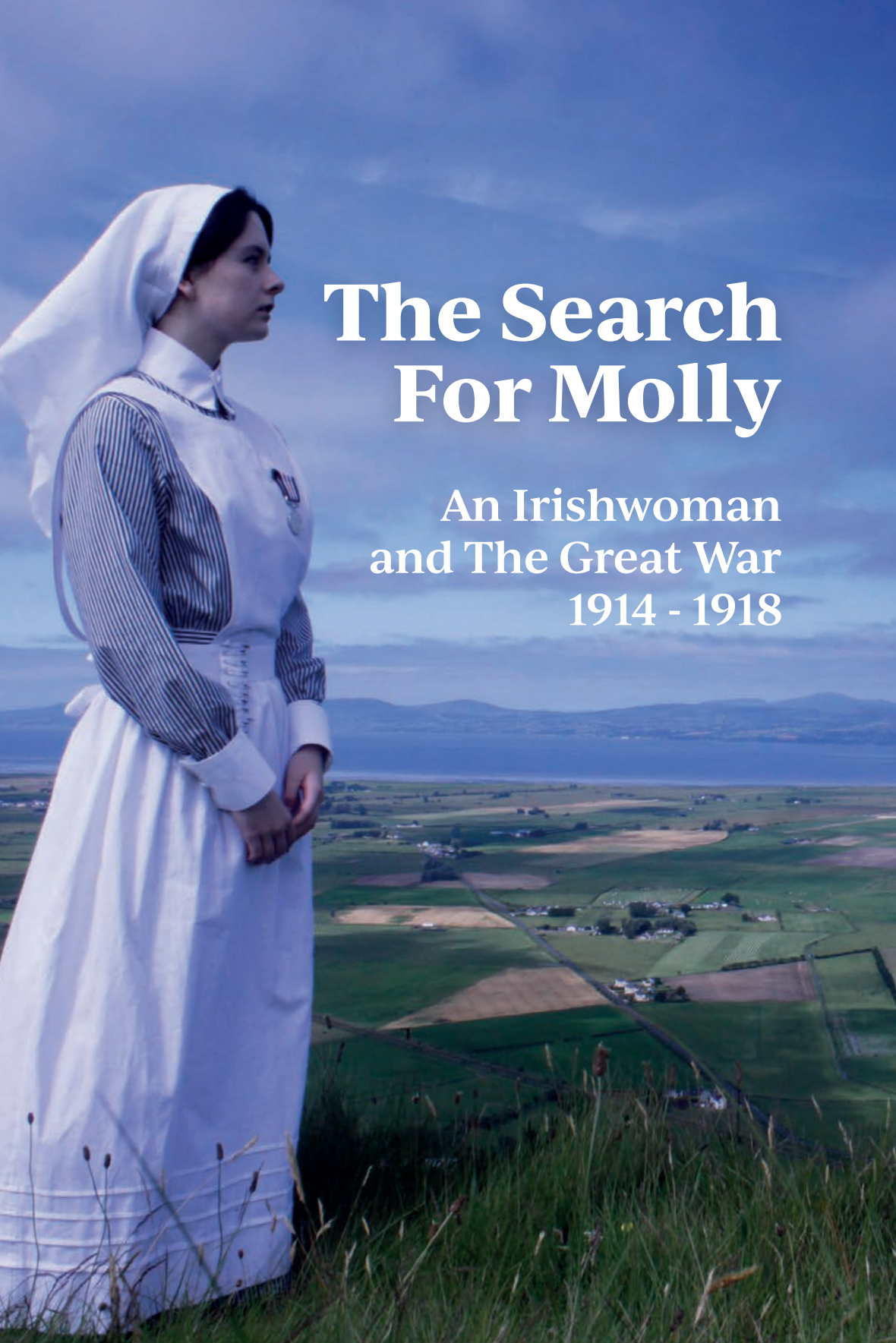


The Search For Molly

An Irishwoman and The Great War 1914 - 1918

The Search for Molly: An Irishwoman and The Great War 1914 - 1918
By Rosemary Henderson.
Edited by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough
Council Museum Services.

Printed in Northern Ireland.

ISBN 978-1-9161494-9-6

Cover design and book layout by Colin the Designer.

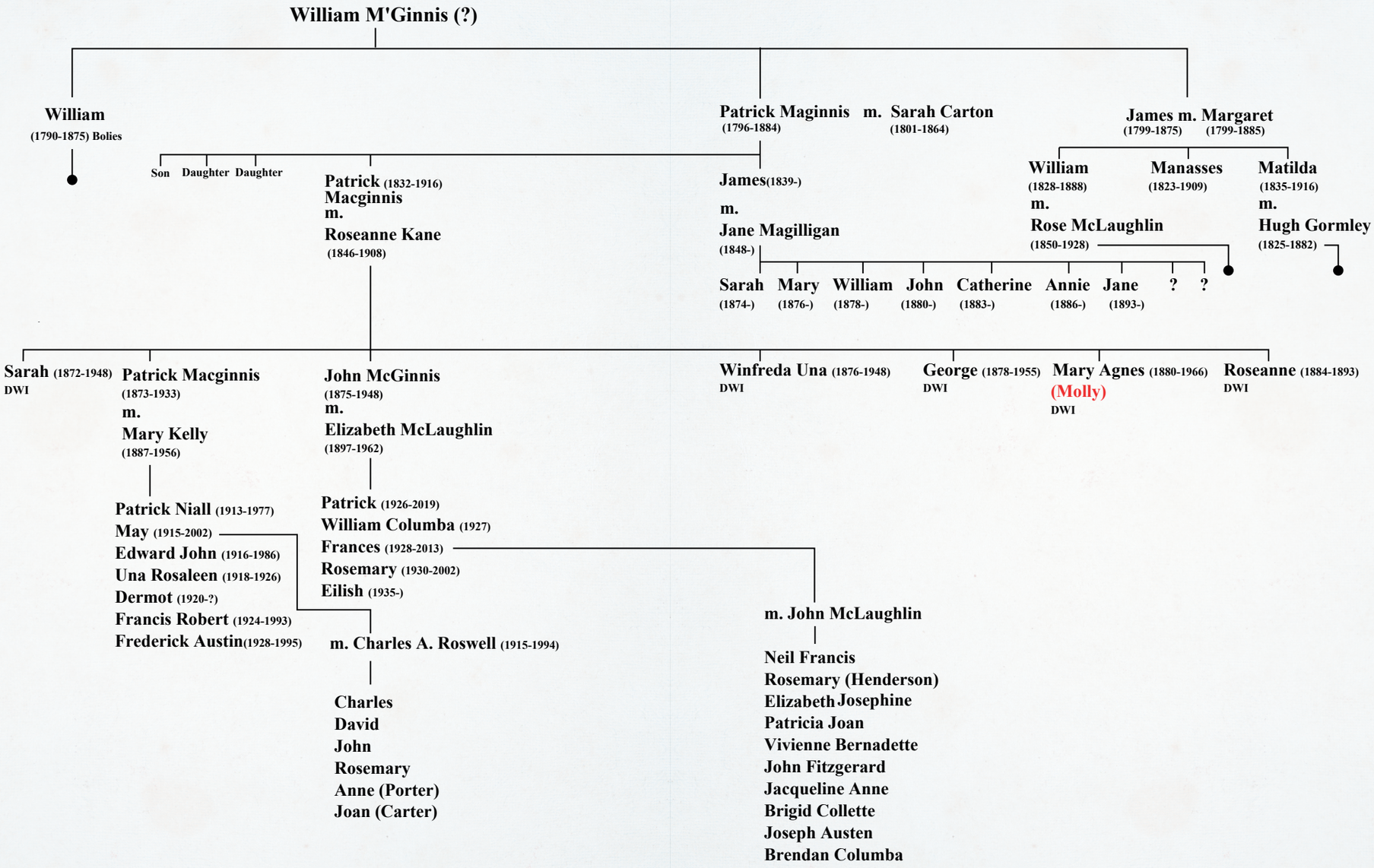
Front cover image: Figure against skyline overlooking Lough Foyle © R Henderson.

This book was produced with the generous financial support of the Special EU Programmes Body as part of the European Union's PEACE IV Programme.

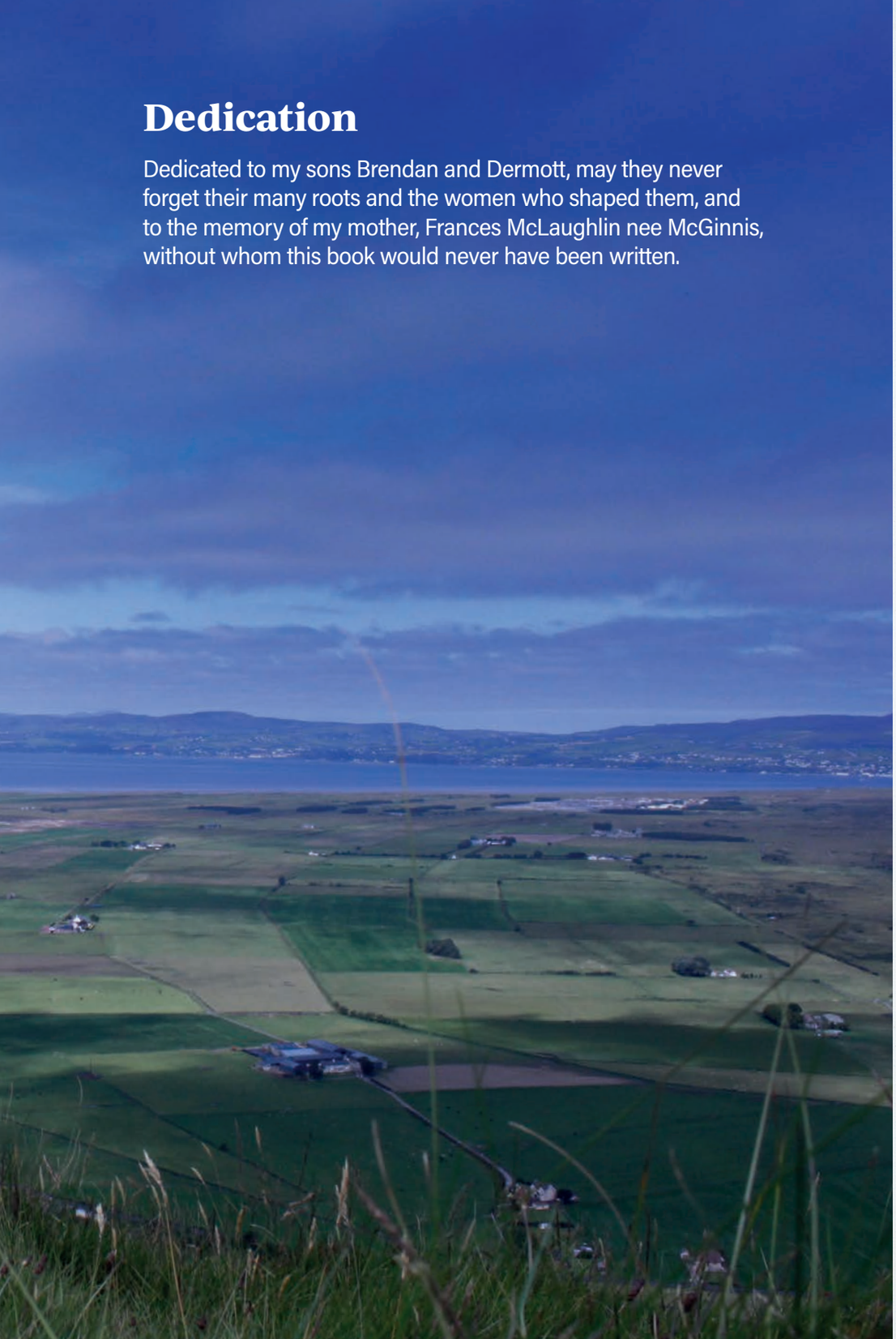
The Search For Molly

An Irishwoman and The Great War 1914 - 1918

The Legahoire M'Ginnis Family Tree



Note: DWI - died without issue



Dedication

Dedicated to my sons Brendan and Dermott, may they never forget their many roots and the women who shaped them, and to the memory of my mother, Frances McLaughlin nee McGinnis, without whom this book would never have been written.

Contents

Acknowledgements

In compiling this book there are several people without whom it would not have been possible to have undertaken, never mind completed, such an exercise. The following is a list of those whose help, expertise and assistance are truly thanked and appreciated.

Peace IV.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Museum Services and PEACE IV Understanding Our Area staff - Helen Perry, Museum Services Development Manager; Joanne Honeyford, PIV UOA Project Officer; Suzanne Fol, PIV UOA Admin Officer.

Order of St. John Museum Clerkenwell, London.

Staff of Derry Central Library.

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

Isabel Apsley, St. John Ambulance, Inver Museum, Larne.

Hester McCunn and Robert Guthrie for their support and suggestions.

The McGinnis family of Carnamuff, Faughanvale and further afield.

Brendan Henderson, teacher of Modern History, for his contribution to ensuring that historical events were accurately incorporated into Molly's life.

A special note to my cousin, Anne Roswell Porter, Racine, Ohio and her family who I would never have had the pleasure of corresponding with, were it not for the search for Molly, and for the use of her family photographs and anecdotes.

A special thanks to my own McLaughlin family who have tolerated my constant questioning and ever present notebook over the years. You are warned that I have not finished but only started!

If I omit anyone please forgive me, know that your assistance was appreciated if not acknowledged.

As anyone who has interest in research and compiling family history will know, there is always something more to find and stories to hear. The author welcomes any additional information of interest by contacting her at email: rosemaryhenderson@tiscali.co.uk

List of Illustrations

Foreword

In recent times, we have begun to consider and accept that our recent past, including the involvement of local people in World War One, has not been one-dimensional in terms of its narrative. Indeed, we have spent a huge amount of time looking at World War One as a vehicle in which to attempt to identify commonality and unity, but in many ways this focus all too often has been from a male perspective, the experience of a soldier, a young man heading off to unfamiliar shores to fight a war.

This publication is unique in so many ways, but particularly because Molly, a woman who followed her vocation into nursing, who was committed to healing and providing compassion to others, compassion to many young men who would never return home again from war, was not a story often told. Very often we have read the story of Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, as nurses who served during the Crimean War, both of whom who, incidentally, have had facilities named in their honour during the COVID-19 crisis. However, less often do we hear about Irish nurses in a similar vein, their roles and how they ended up in a World War. One such woman was Molly McGinnis, a local girl from Faughanvale, near Ballykelly.

This publication lovingly charts Molly's life, her family background, her influences, her motivation to care for others and her journey that would ultimately lead her to serve as a nurse in World War One. This is a hugely significant publication providing a local perspective to a global emergency. Molly's story will be a resource for keen local and World War One historians, as well as children studying this period of history through case–studies.

We are grateful that Peace IV funding has enabled Molly's story to be brought to life and to be shared to a wider audience. An additional layer of history and understanding is offered through this personal and compelling account.

Councillor Orla Beattie
Chairperson – Peace IV Partnership

1 The Search for Molly

One of my earliest memories of school was, at the start of the new school year, being called to the front of the classroom to the teacher's desk to record your personal details into the School Register. By 1965, Dupont's Stephanie Kwolek had already developed Kevlar but pocket calculators, email and video game consoles were yet to be launched onto an unsuspecting public. It was still an age when most information was written down by hand and a computer filled a whole room. The replies to the enquiry of your name, address, date of birth and your father's occupation were painstakingly entered in the large beige book which was kept at the teacher's elbow on her desk. It was referred to in the event of any query, and also recorded your attendance or absence each day and any misdemeanours you were unfortunate to be caught doing.

1. Author aged seven, standing on left, 1966.

2. Londonderry City Asylum nurses circa 1950s.
©J McLaughlin

There was no request to provide information on your mother or her occupation or activity. As a five-year-old, the irony was lost to me that a woman's place was most likely in the home and remained so well into the 1970s. I remember being irritated that the teacher would cast a wry glance at me, clearly not believing me when I solemnly informed her that my father was a *'female nurse.'*

It was many years before I realised my error in his gender assignment and many more before I realised that his being a nurse was unusual in itself. He was invalided out of the NI Forestry Commission at the tender age of 18 years old following an accident in Baronscourt Estate, near Omagh, only the skills of a surgeon visiting from Belfast saving his foot.

His brother organised his application to undertake nursing. A career in nursing was usually associated with women but was not historically exclusive to them. However, prior to the Second World War employment for men was confined to psychiatric hospitals.

In the 1970s, the Government launched a drive to encourage more male nurses, advertising consisted of men in suits, emphasising the professional standing of nurses. There remained a gender prejudice that men in general nursing would unsettle the female workforce and they could not be expected to look after female patients. My father trained in the City and County Infirmary, Londonderry, and qualified as a psychiatric nurse in the asylum there. He subsequently became one of the first nurses to take up position in the newly built Gransha Hospital which opened in 1956.

3. John McLaughlin with motorcycle, the 'Flying Flea', 1954.
©R Henderson

Gransha Hospital was the first green field site hospital built in the United Kingdom following World War Two, and it was there that he met my mother Frances, who also worked there as a cook. The hospital operated almost self-sufficiently, with its own farm, livestock, orchard, vegetable and soft fruit gardens tended by the patients. The only produce that was brought onto the site was flour for the bread-making and coal for the heating system. The Doctor was the only person with a car; everyone else used bicycles to get around the large open green field site. All except my father, who caused quite a stir because he owned a Royal Enfield motorcycle, more commonly known as the "flying flea," a gift from his grandfather, Jimmy McColgan, a former soldier, who had served with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and lost two brothers in the Great War.

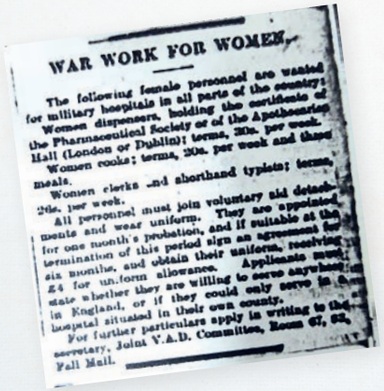
The public sector has long been the biggest employer in Northern Ireland and the Health Service was the provider of employment for many of my aunts and uncles. My father expressed a wish that I would follow him into a career in nursing. However, I had notions of a more artistic direction until the cold light of reality and practical needs led to a career spanning over thirty years in Health Service Administration, working alongside the nurses he had wanted me to be one of.

It wasn't until I was much older that I became aware that my mother had nursing roots in her family; her aunt, Molly McGinnis, was a trained nurse also. Fascinated by the people who shaped the world I grew up in, I spent many hours questioning my mother and noting the family history.

I became aware that Molly was born into a world where the principal role for woman was to marry, keep house for their husband and have children. The summer of 1914 was to change that role for many women and the effect would be felt by the generations of women to come after.

The First World War, or the Great War as it is sometimes known, was the biggest mobilisation of men the world had seen. It created a situation that required women to take a different role. With many men away fighting, they were actively encouraged to take up the work and positions that men had hitherto occupied.

Women in their thousands, took up positions in offices, factories and farms doing work that would have been inconceivable before the war. As the war progressed, it became inevitable that women would be required to assist the men at the Front. Medicine and nursing became the frontiers that created a situation where women could work equally alongside men. Up to that point, the suffrage movement had been pushing for democratic equality but the war created a world where women had physically proven their ability to work just as hard and face danger with equal strength of mind. They worked long hours, drove ambulances, travelled the hospital trains, lived in shocking conditions in tents and abandoned buildings with limited supplies. Many more who stayed at home worked equally tirelessly, making comforts, wrapping bandages and walking the hills in all weathers to collect sphagnum moss for wound dressings.



WAR WORK FOR WOMEN.

The following female personnel are wanted for military hospitals in all parts of the country: Women dispensers, holding the certificate of the Pharmaceutical Society or of the Apothecaries' Hall (London or Dublin); terms, 30s. per week. Women cooks; terms, 30s. per week and three meals.

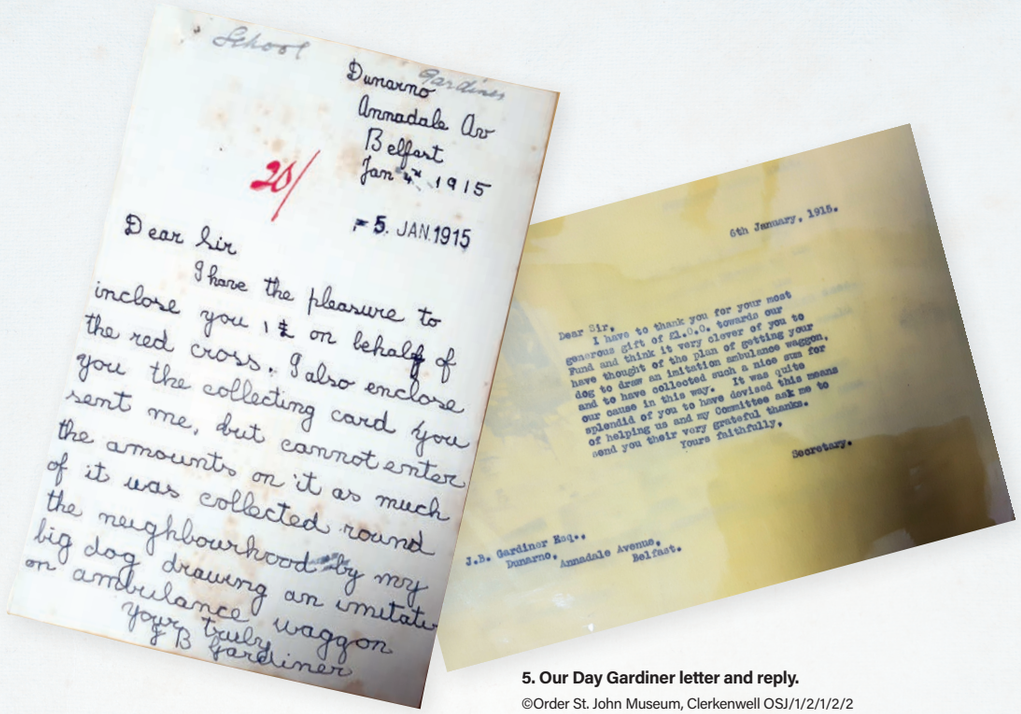
Women clerks and shorthand typists; terms, 25s. per week.

All personnel must join voluntary aid detachments and wear uniform. They are appointed for one month's probation, and if suitable at the termination of this period sign an agreement for six months, and obtain their uniforms, receiving £4 for uniform allowance. Applicants must state whether they are willing to serve anywhere in England, or if they could only serve in their hospital situated in their own county.

For further particulars apply in writing to the Secretary, Joint V.A.D. Committee, Room 67, 52, Pall Mall.

4. Women Wanted Advertisement 1915.
©Order of St. John

In the ensuing years, much has been written about World War One and how the outcome changed not only the geographical map of Europe but the social map of the world. Although the changes were recognised, until recently very little had been discussed about the important role women had taken in World War One and that was mainly from official records and diaries of soldiers.



Ghost

Dunarno
Gardiner
Annadale Ave
Belfast
Jan 4th 1915

28/

5. JAN. 1915

Dear Sir

I have the pleasure to inclose you 1 £ on behalf of the red cross. I also enclose you the collecting card you sent me, but cannot enter the amounts on it as much of it was collected round the neighbourhood by my big dog drawing an imitation ambulance waggon

Yours truly
J B Gardiner

6th January, 1915.

Dear Sir,

I have to thank you for your most generous gift of £1.1.0. towards our Fund and think it very clever of you to have thought of the plan of getting your dog to draw an imitation ambulance waggon and to have collected such a nice sum for our cause in this way. It was quite splendid of you to have devised this means of helping us and my Committee ask me to send you their very grateful thanks.

Yours faithfully,

Secretary.

J.B. Gardiner Esq.,
Dunarno,
Annadale Avenue,
Belfast.

5. Our Day Gardiner letter and reply.
©Order St. John Museum, Clerkenwell OSJ/1/2/1/2/2

Many of the records kept by women during that time had been written primarily by women of middle class or high birth, such as Vera Brittain, Mairi Chisolm or Emma Duffin; their experiences remaining largely private. The average woman did not keep a diary, did not express in words her experience and for the most part, like most men of their generation, did not speak of it again. Many of those women have not been recorded or recognised.

In my search for Molly, I have become more aware of those who also contributed to that world and have largely been forgotten. This book is a small attempt to redress that omission.

At the start of this journey many years ago, it was primarily a curiosity about family history - that my mother was often reticent in her recall only served to fuel my curiosity. Over the decades I pieced together snippets of conversation. During moments when she was in a mood to talk and unable to resist a captive audience, she spoke of her childhood and life growing up on a small farm; of her mother, strict and old fashioned but with a generosity of spirit and hospitality; of being excluded from the kitchen when a

neighbour called bringing news that a local girl had disgraced herself by getting pregnant out of wedlock. Of her maternal grandparents, so warm and welcoming, that an elderly cousin who was then in his eighties recalled his own mother taking him to visit Lizzie McLaughlin of the Bolie. He bragged to his friends of where he was going because they would be jealous of the treats he would get whilst there. She talked fondly and with a smile of her grandparents McLaughlin and the happy time spent with them.

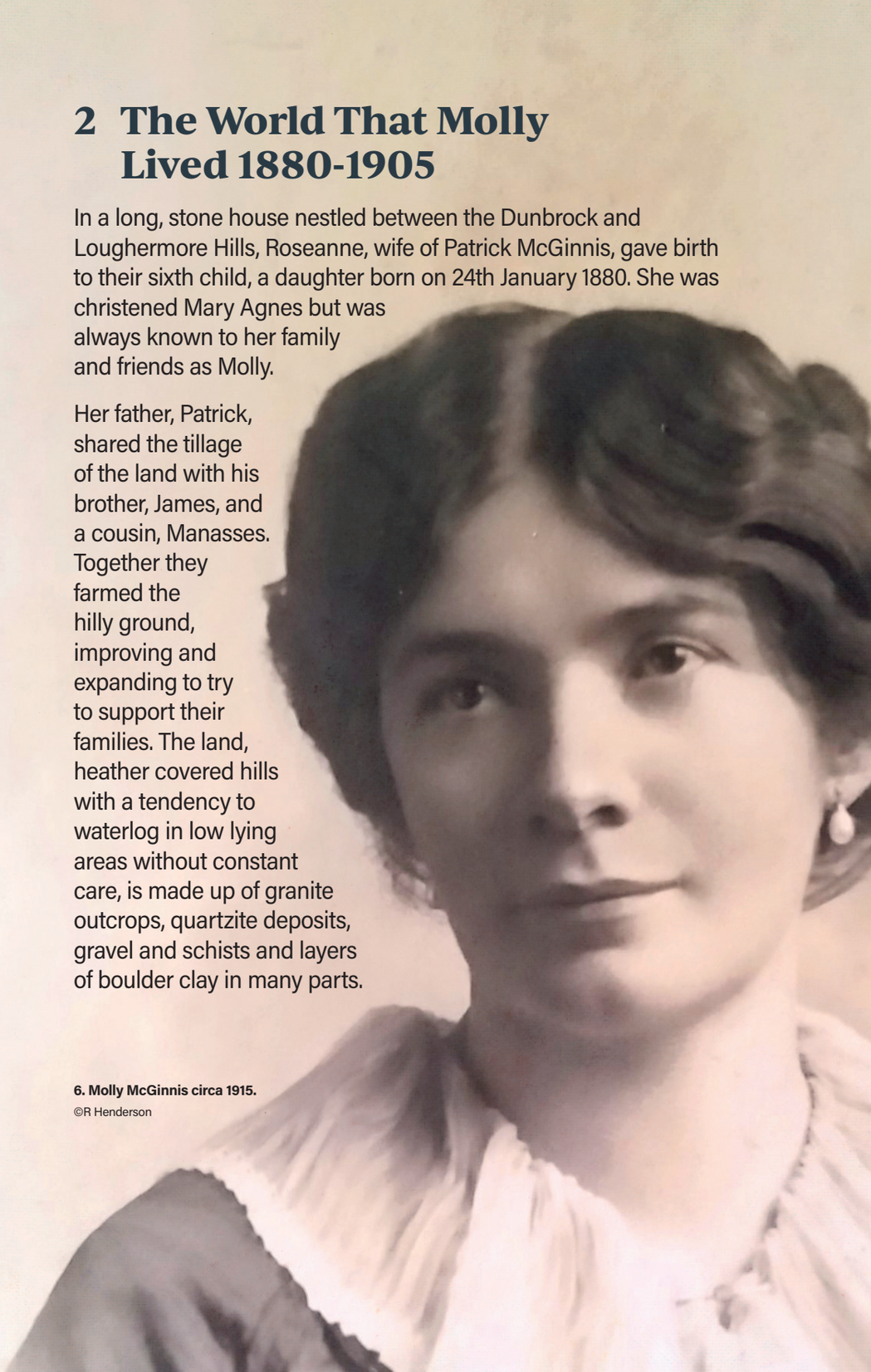
She also spoke of her father's people, the McGinnis'. However, her Uncle Patrick had moved away before she was born and contact with them was poor. Her mother corresponded with her brother-in-law, Patrick, but on his death in 1933 contact appears to have been severed. Her Aunt Molly she spoke of with mixed feelings; she imparted the information that she had won a medal, the highest one available to non-commissioned personnel, but beyond this she had not much to add. Her father she informed, had been interned on the *Argenta* Prison Ship in Belfast Lough in the 1920s, for why she did not know. His siblings, Sarah, George and Molly, had not spoken with him after that. In those turbulent times, with rising tensions and nationalist feelings running high, families were torn in their loyalties and many were split in their politics.

Through time many possible reasons have been suggested for why the family had their differences but the actual reason remains a mystery. Molly and her siblings have left no records of their thoughts and purpose, so we are left to conjecture and speculation and the true answer is unlikely to be known. What is certain is they were an interesting collection of talents and strengths that served them well. Belonging to a time when changes were both local and global, they lived through times that shaped and influenced all our lives. Molly was one of many thousands of women who wanted a better world and worked hard to achieve it.

2 The World That Molly Lived 1880-1905

In a long, stone house nestled between the Dunbrock and Loughermore Hills, Roseanne, wife of Patrick McGinnis, gave birth to their sixth child, a daughter born on 24th January 1880. She was christened Mary Agnes but was always known to her family and friends as Molly.

Her father, Patrick, shared the tillage of the land with his brother, James, and a cousin, Manasses. Together they farmed the hilly ground, improving and expanding to try to support their families. The land, heather covered hills with a tendency to waterlog in low lying areas without constant care, is made up of granite outcrops, quartzite deposits, gravel and schists and layers of boulder clay in many parts.



6. Molly McGinnis circa 1915.

7. Patrick and Roseanne Maginnis circa 1860s.
©R Henderson

The Fishmongers' Company, who had held the land around Ballykelly under royal grant from the early 17th century and sub-leased the land until 1820, when it reverted to the Company, were not always easy landlords. In September 1872, the tenants of the Fishmongers' Company made a petition to Westminster, protesting that they had been asked to sign an agreement that would release the Company from any requirement to renew the tenants' leases when the current term expired. The tenants petitioned that the land had been revalued and the tenants asked to sign a waiver when the leases came up for renewal. The tenants objected that improvements, particularly reclamation of hilly ground and drained land had been made at the tenants' own expense and not by the landlords.

At the time, Patrick's farm was listed as just over 258 acres and his brother James at just over 124 acres. The rents were £12 and £10 respectively, the disparity between the sizes and the rent was because the majority of Patrick's land was hillside and only suitable for grazing sheep. Both James and Patrick had worked hard and reclaimed 32 acres and 24 acres respectively. The petition stated that, *"the case of occupiers of reclaimed land is one of particular hardship. Their farms are the result of their hard toil and unremitting industry; the soil is at best very inferior; the climate so moist as to make the harvests extremely precarious; that the small holders with the greatest care and frugality, can realise only a scant subsistence. That the interest on the cost of reclamation would alone be a reasonable rent and the proposed increase is exorbitant and oppressive."*

8. The gully above the McGinnis family home.
© R Henderson

The proposed revised rent each for both James and Patrick was £20, an increase of 66% and 100% respectively.

The brothers added their names to the list of tenants petitioning the Fishmongers' Company, their farms listed to highlight the unjust burden placed on small holdings of the large rental increases. The Court passed the resolution that, *"having regard to the course of recent legislation relating to land in Ireland, this court is of the opinion that it would be desirable that the Company should, at the proper time, sell their Irish estate to the occupying tenants, so that each tenant may have the opportunity of purchasing the freehold of his own holding on reasonable terms."*

However, it wasn't until the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act 1885 that tenants were able to apply for a government loan to enable them to buy their land.

The house, built around 1830 of locally quarried stone, replaced two previous homes which had occupied the site. The first was swept away by a flood and the second destroyed by fire.

A large barn adjoined the building on the right to store grain and livestock and a little garden lay within a small wall which enclosed the front of the house. A small stream runs from the north past the front of the house. The hill behind the house marked with a dark cleft through which another stream runs.

Molly was the second youngest of seven, she had three sisters, Sarah Ann, Winifreda Una and Rosanna and three brothers, Patrick, John and George. Her younger sister, Rosanna died aged only nine in 1893.

9. The McGinnis home 2012.
©R Henderson

She died from bronchitis complicated by a spinal disability that she had suffered from the age of three. The disability was likely to have been the result of polio or spinal tuberculosis which was prevalent at that time. Records show that the family held land in the area from the early 1800s, however, family stories suggest that the family originated in the Banagher area prior to that. What is known is that Molly's grandfather, also named Patrick, was born in 1796, married a lady named Sarah Carton, raised at least three sons and possibly two daughters, lived and died on the farm. Her grandparents, Patrick and Sarah, are buried in the family plot at St. Finlough's Chapel, Loughermore. The present church, built and consecrated in 1841, has seen five generations of baptisms, marriages and burials of this branch of the McGinnis family. Although not all the family are noted on the family headstones, confusingly, those who are, have managed to use three different spellings of the name which has not endeared them to the present generation of family history hunters.

Family stories recount that their meagre income from the land was supplemented by the production of whiskey, stilled in the cellar, which was reputed to be so good that people came from four counties to buy it. The house was built with the still incorporated into the cellar and the flue travelling up and into the chimney for the fire so that the resulting smoke would not alert the revenue men. In reality, the local police sergeant was reputed to be one of the family's most satisfied customers. Ironically, the family generally have been known to be teetotal, perhaps because of their experience of the damage done by the overindulgence of alcohol.

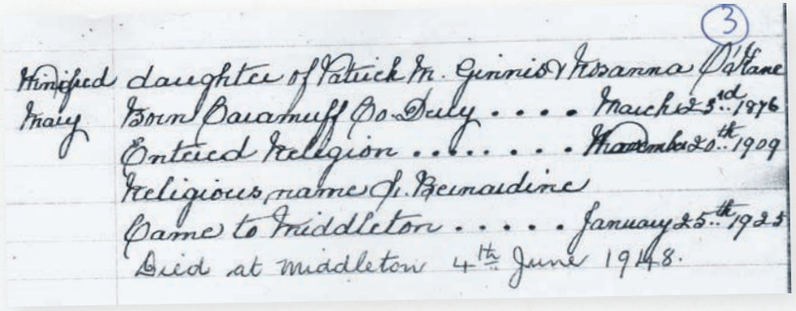
10. Roseann Maginnis and her mother-in-law, Sarah Maginnis (nee Carton) circa 1860.
©R Henderson

The family income was also possibly supplemented by the shell banks of Lough Foyle, which continued to be a source of income for local farmers well into the 1960s.

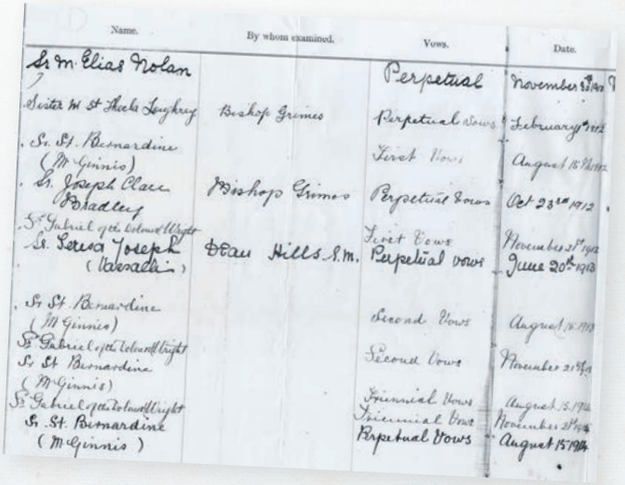
11. The view towards Dunbrock from Loughermore Road.
© R Henderson

This additional income provided the means to enable Patrick to send his sons by train from Carrichue Station to the newly opened St. Columb's College Grammar School in Londonderry.

Molly was schooled at the nearby Dunbrock National School. It is probable Molly would have commenced school in the autumn of 1885 aged 5 years old and attended until the summer of 1892, apart from periods when she would have been expected to help on the farm during harvest time. However, Molly's father clearly believed in the education of not just his sons, as Molly was encouraged to continue her studies. It helped that she was not the eldest daughter and it fell to Sarah as the eldest to help her mother in the home.


(3)
Winifred daughter of Patrick M. Ginnis & Rosanna O'Kane
Mary Born Carnmuff Co. Derry .... March 25th 1876
Entered Religion ..... November 20th 1909
Religious name Sr. Bernardine
Came to Middleton ..... January 25th 1925
Died at Middleton 4th June 1948.

Her sister, Winifreda Una, born on 23rd March 1876, was a devout and spiritual girl, quiet and solitary. Encouraged by her family in her faith, she left the family home and entered the Order of the Sisters of Nazareth.


Name.	By whom examined.	Vows.	Date.
Sr M. Elias Nolan		Perpetual	November 21st 1911
Sister M. St. Thecla Loughrey	Bishop Grimes	Perpetual Vows	February 2nd 1912
Sr. St. Bernardine (M. Ginnis)		First Vows	August 15th 1912
Sr. Joseph Clare Bradley	Bishop Grimes	Perpetual Vows	Oct 23rd 1913
Sr. Teresa Joseph (Nevada)	Dean Hills P.M.	First Vows / Perpetual Vows	November 21st 1913 / June 20th 1918
Sr. St. Bernardine (M. Ginnis)		Second Vows	August 15th 1917
Sr. Gabriel of the Sacred Heart		Second Vows	November 21st 1917
Sr. St. Bernardine (M. Ginnis)		Triennial Vows	August 15th 1918
Sr. Gabriel of the Sacred Heart		Triennial Vows	November 21st 1918
Sr. St. Bernardine (M. Ginnis)		Perpetual Vows	August 15th 1921

12. Winifreda's record of training as a nun.
©R Henderson

She became a novitiate on 20th November 1909 and took her First Vows in August 1912. She took her Perpetual Vows in August 1914, taking the name of Sister St. Bernadine. In January 1925, she was sent by the Order to New Zealand to care for the elderly and infirm in their residential home. Winifreda Una remained in New Zealand and corresponded with her sister and family but she never returned to Ireland nor saw her family again. She worked and lived in the Order's home in Middleton and died there aged 72 in June 1948. It is unlikely that the family expected Winifreda to be sent so far away, or that she would so willingly go.

The Mother of the Sisters of Nazareth in New Zealand, Sister Marie Townsend, expressed their appreciation many years later, stating that *"the Sisters of Nazareth thanked Winifreda for the many years of devoted service she gave God through her life as a Sister of Nazareth... and so far from her home and her loved ones."*

This is first and foremost the story of one woman and it is not the intention of this book to attempt to outline the momentous events which preceded Molly's life and shaped the country she lived in. However, it is important to give a very brief overview of the major political events during Molly's life which resulted in a woman from rural Ireland becoming engaged in a global conflict.

Molly's birth, in January 1880, is remarkably sandwiched between two events which would have a lasting impact on both Ireland and the world. October 1879 saw the formation of the Dual Alliance between the recently united Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the UK General Election, in April 1880, saw Charles Stewart Parnell emerge as the Chairman of the Home Rule grouping within the British Parliament. Few would have predicted in 1879 the turn of events that unfolded which would lead Britain into war with what eventually became the Triple Alliance in 1914.

13. Nazareth House, Christchurch, New Zealand.

> While a Bill for the further enlargement of the German army is before the Federal Council, Mr Gladstone has been writing to Professor Harburo, of the Neapolitan Congress, expressing his feelings of shame and horror at the monstrous armaments maintained ostensibly for the preservation of the peace, and stating his determination to advocate disbarment in his place in the British Parliament.
>
> *Londonderry Sentinel*, 24th January 1880

With the Liberals under Gladstone failing to win an overall majority in the 1885 UK General Election, Parnell and his Irish Parliamentary Party, who won 85 seats in Ireland, held the balance of power at Westminster. Although the Home Rule Bills of 1886 and 1893 failed to reach the statute books, there was growing concern in the predominantly Protestant province of Ulster. Besides the fear of 'Rome Rule' from Dublin, Ulster Protestants were also alarmed at the prospect of peasant Ireland hindering its industrial growth. Whilst the phrase, 'Ulster will fight, and Ulster will be right' may have been wrongly attributed to Lord Randolph Churchill, it was a reflection of the indignation felt amongst Ulster Protestants at the time.

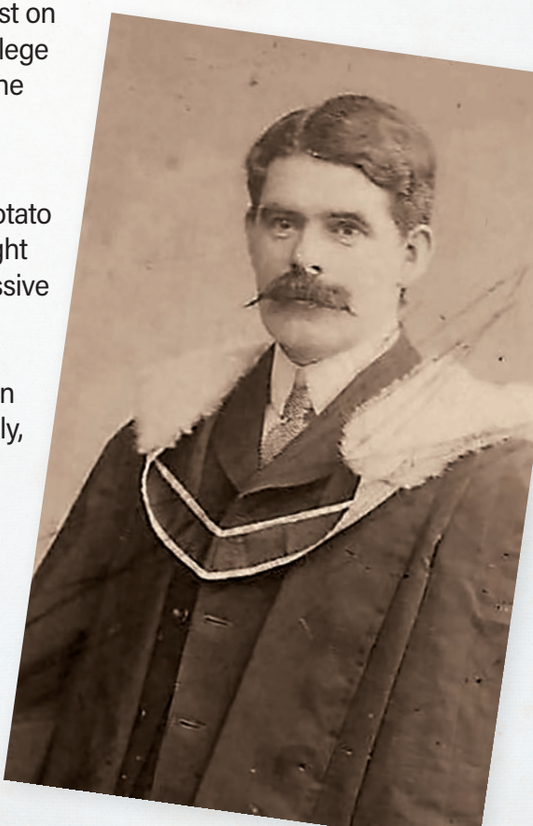
The political background to Molly's early life is one of turbulent geopolitics and ever increasing division at home, to the extent that it could be argued that the outbreak of the First World War was an anomaly in Irish history, as it was welcomed by both Nationalist and Unionist traditions on the island of Ireland. That this unity has largely (with some honourable exceptions and recent appraisals) been airbrushed from history is one of the many reasons why stories such as Molly's have been lost to subsequent generations.

3 Preparation for War 1905-1914

After leaving school, Molly's life was one of domestic duties and supporting her mother in the home. Accounts suggest that her mother was strict and cautious. Her older sister, Sarah, was reputed to have a fierce and hard temperament. It has been said that Sarah was engaged to be married and her mother warned the prospective groom that her daughter's temper would not make their marriage a happy one. In any case, she remained a spinster as did Molly. Molly herself spoke of her affection for a local Protestant lad named William but that the romance never had an opportunity to blossom, so close a watch her mother kept on her daughters.

In 1908, Molly's mother died, and this may have been a factor in Winifreda's decision to embrace her calling. Certainly, Molly had already left home to undertake further studies in Dublin where her brother, Patrick, had by this time commenced his medical studies in the Royal College of Science for Ireland. He was described as a very bright, intelligent boy and this was evidenced by his successful career, taking a post on graduation at Albert Agricultural College as Professor of Bacteriology, where he lectured and undertook research.

The College was instrumental in developing the improved strain of potato which was able to withstand the blight that had decimated crops for successive generations and held such horrors for those who had lived through the famine years of 1845-1849. It is known that Patrick supported his sister, Molly, and even paid for part of her tuition. Her decision to undertake nursing may have been inspired by Florence Nightingale who had become famous for her pioneering work in



14. Dr Patrick Macginnis circa 1910.

15. Nurse in uniform, 1880s. Wellcome Collection.

Crimea, as Margaret Huxley, a leading figure in Dublin's nursing circles had been inspired by her several decades before.

In Ireland, nurse training was organised along denominational lines with voluntary and state hospitals set up by either Catholic or Protestant institutions. Catherine McAuley was instrumental in setting up the Order of the Sisters of Mercy and Mary Aikenhead set up the Sisters of Charity, both of which had an ethos of caring for the sick and the poor. They were active throughout Dublin and beyond for providing nursing care and support for the needy. Catherine McAuley used her considerable inheritance to open a house in Baggot Street, Dublin as a school for girls and a shelter for homeless servants and women.

The Sisters of Charity under Mary Aikenhead's direction set up St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin, one of the earliest public hospitals built. The hospital was staffed and run by nurses. The work of these Orders could be seen as the start of a structured nursing system in Ireland. As nursing was traditionally provided by women within a religious order, often these women were not trained. These Orders were disinclined to support the campaign to formally recognise nursing as a regulated profession, perhaps because they perceived their work as a calling rather than something that required recognition, regulation or legislation. Florence Nightingale did not support the British Nurse Association register which required an examination to be passed before inclusion with the aim of excluding the working class in an effort to raise the social status of the profession. She observed that whilst the objective had its merits, "some of our best could not pass an examination with credit, while some of our worst could gain the most credible place."

NURSES WANTED

WANTED, a clean, smart, young R. C. Girl as Nurserymaid; must be well recommended. – N1702, this office

WANTED, Thoroughly respectable young French Girl, to look after two children, aged 8 and 9, and do some light housework, Apply Olney, Foxrock 4 27

WANTED, experienced Nurse; entire charge of infant from month; Protestant preferred; send copies discharges, stating age and wages expected, Address "Z 3686, Nurse, this office

WANTED, for gentleman's country place, Co. Fermanagh, a Lady Nurse or Mother's Help, entire charge of three children, youngest 4; strict with children, first lessons, good needlewoman, no music, religion not objected; wages £18 Address "Z 3671 Nurse" this office

WANTED immediately, experienced young Protestant Nurse, able to take charge of infant, must be well recommended. Reply stating age, wages, N 1946, this office

WANTED, superior Girl or Lady, Protestant, 17, help with two children, mail car, salary £10 – "Help", Irish Times office, Bray

Irish News, 26th January 1908

The Sisters of Mercy were among the first nurses to go to the Crimean War in response to the need for care and, in 1853, operated several hospitals there which were not under the supervision of Florence Nightingale. Sister Mary Clare Moor, who worked and studied with Catherine McAuley in Dublin, was part of that group in Scutari. She and Florence Nightingale became colleagues and she no doubt imparted her knowledge gained over twenty two years of nursing. Florence Nightingale had tried to obtain a place at St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin, operated by the Sisters of Charity, on two separate occasions in 1844 and 1852. Mary Clare and Nightingale corresponded for the rest of their lives, discussing and exploring nursing techniques and management. The title, "Sister" applied to a senior nurse is a direct result of the historical association between the care of the sick and religious institutions.

Nurses in common literature had often been portrayed in a poor light, as drunk and dissolute. Hospitals were voluntary and paid for by donations, legacies left by benefactors and public subscription. It was not until the 1800s that formal training and certification was considered for nursing. The only government provision was under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, whereby those without the means to support themselves had to enter their local workhouse to obtain relief and support. The conditions within these institutions were harsh and difficult, deliberately so in many cases, to deter all but the most desperate to enter their walls.

Florence Nightingale, on her return from Crimea, campaigned for improvement in nursing standards and the formalisation of training. Her use of statistics, carefully tailored to support her arguments and her first-hand knowledge of the atrocities of war raised awareness of the importance of professionally trained, competent nurses. Losses suffered by the Army during these wars were exacerbated by the spread of diseases and infection, not just by the damage inflicted by the enemy. It was during the Boer Wars of 1880 and 1899, that nursing and the care of the injured was undertaken by trained professionals for the first time.

Molly applied and was accepted to train as a nurse in the City of Dublin Nursing Institute in 1906/07.

NURSING RULES AND REGULATIONS CIRCA 1887

Source: *Management and Leadership for Nursing Managers,* Russell C Swansberg, 1996

1. Daily sweep and mop the floors of your ward, dust the patient's furniture and window sills.
2. Maintain an even temperature in your ward by bringing a scuttle of coal for the day's business.
3. Light is important to observe the patient's condition. Therefore, each day fill kerosene lamps, clean chimneys and trim wicks. Wash the windows once a week.
4. The nurse's notes are important in aiding the physician's work. Make your pens carefully, you may whittle nibs to your individual taste.
5. Each nurse on day duty will report every day at 7.00am and leave at 8.00pm except on Sabbath on which day you will be off from 12.00pm until 2.00pm.
6. Graduate nurses in good standing with the Director of Nurses will be given an evening off each week for courting purposes or two evenings a week if you go regularly to Church.
7. Each nurse should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of her earnings for her benefits during her declining years so that she will not become a burden. For example, if you earn £20 a month you should set aside £10.
8. Any nurse who smokes, uses liquor in any form, gets her hair done at a beauty shop or frequents dance halls will give the Director of Nurses good reason to suspect her worth, intentions and integrity.
9. The nurse who performs her labours and serves her patients and doctors faithfully and without fault for a period of five years will be given an increase by the hospital administration of 2 pennies a day.

As the Sisters of Nazareth had a large house in Baggot Street at that time, it is possible her sister, Winifreda, was also in Dublin. More likely, the presence of her brother there would have influenced her decision.

The City of Dublin Nursing Institute had been set up in 1883 by the Board of Directors of the City of Dublin Hospital. Its purpose was the 'training of women as nurses for the sick in hospitals and in private families.'

Entrants were required to be over 18 and under 40, have the ability to read and write well and bring a number of testimonials of good character. Successful applicants undertook a three month probation, on a salary of £10 for the first year. Thereafter, they would earn £15 per annum for the following three years. If entrants undertook a further three year period, their earnings rose to £20 per year. Successful candidates could be awarded a 'special diploma,' if deserved.

The first graduates completed their studies in 1886. Regulations were tough in terms of expected conduct and behaviour, but not clear what constituted a misdemeanour.

16. City of Dublin Hospital, Upper Baggot Street, Dublin.

©R Henderson

Probationers were provided with a home, boarding (that is, food and housekeeping) and washing facilities. It was forbidden to receive gratuities from patients, as was the use of wine or spirits, notably beer was not included. A probationer would be the "subject of instant dismissal for disobedience of orders, culpable neglect or other misconduct."

The City of Dublin Nursing Institute was so successful that by 1890 it had 36 probationers and 63 qualified nurses working in the City of Dublin Hospital across the road, and throughout Dublin in a private capacity in peoples' homes.

It was recognised that trained, qualified nurses were material to the fabric and day-to-day running of an efficient hospital. Of the 25 nurses sent to assist in the Boer War in 1899 as part of the Army Nursing Service Reserve, five were Irish nurses who had trained in the City of Dublin Institute.

In 1901, Catherine Black, from Ramelton in Donegal, had presented herself for interview by the Matron at the Institute and was promptly turned away. In her memoirs she described her eighteen-year-old self as *"very small and underdeveloped ... I certainly did not look fitted for the strain of nursing".* The duties of any probationer involved cleaning wards and feeding and bathing patients and were considered heavy work. Molly, who was tall and strongly built, had no such problem being accepted. Incidentally, Catherine had a photographer take her picture made up to look much older and sturdier, then was accepted by another hospital and went on to serve with the Queen Alexander Imperial Military Service, saw active service abroad and a distinguished nursing career post war. Following the war she became the private nurse of King George V and was present at his death in 1936.

17. Dublin circa 1900s.

©NLI L_ROY_01704 National Library of Ireland on The Commons

Life in Dublin would have been very different from that of a small farm in the far north-west of Ireland. Life on the farm would have been busy, tiring hard work, with little or no opportunity for entertainment. In contrast, Dublin was a bustling thriving place. In those first few weeks it must have been a terrifying place, streets thronged with people, tram cars screeching past, strange smells, loud noises, the sounds of people in the house next door and the streets never really quiet at night. There were theatres, fairs, shows and no end of entertainment.

In Ireland, 1906 was a year of many notable events. The Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, was completed, being the first air-conditioned public building in the world and Belfast City Hall was also completed. Alice Perry became the first woman to graduate with a degree in civil engineering in Ireland or Britain from Queen's College, Galway. In education, the Catholic hierarchy ruled out any prospect of mixed education at Trinity College, Dublin. In sport, Cliftonville and Distillery shared the Irish League after two playoff matches ended in draws which Molly, an avid football fan would have enjoyed.

On the wider world stage, a conference held in Switzerland, attended by thirty-five states, including Great Britain, resulted in the adoption of the "Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field."

18. Red Cross Flag.
Public Domain

What has become known as the Geneva Convention, is an international treaty that contains rules to be followed to try to minimise the barbarity of war. An agreed symbol that would identify all Army Medical Services, and provide protection for those who displayed the emblem, was adopted and became the Red Cross. The red cross on a white background has been accepted as the recognised symbol of medical services, whether of a regular army unit or a recognised voluntary aid society working with the consent of the military authorities.

After studying for three years at the City of Dublin Institute, Molly graduated in 1909 as a trained nurse.

In the 1911 census she is listed at home in Carnamuff but there is no evidence that she ever lived at home again after she left in 1906 to train in Dublin. The census lists her occupation as "Nurse (trained)", an indication of the growing respectability of the profession, that it was important to differentiate between those who had studied and obtained a recognised qualification and those who had learned the care of the sick through custom and practice in the home and through their family relations.

It is not known if Molly, in her training, was considered "deserving" of a "special diploma" but the reputation of the Institute would have served her well in any future job applications.

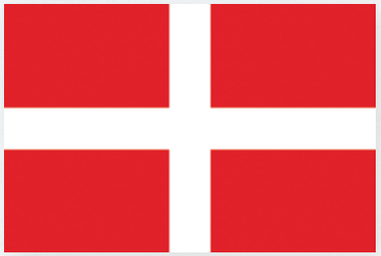
Molly would have been aware of the role played by the Order of St. John in Dublin at that time. The organisation is dedicated to the teaching and practice of medical first aid. The Order of St. John has its roots in the 11th century. Initially, the aim of the organisation was to provide care for sick, poor and injured pilgrims on the road to worship in Jerusalem, but because of unrest in the area, the Order soon extended to providing pilgrims with an armed escort to journey to Jerusalem and back to Europe safely. The Order of St. John imperceptibly became structured as a military organisation without losing its charitable character.

To distinguish themselves they wore, over their armour, a long red tunic, or surcoat, which had a plain white cross on it. This was the coat-of-arms of the Hospitallers of the Order of St. John. It was also on their banner. The eight-pointed cross was used for their church dress, and gradually came to be used as a badge. The emblem known as the cross of St. John is often referred to as the Maltese Cross. The Knights Hospitallers Museum in Valetta, Malta, catalogues the long history and association with the island. The knights held power on the island for almost 300 years until they lost control to Napoleon in 1798.

19. St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, London
©R Henderson

There was also a house established in Ireland at Kilmainham, Dublin, in the 12th century, the Abbot of which held a strong influence on local affairs of the time. The Order of St. John headquarters at St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, London also dates from the 12th century. Through the Reformation and afterwards it was put to a number of uses such as a pub, a private home and a public register office, before it again became the home of the Order and Queen Victoria granted its charter in 1888.

The eight point cross on a black background symbolised the crucifixion of Christ, the white to represent purity on black to represent humility - the four arms to represent the Christian virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, and the eight points signifying each of the beatitudes listed by Christ in his Sermon on the Mount.



20. Order of St. John Flag.
Public Domain

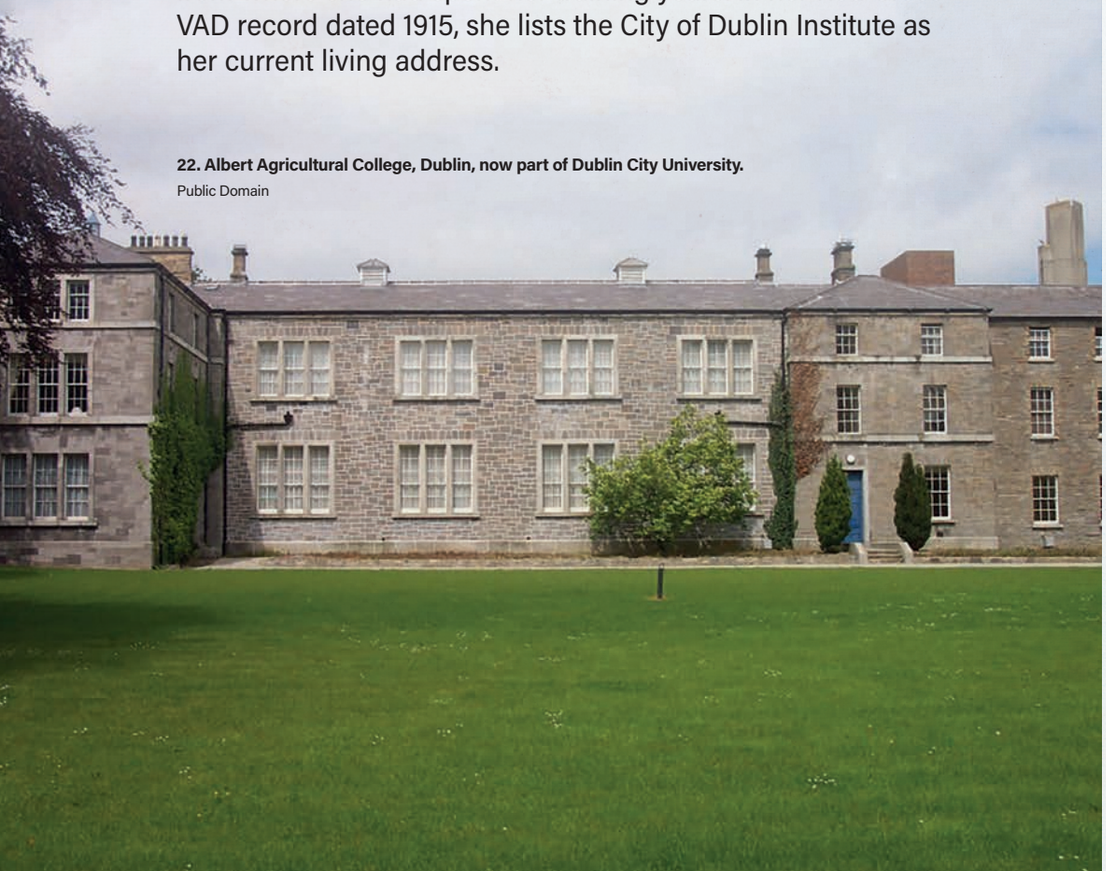
21. Order of St. John Cross.
Public Domain

Following the First World War, the beatitudes were replaced by meanings which had a more secular orientation each associated with the qualities of a good First Aider as detailed below:

- **Observant** - "that he may note the causes and signs of injury"
- **Tactful** - "that he may without thoughtless questions learn the symptoms and history of the case, and secure the confidence of the patients and bystanders"
- **Resourceful** - "that he may use to the best advantage whatever is at hand to prevent further damage, and to assist Nature's efforts to repair the mischief already done"
- **Dextrous** - "that he may handle a patient without causing unnecessary pain, and use appliances efficiently and neatly"
- **Explicit** - "that he may give clear instructions to the patient or the bystanders how best to assist him"
- **Discriminating** - "that he may decide which of several injuries presses most for treatment by himself, what can best be left for the patient or bystanders to do, and what should be left for the medical men"
- **Persevering** - "that he may continue his efforts, though not at first successful"
- **Sympathetic** - "that he may give real comfort and encouragement to the suffering"

The introduction of non-religious meanings highlights the organisation's determination to introduce changes that reflected a more modern approach. The St. John Ambulance Association was established in Great Britain in 1877. Branches were set up in Dublin and Belfast in 1881 and 1886 respectively. The St. John Ambulance Brigade was established in 1892, and the first division in Ireland was the Belfast Fire Brigade Ambulance Division. The Dublin (St. James Gate) Ambulance division was formed in the Guinness Brewery in 1903. The first division formed to accept members of the public was the City of Dublin Ambulance Division in 1905, and the first to accept women was the City of Dublin Nursing Division in 1909. This was likely the division Molly joined on completion of her studies that year.

Shortly after her graduation from the City of Dublin Nursing Institute, Molly obtained a post as night sister at the Fitzwilliam Nursing Home in Upper Pembroke Street, a few streets away from where she had spent her training years. In her Red Cross VAD record dated 1915, she lists the City of Dublin Institute as her current living address.



22. Albert Agricultural College, Dublin, now part of Dublin City University.
Public Domain

ARMS TO BE CARRIED OPENLY

Belfast, Wednesday. – The Headquarter Staff of the Ulster Volunteer Force to-day issued orders to the officers commanding regimental districts that the time has come when, in the discretion of the officers commanding the several districts, arms may be carried openly in public by members of the Ulster Volunteer Force, and that any attempt to seize arms from individuals who may be carrying them in accordance with these instructions is to be resisted in accordance with former instructions issued on this subject in Belfast.

Derry Journal, 3rd July 1914

MACHINE GUNS FOR DERRY

Another Coup by Irish Volunteers (Special Telegram.)

Dublin, Tuesday Night. – Our correspondent wires:- I learn on good authority that on Sunday evening while the police and coastguards and revenue officers were busy looking for arms at Bullock and Coliemore Harbours, at Dalkey, a fishing trawler put into Kingstown Harbour, and landed twelve machine guns, which were, it is stated, despatched by motors to Derry and Belfast for the National Volunteers. Those responsible for this coup are unknown in Kingstown.

Derry Journal, 29th July 1914

23. Front of 27 Upper Pembroke Street, Dublin.
©R Henderson

It has recently come to light that supporting his sister, Molly, in her training, was not Patrick's only act of philanthropy. A family member has recounted a story in which her grandfather, Michael, attended college in Dublin and trained as a teacher, supported and paid for by Patrick. On graduation, Michael obtained a post teaching at the Long Tower School in Derry/Londonderry. On the introduction of partition in 1922, staff were required to take an oath of loyalty to the King, which he and a number of staff refused to do and were subsequently relieved of their posts. Patrick assisted his cousin, Michael, in obtaining a post in the National School in Carndonagh, where he set up home with his wife. Sadly, Michael died a short time later, leaving a wife and young family in a house provided for by the school. In order that they would not be made homeless, Patrick arranged to pay the rent and help support Michael's widow.

There is some family information that suggests Patrick was a friend of Patrick Pearse, who was said to be a regular visitor to his home in Dublin. There is also speculation that Patrick provided first aid lessons to young women, members of the Cumman na mBan in the lead up to the Easter Rising.

ASSASSINATION

Austrian Archduke and Wife
Shot Dead in Serajivo
Two Arrests

Vienna, Sunday. – News has just been received here from Serajivo that the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated to-day while driving through the streets of the town.

Serajivo, Sunday. – As the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, were driving through the streets to-day, a young man, a high school student, fired two shots from a Browning pistol at their carriage.

Both were mortally wounded and died in a few minutes.

Two attempts were made on the lives of the Archduke and his wife, a bomb being thrown at their motor while they were driving to the Town Hall by a compositor, who was immediately arrested.

Though the Archduke and his Consort escaped, several other persons were injured. The author of the second attempt was also arrested, both criminals being almost lynched by the crowd. – Reuter.

London, Sunday. – On inquiry this afternoon at the Austro-Hungarian Embassy in London a representative of the Press Association was informed by the Ambassador that he had up to that time received no message from Vienna regarding the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in the streets of Serajivo to-day. The only message he had received was the one circulated by Reuter just previously. Sir Charles Cust had visited the Embassy to make enquiries on behalf of the King, and he asked that any messages received by the Ambassador might be telephoned to Buckingham Palace at once.

Derry Journal, 29th June 1914

Whilst it is not known if Molly's brother had any direct involvement in local politics, his position at the Albert Agricultural College was said to have become untenable and his employment contract was not renewed. His small Dublin medical practice was not sufficient to support his family, therefore, Patrick and his family left Dublin in early 1916, relocating to Brimington, near Chesterfield in Derbyshire. Molly was a frequent visitor to Patrick's home, having a close fondness for Patrick's wife, also called Molly.

Meanwhile, with violence in the air and Ireland sitting on a tinderbox, a shot from Sarajevo reverberated around Europe.

At home, the Irish question had tasked the British Government to the point where war in Europe almost took them by surprise. Winston Churchill, as Lord Lieutenant of the Navy, had tried to instil a sense of urgency about the need to act in Europe and warned the cabinet about impending war. In heated discussions about parish boundaries, he observed in July 1914, *"The parishes of Fermanagh and Tyrone faded back into the mists and squalls of Ireland, and a strange light began to fall on the map of Europe."*

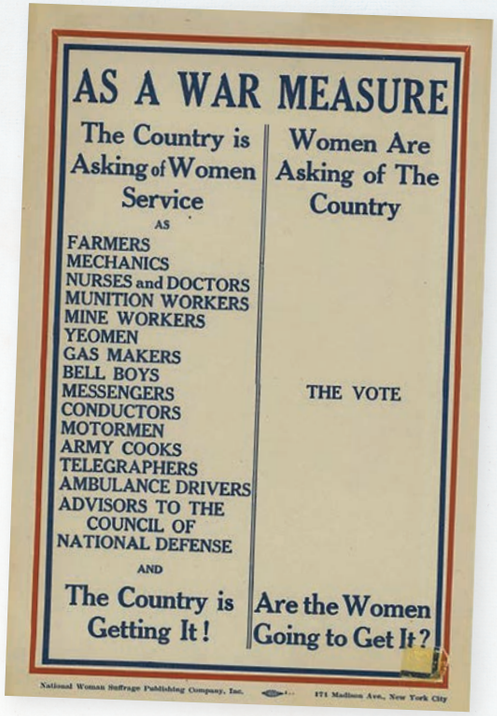
24. War Recruitment Poster circa 1917.
©Library of Congress LC-USZC4-11005

Domestic quarrels over self-governance now seemed a secondary concern to the leaders of both Unionism and Nationalism alike. Redmond's call for nationalists to go *"wherever the firing line extends"* led to hundreds of thousands of his countrymen enlisting. Carson also implored Protestants to sign up and serve.

Both sides signed up with the same intention - to demonstrate their loyalty to the British Empire. They only diverged on what they wanted in return for this loyalty - Home Rule for Nationalists and the precise opposite for Unionists.

However, in the autumn of 1914 these differences seemed trivial in the wake of the threat from Europe. Domestic quarrels could wait.

With a continental conflict emerging, the island of Ireland found a common cause to unite behind, which would temporarily alleviate domestic troubles.



25. Women's Suffrage Poster circa 1915.
© Butler Centre for Arkansas Studies

The increasing militancy of women campaigning for equal rights, part of the suffrage movement, combined to create diversions and concerns about home affairs. Events in Europe almost overtook Britain before they were mobilised to take action. The agitation of both Nationalists and Unionists and the activities of suffragettes ceased on the declaration of war, almost as if the act of declaring war served to give the Government a breathing space to try to find a solution to its own problems at home.

26. Archduke Ferdinand, his wife Sophia and their children circa 1910.
Public Domain

The outbreak of war put, for many, the fight for equality at home on the back burner.

On the 28th June 1914, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, travelled to the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, where he became the victim of assassination at the hands of the Serb nationalist 'Black Hand'.

After the assassination, Germany promised to support Austria-Hungary in their response against Serbia. The finger of blame was pointed at Belgrade and the terms of an ensuing ultimatum were completely unpalatable to the Serbs.

Consequently, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia and Russia mobilised its troops in response to this. When Russia refused to heed Germany's warning to cease mobilising, Berlin declared war on Russia. Due to France's alliance with Russia, they subsequently declared war on Germany in solidarity with their allies.

Despite Britain's friendship with both France and Russia at this point, they were under no legal obligation to go to war in support of either. Germany was aware of this and had devised the Schlieffen Plan almost ten years earlier in anticipation of a dual front war against both France and Russia. Germany planned to invade France first by going through Belgium, circumnavigating the defences on the French-German border. After a quick victory against the French, Germany could then divert her resources towards the newly renamed Petrograd in the east.

There was one obstacle to this problem. Britain had signed the Treaty of London in 1839, recognising Belgian independence and her right to neutrality.

German military officials, although aware of the treaty, simply believed that Britain would not be prepared to go to war over 'Little Belgium' and felt that the United Kingdom would take the opportunity to sit out the conflict.

However, previous diplomatic scrapes between Britain and Germany had provoked outrage in Britain, and on 4th August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany.

27. War Recruitment Poster designed by Robert Baden Powell.

GERMANY DECLARES WAR AGAINST GREAT BRITAIN

Austrian Archduke and Wife

London, Tuesday. – The Press Association states:-

Reuter's Agency learns that Germany has declared War at seven o'clock to-night.

WAR DECLARATION

Official Statement.

London, Wednesday, 12.30 a.m. – The Press Association is officially informed that his Majesty's Government has been notified that Germany has declared war on this country and that his Majesty's Ambassador has been handed his passports. A state of war therefore exists between Germany and this country from to-day.

Corrected Statement

London, Wednesday, 12.45 a.m. – The Press Association says a corrected official statement says the declaration of war was made by England upon Germany.

ENGLAND DECLARES WAR

Ambassador Leaves Berlin.

London, Wednesday, 1 a.m. – The Press Association says:- The following is the text of the amended official statement issued by the Government to-night – "Owing to the summary rejection of the request made by his Majesty's Government that the neutrality of Belgium will be respected his Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin has received his passport, and his Majesty's Government have declared to the German Government that a state of war exists between Great Britain and Germany as from 11 p.m. on August 4th."

Derry Journal, 5th August 1914

4 Women At War 1914-1916

The War Office, following their experiences in the Crimean War and the first and second Boer Wars, considered steps needed to be taken to ensure the country was equipped both to mobilise in the event of war and to care for those who were injured as a result.

There was an emphasis on care during wartime being provided by nurses based within organisations aligned with military authorities.

In 1909, the War Office established a scheme for the organisation of voluntary aid in England and Wales, this was extended to include Scotland in 1910. It is not known when it was extended to Ireland, but it must be assumed that it occurred at the same time as Scotland, or shortly thereafter. The Voluntary Aid Organisation, established as part of the Territorial Army Scheme, consisted of both men and women who became members of the Voluntary Aid Detachment or VADs. The VADs consisted of members of the Ambulance Department, the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the British Red Cross and Territorial Forces Association, all of whom had training in first aid and nursing.

In the early days of the Voluntary Aid Organisation a uniform had not been planned, only an armband or brassard with the Red Cross insignia to signify their role. By 1913, the British Red Cross had made uniform mandatory. VADs under the auspices of the Order of St. John wore their own insignia and uniform.

28. Advertisement for St. John Ambulance and Red Cross Uniforms suppliers.

29. St. John Ambulance indoor and outdoor uniform circa 1917.
©IWMQ30375

A VAD was required to purchase 3 dresses, 16 aprons, 1 hat, 1 overcoat, 12 collars, 8 caps, 4 white belts, 6 pairs of sleeves, and 1 Macintosh apron which could total a cost of £6 12s 8d. In many ways the membership of VADs by mainly well-to-do women was not only because of social status and education, but because of the costs incurred for uniforms.

30. St. John Ambulance brassard worn on the right arm.
©Inver Museum

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, there were many appeals for individuals to come forward to support the war effort, but it was not until the early part of 1915, that efforts were increased to appeal to the public to make a contribution. St. John Ambulance started immediately to enrol trained nurses for work in France and Belgium; by the end of the year about 2,000 nurses had enrolled, some of whom were prepared to work voluntarily without salary.

By the summer of 1914, there were over 2,500 Voluntary Aid Detachments in Britain. Of the 74,000 VAD members in 1914, two-thirds were women and girls.

The Joint War Committee report issued in 1919, on the work of the Order of St. John, stated that 228 men's detachments and 471 women's detachments were registered with the War Office prior to and during the war. The report states this was a total of 12,385 men and 19,930 women volunteering in every capacity required from orderlies, ambulance drivers, cooks, cleaners and assistant nurses.

Katharine Furse, often described as the founder of the Voluntary Aid Detachment Force, enrolled as a member in 1909. In October 1914, she was sent to France with the first VAD group abroad, but their role was restricted to serving as canteen workers and cooks. By January 1915, Katharine had returned to London and was appointed commander-in-chief to take charge of the VAD organisation. Initially it was not intended that VADs, as the female members became known, would serve overseas, but as the War continued, the need for support nearer the Front became acute.

31. Two members of the Women's Police Service with a male police constable at Euston Station, London, 1918.
Public Domain

The British Red Cross was reluctant to allow civilian women a role in overseas hospitals and military authorities would not accept VADs at the front line because of their lack of military training.

Eventually this changed, and restrictions were removed. The growing shortage of trained nurses opened the door for VADs to serve overseas in military hospitals. Female volunteers over the age of twenty-three and with more than three months' hospital experience were accepted for overseas service.

By the summer of 1915, VADs were being sent to hospitals and clearing stations on the Western Front. By the end of 1918, 38,000 had worked as assistant nurses, cooks, ambulance drivers and other support workers.

There were a number of military nursing organisations, the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, the Royal Air Force Nursing Service and the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service that had been in existence for some time.

VADs provided an important support to these groups and although equally involved in the theatre of war they were not directly under the control of the military. Their work was restricted to field hospitals close to the Front and in long term care and convalescent homes in the UK.

Although there has been a perception that the organisation only accepted those from middle and upper classes of society, the reality is that the requirement set in place by the organisation of the ability to read and write, together with the aforementioned expense of uniforms, automatically excluded those who had neither the means nor opportunity to obtain an education in the early part of the 20th century. It must be acknowledged that the majority of those who volunteered and saw active service, particularly in hospitals at home and abroad, were exposed to hardship and experiences they were not accustomed to. New techniques of warfare, such as nerve gas and shell fire caused horrendous injures and deformities that even seasoned doctors and nurses were not prepared for.

By 1916, military hospitals at home were employing about 8,000 trained nurses with about 126,000 beds, and there were 4,000 nurses abroad with approximately 93,000 beds. By 1918, there were about 80,000 VAD members, some 12,000 nurses working in the military hospitals and almost 60,000 unpaid volunteers working in auxiliary hospitals, both at home and abroad. It has been estimated that over 4,500 Irish women served as VADs. For those who were paid, it was suggested that a suitable rate of pay would be £20, as fully trained certified staff nurses were paid £40 per annum.

VADs were an uneasy addition to military hospitals' staff. For the most part they lacked the advanced skill and discipline of trained professional nurses and were often critical of the nursing profession. Emma Duffin, a VAD who hailed from Belfast and saw service in Egypt and France, noted in her reminiscences that, *"All the Sisters looked careworn and depressed. They more or less ignored us but there was a feeling in the atmosphere of disapproval which we did not fail to notice."* Many accounts suggest that there was an element of snobbishness on the part of VADs towards trained nurses too, but there is no doubt that this eased as they worked and struggled in difficult situations together and relations improved as the war stretched on.

VAD members increased their skill and efficiency and trained nurses were more accepting of the VADs' contributions, often assisting in their training and encouraging their growing expertise. During four years of war, 38,000 VADs worked in hospitals and served as ambulance drivers, assistant nurses and cooks. VADs served near the Western Front and in Mesopotamia and Gallipoli. VAD hospitals were also opened in most large towns in Britain. Later, VADs were also sent to the Eastern Front. They provided an invaluable source of support to trained, professional nurses and physicians in the war effort. Many were decorated for distinguished service.

32. Voluntary Aid Detachment recruitment poster circa 1915.

However, despite the knowledge and experience gained in these difficult and demanding roles, at the end of the war, the leaders of the nursing profession agreed that untrained VADs should not be allowed onto the newly established register of nurses.

At the commencement of the war, the Red Cross and the Order of St. John were operating separately but it was recognised that a joint approach was more practical, and the Joint Committee was formed.

33. Recruitment poster 1915.
©Library of Congress LC-USZC4-11248

In October 1914, the British Red Cross and Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England combined to form the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee to maximise efficiency and avoid duplication of their work in caring for the sick and wounded.

Sara Swift, former Matron of St. Guy's Hospital, London, assumed responsibility for selecting, appointing and maintaining the nursing service and was based at St. John's Gate in Clerkenwell, at what is now the Order of St. John Museum.

The Joint Committee stated that the nurses sent to the Front had to be of an accepted standard and "*every nurse engaged ... came up to the standard of a Sister or Staff Nurse or Matron in an average London hospital.*" The report stressed that the *"Front"* was anywhere the wounded needed tending and would equally apply to Southampton or London.

The following rules were issued for the information of candidates:-

1. You must hold a certificate for three years' consecutive training of a general hospital of not less than 50 beds, and must be well recommended by your Matron.
2. Nurses not up to the required standard of training obtain posts as staff nurses at £40 per annum.*
3. If your health certificate and references are satisfactory you will be on the list for either home or foreign service. For foreign service a good knowledge of French is desirable. All nurses must be equally willing to serve on night or day duty at home or abroad.
4. If you are accepted it will be necessary for you to be inoculated against enteric, and also to be vaccinated, if not done within the last seven years.

*Matrons, Sisters-in-charge and fully trained Sisters, like Molly received a guinea a week.

5. You will be required to sign an agreement to serve in a Home hospital for a period of six months at a salary of one guinea a week, insurance, outdoor uniform, laundry at the rate of 2s 6d per week (unless otherwise provided); travelling expenses from London, board and lodging will be provided. You will be lodged at a hostel between engagements.

6. You must provide your own indoor uniform, blue cotton (or use what you have) and when on duty must wear the badge, which will be provided.

7. On and after June 7, 1917, Nurses Third Class Railway Fares to London are paid on their engagement, and back to their own homes (in the United Kingdom) on completion of their contract.

8. After the expiration of one year consecutive service with the Joint Committee the rate of pay of all Nurses to be automatically increased by 16s 8d per month, such increase to date from July 1, 1917 and to apply to all Nurses on the payroll on June 30, 1916. This increase refers to continuous employment only, allowing for the usual annual holiday (two weeks during the year, exclusive of the days used in travelling) and sick leave. Any extra leave taken renders the nurse ineligible for the above increase of salary, which only applies where continuous service has been given.

For consideration to work abroad, candidates had to meet a number of additional attributes. Suitable candidates for service abroad had to have a good personality. Molly was noted in her service record as having an *'excellent'* personality. In addition to a health certificate and preferably a recent inoculation against typhoid, a language such as French was desirable as well as a knowledge of customs and life abroad. Many would never have been outside their own county never mind travelled abroad.

34. Red Cross Poster.

35. WW1 Recruitment Poster.
©Library of Congress LC-USZC4-10986


ADVERTISEMENT.

NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY
WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 22, 1915.

CUNARD
Established 1840
EUROPE VIA LIVERPOOL
LUSITANIA
Fastest and Largest Steamer now in Atlantic Service Sails
SATURDAY, MAY 1, 10 A.M.
Transylvania..Fri., May 7, 5 P.M.
Orduna.....Tues., May 18, 10 A.M.
Tuscania....Fri., May 21, 5 P.M.
LUSITANIA..Sat., May 29, 10 A.M.
Transylvania..Fri., June 4, 5 P.M.

Gibraltar—Genoa—Naples—Piraeus
S.S. Carpathia, Thur., May 13, Noon

ROUND THE WORLD TOURS
Through bookings to all principal Ports of the World.
COMPANY'S OFFICE, 21-24 State St., N. Y.

36. Newspaper advertisement indicating Germany's intention to target shipping in the Atlantic Ocean.
Courtesy of Carlton Ware World

Molly, a member of the St. John Ambulance in Dublin, enlisted in the VAD scheme on 18th March 1915. Her salary on engagement was £1 1s 0d per week which curiously is higher than the salary agreed by the Joint Committee. Under VAD terms she served a probationary period of three months in the UK before being considered for service abroad. This was at the Red Cross Hospital at Stanhope Hall in Horncastle, Lincolnshire. Horncastle is a small market town in the north-east near the coastal town of Skegness with a population of 3,900 in the 1911 census. It would have been Molly's first introduction to day-to-day living with the experience of a country at war.

37. Stanhope Hall, Horncastle.
©Stanhope Community Hub

After the required three months, Molly transferred to the VAD Hospital at Newton Abbot in Devon on 28th June 1915. The hospital was housed in the former Newton College.

The VAD Hospital at Newton Abbot cared for wounded soldiers who were recovering from lost limbs and severe damage due to injuries from shrapnel. It was one of the first points of arrival of soldiers returning from the front across the channel. It began as a forty bed unit but quickly expanded to care for 100 patients.

The *Mid Devon Advertiser* published accounts for the hospital on 17th February 1917, stating that of the 2,560 patients cared for from its opening in November 1914 until December 1916, only six died despite being some of the most severely injured, so good was the care they received.

38. Patients and staff at Red Cross Hospital, Horncastle circa 1917.
©Horncastle Heritage Society

WITH THE RED CROSS

SUPPORT FROM THE CITY, DERRY AND DONEGAL

A Red Cross conference was held in the Guildhall on Friday in connection with the work of the British Red Cross and Order of St John in the city of Derry and the counties of Derry and Donegal. The Mayor (Alderman Sir Robert Anderson) presided and the Right Hon, the Earl of Ranfurly, P. C. G.C.M.G., attended to confer with the large and representative gathering of officials, organisers and workers.

The Mayor said that he had no doubt that when the need for funds was realised the people would open their hearts and their purses in a spirit of loyalty and generous sympathy, and contribute all in their power to this noble work. (Applause)…

In the city of Derry since the war broke out £8,800 had been raised for the Red Cross, in addition to the large amount of other funds for war projects raised through the energies of the Mayor and Mayoress... From the city of Derry and County Donegal, 204 women had been accepted for active service… The working parties in the county had sent 8,309 articles to the Red Cross Headquarters. That was exclusive of the work done in connection with the wonderful organisation known as the War Hospital Depot, which in addition to thousands and thousands of other articles had sent 17,000 articles to the Red Cross.

Lord Ranfurly… mentioned that the hospital bombed recently was that which contained the Derry Ward. He was glad to say that the patients, nurses and V.A.D.s had escaped uninjured but it was regretted that five orderlies were killed and two doctors, a chaplain and a quartermaster wounded. The public could rest assured that that every penny given went to the work for which it was intended, without even the deduction of the remarkably low amount of 4d in the £ for administration expenses, the interest in the money being more than able to defray that.

Derry Journal, 3rd June 1918

A Zeppelin air raid on the north-east coast, near where Molly had so recently worked, had caused severe damage to industrial plants and killed sixteen workmen. She no doubt would have worried about the friends and staff she had recently left in Horncastle.

She would have been acutely aware that the hospital had received 65 new patients in the first week of her arrival. She would have been kept busy, orientating herself in a new environment, settling into her new accommodation and hoping to find time to write to those friends she had made whilst at Horncastle and letting her family know she had arrived safely in Devon.

Molly spent seven months at the VAD Hospital at Newton Abbot, honing her skills and gaining useful experience of the effects of warfare on the human body and most definitely the human spirit. Many of the injuries would have been unprecedented due to the changing nature of the act of warfare.

39. Newton College, home of the VAD Hospital, Newton Abbot.
© Newton Abbot Town Council

40. War Recruitment Poster.
©Library of Congress LC-USZC4-11013

She would have been aware of the ground breaking and often controversial treatment of shellshock victims being trialled at the nearby Seale Hayne Military Hospital, under the care of Dr Arthur Hurst. Dr Hurst's approach was the forerunner of the use of cognitive therapy for treating patients suffering from shock. His successes in rehabilitating soldiers, enabling them in many cases to return to active service, was adopted by the military and became a part of nursing care approach to mental debility.

Molly's time in Horncastle and Newton Abbot would prepare her well to cope with the conditions she would experience in the coming years as the war showed no signs of coming to an end anytime soon.

5 Crossing Continents - A Woman Abroad 1916-1919

In her diary for September 1915, Emma Duffin recalls receiving a letter followed by a telegram informing her to report to St. John Ambulance Headquarters at St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, for issue of the relevant papers for her assignment to Egypt. She describes her journey to the Hotel York on Berners Street where she met amongst others, a Miss Girvan who was also reporting to St. John's Gate for assignment. Once there, they were issued with passports with their pictures, a Red Cross brassard and an identity disc.

41. Hospital nursing staff with Matron Todd and Assistant Matron Chittick. Molly is seated 2nd row, 3rd from left.

On 22nd January 1916, Molly was transferred to St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital based at Etaples in France. Having received her papers at Clerkenwell, like Miss Duffin before her, she would have travelled by train from Newton Abbot and caught a transport ship to France, to the port of Le Havre then by train along the coast to Etaples. This was the route taken by VAD Vera Brittain on her journey to Etaples in September 1916. Vera wrote of her first impressions of the large encampment of hospitals and training camps, the hordes of soldiers and many wounded. She was particularly impressed with the Sisters and trained nurses who she reported to in No. 24 General Hospital. Her experiences inspired her to write the poems which were later published by Eskine MacDonald Ltd, London, in 1918, under the title *Verses of a VAD*, a number of which have been reproduced in this book.

42. Basic Kodak Brownie camera circa 1900s.
Public Domain

By the time Molly travelled to France in January 1916, to undertake her duties as a Nursing Sister in the St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital in Etaples, there were around 435,000 soldiers fighting on the Western front and upwards of 1,590,000 on the Allied Eastern Front. In total over 2,025,000 men were struggling in horrendous conditions and suffering terrible injuries in the war against Germany and her allies.

Molly would have packed her brown leather suitcase with her required number of aprons and spare headdresses, and especially her ever present camera. At home and during her time in England, her camera was never far from her side. However, the use of cameras and photography was strictly forbidden in France, therefore, it must be assumed, that Molly was careful not to come to the notice of the Matron, who would have been compelled to confiscate it.

43. Brigade staff, Etaples 1917, Molly is the fifth nurse standing from the left.
©Inver Museum

VAD Veronica Nisbet compiled an album of many images she took whilst at Etaples and there is no doubt that Molly too, took many photographs. Many years later, her niece confessed that there was a large box of photographs thrown away when the house was being cleared. No value was attached to the pile of black and white photographs of nurses, hospitals and soldiers in various stages of hurt and healing.

A Military Hospital

A MASS of human wreckage, drifting in
Borne on a blood-red tide,
Some never more to brave the stormy sea
Laid reverently aside,
And some with love restored to sail again
For regions far and wide.

Vera Brittain

44. View of St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital, Etaples.
©Order of St. John Museum OSJ/1/2/1/7/2

At the outbreak of war, the Grand Priory of the Order of St. John mobilised its volunteers. A number of hospitals were set up and manned by the organisation in England, however, the St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital in Etaples was considered the jewel in the crown of the Order. Equipped with the latest cardiology machines and the most up to date apparatus it was considered the most modern military hospital in France. It was initially commanded by Colonel Sir James R A Clark, who oversaw the construction and fitting of the hospital in the first year of operation. It received the first patients in September 1915. An Irishman, Colonel Charles Joseph Trimble, succeeded Clark and took charge of a staff consisting of 17 medical and surgical officers, one dental surgeon, one quartermaster, one honorary secretary, 55 trained nurses and 23 VADs. The hospital orderlies were trained St. John staff and were a provisional part of the Royal Army Medical Corps for the duration of the war. The hospital became known as 'Brigade' but was officially classed as a Base Clearing Hospital with capacity for 520 beds, 16 wards of 30 beds and two wards of 20 beds. The wards were on two sides of a central corridor with covered walkways joining them together.

Bed capacity was capable of being increased from 520 beds to 585 when needed. The hospital huts were made and supplied by Messrs Humphreys, Knightsbridge, London, and transported out to France stick by stick.

45. Brigade Hospital garden showing Nurses' Quarters.
©Inver Museum

46. Queen Mary inspecting VADs in St. John Ambulance Hospital at Etaples, July 1917.
Library of Congress LC-DIG-ggbain-25109

Totally funded by voluntary contributions, the Brigade Hospital gained a reputation for the highest standard of nursing and medical care. As the hospital to read it was well equipped and staffed by trained competent personnel, the army medical authorities treated it as a base evacuating hospital. Therefore, the most severely injured men requiring the most expert special treatment were sent there. Following Queen Mary's visit in July 1917, she remarked to Colonel Trimble that he had the most *"beautiful hospital"*. By the time of the hospital's demobilisation in February 1919, more than 40,000 sick and wounded patients had been treated, including many of the most serious cases because of the fine reputation it had achieved.

The hospital was equipped with X-ray facilities, pathological lab, and an electro-cardiograph machine thought to be the only one of its kind in France at that time. The X-ray machine was funded and provided by the people of Belfast. When the hospital was demobilised, the X-ray plates that related to the hospital were donated to Queen's University of Belfast.

47. Interior of ward at Brigade Hospital.
©Inver Museum

The bacteriological and laboratory equipment was presented by the County Relief Committee of Co. Antrim, and the Dispensary Building was presented by residents of Belfast and Co. Down through Viscountess Bangor. Plaques were erected listing £2,500 donations from Co. Donegal and the city of Londonderry.

A nurse's day started at 7.50am and finished at 8pm, and when possible, they had three hours off duty between 2pm and 5pm. Night duty, of which Molly appeared to have a preference, started at 7.50pm and finished at 8am. The Order of St. John had a profound Christian ethos and all shifts started and ended in prayer.

Sisters had responsibility for ensuring the work of ward staff was undertaken, and that the care of their patients was completed properly. The orders of the medical staff were carried out - medications administered, prescribed treatments undertaken, wounds dressed and patient's details recorded.

48. Sisters and nurses with Billy the hospital mascot. ©IWM2521

Their duties also included the supervision of meals, preparation of treatments such as checking dressings, bathing and providing a sympathetic environment.

VAD duties were to assist the trained staff, undertaking the day to day jobs that enabled the trained staff to concentrate on the more specialised area of nursing. VADs mopped floors, cleaned sluice rooms and sterilised equipment, helped with mealtimes and fetched and carried. A lucky few might prove their ability to take on more specialised tasks, but the trained staff very often discouraged this as they saw this as a threat to their professional standing.

Daily routine meant bathing patients in the morning after breakfast, those who required bed baths were seen to by VADs. More intimate tasks might be carried out by orderlies but VADs could sometimes be expected to do it. If a patient died during the day, orderlies laid them out, but at night it was the responsibility of the nursing Sister who would undertake the dressing of the dead.

49. Princess Victoria Rest Room for Nurses, Etaples.
©IWM3170

The laying out of the dead was seen as an essential part of nurse training and the final act of care that a nurse could do on behalf of their patient. In fact, it is only in recent times that this has ceased to be part of the nursing care provided at hospitals.

Following bathing, patients' wounds were dressed, often more than once a day, depending on severity. This all had to be done between doctors' rounds, the influx of new patients and the discharge of those considered fit to be moved. At Brigade, because of the severity of those received for treatment, this usually meant transfer to England and another hospital for further treatment and recuperation.

In the afternoons, visitors would be allowed to visit the wards and patients would get help writing letters home to loved ones, assisted by the VADs or nursing staff. An important task of nurses was writing letters to the families of those who died in their care. This was seen as one of the most difficult but important roles of the nursing staff. These letters provided consolation and comfort to those who lost their relatives in the most tragic circumstances, and in many cases would be kept and treasured by those who received them.

50. Ward exterior, Brigade Hospital, Etaples.

The senior physician, Dr Thomas Houston, and Matron Constance Todd, very often spent a portion of their day writing letters of condolence to family members of patients who had died.

When off duty, a nurse's day was spent walking into the local villages, by the sea or into the woods nearby. On occasion, they might get the bus into Boulogne if given permission by Matron.

51. Colonel Charles Trimble, Hospital Commandant.

Throughout France, there were a series of nurses' rest rooms set up adjacent to areas of major operations. The Princess Victoria Rest Room was established in June 1915, near No. 26 General Hospital, Etaples, in a central position which suited all staff as it was easy to get to. The rest room proved popular with a consistently large membership of nurses who welcomed a place to be able to take a break, read the latest newspapers and magazines and have light refreshments away from the stresses of the hospital wards.

Within the Brigade Hospital there was a recreation area for reading, writing and playing games. Colonel Charles Trimble, Commandant of the St. John Ambulance Hospital, or the Brigade, believed it was important to maintain morale through a variety of entertainments, plays, musicals and lectures. He managed to find musical instruments and get a band together. Many of the staff could play and sing, patients were encouraged to take part, all in an effort to try to bring a little light relief to an otherwise dreadful experience and to stop the onslaught of mental fatigue.

Colonel Trimble kept a daily log and reported weekly the activity within the hospital.

He recorded the numbers of patients received, noting how many officers and other ranks, how many stretcher cases, and the numbers of patients transferred and discharged. He would have noted in his log the staff who arrived and those who were heading off on some well-earned leave. Whilst he kept his entries short and specific, he would have recorded the names of new staff who arrived.

In 1915, Molly would have joined a team who had already seen the horror and terrible injuries that modern warfare could inflict. By this time, she was a fully trained nurse with, including her training period, almost eight years of experience.

As Penny Starns recorded in her book, *Sisters of the Somme* (2016), *"Nursing at base hospitals was not for the faint hearted, some nurses, faced with the appalling carnage and shocking wounds, simply gave up during the first six months of deployment. Those who remained fought their own quiet war against suffering and sickness with dignified compassion."*

To My Ward-Sister

Night Duty, December 1917

THROUGH the night-watches of our House of Sighs
In capable serenity of mind
You steadily achieve the tasks designed
With calm, half-smiling, interested eyes;
Though all-unknowing, confidently wise
Concerning pain you never felt, you find
Content from uneventful years arise
As you toil on, mechanically kind.
So thus far have your smooth days passed, but when
The tempest none escape shall cloud your sky,
And Life grow dark around you, through your pain
You'll learn the meaning of your mercy then
To those who blessed you as you passed them by,
Nor seek to tread the untroubled road again.

Vera Brittain

It took a determined type of character to cope with the day-to-day nursing and remain calm in the face of possible attack. Molly's work entailed her to have charge of a ward, ensuring the day-to-day tasks were undertaken, that patients were comfortable and received the necessary treatments to ensure a full and speedy recovery.

It would be over four months before Molly would have leave approved and she went on three weeks leave on 19th June. A much needed break from the daily grind of a busy hospital at any time, but critical to enable staff to recharge and refresh their energies. As a result of the hospital's reputation, Brigade often received the most serious cases and therefore had a higher than average death rate, solely as a result of the terrible wounds inflicted at the front. Colonel Trimble recognised the importance of staff getting sufficient rest to return to undertake their duties efficiently. It is likely that Molly went to England to visit her brother, Patrick, and see her new nephew, born in May of that year. It is doubtful that she would have travelled to Ireland as special papers were required, due to civil unrest, and the uncertainty of safety would have influenced her decision not to journey home.

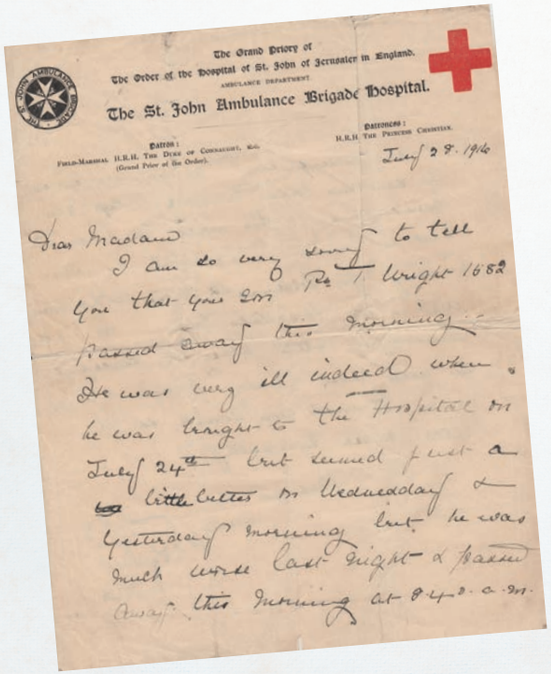
On hearing the news from home, Molly may have shared the dismay of many Dubliners following the events of April 1916, when much of the city centre was destroyed.

52. The shell of the G.P.O. on Sackville Street (later O'Connell Street), Dublin in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising.

The *Liverpool Echo* of 29th April 1916, recounted that Herbert Goodwin, visiting from London, observed that the local residents' attitude to the rebellion was one of *"tolerant interest, even amusement"* of the *"consequences of lawless acts".* Not all shared that view, the St. John Ambulance Deputy Commissioner, Dr Lumsden wrote that St. John Ambulance members continued to recover the wounded from the *"bullet swept streets of Dublin, irrespective of sides".* Had Molly not enlisted under the VAD scheme, she possibly would have been present at Baggot Street Hospital where St. John Ambulance had been given rooms to treat the many victims of the insurrection.

As the summer of 1916 commenced, the war had been in progress for two years and for the first time the shortage of supplies became a factor of vital importance heralding the need to introduce rationing.

Molly returned from leave in early July 1916, and possibly was on duty in the ward when Private Thomas Wright, from near Coleraine, was admitted on 24th July 1916, having suffered a serious injury to his left lower ribs. Although in pain and barely able to speak, he was most concerned that his mother was not told that he was wounded. Although he appeared to be improving, sadly, pneumonia set in and he lapsed into unconsciousness and died on the morning of 28th July 1916, aged only 22. In his letter to Private Wright's mother, Dr Thomas Houston informed her that the physician in charge and the nursing staff had given her son every care and assured her that *"everything possible was done for your son".*



The Grand Priory of
The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England.
AMBULANCE DEPARTMENT
The St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital.

Patron:
Field-Marshal H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught, K.G.
(Grand Prior of the Order).

Patroness:
H.R.H. The Princess Christian.

July 28. 1916

Dear Madam
I am so very sorry to tell
you that your Son
Pte T. Wright 1682
passed away this morning.
He was very ill indeed when
he was brought to the Hospital on
July 24th but seemed just a
little better on Wednesday &
Yesterday morning, but he was
much worse last night & passed
away this morning at 8.45 a.m.

53. Letter to Mrs Wright from Matron Todd.
©J Honeyford

54. Matron Constance Todd.
©IWM WWC D41-18

Matron Constance Todd, who also wrote to Mrs Wright, indicated that he had lapsed into unconsciousness and left no message. She described where he had been laid to rest as *"a beautiful little place... so peaceful and with the most lovely plants and flowers in... I wish you could see it."* Their letters no doubt gave some comfort to his mother as she kept and treasured them. Tragically, she had already lost another son, John, who had been killed on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme.

In May 1917, Colonel Trimble applied for and was granted permission to extend the hospital to cater for 1,040 patients. The one proviso from the War Office was that it would be done at no expense to the Government. Yet again, the hospital financed operations from voluntary sources and fund raising.

The work of the hospital continued and Molly served quietly and unobtrusively, so much so, that Colonel Trimble's daily log and weekly report to Headquarters in St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, London, has no mention of her, other than to record her departure on leave and her safe return. She may have emulated Margaret Huxley, who Susan McGann describes as, *"a woman of simple tastes who preferred deeds to words."* It is noted that Molly took all her leave in the company of Sisters Bridget Mary Slevin and Rose Gervine.

55. Molly's St. John Ambulance Belt Buckle.

Bridget Slevin hailed from Co. Kerry and had been at the hospital from its inception in 1915. Rose, who listed her address as Kingstown in Dublin, but was born in Meenagh, Co. Tyrone, had arrived with Molly from Le Havre. As there is only one of that name listed in the Red Cross VAD records, it can be assumed that she is the same Miss Girvan that Emma Duffin shared her lunch with, prior to sailing to Egypt in September 1915. Rose Gervine's name was consistently spelt as Girvan in Colonel Trimble's reports and records also, although there is no-one of that spelling in the VAD records.

The three nursing sisters had become close friends, held together by their shared experiences. It is not clear if they knew each other in Dublin but the Red Cross records show that Rose, or Rosie as she sometimes preferred, was in Horncastle in 1916 when Molly was there, so it is possible they were already known to each other. They were together at Newtown Abbott during the same period of time so they were already friends when they travelled together to join the Brigade on 22nd January 1916.

How they managed to be assigned the same posting at three different hospitals is not clear but there is evidence that some flexibility was given to nurses who expressed a wish to be posted at the same place. The three shared their workload and supported each other through the dark and stormy days ahead. Lynda Dennant, a WWI nursing researcher, observed that, *"what was important to woman was acquainting themselves with their surroundings, making friends, dealing with the demands of their jobs. Situating themselves within a different environment and coping with the pressures it entailed."*

Sadly, Molly's father Patrick died on 15th October 1916, but there is no record that she travelled home to his funeral. He had suffered from cardiac failure for over a year and it is reported by family stories that he had 'taken to his bed' for some time before his death. His will left the farmland to be divided between her brothers, John and George. There was no mention of any of her other siblings, in particular her eldest sister, Sarah,

who had remained at home looking after the family home. This was a little unusual as most unmarried women, without means of earning income of their own, would have been expected to be provided for in their father or sibling's will as was the custom. It is particularly harsh considering family information states that he had left the running of the farm to his sons, and was 'nursed' by Sarah.

If Molly resented her omission in her father's will she has left no indication of it. She continued to work quietly and efficiently but not without some light hearted entertainments and enjoyments to lift staff and patients spirits. Colonel Trimble apparently believed in ensuring there were plenty of opportunities to enjoy activities organised on a regular basis.

56. Irish Recruitment Poster.

In the period between Christmas 1916 and the New Year, there was a staging of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, to great enthusiasm.

Following the show there were light refreshments available in the Officers' Mess and the Sisters' Mess. Even during the seasonal festivities the rules forbade fraternising. Those whose theatrical tastes ran to more light-hearted could look forward to New Year's Eve, when a series of plays and sketches were performed. The programme commenced with a play entitled *The Rest Cure*, followed by a song by Father Christmas and a dance called the 'powder rag', ending with a tableaux entitled the Scrap of Paper and the Unexpected. The evening was rounded off with a group of nurses, calling themselves 'The Moonbeams', singing a selection of popular songs, assisted on the piano by talented musicians, Nurses Watts and Carey.

I shall see the Sister standing, with her
form of youthful grace,
And the humour and the wisdom of her smile,
And the tale of three years' warfare on her
thin expressive face—
The weariness of many a toil-filled while.

Excerpt from The German Ward,
Vera Brittain

In the New Year, Molly had some welcome leave and returned to duty on 18th January 1917, after two weeks away. Life continued and the numbers of patients being received by the hospital continued to rise. Although the hospital had a core of permanent staff, there were a number of changes in the VADs who were based there. One member of staff recorded in her diary, on supervising a new placement, *"These VADs! A new VAD was blanket bathing a patient - her first experience of a bed patient - she soaped the patient's face thoroughly and then left him while she went in search of sister to enquire if she should wash it off! She was quite surprised to find her patient on her return looking chilled and injured."*

57. The Greatest Mother in the World, Red Cross recruitment poster.

However, in general, there were few problems and staff worked well together, helping and training those who had less experience.

The publication of a telegram from the German Chancellor in March 1917, promising support for Mexico against America for disputed territory and the resulting public outcry, was the final push that propelled America into declaring war on Germany in support of the Allied Forces on 6th April 1917. The first U.S. troops had arrived in France by 26th June 1917, increasing the number of troops by about 14,000.

It would be six months before Molly would have any further leave and on her return from her second period of leave on 18th July, she would probably have heard of the sad case of the Portuguese soldier who had 'accidentally' shot himself in the head and died of his wounds the previous night.

The increase in troop numbers and the harsh regime combined to create tensions in the camp around Etaples. In September 1917, events escalated and spilled over into the surrounding area. The nearby town was disturbed by rioting soldiers and all female staff were confined to the vicinity of the hospital for their safety. It has become known as the Etaples Mutiny or Riots, resulting in the death of an officer and a civilian French woman. A soldier was executed in October 1917 for 'attempted mutiny.'

Vera Brittain, stationed at No. 24 General Hospital, mentions what became known by the soldiers as the Battle of Etaples. She notes that censorship forbade them to mention any reference to the incident in their letters home and that subsequent accounts of the war omit this particular sequence of events, until the *Manchester Guardian* published an account in 1930. In a footnote to her autobiography *Testament of Youth* (1933), Vera stated that the mutiny was due to *"repressive conditions"* in the Etaples camps and was provoked by the military police.

Instead of being able to enjoy her off duty by going into town with her friends, Molly would have had to satisfy herself with confining her outdoor walking to the nearby woods and the beach close by. By mid-October, the restrictions on staff movement had eased, or been lifted entirely, and walks to the village could resume.

During the winter of 1917-18 there was a shortage of matches and coal. By early 1918, food shortages had become acute and rationing was becoming inevitable. Meat, margarine, bacon, cheese, tea, jam, syrup and suet were some of the foodstuffs in short supply and special arrangements were made to ensure hospitals received adequate supplies.

COAL SHORTAGE

The amount of Coal available for consumption in Ireland will, it is expected, be reduced by at least 25 per cent. during the year.

It is, therefore, up to everyone to economise now in order to ensure fuel for the winter months.

HENRY LANE & CO

Princes Quay, Londonderry.

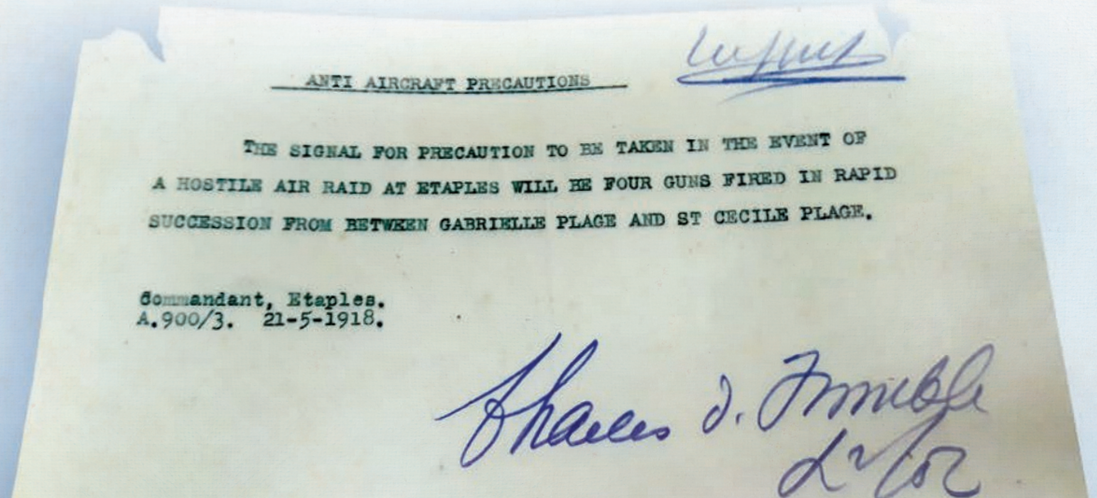
Derry Journal, 12th August 1918

Molly and her friends, Rosie and Bridget, took leave on 28th January and went to Cannes, perhaps to belatedly celebrate Molly's birthday which was on 24th January. The British Red Cross maintained a house there and with an allowance for essentials they would only have had to pay for their lodgings. Molly returned to duty on 28th February to increased enemy reconnaissance activity around the hospital.

Whilst this book covers the lives and experiences of nurses and personnel on the Western Front during the Great War, it was events in the East that ultimately precipitated the end of the war in Europe. Germany's Schlieffen Plan had originally envisaged a quick war with France, then turning its troops east to face the might of Imperial Russia. It quickly became evident that France would not fall as easily as the Germans had intended, with the Western Front largely at a stalemate for most of the war. The Eastern Front saw a lot more movement and also saw the first of the 'Great Powers' leave the war - the entity that had been known in 1914 as the Russian Empire.

Participation in the First World War was an unmitigated disaster for Russia, ultimately leading to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and ending three centuries of autocratic Romanov rule. Vladimir Lenin and his Bolsheviks, who seized power in the October Revolution of 1917, signed the Treaty of Brest Litovsk in March 1918, leaving Germany to concentrate on the Western Front.

58. Memo issued by Colonel Trimble following increased German aircraft activity.



ANTI AIRCRAFT PRECAUTIONS

THE SIGNAL FOR PRECAUTION TO BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT OF A HOSTILE AIR RAID AT ETAPLES WILL BE FOUR GUNS FIRED IN RAPID SUCCESSION FROM BETWEEN GABRIELLE PLAGE AND ST CECILE PLAGE.

Commandant, Etaples.
A.900/3. 21-5-1918.

By this time, the offensive on the Western Front was resulting in casualties arriving at Brigade in increasing numbers. Colonel Trimble continued to make his daily entries in his log. On the 12th March, he recorded that the lights had been cut off from 9.30pm until 10.25pm and enemy aircraft were in the vicinity. On the 13th March, his entry recorded, "hostile aircraft overhead 12.15pm". As the weeks went by the entries in reference to enemy aircraft overhead increased and the bombs began to fall.

It can only be imagined how terrifying it would have been to hear the sirens roar, warning that the lights were about to be switched off, then waiting for the sound of enemy aircraft approaching in the darkness. On one occasion, Colonel Trimble recorded in his log that the lights had gone out without warning. His log continued to record the daily routine in short often illegible scrawl, no doubt, a rushed, but necessary piece of administration at the end of a long day. He noted on 23rd March a lecture to be given on Belgium by Mr Headman and that Sister Stubington is to marry Officer Leake. Almost as an afterthought he notes, *"enemy bombs dropped at Etaples nearby at 9.15pm."*

Matron Constance Todd in her account written shortly after events, stated that in the first few years, apart from one zeppelin which dropped a number of bombs nearby which didn't explode, they *"were very free from alarms."* This changed in the spring of 1918. She describes frequent overhead sightings of aeroplanes, *"continuously"* photographing the site of the hospitals and of the artillery gunners' unsuccessful efforts to bring them down. She recalls the increased feeling of anxiousness as the enemy's activity overhead became daily. At night the lights were always cut off when enemy aircraft were about, which happened most nights, particularly inconvenient as the majority of admissions were at night, which she found, *"very awkward."* Her account tallies with that of Colonel Trimble, that as the month of May progressed, the frequency of enemy aircraft increased.

Other than the bombs dropped nearby, noted by Colonel Trimble, Matron Todd records there were no real air raids until the night of Sunday 17th May, the Feast of Whitsun.

War
(The Great German Offensive, March - May 1918)

A NIGHT of storm and thunder crashing by,
A bitter night of tempest and of rain—
Then calm at dawn beneath a wind-swept sky,
And broken flowers that will not bloom again.
An age of Death and Agony and Tears,
A cruel age of woe unguessed before—
Then peace to close the weary storm-wrecked years,
And broken hearts that bleed for evermore.

Vera Brittain

Shortly after 10.30pm, a loud noise was heard and one of the Sisters called out that it was a bomb, but those present exclaimed that the alarm hadn't sounded and the lights were still on. Almost immediately the huts shook, the lights went off and there was a loud explosion.

The night was lit up by an incendiary which had dropped on the orderlies hut in the nearby Canadian hospital. The St. John Ambulance Hospital Fire Brigade, manned by the hospital's orderlies and medical officers, responded immediately and assisted in extinguishing the fire which had started. As the majority of the buildings were wood based, fire was an ever present threat, which was capitalised by the enemy, who in addition to bombs, often dropped incendiaries to spread panic. Two of the sergeants who went to the assistance of the Canadian orderlies were awarded the Military Medal for their bravery.

As the fire started next door, the alarm sounded in Brigade. It was the signal for all Sisters not already on duty to go to their wards. As Matron Todd observed it was difficult for staff to get dressed in the dark in small cramped living quarters.

She was met by a procession of VADs who had, quick-wittedly, commandeered their metal washbasins and were using them as impromptu head protection, with their heavy coats over pyjamas. This was a tactic they later adopted for patients who were confined to bed and couldn't be moved, the basins that is.

The following morning, a Sister discovered a large piece of shrapnel in her pillow and the cubicle next door was *"riddled"* with shrapnel. The Sister had been asleep in the bed when the alarm sounded and, if she had not gone to the ward may likely have been killed, or seriously injured. As it was, possibly more by luck than design, the casualties were minimal at the Brigade Hospital. The Canadian Hospital bore the brunt of the air attack and over 40 people were killed.

I shall see the pallid faces and the half-suspicious eyes,
I shall hear the bitter groans and laboured breath,
And recall the loud complaining and the weary tedious cries,
And sights and smells of blood and wounds and death.

Excerpt from The German Ward,
Vera Brittain

59. Nurses survey air raid damage to No.9 General Hospital.

Private Latimer de Poidevin lay in a nearby hospital and noted in his diary:

> *"...just about midnight the alarm went, Germans was raiding the place. They dropped two bombs at the top of our hospital... the noise of these bombs coming down was something awful... I stayed in bed as there was no other place for shelter. This was on the 19th of May, 1918, and during the raid 27 bombs was dropped over the hospitals and the town of Etaples... The next night was as bad, I thought my last minute had come. About the hospitals was nothing else but dead lying about. But the third night was the worst night for us. When the alarm was given the bombs was already dropping in the Hospital and before we had time to get in our trenches one bomb fell on No.17 ward, smashing all the windows of our ward. Some couldn't move from their beds, so we used to put the clothes of the ones that was able to walk on those that couldn't move. After the bomb there was not a piece of ward standing and some of the chaps that was in No. 17 were never found again. A Canadian Hospital had five Canadian nuns killed, and one of the wards they found a door down with a chap laying on top dead and a nurse in under living. Then after the third night they began clearing the hospital, and only the ones that could walk about was kept back. Then at night time every nurse was carried away in motor ambulances, and we would sleep in the wood... we used to take two or three blankets each and go down by the river... We used to find ourselves back about six o'clock the next morning. This carried on for a week or so, and this week Gerry never came over at all, then he started again on his raiding."*

The War Diary of the 7th Canadian Stationary Hospital confirms Latimer's description, noting how on the 19th of May 1918, German aeroplanes attacked the hospitals at Etaples. The entry for Monday the 20th of May states:

> *"Last night, about 10:30pm, we had a disastrous air raid as a result of which we lost two men... Enemy aircraft suddenly were heard, and began dropping bombs without our having received warning. Practically the entire Etaples hospital area was subjected to an aerial bombardment for fully an hour, after which the raiders departed, returning again sometime after midnight, and dropped more bombs. They also employed machine guns. Bright moonlight last night. The anti-aircraft fire appeared to be feeble."*

It became known later that three of the anti-aircraft gunners had been killed at their post, which might account for the 'feeble' response noted.

There had been repeated air raids of varying intensity throughout the area. Maud McCarthy, Matron-in-chief, spent a good portion of her time each week visiting the many hospitals under her responsibility. She kept a detailed war diary, noting on 20th May, the loss of life at No. 1 Canadian Hospital and listing six hospitals which had suffered damage and lost staff and patients. She listed one Sister amongst the dead and many injured. Although McCarthy's diaries are very detailed, she only records specific numbers of loss when they related to nurses, as part of her duties in notifying command of the reduction in staff through death, injury or illness.

60. Air raid damage at the St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital, May 1918.

Matron Todd, writing several months later, was able to document that No. 1 Canadian Hospital had received a direct hit, losing over 100 staff dead or injured. Four nursing Sisters had died when the hut they were in received a direct hit. Sister Katherine Macdonald was killed outright, whilst the others died over the coming days. McCarthy had noted in her diary some months before, of Sister Macdonald's award of the Military Medal for a previous act of bravery during an air raid. Todd noted that St. John Hospital had lost three orderlies and others seriously wounded, including a patient.

Many of the injured and dying were brought to St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital for care and at the time of her writing, a total figure for the dead and injured wasn't known but she speculated that *"it must have been tremendous."* Matron Todd was, *"impressed with the bravery"* of the all-female Ambulance Convoy based in Etaples, who were out all night bringing in the wounded. Also, her own staff who *"were splendid"* not showing the *"least panic".*

The Princess Victoria Rest Room was badly damaged, the only thing left upright being the portrait of Princess Victoria, but thankfully no one was injured. After the damage was repaired, the Rest Room continued to provide a welcome respite for nurses until its closure in June 1919.

The experience was to stand the staff in good stead in the days and nights to come. The next day, Colonel Trimble ordered the digging of trenches and sandbagging of all the hospital buildings. Trenches were built near the Sisters' Mess for Sisters and VADs, instructions were given that all ambulatory patients and those not on duty in the wards were to go immediately to the nearest trench. Some objected, patients felt they would be safer in the wards. German and Chinese prisoners, with soldiers, worked to prepare the hospital in the event of further strikes. From that night, there were air raid warnings almost every night, with patients suffering so badly that it was decided as many as possible would be evacuated to England.

Colonel Trimble issued new instructions in the event of further air raids - a note of them were posted on bulletins boards throughout the hospital. (See Appendix 3.) Staff were reminded that the signal which warned of overhead aircraft would be four guns fired in rapid succession between Gabrielle Plage and St. Cecile Plage in the town. There was a sense of reassurance that the Colonel had made the necessary safeguards and many felt it unlikely that they would experience anything like the night of the 18th May.

On the night of 30th May, the bombers struck in the nearby town of Etaples killing many civilians. The following day, those who survived left in huge numbers, leaving a ghost town behind. Matron recorded that the weather was *"thundery and oppressive",* which would have added to the tension in the air, felt by staff and patients alike.

Having prepared so thoroughly staff felt secure in the arrangements made. They never thought those arrangements would be tested so soon. At around 10.30pm on the night of 31st May 1918, there was a shout in the Sisters' Mess that the searchlights nearby were on, a sure sign of approaching aircraft. Within minutes, the bombs began to fall and continued with frightening frequency for the next three hours.

By the early hours of Friday morning, the hospital lay wasted, whole wards blown away and one side completely gone. Following the attacks earlier in the month, many patients had been transferred to England and the walls of the hospital huts had been covered with sandbags for protection.

61. Air raid damage at St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital, May 1918.

As a result, Matron Todd felt that the outcome could have been much worse with a much higher loss of life. Sadly, the cost was high enough.

One ward received a direct hit killing eleven people, including seven patients, three orderlies and Sister Annie Watson Bain. Annie, from Devonport was only 30 and most of her two years' service were spent at Etaples.

Although the Imperial War Museum image pictured here does not specify, the author's research indicates that it is Sister Bain's funeral as she was the only nursing staff member killed in the previous raid and Colonel Trimble's diary notes her funeral on the 3rd of June.

The hospital staff reacted quickly and with calm efficiency - emergency stations were set up and patients were moved to safety away from the damaged buildings; bandages were hastily applied and tourniquets tightened to stem the flow from injured limbs. Although as many patients as possible had been transferred, the hospital still had over 400 patients. Only that day, Colonel Trimble had recorded the arrival of 103 patients, all of whom were stretcher cases except for ten who were walking officers. Staff had to work by the light of an electric torch, which, for fear they would make themselves a target, was repeatedly turned off and on, as bombers continued to circle overhead.

By daybreak, the bombers had retreated, leaving a sorry collection of tired, bedraggled and shocked people. The hospital lay in ruins and the patients were transferred to other hospitals for safety.

62. Funeral of a nursing sister killed during the bombing of a hospital at Etaples.
©IWM Q 11034

63. Memorial plaque erected in Sister Bain's hometown, Hammersmith, O.F.S., South Africa.
©South Africa War Graves

They were informed that all the Sisters and nurses would be evacuated to England, but for Matron Todd, Assistant Matron Chittock and 10 Sisters and nurses who would care for the remaining patients. Ambulances were despatched from British Red Cross in Boulogne to escort the staff away. As the rubble was cleared and the damage assessed, Colonel Trimble noted in his daily log that, *"not a single department in the whole hospital was in working order."*

Of the six nurses who were injured that night, only two did not return following leave. VAD Katharine Margaret Freshfield had suffered a serious head injury and was invalided home to Sussex, aged only 33. She was awarded the Military Medal for her *"gallantry and devotion to duty"* on the 31st July 1918. She had been in one of the wards which received a direct hit. She had been serving in France since February 1915 and never fully recovered from her injuries. Sister Marion Purcell McKinnon also suffered a head injury and was unable to return to duties; aged only 28 years old she returned home to Scotland.

64. Sister Bain's grave, Etaples Cemetery.
©South Africa War Graves

ANOTHER HOSPITAL BOMBED

(From the Press Association's Special Correspondent)

General Headquarters, Friday – The Germans have bombed another British hospital, inflicting numerous casualties. The scene of this latest attack is the neighbourhood of a little town many miles from the front. The hospital is in an isolated group of buildings. It has been a hospital ever since the outbreak of the war, and upon the roof of every one of the wings the Red Cross is painted. The bombing took place at half-past twelve on Wednesday night. The weather was very fine and clear, and the moon, only just past its full, was well up in the heavens, so that the landscape was flooded in a silvery light. Four bombs were dropped in the immediate vicinity of the hospital from machines flying at a low altitude. The a fifth fell right upon one of the wings in which a number of staff were sleeping, and in the operating room, in which an officer was undergoing medical treatment. The terrible explosion wrecked the building, burying many people.

Londonderry Sentinel, 3rd June 1918

Colonel Trimble was most definite in his opinion of his staff. In the weekly report to Headquarters in St. John's Gate on 3rd June, he stated, *"I can never forget the discipline, fortitude and bravery exhibited by the entire staff of the hospital. It was splendid and beyond description."*

65. Air raid damage at St. John Ambulance Hospital, May 1918.

IRELAND'S WAR HELP AS A FOOD SUPPLIER OF GREAT BRITAIN

With a view to encouraging the Irish Agriculturist, by bringing home to him the part he is playing and can still further play in food production, and with the object of making better known in Great Britain the place Ireland is making as a supplier of food for the British population and the Allied armies, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland have issued a statement which gives some remarkable facts and figures.

Ireland's production of food, including especially her supply of food to Great Britain, has, for several years past, the statement says, been growing until the supply from Ireland had become the most important in point of quantity, character and proximity, arriving in Great Britain from any country in the world. Since the war that supply has been fully maintained. By 1913 Ireland's supply to Great Britain had reached a point where it was only exceeded by that of one other country in the world, the United States… She is, in an increasing degree, an essential base, not only for the British food supply, but for British agriculture itself, the meat raising and dairying of which depend on Ireland's breeding and production. Ireland produces forty percent of the cattle and thirty percent of the pigs of the United Kingdom. Of the beef cattle, two out of every five killed in Great Britain are bred in Ireland. These facts are sufficient to illustrate Ireland's importance as a food base. But with the present position of the war, the importance of this food base at Great Britain's door is enormously enhanced.

Derry Journal, 3rd June 1918

He advised that he intended to forward the names of his medical officers, sisters and staff who he felt deserved *"immediate"* reward.

Molly was destined to be on that list. She was on duty that night and remained at her station while the bombs rained down and incendiaries dropped all around. Fortunately, the incendiaries for the most part failed to ignite but the damage caused was severe. Walls crashed inwards, glass and metal flew in all directions, patients called out in the dark, crying for help, staff and nurses desperately trying to reach them in the gloom. The night was lit up only by the glare of the searchlights, as the anti-aircraft gunners tried vainly to bring the bombers down.

Penny Starns describes a moment that, when tending to patients, Molly threw herself across the bed of a helpless patient, acting as a human shield against the bombardment and the debris falling everywhere.

Sister Molly McGinnis was awarded the Military Medal for her bravery under fire and her conduct to rescue and safeguard her fellow nurses and patients. The award was the highest civilian honour available to non-enlisted personnel in the field, and had been introduced at the insistence of the King on 25th March 1916, initially to be able to honour those who were fighting with the French resistance.

She was the one of the few Irish civilian women to be awarded the Military Medal during World War One. It is believed that the first Irish women to be awarded the honour were St. John Ambulance personnel who provided first aid to both military and rebels injured during the Easter Rising of 1916.

66. Air Air raid damage at St. John Ambulance Hospital, May 1918.
©IWM Q 291

During World War One, around 114,000 Military Medals were awarded, only 147 were awarded to women, some sources state there were 127, of those only 9 were Irish. Two hailed from Co. Londonderry, the other being Annie Colhoun, a native of Londonderry, she served in Macedonia as a Queen Alexander Imperial Medical Nurse. She also received her honour for actions during an air raid on the hospital where she worked. She was decorated on 24th July 1917, the day after her wedding to Private Frank Crofton of the Canadian Army Service Corps.

67. Military Medal awarded to Sister M McGinnis.
©Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

The London Gazette supplement of 30th July 1918, page 9001, records that Sister Molly McGinnis, St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital was awarded the Military Medal,

"For gallantry and devotion to duty during an enemy air raid. She showed great courage, took charge of a ward, and sustained her patients."

The Edinburgh Gazette, 2nd August 1918, page 2779, carried the same citation.

68. Molly McGinnis in uniform wearing Military Medal circa 1919.
©R Henderson

MILITARY MEDAL FOR COUNTY DERRY NURSE

The "London Gazette" announces that Sister Molly McGinnis, St John Ambulance Brigade Hospital, has been awarded the Military Medal for gallantry and devotion to duty during an enemy air-raid. She showed great courage, took charge of a ward, and sustained her patients. Sister McGinnis is a native of Carrichue, County Derry.

Londonderry Sentinel, 1st August 1918.

Many years later, Molly, when asked why she got her medal, replied that they gave her a medal *"because she did not run away."* Catherine Black, reflecting on her experiences of a nurse in the war, observed that, *"you went into (a casualty clearing station) young and light-hearted. You came out older than any span of years could make you."*

Molly went home on leave to rest and recuperate. She took the opportunity to visit her parents' grave and see her family. She stayed with her brother in Brimington, near Birmingham, for a short period and corresponded with friends she had made during her time in Lincolnshire. She was reassured by her regular letters from Brigid that all was well at Etaples, although air raid warnings continued, there was no further repeat of the night of 31st May 1918. She may have sent her friend a copy of the *London Gazette*, of 3rd July, that carried the notification that Brigid had been awarded the Royal Red Cross 2nd Class for her bravery on that night; an honour she shared with the first recipient of the award, in 1883, Florence Nightingale.

Molly, with her love of photography, made sure she had her portrait taken, in uniform wearing her medal.

She sent copies to her family and friends and her personal copy is reproduced in this publication.

While preparations were underway for a replacement hospital further back from the railway at Trouville, Brigid and the remaining nurses were given leave to go home until the new hospital was ready to take patients.

On 3rd July, Molly reported for duty at the Voluntary Auxiliary Hospital in Ashford, Kent. There were two hospitals based there and records do not indicate which she served in, but it is likely she was based in Swanton House. It was a home for war pensioners or those who had been invalided out due to injury. The work would have been less intensive and provided an opportunity for her to gather her strength and energy. She would have been due to go on leave in August in any case.

She remained there for four months, then received orders to report to Headquarters for posting back to Etaples.

69. Swanton House, Elwick Road, Ashford.

Colonel Trimble had spent the summer planning, organising and fitting out the new hospital. The site for the hospital was 235km south of Etaples, near Trouville, a small fishing village. It was considered a much safer area away from the major railway links and already had several convalescent camps, where soldiers could take advantage of the healthy seaside air. In June, he wrote to Headquarters in London, concerned that the insurance against damage by aircraft of £35,000 would cover the cost of repair and whether the government should be asked to undertake it or rely on the contractors they had previously used to setup the hospital in Etaples. He wrote that he would be *"delighted"* to stick with the *"dear old hospital"* and see it through and would *"endeavour to recover everything that is serviceable."* He estimated that there would be enough salvaged to provide facilities for 350 beds but wished the new hospital to be able to accommodate the original number of 520 beds.

Although it had the capacity, on paper, to take 520 patients as before, in reality, a number of the wards remained closed. Problems with paintwork not drying in the theatres meant a temporary affair was used in one of the wards. The distance from the Front meant that most patients arriving had already been through the worst of their experience and were recuperating.

Molly took some well-earned leave on 2nd October, and returned fit and active for duty at St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital, at its new location near Trouville, on 25th October 1918. It had reopened to take patients on 23rd October 1918.

> There were 336 deaths from influenza in Glasgow last week. In Cardiff so many deaths have occurred that the gravediggers' staff has been increased.
>
> *Londonderry Sentinel*, 24th October 1918

Colonel Trimble reported on 30th October, that four Sisters' blocks were completed and the first convoy, of 200 walking casualties, had arrived on 23rd October from No. 73 General. On 27th October, VADs Batey and Fenwick, and Sister Proudfoot were ill with influenza and had been transferred to the Sisters' Hospital. The following Monday, VAD Nurse Tait joined them. Colonel Trimble speculated that they must have brought the infection with them from England. Following a request from No. 72 General who were experiencing a shortage of staff due to illness from influenza, six trained nurses and four VADs were sent.

The Colonel was *"glad to be in a position to help a military hospital,"* until their own hospital was up and running fully, the staff were not fully employed. He expressed exasperation about the delays in completing the hospital and asked if Headquarters could put some pressure on the contractor, Humphrey's of London, as they *"weren't playing the game."* He may have regretted his earlier correspondence in which he indicated a preference for their involvement in the replacement scheme.

With the United States entering the war in 1917, and, despite Russia's exit in March 1918, Germany and her allies were being outmanned and outgunned on the Western Front. By the autumn of 1918, Germany's weary army and their generals had realised that the war could not be won. Thoughts quickly moved as to what shape the post-war Germany would take.

On the other side of the Celtic Sea in Co. Fermanagh, the subject of a heated debate by Asquith's cabinet all those years ago, a wireless operator in the military barracks in Enniskillen, received a faint Morse code signal. It came from the Eiffel Tower and, signed by Marshall Foch, French Commander of the Allied Forces, it read:

> *"Hostilities will cease along the whole front from 11 November at 11 o'clock, French time. Until a new order, allied troops will not pass the line reached on that date at that hour. Hold exactly this line. All communication with the enemy is forbidden until receipt of instructions sent by the commanders of the armies."*

It was a Thursday, the day the weekly fair was held, so the town was packed. The news spread rapidly and there were wild celebrations, rockets were set off and the church bells rang out. Services of Thanksgiving were held in the two local churches at 9.00am - before there had been an announcement in London. The rest of the country did not hear the news for another three hours. The war was over.

On the 11th November 1918, the Armistice was signed that brought an end to war in Europe. With up to 20 million men dead, a battered continent now had to look towards trying to seize back some semblance of normality. This attempt was stopped almost instantly in its tracks with the Spanish Flu pandemic which had already been raging through the armies in Europe. It was to claim the lives of even more people than the war, including many nurses and medical personnel.

Matron-in-chief Maud McCarthy, who had meticulously entered the daily detail for the previous four years in the official War Diary, entered a brief and concise entry that day, *"War News Armistice with Germany signed 5am to take effect from 11am Mons taken at 4.30am. Great excitement and rejoicing in the town."*

Others, such as Nurse Edith Appleton, based in near Abbeville, wrote more candidly in their private diaries. She stated, *"Peace! Thank God for that! It feels very queer too, as if your elastic had snapped."* She and her colleagues had taken a few patients for a walk the following day and hearing the news on the road, rushed home to tell the others.

Sister Beatrice Hopkinson, nursing with the Army Nursing Service, closer to the thick of fighting than many other nurses, in dangerous and difficult situations, managed to keep a diary that expressed so much of what many were experiencing. The day peace was declared, she and her fellow nurses waited, half expecting that it was not true. It wasn't until after noon that it sunk in and they relaxed. She described clapping, cheering and soldiers setting fire to ammunition to create loud bangs everywhere, more than likely against regulations.

THE WAR OVER

Germany's Surrender on Allies' Terms.

The German Government, which assembled on Sunday, decided to accept in their entirety the armistice conditions imposed by the Allies. Instructions were telephoned from Berlin to Spa, the seat of the German Main Headquarters. A messenger, crossing the line north of Chimay without incident, arrived towards 2 a.m. at the Chateau Francfort, where the German parlementaires awaited him. The latter were then conducted to Marshal Foch, who was in a special train at a station in the neighbourhood of the chateau. Marshal Foch, accompanied by the British naval chief (Admiral Wemyss) received them, and the parlementaires communicated to the Allied Generaissimo the reply of the German Government. Discussion ensued regarding the maintenance of the blockade, but at 5 a.m. the signatures were affixed to the document recording the capitulation of Germany.

"Brutes" To The End.

At the very moment that the armistice was being signed and orders given for hostilities to cease along the whole front the Germans could not refrain from giving a last proof of their barbarity by inundating with asphyxiating gas shells the towns of Mezieres and Charlesville, where they left behind them 22,000 civilians.

Ballymoney Free Press and Northern Counties Advertiser, 14th November 1918

She wrote of quiet enjoyment with patients celebrating with *"dry cake and broken biscuits."* The staff had a small concert a few days later at which she sang and they had dinner in the Officers' Mess, definitely against regulations, but they felt it was *"justified"* on this occasion.

Nurse Dorothea Crewsdon, of the British Red Cross, based in No. 46 Stationary Hospital, Etaples, on 11th November 1918, also kept an extensive diary. Hers expressed the disbelief of events, recording that there was *"no very evident sign of rejoicing."*

She noted later that her hospital would be one of those which would be retained longer as a demobilizing centre and documented that the bulk of her work was taken up with nursing those affected by the influenza epidemic, which was raging through the camp.

At Trouville, the staff would no doubt have marked the occasion in similar ways, singing, dancing and a slight stretching of the rules. In her book, Penny Starns notes that Molly indicated her plan to return to Ireland and find a rich husband to marry, which amused her friends.

70. Nursing Staff, St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital, Etaples showing a smiling Molly seated second row, seven from right circa 1918.

The Last Post

THE stars are shining bright above the camps,
The bugle calls float skyward, faintly clear;
Over the hill the mist-veiled motor lamps
Dwindle and disappear.
The notes of day's good-bye arise and blend
With the low murmurous hum from tree and sod,
And swell into that question at the end
They ask each night of God—
Whether the dead within the burial ground
Will ever overthrow their crosses grey,
And rise triumphant from each lowly mound
To greet the dawning day.
Whether the eyes which battle sealed in sleep
Will open to reveillé once again,
And forms, once mangled, into rapture leap,
Forgetful of their pain.
But still the stars above the camp shine on,
Giving no answer for our sorrow's ease,
And one more day with the Last Post has gone
Dying upon the breeze.

ÉTAPLES, 1918. Vera Brittain

Colonel Trimble, in his weekly report a month later, wrote that the Christmas celebrations had started early and a social evening held in the Sisters' quarters, at which dancing was *"indulged",* was much enjoyed. The hospital had received 48 stretchers and had a total of 367 patients to care for. A number of wards had remained closed and he saw no point in opening them and the extemporised theatre, in use in Ward I, sufficed for their needs to date. In reading Colonel Trimble's records at this time, there is a sense that the hospital, in being relocated to Trouville, was no longer the critical care unit it had been in Etaples; that patients received were more ambulatory and enroute to transfer to the convalescent camps nearby. His report ended stating that the hospital had been very busy and running satisfactorily.

At home, women were, for the first time, able to vote in that month's general election, provided they were over 30 and owned property. Maud McCarthy noted in her war diary that arrangements were needed to ensure those serving abroad would be able to vote, which did not apply to Molly.

No doubt Christmas was a joyous and noisy affair but it was mixed with sadness, both for the loss of so much life and the knowledge that staff who had built up such a close comradery would be separated. Everyone knew that the hospital would be run down and closed in the New Year. Discussions had been ongoing for several weeks and Colonel Trimble had been seeking clarification on the future of the building and its equipment and contents.

On 28th January 1919, the last four patients were transferred, three to convalesce and one to No. 72 General. Colonel Trimble noted on that day that the hospital *"ceased to function."* Also entered was the note, Sisters Slevin, Gervin and McGinnis left for England. They were among the last to leave the hospital; the Colonel had expressed the wish that those who had served well would have the honour to remain to the end.

As plans were made to close the hospital and dispose of the building and equipment, Colonel Trimble wanted the equipment returned to the areas of Great Britain who had either donated it or funded its acquisition, therefore, much of the laboratory, X-ray and clinical equipment was sent to Belfast.

By 13th February 1919, the medical records and index cards had been sent home by recorded delivery, the *SS Endcliffe* had docked at Trouville harbour and taken away the equipment bound for Southampton to be met by a St. John Ambulance representative, and the Colonel had presented 10 orderlies with a token of appreciation for *"good service"* rendered during the air raids the previous year.

The hospital was demobilised and the building handed over to the French government on 3rd March 1919. It had been purchased for 250,000 francs.

Colonel Trimble noted in his diary that, *"The Hospital is now formally closed and handover (sic) to the French People."*

His final entry reads:

> *"Lt Colonel C J Trimble proceeding to UK on termination of service on 3 March 1919.*
>
> *The St. John A. B. Hospital is finally disbanded and all the personnel disposed of as from March 3, 1919."*

He signed his name, as he had so many times over the previous years, but it can clearly be seen as shaky and unlike his usual clear hand, as he left his 'dear old hospital.'

Molly's record states that she wished to terminate her service and return to Ireland to train in midwifery. Her salary at termination was £1 4s 0d, an additional 3 shillings per week after three years' service. She also received a demobilisation payment of £22 7s to assist in her search for a position.

71. Hospital closing ceremony, January 1919.

Her Red Cross record describes her as having *"very good deportment, pleasant and capable"* and her character as *"excellent".*

Among the letters of appreciation received by the Joint Committee in relation to the service of trained nurses, Lt-General Sir Alfred Keogh, Director General, War Office said,

> *"I am not sure that we have ever fully realised the work of the fully trained nurses in those institutions. Their task of supervision and training must have necessarily been onerous, especially at the beginning. No praise is too great for the example they set and for the patience they displayed."*

Lt-General Sir Arthur Sloggett, Director General, Armed Military Services, France, stated,

> *"It is impossible for me to speak too highly of the way the nursing of our sick and wounded was carried out in the private and other hospitals of the Order of St. John and British Red Cross Society in France during the War. I have always had complete confidence that any patients admitted to these hospitals would not only have the very best treatment, but would be skilfully and sympathetically nursed and cared for. The various institutions, including the ambulance trains, were admirably managed and of immense assistance, and the nursing staff were readily beyond praise."*

To Another Sister

I knew that you had suffered many things,
For I could see your eyes would often weep
Through bitter midnight hours when others sleep;
And in your smile the lurking scorn that springs
From cruel knowledge of a love, once deep,
Grown gradually cold, until the stings
Pierce mercilessly of a past that clings
Undying to your lonely path and steep.
So, loved and honoured leader, I would pray
That hidden future days may hold in store
Some solace for your yearning even yet,
And in some joy to come you may forget
The burdened toil you will not suffer more,
And see the War-time shadows fade away.

Excerpt from The German Ward,
Vera Brittain

The Joint Committee report of 1919, stated that to *"fairly"* estimate Ireland's voluntary civilian war effort, by gift and by service, two vital factors had to be considered, those of population and wealth.

It considered that it was not a normal population because the proportion of *"vigorous"* manhood and womanhood was known to be lower than that of Great Britain, at that time. As a consequence, it considered that there was an undue preponderance of the very young and of the aged. With a population, between the ages of 20 and 60, of the three provinces of Munster, Leinster and Connaught, amounting to 1,338,700, or less than half the total of the whole island.

The population of Lancaster, it stated, exceeded that of the three provinces by 70%. The report calculated that the ratio of population between the three provinces and Great Britain was 1:15, and wealth was a ratio of 1:28.

The result demonstrates that the contribution in Ireland was, in the words of the report, *"astonishingly great"* considering a proportion of the population, as the report termed it, *"stood aloof."* This was possibly a veiled reference to the political unrest that existed in the country at that time and the belief that many nationalists did not contribute to the war effort.

Although the Joint Committee report had a section on activities that occurred within each country that made up the United Kingdom at that time, Ireland's contribution was singled out for particular mention and the Committee declared,

> *"It is important that it is chronicled with emphasis, and without reserve, that contributions from Ireland represent all social grades of the people. And all religious denominations, Catholic and Protestant, Nationalist and Unionist, rich and poor, have shown in the most practical manner their loyalty to the Red Cross, and to the war funds subscribed to help the fighting forces of the empire.*
>
> *A fact to be recognised and remembered is that when the Red Cross Pageant paraded the streets of Dublin, the political leaders of every school expressed by word and by action their respect for the Geneva Convention. The poorest of the population were represented at the battlefront by their kith and kin, men of unsurpassed valour. These outstanding facts are of supreme importance, especially in an atmosphere highly charged with political electricity."*

So, though much will be forgotten when the sound
of War's alarms
And the days of death and strife have passed away,
I shall always see the vision of Love working amidst arms
In the ward wherein the wounded prisoners lay.

Excerpt from The German Ward,
Vera Brittain

6 Coming Home, Armistice and the Aftermath 1919-1966

Molly returned to a very different Ireland to that which she had left only four years previously. A failed armed insurrection, executions, mobilisation of the army, destruction of property and continued civil unrest. It must have seemed as if she had swapped one theatre of war for another.

In addition to the huge loss of life, the map of Europe was unrecognisable to that of 1914. A series of peace treaties were signed in the post-war years, alongside the establishment of the most ambitious diplomatic body in living memory. A League of Nations was set up, with the intention of preventing future wars and encouraging dialogue between nations.

72. Map of Europe circa 1919.

Having signed the Armistice and disposing of Kaiser Wilhelm, the German Empire had also ceased to exist. In its place came the Weimar Republic, named after the small German city where the meeting of its first assembly took place.

THE GERMAN WAR CRIMINALS

The presence of the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney General in Paris has aroused some comment in the French Press, to the effect that the question of bringing the German war criminals to justice is evidently about to be seriously examined. The two British legal representatives held a conference this afternoon with their French, Italian and Belgian colleagues for the purpose of drawing up a list of those guilty of crimes during the war, whose surrender is to be demanded of the German government. The question of the Kaiser is not supposed to be at issue for the moment. It is considered likely that the British Delegation may remain in Paris for a fortnight, but owing to the numerous activities of M. Clemenceau this week, it is not impossible that some modification may be made as to the duration of the stay of the visitors. M. Marcel Hutin, in the Echo de Paris states that a complete list of about 300 names of German war criminals has been prepared for consideration by the Supreme Council.

Irish News, 9th January 1919

The Weimar Republic suffered the humiliation of territorial losses, a restriction on their army to a mere 100,000 men, the requirement to accept the blame for causing the war and an enormous reparations bill.

Indeed, so high were these repayments that Germany did not pay the final instalment until 2010 (although payments did not take place between 1931 and 1945).

Faced with the choice of signing, or a continuing war, the government had no choice but to accept.

Within a few years, millions of Europeans were displaced, with countries containing new minorities and people waking up to find themselves in different countries.

GERMANS CHARGED WITH WAR CRIMES

An exchange Paris telegram says:- Lord Birkenhead had a conference on Friday with the French Under Secretary of State and Military Justice regarding the Germans charged with war crimes. The list numbers 750, and includes the extradition of the Kaiser and the ex-Crown Prince.

According to the Petit Parisien the list of German war criminals whose surrender will be demanded by the Allies comprises 750 names, of which between 300 and 400 have been submitted by the French Government.

Irish News, 9th January 1919

Germans in particular found themselves in states such as Poland, Czechoslovakia and France. The German state was also forbidden from uniting with Austria.

In the period following Molly's return from France, information is somewhat scant and records either no longer exist or have been difficult to locate.

By the time Molly returned to Dublin in February 1919, the first shots had been fired in what became known as the Irish War of Independence. John Redmond, the leader of Irish Nationalism, was dead. So too was his dream of Home Rule for Ireland. On the 21st January 1919, the First Dáil had declared the independent Irish Republic, having won a landslide election victory the previous December. As Yeats' famous words stated, all had changed after the events of Easter 1916. Home Rule was no longer enough for the Irish majority, but with it, the division of Ireland became inevitable.

The first sitting of Dáil Éireann, in which De Valera was elected President of the Republic, is also generally seen as the starting point of the Irish War of Independence, with two Royal Irish Constabulary officers being shot that day. What followed was a two year period of guerrilla warfare, until the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which partitioned the island of Ireland.

The Third Home Rule Bill had been given royal assent in 1914, but was postponed until the end of the war and 'special consideration' given to Ireland. It became the Government of Ireland Act in 1920, in which two Home Rule Parliaments were set up in Ireland - one in Dublin and one in Belfast. Six of the nine counties of Ulster - Londonderry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Antrim, Armagh and Down, became part of what became known as Northern Ireland. A boundary commission was agreed upon to finally decide, at a later date, where the border should lie between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.

"All changed, changed utterly:
A Terrible beauty is born"

WB Yeats, Easter (1916)

TRADE WITH GERMANY

We have resumed diplomatic relations with Germany, and virtually all the restrictions on trade have been removed. Licences are still required before we can export certain classes of goods, but the list is comparatively small. So far as imports are concerned, Germany stands in exactly the same position as France, Italy, or the United States. We can buy from her anything that we can buy from them- provided, of course, that she is able to supply it. Through the Board of Trade the Government has given a lead to the traders of the country. An official statement which has just been issued sets out that "it is now no part of the policy of the Government to discourage British traders from competing in the markets of the late enemy country; it thinks it desirable that traders should make every effort to secure a proper footing in Central Europe". It is to be hoped, therefore, that in the course of a few weeks we shall see large developments in the exchange of goods between the two countries. There are two obstacles in the way. The first of these is purely a question of sentiment. The atrocities which Germany perpetrated during the war created a deep and bitter feeling against her, and many people resolved that under no circumstances would they again purchase German goods. The official ratification of the peace is a call to the nation to let the dead past bury its dead, on the assumption that Germany has changed her heart and has decided to mend her ways. That assumption may be wrong; but it is the hypothesis upon which peace has been made, and must be accepted if the world is to be a habitable place."

Irish News, 14th January 1919

Molly returned to work at Fitzwilliam Nursing Home and continued her training. From information provided by one of her nieces, it is believed that, at a later date, she set up a nursing home with a friend and together they ran it for a period. At the time of writing, access to the registration records of the period are still pending, therefore, it has not been possible to confirm this. It is known that she cared for her brother-in-law, Edward Kelly, who having contracted typhoid whilst swimming had become gravely ill and subsequently died. Over the ensuing years, she would come to do this often, caring for her family in their final days, a skill she had honed during the long nights through years of war in a country that for many of her peers seemed so far away.

MILITARY OFFICER'S SAD END

FAILED TO FIND EMPLOYMENT

At an inquest at Bristol yesterday on Colonel Hugh Westmacott, who was found shot at Durdham Down, a verdict of suicide while insane was returned. The Coroner read a letter in which the deceased gentleman wrote- "As creatures of circumstances we can but just go jogging along, doing our part in the mighty drama, and then we make way for others. I had no wish to take this step, but it is feasible to be heartbroken by repeated disappointments to get employment. I have reached the limit of my endurance."

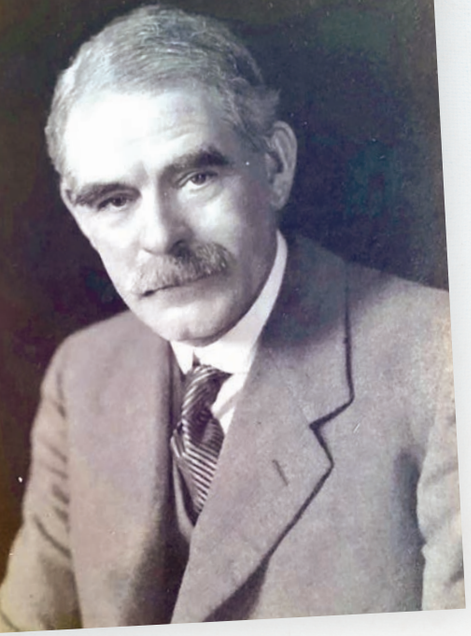
Irish Times, 1st January 1920.

As the unrest in Ireland continued, her older brother John was detained and interned on the prison ship *Argenta*, in Belfast Lough, on 19th June 1922. John was transferred to Larne Workhouse on 30th June 1922 and, following a personal surety of £100 and two sureties of £50 which were raised by friends, he was released on 10th August 1923. As a condition of his release, he was obliged to carry identity papers, report twice monthly to the local sergeant and remain within five miles of Lackagh Bridge, with an undertaking to keep the peace for 24 months. His record states that there was no evidence against him, just a suspicion. It is known that Molly and he had a difference of opinion at this time, with some members of the family believing that she disapproved of his *"alleged"* actions. However, information has come to light, albeit anecdotal, that this may not have been the case, that in fact, she was unhappy that he had arranged his release instead of remaining interned. The reality is that it is probable neither story is true, that in fact they just lost touch and drifted apart. Molly had been living and working in Dublin from at least 1905/6 and had not lived at home for some time. Her nephew, many years later, often remarked that the McGinnis' were a *"poor lot for keeping in touch."*

Molly's niece, Una, only eight years old, was taken ill with appendicitis and despite surgery died unexpectedly in 1923. She had been holidaying with her father at Carrichue and was buried at St. Finlough's Graveyard; the family gravestone carries a memorial to her. Her death would likely have brought back difficult memories of the loss of her own little sister at the same age.

Sometime after 1930, Molly went to work in a private capacity for a wealthy building contractor, O'Callaghan, who lived in the Rathmines area of Dublin.

73. Una Rosaleen Macginnis.



74. Dr Patrick Macginnis circa 1930s.
©A Roswell Porter

She was responsible for the care of their elderly relative. Her niece states that she remained there for a long time, in fact, several years and was part of the family. It is known that Molly kept in contact with her many friends that she had made and with her family in England and America.

Her brother, Patrick, planned to retire to Dublin and bought a house intending to live there. However, whilst renovations of the house were being undertaken and before he could take up residence he took ill, having suffered from diabetes for several years which had weakened his heart. Molly requested leave from her employer and nursed him until he died in Dun Laoghaire, in August 1933. His remains were brought to Ballykelly and he was buried in St. Finlough's Church next to his little daughter, Una.

Molly kept up to date with the news from her sister-in-law and was no doubt alarmed on hearing that her niece, May, who had been studying in Berlin, had had a lucky escape. May had met her future husband, Charles Roswell, whilst studying in Berlin and left Germany when war was declared to travel to America to join him. The boat she was travelling in was attacked and narrowly missed being sunk on its journey across the Atlantic. It can only be imagined what Molly's thoughts would have been on the outbreak of war again in Europe, barely twenty years after her own involvement in what had been considered the 'war to end all wars'. That she was almost 60 years old and too old to see active service may have been a blessing for her, with memories of her own experiences of war never far from her thoughts. With advances in technology, not only would she have read of the familiar place names, she would have seen film footage of the terrors inflicted again on the people of Europe.

75. Molly and her brother, George circa 1940s.
©R Henderson

Molly's nephew, Niall, enlisted and served on *H.M.S Hogue* and *H.M.S. Barfleur* as Surgeon-Lieutenant. He also saw service in 1944 at the evacuation hospital at Charing Cross, London, and on its secondary site at Ashbridge, Hertfordshire. Ms Irene Spruce, a junior nurse, recalled the houseman who rode a motorbike through the London streets.

In 1948, Molly's sisters, Sarah, who had remained on the family farm, and Winifreda, who was in New Zealand, died. She had continued to visit the family home but up to that point there is no evidence that she had any direct contact with her brother, John. What is known is that in the early summer of 1950, John became ill and on hearing of this, Molly came home immediately to care for him. Despite an estrangement that appears to have lasted decades, her natural instinct to care overcame any ill feeling. John's wife, Elizabeth, had no reluctance and Molly shared the care and comforted her brother in his final days. He died on 21st August that year.

Only a few years later, she lost her remaining sibling, George, on 26th September 1955. In his will, the farm inherited from his father in 1916, was left to Molly. However, probate had never been completed on their father's will following his death. Therefore, Molly had the onerous task of settling both her father's estate and her brother's inheritance. It must have brought back many memories from that time, particularly that she, alone of her siblings, remained and had survived the horror and dangers of war.

Molly continued to work as a nurse in Dublin, and her sister-in-law, having moved there with her late brother Patrick, often accompanied her on outings.

When her niece, May, brought her family to visit from America in 1959, they all set off for a day at the beach. May's daughter recalls a heated discussion between her grandmother and Molly on who had the best legs and she wondered how they could tell under the long skirts they wore. Both Mollys agreed in the end that she, May's daughter, had the best legs.

An avid film fan, Molly followed the career of her nephew, Niall, who although trained as a doctor like his father, had from a young age showed a talent for acting. He had starred in a number of films up to that point and also in West End plays. In 1958, he was cast in a film about a young seamstress living in a small village in the west of Ireland, with six children to six different fathers, of which Niall starred as one. The lead character was married to none of the fathers. When the subject matter of the film became known, the residents of the film location created such objection that the filming was promptly relocated to Cornwall where they were clearly more tolerant. Or possibly they recognised that the income generated from a visiting film crew and associated entourage would be welcome. In any case, the film, a comedy, appropriately entitled, *She Didn't Say No!*, was immediately banned in Ireland under the Censorship of Films Act 1923.

76. McGinnis family home at Carnamuff circa 1950s.
©Anne Roswell Porter

Ireland had one of the strictest regimes on censorship and films deemed as obscene were heavily cut or imposed with an outright ban.

Molly, many years later, still raised her disappointment that Niall had taken on such a role. However, it was not his first banned film, in 1936 Niall starred in *Ourselves Alone*, a film banned in Northern Ireland, directed by Belfast born director Brian Desmond Hurst, best known for the 1951 film *Scrooge*.

By early 1962, Molly had worked in a private capacity for almost twenty years and was aged over eighty. At that time she was living with the family in Greygates, Mount Merrion, Dublin, and wrote to her niece in America of the changing times they were living in. She expressed her own regret that she did not pay attention to her father's cousin, Manny, who knew both the family's history and that of the surrounding neighbourhood.

She listed the family lineage for her niece's daughter, Anne, who had, and continues to have, an interest in family history. Molly's employer had hired a helper for her, but her working days were over and she arranged to move into a residential home, run by the Sisters of Nazareth Order in Belfast. It is reported that she lasted two weeks. It is sometimes said that nurses make the worst patients. In any case, Molly didn't like the restrictions put on her and did not want to stay. One evening, her nephew received a phone call from her asking if she could come home. He had not heard from her in some time and had only recently heard

77. Niall Macginnis, 1935.
©R Henderson

that she had gone to Belfast but he agreed, and so in 1964, Molly returned to live at Carnamuff, for the first time since she had left, to train as a nurse, all those years before. After the death of her brother, George, the house they had been born in lay empty and has remained vacant ever since.

Molly settled into her new home and was cared for by her niece, Eilish. Although she would speak of the people she had known and the places visited during the war years, she, like many of her contemporaries, never spoke of the horrors she witnessed. Having lived through a second war, many did not want to hear.

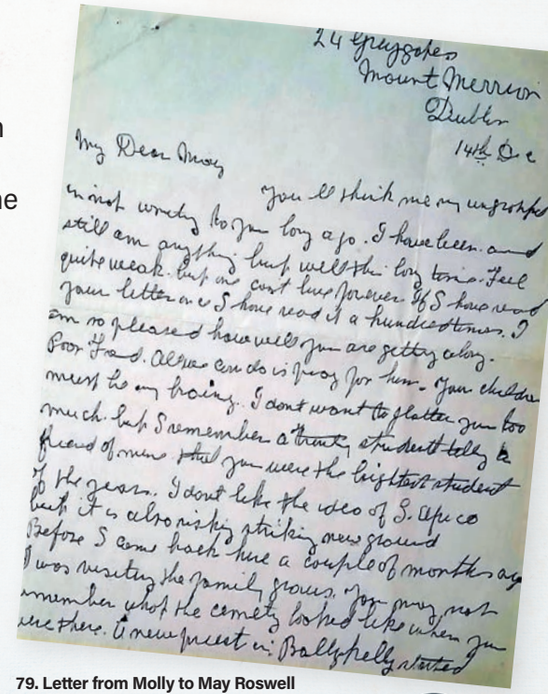
Molly spent her final years living quietly with her nephew and nieces at Legahoire. Her great niece remembers her giving out sweets, which she kept under a cushion on her chair. Her own niece, Eilish, who took care of her in her final years, described her as *"no bother and easy looked after."* Although frail, she often wanted to try to help by bringing in the turf for the evening fire, even though she was far from able.

78. Molly with her sister-in-law, Molly McGinnis (nee Kelly) and her brother, George circa 1950s.
©Anne Roswell Porter

She reminisced about her work in Dublin as a nurse and spoke of the family she cared for. She rarely talked of France. She did recall wistfully that she had a notion of a local boy named William many years before but her mother kept such a *"close eye"* it had no chance to flourish. Her enjoyment in the things around her had not waned and she delighted in her favourite meal, mushrooms fried in butter. She ended each night with a cup of hot Complan, a powdered energy drink fortified with vitamins laced with a teaspoon of brandy, having acquired the taste in Etaples. Matron Todd had administered a tot of brandy each night to give the Sisters 'strength.'

In early September 1966, Molly became ill with pneumonia and was admitted to the Roe Valley Hospital. She had previously had surgery for gall stones and had weathered the experience well but this admission was different, she was unsettled and did not want to stay. Her niece knew well that their home, old and with small quirky rooms and a narrow winding staircase was not equipped to cope with a sick patient. She was unsure how to reassure Molly but knew she may need a more suitable environment to live.

One night, as her niece sat with her, Molly reached out and took her hand and pressed it softly and asked quietly if she could be taken home. Her niece took pity on her and without hesitation, said yes she would come back in the morning with her brother, Patrick, and take her home. Molly smiled to herself and closed her eyes to sleep. That night, 24th September 1966, Molly died peacefully in her sleep aged 86. In the morning, her niece received the news and remains convinced that Molly, reassured that she was going home to Legahoire, had relaxed and gone contented to her final rest.



79. Letter from Molly to May Roswell dated 14th December 1963.
©A Roswell Porter

She is buried with her parents and family in the graveyard at St. Finlough's, Loughermore. In her will, she left her portion of the land to her nephew, Patrick, and made bequests of the remainder of her estate, such as it was, to his siblings, her brother, John's children. Perhaps, after the years of estrangement from him, her legacy to his children was her way of making amends for the lack of engagement, recognising that they had given her a home in her latter years and thus making peace with herself.

"In spite of the War, which destroyed so much beauty, so much promise, life is still here to be lived... no one now living will ever understand... how completely the future of civilised humanity depends upon the success of our present halting endeavours to control our political and social passions, and to substitute for our destructive impulses the vitalising authority of constructive thought. To rescue mankind from that domination by the irrational which leads to war could surely be a more exultant fight than war itself, a fight capable of enlarging the souls of men and women with the same heightened consciousness of living, and uniting them in one dedicated community whose common purpose transcends the individual. Only the purpose itself would be different, for its achievement would mean, not death, but life."

Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, 1933

The War Generation: Vale

We, whom the storm-winds battered, come again
Like strangers to the places we have known,
Who sought men's understanding all in vain
For hardened hearts to grief's dark image grown;
So, passing through the careless crowd alone,
Ghosts of a time no future can restore,
We desolately roam for evermore
An empty shore.
For us they live till life itself shall end,
The frailties and the follies of those years,
Their strength which only pride of loss could lend,
Their vanished hopes, their sorrows and their tears;
But slowly towards the verge the dim sky clears,
For nobler men may yet redeem our clay
When we and war together, one wise day,
Have passed away.

Vera Brittain, 1933

Appendix 1
Terms and Conditions for enlisted VADs

The terms and conditions under which VADs were considered were very strict and in some ways very broad. Dismissal could occur for any number of reasons and were outlined in the Joint War Committee Report as follows:-

The conditions of employment for VADs were as follows:-

1. The selected members must hold certificates for Home Nursing and will be thoroughly recommended.
2. They will be required to work under fully trained nurses and will be under the direct control of the officer in charge and the Matron of the hospital.
3. They should be between 23 and 38 years of age.
4. They will be required to live in quarters provided for the Nursing staff of the military hospital under the control and supervision of the Matron of the hospital.
5. They will be required to adhere strictly to the time tables in force in military hospitals, to the regulations and standing orders of Q.A.I.M.N.S.
6. They will have at all times when on duty to wear the washing uniform of their detachments.
7. They will be appointed for one month on probation - then if recommended, they will be required to sign an agreement to serve for one year or for the duration of the War.
8. The engagement of Voluntary Aid Detachment members will be terminated at any time if found unfit in any respect for service.

Appendix 2
Letter and equipment list issued to all VADs by K Furse

Document given to every VAD called up to active service through Devonshire House.

This paper is to be considered by each V.A.D. member as confidential and to be kept in her Pocket Book.

You are being sent to work for the Red Cross. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience, your humility, your determination to overcome all difficulties.

Remember that the honour of the V.A.D. organisation depends on your individual conduct. It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness of character, but also to maintain the most courteous relations with those whom you are helping in this great struggle.

Be invariably courteous, unselfish and kind. Remember that whatever duty you undertake, you must carry it out faithfully, loyally, and to the best of your ability.

Rules and regulations are necessary in whatever formation you join. Comply with them without grumble or criticism and try to believe that there is reason at the back of them, though at the time you may not understand the necessity.

Sacrifices may be asked of you. Give generously and wholeheartedly, grudging nothing, but remembering that you are giving because your Country needs your help.

If you see others in better circumstances than yourself, be patient and think of the men who are fighting amid discomfort and who are often in great pain.

Those of you who are paid can give to the Red Cross Society which is your Mother and which needs much more money to carry on its great work to their Mother Society and thus to the Sick and Wounded.

Let our mottos be 'Willing to do anything' and 'The People give gladly.' If we live up to these, the V.A.D. members will come out of this world war triumphant.

Do your duty loyally Fear God Honour the King

Katharine Furse
Commandant-in-Chief, B.R.C.S., Women's V.A.D.,(BRCS ACC 513)

The following prayer was printed on the back of the letter:

And only the Master shall praise us,
and only the Master shall blame.
And no one shall work for money, and
no one shall work for fame,
But each for the joy of working, and
each in his separate star,
Shall draw the thing as he sees
it for the God of things as they are.

[This was followed by a prayer written by Rachel Crowdy, commandant of VADs in France]

Lord, who once bore your own Cross shoulder high to save mankind, help us to bear our Red Cross banner high with clean hands unafraid.

To those who tend the wounded and sick give health and courage,that they of their store, may give to those who lie awake in pain with strength and courage gone.

Teach us no task can be too great, no work too small, for those who die or suffer pain for us and their Country. Give unto those who rule a gentle justice and a wisely guiding hand, remembering "Blessed are the Merciful." And when Peace comes, grant neither deed nor word of ours has thrown a shadow on the Cross, nor stained the flag of England.

Appendix 3
Air Raid Instructions
23rd May 1918

---

(1) When an air-raid is imminent the fire-bell will be rung for 10 seconds by the fire-officer, the N.C.O. i/o Piquet, or the Night N.C.O.

(2) On sounding the bell, everyone will go to his or her allotted post. Those not on duty will for the present, take cover in the trenches east of the Sisters' Quarters.

(3) All electric lights must be extinguished. Hand-lights if used, must be effectively screened so as not to be visible on the ground.

(4) All ranks are warned against the danger of collecting in the open during a raid. The best protection against hostile bombs is to lie down on the floors of huts or lie in trenches or dugouts.

(5) The fire piquet will act under instructions to be issued by the fire-officer.

(6) In the event of fire breaking out the fire instructions as issued must be observed. The men in reserve will be summoned from where they have taken cover and be detailed so as to render the most assistance in removing the wounded from the burning wards, or to act in any direction ordered.

(7) A raid may be considered over when the electric lights come on.

23-5-18
sgd. Charles J. Trimble
Officer Commanding.

Appendix 4
List of Irish Staff at St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital - Etaples, France

Lt Colonel Charles Joseph Trimble - Commandant of St. John Brigade, born Castle Bellingham, Co. Louth

Medical, Nursing and Support Staff from Ireland

Mr P. T. Crymble - was surgeon and lecturer in applied anatomy. He went to Etaples in July 1915 to take charge of the x-ray department but had to return to Belfast in October 1916.

Dr W. Wilson - had the post of surgeon and radiographer at Etaples, taking over responsibility for Mr Crymble in October 1916.

Dr Thomas Houston - was Chief Physician in charge of Medical Wards and the Bacteriology Laboratory. Born Co. Londonderry.

Dr John McCloy - was Physician and Pathologist assisting Dr Houston.

Dr John E. McIlwaine - took his cardiograph machine to Etaples, the only machine of its kind in France at that time. He became known as the heart specialist from Belfast.

Dr Foster Coates - joined SJAB in August 1917 replacing Dr McIlwaine who had returned (to Belfast) in July 1917.

David Willix, Lab Technician, Belfast.

Nursing Sisters

Molly McGinnis, Carnamuff, Ballykelly.

Bridget Mary Slevin, Lixnaw, Co Kerry.

Lynda Ethel Irwin, Dublin. (not listed in Red Cross records).

Rose Girvan, Magherafelt. (surname spelling incorrect in Etaples records).

VADS

Miss N. Murray, Dublin.

Miss F Penny-Tallyour, Dublin.

Miss D Wilson, Dublin.

Miss E. Stewart, Kingstown, Dun Laoghire.

Orderlies- seconded to Royal Army Medical Corps (R.A.M.C.).

H. S. Hill, Dublin.

T. Kenna, Dublin.

J. Saunders, Dublin.

F. W. E. Harper, Dublin.

W. J. P. Evans, Dublin.

Additional Notes

Rev. David Hamilton Hanson was the Minister of Gardenmore Presbyterian Church, Larne 1892-1939 and was an Army Chaplain from 1914, it has been reported that whilst based at Etaples Reinforcement Camp he was visiting chaplain to SJAB.

Electro-cardiographer McIlwaine took his own machine to France and was accompanied by Mr Carson of Lizaria, Belfast who helped install a machine in RVH.

Initial information courtesy of Inver Museum, Larne 2018. Additional information added March 2019 R Henderson.

Appendix 5
Table showing Awards to St. John Ambulance members

Total number of nursing members posted up to 20 Dec. 1919 17,367

Total number of general service members	11,000
Joint War Committee Hospitals' members	1,755
Honours*	
Nursing members, mentioned in dispatches	886
Nursing Decorations	329
General Services mentioned in dispatches	16
General Services members decorations	1
Joint War Committee Hospitals' members, mentioned in dispatches	103
Joint War Committee Hospitals' members decorations	34
Deaths	
Nursing members**	128
General Services members	11
Joint War Committee Hospitals members	6
*In addition,	5

**It is known that over 100 other VAD members, not working directly under the Voluntary Aid Department, also laid down their lives.

Appendix 6
Transcript of Molly's letter to her niece, May (image number 79)

24 Greygates
Mount Merrion
Dublin, 14 Dec. [1963]

My dear May,

You'll think me very ungrateful in not writing to you long ago. I have been and still am anything but well this long time. Feel quite weak, but one can't live forever. If I have read your letter once, I have read it a hundred times. I am so pleased how well you are getting along. Poor Fred. All one can do is pray for him. Your children must be very brainy. I don't want to flatter you too much but I remember a Trinity student telling a friend of mine that you were the brightest student of the year. I don't like the idea of S. Africa but it is also [always?] risky striking new ground. Before I came back here a couple of months ago I was visiting the family graves. You may not remember what the cemetery looked like when you were there. A new priest in Ballykelly started improving it and now it is more like a city cemetery. Beautifully kept. I hope you'll both be able to come next Summer. And so Anne is interested in the family history. Had we only had the sense of listening to an old cousin of your grandfather (a man a hundred years before his time) He could give the history of the whole countryside. Your grandmother on your father's side was Carton. On your grandmother's was O'Kane. Your Great Grandmother was Hegarty . Old Manny McGinnis, the man I told you of told us the history of the first McGinnis that came to Derry. I am sure you have heard of the expression "Hell or Connaught" In the days of Cromwell all the Irish were banished to Connaught. A young lad, called Whistling Pat, couldn't be kept in confinement.

He slipped out and joined a travelling pack of tinkers. A gentleman's daughter fell in love with him. They eloped and her father was chasing them to shoot him but her mother intervened on his behalf so he was forgiven and started some sort of business. So that was the beginning of the Derry McGinnis.

I can't tell you how shocked we all were here over the assassination of President Kennedy. Protestant and Catholic alike were brokenhearted. He had made himself so much one of us when here we all felt as if we had lost one of our own. God have mercy on his soul. Yes, we had a very bad Winter last year and nothing but rain all Summer .Quite cold here at present but no snow so far.

I'll be looking forward to seeing you in the Summer. That is if I am alive as I hope to be.

Lots of love and best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely,

Molly

Bibliography

McEwen, Yvonne; *It's a Long Way to Tipperary British and Irish Nurses in the Great War*, 2006, Cualann Press.

Powell, Anne; *Women in the War Zone Hospital Service in the First World War*, 2013, The History Press.

Doherty, Richard; *The Somme 24 June - 19 November 1916,* 2016, Northern Ireland War Memorial.

Tyrer, Nicola; *Sister in Arms British Army Nurses Tell their Story*, 2008, Orion Books.

Starns, Penny; *Sisters of the Somme*, 2016, The History Press.

British Red Cross and Order of St. John; 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 the British Prisoners of War 1914-1019, 1919, The Naval and Military Press Ltd.

Holt, Tonie and Valmai; *Til the Boys Come Home The First World War through its Picture Postcards*, 2014, Pen and Sword Military.

Military Secretary's Branch HQ; Instructions regarding recommendations for Honours and Awards 1918, 1918, The Naval and Military Press Ltd.

Hopkinson, Beatrice, Editor: Newman, Dr Vivien; *Nursing Through Shot and Shell A Great War Nurses's Story Beatrice Hopkinson's Memoir*, 2014, Pen and Sword Military.

Cornish, Nik; *Images of War - The Russian Army in the First World War rare photographs from wartime archives*, 2014, Pen and Sword Military.

Appleton, Edith, Editor: Cowen, Ruth; *A Nurse at the Front the First World War Diaries of Sister Edith Appleton*, 2012, Imperial War Museum.

Atkinson, Diane; *Elsie and Mairie go to War*, 2010, Arrow Books

Parkhill, Trevor; *The First World War Diaries of Emma Duffin*, 2014, Four Courts Press.

Junger, Ernst, *Translated by Michael Hofmann; Storm of Steel*, 2003, Penquin.

Fealy, Gerard; *A History of Apprenticeship Nurse Training in Ireland*, 2006, Routledge.

Alterio, Maxine G; *Memoirs of First World Ward Nurse: making meaning of traumatic experiences*, 2013, a thesis submitted to Victoria University Wellington

McGann, Susan; *Margaret Huxley: Pioneer of Scientific Nursing in Ireland*, 1992, Elsevier Health Services (Scutari press).

Scanlon, Pauline; *The Irish Nurse, a study of Nursing in Ireland: history and education 1718-1981*, 1992, Drumlin Publications.

Dungan, Myles; *Irish Voices from the Great War*, 2007, Merrion Publications.

Urquhart, Diane; *The Ladies of Londonderry: Women and Political Patronage*, 2007, I. B. Tauris.

Dennant, Lynda; *Women at the Front during First World War: The Politics of Class, Gender and Politics*, 1998, University of Warwick, wrap.warwick.ac.uk/36306/1/WRAP_THESIS_Dennant_1998

Walton, Liz; *A Guernseyman Goes to War: Private Latimer de Poidevin 1917-1919*, 2014, Guernsey Museum and Galleries.

Wilkinson, B; McHenry, A; Kilroe, J. R and Seymour, H. J.; *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of Ireland : Memoirs The Geology of the Country around Londonderry*, 1908 Pgs. 69-70, HMSO Dublin.

McMillan, Norah; *Quartery Deposits around Lough Foyle*, 1957, Department of Geology, University of Liverpool.

Castelow, Ellen; *The 1950s Housewife*, www.historic-uk.com.

Spencer, Stephanie; *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s*, 2005, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Gardiner, Juliet; *The Story of Women in the 1950s*, September 2015, History Today Vol. 65 issue.

Deehan, Therese C; *Nightingale: the Irish Connection*, 2010, www.INMO.ie

Deehan, Therese C; *Irish Nurses in the Crimean War*, March 2017, www.carefulnursing.ie

Royal College of Nursing; *Nursing through time*, February 2017

Useful Websites For Research

www.familysearch.org - general search for ancestors

www.britisharmynurses.com - can be searched by name

www.vad.redcross.org - can be searched by name

www.angloboerwar.com - holds information on regiments and military nurses, can be searched by name

www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni - general depository of documents for NI

www.ucd.ie/archives/ - holds material from private and public collections, online archive list, requires permission to access records

www.census.nationalarchives.ie - searchable by name, address and place

www.scarletfinders.co.uk - general information about nurse, VADs and associated details

www.iwm.org.uk - general search, national depository of war related material

Much has been written about the First World War, of the heroism, the horrors, the grief and the loss. The sacrifices of a generation which many felt were too great. For some, it was a time rarely spoken of, for others it was difficult to move on with their lives. A great many returned, changed and often destroyed by their experience, others had a stoicism and strength that served them well under the stress and terrible conditions of war.

This is the story of one such woman, unknown to all but her family and friends. Molly was born in 1880 on a small farm in the hills above Carrichue, County Londonderry. She trained as a nurse in Dublin and enlisted as a VAD in March 1915. Molly served as a St. John Ambulance Sister in their hospital at Etaples, France, for almost four years. She was one of many who served and left barely a footnote in what was to become known as the Great War. This book is a small attempt to redress that balance.

Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

Peace
Northern Ireland - Ireland
European Regional Development Fund