

## **Proposal:**

### **A Woman's Role: Female Veterans memories of their participation in Irish Revolutionary Years**

The recollections of 140 female veterans provide contemporary historians with a fascinating insight into the Irish Revolutionary Years. Recorded as part of the Irish Bureau of Military History during the 1940s and 1950s, these witness statements illuminate and emphasise the integral role played by women during the conflict.

As this paper will highlight, in spite of the fact that these memoirs were recorded at a moment in a newly declared Irish Republic - when the role of women had been greatly diminished by the unified forces of the Church and State - the significant role played by women in helping securing Irish freedom is apparent and telling.

Memories range from those of fervent members of the Irish republican women's paramilitary organisation Cumann na mBan who practised target shooting with rifles to teenage typists cycling alongside their elder brothers as they marched to participate in the Easter Rising 1916 and those of married mothers who fed and housed men - considered to be war criminals on the run - in their family homes. This paper will examine how such activities and responsibilities left many of the women with real physical and mental trauma. While others faced discrimination and ignorance from their former male compatriots as they sought to have their experiences confirmed and attain financial compensation for their efforts.

Ultimately this paper seeks to allow these women through their own words and recollections to rightfully reclaim their role in the Irish revolutionary years, which until recently has arguably been forgotten by the official historical canon.

### **Brief Bio:**

A former IRC scholar, UCD Teaching Fellow and Affiliate Researcher at the University of Glasgow Dr Leanne Blaney specialises in the history of technology and transport during the 19th and 20th century in Britain and Ireland. Her most recent publications include **The Motorcar in Ireland** (Liffey Press, 2019) and **UCD Collegians: All Ireland Senior Hurling Champions 1917** (UCD Press, 2017). She has taught courses on 19th and 20th century modern Irish and British history.