

Letters 1916–1923

Ordinary Lives – Extraordinary Times



Part I

Using the Letters 1916-1923 Explore Database

Go to <http://letters1916.maynoothuniversity.ie/explore/>

And answer the following:

1. What is our largest category of letters? **The Easter Rising (find by going to browse and looking at the list of categories)**
2. Who writes to Mabel Fitzgerald in Irish? **Máire Ní Catháin (use the search bar and search for Mabel Fitzgerald and then use the filter on the right to select language)**
3. What is the difference between 'search' and 'browse'? **Browse provides access to the letters through predefined categories/ search provides a tool to find letters according to specific criteria (looking for a person, place, event, or any other specific term)**
4. How many versions of Pádraig Pearse's last letter do we have? **5 (find by searching the category Last Letters and then count the copies)**
5. Why do we have several copies of Pearse's last letter? **People at the time recopied the letters because of their importance after the executions, in a manner of speaking, becoming secular relics. People wanted to know the last wishes of the leader of the Rising, and in an age before photocopying and when photography was still a specialist profession or pastime, the only real way to get a copy of a written document was to copy it by hand**
6. Which month were most letters written in and why? **May (found through the Browse by month), after Easter Rising, and after the postal service resumed. The Postal service was suspended during and shortly after the Rising because the GPO, the centre of postal services in Ireland, was used by the Rebels base and was thoroughly destroyed during the Rising.**
7. Where can you find information about citing a letter to use in an essay? **Via the how to cite panel to the right of the transcript of each letter. The section is called 'Citation & Contributors'**
8. **How many letters are there in YOUR COUNTY in the collection?**
9. What was the purpose of the Irish Relief Fund Bazaar? **To raise money for Ireland in the United States after the devastation of the Rising (search for Irish Relief Fund Bazaar in the database)**
10. How many love letters we have in the collection? And who are most of them to/from? Were they married at the time of the correspondence? **_33_/ James Finn and May Fay / they are engaged to be married**

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11. What people from YOUR COUNTY you can find in our collection? _____
12. What do you think Letters 1916-1923 is about? It is a collection of letters about Ireland between 1916-1923, with most of the letters from 1916. It collects any letter to or from anybody in Ireland, or written to or from anybody in Ireland from abroad. It covers all aspects of live during the period: from The Rising to love letters.

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Part II

Researching the 1916 Period

For these Case Studies, you will use, in addition to Letters 1916-1923, other resources your teacher showed you. For this part of the treasure hunt, you will need to figure out where is the best place to find the information you need

1) Case Study: The O’Rahilly

The O’Rahilly family

- a. How many letters mention the O’Rahilly family in the Letters 1916-1923 database? **62: do a search on O’Rahilly and it returns 62 letters**
- b. How many O’Rahilly’s write and receive letters and what are their names?
There are four: Nancy, Michael, Anna, Alfred
- c. Which one is **the** O’Rahilly? **Michael**
- d. What was the O’Rahilly’s role in the Easter Rising and what happened to him during it? **The O’Rahilly opposed the Rising at first and was instrumental in spreading word about MacNeill’s countermanding order to call it off. Once he realised the Rising was going ahead on Monday, he became a combatant, fighting with the GPO Garrison. On Friday 28 April, with the GPO on fire, he led a charge down Moore Street and was fatally wounded.**

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2) Case Study: Austin Stack

Austin Stack was a key member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and the Irish Volunteers in County Kerry. Using the Dictionary of Irish Biography, you can find out information about Stack's life before 1916 and after. With the Bureau of Military History you can read first-hand accounts about Stack, written by people who knew him and fought alongside him. With the Letters 1916-1923, you can track Stack's thoughts and locations as he writes. You will need to use both resources to complete the questions below.

Students will need [Austin Stack's dictionary of Irish Biography entry](#) and [Una C Stack's Witness Statement](#)

1. How many letters are there in the *Letters 1916-1923* collection that concern Austin Stack?

There are four letters. This is a little tricky. They can search for Austin Stack in the search bar and it will return eight letters. They can look at each one, but four are not relevant (one is a different Austin and one is about Austin Stack's's siter,etc). But you could show them how to do a Boolean search which is an exact match for a string of text under 'Advanced Search'. If you type "Austin Stack" (with double quotes) it will look for the entire string and return four letters: two by Stack and two concerning his release from prison in England after the Rising.

2. Where was Austin Stack born?

[Tralee \(DIB\)](#)

3. Stack died in 1929, where is he buried?

[\(Glasnevin\) DIB](#)

4. Where does Stack write to Mabel Fitzgerald on 4 June 1916 from?

[Richmond Barracks. Find by searching either \(Mabel Fitzgerald\) or Austin Stack in Letters 1916-1923](#)

5. What date was Stack sentenced for his part in the Easter Rising?

[\(16 June 1916\) DIB](#)

6. What role did Stack hold in the First Dáil (1919-1921)?

[\(Minister for Home Affairs\) DIB](#)

7. What side did Stack take during the Civil War and what was his role during the conflict?

[\(Anti-Treaty, Minister for Finance\) DIB](#)

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8. Who is 'Ireland's unworthy son,' according to Stack's letter of 18 June?

(Himself) Letters 1916-1923

Austin Stack: Challenge Questions

9. What year was Austin Stack sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood and who swore him in?

(1908, Cathal Brugha) DIB

10. Where did Padraig Pearse tell Stack that guns would be landed on Easter Sunday?

(Fenit Pier) DIB This is in Tralee and it is the place where Casement in left offshore by a German Submarine ostensibly to call off the Easter Rising

11. Why did Stack oppose rescuing Sir Roger Casement?

(Believed any fracas in Tralee would frustrate all plans for the rising, was following orders) Mrs Austin Stack (widow of Austin Stack) Witness Statement page 2

12. Did Stack's wife know that he was a member of the IRB?

She believes that he was but resigned. Mrs Austin Stack Witness Statement page 3

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3) Case Study: Marie Martin

Marie Martin was a Volunteer Aid Detachment Nurse serving in the First World War. Hailing from South Dublin, Marie served on the various fronts of the Great War, treating the horrific wounds caused by modern warfare.

Students will need [Marie Martin's dictionary of Irish Biography entry](#), the 1911 census, the Letters 1916-1923 and the Diary of [Mary Martin](#).

1. How many letters are there in the *Letters 1916-1923* collection that concern Marie Martin?
35 (letters)
2. Where does the Martin family live in 1911?
6.1 in Carrickbrennan Road (census)
 3. Why and when does Mary Martin begin a diary? **When Charlie goes missing in action she begins a diary so that when he comes home he can read about what happens with the family during his absence (Diary of Mary Martin diary entry 1 January 1916)**
4. What is the relationship between Mary Martin, Charlie Martin, and Marie Martin?
Mary Martin is Marie's and Charlie's mother (Mary Martin diary site)
5. What does Mary Martin describe in her entry of the 24 of April?
The Sinn Fein Rising (Mary Martin Diary)
6. When does Marie write back to her mother regarding Charlie's fate?
20 July (Letters)
7. Who was George (Geo) R. Boase and why was he writing to Marie?
wounded soldier who wants to meet her as he recalls her nursing him in Malta (letter of 10 July 1916)
 8. What year was the Medical Missionaries of Mary founded and who in the Martin family is involved in it? **1937, Marie Martin (DIB)**

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4) Case Study: Seán Thomas O’Kelly

Seán Thomas O’Kelly was the second president of Ireland. He was educated by Padraig Pearse as a young man and took part in the Easter Rising and subsequent War of Independence. Students will need [O’Kelly’s witness statement](#), his [dictionary of Irish Biography entry](#) and the Letters 1916-1923.

1. What year did O’Kelly join the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB)?
([1901 - DIB](#))
2. What was sent to O’Kelly on 21 April 1916 and by whom?
([Mobilisation orders](#)) Letter of 21 April 1916 sent by William Pearse : follow up question – how are William and Padriag related?
3. Where was O’Kelly sent at the end of World War One?
([Paris Peace Conference - DIB](#))
4. What was the test mentioned by O’Kelly in his letter dated 15 September 1916?
([Using Irish to get past the censor](#))
5. What side did O’Kelly take in the Irish Civil War?
Republican (DIB)

Challenge Questions: from Seán Thomas O’Kelly Witness Statement

1. According to O’Kelly, what position did the IRB want John Redmond to take in the Great War?
([refuse Irish aid unless they got home rule, p.2, witness statement](#))
2. According to his witness statement, what did commandant Connolly order O’Kelly to take from Liberty hall?
([two flags, p.244, witness statement](#))
3. According to O’Kelly’s witness statement, what was the mantra of the IRB?
([The English had to be driven out of Ireland by force, p.1 witness statement](#))



5) Case study - Kathleen Lynn

Dr Kathleen Lynn was a medical practitioner, a suffragist, a nationalist, and a revolutionary. During the Easter Rising 1916, Lynn was Chief Medical Officer of the Irish Citizen Army and was a part of the City Hall garrison, of which she took command after the death of Seán Connolly on the first day of the Rising. After independence, Lynn played a major role in improving public health, and played a significant role in the eradication of tuberculosis in Ireland.

Students will need [Lynn's witness statement](#), her dictionary of Irish Biography entry, the 1911 Census and the Letters 1916-1923 website.

1. What medical procedure was Kathleen Lynn carrying out at Nancy O'Rahilly's house in November 1916? **a vaccination on a baby (Letter of 23 November 1916)**
2. In addition to seagulls and pigeons, which animal does Kathleen write was present in Mountjoy Prison according to Kathleen Lynn? **a black spaniel (can be found by searching seagulls and pigeons in the Letters database; letter of 1 Jan 1916)**
3. In a letter written on 8 June 1916, Madge Calnan misspells Kathleen Lynn's name.
 - a. What is the misspelling? **Doctor Kathleen Glynn**
 - b. What word is used to denote the misspelling? **sic**
4. Why was Dr Lynn refused a position in Dublin's Adelaide Hospital? **because of her gender (DIB)**
5. According to her witness statement, what present did Lynn receive on Holy Thursday from Connolly and the Citizen Army? **a gold brooch in the form of a fibula (pg 3 - <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0357.pdf#page=1>)**
6. Dr Kathleen Lynn was 37 years old on the night of the Census in 1911. She was living in Rathmines in Dublin and two other people were present at her home on that night. What were their names and relation to Lynn? **Frances Margaret Cooho (boarder) and Bridget Cuffe (servant)**

Challenge Questions: Kathleen Lynn

7. On 6 June 1916, Dr Lynn wrote to Miss Carney with instructions. She was to send a card to a number of women including Hanna Sheehy Skeffington.
 - a. What was Skeffington's address at that time and why is she important? **11 Grosvenor Place, Rathmines; she was the wife of the executed Francis Sheehy Skeffington and she is an important suffragette in her own right**
 - b. What was to be included in the card? **Information that she was being deported to Bath with no notice**
 - c. Given the timing of the letter, Why do you think she was being deported? **Due to her role in the Easter Rising**

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- d. Does the Letters 1916-1923-1923 project know who Miss Carey is? **No—see summary on the letter; follow up question: how might the project find out who she is?**
- e. Why do you think Kathleen Lynn advises her to write this letter? **So she can let people who she knows her fate and who might be able to assist her**
(<http://letters1916.maynoothuniversity.ie/explore/letters/2393>)

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