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# **INTRODUCTION**

# **CARSON PAPERS**

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# Carson Papers (D1507)

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## Summary

The Carson papers comprise c.3,000 documents, 1861-1947, mainly deriving from Sir Edward Carson, Lord Carson of Duncairn (1854-1935), barrister, Law Officer and Law Lord, MP successively for Dublin University and for North Belfast (Duncairn), First Lord of the Admiralty, and Dublin-born leader of the Ulster Unionists in opposition to the Third Home Rule Bill.



## Carson's career

The following are extracts from the (hagiographic) DNB entry on Carson, written by the late Sir Douglas Savory, who was of Huguenot descent and, clearly, regarded Carson as the best thing that had happened since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes: 'Carson ... was born in Dublin [on] 9 February 1854, the second son of Edward Henry Carson, a civil engineer ... . He was educated at Portarlinton School and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he studied law ... . After taking his degree, he was called to the Irish bar ... in 1877 ... . In 1887 he became Jnr counsel to the Attorney-General ... until, in 1889, he took silk. At the instance of A.J. Balfour ..., he was appointed Solicitor-General for Ireland in June 1892 ... . In July he was returned to parliament as one of the members for Dublin University, a seat which he continued to hold for 26 years. ... He was called to the English bar ... in 1893, becoming QC the following year ... . Carson's first success at the English bar was in the libel action brought in 1895 by Oscar Wilde against the Marquess of Queensberry, which caused him to be acknowledged by common consent as one of the foremost advocates at the bar. Although he was invited to take office when the Unionists gained power in 1895, Carson refused: he was at the height of his powers as an advocate, and he felt it necessary to devote himself to his professional career. In 1900, however, having been sworn of the Irish Privy Council in 1896, he became Solicitor-General for England, an office which involved a knighthood and which he held until the fall of the Unionist administration in December 1905, when he was sworn of the [British] Privy Council. In January 1910 he was chosen as leader of the Irish Unionists in the House of Commons on the retirement of W.H. (afterwards Viscount) Long from that position. On the resignation of Balfour himself from the leadership of the opposition in the next year, Carson was one of the four men canvassed as possible successors, but he refused to allow his name to go forward, preferring to devote all his energies to the service of Irish Unionism ... .



## The Third Home Rule Bill

In the battle over the Parliament Bill (1910-1911), his speeches were directed to showing the effect that this measure would have on the Irish problem, for if the veto of the House of Lords were abolished, the passage of Home Rule was assured. In 1911 the Ulster Unionist Council appointed a commission 'to take immediate steps, in consultation with Sir Edward Carson, to frame and submit a constitution for a provisional government in Ulster ...'. At a great demonstration on 23 September, at Craigavon, near Belfast, he was welcomed as the new leader, and in a speech in reply to addresses declaring for resistance to the jurisdiction of a Dublin parliament, he declared that the people of Ulster and he joined together would yet defeat 'the most nefarious conspiracy that has ever been hatched against a free people ...'. In spite of... provocation and threats, the discipline maintained by him prevented any outbreak of disorder in Ulster ... . On 9 Apr. 1912, at a great demonstration at Balmoral, near Belfast, Bonar Law, after assuring Ulster of the support of English Unionists, shook hands with Carson as a visible sign of the pledge amid great enthusiasm. When in the committee stage of the [Third] Home Rule Bill an amendment was put down ... to exclude the counties of Antrim, Down, Derry, and Armagh from the jurisdiction of the Dublin parliament, Carson advised that it should be supported. His colleagues had doubts, but ... unanimously supported him. Once more, at a gathering at Blenheim on 29 July, Bonar Law pledged the support of the unionists of England, and Carson announced that the people of [sic Ulster] would shortly challenge the government to interfere with them if they dared, and would await the result with equanimity. This was followed by the drafting of a ... covenant ... which was to be signed all over the province on 28 September, known as 'Ulster day'. Carson described the covenant as a step forward, not in defiance, but in defence, not in a spirit of aggression nor of ascendancy, but with a full knowledge that Ulster would carry out everything which it meant, whatever the consequences. Following this up, Carson moved, in January 1913, the exclusion of the whole province of Ulster from the scope of the bill. The amendment was defeated, although Carson's speech made a powerful impression, and on 16 January the bill was read a third time. A fortnight later it was defeated in the Lords by a majority of 257, but it had only to be passed again in two succeeding sessions in order to become law, and therefore preparations were pushed forward in Ulster ... for a provisional government, and Carson, accepting the chairmanship of the central authority, said Ulster might be coerced into submission, but in that case ... would have to be governed as a conquered country. To the guarantee fund of £250,000 for members of the Ulster Volunteer Force and their dependants who might suffer as a result of their services, Carson subscribed immediately £10,000. The importation of arms and ammunition into Ireland having been prohibited by royal proclamation in December 1913, correspondence took place between Carson and the Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, which many people looked upon as the forerunner of some concessions on the part of the government. Carson, however, ... had no illusions on the subject, and his scepticism was shown on the subject, and his scepticism was shown to be well founded ... when it was announced that warships had been dispatched to Lamlash in the Isle of Aran, and that extra troops were to be rushed into Ulster. The immediate sequel was the 'Curragh incident' (20 March), and the imminence of civil war was brought home to the world. Lastly, when the gun-running at Larne (24 April) was

denounced by Asquith as a grave and unprecedented outrage, Carson replied that he took full responsibility for everything that had been done ... . The promised amending bill was introduced and passed the Commons (25 May), but on 8 July the Lords substituted the permanent exclusion of the whole province of Ulster in the place of 'county option'. Rumours reached Carson that there were differences of opinion in the Cabinet over the amending bill. At the subsequent conference of party leaders opened at Buckingham Palace on 21 July, Carson and James Craig (afterwards Viscount Craigavon) attended as the Ulster representatives, and when, on 24 July, it broke down on the question [of] what portion of Ulster should be excluded, the amending bill, with 'county option', was put down for second reading on 30 July. By then, however, the country was on the brink of war, and at Asquith's request, in order to avoid domestic controversy at such a crisis, Carson and Bonar Law consented to the postponement of the proceedings on the amending bill on the express assurance of the Prime Minister that 'this was of course without prejudice to its future'.



## The First World War

War having broken out in August, a party truce was proclaimed on the terms that no controversial measures were to be taken, but the Prime Minister provoked the protest of the whole Unionist party by advising the royal assent to the Home Rule Bill, although at the same time announcing a bill suspending its operation until after the war, and saying that 'as an integral part of the proposals' the government would introduce an amending bill before the Irish government bill could possibly come into operation ... . Together with the rest of the Unionist party, Carson considered the government to have been guilty of a flagrant breach of faith in thus passing the Home Rule Bill into law; nevertheless, he offered it the services of the Ulster Volunteer Force. In Belfast, on 30 September, he explained to the Ulster Unionist Council the position in regard to the postponement of the amending bill, and said that however unworthily the government had acted, their own duty was to think of their country ... . Next morning he marched at the head of the North Belfast volunteers to the Old Town Hall where they were enrolled as the first unit of the ... 36th (Ulster) Division. In Asquith's administration of May 1915, Carson was appointed Attorney-General. In the eighteen months of its existence, he became more and more dissatisfied with the way in which the government was being conducted, holding strong views about the delay in applying conscription, the necessity of a retreat from the Dardanelles, and the dishonour of Great Britain's abandonment of Serbia ... . The exigencies of war having still required the further postponement of the amending bill, Asquith renewed his pledge on the matter, but after the Easter rebellion in Dublin in 1916, the government, to the astonishment of everyone, proposed that negotiations should be opened for an arrangement for bringing the Home Rule Act into immediate operation, subject to an amending bill excluding the whole or a portion of Ulster. On behalf of the government, Lloyd George asked Carson to go to Belfast to try to persuade the people there to agree to the exclusion of the six counties. Carson consented, solely, as he said, 'on account of the representations made to me as to the urgency of the matter for the prosecution of the war and the encouragement of America to join the Allies ...'. Carson's resignation from office in October 1916 heralded the break up of Asquith's administration. Under Lloyd George, who became Prime Minister in December 1916, Carson accepted office as First Lord of the Admiralty. His admiration for the men of the Navy was unbounded and he avowed that the glory of success belonged only to the officers and men of the ships. His whole duty lay in serving them, in seeing that they got all that they required for their support in guns, ammunition and comfort. [But he also said that he] '... would never have accepted office in [Lloyd George's] government except on the distinct understanding that no attempt would be made to violate these reiterated pledges not to put Ulster under Home Rule ...'. In May [1917], under pressure from the Prime Minister, Carson consented to the setting up of a convention of representative Irishmen under the chairmanship of Sir Horace Plunkett, and it was said by Lloyd George that if this body could propose a settlement 'by substantial agreement', the government would introduce legislation to give effect to it. But after it had sat for many months, the Prime Minister admitted that in the report of the convention there was no 'substantial agreement'. In January 1918, on learning that Lloyd George was intending to introduce a Home Rule Bill for the whole of Ireland, which it was generally assumed would be based on the majority report from which all the Ulster delegates had

dissented, Carson, who had become a member of the War Cabinet in July 1917, resigned from the government.




## The post-war Irish settlement

The joint letter issued by Lloyd George and Bonar Law on the eve of the general election of December 1918 gave a solemn pledge that only when the condition of Ireland was sufficiently settled would the Home Rule Act of 1914 be put into force, and that the policy of the government, if again returned to power, was to exclude the six counties of north-east Ulster from its operation. Carson was shown this letter and asked if he agreed with it. He replied in the affirmative, and in response to representations from Belfast, consented to return to Westminster for the newly created Duncairn division of Belfast. ... When the Government of Ireland Bill had been introduced on 25 February 1920, Carson went to Belfast and after a speech from him, the Ulster Unionist Council adopted a resolution disclaiming responsibility for the bill, but declaring that as there was no prospect of securing the repeal of the Act of 1914, the Ulster parliamentary representatives should not assume the responsibility of attempting to defeat it. Therefore when the rejection of the bill was moved on 31 March 1920, Carson rose and reiterated his opposition to the very end to the whole policy of Home Rule for Ireland ... . But he went on: 'If I help to kill this bill, I bring automatically into force the Act of 1914', and he added, 'it may turn out, as the leader of the House said yesterday, that under this bill, if it passes, the only part of Ireland which will have a parliament is the part that never asked for it ... . One thing I will promise you, that Ulster will do her level best with her parliament'. ... When therefore the Government of Ireland Bill became law on 23 December 1920, many people believed that the great struggle had at last come to an end. Carson now felt that his place should be taken by a younger man, and at a meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council held on 4 February 1921 he announced his resignation as leader of the Ulster Unionists. An urgent request to him to continue in office was met by the plea that it was a case of age and energy, and that he felt himself unequal to the task of undertaking the initiation and establishment of the new Northern Ireland parliament. Three months later (24 May) he left the House of Commons on appointment as a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary. As a compliment to his old constituency he took the title of Baron Carson of Duncairn, and from his seat in the House of Lords he ... strongly protested against handing over the southern loyalists to their enemies under the 'treaty' of 6 December with Sinn Fein. He also, on 11 May 1922, spoke very strongly in support of measures taken by the government for the protection of the old Royal Irish Constabulary, and once more he called attention to the treatment by Sinn Fein of British subjects in Ireland. At the end of October 1929 he resigned his office as Lord of Appeal in Ordinary. Last years and family life. In October 1926, in the course of a fortnight's stay in Ulster, Carson received the honorary degree of LLD from Queen's University, Belfast, and his last two visits were for the opening of the new parliament buildings at Stormont by the Prince of Wales in 1932 and for the unveiling of his own statue in front of these buildings in July 1933. Soon after his eightieth birthday (1934) Carson fell seriously ill with bronchitis, and although he recovered, his health was undermined and he died at Cleve Court, Minster, Kent, 22 October 1935. He was given a state funeral in Belfast and was buried in St Anne's Cathedral. Carson was twice married: first, in 1879 to Sarah Annette Foster (died 1913), adopted daughter of Henry Persse Kirwan, of Triston Lodge, Co. Galway, and had two sons and two daughters of whom the elder son and younger daughter predeceased their father; secondly, in 1914, to Ruby, elder daughter of Lieutenant-

Colonel Stephen Frewen ..., and had one son, [Edward], who was ... conservative member of parliament for the Isle of Thanet ... [1945-1953] ...'.



## **Bibliography**

Numerous books, pamphlets and articles have been written about Carson, covering almost all the aspects of his life and career. The authorised biography is *The Life of Lord Carson* by Edward Majoribanks, who committed suicide weeks before the release of volume one in July 1932. The remaining two volumes were written by Ian D. Colvin and published in 1934 and 1936 respectively. Dr Alvin Jackson, whose *Sir Edward Carson* (Dublin, 1993) is a very recent contribution to the debate about Carson, comments in his excellent bibliography that the Marjoribanks and Colvin Life '... is inaccurate in some details (especially in Vol. I) but contains many references to evidence which has since been destroyed. It is written from an ultra-Tory perspective. H. Montgomery Hyde's *Carson: The Life of Sir Edward Carson, Lord Carson of Duncairn* (London, 1953), although dated in some of its interpretations, is based on the wide range of documentary materials. It has been reprinted several times (most recently in 1987), and represents an accessible and comprehensive analysis of its subject. Like the Marjoribanks and Colvin volumes, it was written as an act of piety. A.T.Q. Stewart's *Edward Carson* (Dublin, 1981) is an elegant synthesis of earlier work, with some additional reflections based on archives not available to Montgomery Hyde. There are fine essays on Carson by R.B. McDowell, in Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed.), *The Shaping of Modern Ireland* (London, 1960); by J.C. Beckett, in his *Confrontations: Studies in Irish History* (London, 1972); and by George Boyce, in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Worsted in the Game: Losers in Irish History* (Dublin, 1989). The contemporary, or ephemeral, literature on Carson merits a monograph. There are numerous highly celebratory accounts written during his lifetime and designed for popular consumption by Irish loyalists. These include: Jean V. Bates, *Sir Edward Carson* (London, 1921) and T.H. Moles, *Lord Carson of Duncairn* (Belfast, 1925). In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Carson's death, which fell in 1985, Jim Allister and Peter Robinson resurrected this genre with their *Carson: Man of Action* (Belfast, 1985). Liberals and Nationalists sought to offer correctives: George Peel, *The Reign of King Carson* (London, 1914) and St John Ervine, *Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster Movement* (Dublin, 1915). The latter is a curiosity - a highly critical portrayal by a leading Irish author who would later celebrate James Craig and damn 'Eire' in *Craigavon: Ulsterman* (London, 1949)...'.  
  


## The archive

The Carson papers are an incomplete archive and consist of the material not destroyed in his London house in the Blitz. No records have survived of his distinguished legal career and large gaps exist in what does remain. On the other hand, as the late H. Montgomery Hyde (himself a barrister, as well as a biographer of Carson) has pointed out, a barrister's papers revert to the solicitor who briefed him, so it may well be that the effect of the Blitz is in this respect something of a myth. Some references to Carson's legal career do survive in the archive, and also reflect the persona of the man. In a postcard collection entitled 'Straight Line Caricatures', the reverse of the card (D1507/F/1/5) describes him as 'A fighter with a bludgeon rather than a rapier. He can terrify a plaintiff and subdue a judge. His large hatchet face, heavy nose, scornful eyes, and obstinate lower lip all reveal a man who knows his own mind and will let nothing stand in his way'. James O'Connor, former Lord Justice of Appeal in Ireland, described Carson as having 'a knowledge of human nature, an instinct in the detection of falsehood and a tenacity in following up a clue that made him a master in the art of cross-examination'.



## Carson's Irish papers

The archive is arranged in seven sections of very uneven size, of which the first and largest relates to Ireland. The papers in this section run from 1899 (with a few earlier items) to 1936 and, in addition to material of exclusively Irish relevance, include First World War papers about the Ulster Division, recruitment, conscription, Ulster's contribution to the War Loan, etc. The major runs of letters in the Irish section are from Richard Dawson Bates, Secretary to the Ulster Unionist Council (and later first Minister of Home Affairs in the Northern Ireland Government), and from Alexander (later Sir Alexander) McDowell of Carson & McDowell, Royal Avenue, Belfast, the solicitor who acted for Carson and for the UUC. A small proportion of the letters are anonymous and threatening; some, later, deal with appeals from Irish ex-servicemen and indigent Protestants in the Irish Free State. But, generally, the letters relate to aspects of Carson's political career or contain advice from friends and well-wishers. Highlights and/or curiosities of the Irish section include several letters from a former Nationalist MP, Dr Edward C. Thompson of Omagh, with suggested alterations in the Home Rule Bill. In January 1914, a Miss C.S. Williams, 'private secretary to one of the Undersecretaries', reveals a plan by members of the government, Asquith, McKenna and Pease, to 'procrastinate until the patience of the hooligan element in Belfast is exhausted and they begin to riot. This is the moment when troops (they have decided which regiments are to be sent) will step in and crush the riots and, incidentally, a few of the Loyalists ...'. There are also papers about the Irish situation in 1917, after the release of the Easter Rising prisoners. Much of the Irish material is composed of memoranda by various people on possible variations of Home Rule or alternatives to it. Several documents relate to the position of Unionist minorities in the South of Ireland under a Home Rule Parliament and are concerned to safeguard their position. A further small section deals with the 1919 dispute in the East Antrim constituency Unionist party, and there are also copies of Ulster Unionist Council circulars to Unionist MPs. Both Nationalist and Unionist attitudes to such matters as conscription, recruiting, the government attitude to Ireland, and the progress of the Home Rule Bill, are well documented in press cuttings from journals such as *The Irish Volunteer*, *Notes from Ireland* and *Irish Freedom*, as well as from British national newspapers. There is a small section of letters and papers relating to Gen. Sir George Richardson and the Ulster Volunteer Force, including his negotiations with the War Office at the outbreak of war. Other Ulster Volunteer Force correspondents include General C.H. Powell and Colonel G. Hackett Pain. There are also notes for speeches made by Carson on the exclusion of Ireland from the Compulsory Services Act, on conscription, on taking office in 1915 and on the Irish Settlement proposals of 1921. A small, but important, group of letters deals with the reaction of the Monaghan and Cavan delegates in the Ulster Unionist Council to the news in 1916 that they had been omitted from the Excluded Area. In contrast to the 11th Lord Farnham and Major Somerset Saunderson, representing Co. Cavan, the Monaghan delegates pledged their 'absolute loyalty' to Carson on this highly emotive issue.



## **Carson's papers about non-Irish affairs**

These constitute the second and second-largest section of the archive, and run from 1899 to 1935. They include Carson's papers as a Cabinet Minister from 25 September 1915 to 20 November 1917. There is no proper series of Cabinet Papers, except for Imperial War Cabinet Papers dealing with the inauguration of a definite peace policy. These latter include: 'The Suggested Basis of a Territorial Settlement'; 'The Possible Terms of Peace'; a memorandum on the German peace proposals by Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson; a memorandum on the effect of an indemnity by J.M. Keynes; and the report of the Committee on Territorial Changes. A smaller group of documents are the reports on the Russian situation in 1917 from Lt-Col Blair in Petrograd. Other Cabinet Papers deal with such topics as: the American attitude to the War; the problem of Serbia and the Near East in 1915; the food situation in March 1917 due to the sinking of supply ships by German submarines; the ship-building programme to 1917; the strategic value of Heligoland; and several reports on the changes in the French Command, especially the substitution of Pétain for Nivelle, and their possible effect upon the French offensive.



## Carson at the Admiralty

The Admiralty Papers run from November 1916 to July 1917, and often contain ten or more documents per day. Topics covered include; the inefficiency of the Dover Command in 1916; guns for merchant ships; neutrals in the Tyneside area; and Brunton's plan for preventing torpedoed or shelled ships from overturning. A number of letters were written to Carson by: Christopher Addison, Minister of Munitions (1916-1917); Walter Runciman, President of the Board of Trade (1914-1916); and Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the War Cabinet (1916-1918). Several letters outline proposals to standardise the construction of merchant ships, in which the firm of Workman, Clark & Co., of Belfast were acting in an advisory capacity. There is also a letter from Noel Buxton, MP, describing American attitudes to the war in 1916: 'The desire to see German militarism destroyed is intense in America and is regarded as an American interest, but it is thought that for future security, reliance must rather be placed upon new international guarantees in which America would share, than upon extreme military humiliation'. Papers of January 1917 include a printed memorandum by Carson marked 'Private and confidential' and entitled 'The Battle Fleets and the Air Service'. This argues that the Germans' supremacy at sea is dependent upon their supremacy in the air owing to their Zeppelins, which could only be completely operational in calm weather conditions. It was proposed by a 'distinguished admiral' that the menace of the Zeppelins could only be properly countered by the use of 'small fast aeroplanes, carried by our Battle Fleet' (in effect the creation of aircraft carriers). The Admiralty was 'insistent on the fact that even if the aeroplane were lost and the man interned, it would be a cheap investment, if it succeeded in destroying or driving the Zeppelins back to their base and so deprive the German fleet of its eyes'. An important Allied policy document, marked 'secret' is also included; it states that 'before the Allies can hope to secure any real success against the Central Powers they must adopt a definite common policy and carry it out under a single direction. This can only be achieved if one power in the Alliance makes it its business to find that policy and to enforce that direction. On the side of our opponents that power is Germany'. In February 1917, Carson received numerous letters from representatives of the British Merchant Fleet regarding the perilous conditions under which they were having to operate, especially in the North Sea and 'around Iceland and Faroe, where if the Germans attack, it will be like a fox getting into a hen roost'. Also included is a report marked 'confidential' and entitled 'The Economic Situation in Germany and Austria - Hungary'. Carson's letters and papers for March 1917 include a letter from Lord Northcliffe insisting that an enemy air raid on Broadstairs, Kent, was conducted for photographic reconnaissance purposes. It also severely criticises press censorship of the raid. In reply, Carson contradicts Northcliffe's supposition and states that the raid was in retaliation for a 'successful attack that had been made from Dunkirk on Zeebrugge'. Also present is a memorandum from Carson regarding the establishment of Shipyard Workers' Battalions in the armed forces.



## **Miscellaneous non-Irish papers**

More miscellaneous papers include; earlier correspondence, etc, about the notorious signal incident of 4 November 1907 in the Channel Fleet, involving Sir Percy Scott and Admiral Lord Charles Beresford; a series of Blood cartoons; various memoranda attached to letters from the exceedingly prolix F.S. Oliver on topics such as an analysis of the basis of war finance in 1915; the October Revolution, and an assessment of the War situation in November 1917, and an unsigned typescript article entitled 'Sir E. Carson at the Admiralty'; and a number of letters and papers dealing with the operation of Lord Derby's Reserve Scheme and other recruitment/conscription plans.



## **Carson's non-Irish papers post-1921**

Carson's later letters and papers, 1921-1933, include; a letter from Stanley Baldwin thanking him for his support and friendship throughout the years; correspondence regarding the introduction of the Moneylenders Bill; a letter from the Private Secretary to the King regarding the publishing the memoirs of Lady Warwick (Edward VII's 'Darling Daisy') in 1929; many letters enquiring about Carson's failing health and voicing concern about his decision to retire from the Court of Appeal which was announced on 1 November 1929; correspondence relating to the Statute of Westminster of 1931; correspondence of 1933 relating to Carson's position in the House of Lords, and including a telegram from Winston Churchill asking for his support regarding India.



## Principal correspondents

A number of Carson's principal correspondents during the period 1912-1921 approximately have already been mentioned. Others, whose letters often straddle the Irish and non-Irish sections, include: Leo. S. Amery, H.H. Asquith, Margot Asquith, A.J. Balfour, Hugh T. Barrie, the 19th Lord Willoughby de Broke, the 5th Earl of Cadogan, James Campbell (later Lord Glenavy), Lord Robert Cecil (later Viscount Cecil of Chelwood), Winston Churchill, James Craig (later 1st Viscount Craigavon), Colonel Fred Crawford (of Guns for Ulster fame), Charles Frederick D'Arcy, Bishop of Down, the 2nd Lord Dunleath, Lloyd George, H.A. Gwynne (editor of The Morning Post and Carson's leading supporter in the press), the 1st Earl of Halsbury, the 3rd Lord Hylton, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, Rudyard Kipling, the 5th Earl of Leitrim, the 6th and 7th Marquesses of Londonderry, Theresa, Marchioness of Londonderry, Walter Long (later Viscount Long), Ronald McNeill (later Lord Cushendun), General Sir Nevil Macready, the 1st Earl of Midleton, Viscount Milner, General Sir Oliver Nugent, William O'Brien, Sir Horace Plunkett, Lord Rathmore, Geoffrey Robinson (editor of The Times), the 4th Marquess of Salisbury, Herbert Samuel (later Viscount Samuel), A.W. Samuels, the 2nd Earl of Selborne, Capt. (later Sir) Wilfrid Spender, Lord Stamfordham, J. St Loe Strachey (editor of The Spectator), Lord Edmund Talbot, Anthony Traill (Provost of T.C.D.), William Copeland Trimble (of The Impartial Reporter, Enniskillen), Lt-Col R.H. Wallace, J. Mackay Wilson of Currygrane, Co. Longford (brother of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson), Frederick Wrench (of the Land Commission Dublin), and the Rt Hon. William Young of Galgorm Castle, Co. Antrim.



## **Other sections of the papers**

The other, smaller sections of the papers comprise; personal diaries of Ruby, Lady Carson (née Frewen, Carson's second wife), 1915-1929, which throw much light on his political career as well as their social and personal lives; letters and papers, 1891-1947, of Carson and his two wives about personal and financial matters, including papers about Cleve Court, Minster-in-Thamet, Kent, and their other houses, and papers relating to the early life of the Hon. Edward Carson, Carson's son by his second marriage; obituary and biographical letters and papers, 1911-1935, addressed to or kept by Lord or Lady Carson, including correspondence with his biographers, Edward Majoribanks and Ian D. Colvin, and letters of condolence to Lady Carson on Carson's death; photographs and newspaper cuttings, 1861-1936, relating to Carson's private life and political and legal career; and superseded PRONI calendars of the Carson papers, 1973-1975.



## Lady Carson's diaries, 1915-1929

Lady Carson's diaries are a blend of naïveté and sharpness (the latter sometimes amounting to waspishness). On 2 January 1917, she says of Lloyd George that 'we cannot really trust a little Welsh attorney', while on the 1st February she describes him as 'almost gaa gaa'. On 18 February Lady Carson notes in her diary that 'Edward is on the verge of leaving the Cabinet, as it impossible for him to remain while they trying to settle Ireland. If they try to co-erce Ulster he would come out at once'. The following day, 'Ronald McNeill, James Craig and Edward consulted and Edward is to leave the Cabinet at once, saying he is doing so to relieve the Government of his embarrassing presence whilst Ireland is being arranged'. Carson's resignation from the War Cabinet was given to Lloyd George on Sunday 20th, and formally announced on Tuesday 22nd. At the beginning of February, Sir Edward and Lady Carson visited Ulster, and the rounds of meetings, rallies and dinners, etc, are well documented in the diary. The opposition of Ulster to Home Rule is continually noted in the diary and on returning to London; Lady Carson mentions that 'Edward had breakfast with PM [Lloyd George] who of course talked a lot of rot about Ulster'. The entry for 11 February is interesting in that Lady Carson talks of impending personnel changes within the Army; 'Lloyd George is going to kick General Robertson out and put Sir Henry Wilson in his place or in Haig's, as I suppose he will have to go too. Really one despairs of the poor country with such dreadful, dishonest politicians running things. General Wilson is only an intriguer and all for himself, which is despicable. The Army at the front except a few of his admirers, and I believe they are very few, call him 'Blackleg' - how loathsome it all is, but I suppose having a Prime Minister who distrusts everyone but himself does lead to these things'. Lloyd George increasingly becomes an object of hate for Lady Carson, who describes him as 'cowardly', 'a liar' and the 'scum of the earth'. On 20 January 1922, 'James Craig came early to see Edward, Col Spender came with him. Col S. and I agreed that we were longing to see de Valera's party and Collin's party at each others throats and a real row. I am sure we shall'. The following day James Craig returned at tea time. 'He had had 3 hours interview with Michael Collins and they had made out a document of agreement and they both signed it. Edward didn't like it much and said he would never have been a party to it, nor would he have met Collins. He didn't say this to James as he says he has many difficulties in Ulster and I expect he will find this document will make more'. The February 12th entry mentions that 'Edward went on to [Sir John] Lavery who is painting him, to give to Belfast. I would like to see the picture but I cannot go as Lady Lavery had de Valera to tea and wants to get Michael Collins and is a dreadful Sinn Feiner and I don't want to meet her'. A naive entry is made on 23 June 1924, when 'Mr Healy came to tea with a Lady Gregory from Galway. She is a regular Sinner and talked about Michael Collins. They want the Lane pictures for Dublin'. Equally naive (but perhaps representative of her class and generation) are her comments of 31 May 1929 on the British election results. 'London and all the industrial centres have gone clear mad Red. The Socialists won't have a clear majority over us and the Liberals - so it will be just stalemate. I am sure its all those horrible girls in the factories. Baldwin must have been mad when he gave them the vote'. On 5 June, Lord and Lady Carson attended an 'Ark' dinner party at the Londonderry's, noted in her diary as 'a most magnificent affair, diamonds and jewels galore. Everyone seemed cheerful. I think probably because the Socialists aren't

strong enough to do much - how thankful I am that I am not one of them'. The entry for 7 June, notes the formation of the new Labour ministry: 'the Socialist Cabinet came out, what dirty dogs there are in the world'.



## **Superseded PRONI calendars**

The superseded calendars of the papers are of importance to researchers who have used the archive in the 1970s and early 1980s, as they show how the arrangement of the material has been refined and improved since then, and make it relatively easy to up-date superseded references. The only advantage of the old calendars is that they run to lengthy, though not always accurate, transcription. In the new arrangement, there has been detailed calendaring of D1507/A/1- D1507/27 (the first 27 subsections of the Irish section); thereafter, the detail is reduced to summary listing.

