

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.

b) What did Sir Robert Chalmers and Sir Matthew Nathan have in common? (DIB)

c) Use the Irish census records of 1911 and find out how many people with the surname Chalmers were registered in Ireland.

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.

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e) Why were two boys (one named Mulligan) fined by the administration on 19 April 1916?

f) What request does Ernest Whitlock address to the Irish administration in May 1916, and why is the request rejected?

g) Why does the Irish Government owe money to the city of Caen in France?

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?

i) Based on what you have learned in the letter of 18 May 1916, why does an informant tell the Commanding Officer of Dublin Castle on 15 May 1916 that a shop assistant working on Grafton Street 'should join his comrades in England'?
