

*Cumann na mBan:*  
COUNTY GALWAY  
DIMENSIONS



“They stand for the honour of Ireland,  
As their sisters in days that are gone,  
And they’ll march with their brothers to freedom,  
The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan.”

GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

# CUMANN NA *m*BAN: COUNTY GALWAY DIMENSIONS

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Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council



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**Marie Mannion & Jimmy Laffey**  
**Editors**

## PREFACE

This publication *Cumann na mBan: County Galway Dimensions* is an action of Galway County Council's *Commemorative Strategy for the County of Galway: Decade of Commemorations 2013-2023* and is also one of over 150 initiatives that will be undertaken or directly supported by the Council as part of the *1916-2016 Centenary Programme for the County of Galway*.

Cllr Mary Hoade, then Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway, first mooted, in January 2015, that Galway County Council should undertake a project to commemorate the role of *Cumann na mBan* during the historic Decade of Centenaries.

This proposal was considered by Galway County Council's 1916 Commemorative Committee. It was decided that a fitting way to commemorate *Cumann na mBan* was to produce a publication that would give an insight into the organisation, the women from the county who were active in *Cumann na mBan* and the work they carried out. It was also felt that this was an appropriate and fitting project for the Council to undertake, given that Alice Cashel, a *Cumann na mBan* member, was Vice Chairman of Galway County Council from 1920-21.

This publication tells the story of *Cumann na mBan* in a very simple manner. It gives a brief outline of the history of the organisation, followed by a selection of extracts as reported in the local newspapers, as well as sample accounts of some *Cumann na mBan* members such as Ada English, Alice Cashel, Eva O'Flaherty, Mai O'Dea-Fahy, Kate Armstrong, Mary McTiernan and Cissie Davoren (nee Lally). It also contains recollections of Bridget Morrissey, as well as some witness statements and pension records from the Bureau of Military History Archives. To accompany the publication, a commemorative CD has been commissioned by Galway County Council featuring Joseph Forde singing the *The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan*, with the aim of making the song available to a new generation.

I am confident that this publication *Cumann na mBan: County Galway Dimensions* and the *Cumann na mBan* Conference that is to take place in Ballinasloe in 2016 will facilitate a greater awareness, knowledge and understanding of the role that *Cumann na mBan* played in our county and will provide a solid platform for others to build on this work into the future.

**Cllr Peter Roche**  
**Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway**

# CUMANN NA mBAN: A GALWAY PERSPECTIVE

by Dr Bernard Kelly

## **Formative period: national and local**

*Cumann na mBan* was one of the most significant republican organisations in 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish history. Founded in April 1914 in Wynn's Hotel in Dublin, *Cumann na mBan*'s primary aims reflected the fact that both nationalism and feminism were on the rise in Ireland at the turn of the century, although it was not self-consciously a feminist organisation; the primary driving force behind its foundation was nationalism. Its first objective was to advance the cause of Irish liberty, while its second was to organise Irishwomen in the furtherance of this object and its original programme stated unambiguously that it was the 'women's section of the Irish Volunteers.' The organisation was therefore criticised by many Irish feminists and suffragettes, who deplored its perceived submission to the Irish Volunteers, which did not admit women into its ranks. *Cumann na mBan* activists countered this argument by contending that the only true way to achieve equality for Irish women was to free Ireland from British rule; an argument not without merit, given that the Irish Parliamentary Party, Irish representatives in the Westminster parliament, was not supportive of women's voting rights. Its links with the Volunteers were close from the very beginning: the central branch in Dublin shared an office with the Volunteers in Great Brunswick Street, and at a speech in Galway during August 1914, a Volunteer representative urged *Cumann na mBan* to use their influence to bring men into the ranks. Like the Volunteers, it split over the issue of recruitment into the British forces once World War I broke out in August 1914. Although it initially tried to remain neutral in the dispute, a resolution passed in October 1914 called on Irishmen to disregard John Redmond's call for enlistments in the British army and it is estimated that *Cumann na mBan* lost around half of its members in this first split.

From the very beginning, Galway played a role in national *Cumann na mBan* affairs. Among the very few branches to send representatives to the 1915 Convention in Dublin was Athenry and the RIC reported a year later that there were two branches of the organisation in Galway with an estimated and respectable membership of 46. The main cause of disloyalty in the county, wrote the RIC inspector for Galway East in 1916, were the priests and women in Athenry. Their 1915 Convention saw *Cumann na mBan* become more overtly militant and move closer to the Irish Volunteers. A military-style uniform was adopted, consisting of coat, hat and skirt of Volunteer tweed, plus a haversack and first aid kit. All purchases of material were to be Irish, if possible, but the uniform remained optional as members had to pay for it themselves. The *Cumann na mBan* badge was also highly symbolic of how the members viewed themselves: the letters C na mB being mounted upon a rifle. Branches began to include drill and signalling in their instructions to members while some branches received weapons training. At the same time, their main role remained to fundraise for the Volunteers and to assist in the procurement of arms. Despite this, *Cumann na mBan* was of little interest to the British authorities, and RIC reports only mentioned them sporadically in the period between their foundation and the

Rising. In addition, they were sometimes disparaged by their male nationalist colleagues. Despite their best efforts, they were generally overlooked or side-lined; for instance, a report in the *Connacht Tribune* on their lecture series in Galway during February 1915 was completely overshadowed by an article by William O Malley MP on the probable course of World War I and the presence of German U-boats in the Irish Sea.

### ***Cumann na mBan* and the 1916 Rising in County Galway**

This attitude, however, was changed by women's roles in the 1916 Rising. Typically, the leadership of *Cumann na mBan* had not been informed of the rebellion, and branches all over the country were caught unawares by the outbreak of fighting. Confusion reigned as some branches mobilised, demobilised and mobilised again, while many individual members simply joined the rebellion by themselves, not waiting for their officers to issue orders. A total of nineteen members of *Cumann na mBan* were awarded military pensions for their service in Galway during Easter week, alongside 223 IRA men.

The activities of *Cumann na mBan* in Galway during the Rising mirrored that of its members involved in the rebellion elsewhere. For the most part, they cared for the wounded, sourced and cooked food and carried messages for the Volunteers, while others carried packages and smuggled ammunition. Brigid Malone brought a package from Dublin by train for Liam Mellows, which she suspected was either a revolver or his uniform; in his book on Liam Mellows, Desmond Graves states that it was Mellows uniform. Bridgit Morrissey packed first aid kits and collected food, Kathleen Clery was both present in Galway during the Rising and also became an IRA courier in Liverpool during the war of Independence, while Mary Higgins smuggled ammunition for the rebels in Athenry. Mary Kate Connor not only helped with cooking and packing haversacks for the men, but also smuggled arms and ammunition for Mellows himself. The collection of food for the insurgents by *Cumann na mBan* was particularly important as the rebels were unprepared for a long campaign and had to organise supplies as they went, often commandeering supplies from local businesses. An estimated 200 *Cumann na mBan* were involved in Dublin, the most famous of them being Elizabeth O Farrell, who carried Pearse's surrender to the British and who afterwards spread the word of the surrender to the other garrisons in Dublin. Also present in Dublin was Caherlistrane-born Eva O Flaherty, an educationalist, entrepreneur and *Cumann na mBan* activist, who cycled to Dublin upon hearing of the Rising, talked her way past the checkpoints surrounding the rebel-held areas, and acted as a courier between the Volunteer outposts, including the GPO. Her role, like her fellow *Cumann na mBan* members, was viewed by the rebel leaders as a strictly non-combat one; as a member of the Military Pensions Board noted in the 1940s, "We never expected the women to fire shots."

The prominence of *Cumann na mBan* during the Rising changed perceptions of the organisation, both amongst nationalists and the British. Along with the Volunteers and Sinn Féin, *Cumann na mBan* was banned in the aftermath of the rebellion, its offices were raided and its organisation suppressed. At the 1917 Convention, its original constitution was substantially modified and *Cumann na mBan* officially became a republican body, dedicated to both the cause of a free Ireland and preservation of the Irish language. Even as the group moved closer to the Volunteers, it still retained the strand of feminism which

had been present at its foundation and from 1917 branches were instructed to set up classes on public affairs, in order that Irish women would be able to play a full role in Irish society once independence came.

One of the major activities that *Cumann na mBan* organised in the immediate post-Rising period was fundraising for the families of republican internees. The Irish Volunteers Dependants Fund and the Irish National Aid Association were both established after 1916, were largely staffed by *Cumann na mBan* members and were eventually amalgamated. Again, members in Galway followed the national pattern and many were engaged in raising money for nationalist causes, and the crossover between sport and nationalism was always evident. One particular member, Deirdre Lowe, was observed collecting money at a GAA match in Athenry, and also attempted to stage a Sinn Féin demonstration on the train to Kilcolgan. A *Cumann na mBan* camogie team took on its counterparts from University College Galway in May 1918 at South Park, Galway, losing 6-0 to no score, but gaining valuable press attention in the process. Margaret Broderick Nicholson, born in Prospect Hill and a section commander in the city, came to prominence as an organiser of *Cumann na mBan* fundraising concerts, an activity which eventually brought her to the attention of the IRA as a person trustworthy enough to carry messages and carry out reconnaissance. Like her colleagues during 1916, Margaret was used to run weapons and ammunition to different locations. The organisation slowly recovered and expanded after the Rising. In September 1918, Galway East Riding had a total of 317 members; by 1921, there were 6,569 in the whole of Connaught.

### **Anti-conscription activities**

In 1918, under severe pressure from the German offensive on the western front in France, the British government decided to extend conscription to Ireland. Compulsory military service had been introduced in Britain in 1916, but the complex political situation in Ireland meant that the island had been excluded. With fresh German armies attacking the western front, London decided that Ireland must be included in the conscription legislation. The issue electrified the public in Ireland and unified all shades of nationalist opinion in a way that no other issue had. Republicans, the Irish Parliamentary Party, the labour movement and the Catholic Church all came together in an unprecedented alliance against conscription. Large public rallies and a one-day strike illustrated the depth of Irish opposition to the move, and the ranks of the anti-recruitment Irish Volunteers once again began to fill with men. *Cumann na mBan* played a full role in the fight against conscription, as always supporting the activities of their male counterparts by fundraising, marching, holding meetings and bill-posting, but also offering their own unique contribution. The organisation was heavily involved in (although it was not solely responsible for) an initiative called *Lá na mBan*, a one-day protest on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1918, in which Irish women were urged to sign a pledge advertising their opposition to conscription and promising not to take any job made available by the conscription of Irishmen. On that day and for weeks afterwards *Cumann na mBan* coordinated public rallies and mass signings of the pledge, and further fundraised for the nationalist cause by selling framed anti-conscription certificates at 3d each. These vocal and very public actions further raised *Cumann na mBan*'s profile and also confirmed their status as a republican organisation, actively working for Irish independence alongside Sinn Féin and the Volunteers.

However, it also meant that the group was firmly on the police agenda and meetings were often disrupted. In August 1918, a *Cumann na mBan* rally in Connemara was charged by the police, resulting in minor injuries to the spectators. Likewise, in the run-up to the November 1918 general election, a body of *Cumann na mBan* members scuffled with the RIC after a parade in Bearna, during which Margaret Broderick Nicholson was struck in the head with a police revolver. When the Volunteer officer leading the parade was arrested, the women attacked the RIC barracks in Bearna and smashed the windows of the building.

### **The War of Independence, 1919 - 1921**

*Cumann na mBan*'s role as an auxiliary organisation to support the Volunteers became extremely important during the War of Independence. One of the most vital roles was to establish first aid posts to deal with wounded IRA members after ambushes or to tend to the needs of flying column men who, because of their constant movement and lack of any sanitary facilities, were often dirty and prone to illness. The organisation's own publication, *Leabhar na mBan*, emphasised the need for its members to prepare to be stretcher-bearers and to understand flag signals. They also collected intelligence, reconnoitred possible ambush sites, carried messages and dispatches, distributed anti-British literature and propaganda and brought food and supplies to IRA men. One of their most dangerous functions was to ferry arms and ammunition between units, or to smuggle weapons away after an ambush, as they were much less likely to be stopped and searched. Their relative immunity to inspection also meant that many *Cumann na mBan* members stored weapons in their houses.

To counteract this, as the conflict wore on British military leaders increasingly requested that women be used to search *Cumann na mBan* suspects, and women also sometimes accompanied British troops on raids of houses of *Cumann na mBan* participants. On one occasion Bridget Doherty, president of the South Leitrim branch, was strip-searched in her home by two women, but she was certain afterwards that one of the searchers was a man dressed in women's clothes. One of the consequences of being so closely identified with the revolutionary movement was that *Cumann na mBan* members were often targeted by the British forces. In one Galway incident, Margaret Broderick Nicholson's house on Prospect Hill was raided by the Black and Tans, while she herself underwent bobbing: she had her hair forcibly shorn off as a punishment for being a leading republican. A small number of women, estimated at fifty, were arrested and interned by the British during the War of Independence.

### **The Civil War, 1922 - 1923**

Remarkably, *Cumann na mBan* was the first republican group to reject the Treaty, declaring itself against the compromise agreement even before the IRA had. At a special convention in February 1922, a proposal to back the Treaty was overwhelmingly defeated by 413 votes to 63. As a result, pro-Treaty supporters were expelled from the larger group and founded *Cumann na Saoirse*, with the declared intention of assisting Treatyite candidates in the upcoming election. They helped distribute pro-Treaty literature and, once the Civil War began in June 1922, they carried out many of the duties for the Free State army that pre-split *Cumann na mBan* had for the IRA: fundraising, providing entertainment for the

troops and first aid. More controversially, *Cumann na Saoirse* also acted as searchers for the Free State when female republican suspects were arrested. The tactic of using *Cumann na mBan* as smugglers for the republican forces was far less successful during the Civil War, largely due to the willingness of *Cumann na Saoirse* members to search women suspects, and the organisation was sarcastically nicknamed ‘Cumann na Searchers’ by its opponents. As a result, it was attacked by the IRA during the Civil War, and members had their homes burned or their offices raided, and on a number of occasions members were physically assaulted, usually their hair being bobbed, tactics which deliberately mirrored those of the British forces.

During the Civil War, *Cumann na mBan* actively supported the anti-Treaty forces and played a central role in the fight against the Free State; for instance, the anti-Treaty forces who occupied the Four Courts in Dublin were heavily dependent on *Cumann na mBan* members to carry messages out by bicycle. Others ferried despatches between isolated IRA units by car or drove leading anti-Treaty figures who were on the run from the authorities. The organisation also became increasingly assertive, and in September 1922 demanded that *Cumann na mBan* should be represented at any negotiations between the IRA and the Free State, which the IRA leaders ignored. However, membership fell away significantly and the Free State government in January 1923 banned it. Eventually around 400 women, not all *Cumann na mBan*, were interned by the Free State during the Civil War.

*Cumann na mBan* also performed vital roles during the Irish revolution, not only carrying out many of the unglamorous tasks such as fundraising, cooking, cleaning and nursing, but also being exposed to danger when transporting arms or carrying messages for IRA units, and many suffered maltreatment or imprisonment because of their republican activities. Despite this, history has not been kind to the organisation: in comparison with the IRA or Sinn Féin, there are few books dedicated to it and the records that it left behind are incomplete. It survived into independent Ireland, enjoying a half-life at republican commemorations and ceremonies, and its modern equivalent supported the Provisional IRA during the Northern Ireland conflict, but it never again gained the prominence it achieved between the years 1914 and 1922.

### **Sources and further reading**

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## WHAT IT SAID IN THE LOCAL PAPERS

The local Galway newspapers namely the *Connacht Tribune*, the *Tuam Herald* and the *Connacht Sentinel* carried many varied articles on the activities of *Cumann na mBan* from 1914 right up to 1981. These articles provide an insight into the organisation on many different facets, ranging from its meetings, training, involvement in various sporting and social events to commemorations, memorials and reunions. The obituary notices alone, of which there are in excess of 170, provide such a rich archive of material from the 1920s forward and give us a significant insight into *Cumann na mBan* membership in County Galway. The following extracts are mere samples of the richness of this archival source in relation to the *Cumann na mBan* organisation.

### **Formative period – meetings, organisation, training and affiliation**

“An important meeting of *Cumann na mBan* will be held on Sunday in the Town Hall at 4 o'clock, and will be addressed by Miss Bloxham, Mrs Colum and Mrs O'Mahony.”  
(*Connacht Tribune*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1914)

“A meeting of the women of Tuam, under the auspices of *Cumann na mBan*, was held in the Town Hall on Tuesday evening. The Hall was crowded and the greatest enthusiasm and determination marked the proceeding. ... Addresses were delivered by Father Moane, Father Ruane and Father O'Reilly on the need of unity and organisation amongst the women of the country. ... After the meeting all joined in processional order and marched through the streets of the town, headed by a banner bearing the words ‘We will not allow the Saxon to conscript our men.’”

(*Tuam Herald*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1918 and reprinted 27<sup>th</sup> July 1944)

“A *Cumann na mBan* meeting, at which Miss Cashel B.A. was to speak, was not long in progress when a large contingent of police arrived and charged the crowd. Although some people, it is said, received nasty injuries, the assemblage kept cool.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1918)

“Miss Bloxham of Dublin delivered an eloquent and very impressive speech at a meeting of the City branch of *Cumann na mBan* on Sunday, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall. There was a good attendance of ladies, while a number of gentlemen identified with the Volunteer force were also present. ... The objects of the Council were set out as follows: 1. To advance the cause of Irish Liberty; 2. To organise Irishwomen in furtherance of this objective; 3. To assist in the arming and equipping of Irishmen for the defence of Ireland; 4. To form a fund for these purposes to be called ‘The Defence of Ireland Fund’. She wished to impress on those present to take up the matter seriously, as they had no intention of making it merely a pleasant social function. ... Mr P.S. McDonnell Solr. (Chairman City U.I.L.), said if ever there was a time in Irish history when the men and women of Ireland should give open profession of their inward faith he believed that moment was the present (*applause*).”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1914)

“The Ardrahan Volunteer Corps continues to improve in efficiency and increase in numbers.

... To complete and perfect matters, Mrs Shawe-Taylor, widow of the popular Capt. Shawe-Taylor, Ardrahan, has organised a Ladies Nursing Corps. The first meeting was held in the school at which Fr Carr presided. Dr Foley and nurses Trotter and Madden attended. The Hon. Mrs Perse was also present, and there was a big assembly of eligible young ladies. Father Carr and Dr Foley addressed the meeting, and after some discussion it was decided to affiliate the branch to *Cumann na mBan* of the I.N.V.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914)

“The lectures in connection with Part II, conducted by Drs Mahon and Waters, were started on Monday evening, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, and were well attended. ... The lectures are held every Tuesday and Thursday evenings, from 6 to 8.20 p.m.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 6<sup>th</sup> February 1915)

“The examination in connection with its hygiene and nursing classes took place last night (Thursday), at 7 o'clock, in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, when 22 candidates presented themselves for examination. The examination was conducted by Dr McGrath, Dublin.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1915)

### **Sports and social**

“**Camógaíocht:** University College met *Cumann na mBan* in a friendly game at South Park on Sunday. There was a good attendance and keen interest was centred in the contest, particularly by the followers of the *Cumann na mBan* team, who were making their first appearance in contests. The College kept their opponents on the defensive during the first half, scoring five goals without encountering any serious opposition. ... At the final whistle the scores were six goals to nil. The *Cumann na mBan* possesses material which training in matches like Sunday's would not take long to develop.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1918)

“The ceilidhe held by Loughrea branch, *Cumann na mBan*, on Sunday night was very successful, over eighty couples attending. There was a large attendance from the town and from Gort, Ballinakill, Leitrim and Attymon. Music was supplied by the Ballinakill Ceilidhe Band. ... Misses C. Lally, Cosmona, and E. Broderick, West Bridge, contributed a vocal duet entitled ‘*The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan*.’”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1934)

“Annual Dinner on Wednesday, February 10 and cordially invite all former members of *Cumann na mBan* who have approved service. All those wishing to attend should forward their applications not later than January 28<sup>th</sup> to the Hon. Secretary, Tom Flood, Pax House, Fr. Griffin Road, Galway.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1954)

“Notice – Please note that all Counterfoils and Cards, with remittance, in connection with draw on the Galway Plate, to be run at Ballybrit on the 27<sup>th</sup> July next, should be returned not later than the 16<sup>th</sup> July to:- Tom Flood, Hon. Sec. Association of I.R.A. and *Cumann na mBan*, Canal Road, Galway.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1955)

“Patrick’s Day – Only sign of the once-great National feast was the sight of a few faithful stalwarts of the Gaelic League taking up the annual *Ciste na Teangan* collection at the church gates. ... Old timers will recall a St. Patrick’s Camogie match being proscribed by the R.I.C. in Ballinasloe and, on the same day, *Cumann na mBan* members were removed from a Hall they were preparing for a Ceili by the same guardians of the law.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1980)

### **Commemorations, memorials and re-unions**

“The Easter Week Commemoration ceremonies in Galway City were conducted with peace and dignity. The following units took part:- Colour Party, Galway Labour Band, Óglaigh na hÉireann, Roll of Honour, Fianna Éireann, *Cumann na mBan*.”

(*Connacht Sentinel*, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1935)

“In the quiet country graveyard of Donaghpatrick, near Headford, on Sunday last, veterans of Ireland’s fight for freedom stood again shoulder to shoulder around a tall, freshly hewn monument, honouring the dead. ... The parade from Headford included units of the Old I.R.A. from North Galway, and from Cork came a colour party led by Tomas MacCurtain. *Fianna Éireann*, *Cumann na mBan* and *Cumann na gCailini* units from the southern capital also took part.”

(*Tuam Herald*, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1952)

### **“Old I.R.A. Athenry Company**

The above Company invite all Pre-Truce Old I.R.A. and *Cumann na mBan* to attend Memorial Mass for deceased members of the Athenry Area at Athenry Parish Church on EASTER MONDAY at 10 a.m.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1954)

“Tuam Brigade Old I.R.A. held their annual Easter commemoration at the New Cemetery on Sunday last. ... Their fight would be remembered forever, not for its military success, but because it aroused a sleeping nation and enkindled a national spirit such as had never existed before. Many were executed and hundreds were jailed, but the Volunteers, *Cumann na mBan* and the *Fianna* grew in strength in later years to continue the fight.”

(*Tuam Herald*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1957)

“On St. Patrick’s Day the Gort Battalion I.R.A. Old Comrades Association will have the Anniversary Mass offered at the Church of St. Teresa, Labane, for the deceased members of the Old I.R.A. and *Cumann na mBan* of Gort Battalion area.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1959)

“Mountbellew Company Old I.R.A. held their Easter commemoration parade at Moylough on Sunday last. ... Members of the company from Moylough, Mountbellew, Newbridge, Ballygar, Ballymacward, Gurteen, Menlough and Skehana units took part. Mass was offered in St. Patrick’s Church, Moylough, for all deceased Old I.R.A. and *Cumann na mBan* members, and the parade took place to Esker Stephens cemetery, where the rosary was recited and wreaths laid on graves.”

(*Tuam Herald*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1963)

“On Easter Monday, Mass will be held in Kilbecanty Church at 12 o’clock for the deceased members of the I.R.A., and Veterans of *Cumann na mBan* after which a plaque will be blessed and unveiled at Ballycahalan where Liam Mellows spent most of his time between 1915 and 1916. ... On Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, the plaque in Limepark will be blessed and unveiled. ... Mass will be celebrated in Peterswell Church on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> April at 2 p.m. ... All members of *Cumann na mBan* have been invited to attend both occasions.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1966)

### **Pensions**

“Legal proceedings in five County Galway cases – including those of two women – were commenced before Mr Justice Haugh in the High Court Dublin on Friday last when conditional orders of certiorari directed to the Minister of Defence to show cause why the reports of the Referee under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934, rejecting the claims for service certificates (entitling them to pensions) should not be quashed were granted. ... In other Galway cases Mr Connolly was instructed by Mr Vincent P. Shields, solicitor. The affidavit of Mrs Bridget Lardiner, Athenry, set out that she joined the local branch of *Cumann na mBan* in August 1915. She attended classes in first aid and signalling and took part in activities preparatory to the Rising in 1916. Lectures were given by Liam Mellows and Frank Hynes. Julia Morrissey, of Church-street, Athenry, was the officer in charge of *Cumann na mBan*.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1943)

### **Galway County Council**

“Galway County Council adjourned their meeting on Saturday for a week as a mark of respect to the Chairman, Mr Martin Quinn, on the death of his sister. The adjournment was proposed by Mr M. Higgins and seconded by Mr J.J. Nestor. ... The late Mrs Beegan had been in the forefront of *Cumann na mBan* and gave great service to the Republican movement.”

(*Tuam Herald*, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1952)

### **Connections**

“Private C. O Cinneide, a native of Caheroyan, Athenry, Co. Galway, was presented with a certificate as the best member of the second platoon of recruits to take part in the passing-out parade on Renmore Barracks square within the past few weeks. ... Private Kennedy is a nephew of Commandant Larry Lardner, Second in Command to Liam Mellows during the rebellion in Co. Galway. His mother and aunts were members of *Cumann na mBan*.”

(*Connacht Sentinel*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1952)

“Mr Peter Greene, a member of Galway Corporation since its restoration in 1937 and, prior to that, a member of the Urban Council, was elected Mayor of Galway in succession to Ald. J. Owens, who proposed the election of the new Mayor. ... His wife was formerly Miss M.K. Egan of Shrule, Co. Mayo. Like Mr Greene, she was active in the fight for freedom and was a member of *Cumann na mBan*.”

(*Connacht Tribune*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1954)

“John (Jack) O’Flaherty of Firpark, Gort, one of the last surviving members of the Gort and East Clare Old IRA (Beagh Coy. 1<sup>st</sup> Batt.) died recently. In the War of Independent [*sic*] he

was the commanding officer of the ill-fated Loughnane brothers. ... Jack's sister, Mrs Annie Monahan had tried in vain to warn them that day. While shopping in Gort she received a message from *Cumann na mBan* that the trashing [*sic*] would be raided. She set out on her pony and trap to warn those at the trashing [*sic*] of the pending raid, but within a mile of her destination the Crosley Tenders of Tans passed her and Pat and Harry Loughnane were captured and killed."

(*Connacht Tribune*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1983)

### **Unveiling Mellows Memorial**

"On Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1916, the Irish Volunteers in South Galway answered the call to arms and mobilised. On Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1965 – forty nine years later – a monument was unveiled to their courageous leader, Liam Mellows. The monument, unveiled and blessed near where Raftery, the poet, is buried in Killeeneen, Craughwell last Sunday is a simple stone structure surmounted by a cross. It was unveiled by one of the volunteers and former T.D. and Galway County Council official, Mr Mattie Niland, Kilcolgan and Blessed by Father Desmond Carroll C.C. Clarenbridge. Mr Niland outlined for the big crowd of volunteers, I.R.A. veterans and *Cumann na mBan* the history of the Easter Rising in South Galway."

(*Connacht Tribune*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1965)

### **Obituaries**

"Following Solemn Requiem Mass at St. Michael's Church, Ballinasloe, on Monday, Mrs M. Naughton, Mackney, Ballinasloe, at which military honours were rendered with a guard of honour of the Ballinasloe Old I.R.A., took place to Creagh Cemetery. The coffin was draped in the Tricolour. ... At the graveside Mr Tadhg McLochain in a brief oration enumerated her activities as a member of *Cumann na mBan*, and as a lifelong worker in the Republican and national movement."

(*Connacht Tribune*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1960)

"Mrs Delia Crowe, whose death occurred at St. Teresa's Nursing Home, Salthill, Galway, was born in Tawin, Oranmore, in 1881. She was a member of a well-known Galway family, being a sister of the late Dr Seamus O'Beirn and the late Dr Bartley O'Beirn. She was a member of *Cumann na mBan* and was associated with the Gaelic College in Tawin with Roger Casement and President de Valera, both of whom stayed at her home in Tawin."

(*Connacht Tribune*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1965)

"Rev. Mother Mary Aquinas McDermott, whose death occurred suddenly at the Mercy Convent, Ballinasloe, was one of the outstanding figures in Irish Secondary Education. ... From her school days she was intensely nationalistic and while at University became actively associated with *Cumann na mBan*."

(*Connacht Tribune*, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1975)

### **Jubilees**

"The Athenry Liam Mellows Memorial Committee invite all members of the Old I.R.A., *Cumann na mBan* and general public to the Commemoration Ceremonies in conjunction with 1916 JUBILEE ON EASTER MONDAY NEXT AT ATHENRY."

(*Connacht Tribune*, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1966)

“Tuam will be the venue for the North Galway 1916 Jubilee Commemoration on Sunday. ... The parade will be led by the Tuam Brass Band and will assemble at The Square [with] F.C.A. Colour Party, Town Commissioners and public representatives from North Galway, Old I.R.A., *Cumann na mBan* and F.C.A.”  
(*Connacht Tribune*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1966)

Easter Week Commemoration Ceremonies were held throughout Connemara on Friday of last week. ... After Mass [in Clifden] proceedings continued in the nearby Convent grounds where Mr Gerard Bartley inspected a guard of honour provided by the F.C.A. Both he and Professor O’Buachalla greeted I.R.A. veterans and members of *Cumann na mBan*.”  
(*Connacht Tribune*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1966)

### 1916 – Immediate aftermath

“Three lorries from Galway toured the West Riding bringing scores of rebels each day. From Gort, Loughrea, Athenry went out raiding parties which never came back empty handed. Two hundred and seventy rebels were arrested during the first week and most of them were sent to Dublin by warship as it was feared there might be an attempt to rescue them if they were sent by train. The members of *Cumann na mBan* were not arrested but were subjected to numerous house-searchings and severe interrogation.”  
(*Connacht Tribune*, –23<sup>rd</sup> April 1966)

#### MRS. M. MITCHELL

Mrs. Kathleen Mitchell (nee Flynn), wife of Mr. Michael Mitchell, Carrowkeel, Dunsandle, whose death occurred last week was one of the brave band of women in *Cumann na mBan* who helped in the fight for freedom of times at the risk of their lives.

The late Mrs. Mitchell who hailed from Menlough, Ballinasloe where her family had strong links with the National Movement, carried dispatches for her brothers while they were on the run. Her brother, Mr. Joe Flynn, was Captain of the local Coy. I.R.A. in Menlough and was arrested by the Black and Tans and taken to Galway Jail. His mother was brought there in an effort to get him to break down and confess but the ruse failed. He was then sentenced to death and sent to Dartmoor Prison where he went on hunger strike for 17 days, in company of his colleague, Mr. Pake Ruane, of Vermont. Their lives were saved, however, by the signing of the Treaty, as they entered the 18 day on hunger strike.

#### O.N.E. – Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen

“A branch of O.N.E. – the organisation of national ex-servicemen – is shortly to be established in Tuam. ... O.N.E. membership is open to any person having served in the old I.R.A., F.C.A., L.D.F., Fianna Éireann, *Cumann na mBan*, or naval service.”  
(*Connacht Tribune*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1972)

#### Media blackout – a banned organisation

“It was only a timely intervention by Posts, Telegraphs and Transport Minister, Mr Albert Reynolds last week which prevented Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act from looking plain foolish in the eyes of the public. The Section bans people like members of the IRA, *Cumann na mBan*, and other named organisations from appearing on RTE, or from being interviewed on RTE radio and television.”  
(*Connacht Tribune*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1981)

Left: Article from the *Connacht Tribune*, Friday, November 27, 1970.

# ADA ENGLISH (1875 - 1944) AND CUMANN NA mBAN

by Dr Brian Casey

*Cumann na mBan* was established on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1914 with the express intention of furthering the cause of Irish liberty by any means possible and organising Irish women in this cause. During the 1916 Rising, it became integrated into the army of the Irish Republic with members acting as Red Cross workers and message carriers as they became involved in general operations to assist the rebels. Members continued these activities during the Anglo-Irish War and they had inspired leadership in the guise of Countess Constance Markievicz, Jenny Wyse-Power and others. Membership transcended class distinctions with women from all walks of life joining. One of the more distinguished yet almost forgotten members was Dr Ada English, who spent most of her working life based at the Connaught Lunatic Asylum in Ballinasloe.

English was born in Caherciveen, Co. Kerry and grew up in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. She graduated from the Royal University of Ireland in 1903 and was one of the first female psychiatrists in the country. As the move towards Irish independence intensified, English became increasingly attracted to the cultural nationalist revival as well as nationalist politics. She was taught Irish by Patrick Pearse and became a fluent speaker under his tutelage. English had become radicalised and during the period between the 1916 Rising and the outbreak of the Anglo-Irish War she became more intensely involved in political activity. She always maintained her involvement in *Cumann na mBan* as she became a member of its executive and used her position in the asylum to convince members of the RIC to leave the force and to take up paid employment in the asylum instead. This was done in an effort to undermine the forces of the State that were challenging the growing assertiveness of the nationalist movement.

English's political activity led to her arrest on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1921 when a considerable quantity of seditious literature was discovered; this helped the police in their efforts to stymie her involvement in politics. It resulted in her being imprisoned in Galway Gaol for nine months following a court martial on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1921, though she was released the following May because her health had suffered. The authorities were generally keen not to let prisoners die owing to ill-health lest a martyr be created. While in prison, English was returned unopposed as a TD representing the National University of Ireland and she became one of five female TDs in the second Dáil that ratified the Treaty. As well as being a staunch supporter of Éamon de Valera, English was also strongly opposed to the Treaty but could see some potential benefits if the clause regarding oaths was removed. As the Civil War broke out, English was resolutely on the side of the anti-Treatyites and the ensuing truce did not temper her radicalism.

English remained active in politics until at least the end of the 1920s. Mary McSwiney, sister of Terence, was also a TD and was aggrieved with the post-Civil War Dáil and formed an alternative Dáil in protest. English was listed as an absentee member of 'Miss MacSwiney's Dáil' and while she did not attend meetings, the fact that she was listed as a member is indicative of where her sympathies lay. Her political involvement during the revolutionary

period was coupled with her medical career in Ballinasloe and as her biographer, Brendan Kelly has stated, this makes her even more remarkable.<sup>1</sup>

Because of her residence in a provincial town and the lack of a personal archive, English has not been subject to the same assessment as other members of *Cumann na mBan* until recently. The secondary leaders are as important as the national players and Ada English is a prime example of the level of regional activity in the national cause. That she and others like her did not leave behind a personal archive should not be a hindrance in filling in the gaps in the wider narrative. The richness of the contemporary evidence that has survived should allow scholars to paint a picture of these personalities, thus adding to the body of literature on the revolutionary period and allowing for a greater understanding of this most turbulent period in Irish history.

<sup>[1]</sup> Kelly, Brendan. *Ada English: Patriot and Psychiatrist*. Dublin: *Irish Academic*, 2014.

# ALICE CASHEL (1878 - 1958)

by Dr Mark Humphrys

Alice Cashel was a Sinn Féin and *Cumann na mBan* activist who became a councillor on Galway County Council. She was born in July 1878 in Birr, Co. Offaly, where her father worked briefly as station master for the Great Southern and Western Railway. The family later moved to Limerick and then Cork. Her grandfather was a policeman, and her father travelled to London in 1882 to give evidence against subversives. By the early 20th century the family's politics were changing. Alice's sister was married to James O'Mara, who became a Home Rule MP in 1900 and resigned in 1907 to join Sinn Féin. Alice became an early supporter of Sinn Féin in Cork and was a co-founder of *Cumann na mBan*'s Cork branch circa 1914-15. She campaigned for Sinn Féin in the by-elections in South Armagh in February 1918 and East Cavan in June 1918.

In summer 1918 she went to Connemara to organise *Cumann na mBan*. On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1918 she held a meeting in Clifden which was banned by the authorities and broken up by the police. She went on the run for a time. During the War of Independence 1919-21 she went to live at her sister's house, Cashel House in Connemara (now a hotel); the house was raided in April 1920 and she was arrested. She was jailed for one week and her release was celebrated with the lighting of a bonfire at Cashel hill. The Bureau of Military History statement recounts other adventures while she was hiding from the authorities at Cashel. On June 7<sup>th</sup> 1920, she was co-opted onto Galway County Council and was elected Vice-Chairman on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1920; she held the position until 1921. The leadership of Galway County Council answered to the Dáil only, but there was some opposition to this. When Alice was on a trip abroad, Galway County Council passed a famous peace resolution, on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1920, repudiating the authority of the Dáil and calling for a truce. Alice returned quickly to overturn the resolution.

She was arrested on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1921 when she came back to Galway. She was charged with having "seditious documents" (documents from the Dáil). She was tried at Renmore Barracks, Galway, on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1921, and was sentenced to six months in Galway Gaol. She refused to recognise the court, and declared the allegiance of Galway County Council to the Dáil, "*the only government which I and they recognise*". She was jailed until 25 July 1921.

She opposed the Treaty and was on the Republican side in the Civil War. In 1935 she published a patriotic novel, *The lights of Leaca Bán*, which was used in schools. She never married, lived in Roundstone, Connemara and died in Galway on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1958. The Taoiseach and President sent representatives to her funeral. Alice is buried in the New Cemetery, Bohermore, Galway.

All sources for the above and additional information relating to Alice Cashel may be found on <http://humphrysfamilytree.com/Cashel/al.html>

The Freeman's Journal, Friday February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1921

## GALWAY LADIES' TRIAL

Court-martial Follow Raids for Documents

DÁIL ÉIREANN: *Cumann na mBan*

Attitude of Council Chairman and Doctor

Two ladies, Miss Alice Cashel, vice-chairperson of Galway Co. Council, and Dr Ada English, assistant medical superintendent of Ballinasloe Asylum, were tried by Field General Courtmartial at Galway yesterday.

Miss Cashel was charged with being in possession of a document header "Dáil Éireann", addressed to "All Public Bodies in Ireland."

She declined to recognise the court. A police witness swore that on January 20 he searched Shrahallagh Lodge, Connemara. In a cabinet he found the document. It contained instruction relating to local government. He examined some luggage and found a letter addressed to Miss Cashel. A civilian, employed at Shrahallagh House, Connemara, said he admitted the police. Miss Cashel gave him his orders and paid him. She stayed in the house two days previous to the search.

Asked if she had anything to say, accused said: "While not recognising the Court, I wish to make a brief statement, so that the stand I take may be quite clear."

"I hold that I would be justified in having in my possession, and acting upon, any instructions that might be issued to me as acting-chairman of Galway Co. Council, a council pledged to Dáil Éireann, the only Government which I and they recognise, namely, the Government of the Irish Republic."

The sentence will be promulgated.

*CUMANN NA MBHAN* [sic]

Dr English was next tried for having in her possession on January 19 a printed document headed "Cumann na mBhan" (sic), containing details of how to form a branch and other details.

Two clergymen and a number of lady friends, including Miss Cashel, were present during the trial.

The President – Have you any personal objection to me or any member of my Court?

The Accused – Have you been appointed by An Dáil to try me?

The President - I have been appointed by the military authority who always appoints the Presidents and members of the Court.

The Accused – Then I object to the members trying me. I object to your jurisdiction, when you have not been appointed by the authority we recognise, An Dáil.

The President explained that it was customary to ask the accused person if there was any personal objection to the members comprising the Court.

### AN OBJECTION

The Accused – I object to every member as being in the pay of the enemy.

A military swore that he, with a party of men, searched the apartments of Dr English at the Asylum. Documents relating to *Cumann na mBan* were found.

A sergeant-major corroborated.

Sentence will be promulgated.

Dr English and Miss Cashel were conveyed under escort in a private motor car to Galway prison.

# EVA O'FLAHERTY (1874 - 1963)

by Mary J Murphy

Eva O'Flaherty was born in Lisdonagh House, Caherlistrane; her parents were of the landed gentry and avid Catholic nationalists. Eva was a member of *Cumann na mBan* in Dublin in 1914, with Louise Gavan Duffy and acted as a courier around the GPO during The Rising. She cycled from the city's outskirts and bluffed her way past sentries by bursting into tears and claiming to have a sick relative in need.<sup>1</sup> Seán MacDermott was a particular friend of Eva's, as were Dr Kathleen Lynn, Linda Kearns, Máire Comerford, Anita MacMahon, Kathleen Clarke, Colm O'Loughlainn, Dr Mark Ryan, Darrell Figgis, Cardinal Dalton and Fr F.X. Martin.

Such was Eva O'Flaherty's contribution to the fledgling Irish state that President Éamon de Valera sent Senator Mark Killilea as his government representative to give the oration at her funeral in Donaghpatrick graveyard in April 1963. Her coffin was draped with a tricolour and she received full military honours. Some of those who were present at her funeral, including Brendan Gannon who was from Caherlistrane and retired solicitor Henry Comerford, recalled the extent that Senator Killilea extolled Eva's extensive *Cumann na mBan* activities.

Eva is considered to have been one of the sixteen couriers known as 'basket-women' during the Rising, so called because they carried messages in the baskets of their bikes. They were chosen by Kathleen Clarke and Sorcha McMahon at the behest of Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott. Through her Limerick family connections Eva knew the Dalys and the Clarkes, and, as a co-founder of *Scoil Acla* on Achill Island in 1910, she knew Figgis and O'Loughlainn. Eva corresponded with Dr Lynn, Mrs Clarke and Máire Comerford all her life. She studied millinery in Paris at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where she knew Countess Markievicz and had a millinery emporium on Sloane Street, London in 1913. Dr Ryan, a senior London-based IRB man, was her 'mentor' and prior to World War I Eva was a well known beauty in the Café Royal, mixing with an eclectic intellectual artistic set, many of whom visited her over the years in Achill. On the island, she operated St Colman's Knitting Industries for five decades, which provided much needed employment for local women. Her portrait was painted by Marie Howet and Derek Hill. The artist Paul Henry was a lifelong friend and writer Graham Green played cards regularly in her home. Eva was an intriguing mixture of a fashionista and an intellectual with a heightened political awareness, as well as being a cousin of Oscar Wilde and a relation of London Lord Mayor, Boris Johnson.

Her former nurse Mary Jo Noonan summed Eva up well. "She was unique, beautiful, witty, good fun and young at heart until the day she died. It was a privilege to look after her. Yeats was her favourite poet. She liked Seán MacDermott and talked about him and 1916 a lot. She joked about having the ferocious O'Flaherty temper, liked me to read the Oxford Book of Verse to her over breakfast and was a real rebel at heart, in a nice kind of way."

<sup>1</sup> These details were conveyed by Mary Jo Noonan, her private nurse who was with her for the last six months of her life.

# MAI O'DEA AND THE FAHY FAMILY, CAHERDUFF, ARDRAHAN

Courtesy of Cllr Michael Fahy

Mai O'Dea, born in Carron, Co. Clare in 1910, was just four years old when her mother died. Her father, being left to rear four small children, sent Mai to her grandparents, in the Garrahy household at Furglan, Ennistymon. The Garrahy family were staunchly republican with two sons actively involved in the IRA's Mid-Clare Brigade and this undoubtedly influenced Mai, even though she was still a very young girl. She became a member of *Cumann na mBan* and was actively involved in all aspects of the organisation's activities during the War of Independence, which included delivering dispatches, concealing arms and ammunition and looking after men 'on the run'. Some of Mai's colleagues in *Cumann na mBan* in the local area were Marie O'Dwyer, Maria Conneally and Nora Morgan.

During those troubled years, the Garrahy household was a regular target for raids and attacks by the RIC and Black and Tans. In one such raid, following the Rineen Ambush in September 1920, a number of people, including Mai's uncles, were seriously wounded and Mai was sent to seek medical assistance. This entailed travelling to Milltown Malbay in the dead of night, a distance of about 10 miles, through a hostile environment to contact Dr Michael Hillery, who arrived the following morning to treat the injured volunteers. Dr Hillery was the father of Dr Patrick Hillery who subsequently became Uachtaran na hÉireann. Mai clearly remembered the aftermath of the Rineen Ambush when the town of Ennistymon was burned and in the process many innocent people were assaulted and killed: "the sound of rafters exploding in the burning houses was like rifle shots, and the smell of the burning was all around the district for weeks afterwards".

Mai also remembered Fr Michael Griffin who served as a curate in Ennistymon from about 1918 to 1920. Fr Griffin, who was a strong republican sympathiser, was a native of Gurteen, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. In late 1920, he was transferred from Ennistymon to Galway city. Shortly after this, he was abducted and murdered and his body was buried in a bog near Barna.

As well as being involved in the fight for freedom, the Garrahy family were also deeply rooted in all aspects of Irish culture, including traditional music.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 1949, at Carron Church, Mai O'Dea married John Fahy, a member of the Old IRA, of Caherduff, Ardrahan, following which she came to live in the Fahy household where she remained for the rest of her life. After John's death in 1985 she remained on the 70-acre family farm with her son Michael and, when in 1979 he contested the local government elections, she became actively involved in his campaign and assisted with his constituency work.

Mai O'Dea-Fahy died, aged 98, on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2008 and was laid to rest in Labane Cemetery.

# CISSIE DAVOREN (NEE LALLY)

by Christina Cassidy (granddaughter of Cissie Davoren)

My maternal grandmother was born on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1909 in Loughrea. Her family had a butchering business in the town. Her given names were Mary Theresa, but she was always known as Cissie. Her mother died when she was quite young, so her father and her uncles primarily raised her and her brother Syl and sister Nellie. Granny was a fabulous cook and worked in that capacity both in private houses and nursing homes in Galway and in Dublin. She was working in Dublin during the 1932 Eucharistic Congress and often spoke about how spectacular it all was. She had a profound faith. Everything that was good, bad or indifferent was invariably put down to 'the will of God' – a will that had to be accepted and its consequences were to be dealt with.

Her maiden name was always very important to Granny. Anyone foolish enough to disagree or cross swords with her would promptly be reminded that 'there was blood in the Lallys, you know' - generations of 'ould stock' who fought and in some cases died for their beliefs. Her father, John, had fought in World War I and by all accounts had returned a traumatised man – hardly surprising, given the horrific conditions we now know most soldiers endured. His brother James emigrated to Boston in 1915 at the age of 20, where he joined the American army. He was killed in action 'under circumstances of exceptional bravery' just a few weeks before the armistice, having refused to leave his post as a radio officer in the face of enemy bombardment. Two other brothers, Patrick and Michael, were 'on the run' and were subsequently interned following their capture during the course of a visit home to see their dying mother.

On 5<sup>th</sup> May 1934, the *Connacht Tribune* reported on a ceili held in Loughrea in support of *Cumann na mBan*. It noted that 'Misses C. Lally, Cosmona, and E. Broderick, West Bridge, contributed a vocal duet entitled *The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan*. That granny could sing was no great surprise to us, she had a beautiful singing voice and loved to sing, but finding out that she had sung at this event was a very proud moment for all the family. Anecdotal evidence suggests that granny assisted those 'on the run' and carried messages for her uncles and their comrades. She remained staunchly republican up to her death on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1994. Thankfully, her death notice appeared in her daily 'bible' – *The Irish Press*, a paper that was to close shortly thereafter. Cissie Lally, my grandmother, was a feisty, determined, sociable and patriotic woman who never forgot her roots and of whom I am immensely proud.

# MARY MCTIERNAN (NEE REGAN)

by Helen McTiernan (daughter of Mary McTiernan)

(This article was forwarded to the Editors by Pat Barrett, Donnellan Drive, Loughrea, County Galway.)

Mary McTiernan (néé Regan) was born in Loughrea, Co. Galway, in April 1903. She was one of the many brave women who helped during the Irish Revolution. She delivered messages to members of the IRA and assisted men who were on the run and evading capture from the Black and Tans. She also took dispatches to Dublin and visited Volunteers in Athlone and Galway prisons. She received an IRA medal for her efforts and, when she passed away in August 1988, her coffin was draped with the Tricolour.

## KATE ARMSTRONG: MY GRANDMOTHER

by Kathy Keane

Kate Armstrong (nee Glynn) was born in Killeeneen on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1885. She was the youngest of twelve children. She never saw her eldest brother as he had emigrated to America before she was born. Kate had been greatly influenced by the Walsh family who also lived in Killeeneen at this time. Mr and Mrs Walsh had been teachers in the local National School.

The Walsh family were 'true Republicans' and had direct communications with the leaders of the 1916 Rebellion, having travelled to Dublin on a number of occasions to meet with them prior to Easter 1916. Strategy meetings were held at Walsh's with people coming from across the country to attend. Walsh's house became the Head Quarters for *Cumann na mBan* for the Killeeneen Branch. Later, it was a safe house but it was often raided.

Kate Armstrong was Branch President of the *Cumann na mBan* in Killeeneen from 1915 until 1921 when she got married. She was one of eleven members in 1916. She saw active service during 1916 from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April with forces from Killeeneen to Moyode with Liam Mellows as the Commanding Officer. Her duties included the collection of food and the cooking of same, the carrying of dispatches and seeing to the welfare of the Volunteers.

On the morning of Easter Sunday 1916, after mass at Roveagh, she was mobilised together with seven other *Cumann na mBan* members. Their duty was to get breakfast for the Volunteers who had assembled there. On Monday, they reassembled at the old school house in Killeeneen where she and other members catered for the Volunteers under Liam Mellows, Eammon Corbett and Mr Neilan. She remained there overnight.

On Tuesday, she carried out the same duties as on the Monday and on Wednesday she and three other *Cumann na mBan* members walked the six miles to Moyode where hundreds of Volunteers had assembled. During her stay in Moyode word came that the British were

on their way; suddenly it all became very real and fear gripped the group. A member of the *Cumann* turned to Kate and said, "Kate what are we going to do? We will all be killed". Kate replied, "There is a priest in the next room if there is anything troubling you". The British did not arrive.

Kate remained there catering for the Volunteers until Friday evening, when they were disbanded. She got orders to go back to her area, gather food and have it ready for the Volunteers on their return. Some Volunteers arrived in Killeeneen on Sunday and at intervals later.

She stayed Friday and Saturday nights at the Walsh's and returned to her own home on Sunday. Her house was raided several times but more so during Easter week. Her home was a 'safe house' and sheltered a number of Volunteers. She recalled that a man from Tipperary stayed in her house for two weeks and a political prisoner stayed on another occasion. She also helped the volunteers in hiding out in the fields and later, after she had married and moved out of Killeeneen, she sheltered people in her new home. Kate was recognised for her service during Easter 1916 and was granted a pension under the Army Pensions Act 1923/1953 and Military Services Pensions Acts 1934. I remember as a child in Primary School taking her medals to school to show to the teacher and my classmates and how proud I felt that I had such a brave grandmother.

She held Liam Mellows in high regard right up until her death in 1977.

## **MEMORIES OF MY EARLY YEARS IN CAHERCRIN, CRAUGHWELL: RECOLLECTIONS OF BRIDGET RUANE (NEE MORRISSEY)**

This article first appeared in *Beginnings* - a journal produced by students at Presentation College, Athenry, in May 1982 and is reproduced with the kind permission of Mr Finbar O'Regan, Swan Gate, Athenry, Co. Galway.

I was born in the year 1898 on the 17<sup>th</sup> March, at Caherclin, Craughwell, Co. Galway. I was educated at Craughwell NS until I attained the age of 14 years. I had six brothers and two sisters, all older except one brother, all of whom God has called from this world, RIP I trust.

After I left school, I stayed at home, helping my mother as both my sisters were married. Then my father bought me a bicycle to do the shopping, etc, being 3 miles from Athenry town.

### **1916 - 1921**

In 1914, I was asked by Miss Morrissey if I would join the girls' movement in Athenry. I asked her what it meant; she said "just take first aid lessons and help at

sports and hurling, sell badges and attend sewing classes”. She said “We have already got ten girls”. I said I would but as I had a lot of work to do at home, it would have to be in the evenings, and she said “of course”, so I started at first aid classes two evenings a week given by Dr Kit O’Farrell of Ballymana, Craughwell. And later, I helped making tricolour badges, small flags, kit-bags, etc. I already knew that there were formed companies of Men’s Volunteers in many areas, small numbers at first but later many joined. We had a Company in our area called the Rockfield Company. My brother Gilbert was the head of that Company, as every company had to have a Commander. There were only about twenty-one men at first but later I could name at the present moment thirty-seven.

### **Parade meeting in the Back Lawn, 1915**

In 1915, I was told there was to be a parade meeting in the back lawn in Athenry (now Kenny Park). All Volunteer Companies now formed a battalion and Larry Lardner, Athenry, was batt-officer. I remember all.

Companies marched into the lawn and most of them carried single-barrel shot guns. Any man could have a single barrel gun at that time as there was no law or licence for that, but no one could have a double barrel or rifle. The RIC were outside the gate on the day of that first public Volunteer march and thought to stop them, but later decided to let them pass. We girls, wearing the Tricolour, marched in afterwards and took up our place at one end of the field. Two men in uniform from Dublin came in to inspect the Volunteers who were lined up in two lines. I would say there were about three or four hundred in all, as companies came from Athenry, Derrydonnell, Oranmore, Carnaun, Newcastle, Craughwell (who had by then changed its name from Rockfield), Cregmore, Kilconiron, Kiltulla, Monivea, Killimordaly, Clarenbridge, Maree, Castlegar, Claregalway, I don’t remember any more. The captain of each company stood in front of his men. I remember that those two men came up between those two lines, addressing them and then came to speak to us girls. I remember him saying that the Volunteer girls of Dublin were now called *Cumann na mBan*, and that we were to be known by that name in future. Our duty was to attend the Volunteers, cater for them and help in every way possible; by collecting funds, helping at sports, helping at dances, etc. Later, we did all this by giving teas and sandwiches at sports, at hurling matches, and selling little tricolour badges.

People were very poor at that time. We could give a cup of tea and a jam sandwich for one shilling (having profit at the same time). The badges only cost one penny and the dances two shillings to get in. There were plenty of boys and girls who played music with melodeons, yet all monies taken were handed over to the brigade to buy arms, ammunition and steel to make pikes. I knew blacksmiths who made hundreds of pikes ‘on the quiet’.

### **Liam Mellows and Joe Mullen and the Easter Rising of 1916**

Then, in late summer of 1915 I think, there were two young men students from Pearse College in Dublin to organise all west Galway. Their names were Liam Mellows and Joe Mullen. They worked with great zeal in training the young Volunteers in the

use of arms, drilling, etc. They stayed in different houses pointed out to them by the company captains in the different areas and were catered for by leading members of *Cumann na mBan* (who also had lessons given to them by Liam Mellows). This continued until the Rising of 1916, on Easter Tuesday morning, when all companies were told that the men of Dublin were out fighting in Dublin since Monday, while the dispatch to the other counties was in some way delayed. Some counties did not turn out but Galway did, when the word got to them. Mellows, and all of the companies that I have mentioned, turned out and mobilised at the 'Farmyard', now Mellows College, Athenry.

I and some other members of *Cumann na mBan* arrived in the early afternoon with our first-aid kits which contained bandages, iodine, gauze, ointment, etc. My company members asked me if I would cycle into Athenry for cigarettes, tobacco, matches, socks and other things. I went in and Miss Morrissey, Miss Kennedy (afterwards Mrs Larry Lardner), Dolly Broderick and Kathleen Cleary (who were the leading members) supplied me. I must say, all the girls of Athenry were wonderful in sending out food and helping in every way. I cannot mention the names of all the members so I hope it will be overlooked, as my memory is not as good now. I know I cycled in from the 'Farmyard' to Athenry at least four times with messages from the company leaders, as I was the only member having a bicycle at the time. I met Fr Feeney (later tortured and drowned by the Black and Tans in 1920). I remember Mattie Niland of Clarenbridge telling me who he was, and he just called to find out if any man or boy needed confession, if they had not already done their Easter duty. Fr Feeney only stayed an hour.

At about 5 o'clock the men were lined up for another march, not before there was some exchange of shots with the RIC who had a police hut near there. Our men took whatever guns and ammunition they had, then they ran them into the Athenry barracks and there they locked themselves up and no RIC were seen again until some days later.

### **Moyode Castle**

Our men then marched to Moyode Castle and the *Cumann na mBan* girls followed afterwards. I think I saw about six girls at Moyode that night before I left for home to get ready some grub. Two young boys had already collected food and an ass and cart and were waiting to be told where to take it. The neighbours were very good in giving our girls what they needed, so I told the young lads to go up to Fahy's in Templemartin and that they would be told there where to go. But they went no further, as there was word sent out to Fahy's that the fight was over in Dublin and that Captain Mellows, who had a despatch from there, told his men that there was no use in he having those men's lives in his hands, and that they were to go home quietly by the fields, as he had word from Galway that the British army stationed in Renmore were on their way to Moyode. He also said that, if any men or officers wanted to go with him, they could. About 150 men went with him and they went to Limepark where they demobbed later and went on the run. It was during the fight in Dublin (where there were many lives lost on both sides) that our men in Dublin got word that

the shipload of arms to come in to them was sunk outside Cork. Rodger Casement was taking them in.

So, early on Thursday, the RIC were out of Barracks and arresting all they could lay hands on. Some avoided arrest by going on the run for a while anyway. All were rounded up by the end of May and put into Galway jail, Limerick's Mount Joy, and Kilmainham; later, after a sham trial, they were sent in cattle boats to England and Wales and kept there, although some were sent home as their health was breaking down. I remember one of my brothers was in Wormwood Scrubs and another in Frongoch jail but they were released with many more before the end of September. My brother Gilbert was changed with many others to different jails. The prisoners were allowed letters and parcels but these were censored. Again, our *Cumann na mBan* girls showed their loyalty by sending out parcels of food such as cakes, cheese and cigarettes to their companies. Anyway, by Christmas the last of them were released. My brother Gilbert was among the last batch to be released. So ended the Rising.

It started again, a few years later, with the *Cumann na mBan* girls, or most of them, still helping. I must say that the girls were very good and will, I trust, be remembered with respect.

This article is also available on the following websites:

<http://homepage.eircom.net/~oreganathenry/oreganathenry/athenryjournal/memoriesofearlyyears.html> and

<http://homepage.eircom.net/~coldwoodns/localhistorymorrisseycahercrin.html>.

# BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY: WITNESS STATEMENTS

The Bureau of Military History Witness Collection covers the period between 1913 and 1921 and consists of 1,773 witness statements, 334 sets of contemporary documents, 42 sets of photographs and 13 voice-recordings that were collected by the State between 1947 and 1957. The motivation for the establishment of the Bureau in 1947 by Oscar Traynor TD, Minister for Defence, was to give individuals who played an active part in the events of this time period a chance to record their experiences. This primary source material now provides us with a window into the past and we are fortunate that the witness statements give us insights into the lives of the women of *Cumann na mBan* in County Galway and the roles they played during this revolutionary period of our history.

The following extracts from seven witness statements go some way in showing the diversity of work that *Cumann na mBan* carried out and portraying the women who were members of this organisation. What follows is just a mere sample of the material available for *Cumann na mBan* in County Galway that is to be found in the witness statements.

## **Excerpt from the Witness Statement of Mrs Margaret M. (Peg) Broderick-Nicholson**

I was born at 17 Prospect Hill, Galway, of parents with a strong nationalist outlook, especially my mother. I was educated at the Presentation Convent, Galway, where one of the nuns, Mother Brendan, who was one of the Joyces of Connemara, belonged to an outstanding Irish family. Well, I remember the Rebellion in 1916, a right good row in the playgrounds with an attempt by a number of girls wearing red, white and blue badges (which was usual during the First World War in the case of a number of people) to snatch our Sinn Féin (green, white and orange) badges. I may say they certainly got the worst of it, with the result that the Rev. Mother sent out an order that all the badges must be given up. Mother Brendan was instructed to have the order carried out, and I refused to give mine up until all the red, white and blue badges were also collected. She did get them all, and when I gave her mine she said: "I have done all the others, give me yours". I did so when she said: "I don't want to take it from you myself".

On the first evening of the Rising, I was on my way home when I noticed a number of shops were closed, including the shops that would not normally close on a Bank Holiday, which it was, being Easter Monday. I asked my mother what was wrong and she replied: "The boys are out in Dublin; there is a Rising." Some trouble was expected in Galway. I remember seeing some of the men with anxious faces who I afterwards knew were associated with the movement, George Nichols and Tommy Flanagan in particular.

In 1917 a branch of *Cumann na mBan* was formed in Galway, which I immediately joined. Our duties consisted of weekly drill, with our nights devoted to lectures on first-aid by Dr Brian Cusack, and other nights of instructional lectures in other subjects. I was later appointed a section commander, which, I think, carried the rank of sergeant.

Our principal duties outside what I have mentioned in 1918 were the continuous interruptions which we carried out at British recruiting meetings, moving through the people and singing

nationalist songs until the meeting collapsed or we were ejected.

I was asked by some Volunteers to take up intelligence work, which I did, and this partly consisted of keeping an eye out for RIC patrols and carrying out dispatches. I did a lot of work at the latter from the brigade to the various battalions at Tuam, Athenry and Connemara. At this time, I was very well known to the different officers in each area, having organised and taken part in concerts all over the country for the Volunteers. I was later trusted with carrying bundles of the Volunteer paper *An tóglach*.

We were working day and night in preparation for the very memorable general election of 1918. This being over, we started to have drills and exercised out the country. On one occasion, when we were on a Field Day at Barna, we were being instructed by an officer from the brigade or battalion. I think his name was Shiels. We were marching back through the village when we met a Volunteer scout who said he thought there were a few RIC outside the barracks waiting for us. Shortly afterwards two RIC on bicycles approached us, dismounted, and walked along our flanks. When we reached the barracks, I noticed the sergeant and six or seven men, who then made a charge out to arrest the Volunteer officer. We immediately pounced on the police. I remember getting up on one policeman's back and getting my two hands around his throat. He wriggled to knock me off and let his grip on the prisoner relax. Another RIC man intervened and pulled me off. I grabbed the second fellow's cap and beat him on the head with the hard peak, and the other fellow swung round and struck me with his revolver on the side of the head, above my ear. I was half stunned and staggered against the wall, when someone shouted "This is no time for fainting". I shook myself back to life, but by that time they had Shiels inside the barracks and came out firing shots in the air to frighten us, and using vile language. We collected all the stones, of which there were plenty, and broke every window in the barracks. We then reformed and commenced our march back very 'brónach' indeed.

Early in 1920, I was attached to the Brigade Staff for the usual intelligence, dispatches, and now the delivery and collection of revolvers and ammunition from place to place for various jobs as they were required. I also conveyed dispatches from General Seán MacEoin to Brigadier Tom Reddington, and vice versa.

In the autumn of 1920, an attempt was made by the RIC and the Tans to burn our house, which was saved by our neighbours, although the Tans were firing shots all over the place. My brother Jimmy was arrested and we had a very anxious time until we were informed he was safe. I would like to mention that the Tans saturated every door in the house with petrol, also the ground floor, evidently to burn us all in our rooms, closing every door carefully after examining the occupants instead of ordering everyone downstairs as was usual.

Sometime afterwards, another raid took place when they asked if I was in. I called down from the top of the stairs and said, "Surely I am allowed to dress myself". They replied, "No, come down as you are". I went down and snatched a coat from the hall-stand. My mother shouted after me "Be brave Peg". I thought at first they were going to shoot me, but they took me out and closed the door, then grabbed my hair, saying "What wonderful curls you've got" and then proceeded to cut off all of my hair to the scalp with very blunt scissors. I might say they did not handle me too roughly, which is strange to say. There was no further comment until they finished, when they pushed me towards the door and said "Goodnight". All spoke with English accents. I had to have my head shaved by a barber next day in order to have my hair

grow properly. As I remembered it afterwards, I should have gone 'on the run', as I was reliably informed that at least one RIC man was seen to point me out to the Black and Tans. Also, there was a public house in Eyre Street which was a happy home for the Tans, and the girls of which were warned by the Volunteers for publicly associating themselves with the RIC and Tans. Nothing whatever was done to molest these girls. The whole family cleared out about the Truce and were not heard of since. I had the pleasure while 'on the run' of sleeping in the house next to the infamous Bakers who had a hotel much frequented by the Black and Tans and who had close associations with the latter.

I visited Galway Jail to see Volunteer prisoners from the country districts whose folk were always anxious about them. I often got parcels in through the guard. I remember one poor little soldier who suspected me but never gave me away, saying "Are you a mother, an aunt, or a sister of some of them today?"

Before concluding I would like to say the job I hated most was enticing British soldiers down the docks in order to have them relieved of their arms by the Volunteers, one of whom, an officer, happened to be my brother.

This witness statement has been abstracted from the Bureau of Military History 1913-21 archive and is available online at the following link: <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1682.pdf#page=1>.

## **Excerpt from the Witness Statement of Mrs Sean McEntee (Margaret Brown)**

I went on Holy Thursday morning to Ryan's in Ranelagh Road. Fr Hannon SJ was there and they were discussing plans in the document published on Spy Wednesday for the arrest of the Volunteer leaders and the seizure of certain buildings by the British. I was given two large sealed envelopes containing copies of the document for the Bishop of Galway and Tuam. I was taking the afternoon train from the Broadstone for Galway and when I first arrived at the station Seán McDermott came and gave me two dispatches, one for Laurence Lardner of Athenry and one for George Nicholls of Galway. He did not tell me what was in the messages, but he said they were very important and that I should not let them fall into anyone's hands. I was to eat them if necessary. He then took an affectionate farewell to me.

When I got to Athenry it was getting dark. I went to the hotel and left my case. I found Lardner's – a public house – at the corner of a street. It was full of people drinking. I walked into a room at the back of the shop. Laurence was not there, but his brother and mother were. They told me he was in Dublin. They also mentioned that Mellows was in the neighbourhood, I think in Oranmore. The brother assured me that I was safe giving the message to himself. Athenry was full of police and the Sergeant came in to inquire who was the young lady that had come in. Mrs Lardner told him I was her cousin who was working in Pim's. They asked me to have tea but I wouldn't. Mr Lardner brought me out the back through a vegetable garden, which was very muddy, into which my high heels sank. My get-up was very unsuitable for that sort of an expedition. I reached the street and went to the hotel and had tea. Shortly before 10 o'clock the hotel people asked me was I staying the night. I said "no". Then they said there was a curfew and I would have to go to the Station.

When I reached it I found it full of police. It became rather cold and I had a long time to wait, so I sat with the night-watchman who had a fire. I had sent wire to Power's to say I was not coming until the night mail. Professor Power did not meet me in Galway as his motor-bike had broken down on his way to the station. I decided to stay in the Railway Hotel. I was not long in it when the Professor came to fetch me. I decided, as it was so late, not to leave the hotel till morning. The following morning, Mrs Tina Power came and she brought me to George Nicholls in his office. When I handed him the message he seemed very disturbed and excited. He asked me did I know what was in it. I said "no", and he said no more about it. Afterwards, I delivered the sealed document to the Bishop of Galway, whom I knew as his niece was in Eccles Street with me. He was worried about it and asked me a lot about the contents. In the afternoon I went to Tuam by train and delivered the envelope to the Archbishop. I met George Nicholls a second time, either that day or the next. He made some remark about things being changed since I had given him the message.

That is all I remember about the events of 1916.

This excerpt from the witness statement of Mrs Sean McEntee (Margaret Brown) has been abstracted from the Bureau of Military History 1913-21 archive and is available online at the following link:

<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0322.pdf#page=1>

### **Excerpt from the Witness Statement of Miss Alice M. Cashel**

I was ordered to go to Clifden to organise *Cumann na mBan*. Orders were sent from Sinn Féin HQ that on the 15<sup>th</sup> August a manifesto should be read in public by every Sinn Féin club in the country. On the morning of the meeting I was informed by one of the RIC that if I held the meeting I should be arrested. We held the meeting near the square; it was broken up by the police, the platform, planks and barrels being pulled from under our feet. We stayed on until the last plank was taken. Then I re-organised the women in the street and marched them out of the town and held the meeting on the monument base which stands on a hill outside Clifden. While the police followed me the Secretary of the Sinn Féin club finished the reading of the manifesto. I then had to go 'on the run'. The local IRA, especially the Dartleys, arranged places of 'safe keeping' for me which however were eventually discovered by the RIC. Gerald Bartley then got me safely out of Clifden by night. I cycled to Galway where I continued my organising work. The bicycle used on these trips was one belonging to Countess Markievicz. On the morning of the Clifden meeting, I had a letter from her from Holloway Jail in London telling me that she was sending me her bicycle as she knew mine was decrepit - she had used it in the Armagh election. It arrived that morning, just in time for me to go 'on the run'. I left it, later on, to the Connemara Volunteers. Father Tom Burke, who had got Liam Mellows away disguised after the Rising, brought me away from Galway - as his sister - to his home in Headford. From there I continued my *Cumann* organising work through Mayo, through Cong, Clonbur, Westport, etc., staying a night in each place and moving on before the police got word of my movements. And so I worked round the coast until I reached Achill. I stayed in Keel for some weeks until word reached me that I had been traced there, when I returned to Dublin. Later, I continued my organising work in Donegal, Leitrim, Fermanagh, until my health failed. About Easter 1919, as far as I remember, I worked at *Cumann na mBan* HQ in Dublin for some time.

In the summer of 1919 I went to live in my brother-in-law's house, Cashel House, in Cashel Connemara. He went to America that autumn to join de Valera and I promised to run his oyster fisheries (which he had just bought, in Cashel and Kilkerrin) while he was away and to keep 'quiet' for the time being. He was thus able to leave his affairs in Ireland and to carry on his work in the States. Owing, however, to the fact that I was known to the local police on account of the Clifden episode of the last August, I was evidently under suspicion of getting arms from America and landing them by means of Mr O'Hara's very powerful motor boat which lay at the oyster quay in Cashel. I was told that the police from Roundstone used to come to Cashel to feel the ropes of the boat to find out whether I had had her out, to sea. At any rate, the house was raided one Saturday in April 1920 and one document addressed to me was taken away. A most innocuous paper - a letter from a priest in Athlone, I did not even know, about 'Holy Wells'. He evidently knew that I was writing a thesis on the subject and sent me some further information. I wonder did the military think that I was burying those mythical guns in those wells? On the following Monday, a lorry load of soldiers held up the roads leading to Cashel House, arrested me and took me in the back of the open lorry surrounded by soldiers to Galway Jail where I was lodged in solitary confinement until the men in Mountjoy had won out in their hunger strike when I was allowed out in the jail precincts. I was retained a week, without any charge being preferred against me, when I was returned by the military to Cashel House. I had demanded to be returned by the same way as they had taken me away so they provided a motor car and a soldier driver. I got a great reception in Cashel, a bonfire on Cashel Hill, etc. As a result of this short adventure, I was co-opted on the Clifden District Council in the following summer (1920). I was also selected as their representative on the County Council where I was elected Vice-Chairman, with George Nicholls, Solr., as Chairman. I was now out of the 'quiet' and busy again in national work. With Miss Katie Kelly (who had been 'out' in Easter Week) I formed a company of Volunteers in Cashel. They received their instructions from me after I had got authority from the Volunteer HQ in Galway to "carry on". Their activities consisted mainly in dispatch carrying and control of the poteen traffic. They patrolled the fairs, seized the poteen which they brought up to Cashel House and on order poured away on the lawn. These IRA patrols got the poteen traffic well under control and were far more efficient than the subsequent recognised 'police'.

Meantime the Republic was getting under way. The Courts were next tackled. At a convention in Galway, justices for the county were elected. On a poll I was elected (I was second in the county, Father Meehan being first) as a Parish Justice for Connemara. John Cloherty was also elected for this area. So we proceeded to hold our 'courts'. Sometimes, we held them openly, at other times secretly at midnight. I remember holding one openly with John Cloherty in Clifden. The matter at issue was land trouble. It was the case of the Clifden Castle estate. Sometime before this a certain Toby Joyce of Clifden had bought the castle and lands which the tenants claimed should be divided amongst them. The case had been fought on behalf of the tenants by Canon McAlpine (bitter opponent of Sinn Féin) in the British courts but without success. There was very great bitterness over the matter and riots in the town were frequent. Joyce attended our court but we failed to get him to give up the lands. Eventually, the question was settled in the Galway (Sinn Féin) court under the presidency of Dr Dillon. I received a telegram asking me whether I would act as Trustee with John Cloherty and a Mrs Gordon. I accepted the Trusteeship. The next step was to acquire the money for the purchase of the lands. About this time, the Land Bank had been

started in Dublin for just such a purpose. I went to Dublin, saw the Manager of the Bank, put my case before him and obtained the necessary thousands to buy the land from Joyce. We bought the estate, striped the land and transferred the land to the tenants. I remember getting Dick Mulcahy to witness the transfer of my right in Fitzwilliam Place - I think it was in 1921 after my release from jail. While in jail I had been active in the matter. I held one midnight court. It must have been in the autumn or winter of 1920. I was still living in Cashel House where I got a message to meet certain volunteers at Toombeola, about three miles distant, at midnight and that they would bring me to Roundstone where a court was to be held. I cycled to Toombeola and was met by volunteers as arranged, and we went on to about a mile or so outside the village where we left our bicycles by the roadside. We climbed over walls into the fields and so bye-passed the village where the police still lived (incidentally, in the house which I now peacefully occupy). At length we arrived at a small stone building apparently standing alone in a field, but actually in a graveyard, as I learnt later. The other justice, John Cloherty, had already arrived. Then the prisoners were brought in, blindfolded. They had been held on charges of larceny. We adjudicated on the cases and I remember convicted in one instance but found the other case not proved. The prisoners were led away and we set out for home. We came back by a different way and to my surprise I discovered that we were in the grounds of the Franciscan Monastery. The court had been held in the mortuary chapel (now demolished) in their graveyard. I heard quite recently that the prisoners had been in the charge of Steve Mannion who still lives here in Roundstone.

In that summer of 1920 the writ of the Republic ran Local Government and the Judiciary were in the hands of Sinn Féin. The Galway County Council was a Sinn Féin Council - we received our instructions from the underground cabinet in Dublin and loyally carried them out. I remember going up to Dublin and with difficulty finding Kevin O'Higgins or Cosgrave, getting my orders from them and bringing down the papers hidden in my hair. The Secretary, Mr Seymour, an old Grand Jury man, though of Unionist leaning and tradition, carried out our orders punctiliously, though he frequently warned me that I would be arrested. We were openly defying the British Local Government and it was evident that we would not be allowed to carry on our activities for very long. The great danger was that our funds would be seized and so our work brought to an end. Our Treasurer was the National Bank Galway - it would be quite simple for the British to seize the money by Garnish so we had to plan to circumvent them. This plan was, I think, devised by Mr O'Loughlin of the Clare County Council. In a word, we arranged that the rates were no longer to be lodged with the Country Council Treasurer but in the name of certain Councillors appointed for the different areas of the county. The rates of Connemara were lodged in my name. These monies we later passed on to the account of someone who was appointed to hold all the rates of the county on behalf of the County Council. So we held our funds and continued to follow instructions from Dublin. But the time was due for the final blow on the part of the English authorities. The Republic could not be allowed to flourish so defiantly, so they sent the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans to crush us. But the Republic still carried on. There were casualties, of course, our chairman, George Nichol was arrested (I do not remember the exact date), and as Vice-Chairman I took his place in the council, and carried out instructions received from Headquarters. During the year, Cashel House, where I then lived, was invaded by a British military patrol. I refused them access to the house so they were quartered in the premises in the large courtyard. They evidently objected to the control I kept over them for when they went away I was told that they said that I

treated them like dogs, and I was warned that they would send the Black and Tans to avenge themselves on me. And so they did. It was a fair day in Cashel when John Cloherty and I were in the study of Cashel House, the window of which looks out on the drive. We saw three countrymen, as we thought, dressed in homespuns, coming up the drive. Then suddenly they stopped and out came parabellums. Something in the underwood or in the bushes must have moved and startled them. Having been warned, I was more or less prepared for this attack and had planned a get-a-way. We both got out at the back of the house, over the wall onto Cashel Hill and lay for some time in the bed of a dried-up stream. I heard afterwards that they, Black and Tans they were, searched for hours for me, looking behind curtains, etc., as Mrs Grealish, who was working in the house, told me. But John and I got away along the hill side. That night I had settled down to sleep on the hillside until Katie Kelly found me and took me to her house. After that episode I went to Dublin. While there I found that family business necessitated my going to Paris where I intended to spend Christmas as it was now November. As I was passing through London on my way to Paris, I saw posters, newspaper posters - *Daily Mail*, I think - stating that the Galway County Council was suing for peace. When I got to Paris I saw Séan T. O'Kelly at the Grand Hotel and after talking over the matter with him decided that I had better return at once, so after a few days in Paris I came back to Dublin. When I reached Fitzwilliam Place -my brother-in-law's house in town - I found an SOS from George Nicholls, which he had got smuggled out of Kilmainham jail, asking me "For God's sake clear up the matter". I returned at once to Galway and discovered that the whole matter was illegal, there was no quorum and got no resolution. I found out also that the peace plea had been sent to Lloyd George and others and that our order about the lodging of the rates had been rescinded. I wrote to the papers explaining the matter and instructed the Secretary, Walter Seymour, to write to all those to whom the bogus resolution had been sent, withdrawing the 'resolution'. This was done but the lie had had a good start and the 'Galway Resolution' figures in all the accounts of the period. (see Crozier etc.) In my capacity as Acting-Chairman, I called an extraordinary meeting of the County to nine Councillors and Rate collectors and I intended that at the meeting of the Council I would restore the status quo ante as to the lodgement of the rates. The Secretary, Mr Seymour, warned me that I would be arrested and he proved right in the event. On my way to the Council Offices, I was arrested and brought into the Eglinton Street Police Barracks. I was brought upstairs and from a window I could see the Councillors and Rate Collectors making their way to the meeting. Later I heard that they too were arrested for the day and that no meeting was held. Still looking out of my window, I saw a lorry of Auxiliaries go down the street and with them in the lorry was a fashionably dressed woman whom I took to be one of their wives. I was shocked at her assurance. But the lorry came back, with the lady still in it, and stopped at the barracks. In a few minutes the door of my room was opened and the lady was ushered in - no wife of an Auxiliary but a prisoner. She was Dr Ada English who had been arrested that morning in Ballinasloe.

This excerpt from the witness statement of Miss Alice M. Cashel has been abstracted from the Bureau of Military History 1913-21 archive and is available online at the following link: <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0366.pdf#page=1>

## **Excerpt from the Witness Statement of Mrs Malone (nee Brighid Breathnach)**

### **Liam Mellows arrives at our house for the Rising**

I am not sure when Liam Mellows came first to our house in Killeeneen. It might have been in 1914 or early 1915. My mother was Mrs Walsh, a national school teacher in Killeeneen at the time. I was not at home then. I was teaching in Tipperary in 1913. Since he did not stay in our house till the Saturday before the Rising. He had come back from England to take part in the fight. He was not dressed in priest's clothes when he came to us. On his way down he went in to the house of a priest, Father Casey of Ballymore in Westmeath, whom he knew and asked for charity to see would the priest recognise him as he had dyed his hair and made other attempts to disguise himself as a sort of beggar man. The priest did not recognise him at first though he thought there was something familiar about him, so Liam went off, but the priest suddenly remembered who he was and ran to the gate after him but Liam was out of sight.

### **I am sent to Dublin with dispatches**

Father Henry Feeney of Clarenbridge sent for me to Tipperary and he told me there was to be a rising. The next day on Holy Thursday he sent me to Dublin to fetch a message for Liam Mellows. At Craughwell station Tom Kenny, the local blacksmith who was favourable to the Citizen Army, met me and asked me to take a written message to Tom Clarke and another either to Seán MacDermott or James Connolly: I am not sure now.

I called first to Tom Clarke's in Parnell Street and saw Tom Clarke whom I had met before. He took the two messages sent by Tom Kenny. Julia Morrissey of Athenry travelled up with me from Attymon. She came by car to that station as she was known to the police in Athenry. She accompanied me most of the way from Tom Clarke's to No. 2, Dawson Street where I was brought into Micheál O'Hanrahan after some questioning by various people, among them Larry Lardner of Athenry. Micheál gave me a parcel, not very large, as I could carry it under my arm. I think the parcel contained either a revolver or ammunition or both. Somebody told me, I think it was Larry Lardner, that the rising was off but I was told to bring some stuff down with me in a dress basket which I had brought up to give the impression that I was going on a holiday. The stuff was to be brought to the train but it never turned up. I can't exactly say how I got the impression about the rising being off but I overheard some angry remarks about McNeill from, I think, Larry Lardner. Among others Seán McDermott may have been present too. I had seen him previously in Aran and I have a vague impression that he was there too and Barney Mellows whom I had not seen before. There was someone else there too whom I knew well at the time, but I can't now remember the name. I went home that same day by the evening train with the parcel for Liam and I don't know whether it was at Athenry or Attymon I got out. Eamon Corbett met me at the station with a car and drove me home.

### **Good Friday and Holy Saturday**

The following day, myself and Eamonn Corbett drove to Crusheen to see a railway porter. I think his name was Con Fogarty, he was a good fellow. Eamonn had a long talk with him,

but I don't know what it was about. I imagine the reason I was chosen for these journeys was that I was not well known in the place an especially not to the police. On Saturday I was at home. That was the day Liam came. Nobody knew he was in the house but a few.

### **News of the Rising in Dublin**

The news of the Rising in Dublin did not reach our house until the evening of Monday. Somebody from Athenry came with it. Pádraig Ó Fathaigh, an Irish teacher in Kinvara, had been arrested, I think on Monday, when he went back there with some message, whether it was that the Rising was off or on, I can't now remember, though I did know it at one time. My sister, Tess, who is now a doctor in England, will remember all that better than I, as her memory is very much better and she is very interested in those things. I'll ask her to go in to see you when she comes home. I expect her very soon.

### **The Volunteers mobilise**

The Volunteers assembled on Monday night in the old school in Killeeneen where my mother taught. I think it was only the Volunteers of Clarenbridge that turned up there, because I don't think Larry Lardner and the Athenry Volunteers were there. The Volunteers remained mobilised and the next morning about 5 o'clock they went on to Clarenbridge. They had only pitchforks and a few shotguns, and very few of them, I think only Eamonn Corbett and Liam, had uniforms. Father Tully, the Parish Priest, prevented them from taking the barracks at Clarenbridge. He spoke to them and told them the curse of God would be on them if they used any violence. They made prisoners of a number of the police that were on the street of Clarenbridge. A couple of Connemara men who were working with Mattie Niland were among the Volunteers. Mattie asked the Connemara men were they coming. They said, "Where are you going?" He replied, "To fight for Ireland". "If you are going sticking peelers we are with you", said the Connemara lads. They were put in charge of the police prisoners whom they would not let sit down. They said, "If you caught us at the poteen you'd tell us to keep stirring".

### **The Volunteers prepare for a siege at Moyode Castle**

The Volunteers then went on to Oranmore. I don't remember if anything happened there. They went to Athenry Farmyard (Agricultural College) for a night and then went on to Moyode Castle but not through Athenry, bringing the police with them. The Athenry Volunteers were there too. They prepared for a siege there as they were in great strength. The castle was empty except for a caretaker and the rooms were not furnished. They stayed there some nights, I think till Friday.

When the Volunteers left our house on Tuesday I did not go with them, but a sister of mine, Gretta, and another girl, Mary Corbett, did. On Wednesday, a number of us girls of *Cumann na mBan* collected provisions in a cart and brought them to Moyode. We stayed there with the Volunteers until they left. Liam, on the Thursday, made a speech telling the Volunteers if they did not wish to stay they should go home. He pointed out the dangers that were facing them and said that anyone who might not wish to remain should go home. Some went home but none of the Clarenbridge Company went. Father Feeney stayed with them to the end and the girls stayed until they decided to leave Moyode.

## **The Volunteers move on to Lime Park where they disband**

Somebody said the British were coming from Ballinasloe to attack us and they thought there was no point in getting themselves wiped out. They went on to Lime Park and perhaps they brought the prisoners with them. Father Tom Fahy of Gloves visited them there and exhorted them to go home. He was in Maynooth at the time and is now in University College, Galway. The Volunteers all disbanded and went home, except Liam Mellows, Frank Hynes and Alf Monahan who went 'on the run' towards Clare. Eamon Corbett and Pat Callanan, better known as the 'Hare', went in that direction too.

I don't know how long they were 'on the run' there but Eamon and Pat said they saw me and Father Feeney passing one night along the road near Carron barracks on our bicycles on our way to Ennistymon where we took the train for Limerick and Tipperary. I think Liam and the other two were there a good while until Liam got away to America. I think it was a man called Moloney who gave them shelter. He was a Volunteer himself. Another Volunteer called McNamara was helping them too. Alf Monahan and Frank Hynes are still alive and should be able to give a good account of all this. In the beginning of August I visited Eamon Corbett and Pat Callanan who were still 'on the run' in a district called Boston. They asked me for revolvers which I brought to them.

## **Father Feeney**

Father Feeney was the only priest who went out with the Volunteers and he was sent to America for five years for his part in the Rising. That time that he came with me to Tipperary he was in plain clothes and stayed around Drombane where I was teaching. He was some time with Fr McCormick of Holy Cross. Then he went to Roscrea Monastery where he was given refuge by the monks. While he was there the soldiers raided the Monastery but it was not for him they were looking. The monks were all rebels. I happened to be visiting the Monastery and Father Feeney brought me into the prohibited part of the building to which the police did not penetrate.

I do not think it was Dr O'Dea, who was one of the two bishops who were not opposed to the Volunteers, that banished Father Feeney to America. Dr O'Dea had a sort of nervous breakdown at the time, brought on, people said, by worry over the things that were happening, executions and arrests, etc. It was probably Monsignor Considine who was then doing duty for the Bishop.

When Father Feeney came back from America he seemed to be afraid to speak to anyone. However, he did go to McNeill's funeral when he died on hunger strike but that was probably because he was his parishioner.

## **How I got involved in the Rising and bought bandages for the Volunteers**

Since I saw you last, my sister, Tess, was here. She went to the west today and will be back again. She says it was Mellows' uniform I had in the parcel. She also said I could not have heard on Thursday anything about McNeill calling off the Rising as he did not do that until Saturday. But I am practically certain I heard criticism of McNeill about interfering with the Rising. I did not know of the Rising until Spy Wednesday. I was going to spend my holidays with my grandmother near Thurles but Father Feeney wrote to me to be sure to come home, that he wanted me. My sister, Gretta, met me in Limerick and told me

that there was going to be a war in Ireland. “What war?” said I. “War with England”, she rejoined. I did not believe her until she produced a £10 note. She said, “I got this from the boys for you to buy bandages”. I went to a chemist’s shop. I don’t know the name but I could go there. He was surprised and rather suspicious when I asked for so many bandages and I had to tell him some lies, though I did not like doing it. I said I wanted them for a lady that wished to donate them to a Red Cross Hospital in France. He had not enough of them for me but said he would send them on after me by post. They came on Saturday to my home in Killeeneen, having been opened in the Post Office by the Postmaster who was a special constable for the British in Easter Week. That was Spy Wednesday that I came home from Tipperary and bought the bandages and it was on account of this that the Head Constable and police from Craughwell came to arrest me on the Friday, I think, of the second week after Easter. The head Constable mentioned about the bandages and the lads in Athenry barracks overheard the police saying they were to arrest me. But I had left for Tipperary with Father Feeny by bicycle. We had started about 11.30 at night.

### **Liam Mellows’ journey from Dublin**

Liam Mellows was not in our house when I arrived home. He did not come to our house until the Saturday. He spent a night on the way down from Dublin in Ballinasloe Diocesan College. It must have been Father Connolly, afterwards head of the Maynooth Mission to China, that got him put up there. He went from there to Loughrea and could not get into Sweeney’s but got into Flaherty’s. Flaherty was a Fenian. I think he stayed there for a couple of nights. My brother, Paddy, and Dominick Corbett went part of the way across country towards Loughrea to meet him and bring him to the house.

### **Alf Monahan in Galway for the Rising: a policeman shot in Claregalway**

I should have mentioned that a short time, about a week, before the Rising Alf Monahan, who was evidently organising Volunteers in Galway, was served with a deportation order by the police. Jack Fleming of Clarenbridge, at the suggestion of Father Feeny, went to the house where Alf was staying, dressed as a priest and exchanged clothes with Alf who walked out of the house in priest’s clothes and went to Brockagh, about ten or twelve miles away, where he remained until the Rising. Pat Callanan was in Claregalway during Easter Week with the Volunteers and they shot a policeman. I don’t know whether he came to Moyode or Lime Park at all.

### **We help Eamonn Corbett and the ‘Hare’ to go to America**

In August late, when I was home on my summer holidays, I went to Lisdoonvarna and Father Meehan and Father Bourke and myself took a car from there to Flagmount, Feakle, where Pat Callanan and Eamonn Corbett were ‘on the run’ in a priest’s house, and took them all the way, by by-roads, to Cappoquin, avoiding Limerick city and crossing the Shannon at Killaloe. We spent the night in Cappoquin and took them the next day to Mount Melleray. I don’t know how they got from there to Cork, but they did and Captain Collins, who was a coal merchant there, took them in his coal boat to Liverpool, from where they worked their passage to America. Eamonn went to California but the ‘Hare’ stayed in New York. I don’t know how long they were there. Eamonn came home and the ‘Hare’ was sent for; I have not an idea when that was. They both took part in the fight later for independence. The ‘Hare’ eventually joined the Free State Army and became a captain.

He is still alive but Eamonn died a short time ago.

After my trip to Melleray I returned to my school. By that time there was a complete change in the outlook of the population of Ireland. Everyone was a Sinn Féiner except the spies who in Tipperary were called 'Stags'.

### **I get married**

Eamonn Dwyer of Goold's Cross started Irish classes in the villages round about and suggested that the best teacher we could get was Séamus Malone, if he was still unemployed. He was and took the job. I attended the classes and married the teacher on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1917.

### **My husband and brother-in-law are arrested; my husband escapes**

In January 1919, our house in Killeeneen, where we were spending the Christmas holidays with my brother-in-law Thomás, was raided and the two were taken to Athenry Barracks. It took the police four days to identify them and it was only when Sergeant Wallace, who was killed a couple of months later in Knocklong, came from Tipperary (Roskeen Barracks), that their identity was fully established. He said to Tomás "You can go away if you like we have nothing against you but your brother, Séamus, will not be let off so lightly. We have a charge against him of attempted murder in connection with the rescue of a prisoner, Jimmy Leahy, at the Ragg". The Athenry police decided to hold Tomás till the following morning. However, during the night Seamus escaped with the aid of Tomás who, owing to the extra width of his shoulders, was not able to get through the hole in the wall that the two of them had been working on during the preceding four days. My husband will be able to give a better account of that.

### **A previous raid**

Before that, during 1918 about the spring, the house Dunne's of Drombane where we were lodging was raided by the police and military. They were looking for my husband to arrest him for having assisted in the rescue of a prisoner, Jimmy Leahy, whom the police had arrested at a hurling match at the Ragg, County Tipperary. My husband happened to be away at Nenagh and I remembered that there was a revolver in our room. So I rushed down to the kitchen with it and hid it among the coal in the range which was not lighting. The raiders never got anything at Drombane. The police took over the hall there and the military were in camps all round it. Drombane is about nine miles from Thurles. I was teaching in Newtown near Drombane. I gave it up about a year after getting married.

### **Constable Collins follows me to Tyrells Pass**

My husband was 'on the run' all this time. The summer after my marriage I went to my husband's place in Tyrells Pass. A Constable Collins from Roskeen Barracks followed me in the same train. I had no idea he was following me; I thought he was going home on holidays as he too came from Tyrells Pass, until one night, shortly after the Sergeant of the barracks, Sergeant Morris, a protestant, sent word to my mother-in-law that there was going to be a raid on our house. We took it as a joke. My husband was in the house sitting on the bed talking when some children ran in to say the peelers were coming down the road. My husband got out by the back and went up the field. When the police came in,

Constable Collins was with them. It was then I put two and two together and came to the conclusion that he was sent to follow me to Tyrells Pass. My husband came back again but he used not to stay in the house.

I stayed with my people-in-law until after my eldest child was born. Then I went home to Killeeneen. Nothing particular took place there as far as I remember. I should mention, however, that my mother's house was raided 132 times before the split, but I was not there for them. She lost count of the raids after that.

### **I take up residence in Cork: death of Tadhg Sullivan**

My husband had got a job in Cork under the name of Forde and I went to him there with my child, Mairin. I am not sure whether that was the time I was staying in Hennessy's in Douglas Street, where Tadhg Sullivan of Rathmore was afterwards killed. At the time he was killed I had left Hennessy's. The Volunteers were holding a meeting at Nellie McCarthy's in Douglas Street and a squad of police or Black and Tans in plain clothes went to raid the place. I had seen them pass the house where I lived at the time but had no idea where they were going. I don't know now whether the Volunteers got out before the raid but I think they must have because the police grabbed Tadhg as he ran, but he freed himself and ran into Hennessy's past Máire Malone, my sister-in-law, who was standing at the door; it was she told me all this. He jumped out through a back window in the landing onto a shed in Woods' yard and he was shot dead by one of the police who followed him up the stairs to the landing window.

This excerpt from the witness statement of Mrs Malone (nee Brighid Breathnach) has been abstracted from the Bureau of Military History 1913-21 archive and is available online at the following link:

<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0617.pdf#page=1>

### **Excerpt from the Witness Statement of Mr Michael Kelly**

Our Company, Clarenbridge, got instructions to go to Confession on Easter Saturday, 1916, and to go to Holy Communion the following day. The whole Company had breakfast after Mass at Roveagh Church. The breakfast was prepared and served by *Cumann na mBan* in the Church grounds. We brought arms to Mass and the idea of having breakfast was that there was to be no returning home after Mass. On the Saturday night there was a big number of Volunteers from various Companies in Father Feeney's waiting for information about the landing of arms. As far as I remember, Martin Niland, Peter Howley, Eamonn Corbett and Pat Callanan, the 'Hare', were present.

This excerpt from the witness statement of Mr Michael Kelly has been abstracted from the Bureau of Military History 1913-21 archive and is available online at the following link:

<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1564.pdf>

## **Excerpt from the Witness Statement of Mr Patrick Glynn**

The following is a list of names of members of *Cumann na mBan* in my Battalion area, as far as I can remember them:-

### **Kilbeacanty Company**

Brigid Ryan, now Mrs Kearns, Kilmacduagh, Co. Galway  
Julia Ryan, now Mrs Quinn, Ballycahalan, Co. Galway  
Annie Ryan, now Mrs Kerrigan, New York  
Margaret Keeley, now Mrs Morrissey, Craughwell, Co. Galway  
Kate Keeley, my wife (deceased)  
Brigid Hennessy, now Mrs Burke, NT, Gort  
Nora Deeley, now Mrs Peter Burke, Roxboro  
Annie Deeley, now in Co. Cavan  
Delia Reilly, now in the USA  
Agnes Moran, now in the USA  
Kate Moran, Cloone, Gort

### **Gort Company**

Elizabeth McNamara, now Mrs Fleming, New York  
Rita Stanford, now Mrs Jordan, Ballinderreen, Co. Galway

### **Derrybrien Company**

Nora Scully, now Mrs Kelly, Derrybrien, Co. Galway  
Mary Tully, now Mrs Maney, P.O., Derrybrien  
Kate Tully, now Mrs Slattery, Derrybrien

### **Peterswell Company**

Kate Fahy, now Mrs McGuane, Tubber  
Kate Fahy, now Mrs Thomas Keeley, Kiltartan  
Margaret Keeley, now Mrs Stone, Tullyra

### **Beagh Company**

Kate Mannion, now Mrs Moran, Flagmount, Co. Clare  
Miss Kelly, now widow of Patrick Ruane, Brigade Police Officer, Galway South West Brigade

The activities of *Cumann na mBan* included the making of collections of money from home to home to provide various comforts for members of the IRA who were on full time service. They carried dispatches and sometimes carried arms from place to place. A good deal of their time was spent on cooking for groups of the IRA. Sometimes these groups were large as, for example, when Brennan's Flying Column entered our Battalion area. In addition, they acted as Intelligence Officers. For example, it was Brigid Ryan who brought word to the IRA of District Inspector Blake's visit to Ballyturn which led to the Ballyturn ambush. In conclusion, I would like to pay a tribute to the work of *Cumann na mBan*, to their loyalty, their perseverance and untiring effort on behalf of the men of the Gort Battalion who carried on the struggle against overwhelming odds.

This excerpt from the witness statement of Mr Patrick Glynn has been abstracted from the Bureau of Military History 1913-21 archive and is available online at the following link:  
<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1033.pdf#page=24>

## Excerpt from the Witness Statement of Mr Laurence Flynn

About the same time I, as Brigade Police Officer, South East Galway Brigade, had to transfer a lunatic from the County to the Mental Hospital, I got instructions from Brigadier Lawrence Kelly to get a permit from the RIC for a Red Cross ambulance. When I went to the RIC barracks for the necessary permit, the Sergeant who admitted me gave me a very cordial welcome. He put me into a room by myself and locked the door. He said there were Black and Tans about the place and that I would be safer with the door locked while he was procuring the permit from the District Inspector. I looked around the room and saw a long Webley revolver in a holster hanging on the wall. I took the revolver out of the holster and put it down the leg of my pants and closed my overcoat. When the Sergeant came back with the permit he said their cook had left and asked me if I would try and secure them a cook to replace her. I told him that I would do my best to oblige him in the matter. He shook hands with me and I left with my permit and the Webley revolver.

I immediately contacted Miss Mary Oliver, a member of the *Cumann na mBan*. I explained the position to her and she agreed to take the position as cook in the RIC barracks. She understood quite clearly that her duties would consist of more than cooking for the RIC. I gave her three pounds out of my own money and told her to learn as much as she possibly could about the RIC and to use the money I gave her if she thought it would help in getting any arms or ammunition. The late Captain Patrick Coy, who was then Quartermaster of the Loughrea Battalion, was with me when I arranged with Miss Oliver to take up the position as cook. He was later killed in County Kerry during the Civil War. Within a week Miss Oliver had obtained three long Webley revolvers, which I delivered to Brigadier Lawrence Kelly. Miss Oliver died in June 1954. She was in receipt of a Military Service Pension.

In a few days' time there was a big raid on the Workhouse. Three lorries of Auxiliaries and Black and Tans from Limerick with local RIC from Loughrea took part. I attributed the raid to the loss of the three revolvers from the RIC barracks because Miss Mary Oliver, whom I had recommended to the RIC for the position as cook, was temporarily resident in the Workhouse before taking up duty as cook. Apparently, when the three revolvers were missed, the RIC very probably associated the loss of those with the loss of the revolver which I took. It probably then dawned on them that they had been tricked into employing Mary Oliver. At any rate, the RIC dismissed her from her position as cook almost immediately they discovered the loss of the three revolvers and the raid followed.

This excerpt from the witness statement of Mr Laurence Flynn has been abstracted from the Bureau of Military History 1913-21 archive and is available online at the following link: <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1061.pdf>

# BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY: MILITARY SERVICE PENSION COLLECTION

The Military Service Pensions Collection is one of the most important archival collections pertaining to Ireland's revolutionary period 1916-1923. This collection contains thousands of individual accounts of nationalist activities during this period.

In June 1923, the *Oireachtas* of *Saorstát Éireann* decided to recognise and compensate wounded members, widows, children and dependants of deceased members of *Oglaigh na hÉireann*. This included members of the National Forces, the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Republican Army, and the Irish Citizen Army. Over time, other organisations such as members of the Hibernian Rifles, *Cumann na mBan*, *Fianna Éireann* and certain members of the Connaught Rangers were included in this provision.

The Army Pensions Acts from 1923 to 1953 dealt with wounded participants and their dependents while the Military Services Pensions Acts, 1924, 1934 and 1949 dealt with surviving participants.

People who considered themselves eligible applied for gratuities, allowances or pensions. These applications were assessed by the Department of Defence and statutory bodies and were deemed successful or not.

The following are some short extracts of information pertaining to *Cumann na mBan* that have been retrieved from this collection:

## **2nd Brigade, 1st Western Division (*Cumann na mBan*) 1st Battalion.**

<b>District Council Staff</b>	<b>Name and Address</b>
President	Mrs Kate Glynn, Ballyturn, Gort
Adj. or Sec.	Mrs Bridget Kerins, Kilmacduagh, Gort
Treasurer	Mrs Mary Callinan, New York Mrs Maggie Morrissey, Cahercriam, Craughwell
<b>Gort Branch</b>	Strength: 20
Captain	Mrs Annie Kerrigan, 330 East 158 St, Bronx, New York
Adj. or Sec.	Miss Baby Hagel, The Square, Gort
Treasurer	Mrs Rita Jordan, Ballindereen, Kilcolgan
<b>Beagh Branch</b>	Strength: 10
Captain	Miss Mary Flaherty, Furpath, Tubber
Adj. or Sec.	Mrs B. Reynolds, Ballinakill, Gort
Treasurer	Miss Annie Healy, Curtane, Tubber
<b>Kilbeacanty Branch</b>	Strength: 15
Captain	Miss Kate Glynn, Ballyturn, Gort
Adj. or Sec.	Mrs Bridget Kerins, Kilmacduagh, Gort
Treasurer	Mrs Maggie Morrissey, Cahercriam, Craughwell
<b>Derrybrien Branch</b>	Strength: 8
Captain	Mrs Nora Kelly, Derrybrien, Gort

Adj. or Sec. Mrs Kate Slattery, Derrybrien, Gort  
Treasurer Deceased

**Peterswell Branch**

Strength: 16  
Captain Mrs Kate McGuane, Bunahow, Tubber, Co. Clare  
Adj. Or Sec. Mrs Nora O'Donnell, Roxboro, Loughrea  
Treasurer Mrs B Kelleher, Peterswell

We, the undersigned members of the Second Brigade *Cumann na mBan* Committee, hereby certify that the above particulars are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Rita Jordan Member  
Brigid Kerins Member  
Katie Glynn Member

The above excerpt from the Military Service Pensions Collection has been abstracted from the Military Archives and is available online at the following link:  
[http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF\\_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-66.pdf](http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-66.pdf)

**2nd Brigade, 1st Western Division. (*Cumann na mBan*) 2nd Battalion.**

**District Council Staff:**

**Name and Address**

President Mrs Maria Purcell, Issertkelly, Ardrahan  
Adj. or Sec. Miss Annie Higgins, Ardrahan  
Treasurer Mrs Martin Murphy, Roxboro, Loughrea

**Ardrahan Branch**

Strength: 9  
Mrs P. Purcell, Esserkelly, Ardrahan, Co. Galway  
Miss Mary Higgins, Greha South, Kinvara  
Bridget Howley, Limepark, Ardrahan, Co. Galway

**Kilmacduagh Branch**

Strength: 2  
Miss Mary A. Nestor, Kilmacduagh  
Miss Delia Nestor, 55 Keira St, Port Kimble, Sydney, NSW

Treasurer

**Kinvara Branch**

Strength: 8  
Miss Kate Fogarty, c/o Mrs Lombard, 2825 46<sup>th</sup> St,  
Astoria, Long Island, New York  
Mary Hynes, Dungora, Kinvara  
Miss Aggie Staunton, Clooas, Kinvara

We, the undersigned members of the Second Brigade *Cumann na mBan* Committee, hereby certify that the above particulars are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Rita Jordan	Member
Brigid Kerins	Member
Katie Glynn	Member

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## **2nd Brigade, 1st Western Division. (*Cumann na mBan*) 3rd Battalion.**

<b>District Council Staff</b>	<b>Name and Address</b>
President	Miss Julia Morrissey, Athenry, Co. Galway
Adj. or Sec.	Mrs Bridget Hegarty, Athenry, Co. Galway
Treasurer	Mrs M.K. O'Connor, Athenry, Co. Galway
<b>Athenry Branch</b>	Strength: 11
Captain	Miss Julia Morrissey, Athenry, Co. Galway
Adj. or Sec.	Mrs Bridget Hegarty, Athenry, Co. Galway
Treasurer	Mrs M.K. O'Connor, Athenry, Co. Galway
<b>Craughwell Branch</b>	Strength: 10
Captain	Mrs Ruane, Castlelambert, Athenry
Adj. or Sec.	Miss Delia Hynes, Cregatorla, Craughwell
Treasurer	Mrs Quinn, Athenry, Co. Galway
<b>Clarenbridge Branch</b>	Strength: 8
Captain	Mrs Kate Armstrong, Caherwilder, Kilcolgan
Adj. or Sec.	Mrs Mary Rabbitt, Killeeneen, Craughwell
Treasurer	Mrs Julia Roche, Rinamona, Kilnaboy, Co. Clare
<b>Maree/Oranmore Branch</b>	Strength: 1
Captain	Mrs Mary Greally, Maree, Oranmore, Co. Galway
Adj. or Sec.	
Treasurer	
<b>Derrydonnell Branch</b>	Strength: 12
Captain	Margaret Freney, Derrydonnell, Athenry
Adj. or Sec.	Julia Poniard, Derrydonnell, Athenry
Treasurer	Kate Henehan, Derrydonnell, Athenry

We, the undersigned members of the Second Brigade *Cumann na mBan* Committee, hereby certify that the above particulars are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Rita Jordan	Member
Brigid Kerins	Member
Katie Glynn	Member

The above excerpt from the Military Service Pensions Collection has been abstracted from the Military Archives and is available online at the following link:  
[http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF\\_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-64.pdf](http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-64.pdf)

**Castlegar Branch 1st (Castlegar) Battalion, Galway 1st Brigade**

Miss Bridget Fallon, Two Mile Ditch, Galway  
Mrs Winnie Molloy, Coolough, Galway  
Mrs Margaret Coyne, Ballybrit, Galway  
Miss Nora Glynn, Kiltulla, Galway  
Mrs Mary Small, Kiloughter, Galway  
Mrs Bridget Broderick, Kilcahill, Claregalway

The above excerpt from the Military Service Pensions Collection (original branch roll RO/247) has been abstracted from the Military Archives and is available online at the following link:  
[http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF\\_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-63.pdf](http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-63.pdf)

*Ref. No: CMB/40*

*An Rúnaí*

*Oifig an Réiteora*

*Beairicí Uí Griobhetha*

*Baile Átha Cliath.*

*Faul*

*Clifden,*

*Co. Galway*

*9<sup>th</sup> Dec 1936*

*A Chara,*

*In reply to your inquiry of the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. I wish to make the following statement.*

*In the District Council – Cumann na mBan, West Connemara Brigade Area, I had on the 11/7/’21 three Branches:*

<i>Clifden with a total strength of</i>	<i>40 members</i>
<i>Ballinafad with a total strength of</i>	<i>15 members</i>
<i>Letterfrack with a total strength of</i>	<i>10 members</i>

*For the date 1/7/’22 I had two Branches namely:*

<i>Clifden with a total strength of</i>	<i>28 members</i>
<i>Ballinafad with a total strength of</i>	<i>3 members</i>

*Any further particulars you require I’ll be pleased to furnish to you.*

*Mise le meas,*

*Margaret Vaughan Capt.*

The above letter from the Military Service Pensions Collection has been abstracted from the Military Archives and is available online at the following link:  
[http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF\\_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-68.pdf](http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-68.pdf)

To The Secretary  
Ballybane,  
Military Pensions Board,  
Gort.

29/11/'38

Dear Mr Burke,

On accordance with your letter of 15<sup>th</sup> inst, re: setting up of Brigade Committee for C-na mBan in the Area, the following were summoned and were present at Clarenbridge on Sunday last. A Bde Comm. and President and Sec were elected:-

1<sup>st</sup> Batt Area : - Mrs P. Glynn, Ballyturn, Gort  
Mrs T. Kelly, Derrybrien, Gort  
Mrs Bridget Kerins, Kilmacduagh, Gort  
Mrs Rita Jordan, Ballindereen, Kilcolgan

2<sup>nd</sup> Batt Area : - Miss Mary Hynes, Dungora, Kinvara  
Miss Mary Fogarty, Kinvara  
Mrs P. Regan, Kinvara

3<sup>rd</sup> Batt Area : - Mrs J. Rabbitt, Killeenen, Craughwell  
Miss Delia Hynes, Creggaturla, Athenry

4<sup>th</sup> Batt Area : - Miss Mary Lenihan, Lower Abbeygate St, Galway  
Miss May Mahon, Forster St, Galway

5<sup>th</sup> Batt Area : - No representative

A Committee chosen from above with two to be nominated by 5<sup>th</sup> Batt, comprised of two from each Batt Area. The following are names and addresses of Committee: -

Chairman Miss May Lenihan, Lower Abbeygate St, Galway  
Secretary Mrs P. Glynn, Ballyturn, Gort  
Mrs Rita Jordan, Ballindereen, Kilcolgan  
Mrs P. Regan, Kinvara  
Miss Mary Hynes, Dungora, Kinvara  
Miss Delia Hynes, Creggaturla, Athenry  
Mrs J. Rabbitt, Killeenen, Craughwell  
Mrs P. Fallon, New Line, Galway

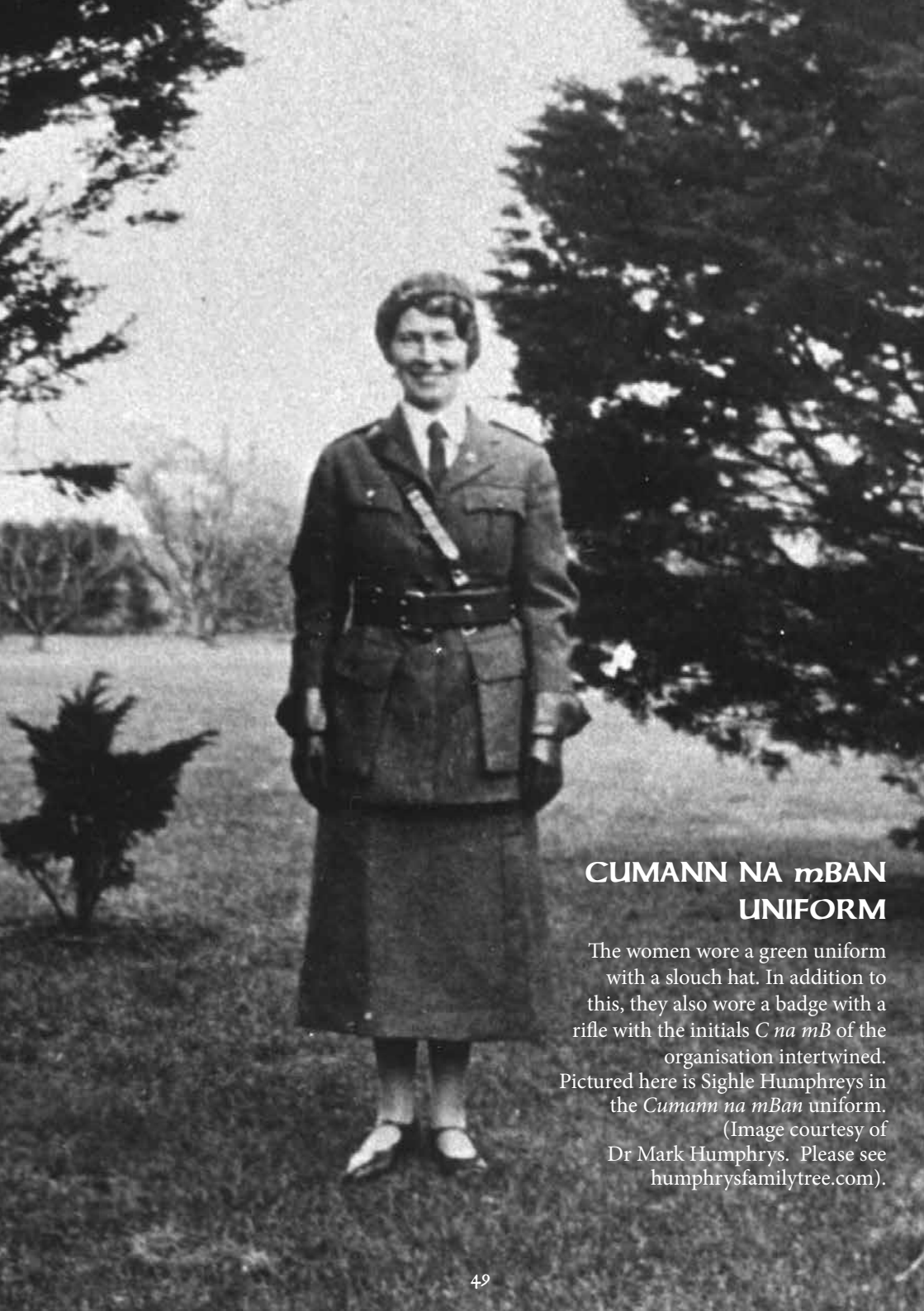
The two from 5<sup>th</sup> Batt Area will be forwarded at earliest date. All communications and instructions can be forwarded to the Secretary at given address, also Mattie Niland and myself will give every assistance to you and the board in dealing with the cases and do our best to make this difficult task easy for all.

I am respectfully yours,

Joe Stanford

Brigade O.C.

[http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF\\_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-65.pdf](http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF_Membership/9/MA-MSPC-CMB-65.pdf)



## CUMANN NA mBAN UNIFORM

The women wore a green uniform with a slouch hat. In addition to this, they also wore a badge with a rifle with the initials *C na mB* of the organisation intertwined.

Pictured here is Sighle Humphreys in the *Cumann na mBan* uniform.

(Image courtesy of Dr Mark Humphrys. Please see [humphrysfamilytree.com](http://humphrysfamilytree.com)).

# CUMANN NA mBAN BADGES

by Patria McWalter

*Cumann na mBan* was founded on foot of the founding of the Irish Volunteers, *Óglaigh na h-Éireann*, which was established in 1913. The first city meeting of *Cumann na mBan* was organised in the Town Hall in Galway in July 1914.<sup>1</sup>

The women's organisation had the aim of assisting the achievement of Irish freedom. It soon adopted the symbolism of Irish nationalism. There had been a tradition in previous imperialist wars of exchanging sweetheart brooches or having them given as gifts by soldiers to their girlfriend. These sometimes featured weapons with hearts or lovebirds or inscriptions combined in a piece of jewellery.

The *Cumann na mBan* badge refreshed this idea. It combined a rifle with a strap like a piece of ornamental interlacement and the initials *C na mB*, for *Cumann na mBan*. Various firms made these badges and examples in bronze and silver are known. Special privately commissioned versions of the badge with enamelling are also known.

Another badge, though an extremely rare one, is an oval badge enamelled in green, white and orange and bearing the inscription *Cumann na mBan*, along with the date, 1916. There are various theories as to the origin of this badge which has a rifle crossed with a pike in the middle. One is that it was given to *Cumann na mBan* members who had participated in the 1916 Rising. The other theory is that it was made as a commemorative badge which was then sold in aid of the widows and families of the executed 1916 leaders or in aid of republican prisoners.



<sup>[1]</sup> *Women in Irish History 1912-1922*, University of Limerick  
<http://www.ul.ie/wic/content/town-hall>. Accessed Mar 2015.

(Image courtesy of Dr Mark Humphrys. Please see [humphrysfamilytree.com](http://humphrysfamilytree.com))

# THE SOLDIERS OF CUMANN NA mBAN

by Brian O'Higgins

All honour to *Óglaigh na hÉireann*,  
All praise to the men of our race,  
Who, in days of betrayal and slavery,  
Saved Eire from shame and disgrace.  
But do not forget in your praising,  
Of them and the deeds they have done,  
Their loyal and true-hearted comrades,  
The Soldiers of *Cumann na mBan*!

*Chorus*

They stand for the honour of Ireland,  
As their sisters in days that are gone,  
And they'll march with their brothers to freedom,  
The Soldiers of *Cumann na mBan*.

No great-hearted daughter of Ireland,  
Who died for her sake long ago,  
Who stood in the gap of her danger,  
Defying the Sassenach foe,  
Was ever more gallant or worthy,  
Of glory in high sounding rann,  
Than the comrades of *Óglaigh na hÉireann*,  
The Soldiers of *Cumann na mBan*!

*Chorus*

O, high beat the hearts of our Mother,  
The day she had longed for is nigh,  
When the sunlight of joy and of freedom,  
Shall glow in the eastern sky;  
And none shall be honoured more proudly,  
That morning by chieftain and clan,  
Than the daughters who served in her danger,  
The Soldiers of *Cumann na mBan*!

*Chorus*

This song has been arranged and recorded by Joseph Forde.  
The resulting CD is enclosed with this publication.

# BRIAN O'HIGGINS: AN INSIGHT

by Jimmy Laffey



Brian O'Higgins (1882-1963), also known as *Brian na Banban*, was born in Kilskyre, County Meath, to a family with strong Fenian and Parnellite traditions. He moved to Dublin as a teenager and became active in the Gaelic League where he learned the Irish language, dancing and songs which led him to commence composing songs himself, many humorous, and he soon published his first of many books. Brian was active in the GPO during Easter Week 1916, despite being in poor health at that time, and after his capture he was imprisoned at Frongoch Jail in Wales. Following his release, he was elected unopposed as a Sinn Féin MP for Clare West at the 1918 general election. O'Higgins opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, voted against it and was re-elected as an Anti-Treaty Sinn Féin TD at the 1921, 1922 and 1923 elections. Eventually, he lost his seat at the June 1927 general election and from then he ran a successful business publishing greeting cards and calendars decorated with Celtic designs and his own verses. He was president of Sinn Féin from 1931 to 1933, and from 1938 to 1962 he published the *Wolfe Tone Annual* which gave popular accounts of episodes in Irish history from a republican viewpoint. Brian O'Higgins penned the lyrics of *The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan* in the week immediately prior the 1916 Rising.

# SOME FURTHER READING

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# AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

## Dr Brian Casey

Dr Brian Casey is a native of Ballinasloe and a graduate of Maynooth University. His PhD thesis 'Land, politics and religion on the Clancarty estate, east Galway, 1851-1914' was completed in 2011 under the supervision of Professor Terence Dooley. He is a historian of late-Victorian provincial Ireland, has published on the Ballinasloe Fenian Matt Harris and is editor of *Defying the Law of the Land: Agrarian Radicals in Irish History*.

## Christina Cassidy

Christina Cassidy is a native of Loughrea. She graduated from UCG [NUIG] with an honours degree in English and History. Christina is passionate about history, in particular local history. She has worked at Loughrea History Project (currently a GRETB Local Training Initiative) since 1999 and has been Project Co-ordinator there since 2010. She has, in collaboration with work colleagues, researched and published a number of local history and folklore books in addition to assisting in the production of a documentary and a number of plays on local themes.

## Joseph Forde

Joseph Forde lives with his wife Maureen and their four children in the townland of Cluide near Corrandulla. Born and reared in a thatched cottage, which in itself is of great significance to the local history of his area, Joe's ear for song and music was tuned in the cradle from the vast repertoire of songs sung by his mother Bridie - a Shrulle native. This followed on into his school days, with weekly traditional sessions at his uncle's, Sean Forde's pub in Headford, where he was equally influenced by the traditional music of his cousin, Gerry Forde, who continues to play and promote Irish music in Florida in the USA.

In later years, he would discover the broader world of folk and ballads as sung by Luke Kelly, Paddy Reilly and Dolores Keane, among many others. His first album, titled *The Stories Within*, was recorded in 2012 and this was followed with the release of a single, *The Promise*, composed, sung and arranged by Joseph in 2014. He is a regular contributor to the local music scene across the west of Ireland at concerts and sessions as well as being much requested on local, national and international radio stations. On reading the lyrics of *The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan* he became intensely immersed in its arrangement and recording and we feel the finished product is testament to his efforts and many talents.

## Dr Bernard Kelly

Dr Bernard Kelly is an Honorary Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh. He obtained his PhD in Irish history from NUI Galway in June 2010 and is the author of two books as well as several chapters, journal articles and magazine pieces. He can be contacted at [v1bkell2@staffmail.ed.ac.uk](mailto:v1bkell2@staffmail.ed.ac.uk).

## **Kathy Keane**

Kathy Keane is a Chartered Building Surveyor. She is married to Marcus Doherty and they have three girls, Alanah, Eabhe and Roisin. Kathy has had a love of history and Architecture from an early age and has always been fascinated by our country's struggle in the past, our fight for Independence as well as today's modern politics.

Her Grand Mother, Kate Armstrong or Nana as she called her, has always been a source of inspiration and wonder to Kathy; a woman that she is very proud of.

## **Dr Mark Humphrys**

Dr Mark Humphrys is a lecturer in Computing at Dublin City University. He grew up in a family that was deeply involved with the events of 1916-23. His great-granduncle was The O'Rahilly, who died fighting in 1916. His grandfather Dick Humphrys fought in the GPO. His granduncle was W.T. Cosgrave. His great-grandfather James O'Mara was a member of the First Dáil. His grandaunt was the revolutionary Sighle Humphrys. His great-grandaunt was Sinn Féin County Councillor, Alice Cashel. Dr Humphrys has spent the last 32 years researching the extended family history, which is all online at [humphrysfamilytree.com](http://humphrysfamilytree.com).

## **Patria McWalter**

Patria McWalter, BA, H. Dip. AS, received her BA in History and Sociology in UCD in 1996, and qualified as an Archivist the following year. Since then she has worked with local government and was appointed to Galway County Council in 2000.

Aside from assisting Galway County Council to ensure that proper care and preservation are applied to its archives, some of the other major projects Patria has worked on in the intervening years are the development and provision of an on-line catalogue of the Archives' holdings and the development of the Digital Archive ([www.galway.ie/digitalarchives](http://www.galway.ie/digitalarchives)), which enables free global access to several interesting and important collections. She has also worked on the publication of *Collecting and Preserving Folklore and Oral History: Basic Techniques* (2006), and *For the Record, The Archives of Galway's Rural District Councils* (2014).

## **Mary J Murphy**

Mary J Murphy is from Menlough in east Galway but has called Caherlistrane home for many years. Forgotten characters and events hold a special fascination for her, and she believes that all history is, in essence, local history. Mary is the author of three books - *Viking Summer: The Filming by MGM of Alfred The Great in Galway in 1968* (ISBN:978 0 9560 749 0 4, Knockma Publishing 2008); *Achill's Eva O'Flaherty: Forgotten Island Heroine* (as above); and *Caherlistrane: Featuring Eilish O'Carroll, Seán Keane & Vivian Nesbitt* (ISBN: 978 0 9560 749 2 8, Knockma Publishing 2015).





The **Easter Lily** is the **NATIONAL EMBLEM**.

The **Easter Lily** represents the **NORTH** and **SOUTH** united in an expression of appreciation of the principles for which the men of **Easter Week** gave up their lives.

The **Easter Lily** is an emblem of **Hope** and **Confidence** in the ultimate realisation of every Irishman's dream, "Ireland free from the centre to the Sea."

We appeal to the **NATION**, and in particular to the young, to

# WEAR AN EASTER LILY

Printed in Ireland





# CUMANN NA mBAN

IRISHWOMEN'S COUNCIL

## A PUBLIC MEETING

WILL BE HELD IN THE

TOWN HALL ATHENRY

ON

*Thursday Aug. 26*

For the purpose of establishing a Branch of above

The Meeting will be addressed by

### MISS E. BLOXHAM

Organizer, DUBLIN

Women of Athenry come and join the  
Irishwomen's Council

And take your place in the fight for Ireland's Liberty

Chair will be taken at EIGHT o'clock, sharp

*A Dhia Saor Eire*

(5)



(6)



(7)



(8)



(9)



(10)

**NO CONSCRIPTION  
NOW! or AFTER the Harvest.**

---

**No Economic Pressure!**

---

LÁ NA mBÁN.

**The Woman's Day,  
SUNDAY, JUNE 9th.**

---

**FOR HOME & COUNTRY.**

---

**IRISHWOMEN,  
STAND BY YOUR COUNTRYMEN  
IN RESISTING CONSCRIPTION.**

---

**SIGN THIS PLEDGE AT THE CITY HALL ON  
ST. COLMCILLE'S DAY.**

---

"We will not fill the places of men deprived of their work through refusing enforced military service."

"We will do all in our power to help the families of men who suffer through refusing enforced military service."

---

**REFUSE** to fill Posts vacated by MEN because of Compulsory Military Service.

All information from Secretary, 18 Kildare Street.

(11)



*The Hayman*  
ENGLISH. Ada. Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.

---

Age, about 45. (1921).

Professor.

Elected Sinn Fein M.P. for National University, Dublin, May 1921.

---

1st Medical Officer, Ballinasloe Lunatic Asylum, Co. Galway.

Present at a Sinn Fein Meeting in Galway Town on 1-1-18.

On 3-3-18 was reported to be President of the Local CUMANN-na-mBAN which she organised.

Took a prominent part in the womens anti-conscription demonstration at Ballinasloe 9-6-18 and was the chief Organiser.

House searched 17-1-21. Various documents relating to Sinn Fein seized. *and in consequence was*

(?FCCM)  
Arrested 19-1-21, and tried by D.C.M. at Galway 24-2-21. Sentenced to 9 months imprisonment without hard labour.

Released from Galway Prison 13-5-21 on grounds of ill-health and on giving an undertaking to reside outside Counties Galway and Mayo

Although not residing in Ballinasloe since her release, it is believed she has been active in connection with the Sinn Fein Movement.

Name appears in secret documents seized from Michael Collins as the Delegate from Co. Galway to the Annual Convention of Cumann-na-mBan 1919-1920.

ACTIVITIES SINCE THE TRUCE.

*"Wood & Thacker"*  
After making a speech at Ballinasloe she proceeded openly to enlist members of the Cimann-na-mBan. (IX/0135).

*Voted against Treaty on Sat. 7.1.22.*

*Re-nominated as Anti-Treaty member for his present constituency to contest in elections June 1922.*

*Defeated at Poll for 2nd Dail.*

Arrested by R.C. Troops, with four other members of Cumann na mBan, recently. ("Republican War News" No35, dated 10th -3-22)

- Poster explaining meaning and symbolism of the Easter Lily. "The Easter lily represents the North and South united in an expression of appreciation of the principles for which the men of Easter Week gave up their lives. The Easter Lily is an emblem of hope and confidence in the ultimate realisation of every Irishman's dream, "Ireland free from the centre to the Sea. We appeal to the nation, and in particular to the young, to wear an Easter lily". At centre of poster is an illustration of a lily in green, white and orange. Borders are decorated with celtic interlace design. At foot of broadside: "Defiance" Series. No. 300'. Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland. EPH F27http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000511268
- "Staff at Ballinasloe District Asylum with English at the front centre (c.1917)." "Source: Mattie Ganly, Used with permission."
- Eva O'Flaherty. Photograph courtesy of Mary J Murphy.
- Alice Cashel. Photograph courtesy of Dr Mark Humphrys.
- Poster advertising a meeting for the purpose of establishing a branch of the Irish Women's Council, *Cumann na mBan* - "The meeting will be addressed by Miss E. Bloxham, Organizer, Dublin". Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland. EPH F517 http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000551288
- Cumann na mBan* Brooch. Photograph courtesy of Deirdre Uí Uallacháin.
- Kate Glynn and Michael Armstrong's wedding 1921. Photograph courtesy of Kathy Keane.
- Alice Cashel out of Prison. Photograph courtesy of Dr Mark Humphrys.
- Front of *Cumann na mBan* medal belonging to Kate Armstrong. Photograph courtesy of Kathy Keane.
- Reverse of *Cumann na mBan* medal belonging to Kate Armstrong. Photograph courtesy of Kathy Keane.
- Handbill issued to advertise an anti-conscription rally held in Dublin city on St. Colmcille's Day, Sunday, June 9th, 1918 which was organised by womens' organisations and trade unions throughout Ireland. It encourages women to "... refuse to fill posts vacated by men because of Compulsory Military Service". The rally culminated in those involved signing an anti-conscription pledge at Dublin's City Hall. Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland. EPH C32 http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000262934
- Mary Regan and her brother Martin. Photo taken at an Irish dancing competition, 1929. Photograph courtesy of Pat Barrett.
- Mai Fahy, Caherduff, Ardrahan. Photo courtesy of Cllr Michael Fahy.
- Kathleen Mitchell (nee Flynn) in her kitchen at Carroweel, Kiltullagh 3rd August, 1967. Photograph courtesy of Michelle Mitchell.
- Cissie Davoren nee Lally. Photograph courtesy of Christina Cassidy.
- Dublin Castle File on Dr Ada English. Image courtesy of The National Archives (UK). The National Archive (UK), WO/35/206.
- Póstaer ar a mínteair an bhrí agus an siombalachas a bhaineann le Lile na Cásca. 'Seasann Lile na Cásca don Tuaisceart agus don Deisceart aontaithe maidir le meas ar na príonsabail a chur in iúl a bhfuair fir Sheachtain na Cásca bás ar a son. Is comhartha dóchais agus misnigh Lile na Cásca go dtabharfar i gcrích aising gach uile Éireannaigh, "Éire atá saor, óna lár amach go dtí an fharráige". Impítear ar an náisiún, agus go háirithe ar na daoine óga, lile na Cásca a chaitheamh.' I gcoilár an phóstaer, tá léaráid de lile faoi dhathanna uaine, bán agus flannbhui. Tá na himill maitisithe le hobair chrosach ar nós na gCeilteach. Ag íochtar an leathanaigh: "Defiance" Series. No. 300' íomhá le caoinchead Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann. EPH F27http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000511268
- "Lucht na Foirne ag Gealltann Ceantair Bhéal Átha na Sluaige agus English i lár báire chun tosaigh (c.1917)." "Foinsé: Mattie Ganly. Is le caoinchead a úsáidtear."
- Eva O'Flaherty. Grianghraif le caoinchead Mary J Murphy.
- Alice Cashel. Grianghraif le caoinchead an Dr Mark Humphrys.
- Póstaer ar a bhfógraitear cruinniú chun brainse de *Chumann na mBan* a bhunú - "Tabharfaidh Miss E. Bloxham, Eagraí, Baile Átha Cliath, aitheas ag an gcruinniú". Íomhá le caoinchead Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann. EPH F517 http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000551288
- Bróiste *Chumann na mBan*. Grianghraif le caoinchead Dheirdre Uí Uallacháin.
- Bainis Kate Glynn agus Michael Armstrong 1921. Grianghraif le caoinchead Kathy Keane.
- Alice Cashel tagtha as an bpríosún. Grianghraif le caoinchead an Dr Mark Humphrys.
- Aghaidh Bhonh *Chumann na mBan* a bronnadh ar Kate Armstrong. Grianghraif le caoinchead Kathy Keane.
- Cúl Bhonh *Chumann na mBan* a bronnadh ar Kate Armstrong. Grianghraif le caoinchead Kathy Keane.
- Bileog a eisíodh chun ollchruinniú in aghaidh an choinscríofa a fhógairt a eagraíodh i mBaile Átha Cliath ar Lá Colm Cille, Dé Domhnaigh, an 9 Meitheamh 1918. Eagraíochtaí na mban agus ceardchumainn ar fud na hÉireann a d'eagraigh an cruinniú. Moltar do mhna diúltú post a líonadh a bheadh folamh mar gheall ar fhear a fhágáil ag dul ar Sheirbhís Mhíleata Éigeantach dó. Nuair a bhí an slógadh thart, shínigh na daoine a bhí páirteach ann gealltanas in aghaidh an choinscríofa ag Halla na Cathrach i mBaile Átha Cliath. Íomhá le caoinchead Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann. EPH C32 http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000262934
- Mary Regan agus a deartháir Martin. Grianghraif a tógadh ag comórtas damhsa sa bhliain 1929. Grianghraif le caoinchead Pat Barrett.
- Mai Fahy, an Chathair Dhubh, Ard Rathain. Grianghraif le caoinchead an Chomh. Michael Fahy.
- Kathleen Mitchell (née Flynn) sa chistin sa bhaile ar an gCeathrú Chaol, Cill Tulach, an 3 Lúnasa 1967. Grianghraif le caoinchead Michelle Mitchell.
- Cissie Davoren née Lally. Grianghraif le caoinchead Christina Cassidy.
- Comhad Chaisleán Bhaile Átha Cliath faoin Dr Ada English. Íomhá le caoinchead The National Archives (An Ríocht Aontaithe). The National Archives (An Ríocht Aontaithe), WO/35/206.