



'Diaspora Nationalism, the Dundee-Irish, and the Experiences of Irish

Republican Women in Britain, c.1916-1966'

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Abstract

Between 1916 and 1923, Irish men and women rebelled against British colonial rule to establish an Irish Republic. The events of this period have been well documented by historians, however, for much of the twentieth century, historians failed to account for the role of women. The Decade of Centenaries has revived interest in this period and has resulted in a plethora of work on the role of women in revolutionary Ireland, however, the experiences of Irish women in Britain, who risked their livelihoods by joining a clandestine militant organisation in an enemy country, have not been sufficiently examined. This is despite the ample possibilities this group of women provides in using gendered and transnational frameworks to enrich historical understandings of revolutionary nationalism.

This thesis investigates the political activism of these overlooked migrant women during the Irish revolutionary era. It uses the Dundee Irish as a window to explore gender and diasporic nationalism, using its unique gender profile and large Irish population to explore these themes in a local context. Rather than exploring this community in isolation, it investigates the networks these women created with other groups in Britain and Ireland.

The life of the Dundee born, IRA member, Lena McDonald, which has been detailed richly in the Military Service Pension Collection, remains at the centre of this research, providing a window to explore wider themes. This includes the rise of Irish republicanism in Britain, the mental and physical impact of revolution, the treatment of female and diasporic revolutionaries by the Irish and British states, and the commemoration of the revolutionary period in Ireland and Britain. In this way, this research highlights how Irish migrant women can be used as a lens through which to explore the Irish revolutionary period and challenge traditional narratives on this period.

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Abbreviations

AOH- Ancient Order of Hibernians

BMHWS- Bureau of Military History Witness Statements

DDUJFW- Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers

DLC- Dundee Local History Centre

DMFOU- Dundee and District Mill and Factory Operatives' Union

EMP- Eamon Mooney Papers

GAA- Gaelic Athletic Association

GHQ- General Headquarters

ICA- Irish Citizen's Army

INF- Irish National Foresters

INLGB- Irish National League of Great Britain

IRA- Irish Republican Army

IRB- Irish Republican Brotherhood

MSPC- Military Service Pension Collection

NGA- National Graves Association

NLI- National Library of Ireland

NRS- National Records of Scotland

NUI- National University of Ireland

NUWSS- National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies

PAS- Protestant Action League

SPL- Scottish Protestant League

TNA- The National Archives (Kew)

UCD- University College Dublin

UDA- University of Dundee Archives

UIL- United Irish League

WOBP- William O'Brien Papers

WSPU- women's Social and Political Union

Introduction

During the 1880s, future trade unionist and Irish Republican, James Connolly, lived in the Scottish city of Dundee. Connolly was born in the Cowgate in Edinburgh, a slum neighbourhood whose inhabitants were overwhelmingly Irish. Connolly himself was of Irish extraction, as both his parents were natives of County Monaghan. He found himself in Dundee after leaving the British Army, living at his aunt's brother's house. While in Dundee, he regularly wrote to his future wife, Lillie Reynolds. In one letter dated 1888, he described the character of his new hometown vividly:

This is the town where women rule the roost. According to the census there are supposed to be eleven women to every two men in Dundee. And if you seen the street beside the mills at dinner hour or any drill hours... women, women, hardly anything but women, women and girls of all shapes, descriptions and sizes, short and small, long and tall, as beautiful as angels and as ugly as sin.¹

During the nineteenth century, Dundee underwent a rapid expansion as a result of the industrial revolution. The jute industry was at the centre of the town's economy and came to dominate employment opportunities: at the time Connolly was writing, over 37,000 people in Dundee were employed as flax and jute operatives.² This expansion proved to be a magnet for female workers, who dominated the workforce as spinners and weavers. So saturated was the industry with women that male Dundonians were affectionately known as 'kettle boilers' due to their secondary economic status in many households.³ While

¹ NLI, William O'Brien Papers 1898-1969, James Connolly to Lillie Connolly, 17th April 1888. <https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000622086/HierarchyTree?recordID=vtls000622086#tree-vtls000622086> (date accessed 16/02/23).

² Jim Tomlinson, *Dundee and the Empire: Juteopolis 1850-1939* (Edinburgh 2014), p.9.

³ Eleanor Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1991), p.164.

Connolly's figure of eleven to two is not quite accurate, women did outnumber men considerably in the city. According to the 1851 census, for every three women, there were two men among the total population.⁴

The gender ratio was even more pronounced among the city's booming Irish population. During this period, Dundee became a prominent destination for Irish, female immigrants due to the employment opportunities afforded to them by the jute industry. In the same letter, Connolly highlighted the density of the Irish population in the town:

You can hear at once all the languages of every district in Scotland and the brogue of every county in Ireland. For there is not a county in the Emerald Isle but what has sent its representatives here. I think Dundee has a stronger Irish population than any other town in Great Britain.⁵

Throughout the nineteenth century, Dundee's Irish population rapidly expanded. Although there had been some Irish migration to the town in the early nineteenth century, this increased dramatically in the late 1840s and 1850s as a result of the Great Famine.⁶ According to one Catholic priest in the city, there were roughly 7,100 Irish born in Dundee in 1840.⁷ However, by the time of the 1861 census, there were 14,366.⁸ In this way, Irish migration to Dundee mirrored other parts of Scotland: in 1841, the percentage of Irish born in Scotland was 4.8 per cent, by 1851 this had grown to 7.8 per cent.⁹ While other parts of

⁴ Brenda Collins, 'Aspects of Irish Immigration into two Scottish Towns (Dundee and Paisley) during the Mid-Nineteenth Century', PhD, (University of Edinburgh, 1978), p.86.

⁵ NLI, WOBB, James Connolly to Lillie Reynolds.

⁶ See William M. Walker, '*Juteopolis: Dundee and its Textile Workers 1885-1923*' (Edinburgh 1979), p.114.

⁷ P. Anson, *Underground Catholicism in Scotland* (Montrose, 1970), p.247; Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.114.

⁸ Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.114.

⁹ James Edmund Handley, *The Irish in Scotland 1798-1845* (Cork, 1945) pp.89-90; Richard B. McCready, 'Irish Catholicism and Nationalism in Scotland: the Dundee Experience, 1850-1922', *Irish Studies Review*, Vol.6, No.3 (1998), p.245.

Scotland had an overall larger Irish population than Dundee, the proportion of the Irish in Dundee was significantly greater. According to the 1851 census, Dundee's Irish population constituted 18.9 per cent of its total population. In terms of density, the only place in Britain which surpassed Dundee was Liverpool.¹⁰

James Connolly left Dundee at some point in the early 1890s for Edinburgh. Although his time in Dundee was brief, it clearly left a mark on him, as this was where he joined the Socialist League, the first step in a significant career of political activism.¹¹ Shortly after his departure, another, lesser-known Irish revolutionary was born in Dundee. Her name was Mary Helen McDonald, however throughout her life she was known as Lena. McDonald was born on the 11th November 1897 at 8 East Henderson's Wynd, Dundee, in the Scouringbourn area of the city. Her father, Peter, was a groom of Scottish origin, however he was conspicuously absent from any census returns after her birth. At the time of her birth, her mother, Helen McDonald (nee Higgins), was a jute spinner, but at some point in the 1910s, she qualified as a midwife. Helen was second generation Irish, as her parents, Bridget and Patrick had migrated from Sligo to Dundee in the 1840s. Lena grew up in this area of the city and was heavily influenced by her maternal grandparents, with whom she, her mother and sister lived with for most of her childhood.¹²

¹⁰ Collins, 'Aspects of Irish Immigration', p.33. The percentage of Irish born in Liverpool was 22.3 per cent.

¹¹ Connolly, James, Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/connolly-james-a1953> (date accessed: 21/02/23).

¹² Marriages (RCR), St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Chapel, Dundee, 21st November, 1892. MCDONALD, Peter and HIGGINS, Helen, 282/2 194, <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/> (date accessed 27th July 2023); Census records, Scotland, St Marys, Dundee, 1901, MCDONALD, Mary [granddaughter] 282/2 10/8, <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/> (date accessed: 27th July 2023); Census records, Scotland, St Marys, Dundee, 1910, MCDONALD, Mary [granddaughter] 282/2 12/5, <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/> (date accessed 27th July 2023).

Lena lived in Dundee during a turbulent time for the city's Irish community. From her birth in 1897 until 1916, she would have witnessed multiple strikes by the city's female jute workforce, the rise and fall of Irish Home Rule, the election of the wholly unpopular Winston Churchill, suffrage activism and the reaction to the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, in which Connolly was famously one of the main leaders. It is likely that this latter event had the most profound impact on Lena, as shortly after she began collecting arms and ammunition with the intention of transporting them to Ireland.¹³ Not long after, she became a member of the Dundee Company IRA.¹⁴

Lena McDonald's life from 1917 onwards is richly detailed in her application for a Military Service Pension, which has been digitised as part of an ongoing project by the Irish government. To date, over 52,000 files have been digitised, with 17,372 individual pension claims made available online.¹⁵ The digitisation of this collection has allowed historians ground-breaking insight into the lives and experiences of those who were involved in the revolutionary period, including previously understudied groups such as women and those within the diaspora. Members of Cumann na mBan, the IRA and Fianna Éireann in Britain were eligible for Military Service Pensions, and accordingly, hundreds applied, with mixed rates of success.

According to her pension file, Lena McDonald became one of the most active gunrunners in Scotland during the revolutionary period, and she even spent a brief spell in prison for her involvement in a gun smuggling plot which went awry, involving a pack of revolvers being

¹³ Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF56964, Lena McDonald.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923/release-history/may-2023-release>

found in a box of eggs at Dundee West station.¹⁶ Her former Officer in Command, Fr. John Fahy, remarked that she procured more arms than any other member of the IRA in Scotland.¹⁷ Although this is difficult to quantify, Fahy's comments reflect the extent of Lena McDonald's efforts during the revolutionary period and her commitment to the cause of republicanism.

After this period of clandestine activity, she faced severe financial hardship and moved to Ireland in the late 1930s.¹⁸ In later life, she was awarded a Military Service Pension and Service Medal by the Irish government, and she lived to experience the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966. However, unlike James Connolly, her name is not well known, even in her hometown. While Connolly's experiences have been elevated and ensured their place in the history of the Irish revolutionary period, Lena McDonald represented a group of women whose experiences of clandestine republican activities in Britain have been overlooked. Their experiences enrich our historical understanding of this period by widening the scope of study and they reveal that there were many similarities, as well as important differences, between female republicans on the island of Ireland and in Britain. These include the way they used to gender to conceal their activities, their experiences with the authorities, and interactions with native communities, as well as their own Irish networks.

This thesis investigates the political activism of these neglected migrant women during the revolutionary era, with a focus on Dundee's Irish community, but also the wider Irish diaspora in Britain. It examines the interaction of gender and national identity, using

¹⁶ Ibid. For the gunrunning incident, see *Dundee Courier*, 30th April 1921; *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1921.

¹⁷ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹⁸ Conspicuously, she left Scotland in September 1939, at the start of the Second World War.

Dundee's unique profile as a laboratory to explore how gender ideologies worked in practice in an environment where women had considerable economic influence, albeit in the framework of a patriarchal society. It will investigate the longstanding tradition of women's involvement in the politics of the city, using a gendered lens to examine how Dundee's Irish women navigated the boundaries between the public and private, the national and local, and the legal and clandestine. Rather than exploring this community in isolation, it investigates the links and networks they created with other groups in Britain and Ireland. The life of Lena McDonald remains at the centre of this research, providing a window to explore wider themes, including the rise of republicanism in Scotland, the mental and physical impact of revolution, the treatment of female and diasporic revolutionaries by the Irish and British states, and the commemoration of the revolutionary period in Britain and Ireland.

Aims and Methodology

This thesis aims to investigate marginalised women from the diaspora, primarily those across Britain, and establish their experiences in the history of the Irish revolutionary period. This is part of a wider approach which challenges the central and privileged position the Irish state takes in these histories.¹⁹ In doing so, it aims to explore the ways in which these women used their gender to navigate their world of Irish revolutionary activism in Britain and how their experiences continued to impact them long after the end of the Civil War in 1923. It does not merely seek to reinsert the histories of these women into an existing framework on the Irish in Scotland and Britain more generally. It examines this community using a gendered and transnational framework, which challenges the

¹⁹ Enda Delaney and Fearghal McGarry, 'Introduction: a global history of the Irish Revolution', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol.44, No.165 (May, 2020), pp.1-10.

established picture of the Irish experience in Scotland as being coloured by sectarian tensions and patterns of male employment, and the revolutionary experience in Britain being dominated by men.²⁰ This approach follows the recent *Irish Historical Studies* special issues on the 'global' Irish Revolution and a 'new agenda' for women's and gender history, integrating these approaches to produce a more inclusive histories of the Irish Revolution.²¹ It uses the Dundee Irish as a window to explore these issues, taking the opportunity to use its unique gendered profile and large Irish population to explore these themes more widely. This marginalisation also leans into a wider lack of work on the experiences of Irish nationalist and republican women in Britain during the revolutionary period and beyond, which this thesis seeks to address.²² Historical works have commented on Dundee's large Irish, female population, however few have examined them using historical analysis.²³

A central question to this project is: to what extent were the Dundee Irish different to other Irish communities in Britain during the revolutionary era, and how far was this because of its gendered profile? It explores what insights a gendered methodology provides into the Dundee Irish. For example, a gendered analysis of women's experiences in the jute mills highlights that while they made up the bulk of the workforce, there was very little room for vertical mobility and men remained in the top positions, therefore female workers used

²⁰ See Gerard Noonan, *The IRA in Britain: in the Heart of Enemy Lines* (Liverpool, 2014).

²¹ Delaney and McGarry, 'Introduction: a global history of the Irish Revolution', pp.1-10; Elaine Farrell, Leanne McCormick, and Jennifer Redmond. 'Exploring the Ordinary: Migration, Sexuality and Crime, and the Progression of the 'Agenda' in Irish Women's History, 1850s–1950s,' *Irish Historical Studies* 46, no. 170 (2022), pp. 338–55.

²² See, Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*; Peter Hart, 'Operations Abroad': The IRA in Britain, 1919-23', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 115, No. 460 (February, 2000), pp.71-102; Darragh Gannon, *Conflict, Diaspora, and Empire: Irish Nationalism in Britain, 1912–1922* (Cambridge, 2023).

²³ William Walker, *Juteopolis*; Richard B. McCready, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee c.1845-1922' PhD, (University of Dundee, 2002).

strikes as a way to subvert gender norms and ridicule their male authoritarian figures through dances, songs, and dressing up.

A key concern of this thesis is to show that a lack of sectarian violence does not mean a lack of engagement with the events of this period, and that Dundee's Irish community was one of the most politically organised and engaged groups in Scotland. It also argues that women's political organisation did not necessarily resemble that of their male counterparts due to vertical patriarchal structures. This meant that female political organisation had to be more flexible, blurring the boundaries between the public and the private, the formal and the informal. This can be seen repeatedly throughout the period under examination, from the 'benevolent' front of the Irish Ladies' Land League to the clandestine operations undertaken by Irish republicans. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that older works on the Irish in Scotland which have claimed Dundee's Irish community was not politically engaged may have been looking for evidence of women's political activism in the wrong places.

This thesis builds on an increasing scholarship of Irish women's migratory experiences. This was one of the areas that MacCurtain, Luddy, and O'Dowd called for more research on in their 1992 article outlining a new 'Agenda' for Irish women's history.²⁴ Since the publication of the 'Agenda', there has been a steady stream of works produced on experiences of Irish women's migration, particularly to the United States of America during the nineteenth century.²⁵ Additionally, historians with broader interests have included the experiences of

²⁴ MacCurtain, Margaret, Mary O'Dowd, and Maria Luddy. 'An Agenda for Women's History in Ireland, 1500-1900,' *Irish Historical Studies* 28, no. 109 (1992), pp. 1-37, p.36.

²⁵ See Janet Nolan, *Ourselves alone: women's emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, (2009); Ide O'Carroll, *Models for Movers: Irish Women's Emigration to America* (Dublin, 1990); Margaret Lynch- Brennan, *The Irish Bridget: Irish immigrant women in domestic service in America, 1840-1930* (Syracuse, 2014); Bronwen Walter, "Old Mobilities'? Transatlantic Women from the West of Ireland 1880s-1920s, *Irish Journal of Sociology*, Vol.23, No.2 (November 2015), pp.49-68.

women in studies on migration, for example, Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin's work on migration from the 1600s to the early 2000s.²⁶ Women's migration experiences were also included as a volume in Patrick O'Sullivan's *Irish World Wide Series*.²⁷

The recent edition of *Irish Historical Studies* has highlighted the progress made in this area, with abundant studies on Irish women's migration and communities in Britain and the USA.²⁸ Resultantly, the 'New Agenda' has called for more studies on Irish women's experiences in other diasporic communities outside of these countries.²⁹ However, while they acknowledge the work that has been done in this area, they also argue 'despite recent scholarship... women's experiences remain peripheral or completely ignored in many general accounts of migration and the Irish diaspora'.³⁰ They continue to state that 'the Irish' is still used to describe research that is solely focused on male migrants without it being 'explicitly acknowledged as such'.³¹

There have been far fewer works produced on the experiences of Irish women's migration to Britain. Enda Delaney's work on migration to Britain in the twentieth century examines female migration to some extent, primarily in terms of numbers, however this is not the sole focus of his work.³² Lousie Ryan has examined this area in a series of articles exploring the migration of Irish women to England in the 1930s, using oral history to explore the reasons why they chose to emigrate and their experiences in their new surroundings.³³

²⁶ Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History, 1607–2007* (Basingstoke, 2008).

²⁷ Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide, Vol.4: Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London, 1995).

²⁸ Elaine Farrell, Leanne McCormick, and Jennifer Redmond. 'Exploring the Ordinary,' p.342.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. p.341.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Enda Delaney, *Demography, State and Society: Irish Migration to Britain, 1921-1971* (Liverpool, 2000); Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (Oxford, 2007).

³³ Louise Ryan, 'Compare and contrast: understanding Irish migration to Britain in a wider context', *Irish Studies Review*, Vol.21, No.1 (2013), pp.6-19; 'I had a sister in England': family-led migration,

In her 2018 monograph on Irish women's migration to Britain in the twentieth century, Jennifer Redmond has explored this gap of research. In her introduction, she stated that prior to the publication of her work, there was 'no dedicated monograph on Irish women migrants to Britain in the first half of the twentieth century.'³⁴ Redmond continued to note that Irish migration to Britain in the twentieth century is dominated by the image of the male navy, and that women's experiences have remained peripheral in even recent monographs, such as John Belchem's work on the Liverpool Irish, or Martin Mitchell's work on the Irish in Scotland.³⁵

While the works of Ryan and Redmond have explored an important lacuna in the experiences of Irish women in Britain during the twentieth century, it should be noted that their works focus almost exclusively on migration to England. There are far fewer works on the experiences of Irish migrant women to Scotland (or even Wales) in the twentieth century. This is another area which this thesis seeks to address.

This research also expands on transnational histories of the Irish diaspora and seeks to integrate the local into the global. It aims to integrate the Dundee Irish within the broader framework of the Irish in Britain and highlights this community's transnational links through nationalism. Previous studies on the Irish in Dundee have looked at this community in isolation. For example, William Walker's socio-historical work on Dundee's jute workers offers a detailed picture of the labour struggles within the jute industry but it does not go beyond the boundaries of Dundee itself. This thesis aims to show that the Dundee Irish did

social networks and Irish nurses', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.34, No.3 (2008), pp.453-470.

³⁴ Jennifer Redmond, *Moving histories: Irish women's migration to Britain from independence to republic*, Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press (2018), p.3.

³⁵ Ibid; John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: the history of the Liverpool Irish, 1800–1939* (Liverpool, 2007); Martin J. Mitchell, *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008).

not exist in a vacuum, but were shaped by numerous external, as well as internal, movements which gave this community their identity, but also kept them in conversation with Irish communities elsewhere. This can be seen through their establishment of churches, fundraising efforts for the Irish in Ireland, invitations to Irish nationalist speakers, and their involvement in post-Revolutionary associations. While the focus is on Dundee, this thesis also looks at Irish communities across Britain and Ireland, and how they interacted with and shaped each other. This further prompts the question of the Dundee Irish's differences and similarities to other Irish communities across Britain, and the extent to which this was because of that unique gender demographic.

By taking a transnational perspective, this research builds on the recent work on globalising the Irish Revolution, pioneered by Enda Delaney and Fearghal McGarry.³⁶ McGarry and Delaney have argued that incorporating a transnational view of the Irish Revolution that looked beyond Ireland would 'promote a more inclusive and diverse' history of this period, addressing the role of traditionally marginalised actors such as women or the diaspora within this history.³⁷ As well as the Irish Revolution, it seeks to incorporate the Dundee Irish into wider narratives on other transnational events of this period. This includes the First World War, which has traditionally been excluded from Irish republican narratives of this period and builds on the work of Fionnuala Walsh by incorporating perspectives of Irish women on the home front and their responses to the violence in Europe.³⁸

The events of the Irish Revolution and how it impacted the Irish in Dundee, as well as across Britain, are key concerns of this research. In the introduction to Patrick Mannion and

³⁶ See Delaney and McGarry, 'Introduction: a global history of the Irish Revolution,' pp.1-10; Patrick Mannion and Fearghal McGarry, *The Irish Revolution: A Global History* (New York, 2022).

³⁷ Delaney and McGarry, 'Introduction', p.10.

³⁸ Fionnuala Walsh, *Irish Women and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2020).

Fearghal McGarry's edited volume on this subject, they posit questions about the role Ireland's global diaspora played in determining the Revolution's outcome, and the impact that the Revolution had beyond Irish shores.³⁹ They also highlight the importance of studies on diasporic communities in this period, arguing that 'research on engagement with nationalist movements by overseas Irish communities is particularly adept in illuminating and clarifying the complexity of the diaspora'.⁴⁰ This research explores these questions and adds to this growing literature by examining the impact of the Irish Revolution in Dundee and Irish communities across Scotland and Britain. It also looks at the impact of these events on the attitudes of politicians and security forces in their approaches to 'the Irish Question', and the impact of this on the Irish. This is of particular relevance to the experiences of the Irish in Scotland, as during this period they were the subject of an unsuccessful, but persistent campaign for deportation, which was influenced by the events of the revolutionary period and Republican connections to communist organisations.

Finally, Lena McDonald's experience as a third-generation republican in a diasporic community is also of importance. While Connolly's Scottish roots have been paid homage to in numerous biographies and commemorative events, the role of the diaspora in Scotland has been overlooked in the history of this period. McDonald was active in a tightly woven network of Irish republicans which stretched across Scotland and the rest of Britain. While many of these activists were born on the island of Ireland, a large proportion were second or even third generation Irish, reflecting the strength of Irish identity in this period. While these groups provided essential weapons, intelligence, and money to Ireland, they also formed their own unique groups and societies in the years after the Irish Civil War, providing an important social and commemorative outlet to those who had been members

³⁹ Ibid. p.1.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 13.

of the IRA, Cumann na mBan and Fianna Éireann in Britain. These diasporic networks and their communities have been overlooked in the history of the revolutionary period, as well as the individual character and nature of each of these Irish settlements.

This research examines Dundee's Irish community from a gendered and transnational perspective. It does not seek to simply insert the experiences of this community into an existing framework of the Irish in Scotland, but to challenge the established picture and the frameworks within which the Irish abroad have been studied.

Gender history was largely developed as a response to the criticisms levelled at women's history. Although women's history was pioneering in its mission to insert women into historical narratives which had been dominated by male figures, critics argued that re-inserting women into the historical narrative did not necessarily challenge understandings of the past. Joan's Scott's influential essay published in the *American Historical Review* in 1986 proved groundbreaking, providing a framework for using gender as a category for historical analysis and examining cultural representations of gender. Since Scott's article, a plethora of historians have used the idea of gender as an "overflowing" category, alongside other social constructs such as class and race, to analyse past events.⁴¹

The majority of Dundee's Irish population during the period under study were women. Much of the work on Dundee's Irish community has simply viewed this as a point of distinctiveness and have not looked at the lives of these women in detail, but rather the political leaders who headed their campaigns for trade unionism, or Irish nationalism. While this thesis seeks to aid this and uses approaches pioneered by women's history advocates, such as exploring women's social, economic and political lives, it is more than a reinsertion

⁴¹ Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.91, No.5 (December 1986), pp.1053-1075.

of women's experiences into the established history of Irish Republicanism. This research uses a gendered lens to explore the way in which diasporic communities expressed their gender and how they used this to navigate the worlds of labour activism and Irish nationalism. It examines the way in which gender was used and expressed by Irish republican women across Britain, highlighting that femininity could be used as an advantage in pursuits such as gunrunning or intelligence gathering. This builds on the corresponding work on femininity and women's roles in the revolutionary period in Ireland.⁴² It is also a useful tool to explore how the women of Dundee, who had significant economic power and freedom through their employment in the jute factories, navigated the vertical patriarchal structures enforced around them, whether that was in the jute factories of Dundee or the hierarchy of Irish republican organisations during and after the revolutionary period. This approach highlights that although Dundee's Irish women were able to organise themselves politically and experienced economic freedom compared to their contemporaries elsewhere, they still existed in a patriarchal society where men held the top positions.

This research also employs a transnational perspective. Transnational history developed at the same time as global history, which came to prominence in the early 1990s, as a method of critiquing the nation state as the main unit of analysis in historical studies.⁴³ This methodology encouraged looking beyond national borders to the past, emphasising themes such as interconnectedness and cross communication. Specifically, transnational history focuses on subjects that transcend national boundaries, such as communications, ideas and migrations, although the distinction between this and global history remains debated and

⁴² See Linda Connolly's (ed) *Women and the Irish Revolution: feminism, activism and violence* (Newbridge, 2020); Oona Frawley (ed), *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana, 2021).

⁴³ Akira Iriye, *Global and transnational history: the past, present and future* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp.2-11.

tenuous.⁴⁴ However, despite their similarities, historians have only started using gendered and transnational approaches in conjunction with each other in relatively recent years. This is somewhat surprising, as Merry E. Wiesner Hanks has highlighted, both approaches are concerned with the issues of borders and crossings, whether they be geographic or gendered, and have a 'bottom-up' approach aimed at challenging established norms in the writing of history.⁴⁵

While a micro-study of the Dundee Irish would undoubtedly be fascinating, it is useful to 'play with the scales', to use Niall Whelehan's phrase, to tease out the ways in which this community was connected to their ancestral homeland, as well as other Irish communities across Britain.⁴⁶ This is done by expanding the scale of analysing, and 'zooming' into Dundee, as well as 'out' to the rest of Scotland, the rest of Britain, and the wider diaspora. This thesis examines Dundee using the wider scale of the Irish diaspora in Britain and connections to Ireland. It does this primarily by focusing on the theme of Irish political activism, examining the ways in which the Dundee Irish interacted with the political shifts which were occurring in Ireland, and how this impacted them. It also highlights the interwoven network of the Irish in Britain during this period, which was connected through efforts such as fundraising, gunrunning, providing safe houses, and formal political affiliations. The role of media should also be considered here, as various Irish publications were available in Dundee and the rest of Britain through Irish news agents, as well as the local Catholic press, most notably the editions of the *Catholic Herald* owned by the former Irish Nationalist MP Charles Diamond. These publications helped to forge a collective Irish

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Merry E. Wiesner Hanks, 'Crossing borders in transnational and gender history', *Journal of Global History*, No.6, (2011), pp.357-379.

⁴⁶ Niall Whelehan, 'Playing with scales: Transnational History and Modern Ireland' in Niall Whelehan's (ed.), *Transnational Perspectives on Modern Irish History*, (New York, 2014), p.9.

identity across Britain, however, this was by no means uniform, as this study will seek to show through this transnational approach. A transnational approach helps to tackle what Tim Meagher has coined 'conceptions of an irreducible Irishness... scattered in lumps and countries throughout the globe'.⁴⁷ Indeed, there were important differences between the Dundee Irish and their counterparts elsewhere in Britain, as well as amongst themselves.

This approach also destabilises the prominence of the state in the history of the Irish revolutionary period, bringing in marginalised groups and highlighting their contributions and the networks they operated in. Emigrants occupied a troubling area in the eyes of the Irish state in the period under examination, as it was commonly believed that emigration would decrease once Ireland became independent. Yet high rates of emigration persisted throughout this period, and emigrants were cast in shades of suspicion by successive governments, and consequently the roles they played in helping to establish the Irish state were marginalised in the official histories and commemorations of this period. Therefore, a transnational approach incorporates marginalised actors into this history.

This thesis ties these two methodologies together by using Lena McDonald as a focal point, using her experiences as a window to explore the wider world of Dundee's Irish community. The structure of this work is semi-autobiographical, using the events in Lena's life as a basis to explore wider themes of pre-Revolutionary Dundee, the Irish Revolution in Dundee and Britain more generally, and the afterlives of emigrant activists of this period. Lena McDonald's life encompasses many of the themes examined here, such as gender, national identity, revolutionary violence and how this is commemorated (positively or negatively). Using her experiences brings these abstract themes to life and gives them a personal, more

⁴⁷ Timothy J. Meagher, 'From the world to the village and the beginning to the end and after: research opportunities in Irish-American history', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, No.28 (2009), pp.118-35, p.122.

tangible edge. This is possible because of the detail in McDonald's Military Service Pension file, originally made in 1938. The file details her Revolutionary experiences as well as the events of her life, from moving to Ireland in September 1939 to her death in the United States in 1982.

Historiography

The Dundee Irish have generally been overlooked in the literature on the Irish in Scotland. The seminal texts on this topic have been produced by James Edmund Handley in the 1940s.⁴⁸ Despite the fact that these texts are over seventy years old, they are thoroughly researched and provide useful information on the Irish population in Scotland during the nineteenth century. Handley's work is also useful in examining the Irish population in Scotland before the Great Famine, where most works on this topic begin. It is useful to remember that while the period 1845-52 saw an influx of Irish to Scotland, this wave of migration had been a fixture for years before. Handley also takes time to examine the impact of the Irish in parts of Scotland outside of Glasgow, including Dundee. Handley does not say much about the Dundee Irish, other than that their population grew considerably in the mid-nineteenth century, as he stated that 'Irish immigration began in the 'twenties and proceeded briskly'.⁴⁹ Handley also noted that the main source of employment in the town was the jute industry and that this attracted women and 'juniors'.⁵⁰

In most cases, the fact that Dundee's prominent Irish population consisted mainly of women is nothing more than an interesting footnote. That Dundee's Irish community was predominantly female could be a possible explanation for this relative historiographical

⁴⁸ James Edmund Handley, *The Irish in Scotland*; James Edmund Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland* (Cork, 1947).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p.138.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p.139.

exclusion, certainly for histories on the Irish in Scotland. Such histories have emphasised themes such as sectarian violence, and therefore Dundee's Irish community has been viewed as an anomaly. Resultantly, much of the established work in this area has been dismissive of the Dundee Irish and has offered lazy explanations for the supposed lack of political interest within this community. For example, Tom Gallagher has explained that because of Dundee's female-heavy demographic, women could be absorbed into the local population as they were not likely to share 'to the same degree as Irishmen, the political and cultural preoccupations with the 'oul country' which could antagonise part of the host society'.⁵¹ Gallagher does not expand any further on this, with the implication being that the Irish women of Dundee were not politicised because they did not resort to sectarian violence, and they did not do this because it was mainly a community of women. Similarly, in his study on Dundee's textile workers, William Walker explained that 'it seems reasonable to suppose that in the politics of Irish nationalism women would be less prominent than men' when discussing the reasons for Dundee's lack of sectarian violence.⁵² Again, Walker does not expand on this reasoning, however, the implication is that women were neither interested nor involved in the politics of Irish nationalism, simply because they were women.

These views are underdeveloped at best and dismissive at worst. Certainly, Dundee experienced lower rates of sectarian violence than other communities on the west coast. Yet unevidenced statements about women's lack of interest in Irish politics are not a suitable explanation for this. Contrastingly, there is a great body of evidence which shows

⁵¹ Gallagher, *Glasgow the Uneasy Peace*, p.32; Tom Gallagher, 'The Catholic Irish in Scotland: in search of Identity' in T.M. Devine's *Irish immigrants and Scottish society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), p.27.

⁵² Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.121.

that Dundee Irish women were keenly involved in elements of Irish nationalist and republican politics, as well as the labour politics of the jute mills.

Much of the work that has been produced on the Irish in Scotland topic has focused on Glasgow and the west of Scotland.⁵³ This has resulted in numerous works that have emphasised sectarian tension as a defining feature of the Irish-Scottish experience. Tom Gallagher's work on the Irish in Glasgow has provided a significant insight into the religious tension Irish Catholics experienced as a result of their interactions with Scots as well as Irish Protestants, predominantly from Ulster.⁵⁴ Geraldine Vaughan's work on the Irish in the 'west' of Scotland also highlights the tension between the native Scots and Catholic Irish, particularly in the Monklands areas of Coatbridge and Airdrie.⁵⁵ However, there have been attempts to balance this image out. Martin Mitchell's work on the Irish in Glasgow has proposed a revised account of this experience, arguing that the Irish were more integrated into their new Scottish settlements than previously thought.⁵⁶ Mitchell points to the prominent rates of mixed faith marriages between native Protestants and Catholic Irish to highlight this point, arguing that while sectarian violence was not absent in nineteenth century Scotland, it was not as pronounced as it has been originally thought, and that the interwar period saw more intense anti-Irish sentiment in the form of the Church of Scotland's campaign for the deportation of Irish paupers.⁵⁷ Roger Swift's article on the Irish in nineteenth century Britain also reflects this, as Swift argues that more regional studies of

⁵³ Richard B. McCreedy, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee c.1845-1922', PhD, (University of Dundee, 2002), p.11.

⁵⁴ Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy Peace*.

⁵⁵ Geraldine Vaughan, *The 'Local' Irish in the West of Scotland, 1851-1921* (Basingstoke, 2013).

⁵⁶ Martin J. Mitchell (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh 2008).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.18.

the Irish in Britain are needed to counter the west coast narrative, which are dominated by the Liverpool and Glasgow experiences, which were atypical.⁵⁸

The most detailed work on the Dundee Irish community has been produced by Richard B. McCready, who wrote his PhD thesis on the social and political impact of the Irish in Dundee in 2002 and has produced a number of articles on the subject since.⁵⁹ McCready's work has established the Irish in Dundee as a significant social and political force who left their mark on the city through the establishment of schools, churches, social institutions and pubs, as well as having a considerable influence on the politics of the city.⁶⁰

While McCready offers a fascinating and in-depth study into the social and political impact of the Irish in Dundee, his focus is predominantly on the formal political institutions established in the city which were overwhelmingly male in composition. In a city with such a strong female identity, it is important that the contribution of the city's Irish female population is also considered. Brenda Collins' unpublished PhD thesis on migration to Dundee and Paisley examines the demographic impact of this influx of Irish, female migrants.⁶¹ Collins examines the waves of Irish migration to Dundee in the nineteenth century, tracing the county of origin, age, and sex of these migrants. Collins also noted that these women tended to travel in groups, accompanied by sisters or other female relatives. Collins' work is useful for establishing the type of Irish migrant who settled in the city and

⁵⁸ Roger Swift, 'The Irish in Nineteenth Century Britain: Towards a Definitive History?' *Labour History Review* No.57 (1992), pp.8-12.

⁵⁹ McCready, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee'; McCready, 'Irish Catholicism and Nationalism in Scotland'; Richard B. McCready, 'Mad, Motiveless and Meaningless? The Dundee Irish and the Easter Rising in K. Lusk and W. Malley's (ed.) *Scotland and the Easter Rising: Fresh Perspectives on 1916* (Glasgow, 2016), pp.144-148.

⁶⁰ McCready, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee', p.5.

⁶¹ Brenda Collins, 'Aspects of Irish Migration into two Scottish Towns'.

for examining the extent of the gender ratio in the city, giving credence to the idea that Dundee was indeed, a 'women's town'.

Building on this idea of a 'woman's town', Eleanor Gordon's work on women and the labour movement in Scotland examines the striking tactics of Dundee women in the jute industry. Gordon employs a gendered analysis to examine the political culture of female jute workers in the city, arguing that the female jute employees' rowdy methods of striking, which included dressing up in costume and parading effigies of their male employers, was weaponised to emasculate their male supervisors.⁶² Gordon's gendered approach also highlights that while women made up the bulk of the workforce, male employees were more likely to be promoted and occupied the supervisory positions within the factories. Consequently, there was little room for women's vertical mobility, and the idea of Dundee as a 'woman's town' did not extend to the upheaval of a patriarchal, nineteenth century culture. A weakness of Gordon's work is that she barely acknowledges the Irish roots of this workforce, despite the fact that Irish songs and symbols were used throughout these strikes.⁶³ This also means that she misses an opportunity to examine working class women's involvement in Irish nationalism in the city too, and cross examine these areas to investigate how they informed each other. For an otherwise excellent gendered study of this workforce, it is a big oversight.

Niall Whelehan's work on the Irish Ladies' Land League does well to challenge this, and also integrates Dundee's Irish community into a broader framework that looks at land activism

⁶² Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, p.156.

⁶³ See Billy Kenefick's 'An Effervescence of Youth: Female Textile Workers' Strikes in Dundee, 1911-12', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, No.33 (2012), pp.189-221.

across the diaspora.⁶⁴ Whelehan's work highlights the extent to which the Dundee Irish organised and fundraised on behalf of victims of the Land War and puts them in the wider context of the diaspora, using Irish newspapers listings. This highlights that Dundee's women were some of the best fundraisers across the diaspora, consistently outperforming branches elsewhere. Whelehan's work does well to counter the assumptions put forward by Walker and Gallagher and highlight the benefits of a transnational and gendered approach when exploring this community.

The fields of gender and transnational history have grown substantially in the past two decades and have much in common with each other. Both commonly entail a 'bottom-up' approach focusing on minorities or individuals as opposed to large state actors, and both focus on the crossing or blurring of borders, whether real or imagined.

The study of migration and migrant communities offers fertile ground to combine gendered and transnational approaches. The study of migration has led to intriguing analyses of gender because migrants socially and culturally create and maintain links across borders, and that certain groups of migrants are perceived of in certain gendered and sexualised ways which affect their crossing of borders and assimilation into host societies.⁶⁵ For example, Donna Gabaccia's work on Italian migrants to the USA in the nineteenth century has highlighted the importance of studying the 'sending' society as well as the 'host'. Gabaccia highlights important nuances regarding the social, cultural and economic nature of certain streams of migrations. For example, Italian migration has been predominantly characterised as an exclusively male process, with wives, mothers and daughters remaining

⁶⁴ Niall Whelehan, 'Saving Juteopolis: gender, class, and the diaspora in the Irish Ladies' Land League, *History Workshop Journal*, Vol.90, no.90 (2021), pp.74-95; Niall Whelehan, *Changing Land: Diaspora Activism and the Irish Land War* (New York, 2021).

⁶⁵ Wiesner-Hanks, 'Crossing borders', pp.376-377.

at home, waiting for remittances. However, Gabaccia has argued that the trans-Atlantic preoccupation of transnational scholars has meant that important variations in this have been overlooked, for example, while Italian migration to the USA was overwhelmingly male, shorter labour migrations throughout Europe tended to be dominated by women.⁶⁶

There were also important variations regarding which part of Italy migrants originated from, for instance, the male sojourner to the USA was generally from certain regions of the South, while migrants from the North tended to migrate across Europe or to Latin America.⁶⁷

This approach has begun to be incorporated into histories of the Irish diaspora in recent years, as historians such as Whelehan have employed gendered and transnational methodologies to examine Irish communities abroad. Jennifer Redmond's work on Irish women's migration to Britain takes into account the different types of emigration during the twentieth century and considers the places in Ireland where most people left, as well as where people from these areas settled in Britain incorporating both Irish and British borders to produce a more detailed picture of women's experiences.⁶⁸ Síobhra Aiken's work on female Revolutionaries' emigration after 1923 considers the conditions in post-Revolutionary Ireland, such as the limited role for women in the Irish Free State and the impact of trauma.⁶⁹ These methods employ an approach that Whelehan calls 'playing with the scales.' This refers to broadening the gaze of historical analysis by exploring the politics, society, culture and economics at 'home' in Ireland, as well as those 'away' across the

⁶⁶ Gabaccia and Iacovetta, *Women, gender and transnational lives* (Toronto, 2002), pp.3-44; D. Gabaccia, *Italy's many Diasporas* (London, 2000).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Redmond, *Moving histories*, pp.19-45.

⁶⁹ Síobhra Aiken, "Sin Féin permits... in the heels of their shoes': Cumann na mBan emigrants and transatlantic revolutionary exchange', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol.44, No.165 (May, 2020), pp.106-130.

diaspora. This approach allows a fuller picture of these migrants, the circles they operated in and the communities they built.

Recent work in this field has incorporated different types of migrations and crossings of borders, moving away from a purely labour-based focus. For instance, there has been an increasing amount of work produced on the transnationalism of reproduction access, highlighting the hidden journeys of women living in societies where access to abortion is limited or prohibited. This approach has particularly flourished in Irish studies due to the state's historical position on abortion, contraception, and treatment of single mothers. Lindsey Earner-Byrne and Diane Urquhart's work on the Irish abortion journey is a key example of this, as it employs gendered and transnational perspectives to explore Irish women's movements to obtain reproductive healthcare.⁷⁰ Similarly, Lindsey Earner-Byrne, Jennifer Redmond and Lorraine Grimes have all explored the migration of single mothers from Ireland to Britain, and the Irish state's attempts to repatriate them and their children.⁷¹

An underexplored area of Irish history where a gendered and transnational approach can be fruitful is the study of female nationalists and revolutionaries. Síobhra Aiken's work has touched on this, exploring the migration of republican women after the Civil War.⁷² Some historians have also examined the growth and support of Irish nationalism amongst Irish-American women, for example, Tara M. McCarthy and Ely Janis have looked at the Irish

⁷⁰ Lindsey Earner-Byrne and Diane Urquhart, *The Irish Abortion Journey 1920-2018* (London, 2019).

⁷¹ Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'The boat to England: an analysis of the official reactions to the emigration of single expectant Irishwomen to Britain, 1922-1972', *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol.30, No.1, (2003), pp.52-70; Lorraine Grimes, 'They go to England to preserve their Secret': The emigration and assistance of the Irish unmarried mother in Britain 1926-1952', *Retrospectives*, Vol.5, No.1 (Spring, 2016), pp.51-65; J. Redmond, 'In the family way and away from the family: examining the evidence of unmarried mothers in Britain, 1920s-1940s' in E. Farrell's (ed.) *She said she was in the family way: pregnancy and infancy in modern Ireland* (London, 2012)

⁷² Aiken, 'Sin Féin permits in the heels of their shoes'.

Ladies' Land League and women's involvement in the labour movement in the USA.⁷³

Jennifer Redmond has also explored masculinities and migration during the revolutionary period, investigating the idea of a hierarchy of masculinities within Irish nationalist and republican rhetoric, the ideal of which was embodied in the sacrifice of the leaders in the Easter Rising.⁷⁴ There has been little work produced on Irish women's political or revolutionary activities in Britain. This is despite the fact that Britain was a major arena of clandestine republican operations in the revolutionary period, providing ample opportunities to investigate migration, movement, and gender using these methodologies. This is a gap this thesis contributes towards addressing.

The most substantial piece of work that focuses on this period is Gerard Noonan's monograph, *The IRA in Britain: in the Heart of Enemy Lines, 1919-1923*. Noonan's work is the most detailed account of the experiences of Irish republicans in Britain during the tumultuous years of 1919 to 1923, and it spreads its focus evenly on Liverpool, London, Manchester and Glasgow. However, Noonan's work is lacking in one vital area: the contribution of women to this movement. While there is some analysis given to the formation of Cumann na mBan branches in Britain, there is significantly less analysis given to republican women's activities in Britain during this time. Darragh Gannon's recent publication on diaspora nationalism amongst the Irish in Britain examines this area in substantial detail too.⁷⁵ Although Gannon explores gender in some capacity, his work is also mostly male-centric, with the focus largely on party politics and the Irish men at the centre of this. Some consideration is given to the experiences of Revolutionary women in Britain;

⁷³ Tara M. McCarthy, *Respectability and Reform: Irish American Women's Activism, 1880-1920* (New York, 2018); Ely M. Janis, *A Greater Ireland: The Land League and Transatlantic Nationalism in Gilded Age America* (Wisconsin, 2015).

⁷⁴ Jennifer Redmond, 'Masculinities in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, Vol.29, No.2 (2021), pp.131-141.

⁷⁵ Gannon, *Conflict, Diaspora, and Empire*.

however this is extremely limited.⁷⁶ Similarly, Peter Hart's article on the IRA in Britain exclusively focuses on male IRA members, using phrases such as 'the men of the British underground'.⁷⁷ Mo Moulton's work on the Irish in England has explored the experiences of republican women in England to some extent, however their focus is restricted to England and their work was published before the digitisation of the Military Service Pensions Collection.⁷⁸ As a result, it is possible to greatly expand upon the earlier works of Noonan and Moulton with this newly released material, employing a gendered, as well as transnational lens of focus.

The afterlife of Irish republicanism in Britain is also somewhat underexplored in the literature. Brian Hanley's work on the IRA in the interwar period examines this to some extent, but is more focused on the continuation of IRA activities rather than the experiences of those who had been active from 1916 to 1923.⁷⁹ This contrasts with a burgeoning body of work being produced on the experiences of those on the island of Ireland, particularly in areas such as gendered violence, medical treatment of trauma, and financial compensation. These works are largely possible as a result of the digitisation of the Military Service Pension Collection. Marie Coleman has stated that the digitisation of this collection provides insight into what happened to revolutionaries after the close of the Irish Civil War in May 1923, as war pension records are one of the main sources for the study of veterans' post-combat experiences.⁸⁰ Coleman has used these files to explore the

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp.227-231.

⁷⁷ Hart, 'Operations abroad', p.71.

⁷⁸ Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (Cambridge, 2014); Mo Moulton, "'You have votes and power": Women's Political Engagement with the Irish Question in Britain, 1919-23', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 52, No.1 (2013), pp.179-204.

⁷⁹ Brian Hanley, *The IRA, 1926-1936* (Dublin, 2002).

⁸⁰ Marie Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions and the Recognition and Reintegration of Guerrilla Fighters after the Irish Revolution', *Historical Research*, Vol.91, No.253 (August 2018), pp.554-572, p.554.

treatment of women in post-revolutionary Ireland, highlighting that the firm anti-treaty stance taken by Cumann na mBan during the Civil War angered Cumann na nGaedheal officials and influenced them in their policies which women's involvement in public life. Coleman also highlights the difficulties women faced in getting their pensions approved, contrasting the files of the Coatbridge born, anti-treaty Margaret Skinnider with pro-Treaty Brigid Lyons.⁸¹ Similarly, Síobhra Aiken's work has explored the medical treatment and migration of post-revolutionary women in Ireland using this collection, and has stressed the difficulties women faced in post-revolutionary Ireland, citing emigration as a common experience for many of these women.⁸² Catriona Beaumont has also written a thought-provoking article on the experiences of her grandmother's revolutionary experiences and how this impacted her later life, after accidentally spotting her in a photograph of Cumann na mBan women.⁸³

Biographies on prominent revolutionary women have somewhat explored this area, albeit within a framework of individual experiences and analysis. Lindie Naughton's work on Constance Markievicz explores the countess' troubled health, the result of years of imprisonment during the Revolutionary period, and her renewed interest in theatre.⁸⁴ Margaret Ward's biography on Hanna Sheehy Skeffington explores how the former suffragette and republican tried to fight against the increasingly limited role for women in

⁸¹ Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries, 1916-1923', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 26, No.6 (2017), pp.915-934.

⁸² Síobhra Aiken, 'The women who had been straining every nerve': gender-specific medical management of trauma in the Irish Revolution' in Melania Terrazas Gallego (Ed.), *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Bern, 2019), pp. 133-158.

⁸³ Catriona Beaumont, 'How a photograph uncovered my grandmother's republican activism during the Irish Revolution', *The Conversation* (17th October 2022): <https://theconversation.com/how-a-photograph-uncovered-my-grandmothers-republican-activism-during-the-irish-revolution-189326#:~:text=The%20photograph%20of%20my%20grandmother,%E2%80%9Csocial%20order%20and%20stability%E2%80%9D>. (date accessed: 26/02/24).

⁸⁴ Lindie Naughton, *Markievicz: a most outrageous rebel* (Newbridge, 2016).

the post-revolutionary period, while Hilary Dully and Helen Litton's edited forwards on the memoirs of Kathleen Clarke and Maire Comerford help to contextualise the feelings of anger and resentment felt by prominent republican women the post-revolutionary period.⁸⁵ While these biographies are important for highlighting the struggles and experiences faced by republican women in the period after the revolution, it could be useful to expand the lens of analysis to incorporate more 'ordinary' republican women and their experiences, including those outside of Ireland.

Indeed, the Military Service Pension Collection is not restricted to those who were based on the island of Ireland, therefore, there exists the ability to explore the post-revolutionary lives of women like Lena McDonald and her fellow veterans. The post-revolutionary lives of veterans who were based outside of Ireland is also a topic worthy of exploration, as there existed a number of 'Old IRA' associations, many of which were notably based in Dublin. Little has been written of the post-revolutionary experiences of republicans in Britain, both male and female. However, an insight into the pensions highlights that many veterans in Britain underwent similar experiences to those in Ireland, namely ostracism and migration. A transnational perspective can be fruitful in this area, as it highlights the spatial as well as symbolic boundaries this group of people crossed in the post-revolutionary era, with some uprooting their lives in Britain to join their former comrades in Ireland, where their contributions could be celebrated more openly, creating a diaspora within their ancestral homeland. Gender is also a useful tool here, as it is telling that it was mainly men who moved to re-join their former comrades, while women tended to tread their own paths across the world.

⁸⁵ Kathleen Clarke and Helen Litton (ed.), *Revolutionary Woman, an autobiography, 1878-1972* (Dublin, 2008); Máire Comerford and Hilary Dully (ed.), *On Dangerous Ground: a memoir of the Irish Revolution* (Dublin, 2021).

The decade of centenaries has witnessed a renewed interest in this period and an explosion of works on previously understudied groups during this period, such as women, LGBTQ+ groups, and the diaspora. The one-hundred-year anniversary of the Easter Rising has inspired scholars thinking more critically about how we commemorate past events.⁸⁶ Some scholars have turned to the semi-centennial anniversary of the Rising in 1966 to explore this further. Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan's edited volume on the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising explores a variety of commemorative events in 1966, which dispel the idea that the commemorations were a celebration of the physical force tradition.⁸⁷ Roisín Higgins has explored this in depth in her 2013 work which focuses on how 1916 was transformed by Irish officials into a spectacle which triumphed Ireland in 1966 as a modern, developed state, ready to take its place on the world stage and shake off the ghost of physical force republicanism.⁸⁸ Higgins also examined how commemorations were portrayed outside of Ireland, touching on the experiences of the diaspora and how they were incorporated into these events. However, her analysis on this particular aspect of 1966 is limited, as it does not explore the commemorative events which took place in Britain amongst the veteran community fully, but rather explores the Irish government's interactions with and portrayal of the Rising in Britain instead. Newspaper evidence suggests that there were commemorative events in traditional centres of Irish settlement, and, more interestingly, some places like Dundee witnessed very little in the way of commemoration. These silences are worth exploring.

⁸⁶ See Oona Frawley's (ed.) *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana 2021).

⁸⁷ Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan (eds.), *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin 2007).

⁸⁸ Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising* (Cork, 2013).

Therefore, while there has been some expansion on the interlinking topics of the Irish in Dundee, Irish women, and the revolutionary period in the Irish diaspora in Britain, there are still considerable gaps in this knowledge which needs to be addressed. These interlinking topics have also been studied in isolation, however this thesis strives to show that these seemingly separate areas have common themes, such as how gender intersected with national identity and politics during this turbulent period. It also shows that traditional frameworks of knowledge can be challenged by using gendered and transnational methodologies, which bring in perspectives 'from below' and bring into view traditionally sidelined figures in history, such as working-class women. These frameworks offer an opportunity to integrate the history of this community into a wider landscape that takes account of the broader themes in Irish diasporic history, viewing them in connection with a wider world of nationalist politics, clandestine operations, and commemoration.

Sources

Lena McDonald's Military Service Pension File is one of thousands that have been digitised in an ongoing process by the Military Archives of Ireland. The digitisation of the Military Service Pension Collection has aided this research and forms a large body of the sources used. The collection is one of the best source collections detailing the experiences of women in revolutionary conflict, offering insights into activities such as intelligence gathering, dispatch carrying, gunrunning, providing safe houses, and performing first aid, to list a few. However, the collection also offers insight into the applicants' lives after this period of violence, highlighting themes such as poverty, post-traumatic stress, ill health, and emigration. It also offers a window into how Revolutionary women and the Republicans outside of Ireland were viewed by the Irish state.

The collection has been utilised in this research to highlight the experiences of Irish republican women who were involved in the revolutionary period outside of Ireland. Seventy-four files were identified and used for the purpose of this research.⁸⁹ Although this seems like an easy category to define, the mobility of these women and the clandestine nature of the groups they belonged to can make defining 'active outside of Ireland' tricky. For example, some women made trips from Ireland to Britain to collect weapons, while others sheltered men travelling in the other direction. Therefore, some Irish based women were entangled with IRA units in Britain. Consequently, the files I have selected belong to women who carried out prolonged activities on the island of Britain, which was usually (but not always) aided by affiliation to a British-based unit of the IRA or Cumann na mBan.⁹⁰

These files are utilised to build a profile of republican women in Britain, identifying their age, marital status, where they were active, what their backgrounds and professions were, as well as their activities during the revolutionary period. They have also been used to trace their lives after these years, charting themes such as financial difficulty, ostracism from the local community, emigration, and an uphill battle with the Irish state in getting their service recognised. In addition to the women identified, the files of the men they worked alongside have also been utilised, to create a clearer picture of the networks these women operated in.

A handful of witness statements from the Bureau of Military History have also been utilised in this way. Whereas the MSPC contain applications from former republicans to apply for a monetary award, and contain correspondence and interviews with the pension board, the

⁸⁹ See Appendix 2, Table 1.

⁹⁰ For example, Kathleen Barrett (MSP34REF2198) was based in Britain and a courier to Gaelic League leader, Art O'Brien, but was a member of the Árd Craobh branch of Cumann na mBan, in Dublin, rather than any of the London based Cumann na mBan branches.

BMHWS were a stated led endeavour to transcribe the history of the Irish revolutionary period. Veterans were invited to be interviewed and were instructed to discuss the events of this period up to the Civil War, however many talked about this anyway. I have identified six witness statements given by women who had prolonged service on the island of Britain. Four of these statements were from women based in London, the other two from Glasgow and Liverpool. The witness statements are different from the pension applications as they were created from oral interviews. Therefore, they are less detailed than the pension applications. They are nonetheless useful in creating a picture of the networks these women operated in during the revolutionary period and illuminate more clearly the thoughts and feelings of those being interviewed.

Although richly detailed, these sources do not come without their challenges. Most women who were involved in the Revolution were not able to apply for a military pension until the Military Service Pension Act 1934, which allowed members of organisations such as the Irish Citizen's Army and Cumann na mBan to apply. Some women applied before this Act, however only one application, belonging to the prominent pro-Treaty veteran Dr Brigid Lyons, was approved. Therefore, the military service pension applications in this sample were made at least a decade after the end of the Civil War, with only one being made (and consequently rejected) during the 1920s. This pension belonged to Margaret Skinnider, who was rejected on account of being a woman and a prominent anti-Treaty Republican.⁹¹ The obvious problem with this lapse of time is that some of the events being discussed were reported inaccurately, with some applicants struggling to remember specifics details. This lapse of time also meant that some applicants lost touch with their former comrades who might have been able to embellish their experiences or corroborate evidence.

⁹¹ Coleman, 'Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries', pp.915-934.

The witness statements of the Bureau of Military History were also conducted decades after the end of the Civil War. The Bureau was established in 1947 to 'assemble and coordinate material to form the basis of compilation of the history of the movement for independence'.⁹² By 1959, the Bureau had recorded 1,773 statements. Although the witness statements contain detailed information, personal insights, and the perspective of more 'ordinary' people across a variety of organisations, the time lapse between the interviews and the events they narrate should be considered. However, these lapses in memory should not detract from the wealth of perspectives that the interviews provide. Most errors in dates, names or places can be rectified by cross referencing interviews, however more significant deviations or embellishments should not be disregarded. Oral historian Luisa Passerini has argued that memories have a 'multiplicity of layers' and part of the process of interpreting them is considering the influence of these various contexts within the text.⁹³ Eve Morrison also highlights that the passage of time between the events being described, and the interviews being conducted means that interviewees were likely to have heard retellings of the events they described which undoubtedly impacted the way they told their testimonies.⁹⁴ Therefore, when reading these interviews, deviations from traditional narratives, conflicting narratives, or disobeying instructions given by the Bureau should not be disregarded. One of the most obvious deviations in this collection is interviewees' disobedience of the Bureau's instruction to not discuss any events after December 1921, namely the Civil War. Some of the most detailed and personal accounts of

⁹² Fearghal McGarry, 'Too many histories'? The Bureau of Military History and Easter 1916', *History Ireland*, Vol.19, No.6 (November/December, 2011), pp.26-29, p.26.

⁹³ Luisa Passerini, 'Memories between silence and oblivion' in Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone's (eds.) *Memory, history, nation: contested pasts* (New Brunswick, 2006), p.238.

⁹⁴ Eve Morrison, 'Bureau of Military History Witness Statements as Sources for the Irish Revolution', Military Archives of Ireland website (2010), https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Bureau_of_Military_witness_statements-as_sources-for_the_Irish_Revolution.pdf (date accessed: 06/08/2023).

this period can be found within this collection. Out of the six women who were active in Britain and gave statements to the Bureau, only one does not talk about events after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921.⁹⁵

A similar approach should be taken when considering inaccuracies or deviations in the files of the MSPC. However, it should also be noted that applicants had less freedom of expression in these files, as their purpose was to recollect activities that proved their 'active service', such as the transportation of weapons. Applicants who were interviewed by the pension board also had less freedom in their retelling of events, as interviewers took a more active stance than members of the Bureau to extract information that could prove or disprove a pension claim, asking questions rather than letting the interviewee re-tell their experiences. Conversely, it is possible that applicants embellished parts of their experiences which they believed would result in their applications being approved. For example, during her interview with the pension board, McDonald stated that she was 'reminded' by her former Officer in Command, Fr. John Fahy, that she should mention her involvement in an attempted prison break.⁹⁶ The implication here is that Fahey believed that this venture would have reflected positively upon McDonald, improving the chances of her application getting approved.

The fact that these were state led ventures should also be noted. Fearghal McGarry raises the point that the Bureau offers a partial collection and should not be seen as 'complete': interviewers selected who should be interviewed as well as who should *not* be interviewed.⁹⁷ Significantly, women were interviewed in much smaller numbers than men,

⁹⁵ See Bureau of Military History Witness Statement No. 655, Nora Thornton; No. 902, Mary McGeehin; No. 924, Mary Cremen; No. 945, Sorcha Nic Diarmada.

⁹⁶ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

⁹⁷ McGarry, 'Too many histories?', p.29.

and women who were active outside of Ireland even less so. Out of the 146 statements that were given by women, only six were from women who had service or were based in Britain, four of which were based in London. Morrison has highlighted that women who had male spouses or relatives were more likely to be selected than those who did not: out of the six women who had service in Britain, two had male relatives, who they discussed in detail in their statements.⁹⁸

Morrison also highlights that women interviewees were more likely to devote their statements to the activities of others, particularly their male comrades.⁹⁹ Two of the interviews given by women who were based in Britain talk almost exclusively about the men they worked with. Mary McGeehin discussed Reginald Dunne and Joe O'Sullivan, who were executed for the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson in 1922, while Elizabeth McGinley spoke about her experiences working with Art O'Brien and Sam Maguire.¹⁰⁰ This can be frustrating, but it is nevertheless insightful into how women viewed these interviews and their involvement in them. Morrison explains that the interviews gave some people a chance to become 'speakers of the dead', which can be seen in the case of McGeehin discussing Dunne and O'Sullivan, and McGinley discussing Sam Maguire, and may also reflect an unwillingness to cooperate with the state sanctioned Bureau.¹⁰¹ Several prominent anti-Treaty women used their interviews to talk about their deceased male relatives, such as Cait O'Callaghan and Kathleen O'Donovan.¹⁰² Therefore, these deviations were not necessarily a reflection of the subordinate status of women but could be viewed

⁹⁸ Eve Morrison, 'The Bureau of Military History and Female Republican Activism, 1913-1923 in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (ed.), *Gender and Power in Irish History* (Dublin, 2009, pp.59-83, p.66; BMH WS No.924, Mary Cremen; No.655, Nora Thornton.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.67.

¹⁰⁰ BMH Witness Statement No.902, Mary McGeehin; BMHWS No.860, Elizabeth McGinley.

¹⁰¹ Morrison, 'The Bureau of Military History and Female Republican Activism', p.67.

¹⁰² BMH WS No.688, Cait O'Callaghan; No.586, Kathleen O'Donovan.

as an opportunity to rectify the image of deceased comrades, or defy the wishes of the Bureau. Nevertheless, these deviations of passages to men still result in the omission of female experiences.

The state's involvement with the Bureau resulted in several women refusing to cooperate on political grounds. There was a wide range of reasons for refusing to participate in the process, including disgruntlement with service pensions and lingering resentment from the events of the Civil War. For women, these reasons were more pronounced, as they were relegated to the lowest ranks of the pension awards and their public roles were increasingly curtailed by successive governments throughout the 1920s and 1930s for example, the 1927 Juries Act, the 1932 marriage bar on the civil service, and the 1937 constitution which formalised women's place in the home.¹⁰³ Former Cumann na mBan member, Pauline Keating, stated in her interview that she was surprised by the attitude of some of her fellow female comrades, who she stated would 'rather burn anything they had than give it to the Bureau'.¹⁰⁴

The MSPC should not be seen as a 'complete' collection for similar reasons. Not everyone who was eligible applied for a pension, some for political reasons. One of the applications in this sample, belonging to Kathleen Mary Hanrahan, who was in Cumann na mBan in Liverpool, stated that there were former Cumann na mBan women who could provide a

¹⁰³ For more on this, see Deirdre Foley, 'Their proper place': women, work and the marriage bar in independent Ireland, c. 1924–1973, *Social History*, Vo.47, No.1 (2022), pp.60-84; Jennifer Redmond and Judith Harford, "'One man one job": the marriage ban and the employment of women teachers in Irish primary schools', *Paedagogica Historica*, 46, 5 (2010), 639–54; Jennifer Redmond and Judith Harford, "'I am amazed at how easily we accepted it": the marriage ban, teaching and ideologies of womanhood in post-independence Ireland', *Gender and Education*, 31, 8 (2019), 186–201.

¹⁰⁴ BMH, WS. No.432, Pauline Keating.

reference for her, but they refused to because they ‘protest[ed] strongly against the pension scheme’.¹⁰⁵

Both collections allow for an exploration of the experiences of former republicans in Britain. The BMH is easier to explore as statements are prefaced with an information page which states where the interviewee was active, sometimes even giving the years. This makes identifying republicans in Britain a straightforward task. The MSPC is more difficult to navigate as the addresses listed indicate the location of the applicant at the time they made their application. In the case of those who did not move, this is an uncomplicated task, however, people are not stationary, and the lapse in time from the end of the Civil War to the 1934 Military Pensions Act means that many people moved. In this sample of seventy-four women, over half had left Britain by the time they made their application. One way to navigate this difficulty is to cross reference applications and search for people mentioned in other applications, however this can be difficult as people are misnamed or their names are spelled inaccurately. Moreover, names can change, especially for women. For example, the Police Service General Files at the National Records of Scotland identified one ‘Pidge Dougan’ amongst the four women who were deported in 1923.¹⁰⁶ ‘Pidge Dougan’ could not be located in the MSPC until her husband’s pension file was read, revealing that she had applied using both her Christian name and her married name, which was ‘Hannah Robinson’.¹⁰⁷ Confusingly, her surname before marriage was also misspelled on numerous occasions as ‘Duggan’ or ‘Doogan’.

¹⁰⁵ MSPC, MSPC34REF25414, Kathleen Mary Hanrahan.

¹⁰⁶ NRS, H55/72, Irish Disturbances, Arrests and Deportations to the Irish Free State; NRS, HH55/71, Irish Disturbances, General papers and correspondence concerning arrests and deportations of Sinn Feiners and others to the Irish Free State.

¹⁰⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF558810, Hannah Robinson.

Despite these difficulties, the MSPC and the BMH provide an insight into the lives of 'ordinary' veterans who did not leave memoirs, diaries or pursue high-profile careers after the Civil War. The collections combined illuminate the activities and impact of the revolutionary period on rural IRA officers of Cumann na mBan members just as much as they further illuminate the activities of high ranking officials. Crucially, the collections provide an opportunity to explore the experiences of traditionally marginalised groups in Irish society. This includes women, but also those who were not active on the island of Ireland who have also been left out of the major retellings of revolutionary events.

This thesis was written at a very opportune time concerning the release of court records in Scotland by the National Record of Scotland, as I have been able to access the police files and court proceedings of a number of women in this sample who were arrested during the years 1916 to 1922. These files are closed for 100 years; therefore, this research has utilised newly released material which sheds additional light on the activities of these women, as well as the networks they operated in. The police reports around Lena McDonald's arrest in 1921 detail a vivid picture of the republican groups that operated in Dundee, their popular appeal, and their demographic. These files are also useful for understanding how the Irish, and specifically republican groups (often dubbed 'Sinn Féiners') were viewed by the security forces and government figures, who often connected them to other political groups such as communists.

The National Archives in Kew also contain state-related material on these women and the organisations they belonged to. One of the more under-utilised collections is the Treasury Department's files on the arrest and deportation of over 100 Irish men and women in March 1923, for supposed 'anti-Treaty activities'. These files detail the deportees' experiences in prison in the Irish Free State and their fight for compensation from the

British government. The files build a fascinating picture of the activities and networks Irish Republicans in Britain operated in and highlights that the rift caused by the Irish Civil War did not just affect those on the island of Ireland. The fact that the deportees were split by gender also offers an opportunity to explore gendered experiences of imprisonment and their treatment afterwards. There is also a corresponding collection for the Scottish deportees at the NRS, however this collection is slightly less detailed.

The private collection of the Eamon Mooney Papers (referred to throughout as the EMP) has been invaluable in piecing together an image of the Republican networks in Scotland. The collection was created by former Scottish Brigade IRA Officer, Eamon Mooney, who became the Secretary of the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association in the years after the close of the Irish Civil War. Mooney aided those applying for Military Service Pensions and kept meticulous lists of those who had been active in Scotland during the revolutionary period, and their whereabouts in the years after. He also corresponded with former members of the Scottish Battalions, including Cathal Duthie, former President of the Kevin Barry Sinn Féin Club in Dundee. The EMP has been invaluable in filling the gaps in Dundee's Republican history, and has allowed for a more detailed profile of the Dundee IRA, Cumann na mBan, and Sinn Féin clubs to emerge. Access to these papers was kindly provided by historians Máirtín Ó Catháin and Stephen Coyle.

The use of digitised British and Irish newspaper archives has also greatly aided this research and has helped to demonstrate how interconnected the world of the Dundee Irish was with events and movements on the island of Ireland, as well as elsewhere in the diaspora. The collections at the Dundee Local History Centre have further aided this, providing access to local publications such as the *Dundee Advertiser* and the *Scottish Prohibitionist*. The latter of these publications was edited by Edwin Scrymgeour, Britain's first and only Prohibitionist

MP, who took a great interest in Irish affairs in the lead up to his election in November 1922, striking up a friendship with the captain of the IRA in Dundee. Consequently, the pages of the *Prohibitionist* for this period contain detailed coverage of Sinn Féin organised events in the city, and the Irish community's thoughts and feelings on developments in their home country. The local edition of the *Catholic Herald* also gives an insight into Dundee's Irish community, highlighting more 'ordinary' events in the day to day lives of the Dundee Irish, as well as their responses and reactions to events in Ireland.

Most of these sources have been utilised in to build a picture of the Dundee Irish. However, they have also been used to highlight the networks that this community were a part of, highlighting the interconnectedness of the diaspora in Britain. They have also been used to scrutinise gender and how this was expressed and interacted with national identity.

Chapter Overview

The musings of James Connolly and the life of Lena McDonald offer an important glimpse into a vibrant, but often overlooked Irish community in Britain. To understand more fully the experiences of Revolutionary Dundee, it is important to firstly establish the character of its Irish community in the period preceding it. Therefore, this thesis will begin chronologically by examining the city of Dundee and its Irish inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century, and will seek to build the world in which Lena McDonald and her companions existed in.

Chapter one will explore the culture of working class, female led politics in the city, exploring groups such as the Irish Ladies' Land League, which had two very active branches in Dundee. It also explores the women's involvement in the labour movement in Dundee and how they organised themselves in spite of attempts from male colleagues to formally unionise. These actions of protest are embedded with attempts to subvert male authority

and gendered norms, and are littered with Irish imagery and symbolism, reflecting the importance of national identity to this community. It argues against the idea that Dundee Irish women were not politicised or interested in Irish nationalism in this period, highlighting that historians have looked in the wrong places for evidence of women's involvement, such as the patriarchal organisations of the United Irish League or upper echelons of trade union groups. It examines Irish women's involvement with suffrage activism in the city, ultimately arguing that most of this activity was the product of external suffragettes not native to Dundee, rather than a home-grown effort. This chapter sets up the picture of the landscape in which Lena McDonald and her fellow Republican operated in and highlights the extent to which this community was already entwined with the wider Irish world.

Chapter Two continues this 'world building' by exploring Dundee during the revolutionary Period, here defined as 1916 to 1923. Much of the established knowledge of the Irish in Scotland during this period is based on the Glasgow experience, as until recently, available sources in this area were by produced Glasgow based Republicans. This chapter will nuance this image and add the Dundee experience into the established picture of the revolutionary period in Scotland. It does this by using the MSPC, EMP, and census data establishing the profile of IRA, Cumann na mBan and Sinn Féin members in the city. It also utilises newspaper material covering the wide variety of lectures, marches, and fundraising activities which highlight the popularity and organisational prowess of Dundee Republicans. The image of the Irish in Scotland during the Civil War period has been depicted as decidedly anti-Treaty as a result of the reliance on Glasgow based sources, however the reaction of the Dundee Irish to the events of this period highlight that there was much nuance in people's reaction to the split in the republican movement, and that there was not necessarily a uniform response. Importantly, this chapter highlights that despite the

economic influence and demographic power of women in Dundee's Irish community, republican organisations in the city still operated along patriarchal structures. Men held the committee positions on all the Sinn Féin Clubs in the city, and resultantly, the files in the EMP are skewed towards the male leaders rather than the large female membership. Consequently, many of the female names and faces of the republican movement in Dundee are still unknown. Yet, as this chapter highlights, they undoubtedly had a large influence on republican groups in the city. Finally, this chapter examines the surprise election of Edwin Scrymgeour, and his relationship with the Dundee Irish. Scrymgeour's election is a testament to the voting power of the Irish in Dundee during this period and a shift away from a Liberal political consensus to a more left leaning one. Scrymgeour's election can also be seen as an anti-government vote, as the incumbent MP for Dundee was Winston Churchill, a member of the cabinet who was involved with the deployment of the notorious Black and Tans in Ireland.

By using Lena McDonald as a focal point, chapter three progresses to explore the experiences of women and the republican movement in Britain. This is a largely under researched topic in the otherwise burgeoning field of gender and revolutionary Ireland. Chapter Three expands the transnational lens and examines the activities of republican women in Britain, who worked alongside Lena McDonald. It analyses the way these women used their gender to conceal their activities, and how the distinctions between the public and private were not clear cut when it came to clandestine operations. The chapter reconstructs this network of republican women and further reveals the extent to which Lena McDonald and her fellow Dundonians were linked to the diaspora and events in Ireland. The way these women were viewed by those outside of the republican movement is examined, such as the security forces and the media, arguing that gendered bias could be both a help and a hindrance in cases of arrest and imprisonment.

While much focus has been centred around the revolutionary period itself, it is important to note that the Irish Civil War did not end neatly in May 1923, and that the events of this period affected those who were involved for years after. Chapter four examines this.

Evidence shows that many women suffered physically and mentally as a result of arrests, interrogation, and the stress of being involved in a clandestine political movement. For those who had been based in Britain there was the added problem of having been part of a clandestine organisation in the country of the enemy. This resulted in some experiences unique to those who had been active in Britain, such as social ostracism, difficulty finding work, and ongoing police surveillance. The pension collection also gives us insight into how republican women in Britain were viewed in the eyes of the state, contributing to the idea that there was a hierarchy of veterans. While women who had been active in Ireland had difficulty in proving their 'active service' because they were mainly members of the 'auxiliary' Cumann na mBan, this was an even more pronounced problem for women who had been active in Britain. This was because their 'active service' consisted of covert acts and using their own resources to further the Republican cause. Many of the women in the sample also experienced medical complications, physical and mental, and decided to emigrate in the years after this period. This thesis examines this area, highlighting that the effects of the revolutionary period could transcend borders, with themes such as emigration and social ostracism prevalent in the afterlives of Republicans in Ireland and Britain.

Chapter five focuses on the afterlives of republicans in Scotland, where these issues were particularly pronounced. This was because the Church of Scotland spearheaded a campaign to repatriate Irish migrants, who were thought to be racially inferior to native

Scots.¹⁰⁸ The campaign affected parts of Scotland where sectarian violence had not been so intense, such as Edinburgh and Lena McDonald's home of Dundee, and was able to muster a renewed style of anti-Irishness that was cloaked in racial rather than religious language, highlighting that prejudice could take different forms in different periods. Resultantly, many who had belonged to republican organisations re-established themselves in Ireland during this period, where their past involvement in clandestine organisations could be celebrated to a certain extent and was a badge of honour. This led to the establishment of 'Old IRA' associations, such as the Old Scottish Brigade IRA. These groups acted as a social network and offered practical assistance in completing pension applications and are evidence of the transnational links of the Irish in Scotland. However, much like the formal structures of republican organisations, these Associations were gendered, with former IRA officers taking the leading positions in the hierarchy and events such as commemorative marches.

The final chapter examines the commemoration of the revolutionary period in Ireland, Scotland, and England, with special attention given to the celebrations, or lack of, in Lena McDonald's hometown. McDonald moved to Ireland in 1939, and although some of her former comrades remained in Dundee, her legacy in the city was somewhat underplayed until the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966, when the *Evening Telegraph* featured a double page spread of her and her sister, Kathy.¹⁰⁹ The fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising marked a series of commemorative events across Britain, however they were more a reflection of the cultural contribution of the Irish in Britain than commemorative of the events of 1916. In the slowly deindustrialising city of Dundee, the anniversary was barely acknowledged, apart from the *Evening Telegraph* article. This

¹⁰⁸ For more on this, see David L. Ritchie's 'Irish Immigration: Church State and Catholicism 1919-1929', PhD, (University of Edinburgh, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

research examines how the 'afterlife' of revolution in Britain, and particularly in Lena McDonald's hometown, was remoulded, or even forgotten, and highlights the changing nature of Irish migration to Britain post-1945. Similarly, in Ireland the commemorations were designed to reflect a new, modernised Ireland, and paid homage to the male veterans who had laid down their lives in the ensuing conflict. Women were afforded a secondary status, while women who had been active outside of Ireland, such as McDonald, were firmly at the bottom of the commemorative hierarchy, reflecting that gender and the continuing stream of emigration did not seat comfortably with the conceptualisation of a 'modern' Ireland.

By exploring the lives of the Dundee Irish and Irish, female republicans in Britain more broadly, this thesis aspires to contribute to a growing literature on the Irish diaspora. By concentrating on these lesser explored groups, this thesis seeks to broaden the scope of Irish studies and move closer towards providing a definitive account of the Irish abroad. The gendered and transnational approaches taken in this research seek to challenge the established picture of the Irish in Scotland and highlights the ways in which these women navigated a patriarchal landscape. Overall, it highlights the advantages of 'playing with scales' and integrating the local with the global, as it offers a fuller picture of the lives of the people being explored, and the political, social, economic and cultural shifts they experienced.

Chapter One: Building Ireland in Dundee, 1845-1916

The image of Irish nationalism in Scotland is one dominated by a west coast, or even Glasgow-centric, narrative. Violent sectarian clashes, communist conspiracies, the enduring rivalry of the Old Firm football clubs have dominated popular perceptions of Irish communities in Scotland, and, until recently, research in this area has reinforced this imagery.¹ However in the last decades, the rise of transnational histories and an increasing amount of studies on local Irish communities has led historians to recognise that cities with high rates of violent sectarian conflict, such as Glasgow and Liverpool, were more likely to be atypical of the broader Irish experience in Britain during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²

Dundee in this period had a flourishing Irish political culture, which has been overlooked by historians of the Irish in Scotland because of its lack of sectarian violence.³ The city saw the Lochee branch of the Irish Ladies' Land League established in the summer of 1881, the first of its kind in Scotland, after the Irish women of that community organised and wrote to the Ladies' League's leader, Anna Parnell, sister of the nationalist campaigner Charles Stewart Parnell.⁴ Dundee was also a stop on many prominent Irish leaders' speaking tours.

Other prominent figures within the Land League movement also came to speak in Dundee. Land League campaigner, nationalist, and later suffragette, Marguerite Moore, who came to the city shortly before her arrest, and T.P. O'Connor, the only Irish Parliamentary Party MP who held a seat

¹ See Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy Peace: Religious Tension in Modern Scotland* (Manchester, 1984).

² Richard McCready, 'Revising the Irish in Scotland: the Irish in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Scotland' in Andy Bielenberg's (ed.) *The Irish Diaspora* (London, 2000), p.38; Martin J. Mitchell (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008).

³ See Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy Peace: Religious Tension in Modern Scotland* (Manchester 1987), pp.32-3.

⁴ Niall Whelehan, 'Saving Ireland in Juteopolis: Gender, Class and Diaspora in the Irish Ladies' Land League', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol.90 (2020), pp.74-95, p.77; Parnell, Anna Mercer (Catherine Maria), Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/parnell-anna-mercercatherine-maria-a7198> (date accessed 21/02/24); Parnell, Charles Stewart, Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/parnell-charles-stewart-a7199> (date accessed: 21/02/24).

in Britain (Liverpool Scotland).⁵ These famous visitors wrote of the hearty reception they received and the great enthusiasm of the Dundee Irish for their various nationalist causes, while the town's newspapers consistently reported on large crowds of women in attendance at these events, which gave Irish political culture in the city a distinctive identity.⁶

Reconstructing Dundee's female Irish population can be difficult due to limited available evidence. Most of the town's Irish women were working class and worked in the jute mills, having been recruited from Ireland where the Ulster based linen industry was fledging. This is a wider problem for those working in the field of gender studies and women's history, as it is difficult to find sources which have been produced by working class women themselves, therefore investigating their hidden histories requires the historian to exercise their imagination and read between the lines. However, the digitisation of material such as the Military Service Pension Files and the Dundee Oral History Project has made identifying sources produced by working class women more accessible. An examination of the Irish, female associational culture in the town reveals much about this community of women and their position within the wider diaspora as well as the town of Dundee itself.

This chapter explores the lives of the Dundee Irish from the mid-nineteenth century when Irish migration to Scotland accelerated, until the start of the Easter Rising in 1916, which is generally agreed to be a watershed moment in Irish history and an opening date for historians of the Irish revolutionary period. It will initially analyse the demographics of the town and migration patterns, before progressing to investigate the impact of the Irish on the town's politics, economic, and social life. This includes their impact on the politics of the town as well as specific political movements such as the Irish National Land League and the women's suffrage movement, as well as disputes within the jute mills, which dominated the town.

⁵ See O'Connor, T.P., Irish Dictionary of Biography, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/oconnor-thomas-power-a6618> (date accessed: 04/02/24).

⁶ Ibid.

The purpose of this exploration is to establish the environment Lena McDonald and her fellow Irish republicans operated in, and to compare and contrast it to other parts of Britain and the across diaspora which saw heavy Irish political activity before, during and after the revolutionary period of 1916 to 1923. It is important to recognise that Dundee already had a rich and textured history of Irish political activity by the start of the Easter Rising in 1916.

This chapter also examines this community from a gendered perspective. According to Brenda Collins, in 1861 there were only 674 Irish born men in Dundee for every 1000 Irish born women.⁷ This was largely as a result of the jute industry which dominated the town and attracted single female migrants from Ulster.⁸ The high proportion of Irish women within this industry had major consequences for the development of Irish politics in the town, as well as the development of trade unionism. Dundee has traditionally been characterised as lagging behind other Scottish centres of industry in this regard, however the female jute workers developed their own organisational tactics which often bypassed their male superiors.⁹ Despite the large proportion of women in the city, Dundee was still very much a patriarchal environment, and the Irish women who lived there had to find ways to operate around these structures, for example, by developing their own methods of communication, or by presenting their activities as an extension of the private, domestic sphere. This section will also briefly examine the suffrage movement. From the start of the century until the outbreak of the First World War, suffrage activity was prominent in Dundee as Winston Churchill was the town's MP from 1907 until 1922.¹⁰ However, very few of the female, Irish jute workers became involved in this aspect of the town's politics. This lack of active involvement highlights the

⁷ Brenda Collins, 'Aspects of Irish Immigration into two Scottish towns (Dundee and Paisley) During the mid-Nineteenth Century', PhD, (University of Edinburgh, 1978), p.28.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Eleanor Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1991), p.169.

¹⁰ See Norman Watson 'Daughters of Dundee: Gender and Politics in Dundee: the Representation of Women 1880-1997', PhD, (Open University, 2001).

complicated relationship between feminism and nationalism for Irish women in this period. Studying Irish women's responses to suffrage in Dundee demonstrates how wider tensions between Irish nationalism and the suffrage campaign played out locally and affected people who were not in the higher strands of these respective movements.

Finally, an analysis of the Irish in Dundee improves understandings of the Irish in Britain during this period, especially as this community has been neglected in favour of larger cities such as Glasgow and Liverpool.¹¹ This is despite Dundee's high density of Irish within its population and the Irish community's important contributions to both local and transnational politics. This chapter will argue that by exploring less studied Irish communities a more nuanced picture of the Irish in Britain emerges, with less emphasis on sectarian violence. This fits with Martin J. Mitchell's argument about the Irish in the west Coast of Scotland during the nineteenth century being more integrated with the native Scottish community than it has originally been thought.¹² Sectarian violence was not strictly an indicator of Irish nationalism nor Irish political and economic activity, as demonstrated by the strong Irish social, cultural and political activity in Dundee during this period.

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Profile of Dundee

By the mid-nineteenth century, Dundee had a densely concentrated Irish presence: in 1851, 18.9 per cent of the city's population were Irish born.¹³ In terms of Irish concentration, only Liverpool had a higher percentage at 22.3 per cent.¹⁴ Although eighteen percent does not seem particularly large, this figure would be greater if second generation Irish were taken into account, as the children of Irish migrants were also considered to be 'Irish' by the native population as well as among the Irish

¹¹ McCready, 'Revising the Irish', p.38.

¹² Martin J. Mitchell, 'Irish Catholics in the West of Scotland in the Nineteenth Century: Despised by Scottish Workers and Controlled by the Church?' in Martin J. Mitchell's (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp.1-19.

¹³ Collins, 'Aspects of Immigration', p.22.

¹⁴ Ibid.

population themselves.¹⁵ Furthermore, Dundee had a considerably smaller population than other cities with large Irish communities, such as London, Liverpool, or Glasgow, therefore this high concentration of Irish migrants might have been more noticeable within the city.

Like many other cities during this period, Dundee experienced radical growth in its industries and population across the nineteenth century. In 1801, it is estimated that the population of the city was around 26,000 people, however by 1851 this had rapidly grown to 62,545.¹⁶ The decennial censuses of the city highlight how rapid this growth was: between 1821 and 1831, Dundee's population rose by 48 per cent, while between 1831 and 1841, it rose by a further 38 per cent.¹⁷ This was a result of the expansion of the flax and linen industry in the city in the background of the industrial revolution, which attracted workers from the surrounding rural areas and, of course, Ireland.

It is important to consider how central the jute industry was to Dundee's social and economic life and the role it played in the city's growth during this period. Jim Tomlinson has stated that 'no large city in Britain was ever so dominated by a single industrial sector as Dundee was by jute'.¹⁸ The number of people employed in the jute industry in the city reflect this 'domination'. In 1851, 21,000 people in the city were employed in the jute and flax industries, which was 34 per cent of the city's entire population.¹⁹ At its peak in 1911, 40 per cent of the city's population were employed in the jute industry, stating that they were jute operatives of some kind in the census.²⁰ However, this figure does not reflect the true centrality of the industry to the city: alongside those who worked in the mills, the industry employed merchants, clerks and office workers, and jute also dominated the working lives of transport workers, dockers, and local businesses in the city.²¹ It is also important to

¹⁵ Walker, *Juteopolis: Dundee and its Textile Workers, 1885-1923* (Edinburgh 1979), p.115.

¹⁶ For figures see James Edmund Handley, *The Irish in Scotland* (Cork, 1945), p.138; Collins, 'Aspects of Irish Immigration', p.48.

¹⁷ McCready, 'The social and political impact of the Irish in Dundee c.1845-1922', PhD (University of Dundee, 2002), p.14.

¹⁸ Tomlinson, *Dundee and the Empire*, p.9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.* p.11.

note that the jute industry could be unstable and fluctuated greatly depending on supply and demand.²² This would have important ramifications for those not just employed in directly by the jute mills, but for others in the city too. Therefore, the rise of the city and its employment opportunities were heavily tied to the rise of 'Juteopolis'.

The rise of the jute industry was a major 'pull' factor for Irish migrants to Dundee. The impact of the Great Famine of 1845-52 also had a huge impact on Irish migration to Scotland and has been viewed by many historians as a watershed in Irish-Scottish relations.²³ However, it is important to note that Irish migration to the area predated these events of the mid-nineteenth century. The growth of the Catholic Church in the city reveals that there was a substantial Irish population in the city by the 1840s. According to the *Catholic Directory* of 1834, the number of Catholics in Dundee at the start of the nineteenth century only numbered about fifty, however the Church witnessed a dramatic expansion in the number of births and baptisms since, roughly 136 baptisms a year.²⁴ This was attributed to the 'great influx of Irish Catholics' who were drawn to Dundee because of the 'flourishing state of trade in the town'.²⁵ It should be noted that not all Catholics in the city were Irish, and vice versa, not all of the Irish who migrated to Dundee were Catholic. However, the growth of the Catholic Church in the city is a good indicator of the growing Irish population in the city, particularly before the 1841 census when it was not required to state place of birth.

The 1841 census was the first census in Britain and Ireland where it was required to state place of birth. Therefore, this census allows a glimpse into Dundee's Irish population before the 'push' factor of the Famine later that decade. The census data reveals that there was already a substantial Irish population in Dundee before this period: there were 62,596 people counted in Dundee, of which

²² Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, pp.139-140.

²³ T.M. Devine, *The Great Irish Famine and Scottish History* in Martin J. Mitchell's (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp.41-55.

²⁴ *The Catholic Directory for Scotland*, 1834.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

5,326 stated that they were born in Ireland.²⁶ This was roughly nine per cent of the city's population, however this figure was probably greater as the children of Irish migrants would have also been considered Irish, indicating a multi-generational population. Therefore, Dundee had a considerable Irish population which pre-existed the expansion of the jute industry and the Famine, laying the foundations for the large increase from the 1850s onwards.

This pre-existing stream of migration expanded in the decades after the 1841 census. The 1851 census reveals that Dundee's Irish-born population had grown from 5,326 in 1841, to 14,889 ten years later, an increase of over nine thousand people, representing 18.9 per cent of Dundee's entire population.²⁷ There was a 3.5 per cent decrease of Irish born in the 1861 census, totalling around 14,366, however, it is important to consider that these figures do not include second generation Irish migrants, therefore this figure should not be taken out of context. The figure for Irish-born people stays consistently around this figure for the rest of the nineteenth century, therefore it can be concluded that the Famine had an impact on the pre-existing stream of Irish migration to Dundee.

Who were these Irish people migrating to Dundee? As Roger Swift has argued, the Irish people who migrated to Britain were by no means a homogenous group, therefore it is worth examining the type of migrant who came to Dundee during this period.²⁸ Although James Connolly wrote to his wife that 'every Irish brogue from every county' could be heard in the streets of Dundee, most Irish migrants who came to the city originated from the North Midlands and Ulster, as Brenda Collins stated, if an 'imaginary line' was drawn from Drogheda to Sligo.²⁹ Collins argues that an important aspect of this was the domestic linen trade in the north central region. The trading of flax for spun yarn between Dundee and Drogheda bound the flax growing and weaving households of the north central counties

²⁶ Collins, 'Aspects of Irish immigration', p.48.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Roger Swift, *The Irish in Britain 1815-1914, Perspectives and Sources* (London, 1990), pp.1-20.

²⁹ Collins. p. 101.

like Cavan, Monaghan, and Armagh closely to the expansion of textile production in Dundee.³⁰

Dundee employers placed newspaper advertisements in these areas with the intention of attracting workers to Dundee who had already acquired skills in textile production. Some answers on the 1851 census are county specific, and of these thirty-four per cent of Irish born people in Dundee stated that they were from Cavan or Monaghan.³¹ Significant numbers were also from Sligo, Fermanagh and Leitrim, and smaller proportions from Kings County and Donegal.³²

The most striking aspect of Dundee's Irish population was the concentration of women within it. Colloquially known as 'the women's town', in 1851, for every three women, there were two men among Dundee's total population.³³ This was exacerbated within the Irish born population of the city: for every man there were two women. This difference is more pronounced in certain age groups of the Irish in the city. For every one thousand Irish-born women between the ages of 20-24 in Dundee, there were only 524 men (as opposed to 684 for the total population).³⁴ This imbalance evens out among the older total population and population of Irish born, highlighting the influence of the jute industry in attracting women's employment in the city.³⁵ Therefore, the 'average' Irish migrant to the city was young, female, and from the north central counties of Ireland where there was an established textile trade.

The Irish and Politics in Dundee

What impact did this large, concentrated Irish population have on Dundee's social, political, and economic character? In comparison to other communities with large Irish populations in Scotland, Dundee witnessed little in the way of sectarian violence, a feature which is almost synonymous with the experience of the Irish on the west coast of Scotland, in the nineteenth and early twentieth

³⁰ Louise Miskell and C.A. Whatley, 'Juteopolis' in the making: linen and the industrial transformation of Dundee', c.1820-1850', *Textile History*, Vol.30, No.2 (1999), pp.176-198, p.179.

³¹ Collins, 'Aspects of Irish Immigration,' p.92.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. p.73.

³⁴ Ibid. p.72.

³⁵ Ibid.

centuries. Tom Gallagher stated that there were 'remarkably few reports of serious inter-communal life' in the city during this period, despite the density of Dundee's Irish population.³⁶ Similarly, in William Walker's work on the Dundee Irish and the jute industry, he stated that the picture of strife and sectarian violence painted by James Edmund Handley's seminal work *The Irish in Modern Scotland* could not be applied to Dundee. Walker stated that 'unless Handley has exaggerated the intensity of anti-Irish sentiment in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other places, Dundee, by comparison, must have been remarkable for its restraint and moderation'.³⁷

Work published in the last two decades has challenged this established view of the Irish in Scotland in the nineteenth century. Martin Mitchell has used census information and marriage records in the west of Scotland to argue that the native, Scottish Protestants and the immigrant Irish were more open to mixing than it has been previously thought.³⁸ Similarly Swift has asserted that the sectarian violence associated with towns like Liverpool and Glasgow may actually be atypical of the wider Irish experience in Britain in this period.³⁹ Therefore, Dundee's lack of open hostility and violence may not be as unusual in the context of the Irish in Scotland than it is has been originally assumed.

Dundee's absence of sectarian conflict has usually been explained as consequence of a weak Orange presence in the city. In Walker's study of the Irish in the city, he stated that Dundee only attracted 'the Catholic Irish', and that 'there was no effective Orange outpost in the city goes far in explaining the relative lack of Irish sectarian violence in the city'.⁴⁰ However McCready's analysis of the Irish in Dundee argues that there *was* an Orange presence in Dundee which was larger than it has been previously stated.⁴¹ McCready uses the *Dundee Directories* to demonstrate that there were two

³⁶ Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow The Uneasy Peace: Religious Tension in Modern Scotland* (Manchester 1987), p.32.

³⁷ Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.121.

³⁸ Mitchell, *Irish Catholics in the West of Scotland*, p.10.

³⁹ Roger Swift, 'The Irish in Nineteenth Century Britain: Towards a Definitive History?', *Labour History Review* No.57 (1992), pp.8-12.

⁴⁰ Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.121.

⁴¹ McCready, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish', pp.91-6.

districts in the city's parameters with a total of thirteen lodges in 1871.⁴² He also points to the visit of William Johnston, MP for Belfast to the city in 1871, where a 'soiree' was hosted by local Orangemen. McCready argues that the Orange presence in Dundee must have been more significant than it had previously been assumed for a politician of such standing to make a visit to the city. However, he does concede that their political influence was muted, with Dundee famously being a 'Liberal town', and highlighted that there were never any Orange walks through the city.⁴³

A lack of sectarian violence, however, does not necessarily indicate a lack of influence or interest in Irish politics. Indeed, sectarian conflict is not an indicator of interest in Irish politics. The Dundee Irish had a considerable influence on the politics of the city and were viewed as an invaluable voting bloc whose favour needed to be carried by the city's politicians. The Third Reform Act in 1884 extended the franchise and meant that many Irish men who had previously been excluded could now vote. Therefore, the general election of 1885 is a good indicator of the effect of the Irish vote in Dundee. This election brought the issue of Irish Home Rule to the fore, and the Irish National League of Great Britain (INLGB) instructed their members to vote Conservative due to the Liberals' split position on Home Rule. Dundee was one of the few seats in Britain which used the voting bloc system and sent two MPs to Parliament (this lasted until 1950). The Irish in Dundee were instructed by the Dundee branch of the United Irish League to use their first vote for the Conservative candidate, Edward Jenkins, and to use their second vote however they wished. McCready has highlighted that the effectiveness of this tactic was questionable, as voters could have cancelled out their first vote with their second.⁴⁴ The Liberal candidates, Charles Lacaita and Edmund Roberston were elected to parliament, however, Jenkins received 5,149 votes, which was more than any conservative candidate in the city previously, highlighting the impact of the Irish vote.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. p.93.

⁴⁴ McCready, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee', p.129.

The expansion of the franchise in 1884 led to an increased Irish electorate in Dundee which could clearly alter the course of politics in the city, as demonstrated by the Conservative gains in the 1885 general election. It is difficult to give exact figures for the size of the Irish electorate in Dundee at this time, however an official of the Irish National League of Great Britain estimated that it was between 2,000 and 3,000.⁴⁵ This was a significant minority in a city where the electorate was roughly 17,429 people. As a result, political figures in the city had to try and appeal to this voting bloc and tried to curry the favour of the Irish in the city. For instance, in the 1889 by-election in the city, the Liberal Party candidate, John Leng, left his nomination meeting to attend a meeting of the Irish National League and made the issue of Irish Home Rule a major part of his campaign.⁴⁶ Leng was elected unopposed and held his seat until 1905, when he retired.

The Irish in Dundee also organised themselves politically and were well informed about issues in their ancestral homeland. This is most notable in the Dundee Irish reaction to the Land War of the late 1870s and 1880s. The Land War was a prolonged period of agrarian activism which aimed to secure free rent, sale, and fixity of tenure for tenant farmers. The agitation was led by the Irish National Land League, whose leader was Charles Stewart Parnell. A branch of the Land League was established in Dundee in early 1880, and there were soon multiple branches in the city.⁴⁷ The branch was active in the city's political life: it joined forces with the Dundee Home Rule Club to question candidates on the issue of Irish Home Rule, and it invited Irish Parliamentary MP T.P. O'Connor (the only IPP MP for a constituency outside of Ireland in the House of Commons) to give a talk in December 1880.⁴⁸

Irish Women, Dundee, and Politics

⁴⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 16th September 1885.

⁴⁶ *Dundee Advertiser*, 11th September 1889.

⁴⁷ The earliest mention of a Dundee branch of the Land league is in the *Dundee Courier*, 19th March 1880.

⁴⁸ *Dundee Advertiser*, 10th December 1880.

Politics was not restricted to Dundee's Irish men, as the Irish women in the city also established a branch of the Irish Ladies' Land League in Lochee in August 1881.⁴⁹ Most of the jute factories were located in this part of the city, it also had a large Irish population and was nicknamed 'Tipperary'. The Ladies' Land League was originally established in the USA by Parnell's sister, Fanny, and his mother, Delia, pre-empting the arrest of the male leaders of the League. Parnell's sister Anna took charge of the League in Ireland where its members fundraised for victims of eviction, built temporary accommodation for evicted tenants, and protested at political meetings. The Ladies' Land League soon had branches across the diaspora which aimed to raise awareness of what was occurring in Ireland and to fundraise for relief. The Lochee branch was the first of its kind to exist in Scotland. A Dundee branch based out of the Catholic Parish of St. Andrews in September 1881, after a visit to the city by Anna Parnell.⁵⁰ During this visit, Parnell lauded praise on the women of Lochee for their efforts, stating that the ladies of Dundee were the first to organise and send help to Ireland, 'therefore no matter what the other towns in Scotland would boast of, they in Dundee would always know that they were the first to send help'.⁵¹

The Dundee branches of the Ladies' Land League were energetic and meticulous in their efforts. Niall Whelehan's work on the Ladies' Land League has highlighted their consistently high fundraising despite their relatively low socio-economic status.⁵² Using the 1881 census and newspaper reports, Whelehan has traced some of the women who were members of the League in Dundee and Lochee.⁵³ The majority of women members in both the Lochee and St. Andrews' branches were listed in the 1881 census as working in the jute mills as either spinners or weavers, although the president of the Lochee branch, Jane Keenan, was a teacher. The work in the jute mills was

⁴⁹ *Dundee Courier*, 9th August 1881.

⁵⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 6th September 1881.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² See Niall Whelehan, 'Saving Ireland in Juteopolis: Gender, Class and Diaspora in the Irish Ladies' Land League', *History Workshop Journal*, No.90 (Autumn 2020), pp.74-95; Niall Whelehan, *Changing Land: Diaspora Activism and the Irish Land War* (New York, 2021).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

laborious, and employment was haphazard due to fluctuations in demand of jute. The jute industry in Dundee was also sharply divided along gender lines: the bulk of employees were female spinners and weavers; however, the small supervisory teams were nearly entirely male. Therefore, there was little vertical mobility in the industry for women workers, whose wages were subject to fluctuation.

Despite this, the Dundee and Lochee branches of the Ladies' Land League consistently topped the lists published in nationalist newspapers such as *Freeman's Journal* and *The Nation*. For instance on the week of 17th December 1881, the Dundee branch managed to raise £11, the third highest amount behind the Central Committee of Victoria and Jarrow upon Tyne, who had raised £100 and £20 respectively.⁵⁴ On the week of 25th March 1882, the Dundee branch topped the tables, managing to raise £8.10s, with the next highest amount coming from the Kileen branch in Galway who raised £6.⁵⁵

In the eight months after its formation in August 1881, the Dundee branches had raised £200 for the cause in Ireland.⁵⁶ At a demonstration in the Kinnaird Hall in April 1882 the Dundee branches of the Ladies' Land League were praised for '[eclipsing] all other branches on this side of the water' by John Ferguson of Glasgow, while the president of the west end branch, Thomas Flanagan, praised his female counterparts for 'the great energy and activity that they have already displayed, and on the great success that has attended their efforts in the past'. Flanagan called 'on every Irishwomen in Dundee and Lochee to become members' and 'give them their united and hearty support'.⁵⁷ The persistent fundraising from the Dundee and Lochee women in spite of their bad wages, living and working conditions is a testament to their dedication to the cause. Whelehan argued that while the Irish nationalist elements would have struck a chord with these women, it is hard to imagine there were no elements of class consciousness in their activism too.⁵⁸ The main demands of the Land

⁵⁴ *The Nation*, 17th December 1881.

⁵⁵ *The Nation*, 25th March 1882.

⁵⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 12th April 1882.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Whelehan, 'Saving Ireland in Juteopolis', p.86.

Leaguers, which included fair rental prices and fixity of tenure, probably resonated with the Irish, female jute workers of Dundee and Lochee, who were paid badly for notoriously hard and dangerous work. A quick glance at the patients admitted to Dundee Royal Infirmary during this period attests to the harsh conditions in which these women worked. The lists repeatedly show 'mill workers' suffering from respiratory conditions such as chronic bronchitis, pneumonia, dilated heart, as well as accidents directly related to mill work, such as missing fingers or mangled arms.⁵⁹ Dundee also had some of the worst overcrowding and expensive renting prices in Britain during this period. In his study of Irish emigrants in the USA, Kerby Miller has argued that labour grievances could easily be 'translated into nationalist expressions and activities', this can be seen not just in Dundee, but across land league activism in Scotland, as the activists often linked the struggles of Irish tenants to miners in Lanarkshire, or land reform in the Scottish Highlands.⁶⁰ Therefore the issues the League fought for hit close to home, and could be translated into local contexts, offering a voice to people who did not have one.⁶¹ This was particularly relevant to the working class, emigrant Irish women of Dundee's jute industry, who would have been excluded from mainstream political activism in this period.

Unlike in other parts of the diaspora, such as the USA and the rest of Britain, the Dundee and Lochee branches of the Ladies' Land League received little opposition or backlash. The branches had the support of the local priests, who offered their church halls for meetings and were often present on platforms at rallies.⁶² Ely M. Janis has shown that the Ladies' Land League in the USA caused considerable concern in certain areas and that factions existed within both the wider movement and local branches, involving moderates who saw Irishwomen's activities in the Ladies' Land League as an extension of their Christian moral duty, versus radicals who wanted to push for wider social

⁵⁹ UDA, Dundee Royal Infirmary Admissions 1905-10.

⁶⁰ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford, 1985); Whelehan, *Changing Land*, pp.82-3.

⁶¹ Whelehan, 'Saving Ireland in Juteopolis', p.86.

⁶² See *Dundee Courier*, 9th August 1881; *Dundee Courier*, 6th September 1881.

reform.⁶³ However in Dundee there seems to have been little backlash around the role of women. One possibility for this could be that working class women in the city already had a prominent role in the public sphere through their employment in the jute industry. However, it is important to note that despite women's prominent role in the city, politics in Dundee were still drawn along patriarchal lines, therefore the notion that the Ladies' Land League was an extension of the private sphere, as some of the more conservative leaders of the movement maintained, probably benefited their image.

There was some opposition to Dundee Irishwomen's political activity in the Ladies' Land League based on gender, although this was less considerable than elsewhere across the diaspora. In a letter to the editor of the *Dundee Courier*, a person using the pseudonym 'Justice to Ireland' wrote a scathing attack on the formation of a ladies' branch of the League, stating that 'Irishmen, and those residing in Lochee especially, are rank cowards, or else they would not resort to such a mean dodge as mix up their sisters and daughters with a movement, the outcome of which is a disgrace to the civilisation of the nineteenth century'.⁶⁴ The letter continued to attack the Irish, ending by suggesting that a 'second Cromwell' would be a welcome figure.⁶⁵ However, a response was issued by James Ward, who applauded the women of Lochee and stated that their efforts were 'an honour to themselves and a step in their advancement', before adding that the men's branch was also very much still active despite Justice for Ireland's claims that they were hiding behind their sisters and daughters.⁶⁶ Ward's defence paints the Ladies' Land League as a organisation which aimed to 'watch and guard' their country, highlighting the respectfulness of the organisation in the face of criticism. Therefore, when faced with criticism, it is interesting to note that supporters of the Land League in

⁶³ Ely M. Janis, *A Greater Ireland: The Land League and Transatlantic Nationalism in Gilded Age America* (Wisconsin, 2015), pp.65-108.

⁶⁴ *Dundee Courier*, 12th August 1881.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 16th August 1881.

Dundee chose to draw on language of respectability and an extension of women's morality into the public sphere.

The activities of the Land League and its female counterparts died down after the release of Charles Stewart Parnell and the other male leaguers in May 1882. However, the League remained somewhat active in Dundee due to the influence of Michael Davitt.⁶⁷ Davitt came to the city to speak about the issues of the Land League as early as 1879, and continued to be an influential force in the city even after the zenith of Land League activism was over. On 23rd October 1885 a 'Great Land Reform Demonstration' was held in Dundee, addressed by Davitt. At the meeting, Davitt spoke about issues of land reform and Irish home rule, which was another important issue for the Irish in Dundee.

The Land League evolved into the Irish National League, which also had an active role in the city. A branch of this organisation was formally established in the city in 1885, and it took on a key role of advising eligible Irish citizens in Dundee how to use their vote to benefit the Irish Party and Home Rule. However, the fall of Parnell in 1890 and the consequent split this caused saw the INLGB fall into oblivion in Dundee, as it did elsewhere across the diaspora. By the 1890s, the United Irish League (UIL) had superseded the INLGB as the main agitator of Irish politics in Dundee. Dundee and Lochee had a branch of the UIL, who were preoccupied with ensuring that all eligible Irish voters were listed on the electoral rolls for upcoming elections. The League was also responsible for organising talks in the city by leading Irish nationalist figures, such as one by Michael Davitt in 1903.⁶⁸ The United Irish League acted as the main political organ for the Dundee Irish.

It should be noted that formally, the INL and UIL were political organisations, mainly focused on advising eligible voters to use their votes in relation to Irish concerns. As women did not have the vote during this period, they were largely excluded from these organisations. However, newspaper evidence reveals that despite this, women continued to attend the meetings and rallies organised by

⁶⁷ Davitt, Michael, Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/davitt-michael-a2437> (date accessed 21/02/24).

⁶⁸ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th March 1903.

these groups, taking a keen interest in Irish politics. Journalists attending rallies or talks given by prominent Irish nationalists often remarked on the large presence of women in these crowds, highlighting while they might have been formally excluded from the arena of politics, they still took a keen interest and participated where they could.⁶⁹ This was a feature of Irish audiences in Dundee throughout the early twentieth century and the periods of the Irish Revolutionary struggle, as large, enthusiastic female audiences gathered for Irish political events in the city.⁷⁰

Women also set up their own 'ladies' branches of these organisations, like how they did for the Land League. In March 1893, the *Dundee Courier* remarked that the 'ladies of Lochee have formed a branch of the Irish National League'.⁷¹ However, unlike the enthusiastic Ladies' Land League in the city, little is known of who the members of the Ladies' INLGB were, or what their activities encompassed.

Similarly, the *Dundee Catholic Herald* reported enthusiastically on a woman joining the United Irish League in 1904.⁷² A further two women joined because of this, and by May 1904, the UIL in Dundee had eleven female members. However, these women were not elected as committee members, which was for the reserve of men. The Ladies' branch of the INLGB and the women on the UIL did not reach the same heights of success as the Ladies' Land League, however they were important vehicles for keeping women informed and involved in Irish activism in the city. Richard McCready has stated that 'given the role of women in Dundee, especially in the Irish community, it is surprising that they did not play a stronger role in politics' during this period. However, considering that women were still not enfranchised during this period, the persistent presence of women at Irish rallies in the city, and the admirable efforts as part of the Ladies' Land League, Dundee's Irish

⁶⁹ *Glasgow Observer*, 29th October 1920; *Evening Telegraph*, 30th December 1921; *Dundee Courier*, 12th August 1921.

⁷⁰ See *Glasgow Observer*, 29th October 1920; *Evening Telegraph*, 30th December 1921; *Dundee Courier*, 12th August 1921.

⁷¹ *Dundee Courier*, 7th March 1893.

⁷² *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 8th April 1904.

women put their own unique stamp on Irish nationalist activity in the period before 1916.⁷³ It is also important to consider that despite the prominent economic role that women played in the city as the bulk of the jute workforce, nineteenth and early twentieth century Dundee was still a patriarchal society, and women had to navigate these parameters as they did elsewhere across Britain and Ireland.

Suffrage and the city?

Another important movement that needs to be discussed is female suffrage. The suffrage movement was active in Britain from as early as 1867 when the National Society for Women's Suffrage was founded by Lydia Becker. However, the foundation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1897, and the more militant Women's Social and Political Union in 1903 saw suffrage activity rapidly increase in Britain in the early twentieth century.

Dundee witnessed a significant amount of suffragette activity as Winston Churchill was the city's MP from 1908 until his defeat in 1922. Churchill was a notorious opponent of women's enfranchisement and was the target of suffragette activities. Dundee was often the backdrop to these incidents. Perhaps the most famous and amusing example was by Mary Moloney (sometimes styled as Molony), an Irish suffragette who was renowned in Dundee for following Churchill with a bell during his campaign trails. Moloney would ring the bell any time Churchill attempted to talk, and on more than one occasion her bell ringing became so disruptive that meetings had to be disbanded.⁷⁴

The combination of Dundee's large female population, strong Irish demographic and Churchill as MP would make it reasonable to assume that the suffrage activism in the city was carried out by the Dundee Irish. However, there is little evidence that the Irish women in Dundee were involved in the suffrage activism witnessed in the city during this period. Dundee had a branch of the WSPU, and the NUWSS frequently held meetings there. It is also worth noting that the first acts of violence by

⁷³ McCready, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee', p.208.

⁷⁴ *Dundee Courier*, 5th May 1908; *Evening Telegraph*, 7th May 1908.

suffragettes in Scotland were committed in Dundee.⁷⁵ This drew many prominent suffragettes to the area and gave Dundee a reputation as a 'suffrage city'. Norman Watson's study explores suffrage activism in Dundee and draws a more nuanced picture of suffrage in the city.⁷⁶ Watson argues that despite the 'radical tradition on the shop floor' adopted by the city's female jute workers, suffrage activity in the city was only embraced by the city's small female, middle class.⁷⁷ Watson argues that while Dundee witnessed a great deal of suffrage activity, this was not a result of the women from the jute mills who were native to the city, but rather imported by flying pickets who travelled to the area to challenge Churchill on his political home turf, such as the WSPU members Ethel Moorhead from Edinburgh, the first suffragette in Scotland to be force fed, and hunger striker Florence MacFarlane, both of which were based in Edinburgh during this time.⁷⁸

There are few mentions of working-class suffrage activity in the city in local newspapers or among other activists, and few of the small, committed circle of middle-class suffrage activists in the city were of Irish extraction. This raises some interesting questions about the Irish women in the city and their relationship with political activity based on class and gender. The activities of the Dundee and Lochee branches of the Irish Ladies' Land League demonstrate that the Irish, working-class women of the city had the capacity to organise themselves, and their continued presence at Irish political rallies in the city highlights that they were interested in nationalist political affairs. One possibility is that the cause of suffrage simply did not resonate with them in the same way that the issues raised by the Land League and Irish nationalism did. Watson's analysis supports the idea of a class consciousness amongst the working-class women of Dundee, who made up the bulk of the city, and their relative indifference to the suffrage campaign. According to Watson, one simple reason why working-class women did not feature prominently in the campaign was because women in the jute

⁷⁵ *Dundee Advertiser*, 11th April 1907.

⁷⁶ Norman Watson, 'Daughters of Dundee'.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.62.

⁷⁸ Moorhead, Ethel Agnes Mary, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-59253?rskey=PNrgTi&result=1> (date accessed 21/02/24);

industry were hard pressed for time and must have considered there was little to benefit from it.⁷⁹ Watson proposed that with such limited time, for many of these women, politics must have been a time-consuming luxury reserved for the city's professionals and middle classes.⁸⁰ Although Watson's analysis can be challenged with the examples of the Irish Ladies' Land League, it is true that working class women would have had less time and capacity to organise. Daily life in the jute mills was a ten-hour shift, where women would have been on their feet doing intense, manual labour in dirty, noisy conditions. The Land League also resonated with working class issues such as living conditions, giving these women impetus to organise.

The question of which women would be enfranchised is also relevant: during this period, many working class men did not have the vote either, therefore the question of which women would be enfranchised was relevant amongst suffrage activists. This did not necessarily include the single, working class mill girls of Dundee, who did not own property. Therefore, the cause that suffrage activists were fighting for might not have been relevant to them.

While it is possible that working class women in Dundee had neither the time nor desire to commit their energies to the cause of women's suffrage because it did not resonate with their class, it should also be considered that some prominent suffrage activists were critical of the Irish Party and hostile to the Home Rule. This may have impacted Dundee Irish women's involvement in suffrage activism as well. Some of the leading Irish suffrage activists of the late nineteenth century were hostile to the Irish Parliamentary Party for their lack of support for women's suffrage but were also hostile to the Home Rule movement itself. For example, the founding member of the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association, Anna Haslam, was a liberal unionist who opposed Home Rule because she believed female suffrage was more likely to be granted in Ireland if it was part of the United Kingdom. Isabella Tod, founder of the north of Ireland branch of the National Society for

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.78.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Women's Suffrage, opposed Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill for similar reasons. Todd established the Liberal Women's Unionist Association in Belfast in opposition to the Bill.

Some suffrage activists were also discouraged from publicly supporting the Irish National Land League by British colleagues. The feminist and land activist Helen Taylor was rebuked by British suffragist Priscilla McLaren for her involvement in the Irish Land League during the 1880s. McLaren stated that Taylor would 'retard our suffrage movement' by 'signing up to the Land League'.⁸¹

Similarly, working class suffrage activist Jessie Craigen was pressured by fellow suffrage campaigners into cancelling an address on the Land League in Glasgow because it was one day after a suffrage rally.⁸² Conversely, Craigen felt alienated by the male culture amongst the leaders of the Land League and their drinking habits, and was upset with Charles Stewart Parnell for agreeing to support Gladstone's Liberal government, besmirching him as a 'political trickster'.⁸³ Craigen exemplifies the tension between these two movements, and the contradictions of being a supporter of the British suffrage campaign and the Irish Land League in Britain in the 1880s.

These long term, underlying tensions were not resolved during the zenith of suffrage and Home Rule activism in the early 1910s. Instead, they were exacerbated by the political situation in Ireland and the divisions between Nationalists and Unionists. British suffrage activists were not sensitive to the wider political situation in Ireland and pursued their own goals at the cost of forming solidarity with their Irish counterparts.⁸⁴ This is most evidently demonstrated in the attack on Prime Minister Henry Herbert Asquith by British suffragettes during a visit to Dublin in 1912. Three British suffragettes, Mary Leigh, Gladys Evans, and Lizzie Baker travelled to Ireland and threw a small hatchet at Asquith, who was onstage with Irish Party leader John Redmond, and set fire to the Theatre Royal where he

⁸¹ Janet Smith, 'Helen Taylor's work for land nationalisation in Great Britain and Ireland 1879–1907: women's political agency in the British Victorian land movement', *Women's History Review*, Vol.27, No.5, pp.778-798.

⁸² *The Nation*, 11th November 1882.

⁸³ Sandra Stanley Holton, 'Silk dresses and lavender kid gloves: the wayward career of Jessie Craigen, working suffragist', *Women's History Review*, Vol.5, No.1 (1996), pp.129-150, p.139.

⁸⁴ Margaret Ward, 'Conflicting interests: the British and Irish Suffrage Movements', *Feminist Review*, No.50, (Summer, 1995), pp.127-147, p.127.

was due to speak. These actions were condemned by the Irish Women's Franchise League, the Irish organisation for militant suffrage, who argued that the women did not consider the volatility of the political situation in Ireland, nor the strategic interests that Irish suffragists had in the Home Rule Movement.⁸⁵

Suffrage activists in Ireland were also divided on issues of unionism, nationalism, constitutionalism, and militantism, as suffrage activists were drawn from women across the political spectrum. Louise Ryan's work on *The Irish Citizen*, a newspaper founded by the Irish Women's Franchise League, demonstrates that there was a range of opinions amongst Irish suffrage activists on these issues.⁸⁶ Ryan highlights the divergence of opinions in articles in the newspaper throughout the 1910s, arguing that the tensions between nationalism and suffrage were not clear cut, as campaign strategies such as the use of militant force and support for the Home Rule Bill complicated Irish suffrage activists' approaches. The establishment of Cumann na mBan in 1914 added a further complicated layer into the mix, exacerbating existing debates on the competing priorities of nationalism and suffrage.

These tensions would not have been lost on the Irish women of Dundee, who had taken an active role in the Ladies' Land League movement and would have witnessed suffragette activism in their city first hand. These tensions could possibly explain why there was no greater activism amongst the city's working class, Irish, female population, as there had been during the zenith of Land League activism. Furthermore, the Irish organisations in the city during this period were largely linked to the Irish Parliamentary Party, whose leader, John Redmond, was opposed to female suffrage. Support for Irish Home Rule, or membership of the ladies' branch of the United Irish League would have jarred with support for female suffrage.

⁸⁵ Sharon Crozier De Rosa 'Divided Sisterhood? Nationalist feminism and feminist militancy in England and Ireland', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 32, No.4 (2018), pp.448-469.

⁸⁶ Louise Ryan, *Winning the vote for women: the Irish Citizen newspaper and the suffrage movement in Ireland* (Dublin, 2018).

Although there is no available evidence of Irish working-class women in Dundee participating in suffrage activism, there is some evidence to suggest that the Irish population was supportive of the cause more generally. The Irish population's attitude towards the cause of women's suffrage was referenced numerous times by suffrage activists who visited the city. On one occasion, Mary Moloney spoke alongside the Pankhursts as part of an all-day suffragette rally, focusing on the Irish vote.⁸⁷ Moloney argued that the Irish people would not be loyal to Ireland if they voted for Churchill, arguing that they should instead combine their votes to oust the Liberal candidate.⁸⁸ During Moloney's speech, one man in the crowd asked 'what do you want female suffrage for in Dundee for when all the women... have mastery over their husbands?' Moloney quipped back 'if our friend is a hen-pecked man... or if there are any henpecked men in the crowd, they must be either fools or cowards'.⁸⁹

On another occasion, a letter published by the press secretary for the Dundee branch of the Women's Freedom League in the *Dundee Courier* ruffled the feathers of the *Dundee Catholic Herald's* editor, M.T. Hannigan. In the letter, a suffrage campaigner named J.A. Smart argued that the criticism levelled at suffragettes for their tactics was unjust, and stated 'one might as well argue the Irish will get no legislation because riots, murder, boycotting, cattle driving... have been their methods at various periods of their history'.⁹⁰ Hannigan wrote to the editor of the *Courier* the following day, stating he wished 'to make a vehement protest' against Smart's statement, urging that she 'hasten to correct the impression [she] has made in the minds of a not unsympathetic section of the community, who follow movements against the government very closely'.⁹¹ Smart duly replied, stating she never intended to 'wound the susceptibilities of any people or party... especially not the Irish who reckon our friends'.⁹² Smart referenced Charlotte Despard, who was a

⁸⁷ *Dundee Courier*, 4th May 1908.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 21st October 1909.

⁹¹ *Dundee Courier*, 22nd October 1909.

⁹² *Dundee Courier*, 23rd October 1909.

prominent leader in the cause and of Irish extraction, and argued that she could have used the example of the violence inflicted by working class men before the passing of the Franchise Bills to make her point instead.⁹³ She signed off her letter by stating that she wished ‘to thank the Irish people for their politeness... and sympathy’ for the movement.⁹⁴

Smart was not the only suffragette who used examples of political violence in Ireland to justify the use of violence as a legitimate means to affect constitutional change. The suffragette publication *Votes for Women* repeatedly used examples of violence in Irish nationalist campaigns to justify the actions of suffragettes. In response to the arrest of the women who attacked Asquith in Dublin, *Votes for Women* published that ‘no concession had ever been made to Ireland except in response to force- either Parliamentary force or physical force’.⁹⁵ Similarly, in response to the escalating violence in Ireland in early 1914, *Votes for Women* commented that the British government capitulated in the face of male violence, so why not women’s?⁹⁶ However despite British suffragettes’ endorsement of political violence in Irish nationalist movements, their sympathies and activities did not extend to resolving the Irish Question or establishing Home Rule itself. British suffragettes were instructed not to take an active stance on the Irish Question, while some of the leading suffragettes actively opposed Irish Home Rule. Some British suffragettes condemned their Irish counterparts for putting nationalist politics before their own sex. In an article entitled ‘the betrayal of Ireland’, *Votes for Women* made a scathing attack on Irish women for putting nationalist and unionist politics before the cause of female suffrage.⁹⁷ In 1914, the same journal published a front-page cartoon of an Irish woman rejecting both nationalism and unionism to prioritise her own freedom as a woman.⁹⁸ Therefore, the discourse between Smart and Hannigan mirrored

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ ‘Violent and Lawless Action,’ *Votes for Women*, Vol.5, No. 229 (26th July 1912), p.700.

⁹⁶ ‘Yielding to Force,’ *Votes for Women* Vol.7, No. 314 (13th March 1914), p.364.

⁹⁷ ‘The Betrayal of Ireland,’ *Votes for Women*, Vol.6, No. 259 (21st February 1913), p.298.

⁹⁸ ‘Tim Healy’s Zoo,’ *Votes for Women*, Vol. 7, No. 314 (13th March 1914), p.357.

conversations that were occurring across political networks in Britain and Ireland, and underlines some of the tensions between Irish nationalism and suffrage activism on a local level.

Dundee offers a local perspective on how the complications of nationalism and feminism played out. The correspondence between Hannigan and Smart and the presence of Mary Moloney suggests that while Dundee's Irish women may not have been prominent members of the suffrage movement, they were considered an important bloc of supporters or sympathisers, and that the Dundee Irish were in tune with the major conversations that were being had across these movements. Although neither Moloney, Smart nor Hannigan expand on how far the Irish community's sympathies went, the idea that the suffrage campaigners were anti-government might have carried favour, although it should be noted that the UIL continued to pledge their votes towards the incumbent Liberal MP throughout the duration of this period.⁹⁹

Outside of Mary Moloney, there is also no specific evidence of Dundee's Irish women mobilising or joining the suffrage cause. This might be because the Dundee Irish were aware of the complications between these two campaigns. Support for Home Rule and the UIL meant supporting a political leader who was opposed to suffrage. Conversely, actively supporting suffrage meant supporting a movement which remained opposed to Irish Home Rule. As demonstrated by the Dundee branches of the Ladies' Land League, Irish working-class women in Dundee were more than capable of organising politically, therefore their absence in any of the major events or branches in the city could be an indicator of their awareness of these underlying political tensions, and a reflection of their quiet, communal support echoed by Smart, rather than any organised activism.

Strikes and Trade Unionism

Watson also argues that the way that suffrage activists promoted their cause was alien to the working-class women of Dundee, stating that 'letter writing and public speaking' were unfamiliar

⁹⁹ *Dundee Courier*, 22nd October 1909.

forms of protest for the mill girls of Dundee, who employed their own, unique tactics to further their own causes.¹⁰⁰

Watson overlooks the endeavours of the Ladies' Land League in the 1880s, some of whom delivered speeches at public events during Anna Parnell's visit to Dundee in 1881.¹⁰¹ However, the tactics of non-militant suffrage activists in Dundee certainly differed in comparison to those that the Dundee mill girls employed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The mill girls had distinctive and often rowdy methods of striking. Despite numerous attempts to formally organise them into trade unions, by the early twentieth century, only around one third of the combined female workforce in the jute mills were members of the two trade unions which represented them.¹⁰² This lack of formal trade union membership has led some scholars to argue that there was not an effective trade union presence in Dundee, and that women were not interested in working class politics.¹⁰³

At the height of the jute industry's production in 1911, 23,368 women were employed in the industry, nearly two thirds of the city's working female population.¹⁰⁴ Considering the large concentration of Irish women in the city, it is reasonable to assume that a significant proportion of these women workers hailed from Ireland or had Irish family. Tara McCarthy has argued that in addition to the experience of the Ladies' Land League, Irish women in America greatly benefitted from participation in labour activism, and their involvement provided crucial experience of working in political and activist circles which paved the way for their involvement in twentieth century nationalism.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Mo Moulton argued Irish women's nationalist activism Britain was rooted in a tradition of radical working class activism, which grew out of the same industrial areas where

¹⁰⁰ Watson, 'Daughters of Dundee,' p.79.

¹⁰¹ *Dundee Courier*, 6th September 1881.

¹⁰² Watson, 'Daughters of Dundee,' p.79.

¹⁰³ Bruce Lenman, Charlotte Lythe, Enid Gauldie, *Dundee and its Textile Industry 1850–1914* (Dundee, 1969); William Walker, *Juteopolis*.

¹⁰⁴ Tomlinson, *Dundee and the Empire*, p.10.

¹⁰⁵ McCarthy, *Respectability and Reform*, pp.32-64.

support for nationalism was strongest.¹⁰⁶ An examination of Dundee's female jute workers and their involvement in workplace politics reveals their ability to create informal networks, bargain, and a significant flouting of gendered norms.

Eleanor Gordon's work on women's trade unionism in Scotland argues that 'whilst the structural constraints on the organisation of women workers were substantial, organisation did exist and was imaginative and oppositional, and that the history of Dundee's textile industry was not one of the unfettered control of employers over a passive labour force'.¹⁰⁷ Women workers' favoured method of activism was striking until their demands were met, contrasting with their male counterparts' and the Dundee Trades Council's preferred method of negotiation.¹⁰⁸ Although there were multiple attempts (mostly by men) to try and organise the female jute workers into a formal union in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, women workers preferred to handle their own grievances through actions such as the spontaneous strike, which they could arrange themselves on the workplace floor. The noisy machinery that operated within the mills enabled female spinners to develop sign language and lip-reading skills, facilitating communication.¹⁰⁹ One mill worker recalled:

'Oh you couldn't hear over the machinery an' when you wanted the time you did that (gesticulating). There were a lot of signs that you had, you know, sign language'.¹¹⁰

This covert means of communication could be used to plan strikes, however in Gordon's interviews with the workers of Halley's weavers, it was also stated that it could be used to pass on gossip such as upcoming engagements and the events of the previous night.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Moulton, "You have votes and power", p.199.

¹⁰⁷ Eleanor Gordon, *Women and the labour movement in Scotland, 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1991), p.169.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. pp.170-211.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p.156.

¹¹⁰ DLC, Dundee Oral History Project, Tape 023.

¹¹¹ Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, p.156.

Women strikers heckled, sang and marched, methods which were utilised to turn sexual division of labour into an effective weapon through the emasculation of their male superiors.¹¹² Women also dressed-up during strikes and wore face paint. Popular costumes included warriors or moustaches and hats which resembled their male supervisors. By not conforming to their gendered roles through their actions of crass singing and heckling their male superiors, women strikers were effectively rejecting male control and dominance, and by not uniting behind their attempts to formally unionise, they were denying them the power of control.¹¹³



The People's Journal, 4th March 1911.

Before 1885, there was little in the way of formal union organisation in Dundee's textile industry.

However, the mid-1880s saw attempts to organise female workers by the Reverend Henry Williamson, a Unitarian minister. In a series of articles in the *People's Journal* in the 1920s,

¹¹² Ibid. p.208.

¹¹³ Ibid.p.210.

Williamson recalled walking down the Lochee Road during and being greeted with the 'same sad sight' every week of 'tousled, loud-voiced lassies with the light of battle defiant in their eyes'.¹¹⁴

Williamson further stated that it was not their spirit which upset him but their lack of organisation, and he was concerned that there was no intermediary between the workers and the employers.¹¹⁵

Williamson stated they were like 'a flock of sheep without a shepherd'.¹¹⁶ Consequently, Williamson formed the first trade union for female workers in 1885, establishing the Dundee and District Mill and Factory Operatives' Union (DMFOU). Membership was originally restricted to female mill workers, and numbers fluctuated. At its peak in 1902, the DMFOU had 6,000 members.¹¹⁷

Williamson's approach to the grievances of the mills girls was to prioritise negotiation with employers and prevent strike action at all costs.¹¹⁸ This did not prove popular among female workers who had their tried and tested methods of striking. This further exacerbated Dundee Trades Council, who were frustrated that Williamson had put himself in control despite being a minister, and therefore not a part of the jute trade. Indeed, Williamson's efforts were largely in vain: between 1889 and 1914 there were 103 strikes involving women in Dundee's jute industry.¹¹⁹ Dissatisfaction with Williamson's efforts led to the formation of another union: the Dundee and District Jute and Flax Worker's Union (DDUJFW) in March 1906, established by Mary MacArthur and John Reed. This union reached a pre-war peak of 8,500 members in 1913, performing marginally better than its predecessor.¹²⁰

The Girl in the Green Felt Hat

Despite the existence of two textile unions, it was still the case that the mainstream of Dundee jute workers' action occurred outside of formal organisation and the spontaneous strike remained the

¹¹⁴ *People's Journal*, 14th October 1922.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ W. Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.49.

¹¹⁸ Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, p.184.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.190.

¹²⁰ Tomlinson, *Dundee and its Empire*, p.64.

most popular form of protest among female jute workers. These protests were often lively affairs, which included dressing up, singing, and promenading into the city centre. However, after March 1911, it became increasingly popular among striking female workers to don green hats and parasols. This was the result of a particular mill girl's rise in popularity during the Lochee strike of 1911, who was applauded for her tireless efforts during a strike which lasted for over a month.

Known locally as the 'girl in the green felt hat,' Susan Devine was born to Irish parents in Lochee and worked as a spinner in Cox's Camperdown jute mills. She was twenty-eight in 1911 when spinners in Cox's Camperdown works in Lochee decided to strike after it was proposed to reduce the number of spinners per frame from ten to eight. Over 1,000 spinners, bobbin-shifters and helpers struck on 25th February. The employers responded by locking out over 5,000 workers.¹²¹ The Cox brothers refused to meet with either of the textile unions that represented the women workers and resultantly there was much public sympathy for the strikers. *The Scottish Prohibitionist* reported that the striking women had 'never got their due reward as producers of that great wealth which had been accumulated by the Messrs Cox'.¹²² Even in the usually conservative pages of the *Dundee Courier* and its evening edition, the *Telegraph* there was support for the striker. For instance, the *Evening Telegraph* reported that the strike was a 'serious' matter for workers and raised concerns over their welfare.¹²³

For nearly a month, the female strikers marched from Lochee into the centre of Dundee each day, parading in costumes and face paint while singing songs which ridiculed their employees and proclaimed their right to a fair wage and working conditions. It was not unusual for these songs to be tongue in cheek at best, or lurid at worst. Gordon has argued that such songs and costume was a deliberate challenge of patriarchal authority and contrasted with the more sober, formal tactics that

¹²¹ *Dundee Advertiser*, 27th February 1911.

¹²² *The Scottish Prohibitionist*, 4th March 1911

¹²³ *Evening Telegraph*, 24th February 1911.

male jute employees used.¹²⁴ The *Scottish Prohibitionist* printed one of the songs that the women sang on this occasion, which was acceptable to print:

We are out for higher wages as we have a right to do,

And we'll never be content until we get the ten per cent.

We have a right to live as well as you.¹²⁵

According to the press, the leader of this strike was the pivotal Susan Devine, or, as she became more commonly known, the 'girl with the 'green felt hat'. The *Weekly News* reported that the girl with the green felt hat led the procession into town daily, donning her green hat and matching parasol, while *the Evening Telegraph* heralded her as the 'Boadicea' of the strike.¹²⁶ Her efforts were not restricted to leading the strike, as she also organised relief for families affected by the strike.¹²⁷ According to the *Weekly News*, Devine was 'here, there, and everywhere' collecting money for the striking workers.¹²⁸

The strike eventually came to an end on the 17th March 1911, which the *Dundee Courier* noted was an appropriately celebratory date due the Irish origins of many of the striking women, and that it was also five years after the establishment of the DDUJFWU.¹²⁹ The Cox brothers accepted the workers' demands with considerable intervention from Lord Provost Urquhart, who was presented with a 'sprig of dear little shamrock' by the striking women to thank him for his efforts.¹³⁰ For her hard work, Susan Devine was presented with a brand new green felt hat by a Dundee milliner. The hat was embroidered with shamrocks and Irish roses, a nod to the Irish heritage of Devine as well as

¹²⁴ Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*, pp.200-9.

¹²⁵ *The Scottish Prohibitionist*, 11th March 1911.

¹²⁶ *Weekly News*, 18th March 1911; *Evening Telegraph*, 24th February 1911.

¹²⁷ Billy Kenefick, 'An Effervescence of Youth: Female Textile Workers' Strike Activity in Dundee 1911-1912', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, Vol.33 (2012), pp.190-221, p.197.

¹²⁸ *Weekly News*, 18th March 1911.

¹²⁹ *Dundee Courier*, 18th March 1911.

¹³⁰ *Dundee Advertiser*, 18th March 1911.

the other Lochee mill girls.¹³¹ Later that week, Devine went to Celtic Park to collect for relief at a Scotland v Ireland football match, dressed in her 'famous costume'.¹³²

Devine's green headwear was emulated at subsequent strikes, and she gained local recognition for her actions during the March 1911 strike. She continued to work as a spinner in Lochee for at least another ten years, although it is unclear what happened to her in her later life. The 'girl with the green felt hat' and her elevation to local heroine illustrates the extent to which Irish identity was tied up with the mill girls of Lochee. Billy Kenefick argues that this Irish identity marked the Lochee women strikers as distinct from other workers in textile localities in Scotland, and the symbolism of objects and actions within the strike further demonstrates this point.¹³³ The colour of the hat and parasol, the sprigs of shamrock, and Devine's trip to a Scotland v Ireland football match illustrate the centrality of Irishness to the identity of the working-class women of the Lochee mills. Some of the songs that the striking women chose to sing on their daily processions were also Irish, for example, 'Molly Molloy', or, as the *Evening Telegraph* confusingly reported, 'something about Flanagan'.¹³⁴ Indeed, Irish imagery was at the forefront of this particular strike, highlighting the importance of Irish identity to this group of women, many of which would have been second or even third generation, like Devine.

William Walker also argued for the importance of Catholic, Irish identity for the female jute workers of Lochee. Walker stated that the Irish female spinners had traditionally been the most strike prone in the city and that their determination had much to do with Catholic traditions and 'unity of purpose'.¹³⁵ Walker also stressed that informal networks of Catholic relief aided female workers in their ability to go on strike, as these enabled them to pool resources and have a substitute income during strike action. Indeed, the strike of March 1911 and the infamous 'girl with the green felt hat'

¹³¹ *Weekly News*, 18th March 1911.

¹³² *Evening Telegraph*, 20th March 1911.

¹³³ Kenefick, 'An Effervescent of Youth', p.14.

¹³⁴ *Evening Telegraph*, 24th February 1911.

¹³⁵ William Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.143.

further demonstrate this point and highlights the resilience and centrality of Irish identity to the mill girls of Lochee.

Similar to the women of the Ladies' Land League, it is possible that the press lauded praise on the 'girl with the green felt hat' because her actions could be viewed as benevolent rather than political. Devine's actions were praised in the press as selfless, and despite the political nature of her actions, no reference was made to politics in any of the news outlets which reported her actions, with the exception of the *Advertiser* which fretted that if the strike were to continue it could foster support for socialism.¹³⁶ Poems written by the public about the 'girl with the green felt hat' also attest to this. One poem published in the *Evening Telegraph* by 'J.O'. contrasted Devine positively with suffragettes, praising Devine's light heartedness and commitment to others:

A suffragette once in a while
 May catch asleep a canny scoffer,
 And teach his gloomy heart to smile.
 But speedily he wearies of her;
 But you wax grander with the days,
 Each turn of fortune finds you stronger.¹³⁷

The poem finishes with the author stating that they hoped that such a woman as Devine was 'adequately mated'.¹³⁸ Similarly, the *Evening Telegraph* praised the efforts of Devine and her friends who travelled to Parkhead for the Ireland v Scotland game despite the bad effort, stating that they 'stuck to their guns for charity's sake'.¹³⁹ Overall, it is clear that to local commentators, 'the girl with the green felt hat' was not necessarily a political symbol, but rather a tireless worker who

¹³⁶ *Dundee Advertiser*, 13th March 1911; *Dundee Advertiser*, 15th March 1911.

¹³⁷ *Evening Telegraph*, 17th March 1911.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Evening Telegraph*, 20th March 1911.

considered the needs of others and an example of working class femininity to the other Irish mill girls of Lochee.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there existed a thriving, Irish political and social culture in Dundee in the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It has set out the main demographic trends of this community and has emphasised the prominence of women in this community.

It has shown that despite an absence of sectarian conflict, which has coloured perceptions of the Irish in Scotland and has become central to its history, Dundee still had a vibrant Irish community who were engaged with Irish nationalism in this period. The city had active branches of the Irish National Land League, United Irish League and had ladies' branches for these movements too, some of which out-performed the men in their efforts.

In contrast to what McCready has argued about the Irish women's lack of involvement in politics in Dundee, this chapter had argued that women were highly engaged with Irish politics, considering the constraints that they faced. Indeed, while the prominence of women in Dundee's jute industry and their capacity for earning gave them more economic freedoms than women in other parts of Scotland, this does not diminish the fact that women were still unable to vote and largely excluded from the formal realm of politics. Furthermore, work in the jute mills was long, difficult, and exhausting, it is reasonable to state that for many of these women, participating in formal politics was a luxury reserved to the middle classes of the city, as was the case with the suffrage movement. Therefore, it is a testament to the efforts of these women when they did formally rally for political causes. The Lochee and Dundee of the Ladies' Land League and the 'girl with the green felt hat' are striking examples.

This chapter has also explored the complex relationship of Irish nationalism and suffrage activism in this period and has used Dundee to highlight how tensions across these organisations played out on

a local level. Dundee's large female population and the fact that the city's MP was Winston Churchill might make one assume that the Irish community rallied behind the cause for suffrage, however there is little evidence to suggest this. Rather, the exchanges between Smart and Hannigan highlight the tensions between these two movements, and although they suggest that there was sympathy for the cause generally in Dundee, Irish women did not mobilise as they did during the 1880s for the Ladies' Land League. These tensions are also revealing of the issue of class, and how the Ladies' Land League was able to resonate with the female workers of Dundee on issues such as living conditions in ways that the suffrage movement did not.

Therefore, the Irish community in Dundee before 1916 was already vibrant and politically aware. It is therefore unsurprising that it would produce someone like Lena McDonald, a third generation Irishwoman with a family of jute workers who would go on to be a prominent gunrunner and member of the IRA in Scotland.

Chapter Two: The Revolutionary Period in Dundee, 1916-1923

The execution of James Connolly and thirteen other leaders of the Easter Rising in May 1916 sent reverberations across the island of Ireland and the global Irish diaspora. From Easter Monday 24th April until the Saturday of that same week, a group of rebels seized the General Post Office in Dublin, among other key buildings, and launched a sustained rebellion against British rule in Ireland. Ireland's capital endured nearly a week of fighting by the time of the rebels' surrender on Saturday afternoon and its centre had nearly been razed to the ground. Other parts of Ireland had also experienced fighting, including Enniscorthy, Galway city, and Athlone. The last of the Rising's leaders, Roger Casement, was also executed in London, three months later in August.

At the time of the rebels' surrender and arrest, public opinion was not on their side. As the rebels were marched through Dublin, they endured jeering and mockery from the crowds.¹ The Rising had resulted in the death of approximately 276 civilians; therefore, it is no wonder that they were so unpopular.² The actions of the rebels were also condemned by the Irish Parliamentary Party in both Ireland and Britain. Speaking in the House of Commons, the leader of the IPP, John Redmond, stated 'this whole incident in Ireland to me had been a misery and heart breaking'.³ He expressed gladness at the fact that three of the Rising's leaders had been executed.⁴ However, Redmond warned the government not to pursue the same hard line against the majority of those who had taken part in the Rising, stating they should 'only take such action as will leave the least rankling of bitterness in the minds of the Irish people'.⁵ Redmond's warning was not heeded, and the government proceeded

¹ Bureau of Military History Witness Statement, No. 1052, Sean McEntee; BMHWS, No.141, James Kenny; BMHWS, No.280, Robert Holland.

² Lorcan Collins, *1916: The Rising Handbook* (Dublin, 2016), p.112.

³ Resignation of Mr Birrell, HC Deb 3rd May 1916, Vol.82, cc.30-9, Hansard (Date accessed 6th March 2023: https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1916/may/03/resignation-of-mr-birrell#S5CV0082PO_19160503_HOC_228).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

to execute other leaders of the Rising, including the mortally injured Connolly, who had to be tied to a chair because he could not stand in front of the firing squad. Willie Pearse, the brother of Patrick Pearse, was also executed, despite the fact he only played a minor role in the uprising.

The execution of the Rising's leaders changed the tide of public opinion and, resultantly, the pursuit of Irish independence. Public opinion shifted from support for Home Rule through constitutional means, to physical force Republicanism. The General Election of November 1918 highlighted this shift, as the Irish Parliamentary Party suffered defeat at the hands of Sinn Féin (the political arm of the physical force republicans), who won seventy-four out of one hundred and five seats. The Irish Parliamentary Party only won six. In December 1919, Sinn Féin MPs did not take their seats in the House of Commons and established an Irish Parliament, Dáil Éireann, in Dublin. Meanwhile, the Irish Volunteers had re-mobilised as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and were arming themselves for a guerrilla war.

As part of this remobilisation, the IRA reorganised in Britain. Like many other outposts of the Irish abroad, the Dundee Irish followed the pattern of supporting constitutional Home Rule until the aftermath of the Easter Rising. This chapter will examine the events of 1916-1923 in Dundee, exploring the Irish community's responses to the Easter Rising, the organisation of the political and physical force republican groups in the city, and how the city's Irish community interacted with other parts of the diaspora. Much of what we know about the Irish in Scotland during this period has been gleaned from studies centred on Glasgow, however this chapter seeks to remedy this balance and extend the geographical scope of study to a city that has been neglected by scholars of this period.

Through this exploration, this chapter argues that Dundee's Irish community was highly engaged with the tumultuous events in Ireland during these years, primarily through the establishment of physical force republican groups and their gunrunning exploits. It begins by exploring the involvement of the Dundee Irish in the First World War and exploring their reactions to the events of the Easter Rising to establish how and why the shift from support for home rule to republicanism

occurred. It then examines the influence of republican organisations in the city, and investigates the profile of those who were involved. Although women joined these groups, the leaders and main organisers were predominantly male, highlighting a continuation of the patriarchal structures that persisted before this period. The wider Irish community was also involved in Irish affairs in the city during these years, through the city's multiple branches of Sinn Féin clubs, which hosted a variety of activities including dances, concerts, and public lectures, at which many prominent Republicans spoke at. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the scale of support for Irish Republicanism in the city and the extent to which the Dundee Irish were able to peacefully mobilise in public, for example, during the funeral procession of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney. Finally, exploring the Dundee Irish during these years sheds light on reactions to the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the subsequent Civil War outside of Ireland. The Dundee Irish reflect that this was a highly contentious issue, to which many people did not have a clear-cut answer.

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'Over 4,000 Volunteers': The Irish Response to War, a prelude to the Easter Rising

Like elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, the events of Easter week 1916 took Dundee by shock, not least because Britain was already plunged into war on continental Europe. Overall, the Irish in Ireland and across Britain responded enthusiastically to the call to volunteer in the summer of 1914. The response of the Irish in Ireland has traditionally been downplayed until recently, in what F.X. Martin has identified as a 'national amnesia' due to the predominance of republican narratives of the conflict which viewed the Great War as a prelude to the Easter Rising.⁶ Studies from the 1990s which emphasised the experience on the home front have challenged this narrative. For example, the works of John Horne have pioneered 'bottom-up' approach to studies of the Great War in

⁶ Francis Xavier Martin, '1916- Myth, Fact and Mystery,' *Studia Hibernica*, no.7 (1967), pp.7-126.

Ireland, which have emphasised experiences related to class, gender and psychiatry.⁷ Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta have produced an edited volume on the social and political aspects of Ireland Great War experience.⁸ Gregory and Pašeta's work also challenges the uniqueness of Ireland emphasised in republican narratives of the war, by linking the nationalist movement in Ireland to wider nationalist movements across Europe, and they caution against using simplistic dichotomies such as 'nationalist' or 'unionist' to characterise experiences of the Great War in Ireland, arguing for a more nuanced picture.⁹ More recently, Niamh Gallagher has written about the Catholic, nationalist experience of the Great War, arguing that throughout the twentieth century, many Irish republicans did not consider the Great War to be a part of their past, despite the fact that some of those who fought in the GPO in 1916 had family members in the trenches of France and Belgium.¹⁰ Gallagher also contends that for much of this period, the Irish soldier of the Great War was depicted as a loyalist Ulsterman, and it is only since the start of the twenty-first century that there has been interest in the experiences of the Irish, Catholic soldier.¹¹ Similarly, Fionnuala Walsh has argued for the importance of the impact of the War on Irish women, arguing that women threw themselves into the war effort on the home front in Ireland.¹² Walsh also contends that the War brought transformative changes for Irish women regarding public activism, which set the stage for their participation in the Revolutionary period.¹³ These works have helped to remedy the 'cultural amnesia' by demonstrating that the conflict on the continent was intertwined with society in Ireland. Recent studies have shown that while volunteers were still lower than in the other three countries of the United Kingdom, the Irish response was more enthusiastic than it has been previously thought.

⁷ See John Horne, *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge 1997); John Horne, *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008); John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds.) *Towards Commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution, 1912-1923* (Cambridge, 2013).

⁸ Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War: 'A War to Unite Us All?'* (Manchester, 2002).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Niamh Gallagher, *Ireland and the Great War: A Social and Political History* (London, 2020), pp.17-18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Fionnuala Walsh, *Irish Women and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2020).

¹³ *Ibid.*

Catriona Pennell has highlighted that the agricultural nature of the Irish economy acted as a major barrier for men of military age volunteering, however, rates of volunteering from urban and industrialised areas were on par with elsewhere in the United Kingdom.¹⁴ Gallagher's work supports this, as she argues that the urbanised areas of Dublin, Wicklow, Kildare and Ulster provided more recruits in the first six months of the War than some industrialised parts of the North of England, concluding that Ireland's military contribution 'was not insignificant'.¹⁵

Much like in England, Scotland and Wales, there were a myriad of reasons why Irish men volunteered. Gallagher identifies 'high' and 'low' causes, for example, sympathy for 'small nations' such as Belgium, as well as economic reasons and encouragement from family and friends.¹⁶ By November 1914, 50,000 Irishmen had been recruited into the British Army.¹⁷

It is difficult to determine how many Irish men in Britain enlisted in the Army. However, figures given by the United Irish League of Great Britain, the largest and most influential Irish political body in Britain this period, at a delegation later that year provide some insight. The delegation was held in October 1914. Leading UIL figure and Irish Parliamentary Party MP, T.P. O'Connor proclaimed that the Irish in Britain had volunteered in great numbers.¹⁸ In Liverpool, 12,000 had volunteered, while in Manchester it was reported that there were 9,000 recruits.¹⁹ Jeremiah O'Donnell-Derrick, UIL organiser for Scotland, stated 'taking the lowest figures into account', at least 5,000 Irishmen in Scotland had volunteered, however the leaders of the League estimated that the figure was nearer 10,000.²⁰

¹⁴ Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012), pp.191-2.

¹⁵ Gallagher, *Ireland and the Great War*, pp.26-30, p.28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp.26-30.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Dundee Courier*, 5th October 1914; *The Derry People*, 14th October 1914.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

The Dundee Irish were no exception. Bernard McLaughlin, Secretary of the League in Dundee, stated that 1,000 Irishmen had joined the army since the start of the war, and that Fifeshire mining villages had been 'depleted' of inhabitants as a result.²¹ A letter in the *Freeman's Journal* from O'Donnell-Derrick published in December 1914 gives further insight into this. In the letter, Derrick-O'Donnell stated that it was no exaggeration that 30,000 Irishmen and sons of Irishmen had gone from Scotland into the army. O'Donnell-Derrick stated that the UIL in Scotland were in the process of counting the names of their members from various districts across Scotland, and by this point, had already counted 13,559 men. Of these, 1,500 hailed from Dundee, while 1,648 came from Edinburgh, and 7,055 came from 23 parishes of Glasgow.²² O'Donnell-Derrick included a poem which praised the Irish in Scotland for their readiness to volunteer:

I find on the list an O'Mally and a Boyle,
 A Murphy, a Kelly, a Riley and a Doyle,
 A Casey, a Carney, a Rourke and McCann,
 All strapping Highlanders, every man.²³

O'Donnell-Derrick finished his letter by informing his readers that Irishmen from Lanarkshire had already been killed in battle, and he stated that they were 'modern heroes of the Irish movement'.²⁴

O'Donnell-Derrick's estimate that the number of Irishmen volunteering in Scotland would reach 30,000 seems overconfident given that in the returns, just under 14,000 men had volunteered.

Elaine McFarland has cautioned that these figures were liable to exaggeration, but she does concede that they provide a useful yardstick including second-born immigrants.²⁵ Indeed, O'Donnell-Derrick's

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Freeman's Journal*, 14th December 1914.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Elaine McFarland, 'How the Irish paid their debt': Irish Catholics in Scotland and Voluntary Enlistment, August 1914- July 1915', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Volume LXXXII, 2, No. 214, (October 2003), 261-284, p.261.

inclusion of 'sons of Irish men' is a useful indicator of second, and even third generation Irish in Scotland, who were probably considered 'Irish' by the native Scottish population. Therefore, the reports give us some indication of the initial enthusiasm amongst the Irish in Dundee, as well as the rest of Scotland, to enlist.

However, figures for volunteering only represent a small section of society, as they were restricted by age and gender. At the start of the war, only men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one could enlist, excluding women and anyone outside of these age brackets. Men who volunteered also had to undergo rigorous medical checks, therefore these figures may exclude a larger group who wished to volunteer but did not meet the medical standards. Resultantly, O'Donnell-Derrick's figures for volunteers only represented a small section of the wider Irish community in Dundee.

People who were unable to volunteer supported the War effort in other ways. Indeed, when exploring attitudes and participation in the War, it is important to look beyond the trenches of Europe and extend our gaze to the home front and include the role of women. Gallagher has argued 'women, men outside the military age for enlistment... and children assisted the war effort, and their activity must be given due consideration if Ireland's war effort is to be understood in its proper context'.²⁶ Walsh's work has highlighted the lived experiences of Irish women during the War.²⁷ Walsh argues that Irish women mobilised similarly to women across the Empire, through volunteering in activities that blurred the lines between the public and private, including nursing, knitting for soldiers, preparing parcels, and caring for the families of enlisted men.²⁸ Walsh uses the records of the British Red Cross to highlight the extent of Irish women's mobilisation: over 13,000 Irish women were members of the organisation and actively volunteered during the War.²⁹ While some women were deployed to the continent or to Britain, Walsh argues that most women were

²⁶ Niamh Gallagher, *Ireland and the Great War*, p.30.

²⁷ Walsh, *Irish Women and the Great War*.

²⁸ *Ibid.* pp.21-38.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p.26.

involved in local branches and volunteered for many of the same reasons as their male counterparts: patriotic duty, peer pressure, and the excitement of a new opportunity, to name a few examples.³⁰

It is especially important to consider these alternative types of mobilising for the War effort when examining a city like Dundee, which had a disproportionately large and economically important female population.

The Irish in Dundee supported the war effort in ways other than volunteering, most notably by raising money for the Belgian Relief Fund. In Ireland, a significant factor in recruitment and support for the War more generally was the German invasion of Belgium: a 'small', Catholic nation which had been overpowered by its larger, imperial, Protestant neighbour.³¹ In 1915, the city held an 'Irish flag day' to raise money for the fund. Green flags were sold across the city as torrential rain poured, however the press reported that despite the weather, the day was a success, with some stalls staying open until 10pm.³² In total, £401 was raised by the event, making it one of the largest fundraisers for the Belgian Relief Fund in the city at that point.³³ Dundee and other cities across Britain held events like this before, however the flags for sale were usually those of the Allied countries, with Belgian flag days being especially recurrent. The fact that Dundee held an Irish flag day highlights the significance of this community within the city, as well as Irish support for the war effort. For some of the Irish in the city, it was not a conflict of interest to sell symbols of Irishness to support the effort of the imperial British army, although this could have been negated by the fact that in this instance, they were fundraising for victims in Catholic Belgium. Nevertheless, the event highlights that the Irish in Dundee were happy enough to reach into their pockets and support the war effort, using symbols of their own cultural and national identities for that purpose. It is not clear

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 52-62.

³¹ Pennell, *A United Kingdom*, p.170; Elaine McFarland, 'How the Irish paid their debt,' p.270.

³² *Dundee Courier*, 8th February 1915.

³³ Ibid.

whether Dundee was the first place in Britain to hold an Irish flag day, however, newspapers show that similar events were carried out in Cardiff, Exeter, Hull and Manchester at later dates.³⁴

The amounts raised for the Belgian Relief Fund were published by the *Dundee Courier*, which highlight that a significant amount of money was raised through subscriptions to the *Dundee Catholic Herald*. The publication was one of several *Catholic Herald* newspapers, owned by the publishing magnate Charles Diamond.³⁵ Diamond was a native of County Monaghan and an ardent supporter of Home Rule. Consequently, his papers had a high Irish readership in Britain. Under the auspices of the Dundee editor, M.T. Hannigan, the Catholic community of Dundee raised a considerable amount of money for the Belgian Relief Fund. In September 1914, Hannigan reported that £3.15s had been raised through subscriptions.³⁶ By December, the subscriptions through the *Herald* raised £47.³⁷ St Patrick's Catholic Church raised £2.2s in September 1914, while the Dundee Catholic swimming club also hosted a gala in December, in which teams from the different parishes competed against each other in relays, water polo, and a 'Belgian treasure hunt', where members had to retrieve items from the water.³⁸ Although the *Courier* did not state how much was raised, the event was described as a success.

Outside of this, it is difficult to find specific examples of the ways in which the Irish in Dundee responded to the outbreak of war. In other communities in Britain, an indication of the women who stepped into traditionally male occupations or who joined munitions factories might be a good indicator. However, the proportion of the city's Irish female population who were already employed in the jute industry makes this a less prominent feature of wartime Dundee.³⁹ Jim Tomlinson

³⁴ *Sunday Freeman*, 27th February 1916; *Western Times*, 24th March 1916; *Hull Daily Mail*, 30th September 1916; *Western Daily Press*, 11th April 1916.

³⁵ Diamond, Charles, Dictionary of Irish Biography, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/diamond-charles-a8116>

³⁶ *Ibid.* 24th September 1914.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10th December 1914.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 10th December 1914.

³⁹ Jim Tomlinson, 'The First World War in a 'women's town': Dundee 1914-1918', *Women's History Review*, Vol.31, No.2, (2022), pp.173-197, p.188.

highlights that some women did step into roles like transport conductors, however, most women remained in the jute factories.⁴⁰ This would have been particularly true for the Irish, working-class women of the city. Nevertheless, although possibly exaggerated, the figures provided by the UIL highlight that a significant number of Irishmen in the city volunteered for the British Army, reflecting an enthusiastic response to the call to arms. Similarly, the fundraising by the wider Irish community highlights the extent of support in the early years of the War, and that for many Irish people in the city, Irish identity and support of Irish nationalism was not incompatible with fighting for the British Empire.

A Terrible Beauty is Born: Dundee and the Easter Rising

The events of Easter Monday 1916 hit Dundee by surprise. At the start of the week, the *Dundee Advertiser* had reported that 'Sinn Féin manoeuvres' had been cancelled and Roger Casement had been arrested for trying to import German weapons to Ireland.⁴¹ Similarly, the *Courier* reported on Casement's arrest, stating 'confinement in a lunatic asylum would be a more appropriate fate' for him.⁴²

Due to the rebels' occupation of the General Post Office, there were delays in communicating the week's events outside of Dublin, let alone Ireland. Therefore, coverage in the Dundee press was delayed and speculative during the week of the Rising. Outside of Casement's arrest and reports of a 'Sinn Féin' disturbance, it was hard for those outside of Ireland to know the details of events. The *Courier* dismally reported that the 'it was a humiliation that the traitors were able to seize the Dublin Post Office and destroy telegraphic communications'.⁴³ Nevertheless, the paper was damning of the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Dundee Advertiser*, 25th April 1916.

⁴² *Dundee Courier*, 26th April 1916.

⁴³ Ibid.

rumours of the violence that the rebels had inflicted and attributed it to 'Fenianism,' which they characterised as 'leaving a red trail across the pages of Irish history'.⁴⁴

By the 27th of April, or nearly three whole days into the rebellion, the press in Britain had a clearer picture of what was going on. The *Courier* continued its attack on 'Sinn Féin' and called for an end to its very existence, stating 'the power of Sinn Féin traitors will not be destroyed without much bloodshed and material loss... all of which could have been averted if the movement had been crushed... in its early stages'.⁴⁵ Implicit in this is criticism of the administration in Ireland. In the same issue, the *Courier* proclaimed that the government had failed its country.⁴⁶ There was also widespread criticism of the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Augustine Birrell. On the 28th of April, the paper ran an article entitled 'Why did Mr Birrell remain quiet?' in which the Secretary for Ireland was criticised for his lack of preparation and inaction.⁴⁷

Upon the rebels' surrender on the 29th of April, the *Courier* proclaimed, 'Dublin Reign of Terror Ended', before detailing the extent of the damage on Ireland's capital.⁴⁸ Unsurprisingly, the press in Dundee continued to take a hard line against the rebels in the aftermath of the rebellion. In the lead up to the court martial of the Rising's leaders, the *Courier* stated 'leniency towards the rebels would be a weakness which would react upon us at a later stage'.⁴⁹ After the execution of the first three leaders of the Rising (Patrick Pearse, Thomas Clarke and Thomas MacDonagh) the *Courier* praised the decisions taken by General Maxwell, stating that 'of the misguided trio it may be said at once that they all deserved their fate... these sentences are severe but the crime was great and nobody can say they are too severe'.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 27th April 1916.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Dundee Courier*, 28th April 1916.

⁴⁸ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1916.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The reaction of Dundee's Irish community to the Rising is harder to gauge. Cinemas in Dundee broadcasted films which depicted the violence in Dublin, therefore locals would have had an opportunity to see the extent of the damage on Ireland's capital for themselves.⁵¹ The *Dundee Advertiser* interviewed a labourer who knew James Connolly when he lived in the city.⁵² The labourer stated it was 'a complete surprise' that Connolly was amongst the leaders of the rebels, as he had always expressed constitutional views and 'regarded force as an impossible weapon in political and economic movements in this country'.⁵³

Other than Connolly, there is no evidence of any Dundonian Irish men or women taking part in the Rising. This is despite the fact that a significant number of rebels travelled from Scotland and England to Dublin.⁵⁴ According to Irish Volunteer and Glasgow local Seamus Robinson, approximately eighty-four men from Britain travelled to Dublin.⁵⁵ These men formed the Kimmage Garrison, and were stationed in the GPO during Easter week. The majority were from Liverpool, although significant numbers hailed from Glasgow, Manchester, and London. A handful of women travelled as members of Cumann na mBan and the Irish Citizen's Army, including Coatbridge native Margaret Skinnider, who fought under Connolly's command.⁵⁶ Despite a significant Scottish-born presence in Dublin, there is no evidence of anyone from Dundee travelling to take part in the fighting, possibly reflecting that before 1916, Sinn Féin had little allure in the city, and the lack of an organised Irish Volunteers unit.

Several Dundee Irish groups issued statements on the Rising, which offer a window into the opinions of some of Dundee's Irish community. After the surrender, the Dundee branches of the United Irish

⁵¹ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1916.

⁵² *Dundee Advertiser*, 2nd May 1916.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ BMHWS, No.156, Seamus Robinson.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Skinnider, Margaret (Ní SCINEADÓRA, Máighréad), Dictionary of Irish Biography: [https://www.dib.ie/biography/skinnider-margaret-ni-scineadora-maighread-a8112#:~:text=Skinnider%2C%20Margaret%20\(N%C3%AD%20SCINEAD%C3%93RA%2C%20M%C3%A1ighr%C3%A9ad\)%20\(1893%E2%80%93,mathematics%20in%20Glasgow's%20Hillhead%20district.](https://www.dib.ie/biography/skinnider-margaret-ni-scineadora-maighread-a8112#:~:text=Skinnider%2C%20Margaret%20(N%C3%AD%20SCINEAD%C3%93RA%2C%20M%C3%A1ighr%C3%A9ad)%20(1893%E2%80%93,mathematics%20in%20Glasgow's%20Hillhead%20district.) (date accessed: 28/02/24).

League, the Irish National Foresters (INF) and the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) issued a joint resolution condemning the actions of the rebels, which was published in the *Courier*.⁵⁷ They stated the actions of the 'Sinn Féiners' were 'mad, motiveless and meaningless' and harmful not only to the Empire, but also to Ireland, which, they declared 'after a long struggle, [was] on the threshold of a new era'.⁵⁸ They also stated that there were no 'Sinn Féiners' in Dundee, despite the existence of a small number in Scotland.⁵⁹

This was the view shared across most Irish organisations in Scotland. A few days prior to the Dundee statement, a prominent Glasgow Nationalist (who was not named, but it is likely that it was Jeremiah O'Donnell-Derrick) issued a statement to the *Evening Telegraph* condemning Sinn Féin and the actions of the rebels in Dublin.⁶⁰ They declared that Sinn Féin in Ireland was made up of 'every crank and sorehead who fancied himself a genius', while labelling the Glasgow body who had joined the rebellion as 'a small body of no account'.⁶¹ Other Irish organisations met across Scotland in the aftermath of the Rising. At a meeting in Motherwell, O'Donnell-Derrick, issued a resolution which condemned the rebellion, and reaffirmed the position of the Irish as Allies of Britain during the war. O'Donnell-Derrick continued to express that those who had taken part in the violence were Sinn Féiners or Socialists, 'who had always been hostile to the Irish Party'.⁶² The resolution was unanimously accepted.

The *Dundee Catholic Herald* published an interesting article in the aftermath of the Rising. As a weekly publication, its editors had time to reflect on the events in Ireland. While they condemned the actions of the rebels, they also stated that what happened was 'simply the sequel and consequence of that earlier occurrence at Larne'.⁶³ The author was referring to the Larne gunrunning

⁵⁷ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1916.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Evening Telegraph*, 27th April 1916.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Evening Telegraph*, 1st May 1916.

⁶³ *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 29th April 1916.

operation in 1914, whereby Major Frederick. H. Crawford and Captain Wilfrid Spender of the Ulster Unionist Council smuggled weapons from Germany to equip the Ulster Volunteer Force. The *Herald* compared the treatment of the smugglers at Larne to the rebels in Dublin and stated that ‘Larne was the fount and origin of Monday’s outbreak’.⁶⁴ It also criticised the bias in the ‘Tory press’, arguing that Lloyd George and Bonar Law were as much to blame for the rebellion as Arthur Birrell.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the article closed by condemning Sinn Féin, who they maintained did not represent the majority of Irish people.

However, in the months following the Rising, the tide of opinion changed in Dundee as it did elsewhere. It is hard to pinpoint exactly when this happened, however during the onslaught of executions, the *Dundee Catholic Herald* published an article urging British authorities to ‘stop the shootings now!’⁶⁶ McCready highlights that as early as June 1916, the *Herald* was giving instructions on how to visit rebels interned nearby in Perth Prison.⁶⁷ Similarly, in the weeks after the Rising, the *Dundee Courier* published a nurse’s eyewitness account of the events in Dublin, in which she praised the effortless work of women in the Rising.⁶⁸ The nurse, who remained anonymous, stated that ‘these Irish women, who did their work with a cool and reckless courage unsurpassed by any man, were in the firing line from the first day to the last day of the rebellion’.⁶⁹ The article continues to laud praise on the fearlessness of the women who took part in the Rising, commending them for their commitment and bravery, stating that ‘these women could throw hand grenades, they understood the use of bombs; in fact they seemed to understand as much of the business of warfare as their men’.⁷⁰ While it is unclear who the author of the article is, the fact that the *Courier* decided to print such a sympathetic account of the Rising and its women is significant. This is further

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 6th May 1916.

⁶⁷ Richard McCready, ‘Mad, motiveless and meaningless?’ The Dundee Irish and the Easter Rising’ in Kirsty Lusk and Willy Maley’s (eds.) *Scotland and the Easter Rising* (Glasgow, 2016), p.147.

⁶⁸ *Dundee Courier*, 19th May 1916.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

emphasised when it is considered that most of Dundee's Irish population were women. It is possible that the *Courier* felt the tide was changing in terms of public opinion, although the editors of the paper continued to be critical of the Rising itself. A meeting of the AOH in July praised the bravery of the rebels, applauding their willingness to calmly face death for their principles, and they were compared to soldiers who died in the War.⁷¹ McCready argues that 'in this respect, the Dundee Irish mirrored what happened in Ireland where the Rising was unpopular at first and then over time people's attitudes towards it changed'.⁷² Indeed, the evidence in Dundee press attests to McCready's view.

It is also important to note that after the arrest of the men involved in the Easter Rising, republican women mobilised under an intense propaganda campaign. This campaign was spearheaded by Kathleen Clarke, who was a member of Cumann na mBan and the widow of the Rising leader and former Fenian, Thomas Clarke, who was executed for his role. Under Clarke, Cumann n amban mobilised to ensure that the message of the Rising's leaders did not die. This was achieved through memorial masses for the deceased, fund raising for dependents, speaking tours and journalism.⁷³ Some women also wrote their version of events: Coatbridge born Margaret Skinnider wrote her own account of the Rising, which included her experiences of British rule in county Monaghan in her childhood.⁷⁴ Although there is little direct evidence of the effect of these campaigns in Dundee, it is hard to imagine that the Irish there would have been unaware of such events. Therefore, the role of Cumann na mBan in Ireland must be taken into account when assessing the change of opinion amongst the Irish in Dundee, as elsewhere across the diaspora, in the months after the Easter Rising. Therefore, although it is hard to pinpoint exactly when public opinion regarding the Easter Rising changed in Dundee, it can be concluded that the opinions of the Dundee Irish shifted along with the

⁷¹ *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 29th July 1916.

⁷² *Ibid.* p.148.

⁷³ For more information on the campaign in this period, see Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism, 1880-1980* (London, 1983), pp.215-269; Helen Litton (ed.), *Kathleen Clarke, revolutionary woman, an autobiography, 1878-1972* (Dublin, 2008).

⁷⁴ Margaret Skinnider, *Doing my bit for Ireland* (New York, 1917).

wider diaspora in the aftermath of the execution of the rebellion's leaders. This is further reinforced when the development of Sinn Féin and Irish Republicanism in Dundee is taken into account.

However, the opinion of the popular press in Dundee remained hostile to the events and leaders of the Rising. This is evidenced three months after the Rising, in the coverage of Roger Casement's trial and execution. The *Courier* continually branded Casement as a 'traitor' and dismissed Irish nationalists' concerns that he would become a martyr if executed as an attempt to 'blackmail' the government.⁷⁵ Therefore, when analysing the reaction to the Rising locally, it is important to note that there were a mix of opinions, and that the Irish community in Dundee were not the only people who reacted to these events.

Developments in Republicanism in Scotland after the Rising, 1916-1918

Unlike Glasgow, there is no evidence Dundee had an organised Irish Volunteers unit prior to 1916. Similarly, other than James Connolly's brief stay in the city in the 1880s, there is no evidence of any Dundee men or women travelling to take part in the Rising.⁷⁶ It is also unlikely that any branches of Sinn Féin existed in the city before 1916. This is reflected in the joint statement issued by the UIL, AOH and INF in the aftermath of the Rising, which declared that there were 'no Sinn Féiners in the city'.⁷⁷

Therefore, it is likely that the Dundee Irish mobilised in the post-Rising period, coinciding with the mass reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers in Britain. The earliest available evidence of a Sinn Féin presence in Dundee dates to 1919. The political and social landscape in Dundee had changed considerably by this point, and not just within the city's Irish community. The growth of Sinn Féin and the establishment of physical force republican groups were part of wider changes within the city, some of which were mirrored across other parts of Scotland. It is important to establish what

⁷⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 3rd August 1916.

⁷⁶ See BMHWS, No.156, Seamus Robinson. In Robinson's list of men of the Kimmage Garrison, there are representatives from Glasgow, Liverpool and London, but no evidence of any one from Dundee.

⁷⁷ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1916.

these were before exploring Irish republicanism within the city any further. This is to enable a better understanding of the landscape in which Lena McDonald and her comrades operated in.

Perhaps the most obvious political change that had occurred was the 1918 extension of the franchise to include all adult men and some women. Resultantly, the size of the electorate across Britain expanded exponentially. In Dundee, the electorate trebled.⁷⁸ The extension of the vote to women had important connotations for women across Britain, as it did not only mean that they could vote, but they could also stand for office and therefore a widened platform of political participation was opened for them. Although this did not have an immediate effect on Dundee's Irish female population, many of whom did not meet the age or property requirements to vote, it legitimised women's participation in a male dominated sphere of influence. For Dundee's Irish women, this was compounded by the inclusion of women as equal citizens in the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic.

Like many other communities across Britain, Dundee suffered great losses in the War. Upon the declaration of the Armistice, there were 20,990 Dundee men in active service.⁷⁹ According to Iain Donald, Dundee's total contribution was estimated at 30,490 men, around 63 per cent of those eligible for service.⁸⁰ Of these, approximately 4,000 were killed, representing 15 per cent of those in active service.⁸¹ The losses incurred by the war created a sense of war-weariness across Britain, however this was particularly felt in Dundee, which had developed a prominent anti-war culture during the latter years of the War. Billy Kenefick has explored the activities the Independent Labour Party and communist parties during the war in Dundee, arguing that Dundee developed into a major centre for conscientious objectors for those on the Left in this period.⁸² Conscientious objectors in

⁷⁸ Tomlinson, *Dundee and Empire: Juteopolis 1850-1939*, (Edinburgh, 2014), p.111.

⁷⁹ Iain Donald, 'Loos: the fallen Firth- visualising community identity and loss in the First World War in William Kenefick and Derek Patrick's (eds.) *Tayside at War* (Dundee, 2018), p.110.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Billy Kenefick, 'The impact of war and revolution in Dundee, 1914-1918' in *Tayside at War* (Dundee, 2018).

Dundee were also aided by the circulation of Edwin Scrymgeour's *Scottish Prohibitionist*, which espoused the owner's leftist, anti-war views, adding another prominent voice to the campaign of conscientious objectors in the city. Kenefick makes important points about the activities of conscientious objectors in the city and the unique culture which developed in Dundee, however it is important to remember that these numbers were much smaller than those who volunteered for the Army. Nevertheless, Kenefick's research provides important groundwork for understanding the political consensus in the city at the end of the War, which was sliding to the left and was particularly disillusioned with the incumbent MP, Winston Churchill. Churchill's prominent role in the Cabinet and his involvement in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign were not forgotten by the city's electors, especially when he became involved with the deployment of the Black and Tans in Ireland only a few years later.

Those who survived the War on the front returned to a changing city. Dundee's jute industry experienced a level of prosperity during the War which had not been seen since the American Civil War.⁸³ Resultantly, government controls were imposed on employers to prevent manufacturers from taking advantage. Supplies of raw jute were hard to come by in this period, and employers wanted to curb this by reducing the number of those employed in the mills. However, the leader of the Dundee and District Union of Jute and Flax Workers (DDUJFW), John Sime, was able to avoid this with the support of the Ministry of Labour by negotiating a reduced working week instead. The reduced working week proved to be popular amongst workers, and the successful negotiating by Sime led to the DDUJFW's membership doubling between 1917 and 1918.⁸⁴ These changes persisted into the post-war period, despite resistance from employers, resulting in jute workers having more leisure time. Jute workers also successfully campaigned against rent increases and reductions on wages in this period.⁸⁵ It is possible that this extra leisure time and successful gains

⁸³ Jim Tomlinson, *Dundee and the Empire: Juteopolis 1850-1939* (Edinburgh, 2014), p.103.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p.104.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

bolstered political activity among jute workers, many of whom became involved in Irish republican groups in the city at this time. Although many of these changes were reversed in the 1920s, for a brief time after the war, jute workers were in a strong position with an effective trade union which was at its height in influence and membership.

These events reflected a general shift towards the Left in the city's politics and the start of a breakaway from traditional Liberalism. The Liberal's party support for Home Rule in Ireland had traditionally ensured that Dundee remained a 'Liberal town'. However, the Lloyd George's response to the Easter Rising provoked a change in opinion and hostility towards the government, including the city's MP, Churchill. This in turn enabled and informed the formation of Irish republican groups in the city. Alongside stronger trade unions, conscientious objectors, anti-imperialism, and an increased electorate, the demands of Irish Republicanism did not seem so out of the ordinary. This was also bolstered by external factors such as the success of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution. In this vein, the growth of the labour movement was often viewed in conjunction with the growth of Irish Republicanism in the city and was a point of comment for supporters and critics alike. Charles Diamond, the editor of the *Catholic Herald* newspapers, regularly called for an Irish allegiance to Labour in Britain. The archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, also echoed this when he visited the city in early 1921.⁸⁶ However, this perceived relationship could also attract criticism. A member of the Irish community in 1923 accused anti-Treaty Republicans in Dundee as being a front for Communist organisations, stating that Communists in the city believed they were not getting enough limelight, and so 'snuck into' Sinn Féin.⁸⁷ The President of the Kevin Barry Sinn Féin club replied, stating that such allegations were false.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the letter highlights how such radical groups were growing in Dundee, and how the political atmosphere had changed after the First World War. It was also not unusual to see Sinn Féin banners at labour events in the city, such as

⁸⁶ Dundee Courier, 10th March 1921.

⁸⁷ *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 28th April 1923.

⁸⁸ *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 12th May 1923.

marches for the unemployed.⁸⁹ Indeed, the growth of Republicanism in Dundee was one of many seeds which blossomed into a new political consensus in the city, the results of which would become apparent in the 1922 election (which will be discussed later in this chapter).

As I have established, the IRA and Sinn Féin did not take root in Dundee until after the Easter Rising. This coincided with the reorganisation of the Irish Volunteers after the release of the remaining rebels in late 1916 and 1917. Gerard Noonan argues that the release of these prisoners resulted in a mass re-coordination of the republican movement in Ireland and Britain, with the IRA's director for intelligence, Michael Collins, recognising the significant importance of Britain as a reserve of weaponry.⁹⁰ Indeed, a concerted effort was made to reorganise the Volunteers in Britain as new staff were appointed to coordinate this effort. Resultantly, efforts were made to reorganise units in Britain, although this was somewhat later than efforts in Ireland due to the ongoing threat of conscription.⁹¹

In Scotland, Joseph 'Joe' Vize was appointed as Organiser for the IRA in early 1919. Vize was a navy engineer and member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, who helped to take Jacob's Biscuit Factory during the Easter Rising and was later stationed at St Stephen's Green. Vize was imprisoned in Frongoch for his involvement in the Rising and was released in 1917.⁹²

Vize's appointment and the subsequent re-organisation of the Volunteers in Scotland was earlier than the rest of Britain. In England and Wales, organisation was more dependent on people on the ground.⁹³ Vize's appointment could have been a result of the seemingly poor organisation in the Scottish Volunteers prior to 1919, or fears of the expansion of the Irish Citizen's Army. Upon arrival

⁸⁹ *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 22nd October 1921.

⁹⁰ Gerard Noonan, *In the Heart of Enemy Lines: the IRA in Britain* (Liverpool, 2014), p.33; Collins, Michael, *Irish Dictionary of Biography: Collins, Michael | Dictionary of Irish Biography (dib.ie)* (date accessed 18/02/24).

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p.33, p.43.

⁹² See MSPC, 24SP9904, Joseph Vize.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p.43.

in Scotland, Vize wrote to Michael Collins that of Glasgow 'A' Company was 'full of undesirables' while 'B' Company was 'more promising' but frustrated by 'little differences'.⁹⁴

Vize set to reorganising the Volunteers (who became known as the Irish Republican Army from 1919 onwards and will be referred to as such from hereon) shortly after his appointment. Perhaps due to the 'frustrations' and 'undesirables', Vize stipulated that the movement in Glasgow was to be controlled by Dublin Headquarters, who were to issue all orders for these units.⁹⁵ Vize's reorganisation of the IRA in Scotland, however, was not restricted to Glasgow. Vize sought to establish battalions across Scotland and relied on Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) circles already established in the country.⁹⁶ However he also had an interest in mobilising other parts of Irish communities in Scotland and was keen to surround himself with likeminded people, therefore he was involved with Cumann na mBan and Sinn Féin too. As Peter Hart has argued, it was the IRA's mobilisation of deep communal and personal loyalties that gave it its strength.⁹⁷

The way in which IRA units in Britain were organised mirrored those in Ireland. The tactical unit of organisation was the company, which consisted of about 19 to 25 people. Each company was led by an Officer in Command, or 'O/C', who was assisted by 1st and 2nd lieutenant, and a Quartermaster or 'QM'. The 1st and 2nd lieutenants oversaw one half of each company, while the QM oversaw the maintenance of security and funds.⁹⁸ Some companies had a unit of Cumann na mBan attached to them, for example, the Anne Devlin Cumann na mBan was attached to Glasgow 'A' Company.⁹⁹ The next level up from this was the battalion, which consisted of four to seven companies. Each battalion

⁹⁴ UCD, Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/11, Michael Collins to Joe Vize, 1st October 1919.

⁹⁵ UCD, RMP, P7/A/11, Joe Vize to Michael Collins, Feb/March 1919.

⁹⁶ Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.43

⁹⁷ Peter Hart, *The IRA at War* (Oxford, 2005), p.193.

⁹⁸ Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.42.

⁹⁹ UCD, Eithne Coyle O'Donnell Papers, P61/4 (67), Anne Devlin Branch, Hannah Robinson (nee Duggan), undated.

consisted of a Commandant, Vice Commandant, Adjutant and Quartermaster. Finally, three to five battalions constituted a brigade.¹⁰⁰

Over the course of the War of Independence, at least five battalions were established in Scotland, making up the First Scottish Brigade (or No.1 Scottish Brigade). The first battalion consisted of Glasgow and its surrounding areas, the second of Motherwell and Hamilton, the third Edinburgh and its surrounding areas, the fourth Fife and Dundee, and the fifth Dumbarton and Greenock.¹⁰¹

According to Eamon Mooney, there existed a Second Scottish Brigade, No.2 Scottish Brigade. The No.2 Brigade was based on the East coast, and stretched across parts of Dundee, Edinburgh, Leith, Linlithgow and Portobello.¹⁰² However, during the time he was writing to the Military Service Pension Board in the 1930s, Mooney stated that he had no contact with the former O/C of No.2 brigade, a man named Thomas Dempsey. Consequently, he stated that 'we are not in a position to supply full details for No.2 Brigade'.¹⁰³ Moreover, in the applications for service pensions, the majority of files available from those based in Scotland stated that they were members of the No.1 Brigade. Therefore, when assessing the IRA in Scotland during this period, there is considerably more evidence available about No.1 Scottish Brigade.

Mooney estimated the strength of the IRA in Scotland at the time of the truce in July 1921 numbered around 2,100, with 1,200 men in the No.1 Brigade and 900 in the No.2 Brigade.¹⁰⁴ This was slightly higher than the overall membership in England and Wales during this period. Gerard Noonan suggests that factors such as class conflict and a higher presence of sectarian violence in Scotland than in other parts of Britain.¹⁰⁵ However, Scotland also had a proportionately higher Irish-

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ MSPC, RO/603, Scottish Brigade, List of names forwarded by Mooney to the Pension Board, undated.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.53.

born population than England and Wales in this period, therefore this could have also impacted numbers.¹⁰⁶

The IRA was not the only republican organisation in Scotland (and by extension, Britain) during this period. Several Cumann na mBan branches were established across Scotland in this period, some predating the events of Easter 1916. For example, in Glasgow, the Anne Devlin Cumann na mBan was attached to 'A' Company and were intensely involved in the pursuit of gunrunning.¹⁰⁷ This is the branch that Margaret Skinnider was attached to when she travelled to take part in the Rising, although during the Rising she fought with James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army.¹⁰⁸ According to lists of affiliation fees, sixteen branches of Cumann na mBan existed in Scotland, the majority of which were in Glasgow.¹⁰⁹ Although formally an 'auxiliary' organisation, the role of Cumann na mBan in Britain overlapped significantly with that of the IRA due to its clandestine nature and the importance of gunrunning. Some women were even recruited specially by the IRA to pursue gunrunning, such as Lena McDonald and Jean Gillespie from Glasgow.¹¹⁰ Vize inspected units of Cumann na mBan and was somewhat involved in their activities due to their proximity to gunrunning. The next chapter will talk more in detail about Cumann na mBan in Britain during this period.

During the immediate post-Rising period, Cumann na mBan played an important role in Ireland in the organisation of fundraising, propaganda and support for dependents. Their activities during this period were vital for keeping the republican cause alive while the male Volunteers were in prison.

This period also saw a reorganisation of their ranks and a formalisation of their aims. Therefore,

¹⁰⁶ Sam Glynn, 'Irish Immigration to Britain, 1911-1951: Patterns and Policy' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol.8 (1981), pp.50-69, p.56.

¹⁰⁷ Mary McAuliffe, *Margaret Skinnider* (Dublin, 2020), pp.6-20. See also MSPC, MSP34REF558810, Hannah Robinson; MSPC MSP34REF60809, Margaret O'Carroll; MSPC, MSP34REF63983, Ann Graham; MSPC, MSPREF3456129, Annie Mooney; MSPC, MSP34REF3935, Catherine Rooney; MSPC MSP34REF12320, Alice Coogan.

¹⁰⁸ Although Skinnider did not remain part of Cumann na mBan throughout the Rising, instead she joined the Irish Citizen Army and fought in St Stephen's Green under Constance Markievicz.

¹⁰⁹ UCD, Papers of Shigle Humphreys, P106/1136, 'List of those who have paid affiliation fees', November 1920- October 1921.

¹¹⁰ See MSPC, MSPREF34REF56964 Lena McDonald; MSPC MSP34REF783, Jean Gillespie.

although there is no reliable evidence to determine when Cumann na mBan was established in Dundee, by looking at events in Ireland, it is reasonable to suggest it would have been sometime between 1916 to 1919. It is also important to remember that like the IRA, members of the Dundee Cumann na mBan would have been in frequent contact with their counterparts in Ireland, and that events such as concerts, lectures and fundraising would have been coordinated transnationally.

Sinn Féin also had a significant presence in Scotland during this period, growing significantly outside of Glasgow, where the organisation had been confined to prior to 1916 and was more of a cultural nature.¹¹¹ This contrasts with the pre-1916 period where the main Irish political organisation in Scotland was the UIL. By the end of 1921, there were at least 65 branches of Sinn Féin in Scotland.¹¹²

John (or Seán) O'Sheehan was the political organiser for Sinn Féin in Scotland. O'Sheehan was sent to Scotland by Austin Stack in early 1920 and was in charge of coordinating propaganda work and organising Sinn Féin clubs, however his work sometimes bled over into clandestine activities as he was involved in gunrunning operations in Dundee during this period too.¹¹³ Scotland was somewhat unusual in that Sinn Féin was the main political body for Irish Republicanism during the revolutionary Period, whereas in England and Wales the political body was the Irish Self-Determination League for Great Britain. Máirtín Ó Catháin suggests that the strength of Sinn Féin in Scotland reflected the Irish in Scotland's deep rootedness to Ireland, as Sinn Féin did not seek to address issues faced by the Irish in Scotland, but rather concentrated on solely Irish political issues.¹¹⁴ While the ISDL did not seek to mix with English or Welsh politics, it was created as an organisation specifically for the Irish in Britain, highlighting some recognition of a diasporic identity, rather than a continuation of political processes in Ireland. Ó Catháin further states that the persistence of Sinn Féin in Scotland

¹¹¹ Máirtín Ó Catháin, 'A winnowing spirit: Sinn Féin in Scotland' in Martin J. Mitchell's (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), p.181.

¹¹² Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.53.

¹¹³ MSPC, MSP34REF60017, John O'Sheehan. There was much debate from the pension board over whether O'Sheehan's activities were military or political in nature, which can be found on his file.

¹¹⁴ Máirtín Ó Catháin, 'A Winnowing Spirit: Sinn Féin in Scotland' pp.122-3.

highlighted the lack of assimilation between native Scots and Irish, which needs some revising in the case of the Dundee Irish where sectarian conflict was low. Martin Mitchell's analysis of the Irish in the west of Scotland also argues that tensions between the native Scottish population and the emigrant Irish have been exaggerated, using mixed marriage examples from census data and mixed neighbourhood to support his point.¹¹⁵ A possible explanation is that Sinn Féin had already been established in Glasgow, and it was more logical to replicate these existing structures elsewhere in Scotland, rather than implement new ones.

Like Cumann na mBan, these political organisations acted as recruiting pools for the IRA, and the files of the Military Service Pension Collection highlights that there was much overlap between these organisations. In Dundee for example, the Presidents and Secretaries of the O'Rahilly Sinn Féin Club were also members of the Dundee Company IRA.

The final republican organisation in Scotland during this period was Na Fianna Éireann. This was a youth movement founded by Constance Markievicz in 1909. There is little evidence of the Fianna in Britain, where it seems to have been confined to Glasgow. Nevertheless, many prominent members of the Glasgow IRA had their roots in the Fianna, such as Joseph and Seamus Robinson, Eamon Mooney, and Seamus Reader.

Therefore, the seeds for Republicanism in Scotland were tentatively sown before the events of the Easter Rising, but they bloomed in the years after. In particular, political and armed Republicanism spread outside of Glasgow and organisations such as the IRA, Cumann na mBan and Sin Féin took root elsewhere, including in Dundee. The next section of this chapter will focus on the revolutionary period in Dundee.

Names and Faces of Irish Republicanism in Dundee, 1917-1919

¹¹⁵ Mitchell, 'Irish Catholics in the West of Scotland', pp.1-19.

Much of what we know about the revolutionary period in Scotland centres around Glasgow. This is in part because most of the material in the MSPC was provided by Eamon Mooney, former O/C of the First Battalion Scottish Brigade, which was based in Glasgow and its surrounding areas. However, as evidenced by the existence of different battalions, republican activities during this period were certainly not restricted to Glasgow.

It is likely that there were no IRA or Cumann na mBan companies in Dundee prior to the Rising. It is unclear from Vize's papers when an IRA unit was established in Dundee. However, Lena McDonald's Military Service Pension sheds some light on this. McDonald stated that she began collecting arms for the IRA in 1917, although this appeared to be an individual undertaking rather than a coordinated effort by an organised IRA unit.¹¹⁶ McDonald further stated that she used money given to her by her mother to purchase weapons from pawn shops, and she had a friend who was a doctor in the British Army who gave her weapons.¹¹⁷ Sometime in 1919 she was formally recruited by the IRA to carry out these activities in a more coordinated effort. Although we do not have a concrete date for the establishment of the Dundee IRA, the year 1919 is consistent with Joe Vize's reorganisation of the IRA in Scotland as well as local newspaper reports, which hint at a growing Republican presence in the city.¹¹⁸

Dundee became a valuable channel for smuggling arms for the IRA in Scotland.¹¹⁹ The official nominal rolls held in the MSPC do not contain information on the Dundee based IRA companies, however, the private papers of the Eamon Mooney Collection contain some incomplete information on the members of this company, as well as some members of Cumann na mBan. Further information can be gleaned from individual MSPC files, newspaper evidence and private letters. The

¹¹⁶ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Throughout 1920, the O'Rahilly Sinn Féin club place a number of announcements in the columns of the city's newspapers, highlighting a growing, coordinated Republican movement in the city. See *Dundee Courier*, 29th October 1920; *Dundee Courier*, 28th December 1920.

¹¹⁹ MSPC, John O'Sheehan.

press coverage for the 'eggs in a box' scandal is a good place to start. The 'eggs in a box' scandal was a botched gunrunning plot in which Lena McDonald was arrested after porters at Dundee West station opened an 'egg box' which was filled with arms and ammunition intended for Ireland. The press stated that four people were tried and arrested for their role in this plot: Lena McDonald, Sean O'Doherty, James Kimmet, and James Devaney. All four are included on Mooney's copy of the nominal roll for 'D' Company, 4th Battalion, Scottish Brigade IRA.

Sean O'Doherty was the beating heart of the IRA in Dundee. He was its former O/C and secretary of the O'Rahilly Sinn Féin club. According to former president of the Kevin Barry Sinn Féin club, Cathal Duthie, O'Doherty was the 'pivot on which Sinn Féin and the IRA rested on'.¹²⁰ Similarly, John O'Sheehan stated in his pension application that O'Doherty was 'an excellent Irishman' who had a talent for procuring explosives from the nearby collieries.¹²¹ Duthie also noted that O'Doherty, along with a man called Michael Murray, was one of the first people to be sworn into the IRA in Dundee.¹²²

O'Doherty was born John Doherty in Clara, King's County (now county Offaly) and was one of five children. According to the 1911 census, his mother and sister were jute workers, while his two older brothers were serving in the British army. Both were killed during the First World War. It is not clear when O'Doherty and his family moved to Dundee, however in the 1921 census, his sister, nephew, and mother were living at 101 Rosebery Street, Lochee. The fact that his mother and sister had been employed in Clara's jute industry may have been a pull factor towards the family's move to Dundee. O'Doherty trained as an insurance agent and became a keen political organiser. From 1920, the advertisement section of the *Dundee Courier* and the *Evening Telegraph* were littered with announcements from the 'Dundee Sinn Féin Club' which were signed off by O'Doherty.¹²³

¹²⁰ EMP, Cathal Duthie to Eamon Mooney.

¹²¹ MSPC, John O'Sheehan

¹²² EMP, Cathal Duthie to Eamon Mooney.

¹²³ *Dundee Courier*, 29th December 1920; *Dundee Courier*, 26th October 1920; *Dundee Courier*, 3rd March 1921.

O'Doherty played a major part in getting the charges against Lena McDonald dropped by claiming that she had only been implicated because the two of them had been 'sweet hearting'.¹²⁴ O'Doherty was going to plead 'not guilty' until days before the trial at the High Court, indeed, in the initial hearing at the Dundee Sheriff Court, his plea remained 'not guilty'.¹²⁵ However, the men changed their minds in the lead up to the trial. O'Doherty's solicitor wrote to the Procurator Fiscal, stating 'we shall obtain if desired the necessary pleas of guilty by the three accused whom we represent if you can see your way to withdraw the case against the girl'.¹²⁶ The Procurator Fiscal was satisfied that McDonald had only been implicated by her involvement with O'Doherty, and accordingly accepted the renewed pleas.¹²⁷ Police reports also speculated prior to the trial that O'Doherty and McDonald had been engaged.¹²⁸ Some newspapers reported that there was a romantic entanglement between the two of them, however it is interesting to note that McDonald makes no reference to this in her pension application.¹²⁹

The other two men arrested alongside McDonald and O'Doherty were James Kimmet and James (Seamus) Devaney. Kimmet was a riveter for the Caledonian Shipping Company while Devaney was a hairdresser, nearly ten years older than the rest of the party with a wife and five children. Both men were of Irish heritage but born in Dundee. According to advertisements placed in the local press, Devaney was President of the O'Rahilly Sinn Féin club.¹³⁰ Along with O'Doherty, Kimmet was sentenced to three years penal servitude while Devaney was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment.¹³¹ Upon leaving the dock, Lena embraced one of the men (presumably O'Doherty,

¹²⁴ NRS, AD15/21/22, Precognition against Sean O'Doherty, James Deavaney, James Kimmet and Lena McDonald, Maxwell, Gill, and Pringle Solicitors to the Crown Agent, 3rd August 1921,.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*; *Evening Telegraph*, 29th July 1921.

¹²⁶ NRS, AD15/21/22, Precognition, Maxwell, Gill, and Pringle Solicitors to the Crown agent, 3rd August 1921.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*.

¹²⁹ *Dundee Advertiser*, 2nd May 1921; MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹³⁰ *Evening Telegraph*, 3rd March 1921.

¹³¹ *Dundee Courier*, 9th August 1921.

although reports differed) and kissed him, while Sean O'Doherty shouted 'God save Ireland!' as he was led away.¹³²

Another Dundee IRA member who was unfortunate enough to get arrested was Patrick Joseph O'Neill, a Tyrone native who was a teacher at St. Mary's Catholic School. O'Neill was also a member of the Kevin Barry Sinn Féin club. According to Cathal Duthie, O'Neill had orchestrated a rescue attempt from Perth Prison where the men were able to penetrate the prison but had to retreat.¹³³ Lena McDonald refers to this in her pension application, stating that she was on standby in a motor car, but the attempt never carried off.¹³⁴ O'Neill was arrested in March 1923 along with over ninety other men and women who were suspected of carrying out anti-Treaty activities in Britain, and was deported to Ireland.¹³⁵ The deportations were highly controversial, as under the terms of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, the twenty-six counties of the Irish Free State were to remain part of the British Empire, and therefore the British government was deporting its own citizens. Many of the deportees were also born in Britain, some had never been in Ireland prior to their deportation.¹³⁶ O'Neill privately appealed his case, maintaining that while he did not support the Treaty, he had never taken part in anti-Treaty activities. According to his appeal, it is likely that the main reason O'Neill was arrested was because a package containing four live cartridges was sent to his address by a colleague, Catherine Ford.¹³⁷ The authorities decided against releasing O'Neill initially, because although they believed he had not undertaken any violent actions against the Free State, they believed it would be dangerous to release somebody with his views.¹³⁸ O'Neill was released under

¹³² Ibid; *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 13th August 1921; *Nottingham Journal*, 9th August 1921; *Northern Whig*, 9th August 1921 (the latter two publications state that it was O'Doherty who McDonald kissed, although the *Prohibitionist* reported it to be Kimmet).

¹³³ Duthie to Mooney, EMP.

¹³⁴ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹³⁵ NRS, hh55/72, Irish Disturbances, Arrests and Deportations to the Irish Free State, Pat O'Neill.

¹³⁶ Ibid; TNA, TS27/181, Correspondence Regarding Irish Deportees, Letter to Secretary of State from Deportees at Mountjoy 18th March 1923.

¹³⁷ NRS, H55/72, Arrests and Deportations to the Irish Free State, Pat O'Neill.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

the writ of Habeus Corpus in May 1923 and received compensation from the government, totalling £351.14s.10p.¹³⁹ O'Neill was later reinstated to his teaching position in Dundee.¹⁴⁰

Outside of newspapers, it is possible to use the archives of the Military Service Pensions Collections to explore the activities of Irish Republicans in Dundee. However, despite the presence of an IRA company, multiple Sinn Féin clubs and a branch of Cumann na mBan, very few people from Dundee made an application for a pension.¹⁴¹ As of March 2023, the only Dundee pensions that have been digitised are those made by Lena McDonald and Christina Gray. There are a few others made by people who worked in Dundee, but were not native to the city, such as Sean O'Sheehan, Sinn Féin organiser for Scotland. Chapter three will look at Lena McDonald's application in more detail, however the main overview is that McDonald was a third-generation Irish woman in her early twenties during the revolutionary period in Dundee. Her grandparents, aunts and mother were employed in the jute industry, however in the early 1900s her mother trained to become a midwife. There are advertisements for her mother's services in the *Dundee Catholic Yearbook*.¹⁴² Lena and her sister, Catherine, followed in her mother's footsteps, Lena was training as a midwife when she was arrested in 1921, although the newspapers listed her occupation as 'housekeeper'.¹⁴³ McDonald's family also owned a grocery and antiques shop on Brook Street. According to Seán Healy, former member of the Scottish Brigade, the McDonald's grocery was the 'unofficial HQ of the Dundee lads'.¹⁴⁴ Healy recalled that the night before the 'eggs in a box' incident, McDonald, Doherty, and some other IRA men had been packing arms and ammunition in the grocery when a policeman came to the door to see why the light was on in the shop. McDonald calmly explained that she was going

¹³⁹ NRS, H55/71, Irish Disturbances, General papers and Correspondence concerning arrests and deportation of Sinn Feiners, Scottish division compensation claims.

¹⁴⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd June 1923.

¹⁴¹ As of March 2023, only two military service pension applications from Dundee have been digitised.

¹⁴² *Dundee Catholic Yearbook* 1911.

¹⁴³ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1921.

¹⁴⁴ *The Kerryman*, 20th January 1968.

over the books as the men crouched silently below the counter.¹⁴⁵ McDonald was awarded a Grade E pension.

Contrastingly, Christina Gray, nee Clarke, was a native of Clara, Kings County (Offaly), the same town O'Doherty hailed from. It is unclear whether they knew each other, and Gray makes no mention of this in her pension claim. She had enrolled in the Clara branch of Cumann na mBan prior to moving to Dundee. Gray stated that she was a 'jute worker' which possibly explains her move to Dundee. While in Dundee, she joined the O'Rahilly Sinn Féin Club and was a singer at many of its events. Gray stated that she sold Sinn Féin literature and attended Gaelic League classes ran by Patrick O'Neill, who she spoke highly of. Contrastingly, she besmirched O'Doherty and the others involved in the 'eggs in a box' incident as 'Free Staters', and stated that the gunrunning plot was a 'stupid thing to do'.¹⁴⁶ Gray's pension application was rejected, and so was her claim for a service medal.¹⁴⁷

The other main source of names for those who were involved in Republican activities is in Cathal Duthie's letter to Eamonn Mooney in the 1940s.¹⁴⁸ Duthie provided lists of former Dundee men and women who were part of the IRA, Cumann na mBan and Sinn Féin to Mooney, who at the time was helping former Scottish Brigade members to obtain pensions and service medals. Duthie's letter gives an insight into the organisation of Republicans in Dundee. He stated that there were three Sinn Féin Clubs: the O'Rahilly, the Kevin Barry, and the Fr. Griffin. Duthie referred to the IRA company in the city, and also stated that there was a branch of Cumann na mBan. Some of these people can be traced on the 1921 census, which paints a clearer image of the composition of republican groups in the city.

Mooney subsequently created a nominal roll for the Dundee Company, using Duthie's letter as a base.¹⁴⁹ Mooney included additional names on the roll, possibly from his own knowledge or further

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ MSPC, 49SP6383, Christina Gray.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Duthie to Mooney, EMP.

¹⁴⁹ EMP, Nominal Roll for Dundee Company IRA, undated.

correspondence. Consequently, the Dundee nominal roll is not as detailed and more jumbled than the west Coast based rolls. This is reflected in the roll's title, which Mooney penned as a 'miscellaneous list' of 'officers, N.C. O's and men'.¹⁵⁰ The roll contains the names of thirty-four people: thirty men, and four women. While the list details most of the key members of the IRA in Dundee, it contains an assortment of people from different or overlapping organisations, for example, Sean O'Sheehan is included on the list. Sean O'Sheehan was Sinn Féin organiser for Scotland and although he was involved in gunrunning activities, he technically was never a member of the IRA. This was a major point of contention in his military service pension application.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, O'Sheehan was not strictly based in Dundee, as his work took him all over Scotland. Similarly, Mooney wrote that some of the men were also involved in other companies outside of Dundee. For example, former O/C Thomas Dempsey was also a member of G Company First Battalion, Parkhead Section, while Seán Healy was involved with B Company 1st Battalion No.1 Brigade Cork.¹⁵² The overlapping membership of the people in the nominal rolls reflects that there was a degree of mobility in the various republican groups in Scotland during this period, and that roles were not strictly divided according to organisation.

Out of Duthie's list, newspaper coverage, and the military service pension files, it is possible to trace at least twenty-six people who were associated with republican groups of various stripes in Dundee. Out of this sample, there are five women and sixteen men.¹⁵³ Most members were young, in their twenties or early thirties, and most were single, although there are a few married men in the sample. Their professions were of middling rank and included teachers, hairdressers, nurses, and members of the clergy. A handful worked in lower ranking jobs, for example, as general labourers. In this sample, teachers dominated the occupational status. This is largely reflective of the republican organisations elsewhere in Britain. Gerard Noonan's research has shown that while the rank and file

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ MSPC, Sean O'Sheehan.

¹⁵² EMP, Nominal roll for Dundee Company IRA, undated.

¹⁵³ See Appendix 1, Table 1.

of IRA membership generally consisted of working-class professions such as labourers, the occupations of officers tended to be more middle class in nature, with teachers and clerks dominating.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, in my own analysis of Cumann na mBan in Britain, I have found that most members were employed in white collar work, such as teaching, nursing, and secretarial work.¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, the average age of the Dundee sample also matches the general profile of the IRA and Cumann na mBan in Britain. In Noonan's sample of the IRA in Britain, he found the majority of men were between twenty and thirty years of age, with 53.9 per cent of his sample of Volunteers being between the ages of twenty to twenty-four years old.¹⁵⁶ Noonan found that the average age of Officers was slightly higher, with 32.4 per cent of Officers being aged between twenty-five to twenty-nine years of age.¹⁵⁷ This also mirrors Peter Hart's assessment of IRA members in Ireland, who were consistently between the ages of 20 and 29, with some Officers being slightly older, and unmarried.¹⁵⁸ In my sample of republican women in Britain from the military service pension collections, out of those who provided dates of birth, the average age was twenty-seven, slightly higher than the average male IRA member, but similar to the age profile of IRA officers. This can also be explained by the significant presence of widowed women who took part in the gunrunning activities of Cumann na mBan, who had more money and resources than their younger female counterparts.

Interestingly, Duthie's letter lists at least three priests who were involved in IRA and Sinn Féin activities in the city, all of whom we can trace in the 1921 census. Fr. Michael Fahy was a native of Mayo and spent fifteen years as a curate in St. Patrick's Church, Dundee. Fahy was also implicated during the 'eggs in a box' scandal after he made an incriminating phone call to a fellow curate in

¹⁵⁴ Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, pp.72-74.

¹⁵⁵ Niamh Coffey, "We called ourselves the Irish Ladies' Distress Committee": Irish Republican women in Britain, 1916-1923', *Irish Studies Review*, Vol.30, No.2 (2022), pp.193-207.

¹⁵⁶ Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.73.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Peter Hart, *The IRA at War* (Oxford, 2004), p.121.

Glasgow, however neither phone operators nor the police could decipher the message as he had spoken in Irish.¹⁵⁹

Fr. John Fahy (no relation) was from Galway and was on loan to the diocese of Dunkeld and served at both St. Joseph's and St. Andrew's. John Fahy was heavily involved with IRA activities in the city, and in some cases he publicly confronted the Catholic Church on such matters. For example, when the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, began a hunger strike from Brixton prison, Fahy wrote a letter on behalf of the Dundee Sinn Féin clubs to Fr. Bernard Vaughan, a prominent Jesuit priest in London, which was published in the *Courier*. In the letter, Fahy condemned Vaughan's declaration that hunger strikers should not be given the last rites and wrote that Vaughan had issued the statement to 'salve the conscience of the British government'.¹⁶⁰ Fahy continued by stating that he believed MacSwiney's actions were 'heroically moral' and challenged Vaughan to meet him for a debate.¹⁶¹ Fahy was hastily sent to his home parish of Loughrea in summer 1922. The reason for his removal is unclear, however it is not hard to imagine that the Diocese of Dunkeld wanted to be rid of such an outspoken cleric. The memoir of the Dundee Communist, Bob Stewart, stated that the reason for Fahy's removal was the result of a fiery sermon he gave to members of the Black Watch who came one of the masses he celebrated, however Stewart gives the wrong dates.¹⁶² Nevertheless, Fahy was popular among the Irish in Dundee, and he was given a motor car as a parting gift from his parishioners.¹⁶³

The final priest listed, Fr. Richard Durand, was a native from Waterford and chaplain for the Fr. Griffin Sinn Féin Cumann. There is less evidence of his involvement than the other two Dundee priests, however in April 1921, he spoke at a fundraiser concert for the Irish Distress fund, organised

¹⁵⁹ NRS, AD15/21/22 Precognition against Sean O'Doherty, James Devaney, James Kimmert and Lena McDonald for the Contravention of the Explosive Substances Act 1882 and Firearms Act 1921, Procurator Fiscal Dundee, 10th June 1921.

¹⁶⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 6th September 1920.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Bob Stewart, *Breaking the Fetters* (London, 1967), p.151.

¹⁶³ *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 24th June 1922.

by the O’Rahilly Sinn Féin club. In his speech, he stated that Ireland had been ‘betrayed, bleeding and buffeted’, but that the spirit of the Irish people could never be crushed.¹⁶⁴ Duthie stated in his latter to Eamon Mooney that Durand was ‘now believed to be in the Channel Islands’.¹⁶⁵



Motor Car given to Fr. John Fahy, pictured at the wheel, with Magistrate John Toner in the back seat,

Dundee Catholic Herald, 24th June 1922.

It was not entirely unusual for priests to be part of IRA units in Scotland. The Eamon Mooney Papers contain lists of former members of the IRA and Cumann na mBan who could apply for a military service pension. At least six priests feature on the list, including Fr. McRory of St. Mary’s parish, Calton (a large Irish neighbourhood during this period), who was arrested during a large Glasgow round up following the botched rescue of Frank Carty while he was being transported from Duke Street Prison. McRory’s arrest provoked outrage and a vigil gathered outside the prison every night of his incarceration. Upon his release, there were celebrations in the streets of Calton, and the incident has been memorialised in a popular Celtic song entitled ‘The Smashing of the Van’.¹⁶⁶ The Catholic Church formed a central part of Irish life in Dundee, with former Irish Nationalist groups

¹⁶⁴ *Dundee Courier*, 21st April 1921.

¹⁶⁵ Duthie to Mooney, EMP.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 30th June 1921.

such as the Ladies' Land League dividing their groups along the lines of the parishes in the city. It is also probably that the Church were pivotal in obtaining O'Neill's place back at the local Catholic school, St. Mary's, after his release from prison in Ireland.

While Duthie and Mooney's lists of former Dundee Republicans is insightful, it mainly consists of former IRA members of who were of rank in the city, and therefore, it is not necessarily representative of the bulk of Republican supporters in the city. Firstly, this list of fourteen only represents a fraction of those who were involved in Republican activities in the city, and these were probably amongst the most active. According to a report in the *Evening Telegraph* which detailed a meeting of the O'Rahilly Club with the city's magistrates, the total membership of Sinn Féin in the city was estimated around 1,500 in October 1920.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, the professional, somewhat middle-class backgrounds of the people in the lists contrasts with the city's large, Irish, female population who were employed in the jute industry, and who probably made up the bulk of Sinn Féin membership. Out of the sample, Christina Gray might be the most representative of the average Dundee Republican, then. This is further supported by the fact that the local press often commented on the large presence of women at Sinn Féin events in the city.¹⁶⁸ In this way, republican organisations mirrored other political organisations and professionals in the city, where women made up the bulk of memberships and workforces, but men assumed the top roles.¹⁶⁹ This reflects that despite having a large, influential female population, early 20th century Dundee was still vertically a patriarchal society.

However, Duthie and Mooney's lists contradicts the established portrait of Sinn Féin in the city, which was proposed by William Walker in his study on Dundee jute workers. Walker stated that Sinn Féin in Dundee was 'makeshift and reckless, with a leadership indistinct and undistinguished'.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ *Evening Telegraph*, 27th October 1920.

¹⁶⁸ *Glasgow Observer*, 29th October 1920; *Evening Telegraph*, 30th December 1921; *Dundee Courier*, 12th August 1921.

¹⁶⁹ Eleanor Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850-1914* (1991), pp.147-148, p.163.

¹⁷⁰ William Walker, *Juteopolis: Dundee and its Textile Workers, 1885-1923* (Edinburgh, 1979), p.468.

Walker continued to state that the Sinn Féin leaders did not have a history of conspicuous lay leadership within their parish churches, nor any eminence in the secular world'.¹⁷¹ Given that Duthie's list contains members of the clergy, it is safe to say that Walker's comment about the lack of involvement in parish churches is an oversight. Moreover, the composition of those involved in the higher ranks of republican groups in the city was overwhelmingly young, therefore Walker's accusation of them being undistinguished reads very harsh. Finally, the range of jobs in the sample highlights that those higher up in the movement were well-to-do members of the middle class, with a level of education and professionalism. The prominence of teachers in particular thwarts Walker's claim about their lack of an impact in secular life. Walker's works on the Irish in Dundee have set a precedent and have been highly influential in what is a relatively small body of literature on this group of people. Therefore, Duthie's letter is a significant piece of evidence which highlights the influence and professionalism of the Sinn Féin leadership in the city.

Overall, the assessment of those belonging to the various republican groups in Dundee during this period is incomplete. However, the sources available suggests a young, vibrant, and semi-professional leadership. There was an established IRA company, multiple Sinn Féin clubs in a comparatively small city, and a branch of Cumann na mBan. These groups were operating in a changing environment and were helped by developments in leftist politics and trade unionism, the extension of the franchise, and general disillusionment with the established politicians in the city, most notably Winston Churchill. These political shifts allowed room for republican organisations to blossom in the city, which had undergone vast changes since the start of the War in 1914. The next section will examine the War of Independence from 1919 to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, and how those in Dundee responded to events across Ireland and Britain.

The War of Independence in Dundee, 1919-1921

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

As I have already established, the Dundee Company IRA was mobilised sometime around 1919, coinciding with Joe Vize's reorganisation of the Volunteers in Scotland. The main role of the Dundee IRA and Cumann na mBan was to collect and transport arms and ammunition to Ireland. This reflects the main goal of republican organisations in Britain during this period.¹⁷² Lena McDonald recalled that she was tasked with transporting a variety of weapons to multiple locations in Glasgow, either to Jean Gillespie's furniture shop in Calton, or to the Ivanhoe Hotel. McDonald recalled that she smuggled these weapons in a variety of ways, including in golf bags, gladstone bags, and, egg crates.¹⁷³ Jean Gillespie also recalled this in her own application, stating that she would often take consignments of arms from Dundee, usually from McDonald.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, John O'Sheehan recalled that some members would raid nearby collieries in Fife for gelignite.¹⁷⁵ McDonald also stated that members of the IRA would raid Dundee barracks for weapons.¹⁷⁶

While the collection and transportation of weapons was the main pursuit of the IRA in Dundee, they also engaged in public events in the city through the auspices of the three Sinn Féin clubs. Like Sinn Féin clubs elsewhere in Scotland, the clubs in Dundee hosted a variety of events with the goal of raising money for those in Ireland, whether this was to fund arms or donations towards distress funds.¹⁷⁷ The Sinn Féin clubs in Dundee hosted a range of events, including dances, concerts, public lectures, and lantern shows.¹⁷⁸ These were consciousness raising events as much as fundraisers. The lectures and lantern shows in particular had an educational goal in trying to raise awareness of conditions in Ireland.

¹⁷² Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.84.

¹⁷³ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹⁷⁴ MSPC, Jean Gillespie.

¹⁷⁵ MSPC, John O'Sheehan.

¹⁷⁶ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.108.

¹⁷⁸ *Evening Telegraph*, 28th December 1920; *Evening Telegraph*, 29th December 1920; *Evening Telegraph*, 20th April 1921.

In this period, there were two occasions in which Dundee republican groups mass mobilised in a way which made the rest of the city take notice. The first of these was the hunger strike of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney. The Irish in Dundee felt strongly about the hunger strike as Fr. John Fahy offered to personally challenge Fr. Bernard Vaughan on behalf of the Dundee Sinn Féin clubs.¹⁷⁹ This feeling was exacerbated by the views of Dundee's Member of Parliament, Winston Churchill. During an address to his constituents in October 1920, Churchill branded Sinn Féin a 'murder gang' and expressed regret at MacSwiney's decision to go on hunger strike.¹⁸⁰ He also expressed sadness at the prospect that MacSwiney could die, but he stated that it was in the interests of his friends and colleagues that he died for their own political purposes. These statements drew heckling from the crowd.¹⁸¹

Sinn Féin orchestrated a response by organising an open-air meeting in Albert Square the following day which drew over 10,000 people. At the meeting, Seán O'Sheehan publicly challenged Churchill to debate the issue of Ireland with him. The *Glasgow Observer* praised the organisers of the event for their willingness to engage with British politics and holding a mirror up to Churchill's 'misdeeds'.¹⁸²

Upon MacSwiney's death, the Dundee Sinn Féin Club sent a telegraph to British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, condemning the government for its role in MacSwiney's death. The *Courier* published the statement:

The death of Terence MacSwiney brands you and your government in the eyes of the civilised world as murderers and arrant cowards. You have earned for yourselves the hatred and disgust of all true lovers of freedom. MacSwiney shall be avenged.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ *Dundee Courier*, 6th September 1920.

¹⁸⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 18th October 1920.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Glasgow Observer*, 23rd October 1920.

¹⁸³ *Dundee Courier*, 26th October 1920.

Sean O'Doherty published an advertisement for an emergency meeting of all members of Sinn Féin in the Independent Labour Hall on the matter.¹⁸⁴ On the 28th October, members of Sinn Féin had a meeting with the city's Magistrates to request permission to form a procession from the Albert Square to St. Joseph's Church, where a mass was to be held.¹⁸⁵ The Sinn Féin members promised that the procession would be orderly and did not want any disturbance. With these guarantees, the Magistrates gave permission for the procession to go ahead.

Accordingly, on the day of MacSwiney's funeral, thousands of people gathered in the Albert Square, wearing mourning bands and Sinn Féin colours, and proceeded to St Joseph's Church, where they were led by St Joseph's band who played a funeral march.¹⁸⁶ The procession sparked the interest of onlookers, with one commentator in the *Evening Telegraph* stating that those taking part in the procession were 'as puzzled by the attitude of onlookers as the onlookers were by the whole affair'.¹⁸⁷ The procession was well attended, with estimates of between 1,000 to 2,000 people. The *Telegraph* also observed that despite the bemusement of onlookers, there was no trouble and the mourners processed through the city with ease.¹⁸⁸ The *Glasgow Observer* noted that it was an 'unusual, but fitting and impressive event', and commented on the large presence of women in attendance.¹⁸⁹ Other newspapers outside of Scotland also commented on the Dundee procession, noting its scale and the extent of mourning that MacSwiney's death had provoked.¹⁹⁰ Overall, the procession demonstrated the depth of feeling in Dundee of Irish affairs and is a marked departure from pre-1916 Irish activism in the city.

Five months after MacSwiney's death there was another event in Dundee which saw the mass gathering of Sinn Féin supporters and Republicans. This was the arrival of the Archbishop of

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 28th October 1920.

¹⁸⁶ *Glasgow Observer*, 29th October 1920.

¹⁸⁷ *Evening Telegraph*, 29th October 1920.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ *Glasgow Observer*, 29th October 1920.

¹⁹⁰ *Daily Mail*, 29th October 1920; *The Cheltenham Chronicle*, 30th October 1920.

Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix. Mannix was born in Cork and was ordained in 1912. Shortly after his ordination he was sent to Melbourne in Australia which had a large Irish migrant community. Like many other members of the Irish community, Mannix initially condemned the Easter Rising, but his views changed in its aftermath. He became an outspoken critic of the British government and an ardent supporter of Irish independence. In 1920, he intended to travel to Ireland on a speaking tour, however the British government tried to prevent him from coming.¹⁹¹ While Mannix was prevented from landing in Ireland, he intended to tour Britain's Irish community. Under the DORA Act, the government prevented him from entering Liverpool, Birkenhead, Wallasey, and Glasgow.¹⁹² This did not deter Mannix, who instead gave lectures at Bootle, Rochdale, Wishaw, and Dundee.

The significance of this visit was not lost on the people of Dundee. In the run up to Mannix's arrival, members of the Sinn Féin clubs sold tickets for the open-air lecture and concert the archbishop was to address.¹⁹³ Those selling tickets included Sean O'Doherty, James Devaney and Lena McDonald. Mannix arrived in the city on the seventh of March and was greeted by a torchlit procession, consisting mainly of women.¹⁹⁴ According to the *Courier*, such was the enthusiasm of the candle bearers that a Sinn Féin banner was nearly set alight.¹⁹⁵ A few days later, Mannix addressed an open air concert at the Marist Brothers' Ground in Forebank, consisting of over 2,000 people.¹⁹⁶ He was accompanied on stage by prominent members of the Catholic clergy, including the Archbishop of Portsmouth. At the concert, Mannix declared that Dundee had a particular responsibility, as their representative in parliament, Winston Churchill, was a part of the 'black and tan coalition' and Dundee voters had the duty to vote him out at the next election.¹⁹⁷ Churchill's name was met with

¹⁹¹ TNA, HO144/22281, Activities of Archbishop Mannix, Telegram from Home Secretary to SS Baltic, 2nd August 1920.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ *Evening Telegraph*, 3rd March 1921.

¹⁹⁴ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 8th March 1921.

¹⁹⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 8th March 1921.

¹⁹⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 10th March 1921.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

hisses from the crowd.¹⁹⁸ Mannix continued to say that although he had been turned away from Ireland, he was almost glad of it, as he believed he had addressed more Irishmen in Britain than he would have addressed in Ireland anyway.¹⁹⁹

These two events reflect the scale of republican feeling in Dundee during the War of Independence. On both occasions, the Dundee Irish were noted both within and outside the city for their demeanour, enthusiasm, and organisation. Although the tone of the two events could not be more different, the Dundee Irish demonstrated their support for Irish Republicanism in both instances. It should also be noted that there were no reports of trouble at either of these large-scale events. Smaller scale events such as rallies, dances and lectures continued regularly up until the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty and the Civil War in Dundee

The signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty was met with enthusiasm in the Dundee press. The *Courier* proclaimed that 'December 6th is likely to be red lettered as one of the great days in the history of the Empire'.²⁰⁰ It continued to state that 'Dundee has maintained friendly relations with Irish citizens and with Ireland. At Christmas time it should be possible to arrange special celebrations by the citizens of the opening of an era of goodwill'.²⁰¹

However, less than three weeks later, an Irish rally gathered in the Caird Hall, consisting of over 2,000 people, mainly women.²⁰² The rally was led by Thomas Wilson, vice chairman of the Sinn Féin organisation in Scotland. At the rally, the speakers declared that an Irish Republic was still the ultimate goal, and that whatever decision was made, they prayed that there would be no split.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ *Glasgow Observer*, 12th March 1921.

²⁰⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 7th December 1921.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² *Dundee Courier*, 30th December 1921.

²⁰³ Ibid.

These resolutions were met with great enthusiasm and the rally closed with a rendition of the Soldier's Song.

It is hard to determine which side of the Treaty the Dundee Irish sided with, especially in the initial months after it was signed, although the speakers at the rally imply the Dundee Irish had some misgivings. In February 1922, under the auspices of the Treaty, Irish prisoners were released across Britain. This included Sean O'Doherty, James Kimmet, and James Devaney, the former two were released from Peterhead Prison on the 14th of February along with a large contingent of Irish prisoners. Upon their arrival in Dundee, they were met with a large reception hosted by the city's Sinn Féin Clubs in the Blackness Hall.



Aberdeen Press and Journal, 14th February 1922. It is unclear where O'Doherty and Kimmet are in the picture.

At the reception, O'Doherty gave a speech about his time in prison and his thoughts on the Treaty.²⁰⁴

O'Doherty joked he had been a full-time navy, and although he had muscles, they were 'porridge and tea muscles' and laughed about being able to retain his mop of hair.²⁰⁵ O'Doherty also

²⁰⁴ *Dundee Courier*, 14th February 1922.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

addressed the Treaty, however there is some discrepancy over his remarks. The *Courier* reported that O'Doherty declared 'we are glad a Treaty has been reached, whether for better or for worse' and this version of his speech was circulated around the Dundee press.²⁰⁶ However, after its publication, O'Doherty wrote to the *Scottish Prohibitionist* to set the record straight. A lifelong teetotaler, O'Doherty wrote to the paper's editor, Edwin Scrymgeour, stating that he never made the above statement because he never would be in favour of a Treaty 'for worse'.²⁰⁷ O'Doherty continued to state that he was 'bound by oath' to support a Republic, and that his 'sole regret' was that Lloyd George's government had managed to split the Irish people. O'Doherty added that the tide was turning and that the Republic would continue to live 'until the people of Ireland say otherwise'.²⁰⁸

O'Doherty's comments at this point in time are interesting, because later in 1922 he joined the Irish Free State Army.²⁰⁹ It appeared his views towards the pro-Treaty side softened in the months after his release, and newspaper evidence suggests he went back and forth between Dundee and Ireland to work with pro-Treaty leaders Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith.²¹⁰ Nevertheless, his comments upon his release from prison highlight mixed feelings towards the Treaty, and a sense that a Republic was still the ultimate goal, possibly echoing the feelings of other Dundonians.

O'Doherty's comrade and fellow gunrunner, James Devaney was also sympathetic to the Treaty. He advocated for the Sinn Féin Clubs in the city to extend an invite to Michael Collins, stating in a meeting on the issue that 'eight or nine individuals in Glasgow' should not 'dictate to the rest of Scotland whether they should hear Michael Collins or not'.²¹¹ Collins was an Easter Rising veteran

²⁰⁶ Ibid; *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 18th February 1922.

²⁰⁷ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 25th February 1922.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ O'Doherty is on the 1922 Irish Army Census stationed at Portlaoise Military Prison: https://census.militaryarchives.ie/pdf/Maryborough_District_3_Southern_Command_Page_44.pdf (date accessed 21/03/23).

²¹⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 6th May 1922; Griffith, Arthur Joseph, Irish Dictionary of Biography: [Griffith, Arthur Joseph | Dictionary of Irish Biography \(dib.ie\)](https://dib.ie) (date accessed 18/02/24).

²¹¹ *Dundee Courier*, 1st May 1922.

who had spent much of his earlier life working for the Post Office in London, and was a promotor of the Gaelic Athletic Association during his time there. This diasporic network proved vital for him during the War of Independence. After his release, as he acted as Director of Intelligence for the reorganised IRA and used these links to aid gun running and espionage operations. Consequently, many members of the British-based IRA battalions had direct contact with Collins, and he was a much admired figure throughout the Republican movement in England, Wales and Scotland. During the truce period from July to December 1921, Collins was sent to negotiate the terms of a peace treaty by de Valera, consequently resulting in the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Collins later went on to Chairman of the Provisional Government and became leader of the pro-Treaty side of the Civil War.

Although initial plans for Collins to visit the city in May 1922 did not materialise, Devaney and O'Doherty applied to the Dundee Magistrates to hold a concert to raise money for a visit that summer.²¹² The Magistrates duly granted permission, however no such visit by Collins materialised, as he was killed before he was able to visit the city.

Contrastingly, Lena McDonald stated in her pension application that she continued to work for the anti-Treaty IRA in this period. McDonald stated that on several occasions during the Civil War, she travelled to Ireland to personally deliver weapons to Constance Markievicz, who was a key leader in the Easter Rising and a Teachta Dála for the Dáil Éireann, and later a prominent leader of the anti-Treaty Republican side in the Civil War.²¹³ Markievicz also stayed at McDonald's home when she visited Dundee in February 1923.²¹⁴ Patrick O'Neill and Christina Gray also took the anti-Treaty side in this period.

It is hard to gauge the feelings of the wider Irish community in Dundee on the Treaty and the consequent Civil War. Evidence from newspapers suggests that there was no unanimous side in the

²¹² *Dundee Courier*, 13th May 1922.

²¹³ MSPC, Lena McDonald. See also Markievicz, Constance Georgine, Irish Dictionary of Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/markievicz-constance-georgine-a5452#:~:text=Markievicz%2C%20Constance%20Georgine%20>. (date accessed 14/02/24).

²¹⁴ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd February 1923.

city, as prominent pro and anti-Treaty figures visited Dundee during this time. Furthermore, public meetings and lectures on the Treaty attracted much publicity, both positive and negative.

There seemed to be considerable support in Dundee for the anti-Treaty side in this period, particularly in the aftermath of the Treaty's signing, as evidenced by the rally in December 1921. In April 1922 Teachtaí Dála Mary MacSwiney and Margaret Pearse visited Dundee and gave a rousing talk in a packed Caird Hall.²¹⁵ MacSwiney was the sister of the former Mayor of Cork Terence MacSwiney, and a fierce Republican activist in her own right, as a founding member of Cumann na mBan in Cork. During the treaty debates in the Dáil Éireann, MacSwiney gave the longest speech of any TD, talking for over two and a half hours against the Treaty. Margaret Pearse was the mother of Easter Rising leader Patrick Pearse and his younger brother, Willie. Both were executed for their roles in the Rising. Pearse also rejected the Treaty on the premise that it did not hold up the ideals that her sons died for.

The estimated attendance was around 2,000 people, according to the *Scottish Prohibitionist*.²¹⁶ Both women were members of the Dáil Éireann and had voted against the Treaty, along with all four other female TDs. Pearse talked about the sacrifices of her two sons, Patrick and Willie, who had both been executed for their roles in the Easter Rising. The *Prohibitionist* described her as a 'homely' lady who had lost much for the Irish cause. Pearse spoke of her two sons and her last moments with them in Kilmainham Gaol, stating that she knew she had to make the ultimate sacrifice, just as the Holy Mother had done in giving up her son for the cross.²¹⁷ Pearse's speech drew heavily on the image of female sacrifice, a technique that was used heavily in the aftermath of the Rising, for propaganda purposes. Perhaps the most famous example of this was the set of photographs

²¹⁵ See Pearse (Brady), Margaret, Irish Dictionary of Biography, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/pearse-brady-margaret-a7246#co-subject-A> (date accessed 04/02/24); MacSwiney, Mary, Irish Dictionary of Biography, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/macswiney-mary-a5295> (date accessed 04/02/24).

²¹⁶ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 22nd April 1922.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

published in the December 1916 issue of the *Catholic Bulletin* which depicted the widows and mothers of the men executed in the Rising, in which Mrs Pearse also featured.²¹⁸

Contrastingly, MacSwiney delivered a more thunderous speech in which she condemned the signatories of the Treaty for 'swindling' their followers, having learned this technique from being around Lloyd George's government for so long.²¹⁹ She also stated that those who supported the Treaty were only doing so out of their personal loyalty to Michael Collins.²²⁰ Unlike Pearse, MacSwiney did not invoke her brother, Terence, despite the emotive reaction the Dundee Irish had to his death in 1920. MacSwiney finished by declaring that only a Republic would bring about peace, and that she looked forward to the day when 'all nations great and small would live side by side in peace, when there would be no more war because justice would triumph'.²²¹ The two TDs were presented with bouquets of flowers and fruit baskets in a 'pretty display' by children, and a rendition of the Soldier's Song was performed.²²²



²¹⁸ *Catholic Bulletin*, Vol.6, No.12 (December 1916).

²¹⁹ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 22nd April 1922.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

Margaret Pearse, third from left, back row, and Mary MacSwiney, second from right, back row.

Thomas Wilson, the Sinn Féin organiser for Scotland, is also pictured.

Dundee Courier, 20th April 1922

Interestingly, at the end of the coverage in the *Prohibitionist*, the editor noted that they thought it would be appropriate for some of the members of the Pro-Treaty side of the Dáil to speak in Dundee. The *Prohibitionist* pointedly stated that this was a view which was shared by other members of Sinn Féin in Dundee, presumably O'Doherty and Devaney.²²³ This could have reflected the editor, Edwin Scrymgeour's, own views of the issue, however, it could equally be a desire to see both sides presented to the Irish community in Dundee, and a call for balance. Máirtín Ó Catháin has proposed that anti-Treaty Republicans were quicker to organise visits to Scotland and therefore stole a march on the pro-Treaty side.²²⁴ Such figures included Margaret Pearse, Mary MacSwiney, Constance Markievicz, and Easter Rising leader and acting President of the Irish Republic, Éamon de Valera. While it is difficult to determine whether these visits affected opinion in Dundee, it is plausible that pro-Treaty sympathisers may have been compelled to organise for fear of losing a propaganda battle.

Just as there had been great enthusiasm for the visit of Pearse and MacSwiney, there was equally great excitement for the proposed visit of Michael Collins, which O'Doherty began organising in April 1922. O'Doherty set about organising a number of events to raise funds for the visit, including a concert in the Oxford Picture House and a cinematograph concert.²²⁵ Although Collins could not visit the city in June as intended, he assured O'Doherty that he would visit the city after the general election, writing that 'our friends in Dundee may be assured that Ireland now ceases to be the Cinderella among nations and is about to take her place as the first of the small nations of the

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Máirtín Ó Catháin, 'Michael Collins and Scotland' in Frank Ferguson and James McConnel's (eds.) *Ireland Scotland in the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin, 2009), pp.160-175; De Valera, Éamon ('Dev'), Irish Dictionary of Biography, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/de-valera-eamon-dev-a2472> (date accessed 04/01/24).

²²⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 13th May 1922.

world'.²²⁶ In Collins' place, Pro-Treaty members of the Dáil Éireann, including Seán Milroy, Kevin O'Higgins, and Seán Nolan came to Dundee in May 1922 to deliver an address.²²⁷ O'Doherty placed an advertisement in the *Courier* encouraging the 'Irishmen and women' of Dundee to greet the members at the Caledonian station and give them 'a great Irish welcome'.²²⁸ The *Prohibitionist* reported that only Milroy was able to attend, as Nolan and O'Higgins had been detained in Ireland on 'urgent business'.²²⁹ Nevertheless, Milroy was met with much enthusiasm. In his speech, he stated that 'it nevertheless was true that the Irish people had stood up and smashed the Black and Tans were not going to let themselves be bullied' by anti-Treatyites. This was met with loud applause.²³⁰ A month later, Richard Purcell, organiser for the Pro-Treaty party and a former member of the Tyneside IRA, gave a talk in support of the Treaty which was met with equal enthusiasm.²³¹

Like Irish communities across the diaspora, the Dundee Irish were shocked and deeply saddened by the death of Michael Collins. The Conservative leaning *Courier* wrote a touching obituary to Collins which praised his bravery, declaring that in his life, 'adventure followed adventure'.²³² The *Courier* continued to state that 'consternation and deep sorrow were occasioned amongst the Dundee Irish' upon the news of his death.²³³ Indeed, while not every Irish person in Dundee supported the Treaty, Collins was a remarkable figure who would have had contact with Republicans on the ground in Britain due to his role in GHQ intelligence.

Figures from both the pro-and anti-Treaty sides continued to visit Dundee after Collins' death. In September 1921 Fr. Patrick Torley of Glasgow, chaplain to the 5th battalion No.1 Scottish Brigade,

²²⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 9th May 1922,

²²⁷ Milroy, John Ignatius ('Seán'), Dictionary of Irish Biography, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/milroy-john-ignatius-sean-a5828> (date accessed 21/02/24); O'Higgins, Kevin Christopher, Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/ohiggins-kevin-christopher-a6812> (date accessed 21/02/24);

²²⁸ *Dundee Courier*, 20th May 1922.

²²⁹ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 27th May 1922.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 17th June 1922.

²³² *Dundee Courier*, 24th August 1922.

²³³ *Ibid.*

and President of the Scottish Sinn Féin executive, spoke to a rowdy audience at the Forester's Hall. Torley was a prominent anti-Treatyite. This event was chaired by the various Sinn Féin clubs, who declared that although they had tried to remain neutral on the subject, after hearing in newspaper columns slanderous attacks on leaders of the Republic, they had decided that the 'time was right to make a slashing attack on behalf of the Republic'.²³⁴ At the same meeting, Torley was heckled as members of the crowd cheered at the names of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, however overall, his speech was met with enthusiasm.²³⁵ This meeting highlights the mixture of feelings amongst the Irish community in Dundee, and that there were layers to individual thought on this divisive issue. Constance Markievicz visited the city in February 1923 and gave an address in the Blackness Hall, which was chaired by Patrick O'Neill. Chants of 'up de Valera' were heard throughout'.²³⁶

Shortly after Collins' death, anti-Treaty Republicans in Scotland came together to found *Poblacht an h-Éireann in Albain*, or the Irish Republican Organisation in Scotland. The organisation was put under control of the publication of a series of newspapers which were deemed too dangerous to be published in Ireland, including *Poblacht na h-Éireann* (Scottish edition). A branch existed in Dundee, and Patrick O'Neill was a member.²³⁷ There is not much evidence of the activities of the Dundee branch. Patrick O'Neill in his appeal case stated it was purely a political organisation, however in light of his circumstances, this was probably not accurate.²³⁸ Nevertheless, the fact that a branch existed in Dundee suggests that there was considerable anti-Treaty feeling in the city.

Whether pro- or anti-Treaty, the Dundee Irish were unanimously enraged by the arrest and deportation of Patrick O'Neill, along with over ninety other people from Britain to the Irish Free State in March 1923. O'Neill was arrested on the night of 10th March and was taken by police to

²³⁴ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 16th September 1922.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 23rd February 1923.

²³⁷ NRS, H55/72, Irish Disturbances, Arrests and Deportations to the Irish Free State; NRS, HH55/71, Irish Disturbances, General papers and correspondence concerning arrests and deportations of Sinn Feiners and others to the Irish Free State.

²³⁸ NRS, HH55/72.

Glasgow and put on a destroyer to Dublin. Upon arrival, he was swiftly taken to Mountjoy prison, where the prisoners were treated viciously. A letter was addressed to the Secretary of Scotland from 'the Irish people of Dundee,' writing from the Blackness Hall, which condemned O'Neill's arrest and 'kidnapping'.²³⁹ It is interesting to note that this was signed by the 'Irish people' of Dundee rather than a Sinn Féin or other republican organisation, although it is possible that the signatories wanted to depoliticise themselves because they were writing to the Secretary for Scotland. Upon O'Neill's release he was reinstated to his former position as a teacher at St. Mary's school almost unanimously. There was some resistance to his re-appointment, as two members of the Dundee Education Authority, moved that O'Neill's reinstatement be postponed, however they were defeated.²⁴⁰ This contrasts with other members of this group who struggled to regain their old positions. For example, Roisín Killeen from London was suspended from the school she had previously taught in by the London County Council after objections from parents.²⁴¹ The ease with which O'Neill was reappointed could highlight the support he and by extension, Irish Republicanism, had in Dundee, in contrast to other parts of Britain. It could also be a reflection of the Church's support for Irish Republicanism in the city, as O'Neill worked for a Catholic school. The clergy were involved in Republican activities in Dundee, therefore it is likely that they used their influence to get O'Neill reinstated, explaining why his transition was smoother than some of the other deportees.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Dundee's Irish community in the post-Truce period is the rise of Edwin Scrymgeour as a prominent voice on Irish matters. Edwin, or 'Neddy' Scrymgeour was the editor of the *Scottish Prohibitionist* and a founding member of the Scottish Prohibitionist Party, which was established in 1901. Scrymgeour had a longstanding involvement in local politics in Dundee. He was elected as a town councillor in 1905, and first contested a parliamentary election

²³⁹ NRS, HH55/71, Irish Disturbances, General papers and correspondence concerning arrests and deportation of Sinn Feiners and others to the Irish Free State, Dundee Sinn Féin Club to Secretary of Scotland, 19th April 1923.

²⁴⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd June 1923.

²⁴¹ TNA, HO144/3749, Rosina Maria Killeen, Press cutting from Daily Mail 12th December 1923.

during the 1908 by-election, which saw Winston Churchill elected as MP. Scrymgeour stood in every election in the city thereafter. During this period, Scrymgeour carved out a reputation as a hardworking, Christian, man of his word, with left wing sympathies. He was also a supporter of female suffrage, which placed him in direct opposition with the incumbent Churchill, who was one of the fiercest opponents of the suffrage movement. This image was aided by his newspaper, which had considerable circulation in Dundee. Although the main message of the *Prohibitionist* was on the evils of alcohol, the paper also contained thoughtful and insightful articles on living conditions, worker's rights, general musings on the city of Dundee.

Scrymgeour's share of the vote gradually increased every time he stood for office, consolidating his position as a well-known, leftist, political figure in Dundee. During the War, Scrymgeour was a conscientious objector, and was an outspoken critic of the government which Churchill was a cabinet member of. In his assessment of the 1918 general election in Dundee, Walker states that this long-standing anti-government position made Scrymgeour a favourable candidate for the Irish in Dundee, as he was an outspoken critic of a government which looked set to wage a war in Ireland after the dust had settled on the continent.²⁴² The events of the Easter Rising changed the tide in Irish opinion in Britain, and the 1918 election saw the United Irish League formally endorse Scrymgeour rather than any of the Liberal candidates. A representative of the League stated that 'we believe in him as an honest and sincere Home Ruler'.²⁴³ This endorsement was significant, as the Liberal Party's (albeit inconsistent) support of Irish Home Rule had traditionally made Dundee a safe Liberal seat. The local press made light of Scrymgeour's attempts to curry Irish favour. The *Dundee Advertiser* wrote 'the Irish population of Dundee is not passionately devoted to pouring Dublin stout down the gutter'.²⁴⁴

²⁴² William M. Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.452.

²⁴³ *Dundee Advertiser*, 10th December 1918.

²⁴⁴ *Dundee Advertiser*, 9th December 1918.

Scrymgeour's Irish support base was only half hearted in the election of 1918, as he polled third behind the Labour candidate Alexander Wilkie and Winston Churchill, receiving 15 per cent of the overall vote.²⁴⁵ Both Walker and McCready have analysed the 1918 election and have concluded that it is hard to determine whether the Irish community in Dundee followed the instructions given to them by the UIL.²⁴⁶ Scrymgeour's share of the vote increased significantly, but this was not necessarily because of a new Irish following, and could also be a result of the extension of the franchise under the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which saw all men over the age of 21 and women over the age of 30 gain the vote. Nevertheless, the 1918 election saw Scrymgeour emerge as a significant candidate for Irish interests in Dundee.

In the following years of unrest and upheaval in Ireland, Scrymgeour was able to build upon this image and consolidated important relationships in the Dundee Irish community. Upon Sean O'Doherty's release from prison in February 1922, Scrymgeour printed the *Courier's* version of O'Doherty's speech in the Blackness Hall, in which O'Doherty stated he supported a treaty 'for better or for worse'.²⁴⁷ O'Doherty was quick to respond to and correct Scrymgeour. In his letter, O'Doherty noted Scrymgeour's reputation as an upstanding, moral man and praised the *Prohibitionist* as a 'fearless paper' which he was 'always happy to support'.²⁴⁸ Scrymgeour was happy to oblige, and he duly published O'Doherty's response, recognising the error.

The exchange between the two men seems to have started a working relationship, as Scrymgeour was invited to and subsequently reported on a plethora of Sinn Féin events from February 1922 onwards. The *Prohibitionist* was sold at these events, with Sean O'Doherty on one occasion endorsing Scrymgeour as an 'honest' man who was 'straight-forward in every way'.²⁴⁹ Scrymgeour

²⁴⁵ Churchill won 25,788 votes, while Wilkie won 24,822, receiving 37.5 per cent and 36.1 per cent of the vote share respectively.

²⁴⁶ McCready, 'The social and political impact of the Irish in Dundee', pp.295-301; Walker, *Juteopolis*, p. 452-456.

²⁴⁷ *Dundee Courier*, 14th February 1922.

²⁴⁸ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 25th February 1922.

²⁴⁹ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 1st April 1922.

also began to devote articles in the *Prohibitionist* to the issue of Ireland and wrote about the unfolding Civil War in a sympathetic and understanding tone, contrasting greatly with the other, more conservative newspapers in Dundee at this time. For example, on Easter weekend 1922, he wrote mournfully about the state of Irish affairs and expressed sadness that comrades in arms had turned on each other over the Treaty.²⁵⁰ Scrymgeour was even given a special interview with Mary MacSwiney after her address in Dundee in April 1922 which was published in full.²⁵¹

Why did Scrymgeour suddenly take such an interest in Ireland? The *Prohibitionist* up until this point had rarely focused on Irish matters. It had followed the ‘eggs in a box’ case with interest but had little to say about the situation in Ireland outside of this. While Scrymgeour’s columns do reflect a genuine concern and sympathy for Irish affairs, there may have also been a tactical advantage for his newfound interest. Richard McCready has highlighted how the Irish in Dundee were an important voting bloc, and potential political candidates sought to gain the ‘Irish vote’ in the city.²⁵² He explains that this was partly the reason why Dundee became a stronghold for Liberalism during the late nineteenth century. A general election was held in November 1922, so it is possible that Scrymgeour felt that he needed to curry Irish favour in the city and capitalise on the incumbent MP’s association with the Black and Tans. In this way Scrymgeour carved himself as a politician who would fight for Ireland’s interests, in contrast to Churchill who had been part of a cabinet which had brutally fought against them and was involved in Treaty negotiations. In the lead up to the election, Churchill had been away from Dundee and his absence was prolonged by a bout of illness. Resultantly, his wife, Clementine, and other Liberal party members had to campaign on his behalf. At one meeting, they were heckled so badly by anti-Treaty, de Valera supporters in the crowd that they had to end the talk prematurely.²⁵³ Contrastingly, Scrymgeour was able to build on the Irish relationships he had made in the city. This is exemplified in a letter from O’Doherty to the Dundee Irish which the

²⁵⁰ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 22nd April 1922.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² McCready, ‘The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee’, p.156.

²⁵³ *Poblacht na h-Eireann* (Scottish Edition), 11th November 1922

Prohibitionist published in the lead up to the election. In the letter, O'Doherty formally endorsed Scrymgeour, stating that he 'hoped the Irish electors would return you... by doing so they would assist Ireland in no small way'.²⁵⁴ O'Doherty continued to state that 'I hope Ireland's sons and daughters in Dundee, whether pro-Treaty or anti-Treaty will vote for you', he signed off the letter by stating 'vote for Ireland by voting Neddy Scrymgeour!'²⁵⁵

Scrymgeour was duly elected on the 15th November 1922, winning 32,578 votes. He was aided by the fact that Dundee sent two MPs to parliament, the other being the Labour candidate E.D. Morel, who won 30,292 votes. Churchill only won 20,466 votes, and less than eighteen per cent of the total vote share, finishing fourth overall. While having strong links with the Irish community in Dundee certainly aided Scrymgeour in his victory, other factors, including Dundee's unique parliamentary system, also aided him. Thomas A. Stewart has argued that Scrymgeour's leftist policies were of huge appeal in an industrial city like Dundee which had a tendency for 'radicalism'.²⁵⁶ Stewart also highlights the importance of the female vote in Dundee in securing Scrymgeour's victory. The local press believed that Scrymgeour's emphasis on morality and tackling domestic issues, albeit through the prohibition of drink, was a key factor in securing the 'mill girl' vote after 1918, although it should be noted that the Representation of the People Act (1918) did not necessarily enfranchise the working-class women who made up the bulk of the city.²⁵⁷ In many ways, the election of Scrymgeour reflected the changing nature of the city, where the political consensus had considerably shifted and anti-government and anti-war sentiment was widespread. Churchill's association with Liberalism, disastrous First World War campaigns such as Gallipoli, and the Black and Tans in Ireland were reasons for his defeat, and acted as a foil for Scrymgeour's success. Scrymgeour's victory was due to a combination of these factors, however, as Walker argues, 'in this achievement, Scrymgeour was

²⁵⁴ *Scottish Prohibitionist*, 11th November 1922.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Thomas A. Stewart, 'Vote as you pray: the success of the Scottish Prohibitionist Party in Dundee during the Interwar period', *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, Vol.13, No,2 (2018), pp.105-117.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

greatly assisted by an Irish vote which he had worked hard to consolidate since 1918'.²⁵⁸ Indeed, Scrymgeour made a concerted effort in the lead up to the election to take seriously Irish matters, which certainly helped him gain his seat.

Conclusion

Dundee witnessed a great deal of upheaval during the years 1916 to 1923. The pendulum swung sharply from support for the UIL and Home Rule to Republicanism after the execution of the leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916, mirroring events in Ireland and elsewhere in the diaspora. Similarly, Dundee gained an organised republican movement in 1919 under the general reorganisation of the Volunteers in Scotland under Joe Vize. Resultantly, the city had a flourishing Republican culture, with an established IRA company, Cumann na mBan, and three Sinn Féin clubs. Although we have little evidence about the bulk of the membership, the leaders of these organisations were young, enthusiastic, and hardworking, contrasting with the established picture of Sinn Féin in Dundee by Walker.

The establishment of Irish republican organisations in the city reflects a changing political dynamic in the city, and the effect of the First World War and its consequences. Although the execution of the Easter Rising leaders undoubtedly accelerated the growth of Sinn Féin and clandestine republican organisations in the city, the growth in influence of trade unions, a five-day working week, anti-conscription culture and support for left-leaning politicians like Scrymgeour helped to nurture a strong republican presence in the city. In this sense, Irish republican groups were part of a wider, changing landscape, which was affecting Dundee as well as the rest of Scotland. However, the prominence of men in these organisations highlights that despite changes in the political landscape, patriarchal structures remained in place. The following chapter will explore these structures and how women navigated them in more detail.

²⁵⁸ William Walker, *Juteopolis*, p.467.

Dundee was also seen as an important place of Irish support by those high up in the republican movement, as evidenced by the numerous visits to the city by people like Markievicz, Mannix, MacSwiney and Mrs Pearse, and with Michael Collins' planned trip before his death in August 1922. The Dundee Irish also showed the strength of their support for Ireland on a number of occasions, most poignantly after the death of Terence MacSwiney in October 1920. Newspaper evidence highlights that there was considerable support and mixed feelings for both sides during the Truce and Civil War period. However, there still were occasions when the Irish mobilised such as during the 1922 election and the deportation of Irish men and women in Britain in 1923.

Chapter Three: 'A rather hard egg': Lena McDonald and Republican women in Britain, 1916-1923

Along with the procession for the death of Terence MacSwiney and the concert for Archbishop Mannix, one of the most widely reported incidents in Dundee during the revolutionary period was a gun running case which went awry. On the evening of the 28th April 1921, an unusual discovery was made at Dundee railway station. A consignment of eggs had been dispatched and was due to be taken by rail to Glasgow. Upon being packed onto the lorry, one of the railway employees reached his hand into one of the crates, but to his shock, found the outline of a rifle, exclaiming 'this is a rather hard egg, isn't it?'¹ The police were promptly alerted, and arrests took place across the city over the next twenty-four hours.² Four people were arrested in total: Sean O'Doherty, James Kimmet, James Devaney, and Lena McDonald.

The trial of the accused was held in the High Court in Edinburgh in August the same year. All three men were found guilty of charges relating to the possession of firearms and conspiracy against the state and were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment and penal servitude.³ Lena McDonald, however, was acquitted of all charges, after claiming that she was unaware of the true contents of the box and stated that she thought she was transporting Sinn Féin literature instead.⁴ However, McDonald later stated in her application for a Military Service Pension in 1938, that she *had* in fact known the true nature of the box all along and was a regular transporter of arms to Glasgow during this period. Upon arriving back in Dundee, she was greeted to a hero's welcome, with members of

¹ *Dundee Courier*, 30th April 1921; *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1921.

² NRS, AD15/21/22 Precognition against Sean O'Doherty, James Devaney, James Kimmet and Lena McDonald.

³ O'Doherty and Kimmet were found guilty of all charges and sentenced to three years imprisonment, while Devaney was found guilty of helping to transport the arms and sentenced to eighteen months penal servitude.

⁴ *Dundee Courier*, 9th August 1921.

the Dundee Sinn Féin Club waving banners as she disembarked from the train. An elderly woman even tried to hand her a glass of whiskey, but it was spilled in all the merriment.⁵



McDonald leaving the High Court in Edinburgh, *Daily Mirror*, 10th August 1921.

McDonald's involvement in the gunrunning plot was sensationalised at the time of her arrest and trial, however, the 'eggs in a box' case was certainly not an isolated incident. According to McDonald's pension application, she regularly collected and transported arms to Glasgow, and she

⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 12th August 1921.

was not the only person involved in such activities.⁶ Months earlier, a young woman from Glasgow called was arrested along with fifteen men for conspiracy and the possession of Republican literature and weapons.⁷ Her name was Jean Gillespie (nee Quinn). Her furniture shop on Kent Street in the predominantly Irish neighbourhood of Calton was used as an arms dump and was ambushed on Christmas Eve 1920. A variety of weapons were discovered, including revolver cartridges in her handbag.⁸ Gillespie's furniture shop was the usual destination where McDonald deposited her weapons to await transportation to Ireland, and she and Gillespie were well known to each other, and even provided references for each other when they both applied for military service pensions in the late 1930s.⁹

There is an abundance of evidence which suggests women like McDonald and Gillespie were part of a network of republican women which stretched across Britain's Irish communities, as well as the wider diaspora, during the revolutionary period. The Military Service Pension Collection is by far the most detailed and easily accessible of these sources. The pension applications in this archive highlights women like McDonald, who lived in Britain but were involved in the Republican cause, played a vital role in transporting arms, carrying messages, providing safe houses, and raising money during the revolutionary period. Newspaper reports also reveal that a substantial number of Irish women were arrested and put on trial for their roles in gunrunning operations and clandestine activities, and are also revealing of the way in which these women were viewed by people outside of their communities. The availability of court papers, released one hundred years after a trial (and therefore have only recently become available), allows us to further see the extent to which women who were on trial were involved in such activities. However, despite the increasing accessibility of such sources, the vital contribution of these women has been largely overlooked in the literature on

⁶ MSPC, MSPREF34REF56964 Lena McDonald.

⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF, Jean Gillespie.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid; MSPC, Lena McDonald.

Republican activity during this period, which has largely characterised gun running, as well as other activities performed by Irish women, as male-only pursuits.¹⁰

In addition to this, most of the work that has been produced on women during this period has focused on figures such as Easter Rising leader Constance Markievicz or suffrage campaigner Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, individuals who represented the exception rather than the norm regarding their involvement in Irish nationalism.¹¹ As D.A.J. MacPherson has argued, ‘...by turning the gaze away from leading republican women... a broader repertoire of activism emerges’. In the context of the revolutionary period, shifting the focus to include republican women like McDonald, who lived in Britain or elsewhere in the diaspora, reveals a plethora of activities that ordinary women undertook, often whilst balancing careers and personal lives.¹² Most of these women had very different socio-economic backgrounds to the leading female Republicans, and did not have access to the same connections and opportunities, as well as having the added difficulty of living in Britain, ‘in the heart of enemy lines’, as Gerard Noonan has aptly stated.¹³

‘Broadening the gaze’ of Irish women’s activism in Britain also reveals a significant shift in the character and discourse surrounding their activity. Unlike previous moments in history where Irish women collaborated in nationalist movements, such as the Ladies’ Land League of the 1880s, Irish women were not exclusively justifying their political activism in gendered terms. Instead, they viewed themselves as citizens, rather than concerned wives and mothers, actively fighting for a political cause. This was reflective of the suffrage campaign and the partial emancipation of women

¹⁰ See Gerard Noonan, *The IRA in Britain, 1919-1923: In the Heart of Enemy Lines* (Liverpool, 2014); P. Hart, ‘Operations abroad: the IRA in Britain, 1919-1923’, *English Historical Review*, Vol.115, No. 460 (February 2000), pp.71-102.

¹¹ D.A.J. MacPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation gender, culture and Irish identity, 1890-1914* (Basingstoke, 2012), p.3.

See Skeffington, (Johanna) Hanna Sheehy-, Dictionary of Irish Biography:

[https://www.dib.ie/biography/skeffington-johanna-hanna-sheehy-a8106#:~:text=Skeffington%2C%20\(Johanna\)%20Hanna%20Sheehy%2D%20\(1877%E2%80%931946,McCoy\)%2C%20both%20of%20Co.](https://www.dib.ie/biography/skeffington-johanna-hanna-sheehy-a8106#:~:text=Skeffington%2C%20(Johanna)%20Hanna%20Sheehy%2D%20(1877%E2%80%931946,McCoy)%2C%20both%20of%20Co.) (date accessed: 27/02/24).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*.

in the 1918 Representation of the People Act, as well as the inclusion of the equal rights of women as citizens in the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic, signed by the leaders of the Easter Rising.¹⁴ McDonald's extensive involvement in the Republican cause in Scotland reveals that a wider platform was available for Irish women's political involvement during this period, both in Ireland and throughout the diaspora. The clandestine nature of the IRA and Cumann na mBan's work in Britain also meant that the gendered divisions of organisations were more blurred in Britain than their counterparts in Ireland, and the roles of men and women increasingly overlapped, particularly in relation to gun running. This is further reflected in the numerous applications for a military service pension made by women in the late 1930s, which reveal a major expansion in the roles that Irish women were undertaking.

Having used the previous chapter to establish the profile of the Irish republican movement in her hometown of Dundee, this chapter will use the activities of Lena McDonald as a window to explore the wider experiences of republican women in Britain. It will argue that this was an important period for women, as the idea of citizenship was re-gendered to include them, and they were able to exercise their new rights as citizens in fighting for an independent Ireland. The clandestine nature of the War of Independence in Britain also meant that their activities increasingly overlapped with men, and that they were also able to use their gender as an effective cover to ward off suspicion and further the republican cause. Overall, the experiences of women such as McDonald challenges the idea that republican women were mere 'auxiliaries' to their male counterparts, and highlights that Republican activism did not stop short of Ireland's shores.¹⁵ However, it is also important to note that while the applications in the military service pension collection illuminate the activities of countless of republican women across Britain in this period, it does not represent a complete picture, as it only reflects those who were the most active amongst women in Republican circles. Many other women supported these activities through indirect ways, such as by attending ceilidhs

¹⁴ Mo Moulton, "You have votes and power", pp.179-204, p.200.

¹⁵ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p.248.

and concerts, donating to Irish relief funds, and by attending mass marches. Their activities have also been overlooked.

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Republican women and the Military Service Pensions Collection

The online release of the archives of the Military Service Pension Collection has illuminated the significant contribution made by women in Britain to the cause of Irish Republicanism during the revolutionary period. These applications reveal that republican women in Britain contributed significantly to the cause of Irish independence through activities such as gunrunning, providing safe houses for arms and fellow Republicans, aiding in prison breaks, as well as through more indirect methods such as fundraising through ceilidhs and whist dances.

Very little has been written about the experiences of these women. This stems from a wider lack of work on Republican activities in Britain during this period. As Peter Hart has argued, the activities of the IRA in Britain during this period were more extensive and effective than is usually assumed in the absence of research, and the contribution of the people involved should not be viewed as a mere 'sideshow' to the main action on the island of Ireland.¹⁶

The most detailed accounts of Irish republican women's activities in Britain to date have been produced by Mo Moulton. Their work *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (2014) focuses in part on the contribution of the Irish in England (Scotland and Wales are not included in their analysis) to the revolutionary period and goes into some detail on the contribution of women, primarily the members of Cumann na mBan. Moulton argues that the role of Cumann na mBan in England 'tacked between the charitable and the martial' as women were both heavily involved in clandestine

¹⁶ Peter Hart, 'Operations abroad', p.71.

activities such as gunrunning and intelligence gathering, but also participated in humanitarian efforts to alleviate suffering in Ireland through fundraising and garment collecting.¹⁷

Moulton goes into further detail about the efforts of republican women in Britain in their 2013 article on women's political engagement with the Irish Question in Britain. This article argues that the activities of Irish republican women in Britain 'blurred the boundaries' between the public and the private spheres, as working class women increasingly opened up their homes for use as arms dumps and refuges for fellow Republicans on the run during the wars of independence.¹⁸ Moulton stresses the suffrage movement and the consequent enfranchisement of some women in the 1918 Representation of the People Act as important context for understanding the extent of women's participation in this movement, arguing that the idea of citizenship was being 're-gendered' during this period.¹⁹ It should be noted though that much of Moulton's work focuses on England, and specifically London, and that it was published before the online release of the Military Service Pensions Collection. Therefore, there is potential to broaden the geographical and numerical scope of their study.

However outside Moulton's work, there is very little analysis on the activities of republican women in Britain. The few other works which have focused on Republican activism in Britain have paid scarce attention to the women who were involved. Gerard Noonan's work on the IRA in Britain offers an intricate analysis of the individual IRA companies in Britain, detailing their involvement in gun running channels, intelligence gathering, and sabotage. However, Noonan's focus is on the men who oversaw these companies, and only mentions the contribution of women or female groups, such as Cumann na mBan, in passing. In a similar vein, Peter Hart's article on the IRA in Britain characterises the movement as a male affair and does not account for the women who were involved. For example, in his opening paragraph, he states that 'the men of this British underground

¹⁷ Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p.125.

¹⁸ Mo Moulton, "'You have votes and power'", pp.179-204.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.180.

laboured in the shadows,' and there is little discussion of republican women's contribution further in this article.²⁰ Darragh Gannon's work on Irish nationalism in Britain examines gender to a small extent, using some of the files from the MSPC.²¹ However Gannon only looks at two women in detail, and his findings could be expanded.²² John Belchem's otherwise in-depth study of the Liverpool Irish analyses in detail the personalities of the Liverpool IRA company and the leadership changes within it, but other than paying lip service to the contributions of Cumann na mBan, makes no mention of Scouse Irish women's contributions to the movement.²³ Thomas Tormey's 2019 article on Irish Republicans in Scotland heavily focuses on the group of Glaswegians who travelled to Dublin in 1916 to take part in the Easter Rising.²⁴ Tormey dedicates some of his article to discussing the Coatbridge born Cumann na mBan member, Margaret Skinnider, as she was the only woman in this sample who travelled to take part in the fighting, however beyond this there is little discussion in this article of the role played by Glasgow's various branches of Cumann na mBan.

This lack of work on republican women in Britain contrasts with the work that has been produced on women's activities in Ireland during this period. Until the publication of Margaret Ward's seminal work on Irish women and nationalism in 1983, there had been few works which had explored the role of women in Irish nationalism, let alone the revolutionary period. In this sixty-year period, the role of women in the struggle for independence had been diminished by successive political administrations and historians alike, who sought to re-establish traditional gender roles in the new Irish state. The Sinn Féin historian, P.S. O'Hegarty, denigrated the 'practically unsexed' women of Cumann na mBan who had protested the Treaty, stating that these women had been turned into

²⁰ Peter Hart, 'Operations abroad', p.102.

²¹ Darragh Gannon, *Conflict, diaspora, and empire: Irish nationalism in Britain, 1912-1922* (Cambridge, 2023).

²² *Ibid.*, p.227-231.

²³ John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool Irish, 1800-1939* (Liverpool, 2007), pp.263-297.

²⁴ Thomas Tormey, 'Scotland's Easter Rising Veterans and the Irish Revolution' in *Studi Irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies*, No.9 (2019), pp.271-302.

'furies' who had been destroyed by the masculine world of war.²⁵ This image persisted through much of the twentieth century.

Ward's work set a precedent for later feminist scholars examining Irish history, and in light of the decade of centenaries, Irish historians have pushed to situate women's experiences in the narrative of the revolutionary period. As a result, a variety of works focusing on women in this period have been produced in the years since. Senia Pašeta has published a great body of research on Irish nationalist and republican women, both preceding and during the revolutionary period, while Mary McAuliffe has written extensively on women's involvement in the Easter Rising.²⁶ Work has also been carried out on women who were not involved in political organisations but were nonetheless affected by the events of this period. For example, Linda Connolly has recently edited a collection of works on women's experiences during this period, while Lindsey Earner Byrne and Susan Byrne had also looked at women's experiences of sexual violence in this period.²⁷

Certainly, women like Lena McDonald, who contributed significantly to the republican movement but were based outside of Ireland, have been long overlooked in studies on this period. In part, this is because there have been few available sources about the lives of the 'ordinary,' working, and middle-class women who were a part of this movement in comparison to their male counterparts, or the female leaders of the movement such as Markievicz. However, the online publication of parts of the Military Service Pension Collection in 2014 has changed all this. The collection contains applications for military service pensions, which were originally issued by the Irish Free State

²⁵ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The victory of Sinn Féin: How it won it and how it used it* (Dublin, 1924), p.105.

²⁶ Senia Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge 2013); S. Pašeta, 'Peace and Protest in Ireland: Women's Activism in Ireland 1918-1937', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.34, No.4 (2020), pp.673-696; M. McAuliffe, 'From Inghinidhe na hÉireann to the Irish Citizen Army: Women, radical politics and the 1916 Rising', *Saothar*, Vol.41 (2016), pp.69-74.

²⁷ Linda Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence* (Dublin, 2020); Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'The rape of Mary M.: a Microhistory of Sexual Violence and Moral Redemption in 1920s Ireland', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol.24, No.1 (2015), pp.75-98; Susan Byrne, 'Keeping company with the enemy': gender and sexual violence against women during the Irish War of Independence and Civil War, 1919-1923', *Women's History Review*, Vol.30, No.1 (March, 2020), pp.108-125.

Government from 1924 onwards. To date, it is the most detailed archive charting women's involvement in the wars of independence, both inside and outside of Ireland.²⁸ Originally, the pensions were issued under the Military Service Pensions Act of 1924, which provided pensions to persons who 'rendered active service' in Óglaigh na hÉireann, the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army, Fianna Éireann, or the Hibernian Rifles during the week of the Easter Rising, and from April 1920 to July 1921, who 'served in the National Forces or Defence Forces of Saorstát Éireann at any time subsequent to the 1 July, 1922 and prior to the 1 October, 1923.'²⁹ A board of assessors was established in order to determine whether an application in question rendered "active service", and the amount of pension payable to a person depended on their rank, with a sum of £5 per year of service and per grade awarded.

Originally, women were excluded from the Act. This was primarily because women were not able to join the army of the Irish Free State, however there were also doubts over whether women could be classed as an 'active combatant' in this revolutionary struggle.³⁰ Despite this, some women applied under the 1924 Act, one of which, Dr Brigid Lyons, was successful. As a prominent pro-Treaty figure and supporter of the Free State government with familial connections within the government, Marie Coleman argues that Lyons' application was approved despite reservations about the definition of 'active service' and its application to women.³¹ An amendment in 1934 allowed for the inclusion of Cumann na mBan in the Act, essentially opening the way for women applicants.

As of October 2023, nearly 17,372 individual pension files have been released online, of which 6,445 were lodged by women under the Military Pension Acts, 1924 and 1934.³² All individual pension

²⁸ Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries, 1916-1923', *Women's History Review*, No.26. Vol.6 (2017), pp.916-930, p.916.

²⁹ Military Service Pension Act (1924).

³⁰ Coleman, 'Compensating female revolutionaries,' p.923.

³¹ *Ibid.* p.919.

³² Irish Military Archives website: [May 2023 Release | Release History | Military Service Pensions Collection \(1916 - 1923\) | Online Collections | Collections | Military Archives](#) (date accessed: 13/10/23).

claims by women have now been released and digitised.³³ Of these, there are approximately seventy-four which relate to women who either lived in or were based in Britain from 1916 to 1923, including Lena McDonald. These applications provide valuable insight into the activities of these women and highlight the interconnectedness of the republican movement in Britain. There are many advantages to using these files, as they give an insight into the experiences of 'ordinary' republican women. However, these sources are not without methodological problems. Firstly, the applications and subsequent interviews were conducted decades after the events of the revolutionary period. Therefore, some names, dates, and information are incorrect or incomplete. Moreover, the MSPC was a state led venture. Some republicans did not wish to participate in such schemes, and resultantly, many people did not apply, therefore this is in no way a complete database. The fact that these pensions were based on 'active service' also means that there is an emphasis on activities such as the collection and transportation of arms, and that other important contributions or experiences are overlooked. Nevertheless, the files illustrate the activities and experiences of 'ordinary' republican women in Britain, where there is a lacuna of other evidence.

Lena McDonald and the Revolutionary Period in Dundee

Lena McDonald's application provides a window into the lives of republican women in Britain during this period. Her application was made in 1938, although it took nearly four years for it to be approved and paid.³⁴ McDonald was born in 1897 and grew up in the city of Dundee. She trained professionally as a midwife, alongside her older sister, Catherine. Although it is not stated in her application, McDonald was third generation Irish, and was heavily influenced by her maternal grandmother, an Irish native.³⁵

³³ Irish Military Archives website: <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923/release-history/november-2022-release> (date accessed 04/04/23).

³⁴ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

³⁵ Brian King, *Undiscovered Dundee* (Edinburgh, 2011), p.244.

Lena McDonald became involved in Republican activities as early as 1917, when she began purchasing revolvers and ammunition from pawn shops, with the help of her mother. She then began to smuggle the weapons to Glasgow, normally to Jean Gillespie's furniture shop. Sometime between 1918 and 1919 she became a member of the Dundee Company IRA. This was somewhat unusual, as most of the female applicants in this sample were members of the women's organisation Cumann na mBan, which was officially an auxiliary to the IRA, although in many parts of Ireland and Britain members were as active as their male counterparts. McDonald's own sister was a member of Cumann na mBan. However, women joining the IRA in Britain was not entirely unheard of, due to the interconnected nature of gunrunning activities in Britain and the overlapping roles of the IRA and Cumann na mBan. There are other examples of women joining the IRA, rather than Cumann na mBan, in this sample. For instance, Agnes Winifred O'Boyle, whose London home was a principal arms dump during this period, was part of GHQ munitions.³⁶ Similarly, Bridget 'Mother' Flanagan from Glasgow was attached to the headquarters of the IRA Scottish Brigade, and her home was often used for meetings and to house ammunition.³⁷ Julia Foy, also from Glasgow, was not a part of Cumann na mBan either, due to her heavy involvement in procuring arms and the use of her clothes shop as an arms dump in the city.³⁸

McDonald joined the IRA at a time when there was large scale reorganisation of the Volunteers in Scotland under the newly appointed O/C of the Scottish Brigade, Joseph (Joe) Vize. Vize sought to mobilise Irish communities in Scotland to aid the IRA in the acquisition and transportation of weapons and was quick to organise in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland. Resultantly, an IRA company was established in Dundee sometime around 1919, and a branch of Cumann na mBan was attached to it. There are no nominal rolls for the Dundee contingent of Cumann na mBan, however the large presence of Irish women in the city and their participation in other Irish republican

³⁶ MSPC, MSP34REF57567, Agnes Winifred O'Boyle.

³⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF55614, Bridget Flanagan.

³⁸ MSPC, MSP34REF16472, Julia Foy.

activities in this period suggests that McDonald and her sister were not the only women active in the city. Newspaper coverage of Sinn Féin organised events or republican speaking tours in the city, journalists frequently drew attention to the large number of women in attendance.³⁹

From 1919 until her arrest in 1921, McDonald became extremely active in this circle. She stated she went to Glasgow twice weekly to deposit arms at Gillespie's shop and engaged in several other activities. In her sworn statement to the Advisory Committee, she stated that she smuggled weapons in Gladstone bags, golf bags, and egg boxes.⁴⁰ In 1920, she was involved in an attempted prison break at Perth Prison, and her home on Brook Street became the unofficial headquarters for IRA activities in Dundee.⁴¹ One of her referees, Sean Healy, a purchasing agent for Cork no.1 Brigade IRA, stated that the shop McDonald's family owned was 'strewn' with rifles, and that she was known for her hospitality. Throughout the period 1918 to 1923, McDonald's family home was used to hide republicans on the run as well as to host the many Irish speakers who came to the city.⁴² McDonald echoed this in her pension, stating that 'any one that ever came over and had to go to Dundee, we always kept them'.⁴³ Éamon de Valera visited the city in 1926 and stayed with McDonald, however there are various references to him hiding in her house during this period, although neither McDonald nor de Valera acknowledged this in the pension files or other correspondence.⁴⁴ The fact that de Valera and Constance Markievicz, two extremely influential republicans, stayed with McDonald, highlights her importance within republican circles in Scotland during this time.

McDonald's references further attest to her commitment to the cause. Joseph Booker, who was a member of B Company, 1st Battalion of the Scottish IRA based in Glasgow and was involved in

³⁹ *Dundee Courier*, 8th March 1921; *Glasgow Observer*, 5th November 1920.

⁴⁰ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

⁴¹ *The Kerryman*, 20th January 1968.

⁴² *The Kerryman*, 20th January 1968.

⁴³ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

⁴⁴ It is implied in the *Evening Telegraph* article celebrating Kathy and Lena McDonald that the sisters hid de Valera, but Lena only references that he stayed with them in 1926 when he visited the city with Sean T. O'Kelly. Either way, McDonald and de Valera were known to each other at the very least.

collecting and transferring munitions to Ireland, attested to her reliability and use of her home as a dump. He stated that she 'zealously guarded' the safety of the weapons that were put in her care and made sure that they reached their destinations.⁴⁵ In addition to this, he attests to the hospitality of her home, which was used on 'many occasions' for men over from Ireland on 'work of national importance', a code word for gunrunning.⁴⁶ He signed off the letter by stating that he would be 'only too pleased' to answer any further questions on McDonald's behalf.⁴⁷ John Fahy also wrote a reference for McDonald. Fahy asserted that McDonald 'procured more arms... than any other member of the IRA in Scotland', adding that this was the 'primary object' of their Brigade, in order to highlight the significance of McDonald's contribution to the movement.⁴⁸ Jean Gillespie also testified on behalf of McDonald, stating that she was introduced to her as one of the most trusted members of the movement' and brought large quantities of 'stuff' to her furniture shop to be transferred to Ireland.⁴⁹

The pension application also gives an insight into McDonald's life after the Revolution. Despite the declaration of a ceasefire and the consequent end to the Irish Civil War in May 1923, McDonald continued to move in Republican circles and remained in close contact with other members, particularly throughout Scotland. In 1926, she hosted future Irish Presidents and anti-Treaty Civil War leaders Éamon de Valera and Sean T. O'Kelly when they visited Dundee as part of a speaking tour.⁵⁰ McDonald even pleaded directly to de Valera in her application, as there was a long delay in administering it.⁵¹ De Valera was President by this time.

⁴⁵ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid; O'Kelly, Seán Thomas (Ó Ceallaigh, Seán Tomás), Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/okelly-sean-thomas-o-ceallaigh-sean-tomas-a6840> (Date accessed 21/02/24).

⁵¹ Ibid.

McDonald and Jean Gillespie kept in touch, and in Gillespie's military pension application, John Fahy (who also served as a reference to Gillespie) wrote how lovely it was that Gillespie and McDonald had met up to 'talk over old times'.⁵² Later in the 1940s, when McDonald and her family were met with financial hardship, they moved to Ireland and lived with Fahy in his parish of Loughrea, Galway. In Fahy's reference for McDonald, he cryptically stated that 'pensions should be awarded not according to the position of the applicant's name on the waiting list, but according to the applicant's record during the fight for independence and present necessity,' before continuing to state that the McDonald family 'had lost much financially' and were 'continually being harassed by Scotland Yard'.⁵³ By the time of the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the Easter Rising in 1916, McDonald and her sister had moved to the USA, after living at addresses in Belfast, Dublin and Birmingham. The McDonald sisters were flown over to Dublin as guests of honour for commemorations in Dublin and were awarded service medals for their contributions.⁵⁴

McDonald's application reflects her extensive involvement and dedication to the Irish republican movement in Scotland. Her references attest to her unwavering commitment, and her involvement in the 'eggs in a box' case, as well as the other daring pursuits listed in her application, highlight the risks she was willing to take to further the movement. Her application also reveals the overlapping nature of gender roles in the republican movement in Britain. Although McDonald was officially a member of the IRA, she was in constant contact with women such as Jean Gillespie, who were part of Cumann na mBan, and was extensively involved with the procurement of weapons. The effect this had on her later life reveal that her activities in the revolutionary period had a huge impact, and came to define her.

Irish Republican Women in Britain

⁵² MSPC, Jean Gillespie.

⁵³ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

⁵⁴ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

McDonald's application highlights the presence of a covert, interwoven network of Republicans not only in Dundee, but throughout Britain and across the Irish Sea. To get a better understanding of McDonald's experiences, it is necessary to put her application in the context of the wider republican movement in Britain.

An understanding of McDonald's pension application and her experiences as part of the republican movement are enhanced significantly when read against the application made by her fellow gunrunning mate, Jean Gillespie. The activities of McDonald and Gillespie are intricately connected, and there are striking parallels between their experiences. Both women were involved in gunrunning channels, both used their homes as safe houses for the movement, and both women spent time in prison in 1921. The two women also took part in less covert activities, such as fundraising for the movement through hosting dances and collecting for the White Cross. In the advertisement notices in the *Dundee Courier*, Lena McDonald was listed as one of the ticket sellers for Dundee's concert for Archbishop Mannix, while Jean Gillespie stated in her application that part of her work was to organise ceilidh dances and fundraising events.⁵⁵ They associated with many of the same men involved in the movement, such as Sean Healy, Fr. John Fahy, Eamon Mooney and Joseph Booker. McDonald acted as a reference for Gillespie on her application, attesting to her activities and commitment to the cause.⁵⁶ The biggest difference between the two women's experiences was that unlike McDonald, Gillespie was not a member of the IRA, but part of the Ethna Carberry branch of Cumann na mBan. Despite these organisational differences, the activities, and experiences of the two women are remarkably similar and highlight the overlap between the various Republican societies and organisations during this period.

There were also active republican women in Dundee working alongside McDonald. Duthie's letter reveals that there was a branch of Cumann na mBan in the city, which McDonald's sister, Catherine,

⁵⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 3rd March 1921; MSPC, Jean Gillespie.

⁵⁶ MSPC, Jean Gillespie.

belonged to.⁵⁷ However, the few women Duthie mentions in his letter did not make pension applications, and it is difficult to detail the extent of their Republican activities. Nevertheless, Duthie's letter, along with the press in Dundee, hint at a larger circle of republican women which McDonald would have interacted with. Indeed, during her hearing, trial, and acquittal, the Dundee press commented on the presence of a large amount of women.⁵⁸

Through her activities, McDonald was linked to a wider network of republican women across Britain. Some of the weapons she smuggled from Dundee to Gillespie's shop would have been transported down to Liverpool, where they would be shipped across the Irish Sea, while some of the men she housed would have travelled up from purchasing jobs in London, or prison breaks in Manchester.

Out of the 6,445 pension applications made by women, at least seventy-four were made by republican women who were based in Britain during the revolutionary period. In addition to this, five Cumann na mBan members (three from London, one from Glasgow, and one from Liverpool) gave witness statements to the Bureau of Military History.⁵⁹ However, the actual figure of women involved in Republican activities in Britain was probably higher than this, given that not all women involved in the movement applied for a pension. The medal applications held in the Irish Military Archives reveal that a further twenty-four additional women who were based in Britain applied for a service medal, sixteen of which had been active in Scotland. Treasury Department files at the National Archives in Kew and the National Records of Scotland further attest to this, as they contain the names of countless other women who are absent on the pension files. There is some evidence that some anti-Treaty women refused to apply for pensions on political grounds. For example, former Liverpool Cumann na mBan member, Kathleen Mary Hanrahan, stated in her application that there were former Cumann na mBan women who could provide a reference for her, but they

⁵⁷ MSPC, MD32951, Catherine Ann McDonald.

⁵⁸ *Evening Telegraph*, 8th August 1921, *Dundee Courier*, 12th August 1921.

⁵⁹ These witness statements are: BMHWS No.945, Sorcha Nic Diarmada; BMHWS No.924, Mary Cremen; BMHWS No.902, Mary McGeehin; BMHWS No.655, Nora Thornton; BMHWS. No.648, Catherine Rooney.

refused to because they 'protest[ed] strongly against the pension scheme'.⁶⁰ Similarly, Johanna Moloney stated she had not wanted to make a pension application, but 'circumstances compelled' her to.⁶¹

It is important to note that these applications reflected the most active women, who committed a large portion of their time to the cause. There were certainly many more women who supported Republicanism through more indirect ways, such as attending fund raising events or donating to distress funds, without being directly involved in organisations such as Cumann na mBan or the IRA. As Moulton has argued, most Irish people living in Britain during this time who were sympathetic to the Republican cause contributed in 'less dramatic ways' than gunrunning or aiding in prison breaks, and instead participated through contributing to funds supporting prisoners, donating to the White Cross or participating in public meetings, although the line between legality and illegality could be 'fuzzy'.⁶² In Dundee, there was the only one other woman from the city in this sample, Christina Gray.⁶³ However, considering McDonald's links to the Dundee and Glasgow IRA companies, the involvement of her sister in Cumann na mBan, as well as Dundee's large Irish population, it is unlikely that she was only one of two active women in her hometown. Contemporary newspaper reports stated that the Sinn Féin membership in the city was estimated at 1,500 people, the majority of which were women.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the pension applications provide a detailed insight into the activities of Irish women in Britain involved in the republican movement, who have been glossed over in the writing of this period. Like McDonald, most of these women lived in cities with large Irish populations. Most of the applicants in this sample hailed from centres of Irish settlement such as Liverpool, London, and

⁶⁰ MSPC, MSPC34REF25414, Kathleen Mary Hanrahan.

⁶¹ MSPC, MSP34REF22112, Johanna Moloney.

⁶² Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish*, p.125.

⁶³ MSPC, 49SP6383, Christina Gray.

⁶⁴ *Evening Telegraph*, 27th October 1920.

Glasgow, and Manchester. However, the applications show that there were also active women in less well-known areas of Irish settlement, such as Jarrow in northeast of England, and South Wales.

The applications reveal that like McDonald, most republican women in Britain were young, single and semi-professional, although there is also a strong presence of widows in the sample. Their occupations included teachers, nurses, secretarial assistants, and shop owners, to name a few. Some were Irish born, but many were second or even third generation Irish, and it was not unusual for members of the same family to be involved in the movement. In this sample, there were four sets of sisters (excluding McDonald and her sister): the Browne sisters of Liverpool, Sheila and Kathleen, the Byrne sisters of Glasgow, Catherine and Alice, the Downie sisters of Liverpool, Frances and Margaret, and the Anglim sisters of London, Winifred and Elizabeth. In addition to this, many of the women in the collection had male family members who were also active within the movement. Many had brothers some had husbands, and a handful had sons who were members of their local IRA companies. Agnes Winifred O'Boyle, who was a member of the IRA in London, was a sister of the Carr brothers Denis and John Joseph, who were heavily involved with GHQ Munitions and the transportation of arms to Ireland. Elizabeth Kerr's family from Liverpool were all involved heavily in the city's IRA Company. Her husband, Neil, was O/C until his imprisonment in 1920. He used his job as a foreman for the Cunard Shipping Company in the procurement and transportation of weapons, and in her pension application, she states that 'his duties were mine,' highlighting the overlapping nature of the activities of male and female Republicans in Britain. Her three sons, Thomas, Patrick and Neill Jr. were also involved in the movement in various ways, and the latter was killed in an accident relating to the movement of arms in September 1920.⁶⁵

The most common activity among this group of women was gunrunning.⁶⁶ This reflects the main objective of IRA companies in Britain, as Britain was the main source of armaments procured

⁶⁵ MSPC, MSP34REF3967, Elizabeth Kerr.

⁶⁶ Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, pp.86-97.

overseas during this period.⁶⁷ Nearly every applicant and interviewee states they were involved with the transportation, procurement, or storage of arms in some capacity, yet historians have characterised this activity as an exclusively male pursuit, placing heavy emphasis on the male figures in charge of purchasing such as Joe Vize in Glasgow or Neil Kerr in Liverpool.⁶⁸ Some women, like Lena, actively smuggled weapons, which they obtained from pawn shops, demobbed soldiers, or larger shipments from places like the USA. Hannah Robinson, who was a member of *Cumann na mBan*, Glasgow, stated that individuals were specially picked by the Volunteers to help in the raiding and transportation of arms.⁶⁹ Indeed, this was usually an individual undertaking for reasons of security: Sorcha Nic Diarmada of the London branch of *Cumann na mBan*, stated in her oral testimony for the Bureau Military of History, that the women who undertook this activity were ‘very cautious’ and ‘never confided in one another,’ while Agnes Winifred O’Boyle, whose home was one of the largest arms dumps in London, was instructed by GHQ Munitions not to join *Cumann na mBan* due to the highly secretive nature of arms activities.⁷⁰ While most women transported arms to safe houses in their local areas, it was not unheard of for women to smuggle weapons to Ireland. For example, Sorcha Nic Diarmada recalled that a fellow Republican woman, Grace O’Sullivan, brought ‘the accoutrements’ for a ‘wireless apparatus’ to Dublin shortly before the Easter Rising in 1916, and was unable to sit nor sleep for the duration of the crossing from Holyhead.⁷¹ Mary Gogarty, also of the London *Cumann na mBan*, stated in her pension application that she carried arms to Ireland multiple times in 1920 and 1921, mainly to Tipperary and Dublin, on the instructions of Art O’Brien.⁷²

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.84.

⁶⁸ See Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*; Hart, ‘The IRA in Britain’; Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*; Iain D. Patterson, ‘The Activities of Irish Republican Physical Force Organisations in Scotland, 1919-1921’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol.72, No.193 (1993), pp.39-59.

⁶⁹ UCD, Eithne Coyle O’Donnell Papers, P61/4 (67), Anne Devlin Branch, Hannah Robinson (nee Duggan), undated.

⁷⁰ BMHWS, No.945, Sorcha Nic Diarmada (May 1954); MSPC, MSP34REF57567, Agnes Winifred O’Boyle.

⁷¹ BMHWS, Sorcha Nic Diarmada.

⁷² MSPC, MSP34REF58165, Mary Gogarty.

Like O'Boyle, Gogarty was instructed to remove herself from Cumann na mBan to avert suspicion from her activities.⁷³

Although numerous women took part in the actual smuggling of weapons, it was more common among the republican women to use their homes or businesses as arms dumps, like Jean Gillespie. Nearly every woman in this sample stated that they stored weapons as proof of active service. Most of these weapons were stored in their homes in preparation for transportation to Ireland. However, some of the items stored in these women's homes were used for attacks in Britain as well, most notably in the run up to the Liverpool Fires of November 1920. Members of the Liverpool and St. Helen's Cumann na mBan branches stored gelignite and paraffin in their homes, which were used in the attacks.⁷⁴

Women did not only use their homes as safe houses for weapons. Their homes also acted as safe houses for republicans over from Ireland on 'business trips', meeting spaces for various Irish organisations, recently released prisoners, and Republicans on the run. McDonald alone opened her doors to D.P. Walshe, Eamon Mooney, and Constance Markievicz while they were in Dundee for business purposes and speaking tours respectively.⁷⁵ Elizabeth Kerr and Mary Healy (Manchester Cumann na mBan) both attest to housing Éamon de Valera after his escape from Lincoln Prison in February 1919 and aided him in his departure for the USA.⁷⁶ Mary Egan, a member of Cumann na mBan in London, was renowned for her care of recently released Republican prisoners and men on the run. In her pension application, Bill Ahern, who was a member of the North London unit of the IRA, stated 'the utmost confidence was placed in her discretion and she was used as a connecting link between men arriving and those in charge'.⁷⁷ The safe houses provided by these women acted

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See MSPC, MSPREF3425102, Mary English; MSPC, MSPREF3491808, Sheila Browne; MSPC, MSPREF3439076, Mary Geraldine Darby; MSPC, MSPREF34 Kathleen O'Sullivan.

⁷⁵ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

⁷⁶ MSPC, MSPREF343967, Elizabeth Kerr; MSPC, MSPREF3419467, Mary Healy.

⁷⁷ MSPC, MSPREF55889, Mary Egan.

as vital points of contact for the vast Republican network that stretched across Britain, providing essential spaces for meetings and points of cover for covert operations, such as prison breaks. Using their houses as safe spaces connected these women to the various republican groups in Britain and the wider movement, highlighting the interconnected nature of the movement and the various Irish communities across the country.

These women's activities mirrored those of their counterparts in Ireland. Other women within the MSPC who were based in Ireland also stated that they took part in the transportation and concealment of weapons due to the clandestine nature of the violence in this period. Margaret Ward pointed to Cumann na mBan in Ireland's abandonment of uniform, meetings and lectures to highlight the more clandestine approach women took after 1919.⁷⁸ Ward has highlighted that republican women in Ireland began to hide men on the run and ministered to the growing number of flying columns (small brigades of IRA Volunteers detached from regular brigades who were permanently on the run), carrying them dispatches.⁷⁹ Similarly, Cal McCarthy noted the importance of women in Ireland and gun running, although he concedes that it is impossible to ascertain the extent to which they did this.⁸⁰ He argues that the use of women to conceal weapons under skirts or clothing was an important tactic in the initial 1919 to 1921 period in particular. In this way, the activities of women in Ireland mirrored those in Britain, with gendered divisions becoming blurred as women increasingly became involved in the transport and concealment of weapons and male republicans.

Gender and Republicanism

The official labelling of Cumann na mBan as 'auxiliary' highlights that despite republican women's increasing conceptualisation of themselves as citizens with a right to exercise their role in politics,

⁷⁸ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p.249.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2007), p.131.

some nineteenth century gendered ideals prevailed. However, the pension applications and witness statements reveal that republican women in Britain were able to use gendered preconceptions to their advantage to ensure their activities remained concealed from the authorities. In her witness statement for the Bureau Military of History, Sorcha Nic Diarmada stated that her branch of Cumann na mBan called themselves the 'Irish Ladies' Distress Committee' when hiring venues so they could carry out their meetings without suspicion.⁸¹ Nic Diarmada continued to state that the women would also emphasise the more charitable elements of their work, such as garment collecting and fundraising.⁸² Nic Diarmada argued that the guise of the 'Distress Committee' enabled Cumann na mBan to pursue their activities without arousing suspicion, reflecting a flexible attitude towards Irish women's political activity in Britain.⁸³ Similarly, Gilbert F. Barrington, who was a member of the Tyneside Brigade IRA, recalled the usefulness of republican women accompanying IRA officers on raids and sabotage operations: "had the men gone alone [on the raids] they would have attracted attention, but with their escorts it appeared to all and sundry that they were courting couples."⁸⁴ Nic Diarmada's testimony further supports this, as she stated that she and her fellow Cumann na mBan members would often accompany male IRA members on raids to provide cover. She stated that the women would accompany the men to the location and watch from nearby, ready to intercept and take any weapons from the scene if the authorities arrived.⁸⁵ Sheila Browne recalled one of the ways she transported weapons was by disguising them in prams as she walked to the various arms dumps across Liverpool.⁸⁶ Christina Caffrey-Keeley stated she would take her baby with her on gunrunning missions to Ireland to appear less suspicious, hiding behind the guise of motherhood to conceal her activities.⁸⁷

⁸¹ BMHWS, Sorcha Nic Diarmada.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ BMHWS, No.773, Gilbert F. Barrington.

⁸⁵ BMHWS, Sorcha Nic Diarmada.

⁸⁶ MSPC, Sheila Browne.

⁸⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF9970, Christina Caffrey-Keeley.

The testimonies of other women in the sample also support the idea that republican women were able to use gendered ideals to their advantage. Many of the women stated 'visiting prisoners' as evidence of their active service, elaborating that they would visit republican inmates under the guise of feminine concern to carry secret messages, among other contraband, into the prison walls. The most renowned instance of this was Kathleen Talty and Mary Healy's involvement in Éamon de Valera's escape from Lincoln prison. Talty and Healy were members of Cumann na mBan in Manchester, and were regular visitors to republican men in Strangeways, Knutsford, Frongoch and Lincoln prisons. In January 1920, the women were instructed to bake a fruit cake containing a key which had been made from a candle wax impression de Valera made from a lock on a prison gate, as well as nail files to help aid the escape attempt.⁸⁸ The women had to make the cake multiple times as the original key did not fit. They later met de Valera and the other escaped convicts, providing them with army uniforms. The men then stayed at Mary Healy's house for the night, before moving on to Liverpool the next day.⁸⁹ Other women also stated visiting prisoners as a form of active service and carried despatches as well as comfort items such as clothing and tobacco.

Women were also known to take part in active demonstrations in support of Republican prisoners. The London branches of Cumann na mBan staged large protests outside of Wormwood Scrubs and Brixton prisons in support of prisoners on hunger strike. The most notable of these was for the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, who died in Brixton prison in October 1920. Women kept vigil outside Brixton prison during the final weeks of his hunger strike, and when he died, they lined the streets of London where his coffin travelled. Nic Diarmada stated that this was one of the occasions where the London Cumann na mBan did not use their undercover name, but publicly advertised themselves.⁹⁰ Several women in this sample accompanied the coffin to Holyhead where there was a

⁸⁸ MSPC, MSP34REF50666, Kathleen Talty; MSPC, MSP34REF19467, Mary Healy; BMHWS No.274, Liam McMahan.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ BMHWS, Sorcha Nic Diarmada.

scuffle over plans to take the body directly to Cork as opposed to Dublin.⁹¹ Some of the women of the various London branches were familiar to each other through these activities, for example, Nic Diarmada stated that she had met Mary Egan through these protests before their arrest and deportation to the Irish Free State in March 1923.⁹²

Women were also important fundraisers for the IRA. Hannah Robinson wrote that one of the main activities of the Anne Devlin branch of Cumann na mBan was to raise money through ceilidhs, concerts, and lectures.⁹³ According to Robinson, some of these funds went to the White Cross or various Irish Distress organisations, however some of the money was used to finance personalities for talks. These personalities included Margaret Pearse, who visited Scotland in November 1921 and April 1922, and Archbishop Daniel Mannix, who toured Britain at the start of February 1921 and gave a talk in Dundee to over 2,000 people.⁹⁴ The money raised also helped the IRA's gunrunning effort and could be used to purchase weapons.⁹⁵ Sheila Browne stated after her arrest for the Liverpool Fires in November 1920, she was instructed to stay away from Cumann na mBan but was able to participate in indirect ways, such as organising ceilidhs to fund its activities.⁹⁶ Other women stated that they raised money for the White Cross, while some women organised clothing collections and knitted socks for men in prison.⁹⁷

Activities such as fund raising and organising lectures can be traced back to the activities of Cumann na mBan in Ireland. In the initial period after the Easter Rising, the women of Cumann na mBan in Ireland took pains to spread the message of Irish Republicanism through fierce propaganda and fundraising campaigns. Margaret Ward has documented the activities of Cumann na mBan in the

⁹¹ *Cheltenham Chronical*, 30th October 1920.

⁹² TNA, TS27/182 Court Papers and Particulars of Claims, Irish Deportees (Compensation) Committee, Mary Egan.

⁹³ UCD, Eithne Coyle O'Donnell Papers, P61/4 (67), Anne Devlin Branch, Hannah Robinson (nee Duggan), undated.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ MSPC, Sheila Brown.

⁹⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF25414, Kathleen Mary Hanrahan.

immediate post-Rising period, arguing that 'the vital work of propaganda was mainly undertaken by women.'⁹⁸ Republican women in Ireland organised masses, wrote to newspapers, and raised money to support the dependents' of those who had been arrested, and played a vital role in changing the image of the rebels from villains to heroes amongst the Irish public. By 1919, Cumann na mBan had set this precedent and British based Republican women followed in their footsteps by protesting outside of prisons, raising money for the White Cross and financing talks by prominent republicans.

Women's roles in protesting, garment collecting and fundraising highlights that there was a philanthropic element to their participation in the movement. This drew on a long tradition of middle class Irish and British women's involvement in philanthropic activities throughout the nineteenth century.⁹⁹ However, unlike their predecessors, these women did not try to justify their activities through the language of humanitarianism, women's moral influence, or the natural extension of the private sphere.¹⁰⁰ These women were politically active during a time where some women had been enfranchised under the 1918 Representation of the People Act, and the inclusion of the 'suffrages of all [Ireland's] men and women' in the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic undoubtedly influenced their of themselves as political citizens. Moulton's work highlights the importance of the suffrage movement and the inclusion of women in the proclamation concerning Irish women's political activism in the period, and argues that there was a 're-gendering of citizenship'.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the ideal of citizenship within the Irish Republican tradition since the 1790s had been influenced heavily by the revolutions in France and America, and the central importance of the right to bear arms.¹⁰² Nancy J. Curtin has argued that the ideal citizen in Irish nationalist rhetoric during the nineteenth century was the male citizen-soldier, who was willing to lay his life down for

⁹⁸ Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p.216.

⁹⁹ See Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Cambridge 1995); Moulton, "'You have votes and power:'", p.192.

¹⁰⁰ Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, pp.1-7.

¹⁰¹ Moulton, "'You have votes and power'", p.

¹⁰² Nancy J. Curtin, "A nation of abortive men": gendered citizenship and early Irish Republicanism in Marilyn Cohen and Nancy J. Curtin's (eds) *Reclaiming Gender: Transgressive Identities in Modern Ireland* (London, 1999), pp.33-44.

Ireland.¹⁰³ Republican women, on the other hand, were framed as loyal mothers and wives, whose duty it was to raise soldier-citizens and their greatest sacrifice was to let their menfolk fight for Ireland.¹⁰⁴ While some of these ideas continued into the twentieth century, as demonstrated by some of the care-taking roles that republican women adopted (such as looking after recently released prisoners), the re-working of citizenship in this period to include enfranchised women is important for understanding the context within which both women in Ireland and Britain operated within clandestine Republican organisations.

The pension applications and oral testimonies further attest to the fact that these women viewed themselves as citizens, acting on their political convictions, as opposed to humanitarian concern for the wellbeing of their kinfolk in Ireland. This reflects a wider platform for women's involvement in Irish political and military activities during this period. As Moulton has argued, these women 'blurred the boundary' between the public and the private through their involvement in fundraising for an underground militia, gunrunning, and providing safe houses, and were not mere political hostesses.¹⁰⁵ Despite women's involvement being officially consigned to the 'auxiliary' Cumann na mBan, the applications highlight there was a significant overlap of activities between the women's organisation and the IRA, reflecting that roles in the republican movement were not always limited by gendered ideals. The pension applications and witness statements of both republican women and men in Britain demonstrate that the IRA and Cumann na mBan organisations were in constant communication with each other, and that there were instances of women joining the supposedly male only IRA instead, like in the case of Lena McDonald. Republican men viewed their female counterparts with the utmost respect and admiration, as highlighted in the references given to Lena McDonald, and fought on their behalf if their applications were initially unsuccessful. For example, members of the Manchester Company IRA intervened on behalf of Kathleen Talty when her

¹⁰³ Ibid. pp.33-34.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p.34

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.200.

application was originally rejected.¹⁰⁶ Her application was approved after a hearing from the advisory committee. The applications and interviews also hint at a level of frustration among these women that they were restricted by gender and location and could not do more to aid the Republican cause. Sorcha Nic Diarmada explained there was a split in the London branches of Cumann na mBan because a faction of women, led by Grace Lally and the Anglim sisters, wanted to drill and march openly in military uniform, like Cumann na mBan in Ireland, and were frustrated that they had to ‘masquerade’ as the ‘Irish Ladies’ Distress Committee’.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Mary McPhillips of Glasgow wrote in her application ‘as you will see I am a woman (tho I did serve my country as any citizen would do)’, reflecting a sense of duty which went beyond the codes of gender normativity.¹⁰⁸

Living amongst the enemy

These women did not try to glamourize their roles and were frank about the risks that came with being part of an underground militant movement in the territory of the enemy. In recent years, much has been written about the psychological effects of the revolutionary period on Irish women, and scholars have shed light on issues such as sexual violence and intimidation towards women from both Irish and British forces.¹⁰⁹ However, much like the underground activities of republican women in Britain, the psychological and emotional impact of their experiences have also been neglected. As Marie Coleman has emphasised in her work on the MSPC, the applications made by Republicans do not only illuminate their activities during the revolutionary period, but they are also useful because

¹⁰⁶ MSPC, Kathleen Talty.

¹⁰⁷ BMHWS, No.945, Sorcha Nic Diarmada.

¹⁰⁸ MSPC, MSP34REF61656, Mary McPhillips.

¹⁰⁹ See Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution*; G. Clark, ‘Violence against women in the Irish Civil War, 1922-3: gender based harm in global perspective’, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol.44, No.165 (2020), pp.75-90; Síobhra Aiken, ‘The women who had been straining every nerve: Gender-specific medical management of trauma in the Irish Revolution (1916-1923)’ in M. Terrazas Gallego’s (ed.) *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Dublin, 2020).

they offer us a glimpse into their lives after this period, and the emotions and reflections on their involvement.¹¹⁰

It is also important to consider that these women were living as part of a minority ethnic group in the country of the enemy. Sam Glynn estimates that in 1921 only one per cent of the population of England and Wales were Irish born, while three point one per cent were Irish born in Scotland.¹¹¹ It is worth noting that second, or even third generation Irish in Britain may have viewed themselves as Irish and were an integral part of these communities, therefore the overall figures would have been higher than Glynn's estimates. However, even when taking second and third generations into account, the Irish remained a minority group during this period.

There is evidence that the pressure of being involved in a clandestine militant movement in enemy territory took its toll on these women. Elizabeth Kerr of Liverpool wrote that she spent 'many restless nights' waiting for the safe arrival of weapons at her house.¹¹² Some women reported that being 'shadowed' by the police was a common occurrence.¹¹³ One of her references stated that Mary Egan of London was 'never the same' after her release from prison in 1923, while Marie McGaleagly of Glasgow stated that after her husband's arrest in the 'smashing of the van' incident in Glasgow, she had to go on the run to avoid arrest, and eventually suffered a nervous breakdown in the summer of 1923 while her husband was on hunger strike in prison.¹¹⁴

These women also lived amongst British people, who were often hostile to their activities. Consequently, they had to operate within tight knit Irish communities in large urban centres. Local and national newspapers during this period give an indication of British attitudes towards Republicanism, highlighting that these women lived in a country where they were tolerated at best,

¹¹⁰ Coleman, 'Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries', p.918.

¹¹¹ Sam Glynn, 'Irish Immigration to Britain, 1911-1951: Patterns and Policy' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol.8 (1981), pp.50-69, p.56.

¹¹² MSPC, Elizabeth Kerr.

¹¹³ BMHWS, Sorcha Nic Diarmada; MSPC, Hannah Robinson; MSPC, MSP34REF60322, Agnes Browne.

¹¹⁴ MSPC Mary Egan; MSPC, MSPREF3458062, Marie McGaleagly.

and viewed as a danger to civil society at worst. The 'Sinn Fein menace' was a persistent description in British articles on Republican activities on both sides of the Irish Sea, and the movement was often likened to a disease in the way that support for it rapidly grew and spread after 1916.¹¹⁵ The newspaper columns reserved its harshest criticisms for the movement's leaders, both in Ireland and Britain, however descriptions of Republicans in Britain could be more nuanced. Owing to the young age and professional status of the men involved in republican movements in Britain, it was not uncommon for the media to characterise them as having been led astray. For example, during the 'eggs in a box' case, Sean O'Doherty was described by the *Dundee Courier* as having been swept up by 'mistaken patriotism' which 'so many young Irishmen in Ireland and this country had succumbed to'. Similarly, during Jean Gillespie's trial, the judge stated in relation to the men's sentencing that 'it was a bad habit of their fellow Irish countrymen that they talked blood and thunder as easily as Scotsmen would discuss a plate of sandwiches and a glass of beer'.¹¹⁶

The portrayal of female Republicans was somewhat similar. Although the pension applications and witness statements reveal women's involvement in the movement in Britain was not unusual, the British media sensationalised it to a certain extent. Newspapers singled out McDonald and Gillespie in the reports on their subsequent trials, possibly because they were the only women among a group of men. Headlines for Gillespie's trial was often referenced to as the trial of 'the red-headed girl,' despite the fact that her crime was significantly less than those alongside her, some of which were involved in a motor car chase in Alloa.¹¹⁷ Although the involvement of women in the movement was certainly viewed with intrigue, gender did not prevent the press from condemnation, and served to reinforce existing hostilities towards Irish communities in Britain. During her trial, the judge sentencing Gillespie stated that it was unfortunate that someone like her should be accused of such offences, but he could not overlook the seriousness of her actions and that the minimum sentence

¹¹⁵ See *Dundee Courier*, 12th October 1917.

¹¹⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 9th August 1921; *Dundee Courier*, 21st March 1921.

¹¹⁷ See *Dundee Courier*, 15th March 1921; *Daily Mail*, 15th March 1921.

he could impose was twelve months imprisonment.¹¹⁸ Upon her acquittal, Lena McDonald stated that her neighbours told her that they thought she should have been executed.¹¹⁹

Many of the women stated that there were repercussions from wider society because of their involvement. Kathleen Talty and Margaret Sexton, both of the Manchester Cumann na mBan, stated that their political activities prevented them from being promoted in their jobs as school teachers, while Mary English, who had a sweet shop in Everton which was used as an arms dump, stated that she was ostracised from the local community after her arrest, and eventually had to leave Liverpool.¹²⁰ Elizabeth Bateman (nee Anglim) of the London Cumann na mBan lost her job as a typist after being spotted with Cumann na mBan at the funeral procession of Terrence MacSwiney, highlighting that there was a material as well as psychological cost to being active in this movement in Britain.¹²¹ Margaret Gilmartin had to flee to the Highlands for a period when the police were looking for her, and when she returned she had lost her 'position, home and mother', stating that she was an 'outcast'.¹²²

A group of these women were also deported to Ireland and imprisoned in March 1923 for 'Anti-Treaty' activities, along with over ninety other people across England and Scotland.¹²³ This included Patrick O'Neill of Dundee. These women received compensation upon their release for the treatment they received. Sorcha Nic Diarmada received the largest amount of any woman who was deported, because she was 'the worst treated,' according to her witness statement.¹²⁴ The files of

¹¹⁸ *Aberdeen Journal*, 21st March 1921.

¹¹⁹ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

¹²⁰ MSPC, Kathleen Talty; MSPC, Mary English; MSPC, MSP34REF59330, Margaret Sexton.

¹²¹ MSPC, MSP34REF61788, Elizabeth Bateman (Anglim).

¹²² MSPC, MSP34REF4084, Margaret Gilmartin.

¹²³ The women deported who also have witness statements and pension claims in this sample are: BMHWS, Sorcha Nic Diarmada; BMHWS, Mary Cremen; MSPC, Mary Egan; MSPC, Hannah Robinson; MSPC, Margaret Leonard; MSPC, MSP34REF61419, Ellen McGrath; MSPC, MSP34REF2198, Kathleen Barrett.

¹²⁴ BMHWS, Sorcha Nic Diarmada.

the compensation tribunal also attest to this: they state that Nic Diarmada's wrist was broken in a violent search by female wardresses.¹²⁵ In total, she received £600.¹²⁶

Some women even became isolated from their own Republican circles, such as the Browne sisters in Liverpool. Both sisters were arrested in the aftermath of the Liverpool fires and imprisoned for a short period of time, but the charges against them were dropped. Despite this, the IRA leadership in the city instructed them to no longer take part in clandestine Republican activities and limit their participation to fundraising and other philanthropic endeavours.¹²⁷

The outbreak of Civil War in the summer of 1922 also had an impact on republican women in Britain. The majority of women in the sample were against the Treaty and continued to work with the IRA in this period.¹²⁸ A handful supported the pro-Treaty side. Those who did tended to be married to men who joined the Free State Army, such as Elizabeth Kerr. Many of the applicants stated that they took no part in the Civil War. Although this could be seen as support for the Treaty, it is unlikely that such a divisive issue managed to satisfy the women who had joined the Cumann na mBan and the IRA in support of a Republic. Considering the mixed responses of the Dundee Irish which were examined in Chapter Two, it is possible that this was an equally complex issue for those who chose not to state their activities during the Civil War in their applications. Furthermore, no 'active service' after 1921 does not mean that these women surrendered their interest in Irish political matters. Although some women did not continue in Cumann na mBan or the IRA, that does not mean they ceased their activities altogether. Events like the death of Michael Collins and the arrest and deportation of Irish men and women in March 1923 united people on both sides of the Treaty and acted as rallying points for Irish communities in Britain.¹²⁹ It is likely that those who stated they had no active service

¹²⁵ TNA, TS27/182.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ MSPC, Sheila Browne.

¹²⁸ Out of the sample of seventy-four pensions, thirty-seven women stated they took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War.

¹²⁹ See Dundee Courier, 23rd August 1922.

after 1921 participated in some ways in these events, and that there were different individual thoughts and feelings on this issue. Therefore, a lack of activity after 1921 should not be viewed simply as acceptance or satisfaction with the Treaty and the state of political affairs in Ireland.

Conclusion

Although sensationalised at the time of her arrest, Lena McDonald's involvement in the 'eggs in a box' case does not seem so unique when put in the wider context of republican women's activities in Britain during this period. Indeed, McDonald was part of an intricately connected network of republican women which stretched across Britain and the Irish Sea, who were willing to risk their livelihoods in Britain, their professional careers, and even imprisonment, for the Republican cause. The online publication of the Military Service Pension Collection and the Bureau of Military History has enabled historians to access their experiences, which have long been neglected due to a wider lack of recognition of the Irish in Britain during this period. Their actions reveal a flexible attitude concerning gender, combining a readiness to use gendered assumptions to their advantage, as in the case of the 'Irish Ladies' Distress Committee', alongside the belief that they were acting politically as citizens, rather than out of humanitarian concern. The pension applications also reflect that the roles of men and women increasingly overlapped in the movement, highlighting that women participated in activities which have been largely characterised as a male only pursuit, such as gunrunning or raids. This further complicates the idea that the Irish republican movement was conservative in its attitudes towards gender. By 'broadening the gaze' and examining the lives of ordinary, Irish women in Britain, the interconnectedness of Irish communities in Britain is highlighted, as many of these women's paths crossed through their involvement in the movement, such as Lena McDonald and Jean Gillespie's. In addition to this, examining the activities of republican women in Britain highlights issues that are not as apparent when studying their counterparts on the island of Ireland, such as the psychological impact of living 'in the heart of enemy lines' and repercussions from wider British

society for their actions. Their actions serve to underline that the Irish Revolution was not contained within Ireland itself but stretched across the Irish Sea and throughout the diaspora.

Chapter Four: The Afterlife of the Revolution: Republican Women in Britain

1923-1966

Lena McDonald's story did not end after her acquittal from the Edinburgh High Court in 1921. Her Military Pensions Service Application reveals that McDonald's life was greatly affected by her involvement in the IRA, as well as those of her family and friends. By the early 1940s, she was living in Loughrea, Co. Galway, in the house Fr. John Fahy, along with her elderly mother as they could not support themselves. Consequently, McDonald's military service pension was of great need to the family. The multiple addresses on McDonald's application highlight that Loughrea was not her final destination. From when she originally applied in 1938 to her death in 1982, McDonald lived in eight different places across Ireland, England and the USA, including Belfast, Dublin, Birmingham, New York, and Florida, where she died.¹

McDonald's social and financial hardships are reflective of the experiences of many former IRA members in the post-Revolutionary, especially those who, like McDonald, supported the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War. Historians such as Gavin Wilk and Brian Hanley have analysed this flight of 'wild geese', using IRA membership rolls to chart the patterns of migration by former IRA members and the continuation of Republican organisations throughout the diaspora.² However, considerably less attention has been paid to the flight of republican women during this period, despite the fact that gender ratios for Irish emigration were roughly equal during this period, with women slowly overtaking men into the 1930s.³ Reading the pension applications of former IRA and Cumann na

¹ Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF56964, Lena McDonald.

² Brian Hanley, 'Irish Republicans in Interwar New York', *IJAS Online*, No.1 (2009), pp.48-61; Gavin Wilk, *Transatlantic Defiance: The Militant Republican Movement in America, 1923-45* (Manchester, 2014).

³ Enda Delaney, *Demography, State and Society: Irish Migration to Britain, 1921-1971* (Liverpool, 2000), pp.47-8; Pauric Travers, "'There was nothing for me there": Irish female emigration, 1922-71' in Patrick O'Sullivan's (ed.), *The Irish World Wide, Vol.4: Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London, 1995), p.148, p.159.

mBan members highlights that women faced similar problems to their male counterparts, driving them to emigrate, such as economic hardship and harassment from the authorities.

Despite not living in Ireland, many of the women examined in the chapter three faced these problems. Out of the sample of women based in Britain during the revolutionary period who made military service pension applications, forty-five eventually left Britain. Their reasons varied, but they included economic hardship, employment opportunities, backlisting from the authorities, or a desire to return to Ireland. Those who remained in Britain faced scrutiny for their involvement in republican groups, especially during the Second World War, and were monitored by officials for a great portion of their life. It should also be noted that most women who were active during the revolutionary period in Britain took the anti-Treaty side during the Irish Civil War, with only four women in the pension sample taking the pro-Treaty side, and a further two in the BMH.⁴

Interestingly, as thousands of people were leaving Irish shores, many former Cumann na mBan women in Britain found their way back to their homeland during the heightened tensions of the Second World, as did Lena McDonald for a while. Therefore, although they lived in a different land to their counterparts in Ireland, the republican women of Britain shared similar experiences in the years after the establishment of the Irish Free State, reflecting a transnational and gendered experience of the afterlife of the revolutionary period.

This chapter will explore the afterlives of republican women in Britain, arguing that despite differences in gender and geography, their experiences mirror the struggle of their counterparts in Ireland, highlighting the transnational nature of this movement. It will use Lena McDonald's experiences as a lens to investigate the wider problems faced by these women, who gave their energies to the republican movement. The challenges faced by McDonald were shared by republican women across Britain and the diaspora, reflecting a transnational and gendered post-revolutionary

⁴ These women are: MSPC, MSP34REF3967 Elizabeth Kerr; MSPC, MSP34REF64362, Annie Curran; MSPC, MSP34REF21798, Susan Morris; MSPC, MSP34REF1692, Josephine Mary Mulcahy; BMHWS, No.860, Elizabeth McGinley; BHMWS, No.510, Nora Thornton.

experience. This further underlines the need to expand the scope of study on this period beyond male, former-IRA members, and the island of Ireland. It will also explore how these women were viewed by the Irish state, arguing that these women were relegated to the bottom of the pile in the hierarchy of veterans, despite their vital contributions in gunrunning, fund raising, and other activities.

A 'difficult story' to tell: literature on the afterlives of revolution

Many former IRA and Cumann na mBan members were subject to economic difficulties and were viewed with suspicion by the authorities, both in Ireland and Britain. The pension applications in the Military Service Pensions Collection are revealing of this. Not only do they highlight activities during the revolutionary period, but they also offer a glimpse into the applicants' lives after this period and their emotions and reflections around it.⁵

The subject of post-Revolutionary Ireland has received comparably less thought from historians than the years of conflict. Most of the work that has been produced on this period has analysed the establishment of the Irish Free State and the high-ranking politicians who played a part in this. However, few have examined the afterlives of those who played a significant part in the fight for independence (and did not later pursue a career in politics) and how these years impacted them. Furthermore, there has been very little discussion of what a revolutionary 'afterlife' entails, despite historians alluding to the impact of the revolutionary period when discussing the politics, culture, and society of twentieth century Ireland.

This lacuna of post-Revolutionary study is not unique to the Irish revolutionary period but is a pattern across many studies of revolutionary or violent histories. For example, Catherine Merridale has written about the lack of studies on 'shell shocked' Russian civilians in the 1920s as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution and Russian Civil War despite the comparative plethora of literature on this

⁵ Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish female Revolutionaries, 1916-1923', *Women's History Review*, No.26. Vol.6 (2017), pp.916-930, p.918.

subject concerning former soldiers in western Europe.⁶ Similarly, in his 2019 work *The Afterlives of Terror: Facing the Legacies of Mass Violence in Postrevolutionary France*, Ronen Steinberg has argued that although there exists a vast historiography of the French Revolution, there is little in the way that investigates its impact on those who lived through it.⁷ Steinberg states that his work is ‘about how difficult it was for those who experienced the Terror to tell its story,’ arguing that the aftermath of the Terror invites the reader to consider how contemporaries of the revolutionary era faced ‘a difficult past’ in the context of a movement oriented towards the future.⁸ In a similar vein, the aftermath of the Irish revolutionary period invites the historian to examine a generation of people whose lives were intertwined with the violence and political unrest that plagued the island of Ireland and its diaspora, how they viewed their role in the fight for independence, how they were viewed by the state that they subsequently helped to create, the personal toll that their involvement took on them.

Gavin Foster has drawn attention to historians’ lack of engagement with this topic. Highlighting the exodus of thousands of young, formerly anti-Treaty or republican men from the Irish Free State, Foster has argued that the ‘wild geese’ of the 1920s and 1930s have been ignored by both political and migration historians as they fall somewhere between ‘the cracks’ of the two of them.⁹ Foster argues that these ‘wild geese’ were a hybrid species who were simultaneously political exiles and economic migrants, and were ‘young, bored and restless’ in Ireland, facing economic distress brought on by a lack of employment.¹⁰

Jennifer Redmond also examined migration during the War of Independence from a gendered perspective, arguing that those who left during this period were deemed as unmanly, and that at the

⁶ C. Merridale, ‘The Collective Mind: Trauma and shell-shock in twentieth century Russia’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.35, No.1 Special Issue: Shell-shock (January, 2000), pp.39-55.

⁷ R. Steinberg, *The Afterlives of Terror: Facing the Legacies of Mass Violence in Postrevolutionary France* (Cornell, 2019), pp.1-16.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Gavin Foster, ‘No ‘wild geese’ this time?’ IRA Emigration after the Civil War, *Éire-Ireland*, Vol.47, Nos. 1&2 (Spring/Summer 2012), pp.94-122, pp.94-8.

¹⁰ Ibid.p.117, p.121.

head of the hierarchy of masculinities was the idealised image of the muscular, guerrilla fighting, Catholic soldier.¹¹ As such, male migrants were branded as traitors and emasculated, although women were not afforded the same criticism. Gavin Wilk explored this area in his work on the migration of republican men to the USA.¹² Wilk contends that out of the roughly 12,000 Republicans interned during the Civil War, most of them simply wanted to be freed and find employment upon release. Their struggle to find this resulted in a bitterness and resentment towards the Free State.¹³ Brian Hanley explored the continuance of Irish Republicanism in the USA and the emigration of former IRA members, focusing on organisations such as Clan na Gael and the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic. Hanley's work primarily focuses on the experience of Republican emigrants upon arrival in the USA, highlighting themes of isolation and distrust of republican organisations in the States, arguing that newly arrived migrants were more likely to become involved in GAA clubs or attend Irish dances rather than Irish republican political organisations.¹⁴

Although these works have documented this wave of emigration and captured the emotional complexities of former Republicans after the end of the Civil War, they are almost exclusively male oriented. Síobhra Aiken's work on the migration of female Republican activists has begun to address this issue. Aiken uses the archives of the Military Service Pensions Collection to examine Cumann na mBan nominal rolls to chart some of the difficulties faced by republican women in the immediate years after the Civil War and their subsequent emigration.¹⁵ Aiken argues that many of the challenges faced by former Cumann na mBan members in the years after the Civil War echoed those

¹¹ Jennifer Redmond, 'Brave enough to fight? Masculinity, migration and the Irish revolution', *Irish Studies Review*, Vol.29, No.2 (2021), pp.193-211.

¹² Gavin Wilk, *Transatlantic Defiance*.

¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴ Brian Hanley, 'Irish Republicans in Interwar New York', pp.48-61.

¹⁵ Síobhra Aiken, 'Sinn Féin permits... in the heels of their shoes': Cumann na mBan emigrants and transatlantic revolutionary exchange', *Irish Revolutionary Studies* (2020), No.44, Vol.165, pp.106-130; Síobhra Aiken, 'Sick on the Irish Sea, dancing across the Atlantic': (anti) nostalgia in women's remembrance of the Irish Revolution' in Oona Frawley's (ed.) *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana, 2021), pp.88-106.

of their male counterparts in the IRA.¹⁶ Out of the available nominal rolls for Cumann na mBan, at least thirteen per cent of the listed membership for 1921 emigrated, although this number is likely to be higher due to incomplete information and the high rate of emigration during this period. Aiken argues that reasons for emigrating would have been even more pronounced for women than men, due to the limited role carved out for women in the emerging Free State and highlights that women emigrants were gradually overtaking their male counterparts during this period.¹⁷

Marie Coleman has used the archives of the Military Service Pensions Collection to explore female revolutionaries' experiences in post-revolutionary Ireland, and the role of gender in the awarding of these pensions.¹⁸ Coleman has argued that the pensions reflect that the Irish state that had developed since the revolutionary period had grown into a place where women's contributions to the public sphere were undervalued, and that much can be gleaned from the state's treatment of women who applied for pensions. Coleman also highlights the symbolic importance of the pension awards and medals, arguing that not only were they a vital lifeline of income for some, but were symbolic in their recognition of women's services during a period where women's roles were being increasingly restricted to those of wife and mother.¹⁹ Similarly, Catriona Beaumont has written about researching her grandmother's Revolutionary activities and how it shaped her experiences in later life in a thought-provoking article about accidentally recognising her in a photograph of Cumann na mBna women.²⁰

While Aiken, Beaumont and Coleman have attempted to incorporate republican women into this historical narrative, the afterlives of Republicans who were active *outside* of Ireland have not been

¹⁶ Síobhra Aiken, "'Sinn Féin permits...'", p.112.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Marie Coleman, 'Compensating female revolutionaries,' pp.915-934.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Catriona Beaumont, 'How a photograph uncovered my grandmother's republican activism during the Irish Revolution', The Conversation (17th October 2022): <https://theconversation.com/how-a-photograph-uncovered-my-grandmothers-republican-activism-during-the-irish-revolution-189326#:~:text=The%20photograph%20of%20my%20grandmother,%E2%80%9Csocial%20order%20and%20stability%E2%80%9D>. (date accessed: 26/02/24).

seriously investigated by historians. The experiences of these women, who spent many years fighting for the Republican cause outside of Ireland, raise difficult, but interesting, methodological questions for study of this topic. The global nature of the Irish revolutionary period has been well documented by historians such as Fearghal McGarry and Enda Delaney, however, there has been little investigation into the lives of these people outside of the Revolutionary years.²¹ Because most of the work that has been done on the afterlives of revolutionaries has focused on the establishment of the Free State and mass emigration, it is a challenge to try to insert the experiences of republican women outside of Ireland in this narrative.

Perhaps the one area in which the 'afterlives' of republican women has been considered is through biography. Some prominent revolutionary figures produced memoirs in the years after the Revolutionary period which explored the mixed legacies of the period.²² Other prominent republican women have also had biographies written about them, although some have more titles to their name than others.²³ These biographies do not stop at the end of the Civil War in May 1923, but explore the 'afterlives' of their individual subjects. The post-revolutionary life of Easter Rising leader Constance Markievicz has been well documented in a number of biographies. Seán O'Faoláin's biography on Markievicz was one of the first produced on her life, originally published in 1934.²⁴ O'Faoláin details Markievicz's incredible journey from countess to revolutionary leader, as well as her health battles in her later life. Yet O'Faoláin's work leaves room for criticism: he chastised Markievicz for 'neglecting' her duties towards her husband and children, and he described her as 'unwomanly' in her political endeavours, and 'unintelligent' regarding her political positions.²⁵

²¹ Enda Delaney and Fearghal McGarry, 'Introduction: A global history of the Irish Revolution,' *Irish Historical Studies*, No. 44, Vol. 165, (2020), pp. 1-10.

²² See Margaret Skinnider, *Doing my bit for Ireland*, (New York, 1917); Helen Litton (ed.), *Kathleen Clarke, Revolutionary Woman, an autobiography, 1878-1972* (Dublin, 2008); Máire Comerford and Hilary Dully (ed.), *On Dangerous Ground: a memoir of the Irish Revolution* (Dublin, 2021).

²³ Constance Markievicz has significantly more biographies to her name than any other Irish female republican of this period.

²⁴ Seán O'Faoláin, *Constance Markievicz* (London, 1934).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

O'Faoláin's views were shared by others and were reflective of the attitude towards female revolutionaries in the period after the Civil War. For example, Sinn Féin historian and writer, P.S. O'Hegarty, brandished the 'furies' of Cumann na mBan as 'practically unsexed' in his work.²⁶ Later biographies of Markievicz and other republican women provide a less judgemental depiction and consider the difficulties she faced in the 'afterlife' of revolution in more nuanced terms. Biographies by Lindie Naughton and considers Markievicz's interest in theatre in the post-revolutionary period, as well as her wavering health and final foray into politics, while Lauren Arrington's work explores the relationship between Markievicz, her husband, and her children.²⁷

The recent 'Decade of Centenaries' has seen an explosion in biographies on previously ignored or overlooked republican, revolutionary women, which include their activities during the period of conflict and the careers they pursued after. Mary McAuliffe's work on Margaret Skinnider explores her successful teaching career and relationship with fellow Cumann na mBan member, Nora O'Keefe.²⁸ Margaret Ward has examined the life of the suffragette turned republican Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, and has examined her campaigns against the exclusion of women from public life in the 1930s.²⁹ Leeann Lane has produced biographies on Dorothy Macardle and Rosamond Jacob, the latter of which Lane argues offers an 'alternative lens' on the biographical project due to Jacob's 'ordinariness'.³⁰ Indeed, although Jacob was a member of a variety of political movements during the twentieth century which included feminist and republican politics, she never rose to the ranks of leader, therefore Lane contends that she offers a fascinating insight into the experiences of 'ordinary' women during this tumultuous period in Irish history and its immediate aftermath.

²⁶ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924).

²⁷ Lindie Naughton, *Markievicz: a most outrageous rebel* (Newbridge, 2016); Lauren Arrington, *Revolutionary Lives: Constance and Casimir Markievicz* (Princeton, 2015).

²⁸ Mary McAuliffe, *Margaret Skinnider* (Dublin, 2020).

²⁹ Margaret Ward, *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington: Suffragette and Sinn Féiner: Her Memoirs and Political Writings* (Dublin, 2017).

³⁰ Leeann Lane, *Dorothy Macardle* (Dublin, 2019); Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: the third person singular* (Dublin, 2010).

Through the medium of biography, a handful of individual women's revolutionary 'afterlives' have been explored. Themes such as the struggle against the limitation of roles for women in Ireland, ill health, and the effect of the revolutionary period on relationships have been explored through these works. However, with the exception of Lane's work on Rosamond Jacob, the exploration of 'afterlife' in biography has not been extended to more 'ordinary' women and certainly not to republican women who were active outside of Ireland. This is despite the rich collection of evidence which details the lives of women after the revolutionary period which is available in the Military Service Pension Collection.

Therefore, the 'afterlife' of Lena McDonald has yet to be fully incorporated into historical studies on the revolutionary period and its aftermath. McDonald operated within a network of republican women in Britain, and the archives of the Military Service Pensions Collection give insight into their lives. The applicants also had the added problem of trying to prove they had 'active service,' a flimsy term which was difficult to apply to the guerrilla fighting in Ireland, let alone the clandestine gunrunning activities which were carried out in Britain. Lena McDonald's application highlights some of the main issues faced by republican women in Britain during this time, as her financial difficulties, constant migration, and struggle to get her pension approved were shared by many of the women who she was acquainted with through her involvement in the Republican network in Britain.

'Miss McDonald and her mother are in this country today without a home or means of living...': financial hardship and anti-Irish sentiment.

For many former republican women in Britain, the Military Service Pensions offered a desperately needed source of income, as many faced limited employment opportunities because of their activities. Although these pensions were meagre, especially compared to the sums awarded to their male counterparts in Ireland, for many Irish women in Britain they provided a lifeline, as well as a way of legitimising their service.

Despite her training as a midwife and growing up in a relatively well-off family, McDonald experienced financial hardship in the years after the Civil War. In her application, she stated this was due to a combination of her family's business being shunned and her health preventing her from working.³¹ McDonald's 'delicate health' was touched upon in her plea for bail during the infamous 'eggs in a box case' trial in 1921.³² Although it is not explicitly stated in neither the coverage of her trial nor her pension reports, it is likely that she suffered from tuberculosis or another type of respiratory disease, as she spent time in a sanatorium in Newry in the 1940s.³³ She also expanded on her family's financial hardship; in a letter to Éamon de Valera, dated April 1940, she begged to know whether her pension (which she originally applied for in 1938) had been processed. She wrote that she and her mother had been in Ireland since September 1939 and could not 'go on any longer' as the money they had was 'gone'. Even the 'with the sale of [their] furniture' they 'found themselves without money'.³⁴ McDonald stated that although they had been staying with Fahy, they were in desperate need of a home for themselves as her mother was ill and 'they could not remain [there] forever'.³⁵

During this time, she and her mother also lived with Charles Strickland (alias McGinn), a former member of the Scottish Brigade IRA in Glasgow, at his address in Inchicore, Dublin, highlighting their reliance on the Republican network that existed in Britain during the revolutionary period, and the persistence of these ties after the Civil War.³⁶ Another Scottish applicant, Mary McPhillips (nee Fullerton) attested to the persistence of these old Republican ties, stating that upon moving to Ireland she felt isolated because of her Scottish accent, and that the Old Scottish IRA were 'her crowd' rather than her new, Irish neighbours.³⁷

³¹ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

³² *Evening Telegraph*, 17th May 1921.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*; MSPC, 24SP12427, Charles Strickland (McGinn).

³⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF61656, Mary McPhillips.

McDonald's pension was eventually approved in 1941, three years after she originally applied. At this point in her life, McDonald and her mother were renting a room in a house in Belfast for one halfpenny a week where McDonald was recovering from an operation. She received five shillings a week from the outdoor relief. However, the correspondence on her file suggests that the granting of her pension only alleviated her financial situation slightly. Like many other revolutionary women, she was awarded a grade E, which was the lowest grade available, and was entitled to £11.14s.9p per annum, approximately £461.83 in today's money.³⁸ The majority of women who applied for pension were awarded this grade, with a handful being awarded a D or above. In the sample of women who were based in Britain, only four were awarded a grade D.³⁹

Despite her pension being approved, McDonald had difficulty in obtaining it. In July 1941, she wrote to the pension board enquiring as to the whereabouts of her pension, which had not reached her since she changed addresses from Belfast to Newry. A frustrated McDonald wrote that as she could not work, her pension was her only source of income, and both she and her ill, elderly mother depended on it.⁴⁰ Two years later, writing from Carrickfergus, while enquiring for a service medal, McDonald complained to the Pension Department that her 'papers are always sent on to old addresses' and often arrived late.⁴¹ In April 1944, McDonald wrote from an address in Birmingham, where she remained for four years, experiencing a spell of stability after years of constantly moving around Ireland. Mentions of her mother also ceased around this point, indicating the possibility that she died.

³⁸ Calculated using the National Archives Currency Converter: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result> (Date Accessed: 27/04/21).

³⁹ These were MSPC, MSP34REF19910, Margaret Skinnider; MSPC, MSP34REF61755, Alice Ginnell; MSPC, MSP34REF1692, Josephine Mulcahy; MSPC, MSPREF55889, Mary Egan. Egan is an outlier here: the other three women were involved in propaganda campaigns and international endeavours, which may explain their higher award. Mulcahy and Ginnell were also married to high-profile figures. Egan is the only 'ordinary' women who got a Grade D in this sample.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Other female applicants also highlight economic hardship as a main motivation for applying for a service pension. In the sample of applicants, nineteen women were unmarried and three were widowed. These women would not have had a joint income from a husband to rely on or to substitute their own earnings. Although jobs for women increased during the interwar period, women's opportunities for employment were still limited, especially in Ireland (where a large portion of the women in this sample moved to during this period), where successive governments were increasingly curtailing opportunities for women in the public sector.⁴² These factors, in addition to the dire economic climate of the 1930s, reflect the applicants' reliance on these meagre sums of money.

Many applicants testified that their involvement in Republican activities and anti-Irish sentiment from the British public were key reasons for financial damage or loss of employment. In Lena McDonald's application, Fahy, explicitly states that the activities of McDonald and her sister, Catherine, were the reason why their mother had to close their family business in Dundee, leading to their impoverished existence in Ireland, stating that they were 'continually harassed by Scotland Yard'.⁴³

This was an experience shared by McDonald's gunrunning comrade in Glasgow, Jean Gillespie. Gillespie's trial and arrest in March 1921 was highly publicised as she was tried alongside fifteen other republican men and singled out as the 'red headed girl'.⁴⁴ As a result, her furniture shop greatly suffered. In her pension application, she stated that 'the publicity of the trial 'did very serious injury to [her] business' and she was 'unable to return to it' on her release, entailing a 'heavy financial loss'.⁴⁵ She also wrote she had to move in with her mother and it eventually folded.⁴⁶

⁴² See Claire McGing, 'Women's political representation in Dáil Éireann in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary Ireland' in L. Connolly's, *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence* (2020).

⁴³ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

⁴⁴ *Dundee Courier*, 21st March 1921.

⁴⁵ MSPC, MSP34REF783, Jean Gillespie (nee Quinn).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Several other applicants faced financial and employment difficulties because of their involvement in the republican movement, especially those like McDonald and Gillespie who were arrested. Kathleen O'Sullivan (nee Browne), who was arrested along with her sister for their part in the Liverpool Fires of November 1920, lost her job as a clerical assistant, even though the charges against her and her sister were dropped due to lack of evidence.⁴⁷ Similarly, her illegal arrest and deportation to the Irish Free State in March 1923, Margret Leonard stated she and her husband were 'compelled-for obvious reasons- to leave Liverpool' as she could not find work as a teacher. The Leonards moved to Sydney, Australia, where she stated that they found a 'haven'. The other women who were illegally arrested and deported also had trouble in regaining employment after their release due to the high publicity which entailed their arrest. Roisín Killeen was refused her old position as a teacher at Fairclough Street Council School and had to get the Parliamentary Labour party to intervene on her behalf.⁴⁸ Similarly, Eileen Cullinan, who owned a dress making business, noted that her business had been 'seriously prejudiced' as a result of her arrest.⁴⁹

Many republican women who were not arrested also experienced problems with maintaining employment and keeping themselves financially afloat. Margaret Buckley of the Manchester Cumann na mBan struggled to find work after the collapse of William McMahon's business after he was released from prison in 1923. Buckley stated that this was due to her links with the IRA. Buckley's application was rejected, despite ample evidence and references, although it is not explicitly stated why.⁵⁰ Maire Manning, who was employed as a post office clerk in London, was dismissed from her job after the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson because of her involvement in Cumann na mBan and the Irish Self Determination League (ISDL).⁵¹ Similarly, Margaret Sexton of St. Brigid's, Manchester, Cumann na mBan claimed her activities prevented her from obtaining a

⁴⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF8425, Kathleen O'Sullivan (nee Browne); MSPC, MSP34REF41908, Sheila Browne.

⁴⁸ TNA, HO144/3749, Rosina Maire Killeen.

⁴⁹ TNA, T27/182 Court Papers and Particulars of Claims, Irish Deportees (Compensation) Committee, Eileen Cullinan.

⁵⁰ MSPC, MSP34REF42054, Margaret Buckley.

⁵¹ MSPC, MSP34REF35954, Maire Keyes (nee Manning).

teacher's pension, claiming had she 'not given [her] time and money and energies to the cause [she] would have got a promotion and been able to continue teaching until [she] had served full time and be in receipt of an annuity of £3.15 per week rather than £2.90 per week'.⁵²

The applicants also stressed they used their own money to pursue the operations assigned to them. For instance, acting as a reference for Sexton, William McMahon stated that 'the money needed for her various activities always came out of her own pocket'.⁵³ Lena McDonald stated that her mother gave her most of the money she used to purchase weapons from pawn shops, while Kathleen Talty, who worked closely with Margaret Sexton in Manchester, stated the women used their own money to visit Republican prisoners interned after the Easter Rising and provided them with food and tobacco.⁵⁴

Employment discrimination was not the only way these women faced prejudice in Britain. The authorities were an ever-lingering presence in their life, even years after they ceased being active in republican organisations. Many of these women applied for service pensions during the Second World War when security was heightened. Indeed, it is conspicuous that McDonald left Scotland in September 1939, on the eve of the Second World War passing of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1939. The act gave the authorities power to detain any person endangered 'public safety and defence of the realm' and enabled them to search premises or detain any property 'other than land' by those who were deemed a threat. Therefore, McDonald's swift exit to Ireland may have been in anticipation of tightening security and an awareness of her previous involvement in the IRA.

The wartime restrictions impacted some of the applicants from obtaining their pensions. In Winifred Anglim's application, which was originally made in 1949, she stated she would have liked to have applied sooner, however as Irish news was restricted during the period of war, she was unaware that she was able to do so. She added cryptically that even if she was aware, it would have been difficult

⁵² MSPC, MSP34REF59330, Margaret Sexton.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ MSPC, Lena McDonald; MSPC, Margaret Sexton; MSPC, MSP34REF50666, Kathleen Talty.

as she was 'under observation' and all phone calls and post that came to her house were intercepted, owing to her past involvement Cumann na mBan.⁵⁵ Anglim stated this was because her house was O/C Headquarters during 1920-22 and she used to receive correspondence for the IRA at that address.⁵⁶ Similarly, Mary Gogarty, who was a teacher in London, instructed that the correspondence relating to her pension be sent to an Irish address in Dublin. A member of the Brady family, who lived at this address, wrote to the pensions department to instruct this, stating that 'the nature of her employment in England makes it imperative that no communications from your office should be sent to any address other than the one above'.⁵⁷ Anna O'Donoghue stated her London home was subjected to a police search owing to her former involvement in Cumann na mBan.⁵⁸ O'Donoghue stated the raid was in June 1939, months before the outbreak of the Second World War, however she was at pains to stress she was no longer connected to the movement. Twenty officers raided her home, forcing open doors and drawers, and the stress was so much that her husband took a heart attack.⁵⁹

The experiences of Anglim, Gogarty and O'Donoghue highlight that these women's involvement in Republican organisations had a lasting impact on their lives. They also demonstrate how their activities impacted the way the British authorities viewed them, even long after they had ceased their activities. There is little evidence that any of the women in this sample were part of ongoing IRA campaigns in the 1930s and 1940s, however, in the eyes of British authorities, their past involvement was enough to implicate them.

'A pension will help us to realise the dearest wish of our hearts to return and end our days in our own green isle': Return Migration.

⁵⁵ MSPC, MSP34REF61846, Winifred Anglim.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF58165, Mary (Ciss) Gogarty.

⁵⁸ MSPC, MSP34REF57710, Anna O'Donoghue.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

In 1949, McDonald wrote from an address in New York, stating she had travelled to visit friends, but decided to stay there for a longer period. This holiday must have made an impression, as shortly after, she arranged for her pension to be sent out to an address in Queens, New York, where she remained for over ten years. This period of her life contrasts greatly to her earlier years. Although there is not much evidence about her life in New York, the lack of correspondence and consistent address reflects that McDonald carved out a stable life in the city. Her sister, Catherine resided in the same address. They both worked in a nursing home in the city during this time.⁶⁰ Newspaper evidence from this period highlights that McDonald began to actively celebrate her past involvement with the Irish republican movement.⁶¹ She also holidayed to Ireland multiple times during this period, contrasting strongly with the financial and security problems she faced only a few years earlier.

In 1953, she and Catherine flew over to Ireland for An Tóstal, the first of a series of festivals which celebrated Irish life, and were called upon by the Mayor of Limerick for a reception in the city hall.⁶² At some point during these celebrations, Lena was given a golden bracelet by the Lord Mayor of Dublin for her 'bravery, nobility, and sacrifice' during the revolutionary period.⁶³ McDonald visited Ireland again in 1963, where she lost her service medal at a celebration mass, presumably for former IRA and Cumann na mBan members. Losing the medal caused her great distress, as she wrote to the Pensions Department that she was 'very upset and [should] feel very grateful if something could be done', highlighting a sense of pride towards her former activities.⁶⁴ The sisters also flew to Dublin for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Easter Rising, where they were special guests of the Lord

⁶⁰ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

⁶¹ *Irish Press*, 10th April 1953.

⁶² *Limerick Leader*, 23rd May 1953.

⁶³ *Irish Press*, 15th April 1966.

⁶⁴ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

Mayor of Dublin at a celebration in the Mansion House.⁶⁵ McDonald spent her final years in St. Petersburg, Florida, where she died in 1982 at the age of 85.

As a result of economic hardship and anti-Irish sentiment in Britain, many former republican women emigrated during their lifetime, like McDonald. Out of this sample, over half left Britain for other destinations, including the USA, Australia, and Ireland. The reasons stated in the application for emigration vary, although the two main themes that stand out are the search for better employment opportunities and the need to leave Britain due to ostracism and hostility. In addition to this, there is a distinct pattern among the applicants' destination relating to age, country of birth, and reason for emigrating.

The women in the sample who left for the USA were young, single, and stated that their main motivation was the prospect of employment opportunities. This reflects the profile of women who emigrated from Ireland to the USA from the mid-nineteenth century onwards more generally.⁶⁶

Unlike other waves of emigrants from Europe, Ireland's emigrants who were America-bound were roughly balanced in gender until the interwar period, when Irish women began to outnumber their male counterparts. Figures for the precise totals vary, however Bernadette Whelan estimated that between 1871 and 1971, for every eight Irish men who left Ireland, there were ten Irish women.⁶⁷

Whelan has argued that while Irish men who left in this period have been characterised as unwilling exiles, Irish women should not be viewed through the same lens, as they were active agents seeking out employment opportunities that were unavailable to them in their native land.⁶⁸ Hasia Diner has also explored the opportunities available for Irish women in the USA, especially in the domestic

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ See Jennifer Redmond, *Moving histories: Irish women's migration to Britain from independence to republic* (Liverpool, 2018), pp.30-32; Janet Nolan, *Ourselves alone: women's emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920* (Lexington, 2009), pp.73-77; Pauric Travers, 'There was nothing for me there': Irish female emigration, 1922-71 in Patrick O'Sullivan's *The Irish World Wide, Vol.4: Irish Women and Irish Migration* (London, 1995), pp.146-168.

⁶⁷ Bernadette Whelan, 'Women on the move: a review of historiography of Irish emigration to the USA, 1750-1900', *Women's History Review*. No. 24, Vol.6, (2015) pp.900-916, p.901.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

service sector.⁶⁹ Diner argues that the USA provided Irish women with a space where they could make their own wages (at a considerably better price than back home) and had a greater chance at starting their own families, due to the dowry and land inheritance patterns in Ireland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Janet Nolan also takes this stance, arguing that the structure of society in post-famine Ireland prevented women from ‘achieving adult status as wives and wage earners’, therefore ‘these dispossessed women looked abroad for the opportunity to fulfil their social and economic aspirations.’ These analyses reflect an image of a generation of women who wanted to build careers, earn money, and have families of their own, even if that meant leaving their native land.

The Irish women in the MSPC archives who emigrated for the USA generally fit this image. Most of these women left in the immediate years after the Civil War and some continued to be active in Irish and republican organisations in the USA. For instance, Margaret Buckley and Mary Healy, who were both members of Cumann na mBan in Manchester, left Britain shortly after the end of the Civil War and both settled in Detroit, Michigan, where they were members of the Kevin Barry Cumann na mBan.⁷⁰ Most of these women moved to the East coast or Mid-West in cities that already had established Irish communities, such as New York, Detroit, and Chicago. Within this sample, there is also a pattern of chain migration amongst the Manchester Cumann na mBan women. Mary Healy, Margaret Buckley, Johanna Moloney, Mary Feeney and Mary Doyle all moved to the USA after the Civil War. Healy and Buckley lived together in Detroit with Buckley’s younger sister, where they worked as a sales assistant and bookkeepers respectively.

The most popular destination for republican women who emigrated from Britain was Ireland. Out of this sample, thirty-three out of the forty-five women who emigrated left for Ireland. On one hand, it is unsurprising that these women, who dedicated a significant part of their lives to gaining Irish

⁶⁹ Hasia R. Diner, *Erin’s Daughters in America* (Baltimore, 1983).

⁷⁰ MSPC, Margaret Buckley; MSPC, MSP34REF19467, Mary Healy.

freedom, would choose to spend the remainder of their lives in that country. On the other hand, it is interesting that these once politically active women would choose to come (or in some cases, return) to a country that was actively limiting the public roles available to women through legislation such as the 1932 marriage bar on the civil service, and the 1937 constitution which formalised women's place in the home, as well as the marriage bar on primary teaching.⁷¹ Restrictions in public life were also prevalent in Britain, for example, there was a marriage bar in the Civil Service until 1946, however, the prominence the Catholic Church in state affairs meant that such restrictions lasted longer in Ireland and that change was slower to take place.

Some of these answers can be discerned from examining the profile of the women who migrated to Ireland. In contrast to the women who left for the USA, many of the women who went to Ireland in this period were slightly older, more likely to be married or widowed, and were more likely to be Irish born. The flight of these women back to Ireland was also more gradual and sustained in comparison to those who left for the USA, as applicants based in Britain who left for Ireland did so many years after the end of the Civil War, reflecting a desire to return home rather than economic or political necessity. Many married Irish born men, and so moved back with them. Most of the women who returned to Ireland settled in their native counties, reinforcing the idea that these women were migrating out of a desire to return home. Kathleen Talty, one of the women who assisted in Éamon de Valera's escape from Lincoln Gaol, returned to her native County Clare (where she endorsed Fianna Fáil in the election campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s), while Mary English settled back in County Wexford with her family.⁷²

⁷¹ For more on this, see Deirdre Foley, 'Their proper place': women, work and the marriage bar in independent Ireland, c. 1924–1973, *Social History*, Vo.47, No.1 (2022), pp.60-84; Jennifer Redmond and Judith Harford, "'One man one job": the marriage ban and the employment of women teachers in Irish primary schools', *Paedagogica Historica*, 46, 5 (2010), 639–54; Jennifer Redmond and Judith Harford, "'I am amazed at how easily we accepted it": the marriage ban, teaching and ideologies of womanhood in post-independence Ireland', *Gender and Education*, 31, 8 (2019), 186–201.

It should also be noted for context that there was a marriage bar in the British Civil Service, which lasted until 1946 for the Home Civil Service, and until 1973 for the Foreign Service.

⁷² MSPC, Kathleen Talty; MSPC, Mary English.

One of the possibilities for republican women migrating back to Ireland in later life was that their Republican networks in Britain were slowly dying. The Irish Republican network proved to be a vital community for those who found themselves on hard times, both during and after the revolutionary period. This is demonstrated in Lena McDonald's case, as she relied on her former O/C of the Dundee Company IRA, Fr. John Fahy, and the Glasgow IRA member Charles Strickland for shelter in the years she initially moved to Ireland and was facing financial hardship.

By the time these women were applying for service pensions, these communities had shrunk dramatically in size and power. Many republican women emigrated after this period, or even migrated within Britain, and as the years rolled on, many also died. Consequently, the vibrant communities which many of these women were a part of were vanishing. A common occurrence in the pension applications was the applicant struggling to list the details of possible referees who could testify to their service. In her unsuccessful pension application, Maire McGaleagly (or Marie McGallogly), who was a member of Cumann na mBan in Glasgow, dejectedly stated that she could not provide any more references in addition to than the ones she had already given: 'Essie Ross died a couple of years ago, Nan Behan, now Mrs O'Boyle, is in Derry in residence and I cannot get her address, and one other person I had forgotten about died...'⁷³ Therefore, it is possible that the women who chose to return to Ireland did so because the communities which had moulded their lives in Britain were gradually disappearing.

For those who remained outside of Ireland, the image of the political exile is heavily invoked in their applications. This is intriguing, as the image of the Irish emigrant exile has been traditionally linked to the male experience in the USA.⁷⁴ Applicants and referees draw upon the image of the political exile when trying to make a successful application for these women, with applicants outside of Ireland stressing the fact that they had been torn away from their homeland (or the land of their

⁷³ MSPC, MSP34REF58062, Maire McGaleagly.

⁷⁴ See Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford, 1985); S. Aiken, 'Sinn Féin permits...'

ancestors) involuntarily. In Maire McGaleagly's application, she emphasises the struggles she endured on behalf of the fight for Irish freedom, emphasising the impact of the death of her husband from complications relating to hunger striking, her nervous breakdown after his imprisonment, and her attacks of neuritis. She stated that her 'greatest hunger' was to live out the rest of her life in Ireland.⁷⁵ Similarly, Margaret Leonard wrote that the reason she and her husband were applying for service pensions was to 'realise the dearest wish of [their] hearts to return and end our days in our Green Isle'.⁷⁶ Leonard died in Australia in 1946 without returning to Ireland, the 'dearest wish' of her heart unrealised.

Referees for the applicants also drew on this imagery. Henry Forbes, who was testifying on behalf of Bridget 'Mother' Flanagan, who was a member of the Scottish Brigade IRA in Glasgow, emphasised the suffering this 'daughter of Erin' took upon herself on behalf of her country.⁷⁷ Slipping into the language of martyrdom, Forbes stated that Flanagan was 'willing to lay down her life' for her 'mother country', despite not having lived there for over thirty years, and that for her, 'next to love of God comes love of country'.⁷⁸ Forbes also emphasised the fact that both he and Flanagan were Irish born, practicing Catholics and used religious imagery in his referee statement, for instance, he stated that Flanagan 'took her cross and is bearing it to the best of her ability', and invoked the blessing of God 'and his blessed mother'.⁷⁹

Applicants also underlined political motivations for emigration (or return migration, in some cases), further reinforcing the image of the political exile. Margaret Sexton stated in her application 'had she not given her time and energies to the cause' she would have got a promotion.⁸⁰ Margaret Leonard made a similar case, stating that she was up for a promotion but her arrest and deportation

⁷⁵ MSPC, Maire McGaleagly.

⁷⁶ MSPC, MSP34REF45593, Margret Leonard.

⁷⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF55614, Bridget Flanagan.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ MSPC, Margaret Sexton.

in March 1923 prevented her from obtaining it.⁸¹ Leonard also stated that she could not stay in England because of the high publicity around her arrest and deportation, if she had, she would have been able to retire comfortably on a full pension. However, she continued to state, 'I would forego the same again today if by doing so I could help my native land'.⁸² Síobhra Aiken suggests it is possible these women found it easier to frame themselves as political exiles rather than admitting the economic and social hardships that they had experienced.⁸³ However, it also could have been a tactic in presenting themselves to pension board, as an emphasis on sacrifice and commitment to Ireland may have been looked upon favourably. The applications highlight that emigration was not an experience limited to Republicans in Ireland, and that Irish women in Britain too, 'fell between the cracks' of being political and economic migrants, while those who returned to Ireland demonstrated the strength of their ties to their homeland.

'She has never been the same since': the physical and psychological afterlife of Revolution.

This imagery of exile is also reflective of the psychological impact revolution had for these women. Their involvement in Republican activities significantly shaped their later lives, as highlighted by the continued surveillance and economic ramifications that many of these women were subjected to years after the end of the Civil War.⁸⁴ Women's experiences of Revolutionary trauma and its long-term effects are increasingly being explored by historians. Gemma Clark has examined gender-based violence during the Irish Civil War, arguing that women's experience of violence differed from men's during this period due to prevalence of attacks on home which transcended the public/private boundaries.⁸⁵ Síobhra Aiken has also explored the gender-specific medical treatment of trauma amongst women. Analysing women's diagnoses of conditions such as 'exhausted nerves', Aiken

⁸¹ MSPC, Margaret Leonard; TNA, TS27/182 Court Papers and Particulars of Claims, Irish Deportees (Compensation) Committee, Margaret Leonard.

⁸² MSPC, Margaret Leonard.

⁸³ Síobhra Aiken, "Sinn Féin permits...", p.116.

⁸⁴ See MSPC Anna O'Donoghue; MSPC Mary (Ciss) Gogarty.

⁸⁵ Gemma Clark, 'Violence against women in the Irish Civil War, 1922-3: gender-based harm in a global perspective', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol.44, No. 165 (2020), pp.75-90.

contends that many of these women, both activist and civilian, were suffering from what is now known as PTSD, but were diagnosed as having reproductive problems as a result of gendered understandings of medicine during this period.⁸⁶ Linda Connolly's edited volume *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence* (2020) explores themes such as violence against women, trauma and women's claims for disability and widows' pensions.⁸⁷ Therefore, there is an increasing amount of literature being produced on a subject which was once neglected and considered taboo, and therefore provides another frame of analysis in which to analyse the afterlives of the experiences of Republican women in Britain.

The pension applications reveal women outside of Ireland also suffered from a range of long-term physical and psychological effects because of their experiences. Although these women would not have been witness to the main arena of violence on the island of Ireland, their experiences in gunrunning, attempted prison breaks, and their treatment by the authorities had a lasting impact on their lives. The physical strain of their clandestine activities can be gleaned from their applications, especially from those who served prison sentences. Several women in this sample were controversially deported to Mountjoy Gaol in March 1923 because of 'anti-Treaty activities' for three months. A total of ninety-nine people across England and Scotland, nineteen of whom were women, were arrested in the early hours of the 10th March. They were transported by destroyer to Dublin on the same day. Initially, they were imprisoned in Mountjoy, but were transferred to the North Dublin Union for the latter part of their imprisonment.

There is a substantial body of evidence on the experiences of this group of prisoners due to the compensation trials that occurred after their release. They were released in May 1923 under the writ of Habeas Corpus, after it was found that their arrests and deportations were illegal. The legal

⁸⁶ Síobhra Aiken, "The women who had been straining every nerve": gender specific medical management of trauma in the Irish Revolution (1916-1923) in Melania Terrazas Gallego's (ed.) *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture* (2020), pp.133-158.

⁸⁷ Linda Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence* (2020).

challenge was made by the leader of the Gaelic League in London, Art O'Brien. Resultantly, the 'Irish deportees' were entitled to hefty compensation and a lengthy trial process commenced in the autumn of the same year. In addition to the files of the compensation tribunals, some of the women who were deported made military service pension applications, while others gave their testimonies to the Bureau of Military History.⁸⁸ A handful of women also launched their own individual case hearings before Art O'Brien's legal challenge, with varying degrees of success.⁸⁹

This body of evidence provides a detailed insight into the physical strain that imprisonment had on these women, and its long-term impacts. In the claims of the English compensation tribunal, the solicitor of Sorcha Nic Diarmada (referred to by her English name, Sarah McDermott) stated that she had suffered much physical discomfort in the months after her release from prison.⁹⁰ This included a swollen wrist and the inability to use her right arm after it was broken during a violent search by female prison guards.⁹¹ Other women, such as Grace Lally and Kathleen Brooks, reported that they suffered from insomnia and were 'physically weakened' by their ordeal.⁹² The women stated the conditions of imprisonment in the Irish Free State were far worse than those in Britain, as those who appealed individually were briefly transported to Holloway Prison. The solicitors of these women stated, 'save that [they were] wrongfully deprived of her liberty the Claimant makes no complaint of [their] treatment in Holloway Gaol'.⁹³

All who were illegally imprisoned and transported were compensated by the British Government.

The Scottish tribunal was held first in September 1923. The Scottish contingent received higher

⁸⁸ See MSPC Margaret Leonard; MSPC Mary Egan; MSPC Hannah Robinson; MSPC, MSPREF3461419, Ellen McGrath; MSPC, MSP34REF2198, Kathleen Barrett; MSPC, 49SP9064, Mary Cremen; BMHWS, No.145 Sorcha Nic Diarmada; BMHWS No.924 Mary Cremen.

⁸⁹ See TNA, HO144/2904, Margaret or 'Mary' Leonard; TNA, HO144/2865 Catherine Furlong; TNA, HO144/2866 Mary Finan; TNA, HO144/2852 Kathleen Brooks. Brooks and Furlong's appeals were successful, and they were transported to Holloway Jail in England before they were released.

⁹⁰ TNA, TS27/183, Restoration of Ireland (Indemnity) Act, Transcript of Hearings before the Irish Deportation Committee.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ TNA, TS27/182, Court Papers and Particulars of Claims, Irish Deportees (Compensation) Committee.

amounts than they anticipated, which provoked the Treasury Solicitor to write an apology to the Treasury.⁹⁴ The English tribunals were held in October. Sorcha Nic Diarmada received £600, the highest amount paid to any of the women who were imprisoned.⁹⁵ The amounts awarded to the women were considerably lower than their male counterparts. The highest amount paid out to the men from England was to Martin Molony, a silk trader from London, who was awarded £1,500.

The pension applications further attest to the physical and psychological trauma the women who were imprisoned faced. Rose Ann Duffy, who was a member of Cumann na mBan in Glasgow, stated that she developed a TB gland while she was imprisoned for gunrunning, and that it had 'caused her trouble ever since'.⁹⁶ Mary McPhillips, who was arrested alongside Duffy, stated that she suffered from a 'nervous disposition' since her imprisonment.⁹⁷ Mary Egan, who was a member of the IRA in London, was among the anti-Treaty women who were deported in March 1923. Egan was forty-eight at the time, significantly older than the other women who were active in Republican circles in Britain. She stated in her application that her release from North Dublin Union (where she was transferred to after Mountjoy) was due to 'ill health' caused by the treatment she received during her removal from London and her time in prison.⁹⁸ The papers of the compensation tribunal support this. Egan's solicitor stated that 'the claimant became seriously ill on her admission to Mountjoy Prison and developed symptoms of dropsy and sciatica with feverishness and much coughing'.⁹⁹ Egan's referees for her military service pension also reinforce this. According to Mick Murphy, former O/C of Second Battalion Cork Brigade (a Battalion which Egan had close connections to and even transported arms for) stated that she was released from prison 'in broken health and is not the

⁹⁴ TNA, TS27/181, Correspondence Treasury Solicitor to Treasury, 22nd September 1923.

⁹⁵ BMH, WS No. 945, Sorcha Nic Diarmada (13th May 1954).

⁹⁶ MSPC, MSP34REF52234, Rose Ann Duffy.

⁹⁷ MSPC, Mary McPhillips.

⁹⁸ MSPC, Mary Egan.

⁹⁹ TNA, TS27/182 Court Papers and Particulars of Claims, Irish Deportees (Compensation) Committee, Mary Egan.

same since' and she was 'nearing her last, and there is no doubt that her jail time [was] responsible for it'.¹⁰⁰

Egan's application for a disability pension goes into more depth about the specifics of her health. At the time the application was made in 1937, she was suffering from a variety of illnesses, including chronic bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, chronic osteo-arthritis in the right knee and hip, constipation, and piles.¹⁰¹ Egan stated she was suffering from a cold when she was arrested and deported, and the conditions at Mountjoy and the North Dublin Union resulted in her health worsening. The other female deportees stated that onboard the destroyer, Egan was made to sit under a leaky pipe which dripped on her for the duration of the crossing.¹⁰² Egan claims that she was made to stay in cell with damp and the clothes she wore and the bed she slept in were soaked through. Her osteoarthritis was a result of her time in prison, she claims, because she was made to stand for long periods of time. In her application, the assessor states that she was obese and had limited mobility, labelling her as a 'chronic invalid'.¹⁰³ Egan claimed for all these illnesses in her disability pensions claim, however only her respiratory diseases were recognised by the pension board assessors as being linked to her service. It is also interesting to note that she was awarded a grade 'D' for her service pension, a rank higher than most of the other women in this sample and received £14.16s.8p per annum in addition to fifteen shillings a week for a disability pension. Why she received a higher grade than the other women is unclear. It may have been because she was in the IRA rather than Cumann na mBan, although it should be noted that other IRA women in the sample such as McDonald and Agnes Winifred O'Boyle only received 'E' grades.

Egan's experience is the clearest example of the long-term physical impact of involvement in Republican activities within this sample. Other women in this sample attested to the psychological

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² TNA, TS27/183, Ireland: Restoration of Order in Ireland (Indemnity) Act 1923, Transcript of Hearings before the Irish Deportation Committee, Mary Egan.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

impact of their involvement in Republican activities during this period. Many of the women testified to the horror induced by police raids on their homes. Bridget Flanagan, Elizabeth Kerr, Kathleen Talty and Margaret Buckley, among others, had their houses raided during this period and underline the brute nature of the police and the fear of evidence being found against them.¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Kerr stated after one raid her home was completely destroyed, as floorboards had been pulled up in an attempt to find evidence relating to the Liverpool Fires (which her husband was imprisoned for).¹⁰⁵

The papers of the compensation tribunal for the 'Irish deportees' reflect that the women who were unjustly deported and imprisoned suffered psychologically because of their ordeal. It is stated some of the women had suffered from insomnia and a range of 'nervous disorders', which are not articulated clearly.¹⁰⁶ Kathleen Brooks suffered from 'acute neurasthenia' upon her release and was unable to return to work, being ordered by her doctor to take a holiday to Brighton to treat her nerves.¹⁰⁷ Neurasthenia was a blanket term used to cover a range of symptoms which in modern medicine are associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, however there was also a gendered element as the condition was readily applied to women who were thought to be more susceptible to nervous conditions, and it was also thought that the condition was linked to reproductive health. A growing body of work exists on the gendered medical treatment of veterans of the Irish revolutionary period, and diagnoses of neurasthenia have been scrutinised.¹⁰⁸ The term crops up in numerous pension applications made by women yet is startling absent from those made by men, further highlighting that it was thought of as a female malady. The papers of the compensation tribunals offer a unique comparison of how the women who were deported from Britain were medically assessed versus the men. While the male experience of deportation and imprisonment

¹⁰⁴ MSPC, Bridget Flanagan; MSPC Elizabeth Kerr; MSPC Kathleen Talty; MSPC Margaret Buckley.

¹⁰⁵ MSPC, Elizabeth Kerr.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, TS27/182, Court Papers and Particulars of Claims, Irish Deportees (Compensation) Committee.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Aiken, 'The women who had been straining every nerve', pp.133-158; Marie Coleman, 'Compensation claims and women's experience of violence and loss in revolutionary Ireland, 1921-23' in Linda Connolly's *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism and Violence* (Newbridge, 2020), pp.162-182.

detailed similar experiences of psychological distress and intimidation, the term 'neurasthenia' is notably absent. While women such as Kathleen Brooks were described by doctors as 'exhausted' or as having 'strained nervous', their male counterparts were described as suffering from 'debilities' from being 'abused'.¹⁰⁹

The files of the MSPC further reveals the psychological distress experienced by republican women in Britain. Many of these women witnessed the imprisonment, and even deaths, of friends and family who were also involved in the movement, which had a huge emotional and psychological impact. Elizabeth Kerr lost her son, Neil Kerr junior, who was accidentally shot while transporting arms in Liverpool. Nora Thornton lost two of her brothers, one of whom was part of the Free State army. Nora was the only member of her family at the funeral as her father was in Liverpool and her other brother was badly wounded.¹¹⁰ McGeehin discussed the impact of the executions of Reginald Dunne and Joe Sullivan for the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson in June 1922. McGeehin stated that she visited Dunne in prison after his arrest and they discussed a book he was reading at the time. McGeehin later realised that the book involved a prison escape and wondered whether Dunne was trying to hint at her to rouse their London circle to action. By the time she realised, Dunne had already been executed. McGeehin also attested to the impact of Dunne's execution on his family, stating that it 'practically unhinged' his mother, who 'never got over the tragedy'.¹¹¹ In the pension file of Annie McCaughey (nee Feeley), who was treasurer for the Liverpool branch Cumann na mBan, the assessor wrote a note at the bottom of her interview transcript that the applicant had been recently widowed and came to Dublin unprepared and in a rush. Consequently, McCaughey was 'on the verge of tears' on 'at least two occasions' during the interview, the combination of her rushed

¹⁰⁹ TNA, TS27/182 Court Papers and Particulars of Claims, Irish Deportees (Compensation) Committee.

¹¹⁰ BMH, Nora Thornton.

¹¹¹ BMH, WS No. 902, Mary McGeehin.

trip to Dublin and the memories of her time in a clandestine militant movement proving too much.¹¹²

Maire McGaleagly's application possibly provides the clearest example of the psychological impact of the revolutionary period in this sample. To reiterate, McGaleagly was a member of Cumann na mBan in Glasgow, and her husband's family was heavily involved in the Scottish Brigade IRA. McGaleagly's husband, James (sometimes referred to as Seamus), travelled to Ireland and fought in the GPO during the Easter Rising along with his brother, John. Neither brother had been to Ireland prior to this.¹¹³ After the Rising, he was imprisoned in Frongoch for his involvement, where he went on hunger strike. This led to health complications which plagued him for the remainder of his life, indeed, McGaleagly stated that after his release she no longer recognised 'the brown, curly haired' man she had married in 1916, as he was now 'grey and crippled with stomach pains'.¹¹⁴ Her husband was later arrested during the 'Smashing of the Van' incident in Glasgow in May 1921, following which McGaleagly had to leave the home of her father (where she and her husband lived) in Glasgow and she suffered a nervous breakdown. James McGaleagly died in February 1924, after suffering from long term complications as a result of his hunger strike in Frongoch.

Maire McGaleagly had great difficulty in obtaining both a widow's pension for her husband's service, as well as a service pension for herself. McGaleagly was deeply frustrated by this and emphasised the sacrifices she and her husband had made for the Republican cause in multiple letters to the pensions department. McGaleagly's letters reflect she endured much suffering, both emotionally and physically, as a result of her and her husband's involvement in the Republican cause, and that their involvement significantly shaped the rest of her life. With the loss of her husband, she had to raise her children on her own, and her employment opportunities were significantly limited because of her childcare duties and involvement in Republican activities. From reading her letters, this part of

¹¹² MSPC, MSP34REF23384, Annie McCaughey.

¹¹³ BMHWS No. 244, John/Sean McGallogly.

¹¹⁴ MSPC, 1D321, James McGaleagly.

her and her husband's lives was held in great esteem by McGaleagly. She stated in one letter, relating to her own service pension, dated Christmas Day 1940 that the years of the revolutionary period had made her 'weary' and that 'it is dreadful to think that the most glorious recognition of '16 (mil. Serv. Certificate.) is being withheld from me. I cannot point to it on the wall and say, 'that was my husband's', nor my own'.¹¹⁵ McGaleagly also stated that she suffered a breakdown after her husband's death, and that a life of constant police raids and living on the run had taken its toll on her. Her applications highlight the extent that her and her husband's involvement shaped her life, and there is a great sense of bitterness at the state not recognising this. Eventually, her widow's application was approved, although she never got the recognition of a pension for herself.

'Applicant seems to be a better type': The Irish State's view on female revolutionaries in Britain.

The applications allow insight into how the state viewed female applicants and whose contributions were deserving of recognition. Marie Coleman and Síobhra Aiken have demonstrated how the state's views on 'active service' limited the prospects of both women and people living outside of Ireland in their claims for a pension.¹¹⁶ Resultantly, women, who were generally members of Cumann na mBan, were awarded the lowest pension grades as their work was considered to be supplementary to that of the IRA, despite the fact that their efforts in gunrunning, intelligence gathering, and providing safe houses was vital to the success of the fight for independence. The applications illuminate the gendered ideals of the Irish government during this time and shed light on the ideal type of women the state saw as worthy of recognition in the fight for Irish independence.

Lena McDonald's application is a useful guide for determining the ideal qualities that the pension department looked for when approving a female, overseas applicant for a pension. Her application stresses that she was consistently active throughout the period in question, with only her time in jail

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ S. Aiken, 'Sinn Féin permits...'; M. Coleman, 'Compensating female revolutionaries'.

preventing her from carrying out her duties. Her references (who were all men except from Jean Gillespie) attested to her commitment to the cause of Irish freedom and the sacrifices she made. However, her references also stressed her vulnerability and maternal qualities. Fahy stressed financial difficulties and homelessness. He also stressed the fact that McDonald's mother was dependent on her and stressed that McDonald was her carer, emphasising a maternal side to this daring woman who was involved in a clandestine, militant organisation. McDonald also emphasised this in her numerous letters to the pension department enquiring as to the whereabouts of her pension. In a letter written in 1940, McDonald stated that her ill and elderly mother was completely reliant on her, and she in turn was completely reliant on her prospective pension as she was recovering from an operation and unable to work.¹¹⁷ These themes of maternalism and sacrifice are found elsewhere in these applications. Henry Forbes' reference for Brigid 'Mother' Flanagan heavily invokes religious imagery and sacrifice, while the referees of Mary Egan attest to her hospitality and caring nature alongside her steely commitment to the cause of Irish freedom.¹¹⁸

Besides Fahy and Gillespie, McDonald's other references were all former members of the Scottish Brigade IRA, mainly from the Glasgow A Company. Their names appear as references repeatedly throughout Scottish-based women's claims for pensions. Every woman in the sample who was successful in their claim had at least one male former IRA member acting as a referee, with most unsuccessful female applicants being turned down because they could not produce enough references to substantiate their claims of 'active service'.

Conversely, few women who were based in Britain acted as referees for their male counterparts, although some did for other women, as in the case of Lena McDonald and Jean Gillespie, who acted as referees for each other.¹¹⁹ This reliance on the claims of republican men reflects that in the eyes of the Irish state, they were subordinate to their male counterparts and that there was a hierarchy

¹¹⁷ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹¹⁸ MSPC, Bridget Flanagan; MSPSC, Mary Egan.

¹¹⁹ Ibid; MSPC, Jean Gillespie.

of veterans determined by gender. This put these women in a vulnerable position where they were at the mercy of their male kin to substantiate their claims, sometimes at the risk of their financial livelihood. This is despite the fact that many of their revolutionary roles overlapped, and the essential role women played in gunrunning, carrying despatches, and providing shelter.

Some women's pensions were rejected despite ample evidence provided by former male IRA officers. This suggests that the state was careful in choosing who they wanted to be included in their official recognition of who was involved in the fight for independence. In the application of Johanna Moloney, who was a member of the St. Bridget's branch of Cumann na mBan in Manchester, the board member who took her sworn statement stated that the applicant seemed to be 'a better type' and was 'sincere in her work'.¹²⁰ Similar comments were made on the application of Margaret Gilmartin, a member of Cumann na mBan in Glasgow. Gilmartin's application was originally rejected, and Gilmartin made an appeal. One of the board assessors wrote 'judging from her appeal she appears to be above the average in intelligence, and I think claim should be scrutinised carefully before finally being rejected'.¹²¹ Gilmartin's application took nearly six years to process and was ultimately rejected.

Although the board members who made these remarks do not elaborate, they imply that there existed a hierarchy of applicants. This could possibly explain why some applicants, who were able to produce referees and give examples of active service, were turned down. Maire McGaleagly's case is the most blatant example of this. Despite being a widow of an IRA member who fought in the Easter Rising, an active member of Cumann na mBan, and a mother of three children in need of financial assistance, McGaleagly's case was turned down numerous times. There is a possibility that this was because she was already claiming a widow's allowance, however McGaleagly felt strongly that her own services should be recognised in addition to her husband's. There were also other women who

¹²⁰ MSPC, MSP34REF22112, Johanna Moloney.

¹²¹ MSPC, Margaret Gilmartin.

claimed both widow's and individual pensions. Áine Ceannt, widow of Rising leader Eamonn Ceannt, received both a widow's pension and a pension for her own service, which was awarded a grade D, a grade higher than what most female applicants got.¹²² Grace Plunkett was rejected for an individual pension as she was never a member of Cumann na mBan, but her widow's pension was raised from £90 a year to £500 as the pension assessors felt it was inadequate.¹²³

McGaleagly's treatment contrasts with that of other widows and dependents of 1916 veterans, who were considered high up in the hierarchy of veterans by the state.¹²⁴ Those who were active during Easter 1916 in Dublin found it much easier to get their service pensions awarded than those who were active outside the capital, and the state was willing to provide for the children of the executed 1916 leaders.¹²⁵ Maire's husband, James McGaleagly, was one of the nineteen men from Glasgow who travelled to Ireland to fight in the Easter Rising and joined the Kimmage Garrison.¹²⁶ Although he did not die during the Rising, but later from complications of a hunger strike Maire McGaleagly had to fight tooth and nail to get recognition of both her and her husband's service, despite the fact that within the collection, it seemed that fighting in Dublin in Easter 1916 was prioritised by pension assessors. There were even women in this sample who were *only* granted pensions for their service during the Rising while their contributions outside of this period were unacknowledged, including Kathleen Barrett, who was Art O'Brien's personal courier during this period, and Margaret Leonard, a member of the Liverpool Cumann na mBan.¹²⁷ Therefore, McGaleagly's treatment by the pension department is somewhat perplexing, and highlights that the Irish state's glorification of those who were involved in the Rising was limited, and did not necessarily extend to those outside of Ireland.

¹²² MSPC, 1D330, Eamonn Ceannt; MSP34REF63426, Áine Ceannt.

¹²³ MSPC, 1D249, Joseph Mary Plunkett; MSPC, MSP34REF53667, Grace Evelyn Mary Plunkett.

¹²⁴ Coleman, 'Compensating female revolutionaries', p.927; Caoimhe Nic Dáibhéid, 'Fighting their fathers' fight': the post-revolutionary in independent Ireland, in Senia Pařeta's (ed.) *Uncertain Futures: essays about the past for Roy Foster* (Oxford, 2016), pp.148-160.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Figures for the number of people who travelled from Britain for the Easter Rising vary. For more information, see BMH, WS No.156, Seamus Robinson; BMH, WS No. 510, Frank Thornton; Ann Matthews, *The Kimmage Garrison, 1916: making billy-can bombs at Larkfield* (Dublin, 2010).

¹²⁷ MSPC, MSP34REF2198, Kathleen Barrett (nee Connolly); MSPC, Margaret Leonard.

The women whose pensions were rejected recognised these implications were angry that their contributions were not recognised. Rose Ann Duffy wrote a firm letter to the pension department upon receiving the news that she was 'not a person to whom the act applied'.¹²⁸ Duffy wrote that she was 'actively engaged' with Cumann na mBan in Glasgow and participated in a variety of activities in aid of the Irish cause, including fund raising and speaking tours. Duffy was also arrested for her part in a gunrunning plot which had gone awry in 1918, spending five months in prison. Duffy asserted that she wished to appeal the board's decision, and that if more information was needed, she would 'gladly furnish it'. Similarly, Kate Lee, who was also a member of Cumann na mBan in Glasgow, wrote that she 'got a great shock' upon learning that her pension was rejected.¹²⁹ Lee stated cryptically that she knew of people in Ireland receiving pensions 'and what they done, I don't know... we were in a foreign country... during the black and tan when there was very little stuff in some parts of Ireland depending on what came across the water and it was a very risky thing to do to store up stuff til it was dispatched'.¹³⁰

The letters in protest of their rejection reflect that these women were upset that their services were not being recognised by the country that they had fought for. When Maire McGaleagly finally got a service medal in 1943 (although as it was not engraved, she did not know whether it was for her husband's service or her own), she stated that she would 'treasure it and the 1916 [medal] until [she died]', underlining that official recognition of her and her husband's services was more important than any monetary value. Similarly, when writing to appeal the decision on her pension, Kate Lee sent a document detailing the trial of Henry Coyle, a purchasing agent for the Scottish Brigade IRA (who stood trial alongside Jean Gillespie), to the pension department in support of her active service. Lee stated firmly that it was to be sent back to her after they were done with it, as she 'treasured it more than any pension', reflecting that Lee was more interested in her services being

¹²⁸ MSPC, Rose Ann Duffy.

¹²⁹ MSPC, MSP34REF59950, Kate Lee.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

acknowledged than any payment.¹³¹ Therefore, the rejection or approval of applications by the state can be interpreted as a declaration of acknowledgement of service and were not solely based on economic necessity. In turn, the women who applied were not just seeking money, but wanted to be recognised for their contributions.

There was also great frustration with the Pension Board for the length of time applications took to be processed. This was not necessarily unique to applicants based outside of Britain, however the delays and periods of silence from the board exacerbated the feelings of frustration and isolation experienced by republican women who had been based outside of Ireland. For those whose pensions were rejected, there was deep frustration that they had to wait for such long periods of time, only to be disappointed. In these cases, some women launched appeals, however many did not, probably because they felt there was no point in going through such a long, tedious process only to be disappointed again. The frustration of travelling to Dublin to give a statement, long processing times and ultimately measly results could bubble over into frustrations about the state itself. Upon finding out that her application was rejected, Maire Keyes appealed to the pension board, stating that she was 'one of those who [was] let down in our country which [she] helped to free from British rule'.¹³² Similarly, Christina Caffrey-Keeley, who was a member of the ICA and Cumann na mBan in Glasgow, expressed disillusion with how long it took the board to process her application, stating 'I am beginning to think my application has been overlooked'.¹³³ Mary Feeley from Birmingham wrote that she was suffering financially and 'could have starved' in the time that it took for her pension to be processed.¹³⁴ Feeley's application was ultimately rejected. Overall, in this sample, just over half the women had successful applications.¹³⁵ This is a slightly higher rate than

¹³¹ MSPC, Kate Lee.

¹³² MSPC, Maire Manning.

¹³³ MSPC, Christine Caffrey-Keeley.

¹³⁴ MSPC, MSP34REF59004, Mary Feeley.

¹³⁵ 46 out of 72 women had their pensions approved.

women who had been based in Ireland, however, it should be noted that many of these women were initially unsuccessful and appealed their original decisions.

Conclusion

The pension applications made by republican women in Britain highlight that like their counterparts who were active in Ireland, the events of the revolutionary period had a long-lasting impact on Irish republican women in Britain. Lena McDonald's own life is reflective of some of the main issues these women faced, such as economic hardship, hostility from the wider community and authorities, and migration to name a few. McDonald's own life experiences serve to underline that these issues were not exclusive to male, former IRA members, or those who were active on the island of Ireland, stressing the transnational nature of the conflict and its aftermath. The sample of applications also highlight the physical and psychological impact of this period, as the lives of Mary Egan and Maire McGaleagly serve to demonstrate. This contributes to the increasing body of literature on women's experiences of trauma, a previously neglected and taboo subject within the history of this period.

The pensions are also revealing of who the Irish state deemed to be willing of recognition and reveal a hierarchy of veterans, as well as a consideration of who they believed to be included in the narrative of the establishment of the state. Like their fellow female Republicans in Ireland, women in Britain faced difficulty in obtaining recognition for their services due to the definition of 'active service', despite the vital roles they played which often overlapped with male IRA members. These women were also dependent on references from their male comrades in getting their pensions approved, highlighting that the Irish state, which was increasingly conservative in its attitudes towards women during this period, valued the word of their male counterparts over their own. In this sense, the MSPC archives are important in re-asserting the contribution of these women into the narrative of this period, and in highlighting the struggle they faced in getting their actions recognised in its aftermath.

By expanding the scope of study to include the afterlives of republican women in Britain, this chapter has highlighted that there was a commonality of experiences for former Republicans after the close of the Civil War, and to fully understand this, historians need to focus on those who have been excluded from studies such as women or those based outside of Ireland. While the idea of 'afterlife' is somewhat underdeveloped in the literature on this period, the pension applications reflect that the events of 1916 to 1923 deeply affected the generation of Irish men and women who witnessed the political upheaval and violence on the island of Ireland and elsewhere throughout the diaspora.

For republican women in Britain, their involvement resulted in a mixed legacy: while they took pride in their actions, for many, their involvement in a clandestine militant movement impacted their employment opportunities, relationships with their British neighbours, and their own physical and mental health. The heightened security during the Second World War highlights that some of these women were still viewed with suspicion, and that their past activities continued to follow them. Yet the high rate of return migration and appeals against their pensions being rejected reflect that despite the economic, financial, and social hardship, these women were proud of their actions and felt a great attachment to their native land.

Chapter Five: Discrimination, and Dispersal: The Afterlife of the Irish Revolution in Scotland, 1923-1966

Lena McDonald made the initial application for her military service pension in 1938 when she was still living in Dundee. Nearly seventeen years had passed since her arrest for the 'eggs in a box' scandal, yet McDonald still felt repercussions for her involvement in the Irish republican movement. Shortly after making the application, McDonald and her mother moved from Dundee to the house of her former IRA comrade, Fr. John Fahy, who at the time was living in Loughrea, Galway. The circumstances of their abrupt departure are not entirely clear, however Fahy's reference on McDonald's file sheds some light on their reasons. Fahy was frustrated with the slow pace of Irish bureaucracy and stated cryptically that applications should not be dealt with in order of a waiting list but based on 'current needs'. He explained that 'owing to Miss McDonald's work for Ireland in those days her family lost much financially and had to close their business stores and are still harassed and suspect by Scotland Yard'.¹ It is also worth noting that McDonald and her mother left Dundee in September 1939, around the start of the Second World War and the IRA's S-Plan sabotage campaign. Although the reasons are not entirely clear, it is evident that McDonald's departure had something to do with her previous involvement in the Scottish Brigade IRA, and that she had faced a degree of hostility from her fellow Dundonians for her past activities.² Dundee had a large Irish community, though it did not experience the levels of sectarian tension other parts of Scotland did.³ Nonetheless, McDonald's experiences highlight that the years after the end of the Irish Civil War were difficult for former IRA and Cumann na mBan members in Scotland. The Military Service Pension Collection highlights that hostility from the native population was a common experience for

¹ MSPC, MSP34REF56964, Lena McDonald.

² Ibid.

³ William Walker, *Juteopolis: Dundee and its Textile Workers* (Edinburgh, 1979), p.120; Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace; religious tension in modern Scotland* (Manchester, 1987).

those involved in the republican movement in Britain, and this hostility was not restricted to the periods of conflict but could persist long after 1923. Those in Scotland had to contend with an intensification of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment during the interwar period, which was marked by the success of ultra-Protestant political parties and the Church of Scotland's persistent attempts to limit Irish immigration.⁴

It is not surprising that like Lena McDonald, many former IRA and Cumann na mBan members left Scotland and migrated to Ireland during this period. In Ireland, these former republicans formed their own communities where their involvement in the republican movement could be celebrated rather than hidden. Many former members of the Scottish Brigade ended up in Dublin, where they formed the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association, an organisation which primarily aided former members with their military pension applications, but also acted as a vehicle for reuniting old comrades.⁵ Lena McDonald was in contact with the Association's leaders, and even helped to organise some of its events. However, unlike the flexible nature of the IRA and Cumann na mBan in Scotland, the Association reflected the gender and geographical hierarchies of the new Irish state, which was marked by a conservative Catholic ethos and limited roles for women.⁶

While the previous chapter explored the 'afterlives' of female republicans in Britain, this chapter will investigate the 'afterlives' of those who were active in the Scottish Brigade IRA and Cumann na mBan. It will explore the issues they faced after the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923, until the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966. It is roughly split into two broad

⁴ See David Lloyd Ritchie, 'They do not become good Scotsmen': a political history of the anti-Irish campaign in Scotland, 1919-1939', PhD (University of Edinburgh, 2013); Stewart J. Brown, "Outside the covenant': the Scottish Presbyterian Churches and Irish Immigration, 1922-1938', *Innes Review* Vol.42, No.1 (1991), pp.19-45.

⁵ Máirtín Ó Catháin, 'The Old IRA in Scotland and the 1916 Pensions' in Máirtín Ó Catháin and Stephen Coyle's (eds.) *We Will Rise Again: Ireland, Scotland, and the Easter Rising* (Glasgow, 2018), pp.79-86.

⁶ See Linda Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement: From Revolution to Devolution* (New York, 2002); Mary McAuliffe, 'Remembered for being forgotten: the women of 1916, memory, and commemoration' in Oona Frawley's (ed.) *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana, 2021), pp.1-18.

sections: the experiences of members who remained 'home' in Scotland, and those who went 'away' and migrated back to Ireland.

The first section will highlight the growth of anti-Irish sentiment in Scotland during this period, arguing that while anti-Irish discrimination was neither new nor exclusive to Scotland, this period witnessed a shift in the way the Irish were perceived as a result of the Church of Scotland's anti-Irish campaign in the 1920s and 1930s. Although on the surface this attack on the Irish in Scotland seemed unrelated to the activities of Irish republicans, the campaign had its roots in a Scottish identity crisis after the First World War and the fear of an Irish revolution on its doorstep.⁷ This is demonstrated in the testimonies of former IRA and Cumann na mBan members in the Military Service Pensions Collection, which attest to the struggles former republicans faced in Scotland. It will also argue that although anti-Irish prejudice was not uncommon in Britain, this campaign was unique to Scotland.⁸ This hostile environment was exacerbated by the limited success of ultra-Protestant political groups the 1920s and 1930s.⁹

The second section examines the significant migration of former Scottish republicans to Ireland during this period. It will examine this wave of migration, concluding that many former republicans settled in Dublin where they could use their previous involvement in republican organisations to their advantage in political and social institutions. Finally, it will examine the Old Scottish Brigade Association, arguing that it functioned as a social network which reflected the gender dynamics of Ireland during this period, raising questions about the compatibility of feminism and nationalism and the state of political organisations after periods of conflict.

⁷ David Lloyd Ritchie, 'They do not become good Scotsmen', pp.6-14.

⁸ Ibid; Stewart J. Brown, 'Outside the covenant', pp.19-45.

⁹ David Lloyd Ritchie, 'A very Edinburgh Riot: The John Cormack Phenomenon', *Scottish Local History*, No.83 (Summer 2012); Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: the uneasy peace; religious tension in modern Scotland* (Manchester, 1987), pp.134-182.

This chapter contributes to an understudied, albeit growing, body of literature on the experiences of those involved in or affected by the Irish revolutionary period after 1923.¹⁰ It underlines that the Irish Revolution did not end neatly in May 1923 but continued to affect those who had been involved in Republicanism as well as those who fought against them for many years later. By focusing on the Scottish experience, it also highlights that the messy legacy had a profound impact overseas, underlining that this was not a conflict restricted to Irish shores. The experiences of republicans in Scotland after 1923 highlight themes such as hostility from outside communities, police harassment, migration, and a return to conservative social mores.

'The Menace of the Irish Race in Scotland': The Church of Scotland's anti-Irish Campaign

Lena McDonald's life was significantly shaped by her involvement in the Irish Republican Army. In her later life, she was able to celebrate this aspect of her youth, but in the immediate aftermath of the Irish Civil War, this was not the case. In her military pension application, which was originally made in 1938, McDonald stated she and her mother had to leave Dundee as their family business was boycotted because her activities.¹¹

The hostility of the wider community was a common theme throughout the pension applications made by Republicans who were based in Britain. Those who owned businesses, such as Mary English from Liverpool and Jean Gillespie from Glasgow, stated that their stores were boycotted after it became known to the public that they were involved in republican activities, while other applicants pointed to the unique circumstances of working for a clandestine movement in the country of the enemy.¹² However, for those based in Scotland, there existed a unique brand of hostility which reared its head in the late 1920s and 1930s. This period witnessed an increase of anti-Irish sentiment

¹⁰ See also Síobhra Aiken, *Spiritual Wounds: trauma, testimony and the Irish Civil War* (Newbridge, 2022); Síobhra Aiken, "Sinn Féin permits... in the heels of their shoes': Cumann na mBan emigrants and transatlantic revolutionary exchange', *Irish Revolutionary Studies* (2020), No.44, Vol.165, pp.106-130; Gavin Foster, "'No 'Wild Geese' this time'?: IRA Emigration after the Irish Civil War." *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 47 no. 1, 2012, p. 94-122; Brian Hanley, 'Irish Republicans in Interwar New York', *IJAS Online*, No.1 (2009), pp.48-61.

¹¹ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹² See MSPC Mary English; MSPC Jean Gillespie (nee Quinn); MSPC Kate Lee.

across Scotland, which was the result of a Scottish national identity crisis in the aftermath of the First World War. This wave of anti-Irish hostility had roots in the Scottish experience of the Irish revolutionary period.¹³ During these years, police and officials at the Scottish Office greatly overestimated the size and capabilities of Sinn Féin in Scotland, and believed an attack like the Liverpool Fires of November 1920 was imminent on Scottish soil.¹⁴

The files of the Police Service General at the National Records of Scotland attest to the fear with which Sinn Féin in Scotland were viewed. Papers forwarded to the Scottish Office by the police reveal that the number of IRA Volunteers active in Scotland was overestimated in official reports, which gave the number to be around as much as 30,000 men strong.¹⁵ According to former O/C of First Battalion No.1 Scottish Brigade, Eamon Mooney, this number was much lower. Mooney estimated that at its peak, the Scottish Brigade had 2,100 volunteers, a massive difference.¹⁶ Mooney was a member of Glasgow B Company IRA and after the revolutionary period was a key organisational figure in the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association, which was created to assist those applying for military service pensions. Mooney was a phenomenal organiser and kept detailed lists of former members of Cumann na mBan and the IRA in Scotland, therefore it is likely that his figures are more realistic than the estimations of the Scottish Office.¹⁷ Seamus (James) Fullerton, who also served as O/C of the 1st Battalion Scottish Brigade and was a member of the purchasing staff for GHQ, estimated the membership of the Scottish Brigade to have been around 2,000 at the time of the truce in July 1921.¹⁸ Therefore, it can be said with confidence that the Scottish Office overestimated the size and scale of the IRA in this period.

¹³ Ritchie, 'They do not become good Scotsmen,' p.43.

¹⁴ Ibid. pp.15-44.

¹⁵ NRS, HH55/62, Irish Disturbances, Police Reports concerning illegal activities of Sinn Feiners and precautionary measures being taken, Chief Constable Glasgow C.I.D. to Under Secretary of Scotland, 18th October 1920.

¹⁶ MSPC, RO/603 Scottish Brigade, List of names forwarded by Mooney to the Pension Board, undated. Note: the numbers were slightly higher as the nominal rolls are incomplete for Scottish Brigade No.2, as the whereabouts of its O/C was unknown to Mooney and Robinson at the time of submitting this information.

¹⁷ See MSPC, MSP34REF14728, Eamonn Leo Mooney; MSPC, RO/603 Scottish Brigade.

¹⁸ Gerard Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.51.

Fears of an attack like the Liverpool Fires of November 1920 were also very real. The Chief Constable of Renfrewshire Police, Charles Handing, forwarded a letter from the Clyde Valley Electrical Company dated the 3rd December 1920, requesting a military guard for their power station as the 'destructive activities of Sinn Féin in the United Kingdom cause us serious apprehension to the safety of our power stations'.¹⁹ The response of the Scottish Office was that the War Office was unlikely to fund a military guard, however, they suggested that the company should supply workers with their own weapons at their own cost.²⁰ Similarly, it was suggested to arm guards at Perth prison, which housed numerous Irish prisoners, in case of an uprising.²¹

The reality of the situation was quite different: the main function of the IRA in Scotland was the transportation of weapons rather than the destruction of British property.²² In their study on the IRA in Britain, Gerard Noonan has argued that the influence of Rory O'Connor as O/C Britain meant that any attacks or destruction of property were to be carried out in England rather than Scotland, and that Scottish battalions were to occupy themselves with the task of transporting weapons instead.²³ The only attack which happened in Scotland was the 'Smashing of the Van' in May 1921. The IRA shot dead a police officer in the attempted rescue of Frank Carty, Battalion O/C of the Tubbercurry Company, Sligo Brigade IRA.²⁴ The attack was an unmitigated disaster: Carty was handcuffed to a police officer and was unable to escape. The incident resulted in a large roundup of anyone suspected of republican activities in Glasgow and an intensification of police presence around the areas with suspected arms dumps.²⁵ Those arrested included a priest, Fr. MacRory, whose arrest sparked fury throughout the Irish community in Glasgow. A vigil gathered outside Duke Street

¹⁹ NRS, H55/62, Irish Disturbances, Clyde Valley Electrical Power Company to the Secretary of State for Scotland, 3rd December 1920.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ NRS, HH55/66, Irish Disturbances, Consideration of issue of rifles to staff in anticipation of Sinn Féin attacks on Scottish prisons, Perth Prison Governor to Secretary of State for Scotland, November 1920.

²² See MSPC, Lena McDonald; Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.133.

²³ Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.144.

²⁴ For more information on this episode, see Stephen Coyle, *High Noon on High Street: the Story of a Daring Ambush by the IRA in Glasgow in 1921* (Glasgow, 2008).

²⁵ BMHWS, No. W.S. 933, Seamus Reader.

prison, where he was incarcerated, and there were widespread celebrations when he was released.²⁶ Thirteen people stood trial for murder, conspiracy to endanger lives and destroy property, and shooting to endanger lives at the High Court in Edinburgh in August 1921, on the same date Lena McDonald stood trial for the 'eggs in a box' case.²⁷ Surprisingly, none were found guilty, and the incident has since been popularised in a Celtic football song. Nevertheless, the 'smashing of the van' was a disaster which sparked fury in GHQ and hindered the gunrunning efforts from Scotland to Ireland during this period. Margaret O'Carroll, a member of the Anne Devlin Cumann na mBan, recalled that the incident resulted in a round-up of Republicans in Glasgow and stymied gunrunning operations.²⁸

Even though the IRA in Scotland were more concerned with the transportation of arms than the destruction of property, in the eyes of the police and the Scottish Office, the 'Sinn Féin menace' was seen as a dangerous threat which could not be underestimated and required an active response. There is evidence to suggest that the Scottish Brigade used this heightened sense of fear to their advantage, as they ordered men to drill to distract from gunrunning operations, creating what Peter Hart has described as a 'phoney war' which diverted authorities away from the beating heart of republican operations in Britain.²⁹ For example, a report from Renfrewshire Police Station was forwarded to the Scottish Office detailed a body of 2000 men believed to be 'Sinn Féiners' marching through Mian Street by torchlight.³⁰ Seargent Alexander McKenzie wrote that 'this midnight marching has a sinister aspect', and the Scottish Office forwarded this report to the War Office,

²⁶ *Dundee Catholic Herald*, 30th July 1921.

²⁷ NRS, AD 15/21/23, Precognition against Michael O'Carroll, John Carney, James Kavanagh, James McCarra, Daniel Branniff, John McGarrigle, Thomas Tracey, James Fullerton, William Fullerton, Daniel Patrick Walsh, Francis O'Hagan, Sean O'Daire and Vincent Campbell.

²⁸ MSPC, MSP34REF60809, Margaret O'Carroll.

²⁹ NRS, HH55/62, Irish Disturbances, Police Reports for Secretary of Scotland; D. Ritchie, *They do not become good Scotsmen*, pp.22-3; Peter Hart, 'Operations Abroad', p.3.

³⁰ NRS, HH55/62, Irish Disturbances, Police Reports concerning illegal activities of Sinn Feiners and precautionary measures being taken, Seargent Alexander McKenzie to Secretary for Scotland, 14th October 1920.

warning of trouble in any areas where there was a considerable Irish element.³¹ It is plausible that the 'sinister midnight marching' was used as a diversion tactic to distract the authorities from gunrunning operations, which the police reports demonstrate, was successful.

David Ritchie contends that the anti-Irish campaign that emerged in the years after the Irish Revolution was a result of the fear that Scotland was losing its Presbyterian identity and powerful position within the Empire. This fear had been rocked by the situation in Ireland in the early 1920s: indeed, for a Scottish society which had suffered greatly during the War and was clinging onto its Presbyterian identity in its aftermath, the idea of 30,000 predominantly Catholic 'Sinn Féiners' trying to overthrow the Empire on its doorstep left a lasting impression. Ritchie states that 'to middle class Scotland, the creation of a Catholic Irish Free State was a defeat for Empire, it was a defeat for previously unassailable Protestantism, and it was a defeat on their own doorstep'.³²

This national identity crisis has also been explored by Tom Gallagher. Gallagher highlights the blow to the Scottish heavy industries after the First World War as well as the disproportionately high casualty rate of Scots during the same conflict as important factors in this panic of Scottish national identity and argues that this feeling of loss 'spelt trouble for a marginal and unassimilated group like the Irish' who became a target on which Scottish institutions could project their own fears on to.³³

Martin J. Mitchell also supports this argument. Mitchell argues that 'it must be emphasised that the most intense and sustained period of popular hostility to the Catholic Irish community in Scotland was not in the nineteenth century when the economy was booming and jobs were plentiful, but after the First World War, when the country suffered a severe economic depression and a crisis in national identity'.³⁴

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. p.44.

³³ Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy Peace*, p.136.

³⁴ Martin J. Mitchell, 'Irish Catholics in the West of Scotland in the nineteenth century: despised by Scottish workers and controlled by the Church?' in Martin J. Mitchell's *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp.1-18.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Irish in Scotland came to be perceived as the most dangerous threat to Scottish national identity by a variety of groups. The most notable of these was the Church of Scotland's anti-Irish immigration campaign, which aimed to restrict the number of Catholic Irish migrants settling in the country.³⁵ Unlike other anti-Irish movements which will be discussed in this chapter, the Church of Scotland's anti-Irish campaign was given considerable attention by the Scottish Office and was founded in racial rather than religious arguments, marking it from previous anti-Irish movements in Scotland.

The first major step in this campaign was the publication of *The Menace of the Irish Race to our Scots Nationality* by the Church of Scotland and Nation Committee to the General Assembly in May 1923. The paper expressed deep concern for the state of the Scottish race and deplored the emigration of native Scots and the immigration of the Catholic Irish. The paper explicitly stated that the concern of the committee was not with the native, Scottish Catholics of the Highlands and Dumfries, nor the 'Orange' Irish who migrated to Scotland, but specifically with the Catholic Irish, who could not 'be assimilated and absorbed into the Scottish race'.³⁶ The committee stated that the reasons for this included the Catholic Irish taste for 'improvidence' and 'intemperance', as well as their acceptance to work for lower wages than Scottish natives, citing the 'jute mills of Dundee' as a specific example.³⁷ The committee also cited the 1918 Education Act, and how it benefitted Irish Catholics.³⁸ Although reference is made to the Catholic faith and the growth of Catholic schools and institutions, the publication underlines that the main problem with the Irish in Scotland was racial, rather than religious. In his analysis of the campaign, Stewart J. Brown argues that the Church of Scotland were less concerned with 'converting and more at marginalising and ethnic minority whose presence was

³⁵ See David L. Ritchie, 'They do not become good Scotsmen'; Stewart J. Brown, 'Outside the Covenant'.

³⁶ *The Menace of the Irish Race to Our Scottish Nationality*, Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland, May 1923.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.758.

³⁸ *Ibid*. p.762.

regarded as polluting the purity of the Scottish race'.³⁹ The incompatibility of the Protestant, independent, thrifty Scots and the dependent, volatile Irish was highlighted by the paper as the main reason for towns and villages 'becoming' Irish. The committee saw this as a direct threat to the stability of Scottish institutions. Furthermore, the Irish were consistently referred to as an 'alien' people who divided Scotland into two camps which, by their nature, could never mix. The paper ended by stating that it was the duty of Scottish people to 'preserve Scotland for the Scottish race, and secure to future generations the traditions, ideals, and Faith of a great people, unspoiled and inviolate'.⁴⁰

The Menace of the Irish Race outlines the main themes of the Church of Scotland's anti-Irish campaign during this period: that the Irish and Scottish races were incompatible, and the former posed a threat to the national institutions of the latter. The political unrest in Ireland was also hinted at in the paper as it is stated the Irish had no respect for the Sabbath and would instead rather attend 'political meetings and concerts' while native Scots took a day of rest.⁴¹ It is worth noting that the paper does not make a distinction between those who migrated from Ireland and those who were born in Scotland of Irish heritage, highlighting that the term 'Irish' was not confined to those who had been born there. Indeed, in the paper's calculations of the number of Irish children on school rolls in Scotland, it does not consider whether these children were Irish or Scottish born, further underlining their understanding of the Irish as a 'race' as well as contemporary understandings of generational heritage. Resultantly, many former members of the Scottish Brigade, who were born in Scotland, like Lena McDonald, would have been viewed as Irish rather than Scottish.

The publication of *The Menace of the Irish Race* provoked a tide of responses. Leaders of Irish communities in Scotland were quick to denounce the claims of the General Assembly. For instance,

³⁹ Stewart J. Brown, 'Outside the Covenant' pp.19-45.

⁴⁰ *Menace of the Irish Race*, p.762.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p.759.

in Lena McDonald's hometown of Dundee, Monsignor Turner of St. Andrew's Pro-Cathedral stated in an interview with the *Dundee Courier* that it was only because 'the kirks were a bit naked and the birth rate was not very progressive, the other side had begun to take up this question'.⁴² He also added that they had sent '1500 to the war, 200 of whom were now lying dead on the battlefields' and that there was 'nothing said then' on this topic, implying that Irish Catholics had made the ultimate contribution to the Scottish nation during the First World War.

However, some were quick to agree with the assembly. The *Courier* published an editorial which praised the General Assembly for drawing attention to this supposed issue. 'Irish immigration has become a serious problem', it stated, adding that the Irish had never 'blended' with the Scottish population and were a 'race apart in religion and habits'.⁴³ The editorial also criticised the 1918 Education Act, using it as an example to highlight how the Irish were being favoured over native Scots, and concluded by stating that the Irish should be 'freezed [sic] out' by one means or another.⁴⁴ In further articles, the *Courier* stated the large presence of the Irish in Scotland had resulted in their over-representation in local and national politics, and raised the issue of employers favouring cheap Irish labourers over native Scots, causing the latter to emigrate.⁴⁵ The *Courier* also referred to the political situation in Ireland, stating that the actions of Irish republicans in Scotland had soured public opinion, stating that 'now the Irish had a Free State of their own, why don't they stay there?'⁴⁶

The Church's campaign gathered steam after the publication of *The Menace of the Irish Race*. Spearheaded by Dr Rev John White of Glasgow, who became the Church of Scotland Moderator in 1925, the Church's campaign developed in the 1920s to promote the restriction of Irish migrants entering Scotland, taking inspiration from newly implemented American immigration restrictions.

⁴² *Dundee Courier*, 16th May 1923.

⁴³ *Dundee Courier*, 15th May 1923.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Reports by the Church and Nation Committee proposed deporting Irish people who were in poor houses or jails, claiming that they were disproportionately occupying these spaces in comparison to their fellow Scotsmen.⁴⁷ By the end of December 1925, the Church were exerting pressure on the Scottish Office to act on the issue. Consequently, from January to March 1926, the Scottish Office consulted the Scottish Board of Health, Registrar General and Prison Commission of Scotland to investigate the Church's claims.⁴⁸

The Scottish Office found the reports by the Church were greatly exaggerated.⁴⁹ While the investigation highlighted the 'importance' of this issue and was sympathetic to the fact that more Irish were entering Scotland than vice versa, it found that the 1921 census showed fewer Irish personage in Scotland than in 1911, the number of Roman Catholic marriages was only growing slightly, the number of Irish receiving poor relief had not grown in actual nor proportional terms, and Parish councils had not felt an increase in Irish in recent years.⁵⁰ The investigation also acknowledged the complicated issue of Dominion Status, reflecting on the fact that Irish born immigrants were still citizens of the British Empire, therefore it was illegal to deport them.⁵¹ It is possible that the controversial anti-Treaty deportations of march 1923 were still fresh in mind of Scottish Office officials, who were keen to avoid a similar scandal and financial pay out.⁵²

The *Glasgow Herald* also investigated the Church's claims and found that their assertions were greatly exaggerated.⁵³ The *Herald* conducted its own findings, using statistics from the Scottish Board of Health and steamships, concluding that the Church had greatly exaggerated its claims.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ NRS, CH1/2, Papers of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Main Series, No. 62, Church and Nation Committee 1923, Report of Committee to consider overtures on Irish Immigration & Education (Scot.) Act 1918.

⁴⁸ NRS, HH1/541, Immigration of Irishmen to Scotland, Report on Immigration of Irishmen to Scotland, 8th April 1926.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² For Scottish compensation trials, see NRS, E830/51, Irish deportees, Proceedings of Scottish tribunal under Restoration of Order in Ireland (Indemnity) Act 1923, lists of claims for compensation.

⁵³ *Glasgow Herald*, 8th March 1929; *Glasgow Herald*, 20th March 1929; *Glasgow Herald*, 25th March 1929.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Consequently, the Church's plans to convince the state to deport Irish prisoners and paupers to their native land were thwarted, however that did not mean that these activities ceased. The Church of Scotland continued to promote these motions well into the 1930s, and it was only the start of the Second World War which put a decisive end to this campaign.⁵⁵

Although ultimately a failure, the Church of Scotland's campaign was successful at igniting a conversation in interwar Scotland about its Irish population. While the campaign did not achieve anything in the way of policy, it successfully kept the issue on the agenda of the Scottish Office for at least a decade: the Scottish Office collected data to corroborate the Church of Scotland's claims until at least 1936.⁵⁶ The Church of Scotland's use of racial, rather than religious, terminology also marks the start of a new discourse surrounding the Irish in Scotland, and the use of such language gave its campaign an aura of respectability. While the campaign was criticised vociferously by Irish organisations throughout Scotland, it opened the way for wider conversations about the suitability of the Irish in Scotland and made the growth of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic political organisations in the 1930s possible. It also serves to demonstrate the hostile environment in which former Scottish Republicans found themselves in after 1923.

Protestantism and Politics: anti-Catholic Political Parties in Scotland

The 1930s also saw the rise of ultra-Protestant political groups, such as the Scottish Protestant League in Glasgow and Protestant Action Society in Edinburgh, both of which made significant gains in municipal elections.⁵⁷ Alexander Ratcliffe, who founded the Scottish Protestant League in 1920, had contested various parliamentary seats in elections throughout the 1920s, however his political breakthrough came in 1931 when he was elected to the Glasgow Corporation for Dennistoun, while another SPL member, Charles Forrester, won the Dalmarnock seat. A year later, the SPL gained

⁵⁵ Ritchie, 'They do not become good Scotsmen', pp.100-102.

⁵⁶ See NRS, HH1/537-HH1/574, Irish Immigration.

⁵⁷ Tom Gallagher, 'Protestant Extremism in Urban Scotland, 1930-1939: its Growth and Contraction', *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 64, No.178, Part 2 (October, 1985), pp.143-167.

another seat in Kinning Park, in Glasgow's South side. The main aim of the party was to repeal the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act, which allowed Catholic schools into the state funded system, however Ratcliffe was staunchly anti-Catholic and frequently published stories about the terrors of the church in his own publication, *Forward*. Although the party enjoyed considerable success, voters were not just drawn to it based on an anti-Catholic platform, but also on its socio-economic policies, which Tom Gallagher has characterised as 'left of the Moderates'.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Ratcliffe's views clearly resonated with voters, and he even managed to draw in a crowd of over 3,000 while on a speaking tour in Lena McDonald's hometown of Dundee, a city usually characterised as lacking in sectarian tension.⁵⁹ At this particular meeting, Ratcliffe stated that it was unfair that the 'Roman Catholics, one fifth of the population of Dundee, wanted to dictate to the other four fifths of the population', and he bemoaned the protests of those in the city who had objected to his renting of the Caird Hall.⁶⁰

John Cormack's Protestant Action Society similarly enjoyed moderate levels of success. What is striking about the success of PAS, however, is that it managed to gain seats on the Edinburgh city council, which, like Dundee, was an East coast city which had not experienced the high levels of sectarian violence associated with the west coast of Scotland. In 1933, the party had nine representatives on Edinburgh city council, however, the PAS's most enduring legacy was its involvement in a series of anti-Catholic riots in the city during the summer of 1935. The riots were in response to the Eucharistic Congress, which was being held in the city that year, and were composed of up to 10,000 people who threw stones and tried to fight the attendees of the Congress.

The series of events of the riot is hazy to this day, and historians have argued over the influence of Cormack and the PAS in Edinburgh. Tom Devine has argued that the riots were the 'most violent anti-Catholic riots seen in Scotland this century', while Tom Gallagher has argued that Cormack's

⁵⁸ Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy peace*, p.152.

⁵⁹ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1928.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

charismatic personality had the ability to uproot a usually peaceful community.⁶¹ David Ritchie has used police reports from the months leading up to the incident to show that there were concerns that Cormack would use the Congress to provoke violence.⁶² However Michael Rosie has downplayed the events of the riots, stating that they were little more than 'one rowdy demonstration in the leafy suburb of Morningside'.⁶³ Although Rosie's description of a 'rowdy demonstration' reflects the fringe nature of this political group, his argument undercuts the seriousness of the event. The demonstration was remarkably violent and must have been frightening for those involved. While the scale of violence itself was a one-off event in Edinburgh, there were other incidents in Edinburgh involving the members of PAS, such as an attack on members of the Catholic Truth Society off George Street in February 1936.⁶⁴

Although there is still disagreement over the riots of 1935, it is not hard to imagine that these incidents did not make for a comfortable environment for former republicans in Scotland, who had already been subject to years of harassment from the authorities and wider community. It should be noted that while Cormack's party was anti-Catholic, it was also used as a vehicle to primarily attack the Catholic Irish. For example, in the lead up to the Morningside Riot, members of PAS targeted the Usher Hall on the 10th June 1935 as the Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, was to be given the Freedom of the City. PAS members targeted people in the crowds wearing green with jeering and violence. During the revolutionary period, Mannix was renowned for his ardent support of Irish Republicanism and was prevented by the British government from talking in Glasgow, and as well as Dundee, came to talk in Edinburgh and Whifflet. Therefore, Mannix's political history and support of Irish Republicanism would have been familiar to Edinburgh audiences and members of the PAS.

⁶¹ Tom Devine in *The Herald*, 18th July 1998; Tom Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided: John Cormack and No Popery in the 1930s* (Edinburgh, 1987).

⁶² David Ritchie, 'A Very Edinburgh Riot: the John Cormack Phenomenon'.

⁶³ Michael Rosie, 'Protestant Action and the Edinburgh Irish' in Martin J. Mitchell's (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp.145-157, p.219.

⁶⁴ NRS, HH1/777, Roman Catholicism: Demonstrations and Anti-Catholic Sectarian Riots in Edinburgh, Edinburgh City Police report of disturbances in George Street, Edinburgh on 13 Feb 1936, following meeting of the Catholic Truth Society, 2 Mar 1936.

Therefore, these attacks might not have been motivated by purely anti-Catholic sentiment, but also anti-Irish and anti-Republican sentiment as well. Furthermore, although PAS have often been compared to the British Union of Fascists, they attacked their meetings due to the BUF's support for a United Ireland, revealing much about who was considered the target of their 'anti-Catholic' ethos.

While the Church of Scotland's campaign was racial in nature, the political campaigns of Cormack and Ratcliffe were primarily religious, with some racial elements. These groups and their leaders were more interested in dismantling the Catholic church globally, rather than getting rid of the Irish Catholic population in Scotland. However, as the example above highlights, members of these organisations tended to view these two groups as one. Stewart J. Brown has argued that while the violent outbursts in Edinburgh were deplored by and separate from the Church of Scotland, the Church's campaign certainly contributed to the 'mood of violence' and gave 'an aura of respectability' to sectarianism and racism.⁶⁵ Indeed, the Church's campaign opened up this discourse and set a precedent in starting a conversation on the position of the Irish in Scotland, which was channelled into newspapers columns and eventually, into the political thought of those like Ratcliffe and Cormack.

This aura of respectability could explain in part why waves of anti-Irish sentiment and violence spilled into places which had previously experienced little sectarian tension. The columns of the Dundee newspapers attest to this, and an examination of them gives credence to Lena McDonald's decision to leave the city in 1939 because of hostility from the wider community. After the General Assembly in 1923, the *Dundee Courier* praised the Assembly for bringing up the issue of the Irish to Scotland under the headline 'too many Irish in Scotland: time to stop flow of migration'.⁶⁶ Dundee newspapers also reported consistently high attendance at talks by figures such as Ratcliffe, Cormack, and Rev. Dr John White who spearheaded the Church of Scotland's campaign.

⁶⁵ Brown, 'Outside the Covenant', p.40.

⁶⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 30th May 1923.

However, there was some resistance to these views. Newspaper reports reveal that talks by these figures did not always go smoothly and interruptions were not unusual. For example, during a lecture on tightening Irish immigration given by Rev. Dr Duncan Cameron of Kilsyth, a group of Dundee women interrupted the talk by repeatedly yelling 'long live the Pope!'⁶⁷ There were protests objecting to Ratcliffe speaking at the Caird Hall in 1928, while during a lecture in 1934, a woman who was part of a group of interrupters had to be removed after making her protests loudly known during the talk, and even after she was removed her shouts could be heard from the corridor.⁶⁸ Further afield in Middlesborough, Ratcliffe and those sharing his platform were pelted with tomatoes and forced to end their lecture early.⁶⁹

How did these campaigns affect the former members of the Scottish Brigade IRA? Although neither the Church of Scotland's anti-Irish campaign, nor the anti-Catholic political movements are referenced in the pension records or witness statements, these sources do reveal that hostility continued after the close of the Civil War in May 1923, well into the 1920s and 1930s. Lena McDonald experienced hostility from the outside of the Irish community in Dundee for her previous activities in the IRA, leading to her departure from the city in 1939, which included the boycotting of her family's businesses and her neighbours telling her she ought to be executed. Jean Gillespie also experienced hostility in the form of boycotting, and had to shut down her business. James (Seamus) Fullerton wrote in his application for a military pension in 1924 that he was in desperate need of a pension, as his former involvement in the IRA in Glasgow was well known in the city and as a result, many employers refused to hire him.⁷⁰ Fullerton was working as a sheet metal worker while he was the O/C of the 1st Battalion of the Scottish Brigade. He was arrested in May 1921 for his role in the botched 'Smashing of the Van' incident, although he was later found not guilty in a highly publicised trial at the Edinburgh High Court. Fullerton took the pro-Treaty side in the Civil War and served as a

⁶⁷ *Strabane Chronicle*, 11th October 1924;

⁶⁸ *Dundee Courier*, 2nd May 1928; *Dundee Courier*, 21st March 1934.

⁶⁹ *Western Daily Press*, 28th February 1931.

⁷⁰ MSPC, 24SP2761, James Joseph Fullerton.

Colonel in the Coastal and Marine service until March 1924, when he was demobilised and moved back to Glasgow. In his pension, Fullerton stated that he was 'perpetually barred from my former employment owing to my arrest and imprisonment', and as a result, he was unable to find work, stating that his 'political record [was] too well known to be concealed'.⁷¹

Fullerton was initially denied his pension, however an intervention from the former GHQ Purchasing Officer for the Scottish Brigade, Joe Vize, who also served as a commanding officer in the Irish National Army, was crucial in getting his application approved. Nevertheless, Fullerton stated that he was living in poverty, and eventually he moved to Emyvale in County Monaghan, and later New York. Although he did not state the reasons for this move, it is not hard to imagine that the lack of employment opportunities and hostility from the wider community played a significant part. Other members of the Scottish Brigade also noted similar difficulties, for example, Kate Lee and her family left their home in Parkhead due to hostility from neighbours, while Scottish Brigade O/C Joseph Robinson stated that he was 'never free from police interference' until he left Scotland for the USA in 1927.⁷² Margaret Gilmartin wrote that she was forced to flee to the Scottish Highlands for a period, stating that she was 'broken hearted' as she had lost her 'position, home, mother, as I was only an outcast when I returned'.⁷³

Although the difficulties faced by former members of the Scottish Brigade were not necessarily a direct result of the anti-Irish and anti-Catholic campaigns of the 1920s, it is reasonable to imagine that the efforts of Rev John White, Ratcliffe, and Cormack, amongst others, hardened already hostile attitudes towards the Irish in Scotland. The roots of the Church's campaign can be traced to the fear of an Irish attack on Scottish soil during the War of Independence. The correspondence between police and the Scottish Office demonstrates this, highlighting the feelings of suspicion and paranoia towards Irish Republicans in Scotland during the revolutionary period. Therefore, these campaigns

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² MSPC, MSP34REF59950, Kate Lee; MSPC, MSP34REF298, Joseph Robinson.

⁷³ MSPC, MSP34REF24084, Margaret Gilmartin.

built on foundations of suspicion and hostility which had existed before this period and should not be seen as separate from hostility exclusively towards Irish Republicanism.

While hostility to Irish republican politics and the Irish more generally was not absent from other parts of Britain, the support of the Church of Scotland and the success of anti-Catholic political parties was not matched outside of Scotland in this period. The support of the Church of Scotland also gave an air of respectability to these views. These campaigns marked a shift in the way the Irish in Scotland were viewed, from fears about the growth of Catholicism in the nineteenth century to a more racialised understanding of the Irish as an inferior race, which was heavily influenced by eugenicist theories which were gaining traction during this period.⁷⁴ Considering this political climate, it is not hard to understand why so many former republicans faced hostility from the wider Scottish community.

'Comrades reunited': The Old Scottish Brigade IRA

As a result of this hostility, it is not surprising that many former Republicans based in Scotland migrated to their ancestral homeland during this period. A large proportion of the members of the Glasgow companies relocated to Dublin after the Civil War, including those who had fought on the anti-Treaty side. This included former O/C Joseph Robinson and his wife, Hannah 'Pidge' Duggan, a member of the Anne Devlin Cumann na mBan in Glasgow. Others who moved included Eamon Mooney, Seamus Reader, John McGallogly, and Charles Strickland (alias McGinn), the latter of whom housed Lena McDonald during her financial difficulties in the early 1940s.

An examination of the nominal rolls of the Scottish Brigade IRA, which were compiled by Eamon Mooney, Joseph Robinson, and Sean Flood in the 1930s, reveals there were approximately forty-four men listed as having Irish addresses during this period, twenty-eight of which were located in Dublin.⁷⁵ An interesting pattern in this movement is that higher ranking IRA Volunteers were more

⁷⁴ Ritchie, 'They Do Not Become Good Scotsmen,' p.11, p.70.

⁷⁵ MSPC, RO/603, Scottish Brigade, List of names forwarded by Mooney to the Pension Board, undated.

likely to migrate to Dublin, while lower ranking Volunteers migrated elsewhere in Ireland, possibly indicating that these former officers could exert their influence in the capital. There is also a significant proportion of men whose addresses were listed as The Curragh, indicating that they continued to serve with the National Army after the Civil War.⁷⁶

A similar pattern is reflected in the migration of the female republicans who were based in Scotland during this period. Although the compilers of the nominal rolls do not list addresses of the women of Cumann na mBan, the pension records and medal applications held in the Military Archives highlight that most of the women who migrated from Scotland ended up in Dublin too. Thirty-three women who were based in Scotland applied for a combination of pensions and medals. Some only applied for medals, highlighting the increase in numbers of Scottish based women from the pension files. Out of these women, twenty-one left Scotland after 1923, seventeen of which returned to Ireland. Out of those seventeen, eleven settled in Dublin, while the remaining six migrated to their Irish counties of origin. Files in the Eamon Mooney Papers also reflect this. Although not as detailed as the nominal rolls in the MSPC, Mooney attempted to compile rolls of women who had been active in the Scottish Brigade. Mooney listed twenty-five women that he had addresses for, twenty-two of which had Irish addresses, the majority in Dublin.⁷⁷

It should be noted that these figures do not offer a complete picture: the nominal rolls, while extensive, do not account for every Volunteer in Scotland, as some men fell out of touch with those compiling the lists and some addresses were unknown. Mooney noted that the whereabouts of the men of the Scottish Brigade No.2, which encompassed Dundee and Fife, were unknown, and none of the addresses of the men listed as Captains of this Brigade were known at the time the rolls were compiled. He echoed this sentiment repeatedly in his letters to the pension board. In one undated letter, he stated it was difficult to gather reliable information owing to the 'dispersion of our

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ EMP, Names and Addresses of Scottish Cumann na mBan members.

members in search of work denied to them in Scotland in many cases because of their association with the IRA,' while in another dated 30th October 1936, he wrote that it would take 'a life's work to try and properly locate each individual Volunteer, as quite a large percentage of [their] members were migratory and [were] scattered far and wide in search of employment denied to them in Scotland'.⁷⁸ However, in his military pension application, Joseph Robinson estimated that there were approximately five hundred volunteers in the Dundee companies, and a further two hundred and fifty in Falkirk, therefore the nominal rolls that are currently available only reflect a portion of the Scottish Brigade IRA, and mostly those who were on the west Coast or living around Glasgow.⁷⁹ This problem is even greater for the women who were involved in this period, as there are no complete nominal rolls for Cumann na mBan in Scotland, despite Mooney's best efforts. Therefore, the sample available only reflects a proportion of those who were involved in Republican activities in Scotland during the revolutionary period.

Nevertheless, the return migration Scottish Republicans is significant. This is even more striking when it is considered that the same period witnessed the emigration of significant numbers of former IRA and Cumann na mBan members away *from* Ireland.⁸⁰ Gavin Foster has noted that although anti-Treaty members of the IRA were part of a much larger outflow of emigrants in this period, they faced unique pressures including police harassment and government pressure which influenced their decision to leave.⁸¹ Similarly, Síobhra Aiken has explored the emigration of former members of Cumann na mBan and has highlighted similar reasons for their departure, as well as the limited role for women in the newly established Irish Free State.⁸²

⁷⁸ MSPC, RO/603 Scottish Brigade, Mooney to Pension Board, undated.

⁷⁹ MSPC, Joseph Robinson.

⁸⁰ See Gavin Foster, 'No 'wild geese' this time?', pp.94-8.; Síobhra Aiken, 'Sinn Féin permits... in the heels of their shoes': Cumann na mBan emigrants and transatlantic revolutionary exchange', *Irish Revolutionary Studies* (2020), No.44, Vol.165, pp.106-130; Síobhra Aiken, 'Sick on the Irish Sea, dancing across the Atlantic': (anti) nostalgia in women's remembrance of the Irish Revolution' in Oona Frawley's (ed.) *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana, 2021), pp.88-106.

⁸¹ Gavin Foster, 'No 'wild geese' this time?', p.96.

⁸² Síobhra Aiken, 'Sinn Féin permits... in the heels of their shoes', pp.106-130.

Returning to Ireland provided male IRA veterans with opportunities and influence that they could not obtain in Scotland. The male members of the Scottish Brigade were able to use their old contacts to obtain comfortable jobs, particularly in the government and civil service where many of their former GHQ contacts worked. Eamon Mooney got a job at the Board of Works, while John McGallogly (Maire McGaleagly's brother in law) became a civil servant.⁸³ Seamus Robinson became a Sinn Féin TD for Waterford-Tipperary East and later got a job on the Military Pension Board.⁸⁴ Seamus Reader even managed to procure a job for himself as a janitor for the Dáil Éireann.⁸⁵ As a result, many former male IRA members found themselves in more comfortable positions than their comrades back in Scotland and were able to re-establish their networks in the comfortable suburbs of South Dublin. This was even the case for those who had formerly opposed the Treaty, such as Joseph Robinson and Eamon Mooney.

The presence of this former group of comrades in Ireland's capital and the extension of the 1934 Military Pension Act to include anti-Treaty and female veterans resulted in the formation of the Old IRA Association (Scottish Brigade). The association was created with the intention of aiding veterans of the Scottish Brigade with gaining their military pensions, and was established after a meeting in Leinster House, Dublin, in November 1934. Former O/C of the Scottish Brigade, Joseph Robinson was elected as President, while Eamon Mooney was elected as secretary. The association met monthly to gather contact information of former members of the Scottish Brigade and Cumann na mBan, and to link people together for the purpose of providing references for their applications, as well as reuniting old friends.⁸⁶

Much of the work of the association was tireless efforts of Mooney. Acting as secretary, Mooney painstakingly collected the names and addresses of those who had been active throughout Scotland

⁸³ MSPC Eamonn Leo Mooney; MSPC, MSP34REF176, John McGallogly.

⁸⁴ MSPC, MSP34REF147, Seamus Robinson. See also Robinson, Séamus, Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/robinson-seamus-a7733> (date accessed 27/02/24).

⁸⁵ MSPC, MSP34REF4300, Seamus Reader.

⁸⁶ *The Evening Herald*, 10th January 1935.

during the revolutionary period, using his job as a member of the Board of Works to network and gain contacts to aid this mission.⁸⁷ Mooney's distinct handwriting crops up in numerous pension applications as a reference, highlighting his well-connected status and organisational prowess. He forwarded the lists of names and addresses of his former comrades to the pension boards, with attached information regarding their activities and organisational rank, and even supplied the board with newspaper cuttings to further their cases.⁸⁸ Mooney was also critical in getting service medals for the Scottish Brigade. In some cases, such as that of Sean Healy, this was in lieu of a military service pension, as Mooney's influence could only go so far.⁸⁹ Most of these medals were awarded at a special ceremony in the Red Bank restaurant, Dublin.⁹⁰ Those present at the event included Margaret Skinnider and Fr. John Fahy.

In the years after the Civil War, Mooney acted as a linchpin for former members of the Scottish Brigade, as he was able to connect many former comrades who would have otherwise lost touch. In many ways, the Association was a more helpful body to veterans than the Pension Board itself, which was notorious for its harsh treatment, particularly towards emigrant and female applicants, reflecting the state's ambivalence towards the diaspora during this period.

The Association was not restricted to the approval of members' pensions. It also operated in a social context by reuniting former comrades, particularly those who had moved from Scotland to Ireland. In this respect, it was vital for Lena McDonald, who lived with both Fahy and Strickland during her financial troubles in the early 1940s. Newspaper articles reveal throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the Association was extremely active, hosting dinners, day trips, and commemorative masses for deceased members. Máirtín Ó Catháin states that it was also a 'vehicle for reconciliation' for those

⁸⁷ Ó Catháin, 'The Old IRA in Scotland and the 1916 Pensions', pp.79-86.

⁸⁸ MSPC, RO/603, Scottish Brigade, list of names forwarded by Mooney to Pension Board; MSPC, RO/603A, Scottish Brigade, list of names forwarded by Mooney to pension board.

⁸⁹ Ó Catháin, 'The Old IRA in Scotland and the 1916 Pensions', p.79; Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF27392, Sean Healy.

⁹⁰ *The Irish Press*, 27th September 1943

who had been on opposing sides of the Civil War.⁹¹ An article in the *Irish Press* detailed a smoking concert at the Wynn's Hotel organised by the Association at which Joseph Robinson gave a toast.⁹² Robinson stated that many of those who were gathered at the event had been on opposing sides during the Civil War, but that 'no man had a right to say that the man on the opposite side was wrong'.⁹³ Robinson continued to state that both sides were 'equally honest in their beliefs', and that together, they would unite to achieve the 'final aim' of an Irish Republic.⁹⁴ The speeches at the smoking concert illustrate Ó Catháin's point, that the Association was one way in which former comrades could put aside their differences and reunite over old times.

Similar associations existed for other Republican organisations members in Britain. These mainly corresponded to the former IRA companies that were active in Britain. These associations were also established around the same time as the 1934 Military Pensions Act, with the aim of assisting old members with their pensions. Most of these associations were Dublin based, except for the Old London IRA Association. Newspaper advertisements suggest that this association remained in London, as they hired Irish clubs and Irish owned hotels in the city for their meetings and functions.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the membership of this association was not restricted to those who had been active in the revolutionary period in London but was extended to former IRA and Cumann na mBan members who had migrated from Ireland or elsewhere.⁹⁶ It also held an annual memorial mass for Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan which drew a large attendance and provided an opportunity for socialisation. According to the *Irish Press*, this event drew in 'hundreds of Irish exiles', suggesting that it was not restricted to former members of the London IRA, but drew in Irish migrants from elsewhere and was a ritualised occasion for them.⁹⁷ The activities of the other Old IRA Associations,

⁹¹ Ó Catháin, 'The Old IRA in Scotland and the 1916 Pensions', p.81-2.

⁹² *The Irish Press*, 4th April 1938.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Cork Weekly*, 8th June 1967; *Irish Independent*, 5th March 1957; *Irish Independent*, 8th August 1957; *The Irish Press*, 10th June 1957.

⁹⁶ *The Irish Press*, 10th June 1957.

⁹⁷ *The Irish Press*, 5th October 1967.

however, are remarkably similar to their Scottish counterpart, and included dinners, dances, and religious services on the island of Ireland.⁹⁸

The Old Scottish IRA Association did not just act as a vehicle to heal old wounds but could also be mobilised to critique contemporary Irish politics. At the same smoking concert held at the Red Bank Hotel, Daniel Patrick (DP) Walshe, who was a GHQ purchasing agent during the War of Independence, stated 'the treatment meted out to the Old IRA by [the] government and the previous one was very poor in comparison to the work they had done'.⁹⁹ It is likely that Walshe was alluding to the difficulties Scottish veterans faced in obtaining their pensions and the meagre sums awarded by the pensions board. This was echoed by Mooney, who in his own correspondence with the pensions board, stated that the Scottish cases should be viewed with leniency, as 'working in the midst of a hostile people, the difficulties of the Scottish Brigades were very much greater than those at home'.¹⁰⁰ Mooney added that the IRA in Scotland were the 'main reliance of the native IRA for supplies of arms and ammunition', highlighting the importance of his comrades' contributions to revolutionary activity on the island of Ireland during the revolutionary period.¹⁰¹ Mooney's thoughts were reflected by countless women who applied for pensions. Kate Lee, whose claim was rejected, stated that the work of the IRA and Cumann na mBan in Scotland was very dangerous, owing to the fact that they were operating in an 'enemy country'.¹⁰² Maire McGaleagly stated in her unsuccessful pension application 'someone must be taking more than their fair share' before lamenting that her husband died as a result of his activities and had barely been recognised for his services.¹⁰³

However, the main function of this association was not political in nature, and any criticism or hostility towards contemporary governments should be viewed as a secondary product. The main

⁹⁸ *The Irish Press*, 11th November 1934.

⁹⁹ *The Irish Press*, 4th April 1938.

¹⁰⁰ MSPC, RO/603, Scottish Brigade, Mooney to pension board, undated.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² MSPC, Kate Lee.

¹⁰³ MSPC, Maire McGallogly.

purpose was to rebuild the Old Scottish Brigade networks in a social beneficiary context which celebrated and commemorated the contribution of this group to the cause of Irish independence. This is highlighted by their main goal of assisting former comrades in their pension applications, however it is also reflected in the activities the association organised, which included dinners, concerts, ceilidhs, masses for deceased veterans and service medal ceremonies.¹⁰⁴ In 1955, as part of the An Tóstal celebrations, the association organised a lecture on the infamous ‘smashing of the van’ on Glasgow High Street in May 1921, which resulted in a roundup of anyone suspected of ‘Sinn Féin’ activity in the city, including a Roman Catholic priest whose arrest sparked mass protests throughout the Irish community in the city.¹⁰⁵ The talk was given by Eamon De Barra.¹⁰⁶

Most of these events were somewhat sporadic, however the commemorative masses became an annual fixture, allowing an opportunity for veterans to gather and remember their fallen comrades. Mass cards with a roll of honour for the dead were printed for a service in April 1948 at the Pro-Cathedral on Marlborough Street in Dublin.¹⁰⁷ The cards bore the names of deceased members of the Scottish Brigade IRA, Cumann na mBan, and Fianna na hÉireann, as well as GHQ members involved with the Scottish divisions. One of the names on the roll was Sean O’Doherty, who was arrested alongside Lena McDonald in 1921. O’Doherty died in 1931 from tuberculosis while living in Dublin working as a canvasser, seven years before McDonald made her pension application in 1938.¹⁰⁸

The association also gathered for funerals, many of which were held at the republican plot in Glasnevin cemetery. Roisín Higgins has argued that funerals became sites of holding unofficial republican commemorations, as they met the needs of Irish nationalism as a subaltern aspiration in

¹⁰⁴ See *The Irish Press*, 10th April 1953; *The Irish Press*, 4th April 1938; *The Irish Independent*, 10th April 1939; *The Irish Press*, November 29th 1954; *The Irish Independent*, 28th September 1943.

¹⁰⁵ NRS, HH55/63, Irish Disturbances, Police report and correspondence concerning Sinn Féin attack on prison van in Glasgow and murder of a police inspector; BMHWS, No.776, Joseph Booker. Stephen Coyle, *High Noon on High Street*.

¹⁰⁶ *The Irish Press*, 9th May 1955.

¹⁰⁷ Seamus Reader Papers, Pamphlet for Annual Memorial Mass of the Scottish Brigade IRA, 1946.

¹⁰⁸ *Evening Telegraph*, 13th July 1931, the death notice uses the anglicised version of his name, ‘John Doherty.’

the nineteenth and twentieth century and continued to be important sites of memory after the establishment of the Free State, particularly for those who opposed the Treaty.¹⁰⁹ Funerals were an occasion where Scottish veterans would often gather informally and reminisce about old times. When the Association could not gather, Eamon Mooney often went as a representative, further solidifying his status as the linchpin of the organisation.¹¹⁰

The Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association acted as an important vehicle for socialising and for easing the transition of former Scottish-based Republicans who migrated to Ireland during this period, acting as an equally important network for rekindling old friendships. Despite spending much of their lives fighting for the cause of Irish independence, some of those who moved from Scotland to Ireland in this period expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation. Paradoxically, in Ireland, these people were viewed by their fellow Irishmen and women as Scottish, despite spending most of their lives in Scotland being viewed as Irish. Most of them lived in predominantly Irish neighbourhoods and socialised through Irish political, social, and cultural organisations.

This sentiment is reflected in some of the pension applications. Mary McPhillips (nee Fullerton), who moved to Roscommon in this period, expressed that she did not feel 'Irish enough' in her new home because of her Scottish accent. McPhillips stated she did not socialise with other former IRA and Cumann na mBan associations in her area because of this, but rather, with the old members of the Scottish Brigade, who she stated were '[her] crowd'.¹¹¹ Similarly, Lena McDonald expressed that her 'crowd' was also the former members of the Scottish Brigade.¹¹² This was also a problem experienced by former republicans who had migrated from England, and was arguably a more pronounced problem for them. Mary English, for example, found herself 'isolated' after she moved from Liverpool to Wexford in 1923 because she was English and had an English accent. This was

¹⁰⁹ Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, pp.16-17.

¹¹⁰ *The Irish Press*, 8th May 1939; *The Irish Press*, 5th February 1954.

¹¹¹ MSPC, Mary McPhillips.

¹¹² MSPC, Lena McDonald.

despite the fact that English's departure from Liverpool was the result of her business being boycotted by members of the local community after it was raided by police.¹¹³ Therefore, the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association acted as a vital network for connecting those who experienced difficulty in transitioning into life in Ireland, as well as getting the formal job of approving pensions done.

The association and its activities also reveal a geographical hierarchy which prioritised activity on the island of Ireland and particularly in Dublin. Coleman has discussed this hierarchy in relation to the MSPC, arguing that veterans who were active during Easter week outside of Dublin had a more difficult time convincing the pension board assessors of their active service than those based in Dublin.¹¹⁴ Dublin-centric activity was also a characteristic of the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association. On one hand, it is somewhat strange that a Scottish IRA Association would not be based in Scotland, where a large proportion of veterans continued to live. Furthermore, other Old IRA Associations with cities with large Irish communities were based in their cities of origin, such as the Old London IRA Association. However, the anti-Irish campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s created a hostile atmosphere which probably encouraged many former republicans to emigrate back to Ireland and prevented those who remained in Scotland from publicly celebrating their past involvement in clandestine Republican organisations. Consequently, much of the work of the Association was carried out in Ireland's capital, where many former members of the Scottish Brigade were based during this period. The commemorative masses, concerts, meetings and meals were all hosted in Dublin, with few activities outside of the city.

What impact did this have on those outside of Ireland's capital? There is evidence that veterans travelled from different parts of Ireland for certain events, such as the celebration for Fahy

¹¹³ MSPC, MSP34REF25102, Mary English.

¹¹⁴ Marie Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions and Guerrilla Fighters After the Irish Revolution', *Historical Research*, Vol.91, No.253 (August 2018), pp.554-572, p.569.

organised by Lena McDonald.¹¹⁵ However few of the Scotland based Republicans travelled for these events and instead their involvement with the Association was restricted to gaining assistance in getting their pensions approved. The legacy of the revolutionary period was more complex in Scotland and Republicans who remained there were faced with numerous challenges including police harassment, economic difficulties and anti-Irish and anti-Catholic campaigns which were endorsed by powerful institutions. Considering these difficulties, the Association could only be active to a point, and its influence could only go so far. Resultantly, for those who remained in Scotland, being able to gain a pension or a medal was the most that could be expected. This is echoed in Maire McGaleagly's unsuccessful pension application. Writing to the pension board, she stated that she was honoured to have a medal, as she had something that she could 'point to' as evidence of her service to Ireland, however she yearned for a pension as she was unable to work outside of ceilidh organisations owing to her previous involvement in Cumann na mBan, and she stated that she would have used it to move back to Ireland.¹¹⁶

A Gendered Association?

The work carried out by the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association was of vital importance in its primary task of aiding veterans in obtaining their military service pensions and was also a conduit in reuniting old friends in their later years. The association was particularly important for female veterans who had been based in Scotland and whose claims of 'active service' were more difficult to determine than the men's. This was because Cumann na mBan was seen as an 'auxiliary' organisation to the IRA, and most of their activities were not carried out in Ireland. It is worth noting that all the successful female applicants who were based in Scotland had a high-ranking male referee from the Scottish Brigade attesting to their active service. Lena McDonald had Eamon Mooney and Joseph Booker, who was a member of the IRB, attest to her activities. In cases where women's

¹¹⁵ *Irish Press*, 10th April 1953.

¹¹⁶ MSPC, Maire McGaleagly.

pensions were initially rejected, men such as Eamon Mooney and Joseph Robinson were more than happy to appeal on behalf of the applicant, with varying degrees of success.

While the association represented the interests of female veterans and was active in getting their pensions approved, the association was gendered in its organisational makeup and activities. All the positions within the association were filled by men, despite the presence of several prominent female veterans within the Scottish Brigade in Ireland at this time.¹¹⁷ The nature of some of the events organised by the Association reflect a masculine social agenda. Events such as smoking concerts imply a masculine space where old boys could reunite and revel in the escapades of their daring youth. The absence of women from such events is also reflected in newspaper reports.¹¹⁸ Male members also headed processions that the Association took part in. Before the memorial mass at the Pro-Cathedral in Dublin in 1954 was led by the 69-year-old Joseph Robinson, while Charles O'Toole acted as standard bearer at the procession in March of the same year.¹¹⁹

Male veterans were able to use their former connections in the Scottish Brigade as a means to obtain jobs within the government and civil service, however there is little evidence of their female counterparts doing the same. In Ireland during this period there existed a marriage bar in certain occupations, including the civil service, therefore many republican women from Scotland could not use their influence in this way. However, even among unmarried women and widows, few of these women rose to the ranks in the same way that their male counterparts did. The only exception to this is Margaret Skinnider, who became a major public and political figure in Ireland in her later life. She became President of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation in 1956, and later President of the Women's Advisory Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Although Skinnider gained a prominent public position through these roles, it is important to stress that she did not gain the same recognition for her work or role in the Easter Rising that some of her male contemporaries did.

¹¹⁷ *The Evening Herald*, 10th January 1935; *Irish Independent*, 5th March 1955.

¹¹⁸ *The Irish Press*, 4th April 1938.

¹¹⁹ *Sunday Press*, 28th November 1954; *Irish Independent*, 1st March 1954.

The presence of women at events organised by the association were often noted near the end of newspaper articles, and usually the only women who were named were the wives or relations of prominent members, for example, Mrs Joseph 'Pidge' Robinson, Mrs M. Gallagher, and Mrs A. Mooney (Eamon Mooney's mother).¹²⁰ Once again, the main exception was Margaret Skinnider, who was often singled out among her fellow Scottish veterans in media coverage.

Why then, was Margaret Skinnider given 'special' status within the Scottish Brigade and other single, republican women such as Lena McDonald were not? After all, McDonald, like Skinnider, never married, was heavily involved in the IRA rather than Cumann na mBan, and both spent time in Ireland and the USA.

It is likely that Skinnider's role in Easter week has much to do with this, as there existed a hierarchy of Revolutionary experiences in Ireland during this period which placed the Easter Rising firmly at the top.¹²¹ According to former Cumann na mBan member, Hannah Robinson, the other members of the branch were angry with Skinnider for disobeying orders, along with the two Byrne sisters Alice and Katie, as the remainder of the women had followed instructions after being turned away from St Enoch station in Glasgow.¹²² Like Markievicz, Skinnider joined and fought with the ICA, despite the fact that she had been a member of Cumann na mBan. According to Skinnider's account of the Rising, her commander at St. Stephen's Green, Michael Mallin, did not want her to take part in military action on account of her sex. Skinnider detailed her response as follows:

My answer to this argument was that we had the same right to risk our lives as the men; that in the constitution of the Irish Republic, women were on equality with men.

¹²⁰ *The Irish Press*, 27th September 1943

¹²¹ Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions and Guerrilla Fighters...', p.569.

¹²² UCD, Eithne Coyle O'Donnell Papers, P61/4 (67), Anne Devlin Branch, Hannah Robinson (nee Duggan), undated.

For the first time in history, indeed, a constitution had been written that incorporated the principal of equal suffrage.¹²³

Therefore, Skinnider's status as the most badly injured female rebel during this conflict gave her considerable status within the world of revolutionary Republicans. Nancy J. Curtin's article on gendered citizenship in Wolfe Tone's rebellion also sheds light on Skinnider's status.¹²⁴ Curtin argues that intrinsic to the formation of Irish nationalism was the idea of the 'soldier citizen,' who bore arms and was able to vote, which was denied to Catholics in eighteenth century Ireland.¹²⁵ However, Curtin explains that in Irish nationalist imagination, the soldier citizen was imagined in male terms due to his role in the political process and bearing of arms, therefore women were excluded from this ultimate role. However, by joining the ICA and obtaining grievous injuries, Skinnider transgressed this gendered boundary, affording her the status of soldier citizen and a respect amongst contemporaries which was not afforded to her other female comrades.

Furthermore, Skinnider publicised her experiences in her biography, before travelling USA with on a fundraising tour shortly after her recovery.¹²⁶ The biography and tour ensured that she was a well-known republican figure. Consequently, like Constance Markievicz, she was depicted as one of the few republican women who was 'exceptional'. Women like Lena McDonald who were active Republicans but did not have the status of being an Easter Rising veteran nor the contacts Skinnider had through her touring and publication were not afforded the same status.

However, Skinnider's status as an 'exceptional' revolutionary could only serve her to a point, as she was denied a military service pension in 1925 as the pension board believed that the term 'active combatant' did not apply to women, although some historians have also argued that Skinnider's

¹²³ Margaret Skinnider, *Doing my bit for Ireland* (New York, 1917), p.143.

¹²⁴ Nancy J. Curtin, Nancy J. Curtin, "A nation of abortive men": gendered citizenship and early Irish Republicanism in Marilyn Cohen and Nancy J. Curtin's (eds) *Reclaiming Gender: Transgressive Identities in Modern Ireland* (London, 1999), pp.33-44.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.35.

¹²⁶ Mary McAuliffe, *Margaret Skinnider* (Dublin, 2020), pp.34-49.

status as a prominent anti-Treaty republican also prevented this, pointing to the successful application of pro-Treaty Brigid Lyons as evidence of this.¹²⁷ Lyons also had familial links to the Cumann na nGaedheal government of this period which used to her advantage, therefore, it is hard to conclude that Skinnider's anti-Treaty status did not work against her, as well as her gender.

Nevertheless, within the association, Skinnider carried significant weight, and was marked out from other republican women who had been active in Scotland. Female veterans did organise some events as part of the association, for example, Lena McDonald organised a dinner in honour of John Fahy, at the Gresham Hotel in April 1953, however, within the association and most of its activities, they undertook a secondary role to their male counterparts.¹²⁸



Presentation Dinner in Honour of Miss McDonald, undated, unnamed paper, Eamon Mooney Papers.

¹²⁷ Coleman, *Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries, 1916-1923'*, *Women's History Review*, Vol.26, No.6 (2017), pp.915-934.

¹²⁸ *Irish Press*, 10th April 1953.

This prominence of men within the Association is less a reflection of the gendered order of the Association but rather of Irish society during this period. The Irish government and society more generally prioritised the experiences of male Revolutionary veterans and especially those who were involved in the Easter Rising.¹²⁹ Historians of gender and war have argued that despite the increased opportunities for women during periods of conflict or nationalist struggle, societies tend to revert to conservative norms once the conflict ends.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, Bingham concedes that politically, at least, the interwar period was a ‘gloomy’ one for women’s progress. In the Irish context, in the decades after the Civil War, successive Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil governments used the gendered ideal of domestic femininity to justify restrictions on women’s public roles while vilifying the militant women who had been part of the fight for independence, particularly those who had taken the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War.¹³¹ Such restrictions included the 1927 Juries Act, which restricted women from sitting on juries, the 1932 marriage bar in the civil service, and the 1937 constitution which stipulated that the State would ‘endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home’. While the image of the wife and mother was promoted, the image of the revolutionary ‘furies’ in Cumann na mBan was condemned. As Irish women’s public roles were being increasingly curtailed, so was recognition of their roles in the revolutionary period. This is reflected in the pension board’s attitude to female applicants: only a quarter of individual female applicants had their pensions approved, most of which were given the lowest possible grade, an ‘E’, with only a handful being given a ‘D’ or

¹²⁹ It should be noted that Joseph Robinson failed to take part in the actual Rising as he was arrested a few weeks before it took place, however he was crucial to organising the members from Scotland who did go over to Dublin.

¹³⁰ See Linda Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution*, p.38; Ketu Katrak, ‘Indian Nationalism, Ghandian “Satyagraha” and the Representation of female sexuality’ in Andrew Parker, Doris Summer and Mary Russo’s (eds.) *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York, 1992), pp.77-95; Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making peace: the reconstruction of gender in interwar Britain* (Princeton, 1993); Adrian Bingham, ‘An era of domesticity?’ *Histories of women and gender in interwar Britain* in *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), pp 225–33.

¹³¹ Mary McAuliffe, ‘Remembered for Being Forgotten: the Women of 1916, Memory and Commemoration’ in Oona Frawley’s *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana, 2021), pp.1-18, p.12.

higher.¹³² Some prominent republican women also reflected on the curtailment of women's revolutionary roles. In her memoirs, the prominent Irish republican and women's suffrage activist, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington mourned the restrictive roles for women in the Irish Free State and wrote that the memories of her female revolutionaries 'would be lost in old newspaper files and dusty museums'.¹³³ Similarly, Irish republican activist, Eithne Coyle wrote that 'it is a very curious thing that women got a very meagre place in the pages of history. Irish history, I am sorry to say, is no exception to the rule'.¹³⁴

In such a society, therefore, it is unsurprising that the women of the Scottish Brigade IRA and Cumann na mBan were absent from the hierarchy of the Association and were less visible within Irish organisations more generally. Margaret Skinnider was the only real exception to this pattern. This was largely to do with her prominent role in Easter Week, status as the most grievously injured female revolutionary, and professional career. Therefore, the prominence of male veterans within the Old Scottish IRA Association, and particularly those who were active during Easter week, reflected Irish society and the dominant narrative of the revolutionary period as opposed to the actual structure of the Scottish Brigade when it was active.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the experiences of former members of the Scottish Brigade IRA and Cumann na mBan in the years after the Civil War up to the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising. It has noted the distinct pattern of former republicans migrating back to Ireland and primarily settling in Dublin, largely as a result of the hostilities they experienced in Scotland as a result of their

¹³² <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923/release-history/november-2022-release> (date accessed 19/04/23).

¹³³ Margaret Ward, *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Suffragette and Sinn Féiner: Her Memoirs and Political Writings* (Dublin, 2017), p. 2.

¹³⁴ Ibid. See also Coyle, Eithne (Anne), Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/coyle-eithne-anne-a2132> (date accessed: 27/02/24).

clandestine activities and the growth of anti-Irish sentiment which was fostered by Scottish institutions such as the Church of Scotland.

David Ritchie's extensive work on the Church of Scotland's anti-Irish campaign has revealed that the revolutionary period had a profound effect on attitudes to the Irish in Scotland. This chapter has expanded on this research by investigating the files of the Scottish Office, which highlight overestimations on the IRA's size and capabilities. This created an environment of fear and hostility in which these former volunteers were harassed and isolated from their wider communities. An examination of Scottish republicans' military pension applications puts a personal spin on this, as they reveal the ways in which these campaigns affected former Republicans socially and economically, as in the cases of Lena McDonald, James Joseph Fullerton, and Maire McGaleagly. Although such struggles were not unique to Scotland, the Church of Scotland's endorsement of eugenics and restrictions in Irish immigration, as well as the success of ultra-Protestant political parties in local elections were not found in many other places in Britain. The Church of Scotland's campaign of the 1920s marked a shift in the type of discrimination Irish people faced in Scotland, moving from anti-Catholic sentiments to a more racialised understanding of an inferior Irish race, although the success of ultra-Protestant political parties in this period highlights old attitudes continued to linger.

It is therefore unsurprising that many of those who had been involved in the IRA and Cumann na mBan in Scotland returned to Ireland, where their past involvement in republican organisations could be used to their advantage and could be celebrated rather than suppressed. Unlike their counterparts in Scotland, those who returned to Ireland could use their past roles to gain high-profile jobs and could publicly commemorate their past activities. The activities of the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association are reflective of this, and the award ceremonies, meals, masses, and excursions they organised were more social in nature than they were political. The association acted

as an important vehicle of reunion and reconciliation and helped to reconnect former comrades in their new surroundings.

However, the association also reflected the gender and geographical biases of Irish society during this period. While having a base in Dublin allowed their former activities to be celebrated, it also excluded republicans in Scotland who were faced with more pressing difficulties and mirrored the government's view of Dublin as the epicentre of revolutionary activity. The association itself was also run by an all-male committee, and the experiences of women within the association were downplayed.

By exploring the experiences of Scottish IRA and Cumann na mBan during this period, this chapter has contributed to a growing body of literature on the impact of the 'afterlife' of the Revolution. Although their experiences are not identical, it is useful to consider the experiences of anti-Treaty IRA emigrants who left Ireland in this period alongside their Scottish counterparts who returned to their ancestral homelands. Both groups experienced political pressure and harassment, therefore it is interesting to compare the group that choose to leave Ireland and the group that chose to return, especially as many members of the Scottish Brigade had been anti-Treaty. There is scope for a larger, more detailed study on these parallels, possibly incorporating the migration patterns of republicans in England too. Furthermore, an exploration of 'afterlife' in Scotland reveals that the period 1916 to 1923 had a profound effect not just on the island of Ireland, but beyond its shores and across the North Channel. The effects of these events could be further investigated by exploring the 'afterlives' of other groups affected by the Irish revolutionary period in Scotland, such as Orangemen, the police, or Irish communities more generally. The events of 1916 to 1923 certainly would have had an impact on the way these different groups, as they did on their republican counterparts. Finally, it raises interesting questions regarding race and nationality. Although most republicans in Scotland were born in that country, the wider community did not see them as Scottish both during and after the revolutionary period, as evidenced by the Church of Scotland's anti-Irish campaign. Additionally,

some former Republicans struggled to fit in back in Ireland. Such attitudes and campaigns still have relevance today, although the target group is not necessarily the same. Overall, an exploration of the 'afterlives' of Lena McDonald and her comrades in Scotland during this period opens some fascinating lines of enquiry and underlines the complex legacy of the Irish Revolution in her country of birth.

Chapter Six: Commemoration, Celebration, and Reconciliation: Remembering Women and the Revolutionary Period in Ireland and Britain

For the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966, Lena McDonald and her older sister, Kathy, were specially flown from the USA to Dublin to take part in the celebrations. They were received in the Mansion House by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alderman Eugene Timmons (Fianna Fáil), along with members of the Gaelic League of Detroit.¹ The sisters' involvement was recalled in the *Evening Telegraph*. The paper dedicated a large spread feature dedicated to the two sisters, complete with a brief interview and photograph, in which their service medals are clearly visible.² The same paper had reported on Lena's arrest for smuggling arms in an egg box with great interest some forty-five years previously.³



¹ *The Irish Press*, 15th April 1966.

² *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

³ *Evening Telegraph*, 2nd May 1921.

Evening Telegraph, 25th April 1966

However, other than the article on the 'sisters who hid de Valera,' there was very little coverage in Dundee's newspapers on the anniversary of the Easter Rising.⁴ This is despite the presence of a rich Irish community in the city which had been active in republican activities during this period, boasting branches of the Gaelic League, Sinn Féin, and of course, its own company in the IRA. Indeed, both Lena and Kathy remarked in the *Evening Telegraph* article that the Dundee they had known was long gone, and that most of their fellow compatriots had long left the city.⁵ For the majority of Dundonians, the anniversary went by just as any other week would.

Across the Irish Sea, the situation could not have been more different. Lena and Kathy were invited to partake in a variety of commemorative events which were heavily publicised, both for the entertainment of those at home, and, more pointedly, observers from abroad, upon whom the Irish government were keen to impress the idea of a modern Ireland that could be celebrated. The Old Scottish Brigade IRA, which Lena had been a member of, were also involved in these commemorative events. However, other than the inclusion of overseas IRA units in the parade on Easter Sunday, the role of the Irish abroad during Ireland's revolutionary struggle was not touched upon in the official commemorative events. While Irish officials considered the perception of the revolution and the Irish state overseas, it was less concerned with recognising those who had contributed to the revolutionary struggle throughout the diaspora. The Irish government went to great lengths to ensure that a curated image of a modern Ireland was presented overseas, for example, they produced commemorative pamphlets for the Irish overseas to mark the occasion and took care to ensure that the commemorations were filmed on television. The role of the diaspora, both past and present, were not curated into this image.

⁴ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

⁵ *Ibid.*

In a similar vein, the contribution of women during this period was not celebrated beyond the inclusion of the experiences of the female relatives of the deceased 1916 leaders. There were a few exceptions to this. For example, the role of Constance Markievicz was widely celebrated, and to some extent, so were the efforts of Coatbridge native Margaret Skinnider, as their prominent roles in the Easter Rising gave them an elevated status. However, the role of more 'ordinary' women who were involved in the Rising or the broader revolutionary struggle was less pronounced. Certainly, women like Lena McDonald were *included* in the celebrations, but their contributions were not centre stage, contrasting to their male, Irish based counterparts. Indeed, the efforts that the state's official commemorations went to ensuring that Ireland was portrayed as a modern and prosperous nation were not extended to including the recognition of the women who were involved in the fight for Irish independence.

It is important to examine the commemoration of these events because it is revealing of the aspects of history that certain groups want to be remembered, or, more pointedly, forgotten. Roisín Higgins echoes this statement in her work on commemorations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, stating that 'societies, like individuals, remember to forget'.⁶ Similarly Mary McAuliffe has argued 'who, what, why and how we choose to commemorate remain contested and influenced by societal, political, cultural, class and gender demands'.⁷ The commemoration of the events of the Irish revolutionary period can tell us much about the way those involved thought and felt about their experiences after fifty years of reflection, as well as how they were viewed by the Irish state and their respective communities in Britain.

This chapter explores the commemoration of women like Lena McDonald in 1966, who were active outside of Ireland, focusing on three broad categories of commemoration: commemoration by the

⁶ Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory, and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising* (Cork, 2012), p.19.

⁷ Mary McAuliffe, 'Commemorating Women's During the Irish Decade of Centenaries', *Eire-Ireland*, Vol.57, No 1&2 (Spring/Summer 2022), pp.237-259, p.238.

Irish state, within the city of Dundee, and within the wider Irish diaspora in Britain, with a particular focus on London. It primarily agrees with the work of Higgins, arguing that '1916' could be moulded and reshaped to fit the purposes of those in charge of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, namely the Irish state and the 1916 committees in Britain.⁸ It argues both official and non-official commemorations in 1966 failed to recognise the contribution of women to the Easter Rising specifically and the revolutionary period more broadly, and that there existed a hierarchy of veterans of this struggle. This hierarchy prioritised the experiences of men who fought in Easter week and who were active in, or lived on, the island of Ireland, and the commemorative events of 1966 consolidate this. The most recent online release of the military service pension collection is a testament to this: having digitised all applications made by women, the collection highlights that only twenty-five per cent of female applicants were successfully awarded, reflecting that the state did not view the majority of women as contributing 'actively' to the fight for independence, and therefore relegating the roles they played as secondary to men's.⁹ There were few exceptions to this rule: the roles of Constance Markievicz and Margaret Skinnider were more prominent in the commemorations in Ireland as they were viewed as 'exceptional' women who did not fit the mould of the more 'ordinary' women of Cumann na mBan who were viewed as supporting actors in the events of Easter 1916. It also argues that unlike the centenary commemorations in 2016, the semicentennial of the Rising was not used to springboard feminist issues, and that the limited participation of women in these events reinforced their image as subsidiary to their male counterparts.

Secondly, this chapter examines the role of the diaspora in the semicentennial commemorations, arguing that revolutionaries who travelled from outside of Ireland to partake in the Easter Rising also ranked low in the hierarchy of commemorations. Approximately eighty men from England and

⁸ Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p.17.

⁹ <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923/release-history/november-2022-release> Date accessed: 29th November 2022.

Scotland joined the 'Kimmage Garrison' and fought in the GPO during Easter week, as well as at least thirteen women who were part of Cumann na mBan.¹⁰ The contribution of Irish migrants (especially women), were relegated by state officials in favour of celebrating the new, modern Irish state which was birthed due to the sacrifice of men who had given their lives during the Rising, at least according to them. This correlates with the state's attitude to the military pension claims, which valued claims by men who fought during Easter Week or were active on the island of Ireland above other claims. This attitude was contradictory given the centrality of the diaspora within the Irish state itself: Éamon de Valera, the Irish President, was born in New York. Old IRA societies, such as the Old Scottish Brigade IRA, did more to celebrate and commemorate the contribution of overseas veterans than the Irish official government.

Finally, this chapter will explore the commemoration of 1916 in Britain, primarily focusing on Dundee, Glasgow, and London. Despite the *Evening Telegraph* spread on the McDonald sisters, there were no events in Dundee to mark the semicentennial of the Rising. This reflects the changing demographic of the city and its declining status as a hub of Irish migration, as signalled by the decline of the jute industry and the Irish vote bloc in the city. Contrastingly, there were a string of events in Glasgow and London to mark the semicentennial anniversary. The celebrations in Glasgow and London were more cultural than militaristic in nature and sought to transform 1916 into a celebration of Irish culture rather than the start of a prolonged and bloody guerrilla campaign against British rule in Ireland. The celebrations in London were more publicised than in Glasgow, possibly owing to the underlying sectarian tensions in the latter city and the continuing growth of Irish migration to London in the post-war years. In Scotland, the commemorations were marked only by a few local Irish groups, whereas in London, there was a whole programme of cultural events which celebrate the contributions of the Irish in Britain. This cultural approach reflected a desire

¹⁰ With the exception of Margaret Skinnider, who was a member of Cumann na mBan but fought with the Irish Citizen Army.

amongst the Irish in Britain to distance themselves from the past, to not upset the status quo, and to avoid any political controversies that could sour the improved relationship between the two states.

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Commemorating the Past to Reimagine the Present

Commemorations of historical events are as much to do with the contemporary understanding of the past as they are about the events being commemorated.¹¹ Commemorations of Irish history are no exception. Studies of commemoration and historical memory have grown rapidly in the past two decades, and the recent events of the decade of centenaries have invited scholars to scrutinise the way we remember these events today.¹² Historians explored the ways in which the events of the period 1914 to 1923 were represented through politics, media and within academia, with particular emphasis on the more inclusive approach these commemorations took towards the role of women and how this was shaped by contemporary political movements, such as the campaign for the repeal of the eighth amendment and the Tuam Mother and Baby Home scandal.¹³ Anne Dolan's (2003) work on the commemorations of Irish Civil War has highlighted the unease that this period was felt with by successive governments, and how pro-Treaty groups tried to side-step around commemoration, choosing to donate money to World War One memorials rather than their own predecessors such as Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith.¹⁴ In contrast, Guy Beiner has examined the idea of 'forgetting' in commemoration, focusing on Irish revolutionary history but also the Spanish Flu in the aftermath of World War One.¹⁵

¹¹ Laura McAtackney, '1916 and After: Remembering 'Ordinary' Women's Experiences of Revolutionary Ireland' in Oona Frawley's (ed.) *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana, 2021), p.34.

¹² See *Éire-Ireland*, Vol.57, No. 1&2 (Spring/Summer 2022).

¹³ See Mary McAuliffe, 'Commemorating Women's Histories During the Irish Decade of Centenaries' in *Éire-Ireland*, Vol.57, No.1&2 (Spring/Summer 2022), pp.237-259.

¹⁴ Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003).

¹⁵ See Guy Beiner, *Forgetful remembering: social forgetting and vernacular historiography of a rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford, 2018); Guy Beiner, *Pandemic re-awakenings: the forgotten and unforgotten 'Spanish' Flu of 1918-1919* (Oxford, 2022).

Within Irish history, an increasing number of historians have turned to the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising as a study of commemoration. The fiftieth anniversary of 1916 has generally received historical interest due to some commentators linking the commemorations to the Northern Irish Troubles, which started three years later.¹⁶ However, it also serves as a useful example to explore contemporary feelings about the events of 1916 and the revolutionary period more generally, and the legacy of the men and women whose lives were embroiled in this period. In particular, the fiftieth anniversary commemorations serve as a useful point to explore 1960s Ireland's attitudes to religion, technology, gender, the legacy of imperialism and revolutionary struggle.

The most extensive research in this area has been pursued by Roisín Higgins. In her 2012 work, Higgins argues that the fiftieth anniversary celebrations represented an attempt by the Irish government to convey a message of modernisation. Higgins states that the myths of the Easter Rising generate images of male sacrifice and heroism, however, by 1966, veterans of this episode of history were in positions of power and it was no longer in their interest to promote these militaristic images.¹⁷ As well as exploring the official, state led commemorations through investigating government papers, Higgins also studied alternative commemorations, such as those carried out by republican groups, the National Graves Association, and left wing organisations, as well as artistic memorialisation and exhibitions, recognising that 1916 had more than one 'official' meaning in 1966. Higgins also adopts a broader view of 1966 and examines how the Irish state interacted with the diaspora and projected the celebrations abroad, noting their anxiousness not to project the celebrations as 'anti-British'.¹⁸

Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan produced an edited volume on the semicentennial anniversary of the Easter Rising.¹⁹ Daly and O'Callaghan's arguments echo those of Higgins

¹⁶ See Conor Cruise O'Brien, *States of Ireland* (London, 1974).

¹⁷ Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p.204.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.203.

¹⁹ Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan (eds.), *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007).

concerning the projection of the Irish Republic as a modern state, arguing that ‘the Irish state sought to commemorate, while rendering residual and under control, the historical and cultural capital of Irish nationalist historical memory in 1966; that memory was to be deployed to advance the modern agenda of the state’.²⁰ Much of the volume is dedicated to exploring whether the fiftieth anniversary celebration had an impact on the start of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, as Rebecca Lynn Graff McRae in her chapter explores the ability of commemoration to both unite and divide, while Catherine O’Donnell examines the Stormont government’s response to the anniversary celebrations.²¹ Diarmaid Ferriter explores the successive commemorations of the Rising since 1916 and has highlighted that continuity rather than difference has shaped these events, despite the clashing opinions of those on opposing sides of the Civil War.²²

While there has been some consideration of the commemoration of gender and the role of the diaspora in Higgins, O’Callaghan and Daly’s work, these are areas which could be expanded upon. Daly and O’Callaghan make a point of stating in the introduction to their volume that there was ‘relatively low prominence’ given to women in the 1966 commemorations, and that Cumann na mBan received ‘marginal’ attention ‘at best’.²³ However beyond this, none of the collections in their volume explores this marginalisation. Higgins explores this issue in more detail; however, her work focuses more on women’s groups and their involvement in commemorative events. Higgins also explores the efforts of the Irish government to publicise the Rising abroad and examines some of the commemorative events in London, however her focus is more on the state’s efforts to project itself internationally than on the role of the diaspora in commemoration.²⁴ The way in which the role of

²⁰ Ibid., p.15.

²¹ Rebecca Lynn Graff-McRae, ‘Forget politics! Theorising the Political Dynamics of Commemoration and Conflict’ in *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007), pp.220-240; Catherine O’Donnell, ‘Pragmatism versus unity: the Stormont government and the 1966 Easter commemoration’ in *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007), pp.241-274.

²² Diarmaid Ferriter, ‘A figurative scramble for the bones of the patriot dead’: Commemorating the Rising, 1922-65’ in Daly and O’Callaghan’s *1916 in 1966* (Dublin, 2007), pp.199-219.

²³ Mary Daly and Margaret O’Callaghan, ‘Introduction Irish Modernity and ‘The Patriot Dead’ in 1966’, in Daly and O’Callaghans’ (eds.) *1916 in 1966 Commemorating the Easter Rising*, p.12.

²⁴ Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, pp.183-199.

women and the diaspora were commemorated in 1966 are revealing of attitudes to women, those outside of Ireland, and reflect a hierarchy of veterans which can also be seen in the MSPC.

Remembering the past to look towards the future: Commemoration in Ireland

The semi centennial commemoration of the Easter Rising in 1966 marked an opportunity for Ireland to project itself as a modern state which had progressed rapidly in the fifty years since 1916.²⁵ The Taoiseach, Seán Lemass of Fianna Fáil, was intent on modernising the country and the government was moving towards joining the European Economic Community.²⁶ As a result, there was much thought put into the official celebrations (the first of its kind to be broadcast on the recently established Radió Teilifís Éireann) and how Ireland would be perceived by the outside world. The official celebration commenced on Easter Sunday, 10 April, as the fiftieth anniversary Committee chose to celebrate on Easter week instead of the actual dates of the Rising, which was the 24 to the 29 April. This was marked with a procession down O'Connell Street of veterans, community and cultural groups, and representatives of the Irish overseas. The procession was marked by a minute's silence and a rendition of the Last Post, as well as a reading of the Proclamation. There were an estimated 60,000 onlookers, and although senior politicians had been invited, a logistical error resulted in many not showing up, resulting in a conspicuous number of empty seats. During the week, there was a state-held reception at Dublin Castle attended by politicians, veterans, and their relatives, estimated at roughly 1,703 people.²⁷ The official commemorations ended with a closing ceremony on Saturday 16th April at the GPO. The tricolour was lowered from the GPO as the Last Post played, before the President, Éamon de Valera, was introduced for a closing speech, in which he addressed the desire for a united Ireland and the restoration of the Irish language.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid; Daly and O'Callaghan, *1916 in 1966*.

²⁶ Lemass, Seán, Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/lemass-sean-a4787> (date accessed 21/02/24).

²⁷ Higgins, pp.30-56.

²⁸ Ibid.

Roisín Higgins has argued that over time, the Easter Rising became a concept which could be moulded to fit the interests of a variety of Irish groups, whether they were political, economic, social, or cultural.²⁹ Therefore, in its official commemoration, the government sought to project a picture of unity in which Ireland looked to the future. This was further pronounced by the tenuous situation in Northern Ireland and the conflicted history of the Rising for Unionists. In the preparations for the semicentennial celebrations, there was an acute awareness within the Irish government that the commemorations could be used as an opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the state and exacerbate already existing tensions.³⁰ This was most apparent in relation to Northern Ireland, as Prime Minister Terence O'Neill wrote to Sean Lemass months before the anniversary, asking him to withdraw any plans for fear of inflaming the situation in the North.³¹

Since the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, alternative commemorations to mark the anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising were organised by groups who were opposed to the ruling governments. For example, for the twentieth anniversary in 1936, an estimated 1,000 people marched to Glasnevin cemetery and were addressed by Maurice Twomey, chief of staff of the IRA at the time, as an alternative to then Taoiseach de Valera's official celebrations.³² The National Graves Association, which formed in 1926 as an organisation to maintain and erect monuments over the graves of Irish Republicans, also carried out commemorative ceremonies and fundraisers for the maintenance of republican graves across the country since its formation in 1926.³³

The 1966 commemorations were no different. Republican, labour, and Irish language groups mobilised over the week of the 10th April, organising their own commemorative events which reflected their own interests. Republican groups organised their own marches, contrasting with the

²⁹ Ibid, pp., 4-9.

³⁰ Ibid. p.56; See O'Neill, Terence Marne, Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/oneill-terence-marne-a6940> (date accessed 27/02/24).

³¹ Ibid, p.1.

³² Roisín Higgins, 'Commemoration' in J. Crowley, D. Ó Drisceoil and M. Murphy, *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2016).

³³ Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, pp.25-30.

official routes on Easter Sunday. In Dublin, they marched to Deansgrange and Glasnevin cemeteries and clashed with gardaí over the use of IRA flags in their procession, while in Monaghan town, a crowd of 800 people marched from the town to the gates of Latlurcan cemetery.³⁴ Labour groups were vocal in 'claiming' the legacy of Connolly and in commemorating the 1913 Dublin Lockout, staking their claim in the nationalist movement, while members of the Irish language group Misneach went on a week's hunger strike claiming that the ideals of the martyred Rising leaders had not been met by subsequent leaders of Ireland. Perhaps the most memorable alternative 'commemoration' was the blowing up by the IRA of Nelson's column on O'Connell Street a few months before the anniversary celebrations took place.³⁵

Conspicuously absent in the state-led and 'alternative' commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising was the recognition of the role of women. The state's emphasis on Ireland's future failed to take note of the promise of gender equality which was upheld in the Proclamation, while republican and labour commemorations failed to acknowledge the role of women in their subsequent organisations. The main depiction of women's involvement in commemorative events was as the relatives of the male deceased. Special currency was given to those women whose male relatives had died in the Rising. While the experiences of women such as Kathleen Clarke or the Connolly sisters were reflected somewhat in the official celebrations, those of more 'ordinary' republican women were given little public recognition.

The failure to recognise the role of the women is even more conspicuous when the context of the political landscape in Ireland during 1916 is considered. In the lead up to the Rising, Constance Markievicz identified three significant movements in Ireland: the labour movement, the nationalist movement, and the women's movement.³⁶ Markievicz was a suffrage campaigner herself, as were many of the more prominent women in the nationalist movement, such as Hanna Sheehy

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Irish Citizen*, 22nd September 1913.

Skeffington and Margaret Skinnider. Furthermore, many 'ordinary' women were vital in the fight for independence through activities such as gun running, carrying despatches, and providing safehouses, yet both official and unofficial commemorative events reinforced the ideal of the martyred, male hero, with nationalist groups prioritising Pearse and left-wing organisations idolising Connolly. This imagery of male blood sacrifice was extremely important during the revolutionary era and was used in propaganda campaigns to denote the ideal of Irish masculinity as someone willing to lay down their life for their country, and this continued to be a powerful ideal throughout the twentieth century.³⁷ This persisted alongside successive Irish governments who curtailed the rights of women in Irish public and political life, through the enforcement of marriage bars, the exclusion of women on juries, and restricting access to contraception and divorce. Those women who *were* given credit for their roles were painted as exceptional individuals who represented a rarity among Irish women.³⁸

In chapter five, Margaret Skinnider's status as an 'exceptional' female revolutionary was explored. However, the most prominent woman who was awarded this 'exceptional' status was Constance Markievicz. Along with Elizabeth O'Farrell, the nurse who flew the flag of surrender during the Rising, Markievicz is one of the few women who features most prominently in traditional narratives of the Easter Rising. Markievicz was a member of the Irish Citizen Army and was second in command of the fighting on St. Stephen's Green. Upon surrender, Markievicz was arrested and sentenced to death for her part in the Rising, however, her sentence was commuted to imprisonment because she was a woman. Markievicz was also the first woman elected as an MP: she was elected to stand for Dublin St. Patrick's during the 1919 general election. However, as a Sinn Féin MP she did not take her seat in Westminster but sat in the Dáil Éireann until her defeat in 1922. During the Civil War, she came to Dundee and stayed at Lena McDonald's house, while McDonald travelled to deliver

³⁷ Jennifer Redmond, 'Brave enough to fight? Masculinity, migration, and the Irish Revolution' in *Irish Studies Review*, Vol.29, No.2 (April 2021), pp.193-211.

³⁸ Oona Frawley, 'Naming names: countering oblivious remembering in the decade of commemorations' in O. Frawley's *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana, 2021), p.xiii.

weapons to her too.³⁹ She was re-elected in 1923, but she switched political allegiances to the newly formed Fianna Fáil in 1926. She was elected in the 1927 election but died shortly after due to complications from an appendicitis operation.⁴⁰

Markievicz's prominent role in the Rising afforded her a legitimacy that was not granted to other female republicans in the subsequent retellings and commemorations of 1916. Markievicz's militancy was viewed as exceptional, even unusual, by her male counterparts, and was dictated by the circumstances of revolution. However, her status as a prominent anti-Treatyite prevented her from receiving the honour of a state funeral by the Cumann na nGaedheal government who were in power when she died. Markievicz's role in the Civil War marred her reputation in the immediate years after the establishment of the Irish Free State, however her prominent role in the physical fighting of the Easter Rising afforded her a unique status which set her apart from other women.

Mary McAuliffe has argued that Markievicz and Skinnider's roles in the Rising had been explained away by their contemporaries by being coded as 'unfeminine' and dictated by the unusual circumstances of revolution.⁴¹ Their proximity to violence and their involvement in the fighting during Easter Week linked these women to ideas of soldier-citizen, whose citizenship was tied up with the right to bear arms and lay down his life for his country.⁴² Women were not included in the political process because within this ideology, the enfranchisement of citizens and their ability to bear arms was imagined as being granted to all adult males.⁴³ The greatest sacrifice a republican women could make was to give up her sons or husbands to Ireland.

³⁹ MSPC, MSP34REF56964 Lena McDonald; *Dundee Courier*, 2nd February 1923.

⁴⁰ Markievicz, Constance Georgine, Dictionary of Irish Biography, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/markievicz-constance-georgine-a5452> (date accessed: 11/08/23).

⁴¹ McAuliffe, 'Remembered for being forgotten', p.1.

⁴² Nancy J. Curtin, "'A nation of abortive men': gendered citizenship and early Irish Republicanism' in Marilyn Cohen and Nancy J. Curtin's (eds) *Reclaiming Gender: Transgressive Identities in Modern Ireland* (London, 1999), pp.33-44.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p.33.

Although this ideology was reformulated in the revolutionary period to include the enfranchisement of all Irishmen and women, as reflected in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, this idea of the citizen soldier persisted, as seen in the glorification of the Rising's leaders. Therefore, it is possible that Markievicz's and Skinnider's involvement in the physical fighting legitimised their image as 'soldier-citizens, who did not just 'assist', but were willing to lie their lives down for Ireland. These factors enabled them to be removed from the bulk of women who were involved in the Rising, most of whom were members of Cumann na mBan and not the ICA. During the Rising, Cumann na mBan's official duties were to provide first aid and sustenance to the male fighters, these official roles fitted the idealised femininity of nurturing and caring for their male counterparts, whether this reflected reality or not.⁴⁴

This point is further demonstrated by examining the treatment of Elizabeth O'Farrell, a nurse stationed at the GPO who delivered Pearse's surrender to British forces. Despite being an ardent Republican who had been a member of Inghinidhe na hÉireann and Cumann na mBan, O'Farrell's role as a 'nurse' and the woman to deliver the surrender could be moulded to suit contemporary ideals about gender and the role of women.⁴⁵ Perhaps the most striking feature of O'Farrell's story is that she was airbrushed out of the official photograph depicting Pearse's surrender, an action which was foretelling of the Irish state's recognition of the women who fought in this period.⁴⁶ The airbrushing cemented Pearse's position as the most important figure during the crucial moment of surrender, and O'Farrell's position as 'auxiliary'- and by extension, the other women of Cumann na mBan. Therefore, the 'active' roles of women like Markievicz and Skinnider could be celebrated, so long as it was maintained that they were exceptional, unfeminine, and not representative of 'ordinary' women who took part in these events.

⁴⁴ McAuliffe, 'Remembered for being forgotten', p.1.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.6-12.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Skinnider was alive during the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising in 1966.

Skinnider's 'exceptional' status continued to be echoed, and her connections with Markievicz and James Connolly were emphasised in the commemorative events she took part in. For example, in April 1966 Skinnider was interviewed by the *Irish Press*, a daily newspaper founded by Éamon de Valera in 1931 (and subsequently pro-Fianna Fáil).⁴⁷ During the interview, she recalled travelling to Dublin with detonators hidden in her hat and being sent up to Belfast to work with James Connolly, using her Scottish accent as a ruse.⁴⁸

The interview placed emphasis on Skinnider's close connections with Markievicz and Connolly, giving her significant currency in the established hierarchy of the Rising. It also stressed her exceptional bravery whilst downplaying her femininity, for instance, it stated that her 'Easter bonnet' was 'unusual' as it was 'trimmed with detonators'.⁴⁹ Other articles about Easter Week made passing remarks about Skinnider, citing her somewhat unique role as a female combatant and the seriousness of the injuries she sustained.⁵⁰ Former Cuamnn na mBan member and prominent anti-Treatyite, Maire Comerford, gave an account of her experiences in the *Irish Press*, in which she noted Skinnider's injuries.⁵¹ Comerford's account is telling of the way women who participated in the Rising were viewed, and sheds more light on how Markievicz and Skinnider attained an 'exceptional' status. Comerford stated that 'about 150 women were out' during the Rising and that they 'assisted' in 'cooking, despatch carrying and first aid'.⁵² The use of the word 'assisted' is significant, as it implies that women were not integral to the Rising itself. Furthermore, the activities that she stated were carried out by women contrast to the fighting roles of Skinnider and Markievicz, highlighting

⁴⁷ *Irish Press*, 6th April 1966.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Irish Press*, 6th April 1966.

⁵⁰ See *The Kerryman*, 9th April 1966; *Limerick Leader*, 9th April 1966; *Irish Examiner* 11th April 1966, *Evening Echo*, 9th April 1966.

⁵¹ *Irish Press*, 8th April 1966; for more information, see Comerford, Maire (Mary Eva), Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/comerford-maire-mary-eva-a1899> (date accessed 27/02/24).

⁵² *Ibid.*

why their experiences were perceived as 'exceptional' or atypical when compared to more 'ordinary' women's experiences.

Margaret Skinnider penned her own version of the events of the Rising in the *Irish Press*.⁵³ In the article, she discussed her first impressions of James Connolly and Patrick Pearse and her joy at seeing 'men dressed in dark green' marching onto St Stephen's Green when the initial fighting began.⁵⁴ She described her injuries and expressed her disappointment at the call to surrender.⁵⁵ Skinnider also took part in a radio show broadcast on Radio Éireann recounting her experiences of the Rising, along with other women such as Nora Connolly O'Brien, Louise Gavan Duffy and Helena Moloney.⁵⁶

Women were not completely absent from the commemorative events. As previously stated, some of the women who participated in the Rising gave their accounts on a programme for Radio Éireann.⁵⁷ A further Radio Éireann show broadcasted the Thomas Davis lecture by Dr Brian Farrell (who later became a famous broadcaster) on 'Countess Markievicz and the women of 1916'.⁵⁸ The name of the lecture is telling of the major role Markievicz was perceived to have played in comparison to the more 'ordinary' women of Cumann na mBan. Farrell further expands this point by stating that 'their role was subsidiary. Mainly they were assigned to nursing, cooking, and a selected number performed despatch work'.⁵⁹

Female relatives of the signatories were invited to take part in a seven-part documentary *On Behalf of the Provisional Government*, which was broadcast in the lead up to the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising. Kathleen Clarke, Nora Connolly O'Brien, and Fiona Plunkett all took part.⁶⁰ These programmes

⁵³ *Irish Press*, 9th April 1966.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Irish Press*, 14th April 1966.

⁵⁷ *Irish Press*, 14th April 1966.

⁵⁸ *Irish Press*, 16th April 1966.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Kathleen Clarke was the wife of Thomas Clarke, Nora Connolly O'Brien the daughter of James Connolly, and Fiona Plunkett was the sister of Joseph Mary Plunkett. All men were signatories of the Proclamation and were executed, and all three women had been members of Cumann na mBna and had long standing careers in Irish politics. See Clarke, Kathleen (Caitlín Bean Uí Chléirigh), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*:

were centred around each of the male signatories of the Proclamation. Even the 'exceptional' women leaders such as Constance Markievicz did not get a programme of their own. The surviving female relatives of the male signatories were interviewed and recalled their version of events, although the focal point was their male relatives. This reflects Curtin's argument that the ideal of Republican womanhood was the sacrifice of their sons and husbands, as well as the hierarchy of veterans during this period.⁶¹

Not all the surviving female relatives were happy with the official commemorations. For instance, the sisters of executed Rising leader and signatory of the Proclamation, Seán Mac Diarmada, objected to the presence of the Irish Army in his hometown of Kiltyclogher on Easter Sunday, and instead endorsed the alternative commemoration by the National Graves Association, a republican organisation which maintained the graves of Irish patriots. The NGA's founder, Kathleen Clarke, criticised the state's celebrations which proclaimed Patrick Pearse as the would-be President of Ireland, stating that it was the intention of the signatories that her husband, former Fenian and long standing IRB member, Thomas Clarke, to be President instead.⁶² Clarke had also written to Lemass, requesting to be a part of the Commemorative Committee, however she was denied, as Lemass argued that the focus of the commemorations was on Ireland's future, rather than past.⁶³

The participation of the living female relatives in the official and unofficial commemorative events of 1966 reinforces rather than challenges the narrative of Ireland's revolutionary struggle as male-centric and dominated by blood sacrifice, with the central event being the Easter Rising. The commemoration of the Easter Rising throughout much of the twentieth century reinforced traditional conservative values, and ideas about gender and the role of women were no exception.⁶⁴

<https://www.dib.ie/biography/clarke-kathleen-caitlin-bean-ui-chleirigh-a1707> (date accessed 21/02/24); O'Brien, Nora Connolly, Dictionary of Irish Biography: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/obrien-nora-connolly-a6489> (date accessed 21/02/24).

⁶¹ Curtin, 'A nation of abortive men', p.34.

⁶² Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p.83.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Fearghal McGarry, 'The Politics of Pluralism: Historians and Easter 2016,' *Éire-Ireland*, Vol. 57, Number 1 & 2, Spring/Summer 2022, pp.25-62, p.31.

While many of the female relatives of the signatories were active in the nationalist movement and had careers as journalists, politicians, and labour activists, they used their positions to uphold the masculine tradition of heroism with the nationalist movement, rather than advocate for their gender. Outside the inclusion of these female relatives in some commemorative events, there was little effort made to highlight the role of women in the Rising. The surviving female relatives of the signatories and other prominent revolutionaries continued to be portrayed as weeping widows or grieving sisters, representing the ultimate republican feminine ideal of sacrifice, a much more passive image in contrast to their male relatives and the realities of their experiences.⁶⁵

This imagery had changed little since the revolutionary period, when the female relatives and children of the executed signatories featured in numerous Republican propaganda pieces, not as committed Republicans, but as women who had made the ultimate sacrifice by watching their men lay down their life for their country. For example, in December 1916, the *Catholic Bulletin* commissioned a series of photographs of the widows of leaders of the Rising, many of whom posed with their fatherless children.⁶⁶ Agnes Mallin, wife of Michael Mallin, held her daughter Nora, who was born only a few months after the execution of her father, while the image of Grace Gifford, who married Joseph Plunkett hours before his execution in Kilmainham Gaol, particularly resonated with readers. As Mary McAuliffe has argued, the achievements of these committed republican women were rarely mentioned by the press, and instead, they became the grieving symbols of the nation: 'the ever patient, expectant, and sacrificing Mother Ireland'.⁶⁷

Similarly, feminists or republican women did not use the events of 1966 to springboard a wider debate about women's rights in Ireland.⁶⁸ This is despite the fact that republican women had been the subject of vitriol during the Civil War and under the Cumann na nGaedheal government due to

⁶⁵ Mary McAuliffe, 'Remembered for being forgotten', pp.3-4.

⁶⁶ *Catholic Bulletin*, Vol.6, No.12 (December 1916).

⁶⁷ McAuliffe, 'Remembered for being forgotten', p.4.

⁶⁸ Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p.82.

Cumann na mBan's anti-Treaty stance.⁶⁹ The anti-Treaty stance of the six women TDs of the Second Dáil coloured successive governments' views of women as too emotional and inflexible for the world of politics.⁷⁰ This is echoed in the opinions of prominent Irish nationalists in the 1920s who expressed their views of female republicans in unflattering terms. The writer and nationalist P.S. O'Hegarty, called the anti-Treaty Cumann na mBan women 'practically unsexed' and 'utterly incapable of understanding the complexities of politics,' while the president of the Free State Executive, W.T. Cosgrave, condemned them as 'neurotic girls [who] are among the most active adherents to the irregular cause'.⁷¹ This was far from the truth. The women of Cumann na mBan were intelligent and fully understood the political climate in which they operated, as much as their male counterparts. It is also possible that so many women took the anti-Treaty position because in a world where they had only just been enfranchised, they had less to lose than their male counterparts. However, Cumann na mBan's association with the anti-treaty factions, as well as the influence of conservative gender norms after this period, coloured the perception of republican women for decades after, and the views of O'Hegarty and Cosgrave were widely shared.

1966 presented an opportunity for feminists to revisit the promise of gender equality enshrined in the 1916 Proclamation and challenge the government, as their counterparts in republican and labour groups had done. However, this was not to be. In her pioneering study of Irish women's revolutionary and political activism (1989), Margaret Ward stated that after the Civil War, the women of Cumann na mBan were prevented from pursuing a broader definition of 'liberation' which could have included a commitment to gender equality due to their overriding commitment to nationalism, which was both pragmatic and ideological.⁷² Resultantly, they became 'guardians of the

⁶⁹ See Claire McGing, 'Women's Political Representation in Dáil Éireann in Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary Ireland' in Linda Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence* (Newbridge, 2020).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p.126.

⁷¹ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1924), pp.73-4; Gavin Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society* (Basingstoke, 2015), p.33.

⁷² Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London, 1989), pp.248-263.

Republican consciousness' rather than representatives of the interests of women.⁷³ Ward argues that the only exception to this rule was Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, who consistently critiqued the nationalist movement for its patriarchal attitudes. However, Kathleen Clarke could also be included in this, as she was also a vocal proponent of women's rights, particularly in relation to the 1935 Employment Act and the 1937 Constitution, which she felt did not fulfil the 1916 Proclamation's promise for equal opportunities to both sexes.⁷⁴ Yet the actions of these women did little to change the heroic, masculine narrative of 1916. Rather, they were used to justify critiques of the subsequent government in relation to not fulfilling the ideals that their male relatives had given their lives for. The women's liberation movement in Ireland would gain momentum a few years later, however 1966 was not a springboard for feminist agitation as it was for republicanism.

The Kimmage Garrison and the Old Scottish IRA in 1966

The official commemorations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising were also muted on the role of the Irish outside of Ireland, such as Lena McDonald's former comrades in the Scottish Brigade IRA. A significant number of men and women (including Margaret Skinnider) travelled from Britain to Ireland to take part in the Rising in the months before April 1916. Ernie Nunan, who travelled from London to join in the Rising along with his brothers Seán and Seamus, later stated in an article for the Republican *an tÓglach* magazine that:

We had men from the Nore, the Suir and the Shannon"

(The Bold Fenian Men).

'From the Mersey, the Thames, and the Clyde."

(The Kimmage Garrison).⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Clarke, Kathleen (Caitlín Bean Uí Chléirigh), Dictionary of Irish Biography <https://www.dib.ie/biography/clarke-kathleen-caitlin-bean-ui-chleirigh-a1707> (date accessed 11/08/23).

⁷⁵ Ernie Nunan, The Kimmage Garrison 1916, *An tÓglach*, (Winter 1967), p.9.

The figures for people who travelled from Britain to take part in the Easter Rising vary. Most of the men who came from Britain stayed in Larkfield, a farm in Kimmage which was owned by George Plunkett. They stayed there in the run-up to the Rising and manufactured weapons in preparation for the fighting. This became known as the Kimmage Garrison.⁷⁶ The witness statements in the Bureau of Military History give a rough idea of how many British based people travelled to Ireland and were part of this group.⁷⁷ According to former Glasgow Volunteer and military pension board assessor, Seamus Robinson, there were 'fifty to sixty' men who were part of the Kimmage Garrison, however he then goes on to list eighty-four men from units in Britain.⁷⁸ Of Robinson's list, thirty-eight were from Liverpool, nineteen from Glasgow, sixteen from London and eleven from Manchester.⁷⁹ Similarly, London Volunteer Joseph Good stated that the membership of Kimmage Garrison peaked at 'sixty-four or eighty-four', while Liverpool Volunteer Frank Thornton stated that the Liverpool contingent numbered around 117, although this seems exaggerated.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, we can discern that there was a significant number of men who had travelled from Britain, with a slight overrepresentation from Liverpool compared to other areas. This is probably a reflection of the Irish populations in these areas, as Liverpool had a high percentage of Irish born within its total population throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1911, the percentage of Irish-born in Liverpool among the local population was 4.64 per cent, compared to 1.14 per cent in London and 2.64 per cent in Manchester.⁸¹ Glasgow's percentage of Irish-born was higher than Liverpool's for this period, however there were disruptions in communication amongst the Glasgow Volunteers, and some members of their party were arrested before they could take

⁷⁶ For more information on the Kimmage Garrison, see Ann Matthews, *The Kimmage Garrison, 1916: making billy-can bombs at Larkfield* (Dublin, 2010).

⁷⁷ See BMHWS No.510, Frank Thornton; BMHWS No.156, Seamus Robinson; BMHWS No.388, Joseph Good.

⁷⁸ BMHWS No.156, Seamus Robinson. There are some inaccuracies in Robinson's list, for corrections, see Gerard Noonan, *The IRA in Britain, 1919-1923: 'in the Heart of Enemy Lines'* (Liverpool, 2014), p.17.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ BMHWS, No.388 Joseph Good; BMHWS, No.510 Frank Thornton.

⁸¹ David Fitzpatrick, 'The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921', in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, Volume VI: Ireland Under the Union, II: 1870-1921*, (Oxford, 2010), p.656.

part in the Rising.⁸² There were also mixed signals from the IRB in Motherwell about whether members should join the insurrection, which ultimately stymied mobilisation.⁸³

While the figures for the Kimmage Garrison give a good indication of the amount of people who travelled from Britain to fight in the Rising, these figures do not account for the women who travelled and joined the Irish Citizen Army or Cumann na mBan. For example, although Robinson stated that there were nineteen men from Scotland, we also know of Margaret Skinnider, who joined the ICA and fought in St Stephen's Green.⁸⁴ Hannah Robinson's account of her time in the Anne Devlin branch of Cumann na mBan suggests that this number would have been higher if it were not for miscommunication and last-minute orders.⁸⁵ Evidence from the MSPC, BMHWS, and 1916 Centenary Committees highlights that a significant portion of women travelled from Britain to take part in the Rising. We know of at least thirteen: nine from Liverpool, three from Glasgow, and one from London.⁸⁶ This generally reflects the pattern of men from the Kimmage Garrison, with a slightly higher number coming from Liverpool. Some of the women were also involved in the Rising outside of Dublin. Margaret Leonard took despatches in Athlone while Nora Thornton was sent to Tralee.⁸⁷ All the women except from Skinnider were mobilised within Cumann na mBan.

Those who travelled over for the Rising were both Irish born people who were residing in Britain, and second or third generation Irish. For some in the latter group, it was their first time in Ireland, let

⁸² See MSPC, MSP34REF298, Joseph Robinson; MSPC, MSP34REF4300, Seamus Reader; BMHWS, Seamus Robinson.

⁸³ BMHWS, No.777, Patrick Mills; BMHWS, No.828, James Byrne.

⁸⁴ Stephen Coyle, 'Biographical Dictionary for the members of 'A' Company, Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan, Glasgow, who fought in the Easter Rising,' in Stephen Coyle and Máirtín Ó Catháin's (eds.) *'We Will Rise Again': Ireland, Scotland and the Easter Rising* (Glasgow, 2018), pp.40-64.

⁸⁵ UCD, Eithne Coyle O'Donnell Papers, P61/4 (67), Anne Devlin Branch, Hannah Robinson (nee Duggan), undated.

⁸⁶ See MSPC Margaret Leonard; MSPC MSP34REF1692 Mary Josephine Mulcahy; MSPCMSP34REF19910 Margaret Skinnider; MSPC MSP34REF12320 Alice Coogan; MSPC MSP34REF3935 Catherine Rooney; MSPC MSP34REF46512 Frances Downie; MSPC MSP34REF542 Margaret Viant; MSPC, MSP34REF51015 Nora Thornton; MSPC, MSP34REF28876, Kathleen Murphy; BMHWS No.648, Catherine Rooney; BMHWS No. 655, Nora Thornton. It should be noted that some women in the sample of Republican women based in Britain had service for Easter week but are not included in this sample because at the time, they were based in Ireland, and therefore did not travel over. This included MSPC, MSP34REF2198, Kathleen Barrett.

⁸⁷ MSPC Margaret Leonard; MSPC Nora Thornton.

alone Dublin. This was a factor that resulted in the high numbers of arrests in this group after the surrender, as many of the Kimmage men did not know their way around Dublin and therefore found it more difficult to evade capture. This sense of disorientation is reflected in John McGallogly's witness statement for the Bureau of Military History. McGallogly described trying to find Thomas Clarke's shop in Dublin with his elder brother, James, with no success. Instead, they went to Constance Markievicz's house in Rathmines, only to be turned away after word got out that police were looking for men on the run from Glasgow. The brothers spent the rest of the evening wondering aimlessly around Dublin, until Kathleen Clarke came to collect them at Liberty Hall.⁸⁸ With the exception of Skinnider, who was grievously injured, the women were able to escape with relative ease. According to Nora Thornton, the Liverpool women 'went up to [Dublin] Castle' and said they had come on holiday, only to be held up by the Rising.⁸⁹ The Castle authorities believed them and paid their passage back to Liverpool.⁹⁰

Some of the members of Kimmage Garrison and Cumann na mBan were alive for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Rising in 1966. Although some veterans of the revolutionary period from overseas, such as the McDonald sisters, were invited to attend some of the official celebrations, their roles as overseas IRA and Cumann na mBan members were not reflected in official or non-official commemorative events, except for a few sporadic columns in newspapers. There was some limited acknowledgement of the diaspora in the official commemorations, for example, members of Conradh na Gaelige Glaschu were invited to Dublin and led the civilian part of the official march down O'Connell Street on Easter Sunday.⁹¹ The McDonald sisters also led a party over from New York to lay a wreath at the Scottish republican plot in Howth on 17th April, although this was not part of the official programme of events.⁹² However, in the official speeches and

⁸⁸ BMHWS No.244, John McGallogly.

⁸⁹ BMHWS, Nora Thornton.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Glasgow City Archives, Mitchell Library, TD1641, Minutes of the Gaelic League 1897-1973, Conradh na Gaelige Glaschú 60th anniversary pamphlet.

⁹² *Irish Press*, 15th April 1966.

commemorative events, little acknowledgement was given to the role of the diaspora and those who had travelled to take part in the fighting. Newspaper articles referenced the fact that there were contingents from Britain who had travelled over to join the fighting, but this was usually in passing description. For example, the articles about Margaret Skinnider depict her travelling from Scotland as a mere logistical fact, and do not expand on the role that the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan in Glasgow played in the Rising.⁹³

Some of the veterans were angry at how those who had travelled from Britain to fight in the Rising had been portrayed. In response to the special publication of the book *Headquarters Battalion Easter Week 1916* (1966) by Dominican priest John M. Heuston, Ernie Nunan wrote an angry article for *An tÓglach*. Nunan criticised Heuston's statement that the men who had joined from Britain had done so to escape conscription, as well as his assertion that the Kimmage Garrison was 'weak in equipment and organisation'.⁹⁴ Nunan retaliated by stating that the men of the Kimmage Garrison had received three months training prior to the Rising and had lived under a strict military routine.⁹⁵ Furthermore, he stated that it was 'this weak unit' that took over the GPO and 'set up the headquarters of the Irish Republic'.⁹⁶ Nunan ended his article by stating 'my personal tribute to the Garrison is: "Despite what has been written At least this is their due. They were some of those who tried to make our dreams come true'.⁹⁷ Although the article is a personal piece from Nunan, when the treatment of veterans by the Military Pension Board and the state's reluctance to acknowledge the role of the diaspora in official commemorations are considered, it is not hard to imagine that Nunan's feelings were shared among other veterans from outside of Ireland in this period.

Roisín Higgins has argued that while there was official consideration for the Rising outside of Ireland, it was less about reflecting the role of the diaspora and more about reflecting Ireland's image as a

⁹³ *Irish Press*, 6th April 1966.

⁹⁴ *An tÓglach*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

modern and prosperous nation.⁹⁸ However the little acknowledgement given to those who had travelled from Britain in the official commemorations and the media could also be a further reflection of the hierarchy of commemoration of the Rising specifically, and the revolutionary period more generally. The awarding of service pensions for the years 1916 to 1923 is revealing of the official perception of this period. The awarding of pensions reflects the state's view of a gendered and geographical hierarchy, as women veterans from Cumann na mBan were awarded significantly less amounts than their male counterparts, if any sum at all.⁹⁹ This has been discussed in chapters four and five.

There was also a geographical aspect to this hierarchy, as those who were active in Dublin during the Easter Rising had a more successful rate than those who were stationed in places such as Enniscorthy or Athlone.¹⁰⁰ This geographical hierarchy can be seen to the official and non-official commemorations of the Rising in Ireland during 1966. Indeed, other than a few passing sentences which treat the men of the Kimmage Garrison or Margaret Skinnider's journey from Glasgow as novelties, there was little mention of those who had travelled to Ireland to take part in the events of Easter Week, and certainly none of the existence of a wider republican network outside of Ireland.

Commemorating in Scotland

The run up to the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the Easter Rising in 1966 in Dundee were remarkably muted. Other than the *Evening Telegraph* article about the McDonald sisters, media coverage of the commemoration in Ireland was scarce in the Dundee press, despite the city's connection to Rising leader and head of the ICA, James Connolly, who lived in the town from 1889 until 1893. Dundee is also where Connolly became involved in politics, as he joined the Socialist League in the city, kick-starting his long career in socialism and trade unionism. Therefore, it is

⁹⁸ Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, pp.3-4.

⁹⁹ Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries, 1916-23', *Women's History Review*, No.26, Vol. 6, pp.913-934; Marie Coleman, 'Military service pensions and the recognition and reintegration of guerrilla fighters after the Irish Revolution', *Historical Research*, Vol.91, No.253 (August 2018), pp.554-572.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p.926.

unusual that there was no note of the connection in the Dundonian press, given that the Connolly had such a strong link to the city.

Other than the page spread on the McDonald sisters, *The Evening Telegraph* had little to say about the fiftieth anniversary commemorations. It reported on the note of congratulations sent from the Kremlin on behalf of the Soviet government to the people of the Irish Republic, as well as the unveiling of the statue of Robert Emmet by an American congressman in Dublin to President de Valera.¹⁰¹ No mention of the Dundee Irish or their lengthy connections with Irish politics were made. Even the spread on the McDonald sisters' involvement was presented as a somewhat extraordinary event, and little is made of the large circle of Irish republicans in Dundee that the McDonalds were a part of.¹⁰² This 'exceptionalism' was partly reflected in the *Evening Telegraph* report on the McDonald sisters, which painted them as something of an anomaly among their fellow female Dundonians, despite the large female support base for Republicanism in the city in the early 1920s.¹⁰³ Newspaper reports from Dundee in the early 1920s and other military service pension applications further support this idea that the McDonald sisters were not the only women involved in clandestine republican activities in the city.¹⁰⁴ An anonymous letter written to the newspaper two days after the article's publication also hints at this wider circle. Written by a retired detective, the author stated that one of their first jobs as a plain clothed officer was to 'shadow' Lena McDonald as she 'called at several houses, warning people in them that the police had made a raid and would probably be making others'.¹⁰⁵ The author added two of the houses she called upon had already been raided, before rounding off the letter by stating that she was 'a fine-looking young woman'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ *Evening Telegraph*, 13th April 1966; *Evening Telegraph* 14th April 1966.

¹⁰² *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

¹⁰³ *The Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

¹⁰⁴ See *Dundee Courier*, 8th March 1921; *Evening Telegraph*, 29th October 1920; MSPC 49SP6383, Christina Gray.

¹⁰⁵ *Evening Telegraph*, 27th April 1966.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

There was more coverage given to the commemorations in the *Dundee Courier*. The *Courier* was considered a Conservative publication and had a history of being an anti-Irish mouthpiece within Dundee. Its editors strongly objected to both the Home Rule and republican movements of the early twentieth century. However, the limited coverage in the *Courier* of the commemorations was sensitive in tone, perhaps reflecting a softening of its previous views. The article stated that the commemorations marked the event which 'set Ireland free from British rule' and commented on the 'sprightly' appearance of the eighty-three-year-old President de Valera.¹⁰⁷ It noted the emotional weight of the commemorations in Dublin, but it also covered the commemorations across the border in Belfast, noting the presence of armed police while stressing that both events 'went off without incident'.¹⁰⁸

The *Courier* also reported on the commemorations in London. The article stated that over 5,000 people had marched through London before gathering in Trafalgar Square, where the Last Post was played and veterans 'took a salute' in front of Nelson's Column.¹⁰⁹ The author also commented on the emotional atmosphere in London, as 'heads were bowed and tears flowed' as the Last Post played throughout the crowd.¹¹⁰ The coverage of the commemorations by the *Courier* marked a departure from their previous, hostile attitude to Irish nationalist and republican movements. This is particularly significant for a publication whose owner, DC Thomson, was rumoured throughout Dundee for its anti-Catholic hiring policies.¹¹¹

Neither paper noted the city's connection to Connolly, nor was there any mention of any commemorative activity in Dundee. The papers were also silent on other commemorations marking the event throughout Scotland. Various Irish organisations in Glasgow hosted a myriad of events to

¹⁰⁷ *Dundee Courier*, 11th April 1966.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ It is difficult to find evidence of these rumours as DC Thomson's archives are hard to access, however, it is a common perception throughout the city.

mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, continuing a tradition of marking the event since the 1920s. For the Rising's tenth anniversary, a large crowd gathered to hear Republican priest Michael O'Flanagan deliver a speech in St. Mary's Church hall in the Calton district of Glasgow, in which O'Flanagan related William Wallace and Scotland's historic resistance to English rule to the Irish struggle of the 1920s.¹¹² O'Flanagan was a socialist and republican who was joint-Vice President of Sinn Féin during the revolutionary period. In 1956, Cormac Breslin, TD for Donegal West, delivered a speech for the Pádraig Pearse Cumann of Fianna Fáil for the fortieth anniversary of the Rising, delivering a rousing speech in both English and Irish to a filled St. Margaret's hall which was opened with a reading of the Proclamation.¹¹³ Breslin addressed the Donegal roots of many of those present, and invoked the past sufferings of the Irish people, referencing the Famine, the Land Wars, and the suppression of the Irish language.¹¹⁴ He emphatically declared his desire of a thirty two county republic, which was met with applause from the crowd. Breslin also expressed his sadness at the continued emigration of Irish men and women from their homeland, an issue which was of increasing concern to politicians in the 1940s and 1950s.¹¹⁵

There was a string of events for the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising in Glasgow in 1966, organised by several different groups. These can roughly be divided into political and cultural commemorative events. Cultural activities included concerts, Gaelic football matches, Irish dancing, and ceilidhs. On Easter Sunday, a variety of Irish musical artistes gathered in both the Glasgow Concert Hall and St. Mungo's hall for concerts, with Irish folk singer Nita Norrie performing at the former event. A Gaelic football match followed by Irish dancing was also organised at Eastfield, Rutherglen.¹¹⁶ Political organisations such as Clann na hÉireann (formed in Britain in 1964) also organised events in Glasgow

¹¹² Stephen Coyle, 'Remembering the Rising in Scotland' in Stephen Coyle and Máirtín Ó Catháin's (ed.) *We Will Rise Again: Scotland and the Easter Rising* (Glasgow, 2018), p.88. It is also worth noting that this is the church where Celtic F.C. was founded.

¹¹³ *The Derry People*, 14th April 1956.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Irish Weekly and Ulster Examiner* (Scottish Edition), 2nd April 1966.

to commemorate the Rising. Using St. Mungo's parish hall, the organisation staged a variety event which showcased numerous Irish entertainers, including comedian Ted Cassidy and folk music entertainer the Brian McCollum Folk Four. Performances were also made by the Kelly School of Irish Dancing and the Coatbridge Harp Flute Band. The evening commenced with the reading of the Proclamation, and closed with the sounding of the Last Post, and guests were encouraged to wear Easter lilies to honour those who had died.¹¹⁷ The NGA also raised money in Glasgow towards the erection of a memorial in Glasnevin cemetery. However, many of the living members of the Scottish Brigade IRA and Cumann na mBan who either remained in Scotland or lived outside of Ireland chose to go to the main celebrations in Dublin rather than those in Glasgow.

While it is unsurprising that veterans chose to travel to Ireland to commemorate the anniversary of the Rising, Scotland's muted response outside of Glasgow to the events across the Irish Sea contrasts with the large gatherings in London. This is possibly a reflection of Scotland's more complex relationship with sectarianism, particularly on the west coast. It is possible that the undercurrents of sectarian tension prevented commemorating events more widespread throughout Scotland. This is illustrated by the installation of a commemorative plaque for James Connolly on the Cowgate in Edinburgh in June 1968.¹¹⁸ Weeks after its instalment, the plaque was stolen. The replacement plaque continued to be vandalised over the years by those who disagreed with Connolly's politics, reflecting the tricky nature of commemorating this period of Irish history in Scotland.

Another, simpler reason for the muted commemorations in Scotland might be that many Republican veterans had left for elsewhere. The McDonald sisters stated in their *Evening Telegraph* interview that they had not been to visit Dundee for some years, as Kathy stated that the city they grew up in had 'mostly vanished', and 'most of the people [they] knew had gone too'.¹¹⁹ Lena supported this assertion in her military pension application, as she stated that her 'crowd' were mostly members of

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ *Evening Echo*, 8th June 1968.

¹¹⁹ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

the Old Scottish Brigade, most of whom had resettled in Dublin during this period.¹²⁰ In addition to this, by the 1960s, the jute industry was declining in Dundee, with commercial jute production in the city ceasing in the 1970s. The jute industry was a major pull factor for Irish women's migration to the city for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly those from the northern counties who would have had some experience in the linen trades of Ulster. The Irish women who were emigrating in the post-war period were choosing jobs in the 'new' industries of the service sector, such as nursing, instead of the industrial sectors which had been a linchpin of the previous century.¹²¹

Richard McCready's work on the political impact of the Dundee Irish also supports this idea of decline. McCready's work highlights that the 'Irish vote' was viewed by prospective politicians as critical to electoral success, and that candidates for local and general elections needed to be well versed on the 'Irish situation' throughout much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹²² McCready also highlights the impact of groups such as the United Irish League in Dundee instructing their members on who to vote for, depending on party positions to Irish Home Rule.¹²³ After the astounding election of the UK's only ever Prohibitionist MP, Edwin 'Neddy' Scrymgeour in 1922, there was a decline in politicians trying to specifically appeal to the 'Irish vote'. Indeed, the influence of the city's Irish bodies such as the various Sinn Féin clubs dwindled after the surrender of anti-Treaty forces in May 1923, although there is evidence that the O'Rahilly Club continued to exist into the 1930s.¹²⁴ To an extent, the dwindling importance of the Irish vote in Dundee reflects the idea that for many outside of Ireland in the 1920s and 1930s, the Irish Question

¹²⁰ MSPC, Lena McDonald.

¹²¹ Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (Oxford, 2007), pp.91-92.

¹²² Richard B. McCready, 'The social and political impact of the Irish in Dundee c.1845-1922', PhD (University of Dundee, 2002), p.5, p.24, pp.128-130.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *Irish Press*, 8th January 1934.

had been somewhat 'settled'. It also reflects that the city's once booming Irish population was not as prominent as it once was.

The previous chapter examined the migration of former Scottish IRA and Cumann na mBan members and highlighted that there was significant migration to Ireland, and particularly Dublin, during the years after the Civil War. Dundee was not the only Scottish city which was experiencing this decline in an Irish, Republican presence. Overall, the Irish population in Scotland dropped to under two per cent of the total population in the 1950s, as the South of England began to grow in importance for those who were emigrating, with centres such as London, Birmingham, and Coventry growing in favour of more traditional centres of migration such as Liverpool and Glasgow.¹²⁵ Therefore, there could have been a sense that Dundee was losing its Irish connection during this period, as reflected in the muted responses to the Rising commemorations.

London's Commemorations

The biggest commemorations for the fiftieth anniversary outside of Ireland were in London. As Britain's capital and largest city, London continued to have a significant and growing Irish population throughout the twentieth century, despite the declining population of the Irish in other traditional centres of migration such as Dundee. A committee of fourteen different Irish organisations was established to coordinate the celebrations, and some veterans of the revolutionary period were appointed to the board.¹²⁶ Interestingly, those who were appointed on the committee were not strictly former members of the London IRA units but included Irish veterans who had emigrated in the years after the Civil War, and the presidents of various Irish organisations in Britain. The Honorary Secretary of the Committee was Frank Kevin Lee, a former member of the Southwest London Brigade and a prominent musician, whose ceilihd band toured Ireland and Britain throughout the 1930s and 1940s.¹²⁷ It is possible that Lee's musical talent and name recognition was

¹²⁵ Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.96.

¹²⁶ *Irish Examiner*, 8th July 1965.

¹²⁷ See MSPC, MSP34REF58677, Frank Kevin Lee.

key to securing him the role in the committee, as the celebrations of the centenary in London were largely a reflection of Irish culture rather than nationalism.

Like the celebrations in Glasgow, the events that marked the fiftieth anniversary in London were as much a celebration of the Irish language, music, and culture as they were of the Easter Rising itself. Fourteen Irish groups were included on the official 1916 Committee and were involved with organising the programme of events. These included the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), National University of Ireland Club (NUI), Clann na hÉireann, Tuairim (an intellectual organisation aimed at getting young Irish people involved in political issues such as electoral reform and Northern Ireland), the Gaelic League, the Irish Centres in Eaton Square and Camden, the St. Patrick's Festival Parade Committee, and of course the Old London Brigade IRA Association.¹²⁸ Lee stated in an article for *The Irish Press* that the Committee were 'proud in the knowledge that every Irish National Organisation [in London] is not only represented, but taking an active part,' reinforcing the notion that the committee desired this to be a celebration of the diversity of Irish culture in Britain rather than a strictly republican affair.¹²⁹

The programme of events reflects this idea. The Committee arranged a series of events which stretched across Easter Week. These included a GAA field day and a Ceili Mhor on Easter Monday, a lecture by Dr David Thornley at the Irish Centre in Eaton Square, and a screening of the film *Mise Éire* at the Irish Club in Camden later during the week.¹³⁰ The main programme of events took place on Easter Sunday. The day started with two memorial services: the first at the Anglican Cathedral, St. Saviour's at London Bridge, and the second at Southwark Catholic Cathedral. *The Irish Press* emphasised that the latter of these churches was where the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, was laid after his death from Hunger Strike in Brixton Prison in 1920, the significance of which would not have been lost on former London members of the IRA and Cumann na mBan, many

¹²⁸ *Irish Press*, 14th March 1966.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Nenagh Guardian*, 12th March 1966.

of whom took part in MacSwiney's funeral procession through the capital.¹³¹ The Irish ambassador to Britain, John Gerald Molloy, was in attendance at both services, while MacSwiney's only surviving child, Máire MacSwiney Brugha, attended the Catholic service at Southwark.¹³² This was followed by a parade led by veterans of the Rising from the Horse Guard's Parade to Trafalgar Square, where the Proclamation was read by Ruairí Brugha, son of former Minister of Defence and first President of the Dáil Éireann, Cathal Brugha.¹³³ It is estimated that between 5,000 to 7,000 people were in attendance for this particular part of the event.¹³⁴ In the evening, there was a commemoration concert at the Royal Albert Hall which included a performance of *The Rising of 1916* by the Abbey Theatre Players, a musical performance by the Gaelic League Choir and a dancing show by the Kavanagh Academy of Dancers.¹³⁵ The following Sunday, at a dinner held at the Irish Club in Eaton Square, the Irish Ambassador praised the events as an astounding success and thanked the Committee for their hard work.¹³⁶ Similarly, the chairman of the 1916 Committee, Michael McCormack, praised the week's events, although he also stated that 'the one regret' was the 'lack of enthusiasm of the young people'.¹³⁷ McCormack continued to state that 'all the old stalwarts' were present at the events but he did not know what would bring in the youth, ending his speech by saying that he 'hoped and prayed' that this would change.¹³⁸

The programme of events in London were more a reflection of the contributions and cultural significance of the Irish in Britain rather than a commemoration of the contribution of those who fought in the Easter Rising, like those in Glasgow. It is likely that the organisers did not want to damage Irish-British relations, which were already heightened over the burgeoning violence in the Northern Ireland. With the exception of the reading of the Proclamation and the lectures organised

¹³¹ *Irish Press*, 6th April 1966.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Irish Press*, 6th April 1966.

¹³⁴ Reports vary. See *Dundee Courier*, 11th April 1966; *Cork Examiner*, 19th April 1966.

¹³⁵ *Nenagh Guardian*, 12th March 1966.

¹³⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 19th April 1966.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

by the NUI, the events in London reflected the cultural achievements of the Irish in the arts and sport and highlighted the extent to which the Irish had contributed to and integrated into British society. In a similar vein to the Irish state's objective of using 1966 to portray themselves as a modern and economically developed nation, the London and 1916 Committee structured a programme which portrayed the Irish in Britain in a positive light.

The emphasis on culture in the commemorations also meant that the Committee could steer away from the more troubling, political aspects of this story, as 1916 marked the start of the Wars of Independence against Britain. The Irish state were wary of what the Irish abroad would translate 1916 into, as they could not always be trusted to conform to the official political impulse to reinvent the revolutionary period as one shaped by a combination of dreaming and determination.¹³⁹ Molloy also reflected on this in his speech, as he stated that he was relieved that there were 'no untoward incidents'.¹⁴⁰ The inclusion of a Protestant service in the official programme of events also reflects that the Committee wanted to portray the commemorations, and by extension, the Irish in Britain, as diverse and tolerant, and not exclusively Catholic. This can also be seen in the cultural side of the commemorations in Glasgow, which had experienced more pronounced sectarian tensions than other parts of Britain during the twentieth century.¹⁴¹ In a similar vein to the London commemorations, in Glasgow the emphasis was on Irish cultural contributions through the staging of Irish dancing performances and GAA matches, with the reading of the Proclamation as the only direct reference to the Easter Rising.

It can be argued that the fiftieth anniversary commemorations in Britain were viewed as an opportunity to highlight the progress made between Irish and British relations since 1916, and the subsequent contributions of the Irish diaspora to Britain. Rather than focusing on the fact that a

¹³⁹ Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p.195.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ For more on sectarianism in twentieth century Scotland, see David Ritchie, 'They do not become Good Scotsmen': A Political History of the anti-Irish campaign in Scotland, 1919-1939', PhD (University of Edinburgh, 2013).

contingent of the Irish community in Britain left to fight against Britain during the First World War, the commemorations in Britain focused on highlighting the contributions the Irish had made in that country, and their improving relationship. The British government was co-operative with Irish officials in marking the anniversary. For example, after receiving an application from the Committee requesting use of the Queen's box at the Royal Albert Hall, one government administrator remarked upon the 'Gilbertian' nature of the commemoration.¹⁴²

In the spirit of this feeling of progress, the British authorities handed back the original flag which flew over the GPO during Easter week of 1916. After the defeat of the rebels, British soldiers seized the flag and it was displayed in the Imperial War Museum, until it was returned during the fiftieth anniversary celebrations as a gesture of good will. However, there was some confusion in the process as to which flag was to be returned.¹⁴³ British officials were under the impression that they were to hand over a tricolour which the Imperial War Museum had displayed as the flag that flew over the GPO during Easter Week. The night before the official handing over ceremony in London, British officials were handed a copy of *The Irish Post*, which stated that they were to hand over a green flag which was stitched with the words 'Irish Republic'. After a phone call to the National Museum of Ireland, the British realised their error and had to do a last-minute flag swap. Nevertheless, the ceremony was received well, with the confusion being dubbed as a 'comedy of errors' and was perceived as a reflection of the new relationship between the two states.¹⁴⁴

In a similar vein to the Irish state's official commemorations, the role of women was muted in the London and Glasgow based commemorations. All members of the 1916 Committee in London were men, some of which were veterans of the revolutionary period, but most were representatives of the various Irish bodies involved with the commemorative events. Women were somewhat involved

¹⁴² TNA, DO 130/125, 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the Easter Rising, Letter to the Privy Purse Office, Buckingham Palace 25th March 1966.

¹⁴³ TNA, DO 182/143, Return of Flag over GPO, J.B. Johnstone to Commonwealth Office, 31st March 1966.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, DO 182/143, Return of Flag over GPO, J.B. Johnstone to Commonwealth Office, 31st March 1966.

in the commemorations through the cultural events such as Irish dancing, singing and dramatic performances. Some female performers were listed on the programme, however there is little evidence of events which highlighted contributions of the women of Cumann na mBan from London, or elsewhere in Britain for that matter.¹⁴⁵ While the role of the Easter Rising veterans in the London commemorations was not front and centre like the official commemorative events in Ireland, there was some room given to former male members of the IRA, especially those who took part in the Rising. For example, Ernie Nunan wrote an article for the official London 1916 souvenir book in which he detailed his experiences of the fighting and its aftermath.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, the surviving male veterans of Easter week led the parade to Trafalgar Square. It is possible that like Lena McDonald, some of the female London veterans travelled to Dublin to take part in the Irish celebrations, however the commemorations itself offered little room to celebrate their roles in the Rising or the revolutionary period by extension. This further reinforces the idea that women ranked lower on the hierarchy of commemorations for this period than their male counterparts, and women who were active outside of Ireland were amongst the lowest of these.

Conclusion

Commemorations of the Easter Rising and the revolutionary period more generally are revealing of contemporary attitudes, particularly regarding gender and republican politics. For much of the twentieth century, there existed a hierarchy of veterans, which prioritised the deceased, male signatories of the Proclamation, followed by those men who had taken part in the activities of Easter Week or were active on the island of Ireland. The role of women in the Rising, and by extension, the revolutionary period as a whole, was depicted as subsidiary and fitted gendered roles, for example, activities such as nursing and cooking were emphasised instead of their political dispositions or involvement in carrying weapons or despatches. The few women who were acknowledged in the

¹⁴⁵ *Nenagh Guardian*, 12th March 1966.

¹⁴⁶ NLI, Aiden Hennigan (ed.), *London 1916 commemoration brochure* (London, 1966); *Irish Examiner*, 7th April 1966.

commemorations were depicted as exceptional, unfeminine individuals who were not representative of the bulk of women who were involved in the Rising, such as Skinnider and Markievicz. Resultantly, the contribution of the members of the Kimmage Garrison, as well as the women who travelled to join Cumann na mBan or the ICA, went largely unrecognised in the official commemorations.

An exploration of how the role of women and the diaspora were commemorated in 1966 is revealing of the Irish state's ambiguous attitude to women and the Irish abroad and confirms the attitude of dismissiveness reflected in the Military Service Pension Applications. The pensions offer an insight into the private rewarding of individuals for their actions, whereas the commemorations publicly celebrate who the state viewed as central or periphery to gaining Irish independence, confirming that women and members of the diaspora were at the bottom of this pile. It also highlights the precarious position women like Lena McDonald occupied in the legacy of the revolutionary period as both a woman and someone who was active outside of Ireland. The way in which Margaret Skinnider was held up as an example of exceptionalism in this period further illustrates this: while aspects of Skinnider's involvement in the fight for Irish independence are remarkable, such as the injuries she sustained, there actually were many women like her who had been active in Britain who were barely acknowledged in official or non-official commemorations in 1966. Indeed, as Hannah Robinson's account of the Anne Devlin Cumann na mBan stated, there were a number of women who would have joined Skinnider from Glasgow if it were not for the confusion of last-minute orders.¹⁴⁷

A similar picture occurred in Irish diasporic communities in Britain, if the anniversary was acknowledged at all. Lena McDonald's hometown of Dundee barely acknowledged the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, despite the city's rich history of Irish political activism, stretching back to

¹⁴⁷ UCD, Eithne Coyle O'Donnell Papers, P61/4 (67), Anne Devlin Branch, Hannah Robinson (nee Duggan), undated.

the Ladies' Land League of the 1880s. To this day, McDonald remains a largely unknown figure throughout the city, despite her important role in the fight for Irish freedom. Elsewhere in Britain, the celebrations that marked the fiftieth anniversary were more reflective of the contributions of the Irish in Britain and of Irish culture, rather than of the militaristic nature of the Rising, and barely acknowledged those who had travelled over to take part in it. It is possible that this was to avoid any possible trouble and to instead emphasise the unity and progress with which Irish and British relations had made in the fifty years since the Rising. These ideas of progress and inclusion is further reinforced by the inclusion of Protestant services in the official commemorative programme for London.

Overall, exploring the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the Easter Rising both in Ireland and Britain is revealing of what and who official committees desired to be remembered and commemorated. The exclusion of women, those outside of Ireland, and in particular, women outside of Ireland who were active in this period is revealing of an uneasiness regarding the role women played in the foundation of the Irish state, which no doubt was further tainted by the anti-Treaty positions which Cumann na mBan and the most prominent female revolutionaries adopted in the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.¹⁴⁸ It is only in the recent years of the Decade of Centenaries and with initiatives such as the digitisation of the MSPC that these women are finally being incorporated into this wider history.

¹⁴⁸ See Appendix 2, Table 2.

Conclusion

Shortly after returning to Ireland for the semicentennial anniversary of the Easter Rising, Lena McDonald moved from New York to Florida. She was joined by her sister, Kathy, and they continued to live the rest of their lives in the sunshine state. It is unclear from her pension whether Lena ever returned to Dundee again. There is no mention of visits in her correspondence, and no Scottish addresses. This is despite the fact that she continued to visit Ireland well into her seventies.

Throughout her lifetime, her birthplace of Dundee transformed from a bustling industrial centre with a large Irish, female population which was dominated by the jute industry, into a deindustrialised city with a less visible Irish heritage. Lena and Kathy reflected on this in their *Evening Telegraph* interview in 1966, stating that the city they had grown up in had all but vanished, along with the people they knew there.¹ That is not to say that the Irish did not make their impact on Dundee.

Although the decline of the jute industry resulted in a reduction of the steady stream of Irish women who had been coming to the city since the nineteenth century, the impression they made on Dundee continued to live on. Richard McCready states that this is most apparent through the institutions established by and for the Irish in the city, such as churches, schools, and of course, Dundee United Football Club. Many of these institutions remain active and are evidence of the strength of Dundee's nineteenth and twentieth century Irish communities.²

Few people in Dundee know of Lena McDonald and the important role she and the city's Irish community played during the revolutionary period. The street of her family home where she hid arms and ammunition is unmarked and exceptionally ordinary, her old home and family businesses long demolished. It is hard to think that it was once home to the 'unofficial HQ' of the IRA in Dundee,

¹ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

² Richard B. McCready, 'The Social and Political Impact of the Irish in Dundee c.1845-1922', PhD (University of Dundee), p.339.

to use Seán Healy's description.³ Indeed, the city's Irish connections have been somewhat overshadowed in both history and popular culture, with depictions of the Irish experience in Scotland mainly focusing on the larger city of Glasgow, with its more successful Irish descended football club, Celtic F.C. However, there is some tenuous acknowledgement of the city's Irish history which persists to this day. For example, the area of Lochee to the west of the city is affectionately known as 'Tipperary' by locals due to its once large Irish migrant population. This is despite the fact that most of the women who came to Dundee during this period were from the north central counties of Cavan, Armagh, and Monaghan, as evidenced by Brenda Collins' work.⁴

This research seeks to provide an original, innovative study of diaspora nationalism that contributes towards challenging the male-centric focus of the established scholarship, especially in the Scottish context. It has shed light on the multiple, varied ways in which female emigrants in Britain engaged with the Irish revolution, often at huge personal cost. In doing so, it brings the story of the Dundee Irish before, during and after the revolution to life using a rich array of sources, some of which have not been utilised in this way before as they have just been made available to the public recently.⁵ Despite the material that has been released, researching the experience of the Irish on the west Coast of Scotland continues to be a much easier task than elsewhere in Scotland. To use the Military Service Pension Collection as an example, only five files were made from former Dundee based Irish Republicans, compared to over one hundred made by those based in Glasgow.⁶ Furthermore, the files of Éamon Mooney, the linchpin of the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association, also lean heavily towards Glasgow, as Mooney faced difficulties contacting the men of the No.2 Scottish Brigade, which encompassed the East of Scotland. However, the utilisation of wider sources such as

³ The *Kerryman*, 20th January 1968.

⁴ Brenda Collins, 'Aspects of Irish Immigration into two Scottish Towns (Dundee and Paisley) during the Mid-Nineteenth Century' PhD, (University of Edinburgh, 1978), p.40.

⁵ During the duration of this research, court proceedings from 1919 until 1922 have been made available to the public, encompassing a large chunk of the Irish Revolutionary period.

⁶ These are MSPC, Lena McDonald; MSPC Christina Gray; MSPC MSP34REF60017, John O'Sheehan; MSPC MSP34REF27392, Seán Healy; MSPC MSP34REF57084, Michael O'Carroll. The latter three were not strictly based in Dundee but their work brought them to the city on numerous occasions.

newspaper articles, pension files, private letters, and trial papers, has enabled a clearer picture of the Dundee Irish in the period to emerge.

This study of Dundee reveals the importance of gender to the Irish diasporic experience, as Dundee's Irish female population was integral to shaping the ways in which this community responded to labour issues, suffrage, and of course, Irish nationalism and republicanism. Dundee's lack of sectarian tension has been explained away in past studies of the Irish in Scotland, with historians attributing this to the fact that Dundee attracted Irish female migrants rather than males.⁷ The implication is often that Irish women did not get involved in Irish political issues, with Tom Gallagher arguing that they were less inclined to political organisation and violence.⁸ The evidence from the Dundee Irish reveals that the women of Dundee were not only interested in Irish politics, but were some of the most active organisers in Britain. This activism was not restricted to Irish matters, but extended into the world of labour activism, as female jute workers had their own unique style of striking which included dressing up, singing, and mocking their employers. The Irish influence can be seen here, with Irish imagery being evoked in music, poetry, and infamous green felt hats. This research has tried to contradict this established image and re-write women's experiences into the history of Irish nationalism in Dundee and Scotland more generally.

This research has further highlighted the importance of using gender as a tool of analysis. By analysing the gendered experiences of the Dundee Irish, it has highlighted the ways this community of Irish women navigated their way through the patriarchal structures of nineteenth and early twentieth century society and left their mark on political and social movements. The importance of 'blurring the boundaries' between the 'feminine' private and 'masculine' public spheres should be stressed, as an overlapping of issues allowed women to justify their political involvement in a period where gender norms were being questioned and rigidly enforced concurrently. This is particularly

⁷ Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow, the uneasy peace: religious tension in modern Scotland* (Manchester, 1987), p.37.

⁸ *Ibid.*

relevant for a clandestine organisation, which was inherently political in nature, but its operations were certainly not 'public', leading to the overlapping of its 'male' and 'female' organisations, which was more pronounced in Britain than in Ireland because of this need for secrecy. The period under examination also witnessed the emancipation of women (first in 1918, and the on equal terms as men in 1928) and the inclusion of 'Irishmen and Irishwomen' in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic in 1916. These were significant milestones that justified some aspects of women's political involvement, particularly in the context of Irish republican organisations. That women's political rights were enshrined in this document had significant implications for their involvement in the republican movement, both in Ireland and Britain. The partial emancipation of women in 1918 also had important ramifications, and arguably led to the election of Britain's first (and only) Prohibitionist MP in 1922, who happened to be an influential voice on Irish matters in the city.

However, the use of a gendered lens in this research has also highlighted the difficulties that Irish republican women faced, and that some prejudices transcended borders. This is most evident in the 'afterlives' of republican women in Britain in the post-revolutionary period. The military pension applications reveal the suffering these women endured, which ranged from physical ailments as a result of their activities or imprisonment, financial hardship, ostracism from the wider community, and emigration. This was furthered by the lack of recognition they received for the activities from the Irish state, who viewed women's roles in this period as 'auxiliary', supporting the male effort. This was further compounded by the idea of 'active service' which was defined in military terms and therefore hard to apply to women who had been active in the movement in Ireland, and even harder for those who were active in Britain. Consequently, many of the women in the sample used in this research had their applications rejected (twenty-six out of seventy-four). Those who had their pensions approved were awarded the lowest ranking, an 'E' grade.⁹ This was the lowest monetary amount, but it was also a reflection of how important these women's contributions were viewed by

⁹ Four women received 'D' in this sample: MSP34REF55889, Mary Egan; MSP34REF61755, Alice Ginnell; MSP34REF19910, Margaret Skinnider; MSP34REF1692, Josephine Mulcahy.

the state. In later years, the commemoration of this period further solidified this hierarchy of veterans, placing women based outside of Ireland firmly at the bottom of the pile. Through investigating this, this research has contributed to an important body of literature on gender and periods of revolution and reform, as well as the reinforcement of conservative norms after these periods of violence.¹⁰ This re-establishment of gender norms can also be seen in the structure of 'Old IRA' Associations and their activities, and the official commemoration of Revolutionary events, in which there was a 'hierarchy of veterans' which firmly placed women who had been active outside of Ireland at the bottom.

The benefits of a transnational approach to this subject have also been highlighted by this research. By 'playing with scales' and 'zooming out the lens', the Dundee Irish's links with other Irish groups throughout the diaspora have been illuminated. This thesis has used the Dundee Irish as a building block to explore wider themes over this period. It has attempted to situate the local lives of people like Lena McDonald in the global Irish diaspora and has explored how these people were connected through the wider Irish world. Indeed, this was not a community in isolation, but was linked with a vast network of Irish groups stretching across the rest of Britain and over the Irish Sea through its involvement with Irish nationalist, labour, and republican movements. Dundee's unique demographic makes it a useful laboratory to explore gender and highlights that Irish women in the city were active in a range of causes and had their own, unique methods of political activism. Some elements of this unique culture overlapped with other Irish groups in Britain, such as women's involvement in gunrunning and republican organisations, but some, such as their striking tactics in the jute industry, were unique to them. The bulk of these women remain unnamed, and other than

¹⁰ See Ketu Katrak, 'Indian Nationalism, Ghandian "Satyagraha" and the Representation of female sexuality' in Andrew Parker, Doris Summer and Mary Russo's (eds.) *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York, 1992), pp.77-95; Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making peace: the reconstruction of gender in interwar Britain* (Princeton, 1993); Adrian Bingham, 'An era of domesticity'? Histories of women and gender in interwar Britain' in *Cultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), pp 225–33.

newspaper articles which reported of large crowds of women in attendance at these events, there are few traces of them in the historical record.

A transnational perspective has helped to tease out some of the nuances relating to the image of the Irish in Scotland, which has been dominated by a Glasgow perspective. By taking this approach, this research has highlighted the different approaches and attitudes this community had to labour disputes, the divisive Anglo-Irish Treaty, and anti-Irish sentiment in the interwar period. It has also helped to answer some of the questions raised by Patrick Mannion and Fearghal McGarry in relation to 'globalising' the Irish Revolution, providing more detail on a diasporic community's response to events in Ireland, which adds to our understanding of the complexity and differences within Ireland's diaspora. 'Playing with scales' has also highlighted the extent to which the Irish in Britain were engaged with events in Ireland during this period and highlights that national boundaries could be blurred significantly. This is most evident in the movement of clandestine Republicans during the Revolutionary years. In this period, the Dundee Irish were interwoven with the larger Irish diaspora in Britain through clandestine activities such as gun running, despatch gathering, and providing shelter for those on the run. However, they were also linked through less 'dramatic' actions, to quote Mo Moulton, such as fundraising, attending public lectures, and membership of Sinn Féin clubs.¹¹ This can also be seen in the emigration of these people in the post-revolutionary period and their establishment of new communities in Ireland, forming a diaspora within a diaspora. A transnational approach to commemoration of these events also highlights the changing nature of the meaning of the Revolution to different communities throughout the diaspora. For those organising events in London, it was an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of the Irish to Britain and the progress of diplomatic relationships between the two states, whereas in Dundee, it was merely a point of interest for days gone by. As Roisín Higgins has argued in her work on the Irish semicentennial celebrations, choosing not to commemorate is just as telling as the act of

¹¹ Mo Moulton, *The Irish in Interwar England*, p.125.

commemoration itself, therefore the silence in Dundee on the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising is significant.¹² Other than the newspaper spread on the McDonald sisters, there was little in Dundee to mark Easter 1966, highlighting the changing image of the city and its identity.

Exploring the history of the Dundee Irish has highlighted that the experience of Irish migrants in Scotland during this period was more complex than the established picture, which highlights themes such as sectarianism and conflict, suggests. This thesis has argued that Irish communities in Scotland could be highly engaged in Irish nationalism and republicanism, without necessarily being at odds with the native, Scottish community. Indeed, while Dundee did not witness much outright sectarian tension in the same way that Glasgow did, the chapters of this thesis highlight that this was not an indicator of a lack of interest in Irish affairs. From the mid-nineteenth century, the Dundee Irish were highly engaged in Irish political matters, such as the Land Wars, Home Rule, and Irish Republicanism in the revolutionary period. Arguably, the latter period is where Irish interest in Dundee peaked.

Dundee was viewed by political figures in Ireland as an important outpost of a strong diasporic community. This is evidenced by the many politicians and campaigners who made the journey out to the East Coast city, such as Anna Parnell, Marguerite Moore, Michael Davitt, Constance Markievicz, Mary MacSwiney, Margaret Pearse, Éamon de Valera, and Michael Collins likely would have visited if it were not for his untimely death. The strength of Irish ethnic identity has also been highlighted in this study: the fact that most of the ring leaders of Irish Republicanism in the city, including Lena McDonald, were second or even third generation Irish reflects the strength of Irish identity in this period. This is also reflected in the composition of the Dundee and Lochee branches of the Irish Ladies' Land League. This reinforces the fact that when examining Irish diasporic communities, historians should include second and third generations, as well as those who were Irish born.

¹² Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory, and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising* (Cork, 2012), p.19.

This thesis is structured around the activities of Lena McDonald and has used her as a window to explore the wider world of the Irish community in Dundee. However, it should be noted that there were thousands of other women in the city who attended these events and were engaged in Irish affairs, but we are unable to put names to faces due to a lack of evidence. Lena McDonald was one of the more active members of her community, who happened to file a Military Service Pension claim. The detail of her pension claim illuminates a network of activities in Dundee and beyond. Similarly, the other women who have been examined outside of Dundee represented some of the more active members of their communities, or some of the most well-documented, at least. Their experiences reveal only the tip of the iceberg regarding Irish women's involvement in Republicanism in Britain.

The majority of Dundee's Irish women who were actively involved in the events of this period remain unknown. The ongoing digitisation of the Military Pension Collection may reveal more evidence, putting names to faces, as well as the ongoing release of files in the NRS. A gendered and transnational approach has tried to highlight their activities and their attachment to their ancestral homeland. For now, these remain part of newspaper articles, stating that there were 'a large number of women in attendance'.¹³ However, their legacy lives on in the city, which continues to have a reputation for being a 'radical town'. Indeed, while Dundee's Irish identity has somewhat dwindled over the years, it has retained its reputation for radicalism in other ways, most notably through its high support for Scottish independence.¹⁴

Although the histories of the Irish in Dundee have been somewhat side-lined, new approaches to the history of the diaspora, gender, and the revolutionary period has ensured that their experiences are being incorporated into wider histories of the Irish abroad. In recent years, events have been hosted

¹³ See *Glasgow Observer*, 29th October 1920; *Glasgow Observer*, 5th November 1920; *Dundee Courier*, 8th March 1921; *Dundee Courier* 12th August 1921; *Evening Telegraph*, 30th December 1921.

¹⁴ In the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, 57.3 per cent of voters in Dundee voted 'yes' to independence, with a 78.8 per cent turnout.

in the city which have reclaimed its Irish roots. This was most notable during the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, as the city's links with James Connolly were celebrated with a 'Remembering James Connolly and the Easter Rising' event at the Queen's Hotel, organised by the Scottish Trade Union Congress.¹⁵ The event included musical performances and a talk by Stephen Coyle on Connolly's connections to Dundee. Dundee also hosted an exhibition and talk on Roger Casement in the Central Library in February 2017, which featured historian Owen Dudley Edwards giving a talk on his role in the Easter Rising, while Labour councillor Richard McCready discussed his work on the Belgian Congo, which was a collaboration with E.D. Morel, who became a Labour MP for Dundee in 1922. This author has also given talks in the city which have been met with an enthusiastic reception, and they were somewhat surprised to find that the mere mention of Churchill's name provokes booing and hissing to this day.

The fact that Lena McDonald features so prominently in this research speaks to wider themes on Irish diasporic studies and demonstrates how the experiences of migrant women can be used as a lens through which to explore the Irish revolutionary period and challenge traditional narratives on this period. Her life experiences represent a number of important themes which have been explored in his thesis: feminism, republicanism, diasporic nationalism, and the afterlife of revolution, to name a few. Using McDonald as a focal point demonstrates how some of these wider, large-scale issues played out on a personal level. Her gunrunning experiences highlight the overlapping nature of gender roles in Britain during the revolutionary years. Her experiences with the Pension Board reflect the impact of this period on her later life, and the state's attitude towards female revolutionaries and the diaspora. Her later life and involvement with the Old Scottish Brigade IRA Association reveal how these years came to be remembered and commemorated. These are only a few examples.

McDonald resembles something of an inbetween: a Scottish born, Irish Republican who spent most of her life in the USA, operating in a network of similarly mobile, second and third generation

¹⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 25th April 2016.

Irish Republicans. She died in Florida, aged eighty-four, and her sister, Kathy, died less than a year later. It is difficult to sum up the significance of her activities, so perhaps it is appropriate to conclude using McDonald's own words, from her *Evening Telegraph* interview in 1966:

Well, when I think back on it now, we must have been mad to do some of the things we did. But it was an exciting time. We have no regrets.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Evening Telegraph*, 25th April 1966.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Table for Chapter Two

Table 1: Members of the IRA, Cumann na mBan and Sinn Féin In Dundee, c.1918-23.

Name	Org.	DOB	Where born	Occupation
McDonald, Lena	IRA	1897	Dundee	Nurse
O'Doherty, Sean	IRA	1900	King's County	Insurance Agent
Kimmet, James	IRA	1897	Dundee	Ship Caulker
Devaney, James	IRA	1887	Dundee	Hairdresser
Fahy, John	IRA	1893	Galway	Priest
McDonald, Catherine	CmmBan	1893	Dundee	Nurse
O'Neill, Patrick	IRA	1900	Tyrone	Teacher
Fahy, Michael	IRA	1891	Mayo	Priest
Dempsey, Thomas	IRA	1892	Dundee	Jute Preparer
Gray, Christina	Sinn Féin	1898	King's County	Jute worker
Duthie/Duffy, Charles	IRA			
O'Leary, Jeremiah	IRA	1886	Cork	Teacher
Ford, Catherine				Teacher
O'Donnell, John	IRA			Teacher
Healy, Sean	IRA			
Malloy, James	IRA			
Robbins, Thomas		1879	Dundee	Slipper maker
McNiff, Thomas	IRA	1884	Sligo	
O'Kelly, Dennis				
Scully, Sean	IRA	1875	Dundee	Coal Merchant
Boyle, Matthew				
Coyne, John		1872	Stirling	HM Customs and Excise
Durand, Richard Alopis		1894	Waterford	Priest
Gavin, John	SF	1882	King's County	General Labourer
Agnew, Annie	CmmBan	1904		Clerkess

Appendix 2: Tables for Chapter Three

Table 1: Republican women who were active in Britain 1916-1923 and submitted pension applications.

Name	Year Born	Job	Location	Reference	Success	Grade
Anglim, W.	1900	Tailoress	London	MSP34REF61846	Y	E
Barrett, K.	1887	Courier	London	MSP34REF2198	Y	E
Bateman, E.	1899	Typist	London	MSP34REF61846	Y	E
Breslin, M.A.	1882	Home Duties	Glasgow	MSP34REF51806	N	
Browne, A.M.	1891		London	MSP34REF60322	Y	E
Browne, S.	1887	Teacher	Liverpool	MSP34REF41908	Y	E
Buckley, M.	1899	Typist	Manchester	MSP34REF42054	N	
Byrne, N.	1890	Shop Attendant	Liverpool	MSP34REF39357	N	
Casey, M.	1904	Home duties	Jarrow	MSP34REF17327	Y	E
Caffrey-Keeley, C.	1898		Glasgow	MSP34REF9970	Y	E
Coogan, A.	1898	Unemployed	Glasgow	MSP34REF12320	Y	E
Curran, A.	1896	Typist	Liverpool	MSP34REF64362	Y	E
Darby, K.	1902	Household duties	Liverpool	MSP34REF54239	N	
Darby, M.G.	1883	Shop attendant	Liverpool	MSP34REF39076	Y	E
Doran, K.			Glasgow	MSP34REF46591	N	
Downie, F.	1893	Domestic servant	Liverpool	MSP34REF46512	N	
Doyle, M.	1895	Housekeeper	Manchester	MSP34REF13570	Y	E
Drumm, M.A.			Liverpool	MSP34REF24080	Y	E

Duffy, R.A.		Machinist	Glasgow	MSP34REF52234	N	
Egan, M.	1875	Housekeeper	London	MSP34REF55889	Y	D
English, M.	1885	Shop owner	Liverpool	MSP34REF25102	Y	E
Evans, K.		Housekeeper	South Wales	MSP34REF440	N	
Farrell, M.	1887	Shop assistant	Liverpool	MSP34REF40176	Y	E
Farrelly, S.E.		Shop attendant	Liverpool	MSP34REF57710	N	
Feeney, M.W.		Teacher	Manchester	MSP34REF46864	N	
Feeley, M.			Birmingham	MSP34REF59004	N	
Flanagan, B.	1863	Housekeeper	Glasgow	MSP34REF55614	Y	E
Foy, J.	1886	Shop owner	Glasgow	34E1031	Y	E
Gillespie, J.	1900	Shop owner	Glasgow	MSP34REF783	Y	E
Gilmartin, M.	1899	Assistant	Glasgow	MSP34REF24084	N	
Ginnell, A.	1882	Secretary	London	MSP34REF61755	Y	D
Gleeson, E.	1891	Teacher	Liverpool	MSP34REF59747	Y	E
Gogarty, M.	1886	Teacher	London	MSP34REF58165	Y	E
Gore, M.	1892	Cleaner	Paisley	MSP34REF58568	Y	E
Graham, Ann	1903		Glasgow	MSP34REF63983	Y	E
Gray, C.	1898	Jute worker	Dundee	49SP6383	N	
Hanrahan, K.M.	1898	Clerk	Liverpool	MSP34REF25414	N	
Healy, M.	1895	Saleslady	Manchester	MSP34REF19467	Y	E
Heneghan, M.	1889	Maid	Liverpool	MSP34REF42669	Y	E
Kerr, E.	1882	Caretaker	Liverpool	MSP34REF3967	Y	E
Keyes, M.	1897	Clerk	London	MSP34REF35954	N	
Lee, K.	1872		Glasgow	MSP34REF59950	N	
Leonard, M.	1874	Teacher	Liverpool	MSP34REF45593	Y	E
Lonergan, S.	1896		London	49SP7722	N	
McCamley, A.	1895	Nurse	Glasgow	MSP34REF42316	Y	E

McCaughey, A.	1890	Clerk	Liverpool	MSP34REF23384	Y	E
McDaid, B.			Glasgow	MSP34REF36438	N	
McDermott, B.	1896	Teacher	London	MSP34REF38646	Y	E
McDonald, L.	1897	Midwife	Dundee	MSP34REF56964	Y	E
McEntee, E.	1896	Plate glass warehouse worker	Liverpool	MSP34REF39970	Y	E
McGaleagly, M.	1894	Domestic duties	Glasgow	MSP34REF58062	N	
McGrath, E.	1896	Typist	London	MSP34REF61419	Y	E
McPhillips, M.	1901	Assistant	Glasgow	MSP34REF61656	Y	E
Moloney, J.	1884	Teacher	Manchester	MSP34REF22112	Y	E
Mooney, A.	1879		Glasgow	MSPREF3456129	Y	E
Morris, S.			Glasgow	MSP34REF21798	N	
Mulcahy, J.	1884	Teacher	London	MSP34REF1692	Y	D
O'Boyle, A.W.	1885	Housekeeper	London	MSP34REF57567	Y	E
O'Carroll, M.	1876		Glasgow	MSP34REF60809	N	
O'Donoghue, A.			London	MSP34REF57710	N	
O'Keefe, J.		Domestic Servant	London	MSP34REF29371	N	
O'Neill, A.			Manchester/Liverpool I	MSP34REF56744	N	
O'Shea, W.	1902	Insurance agent	London	MSP34REF56842	Y	E
O'Sullivan, K.	1894	Clerical assistant	Liverpool	MSP34REF8425	Y	E
Patton, K.	1897		Liverpool	MSP34REF28876	Y	E
Rafferty, M.			Wishaw	MSP34REF49380	N	
Ralph, R.	1894		Glasgow	MSP34REF51732	N	
Rooney, C.	1896	Shop Assistant	Glasgow	MSP34REF3935	Y	E

Robison, H.B.	1901	Clerk	Glasgow	MSP34REF55881 0	Y	E
Sexton, M.	1881	Teacher	Manchester	MSP34REF59330	Y	E
Skinnder, M.	1892	Teacher	Glasgow	MSP34REF19910	Y	D
Talty, K.	1883	Teacher	Manchester	MSP34REF50666	Y	E
Viant, M.	1895	Home duties	Liverpool	MSP34REF542	Y	E
White, M.	1886		Liverpool	MSP34REF52672	Y	E

Table 2: Republican Women in Britain's position on the Treaty

Name	Reference	Position on the Treaty
Anglim, W.	MSP34REF61846	N/A
Barrett, K.	MSP34REF2198	Anti
Bateman, E.	MSP34REF61846	N/A
Breslin, M.A.	MSP34REF51806	Anti
Browne, A.M.	MSP34REF60322	N/A
Browne, S.	MSP34REF41908	N/A
Buckley, M.	MSP34REF42054	Anti
Byrne, N.	MSP34REF39357	Anti
Casey, M.	MSP34REF17327	N/A
Caffrey-Keeley, C.	MSP34REF9970	Anti
Coogan, A.	MSP34REF12320	N/A
Curran, A.	MSP34REF64362	Pro
Darby, K.	MSP34REF54239	N/A

Darby, M.G.	MSP34REF39076	Anti
Doran, K.	MSP34REF46591	N/A
Downie, F.	MSP34REF46512	N/A
Doyle, M.	MSP34REF13570	Anti
Drumm, M.A.	MSP34REF24080	N/A
Duffy, R.A.	MSP34REF52234	N/A
Egan, M.	MSP34REF55889	Anti
English, M.	MSP34REF25102	N/A
Evans, K.	MSP34REF440	N/A
Farrell, M.	MSP34REF40176	N/A
Farrelly, S.E.	MSP34REF57710	N/A
Feeney, M.W.	MSP34REF46864	N/A
Feeley, M.	MSP34REF59004	N/A
Flanagan, B.	MSP34REF55614	N/A
Foy, J.	34E1031	Anti
Gillespie, J.	MSP34REF783	Anti
Gilmartin, M.	MSP34REF24084	Anti
Ginnell, A.	MSP34REF61755	Anti
Gleeson, E.	MSP34REF59747	Anti
Gogarty, M.	MSP34REF58165	Anti
Gore, M.	MSP34REF58568	N/A
Graham, Ann	MSP34REF63983	Anti
Gray, C.	49SP6383	Anti
Hanrahan, K.M.	MSP34REF25414	Anti
Healy, M.	MSP34REF19467	Anti

Heneghan, M.	MSP34REF42669	N/A
Kerr, E.	MSP34REF3967	Pro
Keyes, M.	MSP34REF35954	Anti
Lee, K.	MSP34REF59950	N/A
Leonard, M.	MSP34REF45593	Anti
Lonergan, S.	49SP7722	N/A
McCamley, A.	MSP34REF42316	Anti
McCaughey, A.	MSP34REF23384	Anti
McDaid, B.	MSP34REF36438	N/A
McDermott, B.	MSP34REF38646	Anti
McDonald, L.	MSP34REF56964	Anti
McEntee, E.	MSP34REF39970	N/A
McGaleagly, M.	MSP34REF58062	Anti
McGrath, E.	MSP34REF61419	Anti
McPhillips, M.	MSP34REF61656	Anti
Moloney, J.	MSP34REF22112	Anti
Mooney, A.	MSPREF3456129	Anti
Morris, S.	MSP34REF21798	Pro
O'Boyle, A.W.	MSP34REF57567	N/A
O'Carroll, M.	MSP34REF60809	N/A
O'Donoghue, A.	MSP34REF57710	Anti
O'Keefe, J.	MSP34REF29371	Anti
O'Neill, A.	MSP34REF56744	Anti
O'Shea, W.	MSP34REF56842	Anti
O'Sullivan, K.	MSP34REF8425	N/A

Patton, K.	MSP34REF28876	N/A
Rafferty, M.	MSP34REF49380	N/A
Ralph, R.	MSP34REF51732	Anti
Rooney, C.	MSP34REF3935	N/A
Robison, H.B.	MSP34REF558810	Anti
Sexton, M.	MSP34REF59330	N/A
Skinnider, M.	MSP34REF19910	Anti
Talty, K.	MSP34REF50666	Anti
Viant, M.	MSP34REF542	N/A
White, M.	MSP34REF52672	Anti

Table 3: Women's witness statements from the Bureau of Military History Witness Index:

Name	Other name/maiden name	Job	Where based	Pro or Anti Treaty
Cremen, M.	Sheehan	Office worker	London	Anti
McGeehan, M.			London	Anti
McGinley, E.		Secretary	London	Pro
Nic Diarmada, S.	MacDermott	Teacher	London	Anti
Rooney, C.	Byrne	Shop assistant	Glasgow	N/A
Thornton, N.			Liverpool	Pro

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Nenagh Guardian

New York Times

Northern Whig

Nottingham Journal

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1D321, James McGaleagly

1D330, Eamonn Ceannt

24SP2761, James Joseph Fullerton

24SP12427, Charles Strickland (McGinn)

34REF25414, Kathleen Mary Hanrahan

49SP6383, Christina Gray

49SP9064, Mary Cremen

MSP34REF12320, Alice Coogan

MSP34REF147, Seamus Robinson

MSP34REF14728, Eamonn Leo Mooney

MSP34REF16472, Julia Foy

MSP34REF1692, Mary Josephine Mulcahy

MSP34REF1762, John McGallogly

MSP34REF19910, Margaret Skinnider

MSP34REF21798, Susan Morris

MSP34REF2198, Kathleen Barrett (nee Connolly)

MSP34REF22112, Johanna Moloney

MSP34REF23384, Annie McCaughey (nee Feeley)

MSP34REF27392, Seán Healy

MSP34REF298, Joseph Robinson

MSP34REF35954, Maire Keyes (nee Manning)

MSP34REF3935, Catherine Rooney

MSP34REF3935, Catherine Rooney

MSP34REF3967, Elizabeth Kerr

MSP34REF4084, Margaret Gilmartin

MSP34REF42054, Margaret Buckley

MSP34REF4300, Seamus Reader

MSP34REF45593, Margret Leonard

MSP34REF46512, Frances Downie

MSP34REF50666, Kathleen Talty

MSP34REF51015, Nora Thornton

MSP34REF52234, Rose Ann Duffy (nee Hilley)

MSP34REF53667, Grace Evelyn Mary Plunkett.

MSP34REF542, Margaret Viant

MSP34REF55614, Bridget Flanagan

MSP34REF558810, Hannah Robinson

MSP34REF56964, Lena McDonald

MSP34REF57084, Michael O'Carroll

MSP34REF57567, Agnes Winifred O'Boyle

MSP34REF57710, Anna O'Donoghue

MSP34REF58165, Mary Gogarty

MSP34REF58677, Frank Kevin Lee

MSP34REF59330, Margaret Sexton

MSP34REF59950, Kate Lee

MSP34REF60017, John O'Sheehan

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MSP34REF61419, Ellen McGrath

MSP34REF61656, Mary McPhillips (nee Fullerton)

MSP34REF61755, Alice Ginnell

MSP34REF61788, Elizabeth Bateman (Anglim)

MSP34REF61846, Winifred Anglim

MSP34REF63426, Áine Ceannt

MSP34REF63983, Ann Graham

MSP34REF64362, Annie Curran

MSP34REF783, Jean Gillespie

MSP34REF9970, Christina Caffrey-Keeley

MSPREF34 Kathleen O'Sullivan

MSPREF3419467, Mary Healy

MSPREF3425102, Mary English

MSPREF3439076, Mary Geraldine Darby

MSPREF3456129, Annie Mooney

MSPREF3458062, Marie McGaleagly

MSPREF3491808, Sheila Browne

MSPREF3491808, Sheila Browne

MSPREF55889, Mary Egan

RO/603A Scottish Brigade

RO/603Scottish Brigade

MD32951, Catherine Ann McDonald

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BMHWS, No. 156, Seamus Robinson

BMHWS, No. 274, Liam McMahon

BMHWS, No. 280, Robert Holland.

BMHWS, No. 388, Joseph Good

BMHWS, No. 510, Frank Thornton

BMHWS, No. 648, Catherine Rooney

BMHWS, No. 655, Nora Thornton

BMHWS, No. 773, Gilbert F. Barrington

BMHWS, No.777, Patrick Mills

BMHWS, No. 828, James Byrne

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