

Abolition and Reinstatement of the Limerick Night Watch, 1898-1899

Before the election of the new Limerick City Council under the extended franchise in 1899, the old Council had, as one of their last acts, abolished the city Night Watch. The new Council reinstated them, and they continued performing their duties until abolished by the Free State government in 1922. The following extracts are from *The Munster News and Limerick and Clare Advocate*, with one from the *Limerick Chronicle*.

THE HISTORY OF THE NIGHT WATCH

Lt may not be inopportune at a time when the question of the Night Watch in Limerick, and its abolition, has come so prominently before the public, to give a brief sketch of its history. In the first place we find that the system was not always constituted in the manner which obtained up to the end of the year '98, when the term of its natural life ceased with us. The change, perhaps, was not very material, yet it may not be generally known that at one time we had, actually, two night watch systems and under two distinct governing bodies, in Limerick. Local history tells us that prior to 1853 there existed in this city, besides the old Corporation, also a second body, known as the St. Michael's Parish Commissioners, and each of the two had a voice in the municipal affairs of the borough. Each, too, had its own special staff of watchmen, that of the Commissioners looking after, what was then called, the new town, while the staff attached to the old Corporate body watched the interests of the old town. At the time we speak of, the Commissioners had their watchhouse, not where it is now, at the reer of the Town Hall in Rutland Street, but nearly on the site now occupied by the Athenaeum. From this point issued each night the "Charlies," as they were then termed, arrayed in great coats, helmets, and the inevitable pole, which

Compiled by Larry Walsh

served alike as a formidable weapon of attack or defence. It was not merely an ornamental weapon either, because the young bloods in those days were not at all averse to a shindy with the "Charlies," and many a sore head paid the penalty of the rashness which prompted an encounter with the custodians of the night. But all things change, and so it was in the year 1853, when the passing into law of the Limerick Improvement Act vested in the new Corporation which was then formed, both the St. Michael's Parish Commissioners and the old Municipal body. The watch system in its entirety passed also into the hands of the new power - one which in a few days hence will undergo still another change thanks to the provisions of the Local Government Act. Since 1853, however, the watch went on in its uneventful and harmless way, decaying no doubt and degenerating into what it was until the vote for its abolition was passed by the Council not many weeks since. It ceased to exist for all particular purposes on the 31st December, 1898, but still one, at times, might perceive, at odd corners here and there through the city, a shadowy form wrapped in the great coat and armed with the pole, keeping silent vigil, as if reluctant to abandon old haunts and habits. The watch in a word has refused to be abolished, has refused to accept the recompense financially, which would mean their abolishment, and now they remain like so many spectres of the night, not watching, but waiting for a turn in the tide of popular favour which might chance to carry them back once more to that power which all practical citizens had hoped was at an end.

4 January 1899

THE NIGHT WATCH

A Modern Epic

(With apologies to Lord Macaulay.)

*A shout of indignation swept
Across the storm-tossed land,
For hadn't a decree been passed*

*The Night Watch to disband -
The Night Watch which had "told the
night"*

*As long as memory ran,
And now those hoary veterans
Were banished, every man.*

*And now when happier days are ours,
Shall thus the memory fade
Of the men who guard the city well -
Although they're not being paid?
Shall it be said of the Council
That the "Bobbies," bad and bold,
Were allowed to shunt the "Charlies"
Of the brave days of old.*

*In vain - they made a last appeal
And strove against their fate;
But appeal, or proof, or argument,
Had not the slightest weight.
The Council did not care to see
Those "ancients" out so late,
And doomed their faithful servitors
To vamoose with '98.*

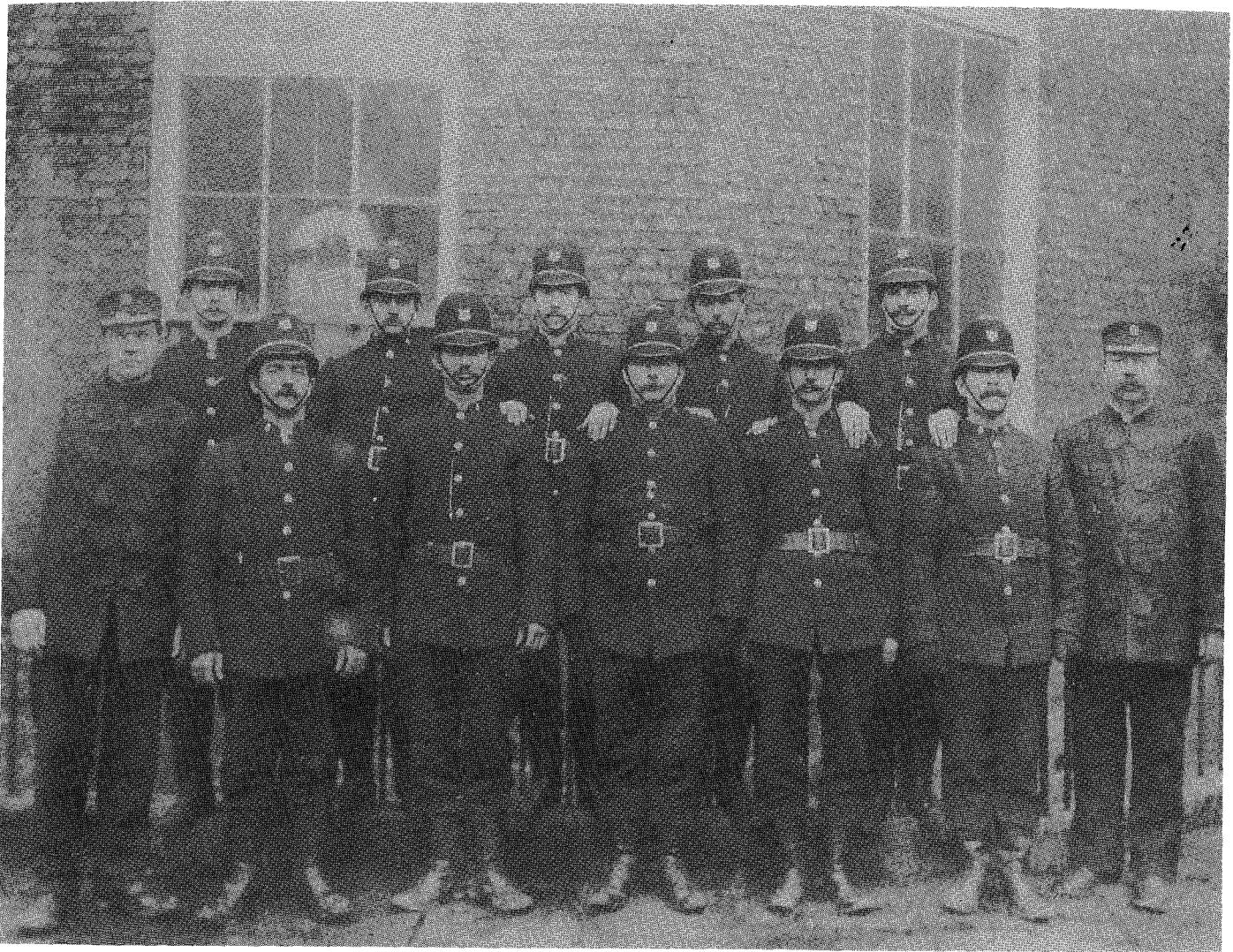
*The first of '99 arrived
And calmly fell the night,
But at the corners of the street
Arose an eerie sight.
For there, with snow crowned heads
erect,
With mien resolved and bold,
The now disbanded Watchmen stood,
Resolved the streets to hold.*

*And still each night they go on "beat"
In Corporation togs,
And swear the City Council
Is going to the dogs.
How shall the Council capture
The hats, the coats, the staves,
That now adorn the manly forms
Of Limerick's midnight braves?*

*Who says that Irish pluck is dead
When Limerick men rush fast
To guard the sleeping city well -
In memory of the past.
Therefore through the countless ages
Let this history be told,
How the Night Watch kept the city
In the brave days of old.*

HORATIUS.

7 January 1899



Limerick Night Watch, 1902. Back Row: P. Hayes, R. Gleeson, P. Sheehan, S. Meany, J. McNamara.
Front Row: J. Gilligan (Inspector), S. Leo, W. Lynch, J. Hayes, J. Lahiff, J. Bourke, J. McNamara (Inspector).

Photo by Thomas Bernard, 7 Rutland St.

Limerick Museum.

THE NIGHT WATCH

EXCITING SCENE AT THE WATCH COMMITTEE

Notwithstanding that the Watch system ended according to the resolution of the Corporation on the 31st December, the watchmen are still doing duty, and it is said to be their intention to do so until the New Council is elected, when they anticipate the previous ruling of the Council would be reversed. The subject gave rise to a long discussion to-day at the Watch committee, and had "an exciting finish."

The Town Clerk read the following letter:-

"Local Government Board, Dublin, 31st December, 1898.

Sir - The Local Government Board for Ireland have had before them the resolution of the Watch Committee of the Corporation of the City of Limerick of the 6th inst relative to the proposal to discontinue the services of the Night-watch, and to allow a pension to certain of its members, and the Board desire to state that they will await the receipt of a resolution of the Corporation on the subject, but so far as the Board see it at

present they would not be disposed to raise any objection to any reasonable proposition of the Corporation in reference to this matter - I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Thomas A. Mooney.

W M Nolan, Esq, Town Clerk."

Mr O'Connell - That is very satisfactory.

Mr Nelson - That bears out my statement a short time ago. Mr Ellis distinctly stated if the Watch were disbanded, and a recommendation made to the Local Government Board to grant them pensions, they would not refuse it.

Mr McGuire - I seconded the resolution, and I am glad the Local Government Board have looked so satisfactorily on the matter.

Mr Donnelly - Yes, but it deals only personally with the watchmen, and not with the system which is far more important.

Mr McGuire - The system which has been dealt with already.

Mr Donnelly - It has not, sir.

Mr O'Donnell - To strengthen the hands of the council, I think we ought to make some recommendation to them in connection with this matter, and I propose - "That the committee recommend to the

council the favourable consideration of the letter."

Mr Kivlehan seconded the proposition, and said it should be taken in hands immediately, because the men could not be kept waiting for money.

The following letter was read from Mr Ryan, late Inspector of the Watch:-

"Sir, - I beg to report that I notified your order to the Watchmen at 7 am on the 1st January. It was read aloud by Ahern, Stackpoole and McNamara, yet several of them remained in the Watchhouse, and stated they would not do so. I reported the matter to his Worship, the Mayor, at 3.30 pm. I have been informed by the acting Watchhouse keeper on this 2nd day of January that with the exception of Healy, Halpin and Stackpoole, that the remainder of them went on duty last night. - I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
M. Ryan, Inspector Nightwatch.
W M Nolan, Esq, Town Clerk."

The Mayor (Michael Cusack) - What reason have the men given?

Mr Ryan - The lamps were put out on Sunday morning by the lamplighters instead of the Watchmen. Some of them -

about a dozen or so - returned to the Watchhouse on that morning, and I asked them how long they were going to remain on the streets, and they said until that day.

The Mayor - What about Sunday night?

Mr Ryan - I did not go near the place, sir, on that night, but last night I went there and found the Watchhouse door locked.

Mr Nelson - Who has the keys?

Mr Ryan - The keys were always hung up on a rail near the door, but they have been taken by someone.

Mr Nelson - Do you know who took them?

Mr Ryan - I can't say, sir.

Mr Hickey - May I ask if the men entered into a fresh week?

Mr Ryan - Yes, sir; Friday night entered them into a new week.

Mr Hickey - Is it not lawful, Mr Dundon [Law agent to the Corporation], to give them a week's notice?

Mr Dundon - I don't know that it is necessary I should answer that question.

Mr Hickey - The question has been raised, and that is why I asked it. If they entered on a new week they are entitled to a week's wages.

Mr Nelson - I propose, to satisfy Mr Hickey, that the men be paid a week's wages, if the Council are willing.

Mr O'Donnell seconded the proposal.

Mr Nelson - This action of the Watch will do a lot of damage to them when this resolution granting pensions comes before the Council.

The Mayor - I hope not (hear, hear).

Mr Nelson - If they were properly advised they would not carry on as at present.

Mr Dundon said as he understood the position taken up by the Watchmen was this - The resolution of the Council declared that on the 31st December they should be disbanded. The 31st was upon Saturday night, and the usual course adopted for paying them was on Thursday night, so that on Saturday night they had entered upon a new week. It is reasonable under the circumstances that they should get a week's wages. It would appear to him a very undignified position for the Corporation to enter into a conflict with the Watchmen as regards their legal rights - and of course they are at liberty to take any action they wish - but they are fairly entitled to a week's notice upon the next Thursday night, and if, again, you pay them a week's wages on that night, if they wish to enter into a conflict with you, they can claim, as well as the wages also a week's notice from that date. Therefore to do away with the difficulty I would advise you to recommend to Council the payment to them of a fortnight's wages on Thursday night which will also cover the week's notice.

Mr Nelson proposed that the Council be recommended to pay the men a fortnight's wages as suggested by Mr Dundon.

Mr O'Connell seconded the proposition which was unanimously adopted.

In the course of the discussion, Mr

Dundon said it was entirely for the men and the members of the Council who had supported these men; but it appeared to him that the letter of the Local Government Board gave a very wide discretion to the Corporation in their future action with regard to gratuities and pensions, and it was only common sense that in exercising that discretion the Council would be guided by the action of the men themselves (hear, hear).

Mr Hickey - Won't these pensions be at the expense of the ratepayers?

Mr Dundon - Certainly. Whatever resolution is come to by the Council in reference to the matter must be approved of by the Local Government Board.

Mr Hickey - I propose that they get three week's wages.

Mayor - On what grounds?

Mr Hickey - To bring them over the bad times.

Mr O'Donnell - Say three months?

The Mayor - The Corporation has treated them very fairly: they are giving them a fortnight's wages. However, I will take the amendment.

Mr Hickey - I propose that they get three weeks.

Mr Dundon - I consider it to be entirely illegal.

Mr Hickey - Are the two weeks illegal?

Mr Dundon - That is a question that may be dealt with from various points of view, and having regard to the controversy on the matter, I don't think you ought to require me to answer.

Mr Donnelly said that he seconded Mr Hickey's proposition, and he did not think it fair to be pressing these legal points when they saw fair terms proposed to be granted by the Local Government Board. That proved conclusively that the watchmen were not those worthless people they were represented to be; they had a long standing in the city, and claims as well as employees. They ought not to differ over a legality because he thought the amount was not very large taking into account the long services of these men. It was an old institution, and a very useful institution, and the loss of it would be felt if it were done away with. They all knew that Mr Dundon while in the Council was hostile to the Night Watch (no, no), but he did not think that hostility should be carried into the Law Advership (oh).

Mr Dundon said that he was sorry for what Mr Donnelly said, because he had acted under an entire misapprehension. When he was in the Council he was not hostile to the Night Watch, but he proposed a resolution in Council which if it had not been rescinded would have got rid of the difficulty with regard to the Night Watch upon the most reasonable and equitable terms it could be possible to give them. He did that through no hostility to the Night Watch, but he considered it a system that ought not be maintained in the city (hear, hear). Since he became Law Adviser he did not think he had displayed any hostility to any class of the citizens, and certainly he did not want to display any, nor had he any feeling of

hostility towards the Night Watch. He simply advised the Committee to propose to the Council that these men should get a fortnight's wages next Thursday, and he did not think, having regard to the letter of the Local Government Board - which could be acted upon by the Council - that it would be prudent to push the matter further than he had advised. The proposition that they should get three week's wages instead of a fortnight's could be considered by the Council when they came to discuss the Local Government Board's letter.

The Mayor observed that they did not know how they stood with regard to the cheque - the auditor might surcharge them.

Mr Hickey pressed his amendment.

Mr O'Connell - You must have some consideration for the ratepayers as well as the Night Watch.

Mr Donnellan thought it would be very fair treatment to give the watch 14 days pay, as he certainly thought it would be very injudicious for any member of the committee to stand up and give them three, as another member might stand up and say "give them five" (hear, hear).

Mr Gleeson understood there was no more money in hands to pay them.

The Mayor - There is not.

Mr Donnellan suggested Mr Hickey would not press his amendment, but Mr Hickey said he would.

Mr O'Connell - I think the action of some of the watch has not served them at all.

Mr O'Donnell - Nor some of their supporters.

Mr Nelson - If Mr Hickey wants to behave a true friend to them he will withdraw.

Mr Donnelly - Mr Hickey knows what he is doing. He does not want any advice from Mr Nelson.

A poll was taken, when there voted - For a fortnight's wages - Messrs O'Donnell, Nelson, Donnellan, McGuire, O'Connell and Kivlehan - 6.

For three weeks - Ald Carr, Messrs Gleeson, Hickey, Franklin, Donnelly and Frost - 6.

The Mayor voted for a fortnight's pay, and the resolution was accordingly carried.

Mr O'Donnell - After that, I think the Watch ought to be very thankful to their friends.

Mr Hickey - They ought to be very thankful to Councillor O'Donnell.

Mr O'Donnell - Let the public judge of Councillor O'Donnell. He does not require any of their sympathy or patronage.

Mr Hickey - Its a disgraceful business on your part.

Mr O'Donnell - All you can do is to destroy my property.

Mr Frost - Oh, withdraw.

Mr Hickey made some further observations, when Mr O'Donnell replied, "Oh, shut up."

Mr Hickey - You are a disgrace.

Mr O'Donnell (to the Mayor) - If I am a disgrace, I ask that that gentleman

withdraw his blackguard, ignorant observations.

Mr Hickey - I could not withdraw it when applying it to a blackguard.

Mr O'Donnell (excitedly) - I think you are the blackguard. (To the Mayor) - If that is the way you are going to conduct the business I will leave this place (standing up). An old and respectable citizen, and my grandfather and father, that never pocketed from a poor person a penny earned by their sweat, to be called a blackguard - (leaving his seat) -

Mayor - I think you ought to withdraw that observation.

Mr O'Connell - It is time to go.

Mr O'Donnell - To be called that by an ignorant "cawbogue" from the bog.

Mayor - Oh, now -

Mr Hickey - We have as good a right to make observations as Mr O'Donnell.

Mr Kivlehan asked Mr O'Donnell to withdraw.

Mr O'Donnell - I will withdraw nothing (putting on his overcoat and preparing to leave).

Mr Hickey - Don't go without your hat.

Mr O'Donnell - My family are one hundred years at the cross of William Street and -

Mayor - One moment, gentlemen. I would ask you to withdraw that observation.

Mr O'Donnell - I will withdraw nothing, but I will withdraw myself from that crowd (walking out of the room and banging the door).

Mr Nelson - The language that has been used here is perfectly disgraceful to both sides.

Mr Frost - Mr O'Donnell had no right to accuse Mr Hickey of injuring his property.

Mr Donnelly - Mr Hickey and other members of the Corporation have received at that gentleman's hands very serious provocation, and I don't know but Mr Hickey and myself would be justified in taking different action.

Mr Kivlehan - I regret very much that any heat should be brought into this little business.

The Mayor - I'd wish that gentlemen should remember where they are, and not be using personalities.

The scene then ended.

Chronicle, 8 January 1899.

THE NIGHT WATCH

New Ireland, an Irish paper published in London, has the following on the subject of the Night Watch - "Together they died - the year 1898 and the funny old Night Watch of Limerick. It was by a very narrow squeak that the verdict was given against the Watch, its death sentence being decreed by 14 against 13 votes of the Corporation. But the dead Watch will not be unavenged. The police decline to undertake the night work of the Treaty City, having no legal authority to discharge such duty. This is delightful. Here is a chance for moonlight pranks of all kinds. If London burglars hear of it,

there will be a big business done in jemmies, and a startling invasion of the watchless town. Tell it not in the New Cut, speak it not in the Seven Dials, else there might be hastily formed a syndicate of crib crackers, to pay a friendly visit to the banks of the Shannon. The Inspector General of Constabulary in his communication with Limerick Corporation intimated that if an Act of Parliament were obtained empowering the police to do night duty, the additional force would cost about £1,325 per annum. This question, however, is left for the New Council to deal with. In the meantime there may be high jinks in Limerick every night by those who are inclined to amuse themselves in night escapades." If the plain hint which our contemporary gives to the London burglars is taken, we shall probably have a new and very unacceptable form of tourist traffic to cope with in this city very soon if the police and the municipal authorities do not take steps to afford the citizens the protection they have a right to expect for themselves and their property.

11 January 1899

FIRST MEETING OF THE NEW COUNCIL

THE NIGHT WATCH AGAIN - INSULTING OBSERVATIONS

Mr Moran, in connection with the reading of the minutes, said that in regard to the resolution contained therein abolishing the Night Watch, he proposed that it be rescinded.

Mr Connery seconded the motion.

Mr J O'Brien (Irishtown Ward), said the watch system might have its defects, but still as a workman it appeared to him that it gave the Council an opportunity of giving employment to 25 respectable men. If the present system could not be maintained, the personnel of the watch of course had faults, but at the same time the Corporation had a right to maintain them on the grounds of giving employment.

Mr Begley - Before the Council agrees to re-instate the watch they might, I think, to give the question a little more consideration. It is a very serious question, and the £1,400 or £1,500 devoted for their maintenance could be put to better use. That money, if capitalized, would pay, perhaps, £30,000 or £33,000 devoted to the erection of labourers dwellings. This would be better for the city and better for everyone concerned than to keep up this system.

A Voice - Bad l— to you, what do you know or care about the watch (groans).

Another Voice - Sit down, Dave. We have to pay 3s 6d in the pound, and then we have to pay for water (laughter, and cries of "order").

A Voice - Knock down the old houses by all means.

Mr Begley - I say, too, by all means provide for the members of the present staff; give them some employment, but let the system die out. It would be a great mistake for the members of this Council,

and it would be a bad beginning for them to saddle the city with this money. Far better for you to erect 300 labourers cottages -

A Voice - You wouldn't lose much by it anyway. Another Voice - And what will pay their families, when they go to the poor house (cheers).

Mr Begley - There are no dwellings in Limerick for the workingmen.

A Voice - Oh, you're on your last legs now, sit down (laughter).

Mr Begley - I move a direct negative to the proposition.

Mr Donnelly said it was almost natural thing that his voice should be heard on the present occasion on this subject. He fought for the Watch in the old Council, and he was prepared to fight for them still. If the system was defective they knew where to place the blame. But these defects could be easily remedied, but the opponents of the Watch in the old Council fought against the system, not against the personality of the Watch. If Mr Begley was going to build labourers dwellings at the expense of the Night Watch, he (Mr Donnelly) would not agree to the arrangement. He thought they had sufficient poor people in Limerick without increasing the number by throwing the Watch and their families on the streets. He thought the Night Watch could be made a very effective body to take care of the property of the citizens, who might rest secure while the Watch was in existence. The system might also be utilized in connection with the Fire Brigade. He did not see where the economy consisted in disbanding the Watch.

Mr Dundon said he thought it was only right to point out to the Council a difficulty which would arise in connection with this matter. So far as rescinding the previous resolution went the motion was all right, but if it was contemplated to take back the Watch into their employment on the old lines it was his duty to point out to them that no funds had been provided to pay the Watch, and they would not be in a position to provide any money for this purpose until April next. They could pass an abstract resolution simply rescinding the former one abolishing the Watch, and then hand in a notice of motion to establish the Watch on the old basis at such time as they could provide money for their maintenance.

Mr James Kett asked if any arrangement had been made to get the police to watch the city until April next.

Mr Dundon said he was not aware of any arrangements made between the Corporation and the police beyond the correspondence which had already been published. Those who voted for the abolition of the watch considered that so far as the peace of the city was concerned, the undertaking given in the County Inspector's letter was quite sufficient. The resolution abolishing the watch was passed and the abolition took place on the 31st December last. Under these circumstances a very serious difficulty arose as to whether even now they could

appoint a night watch under the Act of Parliament under which the Council was governed and controlled.

Mr James Kett said that the Labour party had come there as one of their intentions to reinstate the night watch, and they recognised the difficulty under which they rested. Referring to Mr Begley's suggestion to borrow a sum for the erection of artisans' dwellings, he thought the burdens on the ratepayers were sufficient without any increase. The sum at present pressing on them was more than they could carry and it would not be advisable to add to it. The night watch was item number one in this crusade of abolition; then would come the sweeping off the streets the men who were earning a livelihood thereon to be replaced by electric traction for the benefit of an English company, as he saw, was attempted last year. But while they stood there they would put their foot down on anything that was tended to be for the profit of any individual or body to the detriment of the people. But he would point out that if money could be borrowed for artisans' dwellings, why not for the Night Watch.

Mr John O'Brien said the Night Watch were not abolished as they had been on duty up to last night, and if Mr Dundon's statement was true he would like to know was it the watchmen's ghosts he had seen.

The Mayor (John Daly) said the resolution would not commit them to anything, and it would be within their province to take up the question at a later date as to the providing of money to restore the watch to their original position, and if they could not get the money of course they could not be expected to do the impossible. But it was not rash for the Corporation to take up this subject for it had been before the country for many months, and the people had got plenty of time to make up their minds about it.

The resolution was then passed. The following notice of motion was handed in by Mr Moran:-

"I will move at the next meeting that the question of providing funds for the Night Watch be considered and proper steps taken with the object."

23 January 1899.

THE NIGHT WATCH - STATEMENT BY THE MAYOR

The Council was about to disperse when Mr John McNamara, one of the members of the late Watch, addressed the Mayor from outside, and asked that before the members separated they should sign the pay sheet for the Watch, who had been watching the city for the past four weeks without getting a penny of wages.

The Mayor said he would not permit any interruption of this kind from outside the Council. If the citizens of Limerick had not confidence in them to do justice to the watchmen, they were no longer worthy of representing Limerick (hear, hear). They would show when the proper time came



Inspector J. McNamara, Limerick Night Watch, c.1905.

Photo by Thomas Bernard, 7 Rutland St.

Limerick Museum

they were the best friends of every class of labour in the community in Limerick without making exceptions. They were not going to make pets of any portion of the working classes in Limerick, and he trusted the Council would do justice and show an earnest desire to discharge the duties and responsibilities placed upon it. They had at the present meeting done a good night's work, and he thought it was very wrong for anyone to attempt to foist upon them a subject they could not now go into. They had done all in their power in the matter. They had rescinded the resolution abolishing the Watch, but as yet they had no opportunity of building up another force in room of the late body. He hoped before very long to be able to announce to the citizens that they in Limerick would have their own protectors at night equal in every sense to the

Metropolitan Police in Dublin and governed by rules and discipline in a manner worthy of the most up-to-date principles, and paid in a way to enable them to support themselves and families without having to adopt measures discreditable to the city (applause).

The meeting then concluded, having discharged all the business on the agenda paper.

28 January 1899.

The Night Watch question was before the Council meeting last night, and on the proposition of Mr J H Moran it was resolved to ask the National Bank to advance £250 to pay the watchmen until the next rate would be struck. Mr Begley and Mr Herbert sought to stay this useless expenditure of the public money but without avail, as they were unsupported. It

is scarcely necessary to point out that any member who puts his name to the cheque for payment of the Watch under present circumstances is liable to be surcharged by the Auditor, and it is hardly probable that even Councillor Moran's philanthropy and Home Rule notions will carry him that far.

4 February 1899.

THE PAYMENT OF THE NIGHT WATCH

APPLICATION TO THE BANK

The committee appointed at the last Council meeting, consisting of the Mayor, Town Clerk and Mr Donnelly, TC, waited to-day on the manager of the National Bank, to request an advance of £250 to provide for the payment of the watch until next estimate. Mr Denvir could not give a reply off hand, but stated he would submit the matter to his directors. The result of the application will be known in a day or two.

8 February 1899

THE NIGHT WATCH AND THE MAGISTRATES

At the City Petty Sessions yesterday, a member of the Night Watch named Murray appeared to give evidence dressed in full uniform, and armed with the poll, notwithstanding that the system is now some two months disbanded. He gave evidence of an assault committed on himself and another Watchman while on beat duty near Nicholas street by some parties who threw stones at them.

Mr Hall J.P. (Chairman) - Did you get any money since the 1st January, Murray?

The Witness - No, sir; not a penny.

Mr Hall - I suppose you are living on the air at present?

The witness did not answer.

District Inspector Hetered - I would apply for witnesses expenses for this unfortunate man coming here. He gave information to the police of the attack made upon himself and his companion, and the parties concerned, two men named Benson and Larkin, also stoned the police on the occasion.

Mr Hall - It appears to me we have no power to pay witnesses' expenses in such a case.

Mr Guinane, J.P. - These watchmen reported that timber was being stolen from the dilapidated houses in the locality?

The Witness - Yes, sir; Nightwatchman Farrell and myself.

Mr Hall - I wish I could find a loop-hole in the law that allows expenses, but one does not exist.

The witness, at this point, left the court. His assailants were ordered to be imprisoned for two months each.

25 February 1899.

The appearance of a Night Watchman at the Petty Sessions Court on Friday, under circumstances related in the last issue, was startling enough, but the dejected

and woe begone specimen of the dis-established corps, who tottered feebly to the witness table was, to say the least of it, painful in the extreme. This is all the more to be regretted as the individual in question is only a fair example of what the others are like - some, perhaps, a little better, but the majority much worse. It is indeed a strange anomaly if this be the body of men for whose further maintenance as an effective safeguard for the lives and property of the citizens, it is proposed to mulct the ratepayers. The matter, even in the interests of the poor deluded man who nightly walk our streets in an abortive semblance of authority, is far too serious to treat with ridicule. The Watch system has now been abolished some eight weeks, but the unfortunate men, acting on the suggestion of evil advisers, still insist on doing their nightly rounds. When is the farce going to end? The individuals who encourage the men to carry it further are certainly not their true friends, and the sooner the Watchmen wake up to the absurdity of their own situation the better for themselves.

1 March 1899.

LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL

THE PAYMENT OF THE WATCH

Mr Moran said he understood the Town Clerk had received an answer with regard to the loan of £6,000, and he should come to the conclusion that there was no chance of getting money to pay the watchmen unless they could influence their bankers to advance the money. He suggested, therefore, that the Mayor and Mr Donnelly should again wait on the National Bank manager, and make another attempt to get an advance to pay the poor starving men. If they were again refused, there were other banks in the town, and the directors might be inclined to sanction the advance if they changed their banking account. They should work in reality and not be talking. "Nero was fiddling while Rome was burning," and the watchmen were starving while the bank was quibbling.

Mr Donnelly said it was a curious thing that the bank was prepared to advance £8,000 to the Gas Committee and they denied a paltry sum of £250 to the Corporation. It was an unreasonable thing to do, considering that the Corporation had placed their money in the bank for years.

Mr Dundon, in reply to the Mayor, said he saw no reason why the Corporation could not change their bankers.

Mr O'Brien (Irishtown) seconded Mr Moran's proposition. He believed some outside influence was interfering with the bank; people who had not the courage to come forward and fight openly. He had respect for open opponents, but unfortunately they were dealing with a handful of "snakes" (laughter). But time would expose them and they might regret their interference with the watchmen. He hoped the next time the deputation waited on the manager of the bank they should let him know that they had some little

independence, and that the bank would lose control of the Corporation funds if they ignored the wishes of the citizens.

Mr Dundon said the National Bank had been appointed formally by resolution as treasurer, and it would be necessary to hand in a notice of motion to rescind it.

Mr Slattery said he had been informed that the Board of Guardians when, in a difficulty for money had threatened to change their treasurer, and they were allowed to overdraw their account by thousands.

Alderman Joyce subsequently handed in a notice of motion that in the event of the National Bank again refusing the advance to pay the watchmen, that the Corporation funds be transferred to another bank.

THE NIGHT WATCH AGAIN

Mr Whelan said at the Watch Committee on Wednesday night it was unanimously recommended to Council that a month's pay be given to the watch.

The Mayor - Did they suggest where it was to come from?

Alderman Joyce - The suggestion was by hook or crook to get it.

Mr Moran said if the General Purposes Fund was available for Mr Donnellan's purpose it would be available for the watch, and he would hand in a notice of motion to take the money required from the fund if there was no other means of getting it.

Mr O'Brien (Irishtown) said the city had never been better watched than since the 31st December, and it was too bad that the poor watchmen should have been victimised to please a few fanatics.

On the proposition of Mr Whelan, seconded by Mr Slattery, the minutes of the Watch Committee were adopted.

The Mayor - We will pay them a month's salary without any money (laughter).

The National Bank has again declined to advance money to the Corporation to pay the Night Watch

4 March 1899

THE NIGHT WATCH

Mr O'Brien (Irishtown) inquired if any intimation of the loan of £6,000 asked for by the Council had arrived.

The Town Clerk said he had, but was sorry to say it was most unfavourable.

Mr O'Brien said he would wish to bring under their notice the case of the unfortunate Watchmen, who did not receive any money since the 31st December. They had been out night after night and the city was never in a calmer condition. He would ask the members of the democratic body who swept the shoneens out of the council, to make some provision for the men who had been destitute.

Mr Slattery suggested that they get one month's pay.

Ald Prendergast - Is there any possibility of surcharge in this case.

The Town Clerk said that the Watch were disbanded on the 31st December, and received a fortnight's pay in lieu of notice.

Mr Slattery said the Night Watch were never legally dismissed, and were fully entitled to be paid.

Mr O'Brien (Irishtown) said he would like to see the Local Government Board surcharging them. They could do so if they liked for all they would get from him. He, therefore, proposed that the month's pay be given to the Watch, which was adopted.

The Committee then adjourned.

4 March 1899.

THE PAYMENT OF THE NIGHT WATCH

The Town Clerk received a letter to-day from Mr Denvir, Manager, National Bank, in reference to the renewed application for an advance of £250 for the payment of the defunct Night Watch. The matter was again laid before the Directors of the Bank, and again refused by them. *Apropos* of this, a statement appears in a Cork paper this morning to the effect that the Gas Committee, who were asked by the Borough Council to advance £1,000 to relieve the rates, have consented to contribute £850. This will apparently be devoted to the payment of the Watch. It is somewhat significant that, although the Gas Committee have made this advance, they are themselves £6,000 in debt.

8 March 1899.

THE NIGHT WATCH

The following notice of motion was handed in by Alderman Joyce - "At the next meeting I will move that the action of the Council of 23rd January last, rescinding the resolution abolishing the night watch, be adopted as a resolution to re-establish the night watch as from that date, and further providing that the men of that body who have, since 23rd January, the date aforesaid, continued to fulfil their duties as formerly, be paid their wages for the fulfilment of such duties from the 23rd January, as if the resolution for the abolition of the said body had not been passed. And that the sum of £250, received from the Gas Committee, in aid of the Improvement Fund, be applied to the payment of such wages."

The following supplementary notice of motion was handed in by Alderman Joyce:-

"That in order that the watchmen may be paid for the time they were on duty without pay, from 1st to 31st January, the amount payable to each man for such duty, according to the pay sheet vouched by John McNamara and checked by the City Treasurer, be added to each man's usual wages and paid to him in equal weekly payments, spread over the next four weeks."

The Mayor said in connection with this matter he was glad to say that the Gas

Committee had placed £250 to the credit of their Improvement Fund for this purpose.

11 March 1899.

CITY COUNCIL

THE NIGHT WATCH

Ald. Joyce moved in accordance with his notice of motion that the action of the Council of 23rd January last, rescinding the resolution abolishing the Night Watch, be adopted as a resolution to re-establish the Night Watch from that date and providing that the men be paid their wages as if no resolution of abolition had been passed.

Mr Moran seconded the resolution.

Mr Coffey wished to know was it intended to reconstitute the Watch as intended prior to 23rd Jan, and was any provision to be made for the formation of rules and regulations.

The Mayor said their action was only to justify them in paying the Watch their wages and by no means bound them to no reformation.

Mr Clune said as a member of the old Corporation his opinion on the matter had not changed. He was one of those who assisted in getting the resolutions passed by which the Corporation thought to rid the city of a useless burden. He considered that the Labour Party were making a great mistake.

Mr Moran - That is our business.

Mr Clune - In re-imposing on the city the heavy tax necessary to support the Watchmen.

Mr Coffey said that was not the first time that Messrs Begley and Clune had made these statements in public, and as a member of the new Corporation he stood up now to contradict them. Mr Begley had stated at the first meeting that £30,000 could be borrowed for the purpose of building labourers' cottages. They all knew the effect intended by that statement, to prejudice a certain class in Limerick, who would be benefited by the building of labourers' cottages. The representatives of Dublin Castle had intimated that it would cost a minimum of £1,500 a year for extra police to watch the city. That statement had not been withdrawn or contradicted, and they knew it to exist in the case of Derry. So if they did away with the watchmen they would have police to baton them, and would pay them more for doing so (applause from outside the barrier).

Mr Begley endorsed what Mr Clune had said. He contradicted Mr Coffey's statements and said the preserving of the city would not cost the citizens a penny. He denounced the Labour Party as spending the ratepayers' money in a reckless manner (groans from outside the barrier).

Mr Slattery - If the Labour Party do so they are only following the tactics of the old Corporation for years, and if the present watchmen are a failure it is they who have made them so, when from time to time a man was "sacked" for drunken-

ness six times he was reinstated.

Mr Moran (ironically) - I am sorry Mr Herbert is not here to contradict you.

Mr Begley said they might as well throw the £1,500 they were saddling the city with into the river (groans).

The Mayor said the Council had emphatically decided on paying the watchmen, and he did not think it becoming in any person to be perpetually hammering at the question in this manner.

Alderman O'Mara said he was hopeful when the watchmen were being reinstated, he hoped that they would have a reformed body equal to the metropolitan police as the Mayor had stated - but now they were being re-established with all their vices and defects.

The Mayor - There is nothing to prevent us to formulate a scheme to reform the night watch.

The resolution was then passed, Messrs O'Mara, Begley and Clune dissenting.

Alderman Joyce then proposed his second resolution in connection with the matter, that the amount due to the Watchmen from 1st to 23rd January be added to their pay for the next four weeks. He regretted that in all that the gentlemen on the opposite side had said about the Watch, there was not one word of Christian charity.

Mr Moran seconded the resolution.

Mr Clune thought it was highly illegal to pay men that were not in their employment at all.

Alderman Joyce said the old Corporation acted more illegally in offering a fortnight's pay for no work, while they were only paying for work done.

Mr Slattery pointed out that they had paid Mr Ryan, the Inspector, a fortnight's pay and put him on the pay sheet under the Improvement Fund.

Alderman O'Mara said the old Corporation had taken steps to borrow money to pay and pension the Watch and give the old men a sinecure for life.

Alderman Joyce - It would not give them a Christmas dinner what you would give them.

The resolution was then passed.

18 March 1899.

[The same issue reported letters received by the Town Clerk from several local banks offering to lend the £250 requested and become bankers to the Corporation]

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

THE COST OF THE WATCH

The Mayor read the items relative to the cost of maintaining the watch system for the half year - Two inspectors at 30s each per week, twenty-four watchmen at 15s each per week, watch-house keeper at 15s a week, female searcher at 6s per week and other items, making a total of £653 5s 10d.

Mr Moran - That is nearly less than £1,300 for the whole year.

The estimate was passed.

18 March 1899.