

# Limerick Bakers' Society

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## Introduction

The Limerick Bakers' Society was first established in 1745, and re-established in 1864. The main function of the society was to provide assistance to its' members in times of sickness, unemployment or death.

Medical services were provided by the society's doctor, aged members received superannuation, sickness and mortality benefits were also available. There was also a weekly emigration levy available if members wished to leave the country.

The society was financed by weekly contribution from fully employed members and by the payment of various fines by members.

The number of men employed by bakeries fluctuated according to demand for bread. Thus, the numbers unemployed increased mid-week, whilst at the weekend even casual workers were able to find work. 'Walking money' as unemployment assistance was called was paid to casual workers (or 'jobbers') in proportion to the number of days worked. The Society also undertook to men a full weeks pay at Christmas,

Discussions regarding 'jobbers' were frequently recorded in the minute books. Jobbers were employed on a rota basis. Casual workers had to gather every evening at a certain place in order to be considered for employment the following day. Failure to attend at the place of call also meant that the jobbers forfeited his walking money.

The minute books also records efforts made by the society to improve working conditions for bakers. The organisation succeeded in eliminating night work in Limerick bakeries in 1872.

The Limerick Bakers Society was also involved with National Organisations, which aimed to improve working conditions for bakers. Delegates from Limerick were sent to the Irish Bakers Confectioners National Union in 1891. Limerick also belonged to the National Amalgamated Bakers and Confectionary Union, which became the Irish Bakers' National Amalgamated Union in 1913. However in the minute books the issued discussed are overwhelmingly local and there is little mention of the trade union movement in general terms or the activities of individuals such as Larkin and Connolly.

The position of the Limerick bakers on the issue of nationalism can be gleamed from activities noted in the minute books, such as contributing to the Manchester Martyr Committee (18 March 1910), and writing letters of sympathy to the Daly family on the death of Tom Clarke (5 July 1916).

This collection consists of two no. minute books dating 1871 to 1884, and 1909 to 1923. Additionally University College Dublin Archives holds a large number of records from the Limerick Bakers Society dating from 1844 to 1960 which include minute books, financial records, lists of members, correspondence files, and printed material.

### **Minute Books (1871-1923)**

Minute books of the Limerick Guild of Bakers (known also as Limerick Bakers Society). Meetings were generally held monthly and committee members were fined for non-attendance. Topics discussed include admission to the Bakers Guild, disputes between various Limerick bakeries, working hours and conditions, subscriptions to provide sick pay and assistance for 'idle' members, disciplinary matters, emigration assistance, partnership with Dublin trade unions, strikes by bakers, conditions for boys entering into training, and trade apprenticeship scholarships. Includes entries such as 'A special meeting of the Guild of Bakers was called for the purpose of investigating the case of George Wade who it was stated left a batch of bread in the oven all night and drew it out in the morning and concealed it' (18 September 1873). Includes entries such as 'Tim Kearny will get a loan of £3 to enable him to send his sisters to Australia' (2 May 1883). Includes letter received from Madge Daly (5 July 1916); Includes resolution that 'we should take no direction from Dublin as they sold us during our last strike to employers' (19 February 1919). Bakeries in Limerick with affiliated to the society included Daly's, Russels, Limerick Board of Guardian Bakery, Glin Union Bakery, and Stephen Tubridy Limited

2 volumes.

1	31 July 1871-16 August 1884	c.160 pp
2	4 August 1909-13 August 1923	c.250 pp