

## Waterford and World War 1

The following exhibition, from the archives held in Waterford City and County, provides a glimpse into aspects of Waterford and World War 1 in the 1914-1918 period.

### Introduction

The First World War's origins are multifaceted, involving a tense European landscape of competing power and security interests.

A network of alliances led to widespread conflict following [the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand](#) of Austria-Hungary on 28 June 1914. Austria-Hungary's suspicion of Serbian involvement in the assassination prompted its declaration of war on Serbia on 31 July 1914, triggering Russia's support for Serbia and subsequent declarations of war by Germany on Russia and France.

Britain entered the war to uphold its commitment to Belgium, declared in [the Treaty of London 1839](#). Germany's invasion of Belgium prompted Britain's declaration of war on 4 August 1914. At this time, Ireland, still part of Britain, was also drawn into the conflict.

In Ireland, the focus was on achieving Home Rule. John Redmond, MP for Waterford, and leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, had navigated the Home Rule Bill through Parliament, temporarily excluding Northern Ireland. The outbreak of war delayed the bill's enactment. Redmond urged the Irish Volunteers to join the British Army, a call many from Waterford heeded, as evidenced in the [Waterford War Dead publication](#) as well as the [World War 1 memorial in Dungarvan](#).

### Waterford and John Redmond

John Redmond represented Waterford from 1891 until 1918 and played an important role in rallying support for the war effort in Waterford. John Edward Redmond was born in Kilrane, County Wexford on 1st September 1856. The Redmond family were a well to do Catholic family and his father, William, was nationalist MP for Wexford.



John Redmond followed his father into political life and was elected MP for New Ross in 1881. He was MP for North Wexford from 1885 until 1891 and was MP for Waterford City from 1891 until his death in 1918.

John Redmond was a supporter of Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and he continued to support Parnell following the split in the party because of the scandal of Parnell's involvement in the O'Shea divorce case in 1890.

Redmond became leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party when it reunited in 1900. He led the party to hold the balance of power in Westminster and used this position to leverage an agreement from the Liberal Government to introduce the third Home Rule Bill in April 1912. The Home Rule Bill had a contentious passage through the Houses of Parliament with the Ulster Unionist Party vigorously opposed to its introduction. Redmond's work to bring the Home Rule Bill through the Houses of Parliament was recognised and appreciated by his constituents in Waterford. On 7th April 1914 Waterford City Council resolved:

*"That we heartily congratulate Mr. John E. Redmond MP and the Irish Parliamentary Party on the success of the Home Rule Bill, and we desire to express our enabled confidence in our Leader and his gallant band for their wisdom, energy, determination and ability on all occasions, and especially at the present crisis our pleasure at last night's majority on the division on the second reading of the Bill, and that a copy of this resolution be sent to Mr. Redmond".*

Waterford County Council also expressed their support for John Redmond and the Irish Party and trusted "...that any action they take is in our best interests".

On 2nd June 1914 Waterford City Council resolved:

*"...that we the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the County Borough of Waterford, in council assembled, tender to our worthy representative Mr. John E. Redmond MP, and the Irish Party, our hearty and sincere congratulations on the passage of the Home Rule Bill, and we earnestly pray that Mr. Redmond*

*may be long spared to guide the destinies of our country in the Old House at College Green."*

At the same time as the Home Rule Bill was making its way through the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, war was making its way through the countries of Europe. John Redmond was a strong supporter of the Allied cause and exhorted members of the Irish Volunteer Force, established to protect nationalist interests in the face of Ulster Volunteer Force militant opposition to Home Rule, to join the British Army and fight. On 4th August 1914 Waterford City Council resolved:

*"That we the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the County Borough of Waterford, in meeting assembled, thoroughly approve of, and heartily congratulate our working city member, Mr. John E. Redmond MP on the able and statesmanlike speech delivered by him last evening in the House of Commons on the War Question."*

Many Waterford people responded to John Redmond's call to arms and joined the British Army. However, the people of Ireland were still focused on the success of the Home Rule Bill and on the visit of John Redmond to Waterford on Sunday 11th October 1914. On 6th April 1914 Waterford City Council resolved:

*"...at this, our first meeting since the passing of the Home Rule Bill, heartily congratulate Mr. John E. Redmond MP our wise and able leader, and the faithful Irish Parliamentary Party, on the great and glorious triumph of the placing of the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book, and that we tender them our sincere and grateful thanks for their strenuous labours and constant and punctual attendance during the long and weary historic struggle for freedom for Ireland, which has now come to a successful end."*

An address was written to be presented to John Redmond on his visit to Waterford on 11th October 1914, on 18th August 1915 and on 3rd October 1916.

- [Address to John Redmond 11th October 1914](#)
- [Address to John Redmond 18th August 1915](#)
- [Address to John Redmond 3rd October 1916](#)



The first address was given on his first visit to Waterford after the successful placement of the Home Rule Bill on the statute book.

The August 1915 address was given to support John Redmond's stance of support for the war effort and the 3 October 1916 address was given after the Easter Rising 1916 to reiterate the support of Waterford City Council for John Redmond's stance in supporting the war effort and delaying the introduction of

Home Rule.

Attempts by the British Government to introduce a form of Home Rule that allowed for the permanent partition of Ireland fell apart and damaged the support for the Irish Parliamentary Party. John Redmond was part of an Irish Convention to try and bring about an agreement on Home Rule from July 1917 to March 1918 but this fell apart, and his influence was waning. He was suffering from ill-health at the time, and he died on 6th March 1918.

### **Recruitment & Conscription in Waterford**

Waterford responded to the call from John Redmond for recruits and both Waterford City Council and Waterford County Council supported the recruiting efforts.

On 25th May 1915, the Chairman of Waterford County Council stated that he had a communication from Count Edmund de la Poer in reference to forming a Recruiting Committee for the County. The Council decided to request that Count de la Poer as His Majesty's Lieutenant for the County form the Committee and that they would co-operate. On 30th November 1915 Mr. G.F. Sparrow appeared before the Council and explained the policy and aims of the new Department of Recruiting for Ireland. It was proposed by Mr. Greene, seconded by Mr. O'Gorman, and resolved:

*“That this meeting of the Waterford County Council having heard the statement made by Mr. Sparrow on behalf of the New Department of Recruiting for Ireland, hereby approves of its methods and endorses its policy, recognising as it does the gravity of the present international situation and the need for every available man to be made aware of his individual responsibilities to the County. The County Council also calls upon all employers in the County to facilitate voluntary recruiting, whenever possible, by guaranteeing to keep open the positions of their employees in the event of their joining the army”.*

On 1st December 1914, it was resolved that the Mayor, High Sheriff and the corporation attend in state at the review of the National Volunteers by Mr. John E. Redmond M.P. at Limerick on Sunday 20th December. On 7th December 1915 it was proposed by Councillor Hearne, seconded by Councillor Hyland and resolved by Waterford City Council at the request of Mr. Sparrow that the High Sheriff and Alderman Hackett be appointed to act on the recruiting committee now being formed in the City.



Many in Waterford City and County responded to these recruitment drives and joined the British Army. The service of some of these men was recognised in the magazine “Irish Life” which contained a supplement called “Our Heroes” which included photographs and

brief biographies of Irish soldiers and officers in the British Army who were either killed in action or mentioned in dispatches for acts of bravery.

South Dublin County Libraries [has created an online database](#) of these biographies as part of the Decade of Centenaries 1913-1922.

### **Waiting for Orders**

Staff in the local authorities also joined up to serve and in response for government calls for organisations and businesses to support anyone enlisting, staff were granted a leave of absence with their jobs held for their return. In some cases, staff were paid part of their salary in their absence.

- On 1st October 1914, MF Casey, Clerk in the County Surveyor's Office was granted a leave of absence due to war duties and was granted a half salary during his absence.
- On 15th October 1914, James Flynn a contractor with Waterford County Council and a naval reservist in Carbally, Dunmore East was called up for active service and payments were to be made to his sureties in his absence.
- On 2nd November 1915, a letter was received by Waterford City Council from Private John Maddocks and others applying for half pay, this was referred to the Street Committee for a decision.
- On 1st August 1916, Miss Bridie O'Connor, a Tuberculosis nurse, was granted 12 months leave of absence for Military Service.

While the City and the County Councils were supportive of efforts at voluntary recruitment, they heartily condemned any attempts to introduce conscription. On 3rd August 1915, the City Council resolved that the resolution from the Committee Rooms, 41 York Street, Dublin, signed by J. Kelly, Hon. Secretary regarding conscription "be consigned to the wastepaper basket".

On 23rd April 1918, Waterford County Council resolved:

*"That this Special Meeting of the County Council of Waterford hereby declares on behalf of the People of the County Waterford their unalterable and determined opposition to the imposition of compulsory military service in Ireland against the wishes of the Irish People, and further that only an Irish Parliament should have authority in such a manner, and for the application of Ireland of the principle of self-determination which it is persuaded the British People are fighting for in this war. We also endorse the action and subscribe our names to the solemn pledge to resist conscription approved by the hierarchy and the people's political leaders".*

Among the records of the City Council are three notebooks containing a petition against the introduction of conscription. You can search the list of names and addresses on the petition, please note, in some cases the names and addresses were not clearly written and not sufficiently legible to transcribe.

- [A Petition Against Conscription to the British Army during the First World War](#)

### **Waterford from 1914 - 1918**

The war impacted on the day-to-day life of Waterford people. The import and export of goods was badly affected by the war and as a result the cost of living rose. The government called for thrift and economy from the populace and many infrastructure works were brought to a halt. The war also brought refugees to Waterford. Concerts were performed to raise money for Belgian Refugees in Dungarvan in 1914 and a small group of Belgian refugees stayed in Dungarvan.

On 16th November 1914, Dungarvan Urban District Council refused an application from a young woman to mind children until the end of the war made by P. McCloskey, Cappagh Ward saying that the Council "...did not approve of having the Belgian Refugees let on hire as servants".

As the war continued, the cost of living increased and to attempt to counteract the increases in the cost-of-living war bonuses were introduced. On 2nd March 1915 Waterford City Council resolved, after much discussion:

*"...that the wages of all corporation labourers be increased to £1 a week, in consequence of the increased cost of living, owing to the War, prices having gone up in many cases 20 per cent; and that it be referred to the Finance and Law Committee to consider by what means the necessary amount for the proposed amount be raised".*

On 16th March 1915, a further resolution was passed asking the Finance and Law Committee "to review the rate of wages at present paid to their workmen with a view to see if it be practicable to make some extra allowance to them during the War period owing to the present high prices of provisions." The wages of Miss O'Mahony in Reginald's Tower were increased from 7 shillings 1 penny to 10 shillings for the duration of the war.

On 23rd May 1916 Waterford County Council's Finance Committee recommended:

*“To fix 16 shillings per week as the minimum wage to be paid to men employed on maintenance work during the period of the war”. Again, after some discussion this was agreed, and maintenance overseers’ wages were also increased by 1 shilling a week. It was also agreed that the sum of £250 per annum be granted to the County Surveyor for travelling expenses “pending the termination of the war”. Petrol was very expensive during the war and the travel expenses of JJ Donnelly; Tuberculosis Officer were also increased by £100 per annum for the duration of the war.*

On 27th November 1917, Waterford County Council adopted the recommendations of the Finance Committee to increase the wages of several staff:

- Quarter Overseers – 35 shillings per week
- Engine Drivers – 30 shillings per week
- Rolling Overseers – 32 shillings per week
- Steam Drill Men – 28 shillings per week
- Quarrymen – 25 shillings per week
- Feeders – 24 shillings per week
- Wagonmen – 25 shillings per week
- Wheeling to Breakers and Attending on Rollers – 24 shillings per week.

The Rural District Council also sought to increase wages of labourers and Waterford No.1 Rural District Council was unsuccessful in gaining authorisation to grant a war bonus of 25% to road contractors.

Infrastructure projects, such as housing schemes, were halted during the war and the Board of Trade required detailed information on whether any works were required or could be postponed. On 10th August 1915 Waterford County Council “...assents to the opinion of the Board of Trade, that in view of the present situation and the urgent need for national economy, the question of the construction of the Cunnigar Bridge should be postponed until after the war.”

As part of the drive for thrift and economy allotments were advocated and on 1st February 1916, Waterford City Council resolved:



*“That we approve of the action of the Technical Instruction Committee in carrying out the recommendations of the Department of Agriculture re: “Productive Thrift” and that we grant temporary use of any plots in our possession for the purpose that we may be in a position to do so.”*

Food supply became a matter of increasing concern as the war continued. A Waterford Food Control Committee was established as a sub-committee of the Food Control Committee for Ireland in 1917. The Food Control Committee for Ireland conferred local committees with the authority to fix retail prices of food supplies on 13th December 1917.

The Waterford Food Control Committee fixed the highest price for milk at 1s8d per imperial gallon from 1st January 1918. Discussions were held about the shortage of butter and the fact that English buyers were offering increased prices to local suppliers and thus causing a shortage of butter locally.

On 23rd April 1918 Waterford County Council resolved:

*“That we beg to warn the Irish People of the great necessity that exists for conserving the food supplies of the Country and that we take this opportunity of advising farmers to keep every particle of food which can be kept in the country and thus help to feed the people in their resistance to the enforcement of conscription”.*

In addition to focusing on thrift and economy the local authorities also looked to improve employment in Waterford. Waterford City Council actively pursued the goal of establishing a munitions factory in the City.

On 6th June 1915, it was agreed to contact John E. Redmond MP as the local representative and inform him that there were two military barracks lying idle in the hope that they would be utilised for troop training,

*“And also to ask him to use his influence with the proper authorities in regard to the manufacture of war munitions here which would be a great benefit to the working classes”.*

The proper authorities themselves were contacted directly by the Council when on 3rd August 1915 it was to dispatch a telegram to Captain Kelly of the Ministry of Munitions Department. On 3rd March 1916 a deputation of the Mayor and High Sheriff were appointed to go to London at once and interview John Redmond MP and ask him to support and advocate the

claim for the establishment of a National Munitions Factory by government in Waterford.

All of this lobbying proved successful and on 19th May 1916 the Waterford News newspaper reported that a cartridge factory was definitely about to be established and that officials had been to view the proposed factory at Bilberry, the site of the Waterford South Railway Terminus which had closed in January 1908 to traffic and was being used as a store. The decision was made to go ahead and on 29th September 1916 the Waterford News reported that the following ladies left for London to receive training in munitions work:

Mrs. Hodgkinson; Miss A. Murphy; Mrs. Lewis; Miss Curtis; Miss Smith; Miss MacDonald; Mrs. Nolan; Miss Stephenson; Mrs. B. Quinlan; Miss N. Grant and Miss C. Veale. They were in the charge of Miss Mary O' Reilly of Bridge Street.

On 22nd December 1916, the Waterford News reported that the ladies were at work greasing the machinery and carrying out light work but had not yet commenced making munitions. In 1917 they commenced making cartridges and continue to do so until after the war. The factory closed in the Summer of 1919.

### **War Pensions**

At the beginning of the war the pensions and allowances to soldiers injured in the war or to the families of those who lost someone were very limited.

On 16th November 1914, Dungarvan Town Council discussed a letter received from the Honorary Secretary of the Royal Patriotic Fund enclosing a cheque of £3 for Mrs. Mary Power for the loss of her son at the Battle of Mons. The Council decided to give the money altogether to Mrs. Power and to pay her this amount weekly "...and they further directed the Clerk to call attention to the small amount awarded".

The Naval and Military Pensions Act 1915 was an act introduced to "make better provision as to the pensions, grants and allowances made in respect of the present war to officers and men in the Naval and Military

Service of His Majesty and their dependents, and the care of officers and men disabled in consequence of the present war.”

On 22nd February 1916, the Secretary of the Statutory Committee, Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation wrote to Waterford County Council to inform the Council that in accordance with the War Pensions Act, 1915 a Local Committee should be established in every County for the purpose of assisting the Statutory Committee.

On 16th May 1916, Waterford City Council resolved:

*“That a “Local Committee” under The Naval and Military War Pensions Act, 1915 be appointed to consist of 31 members viz: 16 members of the Council as following: The Mayor, High Sheriff, Aldermen Hearne, Hackett, Murray. Councillors Fitzgerald (W), Poole, Hyland, Hearne, Kirwan, Keane, O’Neill, Walsh, Mac Donnell, Dawson and Croke. Soldiers and Sailors Families Association as follows: Mrs. W. Kearney, Miss Arnold, Miss Grant, Miss Power, Miss Stephenson, Mrs. Oakshott, Miss Nellie Lynch, Miss Deevy, Mrs. G.H. Kelly and Mrs. J. T. Shortis. Chamber of Commerce: The President. The Harbour Boards: The Chairman. The Trades Council: The President and Secretary and Mr. Patrick Nolan, Labour Representative.”*

As the Local War Pensions Committees began to establish and do their work there was a push to ensure that service personnel were fully represented on the Committees. The Local War Pensions Committee submitted an estimate of costs for local pensions to the Council for approval and it was important to those seeking pensions that the Committees adequately represented their interests.

On 26th February 1918, Waterford County Council approved of a supplemental scheme servicing the scheme regulating the constitution of the Local Committee for the County under the War Pensions Act, 1915 increasing the total number of the Committee to 32 and

*“that this number should include at least two disabled men who have been discharged from naval or military service and a woman who is in receipt of a pension as a widow or other dependent of a man in naval or military service who had died from causes marking out of his service during the present war”.*

On 9th April agreed to ask the County War Pensions Committee to suggest the names of three additional members for their committee.

On 5th March 1918, Waterford City Council resolved that the question of the representation of the National Federation of Discharged and Immobilised Sailors and Soldiers be referred to the Finance and Law Committee and that Messrs. McLean and Cleary, two members of the Federation Committee be requested to attend meeting.

On 8th October 1918, the County Waterford Local Committee under the War Pensions Act forwarded a resolution recommending that Mr. William Foley, Main Street, Dungarvan be appointed to replace Mr. Roger Kiely who had resigned from their committee.

On 25th January 1919, the Minister of Pensions wrote with regard to the vacancy in the Local War Pensions Committee caused by the resignation of Mr. Kiely stating

*"...it appeared the Ancient Order of Hibernians on whose recommendation he was appointed recommended Mr. Foley in his place and under article 5 (1) of the scheme constituting the Local Committee it had consequently devolved on the County Council to appoint Mr. Foley as a member of the Committee and it should be done at the earliest possible date".*

The Council appointed Mr. Foley a member of the County Waterford War Pensions Committee.

In addition to pensions the soldiers were also provided with medical assistance. On 14th June 1918 Waterford County Council was contacted by the Local Government Board to inform them that new arrangements had been made for the provision of Residential Treatment for Tuberculosis Discharged Soldiers under which the whole cost of treatment provided in so far as it was not met out of insurance funds would be met by the Exchequer.

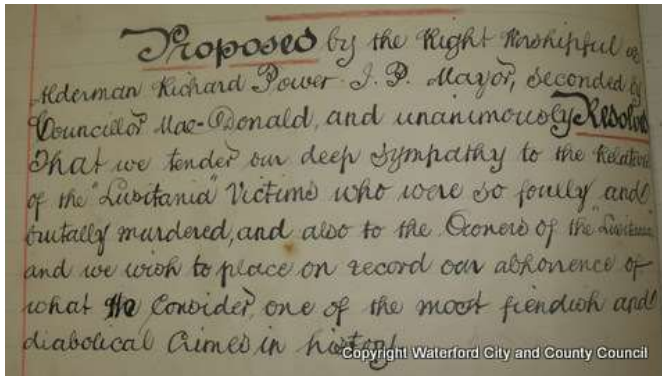
The 1914-1920 Army Pension Records have been digitised by [the National Archives, UK](#) and are available to search on ancestry.com.

[Search Army Service and Pension Records](#)

### **Votes of Sympathy**

The First World War had a huge impact on the people of Waterford and many families were severely affected through the loss of family members on the battle fields.

The sinking of the [Lusitania](#) provoked outrage and sympathy in the City and the County Council. Waterford City Council resolved on 17th May 1915:



*"That we tender our deep sympathy to the relatives of the "Lusitania" victims who were so foully and brutally murdered, and also to the owners of the "Lusitania" and we wish to place on record our abhorrence of what we consider, one of the most fiendish and*

*diabolical crimes in history".*

Waterford County Council resolved on 25th May 1915:

*"That we join with the rest of the civilised world in expressing our horror and indignation at the atrocious and unparalleled outrage committed by Germany in the sinking of the Lusitania with her human freight of 2000 souls, a cold blooded massacre of non-combatants and the most heinous crime perpetrated against humanity during the history of the world, and we desire to express our sympathy with the affected families of the victims".*

John Redmond MP, who had called for the Irish Volunteers to join the British Army and who had exhorted people to enlist was himself to feel the loss of so many families when his brother William Redmond died in 1917. A vote of condolence was made by the members of Waterford City Council for John Redmond and for all of the family of Major WHK Redmond.

On 3rd July 1917 Waterford City Council:

*"tender our deep regret and sincere sympathy to the parents, brothers and sisters, wives and families of the brave and gallant Irish soldiers from Port Láirge who sacrificed their lives on the bloody battlefields of France, Flanders, Belgium, Greece and Italy, nobly fighting for human liberty, and the freedom and civilisation of the Christian world. May they Rest in Peace".*

Waterford was to have its own Shipping Disaster when two steamers went missing in the middle of December 1917. On Monday 31st December the City Mayor presided over a public meeting held in the Large Room to raise money for a relief fund for the many families who had been devastated by

this loss. It was reported by the Munster Express newspaper on 5th January 1918 that £800 had already been raised by the meeting for the families of the bereaved.

The Mayor spoke on the night about the difficulty in being able to speak freely about the event that had occurred as "it is not considered right that we should discuss certain facts which might be of use to the enemy". Mr. G. A. Curry, Company Secretary said

*"They knew well the risks they were running from an unscrupulous and cruel enemy, but they faced these like true men, and the name of every one of them deserves to be inscribed on the proud roll of Ireland's heroes."*

### **Waterford Shipping Disaster 1917**

Presented here is a list of those lost in the Waterford Shipping Disaster.

[Waterford Shipping Disaster - List of Names](#)

On 5th March 1918, Waterford City Council expressed thanks to the Cork Corporation:

*"For their kind vote of sympathy and condolence with relatives and friends of the Waterford Sailors who lost their lives in the grave disaster off the Irish Coast".*