

Clan na Gael and other Irish nationalist girl scouts during the era of the Irish Revolution, 1911–23

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ABSTRACT. *This article examines Irish nationalist girl scouts in the period 1911–23 with a particular focus on the organisation Clan na Gael (or Clann na nGaedheal). It illuminates the involvement of girls in Irish nationalist youth organisations in the early twentieth century and situates them in the wider contexts of uniformed youth groups and the Irish nationalist movement during this period. Like their male counterparts in Na Fianna Éireann, Irish nationalist girl scouts received forms of military training and provided military support services to their adult colleagues in the Irish independence movement. Thus, these Irish girls challenged the gender conventions of the time more overtly than members of the international Girl Guide movement. Participation in these groups could also serve as a conduit to future membership and activism in Cumann na mBan or the Irish Citizen Army. The contributions of Clan na Gael and other girl scouts to the Irish nationalist movement demonstrate that girls, as well as boys, sought to further the struggle for Irish independence. Yet, these adolescent female activists have received far less recognition for their efforts. This may be due to their relatively small numbers, dismissive preconceptions of their contribution, and the sparsity of primary source material.*

In the early twentieth century, Irish nationalists subverted the template of the British uniformed youth group to create Irish nationalist youth organisations that were designed to mould a new generation of activists in the struggle for Irish independence. The best known of these groups are Na Fianna Éireann, or the Irish National Boy Scouts, which were founded in Dublin in 1909. In the popular imagination, such youth groups tend to be associated with boys.¹ Perhaps the most famous examples are Con Colbert and Seán Heuston, both of whom were photographed in their Fianna uniforms.² Less likely to spring to mind are the Clan na Gael (or Clann na nGaedheal) Girl Scouts or the girls in Belfast and Waterford who joined the Fianna despite opposition to their presence.³ These

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¹ Children's fiction set during the Irish Revolution often includes references to male characters who are Fianna members: see Morgan Llywelyn, *The young rebels* (Dublin, 2006); Patricia Murphy, *The Easter Rising 1916: Molly's diary* (Dublin, 2014).

² See John O'Callaghan, *Con Colbert* (Dublin, 2015); John Gibney, *Seán Heuston* (Dublin, 2013).

³ In some contemporary documents, the organisation's name is spelled Clann na Gael or Clann na nGaedheal and its members called girl guides.

Irish nationalist girl scouts are worthy of attention because they demonstrate that girls were socialised and mobilised within the Irish nationalist movement of the early twentieth century in similar ways to boys. These girls often shared the same family backgrounds and motivations for nationalist activism. Like their male counterparts in the Fianna, some of these girls provided military support services during the events of the Irish Revolution, most notably during the Easter Rising, and joined adult nationalist organisations when they were old enough.

Studies of Na Fianna Éireann have included some discussion of their girls' units, but the focus has mainly been on the organisation's dominant male majority.⁴ The Clan na Gael Girl Scouts have attracted even less attention from historians. This Irish nationalist uniformed youth group tends to be mentioned briefly in works on Irish nationalist women or those on the Fianna or the Hibernian Rifles.⁵ Irish nationalist girl scouts may have been marginalised in the historiography of the Irish Revolution due to their relatively small numbers in comparison to their young male and adult female counterparts in other nationalist organisations. Dismissive preconceptions of what adolescent girls could contribute to the struggle for independence may also be a factor.

The relative sparsity of primary source material is another reason for the limited discussion of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts and other lesser-known groups in the historiography. For instance, the Bureau of Military History (B.M.H.) collection contains only one witness statement from a former Clan na Gael girl scout, Mary McLoughlin, though other statements, like those of Peg Duggan and James Allan Busby, mention the organisation in passing. In contrast, there are statements from at least ninety-five former Fianna members and leaders, including Nora and Ina Connolly, two of the few females who joined the Fianna.⁶ The phased release of files from the Military Service Pensions Collection (M.S.P.C.) has enabled historians to gain a much more accurate sense of the number of females who participated in events such as the Easter Rising, the range of organisations to which they

⁴ Girls are the focus of two articles: Marnie Hay, 'Gender inequality and the Irish Revolution: The girls of Na Fianna Éireann, 1911–22' in *Women's History Review* (2024) ([www.doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2024.2305021](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2024.2305021)); Eamon Murphy, 'Fianna Éireann's Betsy Gray Sluagh', 15 Apr. 2016 (fiannaeireannhistory.wordpress.com/2016/04/15/the-betsy-gray-sluagh) (21 Oct. 2022). General studies include Marnie Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909–23: scouting for rebels* (Manchester, 2019 and 2021); Damian Lawlor, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909 to 1923* (Rhode, County Offaly, 2009); J. Anthony Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 33–77; John Watts, 'Na Fianna Éireann: a case study of a political youth organisation' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 1981).

⁵ Examples include: Sinéad McCoole, *No ordinary women: Irish female activists in the revolutionary years, 1900–1923* (Dublin, 2015), pp 37, 219; Liz Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2014), pp 25, 54, 195; Ann Matthews, *Dissidents: Irish republican women, 1923–1941* (Cork, 2012), pp 53, 62, 254; Joseph E. A. Connell, Jr., 'Inghinidhe na hÉireann/Daughters of Ireland, Clan na nGaedheal/Girl Scouts of Ireland' in *History Ireland*, xix, no. 5 (2011), p. 66; Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish republican women, 1900–1922* (Cork, 2010), pp 109, 125, 133, 339; Hay, *Fianna Éireann*, pp 7–9, 12, 16–17, 44, 75, 113, 116, 202; Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, 'A short history of the Hibernian Rifles, 1912–1916' (www.theirishstory.com/2013/03/31/a-short-history-of-the-hibernian-rifles-1912-1916/#.Ys2FxHbMK3A) (12 July 2022).

⁶ For lists of B.M.H. witness statements from former Fianna members and leaders, see Hay, *Fianna Éireann*, pp 231–4; Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland*, pp 166–8.

belonged, what their active service entailed, and their later lives.⁷ The M.S.P.C. includes pension and medal application files for at least fourteen women claiming former membership in the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, but these contain scant information about the youth group itself.⁸ As more M.S.P.C. files are released over time, other former members may emerge in this collection. In addition, a small amount of information about the activities of nationalist girl scouts can be found in contemporary newspaper articles, the diary of nationalist activist Rosamond Jacob and, to a lesser extent, police reports.

The paucity and the nature of the sources currently available present certain challenges. As Mary Jo Maynes has stated, ‘the sources for documenting the history of childhood and youth are at best scattered, often sketchy and inconsistent’.⁹ This means that the location and number of branches and members of Clan na Gael and other nationalist girl scout groups cannot be ascertained as systematically as they can for the Fianna or the Girl Guides in Ireland, which makes comparison difficult. Maynes also notes that ‘much of the history of girls, and by extension, of children and youth more generally is actually the history of the ways in which adults have tried to shape or characterize the young or remember their own or others’ youths’.¹⁰ Most of the sources relating to Irish nationalist girl scouts are written from an adult perspective, that of newspaper reporters, policemen, youth group leaders and even the members themselves as represented in their later memoirs, witness statements and applications for pensions and medals. The adolescent voices of the girls are heard only rarely. What follows is an initial attempt to piece together these disparate sources to document Clan na Gael and other nationalist girl scouts in the period 1911–23.

Thus, this article illuminates the involvement of girls in Irish nationalist youth organisations in the early twentieth century and situates them in the wider contexts of uniformed youth groups and the Irish nationalist movement. The activities of Irish nationalist girl scouts reflected and challenged the gender conventions of the time. Like the Fianna, these nationalist girl scout groups also served as a training and recruiting ground for adult organisations with a paramilitary dimension. Lizzie Merrigan and Molly O’Reilly, for example, were members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts before Lizzie joined the nationalist women’s organisation Cumann na mBan and Molly the Irish Citizen Army (I.C.A.) and later Cumann na mBan. Both were

⁷ It has, thus, been possible to identify more women than the 190 listed by Ruth Taillon and 140 listed by Ann Matthews. See Taillon, *The women of 1916* (Belfast, 1996), pp xxi–xxvii; Matthews, *Renegades*, pp 336–42.

⁸ They are: Mary (May) Chadwick (née Kelly); Philomena Conroy; Marcella Crimmins/Marcella Prendergast (née Crimmins [erroneously transcribed as ‘Cummins’ in the M.S.P.C. database]); Annie Gilseman; Mary McLoughlin; Margaret Mary MacSherry (née Fagan); May Murray; Anne O’Callaghan (née Duggan); Annie O’Hagan (née Carey); Cecilia O’Neill (née Conroy); Sarah Reardon (née O’Mara); Mary Jane Slevin (née Stapleton); Ellen (Nellie) Stynes (née Lambert); and Theresa Thorpe (née Joyce). This list was generated by a search undertaken on 22 Dec. 2023. Other contemporary sources indicate that Eileen Cronin (née Conroy) and Mary (Molly) Teresa Corcoran (née O’Reilly) were members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, but I did not include them in this list because neither of them applied for a medal or pension on the basis of Clan na Gael membership.

⁹ Mary Jo Maynes, ‘Age as a category of historical analysis: history, agency and narratives of childhood’ in *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, i, no. 1 (2008), p. 117.

¹⁰ Ibid.

arrested and imprisoned for their support of the anti-Treaty side during the Irish Civil War.¹¹

I

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the advent of uniformed youth groups as a form of youth culture. Such groups were part of the cult of discipline and training that grew out of the increasing anxiety and fear over escalating international tensions and violence that culminated in the First World War (1914–18) and other more localised conflicts.¹² They were also a reaction to a widely perceived *fin de siècle* ‘decadence’. The establishment of uniformed youth groups addressed often gendered concerns about the health, education and moral welfare of the upcoming generation: would boys be able to defend their countries and would girls be up to the task of being good helpmates and mothers? The general template of the uniformed youth group was adapted to the perceived needs of different countries. In the United Kingdom and the British Empire, organisations like the denominationally-based Boys’ and Lads’ Brigades, the Girls’ Brigade, the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides sought to instil imperial patriotism and middle-class values of order, discipline and ‘character’ in the lower classes.¹³ Uniformed youth groups also could be training grounds for nationalist fundamentalism, as exemplified in both the Irish nationalist movement and Nazi Germany.¹⁴

The best known of these youth groups was the international Boy Scout movement founded by Robert Baden-Powell in 1907–08. Girls took an early interest in scouting at a grassroots level. Some also attended the first big Scout rally at Crystal Palace in London in September 1909. This generated public debate over whether scouting was suitable for girls. Baden-Powell responded to this negative publicity by announcing the formation of the Girl Guides in 1910.¹⁵ Ireland’s first official Girl Guide company was started in Harold’s Cross in south Dublin in September 1911, and over the next four years it was joined by units elsewhere in Dublin, as well as in eleven other Irish cities and towns.¹⁶

When the Girl Guides were first established, the organisation’s primary goal was to create ‘good wives and mothers for the British Empire’, seeking to nurture femininity and domesticity in girls. Such a conservative goal may have contributed to the Girl Guides’ failure to expand in their early years as quickly as the scouting

¹¹ Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution*, p. 25; McCoole, *No ordinary women*, p. 220; Taillon, *Women of 1916*, p. 16.

¹² David Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland, 1900–1922’ in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 382–3.

¹³ John Springhall, *Coming of age: adolescence in Britain, 1860–1960* (Dublin, 1986), p. 64. Also see Michelle Smith, ‘Be(ing) prepared: Girl Guides, colonial life, and national strength’ in *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, xii (2006), pp 1–11 (www.archive.limina.arts.uwa.edu.au/_data/page/186589/smith.pdf) (3 May 2021).

¹⁴ Andrew Donson, ‘Why did German youth become fascists? Nationalist males born 1900 to 1908 in war and revolution’ in *Social History*, xxxi, no. 3 (2006), p. 353.

¹⁵ Sarah Mills, ‘Scouting for girls? Gender and the scout movement in Britain’ in *Gender, Place and Culture*, xviii, no. 4 (2011), pp 542–6.

¹⁶ Gillian Finan, *A hundred years a-growing: a history of the Irish Girl Guides* (Dublin, 2010), p. 35.

movement for boys.¹⁷ Richard A. Voeltz has argued that the context of the First World War helped to increase the popularity of the Girl Guides in Britain: 'The new freedom associated with the war experience changed the common ways of thinking about what constituted appropriate behaviour outside the home for young women and girls.'¹⁸ As a result, Girl Guides could participate in signalling, drill and camping like their male counterparts, as well as contribute to the war effort through more traditional feminine activities such as fundraising, knitting socks for soldiers, and volunteering in hospitals.¹⁹

In Ireland, Constance Markievicz and Bulmer Hobson established Na Fianna Éireann in 1909 as an Irish nationalist alternative to the British imperialist ethos of the Boy Scouts and the Boys' Brigade. Thus, the organisation's original purpose was to cater for boys. Although Fianna units for girls existed in Belfast circa 1911–16 and in Waterford in 1916–18, the formation of these short-lived units were local initiatives. Many of the boys and young men objected to the inclusion of girls in an organisation with a physical force orientation and viewed them as a controversial presence within the Fianna.²⁰ A resolution to admit girls to the Fianna was passed by a majority of only one vote — that of Countess Markievicz — at the organisation's emotionally-charged ard-fheis (annual congress) on 14 July 1912. Boys who opposed the admission of girls argued that a separate organisation should be founded for them. When the Fianna's central council met on 28 July 1912, it decided to hold a plebiscite on the issue of girls' inclusion, ostensibly because some sluaighthe (troops) had not been present at the ard-fheis.²¹

In the meantime, some 'girls from the neighbourhood of Fairview' in north Dublin had shown an immediate interest in joining the Fianna. On 19 July 1912, within a week of the ard-fheis, a preliminary meeting was held in a hall at 2 St Joseph's Avenue in Drumcondra to form the Ann Devlin Girl Scouts for girls aged fourteen years and over. Potential members were advised to contact Agnes Lynch who was listed in the 1911 census as a sixteen-year-old of no recorded occupation living with her family at 57 North Clarence Street. After a second meeting on 26 July, the group sought affiliation with the Fianna, but were informed at a third meeting on 2 August that a plebiscite would have to be held before a decision could be made on their admission.²²

In the end, twelve Fianna sluaighthe voted in favour of a return to a boys-only organisation, with five units in opposition, including (not surprisingly) Belfast's Betsy Gray Sluagh for girls.²³ Although some girls continued to belong to the Fianna in Belfast and, later, Waterford, they had no official voice within the organisation at the national level. Rosamond Jacob, the honorary president of a Fianna

¹⁷ Richard A. Voeltz, 'The antidote to "Khaki Fever"? The expansion of the British Girl Guides during the First World War' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxvii, no. 4 (1992), p. 627. Also see Mills, 'Scouting for girls', pp 546–7.

¹⁸ Voeltz, 'The antidote to "Khaki Fever"?', p. 629.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 629–30.

²⁰ See Hay, 'Gender inequality and the Irish Revolution'.

²¹ *Irish Freedom*, Aug. 1912; *Irish Citizen*, 10 Aug. 1912; *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, 3 Aug. 1912.

²² *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, 10 Aug. 1912. I am grateful to Luca Bertolani Azeredo for highlighting the importance of this newspaper as a source. For the Lynch family's census return, see www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Mountjoy/Clarence_St_North/27734/ (24 June 2024).

²³ *Irish Freedom*, Sept. 1912.

unit for girls (or ‘ladies’ auxiliary’) in Waterford, was dismissive of the ambiguous position that the girls seemingly had accepted within the organisation. In January 1918, she noted in her diary: ‘I found that Fianna Council governs girls as well as boys, without the girls having any representation on it — they let themselves be called a ladies’ auxiliary, so what can they expect.’²⁴

II

The nascent Ann Devlin Girl Scouts who had sought affiliation with the Fianna instead found a welcome as an auxiliary to the Irish National Guard (I.N.G.). This breakaway group of Na Fianna Éireann was formed in August 1912 after the suspension and subsequent withdrawal of Sluagh Michael Dwyer in Drumcondra.²⁵ Accounts vary as to whether the split was over the Fianna hat being manufactured in England and imported into Ireland or the age at which arms training was provided.²⁶ Members of the Ann Devlin Battalion of the Girls’ Auxiliary Corps of the I.N.G. learned physical drill, semaphore signalling and first aid, and hosted a monthly *scoraíocht* (social evening), featuring singing and dancing.²⁷ ‘Our programme is not, and will not be, the same as for boys, but is drawn up to suit the girls and young women of Ireland,’ their correspondent explained in a report published in the *Dublin Evening Telegraph*. She proudly asserted that her group had more autonomy than the Belfast Fianna girls: ‘We are the only branch of Girl Scouts now formed having full control of our affairs, with full and due representation (as an auxiliary) on the Central Council of the Irish National Guard.’²⁸

The Dublin Fianna’s refusal to accept girls remained a source of rancour, especially after Fianna Lieutenant O’Brien praised Sluagh Robert Emmet on the ‘firm action [it] had taken in defeating the attempt to make the Fianna an organisation for boys and girls. They were being trained to work for the independence of Ireland, and they wanted no nonsense about it.’²⁹ The Ann Devlin Battalion tartly responded: ‘That we girls are working for the independence of Ireland, that we have no nonsense about it, that we are allowing no foreign made stuff into our uniform, that we are not suffragettes, and that we girls are just as important and necessary to build up a free Irish nation as are the boys.’ They claimed a place for themselves in the nationalist movement and took a stand on the issue of the Fianna uniform that had contributed to the split and subsequent formation of the I.N.G. Yet, they feared being seen as too radical, dissociating themselves from militant advocates of women’s right to vote. The girls even challenged O’Brien’s sluagh to a potential competition in physical culture, drill and first aid: ‘While we may not come out on top, we say our marks won’t be far behind, and we thus intend to prove the mistake they [the Fianna’s Central Council] made in over-riding the decision of the Ard Feis.’³⁰

²⁴ Rosamond Jacob diary entry, 11 Jan. 1918 (N.L.I., Rosamond Jacob papers, MS 32,582/33).

²⁵ *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, 3, 24 Aug. 1912.

²⁶ Hay, *Fianna Éireann*, p. 44.

²⁷ *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, 24, 31 Aug. 1912.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7 Sept. 1912.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 Oct. 1912.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 19 Oct. 1912.

The Ann Devlin Battalion was soon joined by the Pamela Fitzgerald and Sarah Curran Battalions, which initially met in halls in Cuffe Lane and Blackhall Street respectively.³¹ By May 1914, the latter battalion was meeting at 51 York Street.³² All three Dublin units were named after women associated with the United Irishmen Robert Emmet and Lord Edward Fitzgerald — Devlin a loyal employee and Curran and Fitzgerald their romantic partners.

It seems likely that the I.N.G.'s Girls' Auxiliary Corps formed the basis for what was later known as the Irish National Girl Scouts, whose establishment was reported to have arisen out of the Dublin Fianna's refusal to accept female members.³³ Founding member May Kelly recalled that the Irish Nationalist Girl Scouts were first formed in 1912 with the help of fellow Drumcondra resident Seamus McGowan (though some secondary sources have cited 1910–11 as the youth group's start date).³⁴ Some historians have also cited May's older sister Eliza as a founding member, and given Markievicz some credit for the group's formation.³⁵ However, Helena Molony, who helped Markievicz to initiate what became the Fianna, asserted that her friend 'did not start anything for girls' as she did not like them.³⁶ The Kelly sisters were schoolgirls in their early teens at that time (they are listed as aged 12 and 14 in the 1911 census),³⁷ and McGowan, a member of the I.N.G.'s central committee, had previously been involved in organising Fianna troops on the north side of Dublin.³⁸

May (Mary) Murray recalled that when she joined the Irish National Girl Scouts in 1914, they met at a premises on York Street,³⁹ presumably the place where the Sarah Curran Battalion held meetings. She and May Kelly were among the 'girls' that John Kenny remembered from his involvement in the Irish National Guards.⁴⁰ By July 1915, the Irish National Girl Scouts were among the nationalist organisations that met at the Hibernian Hall located at 28 North Frederick Street in Dublin. The hall belonged to the Clan na Gael division of the Irish-American Alliance (I.A.A.), the more radical, less sectarian section of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.), a Catholic political association. The hall was also used by the A.O.H.'s Ladies' Auxiliary and the I.A.A.'s militia, the Hibernian Rifles, as

³¹ Ibid., 19 Oct., 2 Nov. 1912.

³² Ibid., 5 May 1914.

³³ Mary McLoughlin statement, p. 1 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 934).

³⁴ Mary (May) Chadwick (née Kelly), sworn statement made before the advisory committee, 23 Feb. 1937, p. 1 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20098). See *Irish Press*, 3 May 1966; Connell, Jr, 'Inghinidhe na hÉireann', p. 66; McCoole, *No ordinary women*, p. 37; Matthews, *Renegades*, p. 109; Ó Ruairc, 'A short history of the Hibernian Rifles'.

³⁵ Connell, Jr, 'Inghinidhe na hÉireann', p. 66; Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution*, p. 25; McCoole, *No ordinary women*, p. 220; Ó Ruairc, 'A short history of the Hibernian Rifles'.

³⁶ Helena Molony statement, pp 58–9 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 391).

³⁷ Originally from County Cork, the Kelly family resided at 40 Elizabeth Street in Dublin (www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Drumcondra/Elizabeth_Street/24932) (12 July 2022). Although May's life certificate in her file in the M.S.P.C. notes her year of birth as 1901, it is listed as 1899 on a website recording the site of her grave in Deansgrange Cemetery (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/172922171/mary-chadwick>) (20 July 2022), which correlates with the census return. She died on 31 Mar. 1964.

³⁸ *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, 31 Aug. 1912; Seamus Kavanagh statement, p. 5 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,670).

³⁹ May Murray to secretary, undated (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., 49SP7805).

⁴⁰ John Kenny statement, p. 1 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,693).

well as the Fianna and the I.N.G.⁴¹ Former Fianna member Seán Prendergast described the building as ‘a hive of industry, usually of a military nature, drilling, rifle exercises etc., with a number of musical and dance social evenings thrown in to break the monotony’.⁴²

In July 1915, the Irish National Girl Scouts sought to recruit new members with a brief notice in *The Hibernian*, the I.A.A. newspaper edited by J. J. Scollan, commandant of the Hibernian Rifles. The notice asked ‘the girls of Dublin’: ‘Do you realise that it is as much your duty to learn the art of war, so as to be able to fight for your country, as it is for boys?’ It promised that girls who joined would ‘be taught how to handle a rifle, march, in fact all military drill, also Morse and semaphore signalling, first aid, and the Irish language’. Drill was held two evenings a week, while on Sundays girls could also attend a camogie club in the morning and a social in the evening. Potential members were urged to contact Captain May Kelly.⁴³ The group’s ethos sounds more militaristic than the I.N.G.’s girls’ auxiliary, reflecting the wartime atmosphere and rise in nationalist paramilitarism. Its activities were much the same as those of the Fianna, though the boys played hurling rather than its female equivalent. Among the camogie players were Kelly herself and Eileen (Ellen) Conroy, the latter a future member of the Clann United camogie team that won the 1930 Dublin championship and league.⁴⁴

The Irish National Girl Scouts changed their name to the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts later in 1915 when the group became an auxiliary to the Hibernian Rifles.⁴⁵ The name change appears to signify the youth group’s connection to the Clan na Gael division (or local branch) of the I.A.A. Kelly served as their captain in the period 1915–19 and then assumed the role of commandant-general. Although she linked the change in her title to the demise of the Hibernian Rifles in 1919, Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc has asserted that the Hibernian Rifles ceased to be a separate military organisation when members were absorbed into the 1st Battalion of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers upon its reorganisation in 1917.⁴⁶

Clan na Gael’s uniform reflected the influence of the Irish cultural revival, consisting of ‘a green blouse and green woollen kilt’ with a brown brat (a traditional Irish cloak) attached at the shoulder with a Tara brooch.⁴⁷ Rosamond Jacob considered the £4 cost of the Clan na Gael uniform prohibitively expensive and was told in 1918 that ‘very few [members] have it’.⁴⁸ For those that could afford it, the uniform was emblematic of an Irish nationalist identity; wearing it probably evoked a sense of pride and belonging in members. The presence of youth group members in uniform added to the pageantry of nationalist parades, processions and funerals, with

⁴¹ *The Hibernian*, 10 July 1915.

⁴² Seán Prendergast statement, p. 81 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 755). His wife Marcella (née Crimmins) was a former Clan na Gael girl scout and a sister of former Fianna member Thomas Crimmins. A copy of her death notice is included in Prendergast’s pension file (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF1360).

⁴³ *The Hibernian*, 17 July 1915.

⁴⁴ Michael McCrea, ‘Remembering the Easter Rising 1916 — Mary O’Kelly and Eileen Conroy’ (camogie.ie/news/remembering-the-easter-rising-1916-mary-o-kelly-eileen-conroy/) (23 June 2021).

⁴⁵ Chadwick (née Kelly), sworn statement, pp 1–2 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20098).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1; Ó Ruairc, ‘A short history of the Hibernian Rifles’.

⁴⁷ Peg Duggan statement, pp 7–8 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,576).

⁴⁸ Jacob diary entry, 23 Aug. 1918 (N.L.I., Jacob papers, MS 32,582/34).

these girls and boys serving as a symbol of the future Irish nation state for which earlier generations of nationalists had sacrificed their lives.

The children and adolescents who joined nationalist youth groups like Clan na Gael and the Fianna tended to come from families with a nationalist ethos. Mary McLoughlin, for example, was raised within a tradition of political activism. Her father Patrick was a coal carter and trade union activist, while her elder brother, Seán, who belonged to the Fianna and then the Irish Volunteers, distinguished himself during the Easter Rising and later became a socialist and republican activist. Another brother, Paddy, also participated in the rebellion.⁴⁹ A similar example is the O'Sullivan family of Glengariff Parade, North Circular Road, Dublin. At the time of the Easter Rising, the elder daughters were members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts and at least two of the sons belonged to the Fianna.⁵⁰ The head of the family, Jeremiah O'Sullivan (also known as Diarmuid Ó Suilleabháin), was reputedly 'a Sinn Féin sympathiser, an ardent Gaelic Leaguer and an associate of extremists'. He and his outspoken wife Kate (Cáit) and their children were so notorious for their advanced nationalist viewpoints that an anonymous informer wrote to the Dublin Metropolitan Police on 18 August 1916 to complain that O'Sullivan and his young sons were still employed by the General Post Office (G.P.O.) in the wake of the Easter Rising.⁵¹ In contrast to the McLoughlins and O'Sullivans, Molly O'Reilly was an unusual member of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in that 'her father was a loyalist'.⁵²

The A.O.H.'s mainstream Board of Erin (B.O.E.) section also operated associations for women and boys. These were the Ladies' Auxiliary established in 1910⁵³ and the Hibernian Boys' Brigade which began in late 1911. Neither of these groups was as radical as the organisations connected with the I.A.A. section of the A.O.H. By 1915, there were 170 branches of the Ladies' Auxiliary and seventeen boys' brigades.⁵⁴ The Hibernian Boys' Brigade was designed to promote 'the physical and moral welfare of Irish Catholic boys' aged 10 to 17 years through such activities as 'the study and practice of the Irish language, the promotion of Irish industries, physical and military drill, first aid, swimming, gymnastics, scouting [and] camping'.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Charlie McGuire, 'McLoughlin, Seán', *D.I.B.* (www.dib.ie/biography/mcloughlin-sean-a9554) (1 Mar. 2023).

⁵⁰ Report of Detective Sergeant Fagan, 18 Oct. 1916 (T.N.A., CO 904/215/419). The 1911 census return for the family of Diarmuid Ua Súilleabháin (Jeremiah O'Sullivan), 24 Glengariff Parade, Inn's Quay, Dublin, is available from www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Inn's_Quay/Glengariff_Parade/19328/) (30 Aug. 2022). Two of the children (Diarmuid and Aileen) appear to have been staying with their uncle Denis O'Sullivan and his family in Valencia, Co. Kerry, on census night (www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Kerry/Valencia/Knightstown_Town_Farranreagh_/293972/) (30 Aug. 2022). Diarmuid Ó Suilleabháin (Dermot O'Sullivan) recorded that he was a member of the Fianna during the period 1913–19 (p. 1, M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 508). Seán O'Sullivan, who 'like his brothers [had been] a boy scout associated with the Volunteer Movement', was accidentally shot and killed on 19 Oct. 1922 while serving in the national army: see Kate O'Sullivan to army pension officer, 14 Nov. 1924 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., 2D317).

⁵¹ Report of Detective Sergeant Fagan, 18 Oct. 1916 (T.N.A., CO 904/215/419).

⁵² McCoole, *No ordinary women*, p. 220.

⁵³ Senia Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women, 1900–1918* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 64.

⁵⁴ Martin O'Donoghue, 'Faith and fatherland? The Ancient Order of Hibernians, northern nationalism and the partition of Ireland' in *I.H.S.*, xlvii, no. 169 (2022), p. 83.

⁵⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 14 Dec. 1911.

Members also participated in public events and played football in the Dublin Schools League.⁵⁶

Perhaps because of their connection to the I.A.A. section of the A.O.H. and the Hibernian Rifles, the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts became more militant than the organisations for women and boys operated by the A.O.H.'s B.O.E. section. In terms of both political motivation and exposure to physical danger, the military support roles undertaken by Clan na Gael members during the Easter Rising of 1916 were a far cry from the voluntary social work and contributions to the Great War effort on the home front undertaken by lady Hibernians.⁵⁷ At least eleven serving, former and future members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts claimed to have taken part in the Easter Rising: Annie O'Hagan (née Carey), Cecilia O'Neill (née Conroy), Eileen Cronin (née Conroy), Mary (Molly) Teresa Corcoran (née O'Reilly), Maggie MacSherry (née Fagan), Mary (May) Chadwick (née Kelly), Nellie Stynes (née Lambert), Mary McLoughlin, May Murray, Mary Jane Slevin (née Stapleton) and Annie Soalfield (née Tobin). Ascertaining the exact number and the organisation to which they belonged at the time of the rebellion is challenging due to surname changes after marriage and the limitations of the primary sources available. At least five serving members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts were awarded military service pensions on the basis of their active service during Easter week.⁵⁸ A further two Clan na Gael members, Tobin and Mary Jane Slevin, are also listed on the 1916 roll of honour compiled in 1936, but were not in receipt of service pensions. Tobin was identified as one of two Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in uniform depicted in a photograph taken in the summer of 1916 of sixty women who participated in the rising.⁵⁹

After following orders for the girl scouts to light bonfires on the Dublin mountains, May Kelly initially served at the G.P.O., before moving on the Tuesday of Easter week to Jacob's biscuit factory, engaging in intelligence gathering, delivering ammunition and assisting with first aid.⁶⁰ Maggie Fagan served as a dispatch carrier and a cook for the garrison in the G.P.O.⁶¹ Cecilia Conroy carried dispatches, served as a scout and gathered intelligence, operating among the garrisons at St Stephen's Green, the G.P.O. and Jacob's factory.⁶² A member of the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 26 May 1913; *ibid.*, 28 May 1914.

⁵⁷ McLoughlin statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 934); Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*, pp 64–5.

⁵⁸ See M.S.P.C. files in the M.A.I. for Mary (May) Chadwick (née Kelly) (MSP34REF20098); May Murray (49SP7805); Margaret Mary MacSherry (née Fagan) (MSP34REF54707); Mary McLoughlin (MSP34REF15389); Cecilia O'Neill (née Conroy) (MSP34REF22268). The Clan na Gael membership of Annie O'Hagan (née Carey) was confirmed in letters written by Seán Colbert, 22 Apr. 1938, Mrs M. Chadwick, 18 Dec. 1935, and Sara Kealy, 22 Apr. 1938 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF22054).

⁵⁹ See National Museum of Ireland, The Roll of Honour 1916 – Women of the Roll (microsites.museum.ie/rollofhonour1916/roleofwomen.aspx) (30 Aug. 2022). Annie Tobin (Mrs Soalfield) is included on the deceased members list for the G.P.O. garrison (microsites.museum.ie/rollofhonour1916/map/allpages.aspx) (30 Aug. 2022); Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution*, p. 54.

⁶⁰ Chadwick (née Kelly), sworn statement, pp 2–3 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20098).

⁶¹ MacSherry (née Fagan), summary of evidence, 30 Apr. 1936 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF54707).

⁶² O'Neill (née Conroy), application form, p. 3 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF22268).

Jacob's garrison, Annie Carey, carried dispatches.⁶³ McLoughlin served as a courier.⁶⁴

McLoughlin's B.M.H. witness statement explains how she and her fellow girl scouts got caught up in the rebellion from the perspective of a rank-and-file member rather than a Clan na Gael officer. On Easter Monday, the girl scouts had gone on a route march to the Dublin mountains, but 'at the end of our drill on the mountains we were not told, as usual, to quench the fires', which reflects the order given to Kelly to light bonfires. They planned to come back by train, but when they reached Dundrum station, they 'were told that no trains were running as the Rising had broken out'. They decided to walk back, and the first military post they encountered was at St. Stephen's Green where they were 'introduced to Countess Markievicz and put at her service'. Some of the girls, who were as young as twelve, were frightened and went home. McLoughlin, who was about fifteen at the time, chose to stay and served as a courier, delivering messages and ammunition between the rebels' headquarters at the G.P.O. and the garrisons at St Stephen's Green, the College of Surgeons and Jacob's, a task that brought her into contact with many of the leaders of the rising. For instance, she reported that James Connolly gave her 'eight £10 notes' with which to buy food for the Stephen's Green garrison, but she was unable to procure any and returned to the G.P.O. to give back the money.⁶⁵

While there, Mary met her brother Seán who told her that she should go home because their mother 'was looking everywhere for me and would kill me when she saw me'. When Mary dropped by the family home at 5 North King Street to offer reassurance that she was alive and well, her mother Christina apparently declared: 'Well my fine robbie, but I'm glad to see you and to have you home again and I intend to keep you safe with me' and promptly locked her daughter in an upstairs room. Mary, however, managed to climb out of the window and return to the G.P.O. with a revolver that she had found on the ground.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, for the sake of comparison, Mrs McLoughlin's views on her twenty-year-old son Seán's involvement in the rebellion as a member of the Irish Volunteers are not recorded in his witness statement.⁶⁷ Seán served at the Mendicity Institute with Seán Heuston and then the G.P.O. where James Connolly elevated him to the rank of commandant-general shortly before the surrender. It is, thus, likely that his republican mother was proud of his achievements, especially as his youthful appearance ensured that he was imprisoned rather than executed in the wake of the insurrection.⁶⁸ Mary's involvement in the rising, however, got her into more than hot water with her mother since she ended up losing her job at Arnott's department store.⁶⁹

⁶³ O'Hagan (née Carey), sworn statement made before advisory committee, 23 Apr. 1938 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF22054).

⁶⁴ McLoughlin statement, pp 2, 4 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 934).

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp 1–2.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp 3–4.

⁶⁷ See Seán McLoughlin statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 290).

⁶⁸ McGuire, 'McLoughlin, Seán'; see Charlie McGuire, 'Seán McLoughlin: the boy commandant of 1916' in *History Ireland*, xiv, no. 2 (2006), pp 26–30.

⁶⁹ Email from Christina McLoughlin [Mary's niece] to the author, 18 May 2016.

III

In the period between the end of the Easter Rising and the start of the Irish War of Independence, the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts continued their training programme, engaged in fundraising collections, undertook propaganda work by removing posters promoting the Great War effort, distributed leaflets and posted bills, and participated in various nationalist parades and processions. For instance, they were on hand to welcome home Irish Volunteers after their release from prison and to mark the funeral of republican Thomas Ashe in September 1917. Former Clan na Gael member Marcella Crimmins lists her involvement in some of these activities in her application for a military service certificate.⁷⁰ Irish nationalist uniformed youth groups had always played a prominent role in the commemoration of the republican dead. The Clan na Gael Girl Scouts were among the militant organisations that participated in the procession through Dublin during the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in August 1915, and they again visited his grave on anniversaries of his funeral.⁷¹

On one occasion, such activity resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of leading members of the girls' organisation amidst the febrile post-rebellion atmosphere in Dublin.⁷² On Sunday, 6 August 1916, May Kelly, Ellen Conroy and Maggie Fagan, then all aged seventeen, were in command of a group of about twenty Clan na Gael Girl Scouts between eight and sixteen years of age, including the O'Sullivan sisters. They marched from the hall on North Frederick Street to Glasnevin Cemetery, where they placed a wreath on O'Donovan Rossa's grave and said prayers. One of the girls carried an American flag on which 'Clan na Gael Girl Scouts' was written. The procession was heading back to the city centre when they were stopped by police sergeant Joseph Farrelly close to the junction of the North Circular and Berkeley roads near the Mater Hospital. He suspected that the girl scouts were violating General J.G. Maxwell's order of 11 May 1916, which stated that no procession could take place without the prior written approval of the Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. A crowd of onlookers began to gather as Farrelly tried to seize the girl scouts' flag, asking them whether they knew it was illegal and if they had a permit for their procession. The girls responded that they did not think they needed one. The sergeant ascertained the names of the three leaders and arrested them. Kelly, Conroy and Fagan later alleged that Farrelly had struck one of the girl scouts, Nellie Lambert, and injured her eye when he had been swinging his baton at the restive crowd. Farrelly reported that he was assaulted by members of the crowd and later needed medical treatment for facial wounds. Kelly, Conroy and Fagan were detained at the Bridewell, Inns Quay, without charge until Thursday, 10 August when the military authorities advised the police to release them (later in life, Kelly recorded the length of her detention at the Bridewell as ten days).⁷³

⁷⁰ Marcella Crimmins application form (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF3762). John Kenny mentioned May Crimmins as one of the nationalist girls whom he remembered from his time in the I.N.G. (p. 1, M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,693). Marcella and May are probably the same person.

⁷¹ *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, 2 Aug. 1915; *The Irishman*, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁷² Mark McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising: explorations of history-making, commemoration and heritage in modern times* (London and New York, 2016), p. 125.

⁷³ Affidavit of May O'Kelly, Eileen Conroy and Maggie Fagan, 10 Aug. 1916; report of Sergeant Joseph Farrelly, 11 Aug. 1916 (T.N.A., CO904/23/3); report of Detective

Newspaper reports of the girls' arrest ridiculed the heavy-handed actions of the police, causing embarrassment to the authorities in Dublin Castle.⁷⁴

On a more uplifting note, members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts lent their musical talents to events to raise funds and/or nationalist spirits. Their participation in a concert on 12 November 1916 to support the Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund sparked an allegation that they had joined in the chorus of an English musical hall song performed by a singer who was being hissed by the Irish-Ireland element in the audience. Two supporters of the girls wrote letters to the editor of *Irish Opinion* to refute this allegation.⁷⁵ One asserted: 'The aims and objects of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts are to keep all Irish girls away from the anglicising influence of the vulgar English music hall song and the objectionable foreign dance ... If the girls had known that a song of the stage Irishman type was to be sung they would not have allowed their names on the programme.' This correspondent claimed that the girls' own concert 'turn' was so popular that the audience requested a quadruple encore.⁷⁶ On another occasion in March 1917, 'the Girl Scouts as a finale led the entire audience in singing "A Soldier's Song"' at a Robert Emmet commemoration concert addressed by George Noble Plunkett,⁷⁷ a papal count who had won the North Roscommon by-election in the previous month. His candidacy had evoked sympathy arising from the imprisonment of two of his sons and the execution of a third, Joseph, for their involvement in the Easter Rising.

The participation of some members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in that rebellion may have bolstered the organisation's assertion of a position for girls and young women within the Irish nationalist movement. For instance, as part of the A.O.H. (I.A.A.) contingent, Clan na Gael Girl Scouts May Kelly and Chrissie White were delegates to the conference held at the Mansion House in Dublin on 19 April 1917,⁷⁸ which had been organised 'in response to Count Plunkett's appeal for a National Assembly of Irishmen to deliberate on the present Irish situation'.⁷⁹ In initiating the conference, Plunkett sought to generate an alternative to the Irish Parliamentary Party and its home rule policy. His efforts, however, proved contentious, with Michael Laffan observing that 'the Mansion House convention ... came close to splitting the separatist movement in two'.⁸⁰

From 1917 onward, the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts also began to expand beyond Dublin. However, unlike the Fianna or the Baden-Powell Girl Guides, Clan na Gael seemed to lack the resources and adult patronage to foster any significant national expansion of the organisation. May Kelly, whose family hailed from County Cork, visited Cork in 1917 to form branches of Clan na Gael in that city in the areas of

Sergeant Fagan, 18 Oct. 1916 (T.N.A., CO 904/215/419). See Chadwick (née Kelly), sworn statement, p. 5 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20098).

⁷⁴ *Evening Herald*, 10 Aug. 1916; *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Aug. 1916; *Southern Star*, 12 Aug. 1916; letter from chief crown solicitor, Chief Secretary's Office, Dublin Castle, to attorney general, 10 Aug. 1916 (T.N.A., CO904/23/3).

⁷⁵ Eunan to editor, *Irish Opinion*, 18 Nov. 1916; L. A. Furlong to editor, *Irish Opinion*, 25 Nov. 1916.

⁷⁶ Clan na Gael to editor, *Irish Opinion*, 25 Nov. 1916.

⁷⁷ *Irish Opinion*, 10 Mar. 1917.

⁷⁸ *New Ireland*, 21 Apr. 1917; *Irish Opinion*, 21 Apr. 1917.

⁷⁹ *Evening Herald*, 19 Apr. 1917.

⁸⁰ Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin Party, 1916–1923* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 91.

Douglas and Blackpool.⁸¹ In Cork, Clan na Gael was viewed as ‘a junior auxiliary’ of Cumann na mBan and ‘on a par with the Fianna Boy Scouts’. Annie Duggan was seconded from Cumann na mBan to lead this new branch of Clan na Gael, assuming the rank of commandant. The Cork branch attracted close to 200 girls who were too young to join Cumann na mBan but wished to help their adult counterparts in the nationalist movement. Clan na Gael elected its own officers and financed their activities through collections and céilís. Members attended lectures on first aid and received drill instruction from Tadhg O’Sullivan,⁸² a young Irish Volunteer officer who also ‘took a fatherly and controlling interest in the Fianna’.⁸³

Kelly also claimed that she had formed branches of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in the midlands in Tullamore, County Offaly and Athlone, County Westmeath, circa 1918, but this is difficult to verify, possibly because these branches were too small or short-lived to leave any trace.⁸⁴ The Tullamore branch may have been started in the wake of a visit to that town by Dublin members of Clan na Gael who attended an event at which Eamon de Valera was a headline attraction.⁸⁵ Alternatively, personal links between Clan na Gael members in Dublin and these towns may have been a factor in the formation of branches. For instance, Sarah Reardon (née O’Mara) was a member of Clan na Gael from June 1916 to September 1919 when she joined the Tullamore branch of Cumann na mBan before transferring to a Dublin unit of the latter organisation at the beginning of 1920.⁸⁶

In 1918, a nationalist girl scout troop in Waterford city, which was first formed in October 1916 as part of the Fianna, investigated affiliation with Clan na Gael. In January 1918, the troop had invited the writer and nationalist activist Rosamond Jacob to become their honorary president and preside over their committee meetings.⁸⁷ The following month, Fianna headquarters in Dublin informed the Waterford girls that they should join the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts instead. Jacob liaised with May Kelly and Michael Chadwick in Dublin to get information about shifting the Waterford unit’s allegiance to Clan na Gael.⁸⁸ Kelly had enlisted the help of Chadwick, an Irish Volunteer and her future husband, as military advisor to the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts. Jacob described him as ‘a very, nice fair haired steady looking boy — possibly 20 or so, with a drilled way of moving, who

⁸¹ Chadwick (née Kelly) sworn statement, p. 5 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20098). Although the Military Service Pension Board was unable to verify her efforts to expand Clan na Gael into Cork, B.M.H. witness statements attest to her activities in this regard. For instance, see Peg Duggan statement, p. 7 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,576).

⁸² Duggan statement, pp 7–8 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,576).

⁸³ P. J. Murphy statement, p. 16 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 869).

⁸⁴ Chadwick (née Kelly) sworn statement, p. 5 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20098).

⁸⁵ John F. O’Neill to Éamon de Valera, 15 May 1937 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF22268). O’Neill’s letter refers to his wife Cecilia and her sister Eileen. De Valera spoke at a large outdoor meeting in Tullamore in July 1917, but it is unclear whether this was the event attended by Eileen Conroy, May Kelly and other Dublin Clan na Gael members (*Irish Independent*, 30 July 1917).

⁸⁶ Sarah Reardon (née O’Mara) application form, 6 Dec. 1938 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF5745).

⁸⁷ Jacob diary entries, 10 Oct. 1916 (N.L.I., Jacob papers, MS 32,582/30); *ibid.*, 11 Jan. 1918 (MS 32,582/33); Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: third person singular* (Dublin, 2010), pp 122–3.

⁸⁸ Jacob diary entries, 27 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., Jacob papers, MS 32,582/33); *ibid.*, 23 Aug. 1918 (MS 32,582/34); Lane, *Rosamond Jacob*, p. 123.

apparently devotes most of his evening to these confounded girls, going to branches all over the Dublin area'.⁸⁹

In March 1918, over afternoon tea, Jacob hosted a committee meeting with troop members Angela Quinn, K. Dalton and Maggie Myler and showed them the *Clan na Gael* constitution: 'Its [sic] too military for me altogether, but I failed to get it into their heads that I don't mean to be a military commander.'⁹⁰ Jacob grew increasingly frustrated with the girls' typically teenaged behaviour. She was disappointed by their inattentiveness during her lecture on the Gaelic chieftain Red Hugh O'Donnell's captivity and escape in the period 1587–91: '[I] asked them a few questions on it. It really seemed as if they had hardly listened to a word.'⁹¹ She also found the girls' personality conflicts annoying: 'Angela Quinn wanted to resign because she said she seemed to be an eyesore to some of the girls, but I got her to say she [would] reconsider it. Girls are the devil.'⁹²

Jacob's diary entries indicate that the girls discussed the Waterford parliamentary by-election in March 1918 and the general election in December 1918, in both of which Dr Vincent White unsuccessfully ran on a Sinn Féin ticket.⁹³ She did not mention whether the girls took an active part in campaigning. *Fianna* boys in Waterford supported White's election campaigns by distributing election literature and posters and painting slogans on walls and footpaths. Their band also played at election meetings.⁹⁴ It may have been too dangerous for girls to participate, as the *Fianna* boys helping with the campaign were often 'attacked and beaten up by the Ballybricken pig-buyer element' in the city.⁹⁵ In 1918 the majority of voters in Waterford city bucked the electoral trend toward support for Sinn Féin and instead remained loyal to the Redmond family and the Irish Parliamentary Party.

Finding a meeting room proved problematic for the Waterford girls after *Fianna* headquarters told them to join *Clan na Gael*. Initially, they were permitted to gather in the *Fianna* hall once a week during the summer and autumn of 1918 to give them time to find a new place to hold their meetings.⁹⁶ In late 1918, the Waterford girl scouts began to share a meeting room with *Cumann na mBan* on the upper floor of Gill's, 'an old store off Patrick St', which had been offered to them by a Mrs Power.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, Mr Power found the girls too noisy and stopped allowing them to use the room for their meetings. On 29 January 1919, Jacob recorded that 'there seems no other room to be had'.⁹⁸ The failure to secure a new meeting room may have brought the Waterford nationalist girl scout troop to an end. In any case, Jacob, the unit's chief commentator, moved to Dublin in 1919 after the death of her mother.

Clan na Gael and the *Fianna* were also joined by other nationalist youth groups in County Cork, whose uniformed appearance often added to the pageantry of

⁸⁹ Jacob diary entry, 23 Aug. 1918 (N.L.I., Jacob papers, MS 32,582/34). See Michael Chadwick pension file (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF18109).

⁹⁰ Jacob diary entry, 26 Mar. 1918 (N.L.I., Jacob papers, MS 32,582/33).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3 June 1918.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 30 July 1918.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 26 Mar. 1918; *ibid.*, 19 Dec. 1918 (MS 32,582/35).

⁹⁴ Moses Roche statement, pp 3–4 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,129); Patrick Hearne statement, p. 7 (*ibid.*, WS 1,742).

⁹⁵ Roche statement, p. 4 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,129).

⁹⁶ Jacob diary entry, 8 Apr. 1918 (N.L.I., Jacob papers, MS 32,582/33).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12 Sept., 1 Oct. 1918 (MS 32,582/34).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1919 (MS 32,582/35).

commemorative events. In November 1917, members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, the Fianna and the Citizen Army Boy Scouts attended the anniversary mass at the North Cathedral in remembrance of the Manchester martyrs of 1867 — William O'Meara Allen, Michael Larkin and William O'Brien.⁹⁹ One former Fianna member claimed that the formation of groups of Irish Citizen Army (I.C.A.) Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in Cork circa 1917–18 caused a split in the Fianna and Clan na Gael in that city, while another assumed that the I.C.A. Girl Guides and Clan na Gael were the same organisation.¹⁰⁰ Sisters Nora and Sheila Wallace and Cumann na mBan member Mary Monica Clifford (née Vaughan) were involved in organising the Cork-based I.C.A. youth groups, which disbanded in 1920, with many members then joining the Fianna or Cumann na mBan. Clifford reported that she was one of the founders of the I.C.A. Girl Guides and was elected their commandant. In addition to their involvement in youth group organisation, these women also made their business premises available in support of the independence movement. The Wallaces' newsagent shop on St Augustine Street served as a dispatch centre for Cork No. 1 Brigade of the Irish Volunteers/Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.), while Clifford's drapery shop on Douglas Street was utilised by the Volunteers for various purposes.¹⁰¹

Elsewhere in County Cork, Nora Cunningham recorded the existence of another group that bore a striking resemblance to the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts. Part of an activist family, Nora had older and younger siblings who belonged to Cumann na mBan, the I.R.A. and the Fianna.¹⁰² In early 1917, Nora was elected captain of a *sluagh* of about twenty-six nationalist 'Girl Guides' in Macroom, which she described as being like an organisation operating in Cork city, presumably Clan na Gael. Her younger sister Eileen was also involved. The group appears to have been connected to the Macroom branch of Cumann na mBan, with membership 'confined to girls who were too young to join Cumann na mBan and was similar to Fianna Éireann for young boys'.¹⁰³ In late 1916, there had been talk of 'new Girl Guide ideas' within Cumann na mBan.¹⁰⁴

The group's initial activities were mainly 'drilling and holding parades', but later in 1917, the girls began to raise money to support the Irish Volunteers and 'the Prisoners' Dependants' Fund' by taking part in concerts and plays and holding

⁹⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 26 Nov. 1917.

¹⁰⁰ James Allan Busby statement, p. 6 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,628); P. J. Murphy statement, p. 5 (*ibid.*, WS 869).

¹⁰¹ Nora Wallace application form, 31 Dec. 1935, p. 16; letters of reference from Cathal O'Shannon, 20 May 1940, S. Hegarty and F. O'Donoghue, 20 May 1940 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF29323); Bill Murphy, 'The Little Shop of Secrets' (www.rte.ie/culture/2020/0717/1153982-documentary-on-one-the-little-shop-of-secrets/) (24 June 2024); Mary Monica Clifford (née Vaughan)'s petition to the minister for defence, 10 Sept. 1953 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF30473). See also Sheila Wallace, pension file (*ibid.*, MSP34REF29324). Peg Duggan mentioned that the 'Misses Wallis' were the organisers and leaders of the 'Women's Citizen Army', which was formed in Cork in 1917 and had similar aims to Cumann na mBan but more of a labour outlook (p. 8, M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,576).

¹⁰² See Nora Cunningham pension file (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF41468) and those of her siblings Molly, Eileen, John, Patrick and Timothy.

¹⁰³ Nora Cunningham statement, p. 1 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,690). Also see statement of activities of Nora Cunningham, Casement Street, Macroom, County Cork (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF41468).

¹⁰⁴ Jacob diary entry, 15 Dec. 1916 (N.L.I., Jacob papers, MS 32,582/30).

flag days. In early 1918, the girls were given ‘the job of collecting tin cans, cocoa tins and such like which the Volunteers were to use in the making of canister bombs’. These were later utilised in operations undertaken during the War of Independence. The girls also collected and broke up ‘scrap iron which was used in the bombs as shrapnel’. During the conscription crisis in the spring of 1918, these nationalist girl guides undertook first aid training, helped the local branch of Cumann na mBan to make ‘First Aid outfits for the Volunteers’ and ‘also carried dispatches and often transferred small arms from one area to another’. These activities continued throughout 1919. As the War of Independence intensified, the girl guide group folded and its members joined Cumann na mBan.¹⁰⁵ Like the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, this Macroom group not only participated in similar training and activities, but also provided valuable military support services to their adult counterparts in Cumann na mBan and the Irish Volunteers.

IV

The outbreak of the War of Independence signalled a new phase for Clan na Gael. May Kelly joined the South County Dublin unit of Cumann na mBan in 1919, while maintaining her leadership of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts until at least 1923. She later recorded that during the War of Independence there were three battalions of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in Dublin city, providing members with training in intelligence work, drill, first aid and signalling. In addition, ‘the officers were trained in the use of arms but not the rank and file — they were too young, and besides we had not the arms’.¹⁰⁶ Certain girl scouts were assigned intelligence work. Theresa Thorpe (née Joyce), for example, watched Beggars Bush Barracks, noting down license plate numbers of cars transporting Black and Tans and addresses of civilians whom she followed from the barracks, and then gave this information to Michael Chadwick who passed it along to the I.R.A.’s director of intelligence.¹⁰⁷ Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in Dublin are also reputed to have carried messages and stored guns and ammunition for the I.R.A. during the War of Independence and held vigils at the gates of Mountjoy prison while republican prisoners were on hunger strike in 1920.¹⁰⁸ Although Thorpe viewed Clan na Gael as a ‘training ground’ for Cumann na mBan, she reported that only a minority of the members of her unit actually transferred to the women’s organisation when they turned eighteen.¹⁰⁹

As an organisation, the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, like the Fianna, opposed the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 and supported the anti-Treaty side during the Irish Civil War of 1922–3. Former members of Clan na Gael who had joined Cumann na mBan were among the women who provided military support services to the anti-Treaty I.R.A. when the forces of the provisional government began shelling the garrison in Dublin’s Four Courts after the outbreak of the civil war in June

¹⁰⁵ Cunningham statement, pp 1–2 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 1,690).

¹⁰⁶ Chadwick (née Kelly) sworn statement, p. 7 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20098).

¹⁰⁷ Theresa Thorpe (née Joyce) sworn statement made before the advisory committee, 13 July 1937, p. 3; letter of reference from Michael Chadwick, 19 Aug. 1936 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF9312).

¹⁰⁸ *Irish Press*, 3 May 1966.

¹⁰⁹ Thorpe (née Joyce) application form, 30 May 1935, p. 5; sworn statement made before the advisory committee, 13 July 1937, p. 1 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF9312).

1922. For example, Marcella Crimmins and Annie Tobin served as cooks and messengers for the anti-Treaty I.R.A. outpost located in Hughes Hotel on Lower Gardiner Street, while Maggie Fagan was 'assistant and runner' to Joseph O'Connor, the O/C of the I.R.A.'s 3rd Dublin Battalion, whose base was located at her uncle's premises on Mercer Street.¹¹⁰ Ann Matthews and Liz Gillis have found that members of Clan na Gael were among the republican women interned by the new Irish Free State government during the later part of the civil war. For instance, in March 1923, Christina (Chrissie) Behan was arrested for being a member of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts. Behan served 130 days in prison between 16 March and 24 July 1923, during which time she spent eleven days on hunger strike in the period 4–14 July 1923.¹¹¹ She was one of four women who went on hunger strike in July 1923 to protest their continued detention in the North Dublin Union even though the civil war had ended the previous April. The slow release of prisoners had led to restlessness and frustration amongst internees.¹¹² Clan na Gael founder May Kelly was arrested and interned for ninety-five days between 31 March and 4 July 1923, resulting in the loss of her job at Forrest and Sons, a shop on Grafton Street; she subsequently recorded that she endured four years of unemployment after her release.¹¹³

The first public re-emergence of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts after the civil war was later reported to have been at a commemorative parade on O'Connell Street in Dublin in July 1924 to mark the second anniversary of republican soldier and politician Cathal Brugha's death.¹¹⁴ Kathleen (Katie) O'Connor was credited with keeping the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts going in the new political environment: she served as their commandant from 1926 to 1968, asserting the organisation's independence from the republican movement.¹¹⁵ Clan na Gael's origins as auxiliary to other organisations and the factious tendencies of the republican movement may have motivated O'Connor to maintain an independent status. Newspaper coverage of the youth group's activities later in the 1920s and 1930s indicates that the organisation continued to commemorate the republican dead and foster Irish cultural nationalism and political republicanism in girls. The Clan na Gael Girl Scouts organised events at which girls had the opportunity to compete for prizes in Irish singing, recitations and dancing, and its members participated in various republican processions, such as the annual pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's grave in Bodenstown, County Kildare.¹¹⁶ Members of Clan na Gael also sold

¹¹⁰ Prendergast statement, pp 9, 20, 30 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 802 [he refers to Tobin as Annie and Nan]); Liz Gillis, *The fall of Dublin: 28 June to 5 July 1922* (Cork, 2011), pp 60, 69; Joseph O'Connor statement, p. 12 (M.A.I., B.M.H., WS 544). For confirmation of their Cumann na mBan membership, see membership rolls for Drumcondra and Ranelagh branches (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., CMB/126).

¹¹¹ Matthews, *Dissidents*, pp 53, 62, 258, 292; Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution*, p. 195.

¹¹² Matthews, *Dissidents*, pp 102–03.

¹¹³ Chadwick (née Kelly) application form, 6 Dec. 1935, p. 16; sworn statement, p. 9 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20098); Matthews, *Dissidents*, p. 281. Matthews's list of internees also includes former Clan na Gael member Maggie Fagan (p. 265).

¹¹⁴ *Irish Press*, 3 May 1966. Contemporary news coverage of the July 1924 parade mentions the involvement of the Fianna and Cumann na mBan, but not the girl scouts (e.g. *Freeman's Journal*, 7 July 1924).

¹¹⁵ *Irish Press*, 3 May 1966. Watts, 'Fianna Éireann', pp 295, 436.

¹¹⁶ *Sinn Féin*, 6 Sept. 1924; *An Phoblacht*, 2 Apr. 1927; *Irish Independent*, 30 June 1930; *Irish Press*, 21 Aug. 1933; *ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1933; *ibid.*, 28 Jan. 1935.

Easter lily badges as a part of a fundraising campaign organised by Cumann na mBan as a republican alternative to the Flanders poppy campaign to provide relief to Irish ex-servicemen.¹¹⁷ Cumann na mBan established its own girl scouts, Cumann na gCailíní, for those aged between eight and sixteen in the hope that the new youth group would serve as a recruiting ground for future members of the women's organisation. Although the first branch was formed in Cork city circa 1930–31, the youth group seems to have been organised on a more formal footing from 1933 onward.¹¹⁸ The ethos and activities of Clan na Gael and Cumann na gCailíní were much the same.

V

The Irish state recognised the military contribution of some former members of Irish nationalist youth groups to the struggle for independence in the form of military service pensions and/or medals.¹¹⁹ Male members of the Fianna who had later served with the national army, and thus fought on the pro-Treaty side in the civil war, were eligible to apply for a service pension under the 1924 Military Service Pensions Act (M.S.P.A.). Other Fianna members, as well as women who had served with Cumann na mBan, the I.C.A. or the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts (due to their affiliation with the Hibernian Rifles), had to wait until the 1934 M.S.P.A. for recognition of their service in the form of pensions. Although both Na Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan were limited under the 1934 legislation 'to the two lowest possible ranks for pension purposes — D and E', the ability of male Fianna members to later transfer to the I.C.A., the Irish Volunteers/I.R.A. and the national army meant that they had had the opportunity to serve in ways that could incur greater risks and, thus, received greater recognition and financial compensation by the state.¹²⁰ Marie Coleman has noted that 'those who participated in the Rising in Dublin — both men and women — had a much easier time securing service pensions', adding that it was much harder for Cumann na mBan veterans to get credit for their activities during the War of Independence and Civil War.¹²¹ The same appears to be true for former members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, as the following examples suggest.

Five members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts who participated in the Easter Rising received a military service pension at the lowest grade E on the basis of their active service during Easter week. Three of these women — Mary (May) Chadwick (née Kelly), Margaret Mary MacSherry (née Fagan) and Mary McLoughlin — also received credit for later service with Cumann na mBan. Two other women, Cecilia O'Neill (née Conroy), who was a member of the Clan

¹¹⁷ Matthews, *Dissidents*, p. 202.

¹¹⁸ 'Cumann na mBan, Report of General Convention, 1933', p. 9 (U.C.D.A., Mary MacSwiney papers, P48a/17). A copy of Cumann na gCailíní's constitution is included in MacSwiney's papers (*ibid.*, P48a/23) and reprinted in Matthews, *Dissidents*, pp 297–8.

¹¹⁹ See Marnie Hay, 'Using the Military Service Pensions Collection to uncover a revolutionary youth and its aftermath' in Anne Dolan and Catriona Crowe (eds), *A very hard struggle: lives in the Military Service Pensions Collection* (Dublin, 2023), pp 228–39.

¹²⁰ Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish female revolutionaries, 1916–1923' in *Women's History Review*, xxvi, no. 6 (2017), p. 924.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 926.

na Gael Girl Scouts between 1915 and her marriage in 1919, and Annie O'Hagan (née Carey), were awarded military service pensions in 1939 in recognition of their service during the Easter Rising.¹²² O'Neill had to wait over four years to find out that her application for a service pension was successful. The award of a pension was a godsend to her family as she, her husband and their 'seven young children' were 'in a bad way' financially due to ill-health and inconstant employment.¹²³

Four other women associated with Clan na Gael also received military service pensions at grade E, but not in respect of their involvement with the youth group. May Murray had already transferred to the Inghinidhe na hÉireann branch of Cumann na mBan when she served during the Easter Rising.¹²⁴ Ellen (Nellie) Stynes (née Lambert) was awarded a pension on the basis of her service with the I.C.A. during the rising and Cumann na mBan during the period 1920–23. After the events of Easter week, she had joined the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts before emigrating to Scotland. Upon her return to Ireland in 1919, she joined Cumann na mBan.¹²⁵ Mary (Molly) Teresa Corcoran (née O'Reilly) was awarded a pension for her service with the I.C.A. during the Easter Rising and later service with Cumann na mBan.¹²⁶ Anne (Annie) O'Callaghan (née Duggan), the commandant of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in Cork, was initially rejected when she applied for a military service pension on the basis of her service with Cumann na mBan. After her case was re-examined, she was awarded a pension for her service between 1919 and 1922 during the War of Independence and the Truce.¹²⁷

Four other former Clan na Gael members — Sarah Reardon (née O'Mara), Theresa Thorpe (née Joyce), Marcella Prendergast (née Crimmins), and Mary Jane Slevin (née Stapleton) — were unsuccessful in their applications for military service pensions, though Reardon was awarded a medal for her later Cumann na mBan service. Thorpe (née Joyce)'s claim for service with Clan na Gael from 1917–20 and Cumann na mBan from 1920–23 was supported by many letters of reference, but she was still deemed someone to whom the act did not apply.¹²⁸ Length of active service and the ability to provide corroborating evidence of duties undertaken were among the factors that influenced whether former members of Clan na Gael were awarded pensions and/or medals. Prendergast, for example, was a member of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts from July 1916 to March 1918, after which she joined Cumann na mBan. She was deemed ineligible for a pension because her active service was not considered continuous. Her petition to have her case re-investigated and application for a service medal were both

¹²² See M.S.P.C. files in the M.A.I. for: Chadwick (née Kelly) (MSP34REF20098); MacSherry (née Fagan) (MSP34REF54707); McLoughlin (MSP34REF15389); O'Hagan (née Carey) (MSP34REF22054); O'Neill (née Conroy) (MSP34REF22268).

¹²³ Letter from Cecilia O'Neill (née Conroy), 25 Apr. 1938 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF22268).

¹²⁴ Murray to secretary, n.d. (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF7805).

¹²⁵ Ellen (Nellie) Stynes (née Lambert) summary of sworn evidence, 2 May 1941 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF56696).

¹²⁶ Mary (Molly) Teresa Corcoran (née O'Reilly) pension file (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF20325). Her file does not mention previous membership in Clan na Gael.

¹²⁷ Anne (Annie) O'Callaghan (née Duggan) pension file (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF8617).

¹²⁸ See applications for Reardon (née O'Mara) (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF57545) and Thorpe (née Joyce) (ibid., MSP34REF9312).

unsuccessful.¹²⁹ Slevin, who had signed the 1916 roll of honour, claimed for active service with the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts from 23–25 April 1916, but after waiting seven years for a decision on her application, was awarded neither a pension nor a medal. Her file is stamped ‘Act does not appear to apply’. An assessor wrote ‘Doubtful. Too young’ in the ‘observations on service’ section of a form dated 1 September 1942.¹³⁰ Preconceptions based on age and gender may have coloured assessors’ attitudes toward the value of an applicant’s service. Although Nora Cunningham upon appeal was awarded a pension for her service with Cumann na mBan in 1920–23, her claim for service in an earlier period, during which she was a nationalist girl guide, was unsuccessful.¹³¹

The Irish state also awarded medals to recognise the contribution of activists who had played more limited roles that were not considered as being of a pensionable standard. Individuals who applied solely based on service with a nationalist youth group may have found it more difficult to secure a medal or a pension. As the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts were not an organisation that came within the terms governing the award of a medal, former members were unlikely to have service recognised unless they explicitly referenced Clan na Gael’s link to the Hibernian Rifles or their own connection to the I.C.A. or Cumann na mBan. Philomena Conroy and Annie Gilsenan applied for a Service (1917–1921) Medal on the basis of membership with Clan na Gael, but were unsuccessful because it was not deemed a relevant organisation for the award of a medal.¹³² Eileen Cronin (née Conroy), who had been a member of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, may have recognised this issue when she applied for a 1916 medal on the basis of service with the I.C.A. in Dublin during the rebellion (she signed the 1916 roll of honour as a former I.C.A. member who had served at St Stephen’s Green). However, proof of her service was not established, so she was not awarded a medal.¹³³

VI

The controversy over the admission of girls to Na Fianna Éireann and the establishment of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts and other similar groups shows the desire of some girls to play a part in the Irish nationalist movement in the early twentieth century — even if their male colleagues were not always willing to accept them. Irish nationalist girl scouts engaged in many traditional female pursuits, such as singing, dancing, first aid and fundraising. At the same time, they also challenged the gender conventions of their era by training in military drill and providing military support services to their adult counterparts in the Irish struggle for independence. Given their young age and gender, it is not surprising that only a few Clan na Gael Girl Scouts undertook military support roles during the Easter Rising in Dublin. At a time when some adult nationalists were uneasy about the militant

¹²⁹ Marcella Crimmins application form, 11 Mar. 1935; letter from the runaí of the Office of the Referee, 23 Oct. 1940 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF3762). She has a second file under her married name Marcella Prendergast (ibid., MSP34REF58449).

¹³⁰ See Mary Jane Slevin (née Stapleton) pension file (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF21847). She signed the roll of honour of 1916 as ‘M.J. Slevin Nee Stapleton’.

¹³¹ Nora Cunningham pension file (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF41468).

¹³² See medal applications for Philomena Conroy (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MD2200 & MD7964); Annie Gilsenan (ibid., MD47317 & MD49662).

¹³³ Eileen Cronin (née Conroy) medal application (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MD42876).

activities of Fianna boys,¹³⁴ it is likely that the involvement of girls in similar activities was deemed even more problematic and less likely to receive the approval of parents, employers or state officials.

After the establishment of the Irish Free State, former members of Clan na Gael found it more challenging than their male colleagues in the Fianna to garner state recognition for their contributions to the struggle for independence. Those from Dublin who could prove service during the Easter Rising or later service as members of Cumann na mBan were more likely to be awarded pensions and/or medals. Despite such gender and regional biases against them, the contributions of Clan na Gael and other girl scouts to the Irish nationalist movement in the early twentieth century demonstrate the determination of some girls to further the struggle for independence. Yet, it is still the case that these adolescent activists have received far less recognition for their efforts than their male and adult female counterparts.

¹³⁴ Hay, *Fianna Éireann*, pp 83, 85, 135–6, 199–200.