

VICTOR BEWLEY

Lived: Born May 24th 1912 in Rathgar - Died May 19th 1999

Best Known For: The Bewley's Cafés Ltd, Peace Work, Philanthropy, Campaigning for Travellers' rights

Family background: The Bewley family originated in France and moved to England in the middle ages. Mungo Bewley moved to Edenderry, Co Offaly in 1700 and all Bewleys in Ireland today are descended from him. Father - Ernest Bewley; Mother - Susan Emily Bewley. He was the second eldest of 6 children. Victor married Winifred Burne in 1937

Education: Rathgar Jnr School (founded by Quaker Isabel Douglas) followed by Bootham School in York

Professional life: Victor had wanted to be an artist, concert pianist or a missionary. His family, on the other hand, had groomed him from an early age to become Managing Director of Bewley's Oriental Cafés. Following the untimely death of his father, he found himself thrust into the role of MD in a rapidly growing company at the young age of 21. In 1972 the Bewley family relinquished their shares and Bewleys Cafés Ltd became a common-ownership company, allowing long-term staff to participate in the running of the business and to benefit from the firm's profits. The profit-sharing scheme worked on the basis that whatever dividend was paid out an equal amount had to be paid to assist under-privileged people.

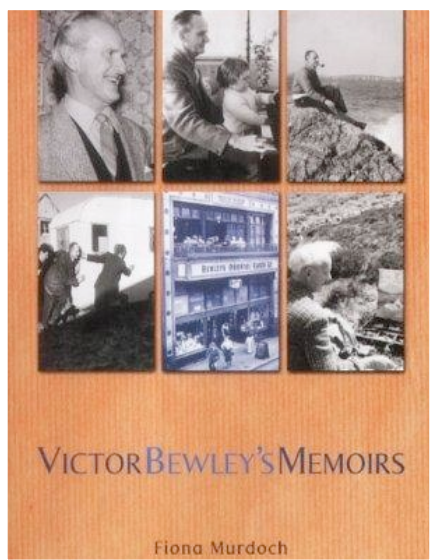
Peace Work: Victor was among a small group of people who held a series of meetings with members of the IRA, including during the height of the troubles in the 1970s. At one point he was asked to act as a go-between for the IRA and the British Government when in 1972 the Chief of the IRA, Dáithí Ó Conaill, asked

BEWLEY'S CAFÉ, DUBLIN

Although it is no longer owned by the Bewley family, the Bewley's Oriental Café situated on Grafton



Street in Dublin is still famous internationally, and there are over 4000 outlets in Ireland alone selling the Bewley's brand teas and coffees. Over 1 million customers visit its flagship store every year. When the café closed briefly in 2004 more than 10,000 people signed a petition to try and save it. The Café served a dual purpose for 4 years during the War, a café by day and a distribution point for free hot meals to children after 6pm, providing a plate of stew, rice pudding and a glass of milk to kids who would otherwise have faced illness due to poor diet.



Victor Bewley's Memoirs is based on a series of interviews with his grand-daughter Fiona Murdoch

him to deliver a message of peace to the British Government. Victor also chaired a series of cross-border/cross-community meetings in the early 70s with Denis Barritt (see fact-file 4).

The Travelling Community: In the early 1960s Victor Bewley felt led to do his best to change people's negative attitude towards Travellers; he also felt access to education and improved halting facilities were vital. He devoted time and energy unstintingly to Travellers' causes for many years, becoming secretary to the Dublin Committee for Travelling People and then chairman of the National Council. In 1974 he was appointed adviser to the Minister for Local Government on the programme for the settlement of Travellers. He also invited two Traveller families to live on his farm in the Dublin mountains, as well as a former prisoner who wanted to "go straight".

Faith: Victor was a sensitive man with a quiet determination to help others. In his memoirs he says, "I believe there is a power greater than ourselves and outside of ourselves that can touch us, mould us, guide us, strengthen us and shed light on life's path. That power is love. To know this power is not a matter of intellectual understanding, but a matter of experience. To orientate our lives towards the spirit of love is the way to the experience. If we aim to do this, it profoundly affects our values and our whole list of priorities: it affects our attitudes to our fellow men and our attitudes to material possessions."