

Letters 1916–1923

Ordinary Lives – Extraordinary Times



Part II

Researching the 1916-1923 Period

For these case studies, you will use, in addition to Letters 1916-1923, other digital resources such as the 1911 Irish census records. For this part of the treasure hunt, you will need to figure out where to find the information you need. Read all questions carefully to spot our hints.

Case study – administration and politics in County Kerry:

The Letters 1916-1923 project holds a considerable amount of official correspondence and private letters from County Kerry relating to the Easter Rising and the First World War. Many of these letters describe opposition to British government policy.

1) Use the search engine on the Letters 1916-1923 website to find the letter from an anonymous 'Loyal Subject' to Ivor Churchill Guest, Lord Wimborne (1873-1939). The letter mentions that some "Sinn Feiners", among them J. P. O'Donnell, have been imprisoned. What is the charge upon which the arrests took place?

-- offence against the Defence of the Realm Act

2) Go the British government website www.parliament.uk and search for the Defence of the Realm Act 1914. Why was the act passed?

-- The act (often referred to as DORA) was incited by the outbreak of the First World War. It's aim was "to control communications, the nation's ports and subject civilians to the rule of military courts."

3) Another incident in which people in Co Kerry opposed the British war effort was reported in a letter from Gerald Horan to James O'Shea on 11 February 1916. How did "a number of persons" disturb a meeting held by the Co. Kerry Recruiting Committee?

-- They marched in with pipes and drums and hindered the progress of the meeting.

4) On the eve of the Easter Rising in 1916, Sir Roger Casement was arrested at Banna Strand in County Kerry and accused of high treason. Many Irish people hoped to prevent his execution and petitioned the British government on his behalf. Find the letter from the Casement Relief Petition Committee to Herbert Henry Asquith (31 July 1916). What was Asquith's position?

-- Asquith was the British Prime Minister.

5) Find the letter from M. J. O'Donnell, a member of Kerry County Council, to Alice Stopford Green, 28 July 1916. What was the opinion of the Kerry County Council on the Roger Casement trial?

-- The Council had "unanimously passed a strong resolution calling for clemency for Roger Casement."

6) Use the Dictionary of Irish Biography/Wikipedia to find out more about Alice Stopford Green. What was her profession and political stance?

-- Alice Stopford Green was the wife of historian John Richard Green (1837-1883). Stopford Green was a nationalist, involved in the Howth gun-running and a historian in her own right.