

Market Square – Then and Now

We look at Market Square now and think isn't it fabulous for Mallow having a brand new shopping centre. It has everything, shops, apartments, theatres and an underground car park. But behind all the development do people ever wonder what it was like in the past? I know I do! What was there before the glamorous shops and apartments?

On the 29th of August 2003, Mallow Cattle Mart ceased operating bringing to a close many centuries of continuous live trading in the town. Set up in 1959, the mart had heralded a bright new era for the cattle trade, where farmers got the best and fairest price for their animals. The mart was built on Mallow's Fair Field which surrounded the old marketplace and Market House erected by Charles Denham Orlando Jephson in 1823. Before that markets and fairs were held in Main Street itself.

Fairs were held quarterly on New Year's Day, Shrove Tuesday, May 13th, July 27th and October 30th. The oldest fairs to have been established were those held in May and October. Fairs and markets were originally held in Main Street, Mallow until the 1820's. In that decade Jephson built New Street which later became known as O'Brien Street. He built the Market House at the top of O'Brien Street, gave two fields nearby for fairs and built a new road leading to what was known as Kilmallock Road, now Fair Street. A stone over the arched doorway of the Market House has CDOJ (Charles Denham Orlando Jephson) and 1823 (the year it was built) inscribed on it. One of the clauses of the development of the shopping centre was that the front wall of the Market House with the inscription be kept. It is now incorporated into the new development. Originally, at the top of O'Brien Street in front of the Market wall sat a water trough and an official weigh-bridge.



The animals milling along the Main Street caused a lot of inconvenience. Having so many animals in the street was bound to cause damage to the street-side properties as

well as general mess which was dragged into shops on customers' boots and necessitated regular clean-ups. Even when the fair was moved and until it finished in the 1950's shopkeepers had to take precautions to protect the fronts of their shops. Some had strong bars across their windows, e.g. Albert Lynch's pub. While others put up wrought iron railings, e.g. Contempo, next to Dunnes Stores. The sheep fair was held where the County Council yard and the old fire brigade yard were. The sheep market consisting of sheep pens was built by Sir Jephson in 1860.

The advent of the Railway to Mallow in 1848, gave a great boost to the local fairs. Dealers from all over the country could now take part in the events as they became easily accessible via train. The end of the fair came in 1959, when Brigadier Maurice Denham Jephson and Mallow Castle Estate Company sold the fair grounds and the rights to the fairs, to Ballyclough Co-Operative Creamery Limited. Ballyclough Co-op set up the cattle mart on the site of the cattle fair ensuring a continuity of trading on the site.

This transaction involved the Market Place and the cattle mart area around it as well as the enclosed sheep fair ground across the road. The site of the horse fair was not included as this ground had already been ceded to the parish of Mallow. It was used to provide sites for the Boy's School, social service facilities, the youth club and swimming pool. Some farmers protested with the passing of old ways by trying to continue trading animals on the street, however this didn't last long. Times had changed and farmers realised that the mart was an easier way and a fairer way to sell their produce. Animals would soon be trucked to the mart. Droving cattle along public roads and through the streets of Mallow became a thing of the past. Over the years the mart was responsible for creating a bustling trade and commercial centre in Mallow town.

Now Mallow is expanding as a residential and service town with easy access to the city of Cork. A development like Market Square shopping centre was exactly what Mallow needed. Mallow is currently in another boom phase with new housing going up by the hundreds. Our town is an example of how things change and time moves on.

- William O'Brien
Freelance Writer
Mallowtown.com
(Second place winner of the 2005 Writers Competition)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Mallow Field Club Journal no. 21 Seamus Crowley "*Notes on Mallow Fairs and Markets*"
Mallow Field Club Journal, no.1 and 2 Jim Copps "*A Walk Through Mallow*"
Maurice Denham Jephson, "*An Anglo-Irish miscellany*" (Dublin, 1964)