cent were factory workers, this breakdown suggests a more blue-collar clientele than implied by Smelser and Fishlow. An important reason for the difference is that

Scotland's more developed joint-stock banking system competed more effectively for the savings of the better off than Ireland's or England's.

Hard evidence on the economic status of those holding accounts in Irish savings banks is scarce for the early years. However, the very first annual report of the Cork Savings Bank (founded in 1817) noted that many of its depositors were too prosperous to deserve its benefits, adding that 'this species of deposits, if continued, would eventually close the Bank, as no gentleman could be got to give their time gratuitously as Managers to conduct the money dealings of their equals and in many cases their superiors in rank and property'. Qualitative evidence in the 1835-6 Poor Inquiry suggests that in Ireland farmers, shopkeepers, and tradesmen were much more likely to use the savings banks than labourers, though servants also feature prominently in the categories listed. And so it seems to have remained: in 1849 the local gentry ceased funding the small bank in Carrickmacross (county Monaghan), because depositors were 'principally of a class superior to those for whose benefit the institution was originally intended'.[43]

A 'classification of depositors' issued by the Dublin Savings Bank in 1844 is also interesting in this respect. The bank sub-divided its 14,211 depositors into twenty-seven classes. The variation in average size of deposit across the selected classes was not great: the average of £18.7 deposited by 2,331 female servants represented the lower end of the scale and the average of £32.5 deposited by the 621 'artists, students, and teachers and those engaged in scientific pursuits' the upper end. In between, ninety hotel and lodging-house keepers held an average of £23.2 each, seven hundred 'law and mercantile clerks and scriveners' an average of £32.2. Over two thousand 'minors' held an average of £28.[44]

Scattered aggregate data offer some firmer clues on savers' socio-economic status. Table 7 compares the average sizes of deposits and withdrawals from savings banks. If the clients of savings banks were mainly men and women of modest means who saved incrementally one might expect the average withdrawal to exceed the average deposit. Nowhere were accounts very active; everywhere the number of deposits per account exceeded the number of withdrawals. In both England and Wales and in Scotland the average withdrawal was much bigger than the average deposit, but this was not so in Ireland. Note too that the average deposit was highest in Ireland by a comfortable margin.

[TABLES 6 AND 7 ABOUT HERE]

Surviving data on sums paid in and drawn out of Irish savings banks in the 1820s highlight the sensitivity of accounts to economic conditions. They show a sharp drop in net deposits in 1826 and 1827, a reflection of the crisis conditions obtaining in those years. The continuing outflows in 1828 and 1829 were probably due to the decline in the interest rate on deposits in 1828. The trend in average deposit size was up for most of the pre-famine period, however, and the aggregate sum deposited in Ireland grew much faster than in England between 1833 and 1845, at a rate of nearly six per cent per annum.

The size-distributions of accounts in individual Irish savings banks also suggest that many of them did not cater primarily for the very poor. The distinction between deposits and depositors is apposite here.[45] The 43,281 Irish account holders with deposits of £20 or less in 1845 accounted for over two-fifths of savers but for only one-ninth or so of all savings. Nearly two-thirds of the savings were held in the 47,318 accounts worth between £20 and £100. Note that on the eve of the famine Irish GDP per capita was £10-£12, while a farm labourer's annual wage averaged £10 or less.

In the cities of Dublin and Belfast the preponderance of small accounts indeed suggests that people on modest incomes were better represented. In the year ending 20 November 1846 a clear majority of accounts (62 per cent in Dublin, 55 per cent in Belfast) contained £20 or less. However, in Cork and

Limerick the proportions holding £20 or less were much lower – 39 and 36 per cent. In the towns of Castlebar and Boyle, located in the impoverished west, the proportions were 33 and 36 per cent.[46]

Another of the ironies of the Irish savings bank system is that though it was meant to alleviate poverty, the banks were most likely to be located in the more developed parts of the country. On the eve of the famine, the province of Connacht, poorest and least urbanised, and about to be devastated by the famine, accounted for 17 per cent of the population but only 4 per cent of the savings held in savings banks. The correlation across Ireland's thirty-two counties between the average deposit per capita and one common measure of living standards, poor law valuation per head, was +0.59. The correlation between a second measure, male literacy in a county, and average deposit per head in the same county was +0.53.

Turning now to the United States, a breakdown of the first 1,527 account-holders with the New York Bank for Savings lists the occupations of over half of them. They included many unskilled workers – 143 domestics, 34 seamstresses, 27 labourers, 20 seamen, 10 boot-cleaners – but many too in white-collar occupations (65 clerks, 14 teachers). Minors accounted for more than one-third of the total.[47] Olmstead's analysis of the socio-economic status of new depositors at the Bank for Savings in its early decades implies that a higher proportion, about 40-50 per cent, were domestics or labourers, but the percentages were lower at the Bowery and the Greenwich. In Philadelphia in mid-century only 16 per cent of male savers were labourers or servants, but servants accounted for two-fifths of accounts held by women. Savings banks were definitely more proletarian or blue-collar in the U.S. than in the U.K.

The Savings Bank of Baltimore described itself in 1818 as 'founded to promote economy and the practice of saving among the poor and labouring classes...[and] to afford a secure and profitable mode of investment for small sums...to Mechanics, Laborers, Hirelings and others'.[48] As in the United Kingdom there was a gap between founding principles and how banks were managed in practice. Some bank trustees tried very hard to restrict the benefits of savings banks to the industrious poor by imposing controls on the upper limits deposited and by closing or paying no interest on inactive accounts. In Philadelphia in December 1833 the directors of the local savings bank resolved to end the practice of receiving deposits 'by' one person 'for' another. In New York the Bowery savings bank apparently decided at some point early in its history to accept deposits only from 'widows, orphans, single women and minors', but this rule did not last long. In the early decades the Bank for Savings remained truest to the spirit of the movement, and repeatedly attempted to limit free riding by well-heeled depositors.[49]

The average amount held per account in New York's savings banks on the eve of the Civil War in nearly all cases exceeded $200 in 1860, a level also exceeded in antebellum Baltimore.[50] At this time the mean wage of an unskilled labourer in New York at this time was about $1-$1.25 per diem or $250-$400 per annum. Clearly many working-class families would have been very hard pressed to accumulate savings of $200 in a savings bank. Yet the ratio of the average deposited in New York to the annual unskilled wage—say, 0.5 to 0.8—was a good deal lower than in Ireland (nearly 2) or England and Wales (over 1) in mid-century.

The records of our two banks corroborate findings based on other data. Irish immigrants living in lower Manhattan formed a majority of the EISB's early customers. People with proletarian, blue-collar occupations were very much to the fore among both male and female account-holders. Two-fifths of the men and two-thirds of the women in our database declared unskilled labouring jobs such as 'labourer', 'porter', 'charwoman', or 'domestic'. Another one-third of savers were in semi-skilled or menial occupations requiring little or no literacy. One saver in ten reported a white-collar, business, or professional occupation (e.g. teacher, printer, lawyer, merchant, clerk, priest), five per cent were housewives or women declaring no occupation, and the remaining three per cent were minors or males declaring no occupation.

Whether the founders of the TSB ever intended to target the poor specifically must remain a moot point. In evidence to the Irish Poor Inquiry[51] in 1835 local clergyman Henry Armstrong, a founding trustee, pronounced it 'prosperous', but added that 'very few of the lower orders take advantage of it'. The evidence on occupational status in the TSB records is incomplete. Clearly, however, the two main unskilled categories, labourers and servants, were under-represented. Domestic servants made up five per cent of account holders but twelve per cent of Tipperary's labour force in 1841 and fifteen per cent in 1881.[52] Labourers made up half the labour force in 1841, but 'labourers' accounted for only one saver in fifty. In effect the TSB was a farmers' bank. Account-holders described as farmers and members of farming families accounted for over one account-holder in four, and it is clear from addresses in the ledgers that a significant number of 'minors', 'spinsters', 'widows', and 'married women' were also from farming families.

6. CONCLUSION

There is plenty evidence that the poor and the working classes don't save much.[53] Whether nineteenth-century savings banks succeeded in their original aim of making the poor more provident is doubtful. We have seen how in the early years at least the new institutions catered disproportionately for the more affluent, who took advantage of the generous interest rates on offer. Though obviously some poor people availed of the new banks, the lion's share of the benefits went to relatively comfortable account-holders. The fate of the elderly poor, in particular, would remain an abiding policy concern. Almost exactly a century after the launch of the savings bank movement, Lloyd George's Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 amounted to an implicit confession that the poor were still incapable of making adequate provision for old age through their own savings.[54] The savings bank movement, fearful that it would crowd out savings, strongly opposed the non-contributory old age pension.[55] The irony is that savings banks were least effective where they were most needed. In Ireland they had even less success in getting the poor to save than across the Irish Sea. In the United States, where living standards were highest, the savings banks were most likely to attract the 'poor'. Overall, though it would be farfetched to argue that the early trustee savings banks did much harm, their contribution to the 'security and improvement of the savings of persons in humble life'[56] was rather limited.

To the limited extent that they served the poor, the new institutions put their savings to more productive use than before. For the poor the alternative would have been, not another savings institution, but a safe hiding place at home. By the same token, the middle-class origins of most deposits imply that, in the early years at least, they did not constitute net additions to savings. In Britain the situation changed after 1828, when legislation reduced the subsidization of savings banks, prompting the more interest-sensitive middle-class depositors to switch their funds elsewhere. In Ireland the savings banks clung more successfully for a time to middle-class savings.[57] Yet even in Ireland the business of the savings banks was sensitive to the interest paid by the joint stock banks and improvements in their facilities. In the United States, where the savings banks came closest to meeting their original mission, their net contribution to savings was probably greatest.[58]

TABLE 1. THE AGE-DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST-TIME DEPOSITORS IN THURLES AND NEW YORK (%)

	Thurles	EISB
Less than 20	22.6	4.2
20-9	19.2	20.1
30-9	25.7	37.8
40-9	17.0	23.1
50-9	11.6	12.3
60+	4.0	2.5
Total	943	407

Note: the data refer to Thurles 1830-1845 and to New York 1862

TABLE 2. SUMS ACCUMULATED IN ACCOUNTS OPENED		
Sums Accumulated ($)	*Women (%)*	*Men (%)*
Negative	77 (29)	234 (34)
0 – 9.99	66 (25)	144 (21)
10-49.99	49 (18)	88 (13)
50-99.99	16 (6)	48 (7)
100-199.99	20 (8)	66 (10)
200 +	38 (14)	99 (15)
Total	266	679

TABLE 3. OPENING DEPOSITS ($)		
First Deposit ($)	*Men (%)*	*Women (%)*
0 - 9.9	21 (3)	11 (4)
10 – 49.9	186 (27)	106 (40)
50 – 99.9	151 (22)	72 (27)
100 – 199.9	153 (23)	34 (13)
200 – 499.9	122 (18)	38 (14)
500 +	46 (7)	5 (2)
Total	679	266
Average	146.8	116.9

TABLE 4. EXPLAINING THE VARIATION IN SAVING PATTERNS IN THE EISB IN THE 1850s

Number of obs	799	799	799	799	799	799	Mean
Adj R2	0.4371	0.1156	0.3671	0.364	0.384	0.292	Value
Dependent Variable	*CLACCT*	*STDEPOSIT*	*TOTALDEP*	*NODEPS*	*NOWITHS*	*SAVED*	
variable	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
female	-18.117	-41.163 **	-112.74 **	.304	-.831 **	-18.118	.2728
jtwwife	22.686 **	16.046 **	16.018	-.209	-.224	22.686 *	.2591
married	-4.680	.4322	27.123	-.447	.649	-4.680	.5207
numbchld	-4.397	2.992	-2.425	.125	.013	-4.397	1.039
outnyc	88.032 **	41.972 **	112.82 **	-1.691 **	-.208	88.032 *	.0588
laborer	69.663	-83.967	2.0826	4.150	-1.332	69.663	.5069
semiskl	81.191	-94.743	18.979	4.572 *	-.928	81.191	.3529
professl	96.204	-92.588	113.86	5.687 **	-2.430	96.204	.0613
houswife	143.10	-76.559	65.547	3.045	-.262	143.10	.0538
yngmale	69.986	-93.694	-66.394	3.756	-2.495	69.986	.0200
noram	-3.725	-47.737	.706	-1.952	.069	-3.725	.0588
irl	-35.696	-117.58 **	-110.22	-3.325 *	1.599	-46.611	.7822
gb	-46.611	-149.39 **	-168.08	-.913	1.770	-35.696	.0576
ger	-30.534	-121.19 **	-79.534	-1.480	.929	-30.534	.0601
othereur	-37.68	-107.69 **	-107.08	-1.266	1.335	-37.684	.0275
iryus	1.679	3.341 **	6.516 **	.007	-.037	1.679	5.948
gbyus	-4.737	7.042 **	5.565	.380 **	-.174 **	-4.737	.4368
geryus	-8.14 *	10.285 **	8.137	.020	-.093	-8.143	.3367
euryus	-1.576	7.245	8.433	-.069	-.092	-1.576	.1176

TABLE 4, CONTINUED

Dependent Variable	*CLACCT*	*STDEPOSIT*	*TOTALDEP*	*NODEPS*	*NOWITHS*	*SAVED*	
variable	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
daysopen	.038 **		.083 **	.001 **	.001 **	0.038 *	1177.
stdepost	.817 **			-.008 **	.005 **	-11.748 *	118.9
nodeps	13.681 **	-5.218 **	20.855 **		.332 **	13.681 *	4.676
nowiths	-11.748 **	5.057 **	1.520	.400 **		-0.185 *	4.854

when a variable is a dummy variable dy/dx is for discrete change of its value from 0 to 1
** => statistically significant at 5%; * => statistically significant at 1%

KEY: CLACCT=size of account when closed; *STDEPOSIT*=starting deposit; *TOTALDEP*=total deposited: *NODEPS*= no. deposits; NOWITHS=no. withdrawals; *SAVED*=amount saved*; jtwwife*=joint account with wife; *numbchld*=number of children; *outnyc*=living outside New York; *stdepost*=starting deposit; *iryus, gbyus, euryus, geryus*=nationality dummies interacting with years in U.S.; *yngmale*=young male; *noram*=born in north America; *semiskl*=semi-skilled

TABLE 5. SAVING PATTERNS IN THE THURLES SAVINGS BANK 1829-1846

Dep. variable	*OPBAL*	*SAVED*	*MAX*	*DEPS*	*WITHDRAWALS*	*Mean*
AdjR2	0.111	0.017	0.043	0.061	0.046	*Value of*
N	2269	2269	2265	2264	2269	*Variable*
variable	dy/dx	dy/dx	dy/dx	dy/dx	dy/dx	
thurles	-1.603 **	2.106 *	-2.746 *	.3409	-.091	.3784
female	2.729 **	.5196	3.068 *	-.217	-.078	.4159
farmer	-.3781	-2.563 **	-4.48 **	1.388 **	.1760	.1744
farmfam	-3.239 **	.2552	-3.915	5.112 **	.1979	.1223
widow	-1.938	-.2191	-4.027	.2053	.9287 *	.0336
marrfem	1.628	.2956	.6496	-.580	-.560	.0653
minor	6.176 **	-2.697	9.027 **	-.603	-.759 *	.0861
spinstr	3.819 **	-.1197	2.948	-.459	-.891	.0706
lab	-1.255	-.1898	-4.364	-.150	-1.16 **	.0234
clergy	-7.466 **	-6.229	-15.68 *	3.591 *	1.892 *	.0071
ric	1.104	-5.058	-6.116	-.568	-.566	.0247
servant	1.78 *	1.191	5.863 *	-.135	.5649	.0583
loesq	.9483	-3.351	-.7485	-.842	-.406	.0238
dateopen	.0003	-.0013 **	-.0020 **	-.000	-.000	9/1838
trust	5.296 **	1.146	4.552 **	-1.78 **	-1.45 **	.4309
mintrst	-4.577 **	12.236 **	1.863	.4524	.0992	.0428
spintrst	-3.642 **	3.1333	-1.103	.8669	.7810	.0309
farfamtr	2.486 *	4.1767	9.998 **	-3.23 **	-.092	.0490

** => statistically significant at 5%; * => statistically significant at 1%

TABLE 6. OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE OF ACCOUNT HOLDERS, 1852				
A. PERCENTAGE OF DEPOSITS (£) IN EACH OCCUPATIONAL GROUP:				
	England	Wales	Scotland	Ireland
1. Gentlemen	1.2	2.1	1.0	3.6
2. Professional men	0.6	0.9	1.4	1.1
3. Working in education (M+F)	1.2	0.2	0.1	1.5
4. Tradesmen, small farmers, etc.	26.0	37.8	29.0	43.7
5. Soldiers, mariners	2.2	2.2	0.6	3.8
6. Policemen, etc.	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.9
7. Labourers, servants, journeymen	15.0	13.8	16.6	4.8
8. Domestic servants, nurses, etc. (F)	24.0	17.9	20.3	11.0
9. Dressmakers, shopwomen, female artisans	2.1	0.1	0.4	0.7
10. Married women, spinsters, widows	13.2	14.5	13.6	19.1
11. Minors	8.2	5.6	6.6	8.3
12. Trust accounts	1.5	1.9	0.1	1.0
13. Misc.	4.6	3.1	10.4	0.6
Total (£)	26,317,616	583.748	1.577.035	1.429.840

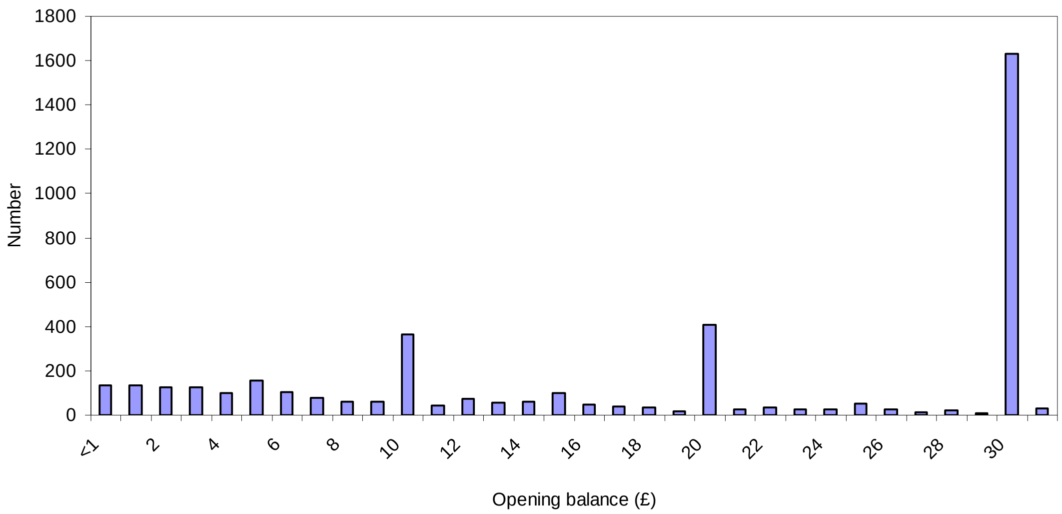
B. PERCENTAGE OF ACCOUNTS BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP:				
	England	Wales	Scotland	Ireland
1. Gentlemen	1.1	2.5	1.2	3.0
2. Professional men	0.5	1.0	0.8	0.8
3. Working in education (M+F)	1.0	0.0	0.1	1.5
4. Tradesmen, small farmers, etc.	23.9	31.7	25.9	40.0
5. Soldiers, mariners	1.6	2.2	0.5	2.9
6. Policemen, etc.	0.2			
7. Labouers, servants, journeymen	12.6	15.2	16.3	7.2
8. Domestic servants, nurses, etc. (F)	22.1	20.1	21.3	14.8
9. Dressmakers, shopwomen, female artisans	2.4	0.1	0.4	1.1
10. Married women, spinsters, widows	11.1	13.7	13.4	18.2
11. Minors	16.3	9.9	11.6	8.3
12. Trust accounts	2.1	1.3	0.1	1.0
13. Misc.	5.0	2.2	8.4	0.6
Total (£)	1,004,143	21,815	110,341	51,848

C. AVERAGE (£) BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP				
	England	Wales	Scotland	Ireland
1. Gentlemen	28	22	12	33
2. Professional me	29	24	24	38
3. Working in education (M+F)	32	43	15	27
4. Tradesmen, small farmers, etc. (*)	28	32	16	30
5. Soldiers, mariners	35	27	17	36
6. Policemen, etc.	34	33	13	39
7. Labourers, servants, journeymen	31	24	15	18
8. Domestic servants, nurses, etc. (F)	30	24	14	20
9. Dressmakers, shopwomen, female artisans	24	24	15	17
10. Married women, spinsters, widows	32	28	15	29
11. Minors	13	15	8	27
12. Trust accounts	18	18	11	28
13. Misc.	33	24	18	27
Total (£)	26	27	14	28
(*) Tradesmen and their assistants, small farmers, clerks, mechanics, artisans not described as journeymen, and their wives				

TABLE 7. SAVINGS PATTERNS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, 1850				
Country	Deposits per account	Withdrawals per account	Average Deposit £ s d	Average withdrawal £ s d
E & W	1.1	0.5	5 17 2	14 2 7½
Scotland	1.8	1.0	3 18 0	5 9 4
Ireland	1.5	1.0	8 15 10½	8 6 8½

Source: BPP, 1852

Figure 1: OPENING BALANCES IN THURLES, 1829-70



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ENDNOTES

1 Davis, *Friendly Advice*, p. 8.

2 In Britain economists David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus lent a hand for a time. See Ricardo, *Works and Correspondence*, vol. 7, pp. 34n., 187, 220-1.

3 Anon., 'Cork Savings Bank', pp. 178-80; O'Shea, 'Thurles savings bank, pp. 95-7.

4 *Hansard* 35 (1817), col. 223 (George Rose); Horne, *History*, p. 78.

5 E.g. Davis, *Friendly Advice*, p. 9.

[6] *Hansard*, 35 (1817), p. 348.

[7] Fishlow, 'Trustee savings banks'. Neil Smelser (*Social Change*, 373) had pointed out a few years earlier that 'the savings banks...have a paradoxical side...[T]he founders thought they would relieve the poor...[T] he primary participants were *not* those dependent on poor relief.' Clapham had made the same point in 1930 (in *The Economic History of Modern Britain*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1930), I, p. 592), as acknowledged by Fishlow ('Trustee savings banks', p. 27).

[8] Alter, Goldin, and Rotella, 'The savings of ordinary Americans'.

[9] Our New York database consists of a one-in-ten sample of accounts opened between late 1852 and late 1857. We excluded a small number of accounts where some of the details are illegible. Our Thurles database includes all accounts.

[10] Horne, *History*, 379-85; Albert Fishlow, 'Trustee savings banks'.

[11] Dillon, *History and Development of Banking in Ireland*, p. 103; McCreary, *By All Accounts*; Tyrrell, *Belfast Savings Bank*.

[12] BPP 1837/8, Table No. 14; *Thom's Almanac 1848*, pp. 192-3; Pratt, *Progress of Savings Banks*; W.H. Porter, 'Savings banks: a review of papers dealing with savings banks', *Dublin University Magazine*, 34 (1849), pp. 127-38; Black, *Economic thought and the Irish Question*, pp. 152-3; O'Shea, 'Thurles Savings Bank'; Barrow, *Emergence of the Irish Banking System*, p. 223. The total of seventy-four savings banks excludes two branches of the Dublin Savings Bank. In 1845 the Bank of Ireland, as keeper of the government's account, held an additional £1.6 million of public funds.

[13] http://www.kennebecsavings.com/h7.htm; Sherman, *Modern Story*, part 1; Olmstead, *New York Savings Banks*, pp. 6-7; Payne and Davis, *Savings Bank of Baltimore*, p. 17.

[14] Nearly half a century ago Peter Payne and Lance Davis speculated that the failure of the new institution to spread west was due to the 'egalitarianism' of the newly settled West and the reluctance of its poor to accept charity from their 'betters'. Perhaps, but such a cultural interpretation hardly accounts for the lack of savings banks in the South. See Payne and Davis, *Savings Bank of Baltimore*, p. 19.

[15] Compare Orcutt, *Miracle of Mutual Savings*, pp. 20-1; Payne and Davis, *Baltimore*, pp. 27-36.

[16] Sherman, *Modern Story*, p. 46; www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/speccol/4313/sbbhist.html. In Boston the leading petitioner in favour of the Five Cents Savings Bank in 1854 was one Rev. Edward Edmunds, and the bank was first located in the Second Universalist Meeting House on School Street (Kyle, *Eighteen Fifties,* pp. 69-77).

[17] Sherman, *Modern Story*, p. 39; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, p. 444-5; Olmstead, *New York Savings Banks*, pp. 77-86, 142-3.

[18] William Dana Orcutt, *Miracle of Mutual Savings*, pp. 20-1; Olmstead, *New York Savings Banks*, pp. 126-31.

[19] In New York several banks paid six per cent on sums of under $500, and five per cent on sums over $500. See Olmstead, *New York Savings Banks*, pp. 36-38.

[20] Albion, *Port of New York*, pp. 270-8.

[21] Manning, *Century*, p. 181.

[22] *Census 1841*, p. 238; Mokyr, 'Irish history with the potato', p. 29.

[23] Barrow, *Emergence of the Irish Banking System*, 160-3.

[24] Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary*, vol. II, p. 623; Condon, 'Mid-nineteenth century Thurles'.

[25] James O'Shea, 'Thurles Savings Bank', pp. 96-7.

[26] The bank and its archive have already been the subject of a very fine study by James O'Shea. A computerized version of O'Shea's database of account holders is fundamental to what follows. See O'Shea, 'Thurles Savings Bank'.

[27] Ó Gráda, 'Institutional import'.

[28] Sherman, *Modern Story*, pp. 274-7; Olmstead, *New York*, pp. 15-6, 32, 64; Ó Gráda, 'The famine'; Ó Gráda and White, 'Panics of 1854 and 1857'.

[29] Alter *et al*., 'Savings', p. 761.

[30] The inner ring included Loughmore, Drom, Moycarkey, Templetouhy, and Holycross; the outer ring Clonoulty, Templemore,Upperchurch, Boherlahan, Borrisoleigh, Gurtnahoe, and Killenaule.

[31] In Philadelphia well over a quarter of recently-opened accounts in 1850 were held by people under 25. See Alter *et al.* 'Savings', pp. 745-6.

[32] *Census 1841*, pp. 20-1.

[33] Compare Alter *et al.*, 'Savings of ordinary Americans', p. 738.

[34] The means by provincial origin were Ulster $162, Munster $97, Leinster $129, Connacht $104, while the means for the main non-Irish account holders were German $142, British $115, and American $193. The average for unskilled and semi-skilled workers was $129, for professionals $221, and for housewives $132. All these averages were subject to wide variation, however.

[35] Some customers who closed their accounts re-opened them later, however.

[36] Alter *et al.*, 'Savings of ordinary Americans', p. 764.

[37] E.g. Payne and Davis, *Savings Bank of Baltimore*, pp. 27-32.

[38] *Hansard*, 37 (1818), cols. 1156, 1177 (General Thornton), 1157 (Mr. Babington), 1178 (Chancellor of the Exchequer); Ricardo, *Works*, vol. V, 128-9; *Hansard*, 2nd ser. 18 (1828), 258 (Hume); *Hansard*, 3rd ser. 17 (1833), cols. 199, 1031 (Thomas Attwood); Ricardo, *Works*, vol. XI, xxi.

[39] BPP (1850) Q. 81, 543-4.

[40] Horne, *History*, 97-8; Fishlow, 'Trustee savings banks'. Horne's official history is indispensable, but it is marred by its apologetic stance even on issues of purely historical interest.

[41] BPP (1850), p. v.

[42] In 1837 the average deposited in Ireland was £28, compared to £31 in England and £29 in Wales (BPP 1837/8, vol. 47, Table No. 14). Since income per head in Ireland was probably less than half that of the rest of the United Kingdom in this period Irish depositors must have come from further up the income distribution.

[43] Anon., 'Cork Savings Bank', 179; BPP (1852a), 'Return of savings banks in the United Kingdom'; BPP (1836), *Poor Inquiry*, supplement to Appendix E.

[44] A similar occupational breakdown of depositors in Wexford in the southeast of Ireland shows that there too the better off were over-represented. The strong farming presence and the very weak representation of labourers are perhaps the most significant features in the profile of depositors on 20th November 1841, though note that servants (one-fifth of the total) seem well represented too. See Foster, *Letters,* p. 494. See too *Freeman's Journal*, 15 Dec. 1845.

[45] Compare Fishlow, 'Trustee savings banks'.

[46] *Thom's Almanac 1848*, pp. 192-3.

[47] Knowles, *History of the Bank for Savings*, 172.

[48] www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/speccol/4313/sbbhist.html.

[49] Wilcox, *History of the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society*, p. 148; Kniffin , *Savings Bank*, p. 12n; Olmstead, *New York Savings Banks*, pp. 58-64.

[50] Payne and Davis, *Baltimore*, 22; Olmstead, *New York Savings Banks*, pp. 157-161. In Boston the average sum deposited in the Five Cents Savings Bank grew from $42 in 1855 to $70 two years later, $94 in 1860, and $150 in 1868. See Kyle, *Eighteen Fifties*, pp. 83-6, 90.

[51] BPP (1836), *Poor Inquiry*, supplement to Appendix E.

[52] *1841 Census*, p. 238; *Census of Ireland, 1881: Part I (Area, Houses and Population, vol. 2, Munster)* (Dublin, 1882), pp. 778, 782, 788.

[53] According to James *et al*. ('Have working-class Americans always been low savers?') 'a majority of working-class families in any given year at the end of the [nineteenth] century saved none of their incomes at all'.

[54] On the old pension and Ireland see Ó Gráda, 'The greatest blessing of all'.

[55] In the event aggregate deposits in neither trustee savings banks nor the post office savings bank were affected, though the pension may have been partly responsible for the big, once-off drop in the number of accounts open in the post office savings bank from 11.0 million at the end of 1908 to 7.9 million a year later. This suggests that the post office may have been more successful in targeting the poor than the trustee savings banks. See the data in Horne, *History of Savings Banks*, pp. 389, 392.

[56] *The Christian Disciple* (Boston), cited in Sherman, *Modern Story*, p. 46.

[57] Fishlow, 'Trustee savings banks'.

[58] Barrow, *Emergence of Irish Banking*, p. 220; Checkland, *Scottish Banking,* p. 519; Fishlow, 'Trustee savings banks'. Compare the boast of one of the managers of the Coleraine Savings Bank in 1834 that savings had been 'gradually withdrawn from the branch of the Provincial Bank.... and lodged with us'. See National Archives of Ireland, OP 1834/403 (letter from William Traill to E.J. Littlejohn M.P., 6 March 1834).