

Limerick City Council Franchise and Elections

L/FR/FE

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Introduction

This collection relates to the Local Elections and Parliamentary elections from 1840 onwards, and the role of the local authority in the compilation of electoral registers.

Under the 1840 Municipal Reform Act, the old Limerick Corporation was abolished (see L/OC) and the city was divided into five electoral wards. Franchise was given to elect councillors to the city council to all adult males who were in possession of property worth £10 or more per year. The act also stated that each borough should keep a list of those entitled to vote-which was known as the 'Burgess List'. The burgess lists which have survived for Limerick City consist of the Burgess roll for the Market Ward (1869-1894) and the roll for entire Limerick city (1896-1897).

The Local Government Act 1898 radically extended the local government franchise as it entitled all householders and occupants of a portion of a house to vote in local elections. The franchise was also extended to all women over the age of thirty, provided they satisfied the same criteria as men. As a result of this dramatic reform, the borough electorate of Limerick City increased by 768%, from 709 to 5,521 voters. Local elections were held in 1899, 1902, 1905, 1908, 1911 and 1914 and were postponed until 1920 due to World War One. The Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1919, introduced proportional representation into the local electoral system. The only electoral register for Limerick city held by Limerick Archives for the period 1898-1922, is dated 1912.

The collection also includes also a number of parliamentary electoral registers for the Limerick City Borough. Limerick City Borough was a constituency of the United Kingdom parliament, which was created by the Act of Union 1800, and abolished by the Anglo-Irish Treaty, signed on 6 December 1921. It returned one Member of Parliament between 1801-1832, two members of parliament from 1832 to 1885, and one member from 1885-1922. Throughout the nineteenth century, the parliamentary franchise was gradually extended to increasing number of adult males by various Representation of the People Acts (known as Reform Acts). The 1884 Reform Act gave the right to vote to all adult males who paid an annual rent of £10 or whose land holdings were valued at £10. However parliamentary suffrage was not granted to women until 1918. Limerick Archives holds the electoral registers for the Limerick City Borough for the years 1885-1886, and 1895.

When the Irish Free State was established, the Electoral Act of 1923 re-iterated the franchise qualification terms for local elections outlined in Local Government Act of 1898. This act granted the right to vote in local elections to those who were owners or occupiers of premises in the electoral area for not less than six months, to female householders and occupants who were at least 30 years of age, and to the wives of electors. This meant that a large number of adults were still excluded from voting in Local Government elections. In 1933 a Bill was introduced in the Dail providing for the introduction of universal suffrage at local elections. Though the bill was initially obstructed by the Senate, by March 1935, it had passed all stages and became law.

Between 1898-1953 the normal term for a borough and county council was three years. This was increased to five years in 1953. Throughout the twentieth century in Ireland there was a common tendency to postpone local elections. The Local Elections

Postponement Acts of 1922, 1923 and 1924 allowed the Minister for Local Government to postpone the first post-Independence local elections which were due to be held in January 1923. The Local Government Act of 1925 provided for local elections being held not later than 26th June 1925. Permanent provisions for holding local elections between June and July every three years were introduced with the Local Elections Act of 1927. However the practice of postponing elections continued until 1999 when Article 28A (3) was inserted in the Constitution forbidding the practice.

On 1st of February each year, an electoral register was published by Limerick City Council listing all men and women who are entitled to vote in referendum, Dáil elections, local elections and European elections. A draft register was also published, on the 1st of November of the previous year and was made available for public consultation at the city council, at post offices, libraries, garda stations, and other public sites. The collection includes volumes of electoral registers (1964-1976) and number of files relating to the preparation of the electoral register (1960-1971).

The collection also includes series of files dating from 1938-1948 relating to the selection of seven members of Limerick City Council to the electorate for the Seanad elections in accordance with the Seanad Electoral (Panel Members) Act 1937 and by the Order entitled (Voting by Councils), Regulations 1938. Also included are files relating to the establishment of electoral areas and polling districts in Limerick city.

The National Archives of Ireland holds a significant number of electoral registers relating to Limerick City and County and dating from 1886 to 1947 –see Appendix 1 for complete list. The collection L/OC Corporation Records Pre-Reform holds list of Freemen of Limerick City dating 1719-1890.

This collection is an important source for family and local historians, and researchers interested in elections and democracy in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland.

1. Registers of Electorates (1840-1922)

(i) Burgess Lists under the Municipal Reform Act 1840 (1869-1897)

1/[1-28]

1/29	8 September 1869-8 September 1894	Burgess Roll for Market Ward, Borough of Limerick. The roll lists annually the persons entitled to be enrolled as Burgesses. Entries are arranged alphabetically, and details recorded for each person include name, residence, situation of qualifying property, and description of property. Also recorded is the date paid, amount paid and amount due by each person for 'rate for paving, sewerage and lighting', and for 'Grand Jury Cess, or any cess, applotment or Rate raised or levied for fiscal purposes of a like nature within the Borough of Limerick', and for the 'Borough Rate' and 'Poor Rate'. Each folio is signed by the Town Clerk. In 1869, 226 persons were enrolled as Burgesses, and in 1894 there was 345 persons enrolled. c. 170 ff
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1/[30-31]

1/1/32	25 November 1896-24 November 1897	Burgess Roll for the city of Limerick. Roll is arranged by electoral ward and then alphabetically by surname. Details recorded for each Burgess include number on roll, name, street lane or other place in the ward where the property in respect whereof the party is enrolled is situate. c.25 pp
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(ii) Electoral Registers post 1898 Local Government Act (1912)

[2/1-13]

2/14	1912	Copy of the register of all persons entitled to vote as parliamentary or local government electors for the Year 1912 in the Parliamentary Borough of Limerick. The register is arranged by Parliamentary Polling district and by street name. Details recorded for each person include the place of abode, and street lane or other like place in the registration unit, and number of house (if any) where the property is situate , surname and christian name, name or description of premises rated, nature of qualification and rated value of premises. Includes summary of register. c. 150 pp
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(iii) Parliamentary Electoral Registers (1885-1895)

Copies of the Registers of Persons entitled to vote at any election of a member of parliament for the county of the city of Limerick. Registers are arranged by polling district, and then alphabetically by surname. Details recorded for each person include surname and Christian name, place of abode, nature of qualification, description and situation of property, and rated value of premises.

2 volumes

3/1	1885-1886 Includes also list of resident freemen entitled to vote at Parliamentary elections, and a summary of the Register	c.150 pp
[]		
13/10	1895 Incomplete with list of freemen and part of Castleward register missing.	c. 120 pp.

2. Register of Electorates post Irish Independence

(i) Electoral Register for East Limerick (1964-1976)

Printed Register of Electorates for the Constituency of East Limerick which is arranged by polling district, registration unit and by street name. The Register lists number, name, and address of each person entitled to vote. Letters are placed in bold against certain persons name to signify if the person may not vote at local elections, may not vote at a county council election, is liable to serve s juror, may vote at local elections only, or may vote by post only. Supplement to the Register of Electors included at the beginning of each volume.

11 volumes.

[1-43]		
1/44	15 April 1964-14 April 1964	c. 500 pp
1/45	15 April 1965-14 April 1966	c. 850 pp
1/46	15 April 1966-14 April 1967	c. 850 pp
1/[47]		
1/48	15 April 1968-14 April 1969	c. 850 pp
1/49	15 April 1969-14 April 1970	c. 850 pp
1/50	15 April 1970-14 April 1971	c. 850 pp
1/51	15 April 1971-14 April 1972 Includes revised index to Limerick streets.	c. 900 pp
1/52	15 April 1972-14 April 1973	c. 850 pp
1/53	15 April 1973-14 April 1974	c. 850 pp
1/54	15 April 1974-14 April 1975	c. 850 pp
1/55	15 April 1975-14 April 1976	c. 850 pp

(ii) Drafting of Register of Electorates (1960-1971)

Series of files relating to the compilation of electoral registers for the constituency of East Limerick. Includes material such as draft registers, claim form for registration or corrections to the register of electorates, index to streets and polling districts, postal voters list, correspondence between the registration officer, deputy registration officer, city manager, Department of Local Government and others, and public notices regarding the publishing of Electoral Lists

[2/1-38]		
2/39	13 September 1960-29 March 1962	c. 50 pp
2/45	1968-1971	7 items

3. Local Government Elections post -Irish Independence

(i) Local Election 1925

1/1 c. 23 June 1925 File consisting of
Declarations of Result of
Polls in the local election
of 23 June 1925. The Declaration of the Result of Polls for each of the five electoral
division consist of a list of all candidates, the number of votes received by candidate
on each count, the count on which candidate elected or eliminated, and name of
candidates elected and the order in which they were elected. Also includes signature
of the calculator, the person whom checked calculations, and the signature of the
returning officer.

7 pp

(ii) Local Election 1929

2/1 14 May 1929 Letter from William M.
Nolan, town clerk and
returning officer to the
city treasurer enclosing an account of expense of the Municipal Elections held in
1928.

3 pp.

(iii) Local Election 1931

3/1 c. 24 June 1931 File consisting of
Declarations of Result of
Polls in the local election
of 23 June 1931. The Declaration of the Result of Polls for each of the five electoral
division consist of a list of all candidates, the number of votes received by candidate
on each count, the count on which candidate elected or eliminated , and name of
candidates elected and the order in which they were elected. Also includes signature
of the calculator, the person whom checked calculations, and the signature of the
returning officer.

5 items.

(iv) Local Election 1934

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| 4/1 | c. 8 November 1934 | Declaration of Result
of Polls in the local
election on 8 November
1934 for the electoral area of the city of Limerick. Closed for Conservation | 4 pp |
| 4/2 | 13 October 1934-15 October 1934 | File of letters from the
Department of Local
Government and Public
Health to Patrick T. Conlon regarding his appointment as Returning Officer for the
County Borough . | 7 pp |
| 4/3 | 8 November 1934 | Blank ballot paper
listing candidates for the
Election of Limerick City
Council, electoral area, city of Limerick 1934. | 1 item |

(v) Local Election 1942

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|-----|----------------|---|---------|
| 5/1 | August 1942 | Declaration of Result
of Polls in the local
election in August 1942
for the electoral area of the city of Limerick. Includes statement of Returning Officer
as to rejected ballot papers Closed for Conservation | 2 items |
| 5/2 | [] August 1942 | Blank ballot paper
listing candidates for the
Election of Limerick City
Council, electoral area, city of Limerick 1942. | 1 item |

4. Selection of City Councillors to Seanad Electorate

Series of files relating to the selection of seven members of Limerick City Council to the electorate for the Seanad elections in accordance with the Seanad Electoral (Panel Members) Act 1937 and by the Order entitled (Voting by Councils), Regulations 1938. Includes circulars from the Department of Local Government and Public Health; copies of notices of election of electorate; nomination forms; and returns of persons appointed to act as members of the Seanad Electorate.

1	1 January 1938-16 February 1938	c. 20 items
2	4 June 1938-9 July 1938	c. 30 pp.
3	29 May 1943-12 July 1943	c. 15 items
4	15 May 1944-5 June 1944 Selection of electorate also subject to the General Elections (Emergency Provisions) Act 1943	c. 12 items
5	12 January 1948-24 February 1948 Includes circular letters from the Seanad Returning Officer requesting a statement of names, addresses, and description of members of the County Borough of Limerick	c. 5 pp

5. Division of County Borough of Limerick into Electoral Areas and Polling Districts (1919-1954)

1 2 June 1919-22 September 1919 File relating to the division of the County Borough of Limerick into electoral areas under the terms of the Local Government (Ireland) Act 1919. Includes correspondence between William M. Nolan (town clerk), John Dundon (city solicitor), and the Local Government Board of Ireland.

c. 25 pp

2 9 April 1922-18 December 1954 File relating to schemes for establishing polling districts and polling places in the County Borough of Limerick, and for the division of the county borough into electoral areas. Includes circulars and correspondences from the Department of Local Government and public notices issued by the City Manager.

c. 150 pp.

Appendix 1: Electoral Registers for Limerick City and County held by the National Archives.

Limerick

Voters' Registers / Lists	1886-1907 (with gaps)	CROWN & PEACE
	1910-1915	CROWN & PEACE
	1918-1943 City and County	CROWN & PEACE