



Chapter Three
WOMEN & THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE
1917-1921

AFTERMATH OF THE RISING (1916-1919)

The work of Cumann na mBan in the aftermath of the Rising had a major effect in shaping the revolutionary spirit of the years 1917-21. The internment camps may have been styled the 'universities of revolution' but in Ireland it was the women who spread the doctrine of Republicanism throughout the country.

The women provided a communications system that brought together the disparate elements gathering under the umbrella of Sinn Féin in the months following the Rising. Women assisted the Volunteers by destroying papers and ammunition and delivering messages to the families of men who had been interned. Others searched for the dead and the injured in the hospitals - work that was vital in compiling a register of those widowed and orphaned or otherwise in need of support.

On the instructions of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Kathleen, widow of Thomas Clarke, took a leading role in co-ordinating the relief operation following the Rising. Within a fortnight two organisations had been established, the Irish National Aid Association and the Volunteer Dependants Fund. Cumann na mBan encouraged and facilitated their amalgamation. The huge task of administering the collection and distribution of money was undertaken mainly by Cumann na

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KATHLEEN CLARKE née DALY (1878-1972) from Limerick. The niece of the Fenian John Daly. In 1901 she emigrated to America and married Tom Clarke, a Fenian who had been in prison with her uncle. They returned to Ireland in 1907 with their three sons. After 1916 and the execution of her husband Kathleen set up the Volunteer Dependants Fund. During the War of Independence she was incarcerated in Holloway Jail, became a District Justice and was elected to the Dáil. She opposed the Treaty. A senator from 1927-1936 and became the first female Lord Mayor of Dublin from 1939-1944.

At the age of seventy-one she stood unsuccessfully for Clann na Poblachta.