

West Cork: Stories of the Revolution, 1916-1923

Cover Sheet – Dreeny National School

Name: Shane, Alison and Orla Dreeny

Age: 11, 10 and 9

School: Dreeny National School, Dreeny, Skibbereen, Co. Cork

Class: 5th, 4th and 3rd class

Name of person/ people you spoke to:

George (my dad)

THE FAMINE SOUP KITCHEN

By Shane, Alison & Orla Deane.

Dreeny National School.

The famine soup kitchen was opened on November 1846 by the Skibbereen Committee of Gratuitous Relief. The food or soup recommended by authorities at the time was beef, water, pearl barley, onions, flour, salt and brown sugar. The Old Steam Mill building in Skibbereen, on the banks of the Ilen River, which hosted the famine. Skibbereen's former famine soup kitchen is once more a centre to remember all those who perished during the Great Hunger. The old steam mill, which is situated on the banks of the Ilen river, across from the West Cork Hotel was purchased by Cork County Council as an exhibition space in recent years and has the double distinction of being Ireland's first steam powered mill and the country's first soup kitchen, set up to feed the starving people in the famine. The soup kitchen is finally being restored. Next to it is the Heritage Centre. The soup kitchen is 4 stories tall. Built in the 1780s as a mill, the large stone building went on to house one of the first largest-scale famine soup kitchen in Ireland. It opened on the 7th November 1846 and at its height of operation, some 8,600 starving people were fed daily from the soup kitchen. The famine began quite mysteriously in September 1845 as leaves on potato plants suddenly

turned black and curled, then rotted, seemingly the result of a fog that had wafted across the fields of Ireland. The Great Famine was also called Irish Potato Famine. The famine ended in 1852. The Great Irish Famine is the second-deadliest disaster in Great Britain and Ireland by death toll (1,000,000 to 1,500,000). Skibbereen was one of the worst effected in Ireland. At Abbeystrewry in Skibbereen, there are famine burial pits which holds the remains of up to 10,000 people.