

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.

Case study – the Chief Secretary and the British administration in Ireland

This case study introduces students to the British administration and the legal system in pre-independence Ireland. The questions are mainly based on government correspondence kept at the National Archives of Ireland. The students will need the Letters 1916-1923 database as well Wikipedia or the Dictionary of Irish Biography to find all the answers. A close reading of the letters is essential.

- a) Augustine Birrell became Chief Secretary for Ireland in January 1907. Use the Dictionary of Irish Biography to find out why he was severely criticised towards the end of his political career. - **He was held responsible for the Easter Rising in 1916.**
- b) What did Sir Robert Chalmers and Sir Matthew Nathan have in common? (DIB) - **They were both public servants and Irish under-secretaries.**
- c) Use the Irish census records of 1911 and find out how many people with the surname Chalmers were registered in Ireland. -- **81**
- d) Read the letter from Thomas B. Garvey to Robert Chalmers, 31 May 1916, and try to identify one of the duties of Chalmers as Under-Secretary. - **Peace-keeping.**
- e) Why were two boys (one named Mulligan) fined by the administration on 19 April 1916? -- **stone throwing**
- f) What request does Ernest Whitlock address to the Irish administration in May 1916, and why is the request rejected? -- **He asks for employment as an architect or building surveyor, but the department is not able to offer him a job in this field.**
- g) Why does the Irish Government owe money to the city of Caen in France? -- **Two Irish ladies are kept there in a Lunatic Asylum and the government is responsible for their upkeep.**
- h) On 18 May 1916, John McLoughlin writes to Robert Chalmers, expressing his disappointment in his 18-year-old son Cornelius F McLoughlin. What is the reason for the father's anger? - **He wanted his son to serve in the British army, but his son was arrested for supporting Sinn Féin and the uprising.**
- i) Based on what you have learned in the letter of 18 May 1916, why does an informant tell

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the Commanding Officer of Dublin Castle on 15 May 1916 that a shop assistant working on Grafton Street 'should join his comrades in England'? -- **The man is also a member of Sinn Féin, and the letter-writer believes that he should be arrested and imprisoned alongside other Irish republicans in England.**