

Limerick Catholic Institute

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Introduction

The Catholic Literary Institute was founded by Edward Thomas O'Dwyer (who later became bishop of Limerick) shortly after he arrived in St. Michael's parish, Limerick in 1874. The first meeting was held on the 12 November 1875. The founding of the Institute may have been influenced by *The Nation*, which at this time was urging that every town should have a center, with a library and a reading room, where young men could inform themselves on matters regarding the well being of the country.

A Council of lay and religious members managed the Institute. 15 lay members were elected annually to sit on the council. Various committees were also established annually such as the Library Committee, and the Billiards Committee, and these committees reported regularly to the Council.

Membership was confined to Catholic men. To become a member of the Institute, an individual had to be proposed and seconded by existing members, and was then elected by ballot. Members paid an entrance fee and an annual subscription fee.

The Institute provided an excellent library for its members, and also operated a gymnasium and billiards room. It also sponsored debates, lectures, and concerts for the benefit of its members.

The Catholic Literary Institute is first mentioned in Limerick Trade Directory in 1877, with premises on Brunswick Street. Though these premises was badly damaged by a fire in 1891, the Institute was able remain open while repairs were carried out. The Catholic Institute occasionally allowed other organizations to use their premises to hold events and meetings. Most notably the St. Vincent De Paul frequently held meetings at the Brunswick street premise. The Institute sold its premises at Sarsfield Street (formerly Brunswick Street) to Irish Workers and General Workers Union c.1954.

The collection held by Limerick City Archives consists of one volume of minute books, and a small number of annual reports. The volume of minutes (P3/1) has recently been restored. The annual reports provide insightful information into the activities of the Institute, and its financial position. The papers of the founder of the Institute, Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, are held by the Limerick Diocesan Archives, these may contain additional information relating to the Catholic Literary Institute of Limerick.

Sources: Thomas J. Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer of Limerick 1842-1917*, (2003)

Minute Book (1886-1923)

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| 1 | 5 May 1886- 28 March 1906(26 October 1923) | Minute book of Catholic Literary Institute of Limerick containing handwritten minutes from council meetings and from various sub-committee meetings such as entertainments, house and finance, billiards, building and gymnasium committees which are recorded chronologically. Council meetings were generally held twice monthly, and committee meetings held more intermittently. The minutes record meeting attendance and deal mainly with the financial and administrative affairs of the Institute arising out of operating a reading room, a library, a billiards room, a gymnasium, and organizing debates, lectures, concerts, and Irish classes and other activities. The minute book records resolutions passed at meetings; summary of correspondence received by the Institute; names and addresses of individuals elected by ballot to be members of the Institute; details of annual elections to the council and election of officers; details of bill paid; building work; fixtures and fittings; subscriptions and donations received; disputes between member; instructions to the caretaker; consequences of fire at the Institutes premises in 1891. Minutes are generally signed by the president of the Institute or the honorable secretary. Includes several signed applications for membership forms. |
| | | c.350 pp |

Annual Reports (1895-1901)

Printed annual reports of the Catholic Literary Institute. Topics discussed in the Annual Reports include the annual general meeting, election and retirement of members, various activities of Institute throughout the year and financial condition of Institute. Reports include an abstract of receipts and expenditure for year.

5 items

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2	1895	3 pp
3	1896	3 pp
4	1897	3 pp
5	1898 Includes handwritten list of names	4 pp
[6-7]		
8	1901 <i>Fragile handle with care</i>	6 pp