

P 95

Goodbody Papers

The Goodbody Family were originally from Clara, Co Offaly. They were Quakers and from the nineteenth century were prominent in the Irish Milling Industry. In 1865 the Goodbody's opened a very successful Jute Mill in Clara. Through this business they came into contact with the Limerick Milling concerns. Limerick was a very important milling centre at this time- the local milling industry was dominated by the Russell's and the Bannatyne's. The Bannatyne business was performing well but James Bannatyne was an old man and his only son, had no interest in the family business. James Bannatyne began to search around for potential investors who would safeguard his mills future.¹ His search came to focus on the Goodbodys, a Quaker family from Offaly who had opened a jute sack plant at Clara in 1865. One of their better customers, was James Bannatyne. He was clearly impressed by the Goodbodys and when he decided to sell up in 1893, he offered the company to the family.

The Goodbodys had great difficulty raising the funds required and eventually entered into a partnership with Bannatyne. Gradually the Goodbodys were able to obtain complete control of the Bannatyne business. The Goodbodys were able to acquire Russell's milling concerns at a low cost as 'they were pretty run down' by 1898.¹ The Goodbodys kept Bannatynes and Russell's as separate limited companies, which traded under their own brands. However, because of the need to buy out the existing Bannatyne shareholders there was no proper provision for depreciation, resulting in the company being under capitalised. This was to create later difficulties for the company. Goodbodys invested in their new mills and at an early date purchased a pneumatic tug, for unloading grain from ships.

The Goodbody's expansion into Limerick was timely and the local industry grew rapidly. Prior to the outbreak of the First World War the family owned mills and stores throughout the city. The Goodbody's made substantial profits during World War I, although the British government took over the running of the Limerick Mills in 1917, as they did with other mills in Ireland and Britain. The Goodbody's after World War I invested heavily in their Limerick mills, especially the famous Newtown Pery Mills, in Henry Street, they also acquired mills in Cork.

However, by 1925 the economy of the new Irish Free State was in difficulties and British millers were importing large amounts of cheap flour into Ireland. The Goodbody's were struggling by 1928. The family's own money and that of depositors was effectively keeping the Limerick mills operating. By 1929 the Goodbody's were on the verge of bankruptcy and their Bank was putting pressure on them to find external investors. In late 1929 they entered into negotiations with the huge Ranks Ltd, one of the world's biggest millers at this time. Ranks acquired all the Limerick mills from Goodbodys. Several of the Goodbody family continued to be employed by Ranks in the Limerick mills for many decades after the takeover.

This small collection contains material from the 1920s. They are of great interest to researchers for several reasons. They offer an insight into a family run business and the Irish milling industry in the difficult 1920s and P95 2 offers a unique insight into Limerick during the Civil War.

Inventory of Collection:

1 Profit & Loss account for James Bannatyne & Sons Ltd. for year to 28 February 1920 prepared by Stokes Brothers & Pim, chartered accountants of Dublin.

2 Typescript copy of letter 9 July 1922 from James P. Goodbody of Limerick to John Brown, who was the secretary of the Irish Flour Millers Association in Dublin. This describes the situation in Limerick during the civil war when the two sides were fighting in the city and how it affected the operation of the mills. The intention of the letter was to let his father, who was in Clara and not in contact with him, know the situation. I do not know where the original letter is.

3 Letters 20,22 and 27 January 1926 from A. & L. Goodbody, solicitors of Dublin to Harold Goodbody concerning a proposed new holding company and the issue of new shares.

4 Letter 26 January 1928 from James P. Goodbody to his brother Harold Goodbody concerning an unrelated family matter and describing a meeting with the Bank of Ireland concerning the financial position of the mills.

5 Letters 30 June 1928 and 5 July 1928 from Gerald Goodbody to Harold Goodbody concerning J.N. Russell & Sons results.

6 Financial statements for James Bannatyne & Sons and J.N. Russell & Sons for half year to 25 August 1928, financial statement for James Bannatyne & Sons for year to 25 August 1928 and combined balance sheet for the two firms at 25 August 1928.

7 Copy of Bannatynes balance sheet at 25 August 1928 showing list of depositors and creditors.

8 Copy letter from auditors, Kenndy Smellie & Co. of Dublin to the Directors of James Bannatyne & Sons Ltd. proposing writing down the assets of both

companies and draft formal notices for a meeting of shareholders at Limerick
on 24 November 1928