



Public Record Office
of Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

CHERRY PAPERS

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Cherry Papers (D2166)

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Summary

c.1000 legal, political and family papers and documents, 1882-1938, comprising the records of eminent Irish academic, lawyer, and politician Richard Robert Cherry, 1859-1923.

Cherry served as Attorney General for Ireland between 1905 and 1909, as a member of the Liberal Government and was then appointed to judicial office as a Lord Justice of Appeal. He held this post for five years until February 1914 when he became Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, a position he held until December 1916.



Background and legal career

Born into a Church of Ireland family of Huguenot origin on 19 March 1859 in Waterford, Richard was the youngest son of Robert William Cherry, a solicitor. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin where he obtained first class honours in mental science, history and political science and then followed in his father's legal footsteps, being called to the Bar in 1881. In 1885 he was appointed as examiner in political economy for the Indian civil service, and in 1889 was given the position as Reid Professor of Criminal and Constitutional Law at Trinity. However, he is best known for his work and expertise in land law in Ireland, a subject upon which he published extensively including three editions of a work on the various Irish Land Law and Land Purchase Acts between 1881 and 1891. Many of the legal issues which concerned Cherry are documented in the archive.



Political papers

Running in tandem and often intertwined, with his practice at the Bar was Cherry's political career. He unsuccessfully contested the Kirkdale Division of Liverpool as a Liberal in the 1900 election (it was during the Boer War and he suffered by being stigmatised as a pro-Boer) before he was returned for Exchange Division in 1906. Not surprisingly, the collection sheds some light upon grass-roots Liberal politics in the Edwardian era and, in particular, the organisation of the Liberal Party in Liverpool. However, by far the greater part of the political papers comprise letters to Cherry from leading British and Irish politicians of the day including: Sir Edward Carson, John Redmond, Viscount Gladstone, James Bryce, Augustine Birrell, Reginald McKenna and Lord Loreburn. It is apparent that these figures valued Cherry's opinions highly as the correspondence reveals a great willingness on their part to explain and account for their various political actions and Ministerial decisions.



Family correspondence

The collection also contains interesting family correspondence including letters, 1887-1907, from his brother, John B. Cherry, who emigrated to Canada and often 'slept out in the woods with only a blanket'. John made unsuccessful attempts to succeed as a Barrister in Vancouver before returning to Ireland (in 1914) to work as secretary to his brother.

