

# Limerick and the War in South Africa, 1899-1902

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*The reaction to the Boer war both in Limerick city and county is discussed and analysed. While the main sentiment among the catholic nationalist majority was support for the Boers, the protestant unionist establishment rallied in support of the British war effort. Despite the strong local support for the Boers and opposition to the war, it is argued that recruitment to the British army in the area was greater than might be expected.*

The response in Limerick to the South African (Boer) War fought between October 1899 and May 1902, mirrored existing political and religious divisions. Nationalists supported the Boers while Loyalists (and they were, according to one newspaper correspondent, 'only about two and a half per cent')<sup>1</sup> gave their customary support to the British war effort. This popular sentiment against the war did not deter British army recruitment attempts in an area which had traditionally proved fertile ground for the recruiting sergeant. The Limerick County Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary argued in a report to the Inspector General of the force in Dublin Castle that this Boer sympathy had been strongly influenced by the nationalist newspapers that were read locally.<sup>2</sup> While this may have been a factor, longer term nationalist sentiment allied to local political and clerical opposition to the war were far more important.

Limerick had become more strongly nationalist in its outlook in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and embraced both the physical force and the constitutional traditions. This is shown by the election of John Daly, an ex-Fenian prisoner member of Limerick Corporation as Mayor of the city for three consecutive years, 1899, 1900 and 1901<sup>3</sup> and also by the election of Alderman Michael Joyce of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) as a representative for the people of the city at the House of Commons in the General Election of 1900.<sup>4</sup> In the county the constitutional support was stronger shown by the election of IPP candidates, William Lundon<sup>5</sup> and P.J.O'Shaughnessy,<sup>6</sup> as MPs for East and West Limerick respectively. Both however spoke against participating with Britain in their fight against the Boers; Lundon stated that 'the Irish militiaman was, to his mind, on a level with the soldier of the line as an instrument of English brutality and despotism. The militiaman corrupted all around him and was a more dangerous recruiting sergeant than the man with the ribbons'.<sup>7</sup> Later to a large public meeting held at Kilfinane, he exclaimed that out of every 100 people in Ireland, 99 supported the Boer cause because they were not only fighting for their families and homes but also

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<sup>1</sup> *United Irishman*, 24 March 1900. The author does not state where he got these figures but as the newspaper was strongly nationalist this figure should perhaps be viewed with some scepticism.

<sup>2</sup> R.I.C., County Inspector's Report, 4 January 1900 (PRO, Colonial Office 904/69).

<sup>3</sup> Denis M. Leonard, 'Provosts and Mayors of Limerick 1197-1997', in David Lee (ed.), *Remembering Limerick* (Limerick 1997) p. 383.

<sup>4</sup> B. M. Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results 1801-1922* (Dublin 1978) p. 36; R.I.C., County Inspector's Report, 3 November 1900 (PRO, CO 904/71).

<sup>5</sup> Walker, *Election Results*, p. 361. William Lundon, was elected a Member of Parliament in the General Election of 1900 without any opposition. He died in 1909, his son Thomas then won the seat in a by-election beating John Molony, Independent Nationalist, by 2,664 to 1686 votes.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p 361-2. P.J. O'Shaughnessy, was elected a Member of Parliament in the General Election of 1900 without any opposition.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 January 1901.



for their independence. O'Shaughnessy was of the opinion that it would be 'a calamity . . . if the men of Sarsfield's county disgraced us by volunteering to do the Saxon's dirty work in plundering the homes and starving the women and children of the gallant burghers of South Africa'.<sup>8</sup>

Daly and Joyce were much more outspoken in their condemnation of the war. Both had no difficulty in linking the cause of the Boers in their fight against the might of the British Empire with the aspirations of Irish nationalism.<sup>9</sup> Mayor Daly attended a meeting in Dublin, which comprised a minority of that city's Corporation<sup>10</sup> as well as others opposed to an address being given to Queen Victoria on her forthcoming visit to Ireland, on 4 April 1900.<sup>11</sup> The royal visit was viewed as having 'been organised to stimulate Irish recruiting which it was asserted, had been badly hit by the general unpopularity of the war in Ireland and the anti-recruiting campaign'.<sup>12</sup> On his return to Limerick he reported to the Corporation on the proceedings in Dublin saying that 'if the Queen had come to . . . grant Home Rule she would be welcome, but not on political visits'.<sup>13</sup> At another meeting of the Corporation he 'used most insulting language to the Queen'<sup>14</sup> and attempted to stop the workers of the Cleeve's factory going on a trip to Dublin for the Queen's visit. The Inspector General of the RIC reported that Daly had: 'stirred up and keeps inflamed the worst possible spirit of disloyalty and sedition amongst the low class of extremists who are unfortunately numerous in Limerick, and entirely under Daly's influence'.<sup>15</sup>

Joyce made speeches both outside and inside parliament with strong anti-recruiting sentiment. At a meeting in Manchester, to celebrate St Patrick's Day he said that 'he had no desire to be anything else than a soldier of Ireland'. He had no ambition other than to take his place 'with the fighting line of the Irish Army, whenever the fight for the old land takes place'.<sup>16</sup> In the House of Commons he opposed the granting of £100,000 for the war saying that it was not a just one and was being imposed 'on a free people whose crime is that they have gold mines which you (British) want to rob them of', and with the 'blood money granted at the price of the bloodshed and misery entailed on South Africa'.<sup>17</sup> While these statements do not specifically refer to anti-recruitment directly, the implication is present. He also participated, as did the two other MPs for Limerick, William Lundon and P.J. O'Shaughnessy,<sup>18</sup> with other Irish nationalist MPs, in rising from their seats in the House of Commons on 10 March 1902 to cheer the news that the Boers had won what was to be their last victory of the war.<sup>19</sup> Joyce may have been cautious in his references to recruitment when he made speeches in England; such was not the case when he spoke back in Ireland. He particularly targeted recruiting sergeants, who were seen as the backbone of enlistment

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 May 1901.

<sup>9</sup> R. Rees, *Ireland 1905-1925, Volume I* (Co Down 1998) p. 78.

<sup>10</sup> *Cork Examiner* (C.E.), 23 March 1900.

<sup>11</sup> *Limerick Leader* (L.L.), 23 March 1900; Samuel Levenson, *Maud Gonne* (London 1977) p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> Keith Jeffery, 'The Irish military tradition and the British Empire' in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester 1996) p. 96.

<sup>13</sup> C.E., 23 March 1900.

<sup>14</sup> County Inspector's Report 2 April 1900 (PRO CO 904/70).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> L.L., 18 March 1901.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 August 1901.

<sup>18</sup> *Irish Daily Independent and Nation*, 11 March & 17 March 1902.

<sup>19</sup> Philip Magnus, *King Edward VII* (Middlesex 1975) p. 375.



for the British army and an institution in every military barracks.<sup>20</sup> At a meeting in Limerick held under the auspices of the UIL he said that the recruiting sergeant should be shunned like one would do with the devil and that if men wanted to fight against England they should join McBride's Irish Brigade.<sup>21</sup> At a meeting in Patrickswell, he said that the recruiting sergeant should be told to go to the devil and that the army the men of Ireland would join would be the United Irish League Army and England should fight her own battles.<sup>22</sup>

Some members of the Catholic clergy with strong nationalist tendencies also opposed enlistment, notably Fr P.F. Kavanagh, the historian of the 1798 rebellion, who was a Franciscan priest attached to the Friary at Lower Henry Street, Limerick, and President of the Limerick Young Ireland Society. In a letter published in the *Limerick Chronicle* he warned that war was never just unless the cause of it was just also and that those who participated in such a conflict knowing that it was not just were guilty of sin and if they remained so without having repented before they died they would suffer eternal damnation. Recruiting sergeants were 'making desperate efforts to entrap young Irishmen into its (British Army) depleted ranks'.<sup>23</sup> He sent a copy of his reply to an invitation that he had received from the High Sheriff of Limerick to attend a meeting to draft a message of welcome to Queen Victoria, to the *Cork Examiner*, stating that as an Irish nationalist this in itself would be sufficient for him not to attend. 'As a long reigning monarch of forty years' he continued, the Queen 'had never visited the country, and neither had she shown any interest in how it was progressing'. The purpose of her visit was the furtherance of recruitment of Irishmen into the British army. However, he added, although Irishmen had in the past been manifestly ignorant they were quickly learning that men of the Christian faith should only engage in fighting for the 'defence of their own country and never in an unjust war'. While there were those who were apt to quote chapter and verse from the bible in defence of this war, he observed that the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue states 'Thou shalt not kill', and that in the war that was underway it was 'mass murder'.<sup>24</sup>

The Bishop of Limerick, Dr Edward O' Dwyer, made what could be construed as anti-recruiting remarks when he held that those who stood to gain from the war were responsible for the death of Irishmen in the field of battle and thereby brought immense sorrow to many an Irish parent. They were also responsible for the vast array of wrongdoings that permeated the countryside i.e., destruction and devastation not only of the countryside but also of the labour and industry of generations. Allegations in the *United Irishman* that Lord Monteagle was contemplating the discharge of some of the men working for him in order that they would then be forced to enlist in the British army were refuted by his steward who said that Monteagle did not want to dispense with anyone, 'no thought, expression, or act of his ever betrayed any such sentiment ... every man in his employment can proclaim aloud his political convictions as well as his lordship himself, and with equal impunity'.<sup>25</sup>

Pro and anti-Boer sentiment was also evident among the ordinary people. At the petty sessions court in the city, Johanna Singleton had William Riordan before the Magistrates for assault. When dogs attacked her cat she chased them off, and he took issue with her over this saying 'the devil sweep the English' while she retorted 'down with the Boers'; apparently one of the dogs was named 'Kruger'. In a case before the petty sessions court at Patrickswell a member of Crecora UIL

<sup>20</sup> C.E., 18 Jan 1900.

<sup>21</sup> L.L., 14 January 1901.

<sup>22</sup> L.C., 22 October 1901.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 November 1901.

<sup>24</sup> C.E., 23 March 1900.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 February 1900.



Branch was charged with assaulting two men and a woman at a public house in the village because one of the visitors said 'Rule Britannia'. When questioned about its meaning he said that he would say it before the world if England won any battles in South Africa, and that he would continue to say it as long as he lived. However, there were those who did not appreciate this expression, hence the altercation.<sup>26</sup>

Before the war commenced a resolution was passed by the Dock Ward Electoral Association expressing sympathy with the Boers and condemning other organisations for not expressing 'their sympathy with the plucky Boer farmers in their fight against the English ... and to express a hope that if a war is forced, it may end in another Majuba Hill'.<sup>27</sup> The Limerick Corporation adopted this resolution word for word;<sup>28</sup> we should, however, not be surprised at this, as some of the members of the former organisation were members of the Corporation. The Board of Guardians of Rathkeale, Co Limerick, on receipt of the resolution from the Corporation adopted it also<sup>29</sup> as did many other local authorities.<sup>30</sup> The news of the passing of this resolution by the Corporation was received by at least one Limerick NCO serving in South Africa with anger. Writing to relatives he bitterly resented the action of the Mayor and Corporation in passing resolutions favourable to the Boers. He was of the opinion that a deputation should proceed and speak to that body in an effort to have such resolutions stopped. They would he believed not only have a serious effect on Irishmen serving in the British army but also on those who were working in the Cape Colony.<sup>31</sup>

Limerick Corporation went further than just passing resolutions favouring the Boers; it decided to confer the freedom of the city on Paul Kruger, President of the South African Republics, by 22 votes to 2 against on 13 December 1900.<sup>32</sup> Although a further motion to confer the same honour on three Boer Generals, de Wet, Botha, De La Ray and ex-President Steyn was passed amidst applause<sup>33</sup> nothing more came of it. Similarly, when a motion to confer the freedom of the city on another Boer leader, Captain O'Donnell, who was described as not only being an Irishman but also a Limerick man, was unanimously adopted by the Corporation it too was dropped quietly.<sup>34</sup>

The cause of recruitment was not well served by letters from Irish soldiers sent home to their families or friends relating their experiences at the front which were published in the local newspapers. These letters were from soldiers who were in the regular army before the war commenced or who were in the reserve,<sup>35</sup> and were called up when the war commenced. Although used to tough conditions, they apparently did not expect the conditions they had to endure when they arrived in South Africa. One soldier stated that he had left a good job to join up and was fed up with what he termed being knocked about. He hoped that the war would soon end as he and his comrades were short of money and were not issued with any new uniforms until the uniform that they were wearing literally fell off their backs. Also, as he had not received any pay for five months

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 Feb & 2 Aug 1901.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 September 1899. Majuba Hill was where the Boers had defeated the British Army during the First South African War 1880-1881.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 September 1899.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 September 1899.

<sup>30</sup> Donal P. McCracken, *MacBride's Brigade* (Dublin 1998) p 72.

<sup>31</sup> *C.E.*, 12 December 1899.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 December 1900.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 September 1902.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 October 1902.

<sup>35</sup> A reservist in the army was one who had spent time as a regular soldier and on discharge was sent to the reserve for a period and was liable to be called upon in the event of a war commencing.



he could not afford the postage stamp to send the letter. However, he felt that a soldier must grin and bear such things in wartime. In ending his letter he hoped that the Boers would win the war so that they could go home. Another letter from a soldier to his mother complained that with all the work of digging trenches etc, they seldom had time to themselves. Their food was bad without any nutrition and he then described what was on the menu:

1 pint of tea, without milk, 3½ biscuits for 24 hours and 1 lb of either tinned or fresh meat. That's the menu day after day. Sometimes we don't even get that. We get ½ flour and ½ biscuits, make your own cake how you like with water-the result is the men are run down; they are as weak as boys of 12 years of age.<sup>36</sup>

The names appended to the end of these letters were Tom and Bob, possibly *nom de plumes* for fear of being severely reprimanded for having them published. This may be contrasted with letters published from James Rahilly, Ballysheedy, Co Limerick, who did not have any difficulty in giving his full name and address, possibly due to the content of the letters. Writing to his wife he said that while they were exposed to the cold travelling from Durban to Pietermaritzburg in open trucks by train, they were nicely catered for when they arrived at their destination. They were greatly welcomed into their camp and met some Limerick men with whom they had a high time. He stated that the newspapers at home were responsible for a lot of misinformation. They got a great reception wherever they went and that 'the blacks who worked for the British had nothing but good things to say about the soldiers.' In another letter he wrote that the Boers threw quite a number of dead soldiers into a mass grave as well as a wounded Dublin Fusilier.<sup>37</sup> We do not know what effect these letters had but any intending recruit reading them would almost certainly think twice before enlisting.

While those opposed to recruiting took credit for its decline, it was stated that throughout Great Britain and Ireland there was a general reduction in men joining the infantry anyway.<sup>38</sup> This, it was alleged was due to recruits enlisting in other corps notably 'the more showy and attractive arms of the service, such as the cavalry and artillery'.<sup>39</sup> The health of those who presented themselves at recruiting offices was another factor that contributed to the decline:

The very serious number of rejections, owing to defective teeth among recruits offering for enlistment cannot be ignored. Among the class of men from which recruits are drawn the deterioration of teeth appears to be rapidly increasing.<sup>40</sup>

In fact it was rare find a good set of teeth from recruits, with the exception of those who came from an agricultural background.<sup>41</sup> A decision was therefore made that those desiring to enlist wearing dentures should not be rejected for this alone, and a dentist had been obtained in one area to reduce the loss.<sup>42</sup> A correspondent writing in a local newspaper reported that army medical officers could obtain specific dental guidance when it was required adding that if the results were good the army authorities could state on their recruiting literature 'Extraction free of charge.

<sup>36</sup> *L.L.*, 31 October 1900.

<sup>37</sup> *L.C.*, 4 January 1900. He was a sergeant (reservist) in the Connaught Rangers.

<sup>38</sup> *Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting 1900*, Cd 519 Volume IX (London 1901) p. 323.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p 305.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p 165.

<sup>41</sup> *C.E.*, 28 October 1899.

<sup>42</sup> *Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting 1900*, Cd 519 Volume IX (London 1901) p. 165.



Fresh sets supplied by the Government'. However, the point was raised whether, when soldiers were discharged, they would have to return the dentures as part of their kit.<sup>43</sup>

Young men desiring to join the army were often prevented by their parents from doing so<sup>44</sup> because it was felt that only the layabouts and corner boys with nothing else to do did this. The respectable mother of Field Marshal William Robertson epitomised this attitude most strongly when he enlisted as a Lancer in 1877. She stated that 'the army is a refuge for all idle people; I shall name it to no one for I am ashamed to think of it. I would rather bury you than see you in a red coat'.<sup>45</sup> While this was an English mother expressing an opinion about her son enlisting in the army, it was also the view of many Irish mothers.

The burden of wounded or retired soldiers also led to anti-army sentiments. The Croom Board of Guardians was not particularly enthusiastic when an invalided soldier, Thomas Walsh of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, from Ballingarry, Co. Limerick, was brought to the Croom Workhouse from Netley Hospital, England, as it meant additional costs to the ratepayers. The way in which this person was treated, according to a member W. Moloney, was further 'evidence of British misrule in Ireland'.<sup>46</sup> Members of the Limerick Board of Guardians also expressed anger at the fact that a discharged pensioner, P. McNamara, was sent from the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London to the Limerick Workhouse. Although he was in receipt of a full pension, in accordance with regulations the Guardians sought more for the maintenance of his keep in the workhouse. When it was refused one member, Mr O'Regan, voiced the opinion that 'it shows the generosity of the English Government in dealing with the unfortunate Irish soldiers who helped to build up the Empire'. He exclaimed further that it showed how the English Government treat the Irish soldiers. They were good enough as long as they were able to fire a rifle or burn down a house, and while they served to hide the British soldiers when fighting innocent people. However, when they became disabled they were only good enough to be let die in the workhouse, therefore this should be a warning to Irishmen against taking the 'shilling'.<sup>47</sup>

With such strong pro-Boer feeling prevalent in the city and county, did the British Army obtain any recruits in Limerick? Reservists in the Limerick area were called up and this was estimated to be about 500 men who were reporting for duty to their regiments. The majority of these men belonged to the regiment associated with the area, the Royal Munster Fusiliers, who were despatched to their depot at Tralee, and thence to South Africa.<sup>48</sup> As they were reservists they had been out of training for some time and some had married. This resulted in emotional scenes when the men were departing, with wives and children crying profusely and the men in a distressed condition. Because of this the departure of the ship was brought forward sooner than scheduled.<sup>49</sup>

In order to release regular soldiers from garrison duties at home and abroad Militia battalions were embodied. The Limerick County Militia or as it was popularly known the 5th Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers who had their headquarters at the Strand Barracks, Limerick saw service in England and Malta. Another battalion was the Limerick City Artillery (Limerick City Militia),

<sup>43</sup> *L.C.*, 4 July 1899.

<sup>44</sup> *Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting 1900*, Cd 519 Volume IX (London 1901) p. 324.

<sup>45</sup> A. J. Smithers, *The Fighting Nation* (London 1994) p. 64. William Robertson was the only man at the time to have enlisted as a private and to have risen to Field Marshal, the highest position attainable in the British Army.

<sup>46</sup> *L.L.*, 24 August 1900.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 January 1901.

<sup>48</sup> *C.E.*, 20 November 1899.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 November 1899.



who mustered 300 men out of a total of strength of 576. The reasons given for such a low turnout were that the men had been called up two months before they normally were, and that they would be sent to South Africa on active service. Some of those departing cheered the South African President, Paul Kruger, which elicited hostile comments from others.<sup>50</sup> Recruiting in Limerick had not apparently reached the expectations of army staff as recruiting sergeants had been out in the county to such places as Kilmallock, Rathkeale, and Newcastle West where it was reported that only a small number was obtained and that in Abbeyfeale there were none at all.<sup>51</sup>

When the band of the Irish Guards came to Limerick on 1 August 1901 there was an attempt, by the Young Irish Society, as on a previous occasion with another military band, to have it boycotted.<sup>52</sup> Both attempts failed due to the prompt action of the police. One of the placards was displayed in the shop window of the bakery belonging to the Mayor John Daly.<sup>53</sup> A correspondent writing in the nationalist *Limerick Leader* reported that the visit was undoubtedly for recruiting purposes for the regiment was 'formed for the purpose of giving a sop to the deluded fools who aspire to martial honours under the Union Jack' and that 'the much boomed visit of the gold laced musicians was a miserable fizzle'.<sup>54</sup> A correspondent in the unionist *Limerick Chronicle* stated that 'the opportunity of hearing them was availed of by a very large and representative company, including numerous visitors from the country...and the programme was thoroughly enjoyed' The correspondent went on to state that several Irish tunes were played such as 'The Wearing of the Green', 'St Patrick's Day' and 'Garryowen' and were greeted with great acclamation and at the end of the recital the band was given hearty applause.<sup>55</sup> Neither account indicates how successful the visit was in relation to the intake of recruits.

Numerous ancillary organisations and committees for the interests and welfare of the soldiers' set about the task of collecting funds that were used to provide comforts, beds etc for those fighting at the front, while others catered for the needs of their families at home. Mrs Georgina Johnston<sup>56</sup> instituted a fund to provide comforts to the men of the Royal Munster Fusiliers (RMF), in South Africa. Several people from Limerick made contributions to this fund as the city and county were part of the recruiting area for the regiment, such as Lieutenant Colonel Lord Clarina, Mrs White, Fort Etna, Sergeants of the 5th Battalion RMF, (Limerick County Militia), Regimental Fund 5th Battalion RMF,<sup>57</sup> Major Kiggell, Glin, and Standish O'Grady, Kilballyowen, Kilmallock,<sup>58</sup> to name but a few. The Countess of Dunraven, Adare Manor, was involved in establishing a 'Fund for the Limerick beds in the Field Hospital at Capetown for the use of the Irish Yeomanry'. This fund attracted donations from such luminaries as Lord Monteagle, the Knight of Glin, Sir Charles & Lady Barrington, Messrs W. Todd & Co, J. Bannatyne & Sons, Cannock & Co, Newsom & Co, Denny & Sons, Earl & Countess of Dunraven, Countess of Limerick, Mrs Matterson, Mr

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 May 1900.

<sup>51</sup> *L. L.*, 21 March 1900.

<sup>52</sup> *L. L.*, 19 September 1900. They also approached the Limerick Race Company with a view to having a civilian band instead of a military one at race meetings, and endeavoured to prevent what they called 'trashy English periodicals, or works advising emigration to British colonies' to be placed on the tables of the reading rooms of the Limerick Free Public Library.

<sup>53</sup> County Inspector's Reports, 4 June & 3 September 1901 (PRO CO 904/72 & CO 904/73).

<sup>54</sup> *L. L.*, 2 August 1901.

<sup>55</sup> *L. C.*, 3 August 1901.

<sup>56</sup> Mrs Georgina Johnston was the wife of Colonel Johnston, the commanding officer of the depot headquarters of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee, Co Kerry.

<sup>57</sup> *L. C.*, 20 January 1900.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 March 1900.



& Mrs Delmege, Aubrey de Vere, Abraham Sutton, Vincent Nash and Mrs Phelps.<sup>59</sup> This is not the complete list as there were many more subscribers reflecting the fact that the majority of these individuals came from the gentry and middle classes, while employees probably donated through the firms listed.

It was the women from these classes in society that occupied the various positions on the committees as well as that of the ordinary member. Another case to illustrate this point was that of the local branch of the Soldiers Sailors and Families Association; it existed to assist families by providing financial relief to the dependants of Limerick soldiers serving in South Africa, and also 'to assist soldiers and sailors who may find their employment gone when the war is over'. The committee consisted of Lady Dunraven, Lady Aileen Wyndham Quin, Mrs Sadlier, Mrs Bunbury, Mrs Lloyd, (Beechmount), Mrs Shine, Mrs Hines, Mrs P. Fitzgerald, Mrs Lloyd, (Pery Square), Mr F.T. Finch and Mr E. Plumstead. The majority, as can be seen, was also from the gentry and middle class. These were the people who were 'to receive applications and to establish the identity and genuineness of those who apply for relief, and to distribute that relief'. What is interesting about this committee is that there was no ex-serviceman on it, and although it claimed to be non-denominational, non-political etc, neither did any member of the Roman Catholic persuasion assist it in its work.<sup>60</sup> One of the reasons was mainly the Roman Catholic Bishop's opposition to the war.

Despite the best efforts of those opposed to recruitment, men being rejected on health grounds, parents obstructing their sons and bad reports in the newspapers among other things, quite a number of men did enlist in the armed forces during the war. In the district in which Limerick was included (101st district) a substantial number of recruits joined. Certainly there was a falling off after the war commenced but this was symptomatic in all the recruiting areas in Ireland with the notable exception of the 83rd district, but by the time the war had ended in 1902 recruitment was again on the increase.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 January & 10 February 1900. Mrs Phelps of Waterpark, had a relation, Joseph Phelps, serving with the Volunteer Yeomanry Force.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 March 1900.