

Kildare-born women who served in the First World War **Barbara Walsh**

More than 80 percent of the c.60,000 First World War Army Service records for women who served between 1917-1921 were completely lost when their archive was damaged in a German bombing raid on London in the 1940s. The number of surviving records for Irish-born women who served with the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later Queen Mary's Army Corps) consequently only totals just over 500 names – mostly those of lower ranking young women and, sadly, the memory of the contribution they had made in the First World War continues to be in danger of being completely side-lined and forgotten – not only by the historical record and knowledge of the general public – but even by their own descendants to-day. It is a topic that local history and/or family history societies can help to redress.

Drawn from every level of society and from every creed and background, these ladies had come forward from all 32 counties of Ireland to offer skills at every level of ability in addition to high-tech expertise in key areas such as the telecommunication networks in France (telegraph and telephone) which linked frontline battlefields to Army Bases.

Their work was categorized into separate sections: A = office clerks; B = catering/cleaning; E = Telephone & Postal Services/Lines of Communication; C = Drivers; D = Unskilled; F = Miscellaneous; G = Technical. The higher-ranking officers (the Officials/Administrators) are marked in the chart as: Off/l.

Kildare-born women who served in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps 1917-1921 (later re-named Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps)

Bracken, Lily Frances. Born in Naas, Co. Kildare, August 1896. Roman Catholic. Father a lockkeeper/Grand Canal. Home address: Millbank, Naas, Co. Kildare. Worked as a general servant/cook when she applied to join up in April/May 1918. Signed up in August 1918 as "B" Cook /later promoted to Forewoman Cook. Army No. 48250. Served in Fermoy, Co. Cork until August 1919.

Carberry, Mary Kathleen. Born in Donadea, Co. Kildare, 14 May 1899. Roman Catholic. Father a farmer. Home address: Winter's Hill, Kinsale Harbour, Cork. Worked as a housemaid at Dover House, Roehampton, SW 15, when she applied to join up in January 1918. Signed up in April 1918 as "B" Housemaid. Army No. 36358. Served in London HQ, until June 1919. (Fined 3 day's pay for being Absent Without Leave).

Connolly, Anastasia. Born in Rathangan, Co. Kildare, 29 December 1897. Roman Catholic. Father a labourer. Home address: Winnington St., Winsford, Cheshire. Worked as a packer in factory when she applied to join up in January 1918. Signed up in May 1918 as "B" Waitress. Army No. 38731. Served in Chadderton, Bostall Heath and Catterick until July 1919.

Corrigan, Bridget. Born in Celbridge, Co. Kildare, 21 April 1900. Roman Catholic. Father a carpenter. Home address: Ashbury, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary. Worked as a waitress when she applied to join up in September 1918. Signed up in November 1918 as "B" Waitress. Army No. 32895 but did not serve because she had given a wrong age and was allowed to withdraw for being too young to be accepted. (Had a brother serving in France for 3 years)

Dolan, Mary. Born in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, 3 January 1898. Roman Catholic. Father an Engine Driver. Home address: 13 Upper Basin St., Dublin. Worked as a farm hand when she applied to join up in October 1917. Signed up in May 1918 as "B" General Domestic. Army No. 38468. Served in Randalstown, Co. Antrim and Ballykinlar, Co. Down until October 1919.

Forde, Christina. Born in Co. Kildare, 25 December 1898. Roman Catholic. Father a labourer. Home address: 19 Church Street, Kildare. Worked as a domestic cook when she made several attempts to apply to join up via the Women's Legion between April 1917 and April 1918. Finally signed up in May 1918 as "B" Waitress. Army No. 38462. Served in Tipperary and in Finner Camp, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal until 1919. (Had 3 brothers in the army)

Kelly, Annie. Born in The Curragh, Co. Kildare, 28 April 1897. Roman Catholic. Father a farmer. Home address: Brownstown, The Curragh. Worked in a shop when she applied to join up in December 1917. Signed up in March 1918 as "B" Waitress. Army No. 36186. Served in Dublin until March 1919.

Lally, Kathleen. Born in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, 17 February 1897. Roman Catholic. Father a Clerk. Home address: 5 Greenhill Terrace, Winchester. Worked as a clerk in local Record Office when she applied to join up (incomplete service army file /no date). Signed up in September 1918 as "A" Clerk in the Army Rifle Record Office. Army No. 49114. Served in Winchester probably until late 1919. (Her sister, Mary Agnes Lally, also served.)

Lally, Mary Agnes. Born in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, 9 June 1899. Roman Catholic. Father a Clerk. Home address: 5 Greenhill Terrace, Winchester. Worked as Clerk when she applied to join up (incomplete army service file /no date). Signed up in September 1918 as "A" Clerk in the Army Rifle Record Office. Army No. 49115. Served in Winchester probably until late 1919. (Her sister, Kathleen Lally, also served.)

McGurrin, Brigid, nee Connolly. Born in Kilcock, Co. Kildare, 2 July 1880. Roman Catholic. Father a gardener. Home address: 25 Old Kilmainham, Dublin. Already working as a civilian army cook in the Curragh Camp when she applied to join up in May 1918. Signed up in July 1918 as “B” Cook. Army No. 45693. Served in Londonderry until August 1919.

O’Reilly, Margaret Mary. Born in Maynooth, Co. Kildare, 2 August 1896. Roman Catholic. Father a Labourer. Home address: 2 Greenfield Cottages, Maynooth. Worked as a housemaid when she applied to join up in December 1917. Signed up in April 1918 as “B” Waitress. Army No. 38465. Served in Randalstown, Co. Antrim, Victoria Barracks, Cork and in Dublin until March 1919. (Two brothers lost their lives serving in France. James died in 1916 and Patrick died in 1918.)

Pettie, Kathleen Mary. Born in Co. Kildare, 1892. Church of England. Mother a shopkeeper. Home address: Landenstown, Sallins, Co. Kildare. She applied to join up in London in September 1917 and was signed up immediately as “B” Housemaid. Army No. 3791. Served in Wimbledon and in Wimereux, Abbeville and Rouen, France, until August 1919.

Ryan, Mary. Born in Nurney, Co. Kildare, 22 March 1896. Roman Catholic. Father a Groom in National Stud, Kildare. Home address: Crosskeys, Kildangan, Co. Kildare. Worked as a housemaid and cook when she applied to join up in March 1918. Signed up in July 1918 as “B” General Domestic. Army No. 45696. Served in Marlborough Barracks Dublin, and the Bombing School, Templemore, Co. Tipperary until February 1919.

Sources

National Archives of United Kingdom, Kew, England

Kildare Local Studies, Genealogy and Archives, Kildare Library Service