

ON THE BRINK

The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916 Project

PRO / ANTI HOME RULE

LOCAL WOMEN

ELLA YOUNG

Ella Young was born in 1867, in Fenagh, Ahoghill, Ballymena, to a Presbyterian family. From the age of three, Ella and family moved several times, but in her teenage years, they settled in Rathmines, Dublin.

After graduating from the Royal University of Ireland in 1898, Ella joined the Theosophical Society where she met the poets WB Yeats and George Russell, who were also members of the Irish Literary Revival. She became involved in their work, putting old Irish tales into print and staging them. In 1903, she learned to speak Irish. She joined Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland), and taught the language to young boys and girls, along with Irish literature and mythology. Ella's friend Maud Gonne a strong supporter of Irish Independence, had founded this organisation in 1900.

Ella also developed a close friendship with Patrick Pearse, a member of the Gaelic League. He widely promoted Ireland's ancient heritage as a means of restoring a strong cultural and nationalist identity to the people of Ireland. Pearse became convinced that the only way to secure Irish Independence was by armed insurrection and Ella supported him. In 1914, with the founding of Cumann na mBan, Ella became an enthusiastic member, she hid Irish Volunteer guns in house in preparation for rebellion, but took no part in the rising itself.

During the Civil War of the early 1920s, Ella supported the anti-treaty republicans and was interned. She emigrated to America in 1925, where she became very established in literacy circles, giving lectures, writing and publishing folklore and poetry books inspired by Irish mythology.



Ella Young in Gaelic revival costume, worn during pageants and theatre performances which celebrated characters from Irish mythology.
Courtesy of Pearse Museum