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The impact of the Great War on women in Ireland 1914 to 1919

A dissertation for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

2016

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Trinity College Dublin



PhD

Histories and Humanities

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THESIS

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Summary

The impact of the Great War on women is a significant area of scholarship within First World War studies. The legacy of the war for women's lives and role in society has been the subject of much debate. This thesis investigates the extent to which the war affected women's lives in Ireland. It aims to demonstrate the socio-economic, psychological and political impact of the Great War upon Irishwomen. Thousands of Irishwomen participated in voluntary work to support the war effort, gained new employment opportunities or were affected by the military service of a loved one. However, although there has been a surge in studies examining Irish military involvement in the war in the last two decades, there has been no systematic study of the impact of the war on women's lives.

This thesis seeks to fill this gap through providing a wide-ranging thematic study of Irishwomen during the Great War. Based on primary research in archives across Ireland and Great Britain, it employs historical demographic methods together with textual analysis of the contemporary press, diaries, letters and memoirs. It has three main objectives: to reconstruct the impact of the war on the daily lives of women in Ireland, to assess the popular support for the war effort, and to place Irishwomen's experience of the war in an international context. It seeks to answer the following questions: to what extent was the Irish female experience of the war unique? How does the contribution of Irishwomen to the voluntary war effort compare with that in Great Britain? What proportion of the Irish female population actively supported the war effort? To what extent did the war affect the day-to-day activities of women? Did their employment opportunities improve despite the absence of conscription? How were soldiers' wives treated in Ireland? To what extent was this influenced by the tense political situation?

Chapter One briefly outlines the demographic, socioeconomic and political position of women in Ireland in 1914, providing the context for their wartime experience. The demographic profile of the female population is further discussed in Chapter Two, which analyses the impact of the Great War on nuptiality, fertility, and maternal and infant mortality in Ireland. Infant health is further considered in Chapter Three, which focuses on women's domestic life, exploring issues of food supply, household management, the infant welfare movement, and the emotional hardship experienced by the families of soldiers in terms of separation and bereavement. The experience of soldiers' wives is further developed in Chapter Four. It explores discourses of social morality on the home front, focusing on the commentary on the behaviour of soldiers' wives, the concern with venereal disease and illegitimacy rates and the attempts to monitor women's behaviour on the streets.

Anxiety surrounding women's behaviour in the public sphere was connected to their increased visibility in the workforce. Chapter Five examines the impact of the war on women's paid employment, investigating the effect of the industrial depression in autumn 1914 and considering the extent to which the war enabled new employment opportunities for Irishwomen, in Ireland or further afield. Women played an important role in the wartime workforce, particularly through munitions work. Chapter Six examines women's contribution to the war effort through auxiliary military roles, nursing and voluntary mobilisation on the home front. The contribution of Irishwomen to the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association is compared to that of Great Britain. The membership profile of war relief organisations is analysed using sampling methods. The chapter further explores the motivations and experiences of individuals involved in the war effort.

Chapter Seven expands the discussion of motivating factors for female mobilisation to consider the role of the churches in women's voluntary work in Ireland and to explore the impact of the war on five major women's philanthropic organisations. It argues that women's associational culture was dominated by the circumstances of war. Chapter Eight explores two interconnected issues; dissent against the mobilisation process and the politicising impact of war on Irishwomen. It evaluates the means by which prominent female unionist, nationalist and suffrage organisations used the war effort to promote their own political agendas, and considers the involvement of women in the anti-conscription campaign and of soldiers' wives in protests against the republican movement. Chapter Nine considers the short-term impact of the Armistice, focusing on the demobilisation of war workers and the impact of the demobilisation of soldiers within the home. Finally, the Conclusion evaluates the overall impact of the Great War on women's lives in Ireland.

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List of abbreviations

- AOH: Ancient Order of Hibernians
BL: Bodleian Library
BLPES: British Library of Political and Economic Science
BMH: Bureau of Military History
BRCA: British Red Cross Archives
BRCS: British Red Cross Society
CCCA: Cork City and County Archives
DATII: Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland
DCA: Dublin City Archives
DDA: Dublin Diocesan Archives
DMP: Dublin Metropolitan Police
GFS: Girls' Friendly Society
IDAA: Irish Drapers' Assistants' Association
ILHS: Irish Labour History Society
IPP: Irish Parliamentary Party
ITGWU: Irish Transport and General Workers Union
IWFL: Irish Women's Franchise League
IRL: Irishwomen's Reform League
ITUC: Irish Trade Union Congress
IWHSD: Irish War Hospital Supply Depot
IWSF: Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation
IWM: Imperial War Museum
IWWU: Irish Women Workers' Union
JP: Justice of the Peace
LGB: Local Government Board
LHL: Linen Hall Library
MMMA: Medical Missionaries of Mary Archive
MP: Member of Parliament (British)
MU: Mothers' Union
MTI: Municipal Technical Institute, Belfast
NAI: National Archives of Ireland
NFWW: National Federation of Women Workers

NLI: National Library of Ireland
 NRF: National Relief Fund
 NSPCC: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
 NUWW: National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland
 PRONI: Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast
 QAIMNS: Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service
 QMNG: Queen Mary Needlework Guild
 RCBL: Representative Church Body Library
 RCPI: Royal College of Physicians Ireland
 RFS: Register of Friendly Societies
 RIC: Royal Irish Constabulary
 SJAA: St John Ambulance Association
 SSFA: Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association
 T: Treasury
 TCD: Trinity College Dublin Manuscripts Department
 TFNS: Territorial Force Nursing Service
 TNA: The National Archives, Kew
 UCDA: University College Dublin Archives
 UI: United Irishwomen
 UVF: Ulster Volunteer Force
 UUC: Ulster Unionist Council
 UWUC: Ulster Women's Unionist Council
 VAD: Voluntary Aid Detachment
 WAAC: Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
 WNHA: Women's National Health Association
 WRAF: Women's Royal Air Force
 WRNS: Women's Royal Naval Service
 WS: Witness Statement (BMH)
 WSPU: Women's Social and Political Union
 WO: War Office
 WWS: Women, War and Society collection
 YWCA: Young Women's Christian Association

Introduction

‘After the war women will not retire to the chimney corner. [...] When the war is finished and soldiers return unfitted, physically and mentally, in thousands of cases, woman with her present training will take up duties and work hitherto performed by men. I think in future women’s services will be at a premium. Yes –woman is on the upward and onward move’.

Lady of the House, 15 November 1915

In November 1915 the Dublin magazine, *Lady of the House*, predicted the lasting consequences of the Great War for women in Ireland. The Irish contemporary press frequently alluded to the significant impact of the Great War on women’s role in society which was described as one of the ‘most remarkable features of the war’.¹² This thesis investigates the extent to which the war affected women’s lives in Ireland. It aims to demonstrate the socio-economic, psychological and political impact of the Great War upon Irishwomen. Thousands of Irishwomen participated in voluntary work to support the war effort, gained new employment opportunities or were affected by the military service of a loved one. However, although there has been a surge in studies examining Irish military involvement in the war in the last two decades, there has been no systematic study of the impact of the war on women’s lives.

This thesis seeks to fill this gap through providing a wide-ranging thematic study of Irishwomen during the Great War. It has three main objectives: to reconstruct the impact of the war on the everyday lives of women in Ireland, to assess the popular support for the war effort, and to place Irishwomen’s experience of the war in an international context. It seeks to answer the following questions: to what extent was the Irish female experience of the war unique? How does the contribution of Irishwomen to the voluntary war effort compare with that in Great Britain? To what extent did the war affect women’s domestic lives? Did their employment opportunities improve despite the absence of conscription? How were soldiers’ wives treated in Ireland? To what extent was this influenced by the tense political situation? Did the war have any lasting impact on women’s role in society?

Women and war

The impact of the Great War on women has been a major topic in international studies of both the war and the role of women in society. The extent to which the war was a ‘watershed’

¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 3 Dec. 1915.

moment in the history of women's rights has been hotly debated. The writing of histories of women and the war have been influenced by trends evident within the wider historiography of the Great War. Heather Jones recently identified a 'major transformation' in the historiography of the Great War since the 1990s, arising from the widespread adoption of cultural, comparative and transnational approaches.³ In 2014 Jay Winter described the current generation of researchers as the 'transnational generation', arguing that First World War scholarship was increasingly taking 'multiple levels of historical experience as given, levels which are both below and above the national level'.⁴ He suggested that the topic of women and the war was a particularly fruitful area for transnational approaches.⁵ A number of valuable transnational and comparative studies of gender and the war have emerged in recent decades. For example, studies such as Alison Fell and Ingrid Sharp's 2007 collection on the international women's movement, Richard Wall and Jay Winter's work on family, work and welfare, and Susan Grayzel's analysis of discourses surrounding motherhood and gender in Britain and France, offer useful comparative perspectives of the impact of the war in Europe.⁶

Recent work on the home front has transformed our understanding of the role of the civilian in wartime. The separation between home and the battlefield is perceived as more permeable than previously thought, with emphasis placed on the constant interaction between soldiers and civilians, and the hardship endured by civilians in the face of severe food shortages.⁷ Heather Jones noted that the most recent research suggests that home front

³ Heather Jones, "As the centenary approaches: the regeneration of First World War historiography" *Historical Journal*, lvi, no.3, (2013), p.857; Pioneering examples of the transnational comparative approach include John Horne (ed.) *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), and Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds) *Capital cities at war, Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1999-2007). For a more recent example, see Adrian Gregory, *A war of peoples 1914-1919* (Oxford, 2014).

⁴ Jay Winter, "General introduction" in Jay Winter (ed.) *The Cambridge history of the First World War: Vol. I Global War* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 6. For fuller discussion of the international historiography of the Great War and the generations of scholarship, see Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *The Great War in history: debates and controversies, 1914 to the present* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁵ Winter, "General introduction", p.8.

⁶ Alison Fell and Ingrid Sharp (eds) *The women's movement in wartime: international perspectives* (Hampshire, 2007); Richard Wall and Jay Winter (eds) *The upheaval of war: family work and welfare in Europe 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1988) and Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's identities at war: gender, motherhood and politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (London, 1999). Other useful comparative works include Richard Evans, *The feminists: women's emancipation movements in Europe, America and Australasia 1840-1920* (London, 1977); Nicole Ann Dombrowski (ed.) *Women and war in the twentieth century: enlisted with or without consent* (London, 1999); Arthur Marwick, *War and social change in the twentieth century: a comparative study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the USA* (London, 1974); Tammy M. Proctor, *Civilians in a world at war 1914-1918* (New York, 2010); Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al (eds) *Behind the lines: gender and the two world wars* (New Haven, 1987).

⁷ Jones, "As the centenary approaches" p.869; influential works in this area include Belinda Davis, *Home fires burning: food, politics and everyday life in World War I Berlin* (London, 2000) and Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Hapsburg Empire: total war and everyday life in World*

engagement from below was more ‘voluntarist, self-motivated, informed and proactive’ than earlier studies had indicated.⁸ For example, Catriona Pennell’s study of the United Kingdom at the outset of the war highlights the complexity of responses among civilians and the extent of the war’s influence in civil life.⁹

Much of the scholarship on women and the Great War has focused on the issue of emancipation, questioning whether the war constitutes within women’s history progress or a parenthesis in the struggle for female emancipation.¹⁰ In his influential work on society and war, Arthur Marwick emphasised change and discontinuity, stressing the novelty of wartime work and the increased freedoms it brought. He argued that the war brought a sudden and irreversible advance in the economic and social power of women.¹¹ This assertion has been echoed by other scholars over the years. For example, the literary theorist Sandra M. Gilbert celebrates the impact of the war for women, suggesting that women assumed a powerful role within society as men became correspondingly emasculated by their wartime trauma.¹² She argues that women in the war years had ‘if not everything, at least something to gain: a place in history, a chance even to make history’. She quotes a suffragist who suggested the horrors of war were nothing compared to the horrors of daily life for women in peacetime Britain – but this is unlikely to be a representative view.¹³ Gilbert’s work is based on a small range of mostly literary sources and cannot be said to offer a representative sense of the war’s impact.

While Angela Woollacott is less optimistic than Marwick or Gilbert, she nonetheless asserts that the value placed on women’s work in wartime represented a definitive and lasting shift in society’s view of women and most particularly women’s view of themselves. She argues that munitions work offered women unprecedented mobility and financial autonomy, thus fostering ambition, independence and assertiveness. This was reflected in their higher level of labour organisation and their refusal of the pre-war conditions and the servility of domestic service.¹⁴ A recent work by Kate Adie offers a similar positive view of

War I (Cambridge, 2004). See also Margaret Higonnet’s work on women at the front, “At the front” in Winter (ed.) *Cambridge history of the First World War: Volume III Civil Society*, pp 121-122.

⁸ Jones, “As the centenary approaches”, p.870.

⁹ Catriona Pennell, *A kingdom united; popular responses to the outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012).

¹⁰ Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in history: debates and controversies 1914 to the present* (Cambridge, 2005), p.141.

¹¹ Arthur Marwick, *The deluge: British society and the First World War* (London, 1967), p.97.

¹² Sandra M. Gilbert, “Soldier’s heart: literary men, literary women and the Great War” in Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (eds) *Behind the lines: gender and the two world wars* (New Haven, 1987), p. 200.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.203.

¹⁴ Angela Woollacott, *On her their lives depend: munitions workers in the Great War* (London, 1994), p.215.

the war's impact on women, arguing that the women workers of the Great War left 'indelible footprints of a giant stride on the way to fairness and equality for their sex'.¹⁵

However a number of historians have expressed reservations about this positive view of the war's impact. Margaret Darrow and Ute Daniel's work on French and German women respectively highlight the temporary nature of any wartime shifts in gender relations and the hostility directed towards women workers or soldiers' wives by society and the government.¹⁶ Penny Summerfield's work on Britain notes the surveillance soldiers' wives endured and the few concrete gains of the war for women.¹⁷ Deborah Thom and Gail Braybon both emphasise the temporary nature of the increased opportunities for women in the British wartime workforce and make reference to the widespread assumption and expectation that women workers would return to the domestic sphere following the Armistice.¹⁸ Similarly, Susan Grayzel emphasises the conservative influences of the war and the promotion of women's role as mothers at the war's end.¹⁹ In their survey of the historiography of the Great War, Jay Winter and Antoine Prost argued that the effect of the war on women's progress towards emancipation was largely negative with the advances of war being swiftly followed by a return to the old order.²⁰

The notion of the war as having lasting emancipatory effects for women has been most prominently challenged by Susan Kingsley Kent in her study of the reconstruction of gender relations after the war. Kent argues that the temporary emancipatory gains of the war were offset by the post-war emphasis on maternalism and separate spheres. She asserts that the war had an overwhelmingly negative effect for feminism with post-war feminists giving greater support to the separate spheres model.²¹ However her work is itself problematic. Kent treats the pre-war feminist movement as a homogenous entity, failing to take into consideration the very diverse opinions and ideologies among those who supported women's suffrage.²² Her conclusions are drawn from a few individual accounts and cannot be considered as representative of wider public opinion. She also overlooks the reality of the political and social structures affecting women's lives in the aftermath of the war and derides

¹⁵ Kate Adie, *Fighting on the home front: the legacy of Women in World War One* (London, 2013), p.2.

¹⁶ Margaret Darrow, *French women and the First World War* (Oxford, 2000); Ute Daniel, *The war from within: German working-class women in the First World War* (Oxford, 1997).

¹⁷ Penny Summerfield, "Women and war in the twentieth century" in June Purvis (ed.) *Women's History: Britain 1850-1945 an introduction* (London, 1995), p.309.

¹⁸ Deborah Thom, *Nice girls and rude girls: women workers in World War I* (London, 1998); Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage, women's experiences in two world wars* (London, 1987), p.131; Gail Braybon, *Women workers in the First World War* (London, 1981), pp 208-210.

¹⁹ Grayzel, *Women's identities at war*, p.246.

²⁰ Winter and Prost, *The Great War in history*, p.142.

²¹ Gail Braybon, "Winners or losers: women's symbolic role in the war story" in Gail Braybon (ed.) *Evidence, history and the Great War: historians and the impact of 1914-18* (Oxford, 2003), p.101.

²² Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and history* (Hampshire, 2012), p.90; *Making peace*, pp 5-6.

as 'anti-feminist' the women who fail to conform to her idealised form of feminism.²³ In her work, the war is once again a watershed but in this case a negative one for gender relations in post-war Britain.

A more useful counterpoint to Marwick is Margaret and Patrice Higonnet's analogy of the double helix -the idea that although the roles of men and women vary greatly from culture to culture, their relationship is in some sense constant.²⁴ The Higonnets suggest that although in wartime women take on previously masculine roles, it has no lasting consequences as the role of men as soldiers will always be seen as more prestigious: 'In this social dance the woman appears to have taken a step forward as the partners change places but in fact he is still leading her. The dynamics of gender subordination remains the same as it was'.²⁵ Similarly, Susan Grayzel has noted the heightened wartime association between masculinity and militarism and the way in which war offers men the opportunity to demonstrate the 'quintessence of manhood'.²⁶

Nicole Van Os further develops the 'double helix' argument in her work on Ottoman women during the Great War. She argues that rather than women entering the male public sphere through their war service, they created a counter-public sphere separately from that of men. She draws on Nancy Fraser's influential essay on the public sphere for her idea of the counter-sphere—a space where women could extend their role as mothers of their own family to that of nurturers and caretakers of the nation.²⁷ While women entered public life as a result of their associational work, this was not the same public life as men. Van Os describes it as a 'public life distinct both in content, scope, and geography from its male counterpart'.²⁸ Laura Lee Downs similarly argues the war legitimated the expansion of a 'third sector' of social services involving middle-class women, which could intervene between state and economy.²⁹ The idea of the counter-sphere or the third sector is a useful means of exploring the participation of women in public war service but it has its limitations as a theoretical framework for this thesis. Issues of infant mortality, welfare, female suffrage, employment, and legitimacy of conscription affected women in specific ways but formed part of debate and action that women shared with men in a common legal and political framework.

²³ Kent, *Gender and history*, p.91; this criticism has also been made by Braybon in "Winners or losers", p.102.

²⁴ Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet, "The double helix" in Higonnet et al (eds) *Behind the lines*, p.34.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.35.

²⁶ Susan R. Grayzel, "Women and men" in John Horne (ed.) *A companion to World War I* (Oxford, 2010), p.264.

²⁷ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy" in *Social text* no.25/26 (1990), pp 56-80.

²⁸ Nicole van Os, "Aiding the Poor Soldiers' Families: the Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti," in *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, xxi (2011), p.282.

²⁹ Downs, "War work" p.76.

The late Gail Braybon perceptively observed that the idea of the Great War as a watershed has dictated the narrative with which we write about the war's impact and made it difficult to ask new questions or to find new ways of framing the debate.³⁰ Braybon also noted that few historians engaging in such debates adequately consider what is meant by 'progress' and that many ignore the problematic nature of the term itself.³¹ She further argued that there has been an unhelpful emphasis on seeking evidence of change or difference rather than signs of continuity.³² Emphasis has been typically placed on women's wartime work in 'men's jobs' and the achievement of suffrage.³³ Laura Lee Downs argues that focusing on the question of emancipation risks 'limiting and distorting' our understanding of women's experiences and the impact those experiences had in shaping the post-war world.³⁴ Both Braybon and Adrian Gregory have argued that the historiographic debates surrounding the war as either patriarchal subjection or as an emancipatory event tell us little about how women actually experienced the war and they often perpetuate a history that treats women as a homogenous identity.³⁵

This thesis attempts to return the focus to women's experience of the war. It employs gender as a category together with age, class and geography to consider how the war affected women's lives and the position of women in society. By focusing on the specific case of Ireland it is possible to undertake a detailed reconstruction of women's everyday lives in wartime Ireland and to consider questions of gender roles and emancipation within an international context.

Irishwomen and the Great War

Ireland offers a valuable case study for studying women during the Great War. As part of the United Kingdom, it was a full participant in the war, albeit with significant differences from Great Britain. Ireland did not experience aerial bombardment; the bombardment and besieging of Dublin during the Easter Rising was the only experience of physical attack for women in Ireland. Food shortages were less evident and farmers in rural Ireland prospered from increased demand for their products. Most importantly, conscription was not implemented in Ireland due to the tense political situation. This significantly affected the extent and the type of the war's impact for women in Ireland. The fact that the country was

³⁰ Braybon, "Winners or losers", p.89.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.93.

³² *Ibid.*, p.104.

³³ Braybon, "Winners or losers", p.89.

³⁴ Laura Lee Downs, "War work" in Jay Winter (ed.) *The Cambridge history of the First World War: Volume III Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2014), p.75.

³⁵ Adrian Gregory, *The last great war: British society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008), pp 291-292.

on the brink of civil war in 1914 and that support for the war effort could not be guaranteed from any quarter makes it particularly interesting for exploring the mobilisation process.³⁶

This thesis argues that while aspects of the experience of Irishwomen were particular to the specific context of Ireland, in others ways their experience closely resembles that of women in other combatant countries. The study thus reveals insights into the broader experience of women in wartime, for example demonstrating the changed relationship between society and the state in wartime, the invasion of the war into the domestic sphere and its politicising impact.

Examination of Irishwomen during this crucial period can also greatly enhance our understanding of Irish society at the time and the experience of women in independent Ireland. Many scholars have acknowledged the importance of the Great War for the evolution of Irish society in the twentieth century.³⁷ Nevertheless, until comparatively recently the Great War was neglected in Irish historiography. In an influential article in 1967, F.X. Martin identified a 'national amnesia' surrounding Ireland's participation in the Great War and noted the disproportionate historiographic and public attention paid to the Easter Rising.³⁸ In 1986 David Fitzpatrick noted the continuing gap in scholarship and observed that references to the war in Irish historiography tended to treat it as an external political factor of little importance in the lives of ordinary people.³⁹ Timothy Bowman attributed this gap to the difficulty encountered by historians in separating the experience of the Great War with that of the subsequent Irish revolution.⁴⁰ The participation of Irishmen in the Great War, occurring in parallel to the 1916 Rising and burgeoning republican movement, represented unwelcome contradictions and complexities in the history of the founding of the Free State and subsequent Republic.⁴¹

The narrative of national amnesia should not be overstated. Popular attitudes towards Irish participation in the Great War have undergone a transformation in the last two decades. For example, there are numerous organisations devoted to remembering Ireland's soldiers such as the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and the Connaught Rangers Association while the National Museum's permanent exhibition on military heritage includes

³⁶ For discussion of the political situation in Ireland in 1914, see Adrian Gregory, "Britain and Ireland" in Horne (ed.) *A companion to World War I*, pp 404-405.

³⁷ David Fitzpatrick, "Preface" in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), p.vii; R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1990), p.471; George Boyce, *The sure confusing drum: Ireland and the First World War* (Swansea, 1993), p.5; John Horne "Our war, our history" in John Horne (ed.) *Our war: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008), p.3.

³⁸ F.X. Martin, "1916: myth, fact and mystery" in *Studia Hibernica*, vii (1967), p.68.

³⁹ Fitzpatrick, "Preface", p.vii.

⁴⁰ Timothy Bowman "Ireland and the First World War" in Alvin Jackson (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of modern Irish history* (Oxford, 2014), p.603.

⁴¹ Charles Townshend, "Religion, war and identity in Ireland" in *Journal of Modern History*, lxxvi, no.4 (2004), p. 890.

a section on the role of Irishmen and women in the Great War.⁴² During National Heritage Week in August 2014 there were more than eighty separate events taking place around the Republic of Ireland that focused on Irish participation in the Great War. Since the 1980s there has been a surge in studies examining Irish military participation, notably David Fitzpatrick's statistical analysis of Irish recruitment to the British Army and various studies of particular regiments and divisions.⁴³ Important work has been completed on various other aspects of relating to Irish involvement, including studies of the mobilisation of civil society to aid the war effort, commemoration in the post-war period and the treatment of veterans after the Armistice.⁴⁴ Three edited collections have been published since 1986, which have provided exploratory studies of topics such as the social and economic effects of the war, the role of labour and the participation of women in the war effort.⁴⁵ A number of useful regional studies of Ireland during the war have been completed, providing valuable insight into the local experience of war and the varying extent to which the war affected communities across the island.⁴⁶

⁴² Bowman, "Ireland and the First World War", p.604.

⁴³ Studies of Irish military involvement in the First World War include Fitzpatrick, "The logic of collective sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army 1914-1918" in *Historical Journal*, xxxviii, no.4 (1995), pp 1017-30; Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland 1900-1922" in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds) *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 379-406; Terence Denman, 'The Catholic Irish soldier in the First World War: the 'racial environment'' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxvii, (1991), pp 352-365; Tom Johnstone, *Orange, green and khaki: the story of the Irish regiments in the Great War 1914-18* (Dublin, 1992); Nicholas Perry, 'Nationality in the Irish regiments in the First World War', in *War and society*, xii (1994), pp 65-95; Myles Dungan, *They shall not grow old: Irish soldiers and the Great War* (Dublin, 1997); Timothy Bowman, *Irish regiments in the Great War: discipline and morale* (Manchester, 2003); Philip Orr, *Field of bones: and Irish division at Gallipoli* (Dublin, 2006); Richard Grayson, *Belfast boys: how unionists and nationalists fought and died together in the Great War 1914-18* (London, 2009); William Sheehan, *The Western front: Irish voices from the Great War* (Dublin, 2011) and Kevin Myers, *Ireland's Great War* (Dublin, 2014).

⁴⁴ See for example, Jane Leonard, "The Twinge of Memory: Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday in Dublin since 1919" in Richard English and Graham Walker (eds) *Unionism in modern Ireland: new perspectives on politics and culture* (Dublin, 1996), pp 99-114; Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the geography of remembrance* (Cambridge, 2003); Catherine Switzer, *Unionists and Great War commemoration in the north of Ireland 1914-39: people, places and politics* (Dublin, 2007); Clare O'Neill, "Unity in adversity: associational culture in Ireland during the First World War" in R.V. Comerford and Jennifer Kelly (eds) *Associational culture in Ireland and abroad* (Dublin, 2010), pp 165-178; Caitriona Pennell, *A kingdom united: popular responses to the outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012); Jerome Aan de Wiel, *The Catholic Church in Ireland, 1914-1918: war and politics* (Dublin, 2003); Jason Myers, *The Great War and memory in Irish culture 1918-2010* (Bethesda, 2013); John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds) *Towards Commemoration: Ireland in War and Revolution 1912-1923* (Dublin, 2013); Richard S. Grayson, "From Genealogy to Reconciliation: Public Engagement with Remembrance of the First World War in Ireland", *Nordic Irish Studies*, xiii, 2 (2014), pp 99-114; Patrick Casey, Kevin Cullen and Joe Duignan, *Irish doctors in the First World War* (Dublin, 2015).

⁴⁵ Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War*; Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds) *Ireland and the Great War: 'A war to unite us all'?* (Manchester, 2002); John Horne (ed.) *Our war: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008).

⁴⁶ Martin Staunton, "Kilrush, Co. Clare and the Royal Munster Fusiliers: the experience of an Irish Town in the First World War" in *Irish Sword*, lxx (1986), pp 268-272; Thomas F. Martin, *The Kingdom in the empire: a portrait of Kerry during World War One* (Dublin, 2006); William Henry, *Galway and the Great War: where the poppies grow* (Cork, 2006); Colin Cousins, *Armagh and the*

Nevertheless, much remains to be explored. In a recent survey of scholarship on Ireland and the Great War, Timothy Bowman noted the absence of the ‘war and society approach’ in Irish historical studies and expressed the hope that ‘proper studies’ of the Irish economy and social change would eventually emerge.⁴⁷ The impact of the war on women in Ireland has been highlighted by a number of historians as an area worthy of further exploration.⁴⁸ Catriona Clear argued in 2008 that Irishwomen remain in the ‘historical shadow’ of writing about women and the Great War, echoing Keith Jeffery’s phrase in 2000 that the involvement of Irishwomen in the Great War constitutes a ‘historically hidden Ireland’.⁴⁹

Women have become increasingly visible in the writing of Irish history over the last four decades with a rich and expanding scholarship in the fields of Irish women’s history and gender history. Many areas remain underexplored however. Although social histories of women’s lives were identified as a particular gap by Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy in 1989, Maria Luddy recently noted that the area of women’s working lives continue to lack sustained research.⁵⁰ Nationalist and republican women have been highlighted and given particular attention. Myrtle Hill has suggested that the focus on nationalism has resulted in an unbalanced historiography, which favours the champions of ‘popular causes’.⁵¹ Although the role of women in the suffragist, nationalist and unionist movements during the revolutionary period has received considerable attention, such studies typically make little mention of the impact of the Great War on women’s lives and activity.⁵² The Great War

Great War (Dublin, 2011); Pdraig Yeates, *A city in wartime: Dublin 1914-18* (Dublin, 2011); Fionnuala Walsh, “The impact of the First World War on Celbridge, Co. Kildare”, *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2013), pp 287-300; John Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war and revolution: Cork city 1916-1918* (Cork, 2013); Frank Cronin, *Blackpool to the Front: A Cork Suburb and Ireland’s Great War 1914-1918* (Cork, 2014); John Dennehy, *In a Time of War: Tipperary 1914-1918* (Sallins, 2014); James Durney, *In a Time of War: Kildare 1914-1918* (Sallins, 2014).

⁴⁷ Bowman, “Ireland and the First World War”, p.615.

⁴⁸ See for example, Edward Madigan, “Introduction” in Madigan and John Horne (ed.) *Towards commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution 1912-1923* (Dublin, 2013), p.7; Eileen O’Reilly, “Women and voluntary war work” in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War: ‘a war to unite us all?’* (Manchester, 2002), p.67.

⁴⁹ Caitriona Clear, “Fewer ladies, more women” in John Horne (ed.) *Our war: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008), p.160. Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000), p.30.

⁵⁰ Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy, “‘Cherchez la Femme’ the elusive woman in Irish history” in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy, *Women surviving: studies in Irish women’s history in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Dublin, 1989), p.6; Maria Luddy, “Gender and Irish history” in Alvin Jackson (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of modern Irish history* (Oxford, 2014), p.199.

⁵¹ Myrtle Hill, *Women in Ireland: a century of change* (Belfast, 2003), p.10.

⁵² See for example, Senia Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013); Ann Mathews, *Renegades: Irish Republican women 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010); Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish revolution* (Cork, 2007); Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (eds) *Irishwomen and the vote: becoming citizens* (Dublin, 2007); Sinead McCoolle, *Irish female activists in the revolutionary years 1900-1923* (Dublin, 2004); Diane Urquhart, *Women in Ulster politics 1890-1940: a history not yet told* (Dublin, 2000); Cliona Murphy, *The women’s suffrage movement and Irish society in the early twentieth century* (Philadelphia, 1989); Rosemary Cullen Owens, *Smashing times:*

continues to be treated as a peripheral military factor of little relevance to women's everyday lives.

However there has been a growing awareness of the scope for research in this area. Women's mobilisation for the war effort has received most attention, and there are numerous short studies illustrating aspects of women's war service in Ireland. Margaret Downes's examination of the civilian war effort offers a useful guide to the gender breakdown of Irish Red Cross work and its geographic spread in southern Ireland.⁵³ Eileen O'Reilly has investigated some of the women's organisations involved in the war effort such as the Alexandra College Guild, the Irishwomen's Association, the County Cavan Women's Patriotic Committee and the Irish Women's League of Honour. O'Reilly also briefly discusses the efforts of Lady Aberdeen in both the area of women's health and the war effort.⁵⁴ Diane Urquhart's work on the involvement of Lady Londonderry with the Women's Legion presents a useful introduction to Irish women's involvement with the war services.⁵⁵ Another recent valuable contribution is Clare O'Neill's study of Irish associational culture during the war. While her work is not specifically focused on women, it nonetheless provides a helpful examination of the involvement of Irishwomen in providing support for Belgian refugees and in other war relief work.⁵⁶

A central aspect to the involvement of Irish women in the Great War was the role played by nurses, both voluntary and professional, in Ireland and overseas. Yvonne McEwen's detailed account of the First World War service of British and Irish professional nurses indicates the extent of the involvement of professional nurses in the war and the type of work they performed overseas and on the home front. However McEwen's reluctance to identify many of the nurses she discusses and her decision not to separate the nationalities involved makes it difficult to uncover the individual Irish experience of professional nursing.⁵⁷ Her work is usefully supplemented by Siobhan Horgan-Ryan's short study, which looks specifically at the Irish nursing experience and uses the stories of a few particular

the history of the Irish women's suffrage movement 1889-1922 (Dublin, 1984); Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable revolutionaries* (London, 1983).

⁵³ Margaret Downes, "The civilian war effort" in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1985).

⁵⁴ Eileen O'Reilly, "Women and voluntary war work" in Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (eds) *Ireland and the Great War: 'A war to unite us all'?* (Manchester, 2002), pp 49-72.

⁵⁵ Diane Urquhart, "Ora et Labora: The women's legion, 1915-18" in Gillian McIntosh and Diane Urquhart (eds) *Irish women at war: the twentieth century* (Dublin, 2010), pp 1-16.

⁵⁶ Clare O'Neill, "Unity in adversity: associational culture in Ireland during the First World War" in R.V. Comerford and Jennifer Kelly (eds) *Associational culture in Ireland and abroad* (Dublin, 2010), p.174.

⁵⁷ Yvonne McEwen. "*It's a long way to Tipperary*": *British and Irish nurses in the Great War* (Dunfermline, 2006), p.13.

women to describe the dangers these women faced and the experience they gained from such service.⁵⁸

While the above studies all make valuable contributions to an understanding of the role played by Irish women in the war effort, there remains much to be explored. For example, the extent of Irish involvement with the women's services such as the WAAC and WRNS has been little discussed. The class and religion of the women involved and the geographical distribution of voluntary work are also lacking detailed analysis to date. The motivations of Irish war volunteers require further examination. Maria Luddy's wide-ranging study of female philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland offers a model for such a study and provides a context for the wartime philanthropic work. Her research demonstrates that such work was not entirely new but rather a continuation and expansion of a long tradition of female philanthropy in Ireland.⁵⁹

The impact of the Great War on the employment of women is a major topic within the international historiography of the war but has been little discussed by Irish historians thus far. Theresa Moriarty's examination of wartime industrial employment provides the most extensive and detailed analysis to date of the effect of the war on women's work and in particular on the involvement of women in the wartime trade union movement.⁶⁰ Liza Maria Toye's M.Litt thesis on Dublin women workers during the Great War describes the movement of some women from the textile trade to the munitions factories and discusses the anxiety about women departing domestic service during the war.⁶¹ However her thesis, while offering a useful guide to sources, is limited in its analysis. Mary Muldowney's recent examination of the effect of the war on the employment of women in the Irish railway industry offers what she describes as 'a snapshot' of the women's wartime employment.⁶² It has been recently recognised that the study of Irish women's work in wartime is a 'field with exceptional potential with regard to women and labour in a context of national, imperial and international politics'.⁶³ The employment of Irish women in munitions factories in Ireland and Britain is one area for further discussion, as is the impact of the war on the career opportunities for women in the professional classes.

⁵⁸ Siobhan Horgan-Ryan "Irish military nursing in the Great War" in Gerard M. Fealy (ed.) *Care to remember: nursing and midwifery in Ireland* (Cork, 2005), pp 89-101.

⁵⁹ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁶⁰ Theresa Moriarty, "Work, warfare and wages: industrial controls and Irish trade unionism in the First World War" in Gregory and Pašeta (eds) *Ireland and the Great War: A war to unite us all?*, pp 83-90.

⁶¹ Liza Marie Toye, "Women workers in Dublin during the First World War" (M.Litt thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1989).

⁶² Mary Muldowney, "Breaking the mould? The employment of women in Irish railway companies during the First World War" in *Saothar*, xxxvi (2011), p.15.

⁶³ Mary Clancy and John Cunningham, "Introduction" in *Saothar*, xxxvi (2011), p.3.

The domestic lives of women in wartime Ireland have also received limited attention to date. Pdraig Yeates has assembled a wealth of useful material on conditions in Dublin during the Great War, including much of relevance to women.⁶⁴ While obviously Dublin city centric and somewhat lacking in analysis, his work has provided a useful context for considering the socio-economic effects of the war on women's domestic lives. David Fitzpatrick and Caitriona Clear provide valuable guides to the topic in two chapters published in John Horne (ed.) *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008). Fitzpatrick's chapter explores everyday life on the home front, while Clear's focuses specifically on the role of women. The two chapters together offer an introduction to the effect of the war on employment, poverty, diet, health, fashion and the public role of women in society. Fitzpatrick and Clear offer broadly positive accounts of the war on women's lives with both concluding that the war had a somewhat liberating impact for women, epitomised for Fitzpatrick by their achievement of suffrage in 1918, and for Clear by changing wartime fashions.⁶⁵ The emphasis on the emancipatory potential of war for women is also evident in Theresa Moriarty's work on labour and Senia Pašeta's study of the women's patrols. Moriarty highlights the wartime growth in the female trade union movement while Pašeta argues that the wartime patrols offered an opportunity for empowerment and feminist cooperation.⁶⁶

This thesis interrogates this viewpoint by attempting to widen the lens to view women's wartime experiences from a variety of perspectives. Temporary expansion in the participation of women in the labour force is considered alongside the wartime depression in the textile industry and the immediate post-war demobilisation of munitions workers. Both Clear and Fitzpatrick note the empowering potential of the separation allowance but the insecurity and anxiety faced by urban women attempting to manage their household budgets and cope with the price inflation and food shortages are also important parts of the experience of women. While the various works on women and the war have offered very useful guides to potential areas for research and have provided insight into specific issues affecting women, they offer an incomplete picture. Domestic life, employment, bereavement and war service were all interconnected and cannot be fully understood in isolation. This thesis attempts a systematic evaluation of the impact of the war on women's lives from the demographic to the domestic to the political. By examining the practical impact of policies such as the separation allowances the thesis argues that the Great War had an overwhelming impact on women's everyday lives, affecting their roles within the private and public spheres and altering their relationship to the state.

⁶⁴ Yeates, *A city in wartime*.

⁶⁵ Fitzpatrick, "Homefront and everyday life" p.140; Clear, "Fewer ladies, more women", p.170.

⁶⁶ Senia Pašeta, "'Waging war on the streets': the Irish women patrol, 1914-22" in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxiv, no.154 (November, 2014), p.252; Moriarty, "Work, warfare, and wages", p.90.

Writing about Irishwomen and the Great War

There has been significant discussion in recent years about the most suitable theoretical and methodological approaches for studying women and the Great War. In essence, the main debate focuses on the use of empiricism or post-structuralism as theoretical frameworks. Such debates highlight the division between the women's history approach and that of gender history. Susan Kingsley Kent offers a useful definition of the differences between the two approaches to history. She outlines how women's historians study women as subjects while gender historians study the relationship of women to men in various societies. They also consider the interplay of male and female identities. Kent rightly observes that there is significant overlap between the two types of history in subject area and methodological approaches. Gender history is reliant on women's history for its material, while women's history is incomplete without analysis of gender.⁶⁷

The work of Joan Scott has been hugely influential on the development of gender history. In her pioneering article 'Gender: a category of historical analysis' she argued for gender to be incorporated into all historical studies as an analytical category. She suggested that this was the best means of transforming the practice of history and of ensuring that women's history was not marginalised but rather integrated into mainstream scholarship.⁶⁸ Scott defines gender as a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and a primary way of signifying relationships of power.⁶⁹ She argues that investigating the role of gender in the development of political systems can enable us to ask new questions, obtain fresh perspectives, make women visible as active participants and create 'analytical distance' between the language of the past and the terminology of the present.⁷⁰

The problematic aspect to the post-structuralist approach to gender history espoused by Scott; however, is that the focus on discourses about the subject rather than the historical experience itself makes it difficult to gain a meaningful understanding of the events in question.⁷¹ Before engaging in theoretical debates about the construction of gender in wartime, an empirical foundation based on archival research is necessary. Mary Cullen argues that women's history is an essential aid in the transition to a 'new integrated history

⁶⁷ Kent, *Gender and history*, p.49.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.53.

⁶⁹ Joan W. Scott, "Gender: a useful category of historical analysis" in *American Historical Review*, xci, no. 5 (1986), p.1067.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1075.

⁷¹ Donald M. MacRaild and Avram Taylor, *Social theory and social history* (Hampshire, 2004), p.130; for detailed discussion of various critiques of Scott's work, see Johanna Alberti, *Gender and the historian* (Harlow, 2002), pp 125-130.

incorporating the historical experience of both sexes'.⁷² Cliona Murphy also warns of the risks of attaching too much importance to gender as a category for analysing society at the expense of other considerations. She suggests that instead of a separate gender history, we need a mentality which includes it as yet another category to examine the state of society along with economic, nationalist, political, religious and other approaches.⁷³

Angela Woollacott defends the empirical approach in her study of British female munitions workers. She argues for the value of experience as a category of historical analysis for examining women's individual lives and their shared circumstances in wartime. In her own work, Woollacott has sought to find the shared dimensions among British female munitions workers in the way they responded to total war while at the same time acknowledging the diversity among the women and the very different ways the war affected their lives.⁷⁴ In contrast, Kent has argued that concepts of 'experience' or 'identity' must themselves be historicised. She argues that experience and identity are 'produced by meaning systems in particular cultures at particular times' and it is the historian's role to analyse the discourses and processes by which the experiences are produced.⁷⁵ Kent dismisses much of the empirical social history approaches to women and the war as confined to 'exercises in measurement' that reveal little about how the Great War transformed the lives of men and women and affected their relationships with each other.⁷⁶

While rightly noting the limits of a social history based approach, Kingsley Kent overlooks the significant contribution such studies have made. Her own attempt to demonstrate the writing of a history of women and the Great War that counters the 'experience' approach is unconvincing.⁷⁷ Her example of theory as practice reveals the flaws within the post-structuralist approach and reinforces the importance of an empirical methodology which takes due consideration of actual lived experience. This thesis is primarily a work of women's history, in that it focuses on the actual lived experience of women rather than discourses of gender identity.⁷⁸ Nonetheless it considers the changing attitudes towards gender in wartime and the ways in which Irishwomen's role in society was affected by the war.

⁷² Mary Cullen, "History women and history men: the politics of women's history" in *History Ireland*, ii, no. 2, (1994) p.32.

⁷³ Cliona Murphy, "Women's history, feminist history or gender history?" in *Irish Review*, xii, (1992), p.25.

⁷⁴ Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, pp 11-12.

⁷⁵ Kent, *Gender and history*, pp 67-68.

⁷⁶ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making peace: the reconstruction of gender in interwar Britain* (New Jersey, 1993), p.3.

⁷⁷ Kent, *Gender and history*, p.89.

⁷⁸ It is influenced by Senia Pašeta's recent work, *Irish nationalist women 1900-1918*, which she describes as 'emphatically women's history' in its focus on exploring the context of nationalist and feminist women rather than discourse analysis, p.1.

The concept of 'everyday life' is central to this thesis. Sheila Fitzpatrick offered a useful definition of everyday life in her study of Russia in the 1930s: 'everyday interactions that in some way involved the state'.⁷⁹ As Maureen Healy notes, the definition works in situations where the state has a pervasive presence in the lives of its citizens.⁸⁰ It is thus particularly applicable to European societies during the Great War. Indeed the Great War brought women into unprecedented contact with the state. In her study of Vienna in WWI Healy argues that a particular feature of total war is the 'refraction of the everyday': that is the distortion of everyday matters usually considered private or sub-political by the medium of war. War on the scale of the Great War meant that no action or deed 'was too small or insignificant to be considered a matter of state'.⁸¹ The everyday is the space between regulations and real life.⁸² This thesis employs this concept as a means of exploring the impact of the war on issues such as household management, the experience of 'separation women' or women's employment opportunities.

The interaction between the everyday and the political is another important element of this thesis. The politicising effects of the war for women have been recently acknowledged, notably by Belinda Davis in her work on Berlin and Maureen Healy in her work on Vienna. Davis has highlighted the political implications of economic matters such as bread riots and has argued that the war enabled the civilians of Berlin to play a role in defining politics and to assert a new view of the state and its responsibilities towards its citizens.⁸³ Maureen Healy argues that the mobilisation process generated by total war served to politicise women, enabling them to practice politics, albeit in different venues to those usually considered the political sphere.⁸⁴

Healy offers a broad definition of politics, defining it as activities in which individuals and groups articulate, negotiate, implement and enforce the competing claims they make upon one another.⁸⁵ This thesis is also influenced by Karen Hunt's work in considering women's politics to be the range of spaces in which women might take political action, which includes not just formal politics (in parties and pressure groups), but also more informal participation in civil society.⁸⁶ Hunt has described how a women's politics of food emerged in various European and American cities in 1917 and 1918, involving public

⁷⁹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: ordinary life in extraordinary times. Soviet Russia in the 1930's* (Oxford, 1999), p.3.

⁸⁰ Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Hapsburg Empire: total war and everyday life in World War I* (Cambridge, 2004), p.20.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁸³ Belinda J. Davis, *Home fires burning: food politics and everyday life in World War I Berlin* (London, 2000), p.3.

⁸⁴ Healy, *Vienna and the fall of the Hapsburg Empire*, p.302.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁸⁶ Karen Hunt, "Rethinking activism: lessons from the history of women's politics" in *Parliamentary Affairs*, lxii, no.2 (2009), p.213.

protests by largely unorganised working-class housewives.⁸⁷ Through examination of women's domestic politics, she argues that the Great War was a crucial moment in the emergence of women as political actors.⁸⁸ Healy and Hunt were commenting specifically on the politics of food that emerged through the cost-of-living demonstrations across Europe. In Ireland the impact of the war on the politicisation of women was more evident in the anti-conscription campaign and the violent and vocal protests by the 'separation women' against the republican movement.

The thesis is further influenced by Arthur Marwick's and Jay Winter's war and society approach. Marwick has proposed a theoretical framework for studying the interaction between society and war. He argues that war disrupts society and tests its cohesion, values and traditions but facilitates the participation of under-privileged or marginalised groups in national life and finally leaves a lasting psychological impact on the beliefs and values of the society.⁸⁹ Jay Winter criticised the model for its lack of precision and questioned that it can be applied fruitfully to all war situations, regardless of the particular context.⁹⁰ Winter argued for the need for more 'quantitative, more methodologically precise interdisciplinary studies'.⁹¹

Winter's own pioneering work on the Great War and the British people combined demographic analysis of trends in civilian health with analysis of war literature and journalism to consider the psychological and societal impact of the 'lost generation'. He argues that from a socioeconomic perspective, the Great War proved paradoxically to be both a catastrophe and a social benefit, but to different parts of the British population.⁹² However he stressed that for the majority of individuals involved, the war was a 'monumental disaster' and was experienced as such, regardless of any improvements in standard of living.⁹³ He outlined an important distinction between the social structural changes engendered by the war and the lived experience of war.

Historical demography, the quantitative study of human population in the past, offers useful insights into the means by which war affected women's lives, revealing, for example, its impact in areas such as nuptiality, fertility and mortality. Arthur Marwick has described the rise of historical demography in the aftermath of World War II as 'the most

⁸⁷ Karen Hunt, "The politics of food and women's neighbourhood activism in First World War Britain", in *International Labour and working-class history*, no.77 (Spring, 2010), p.8.

⁸⁸ Hunt, "The politics of food", p.11.

⁸⁹ Arthur Marwick, "Problems and consequences of organising society for total war" in N.F. Dreisziger (ed.) *Mobilisation for total war: the Canadian, American and British experience 1914-1918, 1939-1945* (Ontario, 1981), pp 3-4.

⁹⁰ Jay Winter, "Review of Arthur Marwick, *War and social change in the twentieth century* (London, 1974)" in *Social History*, i, no.3 (Oct. 1976), p.404.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.405.

⁹² Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (2nd ed., London, 2003), p.2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.3.

important single development' in the practice of history.⁹⁴ This thesis applies Winter's demographic approach to the Irish population, for example, in the use of maternal and infant mortality statistics as an indicator of civilian health during wartime. Influenced by Winter, the thesis combines historical demography methods with social and cultural history approaches, involving the analysis of letters, diaries and memoirs as a means of exploring the development of a war culture and the experience of individuals.

Encompassing a transnational framework, as outlined by Enda Delany and Niall Whelehan, the scope of the analysis ranges from local and regional to national and international and explores themes across national boundaries.⁹⁵ Delaney suggests that a transnational approach enables the systematic reconstruction of the 'complexities of the lived experience', a central aim of this thesis.⁹⁶ Together with regional comparisons within Ireland, the thesis attempts to place the experience of Irishwomen in its wider British and global context. It questions the exceptionalism of the Irish female experience of the war and attempts to draw similarities and parallels with other combatant countries.

Although the destruction of the Public Record Office in 1922 destroyed much potentially relevant material, I have attempted to piece together the history of Irish women in this period using a diverse range of primary sources, drawn from twenty-two archives and libraries in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Government reports, memoranda and correspondence proved valuable sources, including, for example, the records of the Treasury, the Ministry of Labour and the War Office in the British National Archives. The Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers in the National Archives of Ireland together with the papers of Augustine Birrell and Sir Matthew Nathan in the Bodleian Library, and the papers of Viscount French in the Imperial War Museum, provided essential insights into the working of the Irish administration and the attention paid to women's issues during the war. Other important sources included the wartime records and papers of various organisations involving Irishwomen, together with personal accounts of individuals.

Although adult literacy levels were high by the time of the war, there are relatively few surviving personal accounts of domestic and social life on the Irish home front. This can be partly attributed to the lack of academic and popular interest in Irish participation in the Great War until the 1980s which meant that items of historic value relating to the war were less likely to be valued or donated to public bodies. Another consequence is the deficit of oral history projects with accounts of Irish Great War veterans and voluntary war workers.

⁹⁴ Arthur Marwick, *The new nature of history* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.129.

⁹⁵ Niall Whelehan, "Playing with scales: transnational history and modern Ireland" in Niall Whelehan (ed.) *Transnational perspectives on modern Irish history* (London, 2015), pp 7,10, 23. Enda Delaney, "Directions in historiography: Our island story? Towards a transnational history of late modern Ireland" in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxvii, no. 148 (2011), pp 601, 604.

⁹⁶ Delaney, "Directions in historiography: Our island story?" p.612.

The interviews with former munitions workers in the Imperial War Museum, for example, have no counterpart for Irish workers. Nonetheless this thesis made use of fifteen diaries, nine memoirs and six collections of private family correspondence. Recent crowd-sourced digitised projects such as Europeanna WWI and the Letters of 1916 projects have collected material from private collections and, when complete, the projects will greatly expand the primary sources, and specifically the ego documents, available to researchers of the period.

In an attempt to avoid treating women as a homogenous group, I employ a number of case studies in each chapter and use sampling methods to examine the experience of war workers. The personnel files of one hundred British Red Cross volunteers together with those of 137 divisional or work party leaders are analysed and placed in their socio-economic context through use of the 1901 and 1911 censuses. A similar approach is taken with the service records of seventy-five Irish members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. This approach has also attempted to address the upper class bias of the majority of surviving diaries and memoirs of women affected by the war. The use of samples makes it possible to uncover the participation and experience of a wider range of women and to interrogate assumptions regarding the class and religious profile of war workers.

The thesis makes significant use of contemporary newspapers and periodicals. Catriona Pennell has argued convincingly for the value of newspapers as a source for studying civil society during the Great War. She notes that examination of a wide range of newspapers from a variety of political and geographic backgrounds can yield insight into the varying public perceptions of the war. She also observes that rather than just reflecting opinion, newspapers record public behaviour. They reveal what people were doing during the years of the war and give an insight into popular collective behaviour.⁹⁷ The wartime issues of twenty-three newspapers and periodicals have been examined in close detail while the digital copies of twenty-three others have been searched using various key word search terms.

Two periodicals of particular importance to the topic were the *Irish Citizen* and *Lady of the House*, both of which were aimed at women in Ireland. Founded in 1912, the *Irish Citizen* was Ireland's only suffrage paper during the Great War period. Cliona Murphy describes it as a 'mouthpiece of the Irishwomen's Franchise League' but it also published reports of the activities of the other suffrage societies as well as articles on feminism, pacifism and socialism.⁹⁸ Dana Hearne considers the *Irish Citizen* to be the most significant 'articulator of Irish feminist ideology' in the early twentieth century.⁹⁹ Although its editors,

⁹⁷ Pennell, *A kingdom united*, p.6.

⁹⁸ Cliona Murphy, "'The tune of the Stars and Stripes': the American influence on the Irish suffrage movement" in Murphy and Luddy (eds) *Women surviving*, p.183.

⁹⁹ Dana Hearne, "*The Irish Citizen* 1914-1916: nationalism, feminism and militarism" in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, xviii, no.1 (1992), p.1.

Francis and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, were strongly opposed to Irish participation in the war effort, the paper continued to provide a space for divergent views within the suffrage movement. It offers a unique insight into women's politics during the Great War and is an important source of commentary on a wide range of issues affecting women in the domestic and public sphere.

The *Lady of the House* had rather different origins and readership. Founded in 1890 by Findlaters department store in Dublin, the magazine functioned as a monthly catalogue for the store. It claimed a circulation in excess of 20,000 in 1892, 3,000 of which were distributed to account customers.¹⁰⁰ Produced in Dublin, there was a separate Belfast edition with its own social column advising on local activities and affairs. Stephanie Rains describes it as socially aspirational, politically ambiguous and proto-feminist in its editorial tone and emphasis on the important role of women in consumerism and household management.¹⁰¹ The magazine included a social column, advice on suitable careers for women, suggestions for economic housekeeping and fashion, and a debate section featuring discussions on women's role in society. As such, it is a valuable source for information on women's domestic and social lives.

A number of recent digitisation projects have expanded the possibilities for researching Irishwomen's wartime experience. For example, the recent digitisation of the Women, War and Society collection in the Imperial War Museum has made it possible to search the collection for specifically Irish material, thus revealing the wealth of relevant material on Irishwomen during the Great War. Similarly, the digitisation of surviving Women's Army Auxiliary Corps service records in the British National Archives and the ongoing digitisation of the British Red Cross personnel records from the Great War have enabled me to track Irish individuals to an extent hitherto impossible. The thesis has also benefited from the 2013 digitisation of the Bureau of Military History witness statements and the ongoing digitisation and release of Military Service Pension files in the Irish Military Archives.

Thesis structure

Angela Woollacott has rightly noted that much of the debate on the effect of the Great War on women has been framed through the lens of the post-war period. Rather than focusing on what did or did not change, she attempts to move beyond this to examine what was significant for women at the time and how they actually experienced the upheaval of war.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Alex Findlater, *Findlaters: the story of a Dublin merchant family 1774-2001* (Dublin, 2001), pp 315-319.

¹⁰¹ Stephanie Rains, *Commodity culture and social class in Dublin 1850-1916* (Dublin, 2010), p.132.

¹⁰² Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, pp 14-15.

Influenced by her approach, I have chosen to focus on the war years and the immediate aftermath, 1914 to 1919, to maintain the focus on the period itself rather than the longer-term impact of the war. The body of the thesis is structured thematically with chapters outlining the various different strands of the impact of the war on women's lives, ranging from the personal to the political.

Chapter One briefly outlines the demographic, socioeconomic and political position of women in Ireland in 1914, providing the context for their wartime experience. The demographic profile of the female population is further discussed in Chapter Two, which analyses the impact of the Great War on nuptiality, fertility, and maternal and infant mortality in Ireland. Infant health is further considered in Chapter Three, which focuses on women's domestic life, exploring issues of food supply, household management, the infant welfare movement, and the emotional hardship experienced by the families of soldiers in terms of separation and bereavement. The experience of soldiers' wives is further developed in Chapter Four. It explores discourses of social morality on the home front, focusing on the commentary on the behaviour of soldiers' wives, the concern with venereal disease and illegitimacy rates and the attempts to monitor women's behaviour on the streets.

Anxiety surrounding women's behaviour in the public sphere was connected to their increased visibility in the workforce. Chapter Five examines the impact of the war on women's paid employment, investigating the effect of the industrial depression in autumn 1914 and considering the extent to which the war enabled new employment opportunities for Irishwomen, in Ireland or further afield. Women played an important role in the wartime workforce, particularly through munitions work, and were motivated by both economic and patriotic factors. Chapter Six examines women's contribution to the war effort through auxiliary military roles, nursing and voluntary mobilisation on the home front. The contribution of Irishwomen to the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association is compared to that of Great Britain. The membership profile of war relief organisations is analysed using sampling methods. The chapter further explores the motivations and experiences of individuals involved in the war effort.

Chapter Seven expands the discussion of motivating factors for female mobilisation to consider the role of the churches in women's voluntary work in Ireland and to explore the impact of the war on five major women's philanthropic organisations. It argues that women's associational culture was dominated by the circumstances of war. Chapter Eight explores two interconnected issues; dissent against the mobilisation process and the politicising impact of war on Irishwomen. It evaluates the means by which prominent female unionist, nationalist and suffrage organisations used the war effort to promote their own political agendas, and argues that the involvement of women in the anti-conscription campaign and of soldiers' wives in protests against the republican movement represent

evidence of the politicising impact of the war on women. Chapter Nine considers the short-term impact of the Armistice, focusing on the demobilisation of war workers and the impact of the demobilisation of soldiers within the home. Finally, the Conclusion evaluates the overall impact of the Great War on women's lives in Ireland.

Together the chapters provide a systematic evaluation of Irishwomen's lives during the Great War, considering questions such as extent of the war's impact upon women's everyday lives, the degree of popular support for the war effort among Irishwomen and the uniqueness or otherwise of Irishwomen's war experience. The thesis argues that the war had a much more noticeable impact on women's everyday lives in Ireland than has hitherto been suggested and reveals the very significant support for the war effort among Irishwomen, particularly evident in membership and support of the Red Cross. Although aspects of Irishwomen's war experience were particular to Ireland, the similarities with other combatant countries are also very apparent. The thesis thus contributes to scholarship on Ireland during the revolutionary period 1912 to 1923, the history of women in Ireland and international studies of gender and the First World War.

Chapter 1: Irishwomen in 1914

What was the status of women in Ireland in 1914? What role did women play in pre-war Irish society? This chapter briefly explores the position of women in Ireland in the immediate pre-war period, providing the context for any wartime changes. It considers the demographic profile of the female population, their role in the domestic sphere and the workforce, and the opportunities for female participation in political movements. In 1914 women in Ireland were officially second-class citizens. Inheritance and property laws favoured men and women's employment and educational opportunities were limited. It was significantly more difficult for women than men to obtain a divorce and women were vulnerable to exploitation in both the public and private spheres. Before the Representation of the People Act in 1918 women were not entitled to the vote and their official political participation was confined to the offices of local government.¹ Their employment opportunities outside the home were very limited and the majority of women were employed in non-waged work on family farms.

Demographic profile

At the outset of the Great War in 1914 the female population was roughly equal to that of the male population: females comprised 50.7% of the total population in the 1911 census.² However there were regional disparities in the gender breakdown of the population. In Connaught females made up 48.9% while in Belfast they formed 53.2% of all inhabitants.³ The Irish population was distorted by the impact of emigration, resulting in relatively small numbers of women of childbearing age. Of the total female population 29.1% were under fifteen years of age in 1911 while 17.3% were aged over fifty-five.

¹ Myrtle Hill, *Women in Ireland: a century of change* (Belfast, 2003), p.6.

² A.J. Fitzpatrick and W.E. Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics: population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), p.90.

³ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, pp 155, 159, 160.

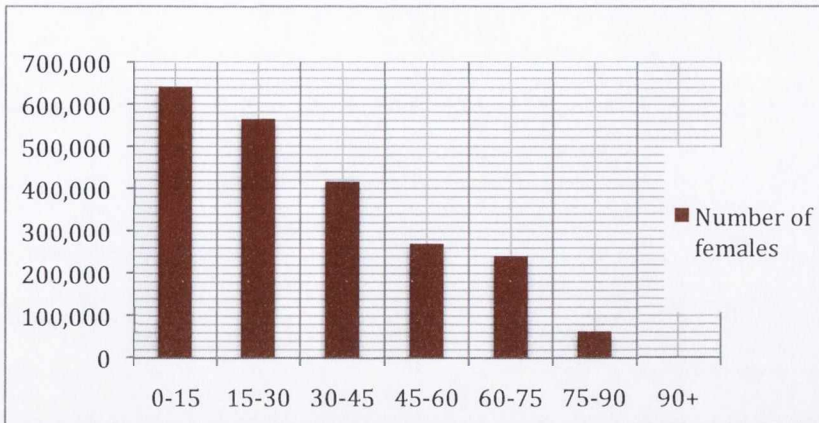


Fig. 1.1 Age profile of the female population in 1911⁴

Regional variation in the emigration rate and internal migration from rural to urban areas affected the age profile. Almost two-fifths (39.9%) of the female population in Dublin city were aged under twenty-five compared to 39.4% in Belfast and 30.7% in Connaught.⁵ Ireland had an 'extraordinarily high level of emigration' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century compared to the remainder of Europe. Enda Delaney has noted how in the late nineteenth century nearly as many people born in Ireland lived outside the country as lived in Ireland.⁶ He suggests that few societies were more 'profoundly shaped' by emigration.⁷

During the period 1910 to 1914 an average rate of 6.6 people emigrated per 1,000 of the population.⁸ More men than women emigrated in the immediate pre-war period: women made up 46.5% of all emigrants enumerated for the period 1910 to 1914.⁹ Figure 1.2 demonstrates the significant variation in the emigration rate between the provinces, with more than five times the number of emigrants leaving Connaught than Leinster. The emigration rate for Connaught in 1914 was 11.6 people per 1,000 of the provincial population compared to 2.3 for Leinster, 5.9 for Ulster and 6.8 for Munster.¹⁰ The dramatic decline in emigration between 1915 and 1919, very evident in the graph, is discussed in Chapter Two.

⁴ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, general report*, p.74.

⁵ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, pp 149, 155, 160.

⁶ Delaney, "Directions in historiography: Our island story?", pp 601-602.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.602.

⁸ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, p.263.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Calculated from figures supplied in Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, pp 345-353.

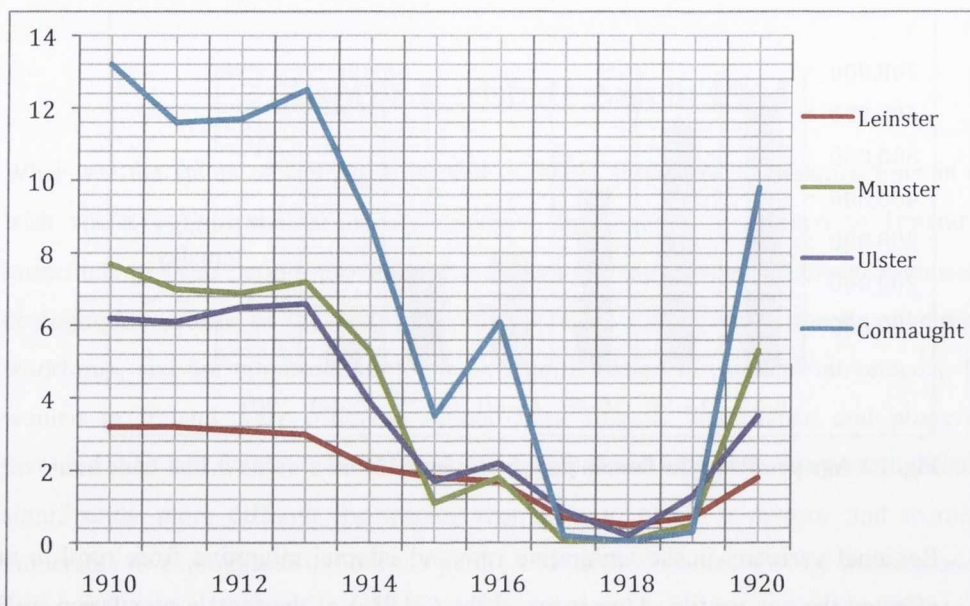


Fig. 1.2 Provincial emigration per 1,000 of the population 1910-1920

The majority of those emigrating in the pre-war period were young and single. In 1914 86.6% of all Irish emigrants were aged between fifteen and thirty-five while just 7.7% of the men and 10% of the women were married or widowed.¹¹ L.P. Curtis Jnr suggests that the high rate of emigration was linked to the sexual frustration of many men and women who had few options for marriage and parenthood in Ireland. Emigration provided an escape route.¹² Low numbers of marriages and births were a noticeable feature of Irish society in this period. Almost half (48.3%) of all women in Ireland aged over fifteen years of age in 1911 had never been married. Late marriages were common. Of women aged 25-34, 53.7% were single compared to 31.2% of women aged 35-44.¹³ The birth rate was accordingly low. During the decade 1900 to 1910 the average number of births per 1,000 of the estimated population was 23.2 compared to a rate of 27.9 for Great Britain.¹⁴

David Fitzpatrick argues that the repressive tradition of late marriages of restricted choice was accepted by the younger generation because emigration provided an alternative for many. He observes that it was 'unnecessary to flout constraints if one could easily choose to leave them and Ireland behind'.¹⁵ He also suggests that emigration reflected the inadequacy of domestic employment opportunities, particularly in the late nineteenth century when the contraction of domestic industry and labour-intensive farming reduced the

¹¹ L.P. Curtis, Jnr, "Ireland in 1914" in W.E. Vaughan (ed.) *A new history of Ireland VI Ireland under the Union II 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996), p.148.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.157.

¹³ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, p.90.

¹⁴ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1900-10 (Dublin, 1900-10); B.R. Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), pp 30-33.

¹⁵ David Fitzpatrick, "Marriage in post-famine Ireland" in Art Cosgrave (ed.) *Marriage in Ireland* (Dublin, 1985), p.126

importance of women's roles as income-earners and producers.¹⁶ Literacy levels rose during the same period, further improving women's opportunities for emigration. By 1911 virtually every young adult could write and the gap between male and female literacy had closed.¹⁷

Domestic sphere

Despite the low marriage rate, the dominant discourse of early twentieth century Ireland proclaimed that women's primary roles were as wives and mothers. The following quotation from the Catholic magazine, *Irish monthly*, in 1913 is indicative of the attitudes to women's role at the time: 'the good wife and mother is the best guardian not only of the physical health and comfort of her husband and sons but their virtue and spiritual welfare as well'.¹⁸ Contemporary women's organisations such as the United Irishwomen also promoted this view, suggesting that women's role was to help ensure that Ireland's rural population was strong, healthy and active.¹⁹ The organisation further stated that women could best help society from their place in the domestic sphere:

Patriotism for women is a thing of deeds not words –it must be part of their daily life. The most manifest theories of men and the constructive work that they do cannot create national prosperity if the women do not help them in domestic details.²⁰

Joanna Bourke argues that the ideology of the domestic sphere became more pervasive between 1890 and 1914. The improved economy led to greater investment in household goods and subsequently altered the expectations of the goods and services that homemakers should provide. There was also an increased awareness of the role of household hygiene in preventing disease thus placing more responsibility on the householder and creating more domestic labour.²¹ These changes, together with the reduction in paid employment opportunities for women, resulted in large numbers of women exchanging paid work for full time work in the unwaged household sector.²² This was part of the gradual move from a family economy to a breadwinner model for household economies, evident in nineteenth-century Ireland. Working wives increasingly represented the failure of the husband's earning power.²³

¹⁶ David Fitzpatrick, "A share of the honeycomb: education, emigration and Irishwomen" in Mary E. Daly and David Dickson (eds) *The origins of popular literacy in Ireland: language change and educational development 1700-1920* (Dublin, 1990), pp 167, 182.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.182.

¹⁸ Hill, *Women in Ireland: a century of change*, p. 21.

¹⁹ Ellice Pilkington, *The United Irishwomen, their place, work and ideals* (Dublin, 1911), p.20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.33.

²¹ Joanna Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery: women, economic change and housework in Ireland 1890-1914* (Oxford, 1993), pp 212-20.

²² *Ibid.*, p.22.

²³ Katie Barclay, "Farmwives, domesticity and work in late nineteenth century Ireland" in *Rural history*, xxiv, no. 2 (October, 2013), p.144.

The number of women recorded in the paid workforce declined by 52% between the 1881 census and that in 1911. However during the period 1851 to 1910 official interpretations of what constituted productive labour changed. Women who did not state an occupation other than that of their husband were classed as 'non-productive'.²⁴ From 1911 male relatives of farmers (sons, grandsons, brothers and nephews) over the age of fifteen and without a specified occupation were included as agricultural workers while corresponding female relatives were not.²⁵ This obscured the extensive roles performed by women in farming households. Of the 862,000 people engaged in agriculture in Ireland in 1912, just 26% were classified as wage earners. Females made up one of every four workers on farms of less than two hundred acres.²⁶

Bourke argues that within farming families, the ideology of domesticity, together with new farming technologies, led to women exchanging a productive farming role for increased status as housewives. Katie Barclay however suggests that instead of women's role in agriculture changing significantly, a different interpretation was placed on their work. She argues that new ideas of domesticity 'competed with old to create a form of domesticity that had space for female labour on the farm'.²⁷ She points to the fact that farmers' wives and daughters continued to engage in homework in the textile trade to supplement the family income at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁸ In the late nineteenth century, women were contributing on average over 60% of the cash income of a sample of small farming households in the west of Ireland.²⁹

Despite their economic importance, home industries became increasingly associated with domesticity and defined as domestic employment rather than as an occupation. Women's work on the family farm or in home industries was viewed as an extension of women's domestic role and thus not classed as 'work' in the usual sense.³⁰ In Bourke's view this shift in attitudes towards women's role had both positive and negative effects for Irishwomen. Women's dependency on the head of household increased and they were more vulnerable to domestic violence as they were held responsible for any domestic problems.³¹ At the same time their responsibility for the household work offered them opportunities to increase their status within the home and to improve both their quality of life and that of the family.³²

²⁴ Maria Luddy, "Women and work in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland: an overview" in Bernadette Whelan (ed.) *Women and paid work in Ireland 1500-1930* (Dublin, 2000), p.45.

²⁵ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, general report*, p.xxix.

²⁶ L.P. Curtis, Jnr, "Ireland in 1914", p.165.

²⁷ Barclay, "Farmwives, domesticity and work in late nineteenth century Ireland", p.145.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.147.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.154.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.156.

³¹ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, pp 265-266.

³² *Ibid.*, p.271.

Workforce

Mary E. Daly suggests that given the predominant values of Irish society in this period it is 'probable that the majority of the female workforce subscribed to the belief that women's principal role was in the home'.³³ Nevertheless significant numbers of women continued to participate in waged labour. Women made up 23.6% of the total workforce in Ireland recorded in the 1911 census while 19.3% of all Irishwomen were recorded as involved in paid employment.³⁴ The majority of female workers were temporary rather than permanent members of the labour force, working in their youth, or in times of need and returning to home life when circumstances improved. Work done by women was usually low skilled, poorly paid and little valued by society.³⁵

Women workers were clustered in particular professions in the years preceding the Great War. In 1911, they constituted 84.9% of domestic servants, 66.8% of those in the textile industry and 63.4% of teachers but just 26.6% of those in the professional class and 1.0% of the legal profession.³⁶ A third of all women in the workforce were in the domestic service sector.³⁷ Domestic service was viewed as suitable women's work, in that it took place within a home and constituted traditional female activities. Parents also welcomed the control and security which they felt service offered their daughters.³⁸ Irish domestic servants were typically young single women. In 1911 47% of indoor female servants were under twenty-five and just 18% were aged over forty-five years of age.³⁹

Geographical location was a significant factor in determining the opportunities for female employment. For example, the textile industry, one of the major employers of women, was largely located in the northeast of the country. Improved opportunities for professional or clerical work were much greater in urban areas.⁴⁰ Just 33.5% of the Irish population in 1911 lived in districts with a population greater than 2,000 people, compared with 78.1% of the English population, thus affecting the gender breakdown of the labour force.⁴¹ Forty three per cent of the total labour force worked in agriculture in 1911 with the majority of these consisting of farmers and their families working on home farms.

³³ Mary E. Daly, "Women in the Irish Workforce from pre-industrial to modern times" in *Saothar*, vii, (1981), p.78.

³⁴ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, general report*, p.7; Maria Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish Society 1800-1940* (Cambridge, 2007), p.4.

³⁵ Daly, "Women in the Irish Workforce from pre-industrial to modern times", pp 76-77.

³⁶ Curtis, Jnr, "Ireland in 1914" p.154.

³⁷ Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish society*, p.4

³⁸ Mona Hearn, "Life for domestic servants in Dublin, 1880-1920" in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds) *Women surviving: studies in Irish women's history in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Dublin, 1989), p.149.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.154.

⁴⁰ Luddy, "Women and work in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland", p.54.

⁴¹ Curtis, Jnr, "Ireland in 1914" p.150.

Changes in employment patterns were evident in the first decade of the twentieth century. Domestic service was apparently in decline: the number recorded as female domestic servants fell by 40,889, a decline of 24.5%.⁴² Two factors affected this: the increase in labour saving devices for the home, which could have reduced demand for servants, and the expanded alternative opportunities available to women.⁴³ Maria Luddy has suggested that there was a shift in attitudes towards domestic service at the end of the nineteenth century with its inferior and dependent nature becoming increasingly seen as unacceptable.⁴⁴ The expansion of education during the same period improved the opportunities for women in the professional classes and in white-collar jobs such as clerks and shop assistants. The number of female commercial clerks (which included typists and general office workers) increased by 128.4%, from 3,437 in 1901 to 7,849 in 1911.⁴⁵ There was a much smaller increase in the number of male commercial clerks, from 18,952 in 1901 to 19,723 in 1911.⁴⁶ There was an increase of over 200% in the number of women in the medical profession (from 2,093 to 6,679). The majority of these were trained nurses.⁴⁷

The numbers of women employed in the textile industry declined between 1901 and 1911. The total numbers fell from 109,588 in 1901 to 104,663 in 1911 but the number of men fell by just 992 compared to a decline of 3,933 for the women.⁴⁸ This decrease was primarily in the flax and linen industry (a decrease of 2,456 people). The woollen industry also witnessed a decline, which again mostly affected female workers. Numbers employed fell from 5,140 in 1901 to 4,479 in 1911. The lace industry however improved, employing 3,004 women in 1911 compared to 2,099 in 1901.⁴⁹ The dressmaking and tailoring industry declined from 137,804 in 1901 to 96,054 in 1911. The decline was most pronounced among milliners and seamstresses. There were more than twice as many women as men in this industry.⁵⁰

The decline in the textile industry reflects the increased mechanisation of the work and the reduced demand for unskilled workers. It is also evidence of the female employment pattern described by Bourke; the move from unskilled work to the domestic sphere. The decade immediately preceding the outbreak of the war was a time of change for women's employment in Ireland. The numbers of women in white-collar jobs was increasing while those in domestic service and unskilled industrial work were declining. Increased emphasis was placed on women's domestic role in the home but there were greater opportunities for

⁴² *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, general report*, p.xxvii.

⁴³ Luddy, "Women and work in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland", p.53.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.54.

⁴⁵ Curtis, Jnr, "Ireland in 1914" p.153. *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, general report*, p.xxviii.

⁴⁶ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, general report*, p.xxviii.

⁴⁷ Curtis, Jnr, "Ireland in 1914" p.154. *Census of Ireland for the year 1911, general report*, p.xxviii.

⁴⁸ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911*, p.xxviii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.xxx.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.xxx.

middle-class women to enter professional occupations in urban areas. Notably however, the majority of Irishwomen continued to be occupied with non-waged work on family farms.

Political participation

Despite the attempted confinement of women to the domestic sphere, in the immediate pre-war period many women were actively involved in formal political activity in the public sphere. The period immediately preceding the outbreak of war in August 1914 had in fact seen unprecedented participation of women in the suffrage, nationalist, and Unionist movements. These movements were all closely connected and interdependent on one another. Mary E. Daly considers the suffrage movement in early twentieth century Ireland to have been 'extremely active' and 'particularly precocious' given the predominantly rural, Catholic nature of Irish society.⁵¹ She attributes it to Ireland's mass politicisation through grassroots nationalist and Unionist movements, its membership of the United Kingdom and the relatively advanced level of women's education.⁵² Senia Pašeta further observes that the suffrage movement itself served as a crucial agent in the politicisation of women in early twentieth century Ireland.⁵³

The term 'Irish suffrage movement' refers to what Louise Ryan terms a 'loose amalgam of scattered groups of varying sizes which began in 1870 and reached its peak between 1908 and 1914'.⁵⁴ Many suffragists were active in party-politics, with some experiencing what Cliona Murphy has described as 'tugs of loyalty' in consequence.⁵⁵ These tensions were partially resolved by the establishment of a diverse range of suffrage societies. In May 1913 Ireland had eighteen suffrage societies with a further eleven branches. There was some overlap of membership between the societies, making it difficult to accurately assess the total numbers involved. The *Irish Citizen* claimed in 1912 that there was upwards of 3,000 women suffragists in Ireland, of whom 1,000 were Irish Women's Franchise League members, but we can assume a desire to inflate the figures on its part.⁵⁶ The years 1912 to 1914 were a particularly active time for the suffrage movement in Ireland and Great

⁵¹ Mary E. Daly, 'Oh Kathleen Ni Houlihan, your way's a thorny way!': the condition of women in twentieth century Ireland' in Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (eds) *Gender and Sexuality in modern Ireland* (Amherst, 1997), p.107.

⁵² Mary E. Daly, 'The 'woman element in politics': Irish women and the vote, 1918-2000" in Esther Breitenbach and Pat Thane (eds) *Women and citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the twentieth century: what difference did the vote make?* (London, 2008), p.80.

⁵³ Senia Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013), p.17.

⁵⁴ Lucy Delap, Louise Ryan and Teresa Zackodnik, "Self-determination, race and empire: feminist nationalists in Britain, Ireland and the US, 1830s to WWI" in *Women's studies international forum*, xxix (2006), p.247.

⁵⁵ Cliona Murphy, *The women's suffrage movement and Irish society in the early twentieth century* (Philadelphia, 1989), p.9.

⁵⁶ *Irish Citizen*, 25 May 1912; Rosemary Cullen Owens, *Smashing Times: a history of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement 1889-1922* (Dublin, 1984), p.103.

Britain. A minority of suffragists were engaged in militant activity on both islands and were receiving much press attention partly as a result of the treatment of imprisoned suffragists under the 'Cat and Mouse' Act.⁵⁷

Nationalist women played an increasingly visible role in politics in early twentieth century Ireland through organisations such as Inghinidhe na hEireann and the Gaelic League. They were also active in the nationalist press, particularly the paper *Bean na hEireann*.⁵⁸ From 1910 the Ancient Order of Hibernians, closely aligned to the Irish Parliamentary Party, accepted women members through its Ladies Auxiliary branches.⁵⁹ The escalation of political tension between the nationalists and the Unionists over the Home Rule issue significantly increased the numbers of men and women in each movement. The Ulster Women's Unionist Council (UWUC) was founded in 1911 as a female auxiliary to the Ulster Unionist Council and Ulster Volunteer Force. Although in some respects a very conservative organisation, Diane Urquhart describes the UWUC as a strong, dynamic and democratic body. It had an estimated 50,000 members by 1912, mainly from the middle and upper classes.⁶⁰ In 1912 229,000 women signed the 'Women's Declaration', organised by the Ulster Unionist Council as part of their protest against Home Rule. This was the largest mobilisation of Irishwomen in modern history and represented the growing role for women in politics.⁶¹ The Association of Loyal Orangewomen also underwent a revival in 1911 in reaction to the Ne Temere decree passed by the Roman Catholic church. It was hoped that the Orangewomen could act as an 'influence against mixed marriages'.⁶² By 1919 twenty-five female lodges were established with a collective membership of over 1,000.⁶³

Cumann na mBan, the most important nationalist women's organisation of the period, was established in April 1914, a few short months before the outbreak of the Great War.⁶⁴ Like the UWUC, Cumann na mBan was formed specifically to aid male activists, in this case, the Irish National Volunteers, with women performing traditional gender roles. Although it nevertheless offered increased opportunities for women's political involvement, Eve Morrison has emphasised the obstacles facing women seeking to enter political life in this period, noting the antipathy of the Irish Party towards women and the exclusion of women from decision-making roles in the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Irish

⁵⁷ Cullen Owens, *Smashing Times*, p.66.

⁵⁸ Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.31; R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: the revolutionary generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London, 2014), p.148.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.64.

⁶⁰ Diane Urquhart, "The female of the species is more deadlier than the male? The Ulster Women's Unionist Council 1911-40" in Janice Holmes and Diane Urquhart (eds) *Coming into the light: the work, politics and religion of women in Ulster, 1840-1940* (Belfast, 1994), p.97.

⁶¹ David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p.36.

⁶² *Association of Loyal Orangewomen of Ireland 100th anniversary 1912-2012* booklet.

⁶³ Diane Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics 1890-1914: a history not yet told* (Dublin, 2000), p.60.

⁶⁴ NLI Cumann na mBan, *Leabhar na mBan* (1919).

Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army.⁶⁵ Ideological and material pressures also made it difficult for women to break away from the traditional domestic role. For example, Countess Markievicz came under sharp criticism for appearing to prioritise politics over the care of her child.⁶⁶ Women were urged to place the care of their home before any political concerns as shown by a column in a nationalist newspaper: 'No Irishwomen can afford to claim a part in the public duties of patriotism until she has fully satisfied the claims her 'home' makes on her'.⁶⁷

The domestic sphere featured prominently in both nationalist and Unionist iconography and women's political action was viewed as an extension of their maternal and protective responsibilities.⁶⁸ Both the unionist and nationalist women's organisations evaded the issue of suffrage in the pre-war period. The UWUC stated that the union should come before all other concerns while nationalist women refused to confront the Irish National Volunteers on the issue, arguing that women in Ireland could only be emancipated when the national fight was won.⁶⁹ Many of the Unionist leaders were openly opposed to women's suffrage: Lady Theresa Londonderry described suffragists as having 'ridiculous socialistic propositions' while the *Irish Citizen* described the UWUC as 'dangerously reactionary'.⁷⁰ It is possible that the emphasis on the traditional role of women in the party-political movements was in fact a response to the militant suffrage activity of the same period; an attempt to differentiate between the unpopular actions of the 'suffragette' and the useful role for 'respectable' women in party-politics.

Margaret Ward, Diane Urquhart and Fearghal McGarry have identified a number of factors which enabled women's formal political involvement in the nationalist and Unionist movements at this time: a supportive familial network, economic independence and sufficient leisure time.⁷¹ Roy Foster describes the membership of Cumann na mBan as 'generally republican, middle-class and well-educated'.⁷² Social class was also a very significant factor in determining both the extent of and type of female political involvement in the Unionist movement. Aristocratic women dominated the leadership of the UWUC. In the period 1911-1939 all of the presidents and all but one of the ten women who were

⁶⁵ Eve Morrison, "The Bureau of Military History and female republican activism, 1913-23" in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (ed.) *Gender and power in Irish history* (Dublin, 2009), p.60.

⁶⁶ Margaret Ward, "Marginality and militancy: Cumann na mBan 1914-36" in Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie (eds) *Ireland: divided nation, divided class* (London, 1980), p.98.

⁶⁷ *Sinn Féin*, 19 May 1906.

⁶⁸ Urquhart, "The female of the species is more deadlier than the male?", pp 94-96.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.102; Ward, "Marginality and militancy" p.101.

⁷⁰ *Irish Citizen*, Aug. 1918; PRONI D/1507/A/27/3: Letter from Lady Londonderry to Edward Carson, Apr. 1918.

⁷¹ Ward, "Marginality and militancy", p.97; Urquhart, *Women in Ulster politics*, pp 4-5; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), p.61.

⁷² Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.201.

appointed as vice-presidents of the UWUC were titled.⁷³ Urquhart has suggested that the high profile involvement of such women gave 'social respectability' to the movement and helped to popularise female involvement in Unionist politics. There is evidence however to suggest that the UWUC drew substantial support from working class women, particularly in Belfast.⁷⁴

Irish suffragists also tended to come from educated middle-class backgrounds. Given the opposition of many men to women's suffrage, it was imperative for a suffragist to be of independent means or have a supportive family. For example, the advanced nationalist Rosamond Jacob wrote to Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington in 1914, that while she would like to join the planned suffrage protest at a visit by John Redmond to Waterford, her mother would disapprove. At the time of the letter, Jacob was twenty-six years old but as she was still living in the family home she was restricted by the views of her parents.⁷⁵ Although various suffrage societies made an effort to gain the support of working class women by involving themselves in the Dublin Lockout relief schemes, their efforts had little impact and it remained a primarily middle to upper-class movement.⁷⁶ It was also very much urban based although efforts were made to establish rural branches and to spread suffrage propaganda countryside.⁷⁷ Protestants dominated the Irish suffrage movement, particularly the non-militant societies. Their disproportionate participation led to the establishment of the Irish Catholic Women's Suffrage Association in 1915, which aimed to provide an organisation for those 'who would prefer to belong to a purely Catholic body than a mixed society'.⁷⁸

Irish suffrage societies such as the Irishwomen's Reform League or the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association incorporated philanthropic and reform activities into their manifesto, believing that through such work women would both earn the vote and persuade society of the benefit of a female voice in public affairs. Many suffragists were also involved in other philanthropic and social reform organisations such as the Women's National Health Association and the United Irishwomen.⁷⁹ The United Irishwomen was established in 1910 to help improve the standard of living in rural Ireland, while the Women's National Health Association (WNHA) was established in 1907 under the guidance of the Countess of Aberdeen, Ishbel Gordon, wife of the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. The WNHA aimed to educate the public on health matters and was particularly

⁷³ Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics 1890-1914*, p.57.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.61.

⁷⁵ NLI MS 33,608/9: Rosamond Jacob to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, 7 Jan. 1914.

⁷⁶ *NLI Report of the Executive Committee of the Irish Women's Franchise League for 1913* (Dublin, 1914).

⁷⁷ For example see *Irish Citizen* 20 Sept. 1913 and 14 Mar. 1914.

⁷⁸ *Irish Citizen*, 23 Oct. 1915.

⁷⁹ Mary Clancy, "On the Western outpost: local government and women's suffrage in Co Galway 1898-1918" in Gerard Moran (ed.) *Galway history and society* (Dublin, 1996), pp 572-573.

concerned with the eradication of tuberculosis.⁸⁰ While such organisations represent the involvement of women in the public sphere, they were again motivated by a traditional paternalistic view of women which stressed their role as homemakers and mothers.

The position of women in Ireland in 1914 very closely resembled that in Britain. A similar percentage of the workforce was female: 29% in Britain compared to 23% in Ireland. In Britain, as in Ireland, domestic service was the largest employer of women for waged work, followed by the textile industry. Across the United Kingdom women entered the workforce while young and typically left upon marriage. However in both Ireland and Britain there is evidence of shifting attitudes towards female work in the years preceding the Great War. The numbers entering domestic service were declining while opportunities for women in clerical work were expanding. Household work remained the responsibility of the woman and occupied a significant amount of the time of working-class women.⁸¹

Nevertheless there were also significant differences between the experience of women in Ireland and Great Britain arising from the exceptionally high emigration rate and the predominately rural nature of Irish society. The family farm structure resulted in late marriages and consequently Ireland's birth rate was particularly low by European standards. Emigration offered women opportunities for improved marriage and employment prospects but left a significant demographic and psychological toll on the remaining population. The years before the war were also a time of particular change in Ireland. Women were increasingly active in the public sphere through associational and philanthropic organisations and through the various party-political movements. The suffrage movement was remarkably advanced in Ireland and created a forum for discussion around the role of women in society, a discourse which became increasingly relevant after 1914. The outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 had the potential to disrupt gender relations and to affect the role of women in the domestic and public spheres. The following chapters explore the extent of the impact of the war on women's lives, beginning with the demographic consequences of the war.

⁸⁰ Margaret O'hOgartigh, *Quiet revolutionaries: Irish women in education, medicine and sport 1861-1964* (Dublin, 2011), p.138.

⁸¹ Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield. *Out of the cage: women's experiences in two world wars* (London, 1987), pp 11-29.

Chapter 2: Demography

The unprecedented military mobilisation of men during the Great War had a significant demographic impact on the civilian population on the home front. Jay Winter argues that the war ‘feminised’ the civilian population of all combatant countries and transformed the age composition and sex ratio of large parts of the home population.¹ This had significant consequences for marriage and birth rates as well as affecting issues such as labour supply and food production. To what extent did the mobilisation of Irish men for the armed forces affect the Irish home population? David Fitzpatrick has estimated that 210,000 Irish men voluntarily served in the British Army during the Great War.² Of these, an estimated 27,000 to 35,000 were killed.³ This mass mobilisation unsurprisingly had an impact on fertility, nuptiality, and mortality amongst the civilian population.

The impact of the military mobilisation and the wartime losses were somewhat mediated by changing trends in migration. Jay Winter has described the Great War as a ‘major divide’ in the history of international migration with the needs of armies and the restrictions on travel and entry permits significantly reducing the general high emigration from Europe to the Americas.⁴ At the same time, there was increased internal migration in all combatant countries leading to a redistribution of the population and greater concentration in urban areas.⁵ Although the war resulted in increased short-term migration to Britain for munitions work, emigration from Ireland to North America declined sharply due to reduced foreign demand for labour and the German submarine campaign.⁶ The emigration rate fell to an average of 1.1 emigrants per 1,000 of the population from 1915 to 1919.⁷

This decline has been described as one of the most dramatic impacts of the war upon Irish society.⁸ Its evidence was most felt in rural Ireland, which had typically contributed the majority of emigrants, and which was least affected by recruitment to the army or to

¹ Jay Winter, “Demography” in John Horne, (ed.) *An Oxford companion to World War I* (Oxford, 2010), p.257.

² These numbers increase when one includes the numerous Irish men who enlisted or were conscripted into units in Britain, the colonies and the U.S.A. See David Fitzpatrick, “The logic of collective sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army 1914-1918” in *Historical Journal*, xxxviii, no.4 (1995), p. 1018; Fitzpatrick, “Militarism in Ireland 1900-1922” in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds) *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p.388.

³ Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p.35.

⁴ Winter, “Demography”, p.256.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ David Fitzpatrick, “Emigration, 1871-1921” in Vaughan (ed.) *A new history of Ireland VI Ireland under the Union II 1870-1921*, pp 630-631.

⁷ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, p.263.

⁸ Fitzpatrick, “Home front & everyday life”, p.136; Curtis, Jnr, “Ireland in 1914”, p.147.

munitions work in Britain.⁹ The war thus created a surplus of single men and women trapped in Ireland who could compensate to some extent for the demographic impact of the military mobilisation. However there was significant concern during the war about the potential impact of the war on the marriage prospects for women and on the birth rate.¹⁰ This chapter examines the extent to which this concern was warranted.

Marriages

Ireland had the lowest birth and marriage rates in the United Kingdom in 1914.¹¹ How did the mobilisation of men for the armed forces affect this? Similar trends are evident in Ireland and Great Britain for the numbers of marriages per 1,000 of the estimated population. Each state experienced a spike in marriages in 1915 following by a drop over the following three war years, with another spike in 1919 and 1920, reflecting presumably the demobilisation of soldiers after the war's end. In Ireland there was an overall drop of 2.2% in the average number of marriages across the war years compared to the previous four. Greater fluctuation was evident in Great Britain compared to Ireland. Figure 2.1 demonstrates the extent of the spike in 1915 across Britain and the accompanying subsequent decline until the end of the war.¹² The marriage rate refers to the number of marriages per 1,000 of the estimated population.

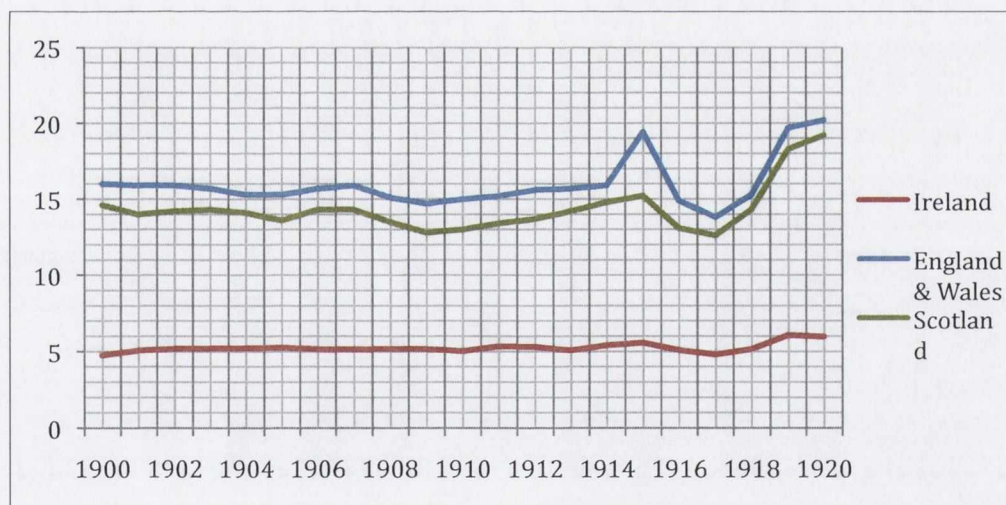


Fig. 2.1 Marriages per 1,000 of the estimated population in Ireland & Great Britain 1900-1919

The fluctuations meant that Scotland's average rate for the war years was just 1.2% less than that of the previous four years while in England and Wales the spike in 1915 was sufficient to give an overall increase of 4.1% for the same period.

⁹ Fitzpatrick, "Emigration, 1871-1921", p.631.

¹⁰ See for example, *Lady of the House*, 15 Nov. 1917.

¹¹ Curtis, Jnr, "Ireland in 1914", p.146.

¹² Compiled from the Annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1900-20 and Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, p.46.

Table 2.1 Marriages in Ireland & Great Britain 1900-1920

Period	Average number of marriages per annum (in thousands) ¹³		
	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1900-10	22.7	263.5	31.7
1911-20	23.6	307.6	35.7
1900-20	23.1	284.5	33.6
1911-14	23.0	285.0	33.4
1915-18	22.5	296.8	33.0

There was a particularly low marriage rate in 1917 in all three jurisdictions. The number of marriages recorded for Ireland in 1917, 21,100 or 4.81 per 1,000 of the estimated population, was the lowest since 1900.¹⁴ This accords with the three-part trajectory for marriage patterns identified by Jay Winter for Europe during the Great War. He attributes the initial rise to the reaction of young couples to the uncertainties of the war crisis, and notes the subsequent fall, which lasted until after the Armistice.¹⁵ This fluctuation in the number of marriages over the war period is more evident in Figure 2.2. It demonstrates the total number of marriages in Ireland over the years 1912 to 1920. The slight rise in 1915 and the subsequent decline until 1918 are evident, together with the significant post-war increases in 1919 and 1920.

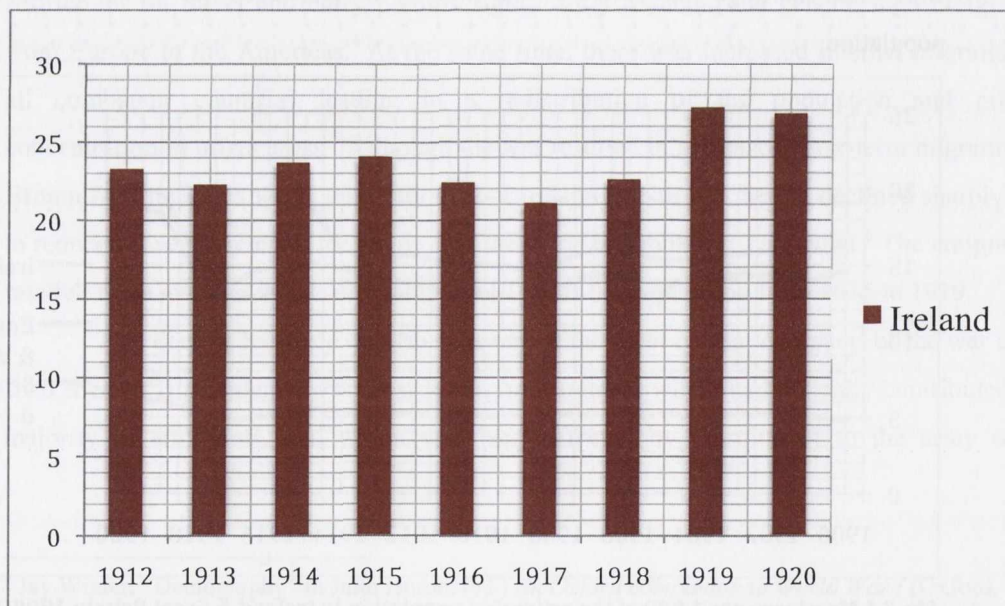


Fig. 2.2 Marriages in Ireland (in thousands) 1912-1920

Did this trajectory differ among the various religious groups? Although the majority of Irish men in the armed forces were Roman Catholic, Protestants were disproportionately

¹³ Please see the appendix for the full tables for each graph or calculation used in the text.

¹⁴ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, p.246.

¹⁵ Winter, "Demography", p.258.

represented.¹⁶ Protestant marriages formed 26.6% of all marriages between 1915 and 1918, compared to 27.0% for the previous four years. Interestingly, the rate of Protestant marriages was at its lowest point in 1916 rather than 1917 – just 24.7% of all recorded marriages compared to an average proportion of 27.3% for the decade. It rose to 26.9% in 1917 and then to 28.4% in 1918 however and continued to rise over the following two years, reaching 29.2% in 1920.¹⁷

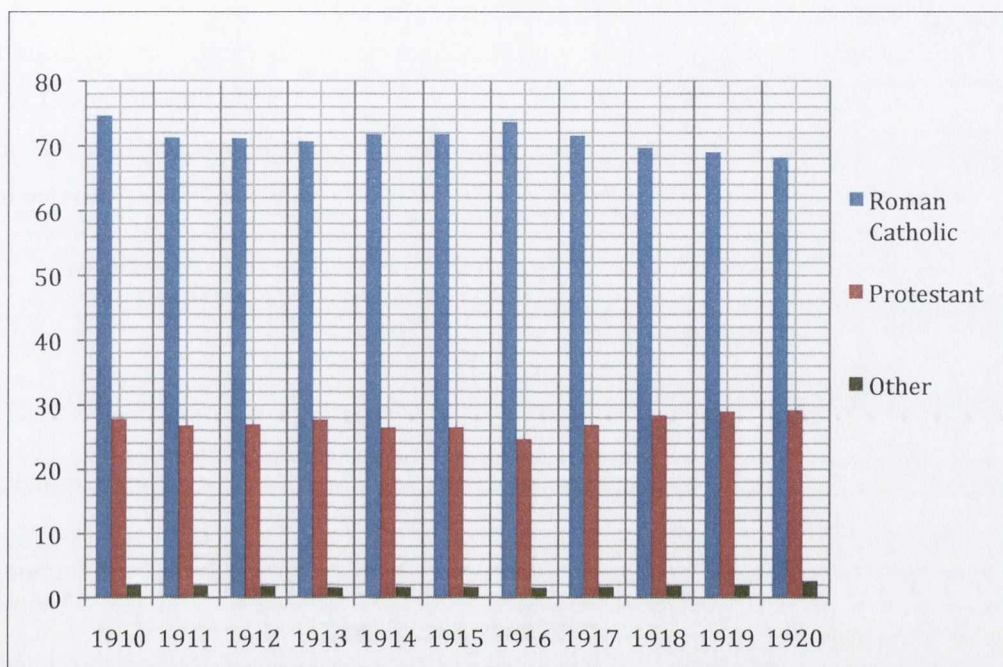


Fig. 2.3 Percentage distribution of marriages by religion

Births

The birth rate had been steadily declining in Great Britain in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This decline was greatly accelerated in wartime however. Jay Winter has described a similar pattern for birth rates as that for marriages in wartime. There was an increase in births approximately nine months after the outbreak of the war in a number of combatant countries, indicating a reaction to the climate of uncertainty and instability. This was followed by a decline in births until 1920 when the demobilisation of the soldiers made its impact.¹⁸ Of more relevance than the standard birth rate (based on the number of births per 1,000 of the total population) is the number of births per 1,000 women of childbearing age (15 to 44), demonstrated in Table 2.2.¹⁹

¹⁶ Fitzpatrick, "The logic of collective sacrifice", p. 1025.

¹⁷ Annual report of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1920.

¹⁸ Winter, "Demography", p.259.

¹⁹ Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, pp 30-33.

Table 2.2 Births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 in Ireland & Great Britain 1900-1920²⁰

Period	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1900-10	100.4	109.5	116.3
1910-14	103.1	97.7	107.3
1915-19	94.1	78.2	90.2
1900-10	100.2	109.9	116.6
1910-20	98.8	88.1	99.5
1900-20	99.5	99.5	108.5

In England and Wales there was a 20.0% decrease in the average number of births per 1,000 women aged 15 -44 in the war years 1915 to 1919 compared to the previous five years. In Scotland there was similarly a 15.9% decrease in the birth rate. This was much less significant in Ireland where the average rate for 1915-19 was 8.7% less than the immediate pre-war period.

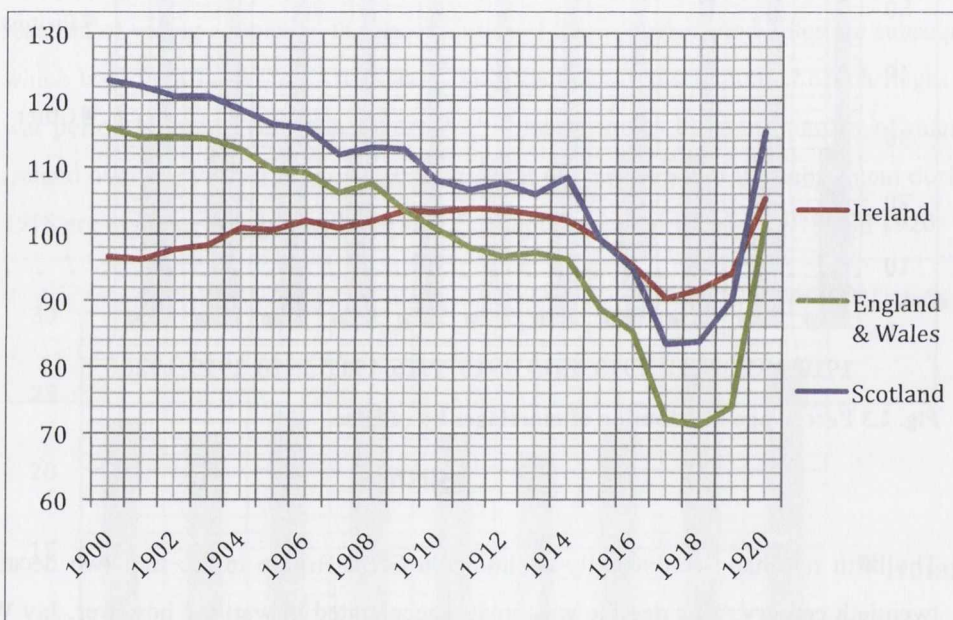


Fig. 2.4 Births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 in Ireland & Great Britain

The birth rate was obviously affected by the much smaller numbers of men mobilised for the armed forces from Ireland compared to the rest of Great Britain. It also reflects the fact that the birth rate was otherwise remaining steady, rather than the gradual decline evident in pre-war Britain. 1917 and 1918 were the years with the lowest birth rate across the United Kingdom. It was a noticeable drop, the lowest recorded since 1900. The rate steadily declined over the course of the war but significantly increased in 1920, reflecting the demobilisation of soldiers. There were regional variations in the extent of the decline of the birth rate with greater declines evident in Leinster and Ulster compared to Munster and Connaught, reflecting the fact that recruiting levels for the British armed forces were

²⁰ Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, pp 30-33.

significantly higher in Ulster and Leinster during the war.²¹ The increase in 1920 was also more apparent in the latter provinces (a rise of 18% in Ulster and 13% in Leinster compared to the average for the previous four years). In contrast the birth rate declined in Connaught in 1920 by 8% compared to the war years.

Mortality

Female mortality

How did the Great War affect women's health in Ireland? Did it have any noticeable impact upon the rates of female mortality and its primary causes? Ireland's mortality rate (the number of deaths per 1,000 births) was slightly higher than that for Great Britain in the first decades of the twentieth century. The average female mortality rate for the years 1900 to 1910 in Ireland was 17.6 while the equivalent figure for Great Britain was 15.5.²²

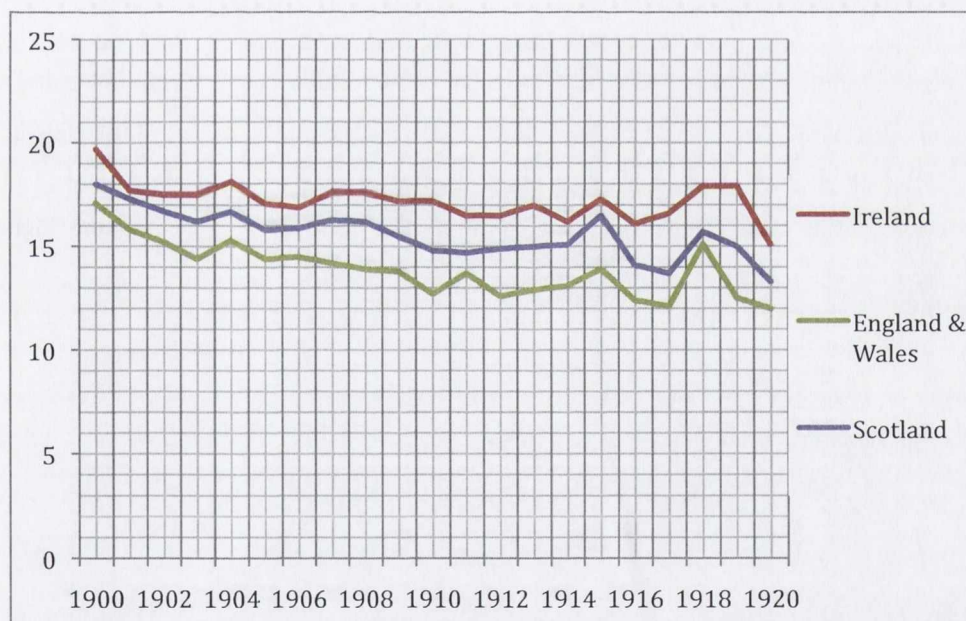


Fig. 2.5 Female deaths per 1,000 of the estimated population of Ireland & Great Britain 1900-1920

The war itself had little impact upon female mortality in Ireland and Great Britain. In Ireland the average rate for the years 1915 to 1918 was 17.0 deaths per 1,000 people compared to an average rate of 16.6 for the previous four years. In Great Britain the female mortality rate declined from 14.0 for the years 1911-14 to 13.8 for the following four years. The wartime

²¹ Annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1910-20; Fitzpatrick, "The logic of collective sacrifice", p.1020.

²² Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, p.35. There was no difference between male and female mortality rates in Ireland (the average male mortality rate for the decade in question was also 17.6).

increase in Ireland was more pronounced in 1918 and reflects the exceptional mortality from the influenza epidemic. The age profile of female mortality was little changed by the war. Deaths of women aged less than sixty-five years declined slightly during the years 1915-17 compared to the previous three years. From 1912-14 an average of 42.1% of all female deaths were of women aged over sixty-five while during the following three years, this had increased to 44%, indicating fewer excess deaths.²³

Table 2.3 Female deaths per 1,000 births in Ireland & Great Britain²⁴

Period	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1900-10	17.6	14.6	16.3
1911-14	16.6	13.1	14.9
1915-19	17	13.4	14.2

The annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland indicate the principal causes of female mortality in early twentieth century Ireland: tuberculosis, heart disease, bronchitis, cancer and pneumonia. The number of deaths from these causes all increased during the years 1915-18 compared to the period 1911-14. Deaths from cancer increased by 6.5% while deaths from bronchitis increased by 6.1%, tuberculosis increased by 3.0% and deaths from cardiac conditions by 5.0%. In 1918 and 1919 influenza was the main cause of death, comprising 12.8% of all female deaths in 1918 and 11.3% in 1919. In contrast, in 1917 influenza caused just 2.1% of female deaths. Deaths from pneumonia, a common complication of influenza also increased in 1918 and 1919, reaching the highest levels recorded that decade.²⁵

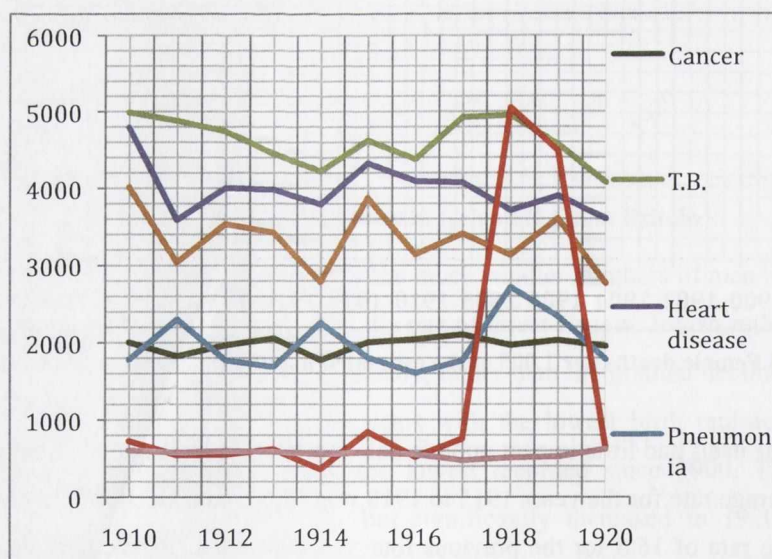


Fig. 2.6 Principal causes of female mortality in Ireland 1910-1920

²³ Compiled from the Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland 1910-20.

²⁴ Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, p. 35.

²⁵ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland 1910-20.

The influenza epidemic struck Europe in three waves, the first beginning in spring 1918 and lasting until July 1918; the second beginning in September 1918 and lasting 6-8 weeks; and the third in early spring 1919. The second wave was the most virulent and resulted in the largest number of deaths.²⁶ In Ireland the second and third waves were less distinctive than in some countries. Caitriona Foley describes a gradual transition period between the ending of the second wave in December 1918 and the beginning of the third in January 1919.²⁷ She notes that in almost every month from June 1918 to May 1919 a flare-up of the disease was occurring in some part of Ireland.²⁸

An estimated 600,000 to 800,000 people were infected by the influenza epidemic in Ireland and approximately 23,288 people died from either influenza or from pneumonia associated with the influenza epidemic.²⁹ A particular feature of the epidemic was the fact that those worst affected were aged between fifteen and thirty-five with remarkably few deaths among those aged over fifty-five.³⁰ 9,535 females died from influenza in Ireland from 1918 to 1919 while there were many more excess deaths from pneumonia. In Ireland, as in other countries, male influenza deaths outnumbered those of females by more than 10%, unlike in previous influenza epidemics when female deaths outnumbered those of males.³¹ Foley has highlighted the vulnerability of pregnant women to the epidemic. In 1919 influenza accounted for over 10% of all deaths among pregnant women.³² In contrast influenza was a factor in just 0.4% of all maternal mortality cases in 1917.³³ However Mary Ida Milne has pointed out that the total number of pregnant women who died from influenza represented less than 1% of all total female deaths from influenza.³⁴

The first wave was concentrated in urban areas and particularly in towns connected by the railway. The second wave touched almost every county by November 1918. The east coast and north Munster were affected first but the western coast and northwest Donegal were affected by late December. Out of the 156 towns listed in the annual report of the Registrar General for 1918, just two registered no influenza deaths in 1918. Neither of the towns, Ballyvaughan and Killadysert in county Clare, was connected to the railway line.³⁵

²⁶ Caitriona Foley, *The last Irish plague: the Great Flu epidemic in Ireland 1918-19* (Dublin, 2011), p.3.

²⁷ Foley, *The last Irish plague*, p.9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.26.

²⁹ Foley, *The last Irish plague*, p.8; Mary Ida Milne has calculated 20,057 influenza deaths and 3,231 excess deaths from pneumonia across the years 1918 and 1919, derived from the annual reports of the Registrar-General: Mary Ida Milne, "The 1918-19 influenza pandemic in Ireland: a Leinster perspective" (PhD, Trinity College Dublin, 2011), pp 80-81.

³⁰ Foley, *The last Irish plague*, p.32.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.33.

³² *Ibid.*, p.34.

³³ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland for the years 1917-19.

³⁴ Milne, "The 1918-19 influenza pandemic in Ireland", p.94.

³⁵ Foley, *The last Irish plague*, pp 16-17.

Deaths from the third wave were concentrated in Connaught and southwest Munster, a reverse of the pattern for the previous year.³⁶

Contemporaries and later historians have noted a link between the military service and demobilisation of soldiers and the transmission of influenza. The wartime disruption and movements of troops facilitated the rapid spread of infection. The worst hit areas in 1918 were those with the highest enlistment figures. Ulster, Dublin, Wicklow, Carlow and Kildare provided the highest number of army recruits per capita and were the areas worst affected by the influenza epidemic.³⁷ Foley describes how soldiers became the 'social scapegoat' for the epidemic, which she views as reflecting the significant change in public attitudes towards the military that took place in Ireland over the course of the Great War.³⁸

Infant mortality

What effect had the Great War on the standard of living of the population and the survival chances of infants? The British historian Adrian Gregory describes infant mortality as 'the most sensitive indicator of general economic well-being'.³⁹ Infant mortality rates have been given significant weight by historians interested in the effect of war on society, notably Jay Winter in his pioneering study, *The Great War and the British People*.⁴⁰ This section utilises the national statistics presented in the annual reports of the Registrar-General to examine wartime trends in infant mortality. The socioeconomic factors affecting infant health and standard of living are discussed in Chapter Three, together with the wartime infant welfare movement.

At the turn of the century Ireland's infant mortality rate was relatively low compared to Great Britain, primarily due to the predominantly rural nature of Irish society.⁴¹ There was a significant divide in mortality levels between urban and rural areas, with the rate in Dublin county borough being over three times that of County Cavan in 1914. In 1915 the infant mortality rate in twenty-seven town districts was 134.4 per 1,000 births compared with an average of 69.9 for the rest of Ireland. The figure was as high as 160.3 per 1,000 births in Dublin.⁴² Social class was another key determinant of infant mortality rates with the babies of labourers being seventeen times more likely to die in their first year than the children of

³⁶ Ibid., p.23.

³⁷ Ibid., p.24.

³⁸ Ibid., p.25.

³⁹ Gregory, *The last Great War*, p.285.

⁴⁰ Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, pp 141-153.

⁴¹ B.N. Browne and D.S. Johnson, "Infant mortality in inter-war Northern Ireland," in R. Mitchison and P. Roebuck (eds) *Economy and Society in Scotland and Ireland 1500-1939* (Edinburgh, 1988), p.277.

⁴² Liam Kennedy and Leslie Clarkson, "Birth, death and exile: Irish population history 1700-1921" in B.J. Graham and L.J. Proudfoot (eds) *An historical geography of Ireland* (London, 1993), p.171.

professional households.⁴³ High unemployment, poor sanitation and overcrowded housing in Ireland's urban areas combined to create potentially lethal conditions for infants.

There was a steady decline in national infant mortality rates, (deaths of infants under twelve months per 1,000 of registered births), across the United Kingdom in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This decline became more pronounced between 1910 and 1920.⁴⁴ The extent of the fall varied however. In Ireland the average rate for 1910 to 1920 was a decrease of 9.1% compared to the previous decade. Scotland experienced a similar decrease over the same period (9.4%) while the rate for England and Wales decreased by 22.8%. The average for the four full years of war (1915 to 1918) was 87.3 for Ireland compared to 91 for the previous four years, a drop of 4.1%.⁴⁵ The mortality rate in Scotland further declined by 1.8% from that of years 1911-14 while in England and Wales there was a significant drop of 10.1% to an average rate of 98.5 for the war years.⁴⁶

The 1916 rate for Ireland, eighty-three deaths per 1,000 births, was the lowest recorded since 1900.⁴⁷ Although there was a small spike in 1917 (to 88 deaths per 1,000 births), there was a clear decline in infant mortality over the following three years, particularly evident when the exceptional mortality from the influenza epidemic in 1918 and 1919 is excluded. Jay Winter has persuasively argued that increased mortality from influenza in 1918 and 1919 reflect a 'random shock to the demographic system' rather than evidence of the damaging impact of the war on civilian health.⁴⁸ Consequently I have chosen to subtract the influenza mortality for 1918 and 1919 and replace it with the average for the previous ten years. With excess influenza mortality excluded, the average rate for 1915-18 was 86.5, a decline of 4.9% compared to the previous four years. The rate had previously fallen by 3.2% between 1907 and 1910 but the decline was accelerated in wartime.

⁴³ Joanna Bourke, *Working class cultures in Britain, 1890-1960: gender, class and ethnicity* (London, 1994), p.8.

⁴⁴ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1918-20.

⁴⁵ Annual report of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1920.

⁴⁶ Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, p.37.

⁴⁷ Annual report of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1916.

⁴⁸ Jay Winter, "Some paradoxes of the First World War" in Richard Wall and Jay Winter, *The upheaval of war: family, work and welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1988), pp 23, 34.

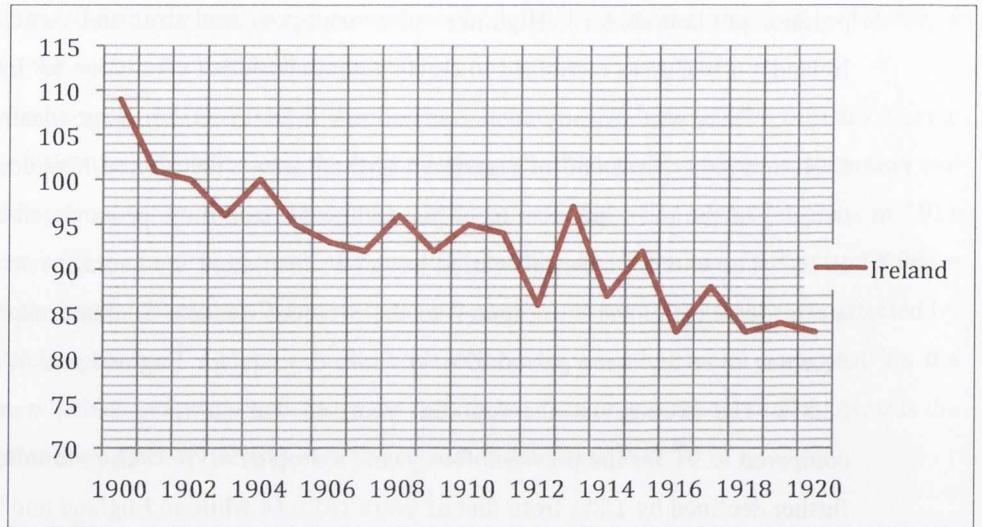


Fig. 2.7 Infant mortality in Ireland with excess influenza mortality subtracted

The primary cause of infant mortality in Ireland during the war continued to be ‘wasting diseases’, forming 40.0% of all infant deaths during the period 1915 to 1918. The descriptor ‘wasting diseases’ included atrophy, marasmus and debility, prematurity and congenital malformations – conditions associated with the health of the mother.⁴⁹

Table 2.4 Principal causes of infant mortality rates in Ireland 1911-1920

Period	Wasting diseases	Diarrhoeal diseases	Common infectious diseases ⁵⁰	TB	Influenza	Other conditions	Total
1911-14	33.9	15.4	5.88	2.6	0.5	32.7	91
1915-18	35.1	11.7	5.5	1.9	1.26	31.9	87.4
1911-20	34.5	12.9	5.5	2.2	1.25	32.2	88.6

Diarrhoea was the next single biggest killer, forming 13.3% of all deaths.⁵¹ Edward Coey Bigger, Crown representative for Ireland on the General Medical Council, suggested in 1917 that inadequate nutrition was responsible for the continuing high death rates from these causes. It was clear to him that the problem of infant mortality was fundamentally one of poverty and that this was an ongoing problem during the war.⁵²

⁴⁹ Jane Lewis, *The politics of motherhood: child and maternal welfare in England 1900-1939* (London, 1980), p.31.

⁵⁰ Excluding influenza.

⁵¹ Annual report of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1920.

⁵² Tony Farmar, *Holles street 1894-1994: the national maternity hospital – a centenary history* (Dublin, 1994), pp 60-61.

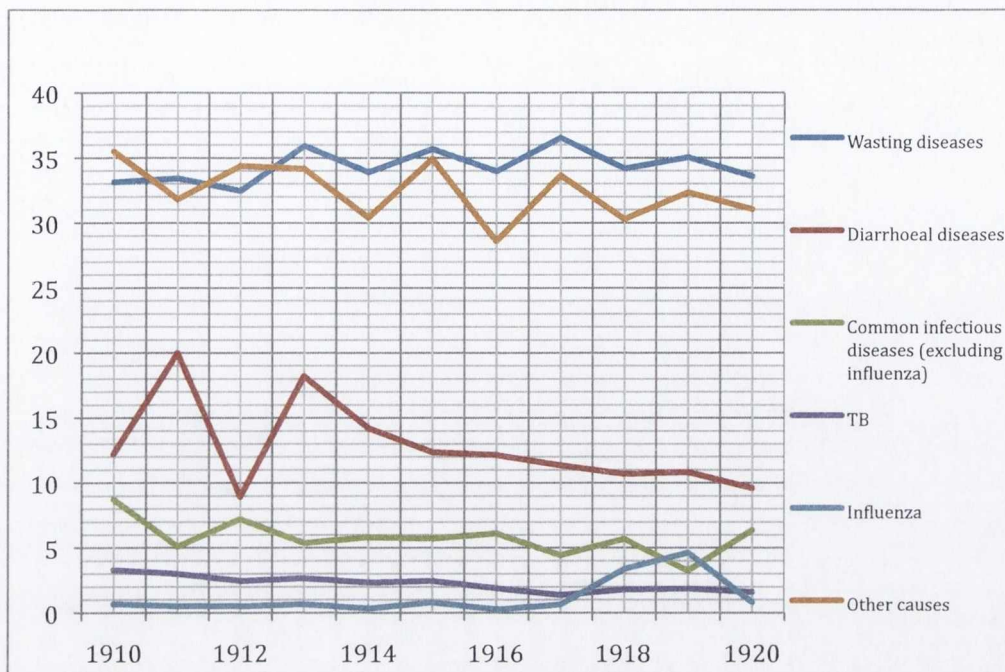


Fig. 2.8 Principal causes of infant mortality in Ireland 1910-1920

Was the urban/ rural divide affected by the war? Did particular regions experience greater improvements? Jay Winter's work on infant mortality in wartime Britain noted an improvement in infant survival chances in areas of London that had a particularly high pre-war mortality rate.⁵³ How does this compare to Dublin or Belfast? Comparative examination of Dublin, Belfast, London and Glasgow reveals that the two Irish cities had the highest mortality rates from 1901 to 1920, and that Dublin's rate was particularly high. The figures in Table 2.5 include excess influenza mortality in 1918 and 1919.

Table 2.5 Comparative urban infant mortality rates 1901-1920⁵⁴

Year	Dublin	Belfast	London	Glasgow
1901-1910	152.4	143.8	126.4	135.3
1911-1920	134.3	130.7	99.8	124.1
1911-14	148.5	136	106.8	131.3
1915-18	152	129.5	102.8	123.8
1901-1920	143.4	137.3	113.1	129.7

Dublin was the only city of the four where the mortality rate was higher during the war years than the previous four years, an increase of 2.4%. Over the same period, the mortality rate declined in the other three cities examined: by 4.8% in Belfast, 3.8% in London and 5.7% in Glasgow.⁵⁵ The decline in Belfast, but not Dublin, may be due to the much greater number of

⁵³ Jay Winter, "Public health and the political economy of war 1914-1918" in *History Workshop*, no.26 (winter, 1988), p.164.

⁵⁴ Annual report of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1920, p.xx.

⁵⁵ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1914-20.

war contracts awarded to Belfast manufacturing industries, thus reducing urban unemployment.⁵⁶ Infant survival chances were further affected by the deteriorating housing conditions in Dublin.⁵⁷

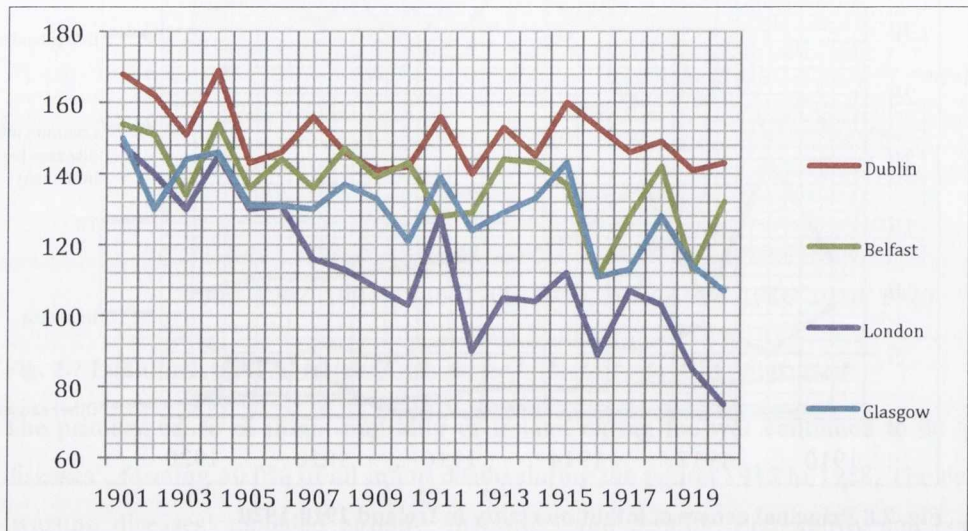


Fig. 2.9 Comparative urban infant mortality rate 1901-1920

The urban-rural divide remained acute in Ireland with the average rate for the six county boroughs for the years 1915-19 being 131.8, compared to 72.4 for the rural districts and an average rate of 87.4 for all of Ireland.⁵⁸ This urban/ rural difference is also very evident when one compares the average rate for the nineteen town districts with populations over 10,000, with the remainder of the country: the average rate for the town districts was 128.1 for the war years, compared to an average rate of 69.1 for the remainder of the country. This difference had increased over the course of the war; the average for the town districts for 1911 to 1914 was 123.2 while the rate for the remainder of Ireland remained at 69 deaths per 1,000 births registered. The town districts consisted of the following: Dublin registration area; Belfast; Cork; Londonderry; Limerick; Waterford; Galway; Dundalk; Lurgan; Drogheda; Lisburn; Newry; Portadown; Wexford; Ballymena; Sligo; Kilkenny; Tralee and Clonmel.

⁵⁶ Niamh Puirseil, "War, work and labour" in Home (ed.) *Our War*, p.184.

⁵⁷ Irvine Loudon observed a similar issue in British urban areas during the war; Irvine Loudon, *Death in childbirth: an international study of maternal care and maternal mortality* (Oxford, 1992), p.241.

⁵⁸ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1920, p.xx.

Table 2.6 Regional distribution of infant mortality in Ireland 1911-1920

Year	Nineteen town districts ⁵⁹ (population over 10,000 in 1911)	Remainder of Ireland	Ireland
1911-14	123.2	69.0	91.2
1915-18	128.1	69.1	87.2
1911-20	124.1	69.0	88.4

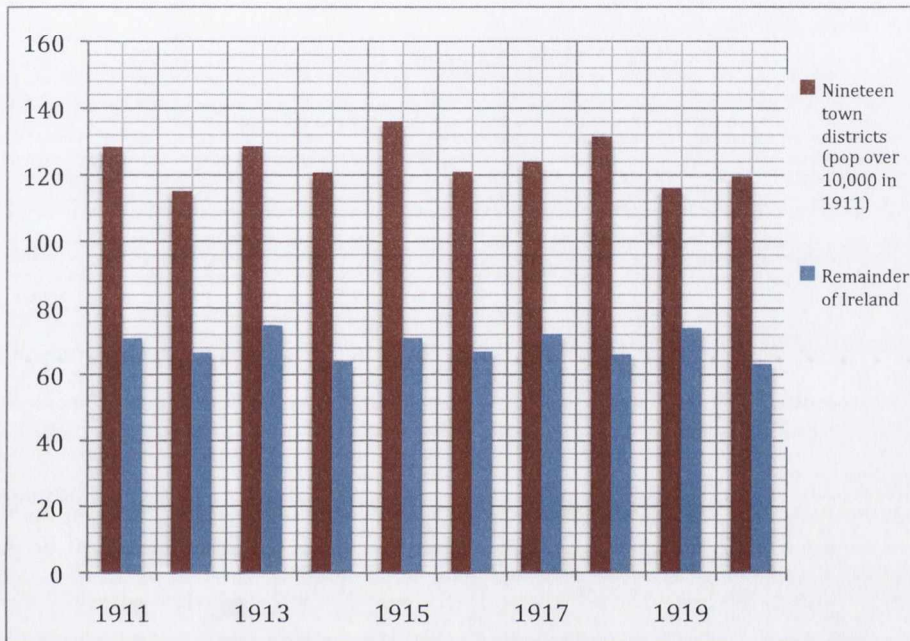


Fig. 2.10 Urban and rural infant mortality in Ireland 1911-1920

Examination of the infant mortality rate in individual counties reveals wide fluctuations with no clear pattern as to whether the rate improved or worsened over the war years. To avoid the problem of the geographically variable impact of the influenza epidemic, I have focused on the years 1915 to 1917 and compared them with the years 1912 to 1914. Seven counties had to be excluded from the calculations due to a change in 1914 in the categorisation of county boroughs.⁶⁰ Of the remaining twenty-six, the average infant mortality rate declined during the period 1915-17 in thirteen counties, increased in ten counties and remained the same in three. It is difficult to ascertain a clear trend or pattern in the mortality rates. It is difficult to see why, for example, infant mortality should increase by 8% in Queen's County but experience no change in King's County or why it declined by 30% in Sligo but increased by 10% in Donegal. Roscommon had the lowest mortality rate

⁵⁹ Until 1914 the urban rate refers to civic unions, those containing towns which are recorded as having at least 10,000 inhabitants in the 1911 census. After 1914 they are referred to simply as the town districts with over 10,000 inhabitants.

⁶⁰ The rates for the county boroughs were separated from their relevant county from 1915 but until that point they were included in the county rate thus leading to misleading comparative figures for Antrim, Down, Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Londonderry, and Waterford.

for the years 1912-14 and experienced no change over the following three years while Tipperary South Riding, which had the highest pre-war rate of 93, declined by 1%. Kilkenny also had a very high pre-war rate (an average of 90 deaths per 1,000 births) but it declined by 14% over the years 1915-17. Fermanagh saw the most significant increase (14%) and Sligo the most significant decrease (30%). It is clear that the periods under review are too short to allow for accurate comparison, and for trends to become evident.

Maternal mortality

In common with infant mortality, maternal mortality was steadily declining over the first two decades of the twentieth century. The average rate (the number of deaths associated with pregnancy and childbirth per 1,000 of the registered births) for 1911 to 1920 had fallen by 6.5% compared to the previous decade. The average of the total number of deaths associated with pregnancy and childbirth for the four full years of war (1915 to 1918) was 9.7% less than that for the previous four years, falling from 579 to 523 deaths (when excessive deaths from the influenza epidemic are excluded). However this decline may be attributed to the reduced birth rate in wartime (a decrease of 8.7% over the period 1915-19⁶¹). Examination of the maternal mortality rate reveals instead an increase of 1.7% in the death rate for the war years compared to the previous four years. As previously noted, the influenza epidemic had a noticeable impact on maternal mortality with seventy-nine deaths of pregnant women from the infection in 1918 and 1919.⁶² To avoid misleading results I have thus followed the same protocol as that for infant mortality and have subtracted the influenza mortality for 1918 and 1919 and replaced it with the average for the previous ten years.

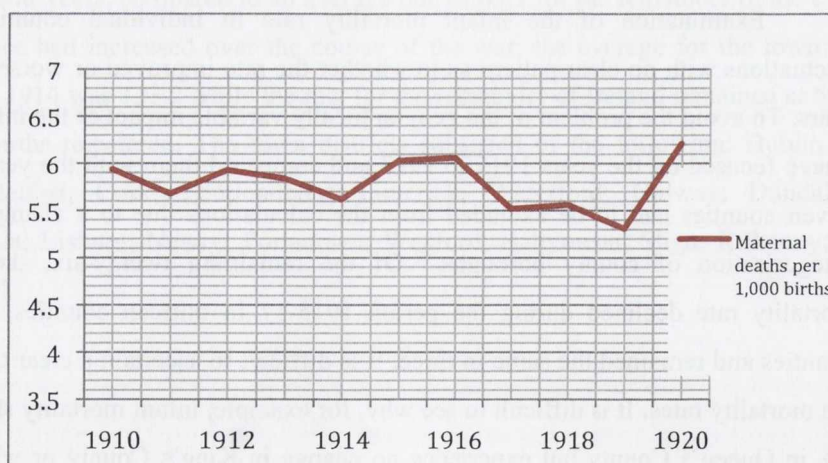


Fig. 2.11 Maternal mortality in Ireland with excess influenza deaths subtracted⁶³

⁶¹ Mitchell, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, pp 30-3.

⁶² Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1915-20.

⁶³ The graphs and tables in this section refer to the number of deaths associated with pregnancy and childbirth per 1,000 of the registered births.

The average rate for the years 1915-18 (excluding excess influenza mortality) was 5.8 deaths per 1,000 births, the same as that for the previous four years. Maternal mortality had been declining before the war. There was a 3.5% drop in the maternal mortality rate from 1907-10 to 1911-14. This decline was arrested by the war and the rate stabilised. However there were significant variations in the rate during the war. The worst years for maternal mortality were in 1915 and 1916 (6 per 1,000 births in 1915 and 6.1 in 1916). The mortality figure for 1917 (5.5 deaths per 1,000 births) however represents a dramatic decrease and is the lowest recorded since 1900. 1917 was also a particularly low year for British maternal mortality, which Winter attributes to the lower birth rate in wartime.⁶⁴ Although there was a small increase in 1918, the rate further declined in 1919 before spiking again.

Although rates of maternal mortality from childbirth may reflect the extent of obstetric help as well as the nutritional status of the mother, R. Millward and F. Bell suggest that examination of the specific categories of maternal mortality give some indication of the general health of mothers.⁶⁵

Table 2.7 Principal causes of maternal mortality in Ireland 1901-1920

Period	Puerperal septic diseases	Accidents of pregnancy and childbirth	Other causes associated with pregnancy and childbirth	Total maternal deaths
1901-10	2.1	3.4	0.8	6.3
1911-14	2.0	3.2	0.6	5.8
1915-18	2.1	3.1	0.7	5.9
1901-20	2.1	3.1	0.7	5.9

The primary cause of maternal mortality in Ireland was ‘accidents of pregnancy and childbirth’, forming over 50% of all maternal deaths from 1901 to 1920. The mortality rate from these causes initially increased in 1915 to 3.3 per 1,000 births but then began to steadily decrease, falling to 2.9 by 1919. Puerperal septic diseases were the next biggest maternity risk, causing a third of all deaths associated with childbirth and pregnancy. Its rate rose in 1916 to 2.3 deaths per 1,000 births but as with the above mentioned cause, it began to decline in the last years of the war with 1919 displaying the lowest rates, falling to 1.7. The death rate from ‘other causes’ remained steady during the war years but peaked significantly in 1918 and 1919 due to the influenza epidemic.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Winter, *The Great War and the British people*, p.134.

⁶⁵ R. Millward and F. Bell, “Infant mortality in Victorian Britain: the mother as medium” in *Economic History Review*, vol. liv, no.4 (Nov., 2001), p.714.

⁶⁶ Annual report of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1920, p.xv.

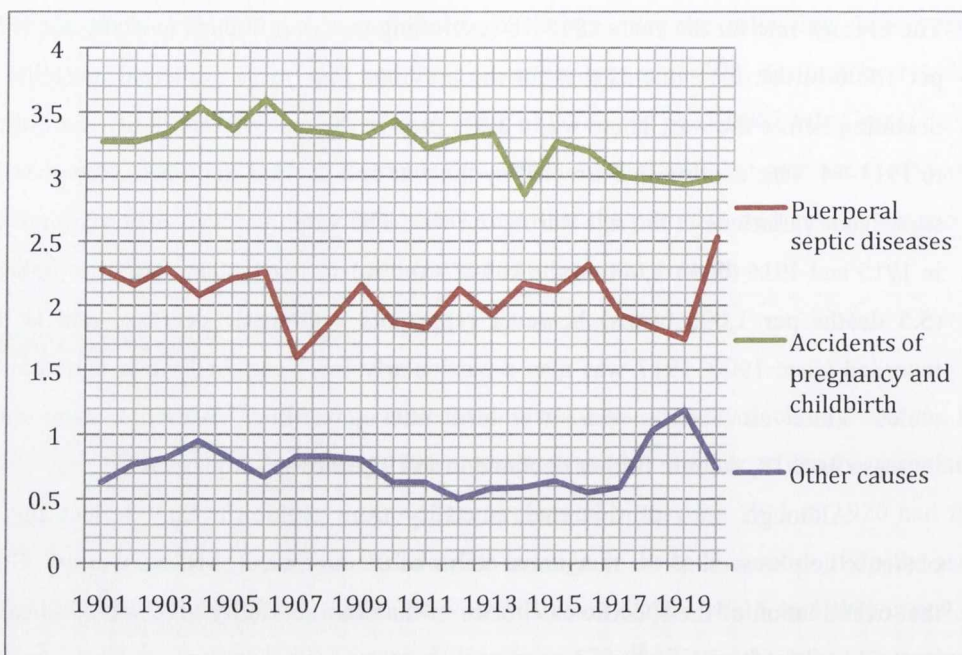


Fig. 2.12 Principal causes of maternal mortality (per 1,000 births) in Ireland 1901-1920

The influenza epidemic may also be responsible for the increased deaths from puerperal septic disease in 1920 when the rate reached its highest figure for the decade under consideration. A similar rise took place in Britain, and Winter has suggested that women who survived influenza may have had less resistance to complications of pregnancy afterwards.⁶⁷ How does Ireland compare with Great Britain in terms of maternal mortality? Ireland's maternal mortality rate was the highest in the United Kingdom in the first decade of the twentieth century, but during the war years it was overtaken by Scotland.

Table 2.8 Maternal mortality in Ireland & Great Britain 1901-1919

Period	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1901-10	6.2	5.1	5.1
1911-14	5.8	3.7	5.8
1915-18	5.9	3.8	6.2
1911-19	5.8	3.8	6.0
1901-19	6.0	5.0	5.5

⁶⁷ Winter, *The Great War and the British people*, p.134.

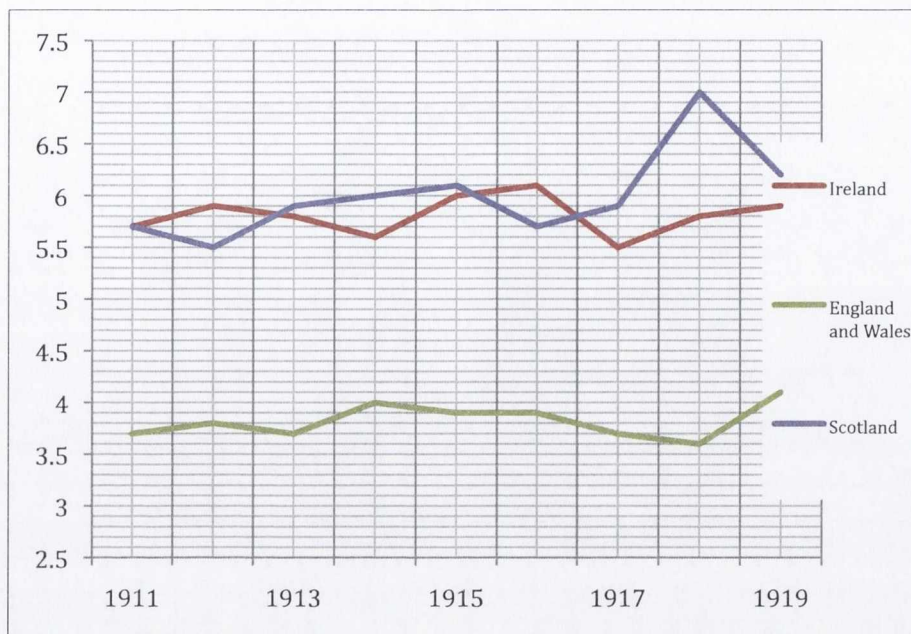


Fig. 2.13 Maternal mortality in Ireland & Great Britain 1911-1919

In all three jurisdictions the average rate for the war years was greater than that for the previous four years, although this was affected by the influenza epidemic. The years with the highest number of maternal deaths varied across each state, with much greater variance apparent than with regard to infant mortality. The figures for England and Wales steadily declined across the two decades, which may be attributed in part to the enactment of the Midwives Act in 1902. Ireland's maternal mortality rate was the highest in the United Kingdom in the first decade of the twentieth century, but during the war it was overtaken by Scotland. In Ireland, as in England and Wales, the average maternal mortality rate for the war remained the same as that for the previous four years. However, in Scotland the mortality rate increased by 6.9% for the same period.⁶⁸ These figures include deaths associated with the influenza epidemic in 1918 however.

How did maternal mortality vary across the country? During the years 1911 to 1915 maternal mortality was lower in urban areas than rural, in contrast to infant mortality. Women appear to have had greater survival chances from complications of pregnancy and childbirth in places with higher population density, presumably reflecting levels of obstetric care available. However this changed over the following four years with the average mortality rate 3.8% greater in the six county borough districts compared to the remainder of Ireland for the period 1916-19. There was a 12.1% increase in the county borough rate for the years 1916-19 compared to the previous five years while the rate for the remainder of the country decreased by 8.8% over the same period.

⁶⁸ *Annual report of the registrar-general of births, deaths and marriages in England and Wales, 1919*, p.xc.

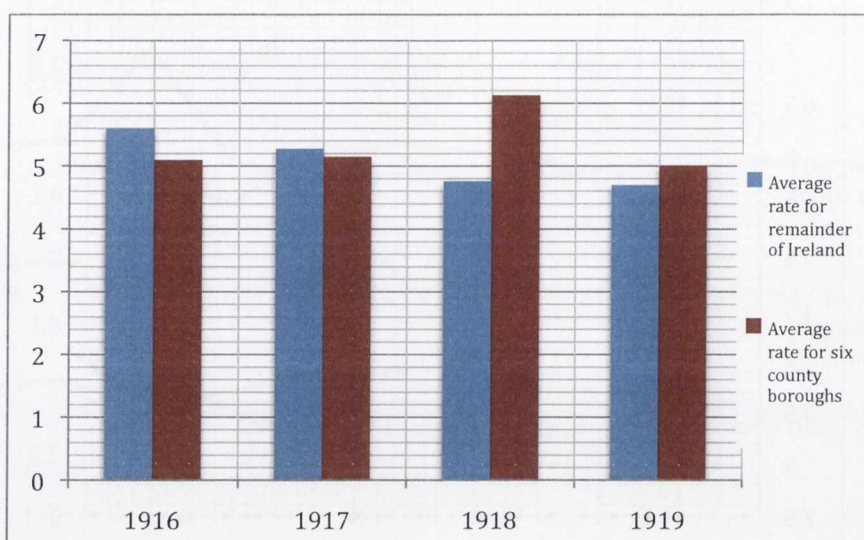


Fig.2.14 Urban and rural maternal mortality in Ireland 1916-1919

These figures include deaths from puerperal septic disease and diseases and accidents of pregnancy and childbirth but exclude deaths from external causes such as influenza. The higher level of urban deaths perhaps reflects the deteriorating housing conditions in the cities and the hardship caused by the increased cost of living during the war. The significant wartime increase in maternal mortality in Londonderry may be attributed to the fact that many female workers in the linen trade in that city were placed on short time for much of the war.

Table 2.9 Maternal mortality rate in six county boroughs 1911 to 1919

County borough	1911-1915	1916-1919
Dublin	4.5	4.3
Cork	4.3	4.5
Limerick	5.3	6.1
Waterford	4.7	6.0
Belfast	4.0	4.0
Londonderry	5.6	6.9
Average for six urban areas	4.7	5.3
Average for remainder of Ireland	5.6	5.1

To what extent was the war responsible for changes in the rates of infant and maternal mortality? Infant and maternal mortality rates were both declining in the period immediately before the war. However the war accelerated this trend in the case of infant mortality, with the rate falling by a further 1.7% between 1911-14 and 1915-18 compared to the previous seven years. Maternal mortality increased in 1915 and 1916 but experienced a significant drop in 1917. What was responsible for this decline? The decline was most evident in rural regions, where farming families were enjoying a period of unprecedented

prosperity during the war. Chapter Three outlines the economic benefits of the war for farming families and notes the strong disparity between the impact of the war on the standard of living in rural compared to urban areas. The separation allowances and the reduced unemployment alleviated some of the wartime hardship experienced by poor families although price inflation and food shortages were increasingly problematic in urban areas. The decline in infant mortality (and in maternal mortality in 1917) reflects this economic context. The welfare movement had little immediate benefit although the efforts to provide a clean affordable milk supply in 1917 were likely of some use.

The demographic impact of the Great War on the Irish population is very evident, making clear both the wide extent of the war's impact on Irishwomen and the invasion of the war into the domestic sphere. The similarities between the Irish case and other combatant countries are also evident, despite relative difference in the proportion of men mobilised for the military. The rate of emigration slowed dramatically reflecting the 'major divide' in migration patterns generated by the war. The numbers of marriages and births in Ireland were noticeably affected by the military mobilisation of men and followed a similar trajectory to Great Britain. Female mortality was significantly affected by the influenza epidemic in 1918 and 1919 but otherwise experienced little change compared to the pre-war period. Both infant and maternal mortality were affected by the wartime conditions. The socioeconomic impact of the war on women and the increased emphasis on maternity and infant welfare are explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Welfare and domestic life

The enlistment of an unprecedented number of men in the armed forces affected women's roles as household managers as well as their relationships with their soldier relatives. Shortages of food and price inflation made everyday living a greater struggle. Bereavement and anxiety were also common experiences on the home front. Wartime propaganda used the image of the dutiful housewife to recruit soldiers, by reminding them of what was at risk in the war. Emphasising the active soldier husband in contrast to the passive wife at home strengthened the traditional gender roles in society. However as the war progressed it became clear that women's responsibilities in wartime extended beyond preparing for the return of the soldiers. The domestic sphere became a battlefield of the Great War and was seen as an essential part of the home front.

Caitriona Clear has outlined the various competing narratives concerning women's position in the home in twentieth century Ireland. These vary from Joanna Bourke's assertion that women found empowerment through their domestic work, to feminist historians such as Catherine Rose and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis who observe a domestic ideology at the heart of the Irish state which forced women into positions of subordination within the home.¹ Caitriona Clear argues that focusing on discourses of power and subordination reveals little about how women themselves experienced their roles within and outside the home.² This chapter is less concerned with competing interpretations of women's role in the home than with attempting to reconstruct the socio-economic and psychological impact of the war on women's everyday life. It argues that the Great War resulted in greater interaction between Irishwomen and the state with the war expanding the state's role in the domestic sphere through food controls, separation allowances and the infant welfare movement.

Socioeconomic impact of the Great War in the Home

What impact had the Great War on women's standard of living in Ireland? What were the socioeconomic effects of the war for Irishwomen? The effect of the war on welfare and

¹ Caitriona Clear, *Women in the House: women's household work in Ireland 1922-1961* (Dublin, 2000), p.5; Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, p.277; Catherine Rose, *The female experience: the story of the woman movement in Ireland* (Dublin, 1975), pp 16-17; Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, "Power, gender and identity in the Irish Free State" in *Journal of Women's History*, vi (Winter, 1994), p.120; see also Valiulis, "The politics of gender in the Irish Free State, 1922-1937" in *Women's History Review*, xx no.4, (2011), p.575.

² Clear, *Women of the House*, p.8.

everyday living has been given significant attention by historians.³ This section considers the effect of the war on women's standard of living and everyday life, examining issues such as availability of food, inflation and wages. Chapter Two demonstrated that infant mortality declined in wartime Britain and Ireland. Jay Winter has argued that the war improved the survival chances of infants through an unintentional consequence of the particular conditions created by the British war economy.⁴ The reduced unemployment, higher wages and the provision of separation allowances for soldiers' dependents in wartime all contributed to a rise in the standard of living among the British working class despite the wartime inflation.⁵ In his recent study of the British home front, Adrian Gregory agrees with Winter that the wartime fall in infant mortality rates in England and Wales is evidence of improved living standards among the working class during the Great War.⁶

David S. Johnson has put forward a similar argument for Ireland. He argues that between 1914 and 1920, Ireland 'experienced a period of unprecedented prosperity'.⁷ He suggests that the war had beneficial effects on the Irish economy due to the increased demand for Irish produced goods. Agriculture, Ireland's foremost economic sector, benefited from the restrictions on imports during the war. The German submarine campaign increased shipping rates and made certain crossings very hazardous, forcing the United Kingdom to rely on its own produce to a much greater extent than before 1914. For example, by 1917 British and Irish producers supplied 90% of the country's beef requirements compared to 60% before the war.⁸ Irish produce was particularly important given that Ireland produced 40% of the cattle and 30% of the pigs raised in the UK, although it had just 10% of the population.⁹ Consequently, agricultural prices rose significantly, improving the lot of Irish farmers.¹⁰ In a recent study, David Fitzpatrick has also highlighted the positive economic effects of the war, noting the fall in unemployment rates, increased industrial wages, and the agricultural prosperity. He suggests that poverty was virtually eliminated in various

³ See for example, Winter, *The Great War & the British people*; Winter & Wall (eds) *The upheaval of war: family, work and welfare 1914-1918*; Catherine Rollet, "The home and family life" in Winter and Robert (eds) *Capital cities at war*, volume II, pp 315-353; Belinda J. Davis, *Home fires burning: food, politics and everyday life in World War I Berlin* (London, 2000), pp 159-189.

⁴ Winter, "Public health and the political economy of war", pp165-171; Winter, "Demography" p.255.

⁵ Jay Winter, "The impact of the First World War on civilian health in Britain" in *Economic History Review*, xxx, no.3 (Aug. 1977), p.496.

⁶ Gregory, *The last Great War*, p.285.

⁷ David S. Johnson, *The inter-war economy in Ireland* (Dundalk, 1985), p.5. A similar argument was made by Louis M. Cullen in his work, *An economic history of Ireland since 1660* (London, 1972), p.171.

⁸ Johnson, *The inter-war economy in Ireland*, p.3.

⁹ *National Food Journal*, 27 Nov. 1918.

¹⁰ Johnson, *The inter-war economy in Ireland*, p.4.

regions.¹¹ H.D. Gribbon however observes that the ‘economic benefits of wartime prosperity were unevenly distributed’.¹²

Rural prosperity is evident in the annual county police inspector reports for 1915 and 1916. For example, the County Antrim report for 1915 states that ‘never within living memory was there so much money in the country’. This was attributed to the ample employment through government contracts, the high prices obtainable for farm produce and stock, and the payment of separation allowances.¹³ Farmers had responded to the need for greater food production and the total area of ploughed land increased by over 3% in 1915 compared to the previous year.¹⁴ The 1916 report was similarly positive, describing an ‘abundant’ harvest and plenty of home-grown foods. The particular prosperity of farming families was also noted in counties Cavan, Kildare and Wexford in that year.¹⁵ Although concerns had been raised early on in the war about the possibility of food shortages the reports for 1916 indicate such fears were unfounded for the most part.¹⁶ A plentiful food supply was reported in nineteen counties across Ireland in 1915 and 1916.¹⁷ Potato shortages were however reported in Kilkenny, King’s County, Longford, Westmeath, Clare, and Limerick.¹⁸ Outbreaks of blight reduced the national production of potatoes by 34.4% in 1916 compared to 1915.¹⁹ The introduction of compulsory tillage in late 1916 increased food production in the final two years of the war. For example, wheat production increased by 175% during the years 1915-18 compared to the period 1911-14. The oat crop increased by 28.0% and the potato crop by 5.5% over the same period.²⁰

However the increase in food production could not entirely compensate for the shortages of foodstuffs and raw materials usually imported from Europe. Food supply increasingly became a cause of public concern, particularly in urban Ireland. It became an emotive issue with critics of British government policy evoking cultural memory of the

¹¹ Fitzpatrick, “Home front & everyday life”, p.137.

¹² H.D. Gribbon, “Economic and social history, 1850-1921” in Vaughan (ed.) *A new history of Ireland, VI, Ireland under the Union, II, 1870-1922*, p.349.

¹³ “Co. Antrim, 1915” in Brendan Mac Giolla Choille (ed.) *Intelligence Notes 1913-1916* (Dublin, 1966), p.136.

¹⁴ *DATI Agricultural statistics of Ireland with detailed report for the year 1915* (Dublin, 1916), p.v.

¹⁵ “Co Antrim, 1916” in Mac Giolla Choille (ed.) *Intelligence Notes 1913-1916*, p.199; the particular prosperity of farmers was also noted in Co Cavan, Co Kildare and Co Wexford in 1916, pp 201, 206, 211.

¹⁶ For concern with the food supply see for example *Irish Citizen*, 15 Aug. 1914; *Lady of the House*, 15 Sept. 1914.

¹⁷ The following counties reported a plentiful food supply: Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Monaghan, Tyrone, Galway, Dublin, Kildare, Louth, Queen’s County, Wexford, Wicklow, Cork, Kerry, Mayo, Roscommon, Tipperary, Sligo, and Waterford: Mac Giolla Choille (ed.) *Intelligence Notes 1913-1916*, pp 202-220.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 207, 208, 211, 213, 215.

¹⁹ Calculated from figures supplied in Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, p.89; Ian Miller, *Reforming food in post-famine Ireland: medicine, science and improvement 1845-1922* (Manchester, 2014), p.182.

²⁰ Calculated from figures supplied in Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, p.89.

Great Famine to protest against the export of food to Great Britain.²¹ Although the agricultural sector did well out of the war, workers in other sectors were less fortunate. While the industrialised north-east benefited from the awarding of war contracts and the higher wages granted to those involved in munitions work, the extent of war-related industry was much less substantial in southern Ireland, and in Ireland overall compared to Great Britain. There was also a contraction in the textile trade in the first half of the war with many workers forced to work short time.²² The building sector, which employed 17% of the Dublin labour force, was also severely affected by the suspension of Local Government Board housing grants in 1914 while the wartime liquor controls and taxation caused unemployment in the brewing industry.²³ For those living in urban areas or those dependent on pensions or fixed incomes the war became a time of hardship due to inflation and scarcity of fuel.²⁴ Coal was considered a luxury by winter 1917 and paraffin oil became prohibitively expensive at two shillings a gallon.²⁵ Attempts were made to regulate the price of coal in Britain through the Price of Coal (Limitation) Act of July 1915 but the Act did not apply to Ireland and only affected the price of coal sold on the domestic market.²⁶

Liam Kennedy estimated that the cost of living in Ireland doubled between 1914 and 1918.²⁷ Table 3.1 demonstrates an 87% increase, on average, in the cost of basic foodstuffs in Dublin between 1914 and 1918. The cost of oatmeal and beef more than doubled over the course of the war while the price of bread and potatoes increased by more than 50%. The inflation was particularly apparent in 1917, before wage increases and price controls took effect. The average cost of the four commodities increased by 114.7% between 1914 and 1917. For example, the price of a loaf of bread in Dublin rose from six pence in 1914 to almost eleven pence in 1917, an increase of 79.2%. The price of a hundredweight of oatmeal

²¹ Miller, *Reforming food in post-famine Ireland*, p.175; Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war and revolution*, p.169.

²² "Co Armagh and Belfast, 1916" p.201, 200. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five Employment.

²³ Tom Dooley, "Southern Ireland, historians and the First World War" in *Irish Studies Review*, no. 4 (1993), p. 8.

²⁴ Ruth Barrington, *Health, medicine and politics in Ireland 1900-1970* (Dublin, 2000), p.68; see discussion of the impact of rising food prices on those dependent on old age pensions, Bodleian Library, Nathan papers, Memorandum 469, 16 Dec. 1915; Yeates, *A city in wartime*, pp 178-179, 185.

²⁵ *Catholic Bulletin*, Nov.1917; the scarcity of coal and paraffin oil was remarked on in the letters of John McDonnell to his wife Senta in Ireland, 9 Sept. 1918 and 28 Sept. 1918, NLI MS 27,816 (6). Coal imports to Dublin had fallen by 30% in 1917 and a by a further 25% in 1918: Neil O' Flanagan, "Dublin city in an age of war and revolution, 1914-24" (M.A. thesis, University College Dublin, 1985), p.27.

²⁶ Samuel J. Hurrirtz, *State intervention in Great Britain: a study of economic control and social response, 1914-1919* (New York, 1949), p.172.

²⁷ Liam Kennedy, "The cost of living in Ireland 1698-1998" in David Dickson and Cormac Ó Gráda (eds) *Refiguring Ireland: essays in honour of Louis Cullen* (Dublin, 2003), p.262. He calculated the cost of living index based on both urban and rural prices and weighted the commodities accordingly: Kennedy, p. 252.

increased by 168.9%, while the price of the equivalent amount of potatoes and beef increased by 155% and 98.5% respectively.²⁸

Table 3.1 Price of provisions in Dublin 1910-1919²⁹

Year	Bread (4lb loaf)	Oatmeal (per cwt)	Potatoes (per cwt)	Beef (per cwt)
1910	6 ½ d	13s 11d	3s, 5d	61s
1911	6	13s 8d	3, 7 ¼ d	58s, 6d
1912	6 ½ d	15s 2d	3s, 9 ½ d	59, 9d
1913	6d	16s	4s, 5 ½ d	63s, 3d
1914	6d	16s 1d	3s, 3 ¾ d	63s, 3d
1915	7 ½ d	20s 9d	4s, 1d	84s, 9d
1916	9 ¼ d	22s 6d	6, 2 ¾ d	97s
1917	10 ¾ d	43s 3d	8s, 6 ½ d	125s, 3d
1918	9d	35s 6d	5s, 4 ½ d	135s, 5d
1919	9 ½ d	36s	8s 2 ½ d	142s
% increase 1914-18	50	120	64	114

The rise in food prices was not unique to Dublin. Colin Cousin's study of Armagh reveals similar increases in food prices. Butter, potatoes and pork all more than doubled in price over the years 1914 to 1918 at the Armagh market. For example, the price of a pound of butter increased from ten pence in September 1914 to two shillings in January 1918, a rise of 140%.³⁰ The war halted butter imports to Ireland, leading to shortages in winter when imports generally exceeded exports. Initially no restrictions were placed on the export of butter from Ireland and consequently Irish markets were 'scoured by English buyers in motor cars, who bought all the butter they could get at the controlled price and swept it out of the country'.³¹ This was remedied however by the Butter (Ireland) Order, dated 24 December 1917, which restricted the export of Irish butter.³²

As evident in Table 3.1, the rate of inflation slowed noticeably in 1918 as a consequence of government regulations to restrict exports and place limits on food prices.³³ In August 1917 a Food Control Committee for Ireland was established, which administered the orders made by the Food Controller in Britain.³⁴ By February 1918 food committees had been organised in various counties, which attempted to establish the existing stocks of food and prevent excess exportation.³⁵ Attempts were made to cap food prices. For example, the price of 7lb of oatmeal or oats was capped at 2 shillings and three and a half pence in Ireland

²⁸ Annual report of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1918, p.xxxiv.

²⁹ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1910-1919.

³⁰ Cousins, *Armagh & the Great War*, p.128.

³¹ *National Food Journal*, 27 Nov. 1918.

³² *National Food Journal*, 9 Jan. 1918.

³³ David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life 1913-1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (2nd ed., Cork, 1998), p.140; Kennedy, "The cost of living in Ireland 1698-1998", p.252.

³⁴ *National Food Journal*, 14 Nov. 1917, p.86.

³⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Politics & Irish life*, p.140.

while the Margarine prices (Ireland) Order of November 1918 set the maximum price of margarine as 1 shilling per lb.³⁶ However Johnson argues that price regulation schemes were less successful in Ireland than in Great Britain, citing the fact that in 1918 over 90% of pigs were sold at above authorised price levels.³⁷ There were disproportionately high numbers of prosecutions under food control orders in Ireland in 1918 and 1919 compared to Great Britain. Irish prosecutions constituted 31.8% of all such prosecutions in the UK in 1918 and 29.9% of those in 1919. William Beveridge, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Food, attributed the high Irish figures to the ‘character of the people and the zeal of the constabulary’. He noted however that the average fines in Ireland were much lower than in Britain: 7 shillings and 3 pence in Ireland in 1918 compared to £4, 7 shillings and 2 pence in Britain.³⁸ The Food Control Committee defended the low fines, arguing that suspending trader’s licences and commandeering stocks were more effective than fines. The absence of rationing in Ireland meant that suspending traders was less disruptive than in Britain.³⁹

Although sugar was rationed in Ireland through a family card system under the Sugar (Ireland) Order, dated 24 December 1917, Ireland was excluded from the rationing placed on meat and fats in Britain in 1918.⁴⁰ The Food Control Committee claimed that the decision to limit rationing in Ireland was on the grounds that there was unlikely to be excessive consumption. This was apparently borne out by the fact that the per head consumption of meat in Ireland, which in the pre-war period was about half that of the British population, maintained its proportion during the war, despite the variance in rationing.⁴¹ The majority of price orders in Britain were also not applied to Ireland. For example, neither the Cattle (Sales) Order 1917 nor the Sheep (Sales) Order of January 1918 applied to Ireland.⁴² Consequently food prices remained problematic in Ireland in the last years of the war. David Dickson argues that the impact of inflation was particularly severe for poor households in 1917 and 1918, when high prices put some necessities out of their reach.⁴³ Indeed, the *Church of Ireland Gazette* observed in March 1917 that the problem of poverty was ‘accumulating’ with the increased cost of living offsetting the benefits of the separation allowances.⁴⁴

³⁶ Andrew L. Bowley, *Prices and wages in the United Kingdom 1914-1920* (Oxford, 1921), p.208; *National Food Journal*, 27 Nov. 1918.

³⁷ Johnson, *The inter-war economy in Ireland*, p.4.

³⁸ W.H. Beveridge, *British food control* (London, 1928), p.236.

³⁹ *National Food Journal*, 27 Nov. 1918.

⁴⁰ *National Food Journal*, 9 Jan. 1917; Beveridge, *British food control*, p.415; J.R. Marrack, *Food and planning* (London, 1942), p.168.

⁴¹ *National Food Journal*, 27 Nov. 1918.

⁴² Frances McDermott, “The economic effects of the Great War 1914-1918 on Ireland” (M.A. thesis, UCD, 1940), p.48.

⁴³ David Dickson, *Dublin: the making of a capital city* (London, 2014), p.457.

⁴⁴ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 16 Mar. 1917.

Although the rise in the cost of living was similar in Ireland to Great Britain, urban poverty was more evident in Ireland where unemployment remained high and wages significantly lagged behind price inflation.⁴⁵ John Borgonovo has noted that Cork workers were paid roughly two thirds that of their counterparts in northern England during the war.⁴⁶ It has been estimated that, on average, wages in the UK increased by 67% between July 1914 and the end of 1919.⁴⁷ The wartime increases varied across the United Kingdom however. For example, the average weekly wage of bricklayers in Belfast increased by 52.5% in Belfast between July 1914 and July 1918 while the average wage of bricklayers in London, Southampton, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow and Belfast increased by 59.5% over the same period.⁴⁸

The gap between wages and the cost of living became apparent in Ireland over the course of the war.⁴⁹ In his history of the Irish economy Louis M. Cullen observes that urban and rural wage-earners suffered during the war as wages lagged behind rising prices.⁵⁰ David Fitzpatrick concurs in his study of wartime Clare. He demonstrates that wages of agricultural labourers failed to keep pace with the price of commodities. For example, although the wages of agricultural labourers in Clare had doubled between 1913 and 1918, the price of wheat, butter and pork had together increased by 113.3% over the same period.⁵¹ Fitzpatrick argues that the situation was even worse for urban workers and concludes that few manual workers did well out of the war.⁵² Colin Cousin's study of Armagh linen workers and John Borgonovo's work on Cork city similarly indicate that by 1917 wages significantly lagged behind inflation.⁵³ Borgonovo examined the wages paid to staff at Murphy's brewery in Cork. The weekly wages of non-unionised workers increased by an average of 39.5% between 1914 and 1917. They increased by a further 23.6% on average the following year. Among unionised workers in the brewery, wages increased by 29.8% on average between 1914 and 1917 and by a further 20.1% in 1918.⁵⁴ Greater increases were observed among the wages of Cork Corporation employees. The wages of Cork corporation labourers and carters

⁴⁵ Gibbon, "Economic & social history" p.349; Dooley, "Southern Ireland, historians and the First World War", p. 8.

⁴⁶ Borgonovo, *The dynamic of war & revolution*, p.155.

⁴⁷ Bowley, *Prices & wages in the United Kingdom 1914-20*, p.93.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.113.

⁴⁹ Alfred J. Rahilly asserted in 1917 that in spite of war bonuses, wage increases and separation allowances, 'the gap between the worker's earnings and the necessary family expenditure has enormously widened' since the outbreak of the war: Alfred J. Rahilly, "The social problem in Cork" in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, vol. 6, no.22 (June 1917), p.179.

⁵⁰ Cullen, *An economic history of Ireland since 1660*, pp 171-72.

⁵¹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics & Irish life 1913-1921*, p.200.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Cousins, *Armagh & the Great War*, pp 111-112; Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war & revolution*, p.159.

⁵⁴ Calculated from statistics provided in Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war & revolution*, p.160.

doubled between April 1914 and autumn 1917 (that of labourers rising by 50% and that of carters by 55%).⁵⁵ However for the most part, wages failed to keep pace with inflation.

This was also evident in Dublin. In 1917 Lionel Smith-Gordon and Francis Cruise O'Brien, who were both active in the cooperative movement, published a report on the impact of the war on poverty in Dublin, provocatively entitled *Starvation in Dublin*. They observed that in many cases wages remained static during the war and that in the trades that witnessed increases, the average rise was between 20 and 25%.⁵⁶ This is evident in Table 3.2, which is calculated from figures supplied in *Starvation in Dublin*. Smith-Gordon and O'Brien noted that substantial improvements had been made in the wages of dockers and consequently the condition of dockers in permanent employment had surpassed that of many skilled tradesmen. A notable feature of wartime changes in wages across the United Kingdom was that the wages of unskilled workers rose at a faster rate than those of skilled tradesmen. This can be attributed to the demand for unskilled labourers in the munitions industry and the awarding of flat-rate war bonuses.⁵⁷ Smith-Gordon and O'Brien however concluded that real wages, as distinct from money wages, had 'fallen considerably and brought about a state of things which menaces the welfare of the community'.⁵⁸

Table 3.2 Wages in Dublin, 1917

Occupational category	Pre-war average weekly earning	1917 average weekly earning	% change
Skilled trades	39/6	£2 1s 6d	+ 5.1%
Organised unskilled work	22s 6d	27 6d	+ 22.2%
Unorganised casual labour	20s	20s	0%

1917 was a particularly difficult year for those living in urban areas in Ireland. Smith-Gordon and O'Brien calculated that there were 1,219 unemployed labourers in Dublin in 1917, supporting 3,428 dependents. These figures were based on trade union returns and the national register and Smith-Gordon and O'Brien warned that the figures were a 'considerable understatement' as many men did not sign the 'idle books' kept by trade unions.⁵⁹ The *Freeman's Journal* estimated in May 1917 that there were about 7,000 unemployed people in Dublin.⁶⁰ The National Relief Fund reported in April 1917 that while agriculture had been prosperous, there were high levels of unemployment again in the towns, and in Dublin 'a great deal of unemployment and distress'. This was partly an effect of the

⁵⁵ Calculated from statistics provided in Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war and revolution*, p.161.

⁵⁶ Lionel Smith-Gordon and Cruise O'Brien, *Starvation in Dublin* (Dublin, 1917), p.9

⁵⁷ O' Flanagan, "Dublin city in an age of war & revolution", p.35; Gribbon, "Economic & social history", p.349.

⁵⁸ Smith-Gordon & O'Brien, *Starvation in Dublin*, p.9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁶⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 8 May 1917.

damage wrought by the Rising but also a consequence of the 'shutting down and restriction of some industries under Defence regulations, the lack of material for works, the rise in freights and the consequent increase in the cost of coal and other imported necessities'.⁶¹ Food prices had peaked in 1917. Smith-Gordon and O'Brien estimated that in 1917 a family with three children required 28 shillings and 6 pence per week to maintain it on the primary poverty line in food alone.⁶² They also noted that a large proportion of the population of Dublin had been on the primary poverty line for a long time before the war and that it consequently took little to 'convert scarcity into starvation'.⁶³

Diet and household management

Price inflation and food shortages increasingly affected the diet of women in Ireland. Dietary changes were evident from early in the war but became more pronounced as the war progressed. In a report on the impact of the war on the diet of Dublin labourers, the Dublin physician William Thompson estimated that the average working-class diet in 1915 provided 259 less calories than that for 1914. The deficiencies in diet were most felt by women due to the practice of men being fed first, and the need to ensure that the usually male primary wage earner had sufficient strength for work.⁶⁴ Although David Fitzpatrick argues that the food shortages may have improved nutrition through the enforced substitution of wholemeal for wheaten breads, margarine for butter and vegetable products for meat, Thompson's report suggests that the calorie content of urban working-class diets, insufficient in peacetime for labourers, was further reduced by the war.⁶⁵ The nutritional deficiencies likely grew more substantial as the war progressed, with food supply becoming most acute by 1916-17.⁶⁶ Blight and poor weather conditions resulted in potato shortages during the winter of 1916-17, affecting the staple food item of the majority of Irish families. As previously mentioned, there were also shortages of butter due to a decline in imports occurring in parallel to the increase in exports. The *Catholic Bulletin* noted the changes to the wartime diet in October 1918: no breakfast bacon, margarine instead of butter, and sugar now 'doled out with a miserly hand'.⁶⁷

⁶¹ IWM WWS: B.O.8 30/183 Report on the administration of the National Relief Fund up to March 1917, p.5.

⁶² Smith-Gordon & O'Brien, *Starvation in Dublin*, p.8.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁶⁴ W.H. Thompson, *War and food of the Dublin labourer* (Dublin, 1915), p.2.

⁶⁵ Fitzpatrick, "Home front & everyday life", p.137.

⁶⁶ Peter Dewy, "Nutrition and living standards in wartime Britain" in Winter and Wall (eds) *The upheaval of war*, p.207.

⁶⁷ *Catholic Bulletin*, Oct. 1918.

The food shortages and price inflation meant that careful household management became increasingly important in wartime. Women traditionally dominated household management in Ireland. Their management of the family budget and decisions on where to shop and seek credit were essential to the economic stability of the family.⁶⁸ Increased emphasis was placed on this role in wartime. Campaigns regarding conservation of the food supply were aimed at women as ‘guardians of the home and the hearth’ and took place in all belligerent countries.⁶⁹ Propaganda exhorted them to be careful not to waste food, claiming that through their power as household managers, they could shorten the war by avoiding waste and saving money.⁷⁰



Fig. 3.1 Imperial War Museum: "Women of Ireland..." Propaganda poster

Advertisements advised housewives how to economise in wartime, for example by baking their own bread and cakes with Paisley’s Flour, rather than buying ready-made from the bakery.⁷¹ Thompson also promoted greater home baking as a means of coping with the food prices.⁷² The *Lady of the House* provided suggestions on coping with housekeeping in wartime and offered advice on how to use leftovers to avoid waste.⁷³ Suggestions for replacing costly meat with vegetables, cheese and cheaper types of fish appeared in the *Catholic Bulletin* section on advice ‘for mothers and daughters’.⁷⁴

Suggestions for wartime housekeeping were also found in a recipe book published by the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot in 1917 to raise funds for the organisation. The

⁶⁸ Luddy, “Women & work in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland: an overview”, p.55.

⁶⁹ Grayzel, “Men & women at home” p.111; Miller, *Reforming food in post-famine Ireland*, p.177.

⁷⁰ IWM, PST 13602: Irish War Savings Committee, Poster no.3.

⁷¹ *Irish Catholic*, 24 Oct. 1914; see also *Lady of the House*, 15 Oct. 1914, 15 Dec. 1914; *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 5 Mar.1915, 19 Mar. 1915.

⁷² Thompson, *War & food of the Dublin labourer*, p.20.

⁷³ *Lady of the House*, 15 Mar.1915; *Lady of the House*, 15 Sept. 1917, 15 Oct. 1917, 15 Nov. 1917; see also *Catholic Bulletin*, Oct. 1914, Nov. 1914.

⁷⁴ *Catholic Bulletin*, Oct. 1916.

recipes were submitted by various women from the many sub-depots around Ireland and provided advice on how to make adjustments in light of food shortages. For example, they provided advice on how to make poor stock into good soup and many recipes for either 'war bread' or 'war cake' which could be made without eggs, sugar or milk.⁷⁵ Other suggestions included adding barley or rice to bread and oatmeal to teacakes as a means of economising or coping with food shortages.⁷⁶ The book was aimed at middle-class families rather than those seriously struggling with poverty, evident from the complex nature of the recipes and the number of luxury items included in the book, such as cakes, scones and buns.

The *Lady of the House* noted in March 1915 that the 'strictest domestic economy known to our generation' had become a feature of home life due to the increasing cost of commodities since the beginning of the war.⁷⁷ The need for economy also affected fashion as styles that could be worn for a greater variety of occasions became increasingly popular.⁷⁸ Women in rural Ireland were exhorted to 'conserve and improve the resources of the home' and so help to stop 'leakages in the national housekeeping'. The role of women in the conservation and production of food on the farms was also emphasised.⁷⁹ Wartime privation was not only an economic necessity but also a sign of patriotism and morality. For example Lady Gregory's granddaughter recalled how they were allowed butter or jam with their bread during the war, but not both together 'to help the troops'.⁸⁰ John Henry Bernard, Church of Ireland archbishop of Dublin, strongly denounced the wastage of food in a sermon in February 1917, claiming that 'every ounce that is wasted will help to lose [the war]' and that those eating more than necessary were 'wasting the resources of the nation'.⁸¹ Cardinal Michael Logue, Roman Catholic archbishop of Armagh, similarly condemned food hoarding, describing the practice as being in opposition to charity, justice and the public good.⁸² The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) promoted 'productive thrift' as a patriotic virtue in wartime.⁸³ In Ireland, as elsewhere in Europe during the war, pre-war consumption patterns and indulgences were frowned upon even where affordable and were associated with the hated figure of the war profiteer.⁸⁴

⁷⁵ PRONI D3764/1/3: Moneypenny papers, Irish War Hospital Supply Depot, *The Wartime Cookery Book* (Dublin, 1917), pp 13, 157-159.

⁷⁶ Irish War Hospital Supply Depot, *The Wartime Cookery Book*, pp 183-185; see also recipes for 'war bread' and 'war cake' in the *Lady of the House*, 15 Oct. 1915, 15 Dec. 1916; 15 Sept. 1917, 15 Oct. 1917.

⁷⁷ *Lady of the House*, 15 Mar. 1915.

⁷⁸ *Lady of the House*, 15 Sept. 1916, Belfast edition, 15 Jan. 1918.

⁷⁹ *Irish Homestead*, 24 Apr. 1915, 21 Aug. 1915, 16 Sept. 1916; *Catholic Bulletin*, Apr. 1915, May 1915.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Mark Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy* (London, 1987), p.171.

⁸¹ John Henry Bernard, *In wartime* (London, 1917), p.53.

⁸² *Irish Catholic directory and almanac for 1919* (Dublin, 1919), p.502.

⁸³ Miller, *Reforming food in post-famine Ireland*, p.176.

⁸⁴ Grayzel, "Men & women at home" p.105. See also *Lady of the House* (Belfast edition), 15 Jan. 1917.

The calls for austerity from press and pulpit highlighted class divisions. The *Catholic Bulletin* noted that the wealthy could still indulge in many luxuries while the poor could not afford the 'bare necessities of life'. Claiming that there was never more need for self-denial than the present, they argued that while self-denial was the 'sad necessity' of the poor', it ought to be the 'proud duty of the leisured rich'.⁸⁵ The working classes were urged not to waste food and to operate restraint but in the majority of cases their diets were already so limited and basic that further economies were not possible. George Robb has noted how in Britain the difference in the diets of the working class and the middle and upper classes remained huge and that the upper classes continued to enjoy relative luxuries while preaching restraint to others.⁸⁶ This was also evident in Ireland. The time to experiment with new recipes was largely restricted to middle class women who had assistance with other household duties and did not have to work outside the home. Working-class homes also frequently lacked the cooking facilities and utensils necessary for home baking, particularly a problem in tenements.⁸⁷

The impact of the war on living standards varied enormously according to pre-war income and social status. A woman was thrown out of a recruitment meeting in Mayo when she interrupted the speaker to protest about the wartime inflation in the cost of a bag of flour.⁸⁸ Around the same time, Rosamond Stephen, an upper-class woman living in Belfast, complained about the increased cost of hats and how the war had made it impossible to acquire good straw hats from Italy.⁸⁹ Sir Matthew Nathan, under-secretary for Ireland 1914-16, asserted in December 1915 that 'there was much money in the country at the present time, and apart from the poor people, the community was well off'.⁹⁰ This rather tautological statement does not however make it clear just whom he was including in the category of 'poor people'. For the upper classes, the war meant holidaying in Irish resorts rather than travelling overseas while for others it meant destitution.⁹¹

Governmental and philanthropic relief

While the inflation and food shortages caused significant privation, the war also brought greater governmental and philanthropic assistance to working-class families. Separation allowances provided financial compensation to the families of serving soldiers and sailors. The extent of the financial support varied from country to country. In France, Germany, Italy

⁸⁵ *Catholic Bulletin*, Sept. 1914.

⁸⁶ George Robb, *British culture and the First World War* (Hampshire, 2002), p.82.

⁸⁷ Thompson, *War & food of the Dublin labourer*, p.25.

⁸⁸ *Irish Citizen*, 20 Mar. 1915.

⁸⁹ Oonagh Walsh, *An Englishwoman in Belfast: Rosamond Stephen's record of the Great War* (Cork, 2000), p.28. Rosamond's diary entry dates from 28 June 1915.

⁹⁰ Bodleian Library, Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 16 Dec. 1915.

⁹¹ *Lady of the House*, Belfast edition, 15 July 1915; 15 July 1916.

and the Ottoman Empire allowances for soldiers' families were means-tested to ensure that only those fully dependent on the absent breadwinner received state support. Financial support for soldiers' dependents, known as 'separation allowances', acted as an important recruitment tool in the British Empire. In the United Kingdom and its dominions the wives and children of all enlisted men received allowances, while other relatives could claim an allowance based on pre-war dependency.⁹² Although allowances for military families in Ireland and Great Britain were initially provided through charities, primarily the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association, the state took responsibility for them from early in the Great War.⁹³

The provision of separation allowances raised questions about what constituted a family and whether the illegitimate children of soldiers should receive state support. The SSFA had provided support to illegitimate children of soldiers during the Boer War but some members expressed reluctance to continue this policy during the Great War, fearing that it threatened the sanctity of marriage and promoted sin. The SSFA held a meeting in London in January 1915 to determine the organisation's policy. Following vigorous debate, it was agreed that the SSFA should administer allowances to unmarried soldiers' dependents and their children where it could be proved that the father had made a home for them.⁹⁴ This decision was viewed by some in Ireland as evidence of 'British immorality' and, according to Patrick Maume, served to increase prejudices against soldiers' dependents.⁹⁵ The social morality debates surrounding the separation allowances are discussed in detail in Chapter Four but it is worth noting the broader issues raised by the provision of support to soldiers' families.

By November 1918 the British government was providing separation allowances to 3,013,800 families (wives and children) or other dependents in the United Kingdom. This gradually declined over the following year, with the government providing for just 191,800 families and dependents in March 1919.⁹⁶ The majority of the over 200,000 Irishmen who served in the wartime British Army would have had dependents in Ireland. During the quarter ending 31 December 1916 the British government was providing 113,316 allowances to people in Ireland and thus supporting 2.6% of the Irish population.⁹⁷ This compares to an average of 6.8% of the British population while the Irish allowances make up 3.8% of those distributed during the quarter in the UK.

⁹² Grayzel, "Men & women at home", pp 107-108.

⁹³ Angela Smith, "Discourses of morality and truth in social welfare: the surveillance of British widows of the First World War" in *Social Semiotics*, vol. xx, no.5 (2010), p.522.

⁹⁴ Grayzel, *Women's identities at war*, pp 91-94.

⁹⁵ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist life 1891-1918* (Dublin, 1999), p.165.

⁹⁶ War Office, *Statistics of the military effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920* (London, 1922), p.570.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Families in receipt of separation allowances were somewhat better off than those of unskilled waged labourers. The allowances took account of the number of children in a family and initially kept pace with inflation. Table 3.3 demonstrates the weekly rate of separation allowance from February 1915. The rate varied significantly depending on the rank of the soldier.

Table 3.3 Weekly rates of separation allowance from 15 February 1915⁹⁸

	Corporal and private	Sergeant	Colour-Sergeant	Quarter-Master Sergeant	Warrant Officer
Wife	12s 6d	15s	15s	22s	23s
Wife + one child	17s 6d	20s	21s 6d	27s	28s
Wife + two children	21s	23s 6d	25s	30s 6d	31s
Wife + three children ⁹⁹	23s	25s 6d	27s	32s 6d	33s
Motherless child	5s	5s	5s	5s	5s

In an attempt to keep pace with inflation the government repeatedly increased the allowance, in 1915, in 1917 and twice in 1918, initially as a recruiting incentive, and later out of fears of unrest among conscripted men.¹⁰⁰ Between October 1914 and November 1918 there was a 121.8% increase in the weekly rate for the wife of a private with three children.¹⁰¹ However the 1917 rate lagged behind the increase in the cost of living. Between January 1917 and October 1918 the wife of a private with three children received a weekly separation allowance of 28 shillings, an increase of 40% since October 1914.¹⁰² Food prices in Dublin had more than doubled during the same period.

Gender historians have criticised the allowances for promoting the traditional patriarchal family model of a breadwinner husband and dependent wife.¹⁰³ However for many women this pay represented their first regular income and it has been suggested that the allowances contributed to wartime improvements in health and standard of living.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ NAI, Chief Secretary Office Registered Papers (CSO RP) 1915/19283: Rates of separation allowances.

⁹⁹ An extra two shillings was provided for every further child. Allowances were provided for soldiers' children up to age sixteen or twenty-one for those disabled or in full-time education.

¹⁰⁰ Susan Pedersen, *Family, dependence and the origins of the welfare state: Britain and France 1914-1945* (Cambridge, 1993), p.109.

¹⁰¹ Susan Pedersen, "Gender, welfare and citizenship in Britain during the Great War" in *American Historical review*, vol. xcv, no.4 (Oct. 1990), p.990. The pre-war weekly rate was just 16 shillings and 4 pence for the wife of a private with three children but by October 1914 this had increased to £1 and to 23 shillings by February 1915. It further increased to 28 shillings by January 1917, 32 shillings and 6 pence by October 1918 while another increase a month later in November 1918 brought it to 36 shillings and 6 pence.

¹⁰² Pedersen, "Gender, welfare & citizenship in Britain during the Great War", p.900.

¹⁰³ Pedersen, "Gender, welfare & citizenship in Britain during the Great War", p.985; Summerfield, "Women & war in the twentieth century", p.308.

¹⁰⁴ Fitzpatrick, "Home front & everyday life", p.137; Clear, *Social change & everyday life in Ireland*, p.100.

Although the allowances were paid in recognition of their husband's war service, the women collected their weekly money from the post office themselves and thus controlled the spending. Jay Winter has argued that for poor households the allowances represented an 'entirely unanticipated liberation from primary poverty'.¹⁰⁵ From his study of Dublin life during the Great War, Pdraig Yeates has concluded that the introduction of separation allowances was the 'most important social initiative of the war in Dublin'.¹⁰⁶

Contemporaries cited the allowances as the primary reason for the wartime decrease in the numbers receiving poor relief.¹⁰⁷ The average number of people in receipt of indoor relief declined by 17% for the years 1915-18 compared to the previous four years while the number in receipt of outdoor relief declined by 9% for the same period.¹⁰⁸ However these figures must be treated with caution. One possible cause of the drop in numbers accessing indoor poor relief is the fact that the government requisitioned many workhouses either for the use of Belgian refugees or as barracks for soldiers, thus limiting the available space for local people in need. By March 1918 three unions were dissolved and eleven workhouses closed.¹⁰⁹ Patricia Marsh describes the poor law system as overstretched by the end of the war as evidenced by its inability to cope with the influenza epidemic.¹¹⁰

However, although the separation allowances may have alleviated the impact of inflation among the poorest classes, for many soldiers' families survival on the allowances meant considerable hardship and careful housekeeping. For example, the *Church of Ireland Gazette* highlighted the case of one family where the husband had been earning a weekly wage of thirty shillings before the war. Following his enlistment his wife was entitled to just fifteen shillings a week separation allowance to support herself and their child.¹¹¹ The allowances initially benefitted the families of unskilled labourers but were frequently insufficient for those of skilled workers who could earn a higher wage in industry. Women also experienced long delays in receiving the allowances in the first half of the war due to the level of demand upon the state apparatus.¹¹²

The allowance also did not include those who were informally supported by men who were now in the army, for example the sisters of soldiers. The lasting economic impact of the war on soldiers' families is evident in the applications for the training grants provided

¹⁰⁵ Winter, "Demography", p.257.

¹⁰⁶ Yeates, *A city in wartime: Dublin 1914-18*, p.302.

¹⁰⁷ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, for the year ended 31st March, 1918* p.30.

¹⁰⁸ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland for the years 1911 to 1918.

¹⁰⁹ Barrington, *Health, medicine & politics in Ireland*, p.74.

¹¹⁰ Patricia Marsh, "'An enormous amount of distress among the poor': aid for the poor in Ulster during the influenza epidemic of 1918-19" in Virginia Crossman and Peter Gray (eds) *Poverty and welfare in Ireland 1838-1948* (Dublin, 2011), p.220.

¹¹¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 19 Mar. 2015, p.190.

¹¹² Jeff Meek and Annmarie Hughes, "State regulation, family breakdown, and lone motherhood: the hidden costs of World War I in Scotland" in *Journal of Family History*, vol. 39, no.4 (2014), p. 366.

through the Ministry of Labour funded Central committee for Women's Training and Employment for the South of Ireland between 1920 and 1922. Applicants had to prove financial war detriment, and the loss of breadwinners in the war appears frequently.¹¹³ The applications are discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

There were also other governmental and private efforts providing relief to offset the effects of shortages and inflation. The Prince of Wales National Relief Fund was the most significant of these. It provided £20,700 for the relief of civil distress in Ireland from August 1914 to March 1915.¹¹⁴ A further £10,000 was provided on the request of the Local Government Board in September 1916 for the relief of the 'exceptional civil distress consequent upon the Rising in Dublin'.¹¹⁵ In 1917 the Fund provided £5,000 specifically for the relief of civil distress in Dublin.¹¹⁶ Some of this grant was used to provide communal kitchens for the working-class poor, established in Dublin city in 1917.¹¹⁷ The Prince of Wales fund also provided support for women who had lost employment due to the war, recognising the importance of female employment for working class families in urban areas.¹¹⁸ Between August 1914 and March 1921 (when the Fund was closed) the National Relief Fund spent £73,700 on the relief of civil distress in Ireland, together with £2,000 for the relief of naval and military distress. Ireland received 9.2% of the total amount distributed in the UK for the relief of civil distress through the National Relief Fund.

The Irishwomen's Reform League pushed for the immediate implementation of the Education (Provision of Meals) Ireland Act, 1914, to combat the hardship caused by the increased prices of food. Dublin Corporation enforced the Provision of Meals act in Dublin but the government provided just five shillings a week to each national school in Dublin for the scheme. By March 1917 the scheme was operating with the cooperation of the Women's National Health Association (WNHA), the United Irishwomen, the Irish Women Workers Union as well as the Dublin Trades Council and the social services committee of the Dublin Presbytery.¹¹⁹ The demand for school meals had increased to such an extent in 1916 that

¹¹³ TNA LAB 2/1580/CCW911/2/1920: Central Committee for Women's Training and Employment for the South of Ireland 1920-1922.

¹¹⁴ IWM, Women, war and society database [WWS] B.O.8 30/179: Report on the administration of the National Relief Fund up to March 1915, p.16.

¹¹⁵ IWM WWS B.O.8 30/182: Report on the administration of the National Relief Fund up to September 1916, p.8.

¹¹⁶ IWM WWS B.O.8 30/183: Report on the administration of the National Relief Fund up to March 1917, p.5.

¹¹⁷ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, for the year ended 31st March, 1918* p.21; *Irish Citizen*, May 1917.

¹¹⁸ *Irish Citizen*, 29 Aug. 1914.

¹¹⁹ *Irish Citizen*, 2 Oct. 1914, 10 Oct. 1914, Mar. 1917.

despite increased funding, the committee were only able to provide meals for five months of the year.¹²⁰ The increased demand for the scheme can be seen in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 School meals scheme in Dublin 1915-1918¹²¹

Year	Meals provided	Children	Schools
1915-16	287,461	5,377	33
1916-17	438,746	4,250	33
1917-18	1,468,250	9,375	39

The significant increase (over 400%) in the number of meals supplied between 1915 and 1918 reflects the growing realisation of the severe hardship in the city. The 74% increase in the number of children in receipt of the scheme over the same period is also indicative of the impact of inflation in food prices on working-class families.

Various private philanthropic efforts also took place to assist the poor. Although some charities such as St Vincent de Paul suffered a decline in donations during the war, presumably as a consequence of the competition from funds to support the war effort, many others were spurred onto greater action by the wartime conditions.¹²² Fr. Thomas Finlay, a Catholic priest, established the Dublin Food Supply in December 1916 to distribute food commodities to poor families at affordable prices.¹²³ A similar organisation was founded in Cork in early 1918. The Cork Child Welfare League distributed tickets for milk and food to those in need. The executive committee consisted of representatives of local charitable organisations involved in poor relief and ‘ladies and gentlemen interested in the case of child welfare’.¹²⁴ As well as the food depots established in Dublin by the National Relief Fund, the Salvation Army opened communal food kitchens in Belfast in May 1917. These were a response to the rising food prices as well as the fact that many housewives were forced to take up outside employment due to the war and consequently had ‘very little time to devote to household duties’. The communal kitchens were intended to safeguard the health of the ‘woman and her family’.¹²⁵ Such initiatives however would not have removed the anxiety and stress felt by women attempting to balance the family budget and provide sufficient nutritious food for her family. Susan Grayzel has also noted the psychological effect on

¹²⁰ Dublin City Archives, “Report of school meals committee” in *Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, vol. I 1918* (Dublin, 1919), p.345.

¹²¹ Dublin City Archives, “Report of school meals committee for session 1915-16” in *Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, vol. III 1916* (Dublin, 1917) p.707; Report of school meals committee 1916-18” in *Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, vol. I 1919* (Dublin, 1920), p.227.

¹²² *Irish Catholic*, 24 Oct. 1914; 26 Dec. 1914.

¹²³ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 16 Mar. 1917; *Irish Citizen*, Dec. 1916.

¹²⁴ Hill, *Women in Ireland: a century of change*, p.24.

¹²⁵ *Lady of the House* (Belfast edition), 15 May 1917.

women's sense of identity as home managers when they were no longer unable to feed their family themselves.¹²⁶

Milk supply was another issue of particular concern to women. Supply of clean milk became a significant problem during the war, with its shortage being blamed for much of Dublin's high infant mortality rate. Although supply of clean milk was not a new problem, it became increasingly serious in the latter half of the war. It was affected by shortages of animal feed due to government requisition of hay and the downturn in the distillery industry (feed for many of the dairies in the Dublin area were supplied by Guinness's and other distilleries from residue from the distilling process).¹²⁷ The milk problem was referred to repeatedly in the press in 1917 and 1918 with the *Irish Homestead* in particular devoting much space to the issue.¹²⁸ It was agreed in 1917 that the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction would provide milk for Dublin's poor from their own herd of cows in Glasnevin.¹²⁹

Clean and inexpensive milk was also a problem in Cork. In October 1916 Cork Chamber of Commerce adopted a resolution calling on Cork householders to support a milk strike against the 'grossly extortionate prices' and urging families to use condensed milk, except for infants.¹³⁰ The WNHA and the United Irishwomen opened milk depots in various towns and villages where milk was scarce. The depots were usually self-supporting, the milk being sold at the current price –the main benefit being the provision of good fresh milk where it would not otherwise be available. In 1917 twenty-eight WNHA branches had provisions for supplying clean and cheap milk to the local population while in the same year more than 22,000 gallons of milk were sold at United Irishwomen milk depots.¹³¹ The *Irish Homestead* reported that in districts where sufficient milk was unavailable, the United Irishwomen substituted it with dried milk imported from New Zealand.¹³²

Although rarely discussed in the contemporary press, the impact of the clean milk shortage was dependent on the extent of breast-feeding of vulnerable infants. More research is needed in this area but the available evidence suggests that breast-feeding for several months was widespread in Ireland in the early decades of the twentieth century, although

¹²⁶ Grayzel, "Men & women at home", p.109.

¹²⁷ O' Flanagan, "Dublin city in an age of war & revolution", p.24.

¹²⁸ *Irish Homestead*, 10 July 1915, 30 Oct. 1915, 15 July 1916, 20 Jan. 1917, 21 Apr. 1917, 30 June 1917, 14 July 1917, 25 Aug. 1917. See also *Catholic Bulletin*, Nov. 1918; *Lady of the House*, 15 Nov. 1917.

¹²⁹ *Irish Times* 3 July 1917.

¹³⁰ CCCA, U126/1/1: Cork Council of Trade Unions Minute books 1915-16: Resolution passed at meeting of the Cork Consumers League in Council Chamber, City Hall, Cork on 24 Oct. 1916.

¹³¹ *Irish Homestead*, 21 Apr. 1917.

¹³² *Irish Homestead* 20 Apr. 1918.

bottle-feeding appears to have become common by the 1930s.¹³³ The most dangerous time for babies was the transition to weaning and the clean milk supply was clearly of great importance for this time.¹³⁴ However the milk depots may have actually served to promote artificial forms of feeding over the healthier alternative of breast-feeding. While aware of the health benefits of breast-feeding, the WNHA recognised that for many women there were societal and economic constraints affecting their ability to breast-feed. Rather than campaigning to remove some of those barriers, they focused their attention on the provision of clean milk.¹³⁵

Infant welfare movement

Concern with the milk supply was part of a broader wartime anxiety surrounding infant and maternal health. Chapter Two noted the serious problem of infant mortality in early twentieth century Ireland. The issue received heightened attention during the Great War in both Great Britain and Ireland. The number of recruits deemed physically unfit for military service led to a greater recognition of the devastating impact of poverty on health, while the unprecedented loss of life on the battlefields simultaneously raised concern about the vitality of the nation.¹³⁶ In Ireland, infant and maternal health captured the attention of various politically disparate groups. The following discussion builds upon previous work by scholars such as Janet Dunwoody, Lindsey Earner-Byrne and Ian Miller to offer a comprehensive examination of the wartime infant welfare movement, and relates it to the quantitative analysis of wartime trends in infant and maternal mortality provided in Chapter Two.¹³⁷ Overall, this section argues that the turbulent political situation in Ireland strongly affected attempts to combat infant mortality, leading to significant differences in public attitudes towards the welfare movements in Great Britain and Ireland.

Infant mortality became a topic of ever-growing concern in the years immediately preceding the Great War and various attempts were made to highlight and tackle the problem. The issue was given increasingly greater attention in the annual reports of the Registrar-

¹³³ Clear, *Women of the house*, p.141; Mary E. Daly, "Death and disease in independent Ireland c.1920-1970: a research agenda" in Catherine Cox and Maria Luddy (ed.) *Cultures of care in Irish medical history 1750-1970* (Hampshire, 2010), p.235.

¹³⁴ Caitriona Clear, *Social change and everyday life in Ireland 1850-1922* (Manchester, 2007), p.98.

¹³⁵ Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Mother and Child: maternity and child welfare in Dublin 1922-60* (Manchester, 2007), p.64.

¹³⁶ Lewis, *The politics of motherhood*; Deborah Dwork, *War is good for babies and other young children: a history of the infant and child welfare movement in England, 1898-1918* (London, 1987); Valerie Fildes, Lara Marks and Hilary Marland, *Women and children first: international maternal and infant welfare 1870-1945* (London, 1992).

¹³⁷ Janet Dunwoody, 'Child welfare', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986); Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Mother and Child: Maternity and Child Welfare in Dublin 1922-60* (Manchester, 2007); Miller, *Reforming Food in Post-Famine Ireland* (Manchester, 2014) pp 155-72.

General for Ireland. In 1912 the county rate of infant mortality was provided for the first time, together with maps illustrating the geographic disparities in its intensity.¹³⁸ Such concern was not confined to Ireland. Carol Dyhouse's work on infant mortality in pre-war London reveals the extent of the problem in Britain's cities and the various attempts made to combat the issue. She notes that between 1900 and 1914 the subject had become 'defined by contemporaries as one of the major social problems of the time'.¹³⁹ A wide range of organisations and initiatives developed in Britain at this time for the promotion of infant welfare. These included baby shows, which offered prizes for breast-fed babies, as well as nursing mothers' restaurants, milk depots, and 'schools for mothers'. This 'rapid mushrooming' of infant welfare centres resulted from both voluntary and municipal efforts.¹⁴⁰ The increased interest in the area was affected by societal concern with racial degeneration following the high rejection rates at recruiting stations during the Boer War (1889-1902).¹⁴¹

In both Britain and Ireland, emphasis was placed on educating the mothers as to the better care of their children, rather than improving the adverse conditions in which many working-class people lived. Influential contemporary commentators dismissed the impact of poverty, and the poor housing and sanitation conditions in overcrowded urban areas, as of little relevance to infant mortality. Arthur Newsholme, chief medical officer of the Local Government Board for England and Wales from 1908 to 1919, argued that any attempt to reduce infant mortality by addressing poverty would be 'unscientific'.¹⁴² The pre-war infant welfare movements were very similar in Ireland and Great Britain sharing common focuses on maternal education and the promotion of domestic hygiene. However the Boer War had less impact in Ireland where the discussion continued to concentrate on problems arising from the post-Famine dietary customs.¹⁴³ Across the United Kingdom scientific advances in the understanding of the role of bacteria in causing infection led to a new optimism that infant mortality rates could be radically reduced with appropriate education.¹⁴⁴ Another war provided further incentive for attempts to improve infant survival rates.

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 brought renewed attention to the topic in both Britain and Ireland. The high numbers of men rejected as physically unfit for military

¹³⁸ Annual report of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1912, p.xxxviii.

¹³⁹ Carol Dyhouse, "Working class mothers and infant mortality in England, 1895-1914" in Charles Webster, *Biology, medicine and society 1840-1940* (Cambridge, 1981), p.74.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 75-76.

¹⁴¹ Three out of every five men offering to enlist in the British Army in Manchester between October 1899 and July 1900 were rejected as physically unfit: Francesca Moore, "Governmentality and the maternal body: infant mortality in early twentieth century Lancashire" in *Journal of Historical Geography*, xxxix (2013), p.59; Timothy J. Hatton, "Infant mortality and the health of survivors: Britain, 1910-50" in *Economic History Review*, lxiv, no.3 (2011), p.952.

¹⁴² Lewis, *The politics of motherhood*, p.67.

¹⁴³ Miller, *Reforming food in post-famine Ireland*, p.157.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 156-158.

service (41% of all recruits examined in Great Britain during 1917-18) caused great concern to the government. George Robb argues the rejection rates made it impossible to ignore the 'social consequences of so many people being brought up in poverty'.¹⁴⁵ For example, in Waterford city 58% of men presenting themselves for the British Army in 1914-15 were rejected as physically unfit, 10% above the national average. Thomas Dooley has cited this as a 'damning indictment of social conditions in the city'.¹⁴⁶ However it was the unprecedented losses suffered by the British Army that caused particular anxiety about the strength of the national race and the military might of the empire.¹⁴⁷ This apprehension together with the declining wartime birth rate resulted in increased investment in infant welfare.¹⁴⁸ The realisation of the impact of maternal health on rates of infant survival also brought greater attention to the issue of maternal mortality.¹⁴⁹

This heightened concern with infant life was evident in Ireland as well as in Great Britain. The treatment of the issue in Ireland both resembled that of Great Britain and had significant differences. While unionists voiced imperialist rhetoric similar to that evident in Great Britain about the health of the population, republicans seized the issue as a means of attacking the legitimacy of the British governance of Ireland. The unprecedented military casualties gave the issue particular urgency to both groups. Edward Coey Bigger explained this wartime concern in the introduction to his 1917 report on maternal and infant welfare in Ireland:

For this paradox has come about that this sacrifice, with its almost wanton disregard of human life, has made life more highly valued and has turned the minds of many to how it may be saved. [...] No repining, no prayers, no curses can bring back those who have given up their lives for us but we can save other lives to take their place. [...] Ireland needs men and yet of every hundred children born, nine die before they reach the age of twelve months.¹⁵⁰

His report was part of a series commissioned by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust to research the physical welfare of mothers and children in the United Kingdom, which is itself evidence of this increased concern with civilian health in wartime.¹⁵¹ Anxiety about the health of future generations is also evident in two papers presented to the Statistical and

¹⁴⁵ Robb, *British culture & the First World War*, p.80.

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Dooley, "Politics, bands and marketing: army recruiting in Waterford city 1914-15" in *Irish Sword*, xvii, p.216.

¹⁴⁷ Dwork, *War is good for babies*, p.208; Dyhouse, "Working class mothers and infant mortality", p.73.

¹⁴⁸ Robb, *British culture and the First World War*, p.80.

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, *The politics of motherhood*, p.27.

¹⁵⁰ Edward Coey Bigger, *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust: Report on the Physical Welfare of Mothers and Children, IV, Ireland* (Dublin, 1917), p.2.

¹⁵¹ Coey Bigger, *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust*, prefatory note by A.L. Hetherington, secretary of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust; The report received high praise from the Local Government Board for Ireland and the Irish Homestead who described it as a document of the 'utmost value'. *Irish Homestead*, 9 June 1917; *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, for the year ended 31st March, 1918*, p.57.

Social Inquiry Society of Ireland during the war. Samuel Shannon Millin, a prominent Dublin barrister, asserted in 1915 that the importance of child life as a national asset has 'never in the history of the British Empire been brought into greater prominence than at the present moment when thousands of our fellow-countrymen are perishing on the battlefield in the prime of manhood'.¹⁵² He further stated that rather than the war being a reason for the neglect of such social concerns, it is at such a time above all others that 'we must avoid a continued slaughter of the infants'.¹⁵³ William Lawson, barrister and president of the Social and Statistical Inquiry Society, expressed similar sentiments in his 1917 paper on infant mortality and the notification of births act.¹⁵⁴

Frequent comparisons were made between the infant mortality rate and the survival chances of soldiers in the trenches, reflecting a heightened sensitivity towards unnecessary deaths and the loss of Irish lives. Bigger's assertion that a baby born in Dublin in 1915 had less chance of surviving the year than his father fighting in France was frequently repeated.¹⁵⁵ During the National Baby week campaign of 1917 Maud Walsh, director of the women's section of the Department of National Service in Ireland, used similar emotive language in the *Irish Times*, referring to 'the torrent of death in babyland' and claiming that 'Ireland's babyhood is being slaughtered in battalions owing to Ireland's neglect'.¹⁵⁶

The National Baby Week campaign began in England in 1917 to help reduce the number of infant deaths among the working class. In Ireland the movement was led by the WNHA and the Infant Aid Society but received support from many prominent figures in Dublin such as the Lord Mayor, members of parliament and the presidents of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons. From 1 July to 7 July 1917 an exhibition and conference on baby welfare were held in the Mansion House, Dublin. The objectives of the week were described as follows:

To rouse a sense of racial responsibility in every citizen, in order to secure to every child born in Ireland a birthright of mental and bodily health; to inform the public generally as to what it is now being done for children and young mothers by voluntary agencies, local authorities and the State; and to show what could be done if every citizen shouldered his or her responsibility.¹⁵⁷

Sir William Taylor, president of the Royal College of Surgeons described the baby week campaign as 'essential to the welfare of the nation'.¹⁵⁸ However the *Irish Homestead*

¹⁵² Samuel Shannon Millin, "Child Life as a national asset" in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland* (Dec. 1915), pp 301-316.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

¹⁵⁴ William Lawson, "Infant mortality and the notification of births acts, 1907, 1915" in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland* (Nov. 1917), p. 479.

¹⁵⁵ Coey Bigger, *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust*, p.2; See for example, *Lady of the House*, 14 July 1917; *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 6 July 1917; *Irish Homestead*, 22 Sept. 1917.

¹⁵⁶ *Weekly Irish Times*, 7 July 1917.

¹⁵⁷ *Lady of the House*, 14 July 1917.

¹⁵⁸ *Irish Times*, 1 June 1917.

expressed surprise about the wartime concern with infant life: 'People seem to really care whether their children live or die though we find it difficult to explain this considering the equanimity with which a death rate about as high as that of the armies in the field has been borne for generations past'.¹⁵⁹ George Russell, the periodical's editor, was correct in asserting that infant mortality was not a new problem but he perhaps failed to appreciate the impact the wartime losses had on public concern with child welfare. The high visibility of death during wartime provided an important catalyst for health campaigners to draw public attention to an ongoing social problem. Elizabeth Burke-Plunkett, the Countess of Fingall and president of the United Irishwomen, recognised this, predicting in April 1915 that by the end of the war 'the value of child life will be enormously increased'.¹⁶⁰ The drop in the birth rate also prompted concern with the survival of the next generation during the war years. This reflected a European wide anxiety about falling birth rates in the war period, seen for example in France, where bearing children was stressed as the patriotic duty of women in wartime, or Germany, where the pronatalist Bund für Mutterschutz (League for Protection of Mothers) expanded its scope during the war.¹⁶¹

The Great War accentuated anxiety about the future well-being of the Irish population; as expressed with consideration of both infant welfare and the deaths of Irish soldiers on the battlefield. But how was high infant mortality tackled during wartime? How did political tensions in Ireland affect attitudes to the subject? Infant welfare became highly politicised in Ireland during the war, taking on a unique tone given the increasing tension between republicanism and unionism and their relationship with imperialism. Campaigners with vastly different political opinions united around the issue of infant welfare. However, the tone of their arguments differed considerably. Unionists typically employed an imperialist rhetoric while republicans often pointed to the inattentiveness of the British government towards Irish health to add weight to their case for national independence.

These contrasting approaches to the problem of infant mortality can be seen in four contemporary Irish periodicals. The *Lady of the House* and the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, both upper-class unionist papers, employed imperialist arguments to promote infant welfare in Ireland while also attempting to place the issue in an Irish context. They both referred to the small population of Ireland which could ill afford to lose any more of its young, with the *Church of Ireland Gazette* arguing that Baby Week ought to have particular appeal in Ireland: 'We are a small race. Within living memory we have become almost halved'.¹⁶² The interest of the *Church of Ireland Gazette* in the issue was possibly affected by concerns with their own declining numbers. A disproportionately high number of Irish Protestants served in

¹⁵⁹ *Irish Homestead*, 22 Sept. 1917.

¹⁶⁰ *Irish Homestead*, Apr. 1915.

¹⁶¹ Darrow, *French women & the First World War*, p.59; Grayzel, "Men & women at home", p.108.

¹⁶² *Church of Ireland Gazette* 6 July 1917. See also *Lady of the House* (14 July 1917).

the armed forces in the First World War. This together with their declining marriage and birth rates may have increased the value of infant life for this sector of the Irish population.¹⁶³

In common with the WNHA, the *Lady of the House* argued that the main cause of infant mortality was ‘lamentable ignorance’ on the part of parents as to the proper care of their babies.¹⁶⁴ They supported the WNHA educational approach to the problem. While the paper highlighted the horrific conditions in the Dublin slums they blamed public apathy for government inaction on the tenement issue.¹⁶⁵ In contrast, the republican movement focused on the socio-economic factors affecting mortality, for which they were adamant that the British government was to blame. Both the *Irish Citizen* and *New Ireland* were critical of the priorities of the wartime infant welfare movement in Great Britain and Ireland. The *Irish Citizen* laid the blame for Ireland’s high infant mortality rate at the hands of the British government, citing in particular the increased export of foods from Ireland to Great Britain during the war:

By refusing self-determination to the Irish people and by confiscating the national wealth and resources of Ireland, the English government is directly responsible for the suffering and misery of the majority of the people which manifests itself in the high death rate, the horrible wastage of infant life and the consequent losses to Ireland.¹⁶⁶

Francis and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Louie Bennett, the editors of the *Irish Citizen*, were strongly opposed to the war and actively emphasised its negative effects for Irish civilians to underpin their case against Irish military participation.¹⁶⁷ They recognised the importance of the infant welfare movement for the Irish nation, arguing in the *Irish Citizen* that it was ‘national work that cannot be postponed till English rule is overthrown’.¹⁶⁸ The advanced nationalist paper, *New Ireland*, similarly described the issue as a ‘problem for Ourselves Alone’ (with the phrase presumably meant both literally and as a translation for the Irish republican party Sinn Fein).¹⁶⁹ Notably, similar attempts to use child welfare concerns to attack the legitimacy of British rule in Ireland were previously employed by republicans such as Maud Gonne during the campaign for school dinners in the years immediately preceding the Great War. Issues relating to ‘school-day starvation’ provided an emotive trope with which to attack British policies in Ireland.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ Fitzpatrick, ‘The logic of collective sacrifice’, p.1025; David Fitzpatrick, ‘Protestant depopulation and the Irish revolution’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 38 (Nov. 2013), p. 659.

¹⁶⁴ *Lady of the House*, 15 Jan. 1917.

¹⁶⁵ *Lady of the House* 15 Aug 1917.

¹⁶⁶ *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1919; see also *Irish Citizen*, Sept. 1917; Dec. 1917.

¹⁶⁷ Louie Bennett became editor in 1916 following the murder of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington in Easter week 1916.

¹⁶⁸ *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1919.

¹⁶⁹ *New Ireland*, 26 Oct. 1918.

¹⁷⁰ Miller, *Reforming food in post-famine Ireland*, p.165.

Although united in their desire to combat infant mortality there were clear disagreements over the best means of tackling the problem. Both the *Irish Citizen* and *New Ireland* were critical of the priorities of the wartime infant welfare movement in Great Britain and Ireland. The *Irish Citizen* described the national baby week campaign as a ‘fashionable’ event involving ‘silly sentimental flummery’ organised by ‘well-meaning busy bodies’.¹⁷¹ The paper criticised the educational focus of the campaign, complaining that it did not give due weight to the socioeconomic causes of infant mortality.¹⁷² The editor of *New Ireland* similarly observed that ‘lectures on dress or cooking do not supply a remedy’ for the impact of the appalling housing conditions in Dublin on infant survival chances.¹⁷³ The serious housing situation was highlighted in Bigger’s report as an important factor in mortality rates in Dublin. However there were difficulties in dealing with the tenements during the war, due to the expense involved.¹⁷⁴

The issue of infant welfare became heavily politicised in wartime Ireland. Differing perspectives existed on whether mothers were responsible for the high mortality rate or the adverse social conditions in which they lived. In turn, this raised questions about the extent to which state involvement was desirable. Some advanced nationalists also seized upon the issue to add weight to their arguments for independence. But what practical measures were implemented? Were they state-led or voluntary efforts? Contemporaries criticised the Irish infant welfare movement for its lack of attention to the socio-economic factors affecting infant mortality. However the wartime initiatives included attempts at social reform as well as domestic improvement. While maternal education continued to be promoted through the WNHA baby clubs and the classes on child welfare organised by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in 1917, there were also other practical measures introduced.¹⁷⁵ These included both legislation and more short-term initiatives such as the milk depots.

From 1908 the WNHA operated mother and baby clubs and this operation greatly expanded in wartime.¹⁷⁶ The Cork Child Welfare League also arranged for trained nurses to visit expectant and nursing mothers in their homes. The nurses, along with trained voluntary workers, offered instruction and advice to the mothers on matters affecting their own health and the care of the child. Child welfare centres, along the lines of the baby clubs, were proposed and the League received funds from Cork City Corporation to supply milk and dinners to poor expectant and nursing mothers and their infants. The League was inspired by

¹⁷¹ *Irish Citizen*, July 1917; Aug. 1917; Sept. 1917.

¹⁷² *Irish Citizen*, Aug. 1917.

¹⁷³ *New Ireland*, 26 Oct. 1918.

¹⁷⁴ Lawson, “Infant mortality and the notification of births acts, 1907, 1915”, p.493.

¹⁷⁵ *Journal of the department of agriculture and technical instruction vol. XVII* (Dublin: H.M.S.O., 1917), p.146.

¹⁷⁶ Coey Bigger, *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust*, p.74.

the success of similar schemes in Dublin, Belfast and England.¹⁷⁷ They received a further £815 from Cork City Corporation in August 1918 to pursue their maternal and infant welfare schemes.¹⁷⁸

Although the *Irish Citizen* presented state inaction as evidence for the need for independence, the British government introduced relevant important legislation for Ireland, notably the extension of the Notification of Births Act and the Midwives Act. Nonetheless these were introduced significantly later in Ireland than in England and Wales. The Notification of Births Act was extended in 1915 to all of Ireland, eight years after its implementation in England and Wales. Significantly, the Act addressed both maternal ignorance and alleviating the hardship caused by poverty. It enabled the Local Government Board to carry out schemes for the physical welfare of mothers and young children such as provision of milk, classes in domestic hygiene for girls, formation of maternity centres to provide advice for mothers, and the appointment of health visitors to advise expectant and nursing mothers in their own homes.¹⁷⁹ A grant of £5,000 was made available from the Imperial Treasury in 1916 to aid with such schemes.¹⁸⁰ Although the grant was initially intended for the introduction of maternal and child welfare schemes in urban areas, in 1917 it was extended to rural districts.¹⁸¹

Their implementation was entirely voluntary however and some districts were reluctant to become involved. For example, Celbridge District Council in County Kildare dismissed the scheme as 'not workable in rural districts' following the unwillingness of the local district nursing association to adopt it. They also criticised the lack of guidelines from the Local Government Board on the implementation of the scheme.¹⁸² In contrast some districts had been eager to be involved from much earlier in the war, reflecting the heightened wartime concern with infant life and awareness of the factors affecting mortality. For example, Mrs Foran of Listowel, county Kerry, lobbied for a child welfare grant for Listowel in early 1916 but was informed by Sir Matthew Nathan that any money received would go to towns 'where the question of infant mortality was much more serious'.¹⁸³ As early as 1915 the local authorities in Newry and Dundalk were reported to be 'very keen' to be involved with the WNHA infant mortality campaign. In Dundalk the urban district

¹⁷⁷ CCCA: Minutes of the proceedings of the public health committee of the Cork County Borough Council at a meeting held on 12 Mar. 1918.

¹⁷⁸ Minutes of the proceedings of the public health committee of the Cork County Borough Council at a meeting held on 13 Aug. 1918.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹⁸⁰ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, for the year 1916-17*, p.56.

¹⁸¹ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, for the year ended 31st March, 1918*, p.56.

¹⁸² *Leinster Leader*, 21 July 1917; 18 Aug. 1917; 25 Aug. 1917; 16 Feb. 1918.

¹⁸³ Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 18 Jan. 1916.

council had voted to grant funds for a maternity nurse and a municipal milk depot.¹⁸⁴ By the end of 1917 fifty-two maternal and child welfare schemes had been carried out by twenty-four urban district councils and twenty-eight voluntary agencies while sixteen further schemes had been approved.¹⁸⁵ The Local Government Board accepted however that ‘much more remained to be done’ with respect to infant mortality.¹⁸⁶

The state also introduced measures aimed at improving midwifery provision. The conditions in which Irish women usually gave birth remained unsatisfactory during the war. The maternal mortality rate in the Rotunda Hospital was half that of Dublin city in general during 1915 but in this period maternity hospital confinements were exceptional. The home, no matter how basic, was accepted as the proper environment for birth.¹⁸⁷ Many working class women who could not afford a doctor, preferred to call on the services of the local ‘handywoman’ rather than the dispensary midwife but these women were usually untrained and potential carriers of infection from one woman to another.¹⁸⁸ Under the Midwives (Ireland) Act passed in 1918, mothers who did not qualify for free treatment under the medical charities system were entitled to medical aid in case of an emergency. The Act’s main purpose however was to regulate midwifery in Ireland. It made it illegal for women to describe themselves as midwives unless qualified to do so or to attend childbirth other than under the direction of a physician, unless she was a certified midwife.¹⁸⁹ It was hoped that this attempt to replace the use of unqualified handywomen with registered midwives would reduce maternal deaths from infection and accidents of childbirth. However despite the Act, the handywoman continued to be a regular feature of Irish childbirths until the 1940s.¹⁹⁰

The Midwives Act had been passed in England and Wales in 1902 and there had been intensive lobbying by the Irish medical profession to have it extended to Ireland. Concern had been expressed that its implementation in Britain had led to a flood of handywomen from elsewhere in the United Kingdom moving to Ireland and thus increasing ‘the number of these deplorable beings’ operating in Ireland.¹⁹¹ The extension of the 1902 Act to Scotland in 1915 lent further weight to the campaign. The increased public interest in infant and maternal welfare generated by the war provided more incentive for action. The

¹⁸⁴ Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 26 Nov. 1915.

¹⁸⁵ *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, for the year ended 31st March, 1918* p.58.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Joseph Robbins “Public policy and the maternity services in Ireland during the twentieth century” in Alan Browne (ed.) *Masters, midwives and ladies-in-waiting* (Dublin, 1995), pp 278-279.

¹⁸⁸ Coey Bigger, *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust*, p.24.

¹⁸⁹ Robbins, “Public policy and the maternity services in Ireland during the twentieth century”, p.282.

¹⁹⁰ Clear, *Women of the house*, p.104

¹⁹¹ See for example, *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1916; Apr. 1917; *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 1 Sept. 1916, p.620.

Midwives (Ireland) Act was eventually placed on the statute books in February 1918.¹⁹² Although undoubtedly of some benefit, the Notification of Births Act (1915) and the Midwives (Ireland) Act merely represented the belated extension of British measures to Ireland.

The loss of lives in the war heightened sensitivities towards death in wartime and brought anxiety about the strength of the nation, as already discussed, resulting in increased concern with infant mortality in Ireland during the Great War. Chapter Two demonstrated the wartime decline in infant mortality in the United Kingdom. To what extent were these linked? How did the welfare movement affect mortality trends? Deborah Dwork argues that 'war was good for babies' due to the increased attention and greater interest invested in their survival.¹⁹³ However Carol Dyhouse is wary of drawing a causal link between declining mortality and the rise of the infant welfare movement. She notes problems that affect the quantitative analysis of the issue, including alterations in the official requirements for the registration of demographic data and a growing sophistication in the diagnosis of various kinds of disease and categorization of death.¹⁹⁴ R.I. Woods, P.A. Watterson and J.H. Woodward further argue that the impact of infant welfare schemes such as post-natal home visits were 'at best gradual, often differed in their effects in different groups and occasionally were entirely inconsequential'.¹⁹⁵ Janet Dunwoody concluded with regard to Ireland that the war brought the language of social reform but not the reality.¹⁹⁶

However the practical measures introduced during the war years benefited some mothers and infants in Ireland. Although contemporaries criticised the educational focus of the welfare movement, there is evidence of a growing recognition of the role of poverty in determining infant mortality rates.¹⁹⁷ While somewhat divisive in their appeal, events such as National Baby Week brought the issue into greater prominence and highlighted significant social problems. The Notification of Births Act and the Midwives (Ireland) Act marked important milestones in infant and maternal care while the funds provided through the Imperial Treasury for the maternity and child welfare schemes enabled the expansion of the WNHA activities. As noted by Deborah Dwork, in relation to similar initiatives in Britain, they were a conservative solution but a relatively successful one.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² Anne McMahon, "Regulating midwives: the role of the RCPI," in Gerard M. Fealy (ed.) *Care to remember: nursing and midwifery in Ireland* (Cork, 2005), pp 167-171.

¹⁹³ Dwork, *War is good for babies*, p.209.

¹⁹⁴ Dyhouse, "Working class mothers and infant mortality", p.77.

¹⁹⁵ R.I. Woods, P.A. Watterson and J.H. Woodward, "The causes of rapid infant mortality decline in England and Wales, 1861-1921 Part II" in *Population Studies*, xliii, no.1 (Mar., 1989), p.120.

¹⁹⁶ Janet Dunwoody, 'Child Welfare' in Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War*, p.75.

¹⁹⁷ For example see *Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland, for the year ended 31st March, 1918*, p.58.

¹⁹⁸ Dwork, *War is good for babies and other young children*, p.211.

The benefits of the infant welfare movement combined with greater employment and agricultural prosperity in wartime can be seen in the small improvement in infant and maternal survival rates during the war, discussed in Chapter Two. However the failure to address the serious issue of the deteriorating housing conditions in Dublin was reflected in the city's persistently high infant mortality rate. Infant welfare became increasingly politicised during the war, with advanced nationalists using the issue as part of their argument for Irish independence. However the disputes and tensions between the disparate concerned groups may have served to bring more attention to the problem of infant mortality and increased public interest in the saving of Ireland's future generations.

Psychological impact

Relationships

Governmental and philanthropic efforts may have provided some compensation for the economic impact of the loss of the breadwinner but could not fill the emotional void of their absence or alleviate the anxiety felt by mothers and wives waiting for news on the home front. Katharine Tynan, a prominent writer living in county Mayo, described vividly her distress upon the enlistment of her elder son Toby.

On the very last day of the year I heard in the dark of the morning a quick, sudden cry, 'Mother! Mother!' [...] I lay drowsily wondering if I dreamt of that call in Toby's voice. A little later he was at my door. He had got his commission. On the last day of 1914 I had finished up my little diary with 'Lord my heart is ready!' I do not know why I wrote it. I never thought then that the War would last long enough for the boys to go.¹⁹⁹

Correspondence provided a vital means of connection between the men on the front and the women back home. A steady flow of communication between home and battlefield was attempted by all combatant nations, with letters considered important for the emotional stability of those serving in the forces.²⁰⁰ Letters from the front allowed soldiers to feel connected to the 'humdrum realities of home life'. Martha Hanna has suggested that wartime correspondence provided the means by which couples 'worked to maintain the essential elements of married life: economic support, emotional compassion and sexual intimacy'.²⁰¹ However regular detailed correspondence between spouses was not always possible. Many couples lacked sufficient literacy skills to be able to write letters with ease while working-class women who often had outside employment as well as significant domestic

¹⁹⁹ Katharine Tynan, *The year of the shadow* (London, 1919), p.179.

²⁰⁰ Susan Grayzel, "Men & women at home" p.115; Rollet, "The home & family life", p.328.

²⁰¹ Martha Hanna, "The couple" in Winter (ed.) *Cambridge history of the First World War Volume III Civil Society*, pp 10-11.

responsibilities, had little time to spare for the activity. The difficulties such couples faced in enduring separation require further examination.²⁰²

The following section explores the experience of separation and bereavement of two Irishwomen, Senta McDonnell, the wife of a prosperous Church of Ireland farmer, and Phyllis Kelly, a young unmarried woman from a Catholic middle class family in Athlone. The collections were chosen due to the particularly frank nature of the correspondence and the fact that each unusually includes a letter from the woman on the home front rather than just her soldier correspondent. Although both collections are those of middle class couples, they nevertheless provide some insight into the wide experience of Irishwomen during the war.

The letters of John and Senta McDonnell provide insight into the importance of correspondence for maintaining relationships in wartime. John McDonnell was a Lieutenant Colonel with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He had served during the Anglo-Boer war and was called up following the outbreak of war in August 1914. He was assigned to service in Queenstown, Cork for most of the war but was sent to France in August 1918.²⁰³ By that time John was married to Senta and they had two young children. They lived on a farm in Drogheda, county Meath. They were members of the Church of Ireland and John was listed as an army captain and a Justice of the Peace in the 1911 census. His father was a Dublin physician and John had completed undergraduate studies in Cambridge.²⁰⁴ In 1918 Senta was twenty-four years old. She grew up in Gormanstown, Co Meath, in a Church of Ireland family. Her father was a Justice of the Peace. In 1901 the family had ten servants, indicating the wealth of the family although this was reduced to three by 1911.²⁰⁵

During his war service in France John and Senta wrote to each other almost every day. The letters are very affectionate, always beginning 'my own dearest' or 'my own darling' and signed 'ever your lasting John' or 'your loving wife Senta'. John's letters combine discussion of mundane practical matters relating to his home and family and descriptions of his war experience. He gave Senta advice on decisions needing to be made with regard to their farm and on the rearing of the children, illustrating the responsibilities placed on women in wartime, for example inquiring about the price fetched for the sale of

²⁰² Although Martin Lyons has suggested in his work on ordinary writing culture during the Great War that letters among working-class couples were far more common than previously assumed, he accepts that it is more difficult to source letters from women on the home front than their soldier correspondents. Aside from the fact that soldiers' letters were more likely to be collected and deposited in public archives, women at home were more likely to have difficulty writing letters. He notes various collections of family correspondence where the voice of the mother or other female relatives are conspicuously absent: Martin Lyons, *The writing culture of ordinary people in Europe, c. 1860-1920* (Cambridge, 2013), p.47.

²⁰³ "John McDonnell", *Winchester College at war*, Winchestercollegeatwar.com.

²⁰⁴ 1901 and 1911 census returns for John McDonnell.

²⁰⁵ 1901 and 1911 census return for Senta Jameson.

their cattle, and instructing her on how to deal with the farmhands.²⁰⁶ He is quite insistent on some matters, for example repeatedly inquiring whether their son Eddie has begun lessons yet.²⁰⁷ Eddie was just three years old in 1918 so his mother's apparent hesitation in starting his lessons is perhaps understandable.

John desired to know the detail of everything that was happening at home and clearly worried about how his wife was coping in his absence. He asks her to be careful not to work too hard but simultaneously provides a long list of chores for her to complete.²⁰⁸ The only letter from Senta that survives was her last letter to John, presumably returned with his possessions after his death. She mentions that she has not received a letter from him in two days, but her tone is teasing rather than concerned. Her affectionate letter is full of mundane events from home, for example her attempt to work out a bill that arrived from the insurance company and her delight at her purchase of a new puppy. Although concerned about the impact of the bad weather on the corn crop, she appears proud of her ability to run the farm and household on her own: 'Father said yesterday he thought the farm running very well indeed'.²⁰⁹ John was killed just three days later at Ypres.²¹⁰

The burden placed upon women as correspondents with soldiers during the war is often overlooked. Soldiers waiting to go into battle wrote to their loved ones very frequently and expected regular replies.²¹¹ The events they describe are frequently horrific and tragic and it must have been difficult for the often very young women back home in Ireland to find the words to express comfort to these men. For example John McDonnell described in detail the conditions in the trenches and the bombardment he endured:

I am sorry you are worrying about not hearing from me but in the front line it is impossible to write and then we went 'over the top' and were fighting in the open for 2 days and 2 nights choking the Boche. It worried me not being able to write but what could I do? However I am safe, thank God. The shellfire at times was the D___ but I did not funk it and though glad to be out a bit the whole battle was interesting [...] I was right in the frontline when the Boche attacked, it was most exciting but I never got a shot at a Boche.²¹²

²⁰⁶ NLI MS 27,816 (1): Letters from John to Senta McDonnell, 5 Aug. 1916; MS 27,816(4): 24 June 1917, 5 Sept. 1918, 16 Sept. 1918.

²⁰⁷ MS 27,816 (6): Letters from John to Senta McDonnell, 9 Sept. 1918, 10 Sept. 1918, 13 Sept. 1918, 17 Sept. 1918, 26 Sept. 1918.

²⁰⁸ MS 27,816 (6): Letters from John to Senta McDonnell, 5 Sept. 1918, 9 Sept. 1918.

²⁰⁹ MS 27,816 (6) Letter from Senta to John McDonnell, 26 Sept. 1918.

²¹⁰ Commonwealth War Graves Commission record for John McDonnell: <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/99289/McDONNELL,%20JOHN> (13 October 2014).

²¹¹ Hanna "The couple", p.11.

²¹² MS 27,816 (6): Letters from John to Senta McDonnell, 3 Sept. 1918, 9 Sept. 1918; see also MS 27, 816 (1): 5 Aug. 1916.

The day before he died he mentioned that he had slept very little the night before due to the ‘aeroplanes, bombardments and shells’ but that fortunately no shells had come near him.²¹³ One can scarcely imagine the anxiety such letters brought to his wife back home.

John’s need to instruct his wife on the minutiae of all household decisions can be seen as symptomatic of the anxiety soldiers felt about their role as husbands in the life of the family in wartime.²¹⁴ Such anxiety placed pressure on the wives at home to assuage the husbands’ concerns by keeping their memory alive within the home and reaffirming their importance to the domestic world in regular letters. At the same time the press were urging women not to bother the soldiers with complaints about difficulties on the home front with regard to food supply and so forth. Women were unable to unburden themselves in their letters without facing criticism for affecting the morale of the troops.²¹⁵

For some couples, letters from the front played an essential role in the development of their relationship. For example Phyllis Kelly, a young woman living in Athlone, County Westmeath, was in regular correspondence with an English officer, Eric Appleby, who she met while he was training in Ireland in 1914.²¹⁶ He wrote to her very frequently describing the horrors he witnessed as well as the boredom he endured.²¹⁷ Such letters made it difficult for Phyllis to enjoy herself back in Ireland. She reportedly did not attend a dance in Athlone in July 1915 in sympathy with Eric who was having a ‘rotten time’ at the front.²¹⁸ He made clear that he depended upon her letters to give him the courage to keep going and whenever there was a hiatus of more than a couple of days between letters, he would write again worrying over their absence.²¹⁹ Such impatience was a regular feature of letters home from soldiers fearful of being forgotten.²²⁰

The couple became engaged in 1916 but Eric was killed in France later that year. In an unsent letter, Phyllis describes her devastation following the news that Eric was ‘dangerously wounded’:

Oh my love, my love, what shall I do –but I must be brave and believe all will be well –dear one, surely God won’t take you from me now. It will be the end

²¹³ MS 27,816 (6): Letter from John to Senta McDonnell, 28 Sept. 1918.

²¹⁴ Jay Winter, “Families” in Winter (ed.) *Cambridge history of the First World War Volume III Civil Society*, p.58.

²¹⁵ Healy, *Vienna and the fall of the Hapsburg Empire*, p.86.

²¹⁶ Jean Kelly (ed.) *Love letters from the front* (Dublin, 2000) p.13; Phyllis Kelly was aged 18 in 1911, a Roman Catholic living in a first class house in Athlone, Co Westmeath, with her parents, brother and sister. Her father was a crown solicitor. They had three servants. All the children are listed as scholars. (1911 census). Eric Appleby, born in Liverpool in 1893, was a second Lieutenant with the Royal Field Artillery, Commonwealth War Graves Commission record for Eric Appleby: <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/30627/APPLEBY,%20ERIC> (13 October 2014).

²¹⁷ For example see “Eric Appleby to Phyllis Kelly, 14 June 1915” in Kelly (ed) *Love letters from the front*, p.41.

²¹⁸ “Eric Appleby to Phyllis Kelly, 10 July 1915”, p.51.

²¹⁹ See for example “Eric Appleby to Phyllis Kelly, 14 July 1915”, p.53.

²²⁰ Hanna “The couple”, p.11.

of everything that matters because, oh Englishman, you are all the world and life to me.

She found the waiting for news particularly agonising: ‘this knowing nothing is terrible, I don’t know what do [...] This writing to you is the only thing that makes the waiting easier –everybody is very kind, I know, but I feel I would give anything to be just by myself’.²²¹ Just three days later she received word that Eric had died of his wounds on 28 October.²²²

Bereavement

The most devastating impact of the war on the domestic lives of women in Ireland was through bereavement. It has been estimated that approximately 35,000 Irish men (who enlisted from Ireland) were killed on active service in the war. In the majority of cases these men left bereft families behind.²²³ Thousands of women lost husbands or sons while many others, like Phyllis Kelly, lost potential husbands. Katharine Tynan powerfully evoked in her memoir the desperate grief experienced by young war widows in Ireland: ‘One got to know the look of the new widows –hard, bright eyes, burning for the relief of tears, a high feverish flush in the cheeks, hands that trembled, and occasionally an uncertain movement of the young head’.²²⁴ Grayzel has noted the gendered process of post war mourning where emphasis was placed on the mothers, wives and sweethearts of the lost men. Mothers and wives acted as representatives of their dead leading to potential tension between the state and the family as to the ‘ownership’ of the fallen soldiers with regard to the repatriation of bodies and construction of memorials.²²⁵

This is evident in Tara Doyle’s detailed examination of bereavement in Ireland during the Great War.²²⁶ Doyle’s research reveals the means by which families took ownership of their bereavement and the importance of collecting as much information as possible about the circumstances of the death and burial of their family member.²²⁷ For example, Alice Wynne travelled to France to be by her son’s bedside as he died while Mary Martin put significant efforts into attempting to find out what happened to her son Charlie following a report that he was missing in December 1915. Final confirmation of his death came six months later. In her diary Mary Martin described the agonising uncertainty following receipt of the telegram informing her that Charlie was wounded and missing:

²²¹ Unsent letter from Phyllis Kelly to Eric Appleby, 28 Oct. 1916.

²²² Kelly (ed.) *Love letters from the front*, p.285.

²²³ Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p.35.

²²⁴ Tynan, *The Year of the Shadow*, p.178.

²²⁵ Grayzel, “Women & men”, p.273.

²²⁶ Tara Doyle, “‘Tell her gently’ – death and bereavement in Irish families during the First World War” (M.Phil, Trinity College Dublin, 2010).

²²⁷ *Ibid*, pp 56-57.

The message that you are now reported wounded and missing says so little and so much. We are hoping that perhaps you will turn up in some hospital or ambulance [...] We have started saying the Rosary together for you every night.²²⁸

Senta McDonnell expended a huge amount of effort into trying to find out the exact circumstances of John's death and in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to have his body returned to Ireland for burial.²²⁹ For many women the fact that their husband did not have a grave that they could visit brought increased trauma, leaving them without a place to express their grief.²³⁰ However the extent to which families were able to investigate the circumstances of their loved one's death depended on their class. The six families that Doyle examines are all middle or upper-class, a consequence of the lack of surviving personal testaments from working-class women. The men killed in these cases were all officers and their families had access to a significant support network in the military and on the home front enabling them to receive additional information or to travel to France.²³¹

There is little evidence surviving of the experience of the vast majority of Irishwomen bereaved in the war. We can only guess at the trauma endured by Margaret Hogan whose fiancée, a labourer named Henry Hayes, was killed on active service in September 1915, that of Ellen Dempsey whose two sons Peter and Thomas were killed in April 1915 and April 1917, or that of Mary Abel whose husband William and son George were both killed in the war.²³² Some women were unable to cope with their loss. Private Thomas Joyce was killed by a shell at the front in late 1915 and on 2 January 1916 his widow Mary Ellen Joyce drowned herself in a pond in County Leitrim. She left a note for her mother saying that she 'had gone to Tommy. We promised each other we would follow one another'.²³³ For one Kildare mother, the loss of her two sons had a very practical impact. Hugh Buckley was killed in autumn 1914 and his brother Peter died of his war wounds in March 1918, two years after being invalided out of the army, suffering severe wounds and from the effects of gas. The *Leinster Leader* described the practical impact of the two losses on their mother: 'A very sad feature of the case is the fact that their mother, who lives in

²²⁸ NLI Ms 34, 256A: Diary of Mary Martin, 2 Jan. 1916.

²²⁹ Ibid pp 24; 35, 36; 37; NLI Ms 27,816 (7) Letter from Imperial War Graves Commission to Senta McDonnell, 27 Dec. 1918.

²³⁰ Winter, "Families" p.65.

²³¹ Doyle, "Tell her gently", p.3.

²³² TNA LAB 2/1580/CCW911/2/1920: Margaret Hogan, Cork Board, 20 Feb. 1922; For more discussion of the impact of the war on the Abel and Dempsey families, see Fionnuala Walsh, "The impact of the First World War on Celbridge, Co. Kildare" in *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society*, xx, no. 3 (2013), pp 287-300.

²³³ *Leitrim Observer*, 15 Jan. 1916; Rosamond Stephen described two suicides in her Belfast neighbourhood involving the mothers of soldiers, which were attributed to the women's anxiety over their sons in the trenches, Walsh (ed.) *An Englishwoman in Belfast*, p.37.

Celbridge, has by the death of her second son lost her only support. She is totally blind and unable to help herself in any way'.²³⁴

The dependents of soldiers killed in the war received pensions from the government. Between August 1914 and March 1920 the government provided pensions to 23,347 widows and children of officers and 243,617 widows and children of non-commissioned officers and enlisted men in the UK.²³⁵ A war widow received thirteen shillings and nine pence per week for herself and five shillings for the eldest child and an allowance decreasing by 10d for each other child.²³⁶ Although the widow's pension was significantly more than the Old Age Pension, the amount was not overly generous and would not have provided much protection from the impact of inflation. Until 1916 the naval and military pensions were administered by philanthropic organisations including the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association, the Royal Patriotic Corporation and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society. The Naval and Military War Pensions Act however brought this work under government responsibility.²³⁷ The pensions could be withdrawn from women considered unworthy of them, legitimising surveillance of women's behaviour by the State. Smith argues that the pension scheme was based on the 'middle-class expectation of a sober, discreet, grieving widow who would care for the children of the fallen hero'. She suggests that the surveillance of soldiers' dependents was motivated by the reluctance of the State to subsidise 'undeserving citizens'.²³⁸ Such attempts by the State to regulate the behaviour of women and to exercise surveillance over military families were not confined to widows. Similar attitudes prevailed in relation to the separation allowances provided to soldiers' dependents. The wartime discourses surrounding motherhood and social morality are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Although the Great War brought prosperity to farmer's families in Ireland, urban waged workers and those reliant on fixed incomes suffered significant hardship from the shortages and doubling in the cost of living. Women's role in household management took on increasing importance in wartime and they gained greater control of the family income. Nevertheless everyday living became more difficult for the majority while soldiers' families endured the psychological distress of separation and, in many cases, bereavement. The Great War resulted in greater state intervention in the domestic and everyday lives of women in Ireland, through the provision of financial support for the dependents of soldiers and sailors, regulation of food production and prices, relief efforts coordinated by the National Relief Fund, and the infant welfare movement. The consequences of this intervention for the

²³⁴ *Leinster Leader*, 6 Apr. 1918.

²³⁵ War Office, *Statistics of the military effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, p.572.

²³⁶ *Irish Independent*, 14 Jan. 1918.

²³⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 14 Apr. 1916.

²³⁸ Smith, "Discourses of morality and truth in social welfare", pp 524-532.

individual woman and for perceptions of appropriate gendered behaviour are discussed in Chapter Four.

These initiatives and state intervention in everyday lives were not unique to Ireland. In fact, they closely resemble the domestic experience of women in Britain and other combatant countries. However there were some elements that were particular to the experience of women in Ireland. The socioeconomic impact of the war was very different in Ireland compared to Britain. Rural Ireland underwent a period of unprecedented prosperity as it became the primary supplier of food for Britain as well as Ireland. However the much smaller war industry in Ireland meant that unemployment and underemployment remained problematic in urban areas, unlike in Britain. Wages remained exceptionally low in Ireland while the disparities between the implementation of rationing in Ireland compared to Britain meant that the poor population was particularly badly affected by increased cost of living. Issues of welfare became politicised and were employed by republicans as a means of attacking the legitimacy of British rule in Ireland. For example, republicans drew links between the food supply concerns and the experience of Ireland during the Great Famine while the infant welfare movement was seized upon by republicans as a means of highlighting what they saw as the negative consequences of British rule for Irish people. The conflicted attitudes in Irish society towards Irish participation in the Great War are further evident in the treatment of working class soldiers' wives which is discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4: Separation women and social morality

In his examination of the mobilisation of European societies for the Great War, John Horne argues that the wartime conditions created a specific 'social morality' on the home front, which he describes as 'a set of reciprocal moral judgements on the contribution of different groups to the national effort'.¹ The conduct of women was held up to a higher ideal and the language of patriotism, loyalty and sacrifice was used to praise or criticise women's behaviour. The previous chapter discussed the emphasis on motherhood enshrined in the wartime infant welfare movement. This focus on motherhood meant that any transgressions of appropriate behaviour such as excessive drinking were viewed as threatening the future of the race through its effects on their children, actual or potential.² Wartime propaganda attempted to preserve traditional notions of femininity, making this a central part of the war effort.³ Soldiers' wives, known as 'separation women' in Ireland, became the particular target for censure and surveillance. The discourse surrounding 'separation women' was part of a transnational phenomenon invoking wartime social morality and censoring of the behaviour of soldiers' wives, and an issue with particular Irish connotations. This chapter focuses on the discourse surrounding the behaviour of 'separation women' together with the attempts to monitor and control women's sexual behaviour.

Separation women

The Irish historiography of so-called 'separation women' has focused on their alleged interaction with the republican movement after the Easter Rising.⁴ Their hostility towards the rebels in the aftermath of the Rising and towards Sinn Féin over the following two years is analysed in Chapter Eight. The broader wartime and international context is frequently overlooked however. This section focuses on the wartime discourse surrounding the behaviour of 'separation women' and investigates the reality behind the myth. It builds upon

¹ John Horne, "Mobilising for 'total war', 1914-1918" in Horne (ed.) *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), p.11.

² Lewis, *The politics of Motherhood*, p.68; Smith, "Discourses of morality & truth in social welfare", p.521; Susan R. Grayzel, "Liberating Women? Examining gender, morality and sexuality in First World War Britain and France" in Gail Braybon (ed.) *Evidence, history and the Great War* (Oxford, 2003), p. 118.

³ Susan Grayzel, "Women's mobilisation for war" in 1914-1918 online, *International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* (December, 2014).

⁴ See for example, Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, pp 45-47; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), pp 142-144; Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916-23* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 126-127; Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: the Irish rebellion* (London, 2005), pp 171-179, 244, 262.

the work of Maria Luddy who discusses the topic briefly in her valuable investigation of prostitution in modern Ireland.⁵

Chapter Three outlined the separation allowances provided to soldiers' dependents. This system of universal welfare was unprecedented and consequently caused some uncertainty as to its administration, most significantly on the vital question of whether the allowances constituted a welfare entitlement or poor relief and charitable aid, and as such what conditions should be attached.⁶ This question was further blurred by the involvement of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association (SSFA) in the administration of the allowances in the first year of the war.⁷ In both Great Britain and Ireland the separation allowances were accompanied by significant controversy and generated copious discussion in the press. The spending of the funds was the subject of concern among the government and those involved in organisations assisting the poor. Women found guilty of adultery or misuse of the allowance were threatened with its removal.⁸ During the war some 50,000 women in Britain were investigated for misconduct (about 2% of all recipients of the allowance), and of these, approximately 16,000 (32% of those investigated) lost their allowance.⁹ Lutz D.H. Sauerteig has noted that this policing of women's behaviour constituted state supervision of domestic morality.¹⁰ By fulfilling the role of the breadwinner the state had appointed itself the 'surrogate husband' of the army wives with apparent jurisdiction over their behaviour as well as their needs¹¹

Penny Summerfield has described how in Great Britain police were requested by the Home Office to exercise surveillance over service-men's wives to 'ensure that relief shall not be continued to persons who prove themselves unworthy to receive it'. Summerfield views this moral intervention as the state 'assuming the disciplinary function of the absent husband over his wife'.¹² In France drinking among women workers was given more attention but concern was also expressed that soldiers might return from the front to find their wives in prison for drunkenness.¹³ As in Ireland, women spending their allowance on drink were considered particularly heinous in light of their husband's sacrifice for his country.¹⁴ In Germany there was resentment towards soldiers' wives who were perceived as unfairly benefiting from the war through their allowances. They were criticised for their

⁵ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, pp 178-184.

⁶ Pedersen, "Gender, welfare & citizenship in Britain during the Great War", p.997.

⁷ Pedersen, *Family, dependence, & the origins of the welfare state*, pp 110-111.

⁸ See for example *Irish Citizen*, 21 Nov. 1914, *Kildare Observer*, 30 Oct. 1915; Susan R Grayzel, "Women and Men", p.268.

⁹ Pedersen, *Family, dependence, & the origins of the welfare state*, p.112.

¹⁰ Lutz D.H. Sauerteig, "Sex, medicine and morality" in Roger Cooter, Mark Harrison and Steve Sturdy (eds) *War, medicine and modernity* (Sutton, 1998), p.169.

¹¹ Smith, "Discourses of morality & truth in social welfare", p.523.

¹² Summerfield, "Women and war in the twentieth century", p.309.

¹³ Grayzel, "Liberating women?", p.119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.116.

alleged extravagance, for neglecting their children, being unfaithful, and being too demanding of their entitlements.¹⁵ This hostility increased, as the conditions on the home front grew more difficult. In response, the government introduced means testing for the allowances after 1916.¹⁶ Similarly in Vienna soldiers' wives were criticised for frivolously spending state funds. They were described as *Unterstützungsweiber*: 'welfare women'.¹⁷ Interestingly, soldiers' wives in the Ottoman Empire experienced little resentment, which Yigit Akin attributes to the fact that the allowances were comparatively small.¹⁸

This public concern with domestic morality was very evident in Ireland. Examination of the wartime press reveals a widespread belief in an endemic problem of alcohol abuse, fraudulent claims and child neglect by soldiers' dependents. For example, the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance claimed in July 1915 that a 'great proportion of the liberal separation allowance' provided to soldiers' dependents, was being spent on alcohol.¹⁹ It was alleged that soldiers' wives were going straight to the public houses after collecting their allowances from the post office.²⁰ The behaviour of soldiers' wives was variously described as 'gone beyond control' and as a 'shocking scandal'.²¹

Comparisons were constantly drawn between the women's behaviour and the patriotism of their husbands. They were perceived as betraying their husbands who were bravely serving at the front. For example, the chairman of the Baltinglass petty sessions made the following comment after the conviction of a soldier's wife for being drunk and disorderly: 'Drunkenness at all times is most reprehensible but at a time like the present it is worst of all. [...] It is very disgraceful to have women in receipt of separation allowances to avail of it by getting into a state of drunkenness'.²² In Ireland, as in France, women spending their allowance on drink were considered particularly heinous in light of their husband's sacrifice for his country.²³

However many individuals, while convinced that there was a nationwide problem of misbehaviours of 'separation women', also claimed that their own locality was not so bad as elsewhere.²⁴ For example the *Kerryman* stated in December 1915 that 'the evil does not

¹⁵ Ute Daniel, *The war from within: German working class women in the First World War* (Oxford, 1997), p.291.

¹⁶ Susan Grayzel, "Women's mobilisation for war" in *1914-1918 online, International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* (December, 2014).

¹⁷ Healy, *Vienna and the fall of the Hapsburg Empire*, p.196.

¹⁸ Yigit Akin, "War, women and the state: the politics of sacrifice in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War" in *Journal of Women's History*, vol. xxvi, no.2 (2014), p.20.

¹⁹ *Irish Independent*, 31 July 1915.

²⁰ *Irish Times*, 26 June 1915.

²¹ *Skibbereen Eagle*, 23 Oct. 1915.

²² *Kildare Observer*, 5 June 1915.

²³ Grayzel, "Liberating women?", p.116.

²⁴ See *Donegal News*, 13 Feb. 1915, *Connacht Tribune*, 18 Sept. 1915, *Kildare Observer*, 30 Oct. 1915; *Kerryman*, 11 Dec. 1915.

seem to be so prevalent in Kerry, or to exist in such shocking forms, in comparison with other places'.²⁵ The chairman of a meeting of the Belfast branch of SSFA similarly stated in December 1914 that he did not think drinking among soldiers' wives had been in excess in Belfast. The secretary of the Belfast branch of the NSPCC was of the opinion that the 'habitual drunkards' were perhaps drinking more, but did not believe there had been any great increase in that city.²⁶ Despite this, the local press continued to highlight the issue.

The Women's Patriotic Council was established in Belfast in early 1916 in an attempt to combat the drink problem in Ulster. While it was stated at the inaugural meeting that drinking among soldiers' wives was not so extensive as represented, the *Lady of the House*, in its reporting of the meeting, disagreed strongly. While accepting that many soldiers' wives were 'everything they ought to be' the magazine felt that 'large numbers are undoubtedly drinking to excess'.²⁷ A government inquiry into allegations of drunkenness among soldiers' dependents in December 1914 concluded that the majority of soldiers' wives were using the money well and were consequently better clothed and fed. While accepting that there was some increase in drunkenness in certain areas, they did not consider the problem to be a significant one.²⁸ Nevertheless concern with the issue continued unabated.

Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations condemned the misuse of the allowances. At the Church of Ireland diocesan synod in Armagh in October 1915, the primate described the separation allowance as 'not a blessing but a curse' because of the way it was teaching women to drink. He contrasted their drinking with their husband's sacrifice at the front and suggested that their behaviour was putting their husbands in greater jeopardy: 'How can God Almighty look favourably upon our armies while the desolation is wrought amongst us?'²⁹ A Catholic priest, Fr Gunning of Nenagh, made similar reference to the soldiers at the front 'who were dying, red with their life's blood in defence of home and country' and the contrast with 'unwomanly and unchristian' behaviour of the women.³⁰ Another Nenagh priest, Fr Fogarty, advised the women to spend their allowance on their children and to save any remaining, arguing that the war was not a time for spending money on drink but rather 'a time for prayer, penance and religious living'.³¹

²⁵ *Kerryman*, 11 Dec. 1915.

²⁶ PRONI D1071/J/H/3/1: Report of special meeting of the Belfast division of the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association, Dec. 1914 p.6.

²⁷ *Lady of the House*, Belfast edition, 15 Feb. 1915.

²⁸ NAI CSO RP 1914/22394 "File re misuse of separation allowances", 17 Dec. 1914.

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 29 Oct. 1915; see similar rhetoric alleging the national intemperance would be to blame if Ireland faced invasion, *Journal of the general synod of the Church of Ireland holden in Dublin MDCCCXV* (ed.) J.A. Maconchy (Dublin, 1915), p.xlvii.

³⁰ *Donegal News*, 25 Sept. 1915.

³¹ *Nenagh Guardian*, 18 Dec. 1915.

A number of church representatives lobbied for greater control of the sale of intoxicating liquor in Ireland, to combat the issue. In February 1915 the Roman Catholic Bishop of Waterford argued for greater enforcement of the liquor licensing laws while the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin argued for the stricter control of the sale of drink.³² A joint meeting of representatives of the Presbyterian Assembly and the General Synod of the Church of Ireland discussed the issue in November 1915, and called for the introduction of prohibition to combat the 'deplorable degradation caused by the large increase of drunkenness, especially among women who are in receipt of government allowances'.³³ The Presbyterian Assembly, the annual Conference of Methodists and the executive committee of the Congregational Union all passed resolutions calling for wartime prohibition of alcohol, citing the widespread 'suffering and demoralisation' of soldiers' dependents due to the 'freer circulation of money'. The Presbyterian Assembly linked the issue to the infant welfare movement, referring to the war as a time when 'in an especial manner child-life is the State's most precious asset'.³⁴

A deputation of the representative body of the Society of Friends met Sir Matthew Nathan to discuss the problem.³⁵ They particularly wished to extend the principle of paying a woman's money to a Trustee to be administered on her behalf when she has been found guilty of misspending it.³⁶ The Society of Friends emphasised that it was not a case of 'teetotalism but a case of necessity in an extraordinary emergency'.³⁷ Numerous diverse groups lobbied the government and the police authorities to deal with the issue of allowance abuse and excessive drinking. Although the suffrage societies were generally more sympathetic towards the women, a deputation of the Suffrage Emergency Council met with the Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police in September 1914 to urge the immediate enforcement of the Intoxicating Liquors (temporary restrictions) Act. They described the circumstances leading to greater intemperance in Dublin: sums of money paid to women 'who never had so much actual cash in their hands before'; the very large number of young soldiers in the city; and a general atmosphere of 'excitement and agitation'.³⁸

³² *Irish Catholic directory and almanac for 1916* (Dublin, 1916), p.504; Bernard, *In wartime*, p.55.

³³ *Minutes of the proceedings of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, June 1916* (Dublin, 1916), p.121.

³⁴ *Minutes of the proceedings of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, June 1916* p.93; *Minutes of the one hundred and forty-seventh conference of the people called Methodists, in Belfast June 1916* (Dublin, 1916) p.76; *Minutes of the one hundred and forty-eighth conference of the people called Methodists, in Belfast June 1917* (Dublin, 1917) p.100; Malcolm Coles, *I will build my church: the story of the Congregational Union of Ireland 1829-1979* (Belfast, 1979), p.28.

³⁵ *Irish Times*, 4 Dec. 1915.

³⁶ Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 15 Nov. 1915.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Irish Citizen*, 26 Sept. 1914.

The Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance was particularly engaged with the issue, meeting numerous times with Nathan to present their views.³⁹ They initially sought total prohibition of alcohol but when informed that this was impossible, instead focused on promoting greater surveillance of soldiers' families through the NSPCC and the SSFA. They suggested that the police contact the SSFA with details of any women known to be misusing their allowances. Nathan disagreed with the idea, pointing out that there was a 'general objection to the police communicating the offences of individuals to third parties and this objection would specifically apply to cases where there had been no convictions'.⁴⁰

The Association organised a conference in late 1915 to discuss the issue of intemperance among soldiers and their dependents in Dublin. In attendance at the meeting were representatives of three suffrage societies (Church League for Women Suffrage, Irish Women's Reform League and Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association), numerous temperance organisations including the Dublin Women's Temperance Association and the Irish Women's Temperance Union, as well as the NSPCC and the SSFA.⁴¹ It was described as an 'undenominational' event with support from both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland. The representatives apparently gave a 'very vivid picture' of the temptations facing soldiers in Dublin and the misspending of the separation allowances. They lobbied for the inclusion of Dublin as a Scheduled Area and argued for more extensive use of probation for intemperate women and assigning of the allowances to Trustees for distribution on behalf of the children.⁴² Nathan investigated the implementation of both proposals.⁴³ He also inquired as to the measures undertaken to deal with the issue of soldiers' wives in England, and apparently was informed that all that was done in England was that the SSFA brought their 'influence to bear upon' the women convicted of drunkenness.⁴⁴

It was suggested in 1915 that women patrols should be established to monitor the behaviour of women in public houses, as well as on the streets. Two middle-class women disguised themselves as charwomen and visited public houses in Dublin in March 1915 to assess general conditions and the implementation of the licensing laws.⁴⁵ Appalled at the lack of enforcement of the laws and that the public houses served alcohol to 'hopelessly drunk' men and women with babies and children, Mrs Farquharson and Mrs Fitzmaurice

³⁹ Nathan papers: Memorandum 468, 30 July 1915; Memorandum 468, 26 Aug. 1915.

⁴⁰ Nathan papers: Memorandum 468, 26 Aug. 1915.

⁴¹ Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 15 Nov. 1915.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 26 Nov. 1915; see also Nathan papers: Ms 464, Letter from Nathan to Major Friend, 12 Sept. 1915.

⁴⁴ Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 6 Oct. 1915.

⁴⁵ Nathan papers: Memorandum 467, 10 Mar. 1915.

Manning met with Nathan to argue for the complete reform of public houses. They proposed the introduction of women inspectors and women police who would 'influence women who went to public houses and also, apparently, the publicans'. Nathan was unconvinced of the practicality of the suggestions.⁴⁶

There was some criticism of the attempts to monitor and control the behaviour of 'separation women', particularly evident in the suffrage paper, the *Irish Citizen*. By October 1914 the *Irish Citizen* had identified the treatment of 'separation women' as 'pseudo-benevolent busybodies' dictating to poor women how they should spend their time and money.⁴⁷ The *Irish Citizen* was unusually supportive of the separation women, viewing it as a class and gender issue rather than a political one. The newspaper described the proposals to manage the spending of the separation allowance for the women as an 'insolent attempt to dragoon women into virtue and thrift' and also pointed out that the suggestions put forward to deal with the issue were symptomatic of societal and governmental attitudes towards women generally: 'No one would dare suggest interference with liberties of men as a sex, however crying the transgression of individuals'.⁴⁸ They viewed the supervision and regulation of the behaviour of soldiers' wives as a curtailment of civil liberties and a worrying extension of state control.⁴⁹ The *Irish Citizen* repeatedly linked the issue to the need for women's suffrage, arguing that no special restrictions on women should take place until 'their consent has been expressed at the ballot box'.⁵⁰ In their view, anything else was highly undemocratic.

Indeed, the most frequent and outspoken defenders of the soldiers' dependents were the suffrage societies, including the anti-war Irish Women's Franchise League. The Irish Women's Franchise League and the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation adopted resolutions in the winter of 1914, protesting against the War Office decision to withhold allowances from those deemed unworthy. They demanded that any measures taken to ensure proper behaviour be of general application 'without differentiation of sex or class'.⁵¹ The Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation objected to the government differentiating between the intemperance of soldiers' dependents and ordinary civilians, pointing out that no employer had the right to withhold a worker's pay because the wage was ill spent.⁵² Suffragists were also involved in the establishment of a recreation room for soldiers' wives to provide

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Irish Citizen*, 31 Oct. 1914.

⁴⁸ Ibid; similar comments about the double-standards of attitudes to women's behaviour were made in the paper in the Sept. 1917 issue.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 21 Nov. 1914.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 10 Apr. 1915, 3 Apr. 1915.

⁵¹ Ibid., 28 Nov. 1914, 26 Dec. 1914.

⁵² Ibid., 16 Jan. 1915.

'sympathy, comfort and association', the lack of which were considered the main cause of the excessive drinking.⁵³

The paper published a number of articles pointing out the harsh conditions in which many of these women lived; criticising for example the attitudes expressed at a temperance meeting in April 1915:

Not one of the speakers made any reference to the housing or other conditions under which these women live, nor had they a word of sympathy for the mental suffering of the wives and mothers who are in many cases undergoing greater torture than the men in the thick of the fight.⁵⁴

The Church League for Women's Suffrage argued in April 1915 that 'it had been satisfactorily proved that the stories of wholesale drinking by soldiers' and sailors' wives were grossly exaggerated' yet the reputation of the women as irresponsible drinkers was maintained.⁵⁵ The rationale for this perception and the evidence for criminal activity by soldiers' wives shall be explored in the following section.

Separation women in the courts

Evidently, the issue of misbehaviour by 'separation women' received significant attention in Ireland during the war from various disparate groups. The broad consensus appears to be that excessive drinking was rampant among soldiers' wives. To what extent was the concern with the behaviour of 'separation women' warranted? Was their reputation justified? From August 1914 to November 1918 hundreds of court cases involving soldiers' wives were reported in the local and national press. I have examined all reports of court cases, in twenty local and national newspapers in 1915 and 1917, which explicitly mentioned that the defendant was in receipt of a separation allowance.⁵⁶ The data presented in Table 4.1 gives some insight into the reporting of cases involving 'separation women' and the extent of the issue.

Table 4.1: Press reports of 'separation women' in the courts in 1915 and 1917

Offence	1915	1917
Drunkenness	23	1
Drunk and disorderly behaviour	13	6
Child neglect/ child cruelty	28	21
Fraud	21	10

⁵³ Ibid., 14 Nov. 1914.

⁵⁴ *Irish Citizen*, 3 Apr. 1915; see also *Irish Citizen* 24 Oct. 1914, 31 Oct. 1914, 14 Nov. 1914, Sept. 1916.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 17 Apr. 1915.

⁵⁶ The above figures refer to all cases which explicitly mentioned that the defendant was a soldiers' dependent reported in the *Irish Times*, *Weekly Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, *Freeman's Journal*, *Kildare Observer*, *Kerryman*, *Nenagh Guardian*, *Westmeath Examiner*, *Leitrim Observer*, *Southern Star*, *Nenagh News*, *Anglo-Celt*, *Meath Chronicle*, *Ulster Herald*, *Donegal News*, *Cork Examiner*, *Connaught Tribune*, *Longford Leader*, *Skibbereen Eagle*, and *Limerick Leader*, from 1 Jan. 1915 to 31st Dec. 1915 and 1 Jan. 1917 to 31st Dec. 1917.

Violent conduct, riotous behaviour, assault	4	5
Abusive language	4	2
Other	5	4
Total	98	49

The table demonstrates the types of crimes for which such women were prosecuted and offers a comparative perspective between 1915 and 1917. Ann Matthews has suggested that the behaviour of ‘separation women’ only drew significant attention in the aftermath of the Easter Rising.⁵⁷ However these figures show that there was significantly more reporting of cases involving ‘separation women’ in 1915 than 1917. In 1915 there were cases involving ‘separation women’ almost every week of the year.⁵⁸ Cases involving alcohol abuse featured heavily in the court reports. As well as the thirty-six reported prosecutions in 1915 for drunkenness or drunk and disorderly behaviour, eighteen of the twenty-eight child neglect cases also explicitly mentioned alcohol as a factor. Similarly, nine of the twenty-one child neglect cases in 1917 involved alcohol abuse. The significant decline in cases involving drunken behaviour in 1917 compared to 1915 has two possible explanations: that soldiers’ wives became accustomed to the allowances and excessive drinking declined in response or that there was greater surveillance of soldiers’ wives in the first half of the war leading to more arrests and greater press attention of the cases.

Drunkenness

Table 4.1 indicates the significance of the problem of ‘separation women’ in Ireland during the Great War. However the numbers in trouble represented a very small proportion of the total numbers receiving the allowance. They were also a minority of the criminal prosecutions of women for drink-related offences during the war. Indeed, the annual criminal judicial statistics reveal a wartime decline in the total number of women arrested for drunken behaviour in Ireland. The total numbers of people arrested for alcohol related offences declined sharply, which can be attributed to reduced alcohol consumption arising from increased prices, shortage of supply and the restrictive licensing laws.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish republican women 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010), p.143.

⁵⁸ See for example *Kerryman*, 27 Mar. 1915, 24 Apr. 1915; *Donegal News* 24 Apr. 1915, 5 June 1915; *Southern Star*, 8 May 1915, 3 July 1915; *Longford Leader*, 24 May 1915; *Irish Independent*, 8 June 1915, 31 July 1915; *Nenagh News*, 19 June 1915; *Leitrim Observer*, 26 June 1915; *Freeman’s Journal*, 22 July 1915.

⁵⁹ Yeates, *A city in wartime* p.287; Cousins, *Armagh and the Great War*, p.159.

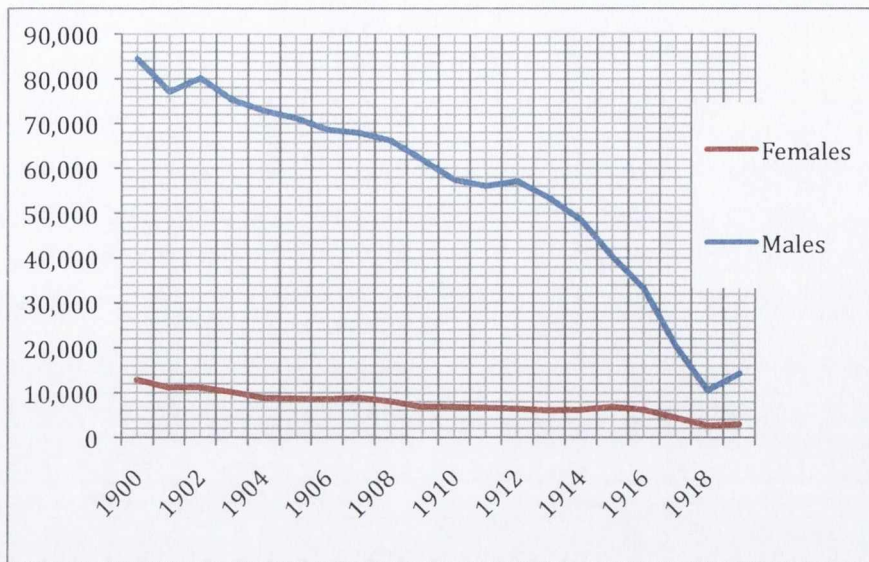


Fig. 4.1 Arrests of males and females for drunken behaviour in Ireland

Women formed a minority of those arrested for such offences, just 11.9% of all those arrested between 1900 and 1919. However, while the number of women arrested for drunkenness or drunk and disorderly behaviour fell, the proportion of females among all those arrested increased significantly, from 10.6% for the period 1911-14 to 19.5% for 1915-18. Figure 4.2 demonstrates that the number of women arrested rose in 1915, reaching the highest figure on record for that decade, but then entered a steadily decline.⁶⁰

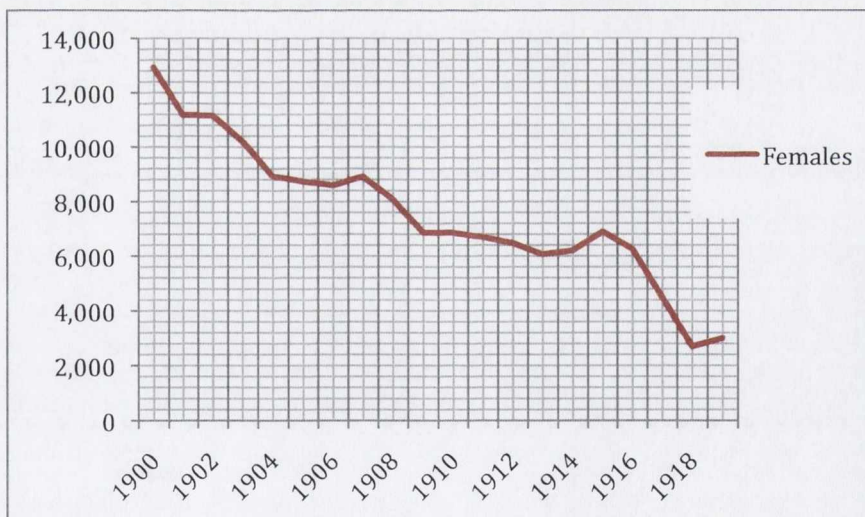


Fig. 4.2 Arrests of females for drunken behaviour in Ireland 1900-1919

It is evident from the conference organised by the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance and the reports of meetings with Nathan that he and the Association considered the problem of excessive drinking by women particularly significant

⁶⁰ *Irish association for the prevention of intemperance, annual reports 1878-1916* (Dublin, 1916); *Irish association for the prevention of intemperance, annual reports 1917-1927* (Dublin, 1927).

in Dublin. What evidence can be discerned from the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) statistics? A very similar picture emerges to that in the national figures. The total number of arrests for alcohol related offences also declined sharply in Dublin during the war years.⁶¹ The percentage of women among those arrested for drunkenness was much higher in Dublin than the remainder of Ireland with women making up on average 39.5% of all offenders for the years 1900-10. This increased during the war. From 1915 onwards women represented the majority of those arrested for drink related offences, rising from 41.3% in 1914 to 59.7% by 1917. This is likely due to the higher proportion of women among the population of Dublin during those years due to the absence of men on army service. Significantly, apart from a sharp increase in 1915, the actual numbers of women arrested for drink related offences declined by 14.0% during the war from an average of 1,146 for the years 1911-14 to an average of 972 for the following five years.

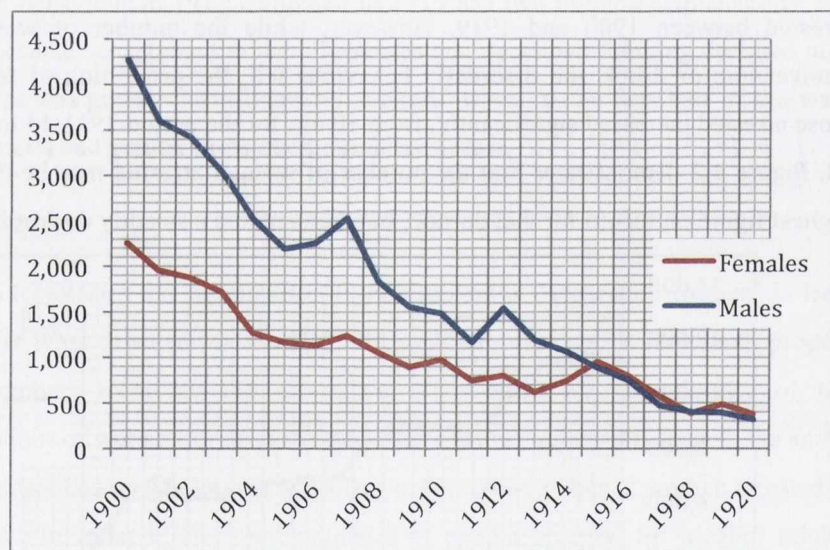


Fig. 4.3 Arrests of males & females for drunken behaviour in Dublin

The increase in the number of women arrested for drunken behaviour in 1915 corresponds to the time when there was most public anxiety about the supposed excessive drinking by ‘separation women’. The question arises of whether the increase in arrests of women in 1915 is a sign of greater instances of women drinking excessively or of heightened attention paid to women’s behaviour. It is also not clear how many of those arrested were ‘separation women’. The *Irish Times* rightly noted in August 1915 that it was by then assumed that any drunken woman on the streets of Dublin or in a public house was the dependent of a soldier or sailor, while according to the reporter’s research, only an ‘infinitesimal percentage’ of

⁶¹ Statistical tables for the Dublin Metropolitan Police 1900-1920 (Dublin, 1900-1920).

them are connected to soldiers.⁶² They estimated that the percentage of drunkards among women dependents of soldiers to be certainly less than 5% and most likely less than 3%. This estimate was based on inquiries at the offices of the NSPCC and SSFA, and discussion with both the police authorities and military authorities. The police asserted that there was no increase in the number of women drunkards since the beginning of the war although the volume of drunkenness had slightly increased: 'women who hitherto drank pretty freely are now indulging more often than heretofore'.⁶³

Child neglect

Child neglect was also an issue associated with 'separation women'. Child neglect was receiving increasingly greater attention in the years before the Great War. The 1908 Children's Act extended the power of the state to intervene in the care of children suffering from neglect or 'wilful cruelty' from their caregivers.⁶⁴ The renewed interest in the area was further heightened by the wartime emphasis on children as a 'collective resource' for the nation.⁶⁵ However, the focus on child welfare could be used to justify further state intervention into women's lives. Angela Smith has described the 1908 Act as a further attempt by the state to exert its control over the family. She argues that child welfare and legislation for prevention of neglect represents 'control, punishment and regulation' as well as 'nurture, treatment and support'.⁶⁶ In her history of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Ireland, Sarah-Ann Buckley has noted the problem of biased NSPCC inspectors. Although very concerned with the welfare of the children, their attitudes towards the caregivers were less than understanding or patient. Working-class parents were described as 'immoral', 'lazy', 'useless' and in other such pejorative terms.⁶⁷ Buckley argues that the inspectors saw themselves as 'saviours of the poor', benevolent beings who gave the worthless mothers every chance to reform but inevitably had to take further action to safeguard the children.⁶⁸

These attitudes can be seen in a number of the investigations of 'separation women' for child neglect. The press reports of the court cases demonstrate how incidents of neglect during the war were frequently blamed on the mother's drinking. For example, the poor clothing and 'miserable home' of the Rowe children in Dublin was attributed to their

⁶² *Irish Times*, 29 Aug. 1915.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Sarah-Anne Buckley, *The cruelty man: child welfare, the NSPCC and the state in Ireland, 1889-1956* (Manchester, 2013), p.23.

⁶⁵ Susan Pedersen, *Family, dependence & the origins of the welfare state* (Cambridge, 1993), p.3.

⁶⁶ Smith, "Discourses of morality & truth in social welfare", p.521.

⁶⁷ Buckley, *The cruelty man*, p.56.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 56-57.

mother's 'drunken habits'.⁶⁹ However the individual circumstances of the family were often not taken into sufficient account. Bridget Talbot's husband had been summoned a number of times before the war and ordered to make better provision for his wife and children who were said to be living 'a life of poverty and degradation'. Although Bridget received an allowance of twenty-three shillings a week after her husband's enlistment, it is in one sense not surprising that the family's problems did not disappear all at once. By September 1915 the children were in the workhouse and Bridget was convicted of child neglect.⁷⁰ The Sullivan family of Windmill, Cork, had been under the observation of the NSPCC since 1913 when one of the children had died. The children were found in a state of neglect in December 1916, which the local magistrate blamed on the mother's separation allowance. She was sentenced to one month in jail with hard labour.⁷¹

The line between poverty and neglect was not always easy to untangle, especially in tenement conditions. Neglect was often a direct result of poverty and the very difficult conditions in which families lived in urban areas.⁷² The 1918 report of the Dublin Corporation housing committee reveals that there were 1,705 soldiers' dependents registered as heads of households in Dublin tenements in 1917. Of these, 1,115 (63.7%) lived in second or third class tenements - buildings that were declared unfit for human habitation, which lacked basic sanitation and cooking facilities and provided no privacy. These usually consisted of one-room homes in buildings, which often housed eight or nine families. There were also thirty-four war widows living in the tenements. Families in receipt of separation allowances made up 13.1% of the 8,503 families living in second and third class tenements in 1917, the second largest occupational group after labourers.⁷³ Given the circumstances in which many soldiers' dependents lived, it is perhaps not surprising that the NSPCC inspectors identified the children as being neglected or that the women may have preferred to pass the time in the public houses rather than their own homes.⁷⁴

What impact had the war on arrests for child neglect or on the proportion of women arrested? Figure 4.4 demonstrates that while arrests for child neglect and cruelty declined during the war, the proportion of female offenders increased. This was a significant increase, from 42.1% for the period 1911-14 to 63.1% for the following three years.⁷⁵ The most significant increase for such arrests of women was in 1915, the same year as that for drink

⁶⁹ *Irish Independent*, 8 June 1915.

⁷⁰ *Nenagh News*, 25 Sept. 1915.

⁷¹ *Skibbereen Eagle*, 10 Mar. 1917.

⁷² Buckley, *The cruelty man*, p.57.

⁷³ Dublin City Archives, "Report of the housing committee, 1918" in *Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, vol. I 1918* (Dublin, 1919), pp 115-145.

⁷⁴ Yeates, *A city in wartime*, p.283.

⁷⁵ Compiled from the Judicial Statistics, Ireland, 1900-1919; the 1918 report is missing from the collection of parliamentary papers.

related offences. The question of causality is again important: do the increased arrests reflect higher rates of child neglect or greater surveillance of working-class families during the war?

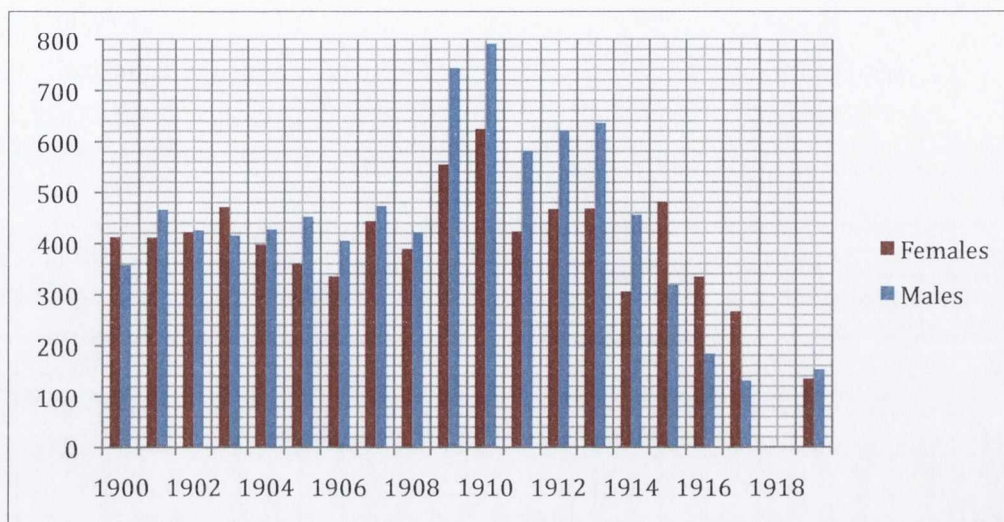


Fig. 4.4 Arrests for child neglect & child cruelty in Ireland 1900-1919

How do the figures for all of Ireland compare to Dublin? Figure 4.5 reveals a very similar situation in Dublin, as compared to Ireland as a whole, in relation to arrests for child neglect and child cruelty. There was a huge decrease in arrests for the war period as compared to the previous four years but a corresponding small increase in the proportion of women arrested. Although women had formed a higher percentage of those arrested before the war in Dublin than elsewhere, there was nevertheless a 10% jump in the proportion for the years 1915 to 1918.⁷⁶ 1915 was once again the war year with by far the highest number of arrests for these offences in Dublin, of both men and women.

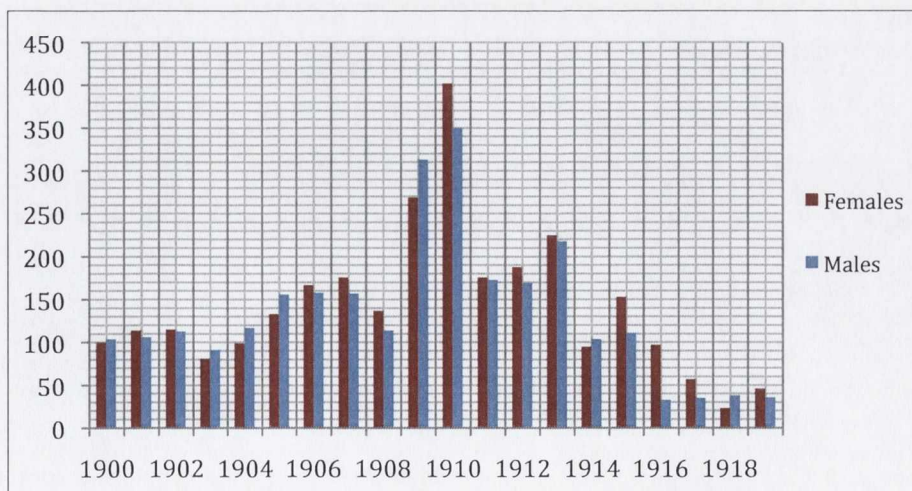


Fig. 4.5 Arrests for child neglect and child cruelty in Dublin 1900-1919

⁷⁶ *Dublin Metropolitan Police Statistical Tables 1913-1918* (Dublin, 1918).

The 1915 increase suggests greater investigation of suspected neglect cases, likely prompted by the public concern with misuse of separation allowances. The increasing proportion of women arrested for such offences during the war, can again be largely attributed to the mobilisation of soldiers. The NSPCC investigated the welfare of 33,234 soldiers' children in Ireland between August 1914 and March 1917. In the case of 116 families the society took over the administration of the separation allowances.⁷⁷ The records of the Dublin branch of the NSPCC give further insight into its wartime work.

Table 4.2 NSPCC Dublin and district branch caseload per annum 1901 to 1920

Period	Cases investigated	Offenders			Females as percentage of all offenders	Convictions
		Females	Males	Total		
1901-10	1670.8	736	988	1724	42.7	63.7
1911-20	1253.2	684	760	1444	47.5	51.8
1911-14	1437.3	708	974	1682	42.1	59.3
1915-18	1294	783	681	1464	53.5	58.3
1901-20	1462	710	874	1584	44.8	57.8

Table 4.2 is compiled from the annual reports of the Dublin and district branch of the NSPCC.⁷⁸ Despite a slight increase in cases needing investigation in 1915, the general trend for the war years was a decline in children reported as at risk, despite the increased focus on child welfare in the same period.

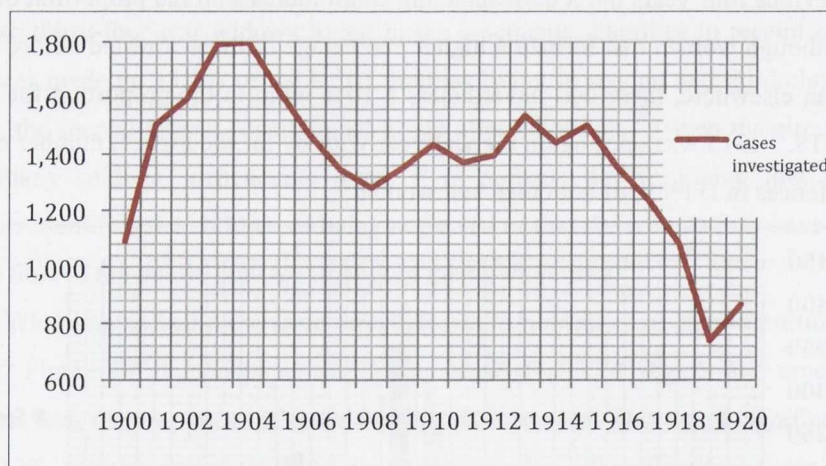


Fig. 4.6 Caseload of the NSPCC Dublin branch 1900-1920

⁷⁷ *Twenty-eighth annual report of the NSPCC* (Dublin, 1917), p.11.

⁷⁸ Compiled from the annual reports of the Dublin and district branch of the NSPCC 1901-20; The Dublin and district branch had committees in the following areas: Blackrock; Castleknock; Clondalkin, Inchicore and Kilmainham; Clontarf and Dollymount; Donnybrook; Dundrum; Foxrock, Carrickmines and Kiltarnan; Glasnevin, Drumcondra, Finglas and Santry; Howth, Sutton and Baldoyle; Kildare, Newbridge, The Curragh and Kilcullen; Leeson Park; Lucan, Leixlip, Celbridge and Hazelhatch; Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam square; Monastrean; Naas, North Dublin; Pembroke; Rathfarnham, Tallaght and Whitechurch; Rathgar, Terenure and Palmerstown Park; Sandymount, Merrion and Ringsend; and St Stephen's Green.

The proportion of offenders who were female however increased over the course of the war, with the average percentage for the war years being 11% higher than that for the previous four years. This is likely due to increased investigation of soldier's families where the mother was the primary care giver.

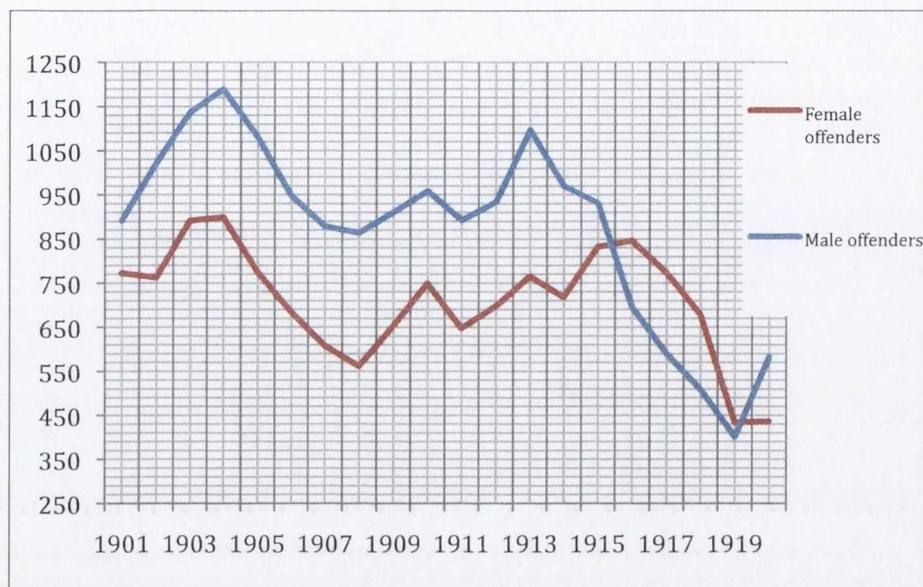


Fig. 4.7 Gender breakdown of NSPCC offenders in Dublin 1901-1919

The number of cases actually prosecuted remained very low throughout the war years, considering the total number of families investigated. There was a significant drop in the number of cases investigated in 1918 in the Dublin branch, and in the national organisation. The NSPCC attributed the drop in 1918 to the increased employment opportunities, better wages, the provision of separation allowances and the restrictions on the sale of alcohol and its prohibitive cost in wartime. The benefit of the separation allowances was particularly emphasised:

The bulk of the cases under investigation this year relate chiefly to the families of soldiers and sailors on active service. Most of these families are better off financially than they have ever been before, and consequently the homes are better provided with food and clothing than during normal conditions in times of peace when there were no funds or separation allowances available.⁷⁹

The NSPCC further suggested that women were not the worst offenders with regard to alcohol abuse: 'Experience tends to show that the women generally appear to be far more abstemious than the men and lapses appear to be most frequent in home comings of husbands on leave'.⁸⁰ The Galway branch of the NSPCC also stated in 1915 that the majority of the allegations against 'separation women' had proven to be false. They claimed that

⁷⁹ *Twenty-ninth annual report of the Dublin and district branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* (Dublin, 1918), p.10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

while there were some cases of women drinking, they were 'the usual culprits' and were mostly not the wives of servicemen.⁸¹

The evidence of all the datasets indicates an increase in child neglect investigations in 1915 and a steady decline thereafter, accompanied by a corresponding increase in the proportion of females as offenders. However, two questions remain unanswered. Is the increase in cases investigated in 1915 evidence of more incidences of child neglect or greater reporting of existing cases? The increased proportion of female offenders is clear; however, as previously mentioned; this may simply indicate greater surveillance of soldiers' families during the war where women were the primary caregivers. The link between the increased cases in 1915 and the separation allowances is also not proven. However it is known that soldiers' families came under particular attention from the authorities during the war, and perhaps particularly in 1915 when there was so much public discussion about the misuse of separation allowance money.⁸² It is therefore reasonable to assume that a significant number of the arrests for child neglect concerned soldiers' wives.

Evidently soldiers' wives were subjected to increased surveillance from governmental and other social reform agencies. This surveillance arose from the core question of whether the allowances represented part of the soldiers' pay or a welfare entitlement, and consequently what conditions, if any, should be attached. It was also very much a socioeconomic issue with the treatment of the women being dependent on their class. This was very evident in the reports of their court cases. Although the available evidence suggests that the rhetoric did not tally with the figures, the perception of an endemic problem of alcohol abuse among soldiers' wives nevertheless affected the way such women were treated in court. During such proceedings the fact that the woman was in receipt of the separation allowance was usually mentioned with the suggestion that the money was being ill spent. This was partly due to a government policy that it be ascertained in every case of a woman being brought before the magistrates, whether or not she was in receipt of a separation allowance.⁸³

Little attention was paid to the individual circumstances of the defendant with comparisons and associations constantly drawn between the particular case and others involving 'separation women'. For example, when one woman appeared before the Derry quarter sessions in June 1915 charged with not paying the bill for her boots, it was stated that the wives of soldiers were not spending their allowance very wisely and that it was all going to the public houses. There was no evidence that drink was a factor in the defendant's case

⁸¹ Henry, *Galway & the Great War*, p.120.

⁸² *Twenty-seventh annual report of the Dublin and district branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* (Dublin, 1916) p.11.

⁸³ Nathan papers: Ms 464, letter from Nathan to James MacMahon, 17 Sept. 1915

but the court assumed it was the underlying cause.⁸⁴ Harsher penalties were imposed to act as a deterrent for other 'separation women'. In Carrick-on-Suir, the magistrates decided to impose a custodial sentence rather than a fine in all cases of women charged with drunkenness, owing to the large number of cases involving soldiers' wives.⁸⁵

Only very occasionally was there sympathy expressed for the extreme emotional distress endured by many of the women. In a report on the devastating impact of the Battle of the Somme on the Ulster home front, the *Lady of the House* described an encounter with a drunken working-class woman on a tram. One of the fellow passengers explained that the woman had lost her four sons and that since she had received the news that the fourth had been killed, she had not been sober. The paper's editor remarked bemusedly that 'somehow no one blamed her –they could only pity but not condemn'.⁸⁶ More common was the treatment of Kate Sullivan, summoned before court for neglecting her children while drunk. She claimed that it was a one-off occurrence, which happened because she had just heard that her husband had been killed. Although it was confirmed that her husband had indeed been killed in action, Sullivan was convicted and threatened with a prison sentence.⁸⁷

Of the cases examined, there was just one where the response of the defendant to the criticism of her conduct, was recorded. Mary Reilly, a soldier's wife, was charged with drunk and disorderly conduct on the streets of Naas in county Kildare. She was sent to jail for one month with hard labour. On being told by the court that her behaviour was disgraceful, Reilly responded: 'Is it then? I am treated as disgraceful. Anything I get, my husband is earning it. A pig would not be treated worse than I am'.⁸⁸ Reilly had raised the vital question of whether the allowances constituted earnings or welfare, an issue that was never fully resolved. A number of magistrates made reference to the fact that the allowance was paid for through public taxes, with one describing the misuse of the allowances as 'public money turned to disgraceful purposes'.⁸⁹ The supposed wastage of taxpayers' money was deemed particularly unfair in a time when 'respectable people' were struggling to cope with the increased food prices.⁹⁰ For example, an article in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* stated that taxpayers were beginning to question why their money was transferring almost directly to the publicans.⁹¹

Allowance fraud was taken very seriously to ensure that women were not cheating the taxpayer. There were numerous court cases in Ireland during the war years concerning

⁸⁴ *Donegal News*, 5 June 1915.

⁸⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 22 July 1915.

⁸⁶ *Lady of the House*, Belfast edition, 15 Aug. 1916.

⁸⁷ *Skibbereen Eagle*, 27 Feb. 1915.

⁸⁸ *Kildare Observer*, 24 Nov. 1917.

⁸⁹ *Nenagh News*, 18 Aug. 1917; see also *Irish Times*, 10 Sept. 1915.

⁹⁰ See for example *Irish Times*, 16 Oct. 1915, *Kildare Observer*, 30 Oct. 1915; see also comment on war profiteers, *Lady of the House* (Belfast edition), 15 Dec. 1916.

⁹¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 17 Sept. 1915, p.688.

fraudulent allowance claims, the most notorious involving women either claiming to be the wives of unmarried soldiers or claiming multiple allowances as the wife of two soldiers.⁹² There was more than one case of a woman claiming to be her soldier brother's wife, in order to receive an allowance.⁹³ For example, Mary Rogers impersonated Priscilla Rogers, the late wife of her brother John. Priscilla had died in 1914 and Mary had decided to impersonate her in order to get the allowance for her and Priscilla's child, Anne, whom she was raising. She did not consider the pretence wrong in the circumstances.⁹⁴ A number of sad cases involved women prosecuted for claiming separation allowance for children who had recently died.⁹⁵

The majority of fraudulent cases appear to have involved mothers exaggerating the financial support provided by their soldier sons before the war and thus claiming a higher separation allowance.⁹⁶ Unlike those for soldiers' wives, allowances for the parents of soldiers were not universal but rather based on the extent of the parent's pre-war dependency on their soldier son. In some cases the mothers were penalised for including their son's earnings from casual work as well as his regular wage.⁹⁷ In another case the mother allegedly recorded her son's worth as opposed to what he had in fact been providing for her. Bridget Lee stated that her son was a 'good boy, and worth what she had claimed for him'. She said she was a poor woman and his loss was very great to her.⁹⁸ Lee was convicted of fraud and fined ten shillings.

The penalties for fraud could be harsh. Mary Ann Murray was convicted for defrauding the War Office after continuing to draw her separation allowance for six months after her husband had been invalided out of the army. Although she stated that she had believed it was arrears due to her husband, she was sentenced to two months in prison.⁹⁹ Rose McNamara was sentenced to three months in prison for fraudulently obtaining £38 in allowance from the War Office. Her husband had transferred from the Royal Irish Fusiliers to the Royal Engineers and she had drawn allowances simultaneously from the two regiments.¹⁰⁰

⁹² For example see *Leitrim Observer*, 12 June 1915; *Freeman's Journal* 7 July 1915, 12 July 1915; *Nenagh Guardian*, 25 Sept. 1915; *Nenagh News*, 27 Nov. 1915; *Freeman's Journal*, 2 Dec. 1915; *Irish Times*, 19 May 1915; *Irish Times*, 24 Dec. 1915.

⁹³ See case of Margaret McKinnon, *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Oct. 1915; that of Mary Rogers, *Irish Independent*, 6 Sept. 1917; and Elizabeth Wood, *Leitrim Observer*, 15 Sept. 1917.

⁹⁴ *Irish Independent*, 6 Sept. 1917.

⁹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 25 May 1917; *Anglo-Celt*, 14 July 1917; *Irish Independent*, 25 July 1917; *Irish Independent*, 1 Dec. 1917.

⁹⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 7 Aug. 1915; *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Nov. 1915; *Ulster Herald*, 11 Dec. 1915; *Irish Times*, 10 Aug. 1915; *Irish Times*, 13 Sept. 1915; *Irish Independent*, 25 Sept. 1915; *Irish Times*, 24 Dec. 1915.

⁹⁷ *Irish Times*, 3 Sept. 1915.

⁹⁸ *Irish Times*, 24 Dec. 1915.

⁹⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 7 Aug. 1915.

¹⁰⁰ *Irish Independent*, 28 Mar. 1917.

There were disparities in the treatment of the women however based on their apparent respectability. Ellen Clarke, described by the press as a 'respectably attired woman', appeared to receive favourable treatment from the court on account of her appearance. She was charged with obtaining goods by false pretences, by claiming to a grocer that her separation allowance was in arrears and thus needed to receive the goods on credit. Her allowance was not in fact in arrears, but she was found not guilty as it was deemed that there was 'no guilty intent'. On discharging her, the judge congratulated Clarke for having so many sons and relatives in the army.¹⁰¹ Social class was an important factor in determining attitudes towards the behaviour of 'separation women'. The allowances represented an increase in income only for those whose pre-war income was very low. This monitoring of the behaviour of the 'separation women' thus appears to have arisen out of middle-class concerns with working-class spending power.

The experience of 'separation women' in Ireland is evidence of the 'social morality' created by home front communities during the Great War. Although the behaviour of 'separation women' was not necessarily significantly changed by the war, they were held up to greater scrutiny and deemed unpatriotic for decisions made within their domestic lives. In many respects, the treatment and behaviour of soldiers' dependents in Ireland was very similar to Great Britain and other combatant countries. The issues of alcohol abuse, child neglect and fraud were universal as was the clear exaggeration of the extent of the problem in the press.

However the extent of the hostility towards Irishwomen was somewhat exceptional. The suffragist and labour advocate Sylvia Pankhurst recalled the surveillance that soldiers' wives in England were subjected to but also the public outcry against the excessive government interference in the domestic sphere.¹⁰² In contrast, in Ireland numerous attempts were made to lobby the government to impose stricter control and surveillance over the women and remarkably little empathy was expressed for the hardship or distress the women were enduring. From the outset, the conflicted relationship between much of Irish society and the British army increased the prejudices against those in receipt of the allowances. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the decision to extend the allowances to unmarried 'cohabitants' of soldiers and their illegitimate children was viewed in Ireland as evidence of British immorality, while Maria Luddy argues that the 'separation woman' became the 'new odious symbol of British rule in Ireland'. She suggests that the disdain felt for the army recruit was

¹⁰¹ *Donegal News*, 2 June 1917.

¹⁰² Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Homefront: a mirror to life in England during the First World War* (London, 1932), p.101.

projected onto the recruit's dependents.¹⁰³ Chapter Eight describes the violent interactions between republicans and 'separation women' and reveals the hostility directed at these women.

John Borgonovo rightly points out however that the negative stereotype was not constructed by republicans 'but rather exploited by them for political advantage'.¹⁰⁴ The press analysis in this chapter reveals that there was significant attention focused on 'separation women' before the Easter Rising and that their negative reputation was not limited to republican quarters. The general unpopularity of the 'separation woman' made them an easy and safe target for republican groups, who attributed all opposition to their cause to the women, citing their financial incentive to support continued British rule. It is however possible that the press focus on the separation women would have dissipated after the first year had their interaction with the republican and advanced nationalist movements not brought them renewed attention. This coincided with widespread anxiety in combatant countries concerning the role of women in society and their appropriate public behaviour. The increased prominence of 'social morality' campaigns in wartime reflected and was part of patriarchal concern with the apparent changing role of women during the war and a need to assert control over their actions.

Sexual immorality

Concern with drinking by soldiers' wives was part of a wider societal concern in early twentieth century Ireland about the supposed growth in immoral behaviour by women.¹⁰⁵ This concern increased in wartime in all combatant countries due to fears about the spread of venereal disease among the troops and anxiety about the increased independence for women involved in war work.¹⁰⁶ Susan Grayzel has noted how women's alcohol abuse was linked to a supposed collapse of 'gendered moral codes of behaviour'. Attempts made to control women's behaviour arose out of this fear. She emphasises however that discourses surrounding women's behaviour in Britain and France during the war reflected fears of what

¹⁰³ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, pp 178, 181.

¹⁰⁴ Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war & revolution*, p.143.

¹⁰⁵ For example, see Myrtle Hill's discussion of the concern with female alcohol consumption in early twentieth century Ireland: Hill, *Women in Ireland* p.40; concern with public immorality in Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish society* pp 157-172; for discussion of the establishment of the Irish Girls' Protection Crusade in 1913 by the Mothers' Union and the Girls' Friendly Society to protect against sexual impropriety: Diana McFarlan, *The Mothers' Union in Ireland: a centenary history 1887-1987* (Dublin, 1987), p.66.

¹⁰⁶ See for example, Philippa Levine, "'Walking the streets in a way no decent woman should": Women Police in World War I" in *Journal of Modern History*, lxvi, 1 (1994), pp 34-78; Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's identities at war: gender, motherhood and politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (London, 1999); Angela Woollacott "Khaki fever and its control: gender, class, age and sexual morality on the British home front in the First World War" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxix (1994), pp 325-334.

might occur rather than the reality.¹⁰⁷ Attempts to control women's sexual behaviour arose out of concern with the spread of venereal disease (VD) as well as the need to maintain morale and order.¹⁰⁸

Venereal disease had particular connotations in wartime Ireland with republicans highlighting its association with the British Army and using anxiety about it as a form of republican propaganda. Maria Luddy has described the heightened public concern with sexual immorality and venereal disease in Ireland during the war and the various initiatives to combat the problem. A Royal Commission on Venereal Disease was established in 1913. Its report was published in 1916, by which time venereal disease had become a pressing problem. The report reveals the persistence of myths surrounding sexual immorality and Irish society. For example, the chief medical inspector to the Local Government Board claimed that syphilis was solely a problem of urban areas and that there was 'very little immorality' in rural Ireland.¹⁰⁹ The report noted the link between consumption of alcohol, sexual activity and the spread of disease, an argument which further supported the attempts to regulate women's drinking in wartime.

The attempts to combat the issue involved regulation and punishment of women's behaviour. From March 1918 Regulation 40d under the Defence of the Realm Act made it a criminal offence for a woman knowingly infected with VD to have sexual relations with members of the military.¹¹⁰ Women suspected of infecting soldiers were subject to forced medical examinations and arrest.¹¹¹ The *Irish Citizen* denounced the Regulation as 'one of the most pestilential of reptiles' and as an affront to women's honour.¹¹² A campaign to protest against its implementation was organised by the Irishwomen's Franchise League, the Belfast Suffrage Society and the Irish Health Society, with Dr Kathleen Lynn also bringing it to the attention of Sinn Féin. The regulation was eventually rescinded in November 1918.¹¹³

The association between venereal disease and the British Army meant that advanced nationalists used the issue as a means of denigrating the British soldier in Ireland.¹¹⁴ Sinn Féin released a pamphlet on the topic in 1918, which included an article by Dr Kathleen Lynn and Dr Richard Hayes arguing that the responsibility for the disease lay with the British Army and proposing that every soldier returning to Ireland be tested for disease. They used emotive language to convey the seriousness of the situation, arguing that it would be a 'national sin' if thousands of yet unborn Irish children were infected with 'the stigma of

¹⁰⁷ Grayzel, "Liberating women?", p.116.

¹⁰⁸ Grayzel, "Women & men", p.269.

¹⁰⁹ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, p.186.

¹¹⁰ Sauerteig, "Sex, medicine & morality", p.176.

¹¹¹ Grayzel, "Women & men", p.269.

¹¹² *Irish Citizen*, Sept. 1918.

¹¹³ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, p.193.

¹¹⁴ Ben Novick, *Conceiving revolution: Irish nationalist propaganda during the First World War* (Dublin, 2001), pp 154-157.

this foulest and most shameful of diseases'.¹¹⁵ The Irish Society for Combating the Spread of Venereal Disease was established in March 1918, and was shortly after renamed the Coiste Cosanta na hEireann ó Aicid na nAinmeine (Committee for the Preservation of Ireland from Venereal Disease). However, despite an initial flurry of activity, the committee made little impact. The hysteria surrounding the issue faded once the war ended and concern became much more muted.¹¹⁶

Deaths from syphilis actually declined over the war years. There was a 19% drop in the average number of syphilis deaths from 1916-19 compared to the previous four years. The majority (68%) of all deaths from syphilis were of infants under twelve months.¹¹⁷ The decline in syphilis deaths suggests that the greater attention paid to the issue was of some benefit to those suffering from the disease. There was however a 14% increase in syphilis deaths in 1920, which is possibly indicative of the spread of disease by demobilised soldiers the previous year. Seventy of the ninety deaths in 1920 were of infants.¹¹⁸ The lasting health impacts on the family from the war service of soldiers is worthy of attention, although outside the scope of this thesis.

Illegitimacy

The decline in the syphilis death rate indicates that despite the wartime concern with promiscuity and the spread of disease, the war did not result in any significant changes in Irishwomen's sexual behaviour. This is also apparent from examining wartime figures for prostitution and illegitimacy. Despite significant concern about the interaction between soldiers and prostitutes in Dublin during the war, the numbers of prosecutions for soliciting or unruly conduct by women in Dublin in fact declined steadily from 1915, falling from 740 in 1915 to 198 in 1919.¹¹⁹ Although this may reflect the diversion of police attention to more pressing wartime issues, Padraig Yeates argues that the primary reason for the decline was the increased prosperity in the city. Separation allowances and the munitions factories provided alternative sources of income, reducing the necessity for engaging in prostitution.¹²⁰

Another means of assessing changes in sexual behaviour is examination of illegitimacy trends. The notion of 'war babies' – illegitimate children of soldiers - received significant attention in Great Britain and France where the illegitimacy rate rose significantly

¹¹⁵ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, p.191.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.191.

¹¹⁷ Annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland, 1911-20.

¹¹⁸ Annual report of the Registrar General for Ireland, 1920.

¹¹⁹ Yeates, *A city in wartime*, p.278.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.283.

during the war.¹²¹ In France, for example, the percentage of illegitimate births, in the départements where statistics are available, rose from 8.5% in 1914 to 15.9% in 1917.¹²² Grayzel notes however that the statistics reveal little about potential changes in sexual behaviour and cannot tell us, for example, whether the intercourse was consensual or considered casual.¹²³

While some commentators viewed the existence of 'war babies' as evidence of increased sexual immorality and thus as a threat to the primacy of the legitimate family, concern with the declining birth rate in Britain and France tempered some of the condemnation. In Britain separation allowances were provided for the illegitimate children of soldiers and their unmarried mothers, out of a sense of duty towards the serving soldiers and concern with the high infant mortality rate. The French government took a similarly benevolent view, allowing soldiers to marry by proxy, providing they could prove previous cohabitation or support of the mother, and eventually passed legislation legitimising the children of soldiers killed in battle.¹²⁴ In Germany the demands for economic production and human reproduction led to improvements in benefits for illegitimate children and their mothers. By 1915 the illegitimate children of soldiers killed on active service, were entitled to pensions.¹²⁵

Although there was some concern expressed about 'war babies' in Ireland, the illegitimacy rate remained relatively stable throughout the war. The Irishwomen's Reform League conducted an investigation into the issue in 1915 and concluded that the numbers of illegitimate children 'will not be seriously increased this year'.¹²⁶ Indeed, reports in the contemporary Irish press repeatedly referred to the myth of war babies and the hysteria surrounding illegitimate children who failed to materialise.¹²⁷ Although the *Church of Ireland Gazette* had referred to the issue as a 'grave and moral peril' in April 1915, by the following July they had asserted that the reports had been greatly exaggerated and that the 'allegation of wholesale immorality is simply not true'.¹²⁸

This is borne out in the official statistics. Ireland's illegitimacy rate was exceptionally low by European standards before the war and it remained so during the

¹²¹ Grayzel, "Men & women at home" p.117; Sauerteig, "Sex, medicine & morality" p.169; Grayzel, "Liberating women?", p.120.

¹²² Grayzel, "Liberating women?", p.120.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.121.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Sauerteig, "Sex, medicine & morality", p.169. However unlike Britain and France, the German illegitimacy rate increased only very slightly over the course of the war, Rollet, "The home & family life", p.322.

¹²⁶ *Irish Citizen*, 10 July 1915.

¹²⁷ For example, see: *Cork Examiner*, 30 Apr. 1915; *Southern Star*, 10 July 1915; *Skibbereen Eagle*, 17 July 1915; *Irish Independent*, 19 Aug. 1915; *Cork Examiner*, 22 Dec. 1915; *Freeman's Journal*, 22 Dec. 1915; *Sunday Independent*, 23 Jan. 1916; *Irish Independent*, 17 Mar. 1916; *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1918.

¹²⁸ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 30 Apr. 1915.

war.¹²⁹ The percentage of illegitimate births rose slightly in 1915 (from 3.1% in 1914 to 3.5% in 1915) but the average for the war years remained the same as the previous four years. There were provincial variations to the wartime illegitimacy rate with the most significant increase in 1915 evident in Leinster. The percentage of illegitimate births in Leinster increased by 17% over the years 1915-18 compared to the period 1910-13.¹³⁰ In contrast there was no change in the average rate in Connaught over the war years. This reflects the clustering of military barracks in Leinster and the higher recruitment rates in the eastern province.

How does Ireland compare to Great Britain? In some respects Scotland presents a similar picture to Ireland. The war had little direct impact upon the already exceptionally high numbers of illegitimate births.¹³¹ In fact, the average rate actually dropped slightly in Scotland during the same period, despite a significant increase in 1918 to 8.4% of all births (the highest recorded for the period 1900 to 1920).¹³² In contrast, there was a significant wartime increase in illegitimacy in England and Wales; a 26.8% increase in the percentage of illegitimate births out of the total number of births for the war years compared to the previous four.¹³³ Given the contemporary association between the wartime rise in illegitimacy and the presence of soldiers preparing for mobilisation, the more significant wartime increase evident in Britain likely reflects the greater mobilisation of men, compared with Ireland.

¹²⁹ Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen and Richard M. Smith (eds) *Bastardy and its comparative history* (Cambridge, 1980), p.59.

¹³⁰ Provincial figures for 1914 are unavailable. Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1910-20.

¹³¹ It should be noted however that illegitimacy was treated differently under Scottish legislation: In Scotland 'bastards' born to couples who subsequently marry are thereby legitimated. Laslett et al (eds) *Bastardy and its comparative history*, p.41.

¹³² Meek and Hughes have argued that the mobilisation of so many young men for the armed forces reduced rural illegitimacy, particularly in incidences where pre-marital pregnancy might otherwise have been followed by marriage but owing to war deaths and military service such marriages did not occur. Meek and Hughes, "State regulation, family breakdown and line motherhood", p.370.

¹³³ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1910-20; Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, p.33.

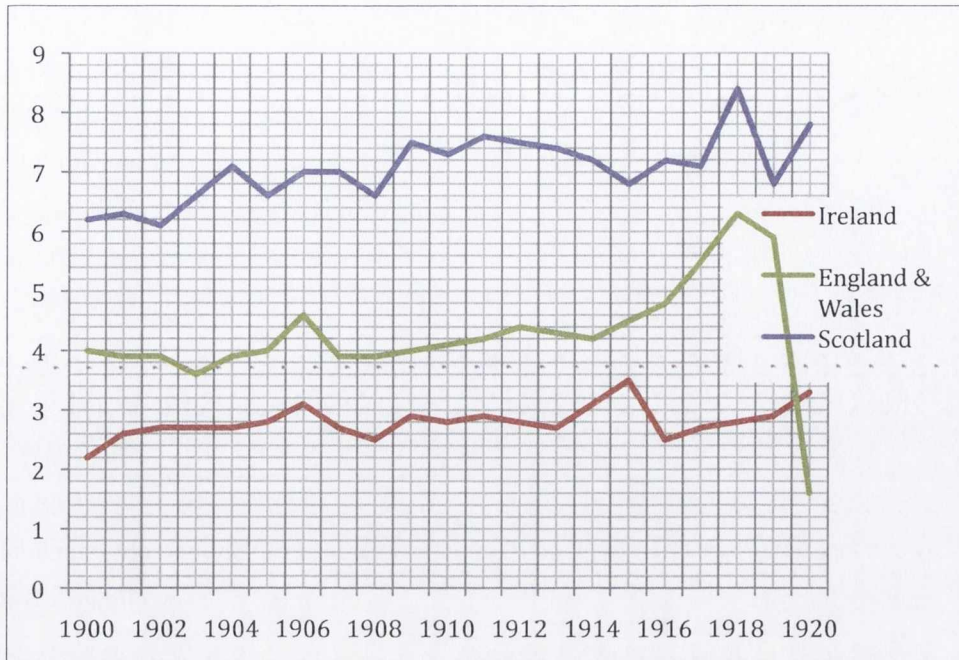


Fig. 4.8 Illegitimate births as a percentage of all births in Ireland & Great Britain

Women's patrols

Significant concern however was expressed in Ireland during the war about a supposed increase in women's immoral behaviour and their interaction with soldiers. In both Britain and Ireland patrols were established to monitor women's behaviour. They were begun in England in 1914 by the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland (NUWW) to monitor women's behaviour on the streets at night. There were more than 2,200 women patrolling parks and other public spaces in Great Britain by 1917.¹³⁴ The patrol movement in Ireland drew support from a diverse range of women's groups, including suffragists and conservative Church of Ireland based associations. Representatives of the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association sought to have patrols established in Ireland and appealed to Sir Matthew Nathan for his support on the issue. Patrol committees for Dublin and Belfast were begun in early 1915.¹³⁵

Nathan was however unconvinced by the extent of the problem in Dublin. He met Mary Hayden and Anna Haslam in October 1915 to discuss the issue, following a letter they had written to the *Irish Times* on immorality in Dublin. He suggested that reports of improper behaviour by women on the quays were actually observations of women returning from seeing their soldier husbands off and thus in a 'hysterical condition'. He further stated that such women 'appeared to be in no way women of a disreputable class'.¹³⁶ Hayden and Haslam, realising that criticism of soldiers would not win them support, asserted that it was

¹³⁴ Sauerteig, "Sex, medicine & morality", p.169.

¹³⁵ NAI CSO RP 1915/2654: "Women's patrols".

¹³⁶ Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 23 Oct. 1915.

the women rather than the troops who were to blame and that there were 'extraordinarily few' cases of drunken soldiers in the streets. When Nathan suggested that the women allegedly behaving improperly at night were in fact 'mainly reasonably respectable girls of high spirits', they however insisted that there was a significant amount of soliciting taking place on Sackville Street. They felt that women's patrols were the solution to the problem, although Nathan refused to consider giving the women patrols the power to arrest other women.¹³⁷

There was a separate attempt in November 1914 to establish a Corps of Women Patrol Officers in Ireland, to particularly protect the welfare of girls and women in the neighbourhood of army camps. Their idea was inspired by the work of the NUWW and was associated with the Girls' Protection Crusade.¹³⁸ The Irish Girls' Protection Crusade, established in 1913 by the Mothers' Union and Girls' Friendly Society, monitored railway stations and port areas to assist girls migrating to urban areas or travelling to Britain. They applied to the Treasury for financial support in 1917 and 1918 citing the war-related nature of their work; however the reports submitted confirm the Treasury view that the majority of their work was dealing with pre-existing social issues.¹³⁹ The suffrage societies also appeared to accept that the social issues encountered by their patrols were in fact chronic and not directly attributable to the war, with Haslam commenting in a report on the Irish patrols in 1915: 'In Dublin at any rate, there are no abnormal conditions just now'.¹⁴⁰ Miss Harris, the patrol organiser in Dublin, also accepted this. She acknowledged that conditions in Dublin were not 'abnormal in the same sense as in English towns' but felt that a corps of women patrols would be very useful in dealing with the 'chronic evils' present in Dublin.¹⁴¹

The patrols were not greeted with universal enthusiasm. The *Irish Citizen* and the *Irish Worker* were both wary of endorsing what they saw as a surveillance scheme for women of the lower classes.¹⁴² The *Lady of the House* also expressed reservations about the women's patrols in Belfast, querying the respectability of patrolling as an occupation for women: 'the intention of any well brought up girl sinking herself to become a 'woman slop' is distasteful and repugnant'.¹⁴³ The particular religious context of Ireland also affected the response to the patrols. The ecumenical aims of the Protestant organisations involved were greeted with suspicion by the *Irish Catholic* newspaper, which suggested that the Women's

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Nathan papers: Memorandum 467 4 Nov. 1914.

¹³⁹ TNA LAB 2/237/Ed29148/1918: "Report of the Irish Girls' Protection Crusade for 1918"; see also TNA T1/12212/41255: Correspondence with Ministry of Labour regarding financial support of voluntary societies assisting women travelling from Dublin or Belfast to government work in England, Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁰ IWM WWS EMP 42.3/14: Report of the Irish Patrols; *Irish Citizen*, 13 Feb. 1915.

¹⁴¹ *Irish Citizen*, 13 Feb. 1915.

¹⁴² Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, p.175.

¹⁴³ *Lady of the House*, 15 Nov. 1917.

League of Honour could prove a 'very pernicious source of influence if it ever begins an active career among the Catholic relatives of Irish soldiers'.¹⁴⁴ The League of Honour was established in November 1914 with the aim of 'upholding the standards of women's duty and honour' in wartime.¹⁴⁵ Its organizers declared the League to be non-sectarian with Rachel Mahaffy quoted in the *Irish Catholic* as stating: 'Its officers and members might belong to any church –there was nothing in the organisation to bind it to any one church or another. Their aim was to provide mutual help and spiritual influence amongst women of all ranks'. The *Irish Catholic* however objected to the ecumenical nature of the League, arguing that the 'policy of 'any one Church or another' does not seem conducive to good taste not to speak of good religion'.¹⁴⁶ Although the League of Honour and the Irish Girls' Protection Crusade were stated to be non-sectarian organisations, the distrust of the Catholic press was inevitable given the Protestant affiliations and identities of the societies and individuals involved.¹⁴⁷

Nationalist tensions also affected attitudes to the patrols and towards women associating publically with soldiers. Girls found to be in relationships with soldiers faced condemnation from republican groups, as well as those concerned with upholding social morality. John Borgonovo has described the social anxiety in Cork concerning the interaction between local women and American sailors in 1917 and 1918. This anxiety resulted in physical clashes between the sailors, the girls and local people.¹⁴⁸ Borgonovo argues that Cork's vigilantes were very different to those involved in the women's patrol movement in Dublin, Belfast or Great Britain. In Cork the vigilantes were typically working class people who had a hostile attitude to both the police and the war effort. While the women's patrols in Dublin and Belfast targeted women for prosecution, the Cork vigilantes physically attacked both men and women. Borgonovo suggests that the motivations of the vigilantes combined 'sexual Puritanism, parochialism and anti-war sentiment'.¹⁴⁹

There were also other incidents of intimidation and assaults against girls known to be 'walking out' with members of the British Army.¹⁵⁰ For example, the women's nationalist organisation Inghinidhe na hEireann distributed leaflets urging Irish girls not to 'consort with the armed and uniformed enemies of their country'.¹⁵¹ The London-Irish soldier Edward Casey described in his memoir how the girl he was walking out with in Cork, while training in Ireland during the Great War, was punished for her interaction with him: 'she had been set

¹⁴⁴ *Irish Catholic*, 28 Nov. 1914.

¹⁴⁵ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 27 Nov. 1914.

¹⁴⁶ *Irish Catholic*, 28 Nov. 1914.

¹⁴⁷ *Irish Catholic*, 28 Nov. 1914; TNA T1 12212/15799: Correspondence with Ministry of Labour regarding the Irish Girls' Protection Crusade, 1918.

¹⁴⁸ Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war & revolution* p.138.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.126.

¹⁵⁰ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, p.170; Novick, *Conceiving revolution*, p.149.

¹⁵¹ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, p.170.

upon by a gang of the local boys and they had cut off her lovely hair because she was associating with a British soldier'. At first the girl, Agnes, continued to see Edward, proclaiming (according to his account) that she 'was not sorry nor am I ashamed. I like you and you are the first boy I ever walked out with'. However she was attacked again by a crowd of men and girls and referred to as a 'British soldier's Moll' and threatened with further reprisal unless she left. She chose to immigrate to Liverpool to live with her sister. She wrote to Edward informing him of this but reassuring him that it was not his fault and that she had not realized that 'bigotry was prevalent in my native land'.¹⁵² Casey's account must be treated with some caution. It was written more than sixty years after the war and some elements are clearly exaggerated or fictionalised. However it is unlikely he made the episode up entirely and as such it offers some insight into interactions between Irish girls and British Army soldiers.

As with the issue of 'separation women', concern with the sexual behaviour of girls and women came from disparate sectors of Irish society with varying motivations. In a recent article, Senia Pašeta has offered a relatively positive account of the patrols, which emphasises the preventative ethos of the work and the support for the patrols among many Irish feminists.¹⁵³ This challenges earlier work by Maria Luddy who calls attention to the class difference between the patroller and the patrolled. She persuasively argues that the patrols provided an empowering moment for the feminists involved but not for the working-class women they patrolled.¹⁵⁴ The evidence of the activities of the patrols and the conservative nature of many of the organisations involved supports Luddy's viewpoint. Rather than rescuing women and girls from any real danger, the patrols served as a further attempt to control the behaviour of working-class women under the guise of protection and a further assertion of patriarchal control over women. Although those involved in the patrols may have seen their work as helping vulnerable women, the concern of the state was primarily with the protection of soldiers and the patrols were part of the accompanying systematic regulation of women's behaviour.

Susan Grayzel argues that during the war there were two opposing ideas of womanhood: women as the 'social glue' keeping the family and society together; or women as 'potential sexual miscreants, prostitutes who posed the greatest danger to the social order'.¹⁵⁵ In her view the public debates on alcohol consumption and the behaviour of soldiers' wives strengthened traditional views of womanhood 'rather than encouraging a

¹⁵² Joanna Bourke (ed.) *The Misfit soldier: Edward Casey's war story 1914-1918* (Cork, 1999), pp 22-24.

¹⁵³ Senia Pašeta, "'Waging war on the streets': the Irish women patrol, 1914-22" in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxiv, no.154 (Nov., 2014), p.252.

¹⁵⁴ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, pp 160-177.

¹⁵⁵ Grayzel, "Liberating women?", p.119.

liberating destruction of such norms'.¹⁵⁶ Grayzel suggests that sexual liberation of women was impossible in a time where there was no easy access to birth control and abortion was illegal.¹⁵⁷ She concludes that despite the wartime anxiety about women's behaviour, gendered assumptions regarding morality and sexuality changed much less suddenly and permanently than has been suggested by commentators such as Sandra Gilbert or Arthur Marwick.¹⁵⁸

This was apparent in Ireland. The public behaviour of working-class women in Ireland had altered little as a consequence of the war but there was nevertheless greater censure of problems evident before 1914. The separation allowances brought the state and related agencies into women's domestic lives and legitimated an unprecedented level of state surveillance and interference in the family. Private behaviour became a matter of public concern. Constant references were made to the state's duty of care to the soldier and his children and to the fact that the allowances represented 'public money'. Similarly the threat to the soldier from venereal disease was used to legitimise surveillance of women's sexual behaviour.

Previous histories of 'separation women' in Ireland have emphasised the particularities of the Irish situation, notably the nationalist and republican context to criticism of soldiers' wives, and have associated such criticism to the women's much publicised opposition to the 1916 Easter Rising. However the analysis of the reporting of separation women and of the judicial statistics makes it evident that the anxiety about the behaviour of soldiers' wives reached its peak in 1915 and involved a much wider and more varied sector of Irish society than often imagined. This was likewise true of the women's patrols and the concern with sexual immorality. Nevertheless while there were significant similarities between the treatment of these issues in Ireland and in other combatant countries such as Britain, France or Germany, the growing opposition to the war among Irish people limited the expressions of support for the women and increased the enmity directed at them.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.119.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.121.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.130.

Chapter 5: Employment

The Great War resulted in the unprecedented mobilisation of civilian populations. The waged labour of women was essential to the success of the war effort. In all combatant countries women replaced absent men on the farms and in the factories. Women's role in the wartime workforce generated significant contemporary debate and discussion. For example, there were concerns surrounding the balance between waged and familial labour and anxiety about the potential impact of factory conditions on maternity and motherhood.¹ Within the international historiography of the impact of the Great War on the role of women, the issue of paid employment is of central importance. The war has been heralded as a time of dramatic and unprecedented change in women's employment opportunities.² Although this viewpoint has been questioned and critiqued by feminist and revisionist scholars over the last thirty years, it nevertheless continues to be enormously influential.³

Emphasis is frequently placed on the substantial rise in the number of women in the British workforce and the role played by female munitions workers.⁴ Such studies frequently portray women's entry into the wartime workforce as a new departure, overlooking the significant role played by women in the labour force for many years before 1914. The change was in fact in the types of work performed by women. Jay Winter correctly describes it as a 'lateral shift across the occupational spectrum'.⁵ For example, working-class women moved from domestic service to factory work, often performing roles which had been previously restricted to men.⁶ There were also increased employment opportunities for married women with children.

This emphasis on the increased numbers in the workforce overlooks the extent to which female wartime work was conceived and perceived as a temporary aberration, accepted and supported in extreme circumstances, but with every effort made to restore the

¹ Grayzel, "Women & men", p.267.

² The work of Arthur Marwick has been particularly influential, see for example, *The deluge: British society and the First World War* (London, 1965); *Women at war 1914-1918* (London, 1977) and *War and social change in the twentieth century: a comparative study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the USA* (London, 1974).

³ For critique of the Marwick model see Laura Lee Downs, "War work" in Winter (ed) *Cambridge history of the First World War: volume III Civil Society*, pp 75-76; Braybon, "Winners or losers: women's role in the war story", pp 86-106.

⁴ These figures are problematic as has been noted by Deborah Thom; July 1914 is used as a base but was itself a period of high unemployment thus making the increase in July 1918 seem larger than would be evident if a longer view was taken, Deborah Thom, "Women and work in wartime Britain" in Jay Winter and Richard Wall (eds) *The upheaval of war: Family, work, and welfare in Europe 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1988), p.304.

⁵ Winter, "Demography", p.257; see also Antoine Prost, "Workers" in Jay Winter (ed.) *The Cambridge history of the First World War, vol. II The State* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 334-335.

⁶ Grayzel, "Women and men", p.267.

status quo of pre-war male dominance in the workforce after the Armistice. Laura Lee Downs has recently argued that we need to move beyond the emancipation model to find new ways of interpreting women's work in wartime.⁷ This chapter attempts to return the focus to women's experience of employment during and immediately after the war. It considers quantitative changes in employment opportunities and conditions together with the public perception of women's role in the workforce. It builds upon the work of Theresa Moriarty, Mary Muldowney, Niamh Purseil and Liza Toye in its attempt to construct a wide-ranging account of Irishwomen's experience of paid employment during the Great War.

1915 national register

The only detailed statistics for women's wartime employment in Ireland are from the National Register, undertaken in August 1915. It gives some sense of the workforce a year into the war. The National Register was created in the United Kingdom in 1915 as a prelude to the introduction of conscription. It attempted to collect data on the occupations of all males and females between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five. Susan Grayzel views the fact that women were included in the National Register as recognition of the important role women could play in the war effort. She however suggests that the fact that conscription of women was never introduced was influenced as much by concern about destabilising gender roles as by the effectiveness of the efforts to secure women's voluntary work.⁸ The inclusion of women in the Register for Ireland was justified on the basis that substitution of men might be required. The Dublin Castle representative noted in November 1915 that the 'question of replacing men by women has not yet practically arisen'. He suggested that if the present appeal for recruits was successful, 'economic pressure might result in this substitution to an appreciable extent'.⁹

The Register gives the ages and marital status of women in Ireland in twenty-seven different occupational categories. The same classification of occupations was followed as that for men. In both cases the inmates of hospitals, asylums, prisons and poor law institutions were excluded.¹⁰ In Ireland registration was compulsory in just six areas: the counties of Antrim, Armagh, Londonderry and Down, and the county boroughs of Belfast and Londonderry. In the remainder of Ireland, other than in the Dublin Metropolitan Police district, the Royal Irish Constabulary filled in the required information relating to people in their district. Individuals could choose to collect the forms from the police station and fill them in themselves but very few people availed of this option (just 3% of all eligible females

⁷ Downs, "War work", p.77.

⁸ Grayzel, "Women & men", p.270.

⁹ TNA RG 28/11: Letter from E O'Farrell, Dublin Castle to Gibbon, General Register Office, 1 Nov. 1915.

¹⁰ RG 28/11: Report on the register by William Thompson, registrar-general for Ireland, 10 Oct. 1915.

outside of the scheduled areas). In Dublin the forms were made available but the DMP did not fill in forms for non-registered people, as happened in the rest of Ireland.¹¹ Consequently the statistics that follow apply solely to the remainder of Ireland.

Direct comparisons between the Register and census evidence are therefore impossible, not only due to the exclusion of Dublin, but also because of the different categories used in each report. The Register places 666,643 or 68.4% of all women in the relevant age group into a category labelled 'other occupations'. Although the majority of women in this category were stated as engaged in 'household duties', the category includes women engaged in the manufacturing of items such as tobacco, candles, dyes, skins, paints, as well as women employed in laundry work, as caretakers, undefined machinists and other varied occupations. It does not however provide a breakdown of the numbers employed in each sector and it is not possible to differentiate between those engaged in household duties within the family home and those employed in the miscellaneous occupations.¹² Nevertheless, the Register provides some insight into the state of female employment in Ireland in August 1915.

The significant rise in the numbers of women in the British or French workforces was focused in manufacturing, in producing munitions for the war effort. Is there any evidence of this wartime trend in Ireland in 1915? The majority of females working outside the home in 1915 (excluding Dublin) were in the manufacturing sector where they made up 66.3% of the sector. The manufacturing category consisted of those working in the leather, paper, and textile trades as well as those producing explosives, boots, clothing, food and drink. Just 110 women are recorded as working in the explosives and chemical trade in August 1915. This reflects the fact that the national shell factories did not open in Ireland until early 1916. The majority of women in the manufacturing sector worked in the textile trade (54,841 or 61.5%) while tailoring and dressmaking made up the second largest group with 31,195 female workers. Domestic work was the second largest category and within it, women formed 94% of the workforce. The agriculture sector employed 61,843 women in 1915, or 6.3% of all women aged between fifteen and sixty-five. It was usefully divided into farmers (27.9%), farmers' daughters (69.8) and farm labourers (2.2), demonstrating that the vast majority of women in agriculture were working on family farms. Female relatives of farmers who were stated to be engaged in 'household duties' were classified in the 'other occupations' category, rather than agriculture.

¹¹ RG 28/11: Letter from E O'Farrell, Dublin Castle, to Gibbon, 27 Oct. 1915.

¹² RG 28/11: Report on the National Registration Act, 1 Nov. 1915, p.5.

Table 5.1 Statistical breakdown of the 1915 National Register of females in Ireland

No.	Occupation	No. of females registered	Category as % of females registered	Category as % of females in categories 1-9	Females as % of category	% unmarried
1	Public administration and professions	20,593	2.1	7.2	35.5	82.0
2	Domestic	78,147	8.0	27.4	94.0	80.2
3	Unskilled labourer	2,398	0.2	0.8	4.6	42.7
4	Distribution/Commerce	30,173	3.1	10.6	32.6	76.0
5	Transport	2,217	0.2	0.8	6.6	41.9
6	Agriculture ¹³	61,843	6.3	21.7	9.2	55.0
7	Metals	75	0.008	0.03	0.2	73.3
8	Building	287	0.03	0.1	0.4	77.0
9	Manufacturing	89,178	9.2	31.3	66.3	81.1
10	Other occupations including household duties	666,643	68.4	n/a	98.5	42.1
11	Unoccupied	22,736	2.3	n/a	54.9	79.1
12	Total	974,290	100	100	100	52.3

The temporary nature of women's employment in Ireland is evident from examination of the age and marital status of the women recorded in the register. The majority of women working outside the home in 1915 were unmarried. Excluding the miscellaneous category, an average of 67.7% of the female workers were single, compared to 52.3% of those aged between fifteen and sixty-five. The youth of the female workforce is also evident. The largest group of occupied females (excluding those in the 'other occupation category) were those aged between nineteen and twenty-five, making up 28.1% of all occupied females. Those in occupations formed 44.0% of the registered female population in that age category. The number steadily declines from age twenty-five. Just 5.4% of the registered females aged between fifty and sixty-five were listed in specified employment categories. It is evident that the dominant trend was for women to enter the workforce while young and leave upon marriage.

¹³ This does not include the wives of farmers and labourers who were stated to be engaged on household duties.

Table 5.2 Age profile of females recorded in National Register in 1915¹⁴

Age	No. of females recorded in register	Unoccupied and other	Females in specified occupations	Females in specified occupations as % of those registered	Age group as % of total in specified occupations
15-19	114,002	71,072	42,930	37.2	17.0
19-25	161,273	90,365	70,908	44.0	28.1
25-30	117,773	75,123	42,650	36.2	16.9
30-35	112,773	83,671	29,102	25.8	11.5
35-41	147,356	116,357	30,999	21.0	12.3
41-45	63,877	50,887	12,990	19.2	5.1
45-50	83,061	67,778	15,283	18.4	6.1
50-65	172,234	134,487	7,737	5.4	3.1
Total	972,349	689,740	252,599		

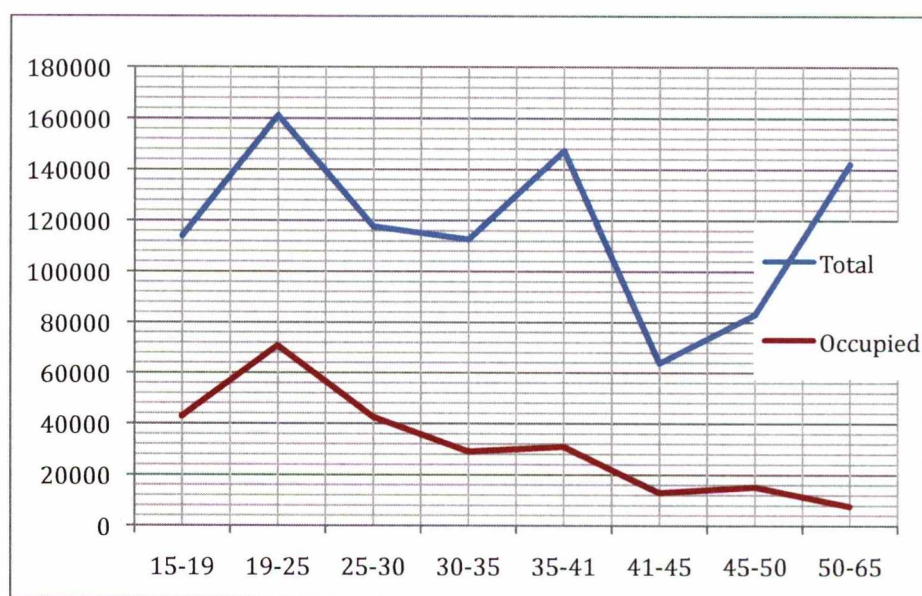


Fig. 5.1 Age profile of female workforce in 1915

An industrial depression followed the outbreak of war, which was particularly evident in the textile industry. The situation gradually improved as Irish textile and clothing firms gained army contracts from the War Office. Irish firms produced a diverse range of military supplies including blankets and uniforms for soldiers and boilers and bedding. However the volume of government contracts awarded to Irish firms was low compared with those given to British companies and much of it was concentrated in the north.¹⁵ In total, about 252 Irish firms received contracts from the War Office between August 1914 and 31 March 1919, of these 160 were based in Ulster, 64 in Leinster and the remaining 28 in

¹⁴ Table 5.2 excludes 1,941 females in Clare, Leitrim and Wicklow whose ages were not ascertained but who are included in the register, hence the discrepancy in the total figures in Table 5.1 and 5.2.

¹⁵ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.78.

Munster and Connaught. These came to the value of £24,695,355, forming 2.6% of the total provided for the United Kingdom as a whole.¹⁶

The 1915 national register is the only wide-ranging source of data for women's employment in Ireland during the war, making comparisons with the pre and post war periods difficult. Some general trends are nonetheless visible. The absence of conscription from Ireland and high pre-war male employment limited the potential for 'dilution' of conventionally male sectors of employment. Nevertheless the development of a small munitions industry in Ireland, the voluntary mobilisation of over 200,000 Irishmen, and the bureaucracy generated by war, led to improved opportunities for women in certain sectors, notably in the munitions factories and in clerical roles. Although the numbers of women whose employment was significantly altered by the war were small, there is evidence of a shift in attitudes towards women's work, both by the female workers themselves and by others.

Women received praise and encouragement from diverse sectors of the press for entering into typically male dominated employment sectors. There is some evidence of increased willingness to extend opportunities to women, especially those in professional sectors. Domestic service became increasingly unpopular and it is evident from reports of agencies assisting women's employment that women were increasingly seeking alternative forms of employment. The wages paid to women workers increased, although they remained significantly lower than those offered in Great Britain. The war also resulted in much greater participation of Irishwomen in the trade union movement. This chapter explores the effects of the war on women's employment opportunities in industry, agriculture and the professions and considers lasting changes in perceptions of female employment and women's trade union participation.

Contraction

The outbreak of the Great War had an enormously disruptive impact upon industry and business in the United Kingdom, France and Germany. Shortages of raw material due to the difficulties of maintaining imports from Europe, the loss of enemy markets and changes in consumption patterns led to an industrial depression across the United Kingdom at the outbreak of the war. There was a 'brief but intense' unemployment crisis for two to three months until industries adjusted to the wartime conditions.¹⁷ Women workers were particularly badly affected. 44.4% of the total number of women in industry in the UK were unemployed or on short time in September 1914, while the corresponding male figure was

¹⁶ Edward J. Riordan, *Modern Irish trade and industry* (London, 1920), p.307.

¹⁷ Prost, "Workers", p. 327.

just 27.4%.¹⁸ In her study of British female employment, Irene Osgood Andrews states that it was not until April 1915 that the number of women employed in industry reached pre-war levels.¹⁹ The war hit female-dominated trades most severely, particularly the so-called 'luxury trades'. These trades included the dressmaking, millinery, silk and linen trades, cigar-making, confectionary and preserve making, the jewellery trade and book and stationary making and printing.²⁰

The impact of the depression upon women's industrial employment was very evident in Ireland. There was a 2.6% contraction in female employment in Ireland in October 1914, compared to the previous July. This had however fallen to 1.3% in February 1915.²¹ Lace and crochet making, two popular Irish trades, were badly affected by the fact that their products were usually purchased for the American, London and Paris markets, none of which could be depended upon after the outbreak of the war. It was reported in March 1915 that the industries were practically at a standstill and that large stocks remained unsold.²² The temporary collapse of these industries was described as removing employment from 'many thousands of Irish girls'. Similar issues affected the employment of girls in drapery and millinery establishments and cardboard box making factories, which depended largely on the textile trades for their orders.²³ There were also shortages of employment in the paper trade during the war due to the problems obtaining the necessary raw materials.²⁴

Many of these occupations were concentrated in Ulster. According to the 1915 register, over 93% of the females employed in textiles were based in Ulster, and 795 of the 1,153 women employed in the paper trade were based in Belfast.²⁵ In many cases workers were placed on short time rather than losing their jobs entirely. However their income would have been halved in many cases.²⁶ Workers in Jacob's Biscuit Factory in Dublin were also placed on short time from August to December 1914, after which the trade improved.²⁷ The factory implemented a hiring freeze at the start of the war and as a consequence the number of female workers in the factory declined by 22% between August 1914 and March 1915.²⁸

¹⁸ Irene Osgood Andrews, *Economic effects of the war upon women and children in Great Britain* (Oxford, 1918), pp 22-23.

¹⁹ Andrews, *Economic effects of the war*, p.24.

²⁰ Andrews, *Economic effects of the war*, pp 22-23.

²¹ *Report of the Board of Trade on the state of employment in the United Kingdom in February 1915*, p.10.

²² E.J. Riordan, "The War and Irish industry" in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, vol.4, no.13 (Mar., 1915), pp 115-116.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.116.

²⁴ Riordan, *Modern Irish trade & industry*, p.169.

²⁵ RG 28/11: Report on the register by William Thompson, Registrar-general for Ireland, 10 Nov. 1915.

²⁶ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages" p.75.

²⁷ Toye, "Women Workers in Dublin during the First World War", p.78.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.79.

Liza Toye's study of Dublin women workers during the Great War includes an examination of businesses run by women in Dublin. She uses *Thom's Directory* to analyse the impact of the war on the survival of these operations and concludes that the war had a negative effect on female owned businesses. For example the number of female-owned businesses in the ladies' tailors, dressmakers and costumiers trade fell by 23% between 1914 and 1919. This compares to an overall decline of 7.4% in the sector. The number of female millinery establishments also declined significantly, from 23 to 15 (compared to 22% decline for the sector as a whole). Typist businesses were also badly hit with the number owned by women falling by 50% from twelve in 1914 to six in 1919. Overall, the number of female owned businesses declined by 16.1%, from 242 in 1914 to 203 in 1919, while the total number of businesses registered in Dublin in *Thom's Directory* increased very slightly from 1,187 in 1914 to 1,190 in 1919. *Thom's directory* was published on 1 January so the figures for each year reflect those submitted towards the end of the previous year.²⁹

However women were involved in the establishment of a number of successful industries after the outbreak of the war. For example, the Dublin Toy Company was set up in September 1914 by Miss Edith MacTier to provide employment for the milliners, dressmakers and box-makers who had lost their employment due to the war. In September 1914 it employed twenty-four women and one man. The Sisters of Charity also established a doll-making industry in Dublin to employ local girls. Similar initiatives took place in Ulster. A doll industry was established in Holywood, Co Down, and another toy industry in Belfast.³⁰ The Church League for Women's Suffrage also established a workroom in Dublin for the manufacture of clothing for soldiers. The aim of this workroom was primarily to provide paid employment for women out of work due to the war. It closed in October 1915.³¹ Suffragist societies were behind a number of these endeavours, with suffragists anxious to improve the conditions of working women and to raise the profile of issues affecting women.³² However such schemes risked bringing greater destitution to the women when the funds ran out. Eighty women were dismissed in July 1917 from a scheme for glove making organised by the Suffrage Emergency Council. They had earned six shillings a week, which was described as a 'starvation wage', and were left with nothing.³³

²⁹ Figures calculated from those supplied in Toye, "Women Workers in Dublin during the First World War", pp 42-43.

³⁰ Edward J Riordan, "Irish industries after twelve months of the war" in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, vol.4, no.15 (Sept., 1915), pp 467-468.

³¹ IWM WWS B.O.2 49/1010: M.L.L. Stack, 'Account of the war relief workroom organised by the Irish branch of the Church League for Women's Suffrage', Oct. 1915.

³² *Irish Citizen*, 19 Sept. 1914, 24 Oct. 1914; *Lady of the House*, 15 Mar. 1915; 15 Apr. 1915 p.3.

³³ *Irish Citizen*, July 1917.

Textile industry

The linen trade was particularly badly affected by the war, resulting in significant unemployment and reduction in hours for its predominately female workforce. In 1915 80 to 90% of the workers in Belfast power-loom factories were female as were at least 50% of the linen workers in the rural districts.³⁴ It therefore provides a useful case study for examining Irish female industrial employment during the war. The industry was affected by both the smaller demand for fine linen goods in wartime and the difficulty of maintaining a sufficient supply of flax. From 1915 contracts were provided through the War Office for aeroplane cloth, thus improving employment to some extent. However the majority of the war contracts for the linen trade went to Scotland, where 61% of the women in the linen trade were on government work by July 1917 compared to 26% in Ireland. In Scotland there was a shortage of labour for the linen trade as the war progressed due to the trade's comparatively low wages. However in Ireland workers had little choice but to remain in the linen industry as fewer alternative outlets for their labour were available.³⁵ The industry was also severely affected by the difficulties of obtaining flax in wartime as the usual supplies came from Belgium, Russia and Holland.³⁶

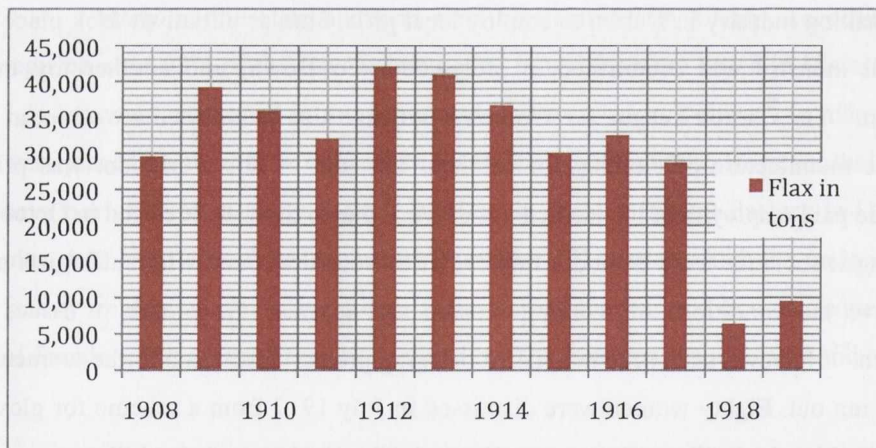


Fig. 5.2 Imports of flax to Ireland (in tons) 1908-1919³⁷

Figure 5.2 demonstrates the reduction in flax imports during the war. Flax imports were further affected by the 1917 Russian revolution while the significant drop in flax imports in

³⁴ PRONI D1857/1/BA/9: Letter from Belfast chamber of commerce to G.S. Barnes Esq of the Board of Trade, London, 21 Sept. 1915; Cormac O'Gráda, *Ireland: a new economic history 1789-1939* (Oxford, 1992), p.282.

³⁵ IWM WWS EMP.25/16: Board of trade report on the increased employment of women during the war, July 1917, p.35.

³⁶ RG 28/11: Course of employment in the United Kingdom, July 1914 to July 1915 p.5; *Report of Board of Trade on the state of employment in the United Kingdom in February 1915*, p.8.

³⁷ Riordan, *Modern Irish trade and industry*, p.115.

1918 was affected by the 'abnormally bad season'.³⁸ Flax production in Ireland significantly increased from 1916 in response, although acquiring sufficient flax seed was difficult. Much of the flax crop in Ireland was grown from seed imported from Holland but in 1915 the Dutch government prohibited the exportation of flax seed.³⁹ However production of flax significantly increased from 1916. The number of acres used for growing flax increased by 72.1% between 1915 and 1916 and by 54.2% over the years 1915-17 compared to the previous three years. The flax crop increased by 50% between 1915 and 1916 and by a further 6% over the following year.⁴⁰ The Irish crop came under the remit of the Flax Control Board from late 1917, which commandeered the crop at set prices.⁴¹

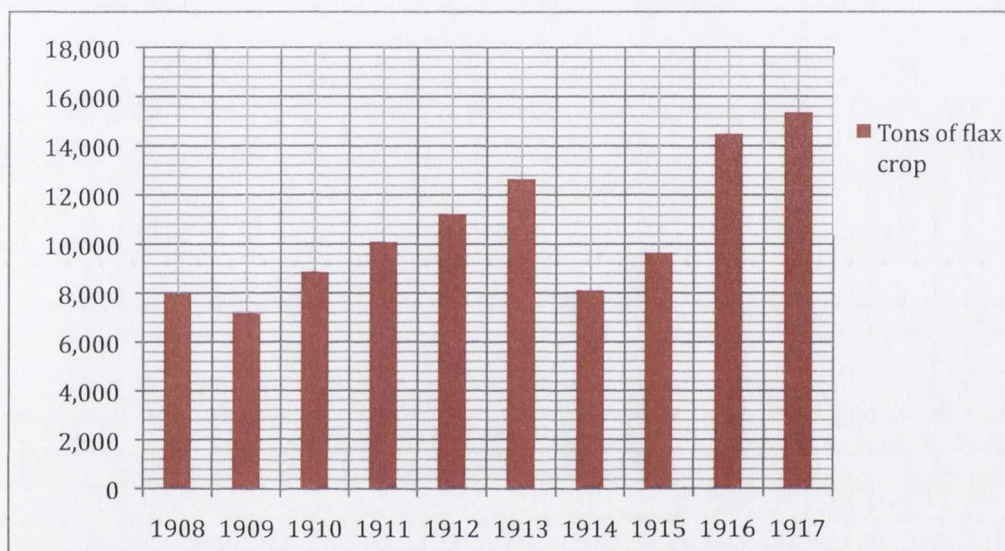


Fig. 5.3 Flax production in Ireland 1908-1917 (in tons)⁴²

In August 1914 it was reported that employment in the linen trade had declined compared to the previous month and that employment was particularly bad for women workers.⁴³ The response to the decline in the trade was to put workers on short time rather than to dismiss them. Workers in both weaving mills and clothing manufacturers were placed on half time hours as early as 13 August 1914.⁴⁴ Figure 5.4 shows the constant fluctuations in male and female employment in the linen trade over the course of the war.⁴⁵ The most significant

³⁸ Frances McDermott, "The economic effects of the Great War 1914-1918 on Ireland" (M.A. thesis, University College Dublin, 1940), p.23.

³⁹ D1857/1/BA/9: Letter from Belfast Chamber of Commerce to Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Office, 5 Oct. 1915.

⁴⁰ DATI, *Agricultural statistics of Ireland with detailed report for the year 1917* (Dublin, 1921), p.vi.

⁴¹ Gribbon, "Economic & social history", p.347.

⁴² DATI, *Agricultural statistics of Ireland with detailed report for the year 1910* (Dublin, 1911), p.7; *Agricultural statistics of Ireland with detailed report for the year 1917*, p.xi.

⁴³ *Labour Gazette*, Aug.1914, p.297.

⁴⁴ *Irish Independent*, 13 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁵ The graph is based on monthly returns of employment in the linen trade recorded in the *Labour Gazette* from January 1914 to December 1919. Employment figures for the linen trade in the *Labour*

declines in the trade came after December 1914 and although employment increased in early 1916, particularly outside of Belfast, it had worsened again by the end of the year.

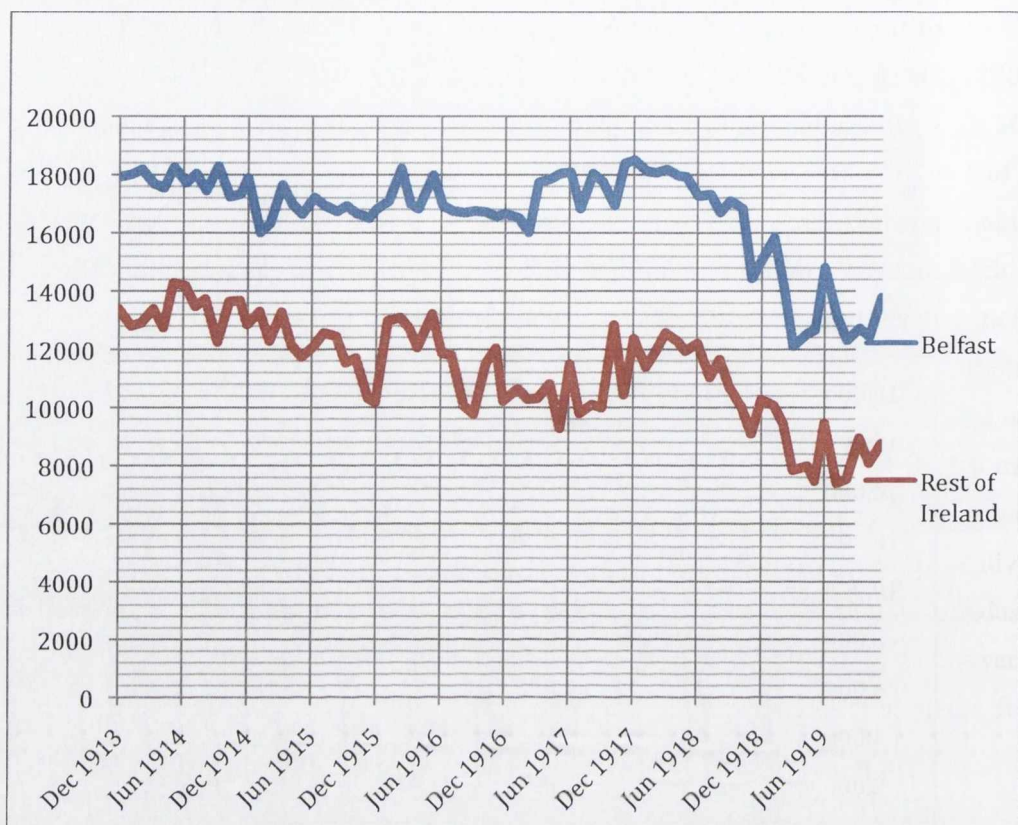


Fig. 5.4 Monthly returns of employment in the linen trade 1914-1919

The impression given in various accounts of the period is that the awarding of government contracts very quickly offset the disruption to employment in the textile trade. For example, David S. Johnson emphasises the wartime demand for linen products in his positive account of the economic effects of the war.⁴⁶ Although David Fitzpatrick noted the disruption to employment, he suggests that the ‘few weeks’ of severe unemployment were quickly outweighed by the high demand for munitions and essential goods such as linen for aircraft.⁴⁷ Similarly, Caitriona Clear mentions a ‘brief period of adjustment’, followed by an improvement in the numbers of women employed in the textile industry, while Niamh Puirseil describes the wartime linen mills as fully stretched, fulfilling military contracts.⁴⁸

These accounts however overlook the extent of the use of short time. For much of the war a significant proportion of the workforce was working between seven to twenty-five

Gazette are divided into those for Belfast and those for the remainder of Ireland. The gender of the workers is not differentiated.

⁴⁶ Johnson, *The inter-war economy in Ireland*, p.4.

⁴⁷ Fitzpatrick, “Home front & everyday life”, p.137.

⁴⁸ Caitriona Clear, “Fewer ladies, more women” in Horne (eds) *Our war: Ireland and the Great War*, p.165; Puirseil, “War, work & labour”, p.184.

hours less than usual. Although some improvement was reported in November 1914 compared to the previous two months, by the following February employment had deteriorated further. Short time was again the norm with about 80% of the 16,000 workers in Belfast and about 86% of the workers in the rest of Ireland on reduced hours. The only section that showed any improvement was flax roughers, a male dominated area, where female employment increased owing to the withdrawal of men to enlist in the armed forces.⁴⁹

The Belfast intelligence report noted that in early 1915 'the female workers in the city suffered considerable privation from want of employment as the mills and factories were only working three-quarter time'.⁵⁰ Further deterioration was evident over the following few months. It was decided at the end of April that the power loom manufacturers and flax spinners would maintain short-time working arrangements for at least the following three months.⁵¹ This decision received some criticism. The trade unionist, Mary Galway, argued that it would be better for the younger workers to be let go to allow them to take up munition work and to allow the older workers to work fulltime.⁵² The short time work also precluded workers from attending the classes established for unemployed women by the Belfast Municipal Technical Institute.⁵³

A representative of the Ministry of Munitions asserted in December 1915 that the mills in the north were fully occupied and that none of the women employees were on short time. The supply of flax was reported to be sufficient to keep the mills in operation until the summer and rumours that the mills were on the verge of closing were denied as groundless.⁵⁴ Such claims are however contradicted by the summaries of the state of the linen trade provided by the *Labour Gazette* for the same period. Although the numbers of Belfast workers on short time had reduced to 60% by August 1915, short time continued to be reported as general for women workers throughout autumn and winter 1915.⁵⁵

Indeed, the reports in the *Labour Gazette* indicate that short time continued to be the norm for the remainder of the war. Some improvement was reported in March 1917, compared to the previous year, but a considerable amount of short time was still being worked. Shortages of flax supplies meant that the situation deteriorated again in early 1918 with about 70% of Belfast workers and 35% of workers in the rest of Ireland reported to be on short time by March 1918. The figure for the remainder of Ireland had increased to 40% a month later and remained at that rate until October when it increased further to 45%. Over

⁴⁹ *Labour Gazette*, Feb. 1915.

⁵⁰ "Co. Antrim, 1915" and "Belfast, 1915" in Mac Giolla Choille (ed.) *Intelligence Notes 1913-1916*, pp 136-137.

⁵¹ *Labour Gazette*, May 1915.

⁵² *Woman Worker*, July 1916.

⁵³ PRONI BCT 6/15/3/2: Report of Prince of Wales Relief Fund Committee, 26 Mar. 1915

⁵⁴ Nathan papers, Ms 469: Memorandum of meeting between Sir Matthew Nathan and Miss S.C. Harrison, 16 Dec. 1915.

⁵⁵ *Labour Gazette*, Aug. 1915, Sept. 1915, Oct. 1915, Nov. 1915, Dec. 1915.

the same period the majority of Belfast workers remained on short time with the percentage fluctuating between 60 and 70%. In September 1918 it was reported that employment in the linen trade was much worse than a year previously.⁵⁶ The Armistice brought no immediate improvement due to the cessation of war contracts, and consequently short time was still the norm a year later.⁵⁷

The shirt and collar trade was another female dominated industry that was affected by the war.⁵⁸ In 1901 women made up 98.7% of those working as shirt makers and seamstresses. As with the linen trade, the majority of workers (75.8%) were based in Ulster, particularly in Belfast and Derry.⁵⁹ Shortages of raw materials resulted in a decline in the trade in 1915, evident in Figure 5.5.⁶⁰



Fig. 5.5 Monthly returns of employment in the shirt & collar trade 1915-1919

The trade was described as slack in February 1915 and in May 1915 the *Labour Gazette* reported that the shirt and collar trade had declined compared to a year previously.⁶¹ A significant number of workers in Londonderry were on short time in July 1916, a situation that further deteriorated over the following month.⁶² However the awarding of war contracts in the south led to increased employment in this trade in 1917 and 1918. Irish firms in the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Mar. 1917, Mar. 1918, Oct. 1918, Sept. 1918.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Oct. 1919, p.432, Nov. 1919, p.478.

⁵⁸ NLI P3212: Report of the twenty-third annual Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, Derry, 6, 7 and 8 August, 1917, p.3.

⁵⁹ Gribbon, "Economic & social history", p.307.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.306.

⁶¹ *Labour Gazette*, Feb. 1915; May 1915.

⁶² *Labour Gazette*, July 1916; Aug. 1916.

shirt and collar industry received war contracts worth £3,794,712 from August 1914 to 31 March 1919 from the War Office.⁶³ Employment figures for Belfast and the remainder of Ireland are available from April 1915 until December 1919.⁶⁴

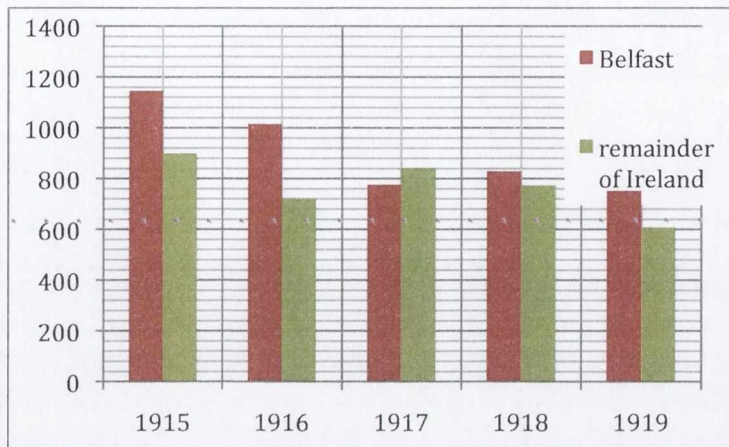


Fig. 5.6 Yearly average of employment in the shirt & collar trade 1915-1919

While pre-war comparisons are not possible, the constant fluctuations in the trade during the war are evident. Despite the war contracts, there was an overall decline in employment in this trade in Ireland between 1915 and the end of the war. The average number of employees in the trade across Ireland fell by 21.6% between 1915 and 1918 (by 27.6% for the Belfast district and by 13.8% for the remainder of Ireland). There was a further decline of 15.1% in the trade over the following year due to the cessation of war contracts (9.3% in Belfast and 21.4% in the remainder of Ireland).

Unemployment relief schemes

The problem of unemployment arising from the war is evident. How was this problem addressed in Ireland? A number of semi-official initiatives were established to aid the problem of wartime unemployment. The Local Government Board (LGB) directed the establishment of county distress committees under the 1905 unemployed workmen's act. The distress committees helped to source vacancies for the unemployed. The labour exchanges also helped Irish labourers to find work in Britain. The national service department in Ireland found employment for 10,600 people between 1917 and 1918.⁶⁵ Endeavours aimed specifically at helping women were also introduced. In 1914 the Central Committee for Women's Employment was established in Britain as part of the National Relief Fund. As it only applied to England and Wales, Sir Matthew Nathan invited a number of women in Ireland to form a cabinet committee concerned with unemployed women in Ireland.

⁶³ Riordan, *Modern Irish trade & industry*, p.123.

⁶⁴ Monthly returns in the *Labour Gazette*, Apr. 1915 to Dec. 1919.

⁶⁵ R.B. McDowell, 'Administration and the public services' in Vaughan (ed.) *A new history of Ireland, VI, Ireland under the Union, II, 1870-1922*, pp 597-599.

Two committees were established, one for Ulster with its headquarters in Belfast, and one for the remaining three provinces based in Dublin.⁶⁶ The decision to have two separate committees arose from the significant differences between the situations of female unemployment in the Ulster manufacturing towns compared with the agricultural districts of southern Ireland.⁶⁷ The purpose of the committees was to ‘advise local relief committees and to formulate schemes as to the methods of employing women who have been thrown out of work by the war’.⁶⁸ The committees themselves had no power to make grants but could recommend worthy schemes to the LGB.⁶⁹

The Ulster Committee was led by the Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava and worked in close connection with the Belfast Municipal Technical Institute. Training schemes for women thrown out of work in the textile industry in Lurgan and Londonderry were approved by December 1914.⁷⁰ In cooperation with the Committee, Belfast Municipal Technical Institute (MTI) organised classes for women who were wholly or partly unemployed owing to the war. The classes were funded by the Prince of Wales Fund, the National Relief Fund established in August 1914 by the Prince of Wales to support the wives and dependents of soldiers and sailors and those made unemployed by the war. This support allowed the MTI to offer financial reward to women for attending the classes. The focus was on domestic training rather than development of new skills to aid future employment, with classes on sewing, cooking, and home nursing.⁷¹ Eighty-three women attended classes through the scheme at the Belfast institute during the period 15 February 1915 to 20 March 1915, having been referred by the labour exchange. The women came from a variety of employment sectors and included domestic servants as well as textile workers, as indicated by Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Occupation of women attending the MTI classes in 1915

Trade	Number
Hemstitchers	18
Smoothers	13
Embroiderers	8
Collar-making	8
Making-up	12
Box-makers	4
Charwomen	7
Outworkers	6
Housekeepers	7

⁶⁶ NAI CSO RP 1919/17126: Interim report of the central committee on women’s employment for Leinster, Munster and Connaught, 7 Feb. 1916.

⁶⁷ NAI CSO RP 1919/17126 : Letter from the chief secretary to J.C.R. Lardner, MP, 5 Jan. 1915.

⁶⁸ CSO RP 1919/17126: Interim report of the central committee on women’s employment for Leinster, Munster and Connaught, 7 Feb. 1916

⁶⁹ *Belfast Newsletter*, 16 Dec. 1914.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10 Dec. 1914.

⁷¹ *Lady of the House*, 15 Mar. 1915.

Women who attended the classes twice a week were entitled to one shilling a week while those who attended three times a week received two shillings.⁷² It was made very clear that the remuneration given to the women was not a 'dole' as they 'have been set to work at their own improvement' with the classes intending to demonstrate to the workers 'the possibility of increased wellbeing for themselves and their families'.⁷³ The MTI classes did not begin until February 1915, at which point employment was improving in Belfast and the classes were of less use than they might have been earlier in the war. Due to the steadily dwindling numbers of women in need of war relief, it was decided to cancel the classes after the second month. At the closure of the classes, the Belfast Trades Council dismissed the initiative as being of little value and suggested more should be done to alleviate the ongoing issue of male unemployment.⁷⁴ The Ulster Committee faded out of the public eye within the first year of the war; however the southern committee was more successful.⁷⁵

The Committee for southern Ireland was initially led by Lady Aberdeen but, following her departure from Ireland, it was taken over by the Countess of Fingall. It included a number of titled ladies as well as individuals active in the suffrage and trade union movements.⁷⁶ It initially confined itself to supporting training schemes for women unemployed owing to the war, on similar lines to those established in Belfast. Classes in domestic economy for unemployed girls were arranged through the city of Dublin municipal technical schools. One hundred and twenty girls attended the classes in cookery, needlework, home dressmaking, laundry work and housewifery at the Kevin Street School in 1915 and 1916.⁷⁷ They attempted to set up a similar scheme in the Crawford Institute in Cork but the principal of that institute appeared unenthusiastic, stating in February 1915 that the meetings of the relief committees had shown him that 'there is very little distress in Cork owing to the war'.⁷⁸

The Committee quickly realised that to be of real service it needed to do more than act in an advisory capacity. Consequently, it obtained War Office contracts for clothing for

⁷² PRONI BCT 6/15/3/2: Memorandum for the Lady's Employment Committee from the Municipal Technical Institute, 24 Mar. 1915.

⁷³ BCT 6/15/3/2: Report of Prince of Wales Relief Fund Committee, 26 Mar. 1915

⁷⁴ Linen Hall Library, Belfast Trades Council, 6 May 1915.

⁷⁵ MacDowell, "Irish administration and the public services, 1870-1921", p.597.

⁷⁶ The initial committee consisted of the following members: Lady Aberdeen; Miss EA Browning; Miss E Buchanan; Miss C Calahan; Miss MF Duggan, The Lady Emly; Lady Everard; Countess of Fingall; Miss e Gleeson; Mrs Noel Guinness; Countess of Mayo; Mis D Mellone; Mrs Vere O'Brien; Miss Richardson; Miss M.L. Robinson; and Mrs TW Russell. NAI CSO RP 1919/17126 : Interim report of the central committee on women's employment for Leinster, Munster and Connaught, 7 Feb. 1916.

⁷⁷ Dublin City Council, Report of the technical education committee for the quarter ended 31 March 1915 in *Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, vol. II 1915* (Dublin, 1916) p.125; Report of the technical education committee for the quarter ended 30 June 1916 in *Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, vol. II 1916* (Dublin, 1917), p.349.

⁷⁸ BCT/6/15/3/3: Letter from JH Grindley, Crawford Institute, to FC Forth, Municipal Technical Institute, 2 Feb. 1915.

soldiers and opened workrooms in Dublin and elsewhere in southern Ireland to provide employment for women made unemployed by the war.⁷⁹ For example in August 1915 the Committee obtained a contract from the War Office for the manufacture of 30,000 shirts.⁸⁰ However by 1917 the committee faced difficulty competing for army contracts with better-equipped commercial firms, which were able to take the work at a lower price. They attempted to gain recognition as a garrison needlework association to help with this problem but do not appear to have been successful.⁸¹ The chief secretary supported them in that attempt and in their efforts to gain more war contracts, describing the committee as a 'valuable one' that played a useful role in the 'prevention of acute distress and social trouble in various Irish towns'.⁸²

The LGB was however much less enthusiastic about the value of the Central Committee. As early as November 1914 Sir Matthew Nathan was careful to reassure the LGB that they need not fear 'any clash of authority' in relation to the Central Committee.⁸³ The LGB warned against making subsidies which would allow the voluntary association to undercut legitimate trade and noted that the Central Committee did not only employ destitute people, but rather the same class of people as other contractors would employ. Their objections to the committee arose from both personal antipathy to the members and the fact that the LGB had provided the Central Committee with monetary loans, which it was unlikely to recoup:

They are very difficult people to deal with, this women's central committee, and they seem to take umbrage at any suggestion of the LGB, which is designed to keep right all questions of low wages and cut prices. At all events I hope they will now carry on without expecting any further advances from us.⁸⁴

The extent of the problem of female unemployment throughout the war is evident in the reports of the Central Committee. In a December 1916 report, the Central Committee noted that 'contrary to the experience of English towns unemployment among women in Dublin increased as the war progressed'.⁸⁵ The high numbers of Irishwomen finding work in

⁷⁹ CSO RP 1919/17126: Letter from Countess Fingall, president of the Central Committee of Women's Employment to chief secretary, 16 Jan. 1918.

⁸⁰ Nathan papers Ms 464: Letter from Sir Matthew Nathan to Sir J. Stevens, War office, 31 Aug. 1915.

⁸¹ CSO RP 1919/1726 : Letter from Countess Fingall, president of the Central Committee of Women's Employment to chief secretary, 16 Jan. 1918; letter from chief secretary to director of ordnance and equipment stores, War Office, 28 Jan. 1918.

⁸² CSO RP 1919/1726: Letter from chief secretary to War Office, 12 May 1917; letter from Duke to War Office, 21 Sept. 1917; Letter from chief secretary to director of ordnance and equipment stores, War Office, 28 Jan. 1918.

⁸³ Nathan papers, MS 462: Letter from Sir Matthew Nathan to Magill, 14 Nov. 1914.

⁸⁴ CSO RP 1919/1726: Letter from Local Government Board, Ireland to A.P. Magill, Irish Office, 13 Dec. 1917.

⁸⁵ CSO RP 1919/1726: Report on female unemployment in Dublin and three provinces, prepared by the Central Committee of Women's Employment for chief secretary Duke, 16 Dec. 1916.

England through the labour exchanges during the war would have drawn particular attention to the difficulties in Dublin. The increasing unemployment in Dublin is evident in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Unemployed women registered at Dublin labour exchange⁸⁶

Date	Number
November 1914	320
November 1915	906
November 1916	1,223

The number of women registered as unemployed in Dublin almost tripled between 1914 and 1915 and increased by a further 35% over the following year. The Committee believed that of the 1,223 women registered as unemployed for November 1916, nine hundred of these were likely to be in urgent need of work and the remainder registered with the exchange in the hope of obtaining munitions work. They expected that the number of unemployed women would further increase when the shortage of sugar affected the confectionary trades. The Committee offered three explanations for the different experience in Dublin compared to English towns: that the supply of labour in Dublin was always greater than the demand; the absence of conscription in Ireland meant little need for women to substitute for absent men; and, with the exception of the munitions factory (which employed six hundred women in December 1916), there was no extra work for women in Dublin arising out of the war. The level of distress arising from the female unemployment was accentuated by the substantial increase in food prices. The expiration of the War Office contracts obtained by the Central Committee was also cited as a factor, the number of women employed through them having dropped from two hundred to twenty. The Committee observed a 'very marked spirit of discontent' among unemployed women in Dublin who appeared to feel that the Committee was failing to understand the severity of their predicament.⁸⁷ However, the development of the munitions sector in Ireland in the latter half of the war provided some improved opportunities for women's employment.

Expansion

Munitions work

The role of women in munitions industries is central to the histories of women and war and to perceptions of changing identities in wartime. Susan Grayzel argues that women's role in manufacturing weapons 'challenged a powerful gendered taboo'. Women were traditionally seen as givers of life but had now become producers of death and participants in the 'culture

⁸⁶ Figures are unavailable for 1917 and 1918.

⁸⁷ CSO RP 1919/1726: Report on female unemployment in Dublin and three provinces, prepared by the Central Committee of Women's Employment for Chief Secretary Duke, 16 Dec. 1916. Evidence of this growing 'spirit of discontent' can be observed in the *Irish Citizen*, see for example, *Irish Citizen*, 17 July 1915, Sept. 1916 and Dec. 1916.

of death'.⁸⁸ Angela Woollacott describes the wartime female munitions worker as a 'powerful symbol of modernity'. She argues that the munitions worker posed a challenge to the gender order through her 'patriotic skilled work and control of machinery' while simultaneously undermining class differences through her increased spending power.⁸⁹ The female munitions worker received a significant amount of comment in the contemporary press, with attitudes varying from praise for women's patriotism to criticism of their supposed extravagant spending of their wages.

The development of the munitions sector in wartime Great Britain employed over one million women and allowed women to learn new skills and play a public role in the war effort.⁹⁰ However the munitions sector was much smaller in Ireland than Great Britain. Five state-run National Shell Factories were eventually established in Ireland in the second half of the war – in Dublin, Waterford, Cork and Galway. Nonetheless the combined floor space of these five factories and the total number of people employed in them was described by Riordan in June 1918 as 'far less than that of a very moderate sized munition factory in Great Britain'.⁹¹ By the announcement of the Armistice the five factories employed 2,148 people. The chief government munitions factory was the Parkgate factory in Dublin. The Parkgate street site incorporated both the National Fuse Factory (which began production in March 1916) and the National Shell Factory (which began production in April 1917).⁹²

Niamh Puirseil notes that it is difficult to overestimate the comparative significance of the low levels of munitions output in Ireland: 'what in many other wartime societies proved one of the most dynamic developments, affecting everything from gender relations to the power and political clout of organised labour, was largely absent'.⁹³ Although Emmet O'Connor has suggested that the small number of munitions factories in Ireland was part of a British policy to keep the south de-industrialised, Puirseil points out that the north fared no better. She states simply that there was no practical reason to situate munitions factories in Ireland while there were significant logistical and security reasons as to why it would be inadvisable.⁹⁴ There was extensive lobbying by Home Rule MPs, trade unions and local pressure groups for more munitions contracts to be granted to Ireland.⁹⁵ It was believed by

⁸⁸ Grayzel, "Women & men", p.267.

⁸⁹ Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p.3.

⁹⁰ *Labour Gazette*, Mar. 1919.

⁹¹ Edward J Riordan, "Restraint of Industry" in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, vii, no.26 (June, 1918), p.310.

⁹² Toye, "Women workers in Dublin during the First World War", p.27.

⁹³ Puirseil, "War, work & labour", p.185.

⁹⁴ Emmet O'Connor, *A labour history of Ireland 1824-1960* (Dublin, 1992), p.96; Puirseil, "War, work and labour" p.184; TNA MUN 4/109: report on state of munitions industry in Ireland, Nov. 1916.

⁹⁵ TNA MUN 4/109: note of conference on the Irish munitions industry, 4 Jan. 1917; Linen Hall Library, Belfast Trades Council, 3 Feb. 1916; NLI P3212: Report of the twenty-second annual Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, Sligo, 7, 8 and 9 August 1916, p.62.

some that the extension of war manufacturing employment would help to create and sustain a 'war atmosphere' in Ireland. The loyalty of the Dublin shell factory staff during the Rising was stressed in an attempt to alleviate security concerns after 1916.⁹⁶ It was also hoped that more extensive munitions contracts would help with the problem of unemployment and short time work among female workers in Ulster.⁹⁷

There were also company-owned factories employing female munitions workers in Ireland, for example Pierce's engineering firm in Wexford, Kynoch's in Arklow and James Mackie & Sons (known as Mackie's) in Belfast. Such factories were referred to as 'controlled establishments' and came under the remit of the Munitions of War Act in July 1915.⁹⁸ Pierce's employed two hundred women workers during the war, who were not previously employed by the factory.⁹⁹ Kynoch's Cordite Works in Arklow, County Wicklow, significantly expanded their workforce. Over the course of the war, the number of employees increased from six hundred to almost 5,000. The increased workforce during the war led to a shortage of housing, already an acute problem in Arklow, and the urban district council appealed to the Treasury for a loan to help them build housing for the workers.¹⁰⁰ Among the employees were a number of teenage girls from the locality.¹⁰¹ The work was very dangerous and the number of workplace injuries was so high that a hospital was opened on the site. On 21 September 1917 there was a huge explosion in the factory, killing twenty-seven men and seriously injuring six more. The factory closed shortly after the war's end.¹⁰²

It was estimated in September 1915 that there were nearly one hundred factories of varying sizes engaged in manufacturing war munitions in Belfast.¹⁰³ In September 1918 it was reported that close to 5,000 women were working in munitions in Belfast.¹⁰⁴ How does this relate to the Belfast female population? In 1911 the population of Belfast was recorded as 386,947 of whom 132,807 or 34.3% were females aged between fifteen and sixty-five.¹⁰⁵ Women made up 40% of the workforce, significantly higher than the average for Ireland,

⁹⁶ TNA MUN 4/109: Report by E.A. Aston on munitions industry in Ireland, 6 Jan. 1917.

⁹⁷ Nathan papers, MS 465: Letter from Sir Matthew Nathan to Captain R.C. Kelly, 30 Oct. 1915; Letter from Sir Matthew Nathan to Captain R.C. Kelly, 15 Dec. 1915; CSO RP 1916/7443: Letters and memorandum from S.C. Harrison to Sir Matthew Nathan as to munitions work and other female employment in Belfast, 28 Mar. 1916.

⁹⁸ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.77.

⁹⁹ IWM French papers, 75/46/10 JDPF 8/3: Memorandum on reconstruction in Ireland by William MacCartney Filgate, Inspector of Industries, Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1918.

¹⁰⁰ TNA T1/11683: Letter from Office of Public Works, Dublin, to Treasury, 28 Oct. 1914; letter from treasury to Office of Public Works, Dublin, 2 Nov. 1914; letter from Athy urban district council to Chief Secretary, July 1915.

¹⁰¹ NLI, Hilary Murphy, "The Kynoch era in Arklow, 1895-1918", p.70.

¹⁰² Anthony Cannon, "Arklow's explosive history: Kynoch, 1895-1918" *History Ireland*, xiv, no.1 (2005), p.35.

¹⁰³ Riordan, "Irish industries after twelve months of the war", p.466.

¹⁰⁴ *Lady of the House*, 15 Sept. 1918.

¹⁰⁵ Fitzpatrick and Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, pp 11, 55.

with the majority working in the linen industry. 23,000 women were employed in the linen industry in Belfast in 1911.¹⁰⁶ Some of the textile plants converted to munitions factories following the outbreak of the war.

Mackie's, a Belfast textile machinery plant, opened a munitions department in early September 1915 which later split into two departments consisting of bombs and grenades. From February 1916 a shell factory, exclusive of the munitions department, was listed in the wage book, and an aircraft department from April 1918. The aircraft department closed at the end of December 1919 and the shell factory closed in February 1919.¹⁰⁷ It is evident from the in-house magazine produced by female munitions workers, discussed below, that the factory employed many middle and upper class women who sought munitions work to aid the war effort but who would not otherwise have entered the industrial workforce.

It was assumed from the outset that the main beneficiaries of the expansion of munitions work in Ireland would be women workers. The *Lady of the House* magazine enthusiastically greeted the news that there would be an expansion in the number of munitions factories in Ireland in September 1915, noting that it was particularly good news for women. They hoped that this would bring 'ample' employment for girls of 'various social grades'.¹⁰⁸ Women made up 66.4% of the workforce in the national shell factories.¹⁰⁹ There was a deliberate policy to show preference to women to prevent the creation of new jobs deterring men from enlisting in the army. Government munitions regulations stated that only 5% of the industrial workforce could be male; however this policy was evidently not always implemented in practice.¹¹⁰

Table 5.5 Gender breakdown of employees in the National Munition Factories, Nov. 1918¹¹¹

National factory	Males	Females	Total	Females as % of the total
Dublin shell factories	278	531	809	65.6%
Dublin fuse factory	123	434	557	77.9%
Waterford cartridge factory	262	257	519	49.5%
Cork shell factory	34	114	148	77%
Galway shell factory	25	90	115	78.3%
Total	722	1426	2148	66.4%

The gender breakdown of employees varied considerably between the different factories. For example, 78.3% of the Galway employees were female compared to just 49.5% of the Waterford workers. Efforts were made to ensure a supply of local skilled

¹⁰⁶ Leanne McCormick, *Regulating sexuality: women in twentieth century Northern Ireland* (Manchester, 2009), p.94.

¹⁰⁷ PRONI D3964/G/3/10: Weekly wage book for Mackie's 1914-1919.

¹⁰⁸ *Lady of the House*, 15 Sept. 1915.

¹⁰⁹ Riordan, *Modern Irish trade & industry*, p.211.

¹¹⁰ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.86.

¹¹¹ Riordan, *Modern Irish trade & industry*, p.211.

workers for the factories. Accordingly a large number of girls were reportedly sent from Waterford to undergo training at the Gramophone Works at Hayes near London so they would be ready to begin work in the Waterford National Cartridge Factory.¹¹² This also occurred with women workers at the Cork shell factory and was anticipated for the Galway shell factory.¹¹³ Irish women also travelled to England to receive training as shell inspectors in English munitions factories before returning to Ireland to act as instructors in Irish factories.¹¹⁴ Training for female munitions workers was also provided in Dublin and Belfast through the technical institutes. In Dublin classes were provided for sixteen girls in munitions work at the Bolton street institute and classes for ten girls in lathe work at the Kevin Street School in 1916.¹¹⁵ In Belfast a special course of lectures for women munition workers employed by Messrs Coates & Sons was organised in the MTI in 1917. The course involved twelve lessons ranging from fractions to the construction of automatic lathes.¹¹⁶

The social class of the workers proved to be a divisive issue. The Ministry for Munitions as well as individual factories held advertising campaigns to persuade middle- and upper-class women to enter the factories on a voluntary basis, which was partly motivated by the realisation that it would be more difficult to dismiss working class women at the war's end.¹¹⁷ Concern was expressed at the potential displacement of working-class women by such voluntary labour. Although friction was evident in British munitions factories between the middle-class volunteers and the working-class workers, the issue was particularly apparent in Ireland due to the much smaller munitions sector.¹¹⁸ The *Woman Worker* reported 'bitter complaints' against voluntary munitions workers in Belfast in summer 1916.¹¹⁹ A 'good deal of discontent' was reported among women on short time in the mills about the employment of 'amateur ladies' on munitions work to the exclusion of textile workers in distress owing to the war.¹²⁰

Dora Mellone of the Central Committee complained to Nathan about the recruitment of voluntary female labour by Mackie's. She argued that girls were being denied employment in other areas on the grounds that they could get munitions work, but were then

¹¹² TNA MUN 4/109: Report on state of munitions industry in Ireland, 5 Jan. 1917.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ British Library, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection: *Daily Mail*, 2 Dec. 1916.

¹¹⁵ Dublin City Archives, Report of the technical education committee for quarter ended 30 June 1916 in *Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, vol. II 1916* (Dublin, 1917), p.349.

¹¹⁶ PRONI ED/4/60: Correspondence between the Belfast Municipal Technical Institute and Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 12 Dec. 1917.

¹¹⁷ Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p.40.

¹¹⁸ For discussion of the class tensions in British munitions factories, see Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, pp 180-182.

¹¹⁹ *Woman Worker*, July 1916.

¹²⁰ NAI CSO RP 1916/7443: Letter from LGB to Miss Slocock, Inspector of factories, Belfast, 11 Mar. 1916.

refused work by Mackie's in favour of voluntary labour.¹²¹ Belfast Trades Council also objected strongly to the use of volunteers in munitions factories, arguing that the ministry of munitions should ensure that before any volunteers were taken on, every woman 'who is now unemployed or earning an insufficient wage in the mills and factories in Belfast owing to the war, shall be employed at the earliest possible date'. The Council described the advertisements for voluntary labour as a 'serious scandal'.¹²² On 2 March 1916 it was stated that it had been 'established beyond doubt' that 'titled ladies and other well-to-do people were working in munitions work at Mackie's'. Although the Council was reluctant to interfere in the affairs of the trade unions, it was felt by many of those present that the issue was a public matter and 'one which concerned the community most immediately'.¹²³ The Local Government Board also initiated an investigation into the matter of 'ladies, amateurs' being employed in munitions factories in Belfast in place of wage earners.¹²⁴ The Ministry of Munitions representatives, Alexander McDowell, however defended Mackie's and suggested that the accounts were greatly exaggerated. He claimed that Mackie's chose their munitions employees on their merits from a long list of applicants and 'the question of birth or position had, I believe, nothing to do with the selection'. He noted that a number of those selected had already taken courses on using the necessary machinery.¹²⁵

The presence of middle or upper-class women in Irish munitions factories is evident in the magazine produced by female war workers in Mackie's factory from November 1916 to March 1917. The weekly magazine was begun in late November 1916 and was referred to as 'Mackie's magazine or the Turret Lathers Friend'. The editors described it as an 'outlet for the talent of our shift and for the edification of all in general'.¹²⁶ It was edited and produced by the workers for the workers and contained poems, short stories (often set in munitions factories), an occasional advice column and notices of social events for the workers. The magazine appears to have been similar to those produced in munitions factories in Great Britain, as described by Claire A. Culleton. Such magazines performed a similar

¹²¹ Nathan papers, Ms 469: Memorandum of meeting between Sir Matthew Nathan and Dora Mellone, 28 Jan. 1916.

¹²² Linen Hall Library, Belfast Trades Council, 3 Feb. 1916; complaints were similarly expressed by the Central Committee on women's employment for southern Ireland, with the committee arguing that offers of employment should be restricted to those who needed to earn their own livelihood, NAI CSO RP 1919/1726: Interim report of the Central Committee on women's employment for Leinster, Munster and Connaught, 7 Feb. 1916.

¹²³ Belfast Trades Council, 2 Mar. 1916. Unfortunately this is the last surviving set of minutes; those from the remainder of the war are missing.

¹²⁴ CSO RP 1916/7443: Letter from LGB to Captain Kelly, Ministry of Munitions, 11 Mar. 1916.

¹²⁵ CSO RP 1916/7443: Letter from Alexander McDowell, Ministry of Munitions, to R.A. Aston, Local Government Board Inspector, 17 Mar. 1916.

¹²⁶ PRONI D3964/T/38: Mackie's magazine or the Turret Lathers Friend, 27 Nov. 1916.

function to trench newspapers in boosting morale and using humour to make the conditions more endurable.¹²⁷

The Mackie's magazine combined spoof advertisements for sofa chairs for factory work and extendable arms for their machines, with articles and poetry about the role of their work in the war.¹²⁸ The poem 'A country's call', extracted below, is indicative of the style of the literary work with the dominant sentiment being pride in their vital role in the war effort:

To aid their country in the awful strife
Came forward the women in every station of life,
'To tighten their grip on the Turks and the Huns'
Was the work of the women, the men and the guns

With bomb, shell and hand grenade
The womenfold are undismayed
They work with silence and precision
Calmly awaiting the final decision¹²⁹

Another poem used military language to describe 'Mackie's finishing corps':

'We've got an army all of our own
in fact for valour it stands alone
we work with shells all day and night
to show the Germans that we can fight'.¹³⁰

The magazine exhorted the workers to remember that each shell they made would help to win the war and bring the day nearer when 'our boys will come home o'er the sea'. Such knowledge seemingly helped to raise their spirits when the unpleasant nature of work made it difficult to continue.¹³¹ Occasionally unease at the nature of their labour was expressed, as evident in one anonymous article titled 'Thoughts in a munitions factory':

Midst the laughter and the singing I often wonder why I am with others engaged in such an occupation. To see the row of shells, so innocent looking, yet made for a specific and terrible purpose – that of human destruction – makes one deeply conscious of their work. It is difficult to think of women in the 20th century engaged in such an occupation.

The writer however continues by reminding the readers of the 'havoc wrought by our enemies' and warns that if they grow 'too conscious of our work the chances are that our own city might be devastated'.¹³² It is interesting that it is the danger to her own locality, to Belfast, that is emphasised rather than the risk to Ireland or the United Kingdom as a whole. This is evidence of the importance of locality in dictating women's responses to the global

¹²⁷ Claire Culleton, *Working-class culture, women, and Britain 1914-21* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp 102-103.

¹²⁸ D3964/T/38: *Mackie's magazine or the Turret Lathers Friend*, 27 Nov. 1916.

¹²⁹ D3964/T/38: *Mackie's magazine*, 4 Dec. 1916.

¹³⁰ D3964/T/38: *Mackie's magazine*, 11 Dec. 1916.

¹³¹ D3964/T/38: *Mackie's magazine*, 11 Jan. 1917.

¹³² D3964/T/38: *Mackie's magazine*, 4 Dec. 1916.

war effort and of the role of both regional and national identities in wartime, an issue discussed further in Chapter Six.¹³³

Who were the Mackie's workers writing in the magazine? It appears they were primarily middle or upper-class women who entered the factory to assist with the war effort rather than from economic necessity. Although Culleton assumes the writers of such magazines to be working-class, the high level of education evident from the style of the text and the frequent literary allusions in both Mackie's magazine and the papers she references, would suggest otherwise.¹³⁴ For example one issue of the Belfast magazine contained an example of a conversation between Mackie's workers written as though 'people talked nowadays as do the characters in Mr William Shakespeare's drama'.¹³⁵ That same issue gave some insight into the pre-war activities the workers were accustomed to. These included going to the theatre, playing golf, and spending a lot of money on clothes. These interests are contrasted with the wartime activities of women: driving ambulances, nursing, making munitions, collecting tickets and working on the land. It stated that after the war's end they planned on becoming 'totally frivolous', buying six new hats and wearing their dance shoes into holes.¹³⁶ Although a light-hearted humorous piece, the article gives an insight into the privileged class backgrounds of the contributors and readership of the magazine.

Thousands of Irish girls and woman also travelled to Great Britain, where there was much greater opportunity for work in munitions factories as well as higher rates of pay. Irish labour was obtained through the labour exchanges and by direct recruitment by officials, agents and contractors.¹³⁷ Advertising campaigns in Ireland to recruit Irishwomen for British factories emphasised the higher wages available in Britain.¹³⁸ In September 1916 a lady representative of a munitions firm in Barrow-in-Furness visited various towns in Ireland to recruit Irish women to munitions work. All women aged sixteen to thirty-five and at least five feet two inches tall were eligible to apply. The minimum wage was £1 a week and board and lodgings were provided at 14 shillings a week.¹³⁹ The divisional officer at Dublin Castle reported in November 1918 that 2,034 women from Ireland had been sent to Britain for

¹³³ For a discussion of the importance of regional identities as separate from national identities, see Celia Applegate, "A Europe of regions, reflections on the historiography of sub-national places in modern times" in *American Historical Review*, vol. 104, no. 4 (Oct. 1999), pp 1157-1182.

¹³⁴ Culleton, *Working-class culture, women & Britain 1914-21*, p.100.

¹³⁵ D3964/T/38: *Mackie's magazine*, Christmas issue, 1916.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ David Fitzpatrick, "The Irish in Britain, 1871-1921" in Vaughan (ed.) *A new history of Ireland, VI, Ireland under the Union II, 1870-1922*, p.665.

¹³⁸ Susan Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (Harlow, 2002), p.30.

¹³⁹ IWM WWS SUPP30/58: *Coleraine Chronicle*, 22 September 1916; see also *Lady of the House*, 15 Aug. 1917.

government work in 1917 and 847 women in 1918.¹⁴⁰ There was also many more travelling to Britain to seek work in the war industries themselves.

Precise figures for those travelling to work in Britain during the war cannot be ascertained. Weekly returns for the Irish labour exchanges for the years 1917 and 1918 show that the exchanges sent a total of 34,207 people from Ireland to Britain to work on the shipyards and in munitions factories. These figures include both male and female labourers.¹⁴¹ Neil O' Flanagan estimates that between 40,000 and 50,000 Irish people migrated to Britain for work during the war through the labour exchanges.¹⁴² The majority of those sent to Britain for work through the labour exchanges in 1917 and 1918 came from the Dublin area (24.5%), followed by Belfast (16.6%) and Galway (8.9%).¹⁴³ The main regions in Britain recruiting Irish workers in 1917 and 1918 were located in north England or in Scotland although Irish workers were also employed in Avonmouth, Redditch and Woolwich in south England.¹⁴⁴

This increased migration for work was also seen in Britain during the war. The *Labour Gazette* noted in March 1917 the increased mobility of women's labour. In 1914 32,988 women obtained employment in other districts through the Employment Exchanges but by 1916 this had increased to 160,003. Although in some cases this merely involved moving from one village to the next or between districts in London, for others there was a complete change of residence. In 1917, between 4,000 and 5,000 women per month were being transferred away from home for work through the Exchanges.¹⁴⁵ The demand for female labour for government work in Britain remained acute until the end of the war. In November 1918 it was stated that a further 50,000 women were required for the WAAC, the WRNS, the WRAF and munitions factories.¹⁴⁶ In September 1918 102 women from Ireland took up government work in Britain; 78 of whom were munitions workers placed in Coventry by the Belfast Labour Exchange, and eighteen were recruited as clerical staff through the Galway and Tralee exchanges.¹⁴⁷

Irish migration to Great Britain had been waning in the years before the war. In 1911 the Irish-born made up of just 1% of the population of England and Wales, but this decline

¹⁴⁰ TNA T1/12212/41255: Letter from Mr Hanrette, divisional officer, Dublin Castle to Mr Headlam Ministry of Labour, 21 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴¹ NAI CSO RP 1918/33366: Weekly returns of labourers sent to Great Britain from Employment Exchanges in Ireland 12 Jan. 1917 to 6 Dec. 1918, cited in O' Flanagan "Dublin city in war & revolution", p.47.

¹⁴² O' Flanagan, "Dublin city in war & revolution", p.47.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹⁴⁵ *Labour Gazette*, Mar. 1917.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, Lab 2/237/Ed29148/1918: Letter from Treasury to Ministry of Labour, 22 Oct. 1918; letter from Ministry of Labour to Treasury, 2 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁷ TNA Lab 2/237/Ed29148/1918: Memorandum from the Ireland divisional officer of the Ministry of Labour, 2 Oct. 1918.

was reversed during the war due to the significantly improved employment opportunities in Britain. However English and Scottish workers did not always view this increased Irish migration favourably.¹⁴⁸ A report on the state of the munitions industry in Ireland asserted in November 1916 that Irish munitions workers in England were 'not liked' and consequently it was difficult to import sufficient Irish labour.¹⁴⁹ The *Labour Gazette* records an incident the same month where one English midlands firm went on strike rather than work with Irish men of military age. The dispute was resolved by the Irish workers being returned to Ireland.¹⁵⁰ This however is the only such incident recorded in the *Labour Gazette* over the course of the war.

The Irish women workers in England often formed their own groups, leading to descriptions of being 'clannish', and in one notable recorded incident, became involved in a physical fight with their fellow workers.¹⁵¹ Gabrielle West, a supervisor in a Hereford factory, described in her diary clashes between the Irish girls and the English in August 1917.¹⁵² The Irish girls allegedly engaged in provocative behaviour such as singing Sinn Fein songs and, according to West, making offensive remarks about English soldiers. The English girls responded and the situation escalated from name-calling into physical violence on at least two occasions. In the end it was decided that the only means of resuming order was to send the Irish girls home. As their train left the station it was pelted with 'rotten vegetables, eggs and bad language'. The Irish girls were clearly in the minority in the factory and, although the initial provocation may have come from their singing, they appear to have been bullied and intimidated by their fellow workers. They were physically attacked not only by their co-workers but by locals in the village and received little support from the police:

Some time ago several lots of Irish girls were taken on to work in the Amatol. There has been a lot of bad blood between them & the English. The Irish sang Sinn Fein songs & made offensive remarks about the Tommies. The English replied in kind. Each side waxed very wroth. The Irish wore orange & green, & the English Red white & blue. This went on for weeks...Last week during the dinner hour an English girl accused an Irish girl of stealing her dinner. The Irish girl replied by spitting in the English girl's face. There was a battle, all the others standing round & cheering on the combatants. We were called in to separate them. We had to lock the Irish girl up in our office as the others wanted to lynch her.

Next evening scenting trouble 8 or 9 of us went down to see the shift train off from Hereford station. A tremendous battle ensued on the platform between about 20 Irish & the rest of the shift. We got the Irish separated out, one at a time & put in the waiting room. I stood guard in front of the door, which unfortunately wouldn't shut. Behind me stormed the Irish & in front the English, until the latter were gradually pushed across to the other platform & got into the

¹⁴⁸ David Fitzpatrick, "The overflow of the deluge: Anglo-Irish relationships, 1914-1922" in Oliver MacDonagh and W.F. Mandle (eds) *Ireland and Irish-Australia: studies in cultural and political history* (Sydney, 1986), pp 85-87.

¹⁴⁹ TNA MUN 4/109: Ministry of Munitions, 28 Nov. 1916.

¹⁵⁰ *Labour Gazette*, Dec. 1916, p.467

¹⁵¹ Thom, *Nice girls and rude girls*, p.153.

¹⁵² IWM, MS 7142: Diary of Gabrielle West, 30 Aug. 1917.

train. Then we let the Irish girls out...Crowds of people hooted & threw mud at them, one girl fell & was kicked by a young man in the crowd. I & another W.P. grabbed him & called to a policeman who had seen it done but instead of taking him the p. man slunk off, so we had to let the man go.¹⁵³

West's account of this incident is mentioned in a number of British histories of women workers in WWI and is often the only reference to Irish female war workers, giving the impression that conflict between Irish and British workers was the norm.¹⁵⁴ Although Deborah Thom notes the rarity of incidents such as that described by West, others have used West's account with little interrogation or questioned the extent to which it was representative of the experience of Irish girls in English factories.¹⁵⁵ Claire Culleton's analysis of Irish female munitions workers in Britain during the war is particularly problematic. Her account implies that the vast majority of the Irish population was opposed to the war, ignoring the significant contribution of Irishmen to the British armed forces, and assumes that Irish wartime migrants to Britain were fleeing their 'troubled country'.¹⁵⁶ She emphasises the Sinn Féin propaganda against munitions work in Britain and argues that the general atmosphere in Ireland was 'hostile to and unsympathetic toward emigrating Irish war workers'.¹⁵⁷ She asserts that Irish female war workers faced significant hostility in Britain but her only evidence is the incident described by West. Culleton further argues that the discord between Irish and English war workers in English munitions factories is very evident in the women's service newspapers and factory magazines. However her subsequent analysis of the service papers makes no reference to Irish workers, let alone any evidence of discord.¹⁵⁸

David Fitzpatrick acknowledges the increased hostility towards Irish migrant workers but argues however that the Irish workers, rather than 'constituting a disruptive faction' in British society, were anxious to demonstrate their loyalty to Britain.¹⁵⁹ Incidences of deliberate antagonism by Irish workers, such as that described in West's account are thus likely to have been rare. There is also some evidence of harmonious relationships between English and Irish munitions workers. The *Cardonald News*, a Scottish munitions magazine, published a poem addressed to a 'beautiful young Irish girl leaving the NPF Cardonald for

¹⁵³ Diary of Gabrielle West, 30 Aug. 1917.

¹⁵⁴ For example it is mentioned in Grayzel, *Women & the First World War*, p.30; Woollacott, *On her their lives depend* pp 43-44; Thom, *Nice girls & rude girls*, p.36; and Claire A. Culleton, "Irish working-class women and World War I" in Susan Shaw Sailer (ed) *Representing Ireland: gender, class, nationality* (Gainesville, 1997), p.161.

¹⁵⁵ Thom, *Nice girls & rude girls*, p.36.

¹⁵⁶ Culleton, *Working class culture, women & Britain 1914-1921*, p.39.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.41. Ignorance of Ireland's wartime political status influences her argument; Culleton refers to Ireland being 'protected by her declared neutrality' during the Great War: Culleton, *Working class culture*, p.43.

¹⁵⁸ Culleton, "Irish working-class women & World War I", p.161.

¹⁵⁹ Fitzpatrick, "The overflow of the deluge", pp 85-87. §

her home in Ireland'. Although a mawkish sentimental piece, the poem is a testament to the friendship between the two workers:

What happy days were spent, when we
Together turned the war-like shell
Thou'art gone! Perchance, I'll see no more
Thy sunny smile, dear Isobel!¹⁶⁰

Examination of the role of Irish women as Land Girls in Great Britain during the war also yields positive accounts of relations between Irish and English workers. Maggie Andrews has found evidence of groups of Irish girls working in the Land Army in Worcester during the war. An account by a Land Girl published in a local paper in March 1917 described working with two-dozen Irish girls from Belfast on a farm in Pershore. There appear to have been no tensions or hostilities between the workers on the farms. Before the Irish girls returned home, there was a 'specially posh' tea in their honour. This was followed by an impromptu concert one evening where 'a little Irish girl recited charmingly'.¹⁶¹ Concerns were also expressed about the decline in the usual Irish seasonal labour in the agricultural sector in Britain during the war.¹⁶²

However there is some evidence of reluctance on the part of the British government to recruit Irishwomen for government war work in England. In 1918, the Ministry of Labour requested funds from the Treasury to provide accommodation for women travelling from Ireland to England for government war work. They claimed that many of the Irish workers were 'uneducated girls from remote villages' and that 'in view of the difficulties which we have to contend with in dealing with the question of the migration of Irish labour to England' it would be best to avoid situations involving Irish women arriving in English towns late at night.¹⁶³ The Treasury questioned the necessity of recruiting Irishwomen, to which the Ministry of Labour responded that for the present, at least, it was essential to draw upon Irish resources but that they would 'of course not draw upon Irish labour for any demand which it is possible to meet locally'.¹⁶⁴ The issue of the supposed mental instability of the Irish people also arose in a report of the physiological sub-committee of the war cabinet committee on women in industry during the war. It was stated that there was 'no doubt' that the Irish people are particularly unstable and that this could be attributed to the peculiar sexual

¹⁶⁰ IWM WWS MUN VII/39, *Cardonald News*, ii, no.2, May 1918.

¹⁶¹ *Berrows Worcester Journal*, 10 Mar. 1917, cited in unpublished draft of Maggie Andrews, Adrian Gregson and John Peters (eds) "Voices of the First World War: Worcester's war" (Gloucestershire, 2014), p.41. I am grateful to Professor Andrews of the University of Worcester for sharing this material with me.

¹⁶² *Labour Gazette*, Mar. 1916; Aug. 1916; Sept. 1916.

¹⁶³ TNA Lab 2/237/Ed29148/1918: Letter from Ministry of Labour to Treasury, 17 Oct. 1918.

¹⁶⁴ Lab 2/237/Ed29148/1918: Letter from Treasury of Ministry of Labour, 22 Oct. 1918; Ministry of Labour to Treasury, 2 Nov. 1918.

repression of Irish girls together with a 'certain amount of nervous instability in the Celtic race'.¹⁶⁵

Nevertheless the government actively recruited Irish women for war work and attempted to find ways of improving their particular situation such as supporting schemes to provide hostels and protective patrols in port areas. The Department of National Service even suggested that one means of assuaging fears about Irish girls travelling to England for war work would be to arrange for Roman Catholic priests to accompany parties of Irishwomen if it was found impossible to 'supply their spiritual needs' in the locality to which they were to be sent.¹⁶⁶ A representative of the Ministry of Munitions noted at a meeting in Dublin of women workers that munitions employers in England 'spoke most highly of the morals of Irish girls and their good work'.¹⁶⁷

What motivated Irishwomen to take up munitions work, in Ireland or Great Britain? The documentation available suggests that a combination of economic and patriotic factors motivated the Irish migrant workers during the war, in common with the British counterparts. Susan Grayzel used the incident in Hereford described by West to emphasise the economic motivation for Irish girls working in munitions in England, and to suggest that the motivations of Irish girls for taking on such work may have been 'very different' to that of the English.¹⁶⁸ However she had previously acknowledged that the majority of English munitions workers were working class women seeking better pay and the greater personal freedom of factory work compared to domestic service.¹⁶⁹ In his 1919 report on British labour conditions during the Great War, M.B. Hammond similarly argued that the number of women, who entered remunerative work during the war for patriotic reasons rather than economic necessity, was 'probably not many in number'.¹⁷⁰ The economic motive was at least as important as patriotism for working-class English girls. The two motivations should not be considered as incompatible with each other. Irene Osgood Andrews, in her 1918 study of the economic effects of the Great War for women and children, suggests that while many women entered munitions for economic reasons, their choice of occupation suggests the influence of patriotic motives.¹⁷¹

The economic motivation for munitions work is evident in the oral history testimony provided by Isabella Clarke, née McGee, to the Imperial War Museum.¹⁷² Clarke, a Roman Catholic from Belfast, had worked in White Lund munitions factory in Morecambe,

¹⁶⁵ IWM WWS EMP.70: War cabinet committee on women in industry: reports on the physiological sub-committee, 1919, p.134.

¹⁶⁶ TNA NATS 1/66: memorandum on national service in Ireland, 1917.

¹⁶⁷ Cathy Hunt, *The National Federation of Women Workers, 1906-1921* (Basingstoke, 2014), p.133.

¹⁶⁸ Grayzel, *Women & the First World War*, p.30.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.29.

¹⁷⁰ M.B. Hammond, *British labour conditions and legislation during the war* (Oxford, 1919), p.327.

¹⁷¹ Andrews, *Economic effects of the war*, p.69.

¹⁷² IWM Oral History, no.774: Interview with Isabella Clarke by Ciaran O'Gallagher, June 1976.

Lancashire during the war. When asked why she decided to volunteer for such dangerous work, she bluntly acknowledged her financial motivation:

For the money, because there wasn't much of a chance in Belfast to get a decent job. And it was for the money and my mother was left a widow with three of us, and she had only a half a crown from the Church to keep us.

Her brothers served in the Royal Navy during the war and her stepfather served in the army. Clarke was just sixteen when she took up the munitions work through the labour exchange in 1915 and had never travelled beyond Ireland before. Her job involved the manufacture of gas shells, which affected her health. After a close friend of hers died from gas poisoning, Clarke moved to another factory and spent the remainder of the war in Coventry. After the war's end Clarke returned to Belfast and worked in a flax mill for a time before returning to Coventry to marry a man she had met while working there.

When asked how she felt about her work after the Rising, Clarke noted that she knew little about the Rising at the time, but that after the war the political turmoil made her reflect on her involvement in the war:

After the war I thought twice about what we'd done, what our people had done and what we'd come back to. I thought of what my brothers had fought for and my stepfather and what I'd done as a girl and my sister who worked as a crane driver.

However when asked whether she had enjoyed her war work, she was emphatically positive about it:

Yes every minute of it, it was a very happy time. Well everything was very happy. We were in work and the people we were in work with. Everyone was very happy to help you.¹⁷³

Reminiscences of their war experience as a happy time are very common in the oral history testimonies of women munitions workers. They focus on the camaraderie of the work and the sense of purpose and fulfilment they gained from it, something perhaps absent from the remainder of their working lives.¹⁷⁴ Isabella's interview was recorded in 1976, sixty years after the war, and thus may not be an entirely accurate account of her war experience. Nostalgia may have coloured her reflections. Penny Summerfield has noted the discrepancy apparent in such interviews between the historical evidence that gender relations were not permanently changed by the war, and the emphasis in the personal accounts of the significance of war work participation for their individual lives.¹⁷⁵ She observes the subjectivity of oral history and argues that local and personal accounts are influenced by the broader societal narratives, 'the conceptual and definitional effects of powerful public

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p.209.

¹⁷⁵ Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing women's wartime lives: discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War* (Manchester, 1998), p.6.

representations'.¹⁷⁶ Deborah Thom has also cautioned that the interviews of munitions workers in the Imperial War Museum derived from a presupposition of the significance of their wartime experience to their later lives.¹⁷⁷

Isabella Clarke's interview was recorded in 1976; sixty years after the war, and thus her recollections may be affected by her experiences in the intervening years. Clarke is also the only Irishwoman featured in the collection, and thus there is a risk in imputing too much significance to her account. Clarke was from Belfast (and possibly from a Protestant background), which may have affected her integration into the English factories. The experience of munitions workers from rural southern Ireland may have been quite different. Consequently, while Clarke's account may give some insight into the experience of Irish munitions workers in England, generalisations based on her experience can only be tenuous.

The impact of the war on women's industrial employment in Ireland was complex and contradictory. The war negatively affected the employment of many female industrial workers in Ireland, particularly those in the textile trade. While some expansion in employment opportunities arose from the development of the munitions sector, this was much less substantial in Ireland than Great Britain. Class tensions were very apparent in Irish munitions factories due to the intense competition for available positions. Although some conflict arose in England between Irish and English workers, the majority of Irishwomen migrating to Britain for war work integrated well into the factories, sharing with the British counterparts a mix of economic and patriotic motivations for their decision to seek such work. How did the war affect other sectors of women's employment? Were there any further opportunities for substitution or dilution beyond industry? The following sections explore other aspects of the war's impact on Irishwomen's employment.

Agriculture

Chapter One noted that agriculture was the dominant economic sector in pre-war Ireland and that the majority of Irishwomen worked on family farms for no formal payment. How did the war affect women's role in agriculture? In other European countries the mobilisation of farmers for army service transformed the role of women in agriculture, significantly affecting the patterns of women's work and their presence in the village community.¹⁷⁸ This change was not evident in Ireland due to the absence of conscription and the particularly low recruitment among farming families. The number of women employed on outdoor work for wages remained small throughout the war and many thousands of Irishwomen worked

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p.15.

¹⁷⁷ Thom, *Nice girls and rude girls*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ Benjamin Ziemann, "Agrarian society" in Winter (ed.) *The Cambridge history of the First World War, Volume II, The State*, p.398.

during the war, as before, on the farms of relatives for no payment. The agricultural sector employed 61,843 women in 1915, or 6.3% of all women aged between fifteen and fifty-five. Women made up 9.2% of all those employed in agriculture. However the majority of such women were relatives of farmers, working on the family farm. Of the women in this category, 69.8% were daughters of farmers and just 2.3% were farm labourers.¹⁷⁹ Irish farms were typically very small and offered few opportunities for regular work by those outside the immediate family. They depended upon the labour of family members, including women. The number of women employed in agriculture in Ireland, as either permanent or casual labourers, reportedly declined from 60,000 to 50,000 from July 1914 to July 1918. This is in contrast to Great Britain, where the conscription of men resulted in a 36.9% increase in the number of women working on the land, from 130,000 in 1914 to 178,000 in 1918.¹⁸⁰ The report admitted however that the figures were difficult to estimate and that the Board of Agriculture believed that a much larger figure than that given above was in fact employed in agriculture by the end of the war.¹⁸¹

There were however efforts made by various bodies to increase the number of women working in agriculture during the war. Chapter Three described the food shortages in Britain and Ireland arising from the difficulties of importing food. The loss of farm labourers to war service also affected food production in Great Britain. Consequently there was a significant mobilisation of women in Great Britain to help maintain the food supply. The Women's Land Army was founded in February 1917 but it arose out of previous organisations such as the Women's Legion and the Women's Defence Relief Fund, which had mobilised women for the land, first for seasonal work and later for long-term work to replace the enlisted men. The targets from the beginning were single women from the educated middle classes and great efforts were made to make the work seem attractive, despite its strenuous physical nature. The patriotic element of the work and its essential nature were stressed. The women were paid eighteen shillings a week at first, which increased to twenty shillings after they passed an efficiency test. In total, 27,000 women served with the Women's Land Army between January 1917 and October 1919.¹⁸² They played a vital role in assisting with the 1917 and 1918 harvests.

No personnel records for the Women's Land Army survive from the First World War, making it difficult to trace Irish involvement.¹⁸³ Bonnie White's recent detailed study of the Women's Land Army adds much to our understanding of the role played by the Land

¹⁷⁹ RG 28/11: National Register for Ireland, 1915.

¹⁸⁰ *Report of the War Cabinet Committee on women in industry* (London, 1919), p.98.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Bonnie White, *The Women's Land Army in First World War Britain* (Basingstoke, 2014), p.8.

¹⁸³ TNA Women's Land Army records, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/womenslandarmy.htm> (20 Feb. 2015).

Army in Britain during the Great War but neglects the Irish experience entirely. Irish land girls receive no mention in her work, whether as workers in Ireland or migrants to Britain. Attempts to piece the Irish involvement together have also been hampered by a lack of surviving documentation. The available evidence however suggests that the Land Army was not particularly popular with Irishwomen. By August 1917, eight months after its establishment, forty-three women from Ireland had applied to join the Women's Land Army. This compares to 3,214 women from Scotland and 38,958 women from England and Wales over the same period.¹⁸⁴ However, many of those who applied for the scheme were rejected or withdrew their applications before taking up work. 7,000 women were placed by the Land Army in its first year in Britain despite the organisation reviewing over 50,000 applications.¹⁸⁵

There were various similar initiatives in Ireland to increase the number of women available to work on the land. In January 1916, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction offered training in farm work for young Irishwomen who wished to 'undertake farm work with the object of releasing men to join the Army for war service'. The courses were provided at the Munster Institute in Cork and cost ten shillings and six pence a week. Applicants had to be over twenty years of age, healthy and 'willing to take part in any class of work on the land, in the farmyard, poultry runs, dairy and garden at such hours as the seasonal work renders necessary'.¹⁸⁶ From autumn 1916 the United Irishwomen, discussed in Chapter Seven, were involved in a scheme to place women on the land. They formed selection committees in twenty-one counties for the purpose of interviewing girls who wished to work as farm labourers during the war. They then attempted to find suitable positions for the girls, either in Ireland or in England. They worked in conjunction with the Women's National Land Service Corps in this respect.¹⁸⁷

In the summer of 1917 Mrs. Maud Walsh, head of the women's section of the Department of National Service in Ireland, sought government approval to set up an Irishwomen's agricultural association which would arrange for the organisation of women's labour on a county basis.¹⁸⁸ Although the primary focus was on ensuring a necessary supply

¹⁸⁴ BLPES, Markham papers, MS 4/7 : Department of National Service Women's Section Weekly reports 9 Feb. 1917 to Aug. 1917.

¹⁸⁵ White, *The Women's Land Army in First World War Britain*, p.38.

¹⁸⁶ *Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction*, vol. xvi (1916), p.481.

¹⁸⁷ *Irish Homestead*, 7 Apr. 1917, p.253.

¹⁸⁸ Maud Walsh (nee O'Connor) was born in 1880 in Wexford. She married a Tralee solicitor, Henry Walsh in 1907 with whom she had one child. She served as a member of the Tralee Board of Guardians and as vice-chairman of Tralee Urban Council and later as member of the Dublin Corporation (1930). Her brother, Sir James O'Connor, was the Attorney General from 1917-18 and her nephew James J O'Connor was a special constable in the RIC. She interceded following the arrest of a man named Potter for involvement in the Bloody Sunday killings in 1920, paying a visit to Lord French, the Lord Lieutenant to plea on behalf of the arrested man. (James J O'Connor BMH WS 1214). However she was regarded as a 'British agent' by Frank Saurin, an intelligence officer for the

of women to help with the harvest, she also proposed the county organisation of women in food production, replacement of male labour to encourage enlistment, and in maternity and child welfare schemes. She organised a public meeting on the matter in summer 1917 in Wexford which focused on the important role women could play in replacing absent men in agricultural work. It was emphasised however that such activity would complement rather than compete with men's labour.¹⁸⁹

In a report on the event, Maud Walsh described the meeting as 'crowded and enthusiastic' and that it included representatives of all political and religious bodies.¹⁹⁰ However the director of National Service in Ireland was very reluctant to endorse the scheme as he felt it would come into conflict with the work of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.¹⁹¹ Personal antipathy between the director and Walsh is evident in the correspondence and it seems likely that this influenced his reservations regarding the viability of her proposal. Walsh persisted with attempting to get her scheme approved but it was never put into practice.¹⁹² She became increasingly frustrated by the government inaction on her proposals and complained to the chief secretary that 'for months I have been at high tension and powerless to proceed'.¹⁹³ The slow level of recruitment in rural Ireland and the absence of conscription meant that there was much less need for the Land Army or the National Service scheme proposed by Walsh in Ireland.

The United Irishwomen admitted that there was not much demand for women's labour on Irish farms, in comparison to England where demand was much greater. Some of the farms seeking land girls were also not suitable with the United Irishwomen reporting that the wages offered in some cases were so low that 'no person could live respectably on them'.¹⁹⁴ There were also conflicting attitudes among farmers to the influx of female labour. In April 1915 the *Lady of the House* featured a piece from a farmer outlining some of the problems associated with well-meaning middle-class urban girls seeking to help out on the farms. He explained that he had given employment to at least thirty girls since the beginning of the war, but that the majority had left at the end of the first week, tired of the life and work. The girls were mostly from urban middle-class backgrounds. He asserted that he was 'not sorry to see the back of them' as they 'did not earn their wages and hindered everybody'.

IRA. (Frank Saurin, BMH WS 715) and accused of attempting to betray Austin Stack to the British authorities by J.J. O'Kelly, another IRA member (BMH WS 384). *Irish Independent*, 28 Mar. 1917; Walsh record, 1911 census.

¹⁸⁹ NAI CSO RP 1922/3950: Report of launch of Irish scheme in Wexford and establishment of the Irishwomen's agricultural association.

¹⁹⁰ CSO RP 1922/3950: Letter from Maud Walsh to Mr Power, 4 Feb. 1918.

¹⁹¹ CSO RP 1922/3950: Letter from P.J. O'Neill to Henry Duke, 11 June 1917.

¹⁹² CSO RP 1922/3950: Letter from Maud Walsh to Mr Power, 4 Feb. 1918, Letter from Maud Walsh to Henry Duke, 12 Apr. 1918.

¹⁹³ CSO RP 1922/3950: Letter from Maud Walsh to Henry Duke, 12 Apr. 1918.

¹⁹⁴ *Irish Homestead*, 7 Apr. 1917.

He did however accept that 'of course they meant well'.¹⁹⁵ In contrast, a woman from Cahir, Tipperary, wrote to the *Irish Homestead* in April 1917 with a positive account of employing a 'young gentlewoman' arranged through the United Irishwomen. The letter-writer's husband had taken a commission in the army and she was left to deal with the five hundred acre farm on her own. The young woman she employed had trained at the Munster Institute. She worked the same hours as the male farmhands and took her share of all 'suitable work' on the farm.¹⁹⁶

The *Irish Homestead* encouraged the move of women into agricultural work, where they were less likely to be competing with men for jobs than in industry, and recommended that women take up the cultivation of vegetables on allotments in Dublin.¹⁹⁷ They suggested that market gardening offered a good opportunity for women 'desiring economic independence'.¹⁹⁸ In March 1917 they suggested that women helpers could be very useful for large farmers whose tillage had been greatly increased. The work would be relatively light and should pay about fifteen to eighteen shillings a week.¹⁹⁹ These wages were however sharply criticised by the *Irish Citizen* as an 'almost cruelly inadequate wage' in the context of the increased cost of living in wartime.²⁰⁰ A 1921 report on British wartime labour suggested that the war had a positive impact upon women's attitudes towards farm work, with it being no longer seen as 'rough or unclean'.²⁰¹ However there is little evidence that it substantially increased in popularity in Ireland. Irishwomen continued to perform unwaged labour on family farms but their attitudes towards the work underwent little change.

Substitution

The mobilisation of over 200,000 Irishmen in the wartime British Army (150,000 of whom had enlisted since the outbreak of the war) also brought new opportunities for women to replace the absent men in traditionally male occupations. For example, the number of women employed in the Irish railway service increased by 77.6% between July 1914 and July 1918.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ *Lady of the House*, Belfast edition, 15 Apr. 1915.

¹⁹⁶ *Irish Homestead*, 14 Apr. 1917.

¹⁹⁷ *Irish Homestead*, 11 Mar. 1916.

¹⁹⁸ *Irish Homestead*, 25 Mar. 1916; see also *Irish Homestead*, 16 Sept. 1916.

¹⁹⁹ *Irish Homestead*, 31 Mar. 1917.

²⁰⁰ *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1917.

²⁰¹ A.W. Kirkaldy, (ed.) *British labour: replacement and conciliation 1914-21* (London, 1921), p.71.

²⁰² IWM WWS EMP.25/10: Board of Trade Report on the state of employment in all occupations in the United Kingdom in July 1918, p.34.

Table 5.6 Railway workers in Ireland 1914-1918

Railway workers	July 1914	July 1918	Percentage increase
Females	523	929	77.6%
Males	26017	26568	2.1%
Total workforce	26540	27497	3.6%
Females as % of total workforce	2.0%	3.4%	70.0%

Mary Muldowney has examined the impact of the Great War on the employment of women in Irish railway companies. Her article draws upon the employment records of the Great Northern Railway (GNR) and the Midlands Great Western Railway (MGWR) to examine the extent to which Irish women were engaged in ‘non-traditional’ work in a male dominated industry as a consequence of the war.²⁰³ Before 1914, there were very few women employed in the railway industry in Ireland. The importance of the railways in wartime however (providing, for example, a link between Dublin and the naval base in Belfast) meant that it was essential to maintain staffing levels throughout the war. While the numbers of women employed during the war increased by 77.6%, the nature of the jobs performed by women on the railways in Ireland changed little, unlike Britain where women became increasingly visible performing traditional male roles on the railway. The rate of pay given to women varied between the different companies in Ireland but women were always paid less than men. Women workers also did not receive the war bonus paid to male workers.²⁰⁴

While many of the women hired by GNR and the MGWR during the war remained with the companies after the war until their marriages, there were very few female clerks hired by the railway companies in the post-war period, highlighting the temporary nature of such employment for women.²⁰⁵ Muldowney concludes that the wartime employment of female railway workers was located ‘strictly within the parameters of work that did not threaten male dominance of the industry’.²⁰⁶ The number of female clerks increased during the war as their male counterparts enlisted in the armed forces, but there was little expansion of potential roles for women and their pay rate remained lower than that of their male colleagues.

The increased bureaucracy created by the war and the enlistment of men for the armed services brought some new opportunities for women in clerical work. This was an expanding sector in the pre-war period with the number of female commercial clerks increasing by 128.4% between 1901 and 1911.²⁰⁷ Opportunities further improved in wartime.

²⁰³ Mary Muldowney, “Breaking the mould? The employment of women in Irish railway companies during the First World War” in *Saothar*, xxxvi (2011), p.7.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.14.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.15.

²⁰⁷ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911*, p.xxviii.

The *Lady of the House* magazine observed in March 1916 that the sight of lady clerks in banks in Dublin was becoming commonplace whereas it was a strange sight before the war. The magazine also noted the waitresses on duty in the Kildare street club where two years previously, waitresses ‘would not have been taken on at any price’.²⁰⁸ The *Belfast Newsletter* claimed in July 1915 that ‘almost the whole of the banks in Ireland’ were now taking on a number of lady clerks on their staff. Women also replaced enlisted men in clerical positions in commercial houses.²⁰⁹ Table 5.7 demonstrates that the number of women employed in the Irish civil service increased by 31.2% between July 1914 and July 1918.²¹⁰ This compares to the figure for all of the UK where the number of women in the civil service increased by 70.6%, from 65,457 in July 1914 to 222,788 in July 1918.²¹¹

Table 5.7 Civil service workers in Ireland 1914-1918

Civil service workers	July 1914	July 1918	January 1919
Females	459	667	678
Males	3780	3068	3055
Total workforce	4239	3735	3733
Females as % of total workforce	10.8%	17.9%	18.2%

The 1917 report of the Dublin based Central Bureau for the Training and Employment of Women asserted that while there were still many women seeking war work of some kind, the demand for untrained workers had ‘practically ceased’ in both government and civilian work. The Bureau also warned that there were increasingly more candidates than available positions in skilled positions such as chauffeurs.²¹² Experienced clerical workers were however still in demand as there was still a shortage of sufficiently trained and experienced shorthand typists. Skilled and experienced clerical workers had usually already been absorbed into government work or other institutions but those without the necessary experience or training had difficulty finding posts.²¹³ Consequently, the Central Bureau for Women’s Employment and Training organised a three-month training course in secretarial work to meet the needs of employers.²¹⁴ The Municipal Technical Institute in Belfast

²⁰⁸ *Lady of the House*, 15 Mar. 1916; see also Gribbon, “Economic & social history”, pp 350-351.

²⁰⁹ *Belfast Newsletter*, 13 July 1915.

²¹⁰ IWM WWS: EMP.25/10: Board of Trade Report on the state of employment in all occupations in the United Kingdom in July 1918 p.34; EMP. 25/11: Report on the state of employment in all occupations in the UK on 11 Nov. 1918 and 31 Jan. 1919.

²¹¹ *Report of the War Cabinet Committee on women in industry*, p.101.

²¹² NLI, *Fourteenth annual report of the Central bureau for the training and employment of women* (Dublin, 1917), pp 2-3.

²¹³ NLI, Report of the Central Bureau for the employment and training of women, 1916, p.2; *Fourteenth annual report of the Central bureau for the training and employment of women*, p.3. The continuing demand for trained typists and shorthand writers was commented on in the *Lady of the House*, 15 May 1917.

²¹⁴ NLI, Central Bureau for the employment and training of women, 1916, p.3.

organised similar short courses to train women as temporary clerical workers to take the place of men withdrawn for military service. The education committee of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce considered the courses to be very useful 'in these abnormal times'.²¹⁵

The possibilities for substitution for Irishwomen were much fewer than for women in Britain due to the lack of conscription. Nevertheless there were some limited opportunities for women to replace men in the workforce, evident, for example, in the railway industry and the civil service. This substitution was important in affecting attitudes towards women's work, as will be seen in the following section.

Perceptions of female employment

During the war the press regularly featured articles discussing the role of women, particularly that of middle-class women, with much of the discourse appearing to accept that the war had irrevocably transformed women's position in society. Women's paid employment received greater attention and it was increasingly assumed that middle-class girls would need to earn their own income, at least until marriage. New careers were promoted for women during the war. The changing attitudes to women's paid employment are evident in the wartime issues of the *Lady of the House*. It regularly featured articles about new careers for women, ranging from beekeepers to chauffeurs and expressed the hope that the expanded opportunities for women's employment would continue after the war.²¹⁶ For example the article on lady chauffeurs made this sentiment clear: 'I sincerely hope that when peace comes again we shall see women continue to be employed in this fairly light capacity'.²¹⁷

How did women's attitudes towards their own employment change during the war? A resistance to employment in the traditional female sectors is evident together with a desire to benefit from the new opportunities offered by the war. After the outbreak of the war, the Central Bureau for Women's Employment and Training received many queries from women wishing to take up 'war work', indicating an early realisation among Irishwomen that the war would bring new employment opportunities. Such women were described by the Bureau in rather dismissive terms as 'the young untrained and inexperienced who felt they 'wanted to do something''.²¹⁸ The Bureau urged the women to undertake training in a specific

²¹⁵ PRONI 1857/1/BA/10: Letter from Belfast Chamber of Commerce to John Earls Esq, assistance vice-principal of the Municipal Technical Institute Belfast, 7 Dec. 1915

²¹⁶ See for example, *Lady of the House*, 15 Jan. 1917, 15 May 1917, 15 June 1917, 14 July 1917; 15 Oct. 1917.

²¹⁷ *Lady of the House*, 15 Sept. 1915.

²¹⁸ NLI, Report of the Central Bureau for the employment and training of women, 1916, p.2.

profession before entering into positions of responsibility for which they were unqualified. The Bureau admitted however that their advice was usually unheeded.²¹⁹

While some of the women seeking war work were women who would not have ordinarily sought paid employment except for the exceptional war circumstances, there was also some displacement of female workers from other professions. The Bureau argued that the demand for clerks had led to a 'great dearth of recruits' for more typical female professions such as lady children's nurse, lady servants and nursery governesses. Such professions were becoming increasingly unpopular before the war and it was now very difficult to fill the advertised posts.²²⁰

In Ireland, as in other combatant countries, domestic service also became increasingly unpopular during the war with women exchanging domestic service for the munitions factories, clerical work, or auxiliary war services.²²¹ For example, Chapter Six demonstrates that many of the Irishwomen enrolling in the Women's Army Auxiliary Service were former domestic servants. The low wages and restricted conditions of domestic service became less attractive when the war expanded other opportunities for women's work. The Bureau complained in late 1917 that it was now 'almost impossible' to fill domestic posts in Ireland.²²² In 1917 the Bureau received notices of 120 vacant domestic service posts but they were only able to find workers to fill seven of them.²²³ The Bureau therefore endeavoured to persuade women seeking work to return to the traditional feminine professions in either domestic or social work. They noted however that there was little enthusiasm to follow such advice among the women they engaged with:

While the glamour of war work with high wages continues, our preaching unfortunately does not find willing listeners, and the number of those who can be persuaded to take up the occupation of children's nurse, matron, welfare worker and so on, is extremely small.²²⁴

The desire for women to enter war work was evident in the cases of women willing to risk their paid positions to volunteer for nursing service. A number of Irish female teachers expressed interest in taking up military or voluntary nursing during the war. Following some discussion, it was decided that teachers who enlisted with the QAIMNS were entitled to the same benefits as men who joined the army or navy for the war but teachers who served with the Red Cross or any other organisation not directly managed by

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.1.

²²⁰ Ibid., p.2; the numbers of women applying for the DATI school of housewifery and domestic economy declined significantly during the war, a drop of 200 per annum to fifty, which was attributed to women taking up war work, *Lady of the House*, 15 June 1917.

²²¹ For comparative perspectives, see Grayzel, *Women & the First World War*, p.29.

²²² NLI, *Fourteenth annual report of the Central bureau for the training and employment of women*, p.3.

²²³ Ibid., p.3.

²²⁴ Ibid., p.2.

the War Office were treated differently. In their case their time of service was regarded as special leave without pay.²²⁵ A question also arose over the benefit entitlements of Miss M. O'Donnell, a typist who enlisted for nursing service with a Voluntary Aid Detachment in early 1918. She was granted an extended leave of absence on half-pay while on her war service. Her period of leave was extended some months later to the end of October 1918 on her request.²²⁶

Although women played a vital role in the wartime Irish civil service, by summer 1916 the government departments were expressing their reluctance to support the post war employment of women. This response was typical of the civil service more generally – the British civil service were similarly very reluctant to encourage the entry of women into their sphere. The issue of women's employment after the war's end was given attention by the reconstruction committee in 1916. The Royal Commission on the civil service recommended that the Treasury should institute an inquiry into the situations in each department, which might 'with advantage to the public service be filled by qualified women' after the war's end. The Treasury requested the under-secretary of Ireland to provide a statement showing the number of women employed in Irish government departments at that time compared with number employed before the war. They also asked for information on the types of work currently performed by women and the departments' opinions on the potential for further expansion of women's work after the war.²²⁷

The report prepared by the under-secretary, following consultation with the various government departments, showed that the number of women employed in civil service grades had increased from sixty-five in summer 1914 to eighty-eight in summer 1916. Many of the government departments that employed extra female staff during the war however expressed reluctance to continue this employment after the war's end. They raised issues such as lack of suitable office accommodation, the fact that women workers were likely to retire early to get married thus disrupting continuity of service, and women's inability to cope with the stress of the work during busy periods.²²⁸ The Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police explained that while they had employed a temporary lady typist owing to members of their clerical staff enlisting in the army, they did not support the continued employment of women in their offices after the war, due to the sensitive nature of the work:

²²⁵ TNA T1/12060: Letter from Commissioners of National Education to Sir Matthew Nathan, 21 May 1915; letter from Treasury to Sir Matthew Nathan, 7 June 1915.

²²⁶ DCA, Report of the technical education committee for quarter ended 31 Mar. 1918 and report of the technical education committee for quarter ended 30 Sept. 1918 in *Reports and printed documents of the Corporation of Dublin, vol. II and III 1918* (Dublin, 1919), pp 261, 199.

²²⁷ NAI CSO RP 1916/16037: Letter from T.L. Heath, Treasury Office to Chief Secretary of Ireland, 10 July 1916.

²²⁸ CSO RP 1916/16037: See for example letter from deputy keeper, Public Record Office to chief secretary, 19 July 1916; Letter from Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 13 September 1916; letter from Irish Land commission, 18 Aug. 1916.

'it will be readily understood that many matters in a police department cannot with equanimity be handed to a woman'.²²⁹ In his objection to the future employment of women, the deputy keeper of the Public Record Office cited the fact that women were 'owing to matrimony more likely to retire than men' which would be a waste of their years of training, and that the department could not afford the office accommodation required.²³⁰ The issue of office accommodation arose frequently with it being assumed that female clerks would need to work in a separate room to the male staff. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (DATII) outlined the problem:

There is no very considerable amount of work of a kind suitable for women, which could, without much inconvenience be separated from that performed by the male staff, and given in charge to female clerks working in separate rooms. The alternative arrangement that both sexes should work in the same rooms is one, which would give rise to serious difficulties in the way of discipline and supervision.²³¹

DATII employed nine female temporary clerks during the war to take the place of members of the staff who had enlisted for army service. However they felt that the difficulties presented by employing female staff outweighed the potential benefits. They also felt that the pressurised nature of the work made it unsuitable for women to be 'subjected to this strain for which they are not physically so well fitted as men'.²³² Of the fourteen departments which responded to the circular, eight were opposed to the post war employment of women, four stated they would consider the employment of women if vacancies arose (although one of these, the Land Commission made it clear that ex-servicemen should be given priority for posts after the war), and two claimed to be unable to form a definitive opinion on the matter at the present time.

This demonstrates the difficulties in changing attitudes towards the permanent employment of women and reveals the extent to which women entering new roles after 1914 were solely accepted as a temporary aberration due to the demands of the war. As mentioned earlier, the particular aversion of the civil service to the long-term employment of female clerks was not unique to Ireland. Susan Pedersen has noted similar responses to the same survey in Britain and suggests that no other group of employers or male workers were more hostile to the idea of extending equal opportunities to women than the civil service.²³³

Similar attitudes were seen in the case of Mrs. Teresa Barrett in Cork. Mrs Barrett's husband had served as rate collector in Cork and following his death, the Council appointed his widow as a temporary rate collector. In 1916 they recommended her to the LGB for

²²⁹ CSO RP 1916/16037: Letter from Commissioner of the DMP to the Chief Secretary, 15 July 1916.

²³⁰ CSO RP 1916/16037: Letter from deputy keeper, Public Record Office to chief secretary, 19 July 1916.

²³¹ CSO RP 1916/16037: Letter from Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 13 Sept. 1916.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Pedersen, *Family, dependence & the origins of the welfare state*, p.121.

permanent appointment. The LGB refused to accept her appointment, citing the fact that under Article I (g) of the Public Bodies Order, 1913, women were ineligible for the position of rate collector. The Council however argued the case on the following grounds: 'a number of important changes affecting the employment of women came into existence during recent years, principally as the result of the war'; women had been appointed to similar positions in England; and that the LGB had sanctioned the appointment of a woman as a rate collector for an urban district council in the north of Ireland. They also pointed out that the LGB had the power and the jurisdiction to vary their orders, as had clearly occurred in the case of the woman in Ulster.²³⁴ The LGB were unwilling to make an exception however. The Council made numerous appeals on the subject but none were successful.²³⁵

Although the LGB noted that Council were 'influenced by charitable considerations' with respect to the proposed appointment of Mrs Barrett, they reiterated that the position of rate collector 'cannot be efficiently fulfilled by a woman' and that it was too important a role to be made the subject of an experiment.²³⁶ It is probable that Cork Council would not have given her case the same support had she not been the widow of a former rate collector. The fact that the Council used the argument that the war had brought changes to the employment of women indicates their awareness of the wider context. However the resistance of the Local Government Board to consider appointing a woman to such a position reveals the deep-seated prejudices facing women in the workforce.

Positive perceptions of female employment in traditionally male sectors were frequently limited to the duration of the war. This was evident in the medical profession. In Ireland, as in other combatant countries, there were improved opportunities for career advancement for female doctors during the war arising from the war service of male doctors and the increased demand for male staff.²³⁷ For example, Dr Margaret Purse was appointed house surgeon in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast; she was the first woman to receive the position in its history.²³⁸ The percentages of women among the medical students rapidly increased, rising from 10.1% in 1913 to 22.5% in 1918, with the female students helping to

²³⁴ CCCA: Minutes of special meeting of the Cork County Council, 6 July 1916.

²³⁵ CCCA: Letter from LGB to Cork County Council, 13 July 1916; minutes of meeting of the finance committee 20 July 1916; minutes of the quarterly meeting of the Cork County Council, 30 Aug. 1916.

²³⁶ CCCA: Minutes of the adjourned quarterly meeting of the Cork County Council, 28 Sept. 1916.

²³⁷ For example, in Britain the Women's Hospital Corps opened a hospital staffed by female doctors in London in 1915: Leah Leneman, "Medical women in the First World War—ranking nowhere" in *British Medical Journal*, vol. 307, no. 6919 (Dec., 1993), p. 1592. Similar initiatives were evident among American doctors; Kimberley Jensen has described how members of the Medical Women's National Association staffed and funded two hospitals in France and sought to use the war work to gain officer status for female physicians in the Army Medical Corps: Kimberly Jensen, "Women's mobilisation for war (USA)", *1914-1918 online International Encyclopedia of the First World War*.

²³⁸ Jeffery, *Ireland & the Great War*, p.32

fill the gaps left by the high number of doctors serving with the army.²³⁹ Women doctors received significant praise for their wartime work and contemporary commentators assumed that there would be more opportunities available for their employment after the war.²⁴⁰ Dr Benson described in 1916 the important work performed by women in the war services and considered the effect this would have in the post-war period:

The war has given women the opportunity of proving their mettle and that they have taken it with earnest enthusiasm is common knowledge. [...] War has had the effect already of levelling many prejudices; not least among them is that against the women members of our profession [...] But of one thing there can be no manner of doubt –namely that women doctors will play an increasingly important part in the near future in looking after the health of the nation and that they are preparing to do so is evidenced by the figures in the Students Register.²⁴¹

However there were early indications that there would be no lasting gains for women doctors. When Miss Nash was appointed as resident medical officer in the Meath Hospital, it was firmly stated that it was due to the exceptional circumstances of the war: ‘this being a national crisis and not to be a precedent’.²⁴² A ‘verbal struggle’ took place over the proposed election of Dr Nora Williams to the post of medical officer for the Wexford Board of Guardians in 1917.²⁴³ Indeed, Laura Kelly’s research demonstrates that employment opportunities for female doctors declined after the war. She attributes this primarily to the saturation of the profession due to the significant increase in the number of female medical students during the war years.²⁴⁴ In 1922 the *Dublin Medical Press* queried the ability of female doctors to secure employment in post-war Ireland and suggested Irish female doctors consider moving to India.²⁴⁵ Kelly concludes the war had no lasting beneficial impact upon the employment of Irish female doctors. This was not unique to Ireland: Janet K. Watson and Leah Leneman has described the difficulties faced by female doctors in Britain in their attempt to get recognition for their war work and to gain equal status with male army doctors.²⁴⁶

Substitution followed a similar pattern in Ireland to other combatant countries with it generally being limited to the duration. While the lack of conscription in Ireland limited the

²³⁹ IWM WWS BRCS 24.10/23 and 24.10/21, May 1918 and Jan. 1917; Anne Mac Lellan, *Dorothy Stopford Price: rebel doctor* (Dublin, 2014), p.25.

²⁴⁰ See for example, *Lady of the House*, 15 Feb. 1917, 15 Oct. 1917, 15 Nov. 1917.

²⁴¹ Dr C.M. Benson, “The effect of war on the medical profession”, *Dublin Journal of Medical Science*, cxli (1916), pp 90-92.

²⁴² Peter Gatenby, *Dublin’s Meath Hospital 1753-1996* (Dublin, 1996), p.93.

²⁴³ *Lady of the House*, 15 Oct. 1917.

²⁴⁴ Laura Kelly, *Irish women in medicine c.1800s -1920s: origins, education and careers* (Manchester, 2015), p.172; The percentage of female medical students in Ireland rose from 10.1% in 1913 to 22.5% in 1918, IWM WWS BRCS 24.10/23 and 24.10/21, May 1918 and Jan. 1917.

²⁴⁵ Kelly, *Irish women in medicine* p.172.

²⁴⁶ Janet K. Watson, “War in the wards: the social construction of medical work in First World War Britain” in *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. xli, no. 4 (Oct. 2002), pp 508-509; Leneman, “Medical women in the First World War –ranking nowhere”, pp 1592-1594.

opportunities for women to enter traditionally male roles in the workforce there is nevertheless evidence of a shift in perceptions of women's role. Many Irishwomen attempted to contribute to the war effort through their employment, whether by working in munitions factories or substituting for men clerical work. They took advantage of the war situation to move into other spheres and away from the traditional female sectors. Their trade union participation provides further evidence of women actively engaging with their position in society and becoming more aware of their value as workers.

Trade unionism

Increased involvement in the trade union movement is often used as evidence of the empowering impact of the Great War for women. How did the Great War affect the participation of Irishwomen in trade unions? How active was the Irish trade union movement during the war? There were 534 strikes in Ireland during the Great War, forming 12.2% of the total number of strikes in the UK. Forty-one of these were in the textile trade, and thirty-three of those were in the linen and jute industries.²⁴⁷ David Fitzpatrick has noted how Irish strike activity became more intense in each successive year between 1915 and 1918. The Irish strikes tended to involve small workforces in prolonged stoppages and were predominately concerned with wage questions.²⁴⁸ Emmet O'Connor has described how trade unionism in Ireland 'exploded in all directions' between 1916 and 1920, with membership of the Irish Trade Union Congress increasing from under 100,000 in 1916 to 225,000 in 1920.²⁴⁹ How did this growth affect women? What role did women play in the wartime Irish trade union movement? What does their participation reveal about the war's politicising impact on Irishwomen?

Irishwomen's trade union activity was very limited in the pre-war period. Very few women participated in the Irish trade union congresses and the number of active women's trade unions in Ireland was very small.²⁵⁰ The majority of women belonging to trade unions in 1914 were from the textile industry: 2,343 members across five unions, the Textile Operative Society of Ireland (T.O.S.I.), the Flax roughers and yarn spinners union, the Lurgan hemmers, veiners and general women workers, the Ulster weavers and winders and the Portadown textile operatives.²⁵¹ The extent of trade union activity among women workers greatly increased as the war progressed with the introduction of compulsory

²⁴⁷ David Fitzpatrick, "Strikes in Ireland, 1914-21", *Saothar*, no.6 (1980), pp 36-37.

²⁴⁸ Fitzpatrick, "Strikes in Ireland", p.28.

²⁴⁹ O'Connor, *A labour history of Ireland*, p.94.

²⁵⁰ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.83.

²⁵¹ NAI CSO RP 1919/23194: Ministry of reconstruction, *Report of the women's employment committee* (London, 1919), pp 95-106.

arbitration encouraging the growth of the trade union movement.²⁵² By 1915 T.O.S.I. had branches across the north and in Kilkenny and Drogheda and by the end of the war there were 10,954 women in the five unions listed above. The Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses also increased their female membership over the course of the war, recruiting five hundred new female members in the space of a few weeks in 1917.²⁵³ Changes in the wartime membership of the Irish Drapers' Assistants' Association are evident in Figure 5.7.²⁵⁴

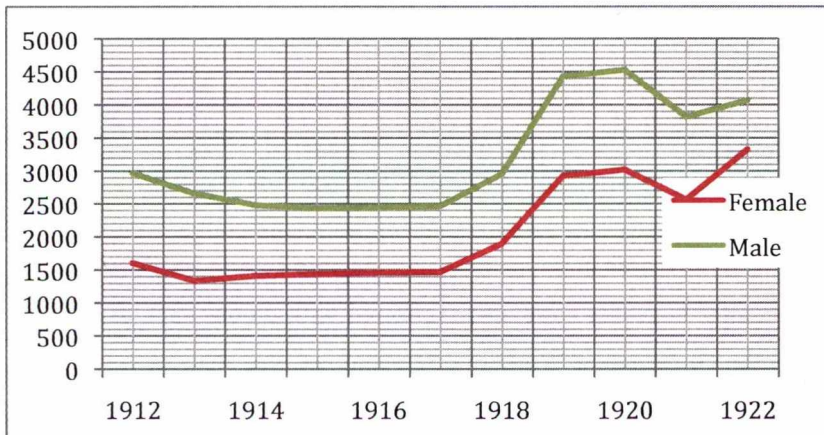


Fig. 5.7 Membership of the Irish Drapers' Assistants' Association 1912-1922

Figure 5.7 indicates static membership levels in the first half of the war and a sharp increase from 1917 to 1918. Although a similar pattern is evident with regard to male and female membership, the increase was proportionally greater among female membership. The average number of female members for 1917-18 was 17% higher than that for 1914-16 while male membership increased by 10% over the same period. There was a further significant increase over the following three years: 69% for women and 65% for men.²⁵⁵ The increased female participation in the IDAA reflects both the general growth in the trade union movement in Ireland between 1916 and 1920 and the increased interest shown by women in joining trade unions in wartime. Trade unions became more accepting of female members and women workers realised the value of trade union membership in the wartime environment. This general trend of increased trade union involvement in wartime is evident in Table 5.8.

²⁵² Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.79.

²⁵³ *Irish Citizen*, Aug. 1917.

²⁵⁴ NAI RFS/225T: Irish distributive and administrative trade union annual returns.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Table 5.8 Female membership of specifically Irish trade unions 1914-1917²⁵⁶

Title of trade union	Female membership at end of year				Percentage increase 1914-17
	1914	1915	1916	1917	
Textile Operatives of Ireland	1,327	1,297	1,108	4,553	243%
Flax Roughers and Yarn Spinners	180	200	164	2,270	1161%
Lurgan Hemmers, Veiners and General Women Workers	408	450	1,000	2,000	390%
Ulster Weavers and Winders	294	250	280	550	87%
Portadown Textile Operatives	134	96	92	1,581	1080%
Amalgamated Tailors and Tailoresses	1,610	2,092	1,656	9,568	494%
Dublin International Tailors, Machiners and Pressers		28	48	69	146%
Dublin Biscuit Operatives ²⁵⁷	729	894	1,255	1,190	63%
Government Workers of Ireland	35	35	31	52	49%
Irish Drapers' Assistants	1,413	1,443	1,461	1,471	4%
Irish Post Office Clerks	600	600	600	616	3%

The very significant increases in trade union membership among textile workers are apparent in Table 5.8. Smaller increases were also registered with unions such as the Dublin Biscuit Operatives and the Government Workers of Ireland, an area that, as was discussed earlier, saw a substantial increase in its number of female employees. The introduction of compulsory arbitration from July 1915 encouraged organisation with the system supporting group claims by unions and comparative claims. The wartime industrial controls offered unionised workers the opportunity to improve their wages and conditions.²⁵⁸ Trade unions also became more welcoming of women.

Although this trade union expansion arose from the specific wartime conditions and was generally confined to the war years, it nevertheless had a positive impact for many women workers. For example, a number of Irish unions admitted female members for the first time during the war. They included the National Union of Railwaymen (from July 1915) and the National Union of Clerks (May 1915).²⁵⁹ By January 1918 women clerks were reportedly amongst the most active members of the Irish Clerical Union and the National Union of Clerks, despite their initial hesitations about joining a union.²⁶⁰ In October 1919 the incorporated Accountants of Ireland amended their constitution to admit women to their membership.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ CSO RP 1919/23194: Ministry of reconstruction, *Report of the women's employment committee*, pp 95-106.

²⁵⁷ From 1916 the female members formed the separate Dublin Guild of Female Biscuit Operatives: *Report of the women's employment committee*, p.103.

²⁵⁸ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.80.

²⁵⁹ *Irish Citizen*, May 1915, 3 July 1915.

²⁶⁰ *Irish Citizen*, Jan. 1918.

²⁶¹ *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1919.

From 1918, the majority of Irish female munitions workers belonged to the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW). The NFWW opened branches in Ireland in 1918 for the first time and organised on a wider geographical spread than any other women's union in Ireland. It had branches in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford, Wexford and Londonderry.²⁶² The Federation helped to ensure the enforcement of munitions regulations and introduced a minimum weekly wage of £1 for all women in government factories in Ireland.²⁶³ Irish organisers were appointed and regular reports from Ireland were published in the union magazine, the *Woman Worker*.²⁶⁴ The Federation was aware of the political sensitivities surrounding their establishment in Ireland. The *Woman Worker* noted that while there was general opposition in Dublin to branches of English unions opening in Dublin, local trade unionists accepted that munitions workers could be best served by having the strength of the Federation behind them.²⁶⁵ The Dublin corporation councillor Sarah Cecilia Harrison praised the Federation for their success with regard to munitions workers in Ireland and expressed gratitude to the executive for their 'public spirit' in taking up the Irish cause.²⁶⁶

The fact that the two Federation organisers in Ireland were themselves Irish no doubt helped their acceptance and popularity among Irish workers.²⁶⁷ They also engaged with the broader Irish trade union movement, by for example, participating in local May Day parades in 1918 and 1919.²⁶⁸ In her history of the Federation, Cathy Hunt observes that the very public position occupied by the Federation in the Waterford May Day procession indicates either that the Irish organiser Helena Flowers was 'insensitive and thick-skinned' or that the Federation had 'achieved a considerable degree of acceptance both within and beyond the labour movement'.²⁶⁹ There is no evidence of expressions of hostility towards her role however in the contemporary press.

Theresa Moriarty has described the significant contribution of the National Federation of Women Workers to trade unionism in Ireland. It helped to make women more visible in the trade union movement and provided the structure for a national women's union. It led numerous successful claims for Irish female workers, improving their pay and the conditions in which they worked. An important success was won in April 1918 when Irish

²⁶² Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.86.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.87; see for example *Woman Worker*, Jan. 1917, July 1917, Sept. 1917, Oct. 1917, Dec. 1917, Feb. 1918, Apr. 1918, May 1918, June 1918, July 1918, Sept. 1918, Dec. 1918; Jan. 1919, Feb. 1919, Mar. 1919, May 1919, June 1919, July 1919, Aug. 1919, Oct. 1919 and Dec. 1920.

²⁶⁵ *Woman Worker*, Jan. 1917.

²⁶⁶ *Woman Worker*, July 1917.

²⁶⁷ Hunt, *The National Federation of Women Workers*, p.131.

²⁶⁸ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.88.

²⁶⁹ Hunt, *The National Federation of Women Workers*, p.133.

women workers in munitions factories were finally granted equal pay with women doing similar work in Great Britain. The increases and back pay applied to the shell workers but also to the messengers, canteen attendants, charwomen and cloakroom women, demonstrating the benefit of trade union involvement for various occupational groups.²⁷⁰ Other successful claims included abolishing the unpaid overlapping half hour in the national shell factories in Dublin and succeeding in obtaining the shop-stewards' committee sought by workers in the Dublin shell factory.²⁷¹

Branches extended beyond the munitions factories. For example, in Galway there were three branches of the NFWW, one in the shell factory, another in the Woollen Mills and the third in the Corrib hosiery factory.²⁷² In 1917 the Federation assisted with the case of a member employed by Waterford bank as a porter. The woman had objected to being paid less than the previous male occupant of the post and went to the Federation to protest. The issue was positively resolved with the bank agreeing to pay the balance of the difference between the man's pay and the woman's own, with arrears.²⁷³ This was an important success in demonstrating the widespread recognition of the equal pay for equal work policy and the ability of trade unions to enforce said policy. Such achievements were atypical however. The policy of equal pay for equal work was implemented by very few employers. The NFWW successes of this type were also short-lived due to the dissolution of the NFWW branches at the war's end.

The NFWW branches did not survive for long after the war. The immediate dismissal of munitions workers greatly reduced the number of NFWW members and by the end of 1919 the members were scattered and branches disbanded. Theresa Moriarty has emphasised the disbanded branches and implies that by summer 1919 the Irish branches had almost ceased to exist. She highlights the dispirited comments of the secretary of the Waterford branch in February 1919 who lamented that the members of the various NFWW branches in Ireland appeared to have forgotten already that they had ever had a union or what the union had done for them.²⁷⁴ However analysis of the *Woman Worker* issues in 1919 suggests that the general disbandment was not as immediate as implied by Moriarty.

In May 1919 the *Woman Worker* reported that the Wexford and Cork branches were doing well and that a new branch had been founded at the Douglas Woollen Mills in Cork. The new branch was described as 'flourishing' the following month and as still strong in

²⁷⁰ IWM WWS EMP.73/192: Munitions of War Amendment Act 1916: awards of special arbitration tribunals under section 6 and 8 of Act, 15 Apr. 1918; *Woman Worker*, July 1917.

²⁷¹ Moriarty, *Work, warfare & wages*, p.87.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Woman Worker*, Sept. 1917.

²⁷⁴ *Woman Worker*, Feb. 1919, p.2; cited in Moriarty, *Work, warfare & wages*, p.89.

October 1919.²⁷⁵ The NFWW was once again involved in the Labour Day parades in Ireland in 1919 with representatives of the Federation participating in events in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Wexford and Waterford.²⁷⁶ In July 1919 one of the Galway branches was described as 'still forging ahead' while the Londonderry branch sought the help of the Federation that month to increase their pay.²⁷⁷ The Federation was still working on behalf of woman workers in Ireland as late as December 1919, for example fighting for higher wages for women at the Wexford printing works and the Galway woollen mills.²⁷⁸

The Irish page was discontinued after 1919 and there is no mention of activities in Ireland in the 1920 volume. It was decided in 1919 that the Irish branches of the NFWW should transfer to the Irish Women Workers' Union (IWWU) under the direction of Louie Bennett. This decision was taken on political grounds, with it being felt that 'in view of the political situation' it was better for the NFWW Irish branches to belong to a 'purely Irish union'.²⁷⁹ The War of Independence made cooperation between Irish and British organisations increasingly strained. The IWWU was also gaining in popularity at the same time and, with its links to the republican movement, seemed better suited to representing the interests of women workers during this turbulent period.

The IWWU reorganised in 1915 following the resignation of Delia Larkin. Their activities at that time however appear to have little to do with promoting the rights of women workers and instead included events such as an ambulance class, a cookery class, dances and concerts.²⁸⁰ However after the Easter Rising the union became more active in trade union affairs once more. They reported involvement in five strikes in August 1916 and their president, Marie Perolz, was appointed as the only female member of the Dublin Trades Council.²⁸¹ Perolz also represented the IWWU at the twenty-second Irish Trade Union Congress, held in Sligo in early August 1916, where she was an active participant, for example lobbying for the appointment of additional Irishwomen as factory inspectors.²⁸² The number of IWWU delegates increased over the following two years to six delegates in 1918.²⁸³ In March 1917 the IWWU organised a meeting at the Mansion House to urge the government to extend the trade board act to printing, laundry and dressmaking trades. The

²⁷⁵ *Woman Worker*, May 1919; June 1919; Oct. 1919.

²⁷⁶ *Woman Worker*, June 1919.

²⁷⁷ *Woman Worker*, July 1919.

²⁷⁸ *Woman Worker*, Dec. 1919.

²⁷⁹ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.88.

²⁸⁰ *Irish Citizen*, 9 Oct. 1915.

²⁸¹ *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1916.

²⁸² *Irish Citizen*, Sept. 1916; NLI P3212: Report of the twenty-second annual Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, Sligo, 7, 8 and 9 Aug. 1916, p.55.

²⁸³ Report of twenty-third annual Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, Derry, 6,7 and 8 Aug. 1917, p.91; report of twenty-fourth annual Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, Derry, 5,6 and 7 Aug. 1918, p.89.

meeting was well attended by women workers and speakers included well-known suffragists and labour advocates such as Mary Hayden and Sarah Cecilia Harrison.²⁸⁴

The close connections between the IWWU and the suffrage movement meant that the IWWU activities received extensive attention and publicity from the *Irish Citizen*, especially during Louie Bennett's period as editor. The paper praised the revitalisation of the union in July 1917, claiming that 'Dublin women are now awake to the value of the organisation'.²⁸⁵ Sections for laundresses, restaurant assistants and tie-makers were established and the printers and stationers' section was described as a 'large and strong organisation' in August 1917.²⁸⁶ The membership of the IWWU was reported as being over 2,000 by January 1918, while just a year previously it had been only a few hundred.²⁸⁷ They registered with the registrar of friendly societies in March 1918, dating their establishment as February 1917.²⁸⁸ A Waterford branch was founded in summer 1918 and received immediate enrolments from workers from local firms.²⁸⁹ The IWWU participated in the 1918 anti-conscription campaign and were acutely conscious of the importance of their refusal to take the jobs of conscripted men to the success of the campaign.²⁹⁰ The role of women workers in the campaign was alluded to in the *Woman Worker* as news that was 'so exciting it could not be printed'.²⁹¹

Although the tone of the IWWU during the latter war years has been described as 'conciliatory rather than confrontational', their close connection to republican politics increased the hostility of some employers towards the union.²⁹² Messrs Tighe and Co., a hosiery manufacturer, angrily rejected the union's attempt to lobby for increased pay for the workers. The company rejected the claims of the low wages, stating that the women were paid per item and could complete far more work in a day than they were currently producing and thus could improve their pay that way. They asserted that the 'agitation' was designed with the object of interfering with war work, 'especially when we consider the source through which it emanates'. In a postscript to their letter to the chief industrial commissioner on the matter, the company mentioned the associations between the IWWU at Liberty Hall

²⁸⁴ *Irish Citizen*, Apr. 1917.

²⁸⁵ *Irish Citizen*, July 1917, see also *Irish Citizen*, Aug. 1917; see also Feb. 1918 and Nov. 1918 for joint IWWU and Irishwomen's Reform League cooperation on events.

²⁸⁶ *Irish Citizen*, Aug. 1917.

²⁸⁷ *Irish Citizen*, Jan. 1918.

²⁸⁸ NAI RFS/332: Irish Women Workers' Union annual returns to registrar of friendly societies

²⁸⁹ *Irish Citizen*, July 1918.

²⁹⁰ *Irish Citizen*, May and June 1918.

²⁹¹ *Woman Worker*, June 1918.

²⁹² Mary Jones, *These obstreperous lassies, A history of the IWWU* (Dublin, 1988), p.26.

and the leaders of the 1916 rebellion.²⁹³ They argued that since their workers became involved with the IWWU relations between employee and employer had deteriorated:

A spirit of unruliness and defiance seems to have been instilled, together with an indifference to the need for keeping regular time and increasing output, even for patriotic reasons.²⁹⁴

Moriarty argues that the Irish trade union movement emerged from the war stronger than it had ever been before. The Irish Transport and General Workers Union (IGTWU) more than doubled its membership, absorbed many smaller unions and extended its base beyond urban male workers. They began recruiting women for the first time, as women began to be increasingly admitted as equal members to industrial trade unions.²⁹⁵ While the war did not dramatically alter women's working conditions, it had a lasting impact upon their involvement in trade unions.²⁹⁶ The increased level of engagement between female trade unionists and the wider trade union movement in Ireland can be observed from their participation in the Irish Trade Union Congress.²⁹⁷

Table 5.9 Female participation in the Irish Trade Union Congress 1901-1925

Period	Average female delegates	Average total delegates	Females as % of total
1901-09	2	84	2.4%
1910-14	3	88	3.4%
1916-20	7	185	3.9%
1921-25	9	219	3.9%

²⁹³ TNA LAB 2/281/IC6064/1916: Letter from Messrs Tighe and Company to chief industrial commissioner, 8 Nov. 1916.

²⁹⁴ TNA LAB 2/281/IC6064/1916: Letter from Messrs Tighe and Company to contracts department, War Office, 16 Oct. 1916; the issue was resolved by increasing the war bonus, Resolution of dispute between Messrs Tighe and Company and the Irish Women Workers Union, 5 Dec. 1916.

²⁹⁵ In Feb. 1919 the IGTWU reported a branch at Liberty Hall with 115 female members who preferred to remain with the IGTWU rather than transfer to the IWWU: Irish Labour History Museum, IWWU Box 28/11: Letter from Thomas Foran, president of the IGTWU to Louie Bennett, 7 Feb. 1919.

²⁹⁶ Moriarty, "Work, warfare & wages", p.90.

²⁹⁷ NLI P3212: Annual reports of the Irish Trade Union Congress 1901 to 1925. There was no Congress held in 1915 due to the Great War.

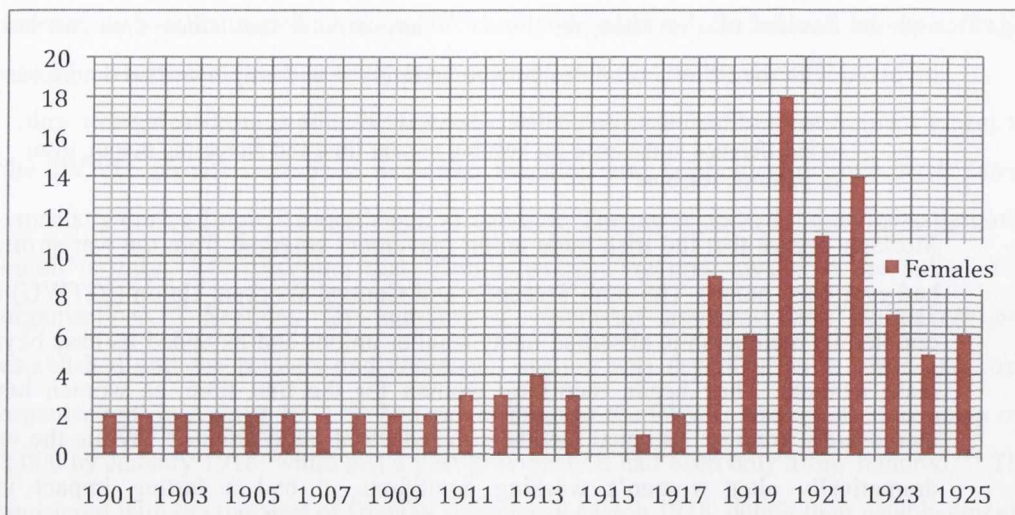


Fig. 5.8 Female participation in the Irish Trade Union Congress 1901-25

The percentage of female delegates remained very low, never reaching more than 7.4% of the total between 1901 and 1925. The number increased from 1918, peaking in 1920 with eighteen female delegates. The greater activity among female trade unionists in the immediate post-war period was in parallel to an expansion in the total number of delegates. Consequently the percentage of females rose very slowly, from an average of 3.4% for 1910-14 to an average of 3.9% for the following five years. For the first eleven years the female delegates were all members of either the Textile Operatives Society of Ireland or the Lurgan Hemmers and Veiners Society. The Irish Women Workers Union was also represented from 1912. In 1918 six delegates were from the IWWU and the remaining three from the Drapers' Assistant Association, the Dublin Central Teachers' Association and the Irish National Teachers Organisation. In 1919 there was a female delegate from the Tailors, Machinists and Pressers Trade Union and from the IGTWU as well as the unions mentioned previously. There was further expansion of the number of female delegates in 1920 (to eighteen), representing eight individual unions and one trades council. The female delegates played an active role, proposing numerous resolutions of direct relevance to women and to the wider labour movement.²⁹⁸

Wartime trade union activity in Ireland mirrored that in Great Britain in many respects. It has been estimated that the number of women belonging to trade unions in Great Britain increased by about 160% over the course of the war. This compares to an increase of 45% for male workers over the same period.²⁹⁹ However the expansion in female membership of trade unions was typically confined to the war years. For example, membership of the IWWU reached its height in 1919 with 3,425 members but fell over the

²⁹⁸ See for example, Report of twenty-fourth annual Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, Derry, 5, 6, and 7 Aug. 1918, pp 64, 69, 71, 72.

²⁹⁹ Hunt, *The National Federation of women workers*, p.67.

following year to 2,942. The average for the years 1921 to 1924 was 3,022 compared to 3,986 for the previous four years, a decline of 24%.³⁰⁰ Membership of the ITGWU also fell over the same period, which Emmet O'Connor attributes to the unstable political situation and the military terror during the War of Independence.³⁰¹

The war politicised Irish women workers, evident not only in their active participation in trade unions and successful claims for fairer wages and better conditions, but also in their unprecedented level of engagement with bodies such as Irish Trade Union Congress. Nevertheless the short-lived nature of the growth in female trade union participation suggests it arose from the particular conditions of the war economy rather than reflecting significant lasting change in the attitudes of male and female employees towards women's work.

Wages

In all combatant countries women's wartime employment was accompanied by a rise in wages.³⁰² The rise in women's wages can be primarily attributed to the high demand for labour, and the rising cost of living.³⁰³ Wages in Ireland gradually increased from 1916 following the expansion of war-related industries and the introduction of industrial controls to minimise labour disputes.³⁰⁴ A campaign for equal pay for equal work grew during the war and received support from male trade unionists concerned about the threat of cheap female labour. For example, the Irish Trade Union Congress adopted a resolution in August 1917 calling for the standardisation of male and female wages 'having regard to the fact that women are, and under existing circumstances will continue to be, utilised in many employments which were previous to 1914 wholly or mainly confined to men'.³⁰⁵

However, despite the wartime expectations of reform, change in this area was very limited.³⁰⁶ Angela Woollacott has described how in Britain men's unions ignored evidence that women continued to be paid less than men so long as the wages of male workers were

³⁰⁰ NAI RFS/332T: Irish Women Workers' Union annual returns 1917-28; a figure of 5,400 has often been cited for 1919 but the IWWU themselves suggested in 1920 that a more accurate figure was 3,425 and claimed that the figures from 1920 were 'computed with more accuracy than their previous returns; NAI RFS/332T: Letter from Helen Chenevix to registrar of Friendly Societies, 14 Mar. 1922.

³⁰¹ Emmet O'Connor, *Syndicalism in Ireland 1917-1923* (Cork, 1988), p.90.

³⁰² Winter, "Demography", p.257. In France the wages of workers in traditionally female employment sectors were initially reduced in 1914 and 1915 before the issue was addressed through syndicalist action: Horne, *Labour at war*, pp 102-106.

³⁰³ Kirkaldy, (ed.) *British labour*, p.93.

³⁰⁴ O'Connor, *A labour history of Ireland 1824-1960*, p.94.

³⁰⁵ Report of the twenty-third annual Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, Derry, 6, 7 and 8 Aug. 1917, p.80.

³⁰⁶ Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p.115; despite a similar campaign in France women workers continued to earn less than male workers performing comparable work: Horne, *Labour at war*, p.112.

not threatened.³⁰⁷ Employers found means of continuing to discriminate against female workers. For example, the Dublin Brick Company refused a request from the IWWU to pay their female workers the same as the male workers on the grounds that no female employee was called upon to do a man's work.³⁰⁸

Chapter Three noted the disparity between the wages of labourers in Ireland and Great Britain. This was very evident with regard to Irish women workers who routinely earned less than women in Great Britain performing similar work. Table 5.10 demonstrates that throughout the war women in Ireland continued to be paid less than women in Great Britain and men in Ireland in the same trade.

Table 5.10 Minimum rates of wages fixed under the Trade Board Act, Sept. 1918³⁰⁹

Trade	Ireland		Great Britain	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Tailoring	7 d	4 ½ d	8 d	5 d
Paper box-making	7 d	4 d	8 d	4 ¾ d
Sugar confectionary and food preserving	7 d	4 d	8 d	5
Shirt-making	-	5 d	-	6d

The fact that women in Ireland were paid less than their counterparts in Britain for the same work was raised constantly during the war. The *Woman Worker* reported in October 1916 that women workers in a Dublin hosiery firm were earning less than half of what women in Manchester were earning for similar work.³¹⁰ The magazine described the very low wages earned by women workers in Ireland as amounting to 'little more than famine rations' in the context of the increased cost of living. In many cases no war bonus had been given and the workers struggled to cope with the rising food prices.³¹¹ The low wages were also blamed for the increasingly high number of Irishwomen migrating to England for munitions work.³¹² Such commentary linking low wages to famine and emigration had particular emotive connotations in Ireland. Chapter Three noted the use of the Great Irish Famine as an emotive trope by republicans when referring to questions of food supply. Similar language was now being used with regard to women's wages.

The rates displayed in Table 5.10 represent increases on the wages paid earlier in the war. For example, the Paper Box Trade Board (Ireland) increased the minimum time rate of

³⁰⁷ Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p.115; despite a similar campaign in France women workers continued to earn less than male workers performing comparable work: Horne, *Labour at war*, p.112.

³⁰⁸ Irish Labour History Society, Box 28/8: Letter from Dublin Brick Company to Louie Bennett, 15 Feb. 1918.

³⁰⁹ IWM WWS EMP.70/J1-/84: War cabinet report on women in industry, 3 Oct. 1918, p.64; see also Bowley, *Prices and wages in the United Kingdom 1914-1920* (Oxford, 1921), pp 196-197.

³¹⁰ *Woman Worker*, Oct. 1916.

³¹¹ *Woman Worker*, Dec. 1916.

³¹² *Woman Worker*, July 1917.

wages for female workers, other than learners, from 2 ¾ d to 3d per hour in June 1916, indicating the very low wages paid in this sector in the pre-war period.³¹³ Efforts were made to combat the impact of price inflation on workers. In July 1916 the government stipulated a guaranteed minimum wage for piece workers, which applied to women doing ‘women’s work’. Minimum time rates were also established.³¹⁴ For example, the Linen and Cotton Embroidery Trade Board for Ireland fixed the minimum rates of wages in December 1916; benefitting women workers engaged in hand embroidery and similar occupations.³¹⁵ The minimum wage for women working in the shirt making trade was increased in October 1917 and came into effect in May 1918. The minimum rate was further increased in December 1918 from 4 1/2d to 5 ½ d an hour. However this was still lower than the 6d per hour paid to women workers in the same industry in Great Britain.³¹⁶ Similarly the wages paid to male and female workers in the paper box trade were further increased in December 1918, following an initial rise the previous year but the relative difference between Irish and British pay rates remained the same.³¹⁷

Women working in the munitions industry, either in Ireland or in Britain, benefited most from government intervention in wages. From August 1917 the wages of female munitions workers increased by 2 shillings and 6 pence per week. A further advance of 3s and 6d was granted in December 1917 and an advance of 5 shillings in September 1918. By November 1918 the majority of women working in munitions factories were earning a weekly rate of not less than 30 to 35 shillings.³¹⁸ From April 1918 workers in Irish munitions factories were granted equal pay with workers performing similar work in Great Britain.³¹⁹ Female national teachers were praised by the *Irish Citizen* for securing the same war bonus as that given to the male teachers.³²⁰ In July 1916 the government provided the schoolteachers with a war bonus to help them cope with the increased cost of living. It was given on the same terms as that given to civil servants but with the distinction that women teachers would receive the same increase as male teachers.³²¹

The fact that the male and female teachers received the same war bonus was quite unusual. For example, male linen workers in Ireland received a war bonus of three shillings a

³¹³ *Labour Gazette*, July 1916.

³¹⁴ Hurtwitz, *State intervention in Great Britain*, p.143.

³¹⁵ TNA LAB/2/231: memorandum by William Sutherland, Aug. 1917.

³¹⁶ TNA Lab 2/281/IC6064/1916/Parts I and II: Shirtmaking trade board, 24 Dec. 1918.

³¹⁷ Lab 2/281/IC6064/1916/Parts I and II: Paper box trade board, Dec. 1918; see also Tailoring Trade Board, Dec. 1918; Linen and Embroidery Trade Board, Dec. 1918; Sugar and Confectionary trade board, Dec. 1917.

³¹⁸ Hurtwitz, *State intervention in Great Britain*, p.143.

³¹⁹ IWM WWS EMP.73/192: Munitions of War Amendment Act 1916: awards of special arbitration tribunals under section 6 and 8 of Act, 15 Apr.1918; *Woman Worker*, July 1917.

³²⁰ *Irish Citizen*, Dec. 1916.

³²¹ *Eighty-second report of the commissioners of national education in Ireland, school year 1915-16*, [Cd. 8495], p.6.

week in August 1917 while the female workers received a bonus of two shillings per week, the same advance as that granted to juvenile workers.³²² The wages of linen workers were reported to have doubled between 1914 and 1918 while the war bonus for Belfast linen workers had reached 18 shillings by December 1919.³²³

Those working on war contracts were entitled to minimum wages and it was possible to appeal to the War Office for assistance when the workers felt they were being underpaid or exploited. In April 1917 Sarah Cecilia Harrison brought the issue of low wages of women working on War Office contracts to the chief secretary. She argued that workers at the Percy Peerless Shirt Factory in Dublin were being paid well below the minimum wage and consequently eighteen workers had been driven to strike. The workers on strike did not belong to a trade union and so were not entitled to any strike money, leading to a sense of urgency about the issue.³²⁴ The chief secretary immediately brought Harrison's allegations to the director of army clothing contracts at the War Office, who organised an investigation into the matter. It was confirmed that Messrs Percy Peerless had been paying below the minimum wage, although they had increased their wages to persuade the striking workers to return. The firm agreed to pay the higher wage set out by the War Office and to pay all arrears due to the workers. Similarly the Dublin Shirt Company was forced to raise their wages and to pay the arrears due to their workers.³²⁵ The fact that the workers were employed on army contracts enabled them to appeal their low wages to a higher authority. However the fact that until June 1917 the predominately female workers had been grossly underpaid shows that employers with army contracts were not hesitant to exploit their workers to ensure their maximum profit.

Compulsory arbitration benefited many workers in the Irish textile trade during the war. A number of pay disputes between employers and workers at in various textile industries in Ireland were resolved through the assistance of the chief industrial commissioner of the Ministry of Labour. For example in June 1917 linen hemmers and veiners in Lurgan went on strike for six days in protest against the introduction of a uniform scale of piece-rates which was alleged to result a reduction in earnings. The dispute was resolved by the withdrawal of the proposed scale and the agreement of a new rate of war bonus.³²⁶ Other disputes involved the handkerchief and embroidery association and the trade hemstitchers association, both in Belfast. For example, in September 1918 an agreement was

³²² *Labour Gazette*, Sept. 1917.

³²³ Bowley, *Prices and wages in the United Kingdom*, p.193.

³²⁴ CSO RP 1917/15482: Letter from Sarah Harrison to H.E. Duke, 5 Apr. 1917.

³²⁵ CSO RP 1917/15482: Letter from Contracts department, War Office, to chief secretary, 13 June 1917; female cleaners working in the King George V Military Hospital in Dublin also received a small increase in their wages following protests to the War Office, *Woman Worker*, Oct. 1917; *Woman Worker*, Jan. 1919.

³²⁶ *Labour Gazette*, July 1917; see also *Labour Gazette*, Sept. 1917.

reached between the Trade Hemstitchers' Association and the Textile Operatives' Society of Ireland. It was agreed that increases would be made to the minimum rate paid and that a 25% bonus on gross earnings be paid to the female workers.³²⁷ Seven hundred workers at Berrington & Co. Ltd, a wholesale manufacturers firm in Belfast went on strike on 26 August 1918 to secure an increase for women workers. A number of the workers were engaged in munitions work and consequently the matter was speedily dealt with. The firm entered into negotiations with Isabel Sloan, the Ministry of Labour representative.³²⁸ By 12 September 1918 the firm had agreed to pay a bonus of 33% on the wages of all female workers in their employment engaged in productive work.³²⁹

Despite the many benefits for workers won through the Conciliation Act, trade unions became increasingly wary of the approach in the immediate aftermath of the war. The IWWU viewed the government's role in conciliatory intervention as strengthening the government's 'insidious attempts to control Labour'.³³⁰ Their objections were however outlined in July 1919, at a time when relations between the British government and the Irish trade union movement were particularly strained.

Chapter Three noted that the wartime increases in male wages in Ireland failed to keep pace with the rising cost of living. Real wages, as opposed to money wages, declined over the course of the war. This was also evident with regard to women's wages. The doubling of food prices quickly outweighed the wage increases registered in traditional female sectors. However the war widened the range of occupations available to women and provided employment in sectors with higher pay than that typically available to working class women. Munitions work was comparatively well paid for women's employment, particularly after the war bonuses in 1918. Irishwomen working in munitions factories in Ireland or in Great Britain could earn significantly more than was possible in the textile industry or domestic service. As noted previously, women tended to be temporary members of the waged workforce, working while young and typically leaving upon marriage. Consequently their earnings were perceived by contemporaries as supplementary to that of the main household income. As such, wages tended to be very low and there were few opportunities for agitation for improvement.³³¹ Consequently compulsory arbitration

³²⁷ TNA LAB 2/468/IC6943/1918: Agreement between the Trade Hemstitchers Association and the Textile Operatives Society of Ireland, Sept. 1918.

³²⁸ Isabel Sloan, an Irishwoman, was involved in the introduction of the National Federation of Women Workers to Ireland before leaving to work for the Ministry of Labour, Hunt, *The National Federation of Women Workers*, p.131.

³²⁹ TNA LAB 2/468/IC6943/1918: Letter from Berrington & Co. Ltd to Isabel Sloan, 12 Sept. 1918; see also LAB 2/468/IC6943/1918: Letter from Trade Hemstitchers Association to Chief industrial commissioner, 24 Sept. 1918; letter from V.C.L. Hosiery Company to the chief industrial commissioner, 18 Sept. 1918.

³³⁰ ILHS Box 23/9: Letter from Louie Bennett to Mr. O'Brien, 9 July 1919.

³³¹ Gribbon, "Economic and social history", p.322.

benefited women workers, for example, enabling textile workers on government contracts to improve their wages, for example.

The fact that conscription was not implemented in Ireland significantly affected the experience of Irish female workers. This combined with the restricted emigration during the war meant that there was much less need for women to substitute for men in the workforce. The female munitions worker, described by Woollacott as a 'powerful symbol of modernity' was far less evident in Ireland.³³² Despite these differences, the war acted as a catalyst for Irishwomen's role in the workforce, accelerating pre-war trends such as the move of women into clerical work and away from domestic service. Although the number of munitions workers in Ireland was comparatively small, significant attention was paid to Irish munitions workers with their impact far greater than their numerical contribution to the workforce.

In her study of German working class women during the war, Ute Daniel has argued that while the war's quantitative impact on women in the workforce was 'remarkably small', a significant qualitative effect was nonetheless possible, arising from changes in the social acceptance of women's work and the conferring of a higher value upon women's paid work.³³³ The experience of German women in wartime is in some respects quite similar to Ireland. Shortages of raw materials resulted in a contraction in the textile trade requiring the organisation of schemes for unemployed textile workers.³³⁴ Although there was no significant increase of women entering the workforce for the first time, women moved into different types of work.³³⁵ German munitions workers, for example, were typically drawn from former textile workers and domestic servants.³³⁶ As in Ireland, the demands of the war economy provided an opportunity for women to move into better-paid work or work that offered greater personal freedom. The wartime economic mobilisation in the second half of the war consisted largely of the mobilisation of women – as workers, food producers, purchasers of war bonds and so forth.³³⁷ Daniel concludes that, by broadening the spectrum of jobs available to women, the war brought improvements to women's working life, but stresses that such changes were for the duration only.³³⁸ She dismisses the idea that praise for women's patriotic entry into the workforce represents greater social acceptance of women's waged labour outside of war conditions.³³⁹

³³² Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p.3.

³³³ Ute Daniel, *The war from within: German working class women in the First World War* (Oxford, 1997), pp 44, 90.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.58.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 46-47.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.47.

³³⁷ Richard Bessel, "Mobilisation and demobilisation in Germany 1916-1919" in John Horne (ed.) *State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), pp 218-219

³³⁸ Daniel, *The war from within*, pp 278; 316.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.282.

How did the war affect women's employment in Ireland? The very severe industrial depression in Ireland at the start of the war severely affected the predominately female workers in the textile trade with some industries never fully recovering. Unemployment and reduced hours were notable features of the Irish women worker's war experience, unlike in Britain where substitution and dilution were far more common. Nevertheless there were some important outcomes for women's employment in Ireland from the war. The demand for labour led to improvements in the wages paid to women and there was increased awareness of the economic importance of women's paid work. There were some moves towards providing equal pay for equal work while the increased involvement of women in the trade union movement is evidence of a shift in attitudes both among women workers and the labour movement. The revival of the IWWU in the latter half of the war and the acceptance of women in previously exclusively male trade unions are lasting legacies of the war. The Great War brought greater recognition to the role performed by Irishwomen in the workforce and generated significant discussion surrounding the lasting impact of their wartime employment.

Chapter 6: War Service

Chapter Five outlined women's economic contribution to the war effort and the effect of the war on waged employment. The Great War demanded the voluntary mobilisation of women beyond the workforce. Women performed essential activities to support the war effort and to maintain morale on the home front. A specific female war service emerged in all belligerent countries, existing as a parallel to men's military service. The activities performed by women on each home front were very similar. In Ireland, as in Australia and South Africa, Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire, women knitted socks for soldiers, prepared parcels of 'comforts', organised war charities, nursed wounded soldiers and cared for the families of enlisted men.¹ In Ireland war service ranged from voluntary activities to paid professional work across regional, national and international organisations and networks.

Much of it fit into traditional feminine roles such as nursing or knitting garments for soldiers. However Irishwomen also participated in military auxiliary roles where they were explicitly replacing men. Krisztina Roberts argues that the women's services succeeded in transcending the binary of home and front through women's work close to the battlefield. War initially emphasised gendered spaces through the emphasis on men's role at the war front and women's role in the peaceful home. However the WAAC and QAIMNS brought women into the masculine arena of the battlefield. Their experience of bombardment blurred the lines between the female civilian and male warrior.²

The chapter first discusses wartime nursing and women's other activities on the home front before analysing the role of Irishwomen in auxiliary organisations such as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and the Women's Royal Naval Service. While some of these roles were paid and others voluntary, they nevertheless all represent women actively engaging with the war effort. This chapter considers the profile of Irishwomen who participated in war service of some kind and attempts to provide voices from their women themselves. It also evaluates the scope of such activity in Ireland, drawing comparisons with Great Britain.

¹ Bill Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme: South Africa in the Great War 1914-1918* (Johannesburg, 2007), pp 178-179; Bruce and Ralene Frances Scates, *Women and the Great War* (Cambridge, 1997), pp 44-46; Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and voluntary action in the First World War* (New York, 2014), pp 37-39; Yigit Akin, "War, women and the state: the politics of sacrifice in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War" in *Journal of Women's History*, xxvi, no.3 (2014), pp 22-24.

² Krisztina Robert, "Constructions of 'home', 'front' and women's military employment in First World War Britain: a spatial interpretation", *History and Theory*, vol. lii, (Oct. 2013), p.342.

Nursing

Wartime nursing is typically viewed as a traditional feminine activity, which enabled women to perform vital war service while not challenging gender norms. Nevertheless, nursing placed women in direct contact with the military war effort. Anne Summers has highlighted the contradictory role played by British nurses in wartime. She notes that the war nurse acted as a symbol of motherhood and domesticity but was expected to serve on the public stage in an international war; they symbolised healing but had consented to participation in the war effort; they represented service and self-abnegation but were expected to respond to challenge and responsibility.³ Wartime nursing served as a parallel contribution to the war effort to that performed by men. Janet K. Watson suggests that nursing acted as a 'metaphorical battlefield' for women seeking voluntary war work.⁴

Irish wartime nursing work took two distinct forms, that by trained professionals and that by amateur volunteers in Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) under the remit of the Red Cross. In September 1914 the Irish district of the St John Ambulance Association (SJAA) and the Dublin section of the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) agreed to cooperate for the duration of the war, forming a joint headquarters in Dublin. Two committees were established, one for Leinster, Munster and Connaught and another which dealt exclusively with Ulster where the VADs took instruction from the Belfast branch of the BRCS.⁵ Varying figures have been provided for VAD membership in Ireland and Great Britain. British Red Cross records indicate that 5,688 women served with the joint committee of the BRCS and SJAA across the four provinces of Ireland: this was comprised of 4,068 women spread across 114 detachments in the three southern provinces and 156 detachments in Ulster comprising 1,620 women.⁶ Examination of the Red Cross records indicates that across the island 587 women are recorded as having served in hospitals outside the United Kingdom and another 2,961 in hospitals in Ireland and Great Britain.⁷ Not all detachments recorded

³ Anne Summers, *Angels and citizens: British women as military nurses 1854-1914* (London, 1988), p.9.

⁴ Janet K. Watson, "War in the wards: the social construction of medical work in First World War Britain" in *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. xli, no. 4 (Oct. 2002), p. 495.

⁵ Margaret Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p.28.

⁶ Figures taken from Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p.31 and "Memoranda on Red Cross Work in Ireland" in *Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England on Voluntary Aid Rendered to the Sick and Wounded at Home and Abroad and to British Prisoners of War, 1914-1919, with Appendices*, (London, 1921), p.728.

⁷ *The Red Cross in Ireland: an account of the Red Cross work of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross society in the provinces of Leinster, Munster and Connaught from August 1st 1914 to November 1918* (Dublin, 1919); "Memoranda on Red Cross Work in Ireland", pp 727, 728.

the war service of their members, while others did not differentiate between home and overseas service.

Twenty-one auxiliary hospitals were equipped or assisted and maintained by voluntary contributions to a cost of £100,000 in the three southern provinces. The hospitals were located in Dublin, Cork, Louth, Kildare, Kilkenny, Meath, Westmeath and Wicklow with twelve in Dublin city and county and two in Wicklow. There were also six auxiliary hospitals established in Ulster, three in Antrim, and one each in Belfast, Tyrone and Down.⁸ By July 1917, Irish auxiliary hospitals provided 1,680 beds for sick and wounded soldiers, 2.8% of the total beds in the United Kingdom.⁹ Each of these hospitals depended upon local support to fund them and to supply personnel. The local gentry were particularly involved with these hospitals and in some cases their own homes were converted for use as auxiliary hospitals.¹⁰

The British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association had two classes of VAD volunteer which existed during the Great War: 'mobile' and 'immobile' volunteers. Mobile volunteers were available for service anywhere, including close to the front, while immobile volunteers registered to serve in auxiliary war hospitals, close to their residence. The majority of volunteers were classed as 'immobile'.¹¹ Applicants to join Voluntary Aid Detachments were required to provide a reference from a local doctor, priest or magistrate. Officially those applying for nursing work in military hospitals had to be aged between twenty-three to thirty-eight years although the urgent need for military nurses in July 1916 meant that this was briefly extended to include those aged between twenty-one and forty-eight.¹² All those accepted were appointed on two weeks' probation and if deemed suitable, were expected to serve at least three months.¹³

These volunteer nurses worked alongside professional nurses serving in military organisations. The Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS), established in 1902, and the QAIMNS reserve, established in 1908, recruited Irish professional nurses during the Great War. Recruits for the QAIMNS had to be over twenty-five years of age, single and of a high social status. As with the VADs, these rules were

⁸ Memoranda on Red Cross Work in Ireland", p.727.

⁹ British Red Cross Archives, "British Red Cross Summary of work for July 1917", p.4.

¹⁰ For more discussion of the involvement of the Irish gentry in the war effort, see Mark Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy* (London, 1987), pp 165-166; Peter Martin, 'Dulce et Decorum: Irish nobles and the Great War' in Gregory and Pařeta (eds) *Ireland and the Great War: 'a war to unite us all?'*, pp 28-48.

¹¹ Neil R. Storey and Molly Housego, *Women in the First World War* (Oxford, 2011), pp 17-19.

¹² OPW-Maynooth University Archive, Airfield papers 2434: St John Ambulance Brigade Order no. 7, July 1916.

¹³ Storey and Housego, *Women in the First World War*, p.21; Airfield papers, Ms 2430: Report of the St John Ambulance Brigade No 12 (Irish District), 29 June 1915.

relaxed when pressure for nurses mounted.¹⁴ On 1st November 1918 there were 12,769 trained nurses and 10,897 untrained or partially trained nurses serving with the QAIMNS and its reserve and the Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS).¹⁵ Of the fully qualified QAIMNS members, 3,337 were serving on home stations and a further 2,436 serving in France. The remainder served on hospital ships, in Italy, Gibraltar, Malta, Salonika, Egypt, East Africa, Mesopotamia and India. The majority of the TFNS members served on home stations or in France.¹⁶

Although reservists had no military duties in peacetime beyond reporting annually to the War Office, they were paid an annual retainer of £2. As Siobhan Horgan-Ryan notes, this was a substantial sum and may have motivated some Irish nurses to enlist.¹⁷ The nurses were liable for immediate call-up in the event of war. Thirty-four QAIMNS Dublin nurses left for 'an unknown destination' on the troop ship SS City of Benares on 17 August 1914.¹⁸ Another twelve Irish professional nurses were mobilised for the front the previous week to serve with the Belgian Army.¹⁹ Many Irish nurses applied to the QAIMNS reserve as soon as war was declared in August 1914. Six nurses from the Mater Misericordiae Hospital applied together to the reserve in August 1914, shortly after war was declared, but just four were accepted. Thirteen nurses from the Royal City of Dublin Hospital, Baggot Street, joined the QAIMNS reserve between August and December 1914 and by the end of the war, the Royal City of Dublin Hospital and the Meath Hospital had each contributed twenty-six nurses in total to the war service. The successful applicants came from middle-class families from all over Ireland.²⁰ The enlistment of nurses in the military services left gaps in personnel in Ireland. A number of supervisory staff had enlisted including the matron of Cork Street Fever Hospital, Dublin and the Irish superintendent of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses. In 1915 Ireland was described as 'straining every nerve' to supply trained nurses for war service, resulting in shortages at home: '[there] was hardly a nurse to be got here for private cases for love or money –all volunteering'.²¹

The majority of Irish military nurses served in France with the British Expeditionary Force but some also served in Macedonia, East Africa, Malta, Italy, Mesopotamia and Egypt. They worked in a variety of different type of locations: base hospitals, stationary hospitals,

¹⁴ Storey and Housego, *Women in the First World War*, p.15; Siobhan Horgan-Ryan "Irish military nursing in the Great War" in Gerard M. Fealy (ed.) *Care to remember: nursing and midwifery in Ireland* (Cork, 2005), p.89.

¹⁵ War Office, *Statistics of the military effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, p.192.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Horgan-Ryan "Irish military nursing in the Great War", p.90.

¹⁸ Yvonne McEwen, *It's a long way to Tipperary: British and Irish nurses in the Great War* (Dunfermline, 2006), p.49; *Irish Independent*, 19 Aug. 1914.

¹⁹ *Irish Independent*, 17 Aug. 1914.

²⁰ Horgan-Ryan, "Irish military nursing in the Great War", p.92.

²¹ McEwen, *It's a long way to Tipperary*, p.55; see also *Lady of the House*, 15 Jan. 1915.

casualty clearing stations and on hospital trains.²² A number of Irish nurses were awarded the Royal Red Cross for their war service. These included Maude Blakely and Mary Doherty. Maude Blakely was born in County Tyrone in 1874. Her father was a doctor. She trained as a nurse in London and served as a military nurse during the Boer War before joining the QAIMNS as a staff nurse in 1903. She worked as matron of a military hospital in Cork before the war. In 1916 she was appointed an assistant principal matron in France. Mentioned in despatches twice, she was awarded the Royal Red Cross in January 1916. In January 1919 she received a Bar to the award and in 1927 an O.B.E. for her war work. Her sister Jane Blakeley also served with the QAIMNS during the Great War while her two brothers served with the Royal Army Medical Corps.²³

Mary Doherty trained at Dr Steven's Hospital in Dublin and volunteered for army work at the beginning of the war. She worked in a hospital in France and was mentioned in despatches and awarded the Royal Red Cross for her devotion to duty. In 1916 she was transferred to Salonika where she died from malaria and dysentery in September 1916 aged twenty-eight.²⁴ Disease was a constant risk for those serving overseas. Marjorie Montgomery, a QAIMNS nurse from Belfast, described being inoculated against cholera and typhoid before being sent to the Dardanelles, but admitted that she did not have much faith in the protection of the vaccine.²⁵ Many nurses also faced danger from shellfire close to the front and from torpedoes while travelling overseas.²⁶ 112 QAIMNS members and forty-eight Territorial Force Nursing sisters are recorded as having died on active service between August 1914 and April 1920. Of these, at least eighteen were Irish. The Irish members all died of disease.²⁷ 142 members of Voluntary Aid Detachments died on active service over the same period, at least twelve of whom were Irish.²⁸

²² Horgan-Ryan, "Irish military nursing in the Great War" p.94.

²³ *British Journal of Nursing*, 4 Mar.1916; "Maude Blakely"

http://www.edithappleton.org.uk/index/Maude_Blakely.asp (20 January 2015).

²⁴ Horgan-Ryan, "Irish military nursing in the Great War", p.101.

²⁵ PRONI T2850/1/33: Letter from Marjorie Montgomery to her sister May from the ship H.S. Dongola, 12 Sept. 1915.

²⁶ For example, Emily MacManus, an English QAIMNS nurse of Irish descent, described in her memoir her close encounter with shell fire in Amiens, France, in 1918: Emily MacManus, *Matron of Guy's* (London, 1956), p.110.

²⁷ Horgan-Ryan, "Irish military nursing in the Great War" p.98; the eighteen members of the QAIMNS are commemorated in St Anne's Church of Ireland Cathedral in Belfast, Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, p.32.

²⁸ They were as follows: Ada Young (Dublin), Mary Dickson (Donegal), Sophia Violet Barrett (Dublin), Margaret Cameron Young (Belfast), Sheelah Plunkett (Dublin), A. Greene Barry (Limerick), Margaret Dillon (Cork), May Giltinan (Cork), Muriel Humby (Cork), Frances Balfour Olphert (Dublin), Miss Ingram (Dublin), and Iza Mahony (Dublin).

War work on the home front

Nursing soldiers was just one of the many ways Irishwomen contributed to the war effort. They also frequently assisted with causes directly associated with their locality, for example sending parcels to the soldiers of their local regiment or assisting the soldiers' wives and children and fundraising for the nearest auxiliary hospitals. In Ireland, as in Great Britain there was a huge variety of organisations associated with the war effort, ranging from the small local initiatives to the nationwide or international organisations.²⁹ A significant portion of voluntary work for the war effort came under the remit of the Red Cross, either directly or through other organisations, which were later brought under its control. In 1915 a General Service section of the VAD was established which included diverse roles including cook, laundress, clerk, telephonist or chauffeur.³⁰ Other activities included providing refreshments for soldiers departing for overseas service and recreation rooms for soldiers' wives, and collecting eggs for soldiers convalescing in Irish hospitals.³¹ The *Red Cross* journal noted that the members of the Dublin city branch had interpreted 'Red Cross service in a wider sense' than purely nursing work. Members collected eggs for wounded soldiers and visited them in hospital, arranged fundraising events and prepared parcels of comforts to send to men at the front.³²

Producing clothing for wounded soldiers was a popular activity in Ireland. This took place in work parties spread across Ireland, which reported to the Central Red Cross workrooms in Dublin and Belfast. There were ninety-six local work parties in Ireland. The British Red Cross had 2,823 work parties under their remit by the end of the war, but according to the report this number included many outside the United Kingdom in locations as diverse as Sierra Leone, Casablanca, New Zealand and Brazil. Each party had to pay a registration fee of 2/6 regardless of size of membership. Materials were issued to each party through their affiliated Central Red Cross workroom.³³

This activity was not uncontroversial however. The War Emergency Workers' National Committee (WEWNC) expressed concern about the work parties in autumn 1914, objecting to the use of voluntary labour of the 'well-to-do' at a time when women in the sewing trades were in need of work. Consequently, a clarification was issued from the Queen Mary Needlework Guild explaining that 'voluntary aid was meant to supplement and not to

²⁹ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, pp 98-100.

³⁰ Storey and Housego, *Women in the First World War*, p.24.

³¹ "Memoranda on Red Cross in Ireland", pp 726-731.

³² *The Red Cross*, 15 Apr. 1915.

³³ *Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem 1914-1919*, pp 264-266.

supplant paid labour'.³⁴The WEWNC was a British organisation founded in August 1914 which represented the major national labour committees, trade unions, socialist groups and various women's and cooperative organisations. Initially focusing on food distribution and inflation, it widened its remit to act as a national lobby for labour, interceding with government to find solutions to urgent problems arising from the war.³⁵

The issue also received attention in Ireland. A letter from the Drapers' Chamber of Trade was published in the *Irish Times* on 26 August 1914 requesting that ladies instead order ready-made garments from commercial retailers to send to the troops.³⁶ The *Irish Citizen* was also quick to condemn the Red Cross work parties, protesting that while the involvement of women from the middle or upper classes in such schemes would save the government money, it would be far better for the unemployed dressmakers and seamstresses to be paid for such work. They summed up the current situation with the following pithy phrase: 'Therefore the ladies must sew and the others starve'.³⁷

There were similarities between the activities of the work parties and that of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot (IWHSD), one of the largest organisations in wartime Ireland. The IWHSD had 500 women registered at headquarters and over 6,000 women workers on the registers of its eighty-four sub-depots spread across Ireland. Its purpose was to manufacture and supply dressings, bandages and other surgical appliances for hospitals treating wounded soldiers.³⁸ Established in December 1915 by the Marchioness of Waterford, it existed until February 1919.³⁹ Individual depots had initially been established in the summer of 1915 in Waterford but it was decided by October 1915 that a central organisation in Dublin was needed to coordinate the various depots. It then came under the remit of the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association. The war hospital supply depots aimed to alleviate the urgent need for hospital supplies and to provide 'definite and regular work' in their locality for those who sought it.⁴⁰

One of its primary activities was the collection and treatment of sphagnum moss to use as surgical dressings to replace cotton wool, which was in short supply during the war. This was led by the Royal College of Science in Dublin, which in November 1915 became the headquarters for sphagnum moss collecting in Ireland. In February 1916 the War Office

³⁴ Andrews, *Economic effects of the war*, pp 24-25.

³⁵ John Horne, *Labour at war: France and Britain 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1991), pp 221-222.

³⁶ *Irish Times*, 26 Aug. 1914.

³⁷ *Irish Citizen*, 26 Nov. 1914. Similar criticisms were expressed by the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 21 Aug. 1914.

³⁸ "Memoranda on Red Cross Work in Ireland" p.727; Thekla Bowser's 1918 account of VAD work in the United Kingdom claims there were 1,300 workers at the Central Depot in Dublin: Thekla Bowser, *The story of British VAD work in the Great War* (London, 1918), p.147. With no surviving membership rolls for the depot it is difficult to accurately assess numbers.

³⁹ IWM WWS: B.O. 11/15: *Report of the National Scheme of coordination of voluntary effort resulting from the formation of the director general of voluntary organisations department*, p.30.

⁴⁰ Airfield papers, Box 69 2597: *Irish Life*, 23 Feb. 1919.

put sphagnum moss on its list of official surgical dressings and a month later commissioned 5,000 moss dressings a month from the Irish organisation.⁴¹ Between 1917 and 1918 fifty-seven hospitals across the war front were supplied with dressings made in Irish depots, including hospitals in France, Italy, Egypt, Salonika, Palestine and India.⁴² Collecting sphagnum moss was an arduous task, requiring the collector to clamber over wet boggy ground often in adverse weather conditions.⁴³ The organisation depended upon funds raised locally in Ireland, usually in the areas surrounding the sub-depots. They were thus in competition with other organisations conducting fundraising efforts, for example the Irish Counties Hospitals and the Red Cross 'Our Day' fund.⁴⁴

A parallel organisation was established in Ulster with sphagnum moss being sent to the two main depots in Belfast and Derry. Mrs G.A. Milliken established the Belfast Sphagnum moss depot in October 1915 in Belfast.⁴⁵ The Ulster Women's Unionist Council granted them the use of a suitable room in the Old Town Hall. The organisation claimed to have been the first sphagnum moss depot in Ireland and stated that they received bags of moss from all over Ireland, including from Cork and Kerry. They sent their dressings to the Edinburgh Sphagnum Moss Department and the moss section of the Queen Mary Needlework Guild in London for sorting. There was also a sphagnum moss depot in Londonderry and so to avoid overlapping they formed the Ulster Sphagnum Moss Association. This was brought under the remit of the director general of voluntary organisations in June 1916. The organisation was eventually disbanded in February 1919.

There appears to have been no communication with the sphagnum department coordinated by the Royal College of Science in the south of Ireland.⁴⁶ The report of the activities of the Ulster association makes no reference whatsoever to its parallel organisation in the south. Similarly reports of the sphagnum department at the Royal College of Science do not refer to their northern counterparts and also imply that their organisation was the first in Ireland. They assert that their depot served as a model and an influence for the inauguration of a similar movement in Canada.⁴⁷ The lack of cooperation between the two

⁴¹ Elsie Henry, 'Nov. 1915', '23 Feb. 1916' and '22 Mar. 1916' in Clara Cullen (ed.) *The world upturning: Elsie Henry's Irish wartime diaries 1913-1919* (Dublin, 2013), pp 128, 137, 140.

⁴² Airfield papers Box 68/2574: *Annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot 1917-1918* (Dublin, 1918).

⁴³ NLI *Third annual report of the sphagnum department of the Irish War Hospital Supply Organisation* (Dublin, 1919), p.9.

⁴⁴ Airfield papers Box 68/ 2574: *Annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot 1917-18* (Dublin, 1918), p.23.

⁴⁵ This is most likely Beatrice Milliken of Ormeau, county Down, married to George Milliken, a dentist. She was aged twenty-one in 1911 and a Presbyterian. 1911 census record.

⁴⁶ IWM L.R. 34/1: Report of the Belfast Sphagnum Moss Depot from Oct. 1915 to 1916 (Belfast, 1919).

⁴⁷ IWM L.R. 121/1: 'Red Cross work at the Royal College of Science' (1919).

organisations and the two separate Red Cross committees represent the widening gap between Ulster unionists and southern Ireland and the development of a partitionist mind-set.

Providing material comforts for soldiers was another very popular activity amongst women in combatant countries. For example, in Australia approximately 10,000 women's patriotic clubs or sewing circles were established which sent parcels of comforts to soldiers.⁴⁸ These packages were seen as important for maintaining morale and consequently governments 'sacrificed precious cargo capacity and communications services' to permit their regular delivery.⁴⁹ They served as a vital link between home and battle front and a means for women to express 'solidarity with their nation'.⁵⁰ In Red Cross workrooms in Dublin three hundred women knitted 20,000 pairs of socks and 10,000 mufflers for servicemen.⁵¹ George Hammersely Heenan described in his diary how all the women in Blackrock, County Dublin, appeared to be knitting for soldiers in October and November 1914, leading to a shortage of wooden needles in Dublin.⁵²

This type of activity was not confined to the Red Cross. In 1914 Monica Roberts, a young Dublin woman, established the Band of Soldiers' Helpers, which provided monthly parcels to soldiers serving with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Royal Flying Corps. She operated the association from her home in Stillorgan, county Dublin with no support from any other organisation. Members of the 'band of helpers' paid a monthly subscription and contributed funds or items for the parcels. The parcels contained practical items such as bootlaces, foot ointment, handkerchiefs and lead pencils. All of the letters in the collection are addressed to Monica and it is evident that the parcels all came directly from her. Many soldiers received parcels from her for years and so kept up a lengthy correspondence with Monica. Through this she appeared to build up a close relationship with the men and invited some to her home when they were on leave in Dublin.⁵³ Monica Roberts was twenty-four at the outbreak of the war and lived in her family home in Stillorgan. Her father was a Church of Ireland clergyman and a senior fellow of Trinity College.⁵⁴ As a young middle-class woman, Monica had sufficient time to devote to such activity. Her diary from the Easter

⁴⁸ Grayzel, "Women's mobilisation for war".

⁴⁹ Branden Little, "State, civil society and relief organisations for war" in *1914-1918 online, International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* (published Dec. 2014).

⁵⁰ Paul Ward, "'Women of Britain say go': Women's patriotism in the First World War" in *Twentieth Century British History*, xii, no. 1 (2001), p.31.

⁵¹ Grayzel, "Women's mobilisation for war".

⁵² IWM GH.S. Heenan papers, Diary of George Hammersely Heenan, 4 Oct. 1914, 19 Nov. 1914.

⁵³ DCA, Royal Dublin Fusilier Archives: Monica Roberts Collection, volume 1.

⁵⁴ Bryan MacMahon, "Monica Roberts' Diary of Easter Week, 1916" in *Obelisk: Journal of the Kilmacud Stillorgan Local History Society* vol.3 (2008) p.8. In 1911 Monica was living in Greystones with her family in a first class house. The family had three servants. Monica was one of two children, her elder sister Dorothy was aged twenty-six in 1911.

Rising reveals that unsurprisingly her sympathies were with the British soldiers and that she felt 'awful' that 'our own people have betrayed us like this'.⁵⁵

There were similar initiatives taking place around Ireland. In Wexford Mrs. Janet Bain, the wife of a school principal, raised funds to send 874 tins of toffee to the Royal Irish Regiment by January 1915.⁵⁶ Mrs. Pauline Loftus established an organisation in Kilkenny in August 1914, which supplied parcels of comforts to Irish men serving in the British Army. It had twenty-four voluntary workers and raised the necessary funds through jumble sales, concerts and donations from local individuals.⁵⁷ Another organisation existed in the Kilkenny town of Thomastown, organised by Miss Kathleen Pilsworth, which also send comforts and clothing to the Irish soldiers. Thomastown also participated in fundraising for the Red Cross, with concerts, jumble sales, fetes and plays all organised by local women for the war effort.⁵⁸ The Galway region also played host to a number of war charities. Lady Clonbrock established the Co. Galway War Fund Association in June 1915, which provided comforts for Connaught Rangers, and other Galway soldiers on active service or who had been wounded, and supported Galway sailors serving in the Royal Navy. The association had eighty-two members, representing different regions of the county. It met monthly, under the leadership of Lady Clonbrock.⁵⁹ They later collaborated with the Irishwomen's Association, which was a nationwide organisation, to provide parcels for Irish soldiers at the front or in prisoner of war camps. The Galway War Fund Association remained active until the end of the war, with its final meeting held in June 1919.⁶⁰

Supporting prisoners of war was an important activity for women in Ireland. Prisoners of war depended upon the parcels of food and clothing sent from their home countries. The prisoners endured harsh conditions, usually not so much from wilful mistreatment as a lack of preparation on the part of governments who had anticipated a short war. In many prison camps, the men's food came almost exclusively from external charities and individuals. This was the case for Belgian, British (and Irish) and French prisoners held by Germany from 1916 to 1918.⁶¹ The Irishwomen's Association was established in early 1915 to provide parcels of food and clothing for Irish prisoners of war and parcels of

⁵⁵ Monica Roberts Collection, Diary of Monica Roberts, Easter 1916, volume 8.

⁵⁶ *Lady of the House*, 15 Jan. 1915. 1911 census record of the Bain family.

⁵⁷ IWM WWS: B.O. 11/15 *Report of the National Scheme of coordination of voluntary effort resulting from the formation of the director general of voluntary organisations department* p.31.

⁵⁸ Marilyn Silverman and P.H. Gulliver, *In the valley of the nore: a social history of Thomastown, County Kilkenny 1840-1983* (Dublin, 1986), p.166. Similar activities took place in Co Kerry during the war, see Thomas F Martin, *The Kingdom in the Empire: a portrait of Kerry during World War I* (Dublin, 2006), pp 53-54.

⁵⁹ O'Reilly, 'Women and voluntary war work', p.63.

⁶⁰ NLI MS 35,796 (4): Clonbrock papers, Report of the Galway War Fund Association 1917-18.

⁶¹ Henry, *Galway & the Great War*, p.127.

⁶¹ Little, "Civil society and relief organisations for war" in *1914-1918 online*.

comforts for Irish regiments at the front.⁶² A similar organisation existed in Ulster, the Ulster Women's Prisoner of War Fund, established under the auspices of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council. However in contrast to the Ulster organisation, the Irishwomen's Association attempted to draw support from all sectors of the population. It advertised its activities in both the *Church of Ireland Gazette* and the *Irish Catholic*, taking care in the latter case to emphasise its apolitical and non-sectarian nature: 'politics will be entirely ignored in the work of this organisation'.⁶³ Its list of patronesses included members of both denominations and a mix of those connected to constitutional nationalist and unionist politics.⁶⁴ It called upon a sense of Irish patriotism in its appeals, for example stating that they appealed to 'all who love Ireland and who know and appreciate the bravery and patriotism of her soldiers'.⁶⁵

Although the Ulster Women's Unionist Council dominated much of the war relief work in the northern province (discussed in Chapter Eight), there was a number of independent, localised endeavours. Eileen O'Reilly and Colin Cousins have described the varied war work performed by women in Cavan and Armagh respectively.⁶⁶ It included fundraising for war charities, helping the families of soldiers and manufacturing clothing and comforts for soldiers. O'Reilly emphasises the widespread support for such activities in Cavan, noting for example the support of the Catholic parish priests and of nationalist as well as unionist MPs.⁶⁷ Further evidence of localised war work can be seen with regard to Killyleagh, county Down. Killyleagh women knitted socks for soldiers at the front, made slippers for the war hospital supply depot and formed a Queen Mary's Needlework Guild party. They were also very involved in fundraising for the war effort.⁶⁸ Between September 1914 and May 1918, they organised four concerts, three cake or jumble sales, and two football matches and one rugby match, raising a total of £285 5s 11d.⁶⁹ This money was used to provide materials for comforts for their soldiers. They also raised £822 for 'Our Day' appeals between 1915 and 1917, £730 for the Ulster Patriotic Fund and £20 for the prisoner of war fund.

⁶² NLI MS 35,796 (3): Clonbrock papers, pamphlet issued by the Irishwomen's Association in Feb. 1915.

⁶³ *Irish Catholic*, 12 June 1915.

⁶⁴ For example the unionists Countess of Fingall (Roman Catholic) and Rachel Mahaffy (Church of Ireland), and the constitutional nationalists Mrs Ada Redmond (Church of England), Lady Kenmare and Lady Russell (Roman Catholics).

⁶⁵ Pamphlet issued by the Irishwomen's Association in Feb. 1915.

⁶⁶ O'Reilly, 'Women and voluntary war work' pp 63-65; Cousins, *Armagh & the Great War*, pp 137-154.

⁶⁷ O'Reilly, 'Women and voluntary war work', p.63.

⁶⁸ PRONI D3524/2/1: W.H Martin, *Killyleagh women's war work and patriotic effort and roll of honour* (Oct. 1918).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

The Killyleagh Women's Guild committee was composed of three local women, two of whom were members of the Church of Ireland and one Presbyterian.⁷⁰ Two were married and all were middle-class and aged between forty and sixty during the war.⁷¹ Killyleagh had a population of 3,486 in 1911 which was two-thirds Protestant.⁷² During the war 243 men are recorded on the rolls of honour in the local Church of Ireland (66), Presbyterian (96) and Roman Catholic (81) churches. Of these twenty-nine had been killed by October 1918.⁷³ Unusually the local Presbyterian Church recorded the war service of two Red Cross nurses: Miss Kathleen Heron who served in Salonika and Miss Gwennie Moore who served in France.⁷⁴

Together with the local communities, schools and colleges were important sites for mobilising war workers. One such, Alexandra College played a significant role in the Dublin war effort. The Alexandra College Guild, consisting of present and past pupils, operated a hostel for Belgian refugees, a workroom for unemployed women where they were paid to produce socks for the war effort and a War Club which provided a meeting place for soldier's wives, mothers or sisters. Coal was provided for soldiers' families at a reduced price and a playroom was opened for their children.⁷⁵ The Alexandra College St John's Ambulance Brigade Nursing Division was formed in 1914 and offered training to students and staff in first aid and home nursing. By the end of the war it had ninety-six members, of whom thirty-five served in hospitals, and eleven of these overseas.⁷⁶ The College also organised a war charities fair, founded a war savings association and produced socks and comforts for soldiers through its knitting association.⁷⁷ The multitude of roles played by Alexandra College in the war effort can be traced to its unionist and feminist background and its tradition of philanthropy within the surrounding community as shown by its pre-war work in the Dublin tenements. In Susan Parkes' view, the College and its past pupils used the opportunity afforded by the war to demonstrate the "important and responsible role, which women could take in public life".⁷⁸

Trinity College, University of Dublin, also provided many recruits for the women's war services. The Dublin University nursing division of the Red Cross had forty-four members, seven of whom served overseas.⁷⁹ Two were mentioned in despatches. The

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ 1911 census records for Mary Newell Young, Louisa McKnight, and Margaretta Miller.

⁷² 1911 census record for Killyleagh.

⁷³ D3524/2/1: Martin, *Killyleagh women's war work and patriotic effort and roll of honour*.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Susan M. Parkes and Anne O'Connor, *Gladly learn and gladly teach: Alexandra College and School 1886-1966* (Dublin, 1984), pp 94-97.

⁷⁶ *Red Cross in Ireland*, p.85.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.101.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ *Red Cross in Ireland*, p.88.

majority worked in a hospital for wounded soldiers in Mountjoy Square, which was opened by the College in November 1914. Known as Dublin University Hospital, it was staffed by Trinity College female students and graduates and was financially supported by the Board of Trinity College. The College also provided a house in Belvedere Place to be used as a hostel for Belgian refugees.⁸⁰ Members of the college supplied the equipment for the hospital and hostel and no appeals for external assistance were required.⁸¹ Twenty-seven women are listed in the University of Dublin Trinity College War list, compiled in 1922. The list however noted that 'the names of women are inserted only when they served in hospitals abroad, or in such positions that, had they been men, they would have been given military rank'.⁸²

Twenty-three of the women served in a medical capacity while the others worked for the auxiliary services. They included Annie Ball, who graduated from Trinity College in 1912 and served with a VAD in France from 1916 to 1919. She was mentioned in despatches. Ina Marion Clarke had previously worked as a demonstrator in the anatomy department of Trinity College. During the war she was based at the UVF hospital in Pau, France. A number held senior positions within the WAAC. For example, Mabel Crawford (graduated in 1913) served as the Area Medical Controller of the Irish Command of the WAAC, Mary Gill McCullogh (graduated in 1911) was the Area Medical Controller of the Western Command of the WAAC, and Hilda Varian was the chief medical recruiting officer for Wales for the WAAC. Six of the women served in Malta where Euphan Maxwell (graduated in 1910) was the medical officer of St. George's hospital. One of these, Phyllis Smyly, was fortunate to survive her ship being torpedoed while she was travelling home from Malta.⁸³ Another Trinity graduate, Louisa Woodcock, a physician, died from pneumonia in 1917 when working in a military hospital in London. She is commemorated on the Trinity College war memorial, the Hall of Honour, the only woman to be thus included.⁸⁴

Participation

How extensive was Irish involvement in war work? How does Ireland compare to Great Britain in terms of enrolment with the SJAA and BRCS? By 1918 there were 66,211 women registered with the BRCS and 24,440 women registered with the SJAA in the United Kingdom, bringing a total of 90,651 women involved with the two organisations. Together

⁸⁰ Trinity College Dublin Manuscripts Department: IE TCD Ms 2234, minutes of board meeting, 14 and 21 Nov. 1914.

⁸¹ *Royal Commission on the University of Dublin* (Trinity College), 1920, p.25.

⁸² University of Dublin Trinity College, *War list, February 1922* ((Dublin, 1922), p. viii.

⁸³ Phyllis Smyly entered Trinity College in 1911, *College Calendar 1911-12*, p.19; her war service is detailed in *Red Cross in Ireland*, p. 89.

⁸⁴ Louisa Woodcock graduated from Trinity College in 1907. She worked in a military hospital in London where she died in 1917; University of Dublin Trinity College, *War list, February 1922*.

the two Irish committees form 6.3% of this total.⁸⁵ The percentage of the total female population involved with the BRCS and SJAA was higher in Great Britain than Ireland: 0.4% in Great Britain compared to 0.3% in Ireland.⁸⁶ Chapter One mentioned however that the impact of Ireland's exceptionally high emigration rate on the demographics of the population. Consequently I have calculated the number of females in Ireland in 1911 between the ages of twenty and fifty-five, the age group most likely to have participated in Red Cross work, giving a figure of 680,818.⁸⁷ The number of Irishwomen registered with the two organisations is therefore 0.84% of the women in this age group. This figure is slightly higher than the percentage of the same population group in Great Britain involved with the two organisations: 0.82%.⁸⁸

This suggests that Irish involvement with the war effort was proportionally in line with that of Great Britain. This is particularly noteworthy given that it has frequently been assumed that war service was confined to a very small sector of the population with the vast majority of the people opposed to the war. Instead these figures demonstrate that Irishwomen were as likely as their British counterparts to join the British Red Cross or St John Ambulance Association, It is also noteworthy given Ireland's predominantly rural nature. War work tended to be clustered in urban areas where there were likely to be more individuals with the necessary leisure time for such activity and where collective pressure could play a role in encouraging involvement.

Geographic spread

What was the geographic spread of voluntary work for the war effort? Was it clustered in the north of the country or in urban areas exclusively? Figure 6.1 demonstrates that divisions of the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association were heavily concentrated in Dublin and Ulster. There were forty-seven BRCS and SJAA divisions in Dublin, involving 2,089 women, representing 38.6% of all women enrolled with the Red Cross organization in Ireland. Ulster had 156 divisions, comprising 1,620 individuals (30% of total Irish membership). In contrast there were just six divisions in Connaught with a total membership of 158 women, representing 3% of the total.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, p.10.

⁸⁶ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, p.3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 159-160.

⁸⁸ Calculated from figures derived from Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, pp 12-13

⁸⁹ Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p.29.

Table 6.1: Regional distribution of BRCS and SJAA personnel in Ireland⁹⁰

Region	Divisions	Number of personnel	Region as % of total BRCS and SJAA personnel in Ireland
Dublin	47	2,323	38.6
Rest of Leinster	17	674	12.4
Munster	14	868	16.0
Connaught	6	158	3.0
Ulster	156	1,620	30.0
Ireland	240	5,643	100

Ulster and Dublin were the most heavily populated areas of the country, hence I have also assessed the percentage of the total female population aged between twenty and fifty-five in each district who were involved with the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association during the war:

Table 6.2: Proportion of female population of each region aged 25 to 55 enrolled with the BRCS and SJAA⁹¹

Region	Percentage
Dublin	1.81
Rest of Leinster	0.46
Munster	0.39
Connaught	0.14
Ulster	0.44
Ireland	0.87

⁹⁰ Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p.31; "Memorandum on Red Cross work in Ireland", p.728.

⁹¹ Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p.31; "Memorandum on Red Cross work in Ireland" p.728; Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, pp 159-160.

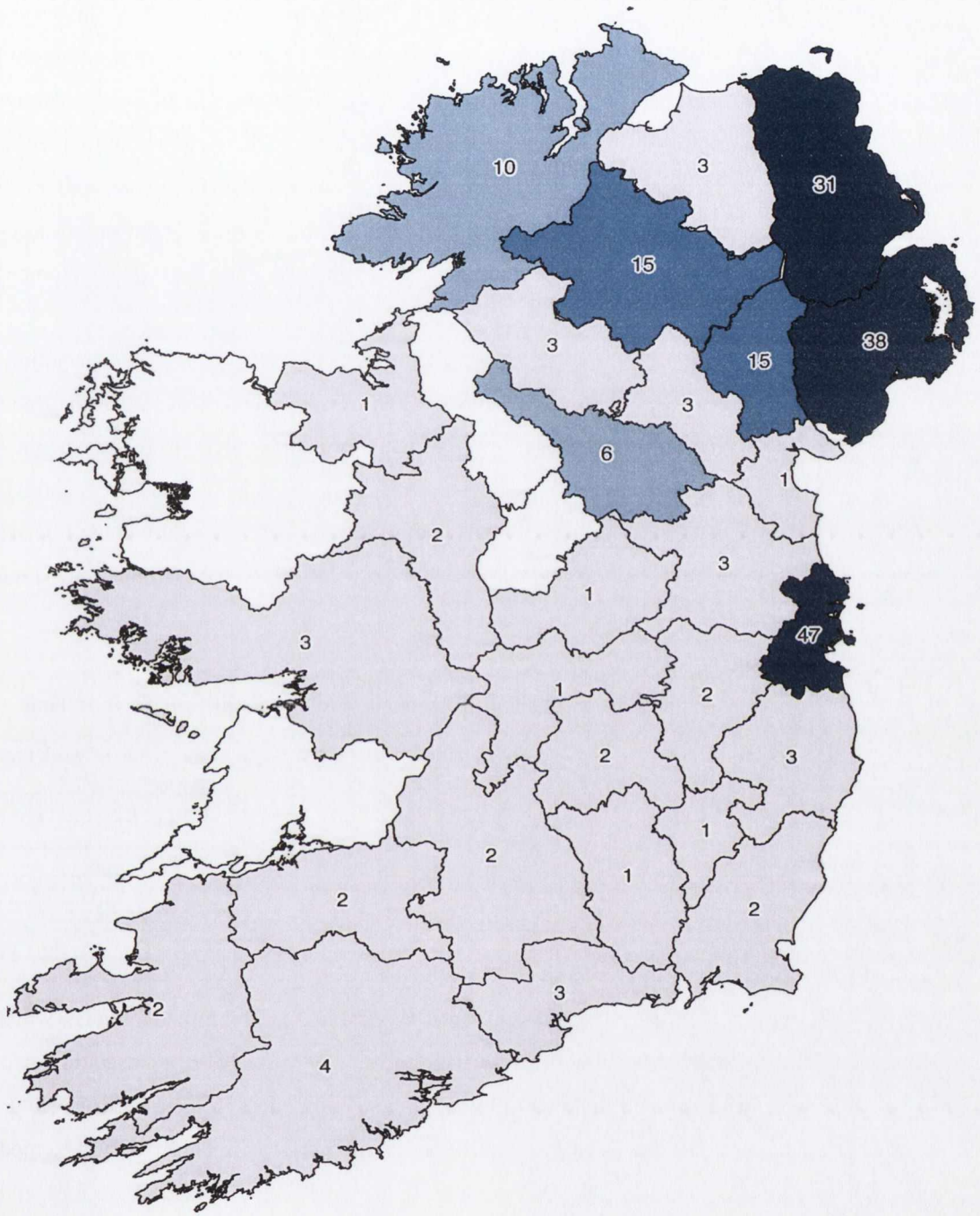


Fig. 6.1 Geographic distribution of BRCS and SJAA divisions in Ireland⁹²

⁹² Derived from Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p.31; "Memorandum on Red Cross work in Ireland" p.728. I am grateful to Dr Fergal Walsh for producing the maps in this section.

The difference between each region is less significant when the population disparity is acknowledged. The relative wealth of each region was a likely factor in determining the extent of voluntary work in the area with more women from the upper classes able to devote time to active participation in the war effort. Women from farming communities in rural areas also had less leisure time to devote to such activity. The table also demonstrates that the proportion of the female population involved with the joint committee was slightly higher in Leinster than Ulster, even with Dublin excluded from the Leinster figures. This may be partly attributed to the existence of a number of other organisations associated with the war effort in Ulster, including those associated with the Ulster Women's Unionist Council.

Some differences are evident with regard to the geographic distribution of the Red Cross work parties. Figure 6.2 reveals that the vast majority (69.8%) of the Red Cross work parties were based in Ulster with very small numbers involved from Connaught. There were a higher proportion of work parties in rural areas, in contrast to the BRCS and SJAA nursing divisions, which were primarily clustered in urban areas. Donegal had the highest number of work parties in Ulster, nine more than Belfast, while Tipperary had the highest number in the south (eight as compared to three in Dublin).⁹³

Table 6.3 Regional distribution of Red Cross work parties in Ireland

Region	Number of Red Cross work parties	Percentage of work parties in province
Dublin	3	3.1
Remainder of Leinster	8	8.3
Munster	16	16.6
Connaught	2	2.1
Ulster	67	69.8
Ireland	96	100

However there were Central Red Cross workrooms in Dublin and Belfast, which had large numbers of voluntary workers on their rolls.⁹⁴ There was also another similar organisation based in Dublin throughout the war: the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society. It became affiliated to the Queen Mary Needlework Guild (QMNG) in late 1915 and formed a group of seven work parties. The QMNG also had branches in Belfast, Waterford and Arklow.⁹⁵

⁹³ *Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John*, pp 669-670.

⁹⁴ The Central Red Cross workroom in Merrion Square, Dublin had 300 workers on its membership rolls: "Memoranda on Red Cross Work in Ireland", p.727.

⁹⁵ IWM WWS B.O.2.2: Queen Mary Needlework Guild: its work during the Great War 1914-1919 (1919), p.46.

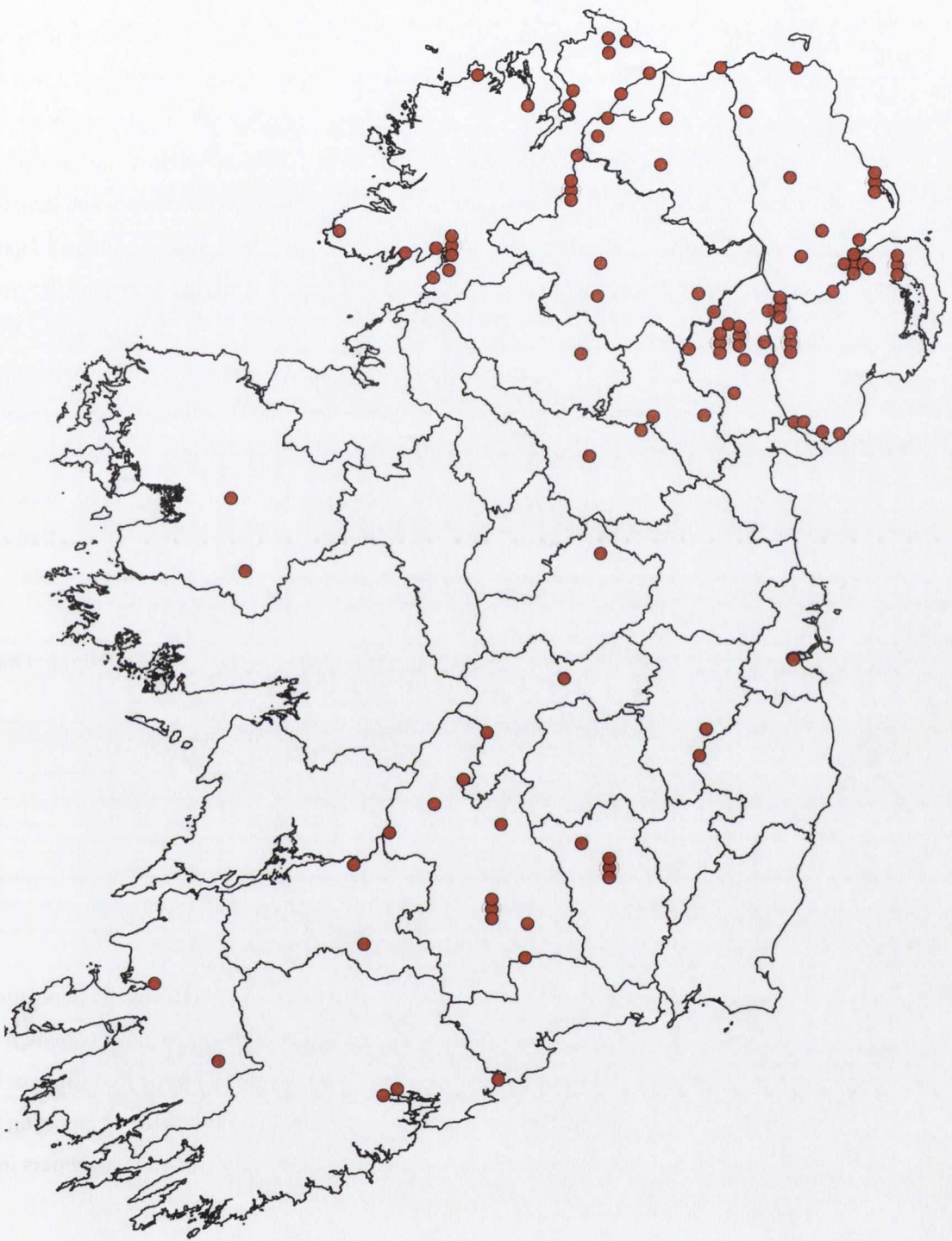


Fig. 6.2 Geographic distribution of Red Cross work parties in Ireland⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Derived from *Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John*, pp 669-670.

In some respects the remit of the Red Cross work parties was similar to that of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot and its sub-depots. Figure 6.3 indicates similar trends in the regional distribution of the IWHSD sub-depots compared to the BRCS and SJAA divisions, though with some variation within provinces. The IWHSD sub-depots were clustered in Leinster with once again very few in Connaught. However within Leinster, Dublin was less dominant than was the case with the BRCS and SJAA. With its nine sub-depots, Wicklow had the highest number of sub-depots per county while Dublin, Louth and Tipperary were each next with seven sub-depots. The only counties with no sub-depots in 1918 were Antrim, Fermanagh, Sligo, Leitrim and Longford.⁹⁷ Sir John Lumsden, director of the Irish division of the SJAA, praised the provincial contribution to the war hospital supply depots, stating that the provincial detachments proved themselves the ‘backbone of this organisation’. He acknowledged the increased difficulties associated with war work in rural areas, which included long journeys and ‘perhaps unenlightened prejudices to be overcome’.⁹⁸ The relatively low distribution in Ulster is indicative of the presence of the Red Cross work parties and the separate Ulster Sphagnum Moss Association.

Table 6.4 Regional distribution of sub-depots affiliated to the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot in 1918⁹⁹

Region	Number of sub-depots	% of total sub-depots located in the province
Dublin	7	8.8
Remainder of Leinster	42	52.5
Munster	19	23.7
Connaught	4	5.0
Ulster	8	10.0
Ireland	80	100

The geographic distribution of voluntary work was primarily affected by population density and wealth distribution. There is strong correlation between the regions with high enlistment rates in the army and the areas that supplied most volunteers for the Red Cross or Irish War Hospital Supply Depot. The work of these organisations was aimed at supporting Irish soldiers and consequently the participation of soldiers’ relatives and neighbours in such activity is unsurprising.

⁹⁷ *Annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot 1917-1918* (Dublin, 1918), pp 23-35.

⁹⁸ Airfield papers 2430: Financial report of the St John Ambulance Brigade, 30 Sept. 1916.

⁹⁹ *Annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot 1917-1918*, pp 23-35.

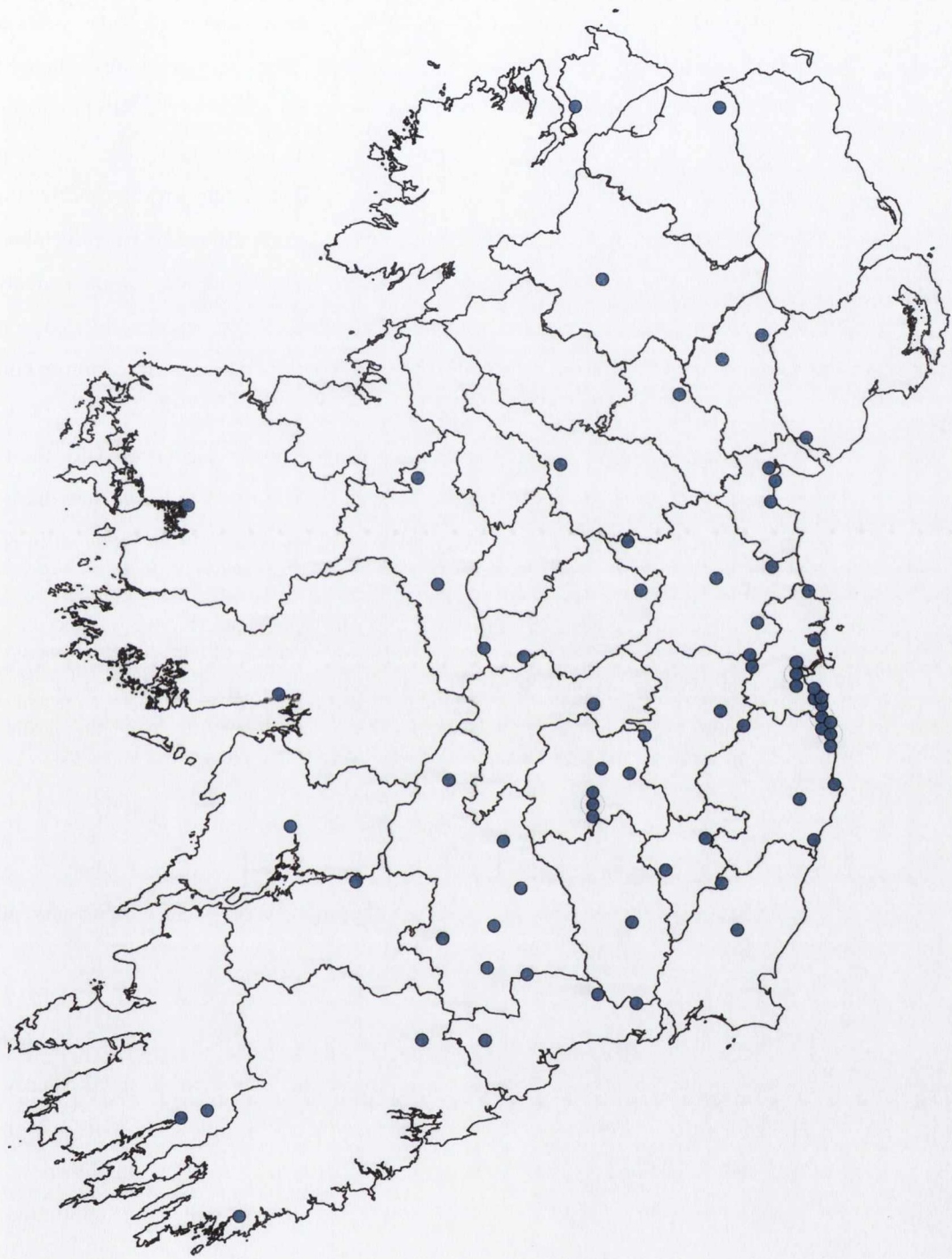


Fig. 6.3 Geographic distribution of Irish War Hospital Supply sub-depots in Ireland¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Derived from the *Annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot 1917-1918*, pp 23-35.

Mobilisation after 1916

To what extent was support for the war effort a phenomenon of the early years of the war? What impact had the 1916 Rising on such support? In her study of the Irish home front Clare O'Neill highlights the waning support for the war effort after 1916.¹⁰¹ Relationships between civil society and the state became increasingly strained after the Rising. Increasing political tension combined with war weariness placed particular strain on the mobilisation process. This war weariness in the latter half of the war was not unique to Ireland. John Horne has described how the second half of the war tested social cohesion, national identity and the legitimacy of the state in various combatant countries. In some cases this led to a refusal to engage further with the war effort and in others to heightened determination to continue until victory.¹⁰² Ireland appears to have experienced both responses. Opposition to the war became more evident, particularly after the Easter Rising. Women associated with the relief effort experienced increased hostility from others. Elsie Henry recorded in her diary reports of hostility directed towards the voluntary workers of the sphagnum moss depot in Kilgarvan in 1917:

The collecting has been difficult as the Kilgarvan people have boycotted the workers and also at first tried to prevent the collection of moss. They attacked the moss-gathers one day, men and women, and one woman scratched Miss Constable's face so badly that blood poisoning resulted. There is a strange and active bitterness, which does not exist around Kenmare itself. The feeling is all anti-English but the Kenmare depot itself has not encountered any resistance.¹⁰³

Pauline Loftus's organisation in Kilkenny also faced difficulties in the latter half of the war due to the 'political unrest'.¹⁰⁴ Opposition to the war peaked in 1918 when the government, feeling that mobilisation through coercion rather than persuasion was necessary, attempted to implement conscription.

However there was a parallel surge of support for the war effort in 1917 and 1918, evident in the outputs of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot and results of fundraising appeals for the Red Cross. The annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot for 1917-18 highlighted the increase in output from the eighty-four sub-depots over the past year, which they attributed to the 'unflagging zeal' of the workers.¹⁰⁵ Thirteen new sub-depots were established between late 1916 and early 1918, indicating continued levels of

¹⁰¹ O'Neill, "Unity in adversity", p.174.

¹⁰² John Horne, "Our war, our history" in Horne (ed.) *Our War* p.7. See also John Horne, "Remobilising for 'total war': France and Britain, 1917-1918" in Horne (ed.) *State, society & mobilisation*, pp 195-211.

¹⁰³ Elsie Henry, '13 April 1917', p.186.

¹⁰⁴ Grant, *Philanthropy & voluntary action in the First World War*, p.78.

¹⁰⁵ *Annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot 1917-1918*, p. 22.

enthusiasm for the organisation and the war effort.¹⁰⁶ The report admitted that there were fewer workers on the books but claimed it was due to competing calls for ‘women’s service in Red Cross and government work’ and the ‘novelty of depot work having worn off’.¹⁰⁷

Table 6.5: Irish War Hospital Supply depot productivity 1916-1917¹⁰⁸

Category	1916	1917	Percentage change
Number of workers	4,551	4,863	+ 6.9%
Average attendance per working day	1,474	1,324	- 10.2%
Income	£13,748	£19,607	+ 42.6%
Output (number of items produced)	970,000	1,900,000	+ 95.9%

The number of surgical dressings produced from the sphagnum moss depots increased steadily from 1916 to 1918, (from 183,628 dressings produced in 1916 to 398,889 dressings produced in 1918), indicating continued support for this activity throughout the war.¹⁰⁹ Galway provides an example of a sub-depot opened in the latter half of the war but which managed to maintain local support. The Galway sub-depot was established in October 1916. It operated two days a week and had forty regular workers who produced a variety of field dressings and bandages. The workers held fetes in the grounds of the university to raise funds to cover the running cost of the depot. By the end of the war the depot had produced 45,768 surgical dressings for the troops.¹¹⁰

An examination of fundraising for the Red Cross also suggests continued extensive levels of support for the war effort in Ireland after the 1916 Rising. Ireland’s contributions to the Red Cross ‘Our Day’ appeal in 1917 and 1918 were particularly high – higher per capita than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The 1917 contribution was described as ‘exceptionally fine’ by the report of the Joint Committee.¹¹¹ Ireland contributed £111,257 in 1917, making up 24.6% of the total contributed by the United Kingdom. This worked out as six pence per person, compared to an average of 2.5 pence per person in the rest of the United Kingdom. The joint committee for Leinster, Munster and Connaught claimed that in proportion to that raised by England and Wales, southern Ireland would have been expected to raise £13,665 given that the wealth of England and Wales was twenty-five times that of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.36.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.5.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.24; see also *Second annual report of the sphagnum moss department of the Irish War Hospital Supply Organisation 1916-1917* (Dublin, 1918), pp 8-9.

¹⁰⁹ *NLI Third Annual report of the sphagnum department of the Irish War Hospital Supply Organisation* (Dublin, 1919), p.11.

¹¹⁰ Henry, *Galway and the Great War*, p.109.

¹¹¹ *Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John*, p.21.

the three provinces. Instead the three southern provinces raised over £62,000 in 1917, which increased to almost £70,000 in 1918.¹¹²

Table 6.6: ‘Our Day’ fundraising in Ireland and Great Britain, 1917

Region	Population in 1911	Funds raised in 1917	Amount per head of population
England & Wales	36,650,492	£329,320	2.2 d
Scotland	2,420,000	£12,310	1.2 d
Ireland (four provinces)	4,390,219	£111,257	6.1 d
Total	43,460,711	£452,887	2.5 d

The report notes that the 1917 contribution was five times that of Ireland’s contribution in 1916. This suggests that there was a revival of support in the last years of the war. There was a further 25.8% increase in 1918 in the amounts raised in Ireland for the Red Cross.¹¹³ The surge in support in 1917 and 1918 suggests that the political tensions may have spurred some sectors of the society to reaffirm their loyalty to the state and their patriotism through civil mobilisation. Adrian Gregory has drawn a similar inference from the particularly high contribution of Glasgow to the war savings scheme in early 1918, arguing that the ‘disloyalty tag’ associated with Glasgow acted as an incentive for its population to attempt to demonstrate ‘conspicuous loyalty’.¹¹⁴ War weariness and compassion fatigue also affected British fundraising for the war effort in the latter half of the war. It is likely that the British contribution had been higher in the earlier years of the war but by 1917 the British population no longer had the resources to contribute to the same extent.¹¹⁵ Gregory’s brief analysis of wartime charitable giving concludes that although support for the war effort continued throughout the war, there was a growing unwillingness to make sacrifices for it in 1917 and 1918.¹¹⁶

Irish fundraising for the war effort was concentrated in Leinster and Ulster, with the amount raised per head of population in those provinces more than double that raised in Munster and Connaught. There were also significant regional variations within provinces. For example, Galway’s contribution in 1917 was greater than that contributed by the remainder of Connaught.¹¹⁷ In both 1917 and 1918 Dublin citizens raised by far the largest amount for the BRCS and SJAA, with the Dublin figures being over twice that for Munster

¹¹² “Memoranda on Red Cross Work in Ireland”, p.725.

¹¹³ Figures for southern Ireland derived from *The Red Cross in Ireland*, p.38 and the figures for Ulster from “Memoranda on Red Cross Work in Ireland”, p.731.

¹¹⁴ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p.228.

¹¹⁵ For discussion of post 1916 war weariness in Britain, see Ward, “Women of Britain say go”, pp 39-42.

¹¹⁶ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, pp 232-233.

¹¹⁷ Downes, ‘The civilian voluntary aid effort’, p.32.

and ten times that of Connaught.¹¹⁸ £30,233 was raised in Dublin in 1917 and £33,588 in 1918. This was more than ten times higher than the second greatest contribution in Leinster.¹¹⁹ Longford raised the smallest amount in 1917 (£101) but this increased to £985 in 1918. Wexford raised the smallest amount in 1918 (£314), a significant drop on the previous year when it raised £822.¹²⁰

Table 6.7: Provincial fundraising contribution to the Red Cross ‘Our Day’ appeal, 1917, 1918¹²¹

Province ¹²²	1917		1918		Percentage change between 1917 and 1918
	Total	Amount per head of population	Total	Amount per head of population	
Dublin	£30,323	15.3d	£33,588	16.9d	+10.5%
Leinster (excluding Dublin)	£13,790	4.8d	£16,954	5.9d	+22.9%
Munster	£11,406	2.6d	£11,244	2.6d	-1.4%
Connaught	£3,565	1.4d	£5,972	2.3d	+67.5%
Ulster	£48,707	7.4d	£70,365	10.7d	+44.5%
Other funds raised ¹²³	£3,556	N/a	£1,808	N/a	-49.2%
Total	£111,257	6.1 d	£139,931	7.6d	+25.8%

The figures cannot be used as a definitive indicator of the relative support for the war effort in the different regions. County Sligo is recorded as having donated just £330 in 1917 and £1,224 in 1918 to the Red Cross ‘Our Day’ appeals but in the first few months of the war about £3,000 was raised locally in the county. The editor of the *Sligo Independent* described in February 1915 how £600 was raised to relieve local distress caused by the war, £100 for the Prince of Wales fund, £1,200 to support Belgian refugees in Sligo and £550 to provide a Red Cross ambulance. There were also other funds to provide clothing, tobacco and cigarettes for the soldiers, thus reaching a financial contribution of approximately £3,000 from the Sligo people. He highlighted that the funds for the ambulance were raised in just over three weeks and mostly through small donations from the working classes.¹²⁴ It is thus possible that by 1917 and 1918 the county had almost exhausted its resources for the war

¹¹⁸ Margaret Downes, ‘The civilian voluntary aid effort’, p.32.

¹¹⁹ Downes, ‘The civilian voluntary aid effort’, p.32.

¹²⁰ *The Red Cross in Ireland*, p.38

¹²¹ Figures for southern Ireland derived from *The Red Cross in Ireland* p.38 and the figures for Ulster from “Memoranda on Red Cross Work in Ireland”, p.731.

¹²² Provincial populations were as follows in 1911: Dublin (477,196), remainder of Leinster (684,848), Munster (1,035,495), Connacht (610,984) and Ulster (1,581,696).

¹²³ These included anonymous donations, a children’s collection in Loughrea and the sale of silver by Lord Donoughmore, *Red Cross in Ireland*, p.38.

¹²⁴ IWM WWS LR 366/1: Letter from Mr Alex Gilmor, editor of the *Sligo Independent*, to Mr WE Dowling, London, 22 Feb. 1915.

effort. Gregory has also noted with regard to Britain that a few large subscriptions or donations by individuals could radically influence the figures for a particular region.¹²⁵

The Red Cross 'Our Day' fundraising in Ireland was organised by Sir John Lumsden, vice-chairman of the Joint VAD committee for Ireland. The *Irish Times* was heavily involved in the effort, both through promoting the appeal in the pages of the newspaper and serving as an agency for collecting the funds raised. Money was raised through church collections and flag days. Lady Arnott, wife of the trustee of the Our Day fund for southern Ireland, organised a pageant in Dublin in October 1917, which was said to be very successful in stimulating 'public interest and generosity'.¹²⁶ There was a competitive aspect to the fundraising. In 1917 the committee for southern Ireland issued a 'friendly challenge to Ulster, which was accepted in an equally friendly spirit, and North and South at once entered into the contest with the right good-will'.¹²⁷ Although such 'friendly challenges' had particular connotations in an increasingly divided Ireland, very similar comparisons were made in *The Times* between the relative contributions of Glasgow and London to the War Loan.¹²⁸

Membership profile

Some women were only involved with one specific type of war relief work while others participated in a diverse range of activities. For example Jane Lee (Jeanie) Fitzpatrick organised a buffet for soldiers, was in charge of the men's dining room in the Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital and helped with the transportation of wounded soldiers from North Wall.¹²⁹ To gain some sense of the war service of Irishwomen, I have examined the personnel files of one hundred women from Ireland who served with the British Red Cross during the Great War. I selected the first one hundred Irish women in the database (listed alphabetically) who could be positively identified in the 1911 or 1901 Irish census. While this method is problematic in terms of assessing the religious backgrounds of members (due to the unequal alphabetical distribution of Roman Catholic surnames), it nevertheless yields some insights into the age, marital status and socioeconomic backgrounds of the volunteers and the types of work they performed. The digitisation of the British Red Cross service records from the Great War, when complete, will allow for more comprehensive analysis of the Irish membership of the organisation.¹³⁰

Of this sample, the dates of enrolment and termination of service with the Red Cross were provided for eighty-five women. The average time spent in service with the Red Cross

¹²⁵ Gregory, *The last Great War*, p.225.

¹²⁶ *Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John*, p.22.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Gregory, *The last Great War*, p.228.

¹²⁹ BRCA: service record of Jane Lee Fitzpatrick.

¹³⁰ As of 16 June 2015, the British Red Cross has digitised the records up the letter 'K'.

was twenty-four months. However the level of commitment during their period of service ranged from Kathleen Adair who served full-time in hospitals in London and France for nineteen months to Winifred Bacon who volunteered for a total of seventy-three hours between November 1917 and October 1918.¹³¹ Many women volunteered for a couple of afternoons a week in a work party or hospital supply depot. The majority (sixty-one) of the volunteers in the sample were classed as immobile members –members who remained within their own locality. Fifty of the women served in hospitals (nineteen in Great Britain, seventeen in Ireland and fourteen overseas). The remaining women were involved in creating garments for the soldiers and producing hospital supplies in work parties and war hospital supply depots. Twenty-two were primarily occupied with collecting sphagnum moss. The type of work undertaken and the time given were obviously affected by the age, marital status, and the social class of the worker.

Only women with independent incomes and no domestic responsibilities could afford to devote the majority of their time to voluntary work for the war effort. For example, Kathleen Adair joined the Red Cross when she was twenty-four. She was the daughter of a land agent and was living in a first class house in Carlow with six servants in 1911.¹³² Although also from a prosperous background, Winifred Bacon was married to an army captain and had two children by 1911.¹³³ It is not clear whether Jeanie Fitzpatrick's service was full-time or took place solely over weekends and in the evenings. She was a trained English teacher, the daughter of a clerk and living in a second class house in 1911. In her late forties at the beginning of the war, she was unmarried and lived in Dublin with her sister who was also heavily involved with the war effort.¹³⁴

Was Jeanie Fitzpatrick typical of an Irish Red Cross volunteers? What type of women volunteered for such work? To what extent was the Joint Committee of the BRCS and SJAA representative of the wider Irish population? Examination of the sample described above gives some insight into the backgrounds of Irish Red Cross volunteers. The majority of the volunteers in the sample were single. Twenty-four were married and four were widowed. This accords with the records of the Red Cross for the three southern provinces. Among the detachments, which list their members, just 21% of the 4,070 women listed were married.¹³⁵ The mean age on enrolment, derived from either the service record or the 1911 or

¹³¹ BRCA: Service records for Kathleen Adair and Winifred Bacon.

¹³² BRCA: Kathleen Adair service record, and 1911 census record.

¹³³ BRCA: Winifred Bacon service record and 1911 census record.

¹³⁴ 1911 census record for Jane Lee Fitzpatrick.

¹³⁵ *Red Cross in Ireland*. The extent to which this reflects the mobilisation of women in other countries is difficult to ascertain. Sarah Glassford argues in relation to Canada that voluntary war work was dominated by married middle-class rural women while Henriette Donner's work on British Red Cross nurses implies the volunteers were young and single: Sarah Glassford, "Women's mobilisation for war (Canada)" 1914-1918 online: *International Encyclopedia of the First World*

1901 census, was 36.6 years. The ages ranged from sixteen to eighty-four. Gertrude Barber (aged sixteen in 1917) acted as a dining room orderly at the Irish Counties War Hospital in a part-time capacity while Ellen Barrett (aged eighty-four in 1917) was a member of the Fermanagh Voluntary Aid Detachment where her role was to knit socks for soldiers.¹³⁶ The vast majority of the women in this sample were from Protestant backgrounds although this may have been affected by the alphabetical clustering of surnames associated with particular denominations, as indicated above.

Table 6.8: Religious background of volunteers in sample

Religion	Number	% of general population in 1911 ¹³⁷
Roman Catholic	10	73.9
Church of Ireland	60	13.1
Presbyterian	22	10
Methodist	6	1.4
Society of Friends	2	0.1

The majority of the volunteers were from Ulster (thirty-seven) and Leinster (thirty-three, of whom fourteen were from Dublin), with just four from Connaught and thirteen from Munster. Thirteen volunteers were born outside of Ireland (but were living in Ireland at their time of enrolment and during either the 1901 or the 1911 census). Their address at enrolment shows that 31% had already moved from their birthplace.

Table 6.9: Place of enlistment of sampled volunteers

Province	Number
Dublin	21
Remainder of Leinster	20
Ulster	40
Munster	13
Connaught	6

Just twenty-seven of the women in the sample are listed as having an occupation in the 1911 census. These were largely in traditional female occupations such as dressmakers, domestic servants, nurses and teachers. Five of the women were trained nurses who offered their services to the Red Cross.

War; Henriette Donner, "Under the Cross –why VADs performed the filthiest tasks in the dirtiest war: Red Cross women volunteers 1914-1918" in *Journal of Social History* (Spring, 1997), p.699.

¹³⁶ Gertrude Barber service record and 1911 census record; Ellen Barrett service record and 1911 census record.

¹³⁷ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911*, pp xlvi-xlvii.

Table 6.10: Occupation of sampled volunteers

Occupation	Number
Textile trade (dressmakers and stitchers)	7
Domestic work (housekeepers and servants)	6
Trained nurse	5
Teacher	4
Clerical work	3
Shop assistant	2
Total	27

Of the remainder, ten were listed as scholars in the census record, one had independent means and three were members of the aristocracy. Seven were the daughters of farmers and may have been expected to assist on the family farm. What were the occupations of the heads of household for the other women? Were they expected to earn their own living or could they afford to devote significant time to the war effort? Three of the women were themselves listed as heads of their household and are thus excluded from Table 6.11.

Table 6.11: Occupational class of head of household

Occupational class	Total	Class as % of occupied population in 1911
Professional	25	7.8
Commercial	20	6.1
Agricultural	13	4.3
Industrial	16	33.8
Non-productive and ill-defined	16	58.6 (of the total population)
Unknown	6	N/a

The majority of heads of households were in either professional or commercial work with smaller numbers employed in either agriculture or industry. Sixteen were recorded in the non-productive category. Of these, nine were landlords and three members of the aristocracy. Five women belonged to military families (two were the daughters of army officers and three were married to army officers). This is based on the 1911 census however and consequently it is likely that many more had family members in the army by the time of their own mobilisation for the war effort. Further indication of social class is given by the quality of the family home. The vast majority (sixty-seven) of the women in the sample were living in 1st class housing in 1911. Twenty-six were living in 2nd class and just four in 3rd class housing while three were not recorded in their family home in the census. Fifty-eight of the women were living in households with at least one servant.

Table 6.12: Housing class of sampled volunteers

Housing class	Number in sample	Class as % of total housing in Ireland in 1911 ¹³⁸
1 st	67	9.5
2 nd	26	68.5
3 rd	4	21.4
4 th	0	0.6
Total	97	100

This analysis of the socio-economic backgrounds of the sampled volunteers suggests that a typical Irish Red Cross member was single, in her thirties, and from a middle class background. However the sample also demonstrates the diversity of women involved with the organisation and the wide variety of work performed by them. War service was not restricted to the privileged few but rather included a broad section of the population indicating the significant levels of support for the war effort in Ireland. The presence in the sample of women in paid employment and from low quality houses suggests a wider class base than frequently assumed.

In an article on the international mobilisation of women, Susan Grayzel argues that the great majority of women performing voluntary war work came from the middle and upper-classes and that almost all the VADs came from the middle classes.¹³⁹ Eileen O'Reilly similarly argued in relation to Ireland that only women with plenty of free time and independent means could afford to engage in voluntary war work.¹⁴⁰ This was certainly true of full-time nursing positions with the Red Cross. The roles were all unpaid although they received expenses for board, lodging and travel to and from the hospital. As well as needing sufficient leisure time to devote to unpaid activity, the women had to pay for the first aid lectures and for their uniform.¹⁴¹

However many of the women enrolled with the organization were involved solely in a part-time capacity, for example giving a few hours a week service in either a hospital supply depot or a work party. Such service was less restrictive and could have included a more diverse range of the population, enabling the participation of older women, those with domestic responsibilities and those obliged to work outside the home. For example, the members of the Kilgarvan sphagnum moss depot were described in April 1917 as 'all poor'. Elsie Henry, a middle-class Dublin woman, observed that the voluntary workers were 'mostly farmer's daughters, whose mothers do all their share of the home work in their

¹³⁸ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911*, p.3.

¹³⁹ Grayzel, 'Women's mobilisation for war'.

¹⁴⁰ O'Reilly, 'Women and voluntary war work' p.66.

¹⁴¹ Storey and Housego, *Women in the First World War*, p.20.

absence, one post-office girl and two or three old Biddies'.¹⁴² While voluntary work was more accessible to upper class women, class was most important in dictating the type of voluntary work performed by women.

The predominance of upper-class women in the Red Cross work is evident from examination of the leaders of the ninety-three work parties in Ireland. Using the 1901 and 1911 censuses, I have identified sixty-nine of the ninety-three women listed as the leaders of the Red Cross work parties in the Memorandum on Red Cross work.¹⁴³ These women were typically married, middle-aged, and from an upper class Protestant background; 72% were married and the average age in 1914 was 43.9 years. The majority of the women were aged between forty and sixty at the time of their war service (57%). The class profile is indicated by the fact that 88.4% lived in first class housing and 89.9% lived in households with at least one servant. The occupations of the head of household were as follows:

Table 6.13 Occupational class of Red Cross work party leaders

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Clergyman	16	23.2
Army officer	12	17.4
Other professional	12	17.4
Commercial	12	17.4
Land	10	14.5
None recorded	5	7.2

The relatives of army officers were disproportionately represented in the sample, unsurprising given the purpose of the work parties. It is also interesting to note the high number of families of clergymen in the sample. Of these thirteen were Church of Ireland rectors and the remaining three, Presbyterian ministers. Members of the Church of Ireland formed 71% of the sample, with Presbyterians following at 20.3%. Just two, (2.9% of the sample) were Roman Catholic. The association between religion and war work is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven, however it is worth noting here the religious ethos of war service.

Examination of the leaders of the commandants of the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance divisions reveals similar socio-economic and religious backgrounds. I identified sixty-eight commandants through the 1901 and 1911 censuses. Again, a typical Red Cross or St John Ambulance Association commandant was middle-aged and from an upper class Protestant background. A greater number of the divisional commandants were single, compared to work party leaders, but still significantly more than in general population of volunteers. Thirty-five or 51.4% of the commandants were married. The average age was slightly lower as well, 40.4 years in 1911. The commandants and work party leaders were on

¹⁴² Elsie Henry, '13 April 1917' in Cullen (ed.) *The world upturning*, p.186.

¹⁴³ "Memorandum on the Red Cross", p. 670.

average older and more likely to be married than the voluntary helpers under their instruction. 82.4% were living in first class houses in 1911 and fifty-five or 80.9% belonged to households with at least one servant. The occupations of the heads of households were as follows:

Table 6.14: Occupational class of BRCS and SJAA divisional commandants

Occupational group	Number	Percentage
Commerce	18	26.5%
Professional	17	25%
Land	7	10.3%
Army officer	6	8.8%
Aristocracy	4	5.8%
Clergy	2	2.9%
None listed	6	8.8%

A greater mix of occupations is evident in this group, compared to the previous one. Four of the women came from aristocratic backgrounds and another seven derived their income from their land ownership. Six were army officer families and two were the wives of Church of Ireland clergymen. Protestants, in particular members of the Church of Ireland, dominated the leadership of the divisions as well as the work parties. The various Protestant denominations made up 81% of the sample, with just thirteen Roman Catholics among the identified commandants.

Table 6.15: Religious background of BRCS and SJAA divisional commandants

Religious denomination	Number	% of general population in 1911 ¹⁴⁴
Church of Ireland	45	13.1
Presbyterian	5	10
Roman Catholic	13	73.9
Society of Friends	3	0.1
Methodist	1	1.4
Moravian	1	0.03
Other	0	1.5
Total	68	100

The disproportionate distribution of Protestants among the leadership of the Red Cross divisions was noted with concern by the *Irish Catholic* newspaper. The *Irish Catholic* was concerned that the British Red Cross contained Protestant proselytisers who were preying upon the vulnerable wives of absent soldiers, under the guise of war relief work. Anxiety was expressed at the dominance of Protestant women in the Red Cross, which was considered problematic in light of their work with the predominately Catholic wives of soldiers in Dublin.¹⁴⁵ The St John Ambulance Association was treated with particular suspicion with one anonymous letter writer describing it as a ‘Protestant imitation of a

¹⁴⁴ *Census of Ireland for the year 1911*, pp xlvi-xlvii.

¹⁴⁵ *Irish Catholic*, 24 Oct. 1914, 28 Nov. 1914.

Catholic religious order' and warning *Irish Catholic* readers to stay clear of the association for fear of its proselytising and sectarian intentions.¹⁴⁶ In contrast another letter-writer argued that the only method of countering the threat of proselytism from the Red Cross was for large numbers of Catholic ladies to join the organization and to secure proper representation on the committees.¹⁴⁷ As previously mentioned, the role of the Churches in promoting women's war work is further discussed in Chapter Seven.

The examples of May Starkie and Marie Martin are illustrative of how social class and family associations could provide equally significant motivators of war service as religion. May Starkie, a Roman Catholic, was the wife of William Starkie, resident commissioner of national education in Ireland, and belonged to the upper class Dublin social scene. The Starkies were considered by contemporaries to be unionists. May Starkie's 1916 pamphlet entitled *What is Patriotism: the teaching of patriotism* was apparently interpreted as propaganda in support of conscription and consequently made the couple increasingly unpopular with the Irish public and the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁸ Both William and May Starkie were strong supporters of the British war effort from the outset.

Their daughter Enid described in her 1941 memoir, her father's pride at the enlistment of so many Irishmen in the British forces and his sorrow at their refusal of conscription. She claimed that her mother 'followed my father in his devotion to the Allied cause' and outlined her mother's work for the war effort: working daily at a Red Cross depot manufacturing hospital supplies, organizing a club for soldiers' wives, and assisting with the Alexandra College Guild scheme to provide a hostel for young girls working in munitions factories.¹⁴⁹ The Starkie's only son, Walter, attempted to enlist with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in autumn 1914 but was rejected on health grounds. However the family lost a nephew in the war and were very aware of the scale of the death and loss among their friends, especially after the Suvla Bay disaster in 1915 involving many of Walter's friends from the Fusiliers: 'there was scarcely a family among us that had not lost someone'.¹⁵⁰ Given this context it is not surprising that May Starkie felt motivated to devote her days to voluntary work for the war effort, regardless of the ambiguous position of her Church towards such activity.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 24 Oct. 1914.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 28 Nov. 1914.

¹⁴⁸ Jacqueline A. Hurlley, "Starkie, William Joseph Myles" in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds) *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009); The pamphlet in fact makes no mention of conscription but rather attempts to persuade young Irishmen that it is their patriotic duty to enlist in the British Army, see NLI May C. Starkie, *What is patriotism: the teaching of patriotism* (Dublin, 1916), pp 8-9.

¹⁴⁹ Enid Starkie, *A lady's child* (London, 1941), p.200; see also DDA Walsh/1914/387/2/Laity: Letter from May Starkie to Archbishop Walsh, 19 Nov. 1914.

¹⁵⁰ Starkie, *A lady's child*, p.201.

Marie Martin's family was affected by the war to an even greater extent due to the enlistment of her brothers. Her war service appears a logical parallel activity. Born into a Dublin middle-class Roman Catholic family, Marie Martin was twenty-two years old at outbreak of war. She immediately signed up for training as a VAD nurse in Richmond Hospital. Two of her brothers enlisted in the army, one of whom was killed in December 1915 although his family only received confirmation of his death six months later.¹⁵¹ Marie served as a nurse in Malta and France as well as in an officers' hospital in England.¹⁵² She saw the horrors of war first hand through the nursing of badly wounded soldiers. Her letters home reveal the importance of her Roman Catholic faith. She was careful to maintain regular Mass attendance even when exhausted from her nursing work and remarked upon the friendliness of the hospital chaplain in France.¹⁵³

Her faith appeared to offer solace during the grief and suffering she endured. On hearing of the death of her brother she is consoled to think that 'Our Lady took care of him'¹⁵⁴ and that he must have gone 'straight to Heaven after all he went through'.¹⁵⁵ She arranged to have the hospital chaplain say a Mass for her brother on the first anniversary of his death which seemed to help her feel spiritually connected to her family back in Dublin: "I shall be at Holy Communion at 6.30 and shall not forget all your intentions and I shall be in union with you all day".¹⁵⁶ Marie's wartime experiences served to intensify her faith and inspired her to devote her life to the medical and spiritual care of others. She undertook further medical training and became a nun shortly after the war's end. She founded the Medical Missionaries of Mary in 1935.¹⁵⁷

The wartime experiences of May Starkie and Marie Martin, just two of the many Irish Catholic women who participated in the British war effort, are indicative of the varied factors which motivated female war service. With the exception of their religious backgrounds, the two women are in many ways representative of the profile of the war worker, as demonstrated by the samples previously discussed. May and Marie were from prosperous middle class families and consequently neither had to undertake paid employment. The different types of war service undertaken by the women are representative of their age and marital status. As a young single woman Marie had the freedom to enlist as a full-time nurse available for overseas service. This choice was not available to May Starkie

¹⁵¹ NLI Ms 34,256A: Diary of Mary Martin, 1916.

¹⁵² BRCA: Service record for Marie Helena Martin.

¹⁵³ MMMA, B/F/1/42: Letter from Marie Martin to her mother from France, 18 June 1916; B/F/1/43: Letter from Marie Martin to her mother from France, 21 June 1916; B/F/1/49: Letter from Marie Martin to her mother from France, 12 July 1916.

¹⁵⁴ B/F/1/46: Letter from Marie Martin to her mother from France, 2 July 1916.

¹⁵⁵ B/F/1/47: Letter from Marie Martin to her mother from France, 8 July 1916.

¹⁵⁶ B/F/1/79: Letter from Marie Martin to her mother from France, 30 Nov. 1916; B/F/1/80, 7 Dec. 1916.

¹⁵⁷ Mary Purcell, *To Africa with love: the biography of Mother Mary Martin* (Dublin, 1987).

but she nevertheless become involved in a range of voluntary war work in her locality. Her role in organising a club for soldiers' wives reflects the leadership roles occupied by older upper-class married women in the war effort. The association between the army service of family members and the war service of women is further discussed later in the chapter.

Women's services

Evidently, social class affected the opportunities for women to participate in voluntary war work. Did the military services attract a wider class profile? Did such paid work offer an alternative means for other women to participate in the war effort? From the commencement of the war to the Armistice, 103,966 women in the United Kingdom were enrolled with the various government schemes of women's services. These included the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Women's Royal Air Force, the Women's Land Army, National Service work and the navy and army canteen board.¹⁵⁸ Irishwomen were members of many of these organisations.

On 4 March 1918 8,403 women were employed in the Royal Flying Corps from the United Kingdom, the majority in a clerical capacity.¹⁵⁹ An Irishwoman, Miss E. M. Hamilton, of Belfast, was appointed to the position of assistant commander at the London headquarters of the WRAF in August 1918.¹⁶⁰ She was the daughter of the late Rev. J.S. Hamilton of Dublin. Other Irish members included Jessie McTaggart, a Presbyterian from a middle-class Dublin family. She enlisted in July 1918 aged twenty-four and served at the Royal Air Force headquarters in Dublin. She passed away in January 1919 and is buried in Dublin.¹⁶¹ Due to a lack of surviving documentation, it has not been possible to establish the extent of Irish involvement with the WRAF. However the experience of Irishwomen with the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and the Women's Royal Naval Service can be usefully explored.

The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was the most significant of the Women's Services. It was established in July 1917 by the War Office to provide support services for the British Army. It arose out of two voluntary organisations, the Women's Voluntary Reserve and the Women's Legion, both founded by an Irishwoman, Edith, 7th Marchioness of Londonderry.¹⁶² In a speech in January 1915, Lady Londonderry outlined her views of the role of women in wartime: 'In time of war women ought to be able to perform many of the ordinary civilian duties of men, when, by the absence of the latter with the colours, there is a

¹⁵⁸ *Labour Gazette*, Mar. 1919.

¹⁵⁹ War office, *Statistics of the military effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920*, p.505.

¹⁶⁰ *Irish Independent*, 5 Aug. 1918.

¹⁶¹ TNA AIR 80/155/99: Jessie McTaggart service record; 1911 census record; Commonwealth War Graves Commission record: <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/899555/McTAGGART,%20JESSIE>

¹⁶² Diane Urquhart, "Ora et Labora: the Women's Legion, 1915-18" in Gillian McIntosh and Diane Urquhart (eds) *Irish women at war: the twentieth century* (Dublin, 2010), p.1.

shortage of labour available, both in the towns, and with regard to agriculture'. She suggested that the Women's Voluntary Reserve would produce a body of 'responsible and efficient women' who could be depended upon in case of invasion and could replace male labour to free men for active service. Aware of the potential criticism, she emphasised that the objects of the Reserve were 'diametrically opposed' to 'ostentatious displays' of women 'stamping up and down the country, bristling with firearms and making themselves ridiculous'.¹⁶³ In an account of the organisation's establishment, written in 1944, Londonderry described how many people were 'deeply prejudiced' at the prospect of women performing war work outside of the traditional female spheres of nursing, sewing or cooking.¹⁶⁴

It was partly due to the controversy over the military roles of Reserve members that prompted Londonderry to withdraw from the Reserve in summer 1915 and to establish the Women's Legion.¹⁶⁵ Unlike the Reserve, the Legion consisted of paid workers with the intention being to 'replace working men with working women'.¹⁶⁶ The first female voluntary organisation to be accepted for military service, the Women's Legion gained recognition from the Army Council in February 1916 and its military cooking and motor transport sections worked directly with the army within the United Kingdom.¹⁶⁷ Despite the strong Ulster Unionist sympathies of Lady Londonderry, the Legion was intended to be non-political and non-denominational. Although far more extensive in Great Britain, there were active Legion detachments in Belfast, Cork and Dublin. One detachment in Dublin had over forty members who acted as motorcar drivers.¹⁶⁸

WAAC

The need for more manpower in combatant positions in the army led to the establishment of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in 1917 with the initial intention of women replacing men in non-combatant positions in France. The existing members of the Women's Legion and Women's Voluntary Reserve were subsumed into the organisation, which came under the remit of the War Office.¹⁶⁹ The organisation changed its name to the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) in April 1918 but for the purposes of clarity I shall refer to it as the WAAC at all times. Between 1917 and 1920 some 57,000 women from Britain and Ireland served with the WAAC. They performed roles such as clerks, telephonists, waitresses, cooks and instructors in the use of gas masks. Those in senior positions held the

¹⁶³ PRONI D3099/3/10/8/4: Edith Londonderry, speech on 'Women and the war', Jan. 1915.

¹⁶⁴ D3099/14/1, Londonderry papers, Edith Londonderry, "The Women's Legion, 1914", 1944

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ D3099/14/1, Londonderry papers, 'Sir John Cowans and the Women's Legion'.

¹⁶⁷ Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army: war and the gentle sex 1907-1948* (London, 2006), p.58.

¹⁶⁸ Molly Coleclough, *Women's Legion 1916-1920* (London, 1940), p.23.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.68.

rank of controller or administrator.¹⁷⁰ At the time of the Armistice, the Corps included 1,058 controllers and administrators, and 38,684 members. Of these 8,529 members were serving abroad and the remaining 30,155 on home service.¹⁷¹

The principle underlying the establishment of the WAAC was the need to release more men for active service. Lucy Noakes has argued that the very act of putting women into army uniforms meant that the WAAC challenged the traditional pattern of gender relations. She notes however that the organisation operated on a 'consciously conservative' model of social class. Thus the WAAC 'combined a highly rigid and traditional class-based organisational structure with the potential to undermine and destabilise existing gender roles'.¹⁷² As paid work, it had broader class appeal than voluntary war work although the pay and conditions were criticised. The *Irish Citizen* objected in March 1917 to the low pay offered to WAAC women serving in France however.¹⁷³ The *Woman Worker* similarly highlighted the fact that the wages paid to WAAC members compared unfavourably to those earned in munitions factories. They also protested against the strict rules and harsh punishments for WAAC members and the fact that they had to agree to sign on for the duration of the war, unlike munitions workers who could give notice whenever they chose.¹⁷⁴

It has not been possible to establish the total number of Irish recruits with the WAAC. Of the 57,000 women who served in the WAAC, only 7,000 service records have survived (12.3%) due to bombing damage during World War II.¹⁷⁵ There are 463 personnel files among the surviving records that list Ireland or a county in Ireland as the birthplace but it is apparent that other Irish files were destroyed in WWII. By 19 July 1917 574 Irishwomen had enrolled with the WAAC, making up 2.4% of all WAAC enrolments by that date.¹⁷⁶ By April 1918 there were sixteen units in Ireland staffed with WAAC personnel but it was anticipated that this would eventually rise to thirty to thirty-five units. There were two unit administrators, seven deputy administrators, fifteen assistant administrators and one quartermistress, indicating a high number of officer positions.¹⁷⁷ In May 1918 enrolments of the WAAC in Ireland were reported to have exceeded expectations and the recruits were described as of a 'very high standard'.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁰ Martin Gilbert, *First World War* (London, 1994) p.345; Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, p.148.

¹⁷¹ War Office, *Statistics of the military effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, p.206.

¹⁷² Lucy Noakes, "Demobilising the military woman: constructions of class and gender in Britain after the First World War" in *Gender and History*, xix, no.1 (2007), p.146.

¹⁷³ *Irish Citizen*, Mar. 1917.

¹⁷⁴ *Woman Worker*, May 1918.

¹⁷⁵ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/womens-army-auxiliary-corps.htm>

¹⁷⁶ BLPES, Markham papers, 4/5: Number of application forms received by the national service department in connection with the WAAC up to and including 19 July 1917.

¹⁷⁷ IWM WWS Army 3.25/5: Statistics re Irish command.

¹⁷⁸ *Lady of the House*, 15 May 1918.

I have examined the records of seventy-five WAAC members who were born in Ireland. I selected the first seventy-five members who had listed Ireland as their birthplace from the British National Archives catalogue. The catalogue arranges the files randomly rather than alphabetically and consequently the files chosen represent a random sample. Examination of this group reveals the class and religious backgrounds of the members and gives some insight into the type of service provided by Irishwomen. Where possible, census records were used to provide additional information. The vast majority of recruits were single. Just four were married and one was widowed. The mean age on enlistment, based on year of birth recorded in their applications, was 22.4 years. The ages ranged from eighteen to thirty-eight years. A slight majority of the Irish members were Protestant.

Table 6.16: Religious background of sampled Irish WAAC members¹⁷⁹

Religion	Number	Percentage of total
Roman Catholic	35	47.3
Church of Ireland	27	36.5
Presbyterian	10	13.5
Methodist	1	1.4
Congregationalist	1	1.4
Total	74	100

The various Protestant denominations accounted for 52.8% of all WAAC members in the sample, and Roman Catholics for 42.3%. This is a substantially higher proportion of Roman Catholic involvement than evident in the Red Cross samples. This likely reflects the more diverse class profile of the WAAC compared to the Red Cross. The dominance of Protestants in the local associations of the Red Cross affected their associational appeal for Catholics, while WAAC workers enlisted as individuals and typically served outside their home towns removing the influence of locality on attitudes to war work. The majority of the recruits were born in Ulster (twenty-nine) and Leinster (twenty-six), compared to just three from Connaught and seventeen from Munster. Their address on enlistment reveals that many had already moved from their birthplace (46.6%). It also shows an urban bias to places of enlistment:

Table 6.17: Place of enlistment of sampled WAAC members

Place of enlistment	Number	Percentage of total
Dublin	12	16.0
Remainder of Leinster	10	13.3
Ulster	27	36.0
Munster	10	13.3
Connaught	2	2.7
Great Britain	14	18.7

¹⁷⁹ The religion of one member was not included on the surviving sections of one application, thus I have calculated the religion category based on 74 records.

Fourteen of the Irish recruits were living outside of Ireland when they enlisted; one in Scotland and thirteen in England. Of those who enlisted from Ulster, fifteen joined up in Belfast (55.5% of the total from Ulster) while 54.5% of those who enlisted from Leinster did so from Dublin. Sixty of the women sampled recorded the ages at which they left school. The mean age at leaving school among this group was 15.1 years, varying from those who left school at twelve to two members who attended university. Two recruits were recorded as being illiterate. A significant number of the WAAC members were former domestic servants (41.3% of the seventy-five sampled members). The majority of the remainder came from factory or clerical work backgrounds. Eight had never worked before, unsurprising given the very young age of many of those who enlisted.

Table 6.18: Previous occupations of sampled WAAC members

Occupation	Number	Percentage of total
Domestic service	31	41.3
Factory work	14	18.6
Clerical	14	18.6
Shop assistant	4	5.3
Other	4	5.3
Never worked	8	10.6

It is interesting to note that twelve of the members had previously worked in the textile industry, either as manual workers or as clerks. The downturn in this industry during the war may have played a role in encouraging these women to join the WAAC. For example, Mary Martin, from Belfast, had worked as a doffer in a flax mill after leaving school aged fourteen. She was unemployed when she enlisted in the WAAC in May 1918 aged eighteen. Her father was deceased and it is likely that she had no choice but to earn her own living.¹⁸⁰ Sarah McAtamney was in a similar situation. She grew up in Carrickfergus from where she joined the WAAC in September 1918. She had left school at fifteen and worked as a doffer in a flax mill. Her father was also deceased. She was accepted for WAAC service despite her referee stating that they did not consider her 'suitable or qualified from any standpoint'.¹⁸¹ As with the munitions workers, the decision to enlist in the WAAC likely arose from a combination of economic and patriotic factors, with particularly individuals motivated more by one factor.

Noakes has described how the work of WAAC members fell into five categories: domestic, cookery, mechanical, clerical and tending war graves with the largest numbers serving in clerical and domestic capacities.¹⁸² Most of the women employed as clerks were from the skilled lower middle class and had worked in similar positions before the war, while those in domestic positions were usually working-class and frequently former

¹⁸⁰ TNA WO 398/144: Mary Martin WAAC service record.

¹⁸¹ WO 398/141: Sarah McAtamney WAAC service record.

¹⁸² Noakes, "Demobilising the military woman", p.148.

domestic servants. The 1,272 female officers were predominately from the upper middle or upper classes. Thus, the Corps reflected the class structure of both civilian society and the army.¹⁸³ This was also true in the case of the Irish workers in the sample. The majority served in a domestic capacity (as general domestics, laundresses, orderlies and waitresses), followed by those in clerical work, which included typists as well as clerks. This is very similar to the statistics given for Irish enrolments to July 1917. Of the 574 Irishwomen enrolled with the WAAC at that point, 36.8% served in a clerical capacity and 54.4% in domestic work.¹⁸⁴

Table 6.19: Roles performed with the WAAC among sampled members

Type of work	Number	Percentage of total
Domestic	42	56.0
Clerical	23	30.6
Cookery	8	10.6
Mechanical	2	2.6

Where did they serve? Forty of the WAAC members in my sample were based in Ireland, nineteen in England and thirteen in France for at least some of their time with the WAAC. It was not possible to ascertain where three members served. A significant majority (80.5%) of the remainder were mobile recruits, that is, they did not serve in the area from which they enrolled with the service. The average length of service for the sampled members was 14.3 months, ranging from those who served for just two months to one member who served for two years and seven months. They were expected to serve ‘for the duration of the war’ when they enlisted, however a number were discharged early for various different reasons, ranging from leaving to get married to being discharged for misconduct.

For example, Annie Ellen Fraser left her post as assistant administrator after two months service in 1918 as she was due to get married. The marriage was cancelled ‘due to religious differences’ and she applied to re-join the WAAC but there were no suitable posts available. Gladys Gilliland was discharged after five months service for circulating a ‘disgusting letter’ among the men with whom she worked. She was described as a ‘danger to the community’.¹⁸⁵ Others were unable to cope with the work. One woman was discharged due to fits of neurasthenia. She had previously worked as a domestic servant and was illiterate.¹⁸⁶

Those involved in the selection process do not appear to have been very particular about who was accepted for enrolment in the WAAC. One member had received an entirely

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp 148-149.

¹⁸⁴ Markham papers, 4/5: Number of application forms received by the national service department in connection with the WAAC up to and including 19 July 1917.

¹⁸⁵ WO 398/80: Annie Ellen Fraser WAAC service record; WO 398/86: Gladys Gilliland WAAC service record.

¹⁸⁶ WO 398/86: Jemima Gilmore WAAC service record.

negative report from her chosen referee while two more received the following assessment following interview: 'Appears rather poor type, only suitable for rough work' and 'usual mill type, would not appear suitable as a waitress'. The latter applicant was taken on as a general domestic worker and served for sixteen months with the WAAC.¹⁸⁷ Another Irishwoman was taken on despite the fact that a note was included in her record to the effect that the office had received a visit from two of the woman's neighbours in Dublin who stated that the person involved 'was not a suitable person to be enrolled with the WAAC'. They claimed that the 'ladies who look after the Canadian soldiers' wives will support their contention that she is not respectable'. The woman in question was married to a soldier serving with the Canadian regiment in France.¹⁸⁸ One Irish woman in the sample was discharged after just five months service with the reason attributed to 'pregnancy'.¹⁸⁹ The woman in question was single and aged nineteen on enrolment. It is not evident whether she was pregnant on enrolment and forced to resign on its discovery or whether the baby was conceived during her time with the WAAC.

There were widespread concerns about sexual immorality in relation to WAAC members. Rumours of sexual immorality began in letters home by soldiers, some of whom clearly resented the women's presence in France in uniform. A commission of inquiry was appointed by the Ministry of Labour in early 1918 to investigate the issue. It found no basis for the rumours but advocated that female police patrols be introduced at WAAC centres in France and for the powers of dismissal to be exercised more freely.¹⁹⁰ However, despite some individual problematic cases, the majority of the women recruited in Ireland for the Corps were described as capable and efficient and the April 1918 report enthused that in the case of the inexperienced workers, they were mostly 'keen and very willing'. While it was noted that there had been a few problems with discipline, the report continued that 'the less educated girls soon fall into line'.¹⁹¹

WRNS

Irish members of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) however came under particular suspicion with the War Office becoming concerned about the possible security risk from recruiting in Ireland for the WRNS. All women recruited from Ireland were subject to scrutiny by the Irish branch of the naval intelligence department, while in England and

¹⁸⁷ WO 398/147: Martha McAuley WAAC service record, see also WO 398/148: Matilda McCullough WAAC service record.

¹⁸⁸ WO 398/230: Mary Wheeler WAAC service record.

¹⁸⁹ WO 398/71: Rebecca Evans WAAC service record.

¹⁹⁰ Noakes, "Demobilising the military woman", p.154. Laura Doan's recent work offers an alternative perspective on the sexual immorality scandals in the women's auxiliary services, suggesting that the emphasis on heterosexual encounters hid the occurrence of lesbian relationships among the women volunteers: Laura Doan, *Disturbing practices: history, sexuality, and women's experience of modern war* (Chicago, 2013), pp 150-154.

¹⁹¹ IWM WWS Army 3.25/5: Statistics re Irish command.

Scotland only those required for special confidential work underwent the same scrutiny.¹⁹² A report on the Kingstown sub-division in 1918 described the difficulties of recruiting Irish women for work in Ireland due to security concerns: 'the religious question must perforce enter largely into the matter and the Commodore was unwilling to trust confidential papers to girls who might feel themselves bound to pass their knowledge on'. The report stated that consequently it was inadvisable to recruit confidential posts through the labour exchanges.¹⁹³ However the Senior Naval Officer stated that they 'had no strong views' about recruiting Irishwomen for work in Ireland 'as long as the scrutiny was thorough and their loyalty was assured'.¹⁹⁴

The WRNS was established in November 1917 to provide support services for the Admiralty and to release more men for active service. As with the WAAC, the roles performed by women fit into the categories of domestic, clerical, cookery and mechanical. Diverse roles included baking, signalling, attaching floats to torpedo nets and driving cars.¹⁹⁵ Women were recruited through the local labour exchanges with the selection boards led by WRNS recruiting officers. As with the WAAC, members could be immobile or mobile. Immobile members were drawn from the surrounding areas of ports and were able to live at home while mobile members came from further afield and lived in temporary hostels in port areas.¹⁹⁶ Divisional directors were appointed from the WRNS officers.

The headquarters of the divisional director in Ireland was in Kingstown but the base stretched from Buncrana, Belfast and Larne in Ulster through Dublin and Kingstown to Queenstown in Munster. Kingstown was chosen for headquarters as a central point with access to all the sub-divisions.¹⁹⁷ The divisional office opened in Ireland in April 1918 and recruitment and absorption began in May 1918. Women who had previously worked on the dockyards were offered the choice of absorption into the WRNS or resignation of their post. For example, in Queenstown thirty women had been employed as clerks and fifty-one in polishing and sail making in the dockyard. The prospect of absorption led to a number of concerns among these women, notably the wearing of serge uniform in summertime, being expected to travel third class on the railways, and how the WRNS pay would compare with what they earned as civilians. Twenty-seven women were ultimately absorbed into the

¹⁹² WRNS 7/29: Precis of WRNS series of dockets: statement re general recruiting arrangements.

¹⁹³ WRNS 8.2/31: Precis of WRNS dockets: statement re Kingstown, sub-division, 1918.

¹⁹⁴ WRNS 8.2./32: Precis of WRNS dockets: statement re Belfast sub-division, 1919.

¹⁹⁵ M.H. Fletcher, *The WRNS: a history of the Women's Royal Naval Service* (London, 1989), p.13.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁹⁷ IWM WWS WRNS 19/1: "The WRNS: being a story of their beginnings and doings in various parts" in *WRNS Journal*, July 1919.

WRNS at Queenstown.¹⁹⁸ Those who were not absorbed had to receive special approval by the Commander-in-Chief to be allowed remain in on the naval base after 15 July 1918.¹⁹⁹

Although the area covered by the Irish division was quite large, the number of women employed there was comparatively small. It was described by the divisional director, Katharine Penrose, as comparable with a ‘moderate-sized sub-division in England’.²⁰⁰ By November 1918 there were 175 WRNS members working in Ireland of whom twenty-four were mobile and 151 were immobile, indicating that the vast majority at least were local recruits. The numbers employed in Ireland was 4.6% of the total employed by the WRNS at that time. However there were many women still required by the Naval service after the end of the war. The Irish division was not closed until August 1919 and it is likely that more Irishwomen joined after the Armistice. The total number of women who worked with the WRNS from 1917 to 1919 is reported to be over 5,000.²⁰¹

Table 6.20: WRNS recruits at work in Nov. 1918 by division²⁰²

Divisions by country	Number of women employed	Mobile recruits as % of the total	Recruits as % of total WRNS
Ireland	175	13.7	4.6
England	2973	31.7	78.7
Scotland	504	51	13.3
Wales	81	8.6	2.1
Mediterranean	47	63.8	1.2
Total	3,780	33.3	100

The above table shows that the majority (78.7%) of all WRNS workers were based in England. With the exceptions of the Mediterranean and Scotland where there was an almost equal divide between mobile and immobile recruits, most of the recruits were local women living in port districts. Clerical work employed the highest number of women (48.6%) of all WRNS members in Ireland. Technical work was the next largest category, followed by unskilled and then domestic work. All those employed in domestic work were mobile workers, indicating perhaps a greater need for domestic workers in areas housing mobile workers in hostels.

Table 6.21: Roles performed by WRNS in Ireland in Nov. 1918

Type of work	Mobile workers	Immobile workers	Total
Clerical	5	80	85
Domestic	17	0	17

¹⁹⁸ WWS 8.2/30: Precis of WRNS series of dockets: statement re Queenstown sub-division, 1919.

¹⁹⁹ WWS WRNS 7/29: Precis of WRNS series of dockets: statement re general recruiting arrangements.

²⁰⁰ WRNS 19/1: “The WRNS”.

²⁰¹ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/womens-royal-naval-service-ww1.htm>.

²⁰² WRNS 9/4: Report on the work of the WRNS by the director of the WRNS, 1919.

Garage	2	2	4
Unskilled	0	29	29
Postal	0	9	9
Technical	0	31	31
Total	24	151	175

Larne, an important anti-submarine base, employed the highest number of WRNS. Substitution had been fully carried out at the base before the establishment of the WRNS, thus meaning a high number of female employees at the division. The women performed a variety of tasks in roles such as clerks, messengers, storekeepers, and mine-net workers. The WRNS employed at Larne was all immobile workers, drawn from the surrounding area. In Buncrana, both mobile and immobile WRNS were employed in roles such as clerks, cooks and domestic workers.²⁰³ Dublin and Kingstown formed one sub-division.²⁰⁴ Kingstown served as the divisional headquarters until May 1919, when it moved to Queenstown, following the closure of the Kingstown naval base.²⁰⁵

Queenstown was the residence of the commander in chief of the coast of Ireland and was a busy base due to the presence of American sloops and destroyers. The recruits were all local women, a necessity owing to a lack of suitable accommodation for mobile recruits coming from further afield. The majority of the recruits lived with relatives in Queenstown and the rest travelled daily from Cork city. A hostel was proposed but the Armistice was announced before the plans came to fruition.²⁰⁶ The recruitment of local women was not problematic despite concerns that Queenstown would be a difficult sub-division to operate on account of the confidential nature of the work, the ‘political situation’ and the presence in Queenstown of many thousands of British and American naval men.²⁰⁷ The vast majority of the Queenstown WRNS were Roman Catholics but despite initial concerns, the ‘religious question’ did not appear to present any problems.²⁰⁸

However both WRNS and the Women’s Legion apparently faced some local hostility in Dublin. The Naval office was based close to Liberty Hall, ‘near the worst rebel quarter of Dublin’ and it was reported that the women ‘often had unpleasant times there’.²⁰⁹ Local hostility may have contributed to the reluctance of both WRNS members and their parents towards the girls participating in public drills on the Naval Parade ground in Kingstown.²¹⁰ The Women’s Legion also faced some hostility in Dublin. Lady Londonderry

²⁰³ Fletcher, *The WRNS* p.21.

²⁰⁴ WRNS 19/1: “The WRNS”

²⁰⁵ WRNS 5.2/20 Weekly instructions to officers, 19 May 1919; WRNS 5.2/35 Weekly instructions to officers, 9 Sept. 1919.

²⁰⁶ 8.2/30: Precis of WRNS series of dockets: statement re Queenstown sub-division, 1919.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ WRNS 14/33: Report of divisional director for Ireland, July 1919.

²⁰⁹ WRNS 8.2/31: Precis of WRNS dockets: statement re Kingstown, sub-division, 1918.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

witnessed Legion ambulance drivers being 'hooted and jeered at by hostile crowds and mud and stones thrown at them' in Dublin in October 1918.²¹¹

Security concerns were increasingly an issue after the war's end. A parade was organised for 6 July 1919 in Queenstown to celebrate the end of the war and the WRNS were all expected to attend. However they were advised to attend in plain clothes rather than uniform in case of inviting attacks from Sinn Fein supporters.²¹² Katharine Penrose, director of the Irish division of the WRNS, noted in 1919 that 'doubts were felt at first at the reception that would be accorded to our uniform by the people of the country' but that beyond being jeered at, at a couple of Sinn Fein processions, for the most part they met with little outright hostility.²¹³ Indeed, Molly Coleclough, an English Women's Legion member, described the hospitality and the friendliness of the Irish people during her time in Dublin in 1918.²¹⁴

The first WRNS worker to die on active service was an Irishwoman, Josephine Carr who was killed in the sinking of the *Leinster* on 10 October 1918.²¹⁵ Josephine Carr was born in Cork in 1899. She had recently enlisted with the WRNS at the age of nineteen and served in a clerical capacity as a shorthand typist. She was a member of the Church of Ireland and the daughter of a tailor. In 1911 her elder sister Eva was working as a shop assistant, indicating that it was expected for the daughters of the family to earn their living before marriage.²¹⁶ Carr was on route to England to begin work with the WRNS and was with a colleague from Cork who survived the sinking. Maureen Waters was aged thirteen in 1911 and was a Roman Catholic. Her father was a prosperous wine merchant.²¹⁷ She was also just beginning service with the WRNS.²¹⁸

Carr and Waters represent the diversity of Irishwomen enrolled with the WRNS and the Women's Services more generally. The Women's Services offered an alternative means for women to contribute to the war effort aside from unpaid voluntary activity. This service enabled them to perform auxiliary military roles bringing them into close interaction with the war front, transcending the binary of home and battle front. Hundreds of Irishwomen enlisted in the various branches of the services, serving in Ireland, Britain and France. This mobilisation took place almost entirely in the latter half of the war after the Easter Rising, when support for the war effort had supposedly dwindled in Ireland. These women came

²¹¹ Urquhart, "Ora et labora", p.8.

²¹² WRNS 14/33: Report of divisional director for Ireland, July 1919.

²¹³ WRNS 19/1: "The WRNS".

²¹⁴ Coleclough, *Women's Legion 1916-1920*, p.25.

²¹⁵ Fletcher, *The WRNS* p.23; Carr is commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial <http://irishmedals.org/r-m-s-leinster.html>.

²¹⁶ 1911 census record for Josephine Carr; Commonwealth War Graves Commission record: <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/3045863/CARR,%20JOSEPHINE>

²¹⁷ Maureen Waters census record.

²¹⁸ WRNS 19/1: "The WRNS".

from a range of social class and denominational backgrounds. It is evident from examination of the case studies that a combination of economic and patriotic factors motivated the women's decision to enlist. However their patriotism was the subject of particular suspicion from the British authorities who distrusted their motivations and commitment to the British war effort.

Motivations and experiences

Female war service was encouraged and supported by governments and the wider society. The civic response was vital to the success of the war effort and to maintaining morale and stability on the home front. The majority of the activities involved prescribed gender roles, and rather than challenging gender norms, they served to reinforce women's auxiliary relationship to men. But what did war service mean to Irishwomen? Why did they voluntarily devote their time and energy to such activity? As with the Irishmen who voluntarily enlisted in the British army, there was a diverse array of motivations behind women's war service, ranging from the patriotic, to the political to the economic. For many women, their participation was motivated by a combination of these factors.

Keith Jeffery has identified a number of factors, which influenced the decision of Irishmen to enlist in the wartime British Army. They include a sense of duty to help defend small nations such as Belgium and Serbia and to join the fight for democracy and civilisation; the influence of one's peers; a love of adventure and a desire to see something of the world; the hope that England would reward Ireland's sacrifice with Home Rule (and the parallel view that the Ulster Unionist's case would be strengthened by demonstrating their loyalty to the Empire) and the economic motivation of the army pay and in particular the separation allowances provided to dependents.²¹⁹ David Fitzpatrick suggests that the influence of peer-groups played a more significant role in Irish enlistment than ideological factors, noting that those belonging to militias, fraternities or sporting clubs were 'particularly susceptible to collective pressure'.²²⁰

Although many of these factors also provided possible motives for Irishwomen, there was one obvious vital difference between the wartime service of men and women: the level of risk involved. As mentioned previously, Irish nurses travelling overseas to serve at the front faced the risk of bombardment, shipwreck and disease, and indeed at least forty-three Irish women died while on active service for the war effort.²²¹ However for the vast majority there was no great danger involved. Diverse motivations were possible for the

²¹⁹ Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, pp 11-20.

²²⁰ Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland 1900-1922", pp 389-390.

²²¹ This included eighteen QAIMNS members, thirteen British Red Cross voluntary nurses, ten WAAC members, one WRNS member and one Women's Legion member.

individual. Both economic and patriotic factors motivated those enrolled in the Women's Services. War service also did not have to be a full-time commitment; it took many forms, of which the majority could be performed in a part-time capacity. Thus women could avail of the social benefits of war service (including interaction with one's peers and purposeful engagement with a national and international cause) while choosing the extent of their participation. The wider age profile meant that multiple generations of the same family could be involved in the war effort. As a young girl in wartime Dublin, Evelyn Mercer knit socks for soldiers while her mother served as a voluntary nurse and her grandmother in Kerry collected sphagnum moss.²²²

Margaret Downes argues that that Irish voluntary aid cannot be categorised simply as Christian piety or Imperial zeal but instead represents the universal aim of voluntary war workers across the world: to alleviate the suffering caused by the war, from which they could not escape.²²³ It is certainly true that for many of those involved, their initial motivation was an urgent need to find some way to assist with the fallout from the terrible crisis engulfing Europe. This urge was evident across party-political lines, including among advanced nationalists opposed to Irish participation in the Great War. For many, their support for the war effort was in aid of specific soldiers or military families rather than an imperial or even national cause. In her work on French volunteer nursing, Margaret Darrow has described the differing attitudes towards war service among soldiers and nurses. She argues that the soldiers served France but the nurse served the soldier.²²⁴

Participation in the war effort could be conceived as personal rather than national service. War relief work was frequently undertaken on a local scale, further distancing it from difficult concepts of nationality. Irish women participated in local, regional, national and international networks. While much of the activity came under the remit of the British Red Cross, for many women, their point of connection was their local division or detachment. The majority of relief work was performed in work parties or sphagnum moss collecting groups, providing a strong associational element. This was a common feature of wartime charitable work. Local associations were viewed as extensions of the family and neighbourhood and thus as permissible spaces for women.²²⁵ In Ireland, it also allowed women to support relief efforts in their locality even if they had reservations about the British or imperial war effort.

²²² IWM G.H.S. Heenan papers MS 67/196/1: "Account of the outbreak of WWI and the Rising by Heenan's grandniece, Miss Evelyn AV Mercer".

²²³ Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', p.37.

²²⁴ Margaret H. Darrow, "French volunteer nursing and the myth of war experience in World War I" *American Historical Review*, vol. ci, no.1 (Feb. 1996), p.84.

²²⁵ Van Os, "Aiding the Poor Soldiers' Families", p.282.

A significant number of the women who devoted their time to the war effort had a family member serving in the armed forces and so it may have provided some consolation to be able to contribute in some way themselves. For example Helen O'Connor, a middle-class Catholic from Celbridge, Co Kildare, served as a voluntary nurse in the Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital. Two of her brothers enlisted in the army, one of whom was killed in August 1917.²²⁶ This was also true of Marie Martin, mentioned earlier in the chapter, and of Emma Duffin. Emma Duffin, a young middle class Belfast woman, served with the Red Cross during the war. Her brother Terence was a British Army officer and her four sisters all volunteered as nurses. She described her motives for enlisting to serve as a St John Ambulance Association nurse in a letter to her mother in May 1915:

I am glad for I think it is the right thing to do, you will feel that that you are being of some use, and it makes me independent till the end of the war anyway, and I daresay I will get to like the work, everyone seems to, it will certainly be interesting.²²⁷

Her reasons for enlisting clearly combined both a sense of patriotic duty with a desire for independence and personal fulfilment. The sense of it being 'the right thing to do' was very common with many women feeling almost compelled to do something related to the war. Isabella Cleland from county Antrim inserted a note with her completed British Red Cross service record, outlining how she had seen a call in a local newspaper for volunteers to help with the sphagnum moss dressings. She described how she was 'well pleased with the privilege of doing a little bit'. Cleland made an estimated three-dozen bandages each week for eighteen months.²²⁸ Another British Red Cross member, Emilie Gilmore McCaw (Belfast) summed up her war service as follows: 'I first went when I could and did all I could'.²²⁹

Personal fulfilment, the influence of one's peers and the social benefits derived from war work were also important factors, particularly in sustaining war relief work beyond the first few months of the war. Patriotic fervour and the excitement generated by the outbreak of the war may have prompted women to begin activities to support the war effort in autumn 1914 but other factors were essential to sustain this enthusiasm and commitment. In her work on British nurses, Henriette Donner has described the fulfilment many women gained from voluntary war work. She noted a sense of pride in their handling of their duty, the companionship of working with others, and a feeling that their lives had meaning and purpose.²³⁰ This is evident in the case of Marie Martin. Her letters from France and Malta to her mother reveal the sense of self-worth she gained from receiving praise from the matron,

²²⁶ *Leinster Leader* 7 Nov. 1914; *Freeman's Journal* 20 Nov. 1917. O'Connor family census record.

²²⁷ PRONI D2019/9/3/a: Letter from Emma Duffin to her mother, 22 May 1915.

²²⁸ BRCA: Isabella Cleland service record.

²²⁹ BRCA: Emilie Gilmore McCaw service record.

²³⁰ Donner, "Under the Cross—why VADs performed the filthiest tasks in the dirtiest war", p.688

and the clear enjoyment she found in being able to dispense medical advice to her relatives.²³¹ Diane Urquhart has similarly described a sense of ‘camaraderie and purpose’ among the Women’s Legion members, evident, for example, in Molly Coleclough’s account of her friendship with her fellow Legion members in Ireland.²³²

Peer pressure also played a role in certain war relief participation. For example, a worker with the National Egg Collection described how two women in a rural area who first refused to give eggs later did so ‘because they were ashamed to be the only families on the mountain who had refused eggs’.²³³ Donations to the National Egg collection were published in the local newspapers with details given of how many eggs were given, placing pressure on women to contribute to the collection.²³⁴ These appeals were directed at women who controlled household management and the element of peer pressure in this regard primarily affected older married women with responsibility for domestic consumption.

The desire for excitement and recognition is particularly evident in the accounts of Irish nurses during the Easter Rising. Anna Rothwell wrote to her commandant during the Rising protesting at the fact that their St John Ambulance nursing division was denied the opportunity to assist with the Rising. Her first concern was not the welfare of civilians and soldiers under bombardment, but that her division would be left out of all the excitement: ‘she and Mrs Lumsden both thought it dreadful for the division to be left out after all our preparation’. They were eventually asked to spend the week making socks and shirts for the troops but a number of them refused to do this, stating that they were ‘not much in the humour to make shirts’.²³⁵ Although this was a very familiar Red Cross activity, some of those trained for first aid clearly felt it beneath them during the present emergency.²³⁶

Emma Duffin referred to the independence she would gain from nursing service. For some women voluntary work for the war effort came as a welcome distraction from their restricted lives. Sharon Ouditt has suggested that British voluntary nurses such as Vera Brittain found themselves ‘suddenly released from the passive, chaperoned Edwardian existence characteristic of provincial female life’.²³⁷ Similarly Arthur Marwick has suggested that middle and upper class women gained economic and social independence from their voluntary war work, particularly that which took them away from home. He argues that their

²³¹ MMMA, B/F/1/41 to B/F/1/81: letters from Marie Martin to her mother, 18 June 1916 to 12 Dec. 1916.

²³² Urquhart, ‘Ora et Labora’, p.13; Coleclough, *Women’s Legion 1916-1920*, p.24.

²³³ IWM WWS B.O.2 44/20: The story of the National Egg Collection (no date).

²³⁴ See for example, *Anglo-Celt*, 13 Nov. 1915.

²³⁵ Airfield papers 2457: Letter from Anna Rothwell to Letitia Overend, 3 May 1916.

²³⁶ However others reported that the VAD workers were happy to do whatever task were required during the Rising, including washing, cooking and laundry: Bowser, *The story of British VAD work in the Great War*, p.136.

²³⁷ Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting forces, writing women: identity and ideology in the First World War* (London, 1994), p.31.

awareness of their contribution to an essential war effort brought a new 'self-consciousness and a new sense of status'.²³⁸

A desire for excitement, independence, and to contribute to the war services can be observed in the case of Sophie Pierce who served as an ambulance driver and motor dispatch rider with the WAAC. Born in Limerick in 1896, Sophie studied at the Royal College of Science from 1914 where she was active in writing for the College magazine, the *Torch*.²³⁹ In summer 1916 she met an English soldier, Captain William Elliot-Lynn, based temporarily in the Curragh with the Royal Engineers. They married in November 1916.²⁴⁰ Sophie initially continued her studies at the Royal College but in April 1917 she joined the WAAC. This allowed her to earn her own income for the first time, to join her husband in serving her country and to exchange domestic life for a more adventurous one. According to Pierce's biographer, Lindie Naughton, the main attraction was to be 'embarking on her first adventure, unchaperoned and free to come and go as she wished, with no aunts or husbands holding her back'.²⁴¹ At first Sophie was based with the WAAC near Salisbury where she carried messages for the army. She was later sent to France and worked with an ambulance unit.²⁴² In a letter to the *Torch* in December 1917 she described her experience in Salisbury in glowing terms:

I enjoy every second of life here; it is no end of a rag. The officers get up dances for us about once a fortnight and a week never passes by without some joy ride into Salisbury, only 16 miles away, for a theatre [...] The work is pretty stiff here I admit, but there isn't one of us that would go back to 'civvy' life without regret.²⁴³

She served in France in 1918 and 1919 where she had her portrait painted by the Irish war artist Sir John Lavery in July 1919.²⁴⁴ She subsequently became one of the first female aviators and an internationally ranked athlete (discussed further in Chapter Nine). Sophie Pierce was evidently an exceptional woman. However her experience nevertheless provides an insight into motivating factors for Irishwomen participating in the war effort, revealing as it does the fulfilment, excitement and independence gained by some such women through their war service.

Specific motivations applied to certain types of war service. For example the paid roles with the women's services discussed in the last section were very different undertakings to participation in a Red Cross work party or an Irish War Hospital Supply

²³⁸ Arthur Marwick, *The deluge: British society and the First World War* (London, 1967), p.99.

²³⁹ NLI *Torch* magazine, June 1915, Dec. 1916, June 1917.

²⁴⁰ NLI *Torch* magazine, Dec. 1916.

²⁴¹ Lindie Naughton, *Lady Icarus: the life of Irish aviator Lady Mary Heath* (Dublin, 2004), p.43

²⁴² Naughton, *Lady Icarus*, p.46; I was unable to locate her WAAC service record in Kew. Only 7,000 service records of the 57,000 WAAC members survive due to losses sustained due to bombardment during WWII.

²⁴³ NLI *Torch* magazine, Dec. 1917.

²⁴⁴ Naughton, *Lady Icarus*, p.48.

Depot. Joining the WAAC, the WRNS or the WRAF or serving with the QAIMNS involved a significant commitment to a specified duration of service. These roles also involved an economic incentive. Many of the Irish members of the WAAC or the other auxiliary services came from working-class backgrounds and were obliged to seek paid employment. A significant number of the WAAC members were former textile workers, a group severely affected by the industrial depression at the outbreak of the war. Many of the WRNS members were former dockworkers who were absorbed into naval service. Although poorly paid compared to munitions work, the war services represented an opportunity to enter new types of employment. However, as was discussed in Chapter Five, economic and patriotic motives were not incompatible with each other and the choice of occupation suggests some level of patriotism was involved for many of the women involved.²⁴⁵ For example the Women's Legion employed thousands of trained cooks who had come from 'excellent situations' and in many cases had accepted a 'considerable drop in salary from motives of patriotism'.²⁴⁶ The pay rates for clerks with the WAAC also compared unfavourably to those offered by commercial businesses.²⁴⁷

The retainer paid by the QAIMNS reserve may have motivated Irish nurses to sign up as reservists before the war, little expecting that their service would be required. Professional nurses could also earn significantly more through army nursing compared with civilian work, as shown in the following table:

Table 6.22 Comparative wartime pay rates for army and civilian nurses²⁴⁸

Type of nurse	Army pay	Civilian pay
Matron	£70-£100	£40-£50
Ward sister	£50-£60	£35
Staff nurse	£40-£50	£25-£30

Personal ambition, patriotism and a desire for excitement were also likely to have played an important role in the enlistment of Irish nurses. In her study of Welsh nurses during the Great War, Sara Brady argues that the Great War offered nurses 'unique opportunities to fulfil private ambitions alongside their duties in public service'. She describes how the war offered an escape route to nurses who wished to move from their usual working environment,

²⁴⁵ Andrews, *Economic effects of the war*, p.69.

²⁴⁶ PRONI D3099-14-1: Londonderry papers, "Sir John Cowans and the Women's Legion".

²⁴⁷ British Library of Political and Economic Science, Markham papers, Ms 4/5: Draft of letter from Violet Markham to the War Office, 27 June 1917.

²⁴⁸ Compiled from figures provided by Horgan-Ryan "Irish military nursing in the Great War", p.96

allowing them to move to another institution, into a more specialized field, or to serve overseas.²⁴⁹

A combination of patriotism and a desire to be part of the excitement of war motivated two Irish nurses who joined the QAIMNS from their civilian hospitals in England. Catherine Black, from county Donegal, was serving in the London Hospital at the outbreak of war. She signed up with the QAIMNS but did not 'really expect to be called up', as she believed the war would be over by Christmas.²⁵⁰ After spending the first year of the war in a military hospital in Cambridge, Catherine was sent to France in autumn 1916. She worked in various casualty-clearing stations in France until the war ended.²⁵¹ Emily MacManus, explained in her memoir how she felt compelled to enlist as an army nurse after the outbreak of war: 'I felt I could remain at Guy's no longer'.²⁵² Emily was born in England in 1886 to Irish parents. The family spent many holidays in county Mayo with relatives and Emily identified as Irish.²⁵³ Her father was a medical doctor and Emily began nursing training at Guy's Hospital in London in 1908. Two of her brothers served in the war: Desmond with the Royal Army Medical Corps, and Dermot with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.²⁵⁴

Emily joined the QAIMNS reserve in July 1915 and was immediately sent to France. In her memoir she described some of the harrowing scenes she witnessed as part of her work. At the time of the March 1918 offensive she was working in a casualty clearing station at Noyon, at the end of the English line. The nurses were placed under huge pressure to cope with the vast numbers of injured soldiers:

We worked from 3pm to 8am or thereabouts –and still the wounded poured in. The wards were filled long ago; evacuation trains were few. [...] We had 3,000 wounded on stretchers, on the grass, outsides the huts.²⁵⁵

She was very reluctant to be evacuated from the front line however and felt guilty about the wounded soldiers and civilians they were leaving behind in danger: 'I have never felt more sad or ashamed'.²⁵⁶ The dedication to her work and a desire to in some way alleviate the suffering caused by the war is very evident in MacManus's memoir. This was also evident in the case of the amateur nurses serving with the Voluntary Aid Detachments during the war through the joint committee of the BRCS and SJAA. However there were significant tensions between the amateur and professional nurses during the Great War.

²⁴⁹ Sara Brady, "Public service and private ambitions: nursing at the King Edward VII Hospital, Cardiff during the First World War" in Anne Morsay (ed.) *Medicine in Wales c.1800-2000 public service or private commodity?* (Cardiff, 2003), pp 108-109.

²⁵⁰ Catherine Black, *Kings nurse, beggar's nurse* (London, 1939), p.84.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp 90-95.

²⁵² MacManus, *Matron of Guy's*, p.89.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.89.

²⁵⁴ MacManus, *Matron of Guy's*, pp 89-92.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.107.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.108.

The mobilisation process could not remove class, nationalist or sectarian tensions. For many women, one of the most significant benefits of war relief work was the solidarity and companionship of working with others for a common purpose. However the wartime rhetoric of sacrifice and nationhood emphasised sectional divisions.²⁵⁷ The political tensions affecting the war effort are discussed in detail in Chapter Eight. Social class was also a persistent issue for women war workers. Although war service is frequently imagined to have encouraged greater interaction between the classes, increased interaction did not necessarily lead to improved relations. The morality of working class women was questioned and upper class women faced criticism for their supposed frivolity and self-importance and accusations of using war service as a new social competition.²⁵⁸

One Irish nurse requested to be transferred from her hospital in Lancashire due to 'the associations of the place'. The wounded soldiers had made unwelcome advances and it is implied that the other nurses are of a lower class and thus unsuitable companions, as they do not 'make allowances for those whose natural inclinations and upbringing compel them to resent incidents which the majority accept as usual'.²⁵⁹ The nurse in question was the daughter of a Roman Catholic barrister and had grown up in a prosperous area of Dublin.²⁶⁰ Celia Duffin, a Belfast voluntary nurse, maintained her class-consciousness when serving in hospitals in England. In a letter to her sister Emma, Celia commented on the class of her fellow voluntary nurses and seemed quite nervous of interaction with them:

They are more or less the Irish contingent I think and are quite decent looking but unattractive. Some of the Red X girls look much nicer and I daresay I shall be able to chum up with them later. A lot of the Red X girls are ladies but don't think many of the St John are.²⁶¹

A few weeks later she repeated the same sentiment to her mother: 'Some of the girls are quite ladies but the greater number are not'.²⁶²

Some women found it difficult to accept orders and instructions from women of inferior class backgrounds. Efficient war work depended upon unskilled amateurs learning from the skilled experienced workers but this was not always harmonious. One woman resigned from the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot following a reprimand from the superintendent of the depot. When Elsie Henry tried to persuade her to stay, pointing out that they had all endured such reprimands, the unnamed woman responded that 'you may have been brought up to that sort of thing but I haven't met it since I was a child and I'm now too

²⁵⁷ John Horne, 'Mobilising for total war 1914-1918' in Horne (ed.) *State, society and mobilisation*, p.12.

²⁵⁸ Similar attitudes prevailed in France: Darrow, "French volunteer nursing", p.82.

²⁵⁹ IWM BRCS 10/37: Letter from W Geoghen, county director of the City of Dublin BRCS branch, to Mrs Katherine Furse, commandant in chief of the VADs, 15 June 1917.

²⁶⁰ 1911 census record of Mary Nydia Kennedy.

²⁶¹ PRONI D2109/9/3/B: Letter from Celia to Emma Duffin, 9 June 1915.

²⁶² D2019/9/3/B: Letter from Celia to her mother, 24 June 1915.

old to learn'. In her letter about the incident Elsie commented that 'the commandant is always right when she 'speaks' because she is the highest authority here on dressings, and the poor lady frankly recognised it to be so, but merely said she couldn't face it'.²⁶³

Significant tensions were particularly apparent in the nursing sector between the amateur and professional nurses. Such tensions can be partly attributed to class differences and the different perspectives each group had of their work. Janet K. Watson has observed how professional nurses viewed wartime nursing as an opportunity to demonstrate their essential and unique skills while the volunteers perceived it as a parallel war service to that performed by their soldier relatives and friends.²⁶⁴ Emily MacManus described in her memoir the initial 'consternation and annoyance' among the QAIMNS nurses on the arrival of VADs in their army camp in France. It was assumed that the 'untrained girls' would be 'useless - frivolous, frightened'. However despite this foreboding, she reported that the VAD girls were the 'greatest success' and that army nurses could not have managed without the extra volunteer help. MacManus was very positive about the presence of the VADs describing the members she encountered as 'careful and keen - determined to learn all they could and to be helpful'.²⁶⁵

Tensions were perhaps even more apparent on the home front. Sara Brady has described the conflict between VAD nurses and professional nurses in the King Edward VII Hospital in Cardiff, Wales, during the Great War. Brady attributes the friction between the VADs and the trained nurses to the 'former's challenge to the professionalization of the latter', which was intensified by the 'disparity in their civilian social status'.²⁶⁶ Brady argues that for nurses the war served to emphasise class disparities.²⁶⁷ The conflict between the two types of nurses was evident in the *British Journal of Nursing*, which frequently featured criticism of the VAD nurses during the Great War. The journal criticised the volunteers for

Their inflated ideas of their own importance, their unreliability, as they stay off duty on the slightest pretext, the snobbery which declares that the trained nurses, who are paid are there to do the work and that the VADs are to have a good time.²⁶⁸

The motivations of the volunteers were questioned with the journal suggesting that the majority of Red Cross workers had no interest in the 'ordinary sick' –the 'sick women and children, or the aged and mentally deficient poor'.²⁶⁹

²⁶³ Letter from Elsie Henry to Alice Stopford Green, 19 Mar. 1917, in Cullen (ed.) *The world upturning* p.180.

²⁶⁴ Watson, "War in the wards", p.486.

²⁶⁵ MacManus, *Matron of Guy's* pp 93-94.

²⁶⁶ Brady, "Public service and private ambitions", p.113.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.117.

²⁶⁸ *British Journal of Nursing*, 13 May 1916. See also *British Journal of Nursing*, 20 May 1916.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 22 Jan. 1916.

The issue was also evident in Ireland. In November 1914, Margaret Cunningham, warden of Trinity College Dublin, expressed similar reservations about the sudden popularity of voluntary nursing. She claimed that women were neglecting 'other obvious duties to have the glamour of looking after the soldiers' and suggested that they would be better served caring for the sick poor.²⁷⁰ Behind the criticism however was real concern about the impact of the influx of volunteers into the nursing profession. The Irish Matrons' association passed a resolution in January 1918 stating that VADs needed to take three years training in the wards of recognised training school to be entitled to the title of a trained nurse.²⁷¹

The *Irish Citizen* adopted the issue in Ireland, arguing that the involvement of Irishwomen with the Red Cross was taking away employment from trained nurses who depended upon such work for their livelihood:

They fail to realise that their action, far from being truly patriotic or likely to be of any use to the State, is helping to degrade a great profession, by flooding it with unskilled workers and lowering its standard and prestige.²⁷²

The paper claimed that the hospitals in Dublin were being 'flooded' by voluntary nurses and suggested that the class and influence of the ladies meant that the majority of hospitals had 'condoned the incursion of hordes of untrained into their ranks'. They derided the purpose of the Red Cross as being to 'send untrained nurses to the front when the trained are thrown out of employment' and suggested that the Red Cross could afford to pay for the services of trained nurses rather than this 'mob of disorganised workers'.²⁷³ The discussion of the topic in the *Irish Citizen* included a number of letters from trained nurses who claimed that there was a shortage of work for nurses in Dublin due to the deluge of amateurs into the profession.²⁷⁴ Such protests were very similar to the objections to the use of volunteers in munitions factories or the potential displacement of textile workers by Red Cross work parties, except that in this case, it was a skilled profession that was threatened by the influx of volunteers. It is however possible that the conflict between the two types of nurses was exaggerated in the nursing journals as a means of asserting their own worth. Yvonne McEwen suggests that relations between the two groups were not as strained as implied by the press reports.²⁷⁵ Examination of more individual accounts from the period is needed to provide a greater understanding of the experience of both groups during the war.

²⁷⁰ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 27 Nov. 1914.

²⁷¹ *British Journal of Nursing*, 12 Jan. 1918.

²⁷² *Irish Citizen*, 21 Nov. 1914; see also *Irish Citizen*, 17 July 1915.

²⁷³ *Irish Citizen*, 21 Nov. 1914.

²⁷⁴ *Irish Citizen*, 5 Dec. 1914; 12 Dec. 1914.

²⁷⁵ McEwen, 'It's a long way to Tipperary', p.118.

Irish voluntary activity for the war effort was very similar to that undertaken in Great Britain or in other combatant countries. The huge variety of organisations associated with the war effort in Ireland, ranging from the small local initiatives to the nationwide or international organisations, closely resembled the structure of voluntary civil mobilisation in Britain.²⁷⁶ Irish female participation in the war effort was very extensive, drawing in diverse sectors of the population from across the island. Communities all over Ireland engaged with the war effort in varied ways. The participation of Irishwomen in the BRCS and the SJAA was in line with that in Great Britain, while the amount raised per head of population through fundraising in 1917 and 1918 actually surpassed that of Britain. This is particularly noteworthy given the political context in Ireland and the level of opposition to the British government among Irish people at the start of the war.

Despite the increasing political divisions and growing disconnection between the state and society, there remained significant levels of support for the war effort in the latter half of the war, as indicated by the outputs of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot and the results of Red Cross fundraising appeals. Although the membership of the Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association appears, from the samples conducted, to have been predominately Protestant and middle to upper class, the majority of the Irish membership of the WAAC and WRNS were working-class Catholics. Voluntary support for the war effort through organisations like the Red Cross was motivated by both humanitarian and patriotic impulses. The extent of the support for fundraising appeals, for example, became a measure of loyalty to the nation or the Empire.²⁷⁷

Many women, in Ireland as elsewhere, hoped to gain independence and personal fulfilment from their war work. War work offered women new experiences, the solidarity of working with others for a common purpose, for some women, financial independence. It is evident from the personal accounts discussed in the chapter, such as those of Marie Martin, Emma Duffin or Sophie Pierce, that Irishwomen found fulfilment and a sense of purpose from their war service. The lasting effect of their war service is discussed further in Chapter Nine. The opportunities for this war service were affected by class, generation and place. The samples of Red Cross voluntary workers reveal that while a wide range of women participated in war work, the women's age, marital status, domestic responsibilities and place affected their level of commitment. Those involved in full-time war work such as overseas nursing were typically upper-class single women. Red Cross work parties and detachments were also more common in urban areas and in north-east of the country. Although dominated by single young women, the women's auxiliary military services had a

²⁷⁶ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, pp 98-100.

²⁷⁷ John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of charity: war and the rise of the Red Cross* (Oxford, 1996), p.256.

wider class and denominational profile, enabling women to combine economic and patriotic motives. However their nationality and religion brought them increased scrutiny and suspicion from the British authorities. Religion affected Irishwomen's participation in the war effort and their attitudes to war work. This is further discussed in Chapter Seven.

Chapter 7: Religion and associational culture

Women's voluntary activities for the war effort formed a type of associational culture, defined by R.V. Comerford and Jennifer Kelly as 'formal voluntary activity or participation in clubs, societies and voluntary organisations'.¹ There was a strong tradition of women's involvement in philanthropic organisations before the outbreak of war and many of the women involved in the war effort had previous experience of voluntary work. Philanthropy provided an opportunity for middle and upper class women to participate in their communities outside of the home. It was undertaken both through church-based parish associations and through secular social reform organisations. Religion was a strong factor in determining the extent and type of women's participation in philanthropic work in the war effort. Parishes and churches proved important sites for the creation of communities of war workers.

In her work on France, Emily Machen has argued that the war expanded the religious responsibilities of women and offered new opportunities for women to take leadership roles within their churches. She suggests that the war enabled women to participate in expanded religious work that resulted in lasting changes in their relationships with their communities and the nation.² Machen argues that the war provided a special urgency to the need for women's contribution to the 'guidance and spiritual protection of the nation'.³ Religion played a particularly important role in Ireland in dictating attitudes to the war effort and affecting patterns of war service. The high tensions between Protestant and Catholic communities during the war resulted in accusations of proselytism and made ecumenical cooperation exceptionally difficult. Class also intersected with religion creating particular dynamics in organisations led by members of the Protestant so-called 'Anglo-Irish' elite which concerned themselves with the predominately Catholic working-class.

This chapter examines the impact of the Great War on female associational culture in Ireland through an examination of women's philanthropic work. It explores the response of the main churches in Ireland towards women's philanthropic work and women's role in the war effort, before considering the wartime experience of three national church-based associations and two national secular organisations. While the activities of these organisations were similar to those discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter is

¹ R.V. Comerford and Jennifer Kelly, 'Introduction' in Comerford and Kelly (eds) *Associational culture in Ireland and abroad* (Dublin, 2010), p.1.

² Emily Machen, "Women, war and religious leadership: Catholics, Protestants and Jews in France during the First World War" in *Minerva Journal of Women and War*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring, 2010), p. 26.

³ *Ibid.*, p.29.

particularly concerned with exploring both the religious context in which this war service took place and the impact of the war on pre-war patterns of women's associational culture in Ireland. It evaluates the extent to which the war offered expanded opportunities for associational work in the public sphere, such as that described by Machen for France, and considers the lasting impact upon women's role in Irish society.

Religion and philanthropy

Maria Luddy has uncovered two distinct strands to female philanthropy in nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland: the benevolent tradition which attempted to do good within a specific organisation and the reformist tradition which aimed to improve social conditions through public and political action. Reformist organisations tended to involve more cooperation with and involvement from men while the benevolent associations were more firmly situated within the women's sphere.⁴ Charitable work was considered a suitable occupation for middle and upper-class women, especially those without families of their own. It was seen as an affirmation of women's traditional role as the maternal caregiver. However charity work also offered relative freedom for girls and women, allowing them to work, and sometimes live, outside the family home. Such work also had a significant social aspect to it and the frequent meetings and fundraising events provided opportunities for large gatherings of women from varied backgrounds.⁵ According to Luddy, philanthropy offered middle and upper class women the opportunity to enter the public sphere 'without any great tension'.⁶ Walsh has noted the contradiction present in many women's organisations between what the female organisers preached to other women and what they practised themselves. She cites the example of the Lady Talbot de Malahide, president of the Mothers' Union, who promoted the role of women in the domestic sphere but who herself was active in the public sphere through her work in various philanthropic organisations.⁷

Philanthropy tended to be clearly divided on religious lines and cooperation between Protestant and Catholic charities was limited due to the fear and suspicion of proselytism. There was a much greater rate of involvement of Anglican women in philanthropic organisations than of lay Catholic women. The low rate of philanthropy by lay Catholic women can be attributed to the significant number of Catholic nuns who provided what Oonagh Walsh describes as a 'ready-made philanthropic army' thus reducing the necessity for further organisation by lay women.⁸ Unlike Protestant women, Catholic women were

⁴ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995), p.5.

⁵ Oonagh Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin: philanthropy, politics and education in the early twentieth century* (Dublin, 2005), pp 90-95.

⁶ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, p.2.

⁷ Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin*, p.96.

⁸ Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin*; p.87; Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, p.53.

unable to create enduring independent secular societies. The Catholic clergy maintained a strong control over female philanthropy creating a particularly conservative Catholic social action.⁹

However the Great War brought a growing awareness of the role Catholic women could perform in society through philanthropic work. In 1917 the *Catholic Bulletin* wrote of the important role the Church could play in the realm of social work. The writer anticipated a revolution in labour and capital relations after the war and believed that Catholic social work would be essential to help the increased numbers of poor.¹⁰ The Jesuit journal, *Irish Monthly* also saw the war as necessitating greater involvement from lay Catholic women in philanthropy. The *Irish Monthly* published five articles between 1916 and 1918 advocating the role lay Catholic women could play in charitable work, including an article by the writer Katharine Tynan. Fr McKenna argued in July 1917 that women's influence would be essential in the reconstruction and adaptation of society to the new post-war world.¹¹ An article the following January described the urgent necessity of works of organised charity led by Catholics in Ireland.¹² This wartime promotion of Catholic women's social action was not unique to Ireland. Machen has described very similar commentary in French Catholic journals during the war.¹³

There was awareness in all the articles of the extent to which Protestant female philanthropy was far more prevalent in Irish society. McKenna addressed the concern that female social work is a 'Protestant thing', describing the long tradition of Catholic social work in other countries.¹⁴ In a further article in July 1917 McKenna describes what he considers to be the most significant barrier preventing cooperation between Catholics and Protestants in charitable work: what he saw as the very real danger of proselytism.¹⁵ Tynan also wrote of the predominance of Protestant run charities and the difficulties encountered by Catholic women wishing to become involved in philanthropic work.¹⁶

The essentially conservative nature of the work suggested, and the extent to which it depended upon traditional gender roles, is made evident in Fr. McKenna's proposal for the Irish Catholic Women's League. He stated that such work demanded the 'peculiar gifts of women' such as household instinct, domestic experience as well as traits such as patience,

⁹ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, pp 23, 35.

¹⁰ *Catholic Bulletin*, Dec. 1916.

¹¹ L. McKenna, "An Irish Catholic Women's League" in *Irish Monthly*, xlv, no. 528 (June, 1917), pp 355, 362.

¹² R.C.N., "A modern crusade" in *Irish Monthly*, xlvi, no. 535 (Jan. 1918), p.1.

¹³ Machen, "Women, war and religious leadership", p.30.

¹⁴ McKenna, "An Irish Catholic Women's League", pp 355, 360.

¹⁵ L. McKenna, "The relations of Catholics to Protestants in social work" in *Irish Monthly*, xlv, no.529 (July, 1917), p.448.

¹⁶ Katharine Tynan, "Social work for Catholic women in country places" in *Irish Monthly*, xlv, no. 534 (Dec. 1917), p.755.

sympathy, approachability and devotedness.¹⁷ The objects of the proposed Catholic Women's League would be the recruiting of Catholic social workers, the co-ordination of Catholic endeavour and the bringing of Catholic women's influence to bear on legislative and administrative authorities. The proposed organisation of the society appeared to be modelled on or at least very similar to the Anglican Mothers' Union. The benefits of Catholic social work for the girls were also considered, with the *Catholic Bulletin* describing it as an antidote to the poison undermining modern society: 'a poison permeating dress, manners, conversation, pandered to by demoralising books, plays, picture houses etc and all too easily imbibed by those whose lives are synonymous with levity, idleness and selfishness'.¹⁸ In January 1918 Catholic social work was again promoted as a 'mental tonic' for Irish women: 'if we are inclined to frivolity, worldliness or discontent, let us visit the homes of the poor and readjust our perspective of life and its meaning. If we are sorrow stricken we may forget part of our heartache in solacing those whose lot is still more cruel'.¹⁹ This was also evident in France. Catholic women participated in the public sphere in greater numbers as a consequence of the war but did so through a conservative Catholic social action based on gendered spheres.²⁰

In Ireland, unlike France, the Catholic social action promoted in such articles was rarely explicitly connected with the war effort. Indeed, the position of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland towards the war effort was somewhat ambivalent. Initially the war received the support of the majority of the Church hierarchy. In his work on the Roman Catholic Church in wartime, Jerome Aan der Wiel emphasises the opposition of the Archbishop of Dublin, William Walsh to the war effort.²¹ However he overlooks Walsh's participation on various committees associated with Irish war relief work, including that of the Dublin Castle Red Cross Hospital.²² The church hierarchy were particularly involved in 'Catholic issues' connected to the war; for example the Archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal Logue was especially concerned with ensuring a sufficient supply of Catholic chaplains for Irish soldiers at the front and with the care of Catholic Belgian refugees, 1,770 of whom were given refuge in Ireland.²³ The refugees were initially housed in workhouses in the

¹⁷ McKenna, "An Irish Catholic Women's League", p.357.

¹⁸ *Catholic Bulletin*, Feb. 1917.

¹⁹ *Catholic Bulletin*, Jan. 1918.

²⁰ Machen, "Women, war and religious leadership", p.26.

²¹ Jerome Aan de Wiel, 'Archbishop Walsh and Mgr. Curran's opposition to the British war effort in Dublin, 1914-1918' in *Irish Sword*, xxii, no.88 (2000), pp 193-204.

²² See for example DDA, Walsh Papers/1914/387/2/Laity: Letter from Lady Aberdeen to Archbishop Walsh, 20 Dec. 1914; Letter from May Starkie to Walsh, 19 Nov. 1914; 1915/378/9/Laity: Letter from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers' Central Advisory Committee to Walsh, 6 Oct. 1915; 1916/385/7/Laity: Letter from Sybil Powerscourt to Walsh, 26 Apr. 1916.

²³ See for example the public speech by Cardinal Logue in Dundalk, 18 Oct. 1914, *Irish Catholic directory and almanac for 1915* (Dublin, 1915), p.543; statement by Cardinal Logue to meeting of the standing committee of the bishops of Ireland, 19 Jan. 1915, *Irish Catholic directory for 1916* (Dublin,

Dublin area but the majority later found accommodation in private homes.²⁴ They depended upon the local population for financial support and in this respect the Catholic Church played an important role. Priests were instructed to 'remind their flocks of the sufferings and needs of the brave Belgian people' and to encourage their congregations to subscribe towards funds established for their relief.²⁵ The fact that the Belgians were predominately Catholic meant that the Church saw them as their responsibility and a suitable concern for their congregation.²⁶ In fact one of the reasons why Ireland was chosen as a destination for significant numbers of Belgian refugees was precisely because it was assumed that Ireland 'as a Catholic country' would welcome the refugees.²⁷

Assisting Belgian refugees was much less potentially controversial and divisive than for example outwardly supporting the British Army. Parallels were also drawn between the Belgian and Irish case, both small nations invaded by a larger neighbour seeking to 'plant' their own communities to spread Protestantism.²⁸ The Church conducted an appeal through its parishes to raise funds to support the refugees in Ireland. By March 1915 £28,352 had been raised through this fundraising effort.²⁹ Proselytism was a significant concern with regard to the Catholic Belgian refugees. For example, Mary Lynch, on behalf of the Cork Temporary Home for Belgian Refugee Women and Children Committee, wrote to Archbishop Walsh in 1914 informing him that the Society of Friends were receiving Belgian refugees in Dublin and suggesting that this was an issue that needed his attention given that 'the refugees are doubtless all Catholics as is the case with the 120 we have in Cork'.³⁰

In his 1916 Lenten Pastoral, Cardinal Logue drew attention to what he saw as 'campaigns conducted by certain Protestants for the proselytism of Belgian refugees'.³¹ Logue criticized the general committee for Belgian refugees established by the Local Government Board, for failing to 'discharge their responsibility satisfactorily'.³² Logue was most likely referring to Portadown where it was alleged that three Belgian families had converted from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism. These conversions were said to have

1916), p.529. Clare O'Neill, "The Irish home front 1914-18 with particular reference to the treatment of Belgian refugees, prisoners-of-war, enemy aliens and war casualties" (PhD thesis, NUI Maynooth, 2006), p.195.

²⁴ *Annual report of the Local Government Board for Ireland for the year ended 31st March 1915*, [Cd.8016], H.C. 1915, pp 44-46.

²⁵ Resolutions passed at annual meeting of the Catholic hierarchy in Maynooth, 13 Oct. 1914, *Irish Catholic directory and almanac for 1915*, p.541.

²⁶ *Irish Catholic*, 19 Sept. 1914.

²⁷ IWM BEL 12/6: Notes on interview between Mr Herbert Samuel (president of the Local Government Board) and a deputation from the war refugees committee, 9 Sept. 1914

²⁸ *Irish Catholic*, 12 Dec. 1914.

²⁹ Letter from Robert Browne, Bishop of Cloyne, 20 Mar., *Irish Catholic directory for 1916*, p.504; *Irish Catholic*, 28 Nov. 1914.

³⁰ DDA, Walsh/1914/378/1/Laity: Letter from Mary Lynch to Archbishop Walsh, 1914.

³¹ Lenten Pastoral by Cardinal Logue, 6 Feb. 1916 in *Irish Catholic directory and Almanac for 1917* (Dublin, 1917), p.505.

³² *Ibid.*, p.506.

been influenced by local Church of Ireland women and to have 'caused ill feeling amongst religious bodies in the town'.³³ The Belgian refugees committee investigated the matter and it was eventually decided that one of the Belgian families would be transferred elsewhere and that no further refugees should be sent to Portadown.³⁴

Chapter Six noted the dominance of Protestants in the Red Cross samples, particularly among the leadership of the organisation. However the available evidence suggests a wider class and religious profile to the women involved in more local-based initiatives. The local clergy played a role in promoting cross-community endeavours and Catholic priests were active in promoting war work among their congregations. Lay Catholic women assisted with the Sunday collections in aid of Belgian refugees and organised fundraising events for the refugees themselves.³⁵ They were also involved in efforts to support soldiers and with the National Egg Collection.³⁶ For example, in Newbliss, county Monaghan, women gathered in the Catholic Young Men's Recreation Rooms to organise the sending of comforts to soldiers. The local parish priest chaired the meeting and the majority of women elected to the committee were Catholics.³⁷ A parish priest in Castlepollard organised a similar meeting of local women, this time to arrange fundraising in aid of wounded soldiers.³⁸ In her memoir of republican activism, Kathleen Keyes McDonnell recalled with disgust the widespread support for the Red Cross in Bandon in autumn 1914. She described how 'even prominent Catholics foregathered in the Allen Institute, notorious loyalist stronghold', and attended classes and meetings in furtherance of Britain's war effort. She claimed that the involvement of Catholics in such an endeavour was 'unknown in Bandon history up to that time'.³⁹

However the Irish Catholic press paid little attention to the role of women in the war effort. The only notable praise of women's war work to appear in one of the four Irish Catholic periodicals and newspapers examined as part of this study (*Catholic Bulletin*, *Irish Monthly*, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* and the *Irish Catholic* newspaper) was a report in the *Irish Catholic* in December 1914 praising the Newry branch of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians for their work sending scapulars to Irish Catholic soldiers at

³³ UCDA, Minute Book of the Belgian Refugees' Committee, 18 Aug. 1915.

³⁴ Minute Book of the Belgian Refugees' Committee, 8 Sept. 1915; 17 Sept. 1915; 6 Oct. 1915; 20 Oct. 1915.

³⁵ DDA, Walsh/1914/387/2/Laity: Letter from Mrs Breda Morgan-Browne to Archbishop Walsh, 12 Oct. 1914; see for example, *Kildare Observer*, 14 Nov. 1915.

³⁶ The vast majority of Cavan donations to the National Egg Collection in 1915 came from Catholic women, *Anglo-Celt*, 13 Nov. 1915.

³⁷ *Anglo-Celt*, 28 Nov. 1914, see also *Anglo-Celt*, 7 Nov. 1914.

³⁸ *Anglo-Celt*, 27 Nov. 1915.

³⁹ Kathleen Keyes McDonnell, *There is a bridge at Bandon: a personal account of the Irish War of Independence* (Cork, 1972), p.31.

their front. The editor encouraged other ladies auxiliaries of the AOH to follow suit, claiming that 'no more genuinely charitable work could possibly be imagined'.⁴⁰

The Ladies Auxiliaries of the AOH came closest to resembling the Anglican women's organisations discussed later in the chapter. The AOH was closely aligned to the Irish Parliamentary Party and, by the time of the war, was one of the largest Catholic nationalist organisations in Ireland. Women were admitted as members through the Ladies Auxiliaries from 1910 and by 1914 there were several hundred branches throughout Ireland with the majority in Ulster.⁴¹ The Dublin auxiliary alone had over three hundred members by August 1916.⁴² The role of the Auxiliaries was to aid and support the men's groups and to promote Catholic morality within the home and in the public realm. Their activities were influenced by Catholic social action and included caring for the poor, campaigning against intemperance and moral rescue work.⁴³ During the war they were particularly concerned with the moral welfare of Irish girls travelling to England for war work.⁴⁴ Senia Pašeta dismisses the AOH as having little to offer to politically active nationalist women.⁴⁵ However the organisation provided a rare space for Catholic nationalist women to engage in philanthropic work.

In contrast to the Catholic Church, the Protestant churches in Ireland quickly recognised the important role women could play on the home front and the extent of the mobilization of the population that would be needed in wartime. Appeals and praise for women's war work were very common features in the *Church of Ireland Gazette*. Between August 1914 and December 1918 the weekly periodical included in excess of thirty-five articles referring directly to women's war work and the role of women in wartime. The distinct roles for men and women in wartime were emphasised. Archbishop Bernard stated in a sermon in December 1914 that among the lessons which the war had taught them was that 'the duties of a woman are not the same as those of a man'.⁴⁶ In another sermon he described the role of women on the home front: 'What is your duty, you women and boys and girls who are so eager to help? [...] It is for us who stay at home to strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts of those who are fighting in our place -the brave lads in the fighting line'.⁴⁷ Bernard was advocating a gendered form of war service, based on traditional ideas of the role of men and women in wartime.

⁴⁰ *Irish Catholic*, 12 Dec. 1914.

⁴¹ Diane Urquhart, *Women in Ulster Politics, 1890-1940: a history not yet told* (Dublin, 2000), p.101.

⁴² *Hibernian Journal*, Aug. 1916.

⁴³ Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist women 1900-1918*, pp 64-65.

⁴⁴ *Hibernian Journal*, June 1917 and Aug. 1917.

⁴⁵ Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist women*, p.65.

⁴⁶ Bernard, *In wartime*, p.20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.11.

The Bishop of Ossory however suggested an equivalency of war service, placing the nursing service of women on equal footing with the army service of their male counterparts: 'the brave women who are going to nurse the wounded are not less worthy of our honour and gratitude. Many households, rich and poor, have given their sons and daughters'.⁴⁸ The Armagh diocesan synod in November 1915 echoed the sentiment, recording its 'profound admiration of the work done by women of the country both at home and abroad'.⁴⁹ In 1917 the Lord Primate of the Church of Ireland praised the daughters of Church of Ireland clergy who 'have found their calling in munitions works and hospitals and elsewhere', stating that they, together with their brothers, have 'won eminence in many walks of life'.⁵⁰ It was suggested in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* in June 1915 that female nurses should be included on a roll of honour being compiled to record the war service of clergymen and their families.⁵¹ However later mentions of the roll of honour refer solely to army service and it appears that the idea of including women was abandoned.⁵² Such praise and promotion of women's war work however would have created an environment that encouraged and motivated Church of Ireland women to become involved with such activity.

The records of the smaller Protestant churches in Ireland reveal similar pro-war rhetoric and praise for those who enlisted in war service of one kind or another. The Presbyterian Church reported in June 1915 that their congregations had raised £4,500 for a church fund for the war effort, and had also contributed to other war funds outside of the Church. They spoke proudly of the service and sacrifice of Presbyterian men in the armed and naval forces but also praised 'the enormous amount of work done by the ladies of our Church in common with other communions to provide comforts for our brave soldiers and sailors'.⁵³ The voluntary work of female church members was described in more detail in the minutes of the later wartime conferences, with references made to work parties associated with women of the church to make comforts for the front, egg and vegetable collections for wounded soldiers and the provision of tea and entertainments for soldiers on leave.⁵⁴ There was clear recognition from the Church for the particular role women could perform on the

⁴⁸ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 14 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1915.

⁵⁰ *Journal of the general synod of the Church of Ireland holden in Dublin MDCCCCXVII* (ed.) JA Maconchy (Dublin, 1917), p.liii.

⁵¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 18 June 1915; 23 July 1915.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1 Oct. 1915.

⁵³ *Minutes of the proceeding of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1911-1915*, vol. XII (Belfast, 1915), p.111.

⁵⁴ *Minutes of the proceeding of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1916-1920*, vol. XIII (Belfast, 1920), p.82; *Minutes of the proceedings of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, held at Belfast, June 1917*, p.383; *Minutes of the proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, held at Belfast, June 1918*, p.606; *Minutes of the proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, held at Belfast, June 1919*, pp 894, 915.

home front and that this, together with the sacrifice of soldiers, was helping to 'hasten the triumph of our cause'.⁵⁵

Similarly, the Methodist Church noted how both Irishmen and Irishwomen were 'playing a noble part' in what they described as a 'fierce struggle between light and darkness, liberty and tyranny, Christ and Belial'.⁵⁶ The use of such religious rhetoric to describe the war is illustrative of how war service was promoted by the various churches as an essential sacrifice, as a war of religion and civilisation.⁵⁷ Under the auspices of the Methodist church, recreation rooms for soldiers and sailors were established in Dublin and Queenstown, all staffed by Methodist women who also paid regular visits to soldiers in hospitals. They also supplied parcels of comforts to serving soldiers at the front.⁵⁸ Like the Church of Ireland, the Methodists made very clear their recognition of and appreciation for the work of women in wartime. For example, in 1919 the annual conference of Methodists recorded its 'high appreciation of the noble part played by the womanhood of the nation during the years of warfare'.⁵⁹

Religion evidently played a significant role in promoting and supporting women's war service. The various Protestant churches in Ireland advocated a gendered view of war service in which women had a particular role to play. Although the Catholic Church in Ireland was less openly supportive of war service, it is evident both that Catholic women did engage with the war effort, particularly through the care of Belgian refugees, and that the war altered perceptions of the role of Catholic women in voluntary work in the public sphere. Religion linked war service to ideals of sacrifice and duty and provided an associational environment for such activities. The war dominated religious discourse and women's associational culture became subsumed into the war effort. This was particularly evident through examination of a number of major pre-existing women's organisations in Ireland.

Anglican women's organisations

A significant portion of Church of Ireland women's work for the war effort took place through various existing Anglican philanthropic organisations. This section examines the activities of three significant Anglican women's organisations during the war years: the

⁵⁵ *Minutes of the proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, held at Belfast, June 1918*, p.564.

⁵⁶ *Minutes of the one hundred and forty-sixth conference of the people called Methodists in the conference established by the late Rev John Wesley begun in Dublin on 15 June 1915* (Dublin, 1915), p.130.

⁵⁷ Similar attitudes prevailed among the churches in France, see Adrian Gregory and Annette Becker, "Religious sites and practices" in Winter and Roberts (eds) *Capital cities at war*, p.391.

⁵⁸ *Annual report of the Methodist Home Mission and contingent fund and of the General Mission (Ireland) 1915* (Dublin, 1915), pp 29-32.

⁵⁹ *Minutes of the one hundred and fiftieth conference of the people called Methodists, in Belfast June 1919* (Dublin, 1919), p.107.

Mothers' Union, the Girls' Friendly Society and the Young Women's Christian Association. Maria Luddy's study has shown that Protestant women had more flexibility with regard to organising societies and, while generally under the nominal control of clerics, they had more freedom to operate the societies according to their own wishes. Protestant societies had a greater degree of cross-class involvement as seen in the Young Women's Christian Association and the Girls' Friendly Society and also tended to be more reformist than benevolent.⁶⁰ These societies all faced the dilemma of responding to the demands of war while not losing their own identity.

Mothers' Union

Initially established in England in 1876, an Irish branch of the Mothers' Union was founded in 1887 in Dublin. The organisation was based on the following objectives:

To uphold the sanctity of marriage; to awaken a sense of the great responsibility of mothers having the care of children and to organise in every place a band of mothers who will unite in prayer and seek by their own example to lead their families in purity and holiness of life.⁶¹

From 1892 the Irish branch was supported at diocesan level and had committees in every diocese.⁶² Many of the committee members were the wives of clergy but there were also a number of aristocratic patronesses involved. For example, the first diocesan president of Down, Connor and Dromore was Lady Dufferin. The membership consisted of married mothers, mostly from the middle classes.

Oonagh Walsh has described it as one of the most important women's organisations in Ireland. Its influence extended beyond its large membership through the publication of pamphlets and books, usually based upon lectures given by members.⁶³ The union described itself in 1897 as a 'union of praying mothers, not just a society, to stem the tide of infidelity, vice and intemperance with the common bond between rich and poor, educated and uneducated'.⁶⁴ The organisation stressed the influential role women could play in the home and suggested that women's place was in the domestic sphere:

There are women crying out for the vote without which they think they have no influence –but believe me, if mothers in past generations and in the present generation had taught their boys that it is great and manly to protect all girls and women and had thereby raised the standard of courtesy and a sense of

⁶⁰ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, pp 67, 209-213.

⁶¹ Lady Isabel Talbot de Malahide, *Foundations of national glory: Mothers' Union Addresses* (London, 1915), p.21.

⁶² Diana McFarlan, *The Mothers' Union in Ireland: a centenary history 1887-1987* (Dublin, 1987), p.5.

⁶³ Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin*, p.96.

⁶⁴ McFarlan, *The Mothers' Union in Ireland*, p.5.

protection to the feebler sex, this world would now be a very different place from what it is.⁶⁵

During the Great War most of the Irish diocesan committees continued with their usual work, although the war's impact was very evident. Many branches became involved in work for the war effort. The extent to which individual dioceses became involved in activities to support the war effort varied by region but none were immune from the war's effects.⁶⁶ Of the thirteen dioceses, four reported that their pre-war activities were negatively affected by the war.⁶⁷ For example, the Cork, Cloyne and Ross diocese reported that they had lost members during the war years, in particular the wives of soldiers and sailors. Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe had the same problem while Tuam, Killala and Achonry diocese reported that war work interfered with the holding of meetings. However the number of branches in the diocese increased between 1914-18. In four dioceses new branches were formed and in others, there was an increase in the overall membership. For example, three new branches were established in the Kimore, Elphin and Ardagh diocese during the war.

The unions in ten dioceses actively engaged with the war effort, while others provided support for members bereaved by the war or engaged in specific wartime reformist activity. The type of voluntary work for the war effort performed by members was typical of the most common forms of war related activity for women in Ireland: the knitting of comforts for soldiers, the sending of parcels to prisoners of war and the manufacture and provision of medical supplies for the Red Cross and other similar organisations. The Ulster diocesan Unions of Armagh and Down however took a more reformist response to the outbreak of war, shown by their attempts to address the war's impact on society by respectively holding meetings to discuss the role of women in wartime, and lobbying for the introduction of measures to reduce drinking among women in receipt of separation allowances.

The extent to which diocesan committees were involved in work for the war effort was likely affected by the extent to which their president was active outside of the MU. Some of the wartime diocesan presidents played a very prominent role in organisations established specifically to support the war effort. For example, Lady Farnham, president of the Kilmore Union until 1915, was centrally involved in the Irishwomen's Association which provided parcels for Irish prisoners of war while Lady Clonbrock, president of the Killaloe diocesan branch led a number of local endeavours in Galway such as providing

⁶⁵ Talbot de Malahide, *Foundations of national glory*, p.42.

⁶⁶ Information on wartime activities of branches drawn from the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 1914-1918; Diana McFarlan, *The Mothers' Union in Ireland*, pp 9-17; Edna Burrows and Patricia Mayes, *Specially concerned: the Mothers' Union in Ireland 1887-1987* (Dublin, 1986), pp 58-60.

⁶⁷ Clogher; Cork, Cloyne and Ross; Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe; and Tuam, Killala and Achonry.

comforts for soldiers serving with the Connaught Rangers.⁶⁸ Mrs Alice Crozier, wife of the Archbishop of Armagh and president of the Armagh Union, was the leader of a Red Cross work party.⁶⁹

War work performed by MU members took two different forms; that undertaken by individual MU members on their own initiative and usually through other organisations, and that organised by the MU itself. For example, in Dublin and Limerick the local MU committees organised the production and collection of clothing made by members for soldiers. In Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh, the MU arranged to send parcels to soldiers at the front, and in Armagh the MU established war savings associations. However in other dioceses such as Cork, Meath and Tuam, it appears members became involved with other organisations established specifically to support the war effort, leading in some cases to a drop in active participation with the MU.⁷⁰

The Mothers' Union was cautious about being used to promote war service in areas outside its own remit. At a meeting of the Executive Committee on 15 April 1915 they discussed a circular they had received from the Board of Trade seeking their assistance in promoting war work that would release men for active service. The committee agreed with Lady Clonbrock, the chairman, that the union's help should be 'rather individual than organic'. It was eventually agreed that the secretary would reply to the divisional officer in 'friendly but guarded terms' offering to send out copies of the appeal to each diocese with a letter commending the matter to their attention but stating that the executive would not further dictate the action of the individual branches. It was also agreed that given the 'trouble and expense involved in using the MU as a vehicle for sending out the appeal' the organisation would make it clear to the divisional officer they would be happy to accept a small payment for the work.⁷¹ Similarly when it was suggested that the union establish clubs and recreation rooms for women and girls along English lines, the General Council responded that it would be 'wiser to keep to the lines upon which MU in Ireland had hitherto worked [...] other organisations being ready to deal efficiently with these questions'.⁷² The impression given is that of an organisation which was supportive of the war effort but unwilling to entirely subsume their work to the dictates of outside bodies.

⁶⁸ NLI MS 18,616/2-8 Farnham papers: Letters and other material relating to Lady Farnham's charitable work in county Cavan during the Great War and materials relating to the Girls' Friendly Society and Mothers' Union; MS 35,796 (4) Clonbrock papers: Report of the Galway War Fund Association 1917-18.

⁶⁹ "Memorandum on the Red Cross in Ireland".

⁷⁰ *Church of Ireland Gazette* 1914-1918; Diana McFarlan, *The Mothers' Union in Ireland* pp 9-17; Edna Burrows and Patricia Mayes, *Specially concerned: the Mothers' Union in Ireland 1887-1987* (Dublin, 1986), pp 58-60.

⁷¹ RCBL, MS 749: Minute book of the organising committee of the Mothers' Union of Ireland 1912-21, 15 Apr. 1915.

⁷² *Ibid.*

However in some aspects the work of the union took on increasing importance in the war years. Cordelia Moyse has described how the Mothers' Union in Britain saw the Great War as an affirmation of the particular spiritual vocation of women. They viewed women's particular wartime contribution as advocating a life of Christian faith grounded in regular prayer and worship.⁷³ The idea of mothers as guardians of the next generation also took on a particular poignancy in wartime. Lady Talbot de Malahide, president of the Dublin diocese Mothers' Union, stated in 1915 that 'at a time like this in the world's history that the advantage of a united effort to bind women together in a common cause, is more widely felt than ever'.⁷⁴ The Archbishop of Armagh stated in his introduction to the collection of addresses that they were particularly important 'just now when men and women are turning from the trivialities of life to its deeper and eternal realities'.⁷⁵ While the Cork, Cloyne and Ross diocese reported the loss of many members to war work, they also claimed that members received 'great help and spiritual support in those war years'.⁷⁶

Many of those involved in the Mothers' Union had sons or husbands serving in the armed forces and the work may have provided some distraction from the anxiety they felt about their families and may also have provided some consolation in cases of bereavement.⁷⁷ Lady Dufferin expressed her gratitude to the organisation for the support it provided her after the loss of her sons on war service: 'I know that as Mothers the members of our union do all feel for me in the great sorrow which has come upon me by the loss of my two sons'.⁷⁸ The association also provided a space for communal bereavement: in April 1918 a memorial service was held in Omagh for the sons of members of the Mothers' Union from the parish who were killed in the war.⁷⁹

The particular significance of the MU in wartime was realised from early in the war. In December 1914 the *Church of Ireland Gazette* noted the influence of mothers on soldiers and argued for the expansion of the organisation throughout Ireland:

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of such a Union. [...] Everyone must feel the influence for good or evil that mothers exercise over the coming generation. It is said that when the soldiers in the trenches are writhing in agony from their wounds that they cry out for their mothers. It is a touching illustration of how deep the mother gets into the life. [...] We know the value of

⁷³ Cordelia Moyse, *A history of the Mothers' Union: women, Anglicanism and globalisation 1876-2008* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp 102-103.

⁷⁴ Talbot de Malahide, *Foundations of national glory*, p.49.

⁷⁵ John B. Armagh 'Introduction' to *Foundations of national glory*, p.2.

⁷⁶ McFarlan, *The Mothers' Union in Ireland*, p.12.

⁷⁷ For example Mrs James Johnston of Lurgan is recorded as addressing a MU meeting in Portadown in Feb. 1917 where she sympathised with members who had been bereaved by the war but ten days later her own son was reported killed at the front, *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 16 Mar. 1917.

⁷⁸ RCBL, MS 749: Minute book of the organising committee of the Mothers' Union of Ireland 1912-21, 2 Mar. 1918.

⁷⁹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 12 Apr. 1918.

the Mothers' Union to uplift and to strengthen. We should like to see a branch, no matter how small, in every parish.⁸⁰

The influential role women had in the lives of soldiers was further emphasised at a special meeting in Portadown that same month for members of the Mothers' Union and Girls' Friendly society. The meeting examined the 'responsibilities of women and girls in time of war'. The women and girls were called upon to 'guard their male relatives and friends who have volunteered for the war from the temptations which thoughtless people so wrongly put in their way' and to 'inspire these brave men with high resolves and noble ideals to take their part in the great conflict'.⁸¹ In 1917 the wartime role of the MU was again highlighted, this time in a letter to the editor of the *Church of Ireland Gazette*:

The present time being one of such deep distress and anxiety in almost every home, the mothers of the land, no matter of what class, need helping and heartening both to bear the strain and the make and keep the homes fit for the sons and daughters to return to. The Mothers' Union and all that it stands for, is out to do this in a most especial manner.⁸²

The letter draws common connections between women of different classes based on a shared experience of motherhood and makes explicit the domestic roles of mothers in wartime. The reference to maintaining the homes for the return of the daughters, as well as the sons, suggests that it was maternity, marriage and age that dictated women's responsibilities. The younger unmarried generation were free to leave the home to participate in a parallel war service to that of their brothers.

Girls' Friendly Society

The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) was another significant Anglican women's organisation in Ireland. Initially established in England in 1874, the Irish society was founded in 1877. It aimed to protect young Church of Ireland girls by training them in religious principles and domestic duty.⁸³ Its specific objectives were the following: 'To band together in one society women and girls as associates and members for mutual help (religious and secular), for sympathy and prayer and to encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers, temperance and thrift'.⁸⁴ Walsh describes it as one of the largest female organisations in early twentieth century Ireland with branches in every large urban centre.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Ibid., 4 Dec. 1914.

⁸¹ Ibid., 11 Dec. 1914.

⁸² *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 27 July 1917.

⁸³ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, p.60.

⁸⁴ *Thirty-ninth report and associates list of the Girls' Friendly society in Ireland for year ending 31st December 1915* (Dublin, 1916).

⁸⁵ Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin*, p.108.

In 1915 it had a membership of 16,010 women dispersed across 510 parishes and 234 branches.⁸⁶

The Girls' Friendly Society, like the Mothers' Union, was an essentially conservative organisation, in that it advocated a traditional view of women's role in society. Luddy has described the society's 'maternalistic' attitude, the way it supported the barriers of class divisions and its emphasis on women's domestic role.⁸⁷ In common with the Mothers' Union, the GFS was closely associated with the Church of Ireland hierarchy. Its presidents were the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin while the vice-presidents included other bishops. However the real power rested with the Central Council which was entirely composed of women, the majority from the aristocracy. An overlap in membership can be seen between the MU and the GFS with the Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava and the Lady Clonbrock, for example, serving on the councils of each.⁸⁸ The two organisations frequently cooperated with each other as seen in the vigilance work discussed below but also in the organisation of events such as prayer services.⁸⁹

The GFS took a similar approach to the war to that of the Mothers' Union, continuing their own work as much as possible but also engaging in activities aimed at assisting with the war effort. One of the immediate effects of the outbreak of war was the decision to retain the current heads of department in their roles until the war's end as due to the 'unsettled state of affairs' it was difficult to get anyone to undertake new work.⁹⁰ As the war progressed a number of existing committee members resigned from their roles due to their involvement in war work.⁹¹ Although supportive of the participation of its members in the war effort, the Central Council of the GFS was reluctant to place too much pressure on their members to support outside causes. For example, the executive committee suggested in 1915 and 1916 that the GFS should organise a collection among members in Ireland to support the work done by the society in England in providing hostels for munitions workers and recreation rooms for soldiers. At both instances the Central Council rejected the suggestion, feeling that it would be superfluous and unwise to make an appeal for funds to Irish members who had already done so much to support the war effort.⁹² However it was

⁸⁶ *Thirty-ninth report and associates list of the Girls' Friendly society*, p.3.

⁸⁷ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, p.61.

⁸⁸ *Thirty-ninth report and associates list of the Girls' Friendly society*; minute book of the General Council of the Mothers' Union of Ireland, 1912-21.

⁸⁹ For example, see *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 30 Mar. 1917.

⁹⁰ RCBL, MS 578: Minute book of the Executive Committee of the Girls' Friendly Society of Ireland 1906-1920, 22 Oct. 1914.

⁹¹ See for example the resignation of Mrs Walsh due to her work with the Princess Patricia Hospital for wounded soldiers, minute book of the Executive Committee of the Girls' Friendly Society of Ireland 1906-1920, 17 Oct. 1917.

⁹² RCBL, MS 578: Minute book of the executive committee of the Girls' Friendly Society, 13 Apr. 1916; minute book of the Central Council of the Girls' Friendly Society, 14 Apr. 1915 and 17 May 1916

agreed in 1918 to make an appeal on behalf of the War Emergency Fund of the GFS in England on the basis that it supported many Irish girls working in munitions factories in England.⁹³

The organisation was more willing than the MU to be used to promote war work for women on behalf of the government, for example in 1918 they gave their full support to a request from the Ministry of Labour to help with recruiting women in Ireland for the war services.⁹⁴ They also became involved in the War Savings scheme, establishing twenty-three GFS War Savings Associations, which had invested over £3,000 in War Savings Certificates by November 1918.⁹⁵

The annual report for 1915-16 gives some insight into the wartime activities of the Girls' Friendly Society in Ireland.⁹⁶ They followed a very similar pattern to the Mothers' Union with branches attempting to maintain their own activities while also participating in war relief activities. Each diocesan committee of the GFS reported involvement in work for the war effort in areas such as the manufacture of comforts for soldiers at the front and prisoners of war, the provision of support for Belgian refugees and soldiers' families and training in nursing and first aid with the Red Cross. In common with the Mothers' Union, some of this work was performed under the auspices of the Girls' Friendly Society and some through outside organisations. Locality was important in dictating the activities. For example, the Ardstraw branch in Derry worked exclusively to provide comforts for the Inniskilling Fusiliers.⁹⁷ This local dimension was a common feature of war service, facilitating a personal identification with the international war effort.

The war disrupted the usual activities of the society and had a varied impact upon membership. In 1915 four dioceses reported a decline in membership numbers while the Portlaw branch in Cashel and the Ballyshannon branch in Derry held very irregular or no meetings due to members being occupied with war work.⁹⁸ However five dioceses reported an increase in membership and a number of new branches were established.⁹⁹ The Girls' Friendly Society diocesan council for Armagh reported in November 1916 that their membership had increased by 211 to 2,189 in 1916 and that two new branches had been established.¹⁰⁰ Clogher diocese reported in May 1917 that their work for the past year had

⁹³ Minute book of the Executive committee of the Girls' Friendly Society, 16 Jan. 1918; minute book of the Central Council of the Girls' Friendly Society, 20 Feb. 1918.

⁹⁴ Minute book of the Executive committee of the Girls' Friendly Society, 16 Oct. 1918.

⁹⁵ RCBL, MS 578: Minute book of the Central Council of the Girls' Friendly Society, 21 Nov. 1917; see also *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 16 Feb. 1917, p.108.

⁹⁶ *Thirty-ninth report and associates list of the Girls' Friendly Society*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Branches in Cork, Killaloe, Kilmore and Ossory all lost membership from 1915-16.

⁹⁹ Branches in Armagh, Derry, Dublin, Meath and Tuam all experienced increases in their membership between 1915-16.

¹⁰⁰ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 17 Nov. 1916.

been 'very satisfactory'.¹⁰¹ Finances proved an increasingly serious issue however, as the war wore on. At an Armagh diocesan meeting of the GFS in 1918, it was announced that fundraising was required to aid the society's finances while the Cork diocesan branch organised a garden fete in July 1918 to assist with the debts of the society.¹⁰² The Armagh diocesan branch suffered a drop in membership in 1918, which it attributed to the long duration of the war and the amount of work connected with it. War service absorbed time and energy, which in normal times would have been expended on their own work.¹⁰³

However, as with the Mothers' Union, the GFS strove to promote the particular value of their work in wartime:

We cannot help feeling also that the high ideals set before our girls and the help thus given them towards living a pure and upright life is a work of even greater importance now that it has even been before and that the future welfare of the Empire will depend more largely on our women and girls and be more deeply marked by their influence and example than it has been in the past.¹⁰⁴

The GFS viewed the involvement of its members and associates in work for war effort as affirmation of the important place of the organisation in Irish society stating that they were thankful the GFS had proved of 'so great value at this time' and expressed the hope that the many women who had become involved in voluntary work for the first time might 'when peace relieves them from their present labours, be induced to join our ranks and bring fresh life and new strength into this society'.¹⁰⁵ This associational activity was undertaken in local, national and imperial networks. It helped to develop a sense of community among Anglican women in Ireland but also served as a connection to Britain and to the British Empire. The reference to the 'welfare of the Empire' in the above quote is indicative of the strength of the imperial identity of the organisation.¹⁰⁶

Young Women's Christian Association

Another similar Anglican organisation was the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which established a Dublin branch in 1866. The Association provided homes in major urban centres for girls awaiting domestic or nursing situations through the labour exchanges.¹⁰⁷ During the war it followed the pattern of the MU and the GFS in continuing their own activities as much as possible but also endeavouring to assist with the war effort. As early as September 1914 it was realised that the war would negatively impact upon their

¹⁰¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 18 May 1917.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 26 Apr. 1918; 31 May 1918.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 6 Dec. 1918.

¹⁰⁴ *Thirty-ninth report and associates list of the Girls' Friendly society*, p.3.

¹⁰⁵ *Thirty-ninth report and associates list of the Girls' Friendly society* pp 3-4; see also *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 25 June 1915.

¹⁰⁶ Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin*, p.150.

¹⁰⁷ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, p.59.

finances and so it was decided to suspend their plan to move premises.¹⁰⁸ They continued to hold quarterly conferences in Dublin. For example, the 1917 review claimed that the YWCA had held eight conferences for secretaries and workers in various parts of Ireland in 1916.¹⁰⁹

Some aspects of their work had increased in wartime. For example, they established a Central Girls' Club in Dublin in October 1915, which had a membership of over sixty by the following May. Attendance at their canteen had also grown from six to fifty.¹¹⁰ Although their report for 1915 suggests that bible study groups remained the main activity of members in rural districts in Ireland, the YWCA also engaged directly with specific wartime issues.¹¹¹ For example, attempts to improve the welfare of munitions workers were discussed at the October 1916 conference.¹¹² They were also particularly concerned with reaching out to girls living and working in areas with high numbers of soldiers.¹¹³ The Dublin branch of the YWCA offered their holiday house to the British National Council of the YWCA for the housing of refugees but this was declined as being unnecessary.¹¹⁴ In 1918 the association provided an emergency hostel at Kingstown for girls travelling to England. It also provided a club for members of the WAAC based in Belfast and Dublin, supporting 792 girls in Belfast and providing meals for 2,000 girls in Dublin.¹¹⁵

The YWCA directory for 1918 indicates a very active organisation in Ireland with very large numbers of women involved in the association in an administrative capacity in roles such as vice-presidents, council members, committee members, district referees, organisers of the various different departments, as well as branch secretaries. There were institutes and hostels in Armagh, Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Lisburn, Lurgan and Waterford and summer holiday homes in Wicklow, Clare, Down and Waterford. There were branches of the Association in every county in Ireland.¹¹⁶

These three societies cooperated together in the organisation of the vigilance campaigns discussed in Chapter Four. This work was begun before the war due to widespread concerns about the dangers for young Irish women travelling away from home seeking work and the threat of the white slave trade.¹¹⁷ In 1913 the Joint GFS and MU Vigilance Committee was formed as part of the Irish Girls' Protection Crusade. They became responsible for the salary of a social worker who attended the Broadstone station in

¹⁰⁸ RCBL, MS 624: Minute Book of the Irish Divisional Council of the YWCA 1913-14; 23 Sept. 1914.

¹⁰⁹ British Library, *YWCA Newsletter*, May 1916; IWM WWS B.0.3 16/70: *A review*, 1917.

¹¹⁰ British Library, *YWCA Newsletter*, May 1916.

¹¹¹ IWM WWS B.O.3. 16/33 *A review*, 1915.

¹¹² *YWCA Newsletter*, Oct. 1916.

¹¹³ IWM WWS B.0.3 16/70: *A review*, 1917.

¹¹⁴ Minute Book of the Irish Divisional Council of the YWCA 1913-14; 1 Oct. 1914.

¹¹⁵ C. Elaine Graham, *For such a time as this: background and highlights of the Irish YWCA* (Dublin, 2004), p.20.

¹¹⁶ IWM WWS B.O.3 16/74 *YWCA directory*, 1918, pp 108-128.

¹¹⁷ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish society*, p. 163.

Dublin and met girls travelling from rural Ireland.¹¹⁸ The work significantly expanded in wartime and in 1915 the GFS reported in 1915 that 4,439 girls were assisted by the Vigilance committee during the year and that 'in very many instances [girls] were rescued from serious danger'.¹¹⁹

At the 1916 annual meeting the Joint Vigilance committee reported that they had accomplished a great deal at the North Wall helping girls going to munitions work in England such as arranging passports, directing country girls and helping girls who had run away from home. Similar work was also being conducted in Belfast 'where they had some dreadful cases to deal with'.¹²⁰ The issue of girls travelling to England needing protection was again raised in 1917, the committee stating that the need for workers was very urgent due to the large numbers of girls crossing to England and the increased temptations caused by the groups of soldiers also crossing to and fro.¹²¹ In February and April 1918 the Irish Girls' Protection Crusade received a grant from the Treasury Office to aid their work assisting women travelling from Dublin or Belfast to government work in England.¹²² Although denied a further grant in November 1918, the Treasury described the organisation as 'very worthwhile and well intentioned'.¹²³ At the 1918 meeting, held less than two weeks after the Armistice, the organisation emphasised the continuing importance of their work in the immediate post-war period. It was envisaged that the work of the committee would continue for at least three more years.¹²⁴

Vigilance campaigns represented societal anxieties about the increased wartime visibility of women in the public sphere and in the workforce. Under the guise of protection, the organisations sought to impose control over women's movements and autonomy. Social class and religion intersected to create particular tensions. The women involved in the executive positions of the MU, GFS and YWCA were middle and upper-class Protestants while the women they sought to assist were typically working-class and frequently Catholic, resulting in the Catholic press expressing concern about the proselytising threat of the initiatives. Chapter Four noted that much of the work of the women's patrols concerned pre-existing issues that were directly caused by the war. This was also the case with the vigilance campaigns organised by the Girls' Protection Crusade. The three organisations involved in the campaigns were taking advantage of the wartime situation to press their own agendas and

¹¹⁸ RCBL, MS 749: Minute book of the General Council of the Mothers' Union of Ireland 1912-21, 19 Nov. 1915; McFarlan, *The Mothers' Union in Ireland*, p.66.

¹¹⁹ *Thirty-ninth report and associates list of the Girls' Friendly society in Ireland*, p.17.

¹²⁰ Minute book of the General Council of the Mothers' Union of Ireland 1912-21, 17 Nov. 1916.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 22 Nov. 1917.

¹²² TNA T 1/12212/15799; T 1/12212/4902: Letters from Ministry of Labour to Treasury, Feb. and Apr. 1918.

¹²³ T 1/12212/41255: Correspondence with the Treasury regarding funding for the Irish Girls' Protection Crusade, Nov. 1918.

¹²⁴ Minute book of the General Council of the Mothers' Union of Ireland 1912-21, 22 Nov. 1918.

to seek funding for their work. This was also evident with some of the major women's secular organisations in Ireland during the war.

Secular women's organisations

United Irishwomen

Irishwomen's associational culture was not confined to church-based organisations and activities. The Women's National Health Association (WNHA) and the United Irishwomen (UI) were two major secular women's organisations, operating in Ireland during the Great War. The UI was established in 1910 with a branch in Wexford but quickly expanded across Ireland.¹²⁵ Sixty-nine branches were established between 1910 and 1914.¹²⁶ The UI arose out of prolonged debates in the *Irish Homestead* about the role of women and domesticity in rural Ireland.¹²⁷ Although the UI refused to allow men on their committees, the organisation was used and supported by the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, which Joanna Bourke describes as a 'bastion of male bureaucracy'.¹²⁸ Unlike the previous organisations discussed, the UI was non-religious in its affiliations, and it was non-political in the sense that it was not affiliated to either nationalist or unionist ideology and involved members from diverse ideological backgrounds.

D.A.J. MacPherson's examination of the socioeconomic and religious backgrounds of UI members in the pre-war period has revealed a mix of Protestants and Catholics among the members and among the branch leadership. Catholics made up 53.9% of the members in his sample of 230 UI members while 67% of his identified branch leaders were Catholic. He suggests the non-sectarian outlook of the organisation could have made it an attractive prospect for women seeking a patriotic outlook for their public activism.¹²⁹ Contemporaries perceived the organisation to be dominated by upper-class women in its early years but both MacPherson and Bourke point to the broadly middle-class background of the majority of its members.¹³⁰

Although MacPherson suggests the organisation had limited appeal, citing its 1914 membership of 1,500, the influence of the organisation extended far beyond its membership through its classes and other work in the local community.¹³¹ They taught cookery, promoted temperance; disseminated co-operative principles, organised charity, secured competent

¹²⁵ James MacPherson, "The United Irishwomen and the advanced nationalist women's press" in Raymond Gillespie (ed.) *The remaking of modern Ireland 1750-1950: Beckett prize essays in Irish history* (Dublin, 2004), p.211.

¹²⁶ D.A.J. MacPherson, *Women and the Irish nation: gender, culture, and Irish identity 1890-1914* (London, 2012), p.56.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.53.

¹²⁸ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, p.240.

¹²⁹ MacPherson, *Women & the Irish nation*, p.65.

¹³⁰ MacPherson, *Women & the Irish nation*, p.64; Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, p.240.

¹³¹ MacPherson, "The United Irishwomen & the advanced nationalist women's press", p.202

sanitary officers and ensured women received proper representation on local boards and obtained legal assistance or redress when required.¹³² The organisation promoted a traditional view of women's role in society, through the emphasis on domesticity and in the way it distanced itself from the suffrage movement. This conservative ideology was expressed by Horace Plunkett, one of the UI's main supporters, in his suggestion that such work might have the benefit of discouraging women from getting involved in the suffrage movement.¹³³ However MacPherson argues convincingly that such public activism created a platform for women to gain power and influence in public life through involvement with local government, Boards of Guardians and other public organisations 'deemed compatible with female domesticity'.¹³⁴

Joanna Bourke argues that the outbreak of war in 1914 heralded the decline of the UI, which persisted until its revival in the 1920s. However the UI's annual returns to the Register of Friendly Societies demonstrate the continued strength of the organisation in wartime. The membership figures are significantly lower than those given in the annual reports, being presumably based on fully paid up members, but they give a useful impression of the war's impact upon membership. They indicate that, apart from a small dip in 1915, membership of the organisation increased over the course of the war and rose significantly between 1917 and 1918.¹³⁵

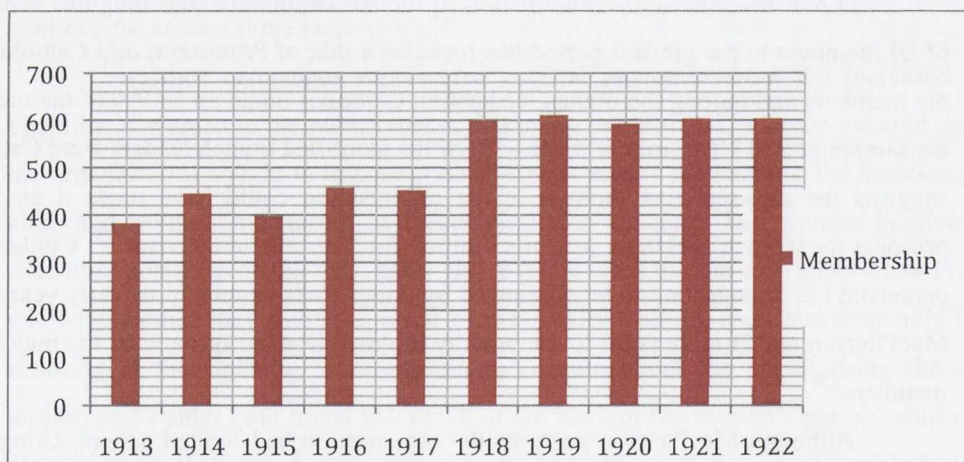


Fig. 7.1 Membership of the United Irishwomen 1913-1922

There was a 24.5% increase in the membership between 1917 and 1918. The numbers remained steady over the following four years, despite the political turbulence. The branch

¹³² Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, p.241.

¹³³ Horace Plunkett, *The United Irishwomen, their place, work and ideals* (Dublin, 1911), p.11; Further evidence of their conservatism can be seen in the UI's declining of an invitation to speak at a meeting of the Irish Women's Reform League in 1913 on the excuse that 'we must keep clear of anything controversial': Diarmaid Ferriter, *Mothers, maidens and myths: a history of the I.C.A.* (Dublin, 1995), p. 7.

¹³⁴ MacPherson, *Women & the Irish nation*, pp 55-56.

¹³⁵ NAI Register of Friendly Societies, F/1230 A: Returns of the United Irishwomen 1913-22.

network fell from forty-eight in 1914 to forty-one in 1918 but membership and branch activities generally increased over the course of the war.

Bourke further states that by the end of 1914 the organisation had devoted itself wholly to war work.¹³⁶ This claim also appears in two histories of the organisation but it has been overstated.¹³⁷ Despite an initial concentration on war work, the pre-war activities of the organisation in fact gained new momentum as the war continued. In the early months of the war the United Irishwomen stressed the benefit of an already existing organisation, with branches throughout the country ready to assist with the war effort. An Emergency Committee was established at their headquarters in Lincoln Place, Dublin. The central office gathered material, which was provided to members to construct garments and comforts for soldiers. Although the majority of this work was voluntary and unpaid, the United Irishwomen also provided paid employment for women in need. The organisation sent parcels to soldiers, refugees and to hospitals arising from this work.¹³⁸ Funds for their other activities were diverted into the war effort. For example the county Wexford UI Council reacted to the outbreak of war by suspending schemes such as the goat club, the organisation of milk depots and the provision of cocoa for school children, in order to apply themselves to exclusively to war work. The members devoted themselves to raising money for an ambulance and to knitting comforts for the troops.¹³⁹

However an examination of the organisation's files, annual reports and reporting of it in the press, suggests that after the initial few months of war, the organisation began to once again turn its attention to improving rural life. For example, while the Connemara sub-committee of the United Irishwomen suspended its meetings in the initial months of the war, by January 1915 it was once more having regular meetings, which focused on the provision of a midwife to the Connemara islands.¹⁴⁰ They also appointed a new instructress in the summer of 1915, an indicator of an active organisation.¹⁴¹ This return to their own work may have been due to an acceptance that the war would last longer than initially expected and a realisation that the work of the UI was particularly valuable in wartime. Wartime issues of food supply and price inflation focused attention on household management and rural produce. The relevance of the UI was emphasised at the annual general meeting in April 1915. It was stated that the society was 'very much alive', had indeed gained ground during the previous twelve months despite the many difficulties it encountered, and that it had

¹³⁶ Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, p.241.

¹³⁷ See Aileen Heverin, *I.C.A.: The Irish Countrywomen's Association, a history 1910-2000* (Dublin, 2000), p.50; Sarah McNamara, *Those intrepid United Irishwomen: pioneers of the Irish Countrywomen's Association* (Limerick, 1995), p.81.

¹³⁸ *Irish Homestead*, 26 Dec. 1914.

¹³⁹ *Irish Homestead*, 12 June 1915.

¹⁴⁰ NLI MS 27,647: Minute book of the Connemara Sub-committee of the United Irishwomen 1914-15; see also *Connaught Tribune*, 8 Jan. 1916.

¹⁴¹ NLI MS 43,342: Letter from Constance Pimm to Miss Brunton, 15 June 1915.

demonstrated 'more clearly than ever the necessity which exists for its work throughout the country'.¹⁴²

The society was praised by Mr Justice Barton for its response to the outbreak of war in helping the wounded and refugees; promoting the growth of vegetables among the public; and encouraging women to take a 'suitable share in matters pertaining to rural life'.¹⁴³ At the United Irishwomen annual council in August 1915 Lady Fingall described the two duties of the UI in wartime: conserving the food supply and the care of the rising generation. She argued that the ideal of cooperation promoted by the UI was the best means of fulfilling the responsibility placed upon women in wartime.¹⁴⁴ The *Irish Independent* praised their efforts to 'stop every leakage in the national housekeeping' and described the work of the society as a fine example of 'practical patriotism'.¹⁴⁵

The United Irishwomen executive encouraged their members to view their involvement with the UI as a form of war service, akin to Red Cross work. The competing calls for their efforts were evident in the case of Annie Brunton, a gardening instructor for the United Irishwomen. She was living in London at the outbreak of the war but was requested by Mary Spring-Rice in September 1914 to return to Ireland to help teach the poor to grow vegetables for food. She used military language to describe her work with the UI: 'I've been ordered to the front! I've got my marching orders'. Brunton complained that she would much rather be a nurse than do the 'horrid old gardening again' and that it seemed 'so inglorious to run away to Ireland to grow vegetables in cottage gardens'. However she reconciled herself to the work with the consolation that she was still contributing to the war effort through her UI work.¹⁴⁶

Other women were inspired by their participation in the war effort to join the UI. This was evident in the case of Lucy Franks. Lucy Franks was involved with a war supply depot in Mountrath, which provided comforts and garments for soldiers belonging to the Leinster Regiment. This was her first effort in public affairs and she became a prominent figure in the local war effort. When an organiser from the United Irishwomen visited the town in 1917 Franks was asked to attend the meeting. She became interested in the association and soon became a member along with others from their local war supply depot.¹⁴⁷ Franks later played a very significant role in the United Irishwomen (later the Irish Countrywomen's Association) and was elected its president in 1942.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² *Irish Homestead*, 24 Apr. 1915.

¹⁴³ *Irish Independent*, 16 Apr. 1915; *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Apr. 1915; *Irish Homestead*, 24 Apr. 1915.

¹⁴⁴ *Irish Homestead*, 21 Aug. 1915.

¹⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, 16 Apr. 1915.

¹⁴⁶ NLI MS 13620 (2): Diary of Annie Brunton, 29 Aug. 1914.

¹⁴⁷ Heverin, *I.C.A.: The Irish Countrywomen's Association*, pp 203-206.

¹⁴⁸ Brigid Hourican, "Lucy (Gertrude) Franks" in Maguire and Quinn (eds) *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

Individual branches attempted to continue and expand their pre-war work as much as possible while also emphasising the role of the organisation in the war effort. Some placed more emphasis on their own activities and others on war relief. For example, the Dunany and Togher branch established a cocoa scheme for local school children in February 1915 but their main focus was war relief activities such as an egg collection for wounded soldiers, fundraising for Belgian refugees and making pillows for the Red Cross. In contrast, the Cappagh branch continued with their pre-war activities as much as possible and avoided being diverted into war work. For instance it held a horticultural and poultry show in the summer of 1915 with 1,200 people in attendance. In 1917 it was reported that the branch had made 'wonderful progress'. It had ninety-four members and was constantly growing. In 1916 it held an annual show with 276 entries, organised several well-attended instructive classes on domestic economy, poultry and agriculture, and at the start of 1917 was making plans to start an egg depot. The Cappagh show continued to expand, with a very large attendance reported in 1917 and the number of entries reaching almost three hundred. In 1918 the branch reported they would need to expand their local hall after the war to accommodate their growing membership and the high numbers attending their classes.¹⁴⁹

As the war progressed the society expanded rather than declined, contrary to Bourke's view. In 1916 it was reported that the UI had forty-four branches spread across rural Ireland. They had ten village nurses, eleven milk depots and a scheme for providing cocoa for school children. An expert gardening organiser had been at work in Limerick, Clare and Wexford with a view to increasing food production. Emergency work for the war had also been carried out 'with much devotion'.¹⁵⁰ The annual report for 1915-16 offered a very positive outlook on the society's future:

The report of the United Irishwomen for 1915-16 is a story of rebuilding. It shows us the society has persisted and indeed made considerable progress during a time of much discouragement and is now, after two years of war, stronger than ever and bravely pushing forward into new activities.

It reported sixty-one new members since the last report and ten new branches. In the previous twelve months the society had established a successful cooperative store at Warrenpoint, an egg depot in Enniscorthy, two bee societies in Connemara; formed a junior branch named the United Irish Children and established a herb-growers' association which by June 1917 had 650 members and branches in nineteen counties.¹⁵¹ They had expanded their milk depots, selling 6,688 more gallons of milk in 1915 than 1914, and their village-nursing scheme, and had begun a cheese-making scheme.¹⁵² At the 1917 annual meeting the

¹⁴⁹ *Irish Homestead* 12 Feb. 1916; 15 Jan. 1916; 3 Mar. 1917; 25 Aug. 1917; 2 Mar. 1918.

¹⁵⁰ *Irish Homestead* 18 Mar. 1916.

¹⁵¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 July 1916; *Irish Homestead*, 23 June 1917.

¹⁵² *Irish Homestead*, 15 July 1916; 3 Feb. 1917; 20 Apr. 1918.

Countess of Fingall stated 'never during their existence as an association was there a greater need for the united energies of Irishwomen than now. Work was piling up for the hands of all women in the anxious period that was before them'.¹⁵³ The *Lady of the House* reported in September 1917 that the UI was constantly increasing its activities, and described it as an 'eminently practical and patriotic organisation'.¹⁵⁴

Diarmaid Ferriter has suggested that the UI were reluctant to cooperate with government schemes during the war. However there are in fact numerous examples of cooperation between the UI and the British government.¹⁵⁵ In September 1915 the UI were asked to alert their members to positions as forwarding superintendents for the War Office where they would be responsible for the delivery of hay and straw from rural districts that had been requisitioned for the War Office. This work was taken up by members of the organisation including the secretary of the Dunany and Togher branch in county Louth.¹⁵⁶ The Countess of Fingall also pledged the support of the United Irishwomen for the proposed Women's National Service scheme organised by Maud Walsh. The first branch of the Irishwomen's Agricultural Association of National Service was established in Co. Wexford, also the birthplace of the United Irishwomen. Among the committee members was Mrs. Anita Lett, first president of the United Irishwomen.¹⁵⁷ This association aimed to increase food production and its objectives corresponded very closely with those of the United Irishwomen.

In common with the other organisations discussed, funding was a significant issue in wartime. Their end of year balance declined by 15% between 1914 and 1915.¹⁵⁸ At the 1915 AGM it was stated that their work was curtailed due to lack of funds.¹⁵⁹ The *Irish Homestead* reported in 1916 that the society's grants were wholly inadequate to carry out their programme and that because many of the society's members were drawn from the poorer classes; they were unable to assist with the funding problem. The paper's editor strongly urged its readers to support the organisation, arguing that to wait until the war's end would be too late and that to 'help now is to help the future of this country'. The difficult situation was acknowledged: 'in no time do we remember more calls for help on every side than are heard at present'.¹⁶⁰

In 1915 the association received £1,500 from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. Their application had emphasised the severe financial difficulties caused by the war due to

¹⁵³ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 Apr. 1917.

¹⁵⁴ *Lady of the House*, 15 Sept. 1917.

¹⁵⁵ Ferriter, *Mothers, Maidens and Myths*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁶ *Irish Homestead*, 11 Sept. 1915; 12 Feb. 1916.

¹⁵⁷ NAI CSO RP 1922/3950: Department of National Service: women's section.

¹⁵⁸ F/1230 A: Returns of the United Irishwomen, 1913-22.

¹⁵⁹ *Irish Homestead*, 24 Apr. 1915.

¹⁶⁰ *Irish Homestead*, 11 Mar. 1916, 15 July 1916.

the competing fundraising demands.¹⁶¹ In 1917 members were asked to increase their subscriptions to support the organisation. In 1919, however, the United Irishwomen benefited from the closure of the Central Bureau of Women's Employment with the UI receiving a considerable portion of the Bureau's remaining funds.¹⁶² The nurses' fund of the United Irishwomen also benefited in the immediate aftermath of the war from donations of surpluses left over from war charities.¹⁶³ For example, they received £750 in two donations from the joint committee of the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association in October and December 1919.¹⁶⁴

Women's National Health Association

The Women's National Health Association (WNHA) was another very prominent secular women's organisation during the Great War. They took a very similar approach to the United Irishwomen to the outbreak of war: becoming involved in work for the war effort but also emphasising the importance of their own work in wartime. The WNHA was established in 1907, under the guidance of the Countess of Aberdeen Ishbel Gordon, wife of the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. It was initially primarily focused on the problem of tuberculosis, a very significant problem in early twentieth-century Ireland, but it also aimed to raise public awareness of matters regarding public health and to promote the healthy rearing of children.¹⁶⁵ By 1911 the WNHA had 155 branches and almost 18,000 members across Ireland.¹⁶⁶ Their work was heavily influenced by neo-hygienist doctrines, which viewed maternal ignorance as central to high infant mortality rates. They focused on educating women about public health, realising that 'the women in charge of homes of Ireland had more power than anyone else'.¹⁶⁷ From 1908, they operated mother and baby clubs in Belfast and Dublin. At the clubs, babies were weighed and doctors were available to provide medical advice. Home visits by nurses to investigate feeding and hygiene regimes also took place.¹⁶⁸

The initial response of the WNHA to the war was to expand their range of activities, beyond their original remit. For example, they secured a War Office contract to make 22,000

¹⁶¹ *Annual reports of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust* (London, 1915), p.61.

¹⁶² NLI MS 39,816/3, *Our book: ICA Golden Jubilee* (Dublin, 1960), p.50.

¹⁶³ Sarah McNamara, *Those intrepid United Irishwomen: pioneers of the Irish Countrywomen's Association* (Limerick, 1995), p.81.

¹⁶⁴ NAI F/1230 B: Letters from M.R. Scott and E.F. Blandford, joint committee of the BRCS and SJAA, to Miss Emily Hogg, UI Nursing branch, 22 Oct. 1919 and 23 Dec.1919.

¹⁶⁵ NLI, *Women's National Health Association of Ireland: Golden Jubilee 1907-1957* (Dublin, 1958), p.1.

¹⁶⁶ Earner-Byrne, *Mother & Child*, p.15.

¹⁶⁷ *Women's National Health Association of Ireland: Golden Jubilee 1907-1957*, p.1; Miller, *Reforming food in post-famine Ireland*, p.157.

¹⁶⁸ Coey Bigger, *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust*, p.74; *Sláinte: Journal of the WNHA of Ireland*, i, (1909), pp 13-14.

army shirts and opened four workrooms in Dublin, employing over one hundred women. They also employed the wives of soldiers to make items for Red Cross Hospitals.¹⁶⁹ Caitriona Clear suggests that the WNHA became diverted into war work at the expense of its work in aid of mothers and children.¹⁷⁰ The annual report for 1917 however, demonstrates the continuation of the organisation's own work. The association had 135 branches in 1917 and its work included a goat society, playgrounds, clinics for school children, and babies' clubs as well as the sanatoria at Peamount and Rossclare. During the war 2,203 patients were treated at Peamount and 540 at Rossclare, despite the financial difficulties encountered by these institutions due to the increased cost of commodities in wartime.¹⁷¹ Only nine branches were reported as being in abeyance for the war.¹⁷² Table 7.1 shows the extent to which the different branches continued with their own work during the war:¹⁷³

Table 7.1: Number of WNHA branches with maternal and infant welfare schemes¹⁷⁴

Schemes	1916-17	1918-19	1919-20
Child welfare schemes	32	25	29
Babies' clubs	23	16	16
Queen Victoria Jubilee nurses	28	18	23
Fully trained nurses	7	5	9
Midwives	6	3	3
Baby shows and baby competitions	3	7	/
Classes for mothers	24	16	10
Milk depots	35	31	20
Meals for school children	8	6	6

Although this table indicates a decrease in most activities between 1916-17 and 1917-18, it nevertheless represents a very active society, committed to continuing its own agenda despite the difficult conditions of wartime. The association faced two major issues: decreased finances due to the fall off of donations after the outbreak of war and the departure of Lady Aberdeen in 1915. The Aberdeen's' departure in 1915 was undoubtedly a setback for the organisation; however their absence from Ireland did not mean the end of their interest in the WNHA. Lady Aberdeen remained president of the association until her death in 1939 and continued to be actively involved. The Aberdeens also fundraised for the

¹⁶⁹ *Eighth annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland* (Dublin, 1915), pp 8-9.

¹⁷⁰ Clear, "Fewer ladies and more women", pp 167-168.

¹⁷¹ *Eleventh annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland* (Dublin, 1919).

¹⁷² *Ninth annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland* (Dublin, 1917), p.10.

¹⁷³ There were no reports of the WNHA printed between 1915 and 1917 and reports prior to 1917 do not contain listing of branch activity.

¹⁷⁴ *Ninth annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, p.8; *Eleventh annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, pp 71-73; *Twelfth annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland* (Dublin, 1920), pp 59-61.

WNHA on their travels in the U.S.A and Canada, raising £19,847 in total.¹⁷⁵ The organisation was also affected by the loss of personnel to the war services, in common with the other women's organisations discussed. For example, Dr Prudence Gaffikin had to take a leave of absence from her role as medical secretary with the association, due to her enlistment with the Royal Army Medical Service in Malta.¹⁷⁶

Examination of the annual reports of the Omagh branch of the WNHA gives some insight into the impact of the war on their activities. This was a large branch with four officers and thirty-two committee members during the period 1913-16. Pre-war activities included providing cocoa and bun luncheons in school (although this was reported to be insufficiently appreciated by the children).¹⁷⁷ The 1916 report noted that since the outbreak of war, the ladies of Omagh had 'risen wholeheartedly to work connected with the Great War'.¹⁷⁸ The branch became actively involved in the war effort from 1914 with committee members joining the local division of the Red Cross, helping at the war hospital supply depot, collecting sphagnum moss, and fundraising for their local auxiliary hospital. As a consequence, the main work of the WNHA was placed on hold and its own fundraising appeals postponed. However the branch president expressed the hope in March 1919 that the ending of the war would mean a return to public health work by the committee and a growth in membership by young people.¹⁷⁹

The hoped for revival did not immediately materialise. The branch membership declined from thirty-two in 1916 to twenty-seven in 1919 and suffered a further decline over the following three years, to twenty in 1922.¹⁸⁰ The experience of the Omagh branch demonstrates the level of commitment to war work among the members and shows how female-specific concerns became subsumed into the war effort. However the war also provided an opportunity for particular maternal and health issues to be highlighted.

Chapter Three described the efforts of the WNHA to provide assistance for mothers and babies and their involvement in campaigns to introduce reforms in maternal and infant health care. The WNHA had always been concerned with infant health but this work took on greater importance in wartime. In December 1914 the organisation described the particular significance of reducing infant mortality in wartime:

¹⁷⁵ *Tenth annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland* (Dublin, 1918), p.4; *Eleventh annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, p.105; *Lady of the House*, 15 May 1917.

¹⁷⁶ *Ninth annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, p.4.

¹⁷⁷ PRONI D1884/1/1/4: *WNHA Omagh branch report from Oct. 1913 to Feb. 1916* (Omagh, 1916), p.3.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ D1884/1/1/4: *WNHA Omagh branch report from Oct. 1913 to Feb. 1916* p.4; D1884/1/1/5: *WNHA Omagh branch report from Mar. 1916 to Mar. 1919* (Omagh, 1919), pp 3-6.

¹⁸⁰ *WNHA Omagh branch report from Oct. 1913 to Feb. 1916* ; *WNHA Omagh branch report from Mar. 1916 to Mar. 1919*; D1884/1/1/6: *WNHA Omagh branch report from Apr. 1919 to Aug. 1922* (Omagh, 1922).

Our future depends, to an extent it has rarely depended before, upon the coming generation. In these circumstances it is nothing less than social crime to suffer the terrible neglect and waste of our child-life, which it is one of the main purposes of the WNHA to combat.¹⁸¹

Chapter Three also mentioned their efforts in relation to providing a clean and affordable milk supply in 1917. The provision of baby clubs also expanded in wartime.¹⁸² The association had nine baby clubs under its auspices by 1917 and was working closely with the Local Government Board Maternity and Child Welfare schemes.¹⁸³ Their operation had extended from the cities to rural Ireland and there were baby clubs in Limerick, Bray, Carrick-on-Suir, Coleraine and Naas by 1915.¹⁸⁴ WNHA branches involved with the local authority Child Welfare schemes included Ballymena, Blackrock, Bray, Carlow, Carrick-on-Suir, Clonmel, Coleraine, Pembroke and Listowel, further indicating the geographic spread of the organisation.¹⁸⁵ Listowel was in fact one of the most active branches of the association, after Dublin city.¹⁸⁶

The Women's National Health Association played a pivotal role in the organisation of Baby Week in 1917, discussed in Chapter Three, which was also supported by the United Irishwomen. Table 7.1 indicates that the association's focus on maternal and child welfare was at its height in 1917 and thereafter began to decline. This is in keeping with broader societal concern with the issue, which peaked in 1917. However the WNHA continued to promote the issue in the immediate post-war period. The eleventh annual general meeting of the WNHA in April 1919 focused on the importance of their child welfare work with Lady Aberdeen describing how the world was 'at last awakening to the urgent necessity of dealing nationally and internationally with the great questions of public health'.¹⁸⁷ The same day a conference was held on maternity and child welfare work in Ireland where Sir Andrew Horne described the important work of baby clubs in combating infant mortality especially in Dublin city.¹⁸⁸

Their work in infant welfare did not receive universal support. The central role of Lady Aberdeen in the WNHA undoubtedly influenced government support of the association and gave it particular prominence. However, this same involvement made the association less appealing to advanced nationalists and republicans. They criticised and mocked Lady Aberdeen's public health work, considering it imbued with an imperialist agenda. For

¹⁸¹ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 4 Dec. 1914.

¹⁸² Coey Bigger, *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust*, p.74.

¹⁸³ *Ninth annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, p.3.

¹⁸⁴ Bigger, *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust*, p.74.

¹⁸⁵ *Ninth annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, p.3.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 10-11; *Eleventh annual report of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, pp 72-73

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.101.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.105.

example, a republican ballad from 1910 claimed her baby clubs were attempting to anglicise Irish mothers and babies.¹⁸⁹

Tensions were apparent between the WNHA and the Infant Aid Society. The Infant Aid Society (established in 1910 as the Dublin Committee for the prevention of infantile mortality) was dismissive of the WNHA baby clubs. Dr Reginald White, chairman of the Infant Aid Society, considered them unnecessary, claiming that their work could be better performed in the maternity and children's hospitals.¹⁹⁰ Despite his position as Master of the National Maternity Hospital, his attempt to win support from Sir Matthew Nathan met with little success.¹⁹¹ However, the Infant Aid society received support from the paper, *New Ireland*. In a call for immediate action to tackle the housing problem in Dublin city, the editor promoted the Infant Aid Society as the 'citizen's own society'.¹⁹² Both the WNHA and the Infant Aid Society were original Irish organisations rather than Irish branches of British based bodies. Nevertheless the increasingly republican context of wartime Ireland brought the issue of the independence of such organisations into prominence. The WNHA was closely associated with the British administration in Ireland from its inception and consequently was perceived by nationalist and republicans as having a unionist imperialist outlook.

At the same time Irish Protestant organisations chose to develop stronger links with similar associations in Britain during the war, perhaps feeling a stronger sense of common identity and purpose with their sister organisations in Britain than with the wider Catholic population in Ireland. For example the first Irish branch of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland (NUWW) was established in 1916. The NUWW was a philanthropic body, which addressed issues of work, morality, education and public health.¹⁹³ The following Irish associations were affiliated with the union by 1918: Alexandra College Guild, Girls' Friendly Society of Ireland, Irish Matrons' Association, Irish Nurse's Association, Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association, Irish Girl's Protection Crusade, Irish Women's Temperance Union and the YWCA of Ireland.¹⁹⁴ By 1919 the Ireland branch had 236 members and twenty-two affiliated local societies.¹⁹⁵

This chapter has demonstrated the very evident impact of the war on women's associational culture and the increased value placed on women's associational work in

¹⁸⁹ Maureen Keane, *Ishbel: Lady Aberdeen in Ireland*, (Newtownards, 1999), pp 157-160.

¹⁹⁰ Nathan papers: Memorandum 469, 4 Nov. 1915.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 12 Jan. 1916.

¹⁹² *New Ireland*, 26 Oct. 1918.

¹⁹³ Luddy, *Prostitution & Irish Society 1800-1940*, p.173.

¹⁹⁴ *Annual report of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland 1917-1918* (London, 1918), pp 72-74.

¹⁹⁵ *Annual report of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland 1918-1919* (London, 1919), p.45.

wartime. It demonstrates the overwhelming impact of the war on women's lives and its reach into the feminine or 'counter-sphere'. None of the associations were immune from the effects of war and all had to find ways to adapt to the new conditions. Funding was a universal difficulty, as was the loss of personnel from their organisations to the war services. However a number of women managed to continue to play an active role in both types of voluntary work. The organisations analysed in this chapter all became involved in work directly for the war effort. The organisational structure and experience of the associations helped them to provide a nationwide network of charitable endeavour. In many cases stronger links were established between the organisations in wartime with a number of shared activities taking place.

The organisations were nevertheless anxious to retain their own independence and to choose war work that promoted their own ethos. They attempted to strike a delicate balance between increasing their public profile through war work and having their identity subsumed altogether. As the war continued the associations increasingly tried to reinvigorate their pre-war work. A common theme evident in the above examination is the attempt by the various associations to emphasise the importance of their own work for the war effort, for example in areas such as vigilance patrols, infant welfare, and the promotion of food production. The war offered an opportunity for charities and philanthropic organisations to demonstrate the value of their work and the particular roles women could play in the public sphere.

The growing awareness of the value of women's voluntary and philanthropic work was also evident in Great Britain. In 1917 Violet Markham, deputy director of the Women's Section of the National Service department, outlined the importance of women's role in the 'normal social services' and the particular role of such activities in 'building up strong and healthy conditions of life and character for the population' during the time of war. Although she accepted the attraction of war work directly connected to the needs of soldiers and sailors, Markham argued that the more traditional form of social action was more necessary than ever before.¹⁹⁶

Such participation also brought personal solace to Irishwomen and provided a sense of communal identity for Protestant women in Ireland or Catholic women anxious to support the war effort. Involvement in philanthropic work helped women cope with the difficult conditions of wartime. It provided a support organisation and regular social activity, providing distraction from the anxiety of waiting for news from the front and communal support in time of bereavement. The religious associations also provided spiritual solace for their members.

¹⁹⁶ BLPES Markham papers, 4/5: Memorandum of new proposals for dealing with national service volunteers, 1917.

To what extent was the war's impact on women's associational culture specific to Ireland? The particular religious and political tensions in Ireland affected women's war service and their associational culture. Irish female philanthropy was dominated by Protestants and was associated with a unionist imperialist identity. Catholics distrusted the motives of the Protestant organisations. The war brought greater international interest in Catholic Social Action and the Irish Catholic press promoted the role of Irish Catholic women in social work as a means of combating the threat of proselytism from Protestant organisations.

The complex attitude of the Catholic Church in Ireland towards the war effort however reduced the opportunities for Catholic women to engage in church-based war relief work and to strengthen the public role of Irish Catholic women. Protestant female organisations such as the MU, GFS and the YWCA played a particularly important role in creating and sustaining a Protestant community in Ireland where Protestants were in the minority and where they felt increasingly under threat as the war progressed. The activities of the UI and the WNHA highlight however the opportunities for denominational cooperation among Irishwomen in secular social reform organisations. However the government connections of the WNHA limited their popularity and brought them into conflict with others engaged in similar reforms.

This chapter has shown how no work in the public sphere was free from the effects of the war, whether it was through funding shortfalls, loss of personnel or a shift in the priorities of the organisation. Although war service initially took priority over social reform initiatives aimed at women such as the work of the UI or the WNHA, the organisations attempted to use the war to highlight the importance of their work and to give it a new sense of urgency. The war expanded the opportunities for women's participation in religious and associational work and legitimated their increased visibility in the public sphere. Nevertheless women performed strictly gendered specific roles and engaged in initiatives that emphasised women's maternalist and domestic responsibilities.

Chapter Eight: Politics

Chapter Seven outlined how women's associational culture became drawn into the 'vortex of war' with the various associations attempting to avoid being entirely subsumed into the war effort.¹ This was also apparent with regard to women's political organisations and political activity. The war dominated political discourse and necessitated a response from those active in the suffrage, nationalist and unionist movements. It altered the means by which women conducted political activity as they adapted to wartime circumstances, while also bringing new opportunities for women's mobilisation and politicisation. This chapter draws upon Karen Hunt's and Maureen Healy's broad definition of politics and politicisation, discussed in the thesis introduction, to consider both the impact of the war on women's political organisations and the war's politicising effect on women as individuals.

Competing loyalties of suffragism, nationalism, republicanism and unionism also affected attitudes towards women's role in the war effort and provided dissenting voices against the mechanisms of wartime mobilisation. Previous chapters have primarily focused on Irishwomen's mobilisation for the war effort, whether through paid employment or voluntary war service. Although support for the war effort was more common in 1914 and 1915, dissent was nevertheless apparent, evident in the activities of the anti-war suffrage organisations, the republican branches of Cumann na mBan and subsequently in the Easter Rising and anti-conscription campaign. This chapter examines three themes relating to the political impact of the Great War on Irishwomen: nationalist, unionist or suffragist motivations for women supporting the war effort; the participation of women in acts of dissent against the war effort; and the politicising impact of war as evident in the public participation of women in the Rising, the mass demonstrations against conscription or in protests against the republican movements. It further examines the impact of the war on the achievement of female suffrage in 1918 and the reaction to the enfranchisement of women among politically active Irish women. It contrasts the opportunities for politicisation offered by the nationalist and unionist movements and argues that the differing approaches to the war effort resulted in the further polarisation of unionist Ulster and southern Ireland.

The chapter questions the extent to which Irishwomen's political activities were unique to the particular nationalist and unionist context of Ireland and whether useful comparisons can be drawn between the Irish case and other combatant countries. Hunt and Healy have noted how cost-of-living protests allowed women to link domestic everyday

¹ Johanna Alberti used the phrase 'vortex of war' to describe how the war dominated the activities of British suffrage societies: Johanna Alberti, *Beyond suffrage: feminists in war and peace 1914-1928* (London, 1989), p.49.

issues to more clearly political ones.² For example, Healy describes how previously unorganised women and children became wartime Vienna's 'newest fiercest political actors'.³

There were no cost-of-living demonstrations in Ireland on the scale of that described in Hunt or Healy's work. Anxiety about the food supply in Ireland manifested itself in agrarian upheaval in 1918, involving republican-sanctioned land seizures. Farmers were intimidated into providing land to labourers for small tillage plots. The republican party, Sinn Féin, supported such endeavours and prominent Sinn Féin activists, together with a group of Irish Volunteers, were involved in the theft of thirty-four pigs in Dublin.⁴ Such protests involved men previously active in party-political movements, rather than the urban housewives who featured in the Vienna demonstrations.

However the anti-conscription campaign in Ireland more closely resembled the European cost-of-living demonstrations. This campaign represented the largest mass mobilisation of the population in southern Ireland. The campaign provides an alternative example of 'politics happening outside the political arena'.⁵ Thousands of previously unorganised women participated in public protests against conscription in Ireland in 1918. The war also created a space for political activism by working-class soldiers' wives in Ireland as the women defended their interests against the growing republican movement. While some of the context was unique to Ireland, the politicisation of soldiers' wives resembled that of the *soldatki* in Russia and the Ukraine. This chapter first examines the response of the major suffrage, nationalist and unionist organisations to the outbreak of the war before considering examples of the wartime politicisation of women evident in the 1916 Rising, the 1918 anti-conscription campaign and the anti-Sinn Féin protests by 'separation women'.

Mobilisation for the war effort

In his work on British dominions during the Great War, Mark David Sheffhall has described how the 'overwhelming pro-war consensus' encompassed many groups and individuals who were previously strong critics of the established order.⁶ This was evident in Ireland, a country on the brink of civil war in July 1914. Nationalists, unionists and suffragists

² Hunt, "The politics of food", p.8.

³ Healy, *Vienna and the fall of the Hapsburg Empire*, p.9. See also Stefan Goebel's discussion of empowering potential of women's role in the wartime food protests, Stefan Goebel, "Cities" in Winter (ed.) *The Cambridge history of the First World War, Volume II, The State*, pp 366-368.

⁴ Boronovo, *The dynamics of war & revolution*, pp 182-183.

⁵ Lynne Taylor, "Food riots revisited", *Journal of Social History*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Winter, 1996), p.493. Cited in Healy, *Vienna and the fall of the Hapsburg empire*, p. 33.

⁶ Mark David Sheffhall, *Altered memories of the Great War: divergent narratives of Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada* (London, 2009), p.48.

mobilised to support the government that they had been opposing at every turn. Patriotism became increasingly defined and measured by war service. Many politically active women viewed the war effort as an opportunity for women to promote their own causes or political agendas. For example, the majority of Irish suffragists, like their counterparts across Europe, became involved in the war effort, feeling that to do otherwise would hurt their movement and that the 'grave danger of the situation' necessitated their support.⁷

The militant suffragist campaign was suspended in Ireland and Great Britain on the outbreak of the war, with the recognition that a campaign of civil unrest would not gain them any supporters in wartime. The militant campaign in any case was not achieving success, but rather alienating the public. The British suffrage historian Martin Pugh has suggested that Christabel Pankhurst quickly realised that the war provided a chance to withdraw from an untenable position.⁸ Many suffragists viewed the war as an opportunity to prove their 'worth as citizens' and to alleviate the damage wrought by the militant campaign, on their public support.⁹ Studies of the wartime suffrage movements in Britain have revealed the fulfilment and sense of purpose that many suffragists derived from such activity. Leah Leneman has noted the 'sense of vigorous purposeful activity' evident in the minutes of Scottish suffrage societies during the war and suggests that 'members found such practical work far more fulfilling than their earlier fruitless campaigning for the vote.'¹⁰

An Emergency Council of Women Suffragists was established in August 1914 to coordinate relief work, drawing in members from a number of Dublin based societies. Their wartime activities were very similar to those described in Chapter Six, including nursing, fundraising, and helping soldiers and their families, as well as Belgian refugees.¹¹ Chapters Four and Five also noted the role played by Irish suffragists in other war related issues such as defending soldiers' wives from public censure and establishing a toy company for textile workers affected by the 1914 industrial depression. The suffragists performed their war work through the suffrage societies where possible.

In Ireland, as in Great Britain, some (but not all) former militant suffragists chose to actively support the war effort, despite their previous ill treatment by the British government. For example, Mary Earl was a militant member of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and the Irishwomen's Franchise League (IWFL) but following the outbreak of the war, she offered the services of the Irish branch of the WSPU for promoting war service

⁷ *Irish Citizen*, 12 Sept. 1914; *Belfast News-letter*, 22 Mar. 1915; Adrian Gregory, *A war of peoples 1914-1919* (Oxford, 2014), p. 25.

⁸ Martin Pugh, "Politicians and the women's vote" in *History*, lix (1977), pp 359-60.

⁹ *Irish Citizen*, 22 Aug. 1914.

¹⁰ Leah Leneman, *A guid cause: the women's suffrage movement in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1995), p.210.

¹¹ *Reports of the Executive Committee of the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association for 1914 to 1917* (Dublin, 1915-1918); *Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation, Fourth Annual Report, 1914-1917* (Belfast, 1915-18).

among Irishwomen and became involved in collecting funds for Belgian refugees in Dublin.¹² Earl was anxious to point out to Sir Matthew Nathan that she was ‘not mixed up with the disloyal suffragettes’.¹³ She continued to face suspicion from others however. During the Rising, her neighbour, Marie Duckett, pointed out her house to British soldiers searching for rebels, on the grounds that Earl was a suffragette. In fact, Earl assisted the wounded during the Rising and provided supplies for the hospitals.¹⁴

The Cadiz sisters provide a further example of Irish militant suffragists who actively supported the war effort. Leila and Rosalind Cadiz were born in India to Irish parents and grew up in county Roscommon. They joined the Irishwomen’s Franchise League in 1910 and became members of the WSPU later that year. They were imprisoned twice in 1912, in London and Dublin, for participating in violent protests against the government.¹⁵ They were expelled from the IWFL in September 1912 for organising a hunger strike in sympathy with imprisoned WSPU members.¹⁶ Their strong suffrage beliefs were evident in a letter they wrote to the *Irish Times* on 22 August 1914 following the outbreak of the war.

Describing themselves as ‘militant suffragettes’, the sisters argued that women should be given the vote without delay in order to best serve the war effort and protested that if women were considered capable of serving as nurses, they surely were ‘equally efficient to register our votes’.¹⁷ The sisters were however willing to support the war effort without being granted suffrage. Rosalind nursed soldiers at the Adelaide hospital in Dublin and Leila joined the City of Dublin VAD of the British Red Cross in May 1915. She served as a nurse in military hospitals in Manchester and Dublin, before being sent to France with the QAIMNS in February 1918, where she served until May 1919.¹⁸ Their three brothers served with the British forces during the war, which undoubtedly affected Leila and Rosalind’s decision to participate in the war effort.¹⁹ Their close ties to the pro-war WSPU and their antagonistic relationship with the anti-war IWFL likewise may have influenced their attitude to the war effort.

¹² *Freeman’s Journal*, 7 Feb. 1911; Nathan papers: Memorandum 467, meeting with Sir Matthew Nathan, 14 Dec. 1914, 22 Mar. 1915.

¹³ Nathan papers: Memorandum 467, meeting with Sir Matthew Nathan, 14 Dec. 1914

¹⁴ Lilly Stokes, ‘Easter week diary’ in Roger McHugh (ed.) *Dublin 1916* (London, 1966), 30 Apr. 1916.

¹⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 18 July 1913.

¹⁶ In July 1913 the Cadiz sisters sued the IWFL for wrongful expulsion but lost their case and the subsequent appeal on the grounds that it concerned ‘one party bringing an action against the other arising out of a criminal conspiracy in which all were engaged’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 18 July 1913, 29 Jan. 1914, *Cork Examiner*, 29 Jan. 1914.

¹⁷ This letter appears to have not been accepted for publication. Simon Muggleton, “Leila Getrude Garcias de Cadiz: a suffragette known as ‘Maggie Murphy’ who served as a frontline nurse during World War I”. I am grateful to Richard Collins for providing me with this unpublished biography in July 2014.

¹⁸ BRCA: Service records for Leila Cadiz and Rosalind Cadiz.

¹⁹ Muggleton, “Leila Getrude Garcias de Cadiz”.

Like the pro-war suffragists, the Ulster Women's Unionist Council (UWUC) used war service as a means of maintaining and promoting a distinct Ulster identity (derived from a Protestant and Unionist heritage) and providing a practical demonstration of their loyalty to Britain.²⁰ They were explicit about their intentions and prioritisation of their political agenda over wartime cooperation with southern Ireland. The Council organised its own voluntary activities and mobilised its members to specified endeavours, for example establishing a gift fund for soldiers, a prisoner of war fund and Ulster Volunteer Force hospitals in Belfast and France.²¹ These were substantial initiatives: each month in 1917 the Council sent over £1,500 worth of foodstuffs and comforts to Ulster soldiers at the front and in prisoner of war camps.²² The South Belfast Women's Unionist Association, a branch of the UWUC, also organised the visiting of families of men serving in the Ulster division.²³ Much of the voluntary war work initiatives in Ulster described in Chapter Six were led either by the UWUC directly or by women active in the organisation, including for example, the Ulster sphagnum moss association.

The unionist agenda of the such activities were always very apparent. For example, the UWUC refused to cooperate with the southern-based Irishwomen's Association, despite their common purpose in providing parcels for Irish prisoners of war. The organisers of the Ulster Women's Gift Fund (UWGF) informed the Lord Mayor of Belfast in May 1918 that they 'would have nothing to do with any movement that was not solely for the Ulster Women's Gift Fund'. It was explained that if members wished 'they could do something for the IWA later on but just now it has to be the UWGF solely and entirely'.²⁴ The focus on specifically Ulster activity was partly motivated by concern that the UWUC was being negatively affected by its prioritising of war work. John Hamill, a member of the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC), reminded Lady Londonderry in January 1916 that 'although the winning of the war is our first consideration we must not forget our original and principal work'.²⁵ This was echoed a year later by Richard Dawson Bates, another UUC member, who argued for the continuation of the UWUC's political agenda.²⁶

Despite attempts by the Council to stay active and relevant in wartime, the war resulted in fewer official UWUC meetings being held. Between 1915 and 1918 the

²⁰ Diane Urquhart (ed.) *The minutes of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council and the Executive Committee 1911-1940* (Dublin, 2001), Council Minutes of the UWUC, 18 Aug. 1914, p.188.

²¹ PRONI, D2846/1/8/53: Letter from Richard Dawson Bates to Lady Londonderry, 12 Oct. 1916; Urquhart (ed.) *The minutes of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council and the Executive Committee 1911-1940* p. xix, Council Minutes of the UWUC, 18 Aug. 1914, p.188.

²² D/1507/A/25/3: "The spirit of the Province" – pamphlet written by Miss Dawson Bates based on a series of articles on Ulster and the war published in the *Morning Post* in July 1917.

²³ PRONI, D1633/2/20: Diary of Lilian Spender, Jan. 1915 to Sept. 1915.

²⁴ D/1507/A/27/8: Letter from Mr W King Stevenson (UWGF hon. Treasurer) to Mrs Ainsworth Barr (UWGF hon. Secretary), 6 May 1918.

²⁵ D 2846/1/8/36: Letter from John Hamill to Lady Londonderry, 3 Jan. 1916.

²⁶ D/2846/1/1/8/65: Letter from Richard Dawson Bates to Lady Londonderry, 3 Jan. 1917.

Executive Committee met on average twice a year (and not at all in 1917), compared to fourteen meetings in 1912 and eleven in 1913.²⁷ The Council itself held no meetings in 1916 and 1917.²⁸ The impact of the war was evident in other female unionist organisations. The Ballyclare branch of the East Antrim Women's Unionist Association held no annual meetings during the war. In 1914 it had over 1,200 members but appears to have ceased activity entirely between 1914 and 1919. The association was revived in 1919 at a public meeting, where the wartime sacrifices were used to express the importance of their work in the present moment.²⁹

The role of nationalist women in relation to the war effort was more complex. The most prominent women's nationalist organisation, Cumann na mBan, experienced significant differences of opinion over the response to the war. John Redmond's support for the British war effort in 1914, and his pledge in September that the Irish National Volunteers would go 'wherever the firing line extends, in defense of right, of freedom and of religion', divided the Volunteer movement. The majority of the Irish National Volunteers supported Redmond, numbering 170,000, who left to form the National Volunteers. A further 11,000 remained in the original organisation, which became known as the Irish Volunteers.³⁰ The Volunteer split caused a dilemma for Cumann na mBan as the organisation had to decide to which of the two groups to lend their allegiance.

The immediate response highlighted uncertainty and ambiguity over just who had the right to speak for Cumann na mBan. A statement in their name appeared on 15 August 1914 declaring that their activities and aims are 'solely national'.³¹ On 6 October a meeting was held of the Central branch where, according to the *Irish Volunteer*, the manifesto of the organisation was 'heartily endorsed by the overwhelmingly majority of the members'. The manifesto clearly outlined Cumann na mBan's opposition to Irish involvement in the Great War and their support for the Irish Volunteers:

We feel bound to make the pronouncement that to urge or encourage Irish Volunteers to enlist in the British Army cannot under any circumstances be regarded as consistent with the work we have set ourselves to do...We call on Irishmen to remain in their own country and join the army of the Irish Volunteers.³²

²⁷ Urquhart (ed.) *The minutes of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council*, pp 40-106.

²⁸ Urquhart (ed.) *The minutes of the Ulster Women's Unionist Council*, pp 187-191.

²⁹ D2047/4/4: Membership book and minutes of the Ballyclare branch of the East Antrim Women's Unionist Association. The Armagh Women's Unionist Association was similarly preoccupied with war relief work from 1914-18: Cousins, *Armagh and the Great War*, p.142.

³⁰ Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of modern Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2004), pp 126-127.

³¹ *Irish Volunteer*, 15 Aug. 1914.

³² *Irish Volunteer*, 17 Oct. 1914.

The vast majority of members at the meeting voted in favour of the manifesto.³³ However one attendee, Bridget Dudley Edwards, described the meeting as a ‘caucus’ with a ‘mischievous manifesto’ that was ‘sprung without notice’.³⁴ There was little room for debate about the rights and wrongs of the war itself and the impact it might have on Ireland: in the eyes of the organizers the issue was solely one of Irish nationalism. For example, when Dudley Edwards attempted to raise the issue of the threat posed by Germany, the chairman insisted that she not discuss European politics.³⁵ This was in sharp contrast to the vigorous debate on the morality and necessity of the war, taking place at the same time among the Irish suffragists.

The formal split took place at the December convention by which point there were two distinct wings of Cumann na mBan, mirroring the split among the Irish National Volunteers.³⁶ Those opposed to the war kept the name Cumann na mBan but the vast majority of its branch membership resigned from the organisation, with many branches disappearing completely.³⁷ Maire Fitzpatrick has described the devastating impact of the split on her Enniscorthy branch, where the vast majority rejected the decision of the Central branch: ‘I gave my speech and asked any member that was against Redmond to stand on my side of the hall, but Mrs Green and I were standing alone. It was my first big disappointment, I was heartbroken’.³⁸ Both Kathleen Keyes McDonnell and Rosamond Jacob similarly described how the majority of attendees at the first wartime Cumann na mBan meeting left after realizing that the organisation did not intend to support the war effort.³⁹ Out of the three hundred women reported to have been in attendance at the Bandon meeting, Keyes McDonnell acknowledges that only thirty ‘saw fit to range themselves on the side of Irish freedom’.⁴⁰

Senia Pašeta describes Cumann na mBan as being in a ‘critical state’ following the split as they struggled to maintain membership and public interest.⁴¹ The organisation received no mention in the anti-war paper *Irish Volunteer* between December 1914 and May

³³ Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2007), p.36.

³⁴ *National Volunteer*, 31 Oct. 1914, 28 Nov. 1914.

³⁵ Hilary Pyle, *Cesca's diary 1913-1916: where art and nationalism meet* (Dublin, 2005), 7 October 1914, pp 156-157.

³⁶ Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.149.

³⁷ BMH WS 541 Nancy Wyse Power; Cal McCarthy concludes that the organisation lost approximately 80% of their branch network and possibly an even larger proportion of their individual membership, Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish revolution*, p.40.

³⁸ BMH WS 1344 Maire Fitzpatrick, p.3.

³⁹ Similar confusion may have led to the exceptionally large attendance at the inaugural meeting of the Newbridge branch of Cumann na mBan in late August 1914, *Leinster Leader*, 29 Aug. 1914; NLI MS 32,582/27: Diary of Rosamond Jacob, 10 Aug. 1914.

⁴⁰ McDonnell, *There is a bridge at Bandon*, p.28.

⁴¹ Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.150.

1915 and regular reporting of their activities did not resume until autumn 1915.⁴² However in July 1915 the membership of the two Dublin branches combined was claimed as over one hundred and in October 1915 it was reported that 'several' branches had sent in affiliation fees of 7s 6d which indicated branch membership of over one hundred.⁴³ Between May 1915 and April 1916 over twenty-five new branches of Cumann na mBan were established or restarted around the country, suggesting a revival of interest in the movement as the war declined in popularity.⁴⁴ However despite this revival only twelve branches sent delegates to the convention in November 1915 leading the *Irish Volunteer* to criticise the fact that 'in many parts of the country the women are still inactive'.⁴⁵

Many of the former Cumann na mBan branches formed themselves into auxiliary organisations to support the National Volunteers serving in the British Army and to promote the Home Rule cause. These included nursing corps, for example in Athy, Waterford, Tralee, Antrim and Tipperary; a National Volunteer Ladies Association in Limerick; the Women's National Council in Dublin; the Ulster Ladies' Association established by the Irish Party MP Joseph Devlin and the Irishwomen's Council which had branches in Belfast and Derry.⁴⁶ The Volunteer Aid Association, established in July 1914 and described by Jenny Wyse Power as being composed 'exclusively of fashionable woman followers of the Irish Party', may have also drawn in some former Cumann na mBan members.⁴⁷ It was reported in April 1915 to have several hundred male and female members from across the country. The female members made comforts for National Volunteers serving at the front and provided canteens at local musters.⁴⁸ It never rivalled pre-war Cumann na mBan in terms of membership or geographic spread and, according to Cal McCarthy; it soon vanished from the public eye.⁴⁹

⁴² The lack of attention paid to Cumann na mBan in the *Irish Volunteer* led to proposals that they begin their own newspaper or at least secure an 'official page' in the *Irish Volunteer*, Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.158.

⁴³ *Irish Volunteer*, 17 July 1915; 30 Oct. 1915

⁴⁴ *Irish Volunteer*, May 1915 to Apr. 1916

⁴⁵ *Irish Volunteer*, 6 Nov. 1915; 11 Dec. 1915

⁴⁶ McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan & the Irish Revolution* p.38, *National Volunteer*, 24 Oct. 1914, 30 Jan. 1915, 27 Feb. 1915; *National Volunteer*, 26 Dec. 1914, 30 Jan. 1915, 27 Feb. 1915, 3 Apr. 1915, 21 Aug. 1915, 18 Mar. 1916.

⁴⁷ Cumann na mBan, *Leabhar na mBan*, p.4. Jenny Wyse-Power (1858-1941) became politically active through the Ladies' Land League. She was involved with the Gaelic League, was a co-founder of Inghinidhe na hEireann, a member of the Sinn Féin Executive and a founder member and President of Cumann na mBan. She was also an active suffragist. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic was signed in her home in Dublin. She subsequently helped to organise the Volunteer Dependents' Fund. Appointed a Cumann na nGaedhael senator in 1922, she became an independent senator from 1925 and a Fianna Fail senator in 1934. In 1883 she married John Wyse Power, editor of the *Leinster Leader* and a member of the IRB. They had four children, one of whom was Nancy Wyse-Power, also a member of Cumann na mBan: William Murphy and Lesa Ni Mhungaile. "Jennie Wyse Power" in McGuire and Quinn (eds) *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

⁴⁸ *National Volunteer*, 17 Apr. 1915.

⁴⁹ McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution*, p.39.

All the associations described above performed traditionally feminine war work and were placed in a clearly subservient role to the male only Volunteers.

The split within Cumann na mBan in reaction to the war has parallels in the response of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) to the war. The leader of the NUWSS, Mrs Fawcett, believed the organisation should support the war effort by engaging in activities aimed at alleviating the inevitable suffering. NUWSS members engaged in typical Red Cross activity such as providing canteens for soldiers. However Jill Liddington has described how many members of the executive together with much of the leadership of the local branches were opposed to this policy and wished to take a more explicit anti-war stance. In the spring of 1915 the organisation split and all the national officers with the exception of Fawcett and the treasurer resigned and subsequently established the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.⁵⁰

In Ireland support for the war effort was far more common than outright opposition in 1914 and 1915. Many of those who were subsequently active in the republican movement were initially involved in war work. For example, Maire Comerford recalled how she participated in a variety of voluntary work to support the British war effort in Enniscorthy, including collecting sphagnum moss, attending first aid classes, welcoming Belgian refugees and fundraising for British war charities. In her memoir she reflects that her nationalist sympathies were slow to emerge.⁵¹ Muriel MacSwiney, wife of the republican activist Terence MacSwiney, nursed wounded soldiers in Cork, but later claimed she gave it up upon realizing that the 'course of action put me down as pro-British'.⁵² Her sister-in-law Mary MacSwiney was however utterly opposed to the war effort, describing her fellow members of the Munster Women's Franchise League as 'Britons first, suffragists second, and Irishwomen a bad third'.⁵³ Their offence was to raise funds for a British Red Cross ambulance for the front. MacSwiney's comment highlights the questions of nationality and gender raised by the wartime situation. The war forced suffragists to choose to whom they owed their first loyalty: the suffrage movement or the war effort; Britain or Ireland?

⁵⁰ Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, *One hand tied behind us: the rise of the women's suffrage movement* (London, 1978, 2000), pp 264-265.

⁵¹ UCDA LA18/6: Draft memoir written by Maire Comerford in 1956 p.21. Maire Comerford (1892-1982) grew up in a middle-class Wexford family. During the Easter Rising she carried despatches for the GPO garrison. She subsequently joined Sinn Féin and supported the IRA during the War of Independence: Military Archives, Military Service Pension application of Maire Comerford, available at <http://mbspsearch.militaryarchives.ie/detail.aspx?parentpriref>.

⁵² Muriel MacSwiney, BMH WS 637.

⁵³ *Irish Citizen*, 21 Nov. 1914. Mary MacSwiney (1872-1942) grew up in Cork. She was a founder member of the Munster Women's Franchise League in 1911 but left the MWFL to found a Cumann na mBan branch in Cork 1914. She established Scoil Íte, an Irish language school in 1916. She was elected to the Dail in 1921 following the death of her brother Terence MacSwiney, republican activist, on hunger strike while in prison. She opposed the Treaty and remained supportive of the IRA until her death in 1942: Brian Murphy, "Mary MacSwiney" in McGuire and Quinn (eds) *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

MacSwiney evidently felt that Irish patriotism should come first, ahead of all other commitments. This attitude became increasingly common as the war progressed.

Dissent

Opposition to the mobilisation process was also apparent from the outset of the war. Roy Foster suggests that the war provided new opportunities for subversion and dissent against the state.⁵⁴ The *Irish Citizen* responded to the outbreak of the war with a front page proclaiming 'Votes for women now! Damn your war!' This received a significant amount of criticism and caused at least one society to suspend its subscription. A number of individuals also resigned from the Irish Women's Franchise League in objection to its anti-war stance.⁵⁵ The IWFL strongly opposed Irish participation in the war and denounced the involvement of suffragists in the war effort from the pages of the *Irish Citizen*. They felt that the hostile treatment of suffragists in peacetime meant that they owed no service to 'war-mongers'.⁵⁶ The society instead saw the war as increasing the necessity for the immediate enfranchisement of women and thus the need for heightened suffrage propaganda.⁵⁷ They criticised the participation of suffragists in war relief work as 'war fever', 'social chatter' and most damningly as a 'criminally stupid disregard of a rich fund of intellectual energy'.⁵⁸

The IWFL accepted the suspension of militancy but refused to follow the line of the WSPU in subsuming their cause to the war effort. Refusal to engage with the war effort among suffragists in Britain and Ireland arose out of a diverse range of motivations. For many it came from a belief in the integral relationship between suffragism and pacifism and was influenced by the internationalist outlook of the suffrage movement in the pre-war years, which had included extensive cooperation with German suffragists.⁵⁹

The IWFL contained many pacifists whose anti-war stance very closely mirrored that of their international suffragist counterparts. For example very similar arguments against militarism appeared in both the *Irish Citizen* and *Jus Suffragi*, the journal of the International Women's Suffrage Association.⁶⁰ Some Irish suffragists became involved in the Fellowship

⁵⁴ Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.176.

⁵⁵ For example see the statement by the Irishwomen's Reform League in the *Irish Citizen* on 29 Aug. 1914; letter from Lily Carre on 2 Oct. 1914 to the *Irish Citizen*; article by EA Browning, 10 Oct. 1914; resignation of EA Browning from the IWFL, 17 Oct. 1914.

⁵⁶ *Irish Citizen*, 22 Aug. 1914; see also the article by Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, 22 Aug. 1914.

⁵⁷ *Irish Citizen*, 19 Sept. 1914.

⁵⁸ *Irish Citizen*, 30 Jan. 1915, 22 Aug. 1914, 11 Dec. 1915; see also article by Margaret Cousins, 5 Sept. 1914; anonymous letter 12 Sept. 1914; Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington's comment, 10 Oct. 1914; Lecture by Mrs Emerson to the IWFL 5 Dec. 1914; editorial comment on the Church League for Women's Suffrage, 26 Dec. 1914; statement by the IWFL on National Service, 17 Apr. 1915; Condemnation of the secretary of the MWFL serving overseas with the Red Cross, 5 June 1915.

⁵⁹ Grayzel, "Women & men", p.264.

⁶⁰ Sybil Oldfield, "Mary Sheepshanks edits an internationalist suffrage monthly in wartime: *Jus Suffragi* 1914-1919" in *Women's History Review*, xii, no.1 (2003), pp 119-134; Louie Bennett, a

of Reconciliation, a Protestant pacifist group established in England at the outbreak of the war.⁶¹ They also attempted to participate in the international conference of suffragists at the Hague in April 1915. The conference was the first organised international opposition to the war and led to the establishment of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.⁶² The Hague conference was the key wartime event for international feminism. However in Ireland it had different connotations with it being used by nationalist feminists as a means of asserting Ireland's independence.

The Irish delegation was split into two groups with different motivations. The nationalist agenda was evident in the planned participation of Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, who, on behalf of the IWFL, requested that the League recognise Ireland as a 'small nation' independent of Britain. Louie Bennett, in contrast, approached it from an internationalist perspective, primarily concerned with trying to prevent any further pursuit of war.⁶³ Bennett was the only Irish delegate to be granted a travel permit by the British government but the stoppage of civilian travel in the North Sea meant that she was ultimately unable to attend.⁶⁴ Nonetheless she remained involved with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom throughout the war.

The Irish nationalist and republican views of many within the IWFL were an added obstacle between them and support for the war effort. The refusal of Redmond, McKenna and other Irish Party members to openly support the inclusion of women's suffrage in a Home Rule Bill had left a lot of bitterness, expressed in this IWFL pamphlet, a parody of popular recruiting posters for the British Army:

When the war is over you will still be voteless! Help us now and you will continue to enjoy those liberties you have hitherto enjoyed –the Cat and Mouse Act, Forcible feeding, the hunger and thirst strike. Women of Ireland do your duty to us and we shall continue to forget ours to you! God save Asquith, Redmond, McKenna and Carson! God help the man-ruled state!⁶⁵

The IWFL's opposition to Irish involvement in the war enabled a closer relationship with Cumann na mBan. Following the split, Cumann na mBan became increasingly antagonistic towards upper-class and British members and hostile towards those associated

member of the Irishwomen's Reform League and a pacifist, acknowledged the influence of *Jus Suffragi* on the Irish movement in a letter to *Jus Suffragi* in Dec. 1915, Oldfield, p.125.

⁶¹ For example, Lucy Kingston, a member of the Irishwomen's Reform League as well as the IWFL, became involved with the Dublin branch of the Fellowship for Reconciliation and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom following the outbreak of war. She also became increasingly close to the Society of Friends, appreciating their pacifist outlook. Daisy Lawrenson Swanton, *Emerging from the shadow: the lives of Sarah Anne Lawrenson and Lucy Olive Kingston, based on personal diaries 1883-1969* (Dublin, 1994), pp 70, 77, 81, 83, 84.

⁶² Gregory, *A war of peoples*, p.77.

⁶³ Margaret Ward, "Nationalism, pacifism, internationalism: Louie Bennett, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and the problems of defining feminism" in Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (eds) *Gender and sexuality in modern Ireland* (Amherst, 1997), p.66.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.67.

⁶⁵ *Irish Citizen*, 13 Mar. 1915.

with the British war effort. Cesca Trench described in her diary the increased suspicion and hostility she faced from within Cumann na mBan after the outbreak of war. Cesca, also known as Sadhbh, was born into an Anglican unionist family to Irish parents living in England in 1891. She became involved with the Gaelic League from 1908 and joined Cumann na mBan in 1914, remaining involved with them until her death from influenza in October 1918. Although her brothers served with the wartime British Army, Cesca was actively opposed to the British war effort. Nevertheless, she felt that Kathleen Clarke, in particular, suspected her of being a spy and disliked her 'accent and general appearance'.⁶⁶ Mary Spring-Rice, a member of the landed gentry, also came under suspicion in August 1914 due to her involvement with a Red Cross work party. She left Cumann na mBan in November 1914, joining instead the Volunteer Aid movement.⁶⁷

The relationship between Cumann na mBan and the Red Cross was strained from the start of the war. Cumann na mBan had applied to the Red Cross headquarters in Geneva for affiliation in 1914 but were told that their application had to be directed to the British Red Cross, as Ireland did not constitute a country. Association with the British Red Cross was not supported and thus it was decided to 'have nothing to do with official Red Cross work, with a reservation that whenever the Red Cross was needed' they would use it without permission from anyone.⁶⁸ Accordingly Cumann na mBan used the Red Cross on their uniforms during the Easter Rising, a decision which, as noted by Ann Mathews, put the actual Red Cross nurses in Dublin in danger.⁶⁹ The Rising cemented the division between Cumann na mBan and those involved in the war effort. At their 1917 convention Cumann na mBan decided that 'no woman can be a member of Cumann na mBan who is a member of an organization doing any kind of work for the English enemy'. This prohibition explicitly included the British Red Cross societies and the Soldiers' Aid Societies.⁷⁰

Uprising

The 1916 Rising represented a significant event in the history of the politicisation of women in Ireland. The rebellion began on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, with the occupation of the General Post Office (GPO) and the proclaiming of the Irish Republic. It was led by members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood but was supported by the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan. Although Germany supplied arms for the rebels, these were intercepted off the southwest coast before the Rising. Action outside Dublin was very

⁶⁶ Pyle, *Cesca's diary 1913-1916*, 14 Sept. 1914, 27 Sept. 1914, pp 145, 153.

⁶⁷ Pyle, *Cesca's diary*, 30 Aug. 1914, 4 Nov. 1914, pp 137, 169.

⁶⁸ Cumann na mBan, *Leabhar na mBan*, McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan & the Irish Revolution* p.45.

⁶⁹ Ann Mathews, "Cumann na mBan and the Red Cross: 1914-1916" in R.V. Comerford and Jennifer Kelly (eds) *Associational culture in Ireland and abroad* (Dublin, 2010), pp 179-190.

⁷⁰ Lil Conlon, *Cumann na mBan and the women of Ireland, 1913-25* (Kilkenny, 1969), p.299.

limited due to the countermanding order of Eoin MacNeill on 23 April. The British Army quashed the rebellion within a week. It had resulted in significant destruction to Dublin and the loss of over four hundred lives, the majority of them civilians.⁷¹

Women participated in the Rising as members of Cumann na mBan and the Irish Citizen Army. Two hundred and eighteen women successfully obtained military service pensions in recognition of their service in the 1916 Rising, making up 8.5% of the total number of pensions awarded for Rising participation.⁷² The British military arrested seventy-nine women following the surrender, although the majority were quickly released. Five women were interned and Countess Markievicz was the only woman tried by court martial. This compares with 3,430 men arrested of whom 1,836 were interned and 170 were tried by court martial and subsequently executed or imprisoned.⁷³ Many of those women arrested could have avoided arrest by leaving the garrisons before the surrender as they were encouraged to do by the rebel leaders. However there appears to have been a desire among the women to endure the same treatment and danger as the men. Cal McCarthy describes a single-minded determination among the women 'to ignore the gender specific values of the day'.⁷⁴ He quotes Nell Gifford's explanation of their attitude: 'the republic promised us equality without sex distinction, so we were all adjudged soldiers, women and men, whether we worked as dispatch carriers or Red Cross units'.⁷⁵

There is disagreement among historians as to the extent to which the involvement of women in the Rising was revolutionary. For example, Ann Matthews highlighted the important part played by some women in carrying dispatches before and during the rebellion, while Fearghal McGarry emphasises the fact that the majority of women performed traditional feminine tasks of nursing and cooking.⁷⁶ While Éamon de Valera's refusal to allow women into Boland's bakery has been frequently noted, McGarry points out that most of the leaders were similarly reluctant to grant women a role in the rebellion. Even within the more egalitarian Irish Citizen Army the vast majority of its female members were not given arms.⁷⁷ Helena Molony, a member of the Irish Citizen Army, however described receiving training in the use and care of revolvers as well as in drill, first aid and camp cookery. Women were able to perform essential activities for the rebels, with less suspicion being attached to them. For example, the female members of the Irish Citizen Army bought the

⁷¹ Gregory, "Britain & Ireland" p.409; Townshend, *Easter 1916*, pp 152-242.

⁷² Military Archives, List of 2,558 veterans of Easter week 1916 with recognised military service: <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/news-events/single-view/article/release-of-listing-of-2558-veterans-of-easter-week-1916-with-recognised-military-service> (15 Aug. 2015).

⁷³ Matthews, *Renegades*, pp 148, 336.

⁷⁴ McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution*, p.66.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Ward, "Marginality & militancy", p.102; Matthews, *Renegades*, pp 125, 138.

⁷⁷ Matthews, *Renegades*, pp 127-130; McGarry, *The Rising: Easter 1916*, pp 162-163.

necessary food provisions for the Rising without attracting suspicion by telling the butchers and grocers that they were hosting Easter Ceilidhes.⁷⁸

The participation of women in the Rising, together with the inclusion of female suffrage and equal citizenship in the Proclamation, had a significant effect on the attitudes of the suffragists towards the nationalist movement.⁷⁹ In October 1916 the role of women in non-gender specific roles in the Rising was used as evidence of women's capabilities and thus their right to vote.⁸⁰ Indeed one writer in the *Irish Citizen* credited the proclamation and the role of Countess Markievicz in the Rising with the granting of limited women's suffrage in 1918.⁸¹ The Proclamation of the Irish Republic promised to guarantee 'equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens' and referred to a National Government elected by the 'suffrages of all her men and women'.⁸² The *Irish Citizen* was effusive in its praise of the Proclamation: 'What if it were all the dream of visionaries? Irishwomen were not excluded from the Paradise!'⁸³

The Rising brought the war home to women in Ireland. Dubliners experienced bombardment for the first time, violence erupted in domestic spaces and everyday life became severely disrupted. It blurred the distinction between the battlefields and the home front and between public and private spheres. The Rising also served as a politicising moment for Irishwomen. Women were part of the history of the week's events and were very conscious of their significant role in the Rising's preparation and execution. For the majority of the female participants, this was their first experience of overt political engagement while their actions served as inspiration to the wider female population. The war offered further opportunities for politicisation and mobilisation through the 1918 anti-conscription movement.

Anti-conscription campaign

The anti-conscription campaign represented the widening chasm between the people and the state. Conscription became an increasingly contentious issue as the war progressed with it being viewed as a violation of the contract between state and society. In Ireland, as in Canada and Australia, the issue of conscription became intrinsically linked to concepts of

⁷⁸ Kilmainham Gaol, KMGLM 2011.0284.01-37 Box 35: Statement of Helena Molony, June 1949 (This statement is similar to her Bureau of Military Statement but provides more detail on the Rising preparations); Military service pensions collection, application of Helena Molony <http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/detail.aspx>.

⁷⁹ Margaret Ward, "Suffrage first, above all else! an account of the Irish suffrage movement" in *Feminist Review*, no. 10 (Spring, 1982), p.34.

⁸⁰ *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1916

⁸¹ *Irish Citizen*, Jan. 1918

⁸² NLI, 1916 Proclamation, <http://www.nli.ie/1916/pdf/1.intro.pdf>. (20 July 2015).

⁸³ *Irish Citizen*, Sept. 1916.

nationalism and nationhood.⁸⁴ Senia Pašeta describes the anti-conscription campaign as the 'greatest and final unifying issue' in pre-independence nationalist Ireland while David Dickson notes that it was an 'unprecedented and untypical display of national unity'.⁸⁵ It was the largest mobilisation of civil society in southern Ireland and in many respects resembled the mass mobilisation of Ulster men and women against Home Rule in 1912.⁸⁶

The campaign united republicans and nationalists in a common cause with opposition to conscription gaining support among those otherwise sympathetic to the war effort. John Redmond had campaigned for Irish participation in the armed forces but warned the government in 1916 that conscription would be resisted in every Irish village. His National Volunteers were trained for the purpose of resisting conscription were it to be introduced.⁸⁷ Both Irish Party and Sinn Féin candidates argued against conscription in the 1917 by-election campaigns. Although exact figures are unknown, the historian Michael Laffan asserts that 'hundreds of thousands' of people signed the anti-conscription pledge while the national defence fund had received almost £250,000 in subscriptions by July 1918.⁸⁸

Women were essential to anti-conscription campaigns during the Great War. For example in Australia women played an important role in producing and disseminating propaganda both for and against conscription.⁸⁹ Unlike Ireland, Australia had an active pro-conscription campaign. This heavily involved women, typically middle class women with strong connections to conservative political groups. Rae Frances suggests that their participation in the conscription campaigns resulted in a greater public role for conservative women after the war. Australian women were also active campaigning against conscription, through the Women's Peace Army (a feminist organisation) and the Church based Sisterhood of International Peace. The various groups arranged thousands of meetings and the female members travelled across Australia to address crowds on the issue.⁹⁰

Similarly in Ireland the role of women in organising and mobilising the population proved very important. 'Women's meetings' were held in Cork city in April 1918 to denounce the Military Service Bill. The meetings featured speeches from women prominent in local government, the trade union movement and nationalist and republican politics. The meetings were reported to have been so well attended that overflow crowds gathered in the

⁸⁴ Sheffhall, *Altered memories of the Great War*, p.91.

⁸⁵ Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.237; Dickson, *Dublin*, p.457.

⁸⁶ David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p.36.

⁸⁷ Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p.129.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.140.

⁸⁹ Scates, *Women & the Great War*, p.71.

⁹⁰ Rae Frances, "Women's mobilisation for war (Australia)", *1914-1918 online*.

streets outside City Hall to hear the speeches.⁹¹ The 9 June 1918 became Lá na mBan (Women's Day) and women all over the country participated in demonstrations against conscription. An estimated 8,000 women gathered at City Hall in Dublin that day and signed a pledge to refuse to take conscripted men's jobs.⁹² Sinead McCool describes how several thousand women paraded in Waterford city and Tipperary town while Ann Matthews reports that 1,000 women in Cork and 2,000 women in Killarney held processions for the movement.⁹³ The *Leinster Leader* reported that in Naas upwards of 400 women signed the pledge on Lá na mBan.⁹⁴ The northeast of Ireland alone remained unmoved by the campaign, further cementing divisions between the provinces.⁹⁵

In Dublin, the first to sign at City Hall were seven hundred Cumann na mBan members but other organisations involved included the Irish Drapers' Assistant's Association, the Irish Women Workers' Union, and the Irish Citizen Army. The IWWU provided 2,400 signatures. The involvement of the IWWU in the anti-conscription movement is worthy of note in that through pledging their opposition to male conscription, women were also promising to keep themselves out of the workforce. For example, the Cork members of Cumann na mBan agreed not only not to take the jobs of conscripted men, but also to refrain from learning to do 'work that was being done by the men of Ireland.'⁹⁶ The IWFL hung a banner on Labour Day proclaiming 'Conscription: no woman must take a man's job'.⁹⁷ The IWWU were aware of the importance of the cooperation of women workers to the success of the anti-conscription movement, pointing out that 'if women workers chose they could to a large extent disorganise the plans of the male workers'.⁹⁸ The campaign was viewed as a positive demonstration of Irishwomen's patriotism and was described by the *Irish Citizen* as a 'glorious movement at once National, Religious and Historic'.⁹⁹

The anti-conscription movement heavily involved women from both the nationalist and suffrage movements. The campaign, together with the particular wartime circumstances, politicised women with no prior formal political involvement.¹⁰⁰ Diverse factors motivated the participation of women in the campaign, ranging from the personal desire to prevent the

⁹¹ Borghonovo, *The dynamics of war & revolution*, p.194.

⁹² Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.244.

⁹³ McCool, *Irish female activists in the revolutionary years 1900-1923*, p.67, Matthews, *Renegades* p.219; see also Cumann na mBan anti-conscription pamphlets in the NLI WAR/1914-18 ephemera collection.

⁹⁴ *Leinster Leader*, 15 June 1918.

⁹⁵ Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.245.

⁹⁶ Matthews *Renegades*, p.218.

⁹⁷ *Irish Citizen*, Sept. 1918.

⁹⁸ *Irish Citizen* June 1918; see also article by MK Connery in the *Irish Citizen* in Aug. 1918.

⁹⁹ *Irish Citizen*, July 1918.

¹⁰⁰ McCool, *Irish female activists in the revolutionary years 1900-1923* p.66; Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.244.

conscription of their loved ones, pacifist objection to military service, nationalist belief in Ireland's right to self-determination in such matters and republican objection to Ireland's participation in the Great War and to Britain's imposition of such legislation on Ireland.

The *Irish Citizen* published a number of letters from readers who explained their stance on the issue. Although some were from readers who opposed it from pacifist principles the majority are revealing of the intense nationalist and republican sentiments among many suffragists. Mary Hayden, a prominent member of the Irishwomen's Reform League and the Irish Catholic Women's Suffrage Association, explained that while she supported the British war effort she objected to conscription on the grounds that 'Ireland has always preserved her entity as a nation, looking back to a national past and forward to a national future. Her claim for self-determination is stronger than for example Australia or New Zealand' while Sarah Cecilia Harrison, a former Dublin corporation councillor, claimed that had the Irish people accepted conscription it 'would have proved the assertion of our opponents that no Irish nation exists'.¹⁰¹

Cumann na mBan was widely credited with the inception and organisation of the female dimension of the campaign but it in fact involved a number of disparate women's groups.¹⁰² Lá na mBan was first planned by Alice Stopford Green, Helen Curran and Agnes O'Farrelly (all supporters of the Redmondite position following the outbreak of the war) but the event's was taken over by Cumann na mBan who believed that with their 'widespread organisation we were in a position to arrange a nationwide demonstration'.¹⁰³

In some respects, the campaign resembled the cost-of-living demonstrations, mentioned earlier, which were taking place around the same time in other combatant countries. For example, in New York and Melbourne political activists targeted spontaneous protests by housewives. The Socialist activists spoke for the crowd and attempted to divert the protests towards wider issues. They hoped to politicise and recruit unorganised women while the housewives were focused on confronting the urgent issue of the high cost of living.¹⁰⁴ While the majority of the female participants in the anti-conscription movement in Ireland were unorganised and new to political involvement, Cumann na mBan took ownership of many aspects of the campaign and attempted to use it to further their own political aims.¹⁰⁵ They organised several anti-conscription meetings, distributed leaflets, painted slogans and collected signatures of sympathisers.

¹⁰¹ *Irish Citizen*, May-June 1918.

¹⁰² Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, p.241.

¹⁰³ Mathews pp.214-218; *Irish Citizen* July 1918; *Freeman's Journal* 10 June 1918.

¹⁰⁴ Hunt, "The politics of food", p.12. Cost of living protests in Berlin and Vienna also drew unorganised women into the public arena, Healy, *Vienna and the fall of the Hapsburg Empire*, p.9. See also the participation of women in the Paris strikes in 1917: Horne, *Labour at war*, pp 180-181.

¹⁰⁵ Mathews, *Renegades*, p.218

The anti-conscription campaign had a unifying impact on the nationalist movement in Ireland, bringing together constitutional nationalists and republicans. However it also served to further emphasise north-south divisions. The Easter Rising had brought the issues of Home Rule and partition to prominence again and had served to confirm for unionists the inherent disloyalty of nationalists.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the war Ulster Unionists continually highlighted and exaggerated the disparity between Ulster's contribution to the war effort and that of the remainder of Ireland.¹⁰⁷ Catherine Dawson Bates, a member of the UWUC and the British Red Cross, outlined the Ulster Unionist attitude towards the war effort in a 1917 pamphlet entitled 'The spirit of the province': 'England's difficulty had again been Nationalist Ireland's opportunity to rebel, pillage and murder, while England's difficulty had once again been Ulster's opportunity to prove her loyalty, her love, her Imperialism'.¹⁰⁸ This hostile competitive atmosphere made cooperation between Ulster and southern Ireland in war relief activities very difficult.

The conscription crisis made the divisions even more apparent and acted as a watershed moment for Ulster Unionism's relations with Nationalist Ireland.¹⁰⁹ Protestant areas of north-east Ulster were alone immune from the general strike which took place across Ireland. Michael Laffan and Thomas Hennessey both argue that the prominent support of the Catholic Church for the campaign strengthened the growing psychological partition between north and south.¹¹⁰ The role of the church in the campaign was viewed by Unionists such as Edward Carson as evidence of the power of the Catholic Church in Irish society and of its ability to interfere with domestic politics.¹¹¹ Hennessey argues that the campaign provided irrevocable proof to the Ulster Unionists of Nationalist disloyalty.¹¹² The anti-conscription campaign together with the wartime situation accelerated the partitionist mindset of the Ulster Unionists, evident for example, in the refusal of the UWUC to cooperate with the Irishwomen's Association.

What impact had the anti-conscription movement on the lasting politicisation of Irishwomen? Cal McCarthy has suggested that Lá na mBan and the women's pledge had more spectacular than practical effect, describing the women's campaign as a 'visual political propaganda'.¹¹³ A similar view was expressed by M.K. Connery in the *Irish Citizen* in August 1918, who was concerned that women had failed to take the anti-conscription pledge seriously and had failed to build upon the mass mobilisation in June. However the

¹⁰⁶ Michael Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-25* (Dundalk, 1983), p.50.

¹⁰⁷ Pennell, p. 192. See also *Belfast Newsletter*, 24 May 1918.

¹⁰⁸ D/1507/A/25/3: "The spirit of the Province" –pamphlet written by Miss Dawson Bates based on a series of articles on Ulster and the war published in the *Morning Post* in July 1917.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War One and partition* (London, 1998), p.226.

¹¹⁰ Laffan, *The partition of Ireland 1911-25*, p.58.

¹¹¹ Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War One and partition* (London, 1998), p.227.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.233.

¹¹³ McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan & the Irish Revolution*, p.95.

mobilisation had at least a temporary positive effect on Cumann na mBan. Membership of the organisation increased from about one hundred branches in December 1917 to over six hundred branches in September 1918.¹¹⁴ Although this surge in membership also reflects the impact of the war on the politicisation of Irishwomen, the huge growth in 1918 was widely attributed to the anti-conscription campaign.¹¹⁵ The link between the campaign and the increased numbers is further indicated by the fact that membership declined again over the following two years, falling to three hundred branches in 1920, suggesting that many branches were established in direct response to the threat of conscription and then declined after the war ended.¹¹⁶ The war however also politicised women beyond the formal party-political organisations.

Separation women and political activism

The politicising impact of the war is evident with regard to the activities of 'separation women, with the war resulting in increased public political engagement by soldiers' wives in Ireland in 1917 and 1918. Described as a 'new element' in Irish politics, 'separation women' became the visible face of grassroots opposition to the advanced nationalist movement.¹¹⁷ They demonstrated their hostility through protests and riots at Volunteer marches and election campaign events, and through jeering the rebels during and after the Easter Rising. While many elements of their activity was particular to the political context of wartime Ireland, there were also similarities between their behaviour and that of soldiers' wives in other combatant countries. As representatives of their husbands, soldiers' wives became increasingly drawn into interaction with the wartime state. They were prominent in the cost-of-living demonstrations referred to earlier and in other protests aimed at protecting their economic interests.

Chapter Four described the attempts to control the behaviour of so-called 'separation women' and the hostility directed towards this demographic by disparate groups. A substantial body of Bureau of Military History witness statements together with

¹¹⁴ Assessing the total numbers of women involved in Cumann na mBan at any one point is difficult as branch membership could vary from eight to thirty individuals. Aileen Sheehan has calculated a figure of 9,000 for the organisation's peak in 1921 based on an average number of twelve per branch but she suggests this is too high and suggests Margaret Ward's figure of 3,000 members is more probable. (*Unmanageable revolutionaries*, p.153), p.89 It is likely that there was a significant divergence between the number of subscribers to the organisation and the actual active membership. Cal McCarthy suggests a figure of 19,800 members in 1918 but this is based on the dubious assumption that less active branches had the same average number of members as those that came to the attention of the RIC. Aileen Sheehan, "Cumann na mBan policies and activities" in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923* (Dublin, 1990), p.89; McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan & the Irish Revolution*, p.112.

¹¹⁵ See for example, Nancy Wyse Power, BMH WS 587; Josephine MacNeill, BMH WS 303; Cumann na mBan, *Leabhar na mBan*, p.6.

¹¹⁶ Sheehan, "Cumann na mBan policies & activities", p.89.

¹¹⁷ Frank Gallagher, *Four Glorious Years* (Dublin, 1953), p.28.

contemporary accounts indicates the involvement of soldier's wives in Irish Parliamentary Party election campaigns in 1917 and 1918 as well as physically disrupting Irish Volunteer events throughout the war. The Bureau statements must be treated with caution given that they were collected some thirty to forty years after the events described and have a very clear political bias.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless examination of a wide sample of statements provides insight into the attitudes of those active in the nationalist and republican movements towards 'separation women'.

The association of 'separation women' with the Rising has been well documented. They are reported in witness statements as attempting to sabotage barricades and attacking the Volunteers at the GPO and outside Jacobs Biscuit Factory, reporting suspected rebels to the police and jeering the rebels as they were marched to Richmond barracks following the surrender.¹¹⁹ The accounts of the women outside Richmond Barracks are particularly numerous. Typical accounts of the women include the following:

The separation allowance women began to gather in the street. They crowded around the Post Office and abused the Volunteers inside, throwing the glass from the broken windows at them.¹²⁰

We would have been torn to pieces by the 'separation women' who followed us shouting out abuse and obscene language at us. They were kept at bay by the soldiers.¹²¹

Although the statements referring to the Rising in Dublin are the best known, there are also references to the response of separation women to the Rising outside of Dublin. These include references to Wicklow, Galway and Wexford although in Galway they are described as the mothers of British soldiers rather than their wives.¹²² There are over forty individual statements that make reference to 'separation women' in conjunction with the Rising in the Bureau collection. The number of individual statements referencing the women suggests some truth to the accounts or at least evidence of these women as an important feature of nationalist memory of the Rising.

The statements are also corroborated by contemporary sources. For example, Kathleen Lynn's diary records 'separation women' jeering the rebels as they were marched to Richmond barracks. She suggests that most bystanders supported the rebels, and that the

¹¹⁸ The Bureau of Military History was established in 1947 and over the following ten years its inspectors collected witness statements from 1,773 participants in the Irish Revolution from 1913-21. Fearghal McGarry has warned of the need to be aware of the unreliability, subjectivity and bias of the statements but has also commended them as 'the most important source to date for understanding the Irish Revolution; Fearghal McGarry, "1916 and Irish Republicanism: between myth and history" in John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds) *Towards commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution 1912-1923* (Dublin, 2013) p.47; McGarry, *The Rising: Easter 1916*, p.6.

¹¹⁹ See for example BMH WS 842 Sean Kennedy; BMH WS 824 Charles Donnelly; BMH WS 822 William Stapleton; BMH WS 1666 Thomas O'Donoghue.

¹²⁰ BMH WS 358 Geraldine Dillon.

¹²¹ BMH WS 805 Annie O'Brien.

¹²² See for example BMH WS 1497 Joseph McCarthy; BMH WS 374 Michael O'Droighneain.

only hostility came from the separation women.¹²³ They are also explicitly mentioned in the diary of a Dublin apprentice from Easter Week while James Stephen's account published in 1916 specifically refers to the opposition of women to the Rising.¹²⁴ Patrick Pearse's Easter week statement blamed 'hangers-on of the British Army' for the looting taking place.¹²⁵

The motive for such hostility is often explained as being due to the fact that the separation allowances could not be collected from the post office during Easter week. For example, Sean O'Kelly and Robert Brennan both make this connection in their witness statements.¹²⁶ Mary Louisa Hamilton Norway, wife of the manager of the General Post Office, however commented that the closure of most city centre shops and the shortage of food supplies meant that the allowances would have been of little practical benefit in Easter week. Great effort was made to ensure the delivery of the allowances the following week to local post offices, so that the women would not be left short any longer.¹²⁷ An important feature of the accounts of such women during the Rising is the desire to attribute to these women sole responsibility for the hostility directed at the rebels, to claim that the only opposition to the Rising came from those connected with the British Army. This can be seen in Pearse's statement, in Lynn's diary and in a variety of the Bureau statements such as the following:

Of course, there was a large number of separation allowance people (families of British soldiers) who booed us but the big majority of the people of Dublin cheered us.¹²⁸

This was not true, as the advanced nationalist periodical *New Ireland* admitted in December 1916: 'there is no doubt that during the actual fighting nearly everybody was against the rebellion.'¹²⁹ The majority of the population opposed the Rising at the time. Tim Pat Coogan rightly asserts that the separation women were simply 'more abrasive than the rest of the population'.¹³⁰

The opposition of soldiers' wives to the Rising is however understandable and somewhat predictable. The rebellion resulted in the destruction of a large amount of inner city Dublin, including areas likely to have been home to these women; food supplies were

¹²³ Royal College of Physicians Ireland, KL/1/1: Diary of Kathleen Lynn, 1 May 1916.

¹²⁴ Richard Kain, "A diary of Easter week: one Dubliner's experience" in *Irish University Review*, x, (1980), pp 193-207; James Stephens, *Insurrection of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1916), p.20.

¹²⁵ Patrick Pearse, 'The Provisional Government to the Citizens of Dublin'.

¹²⁶ BMH WS 1476 Sean O'Kelly and BMH WS 779 Robert Brennan; see also *New Ireland*, 16 Dec. 1916.

¹²⁷ Letter from Mary Louisa Hamilton Norway to her sister Grace, 4 May 1916, cited in Keith Jeffrey (ed.) *The Sinn Féin rebellion as they saw it: Mary Louisa and Arthur Hamilton Norway* (Dublin, 1999), p.73.

¹²⁸ BMH WS 1031 John J. O'Reilly.

¹²⁹ *New Ireland*, 16 Dec. 1916.

¹³⁰ Tim Pat Coogan, *Ireland in the twentieth century* (New York, 2004), p.60.

very short during the week and many families suffered real hardship consequently.¹³¹ Of most significance was the fact that the rebels were fighting soldiers who wore the same uniform as their husbands, including members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.¹³² Pdraig Yeates has also observed that the Easter Rising coincided with the first anniversary of the attack on St Julien in April 1915 where the Royal Dublin Fusiliers suffered heavy casualties. He suggests that some of women who expressed hostility to the prisoners may have lost relatives the previous year and thus had no tolerance for an attack on the British army in Dublin.¹³³ In the context of Irish involvement in the Great War, opposition to any republican insurrection from this group was inevitable.

Although the actions of 'separation women' are most commonly associated with the Rising they were also a significant feature in accounts of other activities associated with the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin. There were demonstrations at St. Patrick's Day parades of Volunteers in Cork in 1916 and other more local small-scale activities in other counties. Such accounts demonstrate that violent opposition towards the advanced nationalist movement was not just connected with the Rising and its aftermath. For example, in April 1915 there was a major Irish Volunteer parade through Limerick at which the Volunteers were jeered and attacked by a crowd mainly composed of women. This occurred as the Volunteers passed through an area traditionally home to British Army soldiers and their families. The Judicial Division Intelligence Notes for Limerick in 1915 recorded this event:

On the occasion of a demonstration by them [the Irish Volunteers] in Limerick City on 23rd May when passing through the Irishtown quarter of the city, where a good many relatives of soldiers reside, they had a hostile reception from the people who pelted them with stones.¹³⁴

Sir Matthew Nathan also referred to the trouble in a letter to Lord Basil Blackwood on 24 May 1915: 'they met with a bad reception from a section of the population who had relatives in the army'.¹³⁵ Nineteen Bureau statements mention this demonstration of hostility, often as a means of praising the Volunteers for their show of restraint in refraining from retaliating against the crowd. It is alleged in a number of accounts that this was a pre-planned demonstration as opposed to a spontaneous reaction.¹³⁶

The election campaigns of 1917 and 1918 demonstrate however the extent to which 'separation women' actively opposed the nationalist and republican movements across the

¹³¹ The DMP requested that Dublin Castle send supplies of bread and milk to soldiers' wives in need in inner city Dublin during the Easter Rising. Another woman, the wife of a soldier, was reported to be starving and was invited to come to Richmond barracks where she would be provided with food: Nathan papers, MS 476, DMP telephone communication, 28 Apr. 1916.

¹³² McGarry, *The Rising: Easter 1916*, p.144.

¹³³ Yeates, *A city in wartime*, p.115.

¹³⁴ 'County Limerick Intelligence Notes 1915' in Mac Giolla Choille (ed.) *Intelligence Notes 1913-1916*, p.149.

¹³⁵ Nathan papers, MS 463: Letter from Sir Matthew Nathan to Lord Basil Blackwood, 24 May 1915.

¹³⁶ See for example, BMH WS 1700 Alphonsus O'Halloran.

country. Violence and intimidation were widespread during the elections of 1917 and 1918.¹³⁷ Rosamond Jacob described in her diary the violence that accompanied the by-election in Waterford in March 1918. She witnessed Irish Parliamentary Party supporters attempting to drown the voices of opposition by singing the popular wartime song ‘Keep the home fires burning’.¹³⁸ The republican activist Frank Gallagher explicitly describes the role of separation women in the Longford election campaign in 1917:

On his side [that of Patrick McKenna, the Irish Parliamentary Party candidate] too was an element that now entered Irish politics for the first time and was to create a problem for the young movement –the ‘separation women’ as they were called: the wives of men serving in the British Army who received large separation allowances. They became the victims of the forces hostile to Irish nationalism and being organised by them, were thrown into the first few elections in a way that disturbed many.¹³⁹

There are at least nine bureau statements referring to the role of these women in the Longford by-election.¹⁴⁰ Contemporaries associated such women with the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) as shown by this Sinn Féin propaganda poster from the election.¹⁴¹

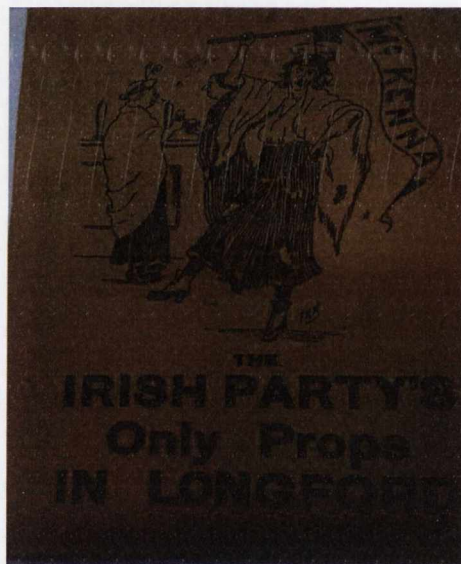


Fig. 8.1 National Library of Ireland "The Irish Party's only props in Longford"

The poster shows two women dressed in rags and elaborate furs. One of them is standing at a bar with a drink while the other is waving a banner in support of Patrick McKenna, the Irish Parliamentary Party candidate. A number of tropes relevant to the myth of the ‘separation women’ are evident in the poster: the furs representing their supposed extravagant spending,

¹³⁷ Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin Party 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p.102.

¹³⁸ NLI MS 32,582/34: Diary of Rosamond Jacob, 11 Mar. 1918, 12 Mar. 1918.

¹³⁹ Gallagher, *Four Glorious Years*, p.28.

¹⁴⁰ See for example BMH WS 1766 William O’Brien; BMH WS 633 Michael Joseph Ryan; BMH WS 722 Dan McCarthy; BMH WS 954 Sean Leavy; BMH WS 1770 Kevin O’Sheil; BMH WS 1003 Patrick Ahern; BMH WS 907 Laurence Nugent; BMH WS 1086 Patrick Mullooly; BMH WS 570 Patrick Kiernan.

¹⁴¹ NLI ILB 300 p6: Sinn Féin, “The Irish Party’s only props in Longford”, 1917.

the drinking in public referring to their reputation for excessive drinking and the banner indicating their overt support for the IPP. It clearly demonstrates the contemporary association between the 'separation women' and support for the IPP.

C.P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, noted in his diary the involvement of soldiers' relatives in the Longford election: 'The wives and mothers of the enlisted men went about waving both the Irish flag and the Union Jack and cheering for the Khaki'.¹⁴² The periodical *New Ireland* also commented on the involvement of separation women in the by-election and highlighted the tacit support of the IPP for the women's behaviour:

In the town of Longford the financial influence of the politicians will count heavily against Mr McGuinness. The separation allowance women and any votes they control go of course for Mr McKenna, the Union Jack and Khaki. [...] Up to the arrival of Mr Dillon and Mr Devlin, apart from the screaming of obscene language of the separation allowance women in Longford, no bitter hostility was shown on either side. [...] No effort was made by Dillon or Devlin to prevent the ruffianly conduct of their followers that day or subsequently.¹⁴³

The actual links between the Irish Parliamentary Party and these women remains unclear. For example the IPP publication *National Volunteer* denounced the violence at the 1915 Limerick parade as 'sullyng the noble cause of nationalism' but felt that the sentiments of the crowd were justified.¹⁴⁴ There are suggestions in some of the accounts of the various election campaigns that the IPP were effectively renting a crowd and making use of these women to provide the mob violence necessary to disrupt the election. For example, republican testimonies have alleged that during the Waterford election in March 1918 the women were plied with drink by Redmond supporting publicans, before being let loose on the streets to attack the Volunteers. The editor of *New Ireland* held the IPP responsible for the behaviour of 'separation women' in the Waterford by-election, stating that they stirred up the women against the Volunteers:

The great stand-by of the party and its intimidating intriguing wing, the AOH, just now is the ladies whose husbands are on the world's battlefields. These good ladies have developed a special dislike against Sinn Féin and the development of this dislike, its conversion into fanatical hatred, has been considerably aided by the Party's organisers and speakers. At Waterford, as at Longford, Ennis and Kilkenny, this particular type of virago was in evidence and but for the order maintained by the Volunteers much blood might have flown and hatred been engendered. [...] It is time, however, that some stop were put to the tactics of those who stir up the recipients of separation allowances against Sinn Féiners.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Trevor Wilson (ed.) *The diaries of CP Scott* (London, 1970), pp 289-290.

¹⁴³ *New Ireland*, 12 May 1915.

¹⁴⁴ *National Volunteer*, 29 May 1915.

¹⁴⁵ *New Ireland*, 30 Mar. 1918.

In his bureau statement, Seamus Babington described the demonstrations by the women in Carrick-on-Suir in 1917 as 'horrible, filthy and hired hostility'.¹⁴⁶ Other statements alleged that the aim of the IPP was to provoke the Volunteers into violent response which would result in their arrest or at least in the turn of public opinion against them. The tacit support of the Royal Irish Constabulary for these women is much commented on and it is claimed by some that there was collusion between the separation women and the RIC.¹⁴⁷ The extent to which the Irish Parliamentary Party drew on soldiers' families as supporters of their election campaigns requires further study as does any suggestion of calculated use of these women. Marie Coleman however suggests that the very public support of the 'separation women' for the IPP actually had a negative effect on the party's chances during the war. Sinn Féin was accusing the IPP of supporting the implementation of conscription in Ireland and Coleman suggests that the IPP's attempt to refute this claim was not helped by their most visible support coming from those connected to the British Army. She also points out that the support of the 'separation women' was of no practical benefit since women did not yet have the vote.¹⁴⁸

The Armistice in November 1918 did not bring an end to violent interaction between the supporters of soldiers and those of Sinn Féin. The general election in 1918 was once again a time of activity by the 'separation women' and a time of widespread violence.¹⁴⁹ Frank Gallagher describes how 150 Clare Volunteers had to be drafted into East Mayo to prevent acts of mob violence by ex-soldiers and 'separation women'.¹⁵⁰ Rosamond Jacob described how a meeting to plan the Sinn Féin general election campaign in Waterford was disrupted by 'separation women' making 'a great uproar'.¹⁵¹ Although the majority of women over the age of thirty now had the vote, this did not have an immediate impact upon the numbers of women expressing their politics through public demonstrations and violence.

A number of issues are raised by this discussion of the discourse surrounding 'separation women'. How were separation women identified as such? What evidence do we have that the women recorded in these accounts were in fact soldier's dependents? They are typically identified using one or other of the following factors: the areas in which they lived being areas which traditionally provided British Army recruits, and the chants and jeers used by the women. In some cases the witness knew the women and so could make a definite statement about their family connections. However they were frequently described as the 'separation woman type' suggesting uncertainty as to their identity. It is evidently possible

¹⁴⁶ BMH WS 1595 Seamus Babington, p.10.

¹⁴⁷ For example see BMH WS 985 Peter O'Loughlin; BMH WS 420 Charles Wyse Power; BMH WS 1552 Bartholomew Flynn and BMH WS 1296 Thomas Costello.

¹⁴⁸ Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution* (Dublin, 2003), p.59.

¹⁴⁹ Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland*, p.162.

¹⁵⁰ Gallagher, *Four Glorious Years*, p.52.

¹⁵¹ NLI MS 32,582/35: Diary of Rosamond Jacob, 17 Nov. 1918.

that there was some exaggeration to the accounts. The majority of reports of the women come from those hostile to their activity and there was a clear desire on the part of the republican movement to attribute all hostility to their cause to connections to the British Army and the economic motivation of the separation allowance.

However, the number and variety of the accounts describing hostile behaviour to the Volunteers suggests some veracity to the statements. Soldiers' wives were involved in violent or vocal opposition to the republican movement in this period. The activities of these women in the years following the Armistice require further research. Evidently various groups of 'separation women' were successful in their motivation of disrupting Volunteer activity. Their hostile response to the Limerick parade in 1915 and the Easter Rising were very heavily reported. Nationalist meetings were disrupted and detours and event cancellations required. During the election campaigns of 1918 it was deemed necessary to draft in extra consignments of Volunteers to provide protection duty in the most troublesome areas such as Waterford. This indicates continued widespread passionate opposition to Sinn Féin during those years.

Nevertheless the 'separation women' involved in anti-republican demonstrations represented a minority of soldiers' wives in Ireland. Not all soldier's families were opposed to the republican movement with some openly supporting the Easter Rising or anti-conscription campaign. The *Lady of the House* commented on 'how money circulates', claiming in June 1916 that a soldier's wife spent part of her separation allowance on Sinn Féin commemorative stamps.¹⁵² Liam de Roiste, a Sinn Féin activist, noted in his diary the participation of 'separation women' in the anti-conscription protest. He witnessed soldiers' wives marching through St Patrick's street singing Sinn Féin songs.¹⁵³

Discussion of the political activism of soldiers' wives should be considered in conjunction with the societal anxiety expressed about their behaviour, discussed in Chapter Four. Soldiers' wives had become a convenient scapegoat for diverse groups during the war and were the target of surveillance and censure. Consequently, their protests against republicanism were criticised rather than being seen as demonstrations of loyalty to the state and the war effort. As disenfranchised members of the working class, these women had few alternative means of expressing their political views. Such violent demonstrations nevertheless represent the growing politicisation of women during the Great War. Ben Novick notes that the actions of 'separation women' in traditional male dominated spheres were signs of freedom denied to the 'purer' female supporters of Sinn Féin.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² *Lady of the House*, 15 June 1916.

¹⁵³ Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war & revolution*, p.194.

¹⁵⁴ Novick, *Conceiving revolution*, p.160.

The Irish 'separation women' were derided by contemporaries for attempting to defend their allowances from the threat of Sinn Féin but their behaviour had many parallels across Europe. Despite some obvious differences, there are some interesting parallels between the collective activity of 'separation women' and the *soldatki* – soldiers' wives in the Ukrainian province of Kharkiv. Mark Baker's work has revealed the wartime role played by *soldatki* in protesting against the government imposed land reforms and price controls.¹⁵⁵ The *soldatki* were directing their protests at the government, unlike in Ireland, where 'separation women' targeted those hostile to the war effort. In both cases, however, the women were protecting the interests of their soldier husbands. Baker argues that it was the perceived threat to their economic wellbeing that had the most effect in galvanising the *soldatki* rather than calls to patriotism or the rise of ethnic politics. He considers their prominence in riots over inflation and food controls as entirely understandable given their assumption of responsibility for the household in the absence of the main breadwinner. In the Ukraine, as in Ireland, contemporaries assumed that the women were being used and influenced by other forces – the IPP in Ireland's case and a revolutionary underground organisation in the case of the Ukraine. Baker notes that the police could not quite believe that women could carry out such provocative violent actions themselves without male leadership. Soldiers' wives were not a new social group in either case but in both states the Great War prompted collective action and enabled them to become a well-formed social group capable of defending their perceived interests.¹⁵⁶

Suffrage

The Representation of the People Act was passed into law on 6 February 1918. While not enfranchising all women on the same terms as men, it nevertheless gave the parliamentary vote to all women over thirty who were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property of a yearly value of not less than £5, or university graduates.¹⁵⁷ It was followed in 1919 by the Women's Emancipation Act which stated that women would not be disqualified 'by sex or marriage from holding any civil or judicial office or place of profit or trust'.¹⁵⁸ The granting of the limited suffrage to women was seen by contemporary observers

¹⁵⁵ Mark Baker, "Rampaging *soldatki*, cowering police, bazaar riots and moral economy: the social impact of the Great War in Kharkiv province" in *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, xxxv, no.2 (Summer-Fall, 2001), pp 137-55.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 143, 147, 150, 154.

¹⁵⁷ Representation of the people...H.C. 1917-1918 (110) ii, 572.

¹⁵⁸ Women's emancipation: a bill to remove certain restraints and disabilities imposed upon women. H.C. 1919 (38) ii, 1187.

as an expression of gratitude for women's role in the war effort.¹⁵⁹ However historians have since questioned the impact of women's war work on the granting of the franchise.

Angela Woollacott argues that the patriotic war worker replaced the suffragist as the most visible image of womanhood. She suggests that their visible dedication to the national cause constituted an implicit claim to their citizenship.¹⁶⁰ June Purvis similarly argues that, by taking control of the discourse of war to further their campaign for female citizenship, the suffragists were able to bring about a cultural shift in the definition of citizenship. Citizenship became centred on the idea of loyal service, patriotic sentiment and British blood rather than manhood, majority or property.¹⁶¹

There was a shift in popular opinion towards women's suffrage in Ireland during the war. Initially the suffrage societies continued to face suspicion and hostility. This gradually altered as the more conciliatory approach of the majority of suffragists and their voluntary work for the war effort gained more publicity.¹⁶² The Belfast suffrage society expressed confidence in March 1916 that the recognition of the citizenship of women would be a 'matter of the near future'.¹⁶³ Mary Hayden asserted at a meeting of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation in January 1917 that suffrage prospects had improved in the last year owing to the war and that she anticipated 'victory' within the year.¹⁶⁴ The *Northern Whig* claimed in 1917 that the war had caused 'the great majority' of the nation to realise that the extension of the vote to women was not only inevitable but desirable.¹⁶⁵

Many Irish suffragists were however frustrated by the fact that the Bill was widely seen as a reward for women's work for the war effort rather than an acknowledgement of the validity of the suffrage cause. Interviewed in the *Irish Independent* as the Bill was passed by parliament in 1917, Mary Hayden and Helen Chenevix, both prominent Irish suffragists, were careful to emphasise the long history of the suffrage movement in Ireland. Helen Chenevix was quoted as saying that the 'work suffragists had always been doing was quite as important as the new war work so that the proposals should be passed on its own merits

¹⁵⁹ See for example, *Lady of the House*, 15 Nov. 1918; NLI Chief Secretary Cuttings: *Irish Independent*, 1917; IWM 67/196/1: Diary of George Hammersely Heenan, 24 Oct. 1918.

¹⁶⁰ Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p.190.

¹⁶¹ June Purvis, "The Pankhursts and the Great War" in Fell & Sharp (eds) *The women's movement in wartime: international perspectives 1914-1919*, p.144.

¹⁶² For evidence of distrust and hostility see for example Rosemary Jacob's account of the difficulties faced by the MWFL in publicising their efforts to fundraise for the Red Cross- NLI MS 32,582/27: Diary of Rosamond Jacob, 28 Nov. 1914. See also the conservative women's magazine *Lady of the House's* effort to make clear that the campaign for prohibition was not 'a suffragette movement' and thus was deserving of support, 15 Mar. 1917. The same magazine had however praised the Holywood Suffrage society's war work and the Suffrage Emergency Council's work on 15 Dec. 1914 and 15 Apr. 1915. Lady Aberdeen also spoke of increased popularity of the suffrage movement in Oct. 1915; *Irish Independent*, 20 Oct. 1915.

¹⁶³ *Northern Whig*, 17 Mar. 1916.

¹⁶⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 25 Jan. 1917.

¹⁶⁵ NLI Chief Secretary Cuttings: *Northern Whig*, 1917.

not because of the new feeling brought about by the war services of women'.¹⁶⁶ The age qualification was also responsible for the muted response to the Bill. The *Irish Citizen* promised to actively oppose the 'offensive sex barrier' for women under thirty years of age while the IWFL made clear its dissatisfaction with the Bill as passed.¹⁶⁷

Susan Grayzel argues that the age qualification is evidence that 'service does not equal suffrage'.¹⁶⁸ Many of the women most actively involved in the war effort remained disenfranchised, thus revealing the lie behind the concept of suffrage as a reward for war work. Electoral reform was essential in 1918 to enfranchise British men who had served in the wartime army. The suspension of the militant campaign together with the popular public role of women in war work meant there was little opposition to the inclusion of women in the franchise. The different qualifications however ensured that men would still form the majority of the electorate despite the loss of so many men in the war.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Nicollella Gullace argues that the Bill was 'as much about defining manhood as about recognising women'.¹⁷⁰

The granting of even limited female franchise however gave new confidence and recognition to the nationalist and unionist women's organisations. Aideen Sheehan has noted how the 'role of women in the Irish Nation' was given priority in the organisation's manifesto for 1918 while the previous year the rights of women had been relegated to third place behind raising money for arms and gaining Irish recognition at the Peace Conference. She cites the granting of limited female suffrage and the rapid growth of the organisation in 1918 as responsible for increasing 'its self-confidence in its ability to bring women into the active life of the country'.¹⁷¹ Cumann na mBan mobilised to support Sinn Féin in the 1918 election. They put significant effort into directing women to vote for Sinn Féin and in ensuring that women likely to vote Sinn Féin had the opportunity to cast their votes.¹⁷² The election of Markievicz to Westminster in the December 1918 election encouraged female republican aspirations, despite the fact that she declined to take her seat.¹⁷³

The Representation of the People Act also had a significant effect on the UWUC, which experienced a revival in 1918. Although many prominent individuals in the Unionist

¹⁶⁶ NLI Chief Secretary Cuttings: *Irish Independent*, 1917.

¹⁶⁷ *Irish Citizen*, Feb. 1918, Mar. 1918.

¹⁶⁸ Susan Grayzel, "Women and men" p.273. See also Ward, "'Women of Britain say go'", p.42. Nicollella Gullace has also highlighted the different property qualifications for men and women and has suggested that the Bill continued to exclude the young and poor: Nicollella Gullace, *The blood of our sons' men, women, and the renegotiation of British citizenship during the Great War* (Hampshire, 2002), p.185.

¹⁶⁹ Richard J. Evans, *The feminists: women's emancipation movements in Europe, America and Australasia 1840-1920* (London, 1977), pp 222-223.

¹⁷⁰ Gullace, *The blood of our sons'*, p.169.

¹⁷¹ Sheehan, "Cumann na mBan policies and activities" p.88.

¹⁷² McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution*, p.98.

¹⁷³ Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist women*, p.263.

cause were opposed to women's suffrage, they recognised that the enfranchisement of women could be used to their advantage.¹⁷⁴ The annual report for the UWUC for 1918 referred to the extension of the franchise as the occasion for a 'quickening of political feeling and necessitated a re-organisation of the Unionist forces to meet changed conditions'. For example, women were now accepted as members of the Ulster Unionist Council on the same footing as men, rather than being isolated in specifically women's auxiliary organisations.¹⁷⁵ The women's council was granted twelve representatives on the Ulster Unionist Council, an achievement attributed by the UUC to the extension of the parliamentary franchise.¹⁷⁶ The branches of the UWUC were also re-organised to fit with the parliamentary divisions and members of each branch were urged to join the local parliamentary association.¹⁷⁷ The UWUC strove to bring as many of the enfranchised women as possible into their organisation and sought to instruct women to vote for unionist parliamentary candidates.¹⁷⁸ The *Irish Citizen*, which was editorially openly nationalist by 1918, was very critical of this manipulation of women's suffrage, at least on the part of Unionists, and denounced Londonderry's methods in the strongest terms:

We surely did not work and suffer and go to prison and endure all the horror of forcible feeding in order to be taken by the hand –though the hand be the hand of a Marchioness –in this high and mighty fashion and told in commanding tones how to vote and for whom to vote!¹⁷⁹

However the majority of Irish suffragists quickly realised that the reality of women's enfranchisement fell far short of their expectations and that in post-war Ireland, party-politics would once again take precedence over feminist aspirations. In Ireland, as in Britain, the achievement of limited female franchise in 1918 heralded the swift decline of the movement. The *Irish Citizen* reported in September 1918 a regrettable 'slackening in both Irish and British suffrage activities with some societies closing entirely'.¹⁸⁰ An attempt was made to amalgamate the various suffrage societies into one organisation which would work cooperatively to 'secure those reforms which as women they are especially concerned'. However after two meetings it was unanimously decided to postpone amalgamation: 'political differences are at present so strong in Ireland that a closer union of society or federation would be out of the question'.¹⁸¹ The suffrage movement had managed the unusual feat of gaining support for their cause from both republicans and unionists in Ireland during

¹⁷⁴ PRONI D/1507/A/26/8: Letter from Lady Londonderry to Edward Carson, 18 Jan. 1918.

¹⁷⁵ D/1507/A/27/3: Letter from Lady Londonderry to all UWUC branches, Apr. 1918.

¹⁷⁶ Urquhart, *Women in Ulster politics*, p.71.

¹⁷⁷ D/2846/1/8/70: Letter from Richard Dawson Bates to Ronald McNeill, 29 June 1918.

¹⁷⁸ D/1507/A/27/3: Letter from Lady Londonderry to all UWUC branches, Apr. 1918.

¹⁷⁹ *Irish Citizen*, Nov. 1918; See also *Irish Citizen*, Dec. 1918.

¹⁸⁰ *Irish Citizen*, Sept. 1918.

¹⁸¹ *Irish Citizen*, Mar. and Apr. 1918.

the war but it could not survive both the achievement of its most basic aim and the increasing political tension.

The Irish suffrage societies shifted their focus from suffrage to broader philanthropic or maternalistic concerns. For the most part, their activities promoted the ideology of the separate spheres. The particular role of women in safeguarding social morality was emphasised. For example, the Waterford suffrage society became a conservative women's organisation after the granting of the franchise, focusing on the issue of cinema regulation. They aimed to make cinemas an 'educational influence of the best kind' and free from 'vulgarity and sensationalism'. They considered this work as particularly suitable for women who they considered to be 'the guardians of the race'.¹⁸² An unnamed suffragist stated in March 1918 that her party did not intend to occupy itself with party politics but instead to use their votes to reform some of the laws pertaining to women and children.¹⁸³ Even the more strident IWFL argued for the need for an independent feminist group, which would watch 'women's special interests and keep up a standard for women'.¹⁸⁴ As early as December 1915 an article in the *Irish Citizen* outlined the particular role for women in the post-war 'healing and reconstruction'. Although they argued that this could be an empowering moment for women, they were advocating traditional gendered roles: 'Women must bind the wounds and mend the shattered social fabric'.¹⁸⁵

This chapter has clearly demonstrated the impact of the Great War on women's political organisations in Ireland, revealing how the war affected the extent and type of political activism by women. Women in the suffrage, nationalist and unionist movements used the war effort as a means of promoting their own political agenda, thus performing political activism through traditional feminine activities. The efforts of those who supported the war effort were very similar to the typical war relief activities described in Chapter Six, except for the emphasis among the suffragists and unionists that their work be performed solely through their own organisations and name. Traditional female roles prevailed and, in the case of the unionists and the nationalists, the women's organisations and their activities took place under the umbrella of the male dominated party-political movements, restricting the agency of the women's organisations.

The war affected the different organisations in diverse ways. While the wartime activities of unionist and pro-war nationalist women were similar in many respects, the latter half of the war offered nationalist, and particularly republican, women more opportunities for overt political activism through the Rising and anti-conscription campaign. Nevertheless

¹⁸² *Irish Citizen*, Dec. 1919.

¹⁸³ *Lady of the House*, 15 Mar. 1918.

¹⁸⁴ *Irish Citizen*, Mar. - Apr. 1920.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 Nov. 1915.

the war politicised unionist women and altered their forms of political activity, involving them in a range of pro-war work in the public sphere as a consequence of the war. Anti-war nationalist women initially lost their space in party-politics through the disintegration of Cumann na mBan in autumn 1914. However their stance gradually gained momentum and relevance as opposition to the war increased.

The war initially brought unprecedented unity among the Irish population as the majority of previously dissenting voices mobilised in support of the war effort. However divisions increasingly became apparent. In his work on the Great War in Europe, John Horne has described how the mobilisation process frequently increased tensions on the home front and accelerated existing divisions.¹⁸⁶ Rhetoric became intensified through the language of sacrifice and betrayal, making reconciliation and compromise increasingly difficult. This was very evident within the Irish suffrage movement and among Cumann na mBan members. Tensions between Ulster and southern Ireland became more acute with the war effort being used as a test of relative loyalty and patriotism. The war accelerated existing divisions and resulted in increasingly polarised identities.

Dissent against the mobilisation process was apparent from the outbreak of the war but became more evident as the war progressed, revealing the complex relationship between the public and the war effort. Although support for the war effort was more evident than outward opposition in the first year of the war, apparent in the disintegration of the anti-war Cumann na mBan branches and the participation of advanced nationalists in war relief work, this was changed dramatically by the 1916 Rising and the subsequent anti-conscription campaign. The Easter Rising reveals the politicising impact of the war on Irishwomen which was further illustrated by the anti-conscription campaign, an example of mass mobilisation against the state. The participation of women was vital to the success of the anti-conscription campaign and it served to mobilise thousands of hitherto unorganised women. Working-class soldiers' wives were also politicised by the wartime context, evident in their vocal and violent opposition to the republican movement.

To what extent was the Irish female experience of politicisation unique? What aspects were particular to the specific context of wartime Ireland? Ireland was an exceptionally divided society in 1914, on the brink of civil war that was primarily averted by the outbreak of the world war. This meant that war relief activity was more explicitly political from the outset of the war and resulted in competing loyalties affecting Irishwomen. The Easter Rising and anti-conscription campaign and the divisions between north and south reflected intense long-lasting internal divisions. However similarities are very apparent between the anti-conscription campaign and the role of women in cost-of-living protests

¹⁸⁶ John Horne, "Mobilising for 'total war', 1914-1918" in Horne (ed.) *State, society and mobilisation*, p.12.

taking place across Europe at the same time. In Ireland as elsewhere, the personal had become political. Likewise the experience of the 'separation women' had features unique to the Irish situation but also resembled the acts of protests by *soldatki* in Ukraine and other European examples of women actively defending the interests of their absent soldier husbands.

Chapter 9: Demobilisation and family life

The ending of the war in November 1918 had a direct impact upon women in Ireland, affecting their employment, position in society and relationships in the domestic sphere. While the cessation of the war brought enormous relief to women anxiously awaiting the return of their loved ones, it also resulted in economic hardship for those employed in the war industries. Irishwomen faced particular difficulties arising from the swift demobilisation of war workers resulting in high levels of unemployment, the more limited relief available from the British government, and the political instability in the years immediately following the war. This chapter examines the immediate impact of the ending of the war for Irishwomen in the public and private spheres before considering the longer-term effects of the war for women in Ireland.

The announcement of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 brought ambivalent feelings for Irishwomen. In her famous memoir of the war, Vera Brittain describes her overwhelming feeling at the end of the war as being relief rather than celebration of the victory.¹ The personal cost of the war had been too great to allow for jubilation. Similar sentiments were evident among Irishwomen bereaved by the war. Rosamond Stephen described a visit to her neighbour, Mrs. Rice in Belfast, to tell her the news of the Armistice:

She sat by the fire saying 'I am glad. I am very glad' and really she did not care two straws because her Ownie was killed in action and Jo is in a lunatic asylum with shell shock. She was very fond of those two boys.²

Veronica Wynne, from county Wicklow, wrote to her mother in November 1918 that while the announcement of the Armistice was 'frightfully thrilling' one cannot help wanting our own boy badly'.³ She was referring to her brother Charles who died of wounds while serving in France in June 1917.⁴ Katharine Tynan anticipated in her memoir, initially completed in April 1918, that there would be no rejoicing when peace finally came: 'We had suffered too much for that. We might emerge from under the scourges but our backs would still be bloody'.⁵

¹ Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London, 1978), p.460.

² Walsh (ed.) *An Englishwoman in Belfast*, p.75.

³ TCD MS 10247/1/1886-1922: Letters from Veronica Wynne to Alice Wynne, 12 and 14 Nov. 1918.

⁴ Commonwealth War Graves Commission: record of Charles Wyndham Wynne <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/23297/WYNNE,%20CHARLES%20WYNDHAM> (21 August 2015).

⁵ Tynan, *The years of the shadow*, p.298.

A sense of deflation and uncertainty was a common response among those active in the war effort. The Countess of Fingall, active in the Irishwomen's Association amongst other voluntary endeavours, described how at the announcement of the Armistice she felt 'drained of all feeling'.⁶ Catherine Black, a QAIMNS nurse, also recalled how the Armistice left her 'dazed and bewildered, the inevitable reaction after those years of strain'.⁷ In her study of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, Janet Lee has observed similar ambivalent reactions to the ending of the war. She records the awareness among members following demobilisation that war service had brought friendship and solidarity, as well as adventure and independence. Many members knew they would miss the solidarity of war work and feared the loss of independence.⁸

This was particularly evident in the case of Letitia Overend (1880-1977). Her diary demonstrates the personal fulfilment that could be gained from war work and indicates the extent to which activities to support the war effort could dominate the lives of participants. Letitia Overend was from an Anglican upper-class background and lived on the Airfield estate in county Dublin. She attended Alexandra College and can be seen as representative of its alumni of educated wealthy women interested in philanthropy. Together with her mother and sister, Letitia became involved with the St John Ambulance Association from 1909. During the war she served as commandant of the Alexandra College Nursing Division and was promoted to lady district officer of the Irish district of the St John Ambulance Association in 1919. She was also heavily involved with the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot. Her diaries show someone actively involved with the war effort, spending most of her weekdays working at the depot or engaged in other war work.⁹ The following diary entry shows her typical wartime schedule:

16 December 1915

Depot 9.40. Car then onto North Wall to meet 'Dover Castle' with wounded soldiers. I worked till 1 –lunch with Kathleen at O'Brien's and then with her to Grafton st. Depot 2.30 to 6.30. Miss Walsh and I worked stockroom.

By depot she is referring to the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot in Merrion Square. In a rare personal comment, she described her sense of anxiety and uncertainty following the announcement of the Armistice.

For afterwards it is well to note that these days of the first relaxing of the chain of war after 4 years are odd and no one can quite realise what has happened – we work as usual but the pace of change and not knowing what may happen next is very hard to grasp.¹⁰

⁶ Pamela Hinkson, *Seventy years young: memories of Elizabeth, Countess of Fingall* (Dublin, 1991), p.386.

⁷ Black, *King's nurse – beggar's nurse*, p.124.

⁸ Janet Lee, *War girls: the First Aid Yeomanry in the First World War* (Manchester, 2005), p.209.

⁹ Airfield Papers, 1223A: Diaries of Letitia Overend.

¹⁰ Diary of Letitia Overend, 23 Nov. 1918.

There is little sense of jubilation in her diary at this time. In another rare personal remark, she notes the last day of work at the IWHSD as being 'very sad'.¹¹ Letitia's life during the war was filled with a sense of purpose and active engagement. In her role as commandant she was someone of importance, someone to whom others looked up and whose presence at meetings was needed.¹² She may have been concerned that she would lose all this after the war and that her life would seem empty without it. Her daily schedule appears to quieten down significantly from spring 1919 although she remained closely involved with the St John Ambulance Association for years afterwards. Letitia continued to serve as a committee member of the post-war hospital supply depot, which provided hospitals and district nurses with dressings and bandages.¹³ She was nominated for an O.B.E. in 1920 but declined because 'it is impossible that everyone who did good work during the War can be recognised and I would not desire to be placed in a different position'.¹⁴

Many war workers who had served overseas found it difficult to adjust to civilian life. Sophie Pierce's wartime experience with the WAAC had a lasting impact upon her life. She returned to Dublin in July 1919 from her service with the WAAC and returned to the Royal College of Science, although her husband wanted her to move to Africa with him.¹⁵ Although she eventually joined her husband, she was unable or unwilling to settle into a traditional domestic role and the marriage did not last. She became a keen athlete and was one of the founders of the Women's Amateur Athletic Association. In 1926 Sophie qualified as a private pilot and was the first woman in Ireland and Great Britain to obtain a commercial flying licence. She later toured the USA demonstrating her aviation skills.¹⁶ Sophie's WAAC experience gave her the opportunity to escape her family life and the expectations placed on her by society. Her biographer suggests she craved the adventure and danger offered by the war and spent the rest of her life attempting to relive those days and recover those lost days of excitement and independence.¹⁷

Emily MacManus also found it very difficult to adjust to post-war life. She found the initial few months of working in a civilian hospital 'intolerable' after her experience with the QAIMNS in France. She missed the comradeship and 'good will' of camp life in France and chafed against the restrictions placed on her freedom of movement. Returning to the female hospital environment having lived for three and a half years in a 'world of men' was

¹¹ Diary of Letitia Overend, 28 Feb. 1919.

¹² This was clearly demonstrated during the Rising when her advice was frantically sought by division members, anxious to know how best to help with the mounting casualties.

¹³ Airfield papers, Box 69 MS 2597: Minutes of meeting of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot, 12 June 1919.

¹⁴ Airfield Papers, Box 69, MS 2609.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.50.

¹⁶ Bridget Hourican, "Sophie Catherine Peirce Evans" in McGuire and Quinn (eds) *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

¹⁷ Naughton, *Lady Icarus*, p.14.

particularly difficult.¹⁸ However, she was able to use her war experience to gain a promotion to the position of matron at the Bristol Royal Infirmary and in 1927, matron of Guy's Hospital.¹⁹

However other war workers were very happy to return to their pre-war lives afterwards. There is no sense of deflation or trepidation in the reaction of Elsie Henry to demobilisation in 1918. She had served as Quartermaster of the Sphagnum department of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot during the war. She recorded in her diary the joyous celebrations in Dublin following the announcement of the Armistice and proclaimed that, 'life was utterly glorious and everyone so happy'. She described how the sphagnum moss depot 'rejoiced and rioted, each according to its own...but not much work got done'.²⁰ She also reported that the indication from the War Office that the sphagnum moss work would continue after the war was not greeted with universal enthusiasm:

The War Office is closing down cotton wool and bandage depots but apparently requires moss ad lib forever and ever. Mrs Cole said today with dangerous mildness, 'The War Office is entitled to express any opinion it wishes, but after xmas I am going to say 'Nunc Dimmitis' and then I shall 'Nunk'.²¹

Veronica Wynne was initially concerned about what the ending of the war meant for her wartime employment in the censor's office in London. Her letters to her mother display the uncertainty created by the Armistice: 'Mrs Phil seems to think we might get a week's notice any time soon – I don't think anyone really knows'. A couple of days later she wrote again saying that she wished she had 'some idea of what is likely to happen to us and that one might have a definite time to look forward to'. However she quickly became enthused about the prospect of coming home, finding that the work held less fulfilment for her once the war had ended: 'the work is stale and stifling and I am longing to paint and write and still more to be home – it is long enough to be away while the war was on'.²²

Demobilisation and unemployment

The sense of uncertainty and instability described by Veronica Wynne was common to many women war workers, for whom the Armistice had an immediate economic impact. Although Veronica came from an upper-class family and had independent means, for many other women in Ireland and Great Britain the ending of the war resulted in unemployment and hardship.²³ Those working in munitions or employed on War Office contracts quickly found

¹⁸ MacManus, *Matron of Guy's*, pp 122, 124-125.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 133, 142.

²⁰ Elsie Henry, '11 Nov. 1918', p. 214.

²¹ *Ibid.* '18 Dec. 1918', p.218.

²² TCD MS 10247/1/1886-1922: Letters from Veronica Wynne to Alice Wynne, 12 and 14 Nov. 1918, 6 Dec. 1918.

²³ For details of the Wynne family, see *Burke's Landed Gentry of Ireland*, 1912, p.788 and the 1901 census record for the family.

themselves without work. Between the Armistice and the end of April 1920, the number of women employed in either army work or industrial work in the UK decreased by 600,000. The hours of work were reduced on average by ten percent.²⁴ The termination of army contracts combined with the anticipated return of enlisted men resulted in the immediate loss of employment for women in Ireland. There was an 8.3% contraction in the number of women employed in industry in Ireland between November 1918 and July 1919.²⁵ Women working in non-traditional female sectors were worst affected. For example, the number of women working in the building trade declined by 50%, the chemical trade by 30% and the metal trade by 23%. There was however a 5.2% expansion in the numbers of women employed in commerce in July 1919 compared with the previous November, indicating continuing work for women in this sector.²⁶

The closure of munitions factories is evident in the 93% contraction in the employment of women in 'government establishments'.²⁷ By 20 November 1918 three hundred women in the Dublin shell factory had lost their jobs.²⁸ It was claimed in December 1918 that the Waterford munitions factory had dismissed some of its women workers after the Armistice on the grounds that they were incompetent. The workers in question had been employed by the factory since its opening and the timing of their dismissal suggested that it was a ploy to avoid having to pay them unemployment benefit.²⁹ By the end of December 1918 all three to four hundred workers at the factory had been dismissed.³⁰ The remaining munitions factories in Ireland all closed over the following twelve months.

The Irish textile industry, the linen trade in particular, entered another depression after the war's end with the loss of army contracts. Shortage of flax supplies continued to be problematic and this, together with the high price of the available flax, made a revival of the civilian linen trade difficult.³¹ Short time continued to be the norm in 1919.³² The situation worsened in April 1919. A considerable number of women were discharged and the use of short time was increased in Belfast and the surrounding district. An estimated 3,000 claims for out-of-work donations were lodged in Belfast as a consequence.³³ The number of women

²⁴ A.C. Pigou, *Aspects of British economic history 1918-25* (London, 1947), p.21.

²⁵ BLPES Beveridge papers, MS 3/58: Report on the state of employment in all occupations in the United Kingdom at the end of July 1919 as compared with November 1918, p. 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Woman Worker*, Feb. 1919.

²⁹ *Woman Worker*, Dec. 1918.

³⁰ *Women Worker*, Jan. 1919.

³¹ Riordan, *Modern Irish trade and industry*, p.119.

³² IWM WWS EMP.80/9: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 1 Mar. 1919, p.9; WWS EMP.80/13: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 29 Mar. 1919.

³³ WWS EMP.80/17: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 3 May 1919, p.18.

employed in textiles in Ireland had contracted by 8% in July 1919 compared with November 1918. Women were particularly badly affected –the number of male workers fell by just 0.4% over the same period.³⁴ Although some improvement was reported, it was explained that there was continuous alteration in the employment situation in the trade: ‘Workers may be on short time one week, totally discharged the next, and then again, after a short interval on short time’.³⁵

However by September 1919 there was a marked improvement in the linen and cotton trades and new employment for women was found in the mills and factories. Work was also resumed at the Dundalk mills and the Drogheda mills were reported to be working at full pressure.³⁶ The shirt and collar trade continued to produce a high output after the cessation of the war contracts. Riordan reported in 1920 that there had been an ‘abnormal demand’ for shirts and collars since the ending of the war, thus maintaining a steady supply of work for the employees.³⁷

Servicewomen were demobilised at a slower pace than munitions workers but by May 1920 102,562 British and Irish women had been demobilised from a variety of organisations.³⁸ Those working in trades dependent on government contracts during the war or in the women’s service corps were entitled to the out-of-work donation following their demobilisation. Table 9.1 demonstrates the number of Irish female workers in receipt of the donation between December 1918 and the end of February 1919.

Table 9.1 Women in Ireland in receipt of out-of-work donation, Dec. 1918 to Feb. 1919

Period	Women and girls in Ireland	Irishwomen as % of total Irish recipients	Irishwomen as % of total UK female recipients
30/12/18	9,244	29.7	3.2
29/01/19	22,197	37.5	5.2
28/02/19	33,072	35.0	6.3

The numbers of Irishwomen in receipt of the donation increased significantly between the end of December 1918 and the end of February 1919, the last point for which figures are available. The importance of the out-of-work donation for women in Ireland can be seen in the fact that by the end of February 1919, 33,072 women and girls in Ireland were in receipt of the donation, making up 35% of all those in Ireland receiving it. Women in Ireland made

³⁴ Beveridge papers, MS 3/58: Report on the state of employment in all occupations in the United Kingdom at the end of July 1919 as compared with Nov. 1918, p. 11.

³⁵ WWS EMP.80/25: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 5 July 1919, p.24.

³⁶ WWS EMP.80/35: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 20 Sept. 1919, p.22.

³⁷ Riordan, *Modern Irish trade and industry*, p.123.

³⁸ War office, *Statistics of the military effort*, p.710.

up 5.2% of all the women in the UK in receipt of the donation at the end of January and 6.3% at the end of February.³⁹

Irishwomen received adverse treatment compared to their British counterparts under the terms of the out-of-work scheme. The British government decided in February 1919 to implement specific restrictions on the scheme in Ireland, limiting its application to demobilised servicemen, insured trades and certain trades certified by the Lord Lieutenant as those in which a substantial amount of unemployment had been directly caused by the cessation of hostilities.⁴⁰ This negatively affected Irish members of the Women's Services. British ex-servicewomen were entitled to receive fifteen shillings per week until July 1921 but Irish members of the same women's services had no such entitlement.⁴¹ The Admiralty objected to the differentiation in treatment of Irish and British members of the WRNS and argued that the immobile members of the WRNS in Ireland should be treated the same as immobile members in Britain. However the Ministry of Labour claimed that little could be done to change the situation in the absence of evidence of substantial unemployment or of a general boycott against war workers in Ireland.⁴² The Irish Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers also raised the issue with Viscount French, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.⁴³

Discussions on the issue were still ongoing in November 1919 with some continuing to argue that demobilised Irish members of the WAAC, WRNS and WRAF should not need to prove unemployment but should be entitled to the donation in respect of their war service.⁴⁴ The divisional officer in Dublin argued that it was unjust to afford preferential treatment to women enrolled in Great Britain for the women's services. Irishwomen were enrolled on equal terms and signed contracts agreeing to work for the duration so were unavailable to take up other employment opportunities that may have occurred.⁴⁵ An Irish member of the WRAF complained in the *Irish Citizen* in October 1919 that she and her fellow Irish members had been let go with just a week's notice and a week's pay. The editor described it as a 'scandalous shame' to throw so many women out of employment and to make no provision for them.⁴⁶

³⁹ *Labour Gazette*, Feb. 1919; Mar. 1919.

⁴⁰ WWS EMP.80/8: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 22 Feb. 1919 p.11.

⁴¹ Norman B. Dearle, *An Economic chronicle of the Great War for Britain and Ireland 1914-1919 with a supplement dealing briefly with the years 1920, 1921 and 1922* (London, 1929), pp 253, 295.

⁴² TNA PIN 7/28: Minutes from Mr Cunningham, 17 Apr. 1919.

⁴³ IWM French papers, JDPF 8/2: Letter from French to Macpherson, 20 Nov. 1919.

⁴⁴ PIN 7/28: Minutes from Mr Basham, 11 Nov. 1919.

⁴⁵ PIN 7/28: Memorandum from divisional officer on the out-of-work donation for discharged members of the women's state services in Ireland, Dublin, 16 Apr. 1919.

⁴⁶ *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1919.

Women workers stood to lose their donation if they refused any work offered through the labour exchanges. Consequently some women lost their donation, even before they had received the first payment, by hesitating or refusing to accept the initial jobs offered in the Labour Exchange.⁴⁷ The Ministry of Labour had ruled that no woman could be suspended from unemployment benefit for refusing a job that paid less than twenty-five shillings a week. However the *Woman Worker* alleged that women in Ireland were being refused benefit 'for no good reason'.⁴⁸ The department of civil demobilisation and settlement reported in February 1919 a situation of 'ever increasing difficulty' in Ireland where it was 'almost impossible' to persuade women to accept the work offered through the labour exchanges. The department accepted that the cause of this was the low rate of wages prevalent in Ireland, thus leading to a situation where the women were financially better off relying on the out-of-work donation than the wages offered.⁴⁹

The department claimed a month later that the donation was having a 'demoralising influence' on women's attitude to employment and claimed that there had been a number of fraudulent claims for the donation. These involved married women who had worked in the shirt trade but who had left their employment on their marriage rather than as a consequence of the cessation of hostilities. It was alleged that 'abundant' work was available were the women to actually seek it.⁵⁰ In his history of post-war employment in Britain, A.C. Pigou echoed this claim but noted that such women were exercising their legal right to claim the donation.⁵¹

Discharged war workers were particularly reluctant to enter domestic service, accustomed as they were to the higher pay and greater freedom offered by war work.⁵² Terence Dooley argues that the Great War was an important turning point for the employment of servants in Big Houses in Ireland. The domestic service sector was already in decline in 1914 – it had fallen from 211,000 employees in 1881 to 154,000 in 1911.⁵³ In January 1920 the *Weekly Irish Times* claimed that the 'servant difficulty in Ireland as elsewhere has assumed serious proportions and at the moment many employers have the greatest difficulty in securing domestic servants'.⁵⁴ In 1922 a letter in the same paper asserted that the 'short-lived experience of munitions factories etc and high wages, with free evenings has thoroughly demoralised many and left to all a new conception of the 'rights and

⁴⁷ *Woman Worker*, Jan. 1919; Thom, *Nice girls and rude girls*, p.192.

⁴⁸ *Woman Worker*, Feb. 1919.

⁴⁹ WWS EMP.80/5: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 1 Feb. 1919.

⁵⁰ WWS EMP.80/9: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 1 Mar. 1919, p.9.

⁵¹ Pigou, *Aspects of British economic history*, p.34.

⁵² Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, pp 85-86; Woollacott, *On her their lives depend*, p.183.

⁵³ Terence Dooley, *The decline of the Big House in Ireland: a study of Irish landed families 1860-1960* (Dublin, 2001), p.166.

⁵⁴ *Weekly Irish Times*, 10 Jan. 1920.

liberties'.⁵⁵ Employers recognised the problem and it was reported in March 1919 that wage rates for domestic servants had generally been increased in Dublin, Belfast and Waterford.⁵⁶ Dooley's examination of advertisements in the *Irish Times* in 1923 reveals that wages for cooks and housekeepers had increased by around 25% on pre-war levels and that of housemaids by about 60%.⁵⁷ The *Irish Citizen* praised the Irishwomen who were refusing to return to domestic work after being demobilised from more remunerative war work:

The refusal of women engaged in more remunerative work during the war to go back to drudgery of domestic service with the approaching peace is a very healthy and significant sign of the times, and indicates the spread of the feminist spirit against bad conditions in a new and hitherto rather uncompromising quarter.⁵⁸

However many of the demobilised workers had no choice but to accept domestic service positions, especially if they wished to remain in Ireland. It was reported in June 1919 that the number of domestic service placements had increased and that several former munitions workers had found work as domestic servants in England through the Sligo Exchange.⁵⁹ Very few of the former munitions workers in Dublin had apparently succeeded in finding employment by June 1919. This was attributed to the fact that there were no suitable industries in Dublin to absorb the labour. They were no longer entitled to the out-of-work donation and were reliant on the seven shilling a week unemployment benefit. Former munitions workers in Waterford, Galway and Cork were reported to be in a similar situation.⁶⁰

The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction of Ireland offered short courses in domestic training for former war workers in 1920 with funding provided by the Treasury. The scheme was intended for:

Young registered unemployed women who desire to return to or enter employment who by reason of war work or war service have either lost their skill or lost the opportunity of gaining requisite knowledge and practice in normal women's industry or occupation.⁶¹

Given the limited extent of industrial occupations for women in Ireland, it was decided that courses in general domestic work would be most useful. Forty former employees of Kynoch's cordite factory in Arklow enrolled for a local course. They had lost their employment on the closure of the firm and had no other prospect of local industrial

⁵⁵ *Weekly Irish Times*, 8 Mar. 1922; see also *Lady of the House*, 15 Nov. 1920.

⁵⁶ WWS EMP.80/9: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 1 Mar. 1919, p.9

⁵⁷ Dooley, *The decline of the Big House in Ireland* p.167.

⁵⁸ *Irish Citizen*, Feb. 1919.

⁵⁹ WWS EMP.80/35: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 20 Sept. 1919, p.23.

⁶⁰ *Woman Worker*, July 1919.

⁶¹ TNA Lab 2/1225/ED30580/17/1919: Scheme for women's training in Ireland, 20 Nov. 1919.

employment.⁶² A course was also run in Dublin for forty-five women, the majority of whom were former munitions workers, and the remaining demobilised members of the Women's Services. Courses in shorthand typing for a small number of applicants who had definite prospects of clerical employment were provided in Dublin, Belfast and Derry from March 1920.⁶³

Many Irishwomen chose to emigrate to seek work, re-establishing the pre-war pattern of exceptionally high emigration from Ireland. It was noted in March 1919 that there had been an 'appreciable revival' in the migration of labour from Ireland to England. In January 1919 280 people travelled from Ireland to England seeking work, a significant increase from the seventy people the previous month.⁶⁴ Workers in a hosiery company in Galway found themselves out of work in summer 1919 due to difficulties obtaining wool supplies. However the Labour Exchange found work for the women in a firm in Yorkshire.⁶⁵

Post-war emigration of women was not a solely Irish phenomenon and was in fact supported by the British government. Emigration was presented as a solution to the unemployment crisis facing discharged female war workers and a means of addressing the gender imbalance in post-war society due to the unprecedented loss of military lives in the war. The Overseas Settlement Office offered free passage to the colonies for ex-servicewomen who had completed a minimum of six months service. The scheme complemented the Free Passage Scheme for ex-servicemen established after the war. By the beginning of 1920 over two hundred former members of the WAAC had been granted free passage under the scheme, the majority going to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.⁶⁶

Although the *Irish Citizen* warned Irishwomen against partaking in the scheme, considering the risk of exploitation of the women very high, the scheme was taken up by a number of the Irish WAAC members, discussed in Chapter Six.⁶⁷ Examination of their service records uncovers evidence of unemployment and financial distress following demobilisation, apparent in applications for assisted emigration schemes or for continued work with the QMAAC. For example, Martha McAuley appealed to the QMAAC for help due to financial distress in February 1920. She had been demobilised the previous September. She then applied for the assisted passage to Canada, planning to leave her husband behind in Ireland.⁶⁸ Four other Irishwomen in the sample applied for the assisted emigration scheme

⁶² Lab 2/1225/ED30580/17/1919: Letter from Irish divisional office, Ministry of Labour to Miss Durham, Ministry of Labour, 19 Jan. 1920.

⁶³ WWS EMP.80/59: Ministry of Labour weekly report, 20 Mar. 1920, pp 266-267.

⁶⁴ WWS EMP.80/9: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 1 Mar. 1919, p.24.

⁶⁵ WWS EMP.80/25: Department of civil demobilisation and settlement, weekly report, 5 July 1919, p.24.

⁶⁶ Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, p.89.

⁶⁷ *Irish Citizen*, Oct. 1919.

⁶⁸ WO 398/147: Martha McAuley WAAC service record.

following their demobilisation.⁶⁹ Susan Canning applied for work with the QMAAC in March 1920, having been demobilised in October 1919. She had served as a forewoman clerk with the WAAC. Her application was however refused.⁷⁰ Monica O'Rourke also struggled to find work after her demobilisation in October 1919 from her seventeen months work as a clerk with the WAAC, and sought support from the QMAAC.

Some faced prejudice on their return to civilian life in Ireland or found it difficult to adjust to the changed political climate. One Irish WAAC member sold her farm in Kildare after the war and moved to Australia, allegedly because she was unable to cope with the 'prevailing disloyalty'. The loss of her two brothers and her fiancée in the war likely also affected her return home from two years' service in France.⁷¹

The case of another Irish WAAC member illustrates the prejudice encountered by some such women on their return home. Annie Kelly was sexually assaulted when on leave from the WAAC in Dublin in 1919. Her assailant justified his actions with the belief that 'she had a bad character as he believed no decent Irish girl would be in the army'. When the case came to court the defendant's solicitor allegedly attempted to cast doubt on Kelly's testimony by pointing out that she was 'only a WAAC' and consequently that her 'word could not be relied upon'. Kelly sought help from the QMAAC as to how to obtain protection from those 'people whose wrath I have incurred by serving my King and Country'.⁷² While such incidents of sexual violence and erroneous assumptions about the morality of WAAC members were not unique to Ireland, Annie Kelly's case had particular political connotations. Annie Kelly evidently believed that her war service had engendered hostility towards her by those opposed to her ideals of 'King and Country'. The difficulties faced by demobilised soldiers in Ireland has been given scholarly attention but the experience of demobilised female war workers remains to be explored.

A number of women who had participated in paid war work during the war applied to the Central Committee for Women's Training and Employment for the South of Ireland for training grants. This was a government scheme introduced in January 1920. It enabled training of women for new employment who had suffered financial hardship or loss of

⁶⁹ Susan Archer (WO 398/5) also applied for the assisted emigration scheme to Canada in February 1920 after her demobilisation in November 1919. Lily Richardson (WO 398/108) similarly availed of the scheme in 1920 after demobilisation in December 1919. Matilda McCullough (WO 398/148) applied for assisted passage to Canada in 1921 but subsequently withdrew her application. Eileen McFadden (WO 398/150) also applied for the scheme in December 1919, a month after demobilisation, but was rejected as she wished to emigrate to the USA and the scheme only applied to British colonies.

⁷⁰ WO 398/36: Susan Canning WAAC service record.

⁷¹ WWS Army 3.26/16: *Old Comrades Gazette*, no.6, Dec. 1920.

⁷² WO 398/126: Letter from Annie Kelly to Controller-in-chief, QMAAC, 9 Sept.1920.

employment opportunity due to the war.⁷³ Applicants for the scheme were required to be unskilled, unemployed on time of application but normally in employment.⁷⁴ The applicants included a number of WAAC members from outside my original sample, giving greater insight into the experience of demobilised WAAC members.

For example, Wilhelmina Swatton (aged 21 on application) successfully applied for a grant to pay for her midwifery training in May 1922. She had given up an apprenticeship in machinery to enlist in the WAAC, with whom she served as a waitress for two years. Unable to find work following her demobilisation, she decided to train as a midwife.⁷⁵ Lillie O'Callaghan (22) also served with the WAAC for fourteen months. She applied to train as a shorthand typist to combat her unemployment following demobilisation.⁷⁶ Kathleen Whyte (27), another former WAAC member, sought a grant to train as a shorthand typist in November 1922. Her chosen course of training was considered unsuitable and her application was unsuccessful.⁷⁷ Frances Cahill (24) had diverted from her gardening training to join the WAAC. Her two brothers were killed in the war and she was dependent upon her mother following her demobilisation. She received a grant to train as a gardener in 1922.⁷⁸ Another application came from a former member of the WRAF. Henrietta Armstrong (27) interrupted her university studies to initially work in munitions before joining the WRAF in 1918. She applied for a grant for medical education at Trinity College Dublin but was considered 'unsuitable for such expensive training'.⁷⁹

Women who had served as untrained clerks in the army pay department appear to have had particular difficulty finding work after the war. Nora O'Brien (23) was one such case. She had interrupted her studies for a university scholarship to take a position in an army pay office in Cork in 1916. She was unable to find work following her demobilisation and was entirely dependent upon her father, a retired schoolmaster. She unsuccessfully applied for a grant to train as a domestic economy instructress in May 1922.⁸⁰ In some cases the former clerical workers sought clerical training to enhance their opportunities for

⁷³ TNA LAB 2/1580/CCW911/2/1920, Central Committee for Women's Training and Employment for the South of Ireland, 1920-1922.

⁷⁴ LAB 2/1580/CCW911/2/1920: Minutes of the Central Committee for Women's Training and Employment for the South of Ireland, 8 Apr. 1921.

⁷⁵ LAB 2/1580/CCW911/2/1920: Wilhelmina Swatton, Cork Board, 19 May 1922.

⁷⁶ Lillie O'Callaghan, Dublin Board, 30 May 1922.

⁷⁷ Kathleen Whyte, Cork Board, 25 Nov. 1922.

⁷⁸ Francis Cahill, Waterford Board, 8 Feb. 1922.

⁷⁹ Henrietta Armstrong, Dublin Board, 4 Oct. 1920.

⁸⁰ Nora O'Brien, Cork Board, 19 May 1922; see also H. Nolan, Cork Board, 24 Feb. 1922, Edith Buckley, Cork Board, 18 Dec. 1921, Kitty Fitzgerald, Cork Board, Gretta McNamara, Cork Board, 27 May 1921, Anna Mary Reddy, Dublin Board, 30 May 1921, and Winifred Craighwell, Cork Board, 7 Feb. 1921.

employment in that field. For example, H. Nolan wished to undertake shorthand typist training in 1922 to build upon her experience in an army pay office and war pension office.⁸¹

Trained nurses also experienced difficulty in finding employment following their return from war service. This is evident in the following three examples. Rose Garvin (36) served with the St John Ambulance Association from 1915 to 1919 as a fully trained nurse. Following her discharge she worked as a private nurse in England but desired to receive midwifery training to improve her employment prospects.⁸² Mary McGlynn diverted from her midwifery training to serve with the Territorial Nursing Service. She found it difficult to find a post without midwifery qualifications after the war.⁸³ A. Purcell (47) also struggled to find employment after her war service. She had nursed wounded soldiers in Malta but was unemployed for a number of months following her demobilisation. Her application to train as a health visitor in 1920 was however denied.⁸⁴

The scheme also provided assistance to the female relatives of soldiers or those whose parent's earning opportunities had been affected by the wartime conditions. The applicants were predominantly from middle-class backgrounds or from the families of skilled labourers; groups for whom the separation allowance did not represent an increased income and who struggled with the wartime price inflation. The lasting economic impact of the war for the unmarried sisters of soldiers is particularly evident. In some cases the women had been obliged to abandon their own education or training to support the family during their brothers' war service, while for others their brother's war service affected his earning capacity and thus his ability to support his sister.⁸⁵

The death of brothers on war service also had an economic impact for many young single Irishwomen whose brothers had been supporting them before the war. The applications reveal the lasting economic impact of the war on the female relatives of enlisted men and demonstrate the extent to which unmarried women were dependents on their fathers or brothers for financial support in this period. For example, Florence O'Brien, aged nineteen, applied to the Cork Board for a grant in April 1922 to cover her nursing training. Two of her brothers served in the army during the war; one was killed and the other was in a mental hospital. Prior to the war her brothers had contributed to the upkeep of the family and assisted their father but with the loss of their incomes, there was insufficient funds for her training. Both she and her younger sister Grace received grants to cover nursing training.⁸⁶ Annie Casey, a Dublin woman, told a similar story of hardship due to the loss of her brothers.

⁸¹ H. Nolan, Cork Board, 24 Feb. 1922.

⁸² Rose Garvin, Dublin Board, 12 Dec. 1921.

⁸³ Mary McGlynn, Dublin Board, 12 Dec. 1921.

⁸⁴ A. Purcell, Waterford Board, 1 Dec. 1920.

⁸⁵ For example, see the cases of Katie Corrigan, Cork Board, 1921 and Margaret Muriel Mollan, Dublin Board, 18 Dec. 1921.

⁸⁶ Florence O'Brien, Cork Board, 20 Apr. 1922; Grace O'Brien, Cork Board, 20 Apr. 1922.

One of her brothers was killed on active service and another was unable to work due to his war wounds. They had both previously contributed to the family income following their father's death. Annie had worked in munitions during the war but in 1921 she wished to train as a housekeeper. She was twenty-six but unmarried and apparently dependent on the family income.⁸⁷

Evidence of the hardship experienced by those with fixed incomes or dependent on investments can also be found in the applications. For example, Mary Gilroy's father was a retired policeman. His pension proved insufficient to cope with the wartime rise in the cost of living and the family was in debt by 1921. Mary (20) received a grant to train as a shorthand typist as a consequence.⁸⁸ David Fitzpatrick highlighted the difficulties faced by members of the Royal Irish Constabulary during the war, arguing the war brought to the Irish policeman fear of poverty and diminished status. He noted that the wage increases and war bonuses provided to policemen lagged far behind inflation.⁸⁹ Inflation also severely affected the Cahill family. Mary Cahill's father worked as a clerk for the Cork Tramway Company but his salary was insufficient to cope with the increased cost of living. Consequently he could not afford to pay for his daughter's training and she was reliant on a grant to cover the cost of her millinery classes.⁹⁰ Margaret Condon, a barrister's daughter, was awarded a grant to cover the cost of her teacher training. Her application asserted that her father had lost £100 annually from 1914-18 due to the cessation of revision sessions and the decrease in his practice during the war years.⁹¹

Protestant clergy were particularly badly affected by inflation, despite diocesan and local voluntary effort to provide war allowances for them.⁹² For example, M. Hemphill (23) was obliged to seek a grant to cover the cost of her massage training course following the decline in income of her clergyman father.⁹³ The fixed income of her clergyman father was also a factor in the application of Henrietta Armstrong, described above. Women whose independent income prior to the war was derived from investments or inheritances were particularly badly affected by the war. For example Lilly Webb's aunt lived on an income derived from shares but in wartime this proved inadequate and she was no longer able to

⁸⁷ Annie Casey, Dublin Board, 30 Sept. 1921; see also Norah Walsh, Waterford Board 8 Feb. 1922; H. Nolan, Cork Board, 24 Apr. 1922; Frances Cahill, Waterford Board, 8 Feb. 1922; Emelia Elizabeth Scott, Cork Board, 30 May 1921.

⁸⁸ Mary Gilroy, Cork Board, 27 May 1922; See also case of Hanna O'Neill whose father was also a retired RIC policeman, Cork Board, 27 May 1921; and E. Boyd, whose father was also a retired RIC policeman, Main Selection Board, 8 Dec. 1920.

⁸⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics & Irish life*, pp 6-7; see also Dickson, *Dublin*, p.458.

⁹⁰ Mary Cahill, Cork Board, 27 May 1921.

⁹¹ Margaret Condon, Dublin Board, 30 May 1921.

⁹² *Report of proceedings of the Representative Body laid before the General Synod of the Church of Ireland at its forty-eighth ordinary session, 1918* (Dublin, 1918), p.81; *Report of proceedings of the Representative Body laid before the General Synod of the Church of Ireland at its forty-ninth ordinary session, 1919* (Dublin, 1919), p.31.

⁹³ M. Hemphill, Main Selection Board, 1 Dec. 1920.

support her niece.⁹⁴ Frances Williams had hoped to support herself from her inheritance from her father, a bank official who died in 1916, but the high cost of living meant that the inheritance was gone by 1922. Instead she chose to train as a kindergarten teacher.⁹⁵

The scheme was closed in March 1922.⁹⁶ In its first year the Irish committee received 701 applications.⁹⁷ It provided grants for 293 girls and women involving a total of £25,677 25 shillings and 11 pence.⁹⁸ This constituted 5% of the total funding provided to the scheme in the United Kingdom by the National Relief Fund. Examination of the records gives some insight into the lasting economic effects of the war and the attitudes towards female workers after the Armistice. Applicants had to prove their financial dependence and their need to work, indicating a continued assumption of work as a choice for women. They tended to seek training in traditional female sectors such as nursing and domestic work and had a higher success rate with these choices.

Deborah Thom suggests that the focus on domestic skills in retraining schemes emphasised the widespread assumption that women had gained no general expertise from their war work and were lacking in the essential domestic skills needed to build a post-war society.⁹⁹ However Thom's account denies agency to the female applicants. The schemes enabled women to receive grants for courses of their choice (albeit within a limited range of options) – the high number choosing domestic roles indicates a continuing interest in maternalist roles and a realisation of the employment opportunities available to women in the post-war period. The grants gave women a unique opportunity to improve their circumstances and to take responsibility for their education and welfare.

The experience of former war workers in Ireland was very similar to those in Great Britain. By 1920 almost two thirds of British women who entered employment during the war had left it again. The employment rate of British women in 1921 was very similar to that in 1914.¹⁰⁰ Susan Pedersen rightly observes that the post-war contraction in women's employment across the United Kingdom was somewhat inevitable given that the most significant areas of expansion were unsustainable in peace conditions and were unique to the demands of war.¹⁰¹ The combined need for munitions and the mobilisation of men for the armed forces provided an exceptional opportunity for women to enter the workforce but

⁹⁴ Lils Webb, Dublin Board, 6 June 1921.

⁹⁵ Frances Williams, Sligo Board, 15 Feb. 1922.

⁹⁶ Dearle, *An economic chronicle of the Great War*, p. 308.

⁹⁷ TNA LAB 2/1580/CCW911/2/1920: Letter from Ministry of Labour to Miss Barker, Central Committee on women's training and employment for the south of Ireland, 9 June 1921

⁹⁸ LAB 2/1580/CCW911/2/1920: Report of the meeting of the Central Committee on women's training and employment for the south of Ireland, 16 Dec. 1921.

⁹⁹ Thom, *Nice girls and rude girls*, p.198.

¹⁰⁰ Marwick, *Women and war*, p.162.

¹⁰¹ Pedersen, *Family, dependence, and the origins of the welfare state*, p.120.

were generally accepted as specific wartime circumstances. The demand for labour dissipated quickly in 1919 while the demobilisation of soldiers led to increased competition for the remaining jobs. The particularly high unemployment among army veterans in Ireland (46% of those demobilised were dependent on the out-of-work donation in autumn 1919 compared to 10% in Britain) is evidence of the difficulties within the labour market after the war and indicates the few opportunities available to women workers.¹⁰² The attitudes of the civil service, discussed in Chapter Five are also indicative of the prejudices facing women who attempted to find a role for themselves in a traditionally male sector in the post-war workforce.

Women had to contend with the determination of many male employers, workers and trade unionists to force women out of the paid workforce and back into the domestic sphere. Pedersen refers to the social contract at the heart of war service, the agreements reached between employers, trade unionists and the government to ensure the ready supply of men and munitions for the war effort. A central aspect of this 'contract' was the need to protect men's position in the labour market after the war.¹⁰³ For example, although the Dublin Dockyards company claimed in 1918 that they wished to retain female labour in their engineering shops, they 'feared that an objection would be raised by the trade union bodies'.¹⁰⁴ The Sex Disqualifications (Removals) Act improved the opportunities for middle class women to enter professional work but the Restoration of Pre-war Practices Act negatively affected working-class women. The Act removed the dilution agreements of wartime industry and excluded dilutees from their wartime positions.¹⁰⁵ Pedersen persuasively argues that wartime mobilisation of women served to strengthen the growing pre-war perception of wage earning as a temporary activity for women, a brief aberration from their roles in the domestic sphere.¹⁰⁶

Domestic life

By May 1920, 4,335 officers and 82,699 enlisted men had returned to Ireland following demobilisation.¹⁰⁷ They returned to a politically turbulent Ireland, beset by violence which doubtless exacerbated the condition of those already suffering from war-induced trauma.

¹⁰² Jane Leonard, "Survivors" in Horne (ed.) *Our war*, p.216.

¹⁰³ Pedersen, *Family, dependence, and the origins of the welfare state*, pp 80-93.

¹⁰⁴ IWM French papers, 75/46/10, JDPF 8/15: Memorandum on reconstruction in Ireland by William MacCartney Filgate, Inspector of Industries, Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1918.

¹⁰⁵ Thom, *Nice girls and rude girls*, p.188.

¹⁰⁶ Pedersen, *Family, dependence, and the origins of the welfare state*, p.92; see also Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, p.86.

¹⁰⁷ War Office, *Statistics of the military effort*, p.708; The remainder died on active service, re-enlisted in new armies, stayed on in Britain following demobilisation, emigrated or had previously been invalided out of the forces before the Armistice: Leonard, "Survivors", p.211.

Couples who reunited after the war's end also faced the difficulties of adjusting to each other's presence after years of absence. The men returned to a domestic world that had functioned in their absence, and to wives who perhaps resented having to submit once more to male interference and notions of male superiority.¹⁰⁸ Martha Hanna observes that for some the 'dreams of marital harmony that had sustained them through the war years dissipated in the stark light of everyday life'.¹⁰⁹ Divorce rates rose in the post-war period in many combatant countries, which Jay Winter attributes to the impact of the long separation on marriages and the failure of the hurried marriages of autumn 1914 to survive the post-war reunion.¹¹⁰

Although divorces and judicial separations remained very low in Ireland, Jane Leonard's work indicates the lasting trauma experienced by demobilised Irish veterans.¹¹¹ She suggests that domestic harmony following demobilisation was 'all too often' disrupted by violence, marital breakdown or suicide.¹¹² The War of Independence and civil war placed further mental strain upon former soldiers and consequently their wives and families.¹¹³ Joanna Bourke has revealed that there were much higher rates of neurasthenia (shell-shock) among soldiers in southern Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In March 1921 there were 120 officers and 1,200 men awaiting hospital treatment for neurasthenia in the south of Ireland.¹¹⁴ The War Office discontinued the pensions of Irish soldiers consigned to lunatic asylums, placing further hardship on their families.¹¹⁵

Soldiers' families in Ireland also faced economic hardship, with unemployment levels among Irish veterans particularly high. 40,000 former soldiers were reported to be

¹⁰⁸ Angela Woollacott, "Sisters and brothers in arms: family, class and gendering in World War I Britain" in Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (eds) *Gendering war talk* (New Jersey, 1993), p.129.

¹⁰⁹ Hanna, "The Couple" p.28. See also Rollet, "The home & family life", p.344.

¹¹⁰ Winter, "Families" p.50.

¹¹¹ Obtaining a divorce or judicial separation in Ireland was particularly complicated and expensive and consequently they were very rare. Between 1901 and 1911 just 203 judicial separations took place while there were only thirty-nine divorces obtained in Ireland between 1857 and 1910. No divorces were obtained in Ireland between the ending of the war and the banning of divorce in the 1937 constitution: David Fitzpatrick, "Divorce and separation in modern Irish history" in *Past and Present*, civ (Feb., 1987), pp 174-176. Leonard, "Survivors" pp 213-214.

¹¹² Leonard, "Survivors", p.214.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* The experience of ex-soldiers during the War of Independence has been the subject of some debate. In a seminal article Jane Leonard argued that British Army veterans became the particular targets of the IRA and were subject to intimidation and physical threats. However a recent publication by Paul Taylor argues that such claims have been overstated and that veterans faced little discrimination in the Free State: Jane Leonard, "Getting them at last: the IRA and ex-servicemen" in Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Revolution?*, pp 118-29; Paul Taylor, *Heroes or traitors: experiences of southern Irish soldiers returning from the Great War 1919-1939* (Liverpool, 2015), pp 243-245.

¹¹⁴ Joanna Bourke, "Effeminacy, ethnicity and the end of trauma: the sufferings of 'shell-shocked' men in Great Britain and Ireland 1914-39" in *Journal of contemporary History*, xxxv, no.1 (Jan, 2000), pp 61, 65, 66.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.68; the difference in treatment between Irish and British soldiers arose due the term 'prisoner' being used instead of 'person' in the Lunacy (Ireland) Act of 1901, resulting in Irish ex-soldiers with neurasthenia being classified as criminal lunatics.

unemployed and without any means of subsistence by January 1920.¹¹⁶ Although some families benefited from the housing schemes built by the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust, just 3,937 homes were constructed (2,720 in the south and 1,217 in the north of Ireland) and tenants endured lengthy battles for affordable rent and the provision of recreational facilities in their communities.¹¹⁷

Legacy

As the war drew to a close, the *Lady of the House* magazine provided a forum for a debate among Irishwomen about the potential impact of the war and the achievement of suffrage, on the post-war marital life. The debate featured middle-class women for whom women's work outside the home was a choice. One commentator, Mrs Fitzroy Stewart, stated that she expected to see significant change after the war and believed that marriages would be different. Women would be their husband's equal and ideally 'his friend and comrade'.¹¹⁸ Another woman interviewed at the same time, the novelist Madame Albanesi, had a more conservative outlook. She predicted in the same issue that after the war, thousands of women would 'drop back into the placid atmosphere of the home life' and not concern themselves with suffrage or using their vote. She suggested that the domestic sphere would still be central for the large majority of women, who would remain 'what they have been in all times – women who find their greatest happiness and their most necessary tasks in the love for their husbands and children, and in the care of their homes'.¹¹⁹

Madame Albanesi was correct in her predictions. Jay Winter had described the paradoxical situation whereby the destruction of so many families in the war led to a 'restoration of family life in conventional patriarchal forms' which required the return of women to a subordinate position in domestic life. Reproduction took priority over other possible opportunities for women at the war's end.¹²⁰ The Victorian idea of the 'angel in the house' persisted and the roles of wife and mother remained elevated above other positions available to women at the time.¹²¹ Pronatalism and the idea of rebuilding the state through repopulation became the dominant theme of post-war public discourse.¹²² Jane Lewis believes that the emphasis of the infant welfare movement on childcare and 'mothercraft' strengthened women's traditional role in the home. She cites the prevalence of this ideology

¹¹⁶ IWM French papers, JDPF 8/15: Letter from French to Walter Long, 17 Jan. 1920.

¹¹⁷ Cousins, *Armagh and the Great War*, p.200; Leonard, "Survivors" p.217.

¹¹⁸ *Lady of the House*, 15 Jan. 1918.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Winter, 'Demography', p.260; see also Grayzel, "Women & men", p.274.

¹²¹ Smith, "Discourse of morality & truth in social welfare", p.522.

¹²² Grayzel, "Men & women at home", pp 119-120.

as the primary reason for the continuing very low numbers of women in paid employment in Britain after the Great War.¹²³

Concern was however expressed in the press about the impact of the high military deaths rate on the marriage prospects of young women. The *Lady of the House* lamented in January 1918 that marriage and motherhood - 'that great joy and duty' - would not be possible for 'hundreds of girls now approaching womanhood' due to the loss of so many men in the war.¹²⁴ The gender disparity in the 1921 British census was widely publicised - 1,096 females per 1,000 males. Although higher rates of male emigration in the pre-war years meant that women were in the majority in 1911, the number of 'excess women' between fifteen and forty-four had risen from 613,000 in 1911 to 1,174,000 in 1921.¹²⁵ Mrs. Mary Hartnett of Sandymount, Dublin, commented on the census figures in the *Lady of the House*, observing that 'one must conclude that marriage for all is an impossibility' and that women must consequently become 'the competitor of men' in the workforce.¹²⁶

However, across Europe the proportion of those married ten years after the war was very similar to the pre-war period, suggesting the idea of the 'superfluous women' was greatly exaggerated. Jay Winter attributes the re-establishment of pre-war marriage rates to two causes: the decline in emigration during the war and changing trends with regard to women's choice of spouse. In France, for example, the age difference between marriage partners changed with more women marrying men of the same age or younger. The age difference between spouses was less significant in Britain but Winter suggests there were higher numbers of women marrying men from lower social classes or from other regions.¹²⁷ A significant number of those widowed in the war married again. Indeed, the *Lady of the House* warned in 1916 that war widows were 'dangerous rivals' in the marriage market.¹²⁸ The Ministry for Pensions reported in December 1919 that out of about 216,000 British war widows, 38,664 had remarried - a rate of 17.9%. Each widow on marrying again received a state dowry equal to one year's pension.¹²⁹

What was the lasting impact of the war on marriage prospects for women in Ireland? The 1926 census figures show that fears about the fate of the so-called 'superfluous women' were certainly unfounded in Ireland. Females made up 50.06% of the population in 1911 and 49.98% of the population in 1926 (including both the Free State and Northern Ireland) thus

¹²³ Lewis, *Politics of Motherhood*, pp 222-223; see also Pedersen, *Family, dependence & the origins of the welfare state*, p.132.

¹²⁴ *Lady of the House* 15 Jan. 1918; see also *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 4 Aug. 1915.

¹²⁵ Katharine Holden, "Imaginary widows: spinsters, marriage and the 'Lost Generation' in Britain after the Great War", in *Journal of Family History*, xxx, no.388 (2005), pp 397-398.

¹²⁶ *Lady of the House*, 15 June 1920.

¹²⁷ Winter, "Demography" in Horne (ed.) *A companion to World War I*, p.259.

¹²⁸ *Lady of the House*, 15 Apr 1916.

¹²⁹ *Irish Independent*, 11 Dec. 1919.

indicating no 'surplus' of women.¹³⁰ The percentage of women married among the total female population saw a small increase from 1911 to 1926: 27.4% in 1911 to 29.1% in 1926.¹³¹ The number of widows dropped from 9.3% of the female population in 1911 to 8.9% in 1926, despite the wartime losses.¹³² Examination of the age group most likely to have been affected by the war -those aged twenty-five to forty-four in 1926 -yields similar results. Almost 56% of women in this age group were married in 1926 compared to 53% for the same age bracket in 1911. The number of widows in this age-bracket declined very slightly in 1926 compared to 1911 to 3.3% from 3.4%. This was despite the bereavement caused by the war. The numbers married in 1926 were slightly higher than in 1911 indicating perhaps an increased focus on marriage and reproduction following years of conflict.

Table 9.2 Marriages in Ireland: a comparison between 1911 and 1926¹³³

Census	Number of women aged 25-44	Women aged 25-44 married	Age group widowed	% married of age group	% widowed
1911	587,470	311,409	19,809	53	3.4
1926	546,739	305,843	18,210	55.9	3.3

Significant numbers of Irishwomen never married but this was not unique to the immediate post-war period. As mentioned in Chapter One, early twentieth century Ireland had a particularly low marriage rate. Despite the promotion of marriage and motherhood, such goals were not attainable for much of the Irish female population.

Nevertheless, despite the demographic evidence to the contrary, the contemporary belief that the war had created 'superfluous women' had a psychological impact. Katherine Holden has suggested that the perception that many young women would never have the opportunity to marry affected both female attitudes to their careers and societal views of spinsters.¹³⁴ Holden suggests that the belief among many middle and upper class women that the war had greatly reduced their marital prospects led to some consciously choosing to focus on independent careers for themselves. This became a more acceptable choice when it was assumed that marriage was impossible for all. The term 'spinster' became less negative with the assumption that unmarried women had lost their potential spouse in the war.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, p.3.

¹³¹ The figure for 1926 includes both the Free State and Northern Ireland, Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, pp 90, 91, 98.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Fitzpatrick & Vaughan, *Irish historical statistics*, pp 90, 91, 98.

¹³⁴ Holden, "Imaginary widows", pp 403, 405.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.398.

Holden argues that this 'imaginary widowhood' could be empowering, enabling a sense of female identity and collective action.¹³⁶

The demographic and psychological impact of wartime losses on marriage prospects were strongest among groups with disproportionate involvement in the war, primarily Protestants and members of the landed gentry. Oonagh Walsh's study of Anglican women in early twentieth century Dublin includes a brief discussion of the effect of the Great War. She discusses the disproportionate involvement and subsequent loss of Protestant men in the armed forces and how this affected the women left behind. The scale of potential loss is indicated by the fact that military bridegrooms accounted for 63% of the total marriage partners in certain working class Dublin parishes between 1910 and 1919.¹³⁷ Walsh's examination of the 1926 census suggests that wartime concern about marriage prospects was unwarranted. While women outnumbered men in the Church of Ireland in 1926 the disparity was concentrated in the older age bands: females made up 56% of the 20-34 age group which does not suggest a particularly bleak outlook for marriage prospects.¹³⁸ Holden's suggestion that the wartime losses may have spurred more women into professional careers is not evident in Walsh's research. The percentage of Anglican women among the female labour force in the professional category dropped from 15% in 1911 to 11.7% in 1926.¹³⁹

The sense of the loss of a whole generation is evident from accounts of the Irish landed gentry. David Fitzpatrick described the 'lopsided community' among county families, 'overstocked with women, the very young and very old'.¹⁴⁰ Of the 109 Irish peers who served in the war, twenty-nine were killed or died of wounds sustained on active service.¹⁴¹ The devastating impact of the war on such families is evident in the case of the Hackett family. In 1911 the Church of Ireland landed gentry family were living in Castletown House, in Ballycumber, King's County. They had six children. In 1915 the youngest child, Edward died of natural causes and the following year his brother Eric was killed on the Somme while serving with the Royal Irish Regiment. In 1918 the family suffered further grief with the death of the remaining son Learo at Ypres in April and their daughter Venice in October 1918. Venice had enrolled with the Red Cross in August 1916, aged thirty, following the death of her brother Eric. After serving with a Tipperary detachment, she was sent to France in April 1917 where she contracted influenza in October 1918. She died in London while on route home to Ireland and is buried in the Ballycumber graveyard.¹⁴² Their mother, Emilie

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.405.

¹³⁷ Walsh, *Anglican women in Dublin*, p.200.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.201.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p.202.

¹⁴⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Politics & Irish life*, p.55.

¹⁴¹ Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Great War 1914-1918* (Harlow, 2007), p.446.

¹⁴² BRCA: personnel files; 1911 census record for Hackett family; Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Venice Hackett. <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war>

Hackett died in 1933 and her two remaining daughters died within the same decade. With no heirs remaining, the family estate was sold in 1938 to Offaly County Council for the sum of £100.¹⁴³

Elizabeth Bowen represents the post-war anxiety and sense of inevitable decline among the landed gentry in her novel *The Last September* (1929). There is a shortage of men in the novel and a noticeable lack of children, perhaps representing the lost generation and the wartime losses of heirs for the Big Houses. The narrator notes at one point that ‘children seem in every sense of the word to be inconceivable’.¹⁴⁴ The main character, Lois, describes the stifling impact of the war with its constant presence:

Mrs Fogarty’s drawing room was thronged with photographs; all the dear boys who for years back had been garrisoned at Clonmore, many of whom, alas! had been killed in that dreadful war. You could not stop to put down a cup on one of the little tables without a twinge of regret and embarrassment, meeting the candid eyes of some dead young man.¹⁴⁵

The sense of the dead being ever present is also expressed in the memoir of Elizabeth Burke-Plunkett, Countess of Fingall. She described her difficulty in coping with the losses her social circle had sustained: ‘the world we had known had vanished. We hunted again, but ghosts rode with us. We sat at table, but there were absent faces’.¹⁴⁶ In his study of the decline of the Big House in Ireland, Terence Dooley has observed the psychological impact of the Great War and suggests that the isolated self-contained nature of the landlord class meant that a death of a member of landlord’s family was taken personally by the whole social group.¹⁴⁷

The ending of the war in November 1918 resulted in further turmoil for many Irishwomen. The contraction in employment opportunities following the Armistice had particularly severe consequences for Irishwomen due to the very high unemployment levels and the decision of the British government to place specific restrictions on Irish female war worker’s eligibility for the out-of-work donation. Those bereaved by the war frequently faced economic hardship, evident in the applications for financial assistance afterwards. The ongoing violence after the war in Ireland made it more difficult for soldiers and their families to cope with their wartime trauma. Much remains to be explored however.

The rebuilding of domestic life and the difficulties faced by the wives of soldiers who returned with severe physical and mental disabilities await detailed examination. This is

[dead/casualty/663204/HACKETT,%20VENICE%20CLEMANTINE%20HENRIETTA](https://www.bbc.com/news/ireland-663204/HACKETT,%20VENICE%20CLEMANTINE%20HENRIETTA) (12 July 2015).

¹⁴³ Kevin Myers, *Ireland’s Great War* (Dublin, 2014), p.164.

¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (London, 1929, 1998).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.71.

¹⁴⁶ Hinkson, *Seventy years young: memories of Elizabeth, Countess of Fingall*, p.386.

¹⁴⁷ Dooley, *The decline of the Big House in Ireland*, p.122.

part of a wider gap in the international historiography of the Great War, a consequence of the scarcity of frank accounts of post-war family and domestic life.¹⁴⁸ Little is known about relations between husbands and wives or the lasting impact of the war on women's position in the household, although Winter suggests that it would be 'absurd' to assume that no women retained any of the financial freedom achieved in the war.¹⁴⁹ Other fruitful areas for further research include the experience of soldiers' wives and former war workers during the War of Independence and the Civil War, and the impact of the post-war instability on domestic relationships and household management, women's associational culture and political activism.

¹⁴⁸ Grayzel, "Men & women at home", p.119.

¹⁴⁹ Winter, "Families", p.57.

Conclusion

You could not go through the things we went through, see the things we saw and remain the same. You went into it young and light-hearted. You came out older than any span of years could make you. But at the time you did not reflect on it much or on anything else. You did not dare to.

Catherine Black, *King's nurse - beggar's nurse* (London, 1939), p.95.

Reflecting on her war experience two decades later, the Donegal nurse Catherine Black was very aware of its significance in her life. She wondered how she endured her wartime years of service with the QAIMNS in France, finding it only possible to reflect upon them at all from the distance of twenty years. Emma Duffin, in contrast, recalled the positive aspects to her wartime nursing service in her 1967 memoir:

It had been a hard life but a great experience, never to be regretted. We had seen great suffering, but greater courage. We had learnt to take responsibility and to act on our own when required [...] We had learnt the value of comradeship and that class could be ignored, an orderly could be a friend as well as an officer, a patient could be a brother. To me some of those men are more dear than those I met perhaps a year or so ago. I can never forget them, and many I know will remember me. I am indeed their 'sister' in both senses.¹

Catherine Black and Emma Duffin were both reflecting on their war service many years later. Catherine was writing in 1939, on the eve of another world war while Emma was recalling her youth at the end of her life. These contexts undoubtedly affected their reflections on the lasting impact of the war in their lives. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that both women felt that their lives had been irrevocably changed by their experience in the Great War. To what extent was this true of the majority of Irishwomen? What impact had the Great War on women in Ireland? How did the war affect their lives at the time and their position in society?

The extent of the war's impact varied enormously depending on the region, socioeconomic status and whether one had relatives serving in the armed forces. Upper-class women availed of the opportunity for greater participation in the public sphere through voluntary war work while working-class women were severely affected by reduced hours or unemployment, food shortages and inflation. The wives, mothers and sisters of serving soldiers endured anxiety and distress while waiting for news. The bereaved mothers, sisters, wives and sweethearts such as Mary Martin, Veronica Wynne, Senta McDonnell and Phyllis Kelly could never fully overcome their loss. For example, Phyllis Kelly never

¹ Trevor Parkhill, *The First World War diaries of Emma Duffin: Belfast Voluntary Aid nurse* (Dublin, 2014), p.17.

married and kept a picture of her lost fiancée in uniform over her bed for the rest of her life.²

How did the experience of Irishwomen during the Great War compare to Great Britain? Irishwomen endured many of the hardships of the experience of British women but few of the ancillary benefits. The agricultural prosperity, arising from the increased demand for Irish agricultural produce, has been emphasised in previous accounts of Irish society during the war. The living conditions of women in farming families most likely improved over the course of the war, although the lack of surviving documentation makes it difficult to explore their particular experience in detail. However the economic effects of the war varied significantly between rural and urban areas and between the north-east and the south-west of the country.

Women living in urban Ireland were severely affected by the industrial depression and the rising cost of living. Few regulations were implemented to balance the doubling in the cost of living between 1914 and 1917. The exclusion of Ireland from most of the price regulations and rationing introduced in Great Britain meant that there were fewer safeguards to protect the poorest classes from the impact of inflation. Women's role in household management meant they were particularly badly affected by the increased food prices and the growing food shortages. The burden of feeding their families rested heavily upon women in wartime.

The industrial depression following the outbreak of the war was also more severe and lasted much longer in Ireland than Great Britain, due to the comparatively small number of war contracts placed in Ireland and the exceptionally few national munitions factories. The Irish linen industry, one of the most important sources of employment for women in the northeast, was particularly badly affected by the disruption of European trade. Many linen workers were placed on short time for the majority of the war. Urban unemployment remained high and wages failed to keep pace with inflation. Their wages remained exceptionally low compared to Great Britain. Although Irish women were fortunate to escape the implementation of conscription, with the numbers bereaved by the war significantly smaller than in Great Britain, the absence of conscription reduced the need for substitution and dilution, thus limiting the potential for improvement in women's working conditions. The dramatic, albeit temporary, increase in the numbers of women in the British workforce was not evident in Ireland.

The war brought Irishwomen into greater interaction with agencies of the state. The State's role as surrogate husband in its dispensing of separation allowances had both positive and negative consequences for Irishwomen. They gained greater control over the

² Kelly, *Love letters from the front*, p.287.

management of the household budget and in some cases benefited from an increased income. However the process of obtaining separation allowances could be confusing and disorientating and served to emphasise women's vulnerable economic position. The allowances were also used as justification for greater state intervention in women's lives and increased surveillance of their behaviour. Despite evidence that the reports were exaggerated, 'separation women' became widely associated with excessive drinking and reckless behaviour. There was little empathy for the emotional hardship experienced by the working-class soldiers' wives, while the conflicted relationship between much of Irish society and the British Army meant that support for soldiers' wives was much more muted in Ireland than in Great Britain.

Despite the complex relationship between Irish society and Great Britain, Irish female participation in the war services was remarkably high. Support for the war effort was much more widespread than has previously been assumed. Irish female rates of enlistment with the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance Association were comparable with Great Britain, despite the political tensions and rural nature of Irish society. Civil mobilisation continued unabated after the Easter Rising with the Irish population contributing more per capita to Red Cross funding appeals than their British counterparts. Although Protestants dominated the membership of voluntary war effort organisations, the majority of Irish members of the Women's Services were Roman Catholics. The Red Cross and WAAC samples indicated the diverse range of women involved in voluntary war work and the war services, revealing a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. This evidence challenges previous assertions about the level of popular support for the war effort in Ireland.

However the mobilisation of Irishwomen had no lasting benefit in uniting communities and bridging the divides between Protestants and Catholics, unionists and nationalists. The war effort became a contested space, with Catholics distrusting the motivations of Protestant war workers and vice versa. The war also emphasised the divisions between north and south with the women's work for the war effort being used by Unionist bodies to emphasise Ulster Unionist loyalty at the expense of all-island cooperation. Indeed women's voluntary work for the war effort accentuated the divisions between Ulster and southern Ireland and accelerated the development of a partitionist mindset.

Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta suggest that the war 'cemented the notion of the two Irelands'.³ Thomas Hennessey further argues that while partition was inevitable without the war, it accelerated the process of 'psychological partition'.⁴ He argues the war began the

³ Gregory and Pašeta, 'Introduction' p.4; Alvin Jackson similarly argues that the mass participation of the Ulster population in the war 'coincided with, and advanced, a stronger Unionist sense of Ulster's distinctiveness': "Loyalists and Nationalists" in Jackson (ed.) *The Oxford handbook of modern Irish history*, p.54.

⁴ Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland*, p.235.

process of the complete polarisation of Irish national and British national or imperial identities.⁵ Although ignored by Hennessey, the activities of the main voluntary war relief organisations are indicative of this 'two Irelands' mentality. Chapter Five described how the British Red Cross Society and the St John Ambulance Association had two separate committees in Ireland: one for southern Ireland and one for Ulster. The two operated independently with seemingly little communication. Similarly, there were two sphagnum moss associations in Ireland – one for Ulster and one for the rest of the country with again very little or no communication between the two. In Ulster much of the voluntary war work was coordinated by the UWUC who openly objected to cooperation with southern organisations. They emphasised the unionist agenda to their war relief work and highlighted what they perceived as the prevailing disloyalty in the south.

The war experience of women in the north and south were also different in other ways. Recruitment to the armed forces was higher from Ulster and separate divisions were formed. Incidences of communal bereavement thus followed different patterns. Dublin women were particularly affected by the losses at Gallipoli in 1915 while the Battle of the Somme in 1916 held a similar place in communal trauma for Ulster women. Labour conditions also differed significantly with the war's impact on female employment more evident in the industrialised north. Although the national munitions factories were all located in the south, the private munitions sector was much more extensive in Belfast. The textile industry, one of the main sources of employment in Ulster, suffered greatly from the industrial depression. However some firms such as Mackie's converted into munitions factories and expanded the employment opportunities for both working-class and middle-class women in Belfast. The different labour conditions resulted in two committees being established to deal with the problem of women's wartime unemployment in Ireland, one for Ulster and one for southern Ireland, providing another example of a missed opportunity for cooperation and further highlighting the integral particularities of Ulster.

The Easter Rising and the anti-conscription campaign further cemented divisions between the north and the south of Ireland and between Catholic and Protestant Ireland. These factors have been typically highlighted when considering the development of the 'two Irelands' mentality. However the impact of the divided nature of women's voluntary war service on this polarisation deserves attention. Partitionist ideology had become part of women's everyday lives. The issue also demonstrates the changing nature of the Irish home front over the course of the war and makes clear the need to consider the multiple identities existing in wartime Ireland.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.239.

How did the war affect gender relations and women's role in Irish society? Adrian Gregory has observed that the impact of the Great War on women is complex and not easily established. War brought women both progress and backlash with the greater recognition of their role as citizens accompanied by increased emphasis on their roles as wives and mothers.⁶ This is apparent in Ireland. The Great War reinforced traditional gender roles through its creation of the gendered spaces of home front and battlefield. Irishmen and women both contributed to the war effort but they did so in very different ways. The roles performed by women as nurses or preparing comforts and knitting clothes emphasised women's position as maternal caregivers. Their associational activity was performed through conservative organisations which promoted a traditional view of women's place in society.

Although there was some, albeit limited, opportunities for Irishwomen to enter previously male dominated areas of the workforce, such roles were accepted as a temporary aberration from the norm and as unique to the conditions of war, evident in the difficulties faced by women workers after the Armistice. Indeed, the commentary on women's wartime role in the workforce highlighted its novelty and impermanence. The ideology of gendered spheres was further reinforced through wartime innovations such as the separation allowances and the infant welfare movement. The military losses made rebuilding through repopulation a dominant theme of post-war society and emphasised the importance of marriage and motherhood for women.

Nevertheless the Great War acted as a politicising agent for Irishwomen. The war invaded women's domestic lives and brought them into the closer interaction with the state. The war altered forms of women's party-political activity, disrupting the pre-war patterns of women's political engagement but giving their work a new sense of purpose and urgency. Women became more evident in the public sphere defending their own interests and that of their families. They joined trade unions in unprecedented numbers and lobbied for improved pay and working conditions, taking full advantage of the industrial controls implemented for the exceptional wartime circumstances. A small number of women took active part in the Easter Rising, engaging in active opposition to Britain and Britain's war effort. This politicisation was far more apparent however in the anti-conscription campaign where women were vital to its success. At the same time soldiers' wives became politicised through their support for the war effort and their opposition to the republican movement. New forms of political activity became available to women and women formed 'new elements' in Irish party-politics. The extension of the franchise to women in 1918 strengthened women's role in the state and offered a formal means for women to exercise their political agency.

⁶ Gregory, *A war of peoples*, p.198.

In a 2015 lecture in Trinity College Dublin, the historian Susan Grayzel, consciously drawing on Joan Kelly-Gadol's influential article on periodisation in women's history, questioned whether women had a Great War, whether the war represented a significant epoch in women's history.⁷ She answered in the affirmative, noting the significant contribution of women to the war effort and the noticeable impact of the war on women's lives in all combatant countries.⁸ Nonetheless the question appeared particularly pertinent in Ireland where the Great War has little place in women's history and where women's role in the war effort has been described as recently as 2008 as obscured in the 'historical shadow'.⁹ This thesis has focused on many aspects of the lived experience of women in wartime but it also demonstrates the rich potential for further research in the area.

Topics that merit further exploration include the representation of women in Irish wartime art and literature, together with women's wartime writings. The Great War is frequently associated with dramatic changes in women's fashion and style, with economic and practical considerations affecting women's choice of clothing. The extent to which this was apparent in Ireland requires further research. The impact of the war on childhood and education are growing areas of international First World War scholarship but have received little attention in Ireland. Alexandra College was referred to as a site of mobilisation for the war effort but was this apparent in other schools? How did the war affect the curriculum in girls' schools?

Another area that merits deeper exploration concerns the cultural and politicising effects of war service. This thesis argues that the war had a politicising impact upon Irishwomen, evident in their trade union activity, participation in party-political movements, the Easter Rising and anti-conscription campaign and the demonstrations of 'separation women'. The particular politicising effects of war service and its lasting effects have not been explored in detail however. Irishwomen's war service took place within local, regional, national and international networks, creating communities of war workers and bringing them into greater interaction with people from other societies and cultures. Did this activity lead to an increased sense of cosmopolitanism or a greater awareness of the world beyond Ireland? Susan Kingsley Kent argues that British women who served overseas were politicised by their experience, contributing to the diverse strands of feminism that emerged in the post war period.¹⁰ To what extent did this apply in the case of Irishwomen? How was the post-war feminist movement in Ireland affected by the war?

⁷ Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did women have a Renaissance?" in Renate Blumenthal and Claudia Koonz (eds) *Becoming visible: women in European history* (Boston, 1977), pp 137-64.

⁸ Susan Grayzel, "Did women have a Great War?", lecture in Trinity College Dublin, 6 Mar. 2015. See also Grayzel, "Women & men", p.262.

⁹ Clear, "Fewer ladies, more women", p.160.

¹⁰ Kent, *Gender and history*, pp 99-104.

The Great War brought Irishwomen into much greater interaction with agencies of the state and expanded the opportunities for their participation in civil society. The war dominated the lives of Irishwomen in both the public and private spheres, affecting everything from their management of the household budget, their diet, working conditions, familial relationships, associational culture, to political engagement. It had a politicising effect on Irishwomen and transformed their everyday lives. Evidently, the experience of Irishwomen closely resembled that of women in Great Britain or in other combatant countries. Although there were some significant differences arising from the rural nature of most of Irish society, the relatively small war industry and the absence of conscription, the similarities are most apparent. Irishwomen's role in society may have altered little between 1914 and 1919 but the lives of women who lived through the war were changed irrevocably.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Demography

Population

Table A.1.1 Population of Great Britain and Ireland in 1911¹

Region	Male	Female	Total
England & Wales	17,445,608	18,624,884	36,070,492
Scotland	2,308,839	2,452,065	4,760,904
Ireland	2,114,977	2,198,171	4,390,219
Islands	70,166	78,749	148,915
Total	22,016661	23,353,869	45,370,530

Emigration

Table A.1.2 Enumerated emigrants from Ireland 1912-1920

Year	Total numbers (in thousands)	Emigrant rate (number per 1,000 of the population)
1912	29.3	6.7
1913	31	7.1
1914	20.3	4.6
1915	10.7	2.5
1916	7.3	1.7
1917	2.1	0.5
1918	0.98	0.2
1919	3	0.7
1920	15.5	3.5

¹ John Whitaker, "Population of Great Britain & Ireland 1570-1931"
<http://homepage.nflworld.com/hitch/gendocs/pop.html> (available 10 September 2015).

Marriages

Table A.1.3 Marriages per 1,000 of the estimated population in Ireland and Great Britain 1900-1920²

Year	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1900	4.77	16	14.6
1901	5.08	15.9	14
1902	5.18	15.9	14.2
1903	5.21	15.7	14.3
1904	5.22	15.3	14.1
1905	5.26	15.3	13.6
1906	5.15	15.7	14.3
1907	5.13	15.9	14.3
1908	5.18	15.1	13.5
1909	5.16	14.7	12.8
1910	5.04	15	13
1911	5.35	15.2	13.4
1912	5.31	15.6	13.7
1913	5.08	15.7	14.2
1914	5.41	15.9	14.8
1915	5.57	19.4	15.2
1916	5.09	14.9	13.1
1917	4.81	13.8	12.6
1918	5.15	15.3	14.3
1919	6.09	19.7	18.3
1920	5.98	20.2	19.2

Table A.1.4 Marriages by religious categorisation in Ireland 1910-1920³

Year	RC	C of I	P	O D	S of F	J	R.O.	Total
1910	16,527	3,474	2,214	457	13	12	415	22,112
1911	16,729	3,627	2,211	461	3	7	435	23,473
1912	16,577	3,494	2,331	454	9	13	405	23,283
1913	15,738	3,447	2,279	452	8	11	331	22,266
1914	17,014	3,601	2,252	428	7	16	377	23,695
1915	17,334	3,521	2,412	479	7	9	392	24,154
1916	16,398	3,011	2,049	441	3	10	338	22,245
1917	15,094	3,099	2,101	468	5	17	334	21,073
1918	15,733	3,566	2,319	522	3	15	412	22,570
1919	18,756	4,247	3,008	643	6	19	514	27,193
1920	18,290	3,937	3,215	678	1	27	678	26,826

RC: Roman Catholic; C of I: Church of Ireland; P: Presbyterian; O D: Other denominations; S of F: Society of Friends; J: Jewish; R.O.: Registry Office.

² Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1900 to 1920; and B.R. Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1962).

³ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1910 to 1920.

Table A.1.5 Percentage distribution of marriages by religion

Year	Roman Catholic	Protestant	Other
1910	74.7	27.8	2
1911	71.3	26.8	1.9
1912	71.2	27	1.8
1913	70.7	27.7	1.6
1914	71.8	26.5	1.7
1915	71.8	26.5	1.7
1916	73.7	24.7	1.6
1917	71.6	26.9	1.7
1918	69.7	28.4	1.9
1919	69	29	2
1920	68.2	29.2	2.6

Births**Table A.1.6 Birth rate per 1,000 women aged 15-44 in Ireland and Great Britain 1900-1920⁴**

Year	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1900	96.6	115.9	123
1901	96.2	114.5	122.1
1902	97.7	114.6	120.6
1903	98.3	114.3	120.6
1904	100.9	112.7	118.6
1905	100.6	109.7	116.4
1906	102	109.2	115.8
1907	100.9	106.2	111.9
1908	101.9	107.6	113
1909	103.4	103.6	112.7
1910	103.3	100.7	108
1911	103.8	98	106.6
1912	103.5	96.6	107.6
1913	102.9	97.1	105.9
1914	102	96.2	108.5
1915	99.1	88.8	99.1
1916	95.2	85.2	94.7
1917	90.3	72.1	83.4
1918	91.6	71.1	83.8
1919	94.1	73.9	90.2
1920	105.3	101.7	115.3

⁴ Compiled from Fitzpatrick and Vaughan, *Irish Historical Statistics*; and B.R. Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics*, pp 30-33.

Table A.1.7 Percentage of illegitimate births among the total number of registered births⁵

Year	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1900	2.2	4	6.2
1901	2.6	3.9	6.3
1902	2.7	3.9	6.1
1903	2.7	3.6	6.6
1904	2.7	3.9	7.1
1905	2.8	4	6.6
1906	3.1	4.6	7
1907	2.7	3.9	7
1908	2.5	3.9	6.6
1909	2.9	4	7.5
1910	2.8	4.1	7.3
1911	2.9	4.2	7.6
1912	2.8	4.4	7.5
1913	2.7	4.3	7.4
1914	3.1	4.2	7.2
1915	3.5	4.5	6.8
1916	2.5	4.8	7.2
1917	2.7	5.5	7.1
1918	2.8	6.3	8.4
1919	2.9	5.9	6.8
1920	3.3	1.6	7.8

⁵ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1900 to 1920; and B.R. Mitchell, *Abstract of British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), pp 30-33.

Infant mortality

Table A.1.8 Deaths of infants under twelve months per 1,000 registered births in Ireland and Great Britain 1900-1920⁶

Year	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1900	109	154	128
1901	101	151	129
1902	100	133	113
1903	96	132	118
1904	100	145	123
1905	95	128	116
1906	93	132	115
1907	92	118	110
1908	96	120	121
1909	92	109	108
1910	95	105	108
1911	94	130	112
1912	86	95	105
1913	97	108	110
1914	87	105	111
1915	92	110	126
1916	83	91	97
1917	88	96	107
1918	86	97	100
1919	88	89	102
1920	83	80	92

⁶ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1900 to 1920.

Table A.1.9 Infant mortality in Ireland with excessive deaths from influenza epidemic in 1918 and 1919 excluded⁷

Year	Ireland
1900	109
1901	101
1902	100
1903	96
1904	100
1905	95
1906	93
1907	92
1908	96
1909	92
1910	95
1911	94
1912	86
1913	97
1914	87
1915	92
1916	83
1917	88
1918	83
1919	84
1920	83

Table A.1.10 Causes of infant mortality in Ireland 1910-1920⁸

	Wasting diseases	Diarrheal diseases	Common infectious diseases	TB	Influenza	Other causes
1910	33.13	12.24	8.74	3.31	0.69	35.51
1911	33.44	20.02	5.1	3	0.52	31.81
1912	32.46	8.95	7.23	2.47	0.5	34.39
1913	35.94	18.21	5.37	2.65	0.65	34.18
1914	33.89	14.23	5.82	2.33	0.33	30.4
1915	35.69	12.39	5.72	2.46	0.80	34.94
1916	33.97	12.16	6.12	1.89	0.25	28.61
1917	36.54	11.37	4.44	1.38	0.62	33.65
1918	34.16	10.7	5.7	1.79	3.37	30.28
1919	35.03	10.85	3.25	1.88	4.65	32.34
1920	33.58	9.6	6.36	1.59	0.81	31.06

⁷ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1900 to 1920.

⁸ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1910 to 1920.

Table A.1.11 Urban/rural differentiation of infant mortality rates in Ireland 1907-1920⁹

Year	Nineteen town districts ¹⁰	Remainder of Ireland	Ireland
1907	123.8	70.2	91.7
1908	129.5	75.1	97
1909	122	70.9	91.5
1910	123.1	75.5	94.6
1914	120.7	63.9	87.3
1915	136.04	71.06	91.37
1916	120.91	66.94	83.41
1917	123.94	72.20	87.80
1918	131.5	66.10	86.36
1919	116.06	74.06	87.78
1920	119.61	63.14	83

Table A.1.12 Comparative urban mortality rates in Ireland and Great Britain 1901-1920¹¹

Year	Dublin	Belfast	London	Glasgow
1901	168	154	148	150
1902	162	151	140	130
1903	151	134	130	144
1904	169	154	145	146
1905	143	136	130	131
1906	146	144	131	131
1907	156	136	116	130
1908	146	147	113	137
1909	141	139	108	133
1910	142	143	103	121
1911	156	128	128	139
1912	140	129	90	124
1913	153	144	105	129
1914	145	143	104	133
1915	160	137	112	143
1916	153	111	89	111
1917	146	128	107	113
1918	149	142	103	128
1919	141	113	85	114
1920	143	132	75	107

⁹ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1911 to 1920.

¹⁰ Towns with populations of more than 10,000 in the 1901 or 1911 census.

¹¹ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1900 to 1920.

Table A.1.13 Infant mortality county rate 1912-1917¹²

Counties	1912-14	1915-17	% Change
Antrim	125	81	-35.0%
Armagh	88	81	-8.0%
Carlow	71	77	+8.0%
Cavan	53	53	0%
Clare	68	64	-6.0%
Cork	81	74	-9.0%
Donegal	59	65	+10.0%
Down	94	84	-11.0%
Dublin	144	117	-19.0%
Fermanagh	57	65	+14.0%
Galway	59	54	-9.0%
Kerry	67	58	-13.0%
Kildare	88	98	+11.0%
Kilkenny	90	77	-14.0%
King's	67	67	0%
Leitrim	47	50	+6.0%
Limerick	100	92	-8.0%
Londonderry	79	71	-10.0%
Longford	68	65	-4.0%
Louth	81	82	+1.0%
Mayo	59	54	-8.0%
Meath	76	69	-9.0%
Monaghan	69	67	-3.0%
Queens	71	77	+8.4%
Roscommon	43	43	0%
Sligo	61	43	-30%
Tipperary N.R.	67	60	-9.0%
Tipperary S.R.	93	92	-1.0%
Tyrone	77	81	+5.0%
Waterford	108	83	-23.0%
Westmeath	74	77	+4.0%
Wexford	83	86	+3.6%
Wicklow	76	66	-13.0%

¹² Up to and including 1914 the figures for Antrim, Cork, Down, Dublin, Limerick, Londonderry and Waterford include those for Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Londonderry and Waterford county boroughs together with the rate for the county.

Maternal mortality

Table A.1.14 Deaths associated with pregnancy and childbirth per 1,000 registered births in Ireland 1900-1920¹³

Year	Maternal mortality rate	MMR excluding excess influenza deaths
1900	6.4	6.4
1901	6.2	6.2
1902	6.2	6.2
1903	6.5	6.5
1904	6.6	6.6
1905	6.4	6.4
1906	6.5	6.5
1907	5.8	5.8
1908	6.0	6.0
1909	6.3	6.3
1910	5.9	5.9
1911	5.7	5.7
1912	5.9	5.9
1913	5.8	5.8
1914	5.6	5.6
1915	6.0	6.0
1916	6.1	6.1
1917	5.5	5.5
1918	5.8	5.6
1919	5.9	5.3
1920	6.3	6.2

Table A.1.15 Deaths per 1,000 births in Ireland and Great Britain 1911-1919¹⁴

Year	Ireland	England & Wales	Scotland
1911	5.7	3.7	5.7
1912	5.9	3.8	5.5
1913	5.8	3.7	5.9
1914	5.6	4.0	6.0
1915	6.0	3.9	6.1
1916	6.1	3.9	5.7
1917	5.5	3.7	5.9
1918	5.8	3.6	7.0
1919	5.9	4.1	6.2

¹³ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland 1900 to 1920.

¹⁴ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General for Ireland, England and Wales, and Scotland 1910 to 1919.

Table A.1.16 Causes of maternal mortality in Ireland 1901-1920¹⁵ (deaths per 1,000 of the registered births)

Year	Puerperal septic diseases	Accidents of pregnancy and childbirth	Other causes
1901	2.3	3.3	0.7
1902	2.2	3.3	0.8
1903	2.3	3.3	0.8
1904	2.1	3.5	1.0
1905	2.2	3.4	0.8
1906	2.3	3.6	0.7
1907	1.6	3.4	0.8
1908	1.9	3.3	0.8
1909	2.2	3.3	0.8
1910	1.9	3.4	0.6
1911	1.8	3.2	0.6
1912	2.1	3.3	0.5
1913	1.9	3.3	0.6
1914	2.2	2.9	0.6
1915	2.1	3.3	0.6
1916	2.3	3.2	0.6
1917	1.9	3.0	0.6
1918	1.8	3.0	1.0
1919	1.7	2.9	1.2
1920	2.5	3.0	0.7

Table A.1.17 Principal causes as percentage of all deaths associated with pregnancy and childbirth

Period	Puerperal septic diseases	Accidents of pregnancy and childbirth	Other causes associated with pregnancy and childbirth
1901-1910	32.6%	54.3%	12.2%
1911-14	34.9%	55.2%	9.9%
1915-18	35.5%	53.6%	10.9%
1901-20	33.9%	54.1%	11.5%

Table A.1.18 Urban maternal mortality in Ireland 1916-1919¹⁶

County borough	Dublin	Cork	Limerick	Waterford	Belfast	Londonderry	Ireland
1916	4.6	5.5	5.5	3.5	3.8	7.8	6.1
1917	2.8	4.9	3.6	3.5	4.3	11.1	5.5
1918	5.4	5.4	8.0	6.9	3.2	7.9	5.8
1919	4.8	2.2	7.3	10.2	4.7	0.9	5.9
1916-19	4.3	4.5	6.1	6.0	4.0	6.9	5.9

¹⁵ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General of Ireland, 1900-1920.

¹⁶ Compiled from the annual reports of the Registrar General of Ireland, 1916-1919.

Table A.1.19 Urban and rural maternal mortality in Ireland 1916-1919

Period	County rate	County borough rate
1911-15	5.6	4.7
1916	5.6	5.1
1917	5.3	5.2
1918	4.8	6.1
1919	4.7	5.0
1916-19	5.1	5.3

Appendix 2 Welfare

Table A.2.1 Number of people in receipt of poor relief¹⁷

Year	Indoor	Outdoor
1910	41,623	54,659
1911	38,465	39,459
1912	37,651	40,168
1913	36,582	38,438
1914	35,340	37,809
1915	32,708	37,345
1916	31,431	34,577
1917	30,034	35,022
1918	27,584	34,742

¹⁷ Annual reports of the Registrar-General for Ireland, 1910-20.

Appendix 3 Crime and welfare

Drunkenness

Table A.3.1 Arrests for drunkenness (including drunkenness, simple and drunkenness with aggravation) in Ireland 1900-1919¹⁸

Years	Females	Males	Total	Females as % of those arrested
1900	12,937	84,520	97,457	13.3
1901	11,183	77,112	88295	12.7
1902	11,163	80,113	91276	12.2
1903	10,220	75,282	85502	12.0
1904	8,929	72,846	81775	10.9
1905	8,743	71,225	79968	10.9
1906	8,606	68,656	77262	11.1
1907	8,920	67,940	76860	11.6
1908	8,091	66,176	74267	10.9
1909	6,876	61,872	68748	10.0
1910	6,859	57,463	64322	10.2
1911	6,705	56,114	62819	10.7
1912	6,483	57,140	63623	10.2
1913	6,078	53,441	59519	10.2
1914	6,216	48,499	54715	11.4
1915	6,906	40,335	47241	14.6
1916	6,267	33,221	39488	15.9
1917	4,498	20,523	25021	18.0
1918	2,710	10,525	13235	20.5
1919	3,011	14,260	17271	17.4

¹⁸ Compiled from the Judicial statistics, Ireland, 1900-1919; and the annual reports of the Irish Association for the prevention of intemperance, 19000-20.

Table A.3.2 Arrests by the DMP for drunkenness and drunk and disorderly behavior 1900-1920¹⁹

Year	Females	Total	Females as % of those arrested
1900	3503	9096	38.5
1901	3200	7979	40.1
1902	3053	7600	40.2
1903	2671	6511	41.0
1904	1976	5185	38.1
1905	1797	4606	39.0
1906	1772	4713	37.6
1907	1890	5095	37.1
1908	1598	4111	38.9
1909	1372	3388	40.5
1910	1548	3571	43.3
1911	1213	2857	42.4
1912	1373	3432	40.0
1913	1033	2675	38.6
1914	1197	2654	45.1
1915	1499	2664	56.3
1916	1191	2110	56.4
1917	858	1438	59.7
1918	595	1064	55.9
1919	716	1199	59.7
1920	536	931	57.8

¹⁹ Compiled from the Statistical tables of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, 1900 to 1919.

Child neglect

Table A.3.3 Arrests for child neglect and child cruelty in Ireland 1900-1919²⁰

Year	Females	Males	Total	Females as % of total arrests
1900	413	358	771	53.6
1901	412	466	878	46.9
1902	423	426	849	50.0
1903	472	416	888	53.2
1904	398	428	826	48.2
1905	361	453	814	44.3
1906	336	406	742	45.2
1907	444	474	918	48.4
1908	390	423	813	48.0
1909	555	744	1299	42.7
1910	625	792	1417	44.1
1911	424	581	1005	42.2
1912	468	622	1090	42.9
1913	469	636	1105	42.4
1914	306	456	762	40.2
1915	482	319	801	60.2
1916	335	184	519	64.5
1917	267	131	398	67.1
1919	135	153	288	46.9

²⁰ Compiled from the Judicial Statistics, Ireland, 1900-1919; I have not been able to find the 1918 report in the House of Commons parliamentary papers database. On checking the *General index to the bills, reports and papers printed by order of the House of Commons and to the reports and papers presented by command 1900-1948/49* (London, 1960), I discovered that the index lists the 1918 report but the paper number it provides in fact leads to the 1917 report, which appears to have two separate paper numbers. There is no evidence however that there was no 1918 report produced –the 1919 report makes no special mention of it.

Table A.3.4 Arrests for child neglect by the Dublin Metropolitan Police 1900-1919²¹

Year	Females	Males	Total	Females as % of total arrests
1900	100	104	204	49.0
1901	114	106	220	51.8
1902	115	113	228	50.4
1903	81	91	172	47.1
1904	99	117	216	45.8
1905	133	156	289	46.0
1906	167	158	325	51.4
1907	176	157	333	52.9
1908	137	114	251	54.6
1909	269	313	582	46.2
1910	402	350	752	53.5
1911	176	173	349	50.4
1912	188	169	357	52.7
1913	225	218	443	50.8
1914	95	104	199	47.7
1915	153	111	264	57.8
1916	97	33	130	74.6
1917	57	35	92	62.0
1918	23	38	61	37.7
1919	46	36	82	56.1

²¹ Compiled from the Statistical tables of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, 1900 to 1919.

Table A.3.5 NSPCC Dublin branch child neglect offenders 1901-1920²²

Year	Female offenders	Male offenders	Females as % of all offenders
1901	773	892	46.4
1902	763	1022	42.7
1903	892	1137	44.0
1904	900	1189	43.1
1905	776	1081	41.8
1906	685	948	41.9
1907	609	879	40.9
1908	562	864	39.4
1909	653	911	41.8
1910	750	959	43.9
1911	648	893	42.1
1912	698	934	42.8
1913	766	1097	41.1
1914	719	970	42.6
1915	833	931	47.2
1916	847	695	54.9
1917	774	590	56.7
1918	679	509	57.2
1919	435	401	52.0
1920	437	582	42.9

²² Compiled from the annual reports of the Dublin and district branch of the NSPCC 1900 to 1920.

Table A.3.6 NSPCC Dublin and district branch caseload 1900-1920²³

Year	Cases investigated	Number of children involved	Cases prosecuted and convicted
1900	1,093	2933	76
1901	1507	4027	96
1902	1596	4341	81
1903	1792	4851	49
1904	1798	4692	43
1905	1625	4300	73
1906	1469	3785	81
1907	1345	3575	35
1908	1281	3582	22
1909	1,353	3590	37
1910	1,435	4,060	44
1911	1,372	3,790	40
1912	1,397	4,046	59
1913	1,538	4,411	70
1914	1,442	3,993	68
1915	1,503	4,308	60
1916	1,352	3,981	68
1917	1,238	3,669	61
1918	1,083	3,023	44
1919	740	1,913	20
1920	867	2162	28

Prostitution**Table A.3.7 Arrests of women for prostitution in Dublin and Ireland 1910-1919²⁴**

Year	Dublin	Ireland
1910	785	1,503
1911	805	1,241
1912	1,067	1,116
1913	689	1,108
1914	645	1,174
1915	740	1,375
1916	552	1,014
1917	447	1,003
1918	260	
1919	198	580

²³ Compiled from the annual reports of the Dublin and district branch of the NSPCC 1900 to 1920.

²⁴ Criminal Judicial statistics for Ireland 1910-1919; DMP statistical tables, 1910-19.

Appendix 4 Employment

Textile industry

Table A.4.1 Flax imports to Ireland 1908-1919²⁵

Year	Flax in tons
1908	29,582
1909	39,194
1910	35,911
1911	32,055
1912	42,144
1913	40,982
1914	36,727
1915	30,114
1916	32,576
1917	28,735
1918	6,442
1919	9,557

Table A.4.2 Monthly returns of employment in the linen trade 1913-1919²⁶

Week ending	Belfast	Rest of Ireland	Ireland
Dec 1913	17935	13400	31335
Jan 1914	18019	12809	30828
Feb 1914	18187	12921	31108
Mar 1914	17,683	13,398	31081
Apr 1914	17556	12752	30308
May 1914	18257	14291	32548
Jun 1914	17734	14195	31929
Jul 1914	18,044	13,489	31,533
Aug 1914	17,460	13,741	31,201
Sep 1914	18,297	12,258	30,555
Oct 1914	17,249	13,651	30,900
Nov 1914	17,330	13,681	31,011
Dec 1914	17,902	12,863	30,765
Jan 1915	16,024	13,312	29,336
Feb 1915	16334	12295	29259
Mar 1915	17654	13289	30943

²⁵ Riordan, *Modern Irish trade and industry*, p.115.

²⁶ Monthly returns of employment in the linen trade recorded in the *Labour Gazette* from Dec. 1913 to Dec. 1919.

Apr 1915	16993	12163	29156
May 1915	16651	11748	28399
Jun 1915	17224	12107	29331
Jul 1915	16948	12573	29521
Aug 1915	16,743	12,443	29186
Sep 1915	16,929	11541	28470
Oct 1915	16677	11706	28383
Nov 1915	16510	10325	26835
Dec 1915	16,812	10176	26988
Jan 1916	17088	12984	30072
Feb 1916	18219	13101	31320
Mar 1916	16993	12714	29707
Apr 1916	16833	12070	28903
May 1916	17983	13225	31208
Jun 1916	16939	11875	28814
Jul 1916	16764	11808	28572
Aug 1916	16694	10061	26755
Sep 1916	16766	9783	26549
Oct 1916	16714	11517	28231
Nov 1916	16554	12040	28594
Dec 1916	16672	10227	26889
Jan 1917	16517	10654	27171
Feb 1917	16023	10292	26315
Mar 1917	17728	10316	28044
Apr 1917	17868	10813	28631
May 1917	18052	9281	27333
Jun 1917	18088	11497	29585
Jul 1917	16833	9807	26640
Aug 1917	18039	10098	28137
Sep 1917	17769	10003	27772
Oct 1917	16953	12840	29793
Nov 1917	18389	10446	28835
Dec 1917	18,499	12367	30866
Jan 1918	18119	11397	29516
Feb 1918	18073	11940	30013
Mar 1918	18187	12574	30761
Apr 1918	17959	12284	30243
May 1918	17925	11947	29872
Jun 1918	17268	12206	29474
Jul 1918	17326	11045	28371
Aug 1918	16709	11649	28319
Sep 1918	17103	10714	27817
Oct 1918	16836	10008	26844

Nov 1918	14440	9112	23552
Dec 1918	15076	10283	25359
Jan 1919	15835	10077	25912
Feb 1919	14227	9468	23695
Mar 1919	12112	7847	19959
May 1919	12561	7989	20550
May 1919	12669	7474	20143
Jun 1919	14804	9467	24271
Jul 1919	13135	7408	20543
Aug 1919	12331	7552	19853
Sep 1919	12723	8947	21670
Oct 1919	12452	8104	20556
Nov 1919	13785	8762	22547

Table A.4.3 Monthly returns of employment in the shirt and collar trade 1915-1919²⁷

Week ending	Belfast	Rest of Ireland	Ireland
Apr 1915	1084	940	2024
May 1915	1263	1054	2317
Jun 1915	1280	907	2187
Jul 1915	1320	982	2302
Aug 1915	944	743	1687
Sep 1915	1237	941	2178
Oct 1915	1466	1022	2488
Nov 1915	1187	549	1736
Dec 1915	1443	964	2407
Jan 1916	1521	666	2187
Feb 1916	1005	703	1708
Mar 1916	1405	444	1849
Apr 1916	1133	667	1800
May 1916	1426	888	2314
Jun 1916	822	545	1367
Jun 1916	1093	856	1949
Aug 1916	509	901	1410
Sep 1916	1029	542	1571
Oct 1916	736	561	1297
Nov 1916	773	939	1712
Dec 1916	756	947	1703
Jan 1917	1020	684	1704

²⁷ Monthly returns of employment in the shirt and collar trade recorded in the *Labour Gazette* from Apr. 1915 to Nov. 1919.

Feb 1917	718	953	1671
Mar 1917	725	961	1686
Apr 1917	720	919	1639
May 1917	674	293	967
Jun 1917	502	928	1430
Jul 1917	698	1085	1783
Aug 1917	1012	1084	2096
Sep 1917	775	523	1298
Oct 1917	774	1089	1863
Nov 1917	989	1104	2093
Dec 1917	729	480	1209
Jan 1918	770	631	1401
Feb 1918	982	1064	2046
Mar 1918	798	1076	1874
Apr 1918	834	1066	1900
May 1918	1039	1060	2099
Jun 1918	1037	642	1679
Jul 1918	765	790	1555
Aug 1918	777	858	1635
Sep 1918	742	700	1442
Oct 1918	785	673	1458
Nov 1918	702	317	1019
Dec 1918	727	417	1144
Jan 1919	520	413	933
Feb 1919	616	674	1290
Mar 1919	719	379	1098
May 1919	1004	268	1272
May 1919	1090	767	1857
Jun 1919	566	260	826
Jul 1919	724	721	1445
Aug 1919	630	787	1417
Sep 1919	823	789	1612
Oct 1919	797	834	1631
Nov 1919	795	807	1602

Trade union membership

Table A.4.4 Membership of the Irish draper's assistants association 1912-1924²⁸

Year	Females	Males
1912	1609	2972
1913	1341	2661
1914	1413	2483
1915	1443	2436
1916	1461	2449
1917	1471	2468
1918	1898	2957
1919	2933	4436
1920	3028	4532
1921	2572	3824
1922	3330	4071
1923	3439	5195
1924	3218	5337

Table A.4.5 Membership of the IWWU 1917-1928²⁹

Year	Members
1917	2300
1918	5300
1919	3425
1920	2942
1921	4084
1922	2556
1923	2556
1924	2891
1925	2978
1926	3078
1927	2918
1928	2972

²⁸ NAI RFS/225T: Irish drapers' assistants' association annual returns, 1912-22

²⁹ NAI RFS/332T: Irish Women Workers' Union annual returns, 1917-28.

Table A.4.6 Female delegates at the Irish Trade Union Congress 1901-1925³⁰

Year	Females
1901	2
1902	2
1903	2
1904	2
1905	2
1906	2
1907	2
1908	2
1909	2
1910	2
1911	3
1912	3
1913	4
1914	3
1915	
1916	1
1917	2
1918	9
1919	6
1920	18
1921	11
1922	14
1923	7
1924	5
1925	6

³⁰ NLI P3212, Annual reports of the Irish Trade Union Congress, 1901-25.

Appendix 5 War service

Table A.5.1 Provincial spread of sub-depots affiliated to the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot in 1918³¹

County	Number of sub-depots	Province
Armagh	2	Ulster
Carlow	3	Leinster
Cavan	1	Ulster
Clare	1	Munster
Cork	4	Munster
Donegal	1	Ulster
Down	1	Ulster
Dublin	7	Leinster
Galway	1	Connaught
Kerry	2	Munster
Kildare	6	Leinster
Kilkenny	1	Leinster
King's County	2	Leinster
Limerick	1	Munster
Londonderry	1	Ulster
Louth	7	Leinster
Mayo	1	Connaught
Meath	4	Leinster
Monaghan	1	Ulster
Queen's County	5	Leinster
Roscommon	2	Connaught
Tipperary	7	Munster
Tyrone	1	Ulster
Waterford	4	Munster
Westmeath	3	Leinster
Wexford	2	Leinster
Wicklow	9	Leinster

Table A.5.2 Irish War Hospital Supply Depot productivity 1916-1917³²

Depot	Average attendance 1916	Monthly output for 1916	Increase/ decrease on monthly output in 1917 (Number of dressings, bandages etc)
Merrion square	131	19,785	+6807
Abbeyleix 1+2	21	3,695	+1,046
Arklow and Avoca	35	2,038	+935
Armagh	-	699	-77
Athlone	21	1,170	+55
Bagenalstown	12	785	+499
Balbriggan	28	410	+191
Blackrock	35	4,355	+2515
Blessington	14	1,092	+203
Boyle	11	350	+5
Borrisokane	17	510	-156

³¹ Annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot 1917-1918 (Dublin, 1918) pp 23-35 [Airfield papers Box 68 2574]

³² Annual report of the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot 1917-18 (Dublin, 1918), pp 25-35.

Bray 1+2	39	1,885	+5,004
Buncrana	10	297	-25
Cabinteely	30	1,927	+1,042
Cahir	24	1,966	+658
Cashel	16	1,329	-517
Castleshane	11	615	+543
Castlebellingham	14	786	+402
Clonmel	20	2,349	+1,817
Coleraine	30	2,541	+1,479
Curragh	14	1,292	+907
Dundalk	23	1,704	+442
Ennis	30	862	+139
Enniscorthy	24	935	+565
Fermoy	14	789	+889
Galway	24	1,357	+341
Greystones 1	20	478	-265
Greystones 2	24	1,258	+1,174
Kenmare	15	1,106	+1,237
Kilgarvan	16	1,309	+523
Killiney	24	1,249	+1,382
Killeshandra	14	189	+115
Limerick	30	1,415	+1,088
Linabin & Bracklyn	11	1,546	+1,325
Littleton	9	333	+79
Malahide	15	750	+670
Maryborough	14	1,205	+85
Milestown	15	806	+502
Moate	19	2,118	+846
Monastrevin	29	1,132	+1,816
Monkstown	24	570	+358
Naas	24	381	+821
Navan	16	1,108	+143
Newport	6	1,850	+411
Newtownbarry	11	256	-23
North Kildare and Leixlip	12	707	+884
North Tipperary	33	1,014	+1,604
Oldcastle	11	283	+556
Omagh	26	917	+430
Platten Hall	18	1,087	+1,233
Portadown	37	220	+116
Portlaw	21	1,888	+242
Ratoath	12	271	+52
Rathdrum	12	752	+1,584
Royal College of Science	46	6,602	-314
Roscommon	18	225	+1,140
Rostrevor	30	811	+699
Skibbereen	16	1,036	+1,797
Stradbally	18	3,622	-1,524
Templemore	12	481	-200
Thomastown	27	869	+311
Tramore	18	990	+89
Tullow and Aghade	8	761	+231
Waterford	25	1,735	+258
West Waterford and Lismore	18	909	-122
Wicklow	29	2,042	+1,459

Table A.5.3 Provincial spread of British Red Cross work parties³³

County	Number of work parties	Province
Antrim	11	Ulster
Armagh	13	Ulster
Belfast	6	Ulster
Cavan	2	Ulster
Cork	4	Munster
Donegal	15	Ulster
Down	9	Ulster
Dublin	3	Leinster
Fermanagh	1	Ulster
Kerry	2	Munster
Kildare	1	Leinster
Kilkenny	3	Leinster
King's County	2	Leinster
Limerick	2	Munster
Londonderry	6	Ulster
Mayo	2	Connaught
Monaghan	2	Ulster
Tipperary	8	Munster
Tyrone	7	Ulster
Westmeath	1	Leinster
Wicklow	1	Leinster

Table A.5.4 Membership and service of British Red Cross and St John Ambulance divisions in Leinster, Munster and Connaught³⁴

	Division	Commandant	Number of members	Married members	Members who served in hospitals	Members who served abroad (Outside Ireland and the UK)
1	BRCS City of Dublin 10	Mrs. J Worrall	47	7	20	7
2	BRCS City of Dublin 12	Mrs. Berry	36	4	24	11
3	BRCS City of Dublin 14	Mrs. G.H. Bailey	16	5	6	0
4	BRCS City of Dublin 16	Mrs. I. Edie	52	16	26	4
5	BRCS City of Dublin 2	Miss Grace Spillane	33	6	12	1
6	BRCS City of Dublin 4	Mrs. M.F. Dwyer	Does not list members			
7	BRCS City of Dublin 6	Mrs. Emily Betham	19	4	7	0
8	BRCS City of Dublin 8	Miss Katherine Conroy	36	Members not listed	Unknown	Unknown
9	BRCS Co Carlow 2	Mrs. Booth	33	6	21	2

³³ Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, pp 669-670.

³⁴ Red Cross in Ireland.

10	BRCS Co Cork 4	Dr. Lucy E. Smith	213	32	185	14
11	BRCS Co Cork 6	Miss V. Merrick	63	7	17	0
12	BRCS Co Cork 8	Miss Voysey	32	16	Unknown	Unknown
13	BRCS Co Dublin 10	Mrs. F. St J Worrall	39	8	37	3
14	BRCS Co Dublin 14	Miss Rita S. Stokes	71	14	25	Unknown
15	BRCS Co Dublin 2	Mrs. K. Johnston	62	8	42	5
16	BRCS Co Dublin 22	Mrs. M.C. Frith	30	4	12	4
17	BRCS Co Dublin 24	Mrs. E. Hely	54	11	42	9
18	BRCS Co Dublin 26	Mrs. Fegan Redmond	81	29	29	1
19	BRCS Co Dublin 28	Miss E.K. Harris	45	9	45	3
20	BRCS Co Dublin 30	Miss Judith P. Warren	22	1	10	4
21	BRCS Co Dublin 32	Mrs Alice Goodliffe	180	25	124	16
22	BRCS Co Dublin 48	Miss Rosalie Franks	51	15	9	3
23	BRCS Co Dublin 50	Mrs L. Goodbody	63	16	31	4
24	BRCS Co Dublin 6	Miss Eile de V. Shaw	52	8	31	3
25	BRCS Co Kerry 4	Miss Martha A. Rowan	66	11	25	Unknown
26	BRCS Co Kerry 6	Miss Ellen Butler	39	17	11	0
27	BRCS Co Limerick 2	Lady Emma Quin	28	2	26	0
28	BRCS Co Louth 2	Miss Ellen McGinity	66	0	60	5
29	BRCS Co Meath 2	Miss Nellie Brodigan	22	5	12	0
30	BRCS Co Meath 4	Miss Madeline Hanly	37	13	16	2
31	BRCS Co Meath 8	Mrs. Katherine Jameson	19	7	6	3
32	BRCS Co Wexford 2	Miss Winifred Davis	73	23	21	0
33	SJ Kingstown, Co Dublin 38	Mrs. Woodward	94	27	89	13
34	SJ South Dublin, City of Dublin 22	Mrs. Eliza Manders	41	15	36	7
35	SJ Alexandra College, Co Dublin 52	Miss Letitia Overend	96	20	35	11
36	SJ Athlone, Westmeath, 6	The Hon. Violet Handcock	23	4	14	1
37	SJ Ballinasloe, Galway, 2	The Hon. Georgiana Dillon	38	6	30	9

38	SJ Blackrock, Co Dublin, 34	Mrs. Eleanor Wilkinson	37	7	0	0
39	SJ Boyle, Roscommon 4	Miss Margaret FFolliott	21	4	3	0
40	SJ Bray, Wicklow 2	Mrs. Ramadge	108	24	97	15
41	SJ Carrickmines, Co Dublin 44	Mrs. Louise Bewley	52	16	24	9
42	SJ Central Nursing Division, Dublin 38	Mrs Georgina Keatinge	20	6	4	0
43	SJ City of Dublin reserve	Mrs. Winifred Bowen- Colthurst	166	57	110	12
44	SJ Clonmel, Tipperary 4	Mrs. Kathleen Cleeve	69	27	24	10
45	SJ Clontarf, Dublin 18	Miss Ethel Stanford Campbell	25	7	7	1
46	SJ Co Sligo, 2	Miss Olive Jackson	45	6	18	7
47	SJ Coolgreany, Wexford 4	Mrs. Maria Murphy	13	6	4	2
48	SJ Dublin University, City of Dublin 30	Mrs. Mary Stuart	92	7	44	7
49	SJ Dundrum, Co Dublin 8	Miss. Bird	103	30	57	16
50	SJ Earlsfort, City of Dublin 38	Mrs. Woodward	54	13	24	3
51	SJ Fermoy, Cork 2	Mrs. Katherine Gordon	58	5	49	8
52	SJ Fitzwilliam, City of Dublin 36	Mrs. Violet McVittie	33	5	17	3
53	SJ Galway, Galway 4	Miss Lucy Gallagher	39	2	11	3
54	SJ Glengearry	Mrs. Elizabeth Phillipson	15	7	0	0
55	SJ Grafton, Dublin 38	Mrs. Kathleen Smalley	36	7	5	0
56	SJ Greystones, Wicklow 6	Mrs. Ada Deverell	15	8	5	2
57	SJ Harcourt, City of Dublin 28	Miss Aileen O'Kelly	80	12	35	8
58	SJ Howth, Dublin 12	Mrs. Isabella Clarke	33	10	11	5
59	SJ Inchicore, City of Dublin 42	Mrs. Forde	17	2	0	0
60	SJ Jacob Ltd, City of Dublin 40	Miss Gwendoline Barrington	30	0	0	0
61	SJ Kilkenny, Kilkenny, 2	Miss Florence Butler	26	6	7	1

62	SJ Killiney, Co Dublin 56	Mrs. H Domville	15	8	8	1
63	SJ Leeson pk, City of Dublin 24	Miss W.H. Archer	65	8	29	8
64	SJ Leixlip, Co Dublin 42	Mrs. Martha Fraser	16	7	11	1
65	SJ Limerick, Limerick 4	Miss Emily Bunbury,	91	11	70	Does not differentiate between home and overseas service
66	SJ Lismore, Waterford 4	Lady Clodagh Anson	18	6	10	3
67	SJ Marborough, Queen's County 2	Mrs. Ellen Coote	36	11	15	3
68	SJ Maycourt, Dublin 20	Miss Mary O'Meara	43	6	28	13
69	SJ Naas, Kildare 2	Miss E. Moore	69	16	43	10
70	SJ Nenagh, Tipperary 2	Mrs. Mabel Dease	94	16	41	7
71	SJ North Co Dublin, City of Dublin 26	Miss Elizabeth Whitehead	49	7	27	1
72	SJ Orthopaedic Hospital, City of Dublin 20	Mrs. Dallas Pratt	56	6	24	12
73	SJ Portarlinton, Queen's County, 4	Mrs. Odlum	22	7	0	0
74	SJ Portlaw, Waterford 2	Beatrice, Marchioness of Waterford	28	11	10	2
75	SJ Rathgar, Co Dublin 40	Mrs Jessica Jackson	57	19	35	4
76	SJ Roscommon, Roscommon 2	Miss Henderson	28	4	None marked	0
77	SJ St James Gate, Co Dublin 36	Miss M. Corry	16	0	0	0
78	SJ St Stephens Green, Co Dublin 46	Mrs. Gladys Rowlette	61	7	22	3
79	SJ Taylor's Hill, Galway 6	Mrs. Syme	14	5	1	0
80	SJ Waterford, Waterford 6	Miss M. Murphy	27	8	None marked	
81	SJ Wicklow, Wicklow 4	Mrs. Margaret Leslie-Ellis	54	5	13	0
82	SJ, Birr, King's County 2	Miss Eithne P. Biddulph	23	3	13	1
83	St John VAD, City of Dublin, 32	Miss Patricia Mowbray	65	10	12	4

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