

**Limerick Corporation
Gasworks
(1880-1949)**

L/G/1

<u>Introduction</u>	1
A <u>Gas Committee Elections (1907-1926)</u>	3
(i) Election Posters (1922-1926)	3
(ii) Electoral Lists (1907-1925)	3
B <u>Reports and Correspondence referred to the town clerk/city manager (1916-1947)</u>	5
C <u>List of Bad Debtors (1880-1954)</u>	6
D <u>Gas Works Wages Books (1894-1949)</u>	7
E <u>Plans and Drawings of Gas Works (1926-1934)</u>	7

Introduction

This collection relates to the Limerick Corporation Gas Undertaking from 1880 to 1947. It includes gas electors' posters and lists, various reports and correspondences which were referred by the Gas Committee or gas engineer to the Office of the Town Clerk and City Manager, wages books, and one volume of bad debt. Also included are series of plans and drawings for improvements at the Gas Works.

The Gas Undertaking owned by Limerick Corporation consisted of an amalgamation of the Gas Consumers Company and the United General Gas and Coke Company. The Gas Consumers Company had been originally established in 1840 to counter the monopoly of the United General Gas and Coke Company. When the Gas Consumers Company fell into financial difficulties in 1856, Limerick Corporation purchased the company. By 1866 the United General Gaslight Company ceased to provide gas in any urban area, except for Limerick City. The company was converted into the Limerick Gas Company by the Limerick Gas Act 1877. The following year, under the provisions of the Limerick Corporation Gas Act of 1878, this company was purchased by Limerick Corporation and amalgamated into one unit with the existing gas undertaking owned by the Corporation. The property acquired by the Corporation included the gas works on the Dock Road, plus offices and a showroom in 34 and 35 William Street, Limerick city. The administration of the gas undertaking and its financial accounts were kept separately from the other business of the Corporation up until the 1934 Management Act.

Between 1878-1934, the management of the gas undertaking was placed in the hands of a Gas Committee, consisting of the Mayor and two city councillors, plus two representatives of the gas consumers elected by the consumers. The electorate for the latter was drawn up by the Gas Committee, and was termed "the gas electors list". (see L/G/1/). The first Gas committee was elected in February 1878 and subsequently, elections were held every two years.

The day to day management of the Corporation Gas was in the hands of the gas manager, assisted by the secretary to the committee and an engineer. In 1902, all three of these received a salary of £300 per year. There were also two gas collectors, a gas examiner, bookkeeper, engineer's assistant and a staff of 126, making it the largest single department in Limerick Corporation. The Gas Committee was abolished under the 1934 Management Act, and the gas undertaking was subsumed into the Corporation.

After the 1930's, when public street lighting was converted to electricity, the Gas Undertaking concentrated on the provision of domestic heating and cooking facilities to the people of Limerick. One of the most significant periods in the history of the Gas Undertaking was the series of events which led to the sworn enquiry into the Gas Works on 16 December 1943, and the eventual demotion of the City Manager J.J Berkley.

Berkley had acted as secretary and accountant to the Clonmel Corporation Gas Undertaking for an eighteen year period, and considered himself as an authority in this area. He also administered the Limerick Corporation Gas Undertaking during the period between the dismissal of the gas engineer (Jan 1940) and appointment of new engineer, Fredrick Thomas (April 1941). In the early 1940's there was a series of clashes between Berkley and Thomas particularly over issues such as the use of turf as a substitute for coal. Berkley also effectively demoted and marginalised Thomas in the gas works by promoting the works foreman Edward Banks to 'production engineer', and the typist Kathleen Moroney to his 'confidential secretary' with

responsibility for administrative and ordering functions of the gasworks. On the 1st March 1943, Berkley attempted to dismiss Thomas but withdrew the order terminating his employment, when Thomas threatened legal action. On 11 September 1943 Berkley demoted Thomas by placing him in charge of the repairs and maintenance staff who numbered only 9 out of a total staff of 43 in the gasworks. He also recommended that Thomas's salary be reduced to £130 per annum (less than that of clerical officer). On 14th September, 1943 the City Council debated the crisis in the Gas Undertaking and passed a resolution 'that we request the Minister for Local Government and Public Health to hold a sworn enquiry into the Gas Works'.

The enquiry was held in the Town Hall, Limerick between 16th December, 1943 and 11th February, 1944 with an adjournment from 16th December to 5th January. It was conducted by T. C. Courtney, M.E. who was Chief Engineering Inspector of the Department of Local Government. A total of 28 witnesses appeared before the enquiry including the Manager, the Mayor, and Frederick Thomas. The Enquiry Report, when published found against James Berkley on virtually all counts and in consequence it stated that the Minister had decided to remove him from the office of City Manager, and appointed to a clerical post in the Corporation's service. Frederick Thomas was exonerated completely and it was recommended that he be retained as gas engineer at his former salary. The Corporation acted on all of these recommendations.

In 1986 the New Limerick Gas Company was established which was jointly owned by Bord Gais and Limerick Corporation and which took over the Corporation's gas functions. The New Limerick Gas Company was subsequently subsumed full into Bord Gais, thus ending the role of Limerick Corporation in the provision of gas in Limerick City

The collection is a useful source for researching the role of the Corporation in the provision of gas in Limerick City during the early twentieth century. Also included is information regarding the engineering developments at the Gas works, the difficulties in securing fuel supplies during World War Two, and the names and occupations of those who worked at the Corporation Gas Works. Limerick City Museum has a number of ephemeral materials relating to the Gas Works. See also P58 Limerick Gas Consumers Company and L/SMIN Limerick City Council Special Committee Minute Books.

A Gas Committee Elections (1907-1925)

(i) Election Posters (1922-1926)

1/1	1922-1926	File consisting of posters issued by the town clerk notifying gas consumers of the gas committee elections, and requesting nominations. Includes multiple copies of posters.
		c. 15 items.

(ii) Electoral Lists (1907-1925)

Volumes of Gas Electoral Lists. The Gas Electoral List includes the name, address, and amount payable by gas consumers, who were eligible to elect representatives to the Gas Committee every two years.

3 volumes

[1/2-13]

1/14	1907	c. 50 pp.
------	------	-----------

[15-21]

1/22	1923 Includes nomination forms for candidates	c.60 pp.
1/23	1925 Includes nomination forms for candidates	c.60 pp.

B Reports and Correspondence referred to the town clerk /city manager (1916-1947)

2/1	18 October 1916	Report prepared by G.W Anderson, Esq (A.M.I.C.E) for the Gas Committee regarding Limerick Gas Works. Includes analysis of Gas Works equipment and machinery, of the efficiency of the distribution plant, quality of coal received, financial accounts of Gas works particularly capital expenditure and sums spent on wages. Includes also a summary of recommendations made through out the report.
		20 pp.

2/2	24 July 1924	Report prepared by W. Doig Gibb for the Gas Committee regarding the
-----	--------------	---

installation of a vertical retort plant and the necessity of the reconstruction of the gas works and street mains.

16 pp.

2/3 27 October 1925-75 January 1933 File of letters enclosing copies of abbreviate of minutes of meetings of the Gas Committee which were sent from the secretary of the Committee to the town clerk. Minutes generally note the date, committee members present, orders passed, and financial status of the Gas Department.

c. 150 pp.

2/4 18 November 1927-30 March 1928 File consisting of letters from John J. Dundon (law agent) to William M. Nolan (town clerk) regarding pensions scheme to employees of the Gas Department. Includes proposed pension scheme report prepared by Dundon; includes Limerick Corporation Gas Undertaking (Pensions) Bill 1928.

3 items.

2/5 July 1931 Department of Industry and Commerce, Census of Production, 1929, Report No. 23, Gas Work Undertakings.

5 pp.

2/6 (1925-) 10 August 1935-13 January 1936 File relating to acquisition under lease of 45 O'Connell street (Galbraith's premise) or 111 O'Connell street, Limerick as a showroom for the Gas Undertaking and disposal of existing showroom premises at 35 William street. Includes valuation reports prepared by Alfred J. Sexton (Auctioneer and Valuer) for 45 O'Connell street and 35 William street and correspondence between Sexton and T.C. O'Mahony (city manager) regarding sale of 35 William street to Bank of Ireland. Includes letters from city manager to the Mayor and Alderman of Limerick. Includes also copy of agreement between Limerick Gas Committee and Mary Purcell regarding her occupation of basement of 35 William street (21 May 1925).

13 items.

L/G/

- | | | |
|------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 2/7 | 15 September 1943-6 December 1944 | File relating to the sworn inquiry into the Limerick Gas Works.

Includes report issued by the Minister for Local Government which considered the minutes of evidence of the Inquiry, and the report of his Chief Engineering Adviser (6 December 1944); includes list of witnesses examined at the Inquiry; includes newspaper cuttings relating to meeting of Limerick City Council on 14 September 1943, when the Inquiry was called for. |
| | | 5 items. |
|
 | | |
| 2/8 | 30 September 1945-30 September 1946 | File of letters sent from Gas Department to the City Manager and Town Clerk enclosing abstracts of accounts of Gas Department for half-year ending 30 September 1945 and 30 September 1946. |
| | | 4 items. |
|
 | | |
| 2/9 | 20 September 1947 | Incomplete letter from F. K. Thomas, (city gas engineer) to M. Macken, city manager and town clerk regarding quantity of coal at gas works procedures for reporting a breakdown at the plant, and the employment of M. J. Kelly as a steel erector. |
| | | 4 pp. |
|
 | | |
| 2/10 | Undated | Memorandum on the training of gas engineers recommending that practical training could be given at Limerick Gas Works. |
| | | 1 p. |

C List of Bad Debtors (1880-1954)

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| 3/1 | 31 December 1880-31 March 1954 | Volume recording annual list of bad debtors of Limerick Corporation Gas Works Department. Details recorded each year include name of debtor, amount of bad debt, whether debt owed for gas or fittings, and total sum of bad debts owed to the Gas Works. From 31 March 1901 additional column records debts owed for 'cookers' and from 31 March 1908 the rental folio reference of the customers account is also noted. From 31 March 1939 the reason for pay debt is also recorded such as 'left |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|

town', 'cooker off' and 'dead'. Includes occasional annotations by the chief collector or gas engineer regarding debts to be written off.

c. 60 ff.

D Gas Works Wages Books (1894-1949)

Wages Books which record weekly wages paid out by Limerick Corporation Gas Works. Details recorded include name and occupation of employee, number of days worked, rate paid per day, and total sum received by employee. Wages are also allocated to the section in which employee worked such as 'coals', 'manufacture', 'lamps', 'gas fittings', 'cookers', 'maintenance', 'residuals', 'sulph am', 'charges', 'meters', 'electrical lighting' and 'extensions'. Total wages paid out by each section are also calculated weekly. From 14 April 1922 the sections are listed under the headings 'manufacture', 'distribution', and 'management'. From 31 March 1933 pension contribution details for each employee are recorded and sections headings change to 'gas', 'tar', 'residuals', 'fittings', 'cookers', 'maintenance', 'management' and 'capital'. From 31 March 1944 includes additional columns recording which days worked, employees and employers contributions, and gross and net wages. Also included at rear of volumes L/G/4/7-21 is half yearly summaries of sums paid by each section.

13 volumes.

4/7	29 December 1894-3 January 1896	c. 160 ff
[8]		
4/9	1 January 1898-31 March 1899	c.200 ff
4/10	1 April 1899-27 July 1900	c. 200 ff
[11]		
4/12	29 March 1902-27 March 1903	c. 160 ff
[13-14]		
4/15	30 March 1907-27 March 1908	c.160 ff
[16-17]		
4/18	5 April 1912-28 March 1913	c.200 ff
[19-20]		
4/21	31 March 1917-29 March 1918	c. 175 ff
[22-23]		
4/24	14 April 1922-11 May 1923	c.175 ff
[25-26]		
4/27	31 March 1928-29 March 1929 Includes columns recording weekly insurance paid by employer and which days during the week the employee worked.	c.175 ff
[28-29]		
4/30	31 March 1933-30 March 1934	c.175 ff.

[31-33]

4/34 31 March 1939-29 March 1940 c. 175 ff
Includes weekly summaries of total wages allocated to each section at rear of volume.

[35-36]

4/37 31 March 1944-22 March 1945 c.175 ff

[38-39]

4/40 26 March 1948-17 February 1949 c. 175 ff

E Plans and Drawings of Gas Works and proposed Extension Works (1926-1934)

5/1 30 March 1926-19 May 1926 File of drawings of 40"x10"x25"-0" vertical retorts in units of 2's, which were prepared by West's Gas Improvement Company, Manchester. Drawings to be used for the construction, working, regulating, and maintenance of retort settings at the Gasworks of Limerick Corporation. Includes drawing No. C5702 'Large Plan of Setting,' (Scale 1 inch: 1 foot) ; No. C5703 'Small Plans of Settings' (scale ½ inch: 1 foot); No. 5705 'Elevation of Settings' which shows the elevations of the producer side and of the non-producer side (scale ½ inch: 1 foot); No. C5707 'Section through producer side wall' (Scale ½ inch: 1 foot). Reference key to drawings shows that various colours of ink are used to signify the material from which retort bricks are made. Drawings on linen paper.

4 items

5/2 1 December 1928-18 April 1929 File of drawings of the extension of 40"x10"x25"-0" vertical retorts in units of 2's, which were prepared by West's Gas Improvement Company, Manchester. Drawings to be used for the construction, working, regulating, and maintenance of extension of retort settings at the Gasworks of Limerick Corporation. Includes drawing No. D5300 'Vertical Section of Settings' (Scale 1 inch: 1 foot) ; No. D5301 'Large Plan of Settings' (scale 1 inch: 1 foot); No. D5302 'Small Plans of Settings' (scale ½ inch: 1 foot); No. D5303 'Section through non- producer side wall' (Scale ½ inch: 1 foot). Reference key to drawings shows that various colours of ink are used to signify the material from which retort bricks are made. Drawings on linen paper.

4 items

5/3 2 July 1934 Drawing No. F2003 of vertical section of sections of 40"x10"x25"

L/G/

0" vertical retorts in units of 2's, which was prepared by West's Gas Improvement Company. Scale ½ inch: 1 foot.

1 item

5/4

Undated

Drawing No. C1054
submitted by West's Gas
Improvement Company

of Standard 40x10 Steaming Retort and the arrangement of Retort Type 'L'. Drawing includes key to the schedule of retort bricks which notes the material of the bricks to be used (silica's or fireclays). Scale ¾ inch: 1 foot.

1 item