



National Archives, Ireland

Content of the Registered Papers 1818-1830.

The CSORP papers consist of official government material relating to all aspects of the administration of Ireland alongside unofficial correspondence from private individuals and organisations across Ireland. The registered papers, therefore, are much more than the 'official' records of government - they offer a unique window into Irish society in the nineteenth century.

The papers cover a wide variety of topics – from matters of national importance to local issues or personal plights. While no summary could possibly delve into all topics, the list below outlines the main themes. These themes are elaborated on in the following section and links to relevant, exemplary documents in the collection are provided.

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• Law and Order

• Policing

- Peace Preservation Force¹
 - The **Peace Preservation Force** was established in 1814 by Sir Robert Peel², as a mobile force, supplementary to the pre-existing and under-resourced baronial constabulary. The new force was under the command of stipendiary magistrates (also known as chief magistrates of police who had the powers of justices of the peace) whose staff each included a clerk, chief constable and sub constables. The force could be dispatched to any district which was proclaimed by the lord lieutenant as disturbed. They were paid for by local rate-payers which made the force unpopular with landlords. Many 'peelers' joined the Irish Constabulary when it was created in 1822 and the force was eventually fully amalgamated into the Constabulary in 1836.³
 - The papers reveal how the authorities began to reduce the force in the mid-1820s. Included, for example, are requests from former Peace Preservation Force policemen seeking appointment to the Constabulary despite being illiterate ([CSO/RP/1824/217](#)); efforts to absorb the force into the Constabulary in Tipperary to deal with increased outrage ([CSO/RP/1828/1631](#)); attempts by a chief magistrate of police in Limerick, to reverse a government order requesting him not to fill current vacancies 'with the view to the gradual reduction of that Force' ([CSO/RP/1829/237](#)).
- Irish Constabulary⁴
 - The **Irish Constabulary**, a centralized force, responsible for the whole country except Dublin, was first established in 1822 by act of parliament. It was a centrally controlled, hierarchical, armed, paramilitary force, organised on a county by county basis. Constables and sub-constables lived in barracks and were subject to military type discipline administered by chief constables who in turn answered to sub-inspectors, county inspectors, inspector generals and ultimately to the Chief Secretary. The officer ranks were directly commissioned, with little promotional opportunity available to the rank and file. Between 1836 and 1846 each county contributed to the cost of their force but after 1846 the exchequer shouldered the entire cost. In 1836 the constabulary was consolidated with the Peace Preservation Force and from 1867 onwards was known as the Royal Irish Constabulary.
 - The papers are filled with letters from individuals seeking positions in the force; with requests for leave of absence from chief constables and

¹ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.136.

² Boyce, D George, *Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), p.270.

³ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.459.

⁴ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.139-145.



appeals from constables for reinstatement following dismissal for drunkenness.

- The papers demonstrate that disobedience or displays of partisanship was not tolerated. For example constables who refused to take down an 'Orange' flag during the long-running dispute in Mountmelick were dismissed ([CSO/RP/1828/1524](#)), as was Captain John Burke, chief constable who attended a Brunswick Club meeting in Wexford ([CSO/RP/1829/160](#)).
- The papers reveal a tension between magistrates and government over the precise role and duties of the new constabulary at local level. The crown law officers made clear that constables were not to be used to enforce civil bills, magistrates' warrants ([CSO/RP/1828/1097](#)) or enforce payment of tithes and were also not permitted to assist the Revenue police except in cases of a breach of the peace. These duties were to be carried out by baronial constables and other officers ([CSO/RP/1826/2037](#)) ([CSO/RP/1826/1718](#)).
- The papers contain letters from high ranking police officers proposing improvements to the force. It was suggested that policemen be moved regularly to prevent them from becoming too familiar with their communities ([CSO/RP/1828/193](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/1712](#)); that married constables were a hindrance to the operation of the force ([CSO/RP/1828/795](#)) and that chief constables, who often had military backgrounds, should not be chosen from the gentry class and should be discouraged from displays of military pomp ([CSO/RP/1828/1361](#)).
- **Revenue Police and Dublin Metropolitan Police**⁵.
 - The **Revenue Police** force emerged from the practice of excise officers hiring armed parties to assist them on raids, following a decision not to allow the military to engage in revenue work. These armed parties were given commissions as excisemen and were under the control of lieutenants. One of their main functions was detecting illegal distilling ([CSO/RP/1819/292](#)). The force was reformed into an efficient, 1,100 strong, light infantry force in 1836, with over two thirds of the men being dismissed. It was abolished in 1857 and its duties were transferred to the constabulary.
 - In 1808 the eighteenth century **Dublin Metropolitan Police** force was reorganised and brought under the scrutiny of central government. Henceforth the government and the corporation shared in the appointment of 18 magistrates of police, one of whom was also given the role of chief police magistrate of Dublin by the lord lieutenant. These magistrates were required to report to government on a regular basis ([CSO/RP/1828/955](#)). The number of magistrates was reduced in 1824 and the force was reformed in 1836 with the appointment of two paid justices of the peace or commissioners of the Dublin police who reported to the chief secretary. The force consisted of circa 200 constables and 500 watchmen in the early 1830s.

⁵ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.137-139.



• Crime

• Secret Societies

- Secret societies had been part of Irish rural life long before the Act of Union. Their organisation and purpose differed according to local conditions and problems and while the most active societies were driven by agrarian issues, sectarianism was also a motivation. They ‘fostered the idea of a group in society which could make its own “laws”, enforce them ... and establish a kind of local power or authority’. Membership mainly came from the labouring classes and the targets of their ire tended to be isolated farmers and local tithe proctors because the landlord and gentry class posed a more formidable target.⁶
- The followers of Captain Rock, known as **Rockites**, were one of the fiercest pre-Famine agrarian societies who engaged in intimidation via threatening notices, livestock maiming, arson attacks, night-time raids ([CSO/RP/SC/1821/684](#)).⁷ They frequently targeted new tenants of holdings where the previous tenant had been evicted and also sought out firearms in the possession of farmers. Other secret oath-bound societies included the **Whiteboys**, **Ribbonmen**, Threshers, Shanavests and Terry Alts and it appears that magistrates, clergymen and landowners used these names interchangeably⁸.
- The State of the County and Outrage papers, in particular, abound with police and magistracy reports of the activities of these societies and include actual notices served on individuals, affidavits of victims and witnesses, pleas for police protection and requests for assisted emigration from those subjected to intimidation – all demonstrate the localised nature of these activities. Documents from these oath-bound and secretive groups are rare however – a purported copy the regulations of Ribbonmen or Rockites being a notable exception ([CSO/RP/SC/1825/702](#)).
- Some interesting documents include accounts of violence which resulted from attempts to enclose common land at Slievegreene, County Waterford ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/345](#)); an account of a gunsmith who was engaged to repair a large cache of stolen firearms hidden in Silvermines, County Tipperary ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/208](#)); high-profile murders and trials including the murder of Daniel Mara in County Tipperary ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/441](#)) and the Doneraile Conspiracy ([CSO/RP/OR/1829/187](#)).
- Heightened sectarianism in the northern part of Ireland in 1828 resulted in midnight marches and meetings of Ribbonmen ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/144](#)) and clashes with **Orangemen** ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/378](#)). A striking feature of these nightly marches was the sheer number of individuals involved. There are similar accounts of

⁶ Boyce, D George, *Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), p.100-107.

⁷ Hoppen, KT, *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity*, 2nd Edition (Essex, 1999), p.49-50.

⁸Williams, TD, *Introduction* in TD Williams (ed), *Secret Societies in Ireland*, (Dublin, 1973), pp7.



large military-style processions of labours en route to dig potatoes for convicted individuals or persons involved in legal cases ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/147](#)) ([CSO/RP/OR/1829/629](#)).

- Witnesses or informers were frequently subjected to intimidation and oftentimes were forced to relocate. They sometimes were accommodated in bridewells or prisons for their own protection and the papers include letters from chief constables seeking money to pay for their upkeep or assist in emigration ([CSO/RP/1828/406](#)).
- Government intervention to curb secret societies included the movement of the constabulary or military to disturbed areas; placing a county under the Insurrection Act as was suggested by Kilkenny magistrates in 1824 ([CSO/RP/1824/721](#)) or the issuing of a proclamation suppressing illegal meetings ([CSO/RP/1828/1489](#)).
- The Unlawful Oaths (Ireland) Act 1823 and Unlawful Societies (Ireland) Act 1825 were in response to the activities of secret societies as well as the prominent political/sectarian organisations. The 1825 act, for example, lead to an influx of queries concerning the legality of orange and freemason marches and meetings ([CSO/RP/1825/616](#)).
- **Workers' Combinations**
 - Workers' Combinations, early precursors to trade unions, had been forbidden under a 1729 law but 1824 saw the repeal of much of the anti-combination legislation⁹. As witnessed in the papers, issues, such as the fixing of rates of pay by skilled workers, frequently lead to violence, particularly against workers who agreed to work for lower rates. The tactics employed mirrored those used by secret societies and it has been suggested that there were links between combinations and the Ribbon societies of Dublin who were 'active in protectionism and intimidation'¹⁰.
 - The papers, for example, contain reports of combination against operators on the Royal Canal ([CSO/RP/SC/1825/365](#)); by masons ([CSO/RP/1826/949](#)), cabinet makers ([CSO/RP/1826/902](#)), coopers ([CSO/RP/1828/613](#)) and miners at Mardyke colliery ([CSO/RP/1828/1562](#)) and Kildrum Mines ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/140](#)).
- **Illegal Distillation**
 - The Revenue Act of 1779 banned small stills and imposed a duty on distilling. This was fiercely resisted by poteen makers and by their communities who often confronted the authorities while they attempted to carry away confiscated stills or spirits. In one such account a Revenue Police officer in Donegal claimed that his men were attacked by 'not less than six or seven hundred men' ([CSO/RP/1819/292](#)).
 - In poor districts, particularly in the north-west, illicit distillation was a vital part of the local economy¹¹. It was even suggested by one correspondent that local magistrates and landlords in his area were prepared to

⁹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.578.

¹⁰ Foster, RF, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, (London, 1988), p.293.

¹¹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.63.



overlook the issue as it afforded tenants the means to pay their 'enormous Rent' ([CSO/RP/SC/1821/351](#)).

- One of the first actions of the Peace Preservation Force in 1817 was against illicit distilling in Inishowen, County Donegal but the practice only became less common after 1857 when the Constabulary took over the duties of the Revenue Police who had not always been effective¹².
- **Sedition**
 - Sedition was of course associated with the activities of secret societies and could be found on the fringes of political or sectarian movements. The papers include complaints or affidavits against individuals for uttering seditious language or disloyal toasts in public houses. One such account from Donegal recounts the toast given – '*the White Pigeon with the green wing, new laws and a Roman King*' ([CSO/RP/1828/1693](#)).
 - Occasionally policemen were accused of seditious language which more often than not resulted in their dismissal. Cases were also taken against individuals accused of posting seditious hand bills or traveling booksellers accused of selling questionable pamphlets or books as occurred in the case of William Tims, itinerant bookseller, who was found in possession of a copy of '*Billy Bluff*' in Mullingar ([CSO/RP/1824/782](#)).
 - Sedition was a serious charge - 'a vagrant ballad singer' in Cork, for example, was sentenced to transportation for seven years for 'vending and singing Ballads of the most mischievous and evil tendency' ([CSO/RP/1827/1465](#)).
- **Faction fighting**
 - Faction Fights, which took the form of large-scale, organised, pitched battles at fairs, patterns and other events, 'emerged as a major problem in the early 19th century' and remained a problem for the authorities until the 1830s.¹³ These long standing feuds between rival factions have generally been interpreted as 'recreational violence' but some may have had their roots in class or sectarian conflict. While the motivation may have been 'recreational' the consequences were often fatal as protagonists armed themselves with clubs, side arms and occasionally guns.
 - The Outrage Papers for 1826 to 1828 point to an escalation of faction feuding in County Tipperary and neighbouring parts of Limerick and Cork. It was reported, for example, that the deaths of two men outside Killinaule, Tipperary, was linked to a feud between the 'Shanavists' [Shanavests] and the 'Corravoths' [Caravats] ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/44](#)) and that even the intervention of a parish priest could not prevent a fight between two factions 'calling themselves Three and Four Years old' at Cappawhite Fair, Tipperary ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/53](#)).

¹² Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.267.

¹³ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.193.



- Intervention by the constabulary in these riots invariably resulted in the crowds turning on the police ([CSO/RP/OR/1826/324](#)).
- In 1828 a plea for reconciliation amongst the Tipperary factions was issued by the Catholic Association and supported by the clergy. This resulted in large gatherings where leaders publically agreed to truces ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/593](#)). Some members of the constabulary or magistracy expressed scepticism at these public reconciliations and forewarned that gatherings of up to 10,000 individuals could be a precursor to 'open rebellion' ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/590](#)). The Catholic Association in turn eventually dissuaded the inhabitants of Tipperary from large public gatherings for such purposes ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/593](#)).

• Justice

- Reform of Legal System¹⁴
 - At the beginning of the nineteenth century the best paid officials in the law courts were sinecurists, whose duties were performed by deputies. In the court of chancery officials worked in 'small, semi-independent departments' assisted by clerks whom they appointed and who in turn were mainly reliant on fluctuating fees which were not 'proportionate to the burden or importance of their work' and which 'acted as a positive disincentive' to any attempts to simplify procedures. Other problems included individuals holding multiple positions and treating positions as private property to be sold or inherited.
 - As a means to initiate reform the Irish government, in 1815, established a statutory **Commission on Duties, Salaries and Emoluments in Courts of Justice in Ireland**. The commission, which was to last for 16 years, discovered a variety of scandals and led to the introduction of reforms including the Court of Chancery (Ireland) Act of 1823 and Law Costs (Ireland) Act of 1823.
 - These reforms were met with internal opposition as is evident in the petitions from officeholders whose positions or salaries were affected ([CSO/RP/1826/63](#)) ([CSO/RP/1826/2197](#)).
- Assizes, Quarter Sessions, Petty Sessions and other local courts^{15 16}
 - The **Courts of Assize** were county courts which met twice a year, to deal with the most serious criminal offences, such as murder and treason. Cases were heard by a Petty Jury, which sat at the county courthouse after the Grand Jury Assizes had finished transacting fiscal business for the county.

¹⁴ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.122-130

¹⁵ <http://www.courts.ie/> Official website of the Irish Court Service. Accessed 16 March 2016.

¹⁶ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.112-116.



- Justice at a local level was administered by benches of unpaid **magistrates (justices of the peace)** who dealt with less serious criminal matters. They could deal summarily with cases at local **Petty Sessions** courts or on indictment with a jury at **Quarter Sessions** courts which were held four times per annum. Preliminary hearings for the assizes were also heard at petty sessions.
- The Petty Sessions Act of 1827 introduced reform into the sitting, fees and records of these courts and investigations were made into other state bodies and the lesser courts ([CSO/RP/1828/1526](#)).
- Requests for legal advice received by the Chief Secretary's Office from magistrates appear frequently in the papers. This often necessitated the documents being sent to the crown legal adviser and/or the **Solicitor General** or **Attorney General** ([CSO/RP/1828/938](#)). Magistrates acting collectively also petitioned government especially in relation to the stationing of the constabulary ([CSO/RP/1827/1885](#)) or wrote letters of support for projects or individuals. The jurisdiction of a magistrate was limited to a particular county and they were appointed by the Lord Chancellor and not by the Lord Lieutenant, a point frequently explained to would-be applicants ([CSO/RP/1826/876](#)).
- Successive governments attempted to improve the workings of local courts by introducing paid professionals into the system. From 1787 onwards the lord lieutenant could appoint **assistant barristers** to assist magistrates at Quarter Sessions and hold courts where they adjudicated on civil bill suits involving sums less than £20. The title of assistant barrister would eventually change to that of county court judge in 1877. From 1814 onwards the lord lieutenant could also appoint paid **magistrates of police** to disturbed areas and from 1822 **stipendiary magistrates** - both of whom who held the same powers as magistrates. Professional standards were expected from these officials who were required to report monthly to the chief secretary's office. In 1801 **crown solicitors** were appointed to each circuit, with responsibility for crown prosecutions at assizes and from 1830 onwards the Attorney General began to appoint solicitors to each county in order to conduct government prosecutions at quarter sessions - these became known as **sessional crown solicitors**. The papers include reports and requests from these officials ([CSO/RP/1827/1735](#)) as well as applications for positions ([CSO/RP/1827/1385](#)).
- **High sheriffs** were the crown's judicial representatives at county level and were appointed annually by the Lord Lieutenant from a list of candidates submitted by the Grand Jury of each county. The papers includes a bulky file concerning the selection, appointment and acceptance of positions of high sheriffs for 1826 ([CSO/RP/1826/2154](#)). The duties of the high sheriffs were deputised to **sub-sheriffs** and included executing writs, summonses, warrants on civil bill decrees, replevins (actions for the recovery of property); supervision of parliamentary elections; selection of grand juries; empaneling juries; appointment of county gaolers; initiating inquiries on a writ of '*ad quod damnum*' (required prior to the granting of permission to hold an annual



fair etc). The office of high sheriff and sub sheriff were also examined by the aforementioned commission in 1826.

- **Lord Lieutenants of counties and their Deputy Lord Lieutenants** – first appointed in late 1831 under the Custos Rotulorum (Ireland) Act 1831, ‘An Act to provide for the better Order and Government of Ireland, by Lieutenants for the several Counties, Counties of Cities, and Counties of Towns therein’. These lord lieutenants nominated their own deputy lieutenants, who were normally magistrates, for the approval of government. They appear frequently in the papers after 1832 often reporting on local disturbances and the need for policing or military ([CSO/RP/1832/445](#)) ([CSO/RP/1832/599](#))
- **Manor Courts** were archaic courts presided over by seneschals. Contemporaries were often critical of the informality of these courts and from 1826 onwards seneschals were required to enter into recognizances for the proper discharge of their duties, reforms which elicited a number of submissions to government ([CSO/RP/1826/402](#)) ([CSO/RP/1826/1240](#)).
- The papers demonstrate a long running grievance suffered by surgeons and doctors who were summoned to perform autopsies and provide evidence at inquests at **Coroner’s Court** with no promise or guarantee of remuneration. This grievance was not dealt with during the 1820s as is evident in the 1828 memorial of John Atkinson, surgeon who was imprisoned for declining to give medical evidence without first receiving assurances of a fee ([CSO/RP/1828/940](#))
- **Petitions for justice**
 - The papers contain numerous petitions from convicted individuals or prisoners claiming to have been denied justice by magistrates who refused to hear their cases, or complaining of injustice in the lower courts ([CSO/RP/1826/1750](#)) or seeking reduction of fines or sentences or ‘green wax fines’ for non-appearance in court ([CSO/RP/SC/1826/17](#)).
 - Also included are a small number of letters seeking pardons for exiled individuals who had been implicated in the 1798 Rebellion. These include John Chambers and Anthony McCann, former United Irishmen ([CSO/RP/1819/237](#)) ([CSO/RP/1825/1075](#)) and Gerald Byrne who had been in command of rebels ([CSO/RP/1824/1037](#)). Also of interest is a claim, submitted by Le Comte de Sarsfield, ancestor of General Patrick Sarsfield, seeking the restoration of confiscated ancestral estates and claiming to have saved the lives of Protestants in Wexford during the 1798 rebellion ([CSO/RP/1828/862](#)).



• Incarceration

• Prisons and Bridewells

- Ireland at the start of the 19th century had a network of 41 gaols which were county prisons and 112 bridewells which acted as secondary prisons for petty criminals and those awaiting trial. Most were under the control of grand juries and conditions in them were invariably poor¹⁷.
- By the 1820s it was recognised that reform was necessary, in order to implement new concepts such as the separation and classification of prisoners, and that this would require the closure of unsuitable buildings, the construction of new prisons and new regulations for gaolers, inspectors and prisoners. New theories of imprisonment placed a greater influence on personal and moral reform and practical work alongside discipline and incarceration and the period also saw a marked decline in the use of capital punishment.
- In 1822 the Lord Lieutenant was empowered to appoint two Inspector Generals to visit gaols and bridewells. The first two long-serving inspectors were Major Benjamin Woodward and Major James Palmer, whose correspondence with government can be found in the papers.
- This can be seen in the wide-ranging reforms contained in the Prison (Ireland) Act of 1826.^{18 19} The introduction of this piece of legislation resulted in a flood of correspondence into the Chief Secretary's Office, for example, from the Grand Jury of Dublin warning that it contained 'imperfections deficiencies inconsistencies and omissions almost too numerous to detail' ([CSO/RP/1826/995](#)).
- Government plans to close existing prisons often met with local opposition. The papers, for example, document objections from sovereigns of corporate towns, such as Youghal, seeking exemptions for their town prisons ([CSO/RP/1826/986](#)). Similar requests were made in favour of the retention of manor prisons ([CSO/RP/1827/1437](#)).
- Opposition was also raised against the government decision to remove military guards from prisons ([CSO/RP/1826/2309](#)). These guards had been maintained at Irish prisons to prevent escapes but it was argued they should be replaced with well disciplined, uniformed turn-keys. The objections from local magistrates did result in the temporary postponement of the changes in 1827 ([CSO/RP/1827/633](#)) but the measure was reintroduced in 1830²⁰.
- Correspondence from the **Inspectors General of Prisons** in 1827 and 1828 warned that, in spite of reforming legislation, illegal prisons or 'black holes', such as manor prisons and town bridewells, were still in operation ([CSO/RP/1827/8](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/137](#)). They also queried if 'watch houses' were to be regarded as prisons under the legislation

¹⁷ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.148-150

¹⁸ McDowell, RB, *Administration and public services, 1800-70* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.545.

¹⁹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.463.

²⁰ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.153



- ([CSO/RP/1827/2052](#)). A letter from an indignant William Harrison complaining of wrongful arrest provides us with an eyewitness account of the conditions in one such watch house in Dublin ([CSO/RP/1826/252](#)).
- A substantial building programme was commenced in the 1820s and this led to correspondence between government, the inspectors, the Board of Works and the state architect. 1827, for example, saw proposals for prisons in Moate ([CSO/RP/1827/62](#)), Sligo ([CSO/RP/1827/660](#)), Trim ([CSO/RP/1827/688](#)), Portlaoise ([CSO/RP/1827/1396](#)), Downpatrick ([CSO/RP/1827/2003](#)). The building programme could stir local rivalry as occurred in Kings County (Offaly) over the selection of Tullamore over Philipstown (Daingean) for the county prison ([CSO/RP/1826/1591](#)).
 - Reforms also resulted in changes to the appointment of medical and clerical staff. An inspector general of prisons for example recommended that the Grand Jury of Dublin increase the number of clergymen appointed to Dublin prisons and also claimed that only surgeons were qualified to act as medical officers ([CSO/RP/1826/982](#)). This stipulation resulted in complaints from rival physicians who found themselves excluded from certain government positions ([CSO/RP/1826/1189](#)).
- **Debtors Prisons / Marshalsea**
 - For much of the 19th century debtors could be incarcerated in debtor's prisons until they satisfied their creditors. Higher class debtors could rent private rooms, while the very poor were housed in inferior, overcrowded conditions in a common hall. Dublin had the **Four Court's Marshalsea** which was under the direct control of government and a city marshalsea adjacent to Newgate prison and many country prisons also housed debtors. In 1821 the Court of Relief of Insolvent Debtors was established including two commissioners appointed by the Lord Lieutenant and in 1836/7 permanent positions of Commissioners in Bankruptcy were created. Imprisonment for debt was finally abolished in 1872 and all insolvency/bankruptcy cases were heard in the Bankruptcy Court^{21 22}.
 - The scale of overcrowding in debtors prisons was reported by an inspector general of prisons in 1819 and his report is noteworthy because it demonstrates how many individuals were imprisoned for debts of less than £20 ([CSO/RP/1819/12](#)). In 1826 the physician to the Four Court's Marshalsea drew attention to the inappropriate incarceration of insane debtors in his prison ([CSO/RP/1826/2353](#)). The papers contain complaints about sanitary conditions ([CSO/RP/1821/213](#)) and overcrowding ([CSO/RP/1828/1100](#)) which resulted in plans for enlargement and sewage works ([CSO/RP/1828/1113](#)).
 - Imprisonment often compounded the indebtedness of debtors as they were unable to earn a livelihood. Petitions from debtors therefore appear regularly in the papers ([CSO/RP/1819/410](#)). The papers also contain pleas from debtors against fees extracted by gaolers and attempts to

²¹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.146.

²² McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.109-110.



move them to the common hall for non-payment of these fees ([CSO/RP/1828/776](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/986](#)).

- **Convicts and Transportation**

- By the early 18th century sentences of transportation were being handed down to individuals who had been committed of non-capital offences as well as those whose sentence of death was reduced to transportation. New convict colonies were established in Botany Bay and Van Diemen's Land in 1788 and 1803 respectively. Between 1788 and the abolition of transportation in 1868, 40,000 individuals were transported²³, of these almost four-fifths were ordinary criminals convicted mainly of stealing with less than one fifth being over thirty years old²⁴.
- In 1824 two converted ships or hulks, named the 'Essex' and 'Surprise' were stationed in Cobh and Kingstown [Dún Laoghaire] for the reception of convicts awaiting transportation – these were decommissioned in 1836²⁵. The papers for 1824 deal with the establishment and fit-out of the vessels ([CSO/RP/1824/343](#)), appointment of medical and clerical officers ([CSO/RP/1824/1422](#)) ([CSO/RP/1824/2013](#)) and general management and reports ([CSO/RP/1829/2115](#)).
- Following the decommissioning of the convict ships in 1836, male convicts were sent to Kilmainham while female convicts sent to Richmond prison.
- The papers also contain information on the ships used to transport convicts such as the 'Prince Regent' ([CSO/RP/1824/366](#)), 'Isabella', 'Almorah' ([CSO/RP/1824/1262](#)) and 'Asia' ([CSO/RP/1824/1698](#)). The last convict ship from Ireland departed in 1856.
- The **Richmond General Penitentiary** in Dublin was opened in 1818 for convicts whose sentences of transportation had been commuted to imprisonment²⁶. In 1827 a complaint of proselytism and cruelty against Hill W Rowan, governor and his officers, was presented to government by the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin ([CSO/RP/1827/211](#)). This resulted in an investigation by a Commission of Inquiry and formation of new rules for the penitentiary ([CSO/RP/1827/1660](#)).
- The papers contain many letters from wives of convicts seeking permission to join their husbands in transportation, demonstrating how families often faced economic destitution following the removal of the breadwinner ([CSO/RP/1821/183](#)). Rules stated that families were not to be admitted except on the recommendation of the Governor of the colony based upon the convict's good conduct ([CSO/RP/1826/1429](#)). An 1828 memorandum suggested that this measure was necessary because families of convicts had in the past arrived in the colony only to find that their husbands either could not or would not support them

²³ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.580.

²⁴ O'Farrell, Patrick J, *The Irish in Australia and New Zealand, 1791-1870* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.662-663

²⁵ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.146-147.

²⁶ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.146.



([CSO/RP/1828/574](#)). The papers also provide anecdotal evidence that some wives committed petty crimes with the intention of being transported and joining their husbands ([CSO/RP/1828/2112](#)).

- The papers contain a small number of interesting letters from convicts in Australia, requesting permission for family members to join them. One such letter from David Gordon, demonstrates how a convict could establish a new life in Australia once their sentence was served. Gordon also was aware that under the regulations his sentence could be reduced if his family joined him, a measure which also promoted good behaviour ([CSO/RP/1826/522](#)).



• Health and Poverty

- Ireland experienced an economic slump following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. This was caused by the depression in agricultural prices and the discharging of thousands of Irish soldiers who contributed to a rise in unemployment. This was compounded by a rapidly increasing population (5,000,000 in 1800; 6,800,000 in 1821; 7,700,000 in 1831; 8,175,000 in 1841), typhus fever epidemics 1816-1819, partial potato famines or once-off calamities such as the abnormally cold year in 1816. As a result the government found itself drawn into a more interventionist social and economic policy, at variance with the dominant *laissez-faire* political philosophy of Westminster – a fact reflected in the CSORP papers for the period.²⁷

• Famine

- A widespread failure of the potato crop in 1823 resulted in the creation of an unusually large file which was registered in 1825. Correspondents included clergymen and landowners from various counties in Connaught, Munster and Leinster who noted that the starving population were being forced to eat their seed potatoes and calling for government to supply oatmeal and seed potatoes ([CSO/RP/1825/1](#)).
- Other famines could be localised as evident in 1824 with a series of requests for relief works to be offered to a population faced with starvation in the Westmeath/Meath border ([CSO/RP/1824/1107](#)) ([CSO/RP/1824/1148](#)).
- The vulnerability of the population to fluctuations in weather can be seen in 1826 when a summer drought threatened the grain and potato harvest as well as threatening water supply in urban areas. The inhabitants of Kingstown [Dún Laoghaire], for example, requested government to order the Commissioners of Kingstown Harbour to supply them with water following the drying up of springs ([CSO/RP/1826/1683](#)). The drought drove up food prices in 1827 resulting in many requests for government aid, including a suggestion from a County Louth magistrate that government supply 'Indian' corn and meal or rice at cost price in order to prevent monopolies from forming ([CSO/RP/1827/418](#)).
- Government intervention often took the form of public work schemes including schemes under the 1817 Poor Employment Act. These included the building of roads, bridges, harbours and canals. Excessive rain in 1821, for example, damaged the potato crop in many parts of Connaught and in response, a central relief committee was established in Dublin Castle in 1822. The papers provide an insight into the response which at its height offered relief to over one million individuals and was responsible for the

²⁷ Beckett, JC, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923* (London, 1981), p.292-294.



distribution of £175,000 in loans for public works which were to be repaid from local rates ([CSO/RP/1822/450](#)).²⁸

• Disease

- Typhus, or fever as it was commonly known, was endemic in Ireland during this period. It was spread by lice and flourished in unsanitary, overcrowded conditions and was especially virulent in times of famine. A major outbreak which occurred during 1817-1818 led to the building of fever hospitals throughout the country.²⁹
- The **General Board of Health** reported to government on the prevalence of fever and preventative measures adopted. During one such outbreak, for example, the secretary of the board warned that many of the hospitals opened during the previous epidemic had been subsequently closed and suggested that the most effective break on the spread of fever was the separation of the sick from the healthy ([CSO/RP/1826/2406](#)). In another report from 1828 he provided an account of the numbers in the five Dublin hospitals, namely the House of Recovery, House of Industry, Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, the Meath Hospital and also included general remarks on sanitation ([CSO/RP/1828/1187](#)).
- Local officials and medical officers also corresponded with government regarding fever. Magistrates in 1828, for example, submitted a resolution to government seeking the appointment of a local board of health to deal with fever in Wexford in ([CSO/RP/1828/144](#)). Richard Wellesley, Lord Lieutenant, took a personal interest in the fever epidemic of 1826-1828, which resulted in temporary fever sheds being erected on the grounds of the Meath Hospital and accommodation being freed up in other institutions ([CSO/RP/1826/770](#)) ([CSO/RP/1827/1664](#)).
- **Officers of health** for civil parishes were elected at vestry meetings. They normally consisted of five individuals and sanction was not need from government to approve them. On foot of a cholera epidemic in 1832 central government introduced the option for local **boards of health** to be formed. Boards mainly consisted of 13 individuals and their jurisdiction often covered a parish or ecclesiastical union or a town and its hinterland. In order to have a board appointed to a specific area a public meeting had to be called by two magistrates, from which the names of nominees were submitted for approval to the Lord Lieutenant. Local boards of health had powers to introduce measures to prevent the spread of cholera and could request constabulary assistance to deal with forced burials etc. The appointment of such boards could occasionally stir up local party rivalry ([CSO/RP/1832/1598](#)).

²⁸ Connolly, SJ, *Union government, 1812-23* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.72.

²⁹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.200.



• Mental Health

- The nineteenth century saw a general recognition of the need for institutions for those suffering from mental illness. The first institution for the insane was **St Patrick's Hospital Dublin** built in 1757 and a major asylum-building program was commenced in the early 19th century which resulted in the opening of the **Richmond Lunatic Asylum** in Dublin in 1814/1815 and 22 other district asylums in Ireland³⁰, including Limerick Lunatic Asylum in 1826.
- The papers include documents relating to the funding, building and staffing of these institutions. In a similar manner to the building of new prisons there were attempts to incorporate new theories into the design of buildings. Francis Johnston, architect and inspector of civil buildings, for example, emphasised the need for proper ventilation in these new buildings ([CSO/RP/1818/390](#)) and also advised that these buildings be secure but not appear 'Gaol-like' to patients ([CSO/RP/1826/2352](#)).

• House of Industry

- Houses of Industry were established in the 18th century to accommodate and provide work for the destitute, 'sturdy beggars' and vagrants. A 1772 parliamentary provision provided for the establishment of a house of industry in every county and city, to be supported by local taxation and voluntary subscriptions – in practice only a small number of these institutions were established. The new **House of Industry** building was however built in Dublin in 1772 and from 1777 onwards this institution was supported by parliamentary grants. In 1838 the remaining institutions were either taken over by the Poor Law Commission or closed down.³¹
- The papers include reports from officials especially in the Dublin House of Industry. The governor, for example, discussed the erection of cells for the use of 'refractory lunatics' in his institution ([CSO/RP/1824/574](#)). Religious tensions between clergymen at the institution over the religious education of children led to a series of letters from the governor in 1827 and a resolution stating that no children were to be permitted to change religion until they were sixteen years of age ([CSO/RP/1827/482](#)).
- In 1772 the old House of Industry building in Dublin was converted into a foundling hospital for abandoned or destitute children. The papers include letters requesting admittance for children into these institutions ([CSO/RP/1826/1939](#)) and also cases of abandoned, illegitimate children or impoverished unmarried mothers seeking support from unwilling fathers ([CSO/RP/1824/586](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/410](#)). A magistrate writing in 1824, for example, recommended that it be made a penal offence 'for a female not to disclose the fact of her being Pregnant (supposing her unmarried) to a Magistrate ... at least before the expected Birth' as well as drawing attention

³⁰ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.271.

³¹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.214 and 260-261.



to the fact that a local woman had been executed in his area for conducting abortions ([CSO/RP/1824/1415](#)).

• Irish Poor Law System³²

- A commission of inquiry investigation into the issue of poverty in Ireland, conducted between between 1833 and 1836 made 'bold and constructive' recommendations. Its findings, however, did not fit with British economic thinking and as a result a short second investigation was carried out at the behest of Prime Minister Russell by George Nicholls, an English poor law commissioner. Government accepted Nicholls recommendations for a severely limited system of indoor-relief, administered within the confines of workhouses.
- The Poor Relief (Ireland) Act of 1838 placed the Irish under the control of a Poor Law Commission which was based in London. 130 poor law unions were created with one workhouse and one board of guardians each. The board of guardians were elected by ratepayers together with the justices of the peace resident in that union.
- Initially Nicholls was sent to Ireland as a commissioner to oversee the new body and he had eight assistant commissioners to assist him. Later assistant commissioners were delegated to supervise the Irish system and these were called the Poor Law Board. In 1847 a separate Poor Law Commission for Ireland created and its members included the Chief Secretary, Under Secretary and Chief Commissioner.

³² McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.175-182



• Religion

• State Religion, Tithes and Vestries

- The **Church of Ireland** was the established or state church in Ireland until 1870. Government was, therefore, involved in the appointment and promotion of the clergy, the sanctioning of state grants for churches and glebes and unification or separation of parishes. The papers are therefore filled with requests for positions and preferment from clergymen and those writing on their behalf. ([CSO/RP/1828/278](#)). Many Church of Ireland clergymen also held positions as magistrates and wrote to government in that capacity.
- These clergy were supported by a locally collected taxes, known as **tithes** or **tythes**. Tithes were a major source of conflict in the early 19th century, chiefly because they were levied on other denominations including members of the Catholic Church. This manifested itself in the form of violent opposition to tithe collectors, retaliation from secret societies and political agitation from bodies such as the Catholic Association. Despite the reforming Tithe Composition Act of 1823, which converted tithes into more predictable charges on pasture and cultivated land, the period 1830 to 1833 witnessed a sustained campaign of non-payment of tithes, known as the Tithe War³³. The issue regularly appears in the papers during the 1820s in the form of representations on legislation ([CSO/RP/1826/924](#)) and issues surrounding the enforcement of payment, protection of collectors and violent opposition ([CSO/RP/1828/1733](#)). From late 1830 onwards, violent and intimidating tactics against tithe agents became more pronounced ([CSO/RP/OR/1830/636](#)) ([CSO/RP/OR/1830/272](#)) and the tithe issue is the most common topic in the CSORP papers for 1832.
- The established church was also involved in parish administration through the **vestry system**. Vestries were assemblies of parishioners who met to discuss parochial business and raise money for local services such as poor relief, parish constables and road repairs. A smaller committee known as a 'select vestry' could levy taxes for religious purposes such as the maintenance of church buildings and payment of officers such as sextons, parish clerks and organists. While vestries were open to all householders irrespective of religion, all office-holders were members of the established church.³⁴ As a consequence the vestry system came under pressure from Catholic groups and the papers include queries from clergymen concerning vestry legislation (including the Church Rate (Ireland) Act of 1826) which was being challenged ([CSO/RP/1827/392](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/485](#)).
- The problem of non-residence of clergymen was addressed in the Clergy Residence Act of 1826 and prior to its enactment the subject appears in

³³ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.573-574.

³⁴ https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Guide_to_church_records.pdf Accessed 21 June 2017.



correspondence for clergymen. (see [CSO/RP/1824/1380-
CSO/RP/1824/1392](#)).

- Protestant clergymen also corresponded with government regarding perceived intrusion on their rights and privileges by Catholic priests. Issues included clandestine or mixed marriages being performed by priests ([CSO/RP/1829/1403](#)), disputes over use of graveyards ([CSO/RP/1828/762](#)) and other burial disputes ([CSO/RP/1824/132](#)). While the Burial (Ireland) Act of 1824 permitted Catholics and Dissenters to be buried in graveyards controlled by Church of Ireland, their clergy were prohibited from officiating at gravesides. The creation of new Catholic graveyards was an early objective of the Catholic Association ([CSO/RP/CA/1824/8](#)) and this resulted in the opening of Golden Bridge Cemetery in 1829 and Prospect (later Glasnevin) Cemetery in 1831/2.³⁵
- Clergymen also occasionally objected to Catholic religious gatherings such as patterns ([CSO/RP/1828/1198](#)) or more generally against failure to observe the Sabbath including the sale and consumption of liquor on Sundays ([CSO/RP/1825/1287](#)).
- **Presbyterian** clergymen could also request remuneration from the state in the form of a royal bounty or regium donum. Such requests from ministers or congregations appear in the papers ([CSO/RP/1824/2109](#)), ([CSO/RP/1828/1030](#)). The granting or otherwise of these bounties appears to have caused friction and jealousy between ministers affiliated to the General Synod of Ulster and those affiliated to the Non-subscribing Presbyterians of the Presbytery of Antrim ([CSO/RP/1828/2032](#)).

• 'The Catholic Question' and sectarian tensions

- Catholic Association and Catholic Emancipation
 - Despite the relaxation of penal laws against Catholics introduced with the Catholic Relief Acts of the late 18th century, Catholics were still prevented from occupying senior positions such as judge, county sheriff, privy council member and most importantly member of parliament. The **Catholic Association** was established by Daniel O'Connell in 1823 to campaign for catholic emancipation and other issues concerning Catholics including tithes and bias in the justice system. Following the introduction of a small subscription known as the Catholic Rent the association became a political movement with a mass membership. Support from the clergy of the Catholic Church, who were ex-officio members of all branches, provided legitimacy and a vital local network for administration and communication. The association was suppressed in 1825 by the Unlawful Societies Act but continued to operate under different guises and names such as the New Catholic Association. O'Connell's decision to stand in the Co Clare by-

³⁵ Connolly, SJ, *Union government, 1812-23* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.550-551.



elections of 1828 and 1829 forced the issue on the British administration and resulted in the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829.³⁶

- The papers include a sub-series consisting of handwritten accounts of meetings of the association and its successor associations, held between 1823 and 1831, amounting to over 190 documents. These eyewitness accounts include synopses or verbatim accounts of speeches with annotations from government officials (see CSO/RP/CA/1823-1831). Many were signed 'SNE', namely Stephen Nolan Elrington of Saunders Newsletter, who having being publically exposed at O'Connell's trial, was ostracised and later pleaded for additional compensation from government ([CSO/RP/1827/1677](#)).
 - The papers reflect the dominance of the association in Irish politics. Given the predisposition and allegiances of senders, such as chief constables, Protestant clergymen and magistrates, it is unsurprising that most references to the association are negative. Issues discussed include attempts to conduct a Catholic census in 1827 ([CSO/RP/1827/52](#)); a failed attempt to establish a branch of the association in Paris in 1828 ([CSO/RP/1828/2108](#)); the mobilisation of freeholders and their franchise during 1828-1829 ([CSO/RP/1828/1910](#)); the passing of the Unlawful Societies (Ireland) Act in 1825 which forced the dissolution of the association and the rival Orange Order; the role of the Catholic clergy in supporting the association and in particular greater support coming from younger priests ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/404](#)); the intervention of lawyers associated with the Catholic Association in local court cases ([CSO/RP/1826/164](#)); a failed attempt by John Lawless to tour the north of the country in support of the association ([CSO/RP/1828/1828](#)) and activities of other leaders like Thomas Steele ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/135](#)); the reconciliation of factions and discouragement of large processions in County Tipperary by the association in 1828 ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/78](#)); reports on the election of O'Connell in Clare in 1828 ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/61](#)) and his re-election in 1829 ([CSO/RP/OR/1829/62](#)).
 - The papers also contain many submissions from opposing sides of the emancipation debate ([CSO/RP/1827/1324](#)). These sometimes take the form of anonymous letters opposing concessions to Catholics, from individuals claiming to be 'loyal Protestants' or 'friends to the constitution' etc ([CSO/RP/1825/1863](#) and see CSO/RP/1825/1863-1873)
- **Orange Order and Brunswick Clubs**
 - The **Orange Order** was a Protestant, oath-bound society established in 1795 following a sectarian battle between Catholics and Protestants in County Armagh. It drew on many of the ritualistic and organisational precedents of the Freemasons. By the 1820 it had spread throughout Ireland and had also moved socially into the landed gentry class. It survived being suppressed in 1825 and re-emerged following the lapsing of the Unlawful Societies Act. A highly critical report in 1835, found that the order

³⁶ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.78-79.



had infiltrated both the yeomanry and army and this resulted in the disbandment of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. The order however survived at local level during the mid 19th century without the broad support of the Protestant gentry and middle class and was to re-emerge as a dominant force again in the 1880s.³⁷

- Clashes between **Orange Order** members and rival groups such as the **Ribbonmen** are regularly reported on by chief constables in the outrage papers. Tensions were annually heightened during orange order celebrations, such as the 12th of July marches, which sometimes erupted into sectarian clashes. This was especially the case in mid-Ulster during 1828 and 1829 – as is evident in numerous outrage reports ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/243](#)) ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/514](#)).
- Efforts were made by authorities to discourage or prevent these events – for example the banning of the annual ‘dressing’ of a statue of King William in Dublin by Dublin Orangemen ([CSO/RP/1824/1753](#)) or the removal of a flagpole in Mountmellick which resulted in rioting and the dismissal of constables who refused to carry out orders ([CSO/RP/1827/291](#)).
- **Brunswick Clubs** were ‘militant Protestant societies’ which emerged from 1828 onwards following the suppression of the Orange Order.³⁸ The establishment of these clubs sparked many violent protests and subsequent boycotts of attendees ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/93](#)). The papers for 1828 contain a number of chief constable or magistrate reports on the issue including handbills advertising meetings and lists of attendees circulated by opponents ([CSO/RP/1828/1839](#)). Allegations were also made against local government officials, such as policemen, accusing them of attending meetings or of displaying bias in favour of those attending ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/172](#)).

• ‘The Second Reformation’

- The ‘Second Reformation’ was a sustained campaign in the 1820s by Protestant evangelical societies to convert Irish Catholics, through missionary preaching in Irish or distribution of bibles and religious tracts under the guise of elementary education. These societies included the **Hibernian Bible Society** and the **Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their Own Language**. Their activities led to direct conflict with Catholic clergy and communities and reinforced demands for denominational education at every level by the Catholic hierarchy.
- Allegations of proselytism were also directed at the state-funded **Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland** (known as the **Kildare Place Society**) which had initially been supported by prominent Catholics and a similar distrust was manifest in the mid-1840s with the establishment of the **Queen’s Colleges**, which were denounced as

³⁷ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.434-435

³⁸ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.65



'godless colleges'. The initial gains made by these societies dwindled as the century progressed.³⁹

- The papers also include reports of attacks on missionaries ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/416](#)), organised boycotts of schools or intimidation of teachers ([CSO/RP/OR/1828/338](#)) and families whose children attended these schools ([CSO/RP/OR/1829/218](#)). In an 1818 letter, Thaddaeus Connellan, a central figure in the Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish etc. outlined his objectives, stating that the dissemination of Irish bibles would dispel the 'endemic ignorance' of spiritual matters amongst the native Irish ([CSO/RP/1818/67](#)).

³⁹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.190, 299, 495-496, 532-533



• Education

• Primary education - pre-1830s⁴⁰

- Prior to the national school system an informal network of schools, known as **hedge schools**, provided basic education mainly to Catholic pupils. It has been estimated that 9000 such schools existed in 1824.
- **Charter schools** were state subsidised boarding schools established under a royal charter dated 1734. Initially intended for the education of 'Popish and other poor natives' for work in the farming, linen and domestic service trades, these schools taught religion exclusively from a Protestant viewpoint and were therefore accused of proselytism. School masters and mistresses fed and clothed children who carried out work in the school. The system lent itself to exploitation, cruelty and neglect and following an 1825 investigation state funding was withdrawn from these schools ([CSO/RP/1827/1572](#)).

• Education Societies⁴¹

- The **Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland**, known as the '**Kildare Place Society**' was established in 1811 by a group of philanthropic businessmen and lawyers with the policy of promoting and assisting non-sectarian popular education in Ireland. It quickly attracted government funding for its programme of teacher-training, publication and school inspection, initially £6000 in 1816 and rising to a peak of £30000 by 1831. By 1820 the society had 381 schools in the country.
- The society initially enjoyed support from prominent Catholics, including Daniel O'Connell, but this had waned by 1819 due to complaints over the large Protestant majority on the managing board and the policy of children reading scripture without comment. In 1820 the society began allocating funding to overtly proselytising Protestant societies while at the same time the society's schools increasingly ignored rules on scripture reading. In 1828 the Catholic hierarchy petitioned government to support the principle of education for the poor free from proselytism ([CSO/RP/1828/1350](#)). In 1831 funding for the society was diverted into the national school system.
- The papers include requests from the society for funding ([CSO/RP/1818/813](#)); requests for funds for school buildings made directly to government by individuals or local groups ([CSO/RP/1825/1330](#)) ([CSO/RP/1825/1337](#)); complaints from schools or teachers who had been refused funding by the society due to their affiliations or practices ([CSO/RP/1828/1611](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/1640](#)); list of all the schools inspected

⁴⁰ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.90 and p249

⁴¹ Akenson, DH, *Pre-university education, 1782-1870* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.528-529.



by the society's inspectors during 1826 noting attendance, funding and teachers ([CSO/RP/1827/2097](#)).

- The papers also include requests from other societies including the **Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their own Language** ([CSO/RP/1824/1020](#)), the **Association Incorporated for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion** ([CSO/RP/1824/1464](#)) or the **Incorporated Society for promoting English Protestant schools in Ireland** ([CSO/RP/1824/1900](#)).

• National School System – 1831 onwards^{42 43}

- By 1830 the state's first attempts to promote elementary education lay in ruins. The Kildare Place Society's objective of non-denominational education had been rejected. Following recommendations from a parliamentary select committee, a national system of education administered by a **Board of Commissioners of National Education** was established in 1831⁴⁴. This scheme was overseen by a multi-denominational Board of Commissioners for National Education, consisting of unpaid distinguished citizens including both the Catholic and Anglican archbishops of Dublin.
- Under the scheme individuals, such as local landowners or clergy, provided school sites and a proportion of current funding and then applied to the board for state recognition and funding of building costs and teachers salaries. The commissioners operated an inspection scheme, published or approved of textbooks and developed model schools. Schools and teaching staff were controlled by local managers, usually a Catholic parish priest, Protestant clergyman or landlord depending on the ethos. The initial policy of the system was that children were to receive 'literary' education together and 'religious' education separately. Struggles for control between the three main denominations thwarted this policy and by the 1870s most schools were denominational. The numbers attending these schools steadily increased throughout the century and was the main contributor to an increase in literacy in Ireland.

• Seminaries⁴⁵

- St. Patrick's seminary, was established at Maynooth in 1795. Its establishment was partly in response to government and the Catholic hierarchy's concern over the exposure of seminarians to revolutionary

⁴² Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.402.

⁴³ McDowell, RB, *Administration and public services, 1800-70* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.550-551.

⁴⁴ MacDonagh, Oliver, *The Economy and society, 1830-45* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.232.

⁴⁵ Beckett, JC, *The Making of Modern Ireland*, pp256-257.



sentiment in seminaries in continental Europe. The papers contain documents relating to the payment of an annual government grant to the seminary ([CSO/RP/1818/804](#)). In 1845, British Prime Minister Robert Peel, guided the contentious Maynooth College Act through Parliament which resulted in a substantial increase in this grant and a large capital grant to the seminary.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Boyce, D George, *Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), p.98-99.



• Public Infrastructure

• Roads and road transport

- The late 18th and 19th century saw substantial improvement in public infrastructure and communication in Ireland.⁴⁷
- From 1765 onwards grand juries had the power to levy a cess (tax) on baronies within their county for road building or repair. This was done through the passing of ‘presentments’, a system which was to last until 1898. Government, through the **Commissioners for Advancing Money from the Consolidated Fund, for Public Works in Ireland**, could provide supplementary funding to projects ([CSO/RP/1828/1218](#)) and the papers include requests for such from grand juries ([CSO/RP/1824/418](#)).
- The papers also contain complaints over levying of taxes, allegations of misuse of funds etc ([CSO/RP/1828/839](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/961](#)) and many requests for or disputes over proposed roads and bridges – for example a long-running local dispute over the location of a bridge over the River Blackwater near Youghal ([CSO/RP/1828/1823](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/51](#)).
- **Turnpike trusts**, which built tolled roads, were established by parliamentary statute in 1729 but were never as extensively used in Ireland as in England. These trusts could apply for government funding from the aforementioned commissioners ([CSO/RP/1825/262](#)). In 1857 all remaining turnpike roads were handed over to county surveyors who also took charge of the grand jury roads.
- The growth of a postal service also provided a stimulus for road development. The importance of roads to the operation of the mail service was recognized in 1805 when the **Post Office** was granted the right to set standards for road design ([CSO/RP/1826/632](#)). Post Office revenue was also allocated to other transport projects of benefit to the mail service such as the construction of Dunmore East Harbour ([CSO/RP/1826/1279](#)). These functions were transferred to the Board of Works in 1853. The Post Office operated and offered contracts to operate mail coaches which also carried passengers. In 1815 Charles Bianconi established a private coach service in Tipperary which also operated contracts for the post office - others followed suit ([CSO/RP/1828/1315](#)). By 1840 a network of private coaches linking provincial towns existed in most parts of the country.
- The **Board of Works** was established in 1831. It eventually took over some or all of the duties of the Board of Directors General of Inland Navigation, the Dublin Board of Works, the Fisheries Commissioners, the Postmaster General, the Commissioners for the Commissioners for Advancing Money etc ... and the Commissioner of Civil Buildings. The board therefore assumed responsibility for expenditure on large projects like Kingstown Harbour and Howth Harbour, took responsibility for the Royal Harbours at Donaghadee and Ardglass and was also empowered to grant loans to local

⁴⁷ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p. 52, 515.



authorities and individuals for road building and maintenance. During the following decades its functions were extended to include railways, navigation on the Shannon, fisheries and drainage and the funding of public buildings such as police stations, national schools, post-offices and colleges.^{48 49}

- The board was also responsible for public relief works, mainly in the form of road-building, which was the main avenue of support provided by government during times of distress. During the 1820s these relief works were overseen by civil engineers - Alexander Nimmo in the north of the county, John Killaly in the middle and Richard Griffith in the south ([CSO/RP/1822/450](#)). These engineers reported regularly to government and were also used to survey and report on other infrastructural projects, for example Griffith's annual report on roads in his district for 1828 ([CSO/RP/1828/2059](#)) or Nimmo's construction of works at Dunmore East Harbour ([CSO/RP/1826/2646](#)).

• Canals, Railways, Harbours etc

- The **Board of Directors General of Inland Navigation**, formed in 1800, were successors to an earlier body. Along with the management of certain waterways, including navigable rivers ([CSO/RP/1829/2154](#)), from 1825 onwards they could also be handed responsibility for the upkeep of presentment roads ([CSO/RP/1828/509](#)). An 1829 report from the board noted that they were responsible for over 300 miles of road ([CSO/RP/1829/291](#)). The board was abolished following a parliamentary report in 1829 which was critical of their administrative costs.⁵⁰
- While canal building in Ireland was encouraged by government as a means of encouraging industrialization, the Irish canal network was significantly smaller than in England. Prior to the Act of Union the Irish parliament provided circa £800,000 for works which included the Newry ship canal, Lagan navigation and the Ulster canal connecting the Shannon with Upper and Lower Lough Erne. In 1826, for example, proposals to increase tolls on the **Newry Canal** in order to fund enlargement works were brought to the attention of the Board of Inland Navigation by President of Newry Chamber of Commerce ([CSO/RP/1826/884](#)).
- In 1803 the main spur of the Grand Canal linking Dublin with the Shannon had been completed. The **Grand Canal Company** also submitted requests for funding for extensions and works ([CSO/RP/1825/815](#)) and reports to the Board of Inland Navigation ([CSO/RP/1829/1841](#)).
- The bankrupt Royal Canal which also linked Dublin with the Shannon was taken over by the Directors General of Inland Navigation in 1814 and was completed in the 1820s.⁵¹ The **Royal Canal Company**, thereafter

⁴⁸ McDowell, RB, *Administration and public services, 1800-70* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.550.

⁴⁹ <http://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/OPW/opwguide.html>, Accessed March 2016.

⁵⁰ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.198-199

⁵¹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p. 72.



submitted accounts to government ([CSO/RP/1824/280](#)) and also submitted applications for funding for extensions to the Commissioners for Issue of Money for Public Works ([CSO/RP/1824/219](#)).

- **Kingstown Harbour** (Dún Laoghaire) which was commenced in 1816, was overseen by a board of commissioners appointed under the Dublin Harbour Act of 1816. The partially constructed harbour was renamed following the visit of King George IV in 1821 and construction was to continue for a number of decades. The papers include estimates, reports and plans submitted by the commissioners to government ([CSO/RP/1821/845](#)) ([CSO/RP/1829/1484](#)). The building works came to be relied upon for employment by the poor in the area ([CSO/RP/1827/678](#)). In 1832 management of the harbour was transferred to the Commissioners of Public Works ([CSO/RP/1832/3550](#)). Other harbours under construction during the 1820s included **Dunmore East Harbour** ([CSO/RP/1824/656](#)). In the 1830s the newly established Board of Works took control of the Kingstown and Dunmore projects.
- The management of the Royal Harbours at **Donaghadee** and **Ardglass**, County Down resulted in correspondence to government ([CSO/RP/1828/2075](#)). In particular, William Ogilvie, local landowner at Ardglass was a frequent correspondent ([CSO/RP/1822/1852](#)) ([CSO/RP/1829/1452](#)).
- The first railway in Ireland was opened between Dublin and Kingstown in 1834, although the first railway to receive royal assent was the Waterford to Limerick Railway which did not see fruition. The papers include documents relating to this venture ([CSO/RP/1827/1331](#)) ([CSO/RP/1829/101](#)) and a Cork-Limerick railway ([CSO/RP/1825/236](#)).
- Other large infrastructural projects for which support was sought from government included sea walls and land reclamation ([CSO/RP/1826/290](#)), bog-land reclamation ([CSO/RP/1828/232](#)) and lighthouse construction ([CSO/RP/1828/1972](#)).



• Other State Bodies

• Linen Board⁵²

- The **Trustees of Linen manufacture**, constituted in 1711, were set up to improve standards and regulate linen manufacture. The board arranged for the inspection of cloth by county inspectors and operated a linen hall in Dublin. Large administration costs, a number of financial scandals and an independently flourishing industry in Ulster prompted the abolition of the board in 1828. Documents relating to the operation and abolition of the board appear in the papers ([CSO/RP/1828/1304](#)) including a memorial from cloth merchants in Donegal calling for the reinstatement of county inspectors ([CSO/RP/1828/1229](#)).

• Postal Service⁵³

- The **Irish Post Office** was established by act of parliament in 1784. By 1800 the establishment was comprised of a head office in Dublin and 260 offices in post towns each managed by a deputy postmaster – this had increased to 430 post towns by 1822. In 1831 the British and Irish Post Offices were amalgamated.
- During the 1820s the day to day management of the service and its large workforce was controlled by the Secretary, Edward S Lees, who answered to two, frequently absent postmasters general. As a result Lees regularly reported directly to the Chief Secretary's Office on relatively minor matters.
- Documents relating to the post service include tenders from private operators to convey the mail ([CSO/RP/1824/976](#)); petitions calling for the designation of towns as post towns etc ([CSO/RP/1824/1014](#)); requests for free postage from religious societies etc; construction or repair of mail coach roads, harbours etc under post office control ([CSO/RP/1824/1280](#)); reports of delays and highway robberies ([CSO/RP/1824/1781](#)); hiring or dismissal of employees etc.

• Boundary and Ordnance Survey and General Valuation⁵⁴

- In 1824 a House of Commons committee report recommended a complete survey of Ireland, prior to a valuation for local taxation purposes. Prior to the commencement of a general survey a survey of boundaries at townland level was required. Richard Griffith, Chief Boundary Surveyor and his staff of five assistant boundary surveyors and their staff conducted this

⁵² McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.195-198.

⁵³ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.83-87.

⁵⁴ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.282-291.



Boundary Survey which was completed in 1830. The papers include progress reports from Griffith ([CSO/RP/1825/1464](#)), correspondence from individuals disputing boundaries and correspondence relating to claims from the Ordnance Survey that delays in the Boundary Survey were hindering their work ([CSO/RP/1826/333](#)).

- The **Ordnance Survey** was commenced in 1826 under the direction of Thomas Colby, Director General and officer in the Royal Engineers and his assistant Lieut Thomas Larcom. The survey was carried out by military officers assisted by military sappers, civilian assistants and labourers and was based at a headquarters in Phoenix Park, Dublin. The survey was soon widened to encompass geology, antiquity and placename information. The first survey was completed in 1846 and resulted in the production of ground-breaking 6" maps of the country.
 - Documents from the Ordnance Survey in the Chief Secretary's papers are predominantly concerned with the survey's dealings with other state bodies – mainly the Boundary Survey or the Constabulary - namely delays caused by boundary surveyors ([CSO/RP/1827/359](#)) or physical attacks on Ordnance Survey surveyors while conducting their duties ([CSO/RP/1828/1670](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/1944](#)).
 - In 1830 Griffith commenced with the valuation of the country, townland by townland, personally selecting and appointing valuation surveyors for the Valuation Office. This work was completed in 1865 and is known as 'Griffith's Valuation'.
- **Wide Streets Commission & Paving Board of Dublin**⁵⁵
 - The **Wide Streets Commissioners** were constituted in 1757 in order to create a wide street leading to Dublin Castle and were later entrusted with similar projects throughout the city - many of the larger streets in Dublin owe their existence to this body. The commission was chiefly made up of government nominees with appointments being filled by the lord lieutenant. They had wide planning powers including compulsory purchase and from 1807 onwards levied a rate in the city. Following the passage of the Dublin Improvement Act in 1849 their powers were transferred to Dublin Corporation and they met for the last time in early 1851. The papers include reports and correspondence relating to the commissioners' work ([CSO/RP/1826/605](#)) and petitions from the public for and against widening plans ([CSO/RP/1826/1852](#)) ([CSO/RP/1824/1169](#)).
 - In 1807 the **Paving Board of Dublin** was established to light, cleanse and pave Dublin streets which were found to be in a neglected and dangerous condition. The lord lieutenant nominated and appointed the three paid commissioners and their staff. The board could levy a rate. In 1824 the board was involved in a dispute with the corporation over the laying of water pipes and in 1826 was investigated for financial irregularity. Its functions

⁵⁵ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.190-192.



were also taken over by Dublin Corporation in 1849. The papers include documents demonstrating the work of the board, most notably the installation of gas lighting in Dublin between 1824 and 1826 – including the tendering process ([CSO/RP/1824/1261](#)), contracts, specifications ([CSO/RP/1825/250](#)) and disputes over repaving costs ([CSO/RP/1826/1373](#)).

• Irish Fishery Board⁵⁶

- The **Fishery Board** was established in 1819 to supervise and support fisheries which had heretofore been encouraged by a system of bounties operated by the revenue commissioners. The lord lieutenant appointed unpaid commissioners to the board to dispense bounties for boats and catches and fund small pier building. Alexander Nimmo, engineer, was employed by the board to make a survey of the Irish coast. Despite a doubling of the number of fishermen by 1829 it was decided to disband the bounty system and the board in 1830, with all remaining functions being vested in the Board of Works. The papers include applications for posts as inspectors, requests for assistance from fishermen, complaints over activities of pirates in Galway ([CSO/RP/1819/408](#)) or misuse of netting ([CSO/RP/1819/1011](#)), reports of the commissioners ([CSO/RP/1825/654](#)) and authorisation of the coastline survey ([CSO/RP/1827/1332](#)).

⁵⁶ ⁵⁶ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.201-202.



• Regulation and Promotion of Commerce

• Commissioners for the Issue of Money out of the Consolidated Fund⁵⁷

- In 1817 the Lord Lieutenant was empowered to nominate fifteen unpaid **Commissioners for the Issue of Money out of the Consolidated Fund** who were responsible for providing loans to grand juries for roads, bridges, canal works, court-houses, church buildings, market houses etc. Another commission was established in 1820 to advance loans to distressed merchants and manufacturers. The papers include files relating to the granting or refusal of loans, for example refusal for a new bridge in County Limerick in 1828 ([CSO/RP/1828/1104](#)). These bodies were consolidated into the Board of Works in 1831.

• Fairs and markets

- At the end of the 18th century there were over 3000 fairs in existence in Ireland, a significant portion of which operated by custom without a royal patent. From the early 18th century onwards improving landlords began to recognise the benefit to their estates of improvements to their market towns – this resulted in the laying out of market houses and squares in estate towns. Applications to establish fairs or markets through the issuance of a royal patent were submitted to government by local landowners. These resulted in investigations by juries to determine if the proposed fair or market conflicted with other commercial interests. The name of the legal documents in these cases, which appear in the papers, is a *warrant for writ of ad quod damnum* ([CSO/RP/1826/2277](#)) ([CSO/RP/1826/844](#)).
- The Weights and Measures Act of 1824 established a system of standard imperial weights and measurements. This change necessitated the replacement of obsolete weights belonging to market towns and tradespeople and resulted in queries and complaints to the Chief Secretary's Office ([CSO/RP/1825/1557](#)) ([CSO/RP/1826/1482](#)).
- Government was also involved in the regulation of certain trades through legislation and the employment of inspectors. Examples include the butter-trade through the employment of butter tasters and weigh masters ([CSO/RP/1828/1545](#)) ([CSO/RP/1828/1214](#)).

⁵⁷ McDowell, RB, *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, (London, 1964), p.202-203.



• Wool and cloth trade

- While the linen trade flourished in the north of Ireland during the 19th century the wool trade went into decline following the removal of protective tariffs in 1824 with the Wool Duties Act⁵⁸. Proposals to remove the tariffs resulted in correspondence from concerned merchants and manufacturers ([CSO/RP/1822/1835](#)) and within a short number of years manufacturers were calling for assistance, for example, calls for the building of a public cloth market in Dublin ([CSO/RP/1826/1341](#)) ([CSO/RP/1826/822](#)). Attention was also drawn to the decline in the linen trade in the south of Ireland ([CSO/RP/1826/913](#)) and threats posed by new materials or manufacturing processes ([CSO/RP/1828/1309](#)).

• Patents for inventions

- The papers include requests to government from inventors seeking patents for their inventions. The granting of patents took the form of Royal Letters being issued directing letters patent to be passed under the Great Seal of Ireland ([CSO/RP/1828/2131](#)). Examples include improvements to firearms ([CSO/RP/1826/2398](#)) or steam power, and also a number of claims for the invention of perpetual motion ([CSO/RP/1828/788](#)).

• Banking⁵⁹

- The economic downturn in Ireland following the end of the Napoleonic wars impacted on the network of private banks – by 1820 there were 20 such institutions instead of 40 in 1804. The 1820s to 1830s saw the establishment of more secure ‘joint-stock banks’ and the rest of the century witnessed fewer bank failures. The papers contain evidence of these failures and the impact on their customers ([CSO/RP/1820/861](#)) or ([CSO/RP/1826/419](#)).

• Coinage⁶⁰

- Prior to 1826 Ireland had its own currency with a fixed exchange rate to the English pound - both currencies were amalgamated in 1826. The papers demonstrate the logistical challenges which accompanied this change including shortage of the new coins ([CSO/RP/1825/1374](#)), provision of premises to exchange coinage ([CSO/RP/1825/1375](#)), transport of coinage by the Royal Navy ([CSO/RP/1825/1388](#)) and progress reports from officials of the **Commissary General's Office**, Dublin ([CSO/RP/1825/1454](#)).

⁵⁸ Ó Gráda, Cormac, *Industry and communications, 1801-45* in Vaughan, WE (ed), *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1989), p.140.

⁵⁹ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.37-39.

⁶⁰ Connolly, SJ (ed), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.384-385.



- The change caused complications for individuals who were on fixed salaries ([CSO/RP/1826/202](#)) and may also have resulted in speculation on commodities ([CSO/RP/1826/1138](#)). The papers also include reports of minting and circulation of base coins ([CSO/RP/1825/1976](#)) ([CSO/RP/SC/1825/360](#))



•Patronage, Pensions and Charity

- Correspondence from individuals seeking patronage, pensions and charity are the most frequently occurring items in the CSORP papers. They frequently take the form of a petition addressed to the Lord Lieutenant or Chief Secretary. Many include endorsements from someone of importance, like a clergyman or magistrate. The positions sought range from the modest position of sub-constable to the well paid position of surgeon.
- It is striking the number of ex-soldiers seeking positions in the police following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, often listing their regiment and engagements ([CSO/RP/1827/18](#)) – the annotations on these requests suggest that in the vast majority of cases there were no positions available.
- A vacancy in a high profile position usually resulted in a flurry of applications to Dublin Castle and the papers reveal the lobbying and intrigue that lay behind these appointments ([CSO/RP/1826/323](#)).
- Church of Ireland positions were sanctioned by government, so the papers contain numerous applications for vacant church positions or parishes and permissions sought for exchanging or uniting benefices ([CSO/RP/1826/1587](#)).
- Positions in the magistracy were filled by the Lord Chancellor, but applicants sometimes lobbied the chief secretary in this respect ([CSO/RP/1826/714](#)).
- Petitions from retired officials or surviving relatives seeking pensions are also commonplace in the papers. Ex-soldiers could receive pensions from the Chelsea Hospital ([CSO/RP/1826/2292](#)) and others sought annual pensions by being placed on the 'concordatum list' ([CSO/RP/1826/2400](#)).
- Amongst the papers are petitions from very impoverished individuals seeking charity in the form of money, positions or a place in an institution ([CSO/RP/1826/119](#)). Individuals also sought assisted emigration as in the case of the free passage to Canada scheme in 1825 ([CSO/RP/1825/102](#)).

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