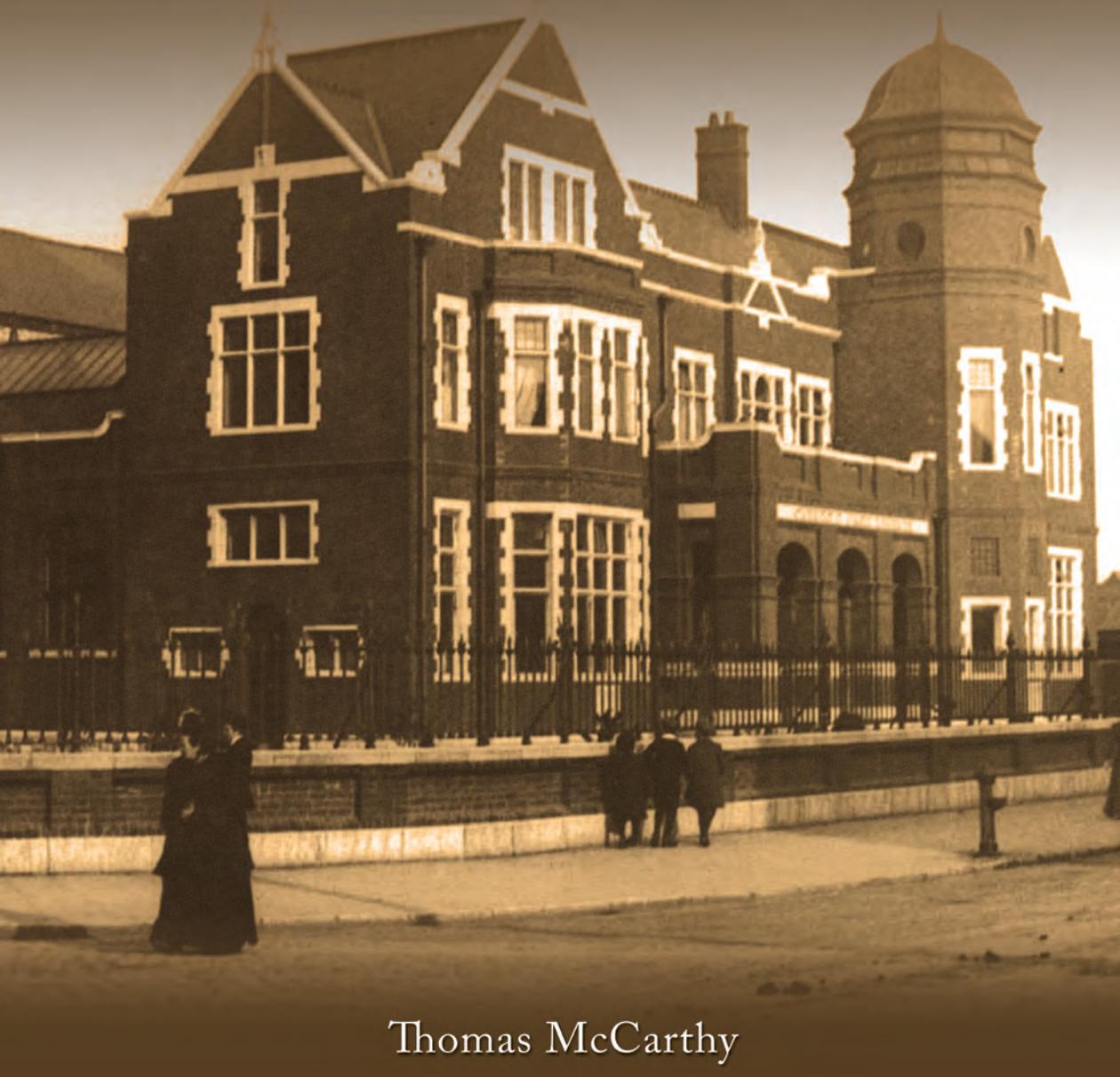


Rising from the Ashes

The Burning of Cork's Carnegie Library
and the Rebuilding of its Collections



Thomas McCarthy

Occasional Series
Sraith Ócáideach 2

Rising from The Ashes

The Burning of
Cork's Carnegie Library
and the Rebuilding of its Collections

Thomas McCarthy



LIBRARIES
LEABHARLANNA

CORK CITY COUNCIL | COMHAIRLE CATHRACH CHORCAÍ

First published in 2010 by
Cork City Libraries
57-61 Grand Parade,
Cork, Ireland

© Thomas McCarthy
Cover image © RTE Stills Library

All rights reserved.
Applications for permissions should be addressed to the publishers.

ISBN 978-0-9549847-7-9

Design and typesetting by Stephen Leach, Cork City Libraries

Typeset in Adobe Caslon Pro

Foreword

Ninety years ago, in December 1920, the Carnegie Free Library on Anglesea Street was destroyed by a fire set by members of the British Crown Forces, along with the adjoining City Hall, and large swathes of the city centre.

The 90th anniversary of this disaster comes at a time of great economic adversity. Our city, and our country, face as difficult a challenge as encountered by any generation since the War of Independence and the founding of the state. Thomas McCarthy's essay is published as a permanent record of the burning of Cork's Carnegie Library, but more importantly, perhaps, of how the city recovered its library. It provides many lessons that we would do well to heed.

The library staff of today are stewards of a service that was forged in the era described in these chapters. The people of Cork could ask no more of us than that we would continue to be as ambitious, as persevering, and as dedicated as then City Librarian James Wilkinson was for their library, in the days, weeks and years after their library was destroyed and as a new one slowly rose from the ashes. Important as buildings are, it is the readers and what they read that make libraries so invaluable.

I congratulate Thomas McCarthy on the fruits of his research in the library records and among other primary sources of that time. His love and understanding of books, and of the spirit that animates the public library movement, comes through in his narrative. Successive chapters describe the destruction of the library, the various efforts to rebuild the city and its library, set against the evolving political struggles, the generosity and public spirit of the many donors, and the single-mindedness of Wilkinson in pursuing his goal. It is an account worthy of such an important part of our city's history.

Liam Ronayne
Cork City Librarian



Carnegie Library, Cork (Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)

1 The Refugee Mayor

In the accessions book of Cork City Libraries, dated 1 January 1927, there is a singular accession entry. It is for *A History of the World to 1898* (accession no. 11368). It is neither a purchase nor a donation. In the column marked 'Donor or Vendor' the acquisitions librarian of the day has entered this simple note: 'Outstanding since the Fire.' The book, withdrawn from stock forty years later, on 21 October 1963, was a survivor of that fateful night in 1920. Leaving the political and military meaning of the burning of his adopted city to historians and to other qualified persons, on the morning of 12 December 1920, the librarian Mr James Wilkinson set about his civic duty to restore his ruined library, a demolished public service that he had operated for the benefit of urban readers and bookless young scholars of a bustling Edwardian port city. Mr Wilkinson was determined that a renewed library would rise again with the help of hundreds of now forgotten friends in America, Britain and elsewhere.

The international response to the Public Appeal for books for the burned library was touching and magnificent. A multitude of constant readers from Ireland, Britain and the USA rallied to the aid of a ruined city. Rediscovering these personal voices from the past, of devoted readers and those who loved Cork or Ireland or both, is to be reminded that we belong at the very heart of a strong and ethically-driven community of booklovers and information gatherers. A community tends to define itself most clearly in response to a crisis. One thing that emerges strongly from the letters and donations of the early 1920s is the strength of *bookish*, rather than merely *literary*, Ireland as an idea, as a locus of identity. Ireland is loved and Cork is loved through books, by those who trade in books and those who read. Seeing the world through books does create a special kind of belonging. In these present days of cynicism and suspicion of our early twenty-first century, it is very difficult for us to acknowledge openly just how loved our country has been through books, through the keepers and purveyors of local and national memory. A generous spirit animates the deep core of Cork and Irish literary life; when something catastrophic occurs that generous spirit is revealed. In the aftermath of

the fire, each book that arrived from Ireland or abroad must have fallen through Mr Wilkinson's letter-box like a fragment of hope.

In Cork, in 1920, it was difficult to see any hope. One Lord Mayor had died on hunger strike, another had been murdered, a third was on the high seas trying to escape to America to be a witness for Cork and Ireland. The city centre was ruined, business was devastated, and the City Hall and the Carnegie Library lay in a heap of ashes and discoloured stones. But the story of Mr Wilkinson and Library Committee Chairman Mr Dennehy, along with the indefatigable Alfred O'Rahilly of UCC, and their public appeal, is a story worth remembering. It takes only half a dozen to rekindle hope in days of crisis, and here in Cork, ninety years ago, the activity of just a few was enough to transform an entire world of reading. This is a story from our world of books, from a trusted urban space that rose again from the ashes of one night in December 1920.

It begins like this:

Shortly after 6 a.m. the clock tower in the City Hall was still standing. – they fixed the hose to the hydrant in Albert Quay and played it on the Library. About thirty policemen, including a head constable and three sergeants, came along from Union Quay. The police had rifles. They lined up along the quay opposite the City Hall and also around the hydrant. For the next half-hour they turned off the water four or five times from the hose; each time Fireman V came back and turned it on again. He spoke to the head constable, who said he would give every assistance. The fireman replied that if he kept his men away it would be much better. The head constable replied that he had no control over them.

This is Sworn Deposition No. 26, on page thirty-six of Alfred O'Rahilly's *Who Burnt Cork City?*, a crucial pamphlet of testimonies published by the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress in January 1921.

Another memoirist of the burning was the gentle and genteel Liam De Róiste, a Cork Sinn Féin representative to Dáil Éireann who at the time was deeply involved in the Irish International Trading Corporation and general Cork Harbour issues as part of a national effort to develop Irish-controlled trade between Irish ports and foreign destinations. At midnight on 12 December, in cadenced prose that might have been lifted directly from Daniel Corkery's *The Threshold of Quiet*, De Róiste wrote in his private diary:

Last night in Cork was such a night of terror and destruction as we have not yet had. An orgy of destruction and ruin: the calm frosty sky red – red as blood with the burning city, and the pale cold stars looking down on the scene of desolation

and frightfulness . . . The finest premises in the city are destroyed . . . The City Hall and the Free Library have also been burned out.

In more recent years that night has been revisited by the publication of Alan J. Ellis's memoir by the Aubane Historical Society. In 'Memories – Cork, December 1920' the veteran *Cork Examiner* journalist and father of the writer, Peter Beresford-Ellis, wrote:

I found a unit of the Cork Fire Brigade actually pinned down by gunfire. When I asked who was firing on them, they said it was Black and Tans who had broken into the nearby City Hall next to the Station. One fireman told me that he had also seen 'men in uniform' carrying cans of petrol into the Hall from the very barracks on Union Quay that I had just been released from.

The firemen with me managed to get a hose on the Carnegie Library as the Tans had evidently given up their game of firing at the firemen. Instead they turned off the fire hydrant and refused to let the fire crews have any access to water. Protests were met with laughter and abuse.

A frenzy of accusation and counter-information began in the days following the burning, though Alfred O'Rahilly's speedy collecting of statements and writing of the witness-pamphlet ruined the effect of Crown propaganda and led to the suppression of General Strickland's official report. Official conclusions would have been greeted with alternate rage and laughter.

The wily Liam De Róiste and the enterprising and brave Lord Mayor Dónal Óg Ó Ceallacháin sprang into action to deliver a second blow for truth. The Lord Mayor and Terence MacSwiney's brother, Peter, avoided capture in the waves of military arrests that Christmas. They stowed away to America to give evidence before the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland, an influential ad-hoc assembly that included five State Governors, including Robert Carey of Wyoming, Lynn Frazier of North Dakota, eleven United States Senators, including Hiram Johnson of California, Charles McNary of Oregon and David Walsh of Massachusetts, thirteen Congressmen and fifteen mayors of major cities, as well as Rabbi Judah L. Magnes of New York, Rabbi E.E. Hirsch of Chicago, powerful Union leaders and social workers like the brilliant Jane Adams of Hull House, Chicago. That so many influential Americans heard the raw voice of Ireland must have struck terror into the Imperial authorities. It was Liam De Róiste, Sinn Féin's shipping expert, who had put the two men on board the America-bound *West Cannon*. In his biography of De Róiste, Diarmuid Ó Murchadha wrote:

Ghlac Liam páirt sa ghnó agus chuaigh sé chun cainte le hoifigigh na loinge. Níor bheag an t-ionadh a cuireadh air nuair a fuair sé amach go raibh gaol ag duine de na hoifigigh sin leis féin, fear ó San Francisco nárbh eol do Liam é bheith ar an saol in aon chor.

In a typical Cork happenstance Liam discovered that he was related to one of the officers of the *West Cannon* through a forgotten uncle in America. The Lord Mayor and Peter MacSwiney were slipped aboard. Earlier, there had been some question of Liam planning to slip away to America as well, information that annoyed Michael Collins when he found out about it. Ó Murchadha quotes a letter of 22 November 1920 from Collins to S.S. Breathnach: 'I note what you say about Liam – but what on earth does he want to go away for? Surely Donal Óg will give all the evidence that is necessary in connection with events in Cork.' The letter shows that the Lord Mayor already had a store of damning evidence on the activities of Crown Forces even before Cork was burned. The burning made his departure from Cork only more urgent. Collins's annoyance was in keeping with a developing Sinn Féin viewpoint at that time: the belief that emigration was a form of national desertion.

On 4 January 1921, the *Cork Examiner* reported that Lloyd George had returned unexpectedly to London to consider General Strickland's report on the Cork burning. The same paper quoted a London *Daily Express* comment about well-remembered military reprisals at Dillon's Cross:

Nothing among all the tragedies has illustrated the terrible state of Ireland more clearly than the deliberate destruction of seven houses in Cork under Martial Law. The facts are set out frankly by the Competent Military Authority. As a punishment for failure to give warning of an ambush against the police, houses adjoining the place of ambush have been burned by the troops. This, of course, is Martial Law. It is legal and disciplined. It is, we must believe, necessary. But it is horrible. These are the punishments exacted against all forms of connivance in treachery.

Below the sanguine *Daily Express* report, the *Examiner* published the text of a cablegram sent to the American Red Cross in New York. It was signed by the acting Lord Mayor, J.J. Walsh (the same S.S. Breathnach of the Collins correspondence), and Liam De Róiste:

We respectfully persist in request that American Red Cross be sent here. It is no advantage to suggest British substitute. Britain is waging war on our people regardless of age or sex. Either you agree to come or you decline.

Two days later the same newspaper quoted a Reuters report from *Newport News*, Virginia:

Lord Mayor of Cork. Arrives in America. Arrested on Landing. 'Released under Guard'. – Tuesday. Two men claiming to be Mr Peter MacSwiney, brother of the late Lord Mayor of Cork, and Mr Daniel O'Callaghan, the present Lord Mayor of that City, arrived here today as stowaways aboard the American steamer *West Cannon* from Ireland. The former carried a passport vised by the American Consul. On arrival both men were placed under technical arrest as stowaways, but later in the day Mr MacSwiney was set at liberty and Mr O'Callaghan 'released' under guard.

The Cork Constitution, a loyal and Unionist paper, reported the same story: 'The Lord Mayor arrived in NY as a stowaway. The case of Mr Daniel O'Callaghan who arrived here as a stowaway in order to give evidence before the American Committee of Inquiry on Ireland is to be dealt with by the State Department, who will decide whether O'Callaghan is to be permitted to remain in the United States.' In a further report two days later the alarmed *Constitution* continued to cover the story of the State Department and the 'Refugee Mayor.' On Saturday morning, 8 January 1921, the *Cork Examiner* carried a further story:

Lord Mayor of Cork. How his Lordship left Cork. Norfolk, Virginia. Thursday. A Reuter's message says 'Daniel O'Callaghan, one of the Irish stowaways, says he boarded the American steamer, *West Cannon*, dressed as a labourer. He hung about the quay at Cork watching his chance. When it came he climbed a ladder and slipped on board and into the hold where he remained concealed in a bunker for seven days when sea-sickness forced him to come out of his hiding place. He was put to work in the fore-castle. Mr MacSwiney remained hidden for three days, after which he was put to work, but he was able to supply Mr O'Callaghan with food and water.

The determined Lord Mayor, at this stage a man at the centre of a media storm, reached Washington DC and became the public advocate of his country and his city. He gave detailed evidence to the powerful committee, chaired by the campaigning Quaker and Haverford College graduate, the lawyer L. Hollingsworth Wood. O'Callaghan was cross-examined by Senator David Walsh of Massachusetts, who was by then a holder of three honorary doctorates from Georgetown, Notre Dame and Holy Cross, and Michael Francis Doyle, Counsel to the Commission. The Lord Mayor's evidence, as recorded by Albert Coyle, Official Reporter, was damning:

Q. Senator Walsh: Were all the books burned?

A. Yes, sir, they were reduced to ashes.

Q. Chairman Wood: How large a library was it? How many books?

A. There was something about 15,000 books.

Q. Mr Doyle: Was it a collection of ancient books in the library, or a recent library?

A. A recent library, but the library has been there for quite a number of years, twenty or twenty-five years – the gift of Mr Carnegie. The books, of course were mixed in the ordinary way in which books in a public library would be.

Q. Did you have any ancient manuscripts?

A. No, there was nothing of historical value in that particular way.

Q. Before you go on from there, I want to get this clearly and definitely settled. I do not think it has been brought out yet. To whom, definitely and specifically, do you charge the burning of Cork upon?

A. I was just getting to that. I charge definitely the British Crown forces in Cork.

The Lord Mayor's evidence, reported widely across America (William Randolph Hearst was also a member of the Commission), went a long way to counteract the 'official' version of events. The official fudge on happenings in Cork can be seen in the 'Incident Report' of the RIC District Inspector for Cork South who wrote,

Between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. the City Hall was set on fire. This fire extended to the Carnegie Library. A party of Police from Union Quay were detailed to assist the members of the Fire Brigade who were on duty in the City Hall to check this fire. They assisted in removing some furniture and effects belonging to the librarian from the premises . . .

But Cork's Fire Superintendent, Alfred J. Hutson, was more blunt in his statements:

I very much regret, however, that the incendiaries were successful in driving my men out of the building and also from the Carnegie Free Library . . . I have no hesitation in stating I believe all the above fires were incendiary fires and that a considerable amount of petrol or some such flammable spirit was used in one and all of them.

All the while, Alfred O'Rahilly himself had worked tirelessly to collect over one hundred of the witness depositions for his influential pamphlet, but the Labour

movement had done the work of financing and distribution. As luck would have it, a British Labour Party commission, including party leader, Arthur Henderson, had arrived in Cork a week before the burning in the company of Thomas Johnson, Secretary of the Irish Labour Party. They were able to see the fruits of the State arson at first hand on the morning of 12 December. On 14 December, Thomas Johnson returned to Cork with two British Labour MPs, John Lawson and William Lunn, and they walked through the ruins of the burned buildings. Johnson committed two hundred pounds of Irish Labour Party money to fund, among other things, the publication of Alfred O'Rahilly's pamphlet. Over two thousand copies of O'Rahilly's pamphlet were sold by March of 1921 and by then the wide world knew that all was not well with official explanations and bland regrets. Even Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh, Dáil Éireann representative in Paris, was moved to congratulate the Trade Union movement for their publishing effort; writing on 19 February 1921 to the Union leader, William O'Brien, he added, 'I have, of course, a stock of your *Who Burnt Cork City?*, on the production of which I heartily congratulate you and your colleagues. Hoping you and all old friends in Liberty Hall are keeping fit.'

That month also the fire-alarm bells of Cork city were still ringing in the British Cabinet room. Brigadier-General Crozier, commander of the hated Auxiliaries, resigned in a spectacularly public fashion and wrote to the London *Times* to urge the British authorities to complete a truce with Nationalist Ireland. Following the British Labour Party's Report with its withering comment that 'Things are being done in the name of Britain which must make our name stink in the nostrils of the whole world,' General Strickland's report was revisited. Thomas Jones' *Whitehall Diary* records Lloyd George's words at a Cabinet meeting on Monday, 14 February 1921:

If it is published it is an unpleasant document. It says that there is evidence that the RIC were seen firing the buildings, that there were numerous cases of looting by the troops, that the discipline of the troops was inadequate' — to which Bonar Law replied: 'Strickland has since told me that with his present knowledge the Report is not true to the facts. In any case it was not intended for publication.' But Winston Churchill observed, with characteristic bluntness, 'On the whole,

with the dangerous situation in Ireland, to publish would only complicate things and give ammunition to the enemy.'

But, as always with Ireland, things at British cabinet level were not completely devoid of good humour. The same Thomas Jones's diary records Austin Chamberlain's contribution to the Anglo-Irish debate during a hurried cabinet

discussion that June on the impossibility of understanding the mind of Michael Collins - 'Chamberlain told the story of two soldiers at the front boasting of their respective countries: the Scot was proud of Edinburgh as the Athens of Scotland to which the Irishman instantly retorted that Athens was the Cork of Greece.'

But the Cork Lord Mayor and the *Hellenic* Dr Alfred O'Rahilly had certainly done their work for Ireland. The Carnegie Librarian, Mr Wilkinson, however, walking across the ashes of his library that had recorded over 100,000 lending and reference users the previous year, must have been traumatised and inconsolable. Mr Wilkinson's job of reconstruction, his duty as an excellent public servant, had only just begun.

2 "Our books are now in a heap of ashes"

On 31 August 1922, the *Report of the Irish White Cross* was presented. It detailed the huge sums of money raised for relief and reconstruction in Ireland, more than £1,300,000, including a gift of £5,149 from Pope Benedict XV. The Irish White Cross, chaired by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alderman O'Neill, and Cardinal Logue, had among its Executive Committee Maud Gonne-MacBride, William O'Brien and Thomas Johnson and among its Trustees, Michael Collins, Thomas Johnson and Arthur Griffith. It had allocated over a million pounds for personal relief and over quarter of a million pounds for a Reconstruction Commission. It set a standard weekly relief of ten shillings per adult and five shillings per child. In the period of transition between Dublin Castle and full Provisional Irish government its monies became a vital component of survival among the Irish working-class. In its report it stated the situation within which the librarian, Mr Wilkinson, had to operate:

It is not considered necessary to describe in detail the burning and its attendant incidents, or the mysteriousness in which those responsible for this gigantic act of arson sought to involve it. It is sufficient here to summarise the ruin wrought as it affected workers it threw out of employment. The commercial heart of the city was burned out – some 45 premises being destroyed, many of them the largest of their kind in the province of Munster. The total amount of damage done has been approximately assessed by the City Engineer (in a report to the Cork Corporation) at £2,000,000.

In a City such as Cork it is difficult to estimate with accuracy the number of people who were directly involved in distress by this destruction, but it is safe to take the estimate given in the same report that close upon 4,000 persons – men, women and children – had to be relieved by reason of the loss of their employment. The ordinary charitable associations could not cope with the burden thus cast upon them, and the Irish White Cross had to undertake responsibility for their maintenance.

This was the situation within which Mr Wilkinson and his Library Committee would have to restore the Free Library, a service of education and information that was even more urgently needed to restore some semblance of civic life and cultural

promise in a bleak urban landscape. The first task was to find other premises, quickly. Of the 15,000 volumes referred to by the Lord Mayor at the American Commission, not all the books had been destroyed. Nearly 1,000 volumes were in circulation that night, safe in the homes of the library's borrowers. The first task was to get those books back into stock so that the semblance of a Lending Library could be restored. On Wednesday, 5 January 1921, the *Cork Constitution* reported:

CARNEGIE FREE LIBRARY

The Return of Books

We are requested to call the attention of people who have books out from the Carnegie Free Library that they may be returned to the School of Art any week-day from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. It is very necessary that this shall be done as soon as possible, in order to facilitate the reorganisation of a branch of the public service which has been such a boon to the citizens of Cork.

The *Cork Examiner* carried the same urgent request, also in its Wednesday edition:

Amongst the most regrettable features of the recent fires in Cork was the destruction of the Carnegie Free Library. Some thousands of citizens have thereby been deprived of the chance of recreative or educational reading. Indeed, it is impossible to estimate the value of the Library to students as well as general readers, and by none is its loss felt more than by the investigators into local and national history. The reference department contained a mine of valuable information which was only partially explored. This is all gone, but perhaps some day may be replaced by a still more extensive library. Meanwhile the Librarian and his staff are carrying on at the School of Art, the old home of the Library. At the time of the fire a large number of volumes were out with ticket holders. It is requested that every volume belonging to the Library will be returned at once so that the Committee and the Library may know exactly how they stand. It is the duty of citizens holding books to comply with this reasonable request, for it is only by the co-operation of all that the Library can be again started in its useful work.

But the return of books from faithful borrowers could never provide enough material for lending or reference. The librarian had to be more creative, active, aggressive and acquisitive if his Library service was to survive. On 8 January he opened a new campaign by writing to the editors of the *Cork Examiner* and *Evening Echo*:

Dear Sir,

I have been directed by my Committee to ask if you will be good enough to publish the enclosed 'Appeal for Books' in the columns of the above mentioned, and also, call attention to same by a short editorial paragraph. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours Faithfully,

James Wilkinson,

Secretary and Librarian



Librarian James Wilkinson



Professor Alfred O'Rahilly

The following appeal, signed by Chairman Thomas Dennehy, Alfred O'Rahilly and Mr Wilkinson, was published in the *Cork Examiner* on Monday, 8 January 1921:

CORK FREE LIBRARY

Appeal for Books

On the morning of Sunday, 12 December 1920, the only Free Library available for the 90,000 citizens of the City of Cork was burnt to the ground – the last victim of the great holocaust in which the City Hall and the principal business houses also perished.

The destruction of a Library, large or small – whether it is in Alexandria, Louvain or Cork – always appears a crime against humanity, a violation of the sacred neutrality of the world of letters, art and scholarship. Our little library, with its 14,000 volumes, the slow garnering of 20 years, could lay no claim to valuable manuscripts or incunabula, though many of our Irish printed books were very rare. Yet the Library, besides providing a newsroom containing all the leading papers and periodicals, recorded during the past year 100,000 issues of books for reading and reference. Our books are now in a heap of ashes; our Library but four bare walls.

We have secured temporary premises. But the finances of the City are, for obvious reasons, unable to render us much assistance; and even in normal times our revenue from the local rate did not exceed £780. We are, therefore, forced to issue this urgent appeal for books to re-establish our Library, which was patronised almost exclusively by working-men and women, serious young students, and also school children for whom we had a special Juvenile Section.

Gifts of books, large or small, will be very gratefully received. A special book-plate, inscribed with the name of the Donor, will be put on every book. As we must rebuild from the beginning, practically every class of book will be useful: Irish Language and History, General Literature and History, Dictionaries and Works of Reference, Religion, Poetry, Drama, and Art, Science, Technology, Fiction, Juvenile Literature, Sports, Travel.

While desirous of competing in no way with the urgent calls for funds now issued by the Cork Relief Committee, we confidently appeal to all those who, without the distinction of creed, race or class, wish to help in this humanitarian and educational reparation. We appeal in particular to all those who are members of the great world of Letters and Art – dramatists, poets, authors, editors, scholars, teachers, clergymen – to contribute were it only a single volume each, to our peaceful endeavour to re-establish a Free Library in our devastated city. Educational, literary, scientific and charitable institutions may also, we hope, be led to send us some books. And there must be very many individual book-lovers who will be only too happy to spare from their libraries a few volumes to contribute to the happiness and education of others less fortunate.

Books may be sent to the Librarian (James Wilkinson, F.L.A.), School of Art, Cork. We earnestly request editors especially to bring this Appeal to the notice of their readers.

It was an effective Appeal, and widely distributed. On the same day, Mr Wilkinson wrote to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust to appeal for £2,000 towards the conversion of one of the city's swimming baths to a library. 'I'm confident,' he stated, 'that were Sir Horace Plunkett at home he would thoroughly support the matter.' On 14 January he wrote to J.L. Fawsitt, the Consul-General at the Irish Trade Commission in New York. This man was none other than Diarmuid Fawsitt, a native of Bandon, the close friend and confidant of Michael Collins; a person who would play a major role in the reconstruction of Cork as assistant secretary in the Department of Industry and Commerce. Mr Wilkinson now wrote to tell him that he had posted one hundred 'Appeal for Books' circulars. He asked Fawsitt to distribute the circulars to 'any likely person or institution who might contribute towards rehabilitating our library. In the event of your as doing,' he went on, 'my Committee will gladly remit the cost of distribution on receipt of an account.' Diarmuid Fawsitt, as always, would prove utterly reliable and became an important collection point for Cork-bound books in North America. An eminently practical man, Fawsitt had begun his career as secretary of the Irish Industrial Development Association in 1911 and would go on to study for the Bar after a career in industry and commerce, eventually rising to become a judge of the Circuit Court on the Eastern Circuit. Fawsitt replied quickly, for on 16 February Mr Wilkinson wrote again, this time to thank him for agreeing to distribute the Appeal leaflets. Eight months later he wrote again to Fawsitt: 'I beg to acknowledge receipt of a parcel of books and a number of pamphlets forwarded by you to this library from the Irish Consulate, New York, U.S.A; some being donations to this institution from various friends in the United States, in response to the circular appeal so kindly distributed by you on behalf of the Library Committee.'

On the same day the librarian wrote to the Metropolitan Laundry, Cork, to thank them for 'their kindness in collecting and conveying books from various donors to the School of Art free.' In the same post, a letter was sent cancelling the library subscription to the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society 'in view of the circumstances.' Another outgoing letter on that busy February day was addressed to a man whose personal campaign would make him one of the greatest historical friends of the Cork library, Dr J.S. Crone, President of the Irish Literary Society, London, and editor of the influential *Irish Book Lover*. Crone was a Belfast man, a Medical Doctor, educated at the Royal Academical Institution and the Queen's University. In the *Irish Book Lover* of Jan-Feb 1921, Dr Crone had written in his 'Editor's Gossip' column:

I have hitherto refrained, as editor of a purely literary periodical, from making any reference to the tragic events in the South of Ireland; not but what (*sic*) I have felt them as acutely as anyone. But I think that the destruction of the Carnegie Library, Cork, calls for action on the part of Irish book lovers. I am anxious to assist in replacing as many as possible of the books destroyed. Some I know, such as the files of the old newspapers, can never be replaced, but a combined effort on the part of my readers can go a long way to replace the lost stock. English scholars are busy restoring the lost treasures of Louvain. Let us Irishmen not be behindhand, but show the world that though we love our books much, we love our country and its intellectual development more. I am prepared to give 100 vols. of standard works and my collection of Cork printed books and pamphlets. Now will all my readers who sympathise send me a post card stating how many volumes they are prepared to give? Arrangements for collecting them shall be made later.

This was not the *Irish Book Lover's* first mention of the Cork Free Library, for over two years previously, in Volume X-13, 1919, the journal had noted the publication of Mr Wilkinson's 'semi-jubilee' report that marked Mr Wilkinson's twenty-sixth year as librarian:

I learn the gratifying fact that the two books in the Reference Department most frequently consulted were the Irish Dictionaries of Father Dinneen and Mr O'Neill Lane; whilst the most frequently issued books in the Lending Library were Lord O'Brien's *Reminiscences* and Joseph Keating's *My Struggle for Life* and the Englishman's *Dublin: Explorations and Reflections*. The librarian records the continued generosity of an old and appreciated friend of the Library, James Coleman, Esqr., of Queenstown, whose gifts to date number 683 volumes, mainly consisting of books of local interest.

It is tragic to think that Mr Coleman's volumes perished in the fire. Coleman worked as a customs official in Southampton, but was already a member of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland and was mentioned in W.P. Ryan's *The Irish Literary Revival* (London, 1894) as one of 'a zealous roll of contributors' to the *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*. In many ways James Coleman is the human link between the generation of Denny Lane and Robert Day and the generation of C.J.F. MacCarthy in the modern Cork era. But at that moment, Dr Crone's intervention was a huge success. Within the month, in *The Irish Book Lover* of March-April 1921, he could write:

I am glad to say that the response to my appeal on behalf of the Cork Public Library has been most gratifying, and already 700 volumes have been delivered, and are described by the librarian as 'splendid.' The Irish Literary Society and other libraries are assisting warmly in the good work. Mrs T.W. Rolleston has given, as a memorial to her late husband who loved Cork and its people, complete sets of the *Dublin University Magazine* (50) and the Irish Texts Society's publications (20), Connellan's *Annals of the Four Masters*, Eugene O'Curry's works (4), and hundreds of other rare works in English and Gaelic. Another lady, Mrs McKee, of Harpenden, has given 1,200 volumes from her late husband's library, more than half of them relating to Ireland, and the remainder standard works. Mr F.G. Bigger sends 50 and Miss Mary Kelleher 12. I believe I shall be able to secure at least a couple of thousand volumes, which, with about the same number presented locally, will go some way towards restoring the new library, which I hope will soon rise phoenix-like, from its ashes.

Dr Crone's work on behalf of Cork was tremendous, but his optimism about the restoration of a library premises was premature. Conditions in Cork were appalling and the work of reconstruction had hardly begun. The reality of the situation is borne out by the letter that Mr Wilkinson had to send to his staff:

14th March '21

Dear Miss [—],

By instruction of the Library Committee I regret to have to give you one week's clear notice that your services as 'Assistant' will not be required after Saturday, 26th March 1921.

The Committee desire it to be understood that the existing condition of the library and their financial resources has reluctantly compelled them to take this action which they trust will only mean a temporary disemployment. I have further to inform you that they have decided to bring your case before the notice of the Cork Distress Committee, unless you decide otherwise, and that they have resolved that in the event of the library being restarted they would give priority to an application from you for any position that may arise should you seek same.

The fact that the employees' National Health Insurance cards had been lost in the burning could only make unemployment more complicated and terrifying. Like many employees in Cork after the Burning, the library employees were now cast out upon the street to try their luck with the Distress Relief system. A day later, the librarian, as secretary of the committee, wrote a bleak letter to the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Corporation:

We, the Committee of the Carnegie Free Library, have come to the conclusion that with the existing funds at our disposal it is utterly *irresponsible* [Wilkinson's emphasis] to provide even a small library unless an addition be made that's in the form of (a) A capital grant for providing premises and furnishing a temporary building (b) An increased annual grant from the rate.

A few weeks later, on 5 April, the desperate librarian was writing to Mr Beale of Adelaide Place, a member of the local Distress Committee, asking if money from the White Cross Fund could be used to rebuild a section of the burned library premises. He had already sent an imploring letter to the Carnegie Trust, and would write again and again. By 20 May he wrote triumphantly to Mr Dennehy of the Library Committee, 'I succeeded in obtaining a definite grant out of the Carnegie Trust Funds for our library at last Wednesday's meeting of the Advisory Committee.'



Michael Collins



Lennox Robinson

Although as a member of the Irish Advisory Committee of the UK Carnegie Trust Mr Wilkinson would have known the good news earlier, his sense of triumph was on foot of the official letter received from Lennox Robinson, then Secretary of the Irish Advisory Committee, advising him that the Committee had unanimously recommended an immediate grant of £1,000 for the purchase of furniture and fittings. Lennox Robinson, playwright and Abbey Theatre Director, was a Douglas native, and would intervene in Cork librarianship years later when appointing Frank O'Connor as the first Cork County Librarian. But for now, Mr Wilkinson hadn't finished with his ambitious fund-raising. He was only getting

started. On 11 June he wrote directly to the Irish White Cross Committee in Dublin saying that Mr Daly, another White Cross representative in Cork, had advised him to approach the Dublin committee directly: 'Acting on this suggestion I have been directed to apply on behalf of my Committee for a grant of £1,200 (One Thousand, Two Hundred Pounds) from the White Cross Funds for (a) the erection of timber structure for a temporary building or (b) the re-roofing and making habitable a portion of the existing Library building for temporary use, as may eventually be deemed the most advisable', and he went on, 'the provision of a library in the place of the one destroyed is a matter of vital importance.'

By the end of that summer Mr Wilkinson's first flush of hope must have been fading. By September, when things usually spring to life in the administrative and commercial rhythm of Cork, the Lord Mayor, now back from Washington DC, had summoned him to his office to ascertain how things stood with his library plans. Later that month, the librarian penned a formal request to the Committee of the Crawford Municipal Technical Institute:

Gentlemen,

We, the Committee of the Carnegie Free Library beg to apply to the Committee of the Crawford Municipal Technical Institute for the use of – if necessary – the following rooms in the School of Art, viz:-

- (1) Sculpture gallery – for use as a reading room
- (2) Museum – for use as a lending library
- (3) The small room at entrance – the last named for an office.

Four days later, Mr Wilkinson, perhaps aware that he was beginning to encroach on other people's working space, wrote a letter of apology to the Principal of the Art School, acknowledging that the storage of donated books was beginning to cramp the working space of the stone-cutting room. But the librarian must have been heartened and empowered by the constant arrival of packages and letters from overseas, for in early October he still hadn't abandoned his ruined Library. He made an official request to the City Engineer, Mr Hegarty, to supply estimates for the rebuilding and refurbishing of two rooms of the destroyed Carnegie Library. The spirit of restoration was catching and the librarian must have seen the erection of several temporary commercial structures along St Patrick's Street. The building of temporary wooden structures by Cork businesses in order to trade quickly would become a major issue in the certification of grants and acceptance of applications for reconstruction from businesses in the period 1922-3. Michael Collins and Diarmuid Fawsitt, who was called home from New York, were soon

to insist on proper architectural design and permanent planning in the restoration of Cork's streetscape. The beautiful sweep of perfect 1920s architecture along the east and south side of St Patrick's Street today owes much to the Provisional Government's visual awareness of Cork and its insistence on high standards of design. Soon, there would be a declared Dáil-authority ban on temporary and low buildings in Cork and, in the interim, the Library Committee would have to accept life as lodgers in someone else's more permanent space.

3 "We beg to express our sympathy"

The industrious and highly motivated Dr Crone of Belfast was but the first of many to respond to Cork's 'Appeal for Books.' Soon, a flood of letters arrived from all over the world. Among the first to respond, and to their eternal credit, were those involved in the commercial book trade. In late January a letter was received from W. and G. Foyle of Charing Cross, signed by its Director, W.A. Foyle. It noted that a consignment of books, a gift from Foyles' Booksellers, was already on the way to Cork: 'We beg to express our sympathy for the great loss the City of Cork has sustained in the destruction of their valuable Library.' The Foyles Directors had seen the appeal for books in *The Publishers' Chronicle*. Longmans, Green and Co. wrote to say that they were sending a set of Canon Sheehan's novels, as well as a set of Somerville and Ross, gifted jointly by the company and Miss Somerville. The publishers of *Thom's Directory*, Sealy, Bryers and Walker, wrote a poignant letter from Crow Street in Dublin:

January 10th 1921.

Re: Appeal for books for Cork Public Library

Gentlemen,

Your circular letter received and in reply we beg to say all our Premises, Plant and Stock was destroyed by Fire some time ago, and we have no books. However, we enclose our Head Office Catalogue, and if any books in there, which your Committee may think suitable, we shall be pleased to supply free copies for the Library. The Catalogue could be marked, and returned to us, so as to save trouble.

With Sympathy for your great loss, and compliments,

We are, gentlemen,

Yours Faithfully,

Sealy, Bryers, Walker

Another correspondent that January was the busy Alfred O'Rahilly, who at that time was studying constitutional structures in countries such as Switzerland as part

of the Dáil preparatory work for independence, as well as his administrative work in UCC. One of his obsessions at that time was to prevent the word ‘Oireachtas’ from being adopted as a description of the Irish assemblies: he thought the word never meant ‘Parliament,’ whereas the word ‘Párlaimint’ had been in use since the sixteenth century. With such linguistic matters spinning in his head, he wrote on 29 January:

I am writing hurriedly to you as I am leaving for Dublin in two days and I want first to fix up the matter of some books for the Carnegie Library.

- (1) I have a wooden-case box of books consisting partly of books from Bere Island Internment Camp and partly of books of my own. How can I convey it to you? I shall leave it ready here before I leave.
- (2) I enclose a list of books received (among others) by me from America. Please mark off all those you have already got from me. I think you have got all the books marked A. I am not sure about B. I think you have got none of these; so I must have them here. Please let me know as soon as you can. I will then fix things up.

The donation of books from the Bere Island Internees was never acknowledged in the Library Report of 1924/5, perhaps a reflection of the divisions and political bad feeling of that era. Little did O’Rahilly know that within a few months he would also be an internee on Bere Island. He was arrested on 26 April and detained in Hut 16, Block A, on Spike Island before his transfer and lengthy detention in the Bere Island internment camp. His internment didn’t mean relief for his students at UCC, though, for he took their examination papers with him and marked them stiffly in his damp discomfort. His removal from the scene meant the temporary loss of a great advocate of libraries and adult learning, and a huge blow to Mr Wilkinson’s campaigns. In the period 1924-7, O’Rahilly would return to the matter of books and libraries, increasing the UCC stock by leaps and bounds and developing a typically eccentric classification system that would frustrate professionally trained university librarians for decades.

That January a letter was received from Hugh Wharton in Grimsby who had seen the ‘Appeal for Books’ in the *Times Literary Supplement*, while E.C. Hamilton of Foxrock, Co. Dublin, had seen the Appeal in the *Irish Times*. Rev. S. Levy, who sent 37 volumes, saw the appeal in *The Times* of London, while Margaret Fogarty of St Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, saw the Appeal in *The Catholic Times*. J.P. O’Callaghan of Ormeau Road, Belfast, whose brother worked at Dowdall and O’Mahony’s on Union Quay, promised to send books; and was as good as his word, sending

a huge gift of 220 volumes. Thomas Healy of North Circular Road in Dublin refers to receipt of the circular. Mr Burke of 51, Lough Road, Cork, promised to donate a copy of Peadar Ó Laoighaire’s autobiography and an edition of the *Táin*; Eamon MacLochlainn of Tramore Villas, South Douglas Road, Cork, promised to donate ‘about 100 volumes.’ E.J. Shanahan, Butter Merchants of Dunbar Street and Summerhill South in Cork, promised 80 books and Ernest Taylor of Malton, Yorkshire, sent on *Palestine Notes and other papers* by J.W. Rowntree. Mrs D.L. Todhunter wrote from Bedford Park, London: ‘I am sending some of my late husband Dr Todhunter’s works.’ Mr Seán Gleeson of Borrisokane wrote that he had seen the Appeal in *The Leader* and offered to *lend* 19 volumes of Dickens for five years. Mr John O’Brien-Hourihan of Ballineen, Co. Cork, offered to *lend* one book to the Library. The author H. Kingsmill Moore wrote from the Kildare Street Club while Marie Savage-Armstrong wrote from Strangford House, Co. Down: ‘I hasten to send the practical works of my late husband.’ From County Antrim, A.M. McNeill wrote: ‘Could it not be wise to wait till the invader is no longer able to burn again!’ From Hampstead, London, Mr Henry W. Nevinson wrote an emotional letter to the Library Committee Chairman:

In the N.Y. *Nation* of March 2nd I have read your appeal for books to start the Cork Library again after its shameful destruction. Though unhappily I am an Englishman, I should be very grateful if you would allow me to help in some small way. I would send over a dozen books or so in a box, if you write that you would be likely to receive them, and that they would not fall into your enemy’s hands. Please send me a line if you get this note. If you do not answer within a week I shall assume that your letters are stopped, and will raise the question in the House of Commons, through some friendly member.

Mr Nevinson sent another letter on 13 April 1921: ‘Messrs. Bowman Bros of Camden Town have today packed and sent off a large wooden box containing the volumes (about 25) which I am sending for your Library.’ Yet another letter was received from Mr Nevinson to explain that the box had been delayed by a railway strike. From Berkhamsted, Herts., Edith Deverall Marvin also promised four volumes, but not before delivering a dubious barb:

Dear Sir,

How good and generous of the Library Committee to let us English – who are made to appear to our indignation as enemies of Ireland – send books to help reconstitute the Library. I send a tiny contribution.

Less conflicted was an emotional letter from the Court of Appeal in British Columbia, Canada:

Dear Sir,

I have read in the *Irish Press* of Philadelphia (for the 12th inst.) the public appeal of your Library for more books to replace those which were lost when your Library was recently destroyed by the British forces.

No impartial person can read of such occurrences without the greatest sympathy for you and the greatest indignation upon realizing that such barbarities are possible, being worse indeed than those committed by the Germans in Belgium, because they are committed upon our own people.

In response to your appeal I send you by concurrent book-post one of the few remaining copies of my book on the 'Hudson Bay Company Land Tenures' and a copy of the 'Genealogy' of my family, and I also send you the sum of £1 which please devote as you think best in the purchase of books on my account for your library.

Hoping that the next time I have the pleasure of visiting your beautiful city of Cork that she will have recovered from the devastation inflicted upon her by the 'Huns' of Ireland.

I remain with every good wish,
Andrew Martin

From Ballincar in Sligo, Isabella Howlitt of the *Irishwomen's International League* wrote a supportive letter:

Sir,

I have been greatly touched by the appeal for books to replace those burned in Cork Library. Destruction of what is valuable is the depth of wicked folly, incapable of justification on any grounds. And next after the destruction of life I should place the destruction of literature, the fruit of intellectual life. I shall try to interest others in your fitly worded appeal. Meantime, I send a small contribution of my own. I can pass on any future issues of the *Socialist Review* which I receive. And, if wished, I could post *The Labour Leader* each week, the week after publication.

The distinguished R. Lloyd Praeger, National Librarian, wrote: 'I have much pleasure in sending herewith a copy of Mr Best's *Bibliography of Irish Literature* to replace the one which was burnt . . . Recently we sent some 300 volumes to Mr

Lennox Robinson in response to your Appeal for Books.'

In mid-February, Mr Wilkinson received a note from the Dáil Ministry of Education at the Mansion House:

A Chara,

Dáil Éireann assisted Thurneysen financially towards publishing his great book on the Old Irish Sagas. Thurneysen sent us 20 copies. I have been instructed by the Dáil Ministry to present a copy to the Cork Library.

Beir beannacht,

Micheal Ó h-Aodha,

Aire an Oideachais.

That same month a letter was received from Ballymoney Rectory, Ballineen, Co. Cork. It was from Mrs E.A. Robinson: 'My son, Lennox Robinson has asked us to send some books to aid in the refurbishing of the Carnegie Library. We send 56 volumes of which I enclose a list.' The librarian acknowledged her letter within three days. R.W. Sheppard of Day's Library, London, sent a selection of books, as did W.G. Neale, the Dublin bookseller. Rev. J. Howard Murphy sent 40 volumes, including a life of Leo X, books on Greek and Roman antiquities and a grammar of the Irish language. Mrs M. Fitz-Gerald of Booterstown House, Dublin, wrote with a practical question: 'Is there not some place in Dublin where one could send these to and get them forwarded to you with other books? Dr Douglas Hyde told me some place but I don't remember the address.' The Irish Texts Society secretary, T.D. FitzGerald, wrote from London, referring to requests received from the Gaelic League. The writer W.P. Ryan wrote dramatically from London's Haymarket: 'Your appeal for books has not fallen on deaf ears.' The secretary of the *Irish Women's Distress Committee*, Maire O'Keeffe, wrote from St Anne's Church, London E1. Although not credited in the official Library Report of 1924/5, this committee would become a donor of valuable and attractive books; sending another note later in the year: 'We have dispatched by City of Cork Steam Packet Co. two bales of books for Cork City Library. We shall be very pleased to hear if you receive them safely.'

Concern over the safety of book delivery would become a constant refrain over the next two years as the dangers from Crown Forces receded, only to be replaced by the wanton destruction by the anti-Treaty forces around Mallow railway junction and elsewhere. Martin Freeman wrote from Maida Vale: 'Táim tar éis bosca leabhar do chur ag trial ort i gcóir do leabharlann.' Other packages, containing books or

promises of books, were received from Golders Green, Holland Park, Cornwall, Worcester, Kensington and Magdalen College, Oxford. Manchester Public Libraries promised 200–300 volumes. Kathleen O’Flynn wrote from the Irish Literary Society in Brunswick Square, London: ‘I asked St John Irvine, Patrick MacGill and Robert Lynd to give you what they could and they all promised to send some direct to you.’ The librarian wrote to her on 20 January 1921:

Dear Madam,

Your letter of the 17th inst. arrived by the same post as one from Dr Crone and both your letters announced the gratifying promise of Mrs T.W. Rolleston. Of course any books sent will be welcome, especially such that bear on Ireland and Irish subjects. We lost a fine collection in the fire. There is no dislocation that I know of in the way of delivery of goods in the city, therefore parcels may be sent at any time.

Thanking you for the efforts you are making towards helping us in this matter.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours Faithfully,

James Wilkinson.

A letter of concern was received from Conradh na Gaeilge in London:

A Chara,

At a meeting of our Árd Comhairle it was decided to send you some books in response to your appeal on behalf of Cork. Now a rumour reaches us that the military authorities are confiscating gifts of money etc. sent for reconstruction purposes to Cork. Could you let us know if books sent now would be likely to reach you safely – if so we shall send on a few, if not we can store them until a future occasion.

Other letters of sympathy came from unexpected quarters. On 11 April the daughter of Major General W.G. Knox, commander of the British army’s Ireland Southern Division 1905–06, wrote ‘I often look back to my happy year in Cork – the Library always interested me.’ Lady Knox donated 27 books.

On 19 February 1921 a bank account was opened in the Munster and Leinster Bank, a sure indication that financial donations as well as books had now begun to trickle in. A few months later a letter was received from someone who would donate 85 valuable books – Sir Malcolm Cotter Seton, Assistant Under-Secretary

at the India Office, editor of Maria Edgeworth’s works and author of *The Transvaal Boers: a Historical Sketch*. Sir Malcolm had strong Cork connections, having been born at Buttevant and, after education at Repton and Oxford, married to Frances Eveleen Bruce of Miltown Castle, Charleville. Another of the Cork county gentry to write quickly and donate generously was Colonel James S. Green of Airhill, Glanworth, whose son, Max, was private Secretary to the Irish Viceroy. Earlier that year, Mr Wilkinson had received a distinctive card marked with a combination of the most famous addresses in British literature and public life:

Ayot St Lawrence, Welwyn, Herts. and 10 Adelphi Terrace, London WC2

Dear Sir,

I received the appeal for books for Cork Public Library, and I have just now packed a box which I am going to send off to you by luggage train in the course of a few days.

They are a miscellaneous assortment, first weeding from the library here, but you say you want ‘every class of book,’ so I hope you may find something useful among them.

If you do so, and will let me know, I will try to send for another box a little later on.

With sympathy for the loss and warmest hopes for better times in the future.

Yours Faithfully,

Mrs George Bernard Shaw

The correspondent was none other than Charlotte Payne-Townshend, formerly of Rosscarbery, Co. Cork, but now the devoted and extremely busy wife of the writer, George Bernard Shaw. In the years to follow, right through to the development of a fully restored library for Cork in the early 1930s, Mrs Bernard Shaw would become the single biggest donor of books to Cork Public Library, a place of honour that has never been disturbed. She was an extraordinary woman. 10 Adelphi Terrace was already her London apartment when she married George Bernard Shaw in 1898. She had rented the flat twelve years earlier in order to help Sidney and Beatrice Webb to found the London School of Economics. She paid £300 a year to the Webbs and had endowed the LSE library with a grant of £1,000. By the time she wrote to Mr Wilkinson she was also endowing a woman’s scholarship to the London School of Economics. Always writing briefly, hurriedly and to the point, Mrs Bernard Shaw maintained a ten-year correspondence with the grateful librarian. On 7 November 1921 she wrote: ‘I sent you a box of books from London on the 25th October, and my housekeeper has just informed me she

forgot to put my name either inside the box or on the label. It was sent by long sea route. I hope you will get it all right.' Eighteen months later, Mrs Bernard Shaw was still shipping books to Cork; on 29 March 1923 she wrote to say that she had chosen to send more books by the long sea route on the advice of Lennox Robinson.

Domhnall Ua Buachalla wrote from Maynooth to say that he'd placed a package of books on the railway to Cork, a package of over 50 books. Later that year Mr Wilkinson wrote a thank-you letter to Mr Alfred Blanche, French Consul, at St Stephen's Green in Dublin; the Republic of France had donated more than 150 volumes to Cork. The fact that Mr Wilkinson suffered a complaint from the Lord Mayor about his tardiness in acknowledging the French gift reflects the overwhelming nature of the work now being done by the librarian working alone. It must have annoyed him to receive a letter from the Carnegie book repository in Dublin requesting the return of books: Now acting as sole Porter-Attendant-Assistant, he replied tersely that all but four Carnegie books had been lost in the fire, and that he would return Annie M.P. Smithson's *Her Irish Heritage* 'myself, this weekend.' The previous month he'd written to an opportunistic Director of the Carnegie Free Library and Museum in Limerick to say that he couldn't supply 'a list of new acquisitions.' The very author whose book had been sought by the Carnegie Repository, Annie M.P. Smithson, who was then working out of the Child Welfare Centre in Waterford, wrote to Mr Wilkinson on 25 January 1921: 'I saw in the papers that you were asking for gifts of books for your Library, wrecked by English vandals. I am sending you a copy of each of my novels, and I only wish I could do far more.'

The famed bibliographer and writer, Ernest R. McClintock Dix, author of the crucial *Catalogue of Early Dublin-Printed Books 1601-1700* and contributor of the Dix Collection to Marsh's Library, sent more than 30 volumes to Cork. In an act of solidarity, Tredegar Workman's Library sent 52 books that they could ill afford to lose, while Dr Andrew Fleming of Corstorphine, Edinburgh, sent 191 volumes and Walter Powell, Librarian of Birmingham Public Libraries wrote: 'I have pleasure in informing you that I have now despatched 200 volumes to you by Great Western Railway, carriage paid. The volumes are a gift from the Birmingham Public Libraries Committee.' Blackrock Public Library, Dublin, sent nearly 100 volumes and the Belfast writer, J.J. Doyle who, wrote under the pseudonym 'Beirt Fhear,' also sent nearly 100 volumes.

But old Cork friends of the Free Library also continued to rally around Mr Wilkinson. The founding member and one-time Secretary of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, James Coleman of Rosehill Terrace, Cobh, resumed his generous giving in the aftermath of the burning. As noted by the *Irish Book Lover*, Mr Coleman, editor of an annotated edition of *Windle's Cork* and *The Pipe Roll of Cloyne*, had seen his huge gift of 683 volumes lost in the fire. He now began to give again in a prodigious act of patriotism and renewed hope: by 1924 he donated a further 415 books. The short-story writer and novelist Daniel Corkery donated 22 books, Barry Egan, member of the Corporation and nominee to the Cork Reconstruction Committee, donated 125 books, many of them lavishly illustrated and beautifully bound. Mrs Mary Louise Dring of Mount Patrick, Glanmire, sent 260 volumes, one of the highest private donations ever received, while Mrs Dowling of Blackrock, Mr Duggan of Cork, Mr Dunphy of Bantry, Mrs N. Massey of Cork and Rev. J. Fehilly of Cork all donated in excess of 40 volumes each.



Annie Smithson



Daniel Corkery



Ruins of Carnegie Library after the burning (Image courtesy of *Irish Examiner*)



Ruins in St Patrick Street after the burning (Image courtesy of *Irish Examiner*)

4 “My heart is in Ireland”

As the year 1921 progressed and the smell of charred buildings began to recede on St Patrick’s Street, letters began to arrive from America. At this time the widely distributed Appeal from Cork coincided with an unprecedented level of American interest in Irish affairs. On the political front, de Valera, Judge Cohalan, John Devoy, Diarmuid Fawsitt on behalf of Michael Collins, John Quinn, and a distinguished host of others orchestrated and ventilated a fearsome debate on Irish affairs. An even wider, sympathetic but non-partisan, Irish-American audience existed as a community of the concerned. Stories of burnings, ambushes, shootings and forced unemployment created a wave of non-political sympathy. Organisations sprang up everywhere in American cities to publicise the suffering of the Irish and to coordinate relief. Millions of dollars were collected. No doubt a great deal will yet be written by historians around Irish fund-raising in the 1920s and earlier. Fund-raising was the key informal network in American-Irish relations; it created powerful relationships, not just for the Irish but for the Americans involved. It was from ‘The American Committee For Relief in Ireland,’ whose Executive Committee Chairman was The Hon. Morgan J. O’Brien, that much of the cash for reconstruction came. In the spring of 1921 this Committee was at its most robust and powerful. In his recent book, *Harry Boland’s Irish Revolution*, historian David Fitzpatrick has written extensively about the influence of this committee and its spectacular American successes: in Saint Patrick’s week of that year, for example, the National Committee of the Motion Picture Industries held benefit performances for Ireland in 50,000 cinemas across America. Such charitable ambition coincided with the indefatigable Diarmuid Fawsitt’s plan to buy half of an entire New York trans-Atlantic shipping company in order to facilitate IRA supply shipments directly to Cork and to other Irish ports. But by now even President Harding felt compelled to address a message of solidarity from Washington DC to this Irish-American committee. On 26 March 1921 a public message was sent from the White House to Morgan J. O’Brien:

I wish you the fullest measure of success, not only in the great benefit performance at the Metropolitan Opera House on April 3rd, but in every worthy effort to make a becoming contribution on the part of our people to relieve distress among

the women and children in Ireland. The people of America will never be deaf to the call for relief on behalf of suffering humanity, and the knowledge of distress in Ireland makes quick and deep appeal to the more fortunate of our own land, where so many of our citizens trace kinship to the Emerald Isle.

Warren G. Harding

President Harding's message of support would be read at the great benefit night in New York. That the Governors of Wisconsin, Idaho, Montana, Virginia, New Jersey, North Dakota, Michigan, Minnesota, and seven other States were Vice-Chairmen of this committee illustrates the powerful reach and emotional pull of Ireland at this time. Despite later political successes, including the Irish bloodlines of John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, Ireland would never again generate the emotional and loving pull at America's heartstrings that it generated in 1920 and 1921.

But it was the ordinary American, in urban apartment or downtown office, who would put pen to paper to reach out to Cork and its Carnegie Librarian. Mary Kinnerk (born O'Leary, whose father was a member of the Castle Street CYMS) wrote from 81st Street in Brooklyn: 'Am a native of your dear old city though away from it for forty years. I never can forget and through kind friends have received the *Examiner Weekly*.' Mrs Agnes Chase wrote to Dr Alfred O'Rahilly (letter transferred to Mr Wilkinson) from 5403 Reno Road, Washington DC, in response to the appeal seen in the N.Y. *Nation*: 'Will you please let me know how the books should be shipped? Are such shipments opened by English officials? As I am an employee of the Department of Agriculture I request that you do not use my name.'

Blanche Watson of the Get-Together Club of the Community Church, New York, wrote: 'We took up a collection to send books to the Women's International League in Geneva, to Austria and to you.' Mary Clancy (née Sugrue) of Lenox, Massachusetts, wrote in response to the Appeal in *The Irish World*: 'I am sending you a few as I can not send them all together. I will send a few every week. I can not tell you how grieved I was when I heard about the Library being burned although I never see it, being living in Massachusetts for 30 years. I was born in the city of Cork 60 years ago. I am very glad to have some books to send and will try to induce my friends to send some too.' Frank P. Walsh of the Harmon Black Law Offices, Woolworth Building, Broadway, wrote in sympathy as did Henry Riordan of Walpole, Massachusetts, who promised 'to use your letter and

solicit more books.' The librarian attached a note to this letter: 'suggested sending carriage-paid to Fawsitt, NY, for transmission to Cork.' Constance Mayfield Rourke of Grand Rapids, Michigan, wrote to express concern: 'I have been deterred from sending them by the advice of an Irish friend (over here) that they might not reach you safely.' Her letter had come to Cork via the Editor of the *Athenaeum*, London. Ellen C. Scott of the Milford New Century Club in Delaware offered her prayer: 'May God give Ireland her freedom soon.' C.J. Sullivan of New York sent a cheque for £50, Miss Haynes of Boston sent £5, Donovan Brothers of Baltimore sent £2 and 12 shillings. From Australia, the Sisters of Mount St Brigid Convent, Sydney, sent the then enormous sum of £30. On 21 November 1921, R.E. Tracy wrote from Indianapolis, U.S.A:

Dear Sir,

Under separate cover I am sending you a few books for your Library. They are of no particular value, I regret to say, but they may serve temporarily. I only wish I could send more books to you, or money whereby you might purchase some. My heart is in Ireland. I have spent much time there and have some very dear friends in your charming city. My father and I were in Ireland last year, and I needn't tell you that we had many unpleasant experiences. We were staying at the Victoria Hotel when 'Cash' store was bombed, and I shan't forget it ever.

We left Cork on Nov. 19, and thus avoided the great catastrophe. Perhaps I can send you more books later. As you know, no doubt, we are constantly doing something in a small way for Ireland on this side – and I'm afraid that the political situation is too apt to overshadow many other vital Irish necessities. Good luck to you. I shall speak to my friends about your needs.

Belford Forrest wrote from Ogdenburg, New York: 'The destruction of Cork Public Library is an outrage that no one who knows and loves the old city can think of without the deepest indignation.' There were many more such letters, donations of books and small contributions of cash: from C. and Sherwell G. McGuire in Washington DC, from C. McPartlin in St Paul, Minnesota, from H.J. O'Leary in Brooklyn, Rev. A.M Skelly in Portland, Miss S.G. MacSweeney in Boston, T.J. Coakley in Elizabeth, N.Y., Mrs T. Cole in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Miss M.E. White in Hartford, Connecticut, J. Conlon in Hoboken, New York, J. Connell in Dorchester, N.Y., J. Goff in Long Island, J. Carroll in West Roxbury and M.F. Hannon in Chicago. Donations ranged from two to fifty books, but all were part of a response felt deeply in the heart of these Americans and Irish-Americans.

The core and bulk of the response, however, in terms of actual stock numbers, came from Cork, Belfast, Dublin and London; ease of transport by railway within the then United Kingdom meant that donors could risk larger quantities of books. The cost of postage and carriage of goods, just like the cost of books themselves, in comparison to the normal working wage, is something we disregard nowadays, but in 1921 or 1922 it must have made the decision to donate books a costly one, especially for the many working-class and lower middle-class Irish in Eastern cities like Philadelphia, New York and Boston. Mr Wilkinson on a number of occasions advised a donor to send books ‘carriage forward,’ meaning that the Library Committee would pay the transport costs. One Glasgow donor made transport a condition of his donation, asking that the librarian pay carriage to Cork via the Clyde Shipping Company. The Free Library at Great Yarmouth wrote to say that they needed to have the cost of carriage defrayed and Mr Ebenezer Downing, who had 45 volumes to donate, wrote from Sheffield: ‘Still, I cannot very well afford to pay carriage. May I send them ‘Carriage Forward?’

The logistics of packing and moving so many books in the case of Mrs George Bernard Shaw and the other major donor, Mrs McKee of Harpenden, London NW10, can be appreciated from the library correspondence. Mrs McKee would eventually donate 1,149 books and the many journeys of ‘Mrs McKee’s Box’ between England and Ireland was unlikely to last without some mishap. On 8 February and 21 February Mrs McKee wrote to describe her collection, including the Croker papers and the O’Connell correspondence: ‘Today was dispatched a large box containing about 300 volumes – I will refill it.’ A later letter was received from the *Irish Book Lover* at its London address, announcing that Mrs McKee’s Box was once more on the way, with over 130 books for Cork. In early August Mr Wilkinson wrote to Dr J.S. Crone to thank him for his donation of books and expressing the hope that Mrs McKee’s empty box would turn up at the Cork Steam Packet Company, having been returned by the library in April. This letter also revealed that nearly 7,000 books had been received. On 25 August a letter was sent to the Cork Steam Packet Company about the missing box and a further letter to Dr Crone advising that the Great Southern and Western Railway had lost the box. On 8 September Mr Wilkinson wrote again, asking Dr Crone if he would pursue the GSWR or if the Cork Library should pursue the Steam Packet Company. By 12 September a claim for £3 two shillings and nine pence was lodged with the Cork Steam Packet Company for the loss of Mrs McKee’s box.

A letter of 12 October 1921, sent by the English-educated librarian to Rev. J. Murphy of the South Presbytery, indicates how the political tide had changed: a new dispensation was now being built in Ireland, along with the reconstruction of the burned city –

Rev. Sir,

At the last meeting of the Library Committee it was decided to send you the enclosed rough list of books on Religion recently donated, with a view to your reporting any books which you consider ought not to be stocked, for the guidance of the Committee.

The books can be seen at the School of Art on any weekday between 10 and 5 o’clock, or, at any other time by arrangement. Perhaps it would be advisable to tick (✓) opposite the title any books you may wish to scrutinize. The return of the list as early as possible will oblige.

With Treaty negotiations and referenda, political splits and Civil War, as well as Church-censoring of Cork intellectual life in the air, the librarian had already set to work sorting and cataloguing incoming donations. In October he wrote to the Irish Industrial Development Association to ask where he might obtain Irish-manufactured quality cards. The same month he wrote to Irish Paper Mills to order 12,000 catalogue cards. At this time he again wrote to the city engineer seeking estimates for a partial library rebuild. But in a burned city, with the City Hall administration itself working temporarily out of the Courthouse and fortyfive of the biggest business rate-payers in ruins, pushing a new library building to the top of the civic agenda would prove hard going.

AYOT ST LAWRENCE, WELWYN, HERTS. 28 March 1921 10 ADELPHI TERRACE, W.C.2.
 STATION: WHEATHAMPSTEAD, G.N.R. 2 1/4 MILES.
 TELEGRAMS: BERNARD SHAW, CODICOTE.

Dear Sir

I received the appeal for books for Cork Public Library, & I have just now packed a box which I am going to send off to you by luggage train in the course of a few days.

They are a miscellaneous assortment - just scrounged from the library here - but you say you want "every class of book".

So I hope you may find something useful among them.

If you do so, I will let me know. I will try to send you another box a little later on.

With sympathy for the loss, & warmest hopes for better times in future, Yours faithfully

Bernard Shaw
 formerly Miss Page Townsend
 3 Long Row, Cork

Letter from Charlotte Bernard Shaw, March 1921

5 "Paid to contractor on foot of demolition"

As Mr Wilkinson assembled and catalogued his incoming volumes, the city of Cork began to assemble its building materials. Even as early as the first week of January 1921, businesses were advertising their wares in a Klondyke-like rush: 'Rapid Reconstruction' was the heading over an advertisement for Eustaces, Cork, advertising weather boarding, asbestos sheets, corrugated iron and pine logs. The Cork Timber and Iron Company advertised under the heading 'Temporary Building,' offering a stock of timber floorings, beaver boarding and patent roofing felt, all ready for prompt delivery. F.C. Porte and Co. of Maylor Street advertised electric light and power installations as well as petrol engines and dynamos. Under the heading 'City Fires', brush manufacturer D. O'Sullivan assured customers that 'Business is being carried on as usual' at 16 Maylor Street, the side of the street across from their burned premises at No. 27. But the real work of construction began when Cork Corporation set up a Reconstruction Subcommittee that met with Michael Collins on 22 February 1922. The Subcommittee's Report to the Corporation contained this sensational news:

As a result of an interview which a Deputation from the Reconstruction Committee had with Mr Michael Collins, Chairman of the Provisional Government, on the 22nd February last it was intimated that with a view to expediting the work of reconstruction in Cork the Provisional Government would be in a position to arrange a grant to the extent of something like £250,000 which, however, it was pointed out would not be available at a moment's notice. It was subsequently officially intimated that of this sum a grant of £50,000 would be made available in mid-April or on the 1st of May.

The Provisional Government, on 30 March, subsequently announced a 'Scheme of Organisation to Facilitate and Expedite the Reconstruction of Cork Destroyed Buildings.' A second, Government-augmented committee was to be set up in Cork, consisting of one representative of the Provisional Government, nine persons nominated by Cork Corporation, a representative of the owners of destroyed buildings, a representative of the Cork District Trades and Labour Council, along with the city solicitor, city engineer and city treasurer, all assisted by an architect and engineer (or quantity surveyor) appointed and remunerated

by the Provisional Government. This was an ambitious scheme, the undoubted brainchild of Michael Collins and his able assistant, Diarmuid Fawsitt. At the initial meeting with local officials in Cork, Diarmuid Fawsitt made a series of statements reported in the *Cork Examiner*:

It was agreed that the economic conditions in the country at the present time, and for many months past, had reached a stage that the nation was approaching a very perilous condition economically. In his position in Dublin he was daily in receipt of reports from all parts of the country setting forth the effects of unemployment and distress which prevailed. These things were really inevitable, as they knew they were the aftermath of two wars – the great war and their own international war with England – and in any country where political conditions were disturbed unrest and unemployment followed. It was the desire of all Irishmen, he took it, that this unrest should give way to stabilized Government in accordance with the will of the Irish people, and, the Provisional Government, under Dáil Éireann, was doing everything possible to alleviate the sufferings and hardship of the people by providing employment. They started a road-improvement scheme, and they were about to finance a large house-building scheme with the same object, and in one or two particular instances they had helped to finance industries which, if not financed by the Government of the country, would increase the roll of the unemployed. At the moment they were negotiating with Great Britain to take over Haulbowline Dockyard to find employment for the people. It was in this spirit that they approached the work of reconstruction, and one of the earliest efforts was to come to an understanding with the British Government to set up a Compensation Commission.

At this meeting Diarmuid Fawsitt went on to explain that holders of ‘Decrees’ for compensation through the court system and upon insurance companies, could get an advance of up to two thirds of the Decree amounts. The first Decree amounts to be so honoured would be holders of Court Decrees from cases that had been defended by local authorities. A number of local authorities in Ireland had refused to sit or to defend themselves in court, or to strike a rate, so that they would not become liable for Decree awards in criminal or malicious damage. Considering the magnitude of the legal task facing any Compensation Commission, the government had decided to fast-track rebuilding work by making interim payments to property owners in exchange for ‘assignment’ of their Decrees. It was a bold move, but it would help both business and employment. Mr Fawsitt became the government representative on Cork’s committee and he kept a very close eye on its proceedings, even when he could not attend, including the certification of claims for payment. One of the principles set out in the memo, initialled by

Fawsitt on 30 March, was the instruction that the Cork committee would ‘Certify only in respect of expenditure upon buildings, of which the plans, elevation, line of frontage, and material proposed to be used have been *previously approved by the Corporation* [words underlined]; and which have been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the City Engineer.’ A further condition of receiving reconstruction monies was this:

It shall be a condition of the setting-up of this scheme by the Provisional Government that the Corporation will not grant any new permit for the erection of a temporary building, or any extension of an existing permit, without the consent of the Ministry of Local Government, of the Provisional Government, first had and obtained.

This provision would prove an irritation and a stumbling block in the subsequent two years of reconstruction. The Corporation officials would come under constant local pressure to allow further temporary timber building, but each time they ran foul of a vigilant and trenchant Fawsitt. With an unerring legal eye, Fawsitt also kept watch on other matters from his perch at the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Even before the committee began to disburse any funds, he wrote a letter marked ‘Private’ to Mr William Hegarty, the town clerk, after he had checked the Minutes of the first Committee meeting:

... it would be advisable if the Committee, when selecting a temporary Chairman, in the absence of the Lord Mayor, would not select a person to serve as Chairman for the time being, who is, or may be, a beneficiary under the Scheme. As a guiding rule, it would be desirable that, in the absence of the Chairman, the temporary chair be filled by the Nominee of the Provisional Government, viz. Mr Liam de Róiste, TD.

This letter is sent to you, for your own information, and not for publication. The suggestion conveyed in it, might be communicated privately to the Lord Mayor, for his guidance.

On 12 June, Mr Fawsitt wrote, once more, to the Town Clerk. This letter was marked ‘Personal’:

A Chara,

On the 2nd instant, I addressed a communication to the City Treasurer, and transmitted therewith Pay Order No. 303 in the sum of £10,000, for purposes of the Cork Reconstruction Scheme.

I am, at this date, without acknowledgement from Mr Ireton, of the receipt of

my letter. Very possibly, he may have sent a receipt to the Minister of Finance. To keep my files in order, I would, however, require a special acknowledgement of my communication direct from Mr Ireton.

What had placed Mr Fawsitt in an awkward position was his sending of the £10,000 speedily to Cork on foot of information he had gleaned from the minutes of the first Committee meeting. He had issued a cheque before receiving the formal request of the Committee. He would never be caught like this again. His letter concluded: 'I would be glad if you could remember to send me, each month, an official application for any sums required by your Committee, in respect of the Scheme, setting out, in detail, the particulars thereof.' Indeed, the committee's next request, for £20,000, was rejected by Diarmuid Fawsitt until 'details' were supplied. Seven weeks later, Mr Fawsitt would again write to the Reconstruction Committee, naming three beneficiaries whose claims were outstanding: 'A Chara, You are instructed that no future advances under the Cork Re-Construction Scheme should be made in any of the following cases, which have already been the subject of award by the Compensation (Ireland) Commission . . .' Compensation of private businesses after the burning of Cork was a complicated matter, especially as businesses panicked if they couldn't begin reconstruction before the Christmas business season of 1921. Businesses had already suffered a disastrous Christmas in 1920.

The Cork Reconstruction Finance Committee was chaired by the Lord Mayor, Donal Óg Ó Ceallacháin, who had spoken so admirably and bravely for Cork in Washington DC, although Diarmuid Fawsitt presided over the working meeting of 2 May 1922. The committee consisted of Aldermen Sean O'Sullivan, Fred Murray and Councillors Sean Nolan TD, William Ellis, Sean French and J. Kelleher. The Owners of Destroyed Buildings were represented by Barry M. Egan and the Cork District Trades and Labour Council was represented by James Barry. City Solicitor J. Galvin, City Engineer Joseph F. Delany and City Treasurer Thomas Ireton also served, with Town Clerk Mr Hegarty acting as Secretary. The first meeting began with an apology from Thomas J. Cullen, the Provisional Government Architect who couldn't make it to Cork. Within a week, the Committee (with a quorum of three) was considering letters from O'Flynn and O'Connor, Architects for the Misses Martin of Cook Street, who sought £750 for their client; from Edward Mooney of 4, 5 and 6 Cook Street who required £1,000; a letter from Chillingworth and Levie, Architects, with a request for £1,000 per month for the rebuild of 53 North Main Street and £4,252 for the reconstruction of premises on St Patrick's Street.

At a meeting on 16 May it was suggested that the cost of furniture, business equipment and fittings should be added to the Decree amounts when claiming compensation under the scheme. Instructions were issued to the Town Clerk to enquire whether an advance of cash for improvement and extension of city premises could be added to Decree amounts. By 9 June, Certificates for Payment from the Provisional Government architects were received for premises on St Patrick's Street, Robert Street and Cook Street. Mr Hegarty was also instructed to write to owners of businesses on St Patrick's Street who had not commenced rebuilding; threatening that 'decisive measures will be taken with a view to expediting the commencement of construction work.' By September of 1922 life was beginning to get extremely complicated and fraught, as is always the way with schemes of public disbursement of monies. The Trade Union representative, Mr Barry, complained that Cash and Co. had received an award of £134,000 in respect of malicious destruction of their property, but he had learned from the company's architect that building work would not commence until the spring of 1923. At the same meeting Cahill and Co. of St Patrick's Street and Cashman and Co. of Cook Street submitted claims for £600 and £1,012, plus architect's fees of £25 and six shillings. By mid-October's meeting further dissatisfaction was being expressed at the attitude of Decree holders in St Patrick's Street who were delaying reconstruction and therefore offering no help to the unemployed.

The committee meeting of 3 November, with Councillor Ellis in the chair, noted the receipt of a further cheque for £15,000 from the Ministry of Finance. Michael Collins also wished to instruct the committee that a property owner who had submitted an application for £600 had already received £10,108 on foot of his Decree from an insurance company and, furthermore, that Robertson, Ledlie, Ferguson and Co. Ltd had already received a substantial advance from insurance companies and that no payments under the Cork Reconstruction Scheme should be made. A further meeting on 17 November acknowledged certificates from Mr O'Callaghan, Assistant Architect at the Board of Works, that allowed the Committee to make payments in respect of destroyed premises at Cook Street and Maylor Street. A meeting on 1 December 1922 considered architects' certifying of work, in particular a certificate allowing payment of four hundred and sixty-five pounds, fifteen shillings and six pence to the Trustees of the Sinn Féin Cumann, 69 Shandon Street; a second payment of £900 would be made on reconstruction of the premises. On New Year's Day 1923 a further meeting was held to certify building plans and to pay architects' fees of thirty-four pounds, seven shillings and six pence; twenty-eight pounds and five shillings; one hundred and forty-

five pounds and fourteen shilling and twenty-eight pounds and five shillings. The architects of Cahill and Co., St Patrick's Street, were decreed a further fourteen pounds and half a crown, to add to substantial fees of £717 already advanced.

On Saturday, 13 January 1923, another meeting submitted new certificates from the Board of Works architects for payment of compensation to business owners in Cook Street and St Patrick's Street. This was its first meeting to mention the burned Library. An application was received from J.J. Fitzgerald, Contractor, for the sum of £1,059 on account of his contract for demolition of Carnegie Library and City Hall: 'It was reported by the Deputy Lord Mayor that at a recent interview with President Cosgrave the opinion was expressed that the amount was chargeable to the Reconstruction Fund, and it was accordingly agreed to pay the amount certified by the City Engineer, viz: - £954, subject to approval by the Board of Works architect. On 15 February the Committee heard a complaint from Kelleher and Sisk, builders, on behalf of the Master Builders Association, that payments for reconstruction were being held up by the Finance Minister despite full certification and compliance. The builders threatened to cease all work unless payments were received; ceasing work would increase the level of unemployment and add further to the misery of the impoverished city. A letter was also read from the ministry to the effect that monies placed at the disposal of the Reconstruction Committee were not intended to be applied for the rebuilding of Corporation property, such as the Municipal Buildings, City Hall and Public Library; and that the government as at present advised were not prepared to grant any special facilities to enable the Municipal Buildings to be erected on their former site. This letter came as a blow to the resourceful but exhausted Corporation that already believed it was granted permission for municipal works as a result of the meeting with President Cosgrave.

That February meeting seemed to be the last completely satisfactory meeting recorded in the Reconstruction Committee minute book. When the Committee was summoned to a meeting on 16 March 1923, only Councillor Ellis, Deputy Lord Mayor, was present along with the City officials. A further meeting was called for 16 April, another on 18 April; and again on 20 April. Only the Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillor Kelleher were present at this last meeting. The penultimate meeting of the committee is recorded in a type-written sheet of 'mion-tuairiscí' inserted into the minute book for 19 March 1923: 'Do bhí an Comh. Liam MacEighlis (Fear in ionad an Ard-Mhéara) sa Cathaoir, agus bhí i láthair freisin – An Comh. D. Ó Céilleachair, agus Séamus uas. De Barra, H.C.;

agus Císdeoir na Cathrach agus Cléireach na Cathrach (Runaidhe).’ Without doubt, the Anglo-Irish Treaty split had now fully penetrated into the political part of the administrative life of Cork; a Civil War within Nationalist Ireland now separated the anti-Treaty activists from the apparatus of reconstruction. The impulse of nation-building was postponed in Irregular IRA quarters while a fatal, sterile pyromania of renewed destruction and ambush would be played out around the cross-roads and railway junctions of North Munster – actions so well described by Michael Harrington in his authoritative *Munster Republic*. Spiritually, as well as in every other way, the reconstructing merchant class of Cork would remain attached to the Provisional Government by the long sea route so loved by Lennox Robinson and the Cork Librarian. The Lord Mayor, Donal O’Callaghan, such a trusted and faithful friend of Cork, took the Republican side and withdrew from co-operation with the Cosgrave government. The same Ó Ceallacháin, educated at the North Monastery and a wonderful orator, had become Minister for Home Affairs in the 1921 Dáil, but failed to be re-elected in the ‘Pact Election’ of 1922. While he was re-elected to the mayoralty in 1923 he withdrew from public life in 1924 and left Cork. After travelling in Europe, wandering in the wake of Diarmuid Fawsitt, he returned to Ireland to join the staff of the ESB as an accountant. He was one of the many brilliant national-minded men and women who withdrew from public life in the Free State, leaving a diminished yet gifted and fully-determined cohort to carry on.

Life had to go on, especially for a city like Cork with its life of trade and commerce; renewed trade and commerce offered the only hope of further employment. Liam de Róiste, who had cleverly eased the refugee Lord Mayor aboard an American ship after the Cork burning, was already on the high seas, this time bound for Germany and Sweden, in search of industrial developers and timber. De Róiste was torn apart by the Treaty split and horrified by the return to violence: According to the balance sheet signed by Mr Ireton, City Treasurer, on 15 January 1923, the Reconstruction Committee had funds of £16,787 4s 11d ‘still available.’ But the final meeting, recorded only in Pitman shorthand, was held on Wednesday, 16 August 1922, with Councillor Kelleher, Barry Egan, Mr Barry, Mr Daly and Liam de Róiste in attendance. By March of 1923, a reduced and withdrawing Cork Reconstruction Committee reported that it had received £35,149 11s 5d, including bank interest, from the Provisional Government and had dispersed £22,913 16s 11d, leaving a balance of £12,235 14s 6d in its Munster and Leinster Bank account. But not a penny of that money could be spent on the renewal of the City Library. Even by the long sea route Diarmuid Fawsitt’s outlook exercised

full control. The same one-page committee report states, perhaps glumly: ‘The amount paid to Contractor on foot of demolition of Municipal Buildings has been transferred to the credit of the Fund.’

The answering of compensation claims would occupy a great deal of government and local authority energy over the next few years. Mr Ernest Blythe TD in his budget speech for 1927 was still making exchequer provision for the settlement of compensation claims; though Denis Gwynn reports in his *The Irish Free State: 1922-1927* that ‘Almost every item in the enormous bill for compensation claims has been paid in full.’

6 “In store pending suitable arrangements”

On 9 December 1921, one year after the catastrophe, Mr Wilkinson entered the first volume in his new accession book of the post-Burning era. The first eight books entered were ‘old stock,’ survivors from the homes of borrowers. *Weather Science* by F.W. Henkel, published by Unwin in 1911, was followed by other scientific survivors of the night, Thomas Henry Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics*, published by Macmillan in 1893, W. Briggs and G.H. Bryan’s *Elements of Coordinate Geometry* and Charles Smith’s *Elementary Treatise on Conic Sections*. Nine further books on mathematical and scientific subjects donated by the National Library of Ireland and nine similar books donated by Mrs McKee were followed by donations from C.M. Rourke of Michigan and from Belfast author J.J. Doyle. The first of Sir Malcolm Cotter Seton’s donations, *World’s Lumber Room* by Selina Gaye, was entered into stock on 16 December while R.L. Praeger’s gifts of *British Ferns and where found*, *British Ferns and their Allies*, *British Butterflies*, and *British Eggs and Nests* would survive for many years in the lending section, in particular the latter book that was transferred to ‘Reference stock’ in October 1947. *Lessons in Heat and Light*, an early donation by Mrs Dring from Glanmire, was entered into the books on 20 December 1921, along with Professor O’Rahilly’s gift of *Second Stage Mathematics*. Mrs Dring’s collection of books was wide-ranging and outstanding. It included 22 books on physics and chemistry as well as the then topical *Aerial Locomotion*, *Aerial World* and *Triumphs of Modern Engineering*. The hugely popular author, Samuel Smiles, many of whose papers are now in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, is represented here by his famously positivist *Self-Help*. A group of language books, including French grammars and exercise books, were added to *Colloquial German Grammar* and *German Conversation*. Competence in German must have been a feature of the cultured Dring household for the list of donations includes works of German fiction published in Leipzig and Gotha, including the famous *Heidi* series. Mrs Dring’s practical offerings of *Gentlemen’s Garment Cutting* and *Royal Confectioner* were balanced by her gifts of *Horace: Satires and Epistles* and Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*.

Barry M. Egan’s gifts of the esoteric *Vindication of Phrenology: Cours de Phrénologie* and *Hypnotism* were marked into stock on 23 December. *New Mysticism* by A.M.

Curtis was donated by Mrs T.W. Rolleston, while Monteith's *Fringe of Immortality* and Woodrow Wilson's *On Being Human* were donated by Mrs Bernard Shaw. Mrs Bernard Shaw also donated *Dream Psychology* and *Amazing Séance and an Exposure*. Rev. E.A. O'Connor, the Shrewsbury-based author and leading light of the London Irish Literary Society, donated many religious books, including *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*, *Science of Religion* and *Hopes of the Human race Hereafter and Here*. Mrs T.W. Rolleston's gift of *Celtic Church in Britain and Ireland* survived many years as a lending copy before its transfer to the Reference section in 1943. Tredegar Workingmens' Library donated *New Testament Narratives* and *Our Church and her Services*, to which Mrs Bernard Shaw added *Reading the Bible* and *Conversations on the Choctaw Mission*.

But the strength and impact of Mrs Bernard Shaw's and Mrs McKee's donations becomes obvious when one enters the subject areas of Ireland, history and society. From the late Rev. McKee's library came *Criminals and Community*, *The Price of Home Rule*, *Irish Grievances Shortly Stated* and *Present Irish Questions*, all accessioned in late January 1922. The Rev. McKee's bookshelves also released a series of brilliantly eclectic Irish church histories, including McWalter's *Irish Reformation Movements* (Dublin, 1852), O'Brien's *Case of the Established Church in Ireland* (Dublin, 1868), *Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion* (Paris, 1835) and Mortimer O'Sullivan's *Case of the Protestants of Ireland* (London, 1836). The Bernard Shaw bookshelves were creatively emptied for the sake of Cork — books like Woolf's *International Government*, *Peace and its Foundations* and *Working Life of Women in the 17th Century*, all reflect the abiding concerns of the British Fabians and British Socialism in those years. Even an early grasp of media is reflected in the Bernard Shaw donation of the 1917 volume, *Cinema: its Present Position and Future Possibilities*. Plays by Ibsen and Strindberg, novels by Scott, Dickens and Lover, as well as books like Helen Pankhurst's *Education on the Dalton Plan* (1922), Bertrand Russell's *Free Thought and Official Propaganda* (1922), W.T. Goode's *Bolshevism at Work* (1920), J.W. DeKay's *Women and the New Social State* (1918) and Rita Sherman's anonymously published arguments for home-schooling, *A Mother's Letters to a Schoolmaster* (1923), were all harvested from libraries at Adelphi Terrace and at Ayot St Lawrence. One play in particular, *Brand*, by Ibsen, has been lent and returned continuously for ninety years — Cork directors and actors who held this script in their hands could hardly have known that they were holding Bernard Shaw's own copy. To aid in the symmetry of the Cork collections, Eamon MacLochlainn donated a popular early biography of Bernard Shaw by Wells. But Mrs McKee's donations were no less interesting.

Our notions of the Protestant clergyman of the late nineteenth century — as bookish observer of the natural world and dismayed scholar of all Ireland's ills — do seem to be confirmed by the bulk of books received from the late Rev. McKee's collections. The McKee library included R.L. Patterson's *Birds, Fishes and Cetacea commonly frequenting Belfast Lough* (1880), *Methods of Study in Natural History*, published by Ticknor of Boston in 1863, or *Old Stones: Notes of Lectures on the Plutonic, Silurian, and Devonian Rocks in the Neighbourhood of Malvern* (1855). Rev McKee also possessed *The Covenanters in Moray and Ross* (1892), *United Church of England and Ireland Catholic* (Dublin, 1842) and *The Year of Grace: a History of the Ulster Revival of 1859* (1860). An engagement with Irish political affairs is reflected in *Present Irish Questions* (1901), *Home Rule* (1911) and *Journals, Conversations and Essays relating to Ireland* (1868).



Mrs Charlotte Bernard Shaw



Mrs Mary Louise Dring

In late May of 1922 a further 30 surviving items of the night in December were re-accessioned. All were travel books, and their titles alone give us an indication of the continuity in the imagined landscapes of the reading public that has endured over one hundred years: *Paris Through the Attic* (1918), *My Italian Year* (1911), *South Sea Idylls* (1903) and *In Western Canada before the War* (1915). The incoming donations would extend these imagined territories so loved by the constant reader — Eamon MacLochlainn sent *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands* (1907), James Coleman donated *With Ski and Sledge over Arctic Glaciers* (1898), Sir Malcolm Cotter Seton donated *The High Alps of New Zealand* (1883), while Rev. Nunan of

Cork gifted Robert Falcon Scott's *The Voyage of the 'Discovery': 1901-04* (1905), and among Mrs McKee's boxes were *Rambles on Railways* (1868) and *Rambles in the Far North* (1884).

Over 100 Irish language books were accessioned in March 1922. These were gifts from a huge range of donors, individuals and organisations. J.J. Doyle, Mrs T.W. Rolleston who was harvesting her late husband's library for Cork, F.J. Bigger, another scholarly Belfastman, Eamon MacLochlainn (donor of *Táin Bó Cuailnge*) and Professor O'Donoghue of Cork, the National Library and Diarmuid Ua Buachalla of Maynooth, Conradh na Gaeilge in Dublin and London, as well as the author, Rose Young, of Cushendun, Co. Antrim; Patrick Mulhall of Castlecomer and P. Donnellan of Castlerea – all contributed to the formation of a new core Irish language collection. From the Rolleston library came *Cúirt an Mheadhan Oidhche* by Bryan Merriman (Figgis, 1912, edited by Risteárd Ó Foghludha) and *Leabhar na g-Ceart*, with translations and notes by the venerable scholar John O'Donovan (1847), *An Irish-English Dictionary* by Edward O'Reilly, with a supplement by the same John O'Donovan (James Duffy, 1864). The National Library of Ireland contributed Bourke's *College Irish Grammar* (M.H. Gill, 1883) while Ua Buachalla sent *A Smaller Irish-English Dictionary* (Irish Text Society / M.H. Gill, 1910). Rev. Dr J.H. Murphy contributed *A Grammar of the Irish Language* compiled by the hard-working John O'Donovan and published by Hodges and Smith of Grafton Street, Dublin, in 1845 'for the use of senior classes in the College of St Columba.'

In April 1924 a huge selection of novels by Dickens, Scott, Thackeray and Lord Lytton, the gifts of Dr Winder of Cork, were added to stock. In May 1924 Daniel Corkery added donations of his own works, including his best known play, *The Labour Leader*, along with his *The Yellow Bittern and Other Plays*; *Hounds of Banba* and *The Threshold of Quiet* to earlier donations such as J.G. Millais's *Wanderings and Memories* and Staley's *Lords and Ladies of the Italian lakes*. At this time, among gifts from T.W. Rolleston's library were Austin Clarke's first book *The Vengeance of Fionn* and, possibly the most important English-language book by a Cork author in the nineteenth century, Francis Sylvester Mahony's *Reliques of Father Prout*. As late as 1926, Mr Wilkinson was still accessioning books donated by Rev. E.A. O'Connor: the fifty six accessioned that February included multiple copies of the *Irish Review* (1911-1914) and the *Dublin Penny Journal* (1832-1833). Rev. O'Connor also donated the historic *Gems of Cork Poets*, containing a lot of fool's gold, published by Barter of Cork in the nineteenth century, as well as P.W.

Joyce's *Irish Names of Places*. Indeed, the destiny of P.W. Joyce's work within the library accession books makes for interesting forensic librarianship. Although the work, in two volumes, was added to stock on 24 February 1926, it fell victim to a re-accessioning process that occurred in the City Library in 1944. Its original accession numbers (10,773; 10,774) were re-assigned in late November 1944 and the volumes acquired a set of new control numbers (54,052; 54,053). A later edition of the same work, published by the Educational Company, Dublin, and Longmans, London, was added to stock on 30 November 1930, having been purchased from Browne and Nolan.

With the first exclusively dedicated municipal music school in these islands, opened in 1878, well before its first Carnegie Library, Cork people have always considered a life of music to be an essential part of their social world. A local life of music teaching and learning, amateur and semi-professional performance, all creates a mental architecture around urban living that is as protective and nurturing as an architecture of bricks and mortar. Mr Wilkinson must have been fully aware of the high usage of music materials in his burned library and his efforts to augment the musical donations are a testament to this. In the aftermath of the fire, donors of musical material were not found wanting. Barry M. Egan donated a valuable selection of sheet music published by Novello, Boosey and Chappell, including Gluck's *Orpheus*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Verdi's *Aida*, Wallace's *Maritana*, Balfe's *Bohemian Girl*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and a *Collection of Irish Airs for Violin*, as well as *Russian and Polish Dances and Melodies for Pianoforte Solo*. The internees of Bere Island Camp provided a national counterbalance by donating *Ár gCeól Féinig*, as did Colonel Green of Glanworth who donated an invaluable *O'Neill's Irish Folk Music* published in Chicago in 1910. Mr E. Hawkins of London also donated a selection of music books, including the *History of Music* in two volumes. Although he is credited in the accession book as the donor of the essential *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in five volumes, these were actually a Library purchase (accession nos. 8891-5), bought from Smith and Sons of Glasgow for £4 12s 6d. In the mid 1920s Mr Wilkinson purchased seventy-four albums of sheet music, including scores of *Madame Butterfly*, *Marta*, *Fille de Madame Angst*, as well as *Songs of France*, and Pittman's *Baritone Album* and *Contralto Album*, all purchased from Piggott and Co., Cork. In parallel with the superb donations, suppliers such as Day's Library, Liam Ruiséal, D.M. Lenihan, C. O'Keeffe and St Luke's Library, all quickly fulfilled orders for stock as the librarian tried to bring balance to the range of books available for public borrowing and reference.

Donations and purchases went hand in hand. The huge number of books donated and the wide geographical spread of the donors did give Mr Wilkinson a world-collector's advantage. The sheer numbers involved meant that the library got an extensive sample of books that had been in private hands, with a quite representative sample of the book market between 1880 and 1920. Literature, language, science, nature, music, art, engineering, biography and history were well represented in the great pile of parcels that engulfed him in his temporary quarters at the School of Art in Emmet Place. The books now accumulating around him were also creating a unique historical advantage for the general reader in Cork. Nobody could have foreseen, in the aftermath of the 1920 arson, how the Cork reader would be placed at an extraordinary advantage in the cataclysm that was coming to the English language book trade – within two decades, on another December night in 1940, between six and ten million books were lost in the fire-bombing of London publishers' warehouses. Longmans, Green, who had responded so quickly to Cork's appeal in 1920, lost their entire list of six thousand titles. Coping with a sixty per cent cut in paper allocation as well as a shortage of strawboard for binding, English language publishing could not hope to reprint these titles — by 1946, 44,000 British older titles and over 5,000 accepted manuscripts awaited printing. The harsh winter of 1947 compounded the problem with massive fuel cuts to the paper industry, causing a fifty per cent cut in paper allocation to publishers from the coal-starved paper mills. Almost no translations of major European authors were published and an entire generation of skilled apprentices in printing were also lost to technical war-work. This made the great collection assembled by Mr Wilkinson come into its own – while a book buyer or library borrower in London scrambled for a translation of Ibsen or a reprint of Dickens, the borrower at Grand Parade, Cork, had a store of treasures to call upon through the bleak years of 1940-1952. Because of the general book shortage, in both new and used books, one can almost be certain that Cork readers of Ibsen, Strindberg, Thomas Mann, as well as Chekhov, Dickens and Lord Byron, were reading books donated in the years 1921-6.

But at that time Mr Wilkinson still needed to strive for a collection balance, as his statement published in the librarian's report of 1925/6 indicates: 'The initial stock of books, mainly donated, failed to supply a really good selection of Reference and Non-Fiction books, consequently there are many gaps in these sections.' He purchased aggressively in order to engineer a new collection that would prove useful and, therefore, widely used. *Smith's Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork* (Cork, John Connor, 1815 edition) was purchased 'second

hand' for £1 7s 1d, to be added to Caulfield's *Council Book of the Corporation of the City of Cork* (1876) that was purchased for nineteen shillings. But it was the cultivated and generous Barry M. Egan who donated Caulfield's *Council Book of the Corporation of Kinsale* (1879). The crucial local journal, *Bolster's Quarterly Magazine*, for 1826-7, was purchased from Lowe Brothers of Birmingham for one pound and four shillings, but holdings of this journal were augmented by the – yet again – generous donations from James Coleman of Cobh. Mr Wilkinson also purchased *Irish Pedigrees* and *Irish Landed Gentry* by O'Hart, published by Hodges Figgis, as well as Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, the latter purchased from Lowe Brothers, Birmingham. Sometimes a donation would double a holding, as with the gift of *Cork: a Civic Survey*, donated by the Cork Town Planning Association. The Library had already purchased a copy from Guy and Co. for ten shillings and sixpence.

Mrs W.B. Yeats, wife of the poet, sent a clutch of unusually practical books, including Muir and Arthur's *Manual of Practical X-ray Work* (1909), Dr J.M. Davidson's *Localization by X Rays and Stereoscopy* (1916), Soyer's *Paper-bag Cookery* (1911) and *The British Red Cross First Aid Manual* (1913). But Mrs Yeats also sent Bradley's *Highways and Byways in the Lake District* (1919), Kipling's *Actions and Reactions* (1912) and Thomson's *Celtic Wonder World* (1902). The Andrew Jackson Council of Rockland, Massachusetts, sent an early Holt, N.Y., 1897 edition of *The Gadfly* by Cork's own, and unknown, E.L. Voynich (née Boole).

In terms of serials and journals the library was lucky in its friends. Dr Crone, the hero of the hour, sent a superb gift of 22 volumes of *Notes and Queries* (1854 and 1891-1913). The twenty volumes of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* was a gift from T.H. Mahony of Cork. Five volumes of *T.P.'s Weekly* (July 1908 – Dec 1910) were donated by Eamon MacLochlainn of Cork, while the now completely forgotten but beautiful journal *Belgravia* was donated by Miss Dowling of Blackrock. Ten volumes of the esoteric *Cosmopolis* were donated by Colonel Green while copies of *La Belle Assemblée* for the years 1825-30 arrived from the recently released but still indefatigable Professor O'Rahilly. The twelve-volume magisterial *Histoire de l'Art* was a gift from the French Government, accessioned on 3 July 1923.

Through his writing of insistent letters Mr Wilkinson never let up on the pressure he could exert for a new library: the Chairman of the City Library Committee, various officials of the White Cross Fund in Cork and Dublin, the Carnegie

Advisory Committee for Ireland, the exhausted Town Clerk, poor Mr Hegarty, even the City Engineer and City Law Advisor, all were targets for his determined pen in the years 1921-3. By early 1921 he was already writing to the Law Advisor in pursuit of his claim for compensation for the loss of the library. He even tried the strategy of seeking 'an advance' from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, the money to be repaid from the expected compensation of £40,000 under the Malicious Injuries Act. Unfortunately for Cork, the Carnegie Trust had adopted a policy of not funding the construction of any further municipal libraries, but Mr Wilkinson made a moral and exceptional case for Cork, pleading that in view of the chaotic situation '*then probably for years, Cork must exist without a Public Library*' (Wilkinson's emphasis). Mr Wilkinson again wrote to the Town Clerk to ask for use of the Cork Reconstruction Fund for the library rebuild. Gossip about the monies available through the Reconstruction Fund must have spread through Cork life at this time and the exclusion of municipal buildings from such funds was extremely frustrating – the sense of outrage, aligned no doubt to the developing Treaty split, spilled across the Library Committee itself until a motion was carried on 28 November that threatened the mass resignation of the committee 'go dtí go mbeidh ionad ann don leabharlann.' But the librarian went on with his campaign, enquiring of Crosse and Blackwell in May of 1922 if their premises, once occupied by the School of Music on Morrison's Island, might be available for lease for a temporary library. He had already written to Murphy Brothers, builders, asking about the premises they owned in the South Mall; and on the same day he wrote to Seán Jennings of Grattan Street seeking to lease 'the lower portion of your premises on the Grand Parade for the purpose of a temporary Library.' He wrote via his solicitors to a 'Ward-in-Chancery' who owned premises on Union Quay once occupied by the Army and Navy Canteen Board.

It must have irked Mr Wilkinson to read the newspaper reports of the successful reopening of Cork's famous private library, the 'Cork Library' at Pembroke Street on 7 March 1922. At the time of the Burning, this library was already moving back and forth across the flat of the city, having negotiated the assignment of its 1820 and 1860 lease of the valuable South Mall-Pembroke Street premises to R. and H. Hall in exchange for a restored 'footprint' on the same site and temporary premises on St Patrick's Street in 1920. Luminaries such as Professor Stockley of UCC and J.J. Horgan were leading committee men of this institution. The transfer of title in the premises had been opposed by another leading bibliophile, the ubiquitous committee-man James Coleman. Although it tried valiantly to

remain viable into the modern era, including the acceptance of a commercial agency for Argosy Books as well as subscribing to Green's, Switzers', and Boots Libraries, this 1792 private institution would eventually falter, running up yearly overdrafts and eventually losing its valuable rates exemption on the prime site. But in March 1922, with refurbished premises and £500 from R. and H. Hall, its future seemed very bright and Mr Wilkinson would have noticed.

Elsewhere, matters of Cork were still being discussed. The minutes of a meeting of the Dublin-based Irish Advisory Committee of the U.K. Carnegie Trust on 12 January 1922 record that 'The Secretary reported that the Trustees had sanctioned a grant of £1,000 for the equipment of Cork library. The Secretary was directed to write to the Cork Library Committee asking what steps they proposed taking in the matter.' Six months later, on 8 June 1922, the Advisory Committee noted that 'A letter was read from the Secretary, Cork Library Committee, stating that the Committee had been unable to secure suitable premises for a temporary library, and that when such premises had been obtained they would communicate with the Advisory Committee regarding the grant of £1,000 for equipment.' Things were still in a state of flux at Cork, for on 14 September the Advisory Committee's minutes record a direct communication from the local authority: 'The Secretary reported that the Cork Corporation had decided to rebuild the Carnegie Library on the old site as soon as possible.' Later that year, on 9 November, an Irish Advisory Committee completed its business with only three members present, Lady Gregory, Dermot O'Brien and Mr Wilkinson, along with Lennox Robinson and his assistant. The minutes of this meeting record that the Carnegie U.K. Trust had begun to engage with the matter of burned libraries in Ireland: 'The Secretary of the Trust's reply to the Committee's query regarding compensation for destroyed Library buildings was considered. The Secretary was directed to ascertain from the Provisional Government whether any steps could be taken to expedite the consideration of the claims of these libraries.'

By September of 1922 a new hope for the future had already formed and Mr Wilkinson wished to contribute 'a view of what is required to the Corporation so that same can be incorporated in the particulars that, I assume, will be issued to competing architects for the future building.' He went on to outline 'details that past experience has proved desirable.' On 15 September 1922 Mr Wilkinson wrote a detailed letter to the Town Clerk outlining his minimum requirements for 'the most modern and up-to-date system' of open access library: his Library should have adequate storage, a news-room well lit from the south and all public rooms

on the ground floor 'as experience has proved that libraries so arranged are more economical to work and lend themselves to better supervision.' The librarian, now believing in an imminent rebuild, insisted that no 'Hot Air' system of heating be installed, as they had always proved inadequate, and that only electricity should be used for 'illumination.' Eight months later his insistence upon a professional input from himself, as the one person in Cork with authority to speak upon library design, must have ruffled other local professional feathers, for we see him writing a lengthy letter of self-justification in reply to the City Engineer's accusations of 'intermeddling' with design.

Eventually the day came, at least for the opening of a temporary service, from premises at no. 2 Tuckey Street. These premises were built on the site of a former RIC barracks which had been the victim of an arson attack in June 1921. (Today these premises are occupied by the Society of St Vincent de Paul.) On 29 July 1924 he wrote to Nat Ross, T. Desmond and Sons, O'Donoghue of Patrick Street, and others, to ask them to 'oblige by quoting' for 'removing in a covered vehicle, from the School of Art to Tuckey Street, about 10,000 volumes, mainly tied up in bundles, and some miscellaneous furniture, as and when required by the Librarian.' On 7 August he wrote a letter, full of poignancy and irony in view of the circumstances, to another public servant who had witnessed the destruction of the library in 1920:

Dear Capt. Hutson,

At the last meeting of my Committee, the question arose as to providing 'Erin' Fire Extinguishers in the library premises, consequent on a letter received from the local agent – Mr W.B. Beamish; before, however, taking any decided action on the matter, I was directed to ask you to report on the general question of providing protective fire appliances with particular regard to the suitability of the above-names or any chemical extinguisher, and your opinion thereon.

Appropriately, perhaps, this is the final letter copied into the Librarian's 'letter book: outgoing.'

The Cork citizens' first renewed encounter with a public library service occurred on 10 June 1924, when the Lord Mayor, Councillor Sean French, opened a News Room in Tuckey Street. Four months later, the books were made ready to receive their first Cork readers. A full service was established in Tuckey Street, in premises that Mr Wilkinson was careful to characterise as 'ideally situated; but, in other respects, they are most unsuitable. The public rooms are all too small

to allow of efficient administration, while the fact that the building comprises three storeys is a great drawback. Fundamentally, a three-storey building for a modern public library is incongruous, but, when this is combined with inadequate accommodation, it is a more serious problem. It is, I submit, undesirable that these conditions should be permitted to prevail longer than need be; or, the idea obtain, that the requirements of the Library have been fully met by the existing arrangements.' Mr Wilkinson could never forget that Mr Carnegie had provided him with a purpose-built public library building, now destroyed in the fire. He wanted his librarian-designed library building back.

Still, by the autumn of 1924 he had a fully functioning library once more; a magnificent achievement both for himself and the Corporation in view of the political and economic circumstances of post-Civil War Ireland. The need for a public library in Cork was fully demonstrated within three days of opening in 1924 – within those three days the modest Juvenile stock, fewer than 500 volumes, was exhausted. It must have been a bizarre sight: the shelves were emptied. Within six months the librarian had nearly doubled the number of Juvenile books, but even this level had to cope with an extraordinary Juvenile issue of 19,832 in the first half year. The librarian contrasted this half-year figure with the last highest full year figure of 14,329 juvenile books issued. A new generation of Irish readers had arrived with the Free State and, in his report, Mr Wilkinson marvelled at this 'unexpected extraordinary demand for children's literature.' In his *Annual Report* of 1925/6, as the city around him was becoming settled and getting back to business, Mr Wilkinson noted a further 356 donations towards the restoration of the burned library stock. Those donors who gave generously at the beginning continued to give: Mrs Bernard Shaw, Rev. E.A. O'Connor, Mrs Dring of Glanmire and the estate of the Rev. R.S. Maffet (which donated 62 Cork-printed books). In the *Annual Report* of 1926/7, Mr Wilkinson, a man not given to idle praise, wrote 'special mention should be made of the generous gifts received from Mrs George Bernard Shaw who has shown an unflinching interest in the Library.' By 1926 the book stock level stood at 10,579 items. That year Mrs Bernard Shaw gave even more books, while Colonel Nicholls of Cork donated 14 books, James Coleman donated a further four, and Sir A. Reid of Cadogan Gardens, London, a director of the Cork Steam Packet Company, donated George Thompson's *Coastwise Trade of the United Kingdom*.

The full complement of library staff was in employment once more, with Miss A. Tucker resigning and Miss H.N. Holly taking her place as third junior assistant.

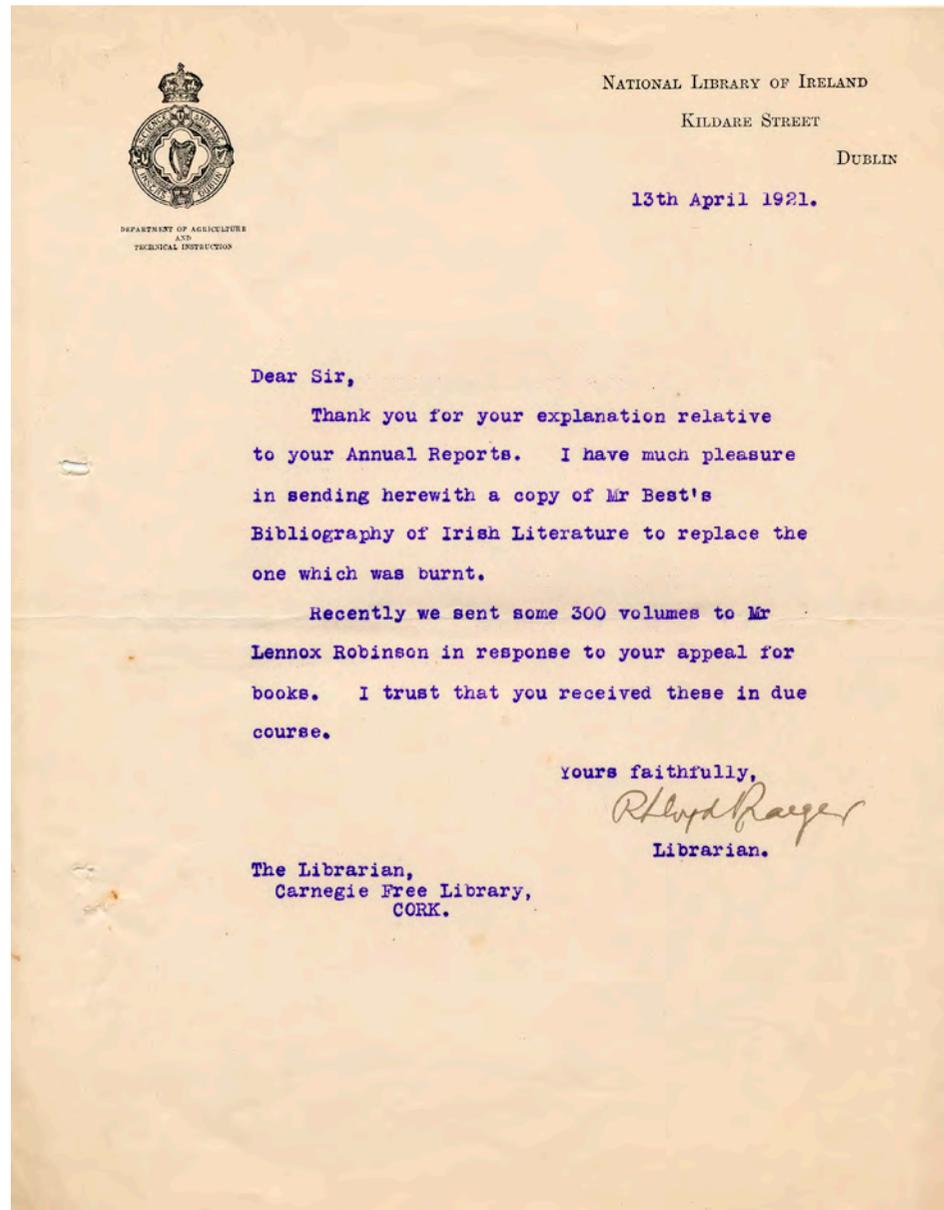
The stock of the library was not restored to its pre-Burning of Cork level until 2 June 1931, when C. Kearton's *In the Land of the Lion*, purchased second-hand from Boots Library for three shillings, became the 15,000th item entered into the Accession Book. This 15,000th volume joined the donations and the survivors of the night of the Burning; survivors like *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, Vol.1* by John O'Leary, published by Burns and Oates in 1909, or *Irish Fireside Songs* by P.J. McCall, published by M.H. Gill, Dublin in 1911. A note in *An Leabharlann* of June 1933, initialled by Donal Cronin, the Cork County Librarian, links the night of the Burning with another important 'moment' in Cork librarianship, the first National Conference of the Library Association of Ireland at University College Cork. The note was published in the Cork Conference number, Vol. 3, No. 2 of *An Leabharlann*:

It is recorded that about 14,000 volumes, many of them rare and valuable books and manuscripts of local interest, were destroyed, as were also some files of old Cork newspapers dating from 1774. To re-establish the Library in the circumstances seemed an almost impossible task, but nevertheless, as a result of an appeal issued by the Committee, about 10,500 volumes were received from sympathetic donors, and in September 1924 the temporary premises were opened to the public.

A suitable site was purchased at the Grand Parade at a cost of £5,000, and on this site was erected what is probably the best-planned and most modern Borough Library in Ireland. The cost of the building was £19,000, and, looking through it today, one must feel that the sum was very well expended. Special attention has been paid to the lighting of the public rooms and the excellent results achieved are a credit to those responsible for the planning and construction. The Library was opened to the public by the Rt. Hon. Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor F.J. Daly, on September 15th 1930.

The 1933 conference included an address, 'Live Libraries', by the faithful book-donor, Daniel Corkery, as well as dinner at University College and an official luncheon at the Victoria Hotel. There was an important afternoon conference visit, on Monday, 5 June, to the new library at Grand Parade. On opening day nearly three years previously, walking through his pristine new library, with its frontage on the Grand Parade, modern, sparkling, fully staffed and buzzing with users, Mr James Wilkinson must have felt that he had entered a miraculous new era. Pacing the floor and looking at his 15,000 volumes, Mr Wilkinson who had carried his service from the late Victorian day, through war and arson, right into

the twentieth century, must have felt *amazed*. But we don't know. Mr Wilkinson was an old Carnegie man, a North of England Victorian; he may have simply noticed a selection of books badly shelved or a tray of *overdue* notices awaiting collection. One thing is certain: he had worked in desperate circumstances with a profound sense of public duty, even after this State had sheared away from his mother country. He waited in Cork until after he had restored his 15,000th book – including the 14,000 volumes burned on his watch – before taking the 'long sea route' home. The depth and breadth of the collection he left behind in Grand Parade, more than a thousand volumes still surviving in the twenty-first century after having been lent regularly for ninety years, is the unassailable monument any old Carnegie man might dream of. We treasure them still. They are his bequest to the constant readers of Cork.



Letter from R Lloyd Praeger, National Library, April 1921



1930: New library premises, 57 Grand Parade

DONORS OF BOOKS TO CORK LIBRARY AFTER FIRE

F. Abell, Isle of Wight
 E. Aitcin/Atkins, Foxrock,
 Dublin
 B. Anderton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
 Andrew Jackson Council, Rockland, Mass.,
 USA
 Mrs Anglin, Cork
 Apostleship of Prayer, New York
 Arlo Publishing, Upper Falls,
 Massachusetts, USA
 Mrs M. Savage-Armstrong, Strangford, Co.
 Down
 Atlantic Monthly Press, USA
 R. S. Baker, Cork
 Mrs S. Ball, Dublin
 F.R. and J.L. Barlow, Bolton, Lancashire
 E. Barrett, Cork
 Miss M. Barry, Roxburg, NY
 Professor F. Bedell, Ithaca, NY
 D.J and J.B. Benger, Lewes, England
 Mrs Bergin, Cork
 E. Berkelyne, London
 Mrs Beveridge, Cork
 F.J. Bigger, Belfast
 Birmingham Public Library
 W.H. Black, NY
 Blackrock Public Library, Co. Dublin
 Miss M. Blyth, London
 C. Boyle, Portland USA
 P. Bradley, Cork
 Consul General for Brazil
 D. Breen, Cork
 W. Briggs, Cambridge, England
 T. Brown, Cork

A Browne, New York
 D. Buachalla, Maynooth
 Miss. Buckley, Cork
 Miss M. Buckley, Winthrop, USA
 Miss M.C. Buckley, Cork
 M. Bulman, Jamaica Plain, NY
 L. Burns, Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
 England
 Miss M.J. Byrne, New York
 C. E. Cadigan, Boston
 Mrs, Canney, Dorchester, NY
 Miss B. Carew, Rathmines, Dublin
 J Carroll, West Roxbury, NY
 Rev J. Casey, Tralee
 Catholic Truth Society, London
 H. A. Charde, Cork
 L.A. Churchill, New York
 Cirencester Public Library, England
 Mrs M. Clancy, Lenox, Massachusetts,
 USA
 J. A. Clarke, Dublin
 Miss Cleary, Long Island, NY
 T.J. Coakley, Elizabeth, NY
 Miss T. Cole, Poughkeepsie, NY
 James Coleman, Cobh, Co. Cork
 C. Collingwood, Cork
 Miss Collins, Long Island, NY
 J. Conlon, Hoboken NY
 J. Connell, New York
 J. Connell, Dorchester, NY
 Conradh na Gaeilge, Dublin and
 London
 Miss L.M.W. Conway, Glasgow
 Miss Cooper, London

Daniel Corkery, Cork
 Miss Cornwall, Frankfield, Cork
 Miss V. Creed, South Boston USA
 G.D. Croker, Waterford
 Dr J.S. Crone, Belfast
 Miss Crosse, Monkstown, Co Cork
 Mr Curtin, Cork
 Dáil Éireann, Dublin
 J. Daly, Pittsburg, USA
 C.L. Darlington, Cork
 Day's Library, London
 Miss A. Dempsey, London
 E.L. McClintock Dix, Dublin
 H. Dixon, Dublin
 Miss S.C. Dobbs, Cushendall, Co Down
 H.P.F. Donegan, Cork
 P. Donnellan, Castlereagh
 Rev. F. Donnelly, Chestnut Hill, Boston
 D. Donovan, Cork
 Mrs Dormon, Cork
 S. Dottin, Rennes, France
 Miss Dowling, Blackrock
 Mr E. Downing, Sheffield
 R.F. Downing, Washington DC
 J.J. Doyle, Belfast
 Mrs S. H. (Marjorie) Dring, Mount
 Patrick, Glanmire, Co. Cork
 F. Drum, Bronx, NY
 E. Duce, New York
 D. Duggan, Cork
 W. Dunphy, Bantry, Co. Cork
 Rev M. Earls, New York
 Mr Edwards, Cork
 Barry Egan, Cork
 Miss M.F. Egan, Brooklyn, NY
 Mrs Emerson, Monkstown, Co Dublin
 Mrs E. England, London
 Miss E.M. Evans, Ely, England

T. Farrington, Cork
 J.L. (Diarmuid) Fawsitt, New York
 Rev. J. Fehilly, Cork
 Republic of Finland
 Mrs M. Fitzgerald, Booterstown, Co.
 Dublin
 Miss E. Fitzpatrick, New York
 Dr A. Fleming, Edinburgh
 Miss M. Fogarty, St Leonards-on-Sea,
 England
 M.C. Fogg, Manchester, England
 The Misses Foley, Cork
 B. Forrest, Ogdensburg, NY
 J. Fortune, Chicago
 Miss B. de Fossebart, London
 Republic of France
 A.M. Freeman, London
 Miss G. Galvin, Cork
 Miss E. Geary, Washington DC
 Gibson Bequest Committee, Cork
 J. Goff, Long Island, NY
 J.A. Gorkin, Boston, USA
 Great Yarmouth Public Library, England
 Colonel J. S. Green, Glanworth, Co.
 Cork
 T. Griffin, Cobh, Co. Cork
 W.E. Griffis, Pulaski, NY
 Guy and Co., Cork
 Professor E.J. Gwynn, Dublin
 J.D. Hackett, New York
 W. Hall, London
 A. Hamilton, Foxrock, Dublin
 S.B. Hannaford, Walpole, USA
 M.F. Hannan, Chicago
 E. Harkness, Charlestown, USA
 E.G. Harvey, Worcester, England
 E.A. Hawkins, London
 T. Healy, Dublin

G. Heard, Foxrock, Dublin
Mrs W.J. Heaslip, Cork
Miss M.L. Hibbert, New York
E. Hillman, London
Hodder and Stoughton, London
P.J. Hogan, Washington DC
J.P. Hollihan, Washington DC
W.E.R. Holmes, Glasgow
Dr J.B. Hurry, Reading, England
Irish Literary Society, London
Irish Society, London
Irish War Memorial Committee, Dublin
Mrs C. Jephson, Rathmines, Dublin
Miss E. Jordan, New York
M. Joynt, Rathmines, Dublin
M. Kelleher, Cork,
E.V. Kennedy, Roxbury, USA
Mrs Kinnick, Brooklyn, NY
A.L. Kip, Highland Park, USA
Lady Knox, London
A.L. Lancaster, Swansea
A. Larned, New Jersey, USA
H.A. Law, Dublin
Miss M. Lawless, Boston, USA
Mrs Leahy, Cork
J. Lecky, Putney, London
D. Lehane, Putney, London
Leigh Browne Trust, London
Rev. S. Levy, Stamford Hill, London
E. Liebermann, Brooklyn, NY
Miss M. Lindum (or Linden), St
Leonards-on-Sea, England
Longmans, Green and Co., London
Miss M. Lumbert, Walpole, USA
H. Ludovic, Boston, USA
Miss Lynch, Cork
Miss J. Lyons, Passage West, Co. Cork
T.W. Lyster, Dublin

D. McCarthy, Clonakilty, Co. Cork
Miss J. McCarthy, Cork
M.T. McDonagh, West Virginia USA
Mrs D. McDonnell, Cork
Mrs L. McGee, Indianapolis USA
D.F. McGrath, West Newton, USA
C. and Sherwell G.A. McGuire,
Washington DC
W.M.A. McInnes., Montrose, Scotland
Mrs McKee, London
Miss M. and Lynn McKenney, USA
J.F. McKeon, Worcester, England
Mrs McKeown, Kemptville, Canada
E. MacLochlainn, Cork
Miss A. McNeill, Cushendun, Co.
Down
C. McPartlin, St Paul, USA
P. McSweeney, Cork
Rev. R.S. Maffet, Dublin
Dr W. Magner, Cork
M.A. Mahony, Boston USA
T.H. Mahony, Cork
Malvern Public Library, England
E. Manley, Chicago
Miss Mannix, Cork
Hon. Justice Martin, Victoria, B.C.,
Canada
Mrs E.D. Marvion, Berkhamstead,
England
Mrs. N. Massey, Cork
Miss E.C. Mayne, London
J. Mintern, Passage West, Co. Cork
Professor R.H. Moody, New York
Mrs C. Moore, Dun Laoghaire, Co
Dublin
Rev. C. Moore, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork
Rev. H.K. Moore, Dublin
T.F. Moore, Rochester, NY

P. Mulhall, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny
T.F. Mulholland, Cork
Mrs Munster, London
Rev. J.H. Murphy, Cork
Miss Murphy, Cork
Mrs Murphy, Cork
Miss M.E. Murray, Jamaica Plain, NY
National Library of Ireland
W.G. Neale, Dublin
H.W. Nevinson, London
Mrs J.C. Newsom, Cork
W. Nicholson, Michigan, USA
Miss L. Nolan, Liverpool
Rev. T. Nunan, Cork
William O'Brien, Mallow
J.P. O'Callaghan, Belfast
S. Ó Casaide, Dublin
Miss M.A. O'Connell, Cork
Mrs O'Connell, Cork
Miss A. F. O'Connor, Cork
C.A. O'Connor, New York
Rev. E.A. O'Connor, Shrewsbury, England
T. O'Donoghue, Cork
T. O'Gorman, Cork
J. O'Hourihan, Ballincarriger
T. O'Kelly, London
H.J. O'Leary, Brooklyn, NY
C. O'Mahony, Esher, England
Miss E. O'Mahony, Dublin
Miss O'Mullane, Cork
Miss J. Mullane, Hartford, USA
D.F. O'Neill, Macroom, Co. Cork
Professor Alfred O'Rahilly, Cork
L. Ó Riain, London
H. O'Riordan, Walpole, USA
W. Orr, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
J. O'Shea, Jersey City, USA
E. O'Sullivan, New York

S. O'Sullivan, New York
H. J. Painten, Blockley, England
Patrick H. Pearse Branch, Washington
DC
R. L. Praeger, Dublin
Rev. D.J. Raikes, Shipston-on-Stour,
England
I. Rashad
P. Regan, Manchester, England
Miss E. Reynolds, Cork
J. Richardson, Dublin
G. Riding, Worcester, England
H. Riordan, Walpole, USA
Lennox Robinson, Dublin
Rev. and Mrs Robinson, Ballineen, Co.
Cork
Mrs T.W. Rolleston, Rosenburg, Loewe
and Co., London
Miss Ross, Cork
Miss C.M. Rourke, South Rapids, USA
Miss I. Rowlette, Sligo
C.F. Saunders, Pasadena, California
M. Sayers, Totnes, England
J. Scanlon, Cork
C. Scollardi, New York
Mrs J.E. Scott, Milford USA
Miss M. Scully, London
T. Searle, Dublin
Sir Malcolm Seton, London
E. Shanahan, Cork
Mrs Bernard Shaw, Welwyn and
Adelphi Terrace, England
Mrs W. Shaw, Kilnap, Cork
T.J. Shaw, Mullingar
Miss E. Shea, Washington DC
Mrs Sheppard, Cork
Shivagi Literary Memorial Committee,
Mumbai, India

W. Siddle, Farnborough, England
 Miss Sidebotham, Llanfairfechan Wales
 Miss Simpson
 The Sloan-Duployan Shorthand Society
 Rev. A.M. Skelly, Portland USA
 A.M.P. Smithson, Waterford
 Mrs Smyth, Dublin
 Miss Somerville, West Cork
 R. Soulis, Vermont USA
 Mrs and Miss Sturges, Newcastle-upon-
 Tyne
 Miss Sullivan, Cork
 Swadlincote Public Library, England
 Consul General of Sweden
 Miss S.G. Sweeney, Boston
 Executors of John R. Synge
 Dr A.B. Taplin, Liverpool, England
 Mrs Tatum, Greenville, USA
 E.E. Taylor, Malton, England
 Rev. E. Teahen, USA
 Thom & Co., Sealy Bryers Walker, Dublin
 C. Thompson, Montrose, Scotland
 Mrs D.L. Todhunter, London

From library annual reports and accession books

R.E. Tracy, Indianapolis USA
 Tredegar Workingmen's Library
 Miss Tucker, Cork
 M. Turleyfill, Chicago
 M.J. Twomey, Boston, USA
 Miss. Terry, Cork
 Miss A. Walker, Kilmarnock, Scotland
 J.J. Walsh, New York
 P. Walsh, Cork
 Mrs T. Walsh, Clondalkin, Co. Dublin
 The Misses Warren, Cork
 A. Warriner, Cork
 Miss B. Watson, New York
 F. H. Webb, Dublin
 Miss Westropp
 Miss Wharton, Grimsby, England
 Miss M.E. White, Hartford, USA
 M. Wickham, Cork
 Mrs Wilkie, Cork
 T. Wilson, London
 Woolwich Public Libraries
 Mrs W.B. Yeats, Dublin
 Miss Rose Young, Cushendun.

Names omitted from Library Reports but entered in Accession Books

Miss M. E. Ahern, Chicago
 Miss M. E. Broderick, Massachusetts, USA
 F. Bruce, Clapham Common, England
 Mrs Burke, Cork
 H.C. Clarke, Cork
 B.B. and E. Cobb, Upper Falls, Massachusetts, USA
 M. Cree, Cork
 W. and T. Evans, Cork
 W. and G. Foyle, London
 H.B. Goodrich, USA
 J.H. Holmes, New York
 E.T. Hurley, Cincinnati, USA
 Internees' Library, Bere Island, Co. Cork
 Irish Distress Fund, London
 Irish Women's Distress Fund, London
 R.A. King, Irish Literary Society, London
 M. McCarthy, Cork
 W. Moffat, Toronto, Canada
 Miss Morrisson, London
 E. Murchadha, Cork
 F.E. Nicholson, Michigan, USA
 Mrs William O'Brien, Mallow, Co. Cork
 T. Ó Ceallaigh, London
 S. Ó Donnchadha, Cork
 John O'Hanlan, Ballineen, Co. Cork
 Aileen O'Shea, Washington DC
 Lennox Robinson, Dublin
 George Russell ('AE')
 P. Ryan, Manchester, England
 Mrs M.A. Taylor, London
 Government of Venezuela
 Dr A. Winder ('Portarlington'), Cork
 Miss Woods, Radleth, Herts., England

According to the Accession books from the 1920s the top 25 donors of books were:

Mrs George Bernard Shaw, 1,283 volumes
Mrs McKee, London: 1,149 volumes
James Coleman, Cobh, by 1932: 532 volumes
Mrs T.W. Rolleston: 400 volumes
Mrs Mary Louise Dring, Glanmire: 283 volumes
Birmingham Public Library: 240 volumes
J.P. O'Callaghan, Belfast: 220 volumes
National Library of Ireland: 216 volumes
Rev. E.A. O'Connor: 206 volumes
Dr Austin Fleming, Edinburgh: 191 volumes
Republic of France: 157 volumes
D. Ua Buachalla, Maynooth: 151 volumes
Mrs W.B. Yeats: 129 volumes
Barry M. Egan, Cork: 125 volumes
Dr J.S. Crone, Belfast and London: 120 volumes
Mrs N. Massey, Cork: 115 volumes
Eamon Mac Lochlainn, Cork: 105 volumes
Irish Literary Society, London: 103 volumes
J.J. Doyle ("Beirt Fhear"), Belfast: 99 volumes
Blackrock Public Library, Dublin: 97 volumes
Colonel J.S. Green, Glanworth: 93 volumes
Sir Malcolm Cotter Seton: 85 volumes
F.R. and J.L. Barlow, England: 83 volumes
The Misses Warren, Cork: 82 volumes
P. Bradley, Cork: 81 volumes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND NOTES

Special thanks to Catherine Coakley, who has listened to all my stories of burned books.

I acknowledge the support of colleagues at Hollyhill Branch Library who had to cope with my going AWOL in burnt territories;

Liam Ronayne, Cork City Librarian, who allowed me to wander for several days in the old Reference stores;

The Archivist and staff at Cork City and County Archives, Seamus Murphy Building, Great William O'Brien Street, for their efficiency and unfailing courtesy;

Dr John Mullins of Cork City Libraries, who agreed to check my final draft;

Kieran Burke, Local Studies Librarian, Keeper of our Cork Collection and who knows more about these local materials than any other living person, for his many suggestions;

Stephen Leach for design and typesetting;

Colleagues in the Cork City Library Reference department who have handled these delicate books for years.

This booklet was conceived as a personal essay, devoid of footnotes and endnotes. All the sources consulted are referred to as they arise in the narrative. They are all available for consultation in Cork City Archives at Great William O'Brien Street and at Cork City Libraries, Grand Parade. I also had sight of the Alfred O'Rahilly Papers in University College Cork, for which I am grateful to the UCC Archivist and Staff and to University Librarian, John FitzGerald.

TMcC

Primary Sources

Cork Library correspondence file. This file also contains a number of letters and book-lists of the Cork Library (Pembroke Street), including lists of books transferred to both City and County Library services in the 1940s. (Cork City and County Archives)

Librarian's letter book 'Outgoing 1920-1924' (Cork City and County Archives)

Minute Book of Reconstruction (Finance) Committee. This includes a number of letters from Mr Fawsitt at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and a handwritten statement of the City Fire Superintendent attached to a Compensation Claim. (Cork City Libraries, Reference strong room)

Cork Library Society, Minute Book. This refers to the private library formerly in Pembroke Street, not the Carnegie Library, and includes documents relating to transfer of property title to R. and H. Hall. (Cork City and County Archives)

Accession books 1921-1932 (Strong Room, Cork City Libraries)

Cork Examiner and *Cork Constitution*, December 1920 and January 1921.

Published Sources

American Commission on the Conditions in Ireland. *Interim report*. London: Harding and More, 1921.

Annual Report of the Cork Public Library: 1924/5. Cork: City and County Borough of Cork, 1925.

Annual Report of the Cork Public Library: 1925/6. Cork: City and County Borough of Cork, 1926.

Ellis, Alan. *The burning of Cork: an eyewitness account*. Millstreet: Aubane Historical Society, 2004.

Gaughan, J. Anthony. *Alfred O'Rahilly 2: public figure*. Dublin: Kingdom Books, 1989.

Gwynn, Denis. *The Irish Free State: 1922-1927*. London: Macmillan, 1928.

Harrington, Michael. *The Munster republic*. Cork: Mercier Press, 2009.

Holroyd, Michael. *Bernard Shaw, Vol. 1, 1856-1898: the search for love*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1988.

Holroyd, Michael. *Bernard Shaw: the one-volume definitive edition*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1997.

Jones, Thomas. *Whitehall diary. Volume III. Ireland 1918-1925*. Edited by Keith Middlemas. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Keogh, Christine A. *Report on public library provision in the Irish Free State, 1935, to the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, the Library Association of Ireland*. Athlone: Library Association of Ireland: 1936.

An Leabharlann, Vol. 3, No. 2, June. Dublin: Library Association of Ireland, 1933.

Morrissey, Thomas J. *William O'Brien 1881-1968: socialist, republican, Dáil deputy, editor and trade union leader*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007.

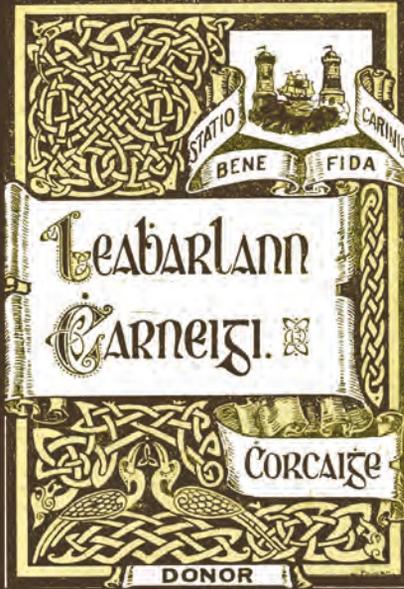
Ó Murchadha, Diarmuid. *Liam De Róiste*. Dublin: An Clóchomhar, 1976.

[O'Rahilly, Alfred (Compiler).] *Who burnt Cork city?: a tale of arson, loot and murder; the evidence of over seventy witnesses*. [Depositions collected by Alfred O'Rahilly]. Dublin: Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, 1921.

Ronayne, Liam and Mullins, John. *A Grand Parade: memories of Cork City Libraries 1855-2005*. Edited by Liam Ronayne, written by John Mullins and Liam Ronayne. Cork: Cork City Libraries, 2005.

White, Gerry and O'Shea, Brendan. *The burning of Cork by*. Cork: Mercier Press, 2008.

Williams, W. J. *Report of the Irish White Cross to 31st August 1922*. Dublin: M. Lester, 1922



In December 1920 the Carnegie Free Library on Anglesea Street in Cork was destroyed by a fire set by members of the British Crown Forces, along with the adjoining City Hall, and large swathes of the city centre.

Librarian and poet Thomas McCarthy tells the story of the destruction of the library, and its subsequent rebuilding in a narrative both exciting and moving. He covers the various efforts to rebuild the city and its library, set against the evolving political struggles, the generosity and public spirit of the many donors, and the single-mindedness of then City Librarian James Wilkinson in pursuing his goal of a new city library.



LIBRARIES
LEABHARLANNA

CORK CITY COUNCIL | COMHAIRLE CATHRACH CHORCAÍ

ISBN 978-0-9549847-7-9



9 780954 984779 >