

## LISMORE POOR LAW UNION

Until the introduction of the Poor Law in 1838 the poor in Ireland were provided for on an ad hoc basis by private charities and miscellaneous government schemes.

In the period 1771 – 1772 some legislation was enacted for the provision of houses of industry (Workhouses) in counties in Ireland for maintaining the poor but little was achieved. In 1833 the Whatley Commission was established to examine the causes and extent of the problem of poverty in Ireland. The Commission recommended a number of measures both economic and social to reduce the causes of poverty in Ireland and also suggested that institutions be established to provide ‘indoor relief’ to the old, infirm, deserted and orphaned children and widows. It also recommended a system of public works to occupy the able-bodied poor.

These proposals were rejected and a system of Poor Law based on the English Poor Law system was introduced in Ireland.

The poor law was introduced in Ireland in 1838 and operated until 1923. The country was divided into poor law unions each of which had a Workhouse run by elected and ex-officio guardians. These guardians were supervised by the Poor Law Commissioners and after 1872, the Local Government Board.

The Poor law system has gained a dark reputation due to the fact that only the most destitute were granted ‘indoor relief’ and entry into the Workhouse was contingent on it being a last resort rather than a source of hope and comfort. The Workhouses were unable to cope with the fast flood of the destitute that was a result of the famine and they became overcrowded and contributed to the death toll due to the swift spread of disease through their packed wards.

Over the years the Board of Guardians acquired further duties in relation to the poor. In the 1850s they accumulated duties in the area of public health, boarding out of children in the 1860s and rural housing from 1883.

The Medical Charities Act of 1851 introduced the dispensary system which provided for the appointment of a medical doctor, the provision of a dispensary and the supply of medicines and medical appliances for a number of districts in each Union. The work of the dispensary was overseen by the Dispensary Committee, which was composed of Guardians and local rate payers elected on an annual basis.

In 1878 the Public Health (Ireland) Act established the Guardians as a Rural Sanitary Authority adding further duties in relation to sanitation and public health to their workload.

The work of the Board of Guardians was funded by the Poor Rate which the Guardians were empowered to levy in the Union. Under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898 this power passed to Waterford County Council. The Guardians then applied to the Council for funds until they ceased to exist in 1923.

The archives of Lismore Poor Law Union provide evidence of the running of the Workhouse, the provision of out door relief and the provision of medical services through dispensaries supplied by the guardians.

These archives are an important social, economic and political record of the area, providing detailed evidence for the lives of the poor who would not otherwise be recorded in history. Not only are local and national events recorded but so too are international events such as the details of a letter from the Irish Peace Society with a copy of the World Petition to the Peace Conference to be held in The Hague (BG/LISM/66).

The archives have been arranged with the minute books for meetings of the board of guardians in date order followed by the few other items in surviving. Of particular interest is BG/LISM/87 which covers the period 1920 –1923 and refers to the moves to amalgamate the Unions.

Further information regarding the poor law unions in Waterford can be found in the collections of archives for the poor law unions maintained in Waterford County Archives Service and identifiable through the BG that begins the collection code for all of these collections.

Joanne Rothwell

Waterford County Archivist

14 December 1998

BG/LISM

Minute books for the Board of Guardian Meetings for Lismore Poor Law Union. Details the state of the Workhouse recording the total number of inmates received during the week and remaining from the previous week under the categories of males aged 15 and upwards, females aged 15

and upwards, boys under 15, girls under 15, children under 2 and inmates male and female born in the Workhouse. States the number and category of inmates discharged or who died during the week and provides a return for sick and lunatic paupers and those relieved out of the workhouse. Records the names of members of the Board of Guardians present at each meeting and the person in the chair who were presented with the Clerk's Report of the execution of orders, the Treasurer's Book of Receipts and Payments and the Clerk's account of petty disbursements. The Board also examine Rate Collectors books and the rates collected and remaining uncollected are recorded. The Clerk provides a relief list and abstract, the provision check account, the provision receipt and consumption account and the totals of each are recorded. The estimates of the Master of the Workhouse for provisions is recorded as are the accounts and invoices of the clothing, establishment and invoice accounts. Reports from the Visiting Committee, the Master and other Officers are recorded and any orders arising out of these are stated. Details any orders received from the Poor Law Commissioners and letters sent to or received from the Commission. Signed by the Clerk, Chairman and some of the members of the Board. The minutes are recorded on pages and placed in the book during the period of time when one book finished and before the next one began. A weekly return of destitute persons relieved outside of the Workhouse is recorded from 1849 (BG/LISM/5). Includes minutes of the proceedings of the Board of Guardians in relation to the Medical Charities Act containing details of estimates for medicine requested by the Medical Officer and for supplies by the Committee of Management of the Dispensary, an account of expenses and a record of the ratepayers elected to the Committees of Management of Dispensary Districts and of the orders and letters of the Poor law Commissioners. Reports are made to the Local Government Board in the place of the Poor Law Commissioners from 16 October 1872 (BG/LISM/31 p648). Proceedings of the Board of Guardians as Sanitary Authority are detailed providing the reports of sanitary officers, letters from the Local Government Board relating to sanitary matters and accounts of expenses incurred under the Sanitary Acts (BG/LISM/34). Records the minutes of proceedings as rural sanitary authority under the Labourers Ireland Act (BG/LISM/46). Includes page markers attached to highlight actions and motions taken by the Board (BG/LISM/57). Financial information is recorded in the Financial Minutes (BG/LISM/59). Includes minutes of proceedings under the Seed Supply Acts (BG/LISM/64). Contains statistical minutes detailing the stock consumed during a week, the weekly cost of an inmate, the infirmary and the fever hospital and an abstract of accounts of the relieving officers (BG/LISM/66). Reports are made to Dail Eireann instead of the Local Government Board (BG/LISM/76).  
Index to resolutions and reports.

#### BG/LISM

- |   |                                   |          |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | [29 March 1843 – 10 October 1843] |          |
| 2 | 11 October 1843 – 2 October 1844  | c. 423pp |
| 3 | 9 October 1844 – 12 November 1845 | c. 578pp |

4	19 November 1845 – 24 February 1847	<u>Includes:</u> a letter from ‘Mathew [Limlea]’ to the Chairman of the Board advising the Board in relation to the proper ventilation in order to prevent infections and stating that ‘...if you continue to admit more claimants without providing increased room the breaking out of fever and other contagious diseases is greatly to be apprehended.’ (p630) A notice of marriage between Garret Colbert, tailor and Catherine Ronan, spinster.	c. 640pp
5	27 February 1847 – 5 January 1848		580pp
6	12 January 1848 – 18 November 1848		580pp
7	[December 1848 – September 1849]		
8	3 October 1849 – 6 November 1850		580pp
9	13 November 1850 – 12 November 1851		528pp
10	19 November 1851 – 9 June 1852		400pp
11	16 June 1852 – 22 December 1852	<u>Includes:</u> a resolution to classify the female inmates ‘... so as to separate the notoriously dissolute females from those whose misfortunes compelled them to become inmates of the House – a portion of the Workhouse be allotted to their use to be called “The Dissolute Ward”...’. (p 347)	320pp
12	29 December 1852 – 18 May 1853		456pp
13	25 May 1853 – 9 November 1853		482pp
14	16 November 1853 – 26 April 1854		472pp
15	3 May 1854 – 18 October 1854		496pp
16	25 October 1854 – 2 May 1855		434pp
17	9 May 1855 – 31 October 1855		478pp
18	7 November 1855 – 30 April 1856		407pp
BG/LISM/			
19	7 May 1856 – 29 October 1856		413pp
20	5 November 1856 – 4 November 1857		850pp
21	11 November 1857 – 17 November 1858		835pp

22	24 November 1858 – 1 June 1859	422pp
23	8 June 1859 – 25 January 1860	429pp
24	1 February 1860 – 17 October 1860	459pp
25	31 October 1860 – 20 February 1862	<u>Includes:</u> details of the punishments of ‘Bridget Dunn’ and ‘Mary Reardon’, inmates, for ‘clandestinely knitting stockings’. Their materials were forfeited and a ‘Mary Callaghan’, inmate was reprimanded for ‘giving impertinence to the Matron’. (p625)
		730pp
26	5 March 1862 – 4 March 1863	828pp
27	11 March 1863 – 8 June 1864	<u>Includes:</u> a letter from the Poor Law Commissioners transmitting a copy of a Bill for Establishing Compulsory Vaccination in Ireland (p 56). A request for authority for the schoolchildren to bathe in the river during the season under the supervision of the Schoolmaster and mistress (p 230). A Clerk’s Report drawing the attention of the Board ‘...to the necessity of taking immediate steps to provide a Registry Office Under the Births and Deaths Registration Act which comes into operation on the 1 January next.’ (p 419).
		880pp
28	15 June 1864 – 27 September 1865	<u>Includes:</u> a letter from the Poor Law Commissioners enclosing a notice served on them by the solicitors of the projected Waterford, Lismore and Fermoy Railway which is intended to pass through a portion of the workhouse premises and requesting the observations of the Guardians. (p 284)
		842pp
29	18 October 1865 – 9 January 1867	836pp
30	16 January 1867 – 18 March 1868	866pp
31	25 March 1868 – 26 May 1869	844pp
32	2 June 1869 – 13 July 1870	842pp
33	20 July 1870 – 25 October 1871	880pp
BG/LISM/		
34	1 November 1871 – 5 February 1873	857pp
35	12 February 1873 – 25 March 1874	848pp
36	1 April 1874 – 14 April 1875	827pp
37	21 April 1875 – 19 April 1876	1046pp

38	26 April 1876 – 25 April 1877	865pp
39	9 May 1877 – 21 November 1877	506pp
40	28 November 1877 – 22 May 1878	515pp
41	29 May 1878 – 11 December 1878	519pp
42	18 December 1878 – 2 July 1879	297pp
43	9 July 1879 – 7 July 1880	<p><u>Includes:</u> a statement from William M. Woodroffe, Justice of the Peace and member of the Board of Guardians with regard to the ‘...distress at present existing amongst the poorer classes of Ireland owing to the failure of crops and the scarcity of fuel...’ and of his intention to request that the Government provide reproductive labour to relieve labourers and small farmers and stating that a memorial be adopted to the Lord Lieutenant ‘...as to the expediency of having an Act of Parliament to enable the Government to apply the remaining Surplus of the Irish Church Fund to the relief of the aged and infirm Poor. (p 337) Details of a demonstration by tenants of William M. Woodroffe and ‘Young’ in front of the Workhouse Gate in order to emphasise their distress at being unable to sow crops unless assisted with seed potatoes and oats. The Board of Guardians resolves to have the poor law union placed on the List of Distressed Unions in order to encourage landlords to apply for loans for reproductive works. (p 634) A report of the Medical Officer in complaint of the state in which male inmates are kept and at the neglect of the Master and Matron in this respect. (pp 822-824).</p>
		1072pp
44	14 July 1880 – 20 July 1881	<p><u>Includes:</u> an inquiry into a complaint from ‘Thomas Brien’, inmate regarding the treatment received from the doctors and nurses and the irregularities he observed in the Hospital (p 748-751). A petition adopted by the Guardians praying that the Land Bill be amended so as to afford protection to rackrented leaseholders or people in arrears of rent, to better the condition of cottier labourers and drop the emigration clauses (p 785) and signed by Richard Geary, esquire in place of F.E. Curry, esquire and Justice of the Peace, Chairman of the Board who it is stated felt the subject was foreign to the Guardians business (p 803).</p>
		917pp

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45	27 July 1881 – 19 July 1882	846pp
46	26 July 1882 – 25 July 1883	1038pp
47	1 August 1883 – 13 August 1884	1037pp
48	[20 August 1884 – 9 September 1885]	

49	16 September 1885 – 8 September 1886	851pp
50	15 September 1886 – 7 September 1887	<u>Includes:</u> a condemnation of the resolutions at the Grand Jury at the late Waterford Assizes ‘...as misrepresenting the peaceful condition of our county, as labelling the National League and as calumuiting us, a peaceful and law-abiding people, in asking a Tory Government for coercive legislation and an account of the good work felt to be carried out by the National League’. A copy of the resolution is to be sent to the Home Secretary, the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary for Ireland the Marquis of Salisbury, Charles S. Parnell M.P., William O’Brien esquire, ‘United Ireland and Freemans Journal’. (pp401-403)
		734pp
51	14 September 1887 – 19 September 1888	<u>Includes:</u> a pledge from the Guardians ‘...to preserve a stern recollection of every indignity and cruelty offered to the darling son of our motherland Wm O’Brien...’ held in prison and expressing their condemnation of ‘...the present base bloody and murdering Tory Government in persecuting Mr. Donoghue Pyne the worthy Chairman of this Board and MP for this, the Western Division of Waterford’ who was arrested under the Crimes Act. (pp118-119)
		761pp
52	26 September 1888 – 25 September 1889	752pp
53	2 October 1889 – 1 October 1890	<u>Includes:</u> details of a letter from the Mayor of Waterford requesting the Board of Guardians name six delegates to represent them at the Convention of the Tenants Defence Association for the county of Waterford. Three members; ‘M. O Callaghan, Timothy [Kerig] and William Walsh’ are nominated.
54	8 October 1890 – 14 October 1891	741pp
55	21 October 1891 – 28 September 1892	698pp
56	5 October 1892 – 1 November 1893	773pp
57	8 November 1893 – 26 December 1894	784pp
BG/LISM/		
58	2 January 1895 – 8 January 1896	742pp
59	15 January 1896 – 20 January 1897	741pp
60	27 January 1897 – 26 January 1898	756pp
61	2 February 1898 – 25 January 1899	714pp
62	1 February 1899 – 2 August 1899	393pp

63	9 August 1899 – 4 September 1901	745pp
64	18 September 1901 – 19 August 1903	634pp
65	16 September 1903 – 28 September 1904	250pp
66	19 October 1904 – 20 March 1908	820pp
67	18 April 1908 – 16 April 1909	338pp
68	7 May 1909 – 15 April 1910	312pp
69	6 May 1910 – 19 May 1911	<u>Includes:</u> details a letter from the Irish Peace Society with a copy of the “World Petition to the Peace Conference” to be held in “The Hague” in 1914 requesting the cooperation of the Board of Guardians in obtaining signatures, this was agreed to ( pp409-410).
		455pp
70	2 June 1911 – 21 June 1912	455pp
71	5 July 1912 – 1 August 1913	459pp
72	15 August 1913 – 4 September 1914	442pp
73	18 September 1914 – 15 October 1915	459pp
74	5 November 1915 – 17 November 1916	442pp
75	1 December 1916 – 7 December 1917	425pp
76	21 December 1917 – 3 January 1919	<u>Includes:</u> a proposal to express congratulations to the electors of Waterford city on the election of Captain W.A. Redmond, the nationalist candidate, as MP (p432).
		442pp

BG/LISM/

77	17 January 1919 – 6 February 1920	442pp
78	20 February 1920 – 23 February 1921	<u>Includes:</u> a resolution to express sympathy to the wife and relatives of Terrence McSweeney, Mayor of Cork, Michael Fitzgerald and Joseph Murphy on their deaths (p 295).
		442pp
79	9 March 1921 – 8 February 1922	442pp

- 80 22 February 1922 – 28 March 1923 442pp
- 81 11 April 1923 – 23 April 1924 442pp
- 82 29 March 1843 – 28 January 1852 Rough Minute Book detailing the proceedings of the Board of Guardians of Lismore Union recording the guardians elected, the chairman, the books examined and the orders and resolutions of the Guardians. Signed by the chairman, three guardians and the Clerk of the Union. Details the letters received from and sent to the Poor Law Commissioners, the admissions to the Workhouse and special business discussed by the Guardians. Contains the accounts and estimates for the Union, including the rates collected. Information is recorded in varying detail throughout and is not recorded in a consistent manner. c.288pp
- 83 15 February 1882 – 22 February 1882 File containing letters from individuals requesting the assistance of the Board of Guardians through outdoor relief or the provision of clothes to enable them to find employment outside the Workhouse. Includes details of the case of Mary Flynn, an inmate of the Workhouse for ten years, who worked as an attendant in the Fever Hospital for six years (BG/LISM/80(3)). 3 items
- 84 [1883] Volume of plans of Labourers Cottage Allotments on a scale of 3 chains or 198 feet to an inch drawn by R Hynes, BE, engineer, Owbeg House, Lismore for Lismore Union. Details the plans for the schemes of cottage building to comply with the Labourers (Ireland) Act 1883 for each electoral division. Index to plans. 42pp

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- 85 21 October 1895 Letter from Robert S Baylor, solicitor, North British and Mercantile Insurance Co., Fermoy to Maurice Healy, Clerk of the Board of Guardians, Lismore, regarding the refusal of the Bard to give 'John Lawton Kylebeg a labourers cottage built on his land. Attached is a draft response of Maurice Healy detailing the difficulties the Board has had in determining the ownership of the land. 4pp
- 86 25 April [1911] Admittance slip to Lismore Union Workhouse for one night only Issued by M. O'Donnell, relieving

Officer, for James Gibbons, labourer, to be presented to the Master of the Workhouse.

1p

- 87      30 September 1911      Admission order for the Lismore Union Hospital from G.O.C. Redmond, Medical Officer, Cappoquin to admit 'Margaret Fitzgerald', Cappoquin suffering from chronic bronchitis to the hospital.      1p
- 88      1842      Record produced by G. Bible, Master of Lismore Union Workhouse, detailing payments made to 'Richard Jones, N.J. Foley and John Burnett' for work carried out in the Workhouse.      1p
- 89      25 August 1880 – 6 August 1884      Typescript abstracts of minutes of the proceedings of the Board of Guardians as sanitary authority for meetings on 25 August 1880, 8 & 29 September 1880, 3 & 24 November 1880, 1, 8 & 15 December 1880 and 6 & 13 of August 1884. Includes an omission from the meeting of the 6 August 1884 regarding sanitary notices served and the attendance of the Clerk of the Union at the Petty Sessions at Lismore and Tallow.      2pp

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- 90      20 May 1920 – 3 September 1923      File containing the general correspondence of Alex Heskin, Clerk of Lismore Union and Rural District Council. There are a wide range of letters such as letters of thanks for the sympathy expressed by the members of the Board of Guardians and the Rural District Council, regarding the employment of staff in the Union, the purchase of supplies for the Union and applications for relief to the Board of Guardians. Includes letters of 12, 18, 20 & 24 May 1922 regarding the sale of the Workhouse by the Duke of Devonshire to Lismore Rural District Council for the sum of £550. Contains letters of 17 May 1922 and 3 & 9 March 1923 from Sister Mary Margaret, Convent of Mercy, Stradbally regarding the payment of pensions to sisters who

worked for the Union. Includes a letter of 18 June 1923 from JR Dagg, Secretary of the Union and Rural District Clerks Association of Ireland to Alex Heskin as a member of the executive committee stating that the Minister for Local Government has agreed to receive a deputation from the Association regarding the proposed abolition of the Rural District Councils on 29 June 1923. c. 250 items