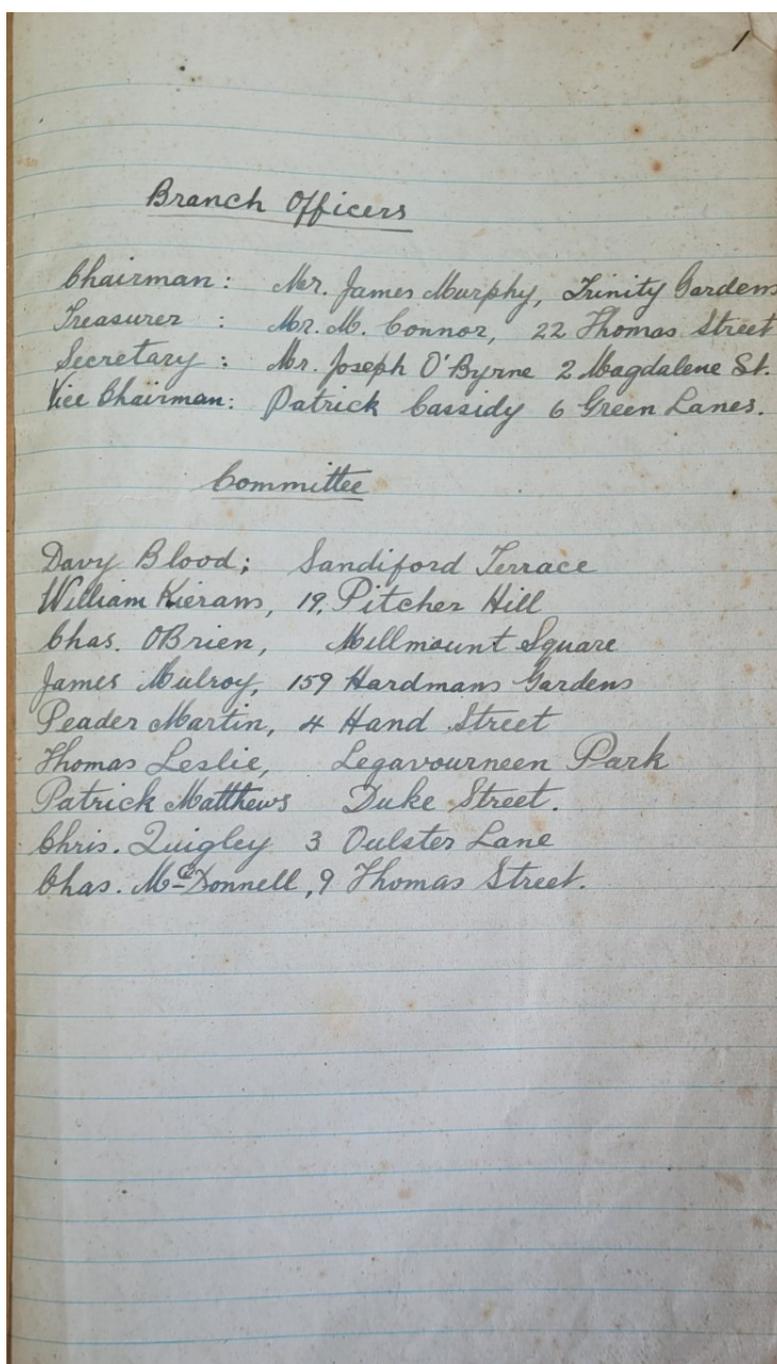


Minute book of the Drogheda Labour Party 1943 – 1949.

In early 2023, the Society received a donation from Terry Corcoran of a minute book of the Drogheda Labour Party covering the period 6th September 1943 to 25th July 1947.

The minute book gives a detailed account of the inner workings of the Labour Party in the town but also touches on national political developments and the local socio-economic conditions in Drogheda. Also included are printed copies of an invitation slip inviting members to attend meetings of the 'James Connolly Branch' of the Labour Party, Drogheda and a flyer for local elections in 1960. The Labour candidates were Mary Corcoran and Daniel McAuley. Mary Corcoran is the mother of Terry who donated the material. The minute book gives details of branch officers, committee members and ordinary members over the period. The book opens with a list of officers and committee in place in 1943.



The following are a sample of topics covered in the minute book;

- A visit by the National Organiser encouraging greater recruitment of women members (4/10/43).
- Fundraising, including raffles, dances and drama performances.
- The national split in the Party in 1944 leading to the branch no longer being able to use the ITGWU Hall for meetings. It subsequently rented the A.O.H hall for meetings. The branch strongly supported the national party as did the local T.D, Roddy Connolly. (Connolly spoke for an hour and three quarters on the issue). (January and February 1944).
- Connolly lost his seat in the 1944 election. The party blamed the loss of votes in rural areas due to the split.
- Also in February 1944, Connolly came into possession of a letter sent by a member, Tom Leslie, to an unnamed 'comrade' who was not a party member. The letter was extremely critical of the work and activities of the party and was particularly critical of Connolly. 'This Connolly man....certainly does not seem to be a revolutionary, certainly not like his father... He gives me the impression that he has accepted the viewpoint of the mild reformers or in other words 'we will do what little we can in a respectable bourgeois manner, and evolution will do the rest.' This led to Leslie being expelled from the party but not before he alleged that the Special Branch had forwarded the letter to Connolly. A number of years later, Leslie reappeared as a member.
- The annual report for the year 1943-44.
- Expansion of membership in 1946 and the establishment of a second branch in the town – the Liam Mellows Branch.
- In February 1946 the branch discussed inviting James Larkin to give a lecture. There was opposition due to uncertainty over his party membership and his 'habit to wander all over the place in his discourse and that he could never keep to any particular theme'. His son, James Larkin Junior, was invited instead. (25/2/46).
- A meeting in late 1946 recorded difficulties in preserving a right of way along the Boyne Canal pathway.
- In June 1947, a Councillor, Peadar Martin resigned from the branch as he refused to support 'a certain aspect of trade union activity', later described as 'blind acceptance of trade union methods'. (23/6/47). He continued as an independent Labour Councillor but later returned to the party.
- In anticipation of the 1948 general election, the branch considered whether the candidate should continue to be Roddy Connolly. Gilbert Lynch was considered as an alternative but Connolly was eventually selected and won the seat. Sadly, in April 1948 the branch recorded with regret, the death of Connolly's young son. (12/4/48).
- International affairs were rarely mentioned at meetings but in May 1949, the branch adopted a motion condemning the British Labour Party in introducing the 'Ireland Bill, 1949', pledging their support to the Irish Government, which included the Labour Party, in whatever action they deemed necessary.

The minute book concludes with details of a recruitment and organisation initiative in mid 1949 involving Ardee, Termonfeckin and Togher.

Shay Cody.

minutes of meeting held on 13/6/49

Mr. C. Dingle was in the Chair. Also present
Mrs. Mackey, Mrs. Dingle, T. Corcoran, H. Brilly,
P. Kessely, Wm. M. Auley, J. Dillon, M. Green,
P. Buckley, and J. Clarke.

At the outset the Chairman reviewed the
organisation drive now in progress in the South
Louth area, stating that Mr. R. J. Connolly, ^{2D}
accompanied by Mr. Dingle, had visited Ardara,
and held a public meeting which had been
fairly well attended. A week later the Chairman
and Mr. Buckley returned to Ardara and founded
a new Branch of the Party there.

Tomnafekin also was visited on May 29th and
an indoor meeting of at least 50 persons heard
Mr. Connolly deliver a fine address in
which he covered a wide field of labour
interests.

It was decided to break new ground and
endeavour to get Branches started in every Parish
in this end of the County. With this end in view
a meeting was arranged for Logher on June 17th.
The Secretary reported that the nett return from
the recent Flag Day amounted to £7.5.11.
A discussion then took place re Branch's Bank Bill
and Drogheda Independent etc and it was
decided to leave these matters over pending
the Treasurer's return.

Arrangements were made to start the
National Collection from house to house on
Friday night June 17th.

The appointment of Mr. Peter Reilly as