

BROS.

ENDA SHEPPARD LOOKS AT THE FUTURE OF THE CBs

They had gathered to say goodbye. The year was 1987 and Paul Walsh, auctioneer and newsagent in the town for over fifty years, was particularly sad as he sat through the farewell dinner in a local hotel for the departing Christian Brothers community. He had seen them come and go.

He could scarcely believe it: the Christian Brothers were leaving Templemore. Paul was the last surviving member there that night of the 'Templemore Christian Brothers School Committee' that had paved the way for the Brothers' arrival to the then struggling North Tipperary town some fifty-five years previously.

As he joined in the relating of memories and anecdotes spanning half-a-century he had the satisfaction at least of knowing the Christian Brothers would not be forgotten. Their legacy was all around them, a solid, thriving community, that prosperity due in no small measure to the educational foundation laid down by the same Order. He was secure, too, in the knowledge that their excellent work would be carried on by the new co-educational school, incorporating the old CBS and run by the Mercy Sisters.

"It was like the church was after going; we thought they were here to stay," says Paul Walsh today, as he reflects on the Christian Brothers tenure in this old garrison town — now, of course,



home to the Garda Training Centre and centre of a solid farming community. "They were part of all our lives."

Before the Christian Brothers arrived in Templemore, there was only one tiny primary school for boys and no secondary school. The few that continued beyond primary had to travel five miles to Templetuohy or eight to Thurles. Some went as boarders to Mount St Joseph's in Roscrea, twelve miles away, or further afield. Paul Walsh left Mount St Joseph's before his Leaving Cert to take over the family business when his father died, leaving behind his twin brother Peter, who eventually went on to be a secondary teacher.

"You have to consider the times that were in it. People

today really have no idea of how tough they were and the dire necessity of bringing the Brothers to the town."

The years 1924 to 1939 are commonly regarded as fifteen of the worst years of international depression. There was the Wall Street crash, followed by the Great Depression and, at home, the bitter aftermath of the civil war, and Eamon de Valera's economic war with Britain which was disastrous for a Templemore dependent on an agricultural industry that was at its lowest ebb since the famine. Calves were being killed because they weren't worth the rearing;