

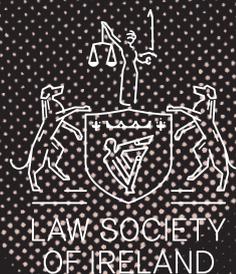
# CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES LEGISLATION

*The first 100 women solicitors*



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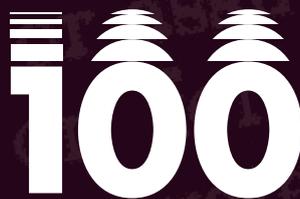
CELEBRATING A CENTURY  
OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES LEGISLATION





# CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES LEGISLATION

*The first 100 women solicitors*



LAW SOCIETY  
OF IRELAND

TUESDAY, 23 DECEMBER 1919 was a landmark date in the history of the legal profession. The *Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919* was enacted - the culmination of many years of lobbying by women seeking to enter the professions.

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1919. *Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, 1919.* CH. 71. 325

### CHAPTER 71.

An Act to amend the Law with respect to disqualifications on account of sex. [23rd December 1919.]

**B**E it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :

1. A person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post, or from entering or assuming or carrying on any civil profession or vocation, or for admission to any incorporated society (whether incorporated by Royal Charter or otherwise), and a person shall not be exempted by sex or marriage from the liability to serve as a juror :

Removal of disqualification on grounds of sex.

The history of attempts by women to enter the legal profession in England is well documented<sup>1</sup>. It culminated in 1913 when Gwyneth Marjorie Bebb, Maud Ingram, Karin Costelloe and Lucy Nettlefold took a case against the Law Society of England and Wales<sup>2</sup> claiming that they should be allowed to sit its preliminary examination. The case was unsuccessful both in the Chancery Division and the Court of Appeal. Lord Justice Phillimore stated:

*“I do not say that this may not be an office suitable to women; what I say is it has never been, in the view of the Courts, suitable to women, and in all the discussions in those cases, in all the quotations with respect to hereditary offices that a woman may hold or her husband may hold in her right, there has never been a suggestion that the office of attorney was one which is open to a woman.”*

The Court determined that the appeal should fail and that if there was to be a change in practice it would have to be brought about by Parliament.

No doubt the outcome of the *Bebb* case was watched eagerly by a small group of Irish women, some of whom were already working in family law firms and other younger women students with aspirations to become lawyers. In particular, Helena Mary Early, a Dublin woman, then in her mid- twenties and already working in her brother’s firm, must have felt a degree of impatience with the slow progress of change. In Belfast, Mary Dorothea Heron, was embarking on a Classics degree at Queen’s University, Belfast and no doubt had formed an intention to qualify as a solicitor and join her uncle’s firm. In 1919 after the Act became law, both women went on to become firsts, Mary Dorothea Heron the first woman to be admitted to the Roll of Solicitors and Helena Mary Early the first woman to apply for a practising certificate in the then newly formed Saorstát Éireann. Although they both commenced their apprenticeships within a few months of each other in 1920, they qualified in 1923 into a radically different post partition landscape of two legal jurisdictions<sup>3</sup> and the iconic Four Courts buildings in ruins.

1 Redmond, Mary. “The emergence of women in the solicitors’ profession in Ireland” in Hall & Hogan (eds.), *The Law Society of Ireland 1852-2002*, p. 100-106. Garahy, John. “The first triumvirate”. (2019) *Gazette*, Jan/Feb, 50-53/. Hogan, Daire. *The legal profession in Ireland 1789-1922*. (1986), p 146-7. Kelly, Teri, “Profession’s perfect parity”. (2015) *Gazette*, Jan/Feb., 20-21.

2 *Bebb v Law Society of England and Wales* [1914] 1 Ch. 286.

3 Government of Ireland Act 1920 established partition as of 31 May 1921.

# INTO THE ARCHIVES

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*Who were the first 100?*



In celebration of the centenary of the Act a steering group made up of representatives from the IRISH WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION, the BAR COUNCIL, the KING'S INNS, the LAW SOCIETY and other professional bodies formed to plan a series of events to mark the centenary. The first official event was a Gala Dinner in the King's Inns on 30 November 2019, at which Professor Mary McAleese, former President of Ireland, gave the keynote address. Her speech was a glowing tribute to the woman lawyers, particularly those who qualified in the first decade post the legislation.<sup>4</sup> She put the achievement of the women in historical and social context:

*“Those women would have to be highly educated which back in the nineteen hundreds and for a great deal of the following century meant they would come from the upper or wealthier classes in other words they would in their turn be drawn from the very elites which had ring-fenced the professions with the sexism that had historically kept women out.”*

As part of that initiative the Law Society Library took a look back through the institutional archives to identify the first 100 women solicitors to qualify. The Law Society's hand-written Roll Books provided the source for the names of the first 100 women who qualified between 17 April 1923 and 7 July 1950. The Roll Books contained the names and dates of admission and this data had to be cross-referenced with the Registers of Apprentices to discover whether the solicitors were graduates, the length of their apprenticeship and where they had served it.

The list was then published in October 2019 and on a number of subsequent occasions with an invitation to solicitors to tell us more about the lives of these women. Below is a taster of what we discovered. The digital archive contains the biographies of over forty women and photographs, where available.

These personal recollections by relatives reflect a diverse group of pioneering women who quietly and with great determination established a place for women in the solicitors' profession. Their stories firstly reflect their strong academic achievement. Many of them practised for short periods only, ceasing to practise due often to family commitments or to moving to other working roles in society. Others practised for most of their lives and were hugely valued by their firms, clients and communities. Many inspired future generations to pursue a legal career.

We will continue to add to the online catalogue version of the archive during 2020 and we hope to receive more biographies during the course of the year.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.marymcaleese.com/celebrating-a-centenary-of-women-in-law>

# First 100 women ON ROLL OF SOLICITORS

	DATE OF ENTRY ON ROLL	NAME	FIRM
1	17 April 1923	Mary Dorothea Heron	T.M.Heron, Belfast
2	25 June 1923	Helena M. Early	Thomas Early, 16 Henry St
3	17 November 1924	Dorothea Mary Browne (married name O'Reilly)	Jasper J. Wolfe, Skibbereen
4	4 November 1926	Maureen McDowell	John M.McDowell, 188 Gt.Brunswick Street
5	19 November 1927	Annie J. Smyth	John B. Murphy, Clones
6	13 January 1928	Eleanore Dulcie Scholefield	Robert Scholefield, later assigned to Arthur James Beatty
7	15 January 1929	Clohra MacBride (married name Murphy)	John Kelly, Westport
8	24 May 1929	Adelaide M. Quin	John Quinn, Ardee
9	14 November 1929	Berenice I. Tarrant	John Tarrant, Sligo
10	15 November 1929	Maria Irene Eleanor McInerney	Henry Lemass, 31 Parliament St.
11	21 February 1930	Mary Emily Smith	Robert Greene, 6 Lr. Abbey St.
12	1 May 1930	Mary Ursula Kearns	James Kearns, Portumna
13	27 November 1930	Catherine J. Tynan	Michael Tynan, 41 William Street, Limerick
14	15 January 1931	Edith Geraldine Keller	Robert Keller, 46 Kildare St.
15	15 January 1931	Finola Adeline O'Connor (married name Foley).	Maurice B. O'Connor, 62 South Mall, Cork
16	30 January 1931	Doreen Sarah Gillespie	John Gillespie, Castleblayney
17	9 May 1931	Nora M. O'Shiel	Vincent P. Shields, Loughrea
18	28 May 1931	Gladys Lallah Tallan (married name Corbet).	Patrick J. Tallan, 106 West St. Drogheda
19	22 June 1931	Margaret Mary Gibbons	James A. Ennis, Tullamore
20	12 November 1931	Mary Neilan	Patrick J. Neilan, Roscommon
21	4 February 1932	Aine Mary Reid (married name Smith).	Helena M. Early, 16 Henry St.
22	8 April 1933	Kathleen Ryan	William L. Ryan, Tipperary
23	14 August 1933	Mary Rosario Gleeson	Lughaidh J. Gleeson, Nenagh
24	17 October 1933	Fionnguala O'Beirn	Michael J. O'Beirn, Galway
25	23 March 1934	Mary Eugenia Harte	James Harte, Kilkenny
26	2 May 1934	Mary Lohan, (married name Delaney).	Henry Concannon, Tuam
27	18 May 1934	Maureen A. Hawthorne	John Hawthorne, 15 Eustace St.
28	31 May 1934	Irene Emilie McCoy	Archibald S. McCoy, 5 Colbeck Street, Waterford
29	31 January 1935	Bridget Winifred Hannon	Henry St. John Blake, Galway
30	5 February 1935	Kathleen Bridget Durcan	John McHale, Castlebar
31	28 May 1935	Pauline Eugenie Laverty	Matthew J. Farrell, Longford
32	13 November 1935	Mary J. O'Neill	Michael J. O'Neill, 71 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin.
33	14 January 1936	Mary E. Reilly	Daniel J. Reilly, Trim

	DATE OF ENTRY ON ROLL	NAME	FIRM
34	15 February 1936	Margaret M. Dunne	Patrick A. Mooney, Kells
35	26 May 1936	Mary T. McCarroll	Robert A. Osborne, Athy
36	29 May 1936	Maire O'Neill	Patrick Glynn, 22 Nassau St
37	24 June 1936	Margaret Carey	Timothy O'Shea, Killarney, assigned to Joseph Reidy
38	14 October 1936	Una Mary Treacy	Edward Treacy, 72 William St., Limerick
39	14 October 1936	Stella Marion Barclay Webb	Leonard Webb, Suffolk St.
40	3 June 1937	Moira Flynn	Cathal L. Flynn, Carrick-on-Shannon
41	6 July 1937	Sheila MacBride	Clohra MacBride, Westport
42	6 July 1937	Mary Frances O'Connor	Alexander M. Healy, 48 Grand Parade, Cork
43	14 January 1938	Eleanor Christina Murray (married name O'Shea).	Gerald F.O'Flynn, 41 South Mall, Cork
44	31 May 1938	Liadain MacErlean	John J. Early, 16 Henry St.
45	20 January 1939	Jane Teresa McGowan	Gerard L. McGowan, Balbriggan
46	6 February 1939	Dora C.M. Corrigan (married name Powell)	Bernard J. Seales, 11 College Green
47	13 February 1939	Elizabeth Kettle	Francis Devine, 12 Dame St.
48	7 June 1939	Teresa Patricia O'Meara (married name Purcell)	William J. O'Meara, Mallow
49	15 June 1939	Moira O'Sullivan	Richard J. Kelly, Galway
50	8 November 1939	Maureen French	Thomas J. Kelly, New Ross
51	15 December 1939	Mary Geraldine O'Leary	Daniel H.O'Leary, Arklow
52	12 February 1940	Brigid Hogan	Patrick Hogan, Loughrea
53	14 January 1941	Moya O'Connor	Patrick O'Connor, Swinford
54	24 January 1941	Eithne Patricia McMullin	Aidan E.R. McCabe, Cavan
55	27 January 1941	Lucy Fagan	James Fagan, 58 Rutland Square West
56	13 March 1941	Maureen Hannon	Denis J. Hannon, Athlone
57	13 January 1942	Joanna Mary Kelly	Robert A. Frewen, Tipperary
58	16 February 1942	Margaret Morris	James A. Binchy, Clonmel
59	6 March 1942	Adeline G.J. Hyland (married name Butler).	Christopher McGonagle, 34 Upr. O'Connell St.
60	10 March 1942	Constance Mary Campbell	Edmund Corr, Ballina
61	30 June 1942	Eileen M.M.Forde	John Forde, Boyle
62	10 July 1942	Mary Brigid Cahalan	David D. MacDonald, 19 Upr. Merrion St.
63	17 July 1942	Mary Winifred Eleanor Thornton	Alfred G. Thornton, Castlebar
64	30 July 1942	Mary Teresa Corboy	John J. O'Connor, 7 Upr. Ormond Quay
65	27 November 1942	Mary Josephine MacClancy	Gerald J.O'Donnell, Ennis
66	1 December 1942	Kathleen Mary O'Kane	John R. Blakeney, 25 Clare St.
67	5 January 1943	Joan N. Macaulay	Robert A. Macaulay, Listowel
68	8 February 1943	Mary Joseph Brennan	Robert A. Macaulay, Listowel
69	26 March 1943	Eithne Mary Mac Inerney	Thomas O'B. Kelly, 98 O'Connell St., Limerick
70	14 December 1943	Eileen Neilan	Patrick J. Neilan, Roscommon
71	16 February 1944	Eileen O'Reilly	Louis O'Dea, Galway
72	15 May 1944	Marguerite S. Meagher (married name Horgan).	William E. O'Brien, Mitchelstown

	DATE OF ENTRY ON ROLL	NAME	FIRM
73	25 May 1944	Cecilia Hurley (married name McGrath)	Gerald Tench, 18 Bachelor's Walk/ assigned to Henry Sheil, John J. Doyle, Plunkett Kennedy, Thomas H. Hayes
74	29 June 1944	Beatrice Mushatt (married name Elyan).	Andrew J. O'Flynn, Gort
75	4 September 1944	Meadhbh Ni Uadhaigh (married name Fitzgerald)	Sean O hUadhaigh, 12 Dawson St.
76	19 September 1944	Mary Teresa Josephine Sweeney (married name Higgins).	Henry MacDermot, Galway
77	21 June 1945	Anna Elizabeth Egan	William J.V. Comerford, Tuam
78	10 July 1945	Nuala Early	Thomas Early, 63/64 Upr. O'Connell St.
79	21 August 1945	Mary O'Reilly Huggard	James Neville, Bandon
80	26 November 1945	Mary Teresa Barry	Robert M. Kiernan, 12 Clare St.
81	9 July 1946	Moya Dixon (married name Quinlan)	Joseph M. Dixon, 15 Parnell Square, Dublin
82	29 July 1946	Josephine Mary Esther O'Keeffe	John H. O'Keeffe, Cork
83	25 November 1946	Carmel Early	Thomas Early, 63/64 Upr. O'Connell St.
84	27 November 1946	Mary Monica McFadden	Patrick O'Donnell, Dungloe
85	2 June 1947	Eileen Kennedy	Patrick J. Kennedy, Carrickmacross
86	2 June 1947	Blathnaidh Ni Uadhaigh (married name O'Rahilly).	Sean O hUadhaigh, 12 Dawson St.
87	28 October 1947	Margaret H. Walsh	Patrick J. Rutledge, 16 Molesworth St.
88	1 December 1947	Annie Josephine McGuinness (married name Carroll)	John C. Harvey, Castlebar
89	17 December 1947	Mary Teresa O'Connor	Michael Power, 4 Upr. Ormond Quay
90	22 March 1948	Pauline O'Donovan	Charles J. Kennedy, Skibbereen
91	19 April 1948	Bridget Patricia Power	John J. Power, Kilmallock
92	2 June 1948	Mary Agnes Mooney	James J. Mooney, Cork
93	4 October 1948	Caroline Rose Bowen (married name Walsh)	Donal McClement, Cork
94	15 October 1948	Sarah Carmel Killeen	John Foley, Bagenalstown
95	17 December 1948	Frances Mary Callan	C. E. Callan, Boyle
96	1 August 1949	Mary Catherine Hughes (married name O'Neill).	Lawrence J. O'Neill, 21 Molesworth St.
97	18 November 1949	Ellen Florence Mary Beatty	Walter Beatty, 62 Dame St.
98	20 December 1949	Margaret E. Hayes	Roger G. O'Sullivan, Limerick
99	3 May 1950	Sheila B. McCrann	James Connellan, Elphin
100	7 July 1950	Mary Matthews, (married name McMahan).	Patrick O'Donnell, Dungloe



The Secretary submitted the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Bill which had passed both Houses of Parliament. It was ordered that from the date of the Bill receiving Royal assent the Secretary do accept from women applications for apprenticeship to Solicitors

“The Secretary submitted the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Bill which had passed both Houses of Parliament. It was ordered that from the date of the Bill receiving Royal assent the Secretary do accept from women applications for apprenticeship to solicitors.”

[Source: Law Society Council Minutes, 10 December 1919]

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no. 1

MARY DOROTHEA HERON

was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 17 April 1923, the first woman to be admitted. She was from Downpatrick, Co. Down and started her apprenticeship on 7 February 1920 in the office of her uncle, Thomas Heron at T.M. Heron, Solicitors, Belfast. She excelled as a student and her achievement as the ‘first lady solicitor’ in Ireland received recognition in Belfast, where three newspapers carried a report of her success. She continued working in the office of T.M. Heron after qualifying until 1946, mainly doing probate work. She died on 9 October 1960.



Mary Dorothea Heron

Photo: *Belfast Telegraph*, 5 February, 1923



Roll Book of the Law Society of Ireland, 1923, showing the entry for Mary Dorothea Heron.

Photo: Cian Redmond

## HELENA MARY EARLY

no. 2

Helena Mary Early was born in Dublin in 1888. She completed her apprenticeship in the office of her brother, Thomas Early and was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 23 June 1923. She was elected first lady auditor of the Solicitors' Apprentices' Debating Society of Ireland in 1921. She became the first woman Commissioner for Oaths.

Helena was a friend of Countess Markievicz. During the mid-1940s she was actively involved in the Woman's Social and Progressive League and was also active in the Irish Soviet Friendship Society, serving as its President for a period. In 1946 she attended at the arrival of Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, former First Lady of the US, at Baldonnel Airport and took advantage of a gap in proceedings to welcome her to Ireland on behalf of the Woman's Social and Progressive League.

Helena Early continued in practice until the mid-1970s and died in 1977.



Helena Early, Solicitor  
pictured outside the  
Land Judges Court



Miss Helena  
Early, (right),  
first lady auditor  
of the Solicitors'  
Apprentices' Debating  
Society of Ireland  
(SADSI), 1921/22 and  
second female solicitor  
admitted to the Roll of  
Solicitors in Ireland,  
with Miss Elizabeth  
A. Ryan of Killenaule,  
Co. Tipperary, a law  
student at UCD and  
second female Auditor  
of SADSI 1970/71.

Photo: *Irish Times*, 28  
October 1970



*“Men were not too pleased over my election as the first woman auditor, but they got over it and in the end I had a wonderful time”*

Helena Early in conversation with Mary Anderson, *Irish Independent*, 5 November 1970

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## HELENA (LENA) MARY EARLY – *a recollection*

By Nuala O'Brien (nee Early), Solicitor, niece

*Reprinted with kind permission of Brian O'Brien, Solicitor*

Helena Mary Early, better known as Lena, was born on 1 April 1888, the second youngest of thirteen children born to Peter and Margaret Early. Her father was a well-known Inn keeper in Swords, Co. Dublin. The Inn was situated in the main street of Swords. The coach from Belfast to Dublin stopped there for refreshments for the passengers and rest for the horse... hence the well-known saying “You are welcome to Swords, says the brave Peter Early”. Right in front of the Inn stood the Big Tree out on the road (now long since removed). Peter Early also owned a big farm between Swords and Malahide.

Lena was born on All Fool's Day but from a very early age it was obvious she was no fool but wise far beyond her years. As a child she was known as ‘Gimlet Eye’, observing things which went unnoticed by the rest of the family. During their courting days she kept “nicks” for her older brothers and sisters. She was orphaned at an early age and as was the custom then went to live with her brother, Tom, earning her keep as a nurse maid to his children. When the “Black and Tans” were in Ireland she was stopped after curfew one night and brought into their barracks. They proceeded to play cards and she asked if she could join them. They were playing poker and by morning they were all left penniless! She related that she heard a bank was to be raided so with a friend she went to the bank in a taxi and brought all the money home with her.

Her brother, Tom, was a solicitor and she often went to the office to run errands, etc. for him often to the bank. The bank manager suggested she should qualify as a solicitor but she had no money so the same bank manager gave her a loan. She only had been educated in the Primary School in Swords but in 1920 she secured first place at the modified preliminary examination for solicitors' apprentices, having the honour of being the first lady in the United Kingdom to obtain liberty under section 16 of the Solicitors (Ireland) Act 1898 to become bound for the short term of three years apprenticeship. She was apprenticed in June 1920 to her brother Tom who was a solicitor to Dublin City Council. She was the first lady Auditor in 1921-2 of the Solicitors' Apprentices' Debating Society and her paper on the occasion of the Inaugural Address on "The influence of the Irish Abroad" was a brilliant effort. She was awarded the Gold Medal and Certificate for Oratory, the Gold Medal and Certificate for Legal Debate and the Silver Medal and Certificate for Impromptu Debate. (In 1970 a Miss Elizabeth Ryan was elected Auditor of the Solicitors' Apprentices' Debating Society and at the time it was thought she was the first lady Auditor until it was discovered Helena had been elected in 1921.) (See photo bottom page 11).

Miss Early was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors of the High Court in 1923, being the first lady to secure the distinction in the State. About the same time she was appointed Commissioner for Oaths. It is believed she was the first lady in the world to secure that distinction. She joined her brother Tom in his practice in O'Connell Street, Dublin. Her younger brother John, was practising at the time in Henry Street, Dublin. She did a lot of the County Council cases appearing in every District Court in the city and county of Dublin. I'd say she was one of the first ladies to own and drive her own car. She was a very large lady and her car was a baby Austin.... I often wondered how she managed to get in through the small door. On a Sunday she would collect six or eight of her young nieces and nephews, put down the soft roof of her baby Austin and drive up the hill of Howth with all of the children standing. Lena had a wonderful way with children – she could always distract and talk them out of a tantrum. Frequently she had to have children committed to care and she would drive them in her little car. Many times she was assumed to be the mother of these children. That didn't worry her- nothing worried her. She did her own thing and couldn't care what anyone thought of her.

When she appeared in Court she got away with murder because in her day gentlemen were respectful and polite to ladies. A young male solicitor was in Court and before proceeding with his case against a man accused of rape he sent a note up to the Judge requesting to have the lady removed from the body of the Court. The Judge sent back a note saying the lady in question was appearing for the accused.

One night going into her flat she was attacked by a man. With her umbrella she gave him the mother and father of a beating. When up in Court some time later the man in question said that he had been all through the First World War but never got the beating Lena had given him. For some years she shared a flat with a married man estranged from his wife. In the 1930's for that she got a fair amount of criticism. About the same time she became interested in Russia and visited the country with a male companion. In the early forties she

was President of the Irish Soviet Society, which to most people meant she was a communist. This was far from the truth as she was a practising Catholic but was genuinely interested in what went on in other corners of the globe. She invited the Red Dean, Newlett Johnson over to address a meeting in the Mansion House. As soon as the Dean started to speak he was pelted with rotten oranges, eggs, etc. mostly by students from U.C.D. and the meeting broke up in utter chaos. Her niece, also Miss Early, was a newly qualified solicitor and President of her school's Past Pupil's Union who had just held their annual dance. The Catholic Standard published a scurrilous article about Catholicism in Ireland and the President of the PPU of one of the leading schools was at the same time the President of the Irish Soviet Friendship Society (who had to be a communist!). The solicitor for the younger Miss Early wrote to the Standard who immediately apologised and followed up with an article singing the praises of the said Convent and their PPU and paying compensation to their President who handed the money over to the Girls' Club they ran in Dominick Street. Some months later at a dinner party the Editor of the Standard related the story and said how very lucky he was to get away so lightly – one of his reporters having made such a terrible mistake – the man next to him at the table then said "the younger Miss Early is my fiancée".

As a child I remember Lena being known as "The Blue Lady". She was probably one of the first ladies in the country to have her hair dyed blue. She smoked incessantly – say 60 a day – up to a few years before she died at the ripe old age of 89. She could not have smoked that many but she did buy 60 each day but was always most generous offering them to everyone (and then most everyone smoked). She took flying lessons but didn't continue to get her pilot's licence.

In the thirties she was Lady Captain of Sutton Golf Club. I remember her organising a Fancy Dress Golf Competition and although she was then 16st appeared on the course as a clown.

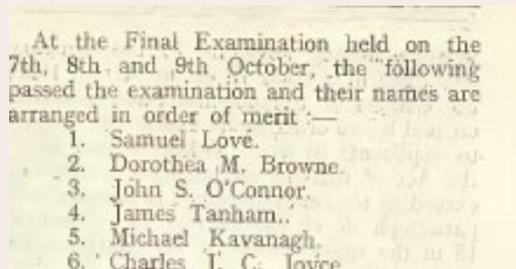
Lena was born fifty or sixty years too soon. She would have been a great asset to the Women's Lib Movement. When all of her contemporaries were tightly corseted she wore neither corset nor bra all of her life. She always believed in the equality of the sexes. She would say she could do anything as well as any man. She could not understand Catholics who were bigoted against Protestants or any other religion.

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## DOROTHEA MARY BROWNE

no. 3

was from Mitchelstown, Co. Cork and worked as a law clerk for Jasper Wolfe, Solicitor of Skibbereen. She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 17 November 1924. She married Patrick F. O'Reilly and together they founded the firm of P.F. O'Reilly in Dublin. Dorothea practised throughout her life and the firm continues in business today at South Great George's Street, Dublin 2.



Results of Law Society's Final Examination, 1924, showing Dorothea M. Browne in second place.

## MAUREEN MCDOWELL

no. 4

was the eldest daughter of John J. and Maude McDowell. She served her apprenticeship with her father, John M. McDowell, Solicitor, 188 Great Brunswick Street, Dublin, who was a native of Belfast. Maureen's grandfather was Mr William J. McDowell, the editor of the *Belfast Morning News* and later editor of the *Freeman's Journal*. Maureen's father died aged 55 in 1925, when Maureen was just a year short of completing her apprenticeship. She is listed as a commissioner for oaths in the 1926 Law Directory, with an address at 3 College Green, Dublin. Maureen appeared on the Register of Solicitors until 1927. Maureen had two brothers who were also solicitors, Dermot, who qualified the same year as Maureen and John L. who qualified in 1931.

Source: Law Society Institutional Archives, Irish Newspapers Archive

## ANNIE JOSEPHINE SMYTH

no. 5

was born on 3 April 1904, at Annalore St., Clones, Co. Monaghan to John Smyth and Elizabeth Smyth (née McManus). Her father John was a publican. Annie attended St. Louis Convent, Monaghan. She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 19 November 1927. She originally practised with the firm Vincent & Beatty before moving to L.C.P. Smith and Co. in Cavan. In January 1955, she was appointed Registrar for Births, Marriages and Deaths for the Clones District. Annie gave up law to take over the running of her family's pub and undertaking business. She died on the 28 August 1985.

Source: *Anglo-Celt*, 5 September 1985

no. 6

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ELEANORE DULCIE SCHOLEFIELD

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Eleanore Dulcie Scholefield was born on the 7 July 1901. She was the youngest of 6 children born to Robert Scholefield and Margaret Bolster. The family lived at “Rosenau” 26 Zion Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6.



Eleanore Dulcie Scholefield, Solicitor

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In 1918, her older brother Cyril Scholefield was killed at the first Battle of Arras. He was awarded the *Croix de Guerre avec Palme* and was made a Chevalier of the *Ordre de la Couronne*, military decorations of the Kingdom of Belgium, awarded for bravery or other military virtue on the battlefield.

Eleanore graduated with a B.A. from Trinity College Dublin and was later admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on the 13 January, 1928. Her father, Robert Scholefield was also a solicitor and head of the firm Messrs. Moore, Keily and Lloyd of 31 Molesworth St. Dublin. Upon his death in 1926, he left his interest in his business as a solicitor to his daughter, Eleanore on condition that she be admitted as a solicitor within twelve months of completing her apprenticeship. Eleanore’s last entry in the Law Directory was in 1934.

At some point during the latter half of the 1930s, Eleanore moved to England. After World War II broke out she joined the Women’s Royal Naval Service popularly known as the Wrens. The first entry for her in the British Military Navy Lists is as a Third Officer serving on HMS Eaglet (based in Liverpool) on the 15 May 1941. However, by 1944 she had risen to the rank of First Officer (8 July 1944).

Eleanore never married. She died in Worthing, Sussex in March, 1985.

Source: Amanda Stuart, niece

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Eleanore Dulcie Scholefield with June Macdonald, niece.

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## CLOHRA MACBRIDE

no. **7**

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was born on 1 May 1906 to Joseph and Eileen MacBride of Westport, Co. Mayo. She was educated at Our Lady's Bower, Athlone, and was awarded a B.A. (N.U.I). She was apprenticed to John Kelly, Solicitor, Westport, commencing her three year apprenticeship in December 1924. She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 15 January 1929, she was the 7<sup>th</sup> woman solicitor, the first in County Mayo. Paid employment was hard to find in those days and so she set up her own practice in Westport. No doubt it was helpful that her father was a local T.D. from a prominent republican family. (He was a brother of John MacBride, the hero of the Boer War, executed after the rising of 1916.). Clohra ran a successful practice for a number of years. She lived at the family home which with three younger sisters and one younger brother was a lively one. She owned and drove a car (a novelty in those days) and played tennis, golf and bridge. She continued her practice until her marriage in 1943 to James Murphy who was in the Munster and Leinster Bank. Bank officials then were moved from town to town. They lived in Kinsale, Newcastle West, Naas, Rathkeale and Castlebar, retiring eventually to Limerick. They had one daughter who lives in England. She died in 2001, having spent her last years in a nursing home. Clohra was my aunt as well as my godmother and I knew her well. She and my mother, (Sheila MacBride, see no. 41 on the list) were very close and we frequently stayed with her and her husband in their various homes. She was a very lively lady who enjoyed sociability. She was good at bridge and golf, as was her husband Jim. She had an independent mind of her own, loved reading and was always good fun.

*Source: Rose Mary Kirwan, retired Solicitor, niece*



Clohra MacBride (left) and Sheila MacBride, Solicitors, at Mallow Cottage, Westport.

## ADELAIDE MARY CONSTANCE QUIN

was born on the 11 July 1888, at 23 Pembroke Road, Dublin 4. She was the eldest child and only daughter of Mr. John Quin, Solicitor, and Mrs Ann Quin (née Brennan). Adelaide was raised at Dromin House, Dunleer, Co. Louth. The house was built by her great grandfather Michael Brennan in the early 1800s. In 1922, the family moved to Ardee where her father practised at the firm T. Gerrard & Co.

She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on the 24 May, 1929. After the death of her father in 1938, she took over the practice, which she carried on up to the time of her death on the 31 July, 1960.

Adelaide has been described as exemplary in character and calling. She was held in the highest regard by all sections of the community. A highly gifted lady, she was noted for her attention to details. Her energy, determination, and capacity for taking pains were altogether unusual. She thought out and planned everything very carefully, and no detail was too small to escape the consideration and attention of her perspicacious mind.

As well as her work as a solicitor, Adelaide was secretary of the Ardee Ladies Golf Club, a founder member of the Ardee Bridge Club, and treasurer and a past president of the local Guild of the Irish Countrywomen's Association. She was also a member of the Co. Louth Archaeological Society and of the Ardee Nursing Association, and was one of the most active members of the Red Cross during the Emergency.

*Source: Drogheda Independent, 6 August, 1960*

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Berenice I. Tarrant,  
Solicitor.

### **BERENICE ITA TARRANT**

was born on 28 July 1903 in Sligo to John Tarrant and Catherine Tarrant (née Murphy) and was the 9<sup>th</sup> lady solicitor to qualify in Ireland following the 1919 Act.

Her father John Tarrant was born in 1867 and qualified as a solicitor in 1894. He practised throughout his career at a premises at Teeling Street, opposite the Courthouse and next door to the practice of Argue & Phibbs. He became the solicitor for Sligo County Council. John Tarrant passed away in 1948. John Tarrant's brother Samuel Tarrant also qualified as a solicitor, being firstly apprenticed to John in 1905 but transferred his apprenticeship in 1908 to Michael J. Howley Solicitor, Sligo.

Berenice Tarrant, the second eldest of John's six children, was educated at the Ursuline Convent in Sligo along with her sisters Sheelagh, Iris and Oonagh. Berenice (or Berrie as she was known to the family) was apprenticed to her father, John Tarrant, in 1924 and qualified as a solicitor in 1929, and initially stayed on and practised in the firm with her father. She was joined in turn by two younger siblings, Ronan, and Cyril. Their older sister Sheelagh initially became apprenticed to her father John but never qualified. She worked on as a clerk in the Sligo office.

After her father's death, Berenice moved to Dublin and worked for many years as a conveyancing solicitor for McCann, Fitzgerald, Roche & Dudley (now McCanns). She latterly worked as a conveyancer with Nathaniel Lacey & Co., and finally before she retired, she was with P.D. Gardiner & Co.

In addition to being one of only a small number of qualified female solicitors practising in Ireland, as a young professional woman in the 1930's she travelled extensively on the continent. Her stories of pre-war Germany were hair-raising. She recalled around 1936 being in Berlin with some friends where their escort was a Nazi. They had wanted to shop in Woolworths but he refused to enter as he said it was a Jewish shop.

After retiring from practice, she helped her sibling sisters look after their elderly mother (John's widow) who died in 1970 aged 99.

After her mother's death she moved back to spend her golden years in Rosses Point, only a very short distance from former family home in Ballincar, Sligo. Berenice died in Sligo on 18 April 1986 aged 82 years.

Berenice's brother Ronan predeceased her in 1972 and while none of his children followed in his legal footsteps his granddaughter Catherine Tarrant qualified as a solicitor in 2006.

Berenice's brother, Cyril Tarrant, left the family practice in Sligo in 1947 and purchased a practice in Arklow (Daniel H O'Leary & Co.). Another connection with the Tarrant name was that Daniel O'Leary sold his practice to Cyril Tarrant when his daughter Geraldine who qualified in 1939 and was the 51<sup>st</sup> female solicitor qualified in Ireland, left the practice to get married. Cyril practised in Arklow until his death in 2000, firstly under the style of D.H. O'Leary & Co until 1972 and then latterly under Tarrant & Tarrant in 1972 when his son David Tarrant joined the firm. The legal line is still continuing through David Tarrant and his son Andrew Tarrant, Berenice's grandnephew, who qualified in 1972.

*Source: David Tarrant, Solicitor, nephew*

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## MARIA IRENE ELEANOR MCINERNEY

no. **10**

Irene McInerney was born in Loughrea on 19 December 1905 to Michael and Mai (née Garry) McInerney. She was the eldest of five surviving children, four girls and the youngest, a boy.

Michael McInerney founded a retail general store in the town in the 1890s which was developed by his grandson, Gerard and great grandson, Michael to form the present day Supervalu in Loughrea.

Irene's mother died in 1913 when she was seven years of age and she spent several early years away from her home. She received her secondary education at Taylor's Hill Dominican Convent, Galway, and University College Dublin. She was apprenticed to Henry 'Nap' Lemass, Dublin.

On qualification she returned to and practised in Loughrea in 1929 and became good friends with V. P. Shields, Solicitor and Patrick Hogan, Solicitor and Minister of Labour and Agriculture in the first independent Irish government of 1922, sadly killed in a car crash in 1936.



Irene McInerney

In October 1932 she married Andrew T. McMahon, then an Income Tax Inspector, later a Special Revenue Commissioner for Appeals. She ceased practice as a solicitor after her marriage.

Initially, the newly married couple lived in Dundalk, in 1937 they transferred to Sandymount, Dublin, in 1947 to Tramore Co Waterford and after three years were back to Dublin permanently, where they lived in Malahide Co. Dublin. They had four children none of whom entered the legal profession.

Irene was a bridge player most of her life and a founder member of the Malahide Bridge club in the early sixties and she continued playing until the nineties. Her other enthusiasm was golf and she played in the two Malahide golf clubs, the Shore and the Island for a number of years. She was nominated Lady Captain of the Island Golf Club in the seventies. She was also a keen gardener.

Her mother's family came from Shanahea, Co. Clare and two of her uncles, Michael and Joseph Garry qualified as doctors at the Royal College of Surgeons. Michael played rugby for Ireland in 1908 and in 1918 married Rita Marr of Liverpool, one of the first women to fly an aeroplane in Ireland. After a brief sojourn in Ireland, they settled in Formby, Liverpool. He became captain of Formby Golf Club and Medical Advisor at Aintree Race Course.

Michael's brother, Joe Garry, on qualifying went to New York for a brief visit and returned to Ireland as assistant medical officer aboard the ill-fated Luisitania on which he perished in 1915.

When Irene attended U.C.D. she stayed at 22 Wellington Road, with her Aunt, Ita Bonass (née Garry), married to Henry Bonass, Law Agent with Dublin Corporation.

Irene McMahon was predeceased by her husband Andrew in February 1991. She died on 21 August 1998 at the Newtownpark Nursing Home.

*Source: John McMahon, son*

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**MARY URSULA KEARNS**

was born on the 20 October 1907 at Portumna, Co. Galway, the eldest child of James J. Kearns, solicitor and his wife Bridget Kearns (née Murphy). Her early education was at the Sisters of Mercy Primary school, Portumna, and later, her secondary education took place at Our Lady's Bower School (La Sainte Union) in Athlone, Co. Westmeath for three years. She then transferred to the Dominican Sisters at Eccles Street, Dublin where she completed her secondary education.

She became apprenticed to her father, James Kearns, and commenced her studies to become a solicitor at the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland and at University College, Dublin. During her time as a student she stayed in Dominican Hall, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. She was admitted as a solicitor on the 1 May 1930.

She practised as a solicitor for a short time in Dublin, it is thought with the firm of James O' Connor & Co. in Dame Street. On the 12 February 1931 she married Gerald A. Claffey, Portumna and thereafter she resided in Portumna all her life. Regrettably it was not possible for her to continue practising law after her marriage. She would have been an excellent practising solicitor.

She had three children, Gene Claffey, Portumna, Brian Claffey, Solicitor, Galway, (now retired), and Sister Hilary Claffey of the Holy Rosary Sisters. Mary Ursula also had two brothers Dominick (Dom) Kearns, Solicitor, Portumna, and Desmond (Des) Kearns, who qualified as a solicitor and practised in Dublin. Later he was called to the Bar and practised mainly on the Western Circuit.

Mary Ursula died on the 8 January 1989.

*Source: Brian Claffey, retired Solicitor, son*



Mary Ursula Kearns,  
Solicitor

no. 13

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CATHERINE J. TYNAN

was the daughter of Michael Tynan, Solicitor, and Mrs Johanna Tynan of Ennis Road, Limerick. Her brother, Martin Tynan, was also a solicitor and another brother, Patrick Tynan qualified as a barrister. A third brother was the Rt. Rev. Mgr. Michael Tynan, Diocesan Inspector of Schools. Catherine was apprenticed to her father and was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 27 November 1930. She won a silver medal for superior answering in the Final Examination, 1930, she took second place in the results of that Examination. She was welcomed to Limerick Circuit Court by Judge McElligott who extended a cordial welcome and said that he was “very glad to see Miss Tynan in Court and expressed the hope that she would have a very distinguished and successful career” (*Limerick Leader*, 11 February 1931).

Catherine was a highly respected solicitor who continued in practice right up to the time of her death. Her niece Dorothy and her nephew Greg both qualified as solicitors and had practices in Limerick up until recently. Another nephew is Gerry Tynan, S.C.

Source: Kieran O’Donovan, Solicitor, Tynan O’Donovan

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Catherine Tynan’s medal for “Superior answering in the Final Examination”, October 1930.

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Edith Geraldine Temple Lang, (née Keller), LL.D. (T.C.D.), 1929.

Edith Geraldine Temple Lang, (née Keller), was one of the most distinguished of the first generation of Irish women lawyers. She was a Scholar and Gold Medallist in history in Trinity College Dublin. She got a first class honours LL.B., and won the Julian Prize. She entered Trinity in 1921, became a Scholar in 1925, was awarded an LL.B. in 1928, and LL.D. in 1929. She was admitted as a solicitor in January 1931.

She was President of the Dublin University Women Graduates' Association in 1941-1943. She was active in the Irish Federation of University Women, finally becoming President, and serving on the committee of the International Federation of University Women. She won the Solicitors' Apprentices' Debating Society medal for oratory in 1928-29. She practised in Whitney Moore and Keller until her death in 1948.

*Source: John Temple Lang, Solicitor, son*



Finola Adeline  
O'Connor (m. Foley)

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Finola Adeline O'Connor, (m. Foley), appears at No.15 on the list. She was apprenticed to her brother, Maurice O'Connor, State Solicitor, 62 South Mall, Cork and was admitted in 1931. She married John Francis (Frank) Foley, also a Solicitor, in 1936. Maurice O'Connor and Frank Foley subsequently practised together as O'Connor & Foley, which practice merged with O'Flynn Exhams in 1974.

Finola and Frank had four daughters, three of whom qualified as Solicitors; Margaret who married Andy Smyth, who was President of the Law Society in 1996, Finola who married Max Neville, father of Richard Neville, and who practised for some years in O'Flynn Exhams and lastly Felicity who practised until recently at 24, South Bank, Crosses Green, Cork.

Finola Foley was the first female Solicitor in Cork City.

*Source: Felicity Foley, Solicitor, daughter*

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## NORA M. O'SHIEL

no. **17**

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(otherwise Nora M. Shields) was born on the 29 January 1905 at Dungannon, County Tyrone. She was educated at Hillside and Farnborough schools in England. She was apprenticed to her brother, Vincent P. Shields, in the firm of Hogan and Shields based in Athenry, County Galway, qualifying in 1931. She continued to work in that firm until the late 1940s when she went to England to work as a solicitor for a number of years. Subsequently she returned to Ireland working as an assistant solicitor in Dublin. In the 1970s and 1980s she had her own practice at 57 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin. After her retirement she returned to live in Athenry with her widowed sister Mollie where she remained until her death on the 16 January 2001.

Nora was a very conscientious and meticulous solicitor with a strong commitment to the best principles of legal practice. She made great efforts to inculcate these values into her nephews, grandnephews and their families who followed her into the legal profession. Outside of the law her many interests included golf as a member of both Athenry and Elm Park golf clubs, and art, which was a passion, until deprived of her sight in her later years. She also had an enthusiasm for family history and was a constant source of information for many American relations as well as researchers interested in her granduncle General James Shields. Well into her 90s Nora remained an active, youthful and stylish presence in the lives of her relations and friends.

*Source: Dan Shields, Solicitor, grandnephew*



Nora M. O'Shiel,  
Solicitor

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## no. 19

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### MARGARET MARY GIBBONS

was the first woman solicitor to practise in Co. Offaly. She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 22 June 1931 and worked with James A. Ennis, Tullamore, for about one year. She moved to Westport to open her own office. She is listed in the Law Directory as practising in Westport until 1938. Thereafter there is an entry for Margaret M. Donnelly practising in Westport until 1947.

Source: *Legal Offaly* by Michael Byrne, (Esler Press, 2008, page 318)

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## no. 20

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### MARY NEILAN

was born on the 20 April 1909 the eldest child of Patrick J. Neilan and Ellen Stroker of Kiltewan, Co. Roscommon. After her primary education in Roscommon she was educated by the Loretto Nuns in Dublin. On leaving school she became apprenticed to her father who was State Solicitor for Roscommon as well as having a large private practice. She completed a B.A. degree in U.C.D. and completed her final examinations in October, 1931 and was admitted as a solicitor on the 12 November of the same year. She returned to Roscommon to work in the family firm. She immediately became involved in all the work of the firm, - even Court work. She was welcomed to the Court at Castlerea District Court by District Justice Conner in December and in the following January she was welcomed by District Justice Kenny in Athlone District Court. It is noted in *The Irish Law Times* that District Justice Kenny noted that she was the first women solicitor who ever appeared before him. Not everyone in Roscommon was ready for women solicitors. One client made his concern known about a small (she was 5' 3") 22 year old woman dealing with his important business. However when the business was concluded to his satisfaction he paid her the politically incorrect compliment "Well 'girleen' sometimes you get good goods in small packages". She remained in practice until September 1934 when she married Peter J. Nugent, a barrister, who was practising on the Midland Circuit and with whom she had become friendly when they were both studying law in Dublin. They had four sons. Tragically however she died on 28 September 1945 at the age of 36 when she developed septicaemia following an infection of the appendicitis. She did however leave a legal legacy - her eldest son John D. became a solicitor and two of her other sons (Peter and James) became barristers. Her third son, Patrick, became a doctor. It is also noteworthy that of her six siblings four became solicitors - John, Jim, Paddy and Eileen, (see biography of Eileen Neilan No. 70).

Source: *James Nugent, S.C., son*

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MISS NEILAN, Solicitor, Roscommon, daughter of Mr. P. J. Neilan, State Solicitor, Roscommon, was welcomed by District Justice Kenny, Athlone, on her first appearance in Court. The Justice said that Miss Neilan was the first lady solicitor to appear before him. Mr. P. V. C. Murtagh and Mr. H. J. Walker, solicitor, also welcomed Miss Neilan.

ABOVE: Mary Neilan, Solicitor

LEFT: *Irish Law Times*, January 1933.

MARY EUGENIA HARTE

was born in 1909 at 39 Parliament Street, Kilkenny in the family home located over the office of her father, James Harte, Solicitor.

She attended Loreto Convent, Kilkenny and the Ursuline Convent, Waterford, before attending University College Dublin in 1927 where she was one of only three women in her year.

She qualified as a solicitor in 1934 and initially practised in the firm of Sweetman & Co in Dublin, before returning to the family practice in Kilkenny, joining her father James Harte and brother John A. Harte. She subsequently married Con Keneally, the Editor of the Kilkenny Journal newspaper. She was a founder member and President of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society.

*Source: John G. Harte, Solicitor, grandnephew*

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Mary E. Harte with her brother John A. Harte on their graduation day.

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Mary E. Harte on her graduation day.

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Irene Emilie McCoy,  
c. 1925 (Poole  
Collection, with  
permission National  
Library of Ireland)

## IRENE EMILIE MCCOY

Irene Emilie McCoy (1902-1937): First Lady Solicitor in Waterford

By John Lucey

*(Reprinted with kind permission of the author from Decies 73, Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society)*

Eighty years ago, a promising young solicitor, the first woman practitioner in Waterford, lost her life in a tragic accident on the Quay in the city.

Irene Emilie McCoy was born on 24 February 1902 at Bella Vista to Archibald Serright McCoy (185-1934) and Mary Helen née Richardson-Griffiths (1865-1946), the second daughter and third child of five children. The family moved to Leoville, Newtown, in 1906 when Irene was four years of age where she lived for the next 30

years. Her father was admitted an attorney in 1875 after serving his apprenticeship with Messrs Dobbyn & Tandy<sup>5</sup> and later, with his younger brother James Abernethy McCoy (1864-1931), became a partner in the law firm and practised as Dobbyn & McCoy at 5 Colbeck Street<sup>6</sup>.

Irene was educated at the Bishop Foy School, then on The Mall where the House of Waterford Crystal now stands. She enjoyed sports and hunted with the Waterford Hounds, firstly with her parents and later with her sisters and cousins. However, she always had a literary inclination and contributed essays and poetry to the Graduates' Circle in the womans' magazine *Britannia and Eve* for which she was sometimes awarded prize money, e.g. for a sonnet in 1932<sup>7</sup>. She was of a spiritual and charitable disposition and deeply involved with her church, being elected to the Select Vestry of Waterford Cathedral in May 1935<sup>8</sup>.

McCoy followed her father into the legal profession, her path being through the examinations of the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland, following a five year apprenticeship with Dobbyn & McCoy. Others such as Mary Dorothea Heron (1896-1960) and Helena Mary Early (1888-1977), the first women solicitors in Ireland, had gone the degree route which then required just a three year apprenticeship.

McCoy sat the final Incorporated Law Society's examinations, for apprentices to solicitors, in April 1934 and was admitted a solicitor a month later in May<sup>9</sup>.

Her father died on 13 April 1934, just three days after she completed her exams and she then had to take over the responsibility of running the practice. Her father had willed the business to her as follows:

*"I give all my law books and the goodwill of the business of a solicitor carried on by me under style and form of Dobbyn & McCoy and the exclusive right to use the name of Dobbyn & McCoy to the said Irene Emilie McCoy."*<sup>10</sup>

She ran the practice with the help of the experienced John J. Colbert who had previously been a general law clerk and solicitor's assistant with the firm before qualifying in 1932<sup>11</sup> at the age of 48. Initially she largely confined herself to work in chambers but made her appearance at the bench in August 1935 when she was

5 The firm of solicitors Dobbyn & Tandy was founded by Michael Dobbyn, who retired from the business in about 1887, and carried on by his younger brother Robert Dobbyn (1824-1911) with A.S. McCoy as Dobbyn, Tandy & McCoy (*Waterford Standard*, March 25, 1911). When the partner Shapland Morris Tandy (1833-1915) was appointed Taxing Master in 1897 (*Dublin Daily Express*, February 12, 1897) and had to retire from the legal profession, the firm became known as Dobbyn & McCoy, the name which it still bears today.

6 *Freeman's Journal*, June 9, 1875.

7 *Britannia and Eve*, May 1, 1932.

8 *Waterford Standard*, May 11, 1935.

9 *Gazette of the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland*, November 1932.

10 Probate Service: Gov.UK Wills and Probate, 1858-1996: 1934 Archibald Serright McCoy.

11 *Gazette of the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland*, November 1932.

welcomed by the presiding district justice and the senior member of the solicitors' profession as well as the superintendent of the Civic Guards<sup>12</sup>. It was a special occasion because Miss McCoy was the first lady solicitor to practise in Waterford District Court<sup>13</sup>. She worked extremely hard, putting in long hours in the very busy practice, but less than three years after qualifying as a solicitor, her life would end tragically five days before her 35<sup>th</sup> birthday.

After finishing work on the evening of Friday, 19 February 1937, just before seven o'clock, McCoy cycled to the General Post Office to dispatch letters and on her way home was involved in a collision with a motor car on the Quay. She suffered multiple injuries and was attended by a doctor at the scene but died in the ambulance on the way to hospital. She was identified by her distraught mother in the County Hospital late that night and the inquest was held on the following afternoon when only evidence of identification and medical testimony as to the cause of death were given. Death was due to fracture of the skull, haemorrhage into the brain and shock.<sup>14</sup> The driver of the vehicle, a Ford V8, Jeremiah Kerwick, who was chauffeur to Captain Miville<sup>15</sup> of Kelcreene Stables, Co. Kilkenny, was charged with the alleged manslaughter of Miss McCoy but was acquitted and a later charge of dangerous driving was also subsequently dismissed.<sup>16</sup>

McCoy's death was the third tragedy to hit the offices of Dobbyn & McCoy in a five-year period, the first being in June 1933 when one of the staff drowned in Tramore<sup>17</sup> and the second a year later when her father died. John James Colbert (1884-1969) carried on the practice as the senior partner in Dobbyn & McCoy and married late in life, his office colleague Anastasia Teresa (Annie) Coghlan (1901-1952) in April 1941.<sup>18</sup> However, they enjoyed less than 11 years of marriage together as Annie died in March 1952.<sup>19</sup> Colbert had been very helpful to McCoy in her short-lived solicitor's career and was instrumental in keeping Dobbyn & McCoy as a prominent legal practice in Waterford which continues to this day at its original premises in Colbeck Street.

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<sup>12</sup> *Waterford Standard*, August 31, 1935.

<sup>13</sup> *Irish Law Times and Solicitors' Journal*, Volume 69.

<sup>14</sup> *Waterford Standard*, February 27, 1937.

<sup>15</sup> The Swiss-born Eric Rudolf Miville (1900-1967) was an accomplished horseman who had been a Captain in the Swiss Cavalry. He spent time in Africa big game hunting in the 1920s, particularly mountain gorillas in the Belgian Congo (Thomas Schmid, Eric Mivilles Berggorilla. *Berner Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 73, 2011, pp.50-53), and came to Ireland in the 1930s where he ran the stables at Kilcreene. In 1940, he left Kilkenny to join the Finnish armed forces in the conflict with the Soviet Union and later served with the French Foreign Legion in North Africa during WWII. In 1952 he married an English woman, Edwina Drummond whom it has been alleged was the secret love-child of King Edward VIII when Prince of Wales (*The Times*, July 11, 1999) and move back to Ireland where they operated a stud-farm at Ballykeane in Wicklow. There, he bred the winner of the then world's richest race, the £90,000 Garden State Stakes in 1953, the horse having been sold to the Hollywood film baron Louis B. Mayer for £100,000 (*Derry Journal*, November 2, 1953).

<sup>16</sup> *Irish Times*, July 10, 1937.

<sup>17</sup> *Waterford Standard*, July 1, 1933.

<sup>18</sup> *Waterford Standard*, April 19, 1941.

<sup>19</sup> *Waterford Standard*, March 8, 1952.

## no. 29

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### BRIDGET WINIFRED HANNON

Frieda Hannon was born in Galway and raised in Mayoralty House. She was the eldest of 10 children. She was known for her thoughtfulness, kindness and love of the truth. Her motto was “Veritas, Veritas” which she learned from the Dominicans in Eccles St., Dublin where she went to boarding school. Due to the far sightedness of her father, a trust had been set up to allow her and her siblings to reach third level education.

She completed her law degree in University College Galway. After qualification as a solicitor she worked in general practice in the firm of Bruce St. John Blake’s father, Henry, in Galway focusing mainly on conveyancing and other non-contentious work. She ceased practising when she married Jim Horgan, a maths teacher from Cork. Her counsel was often sought even after she stopped working as people would visit her at home regularly to seek her advice. She didn’t suffer fools gladly but she treated all with respect and dignity.

She had three daughters who all went into medicine but her legal ability surfaced in the next generation. Her granddaughters, Grainne, who practises in Daniel Spring & Co in Dublin and Elizabeth who practises in Watson Fairley in Singapore together with her grandson, Conor who is studying law in Sydney.

*Source: Grainne Hassett, Solicitor, granddaughter*

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Bridget Winifred Hannon, Solicitor

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Kathleen Bridget  
Durcan

### **KATHLEEN BRIDGET DURCAN**

was the daughter of Mr and Mrs John Durcan of Turlough, Castlebar. She was one of ten children and a sister of John Durcan, who married Sheila MacBride (no. 41 on the list). Kathleen went to school as a boarder in Dominican Convent, Eccles Street, Dublin. Her father died when she was in fifth year in school. The nuns felt that she had the ability to go ahead that year to sit her matriculation. Kathleen became apprenticed to John MacHale, Solicitor, Castlebar, who was married to a first cousin of Kathleen, Una MacHale (née Durcan).

She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 5 February 1935. Following qualification she took up a position with P.J. Nealon & Co. in Roscommon. It was a busy office, the principal being Patrick J. Nealon, State Solicitor. Shortly after, in 1937, she married William B. Montgomery, Solicitor, of Thomas Montgomery & Son, 29 Wicklow Street. A small practice came up for sale in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon and Kathleen and William took up residence there. In 1945 they moved to Dublin. Kathleen did not practise after her marriage until 1951 when she took up a position with Len Clifford, Solicitor, Dawson Street, Dublin. Kathleen took over the practice from Len Clifford and amalgamated it with the practice of William's father at 17 Suffolk Street. She continued to work up to the late 80s.

*Source: William J. Montgomery, Solicitor, son*

**MARY (MARIE) ELIZABETH REILLY**

born on 20 May 1914 became the first female solicitor in County Meath in January 1936. She grew up in Effernock, Trim, the daughter of Mary Monica (Mai) Mulvin and Daniel J. Reilly, Solicitor. She attended secondary school in our Our Lady's Bower, Athlone and continued her studies in University College Dublin which was then located at Earlsfort Terrace. From a family of eight, she was the first of three members of the Reilly family to qualify as a solicitor. She was followed by her brothers, Frank and Donal, into their father's firm, Daniel J. Reilly & Co., Trim, which continues to flourish to this day.

One of only thirty- three women then qualified to work as a solicitor in Ireland, she received her parchment in the Hilary term of 1936 and commenced practice in her father's firm. She was introduced to the District Court sitting in Dunshaughlin on the 26 November 1936 before District Justice Reddin. She remained with the family firm of Daniel J. Reilly & Co until her marriage in 1942. She was a fluent Irish speaker and was frequently asked by the Courts to act as an interpreter for witnesses from the Meath Gaeltacht area. On one such occasion she met her future husband, Patrick J. Shaw. He was a member of the Mullingar firm of solicitors, J.A. Shaw & Co. After her father's untimely death in January 1941, she was left running the practice with her younger and newly qualified brother, Frank. When she married in April 1942, she moved to Belsize House, Mullingar. As was customary at that time she gave up practising law after her marriage to raise a family of six children.

She was a very able sportswoman and an excellent tennis player and golfer who won several cups in competitions. There is no doubt that she brought the skills and experience honed from her studies and her work to her life in Mullingar. She was well known for her unstinting work with the Jubilee Nurse Association (later the District Nurses Association). She ran jumble sales and fundraisers to help the disadvantaged and became President of St. Dominic's Community Council. They provided meals on wheels, laundry services and support and living accommodation for the elderly. It was a concept well ahead of its time and a vision which Marie was determined would come to fruition despite initial setbacks.

The *Westmeath Examiner* in a tribute after her death on June 16 1992 said "To say she was a remarkable woman would be an understatement. She qualified as a solicitor at a time when, for a woman it was a rare achievement. A gracious, kindly, intelligent and perceptive woman she never pushed herself into the limelight. She was much loved by all who came in contact with her. "

*Source: Suzanne Curran (nee Reilly), niece, Daniel J. Reilly & Co. Solicitors*



Mary (Marie) E. Reilly,  
(m. Shaw), Solicitor

## STELLA MARION BARCLAY WEBB

was born in 1910, the daughter of Leonard Webb, Solicitor and Hilda Webb (née Barclay). Her mother Hilda Muriel Barclay was from Co. Durham, England. The family were members of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland (Quakers).



Stella Marion Barclay Webb, Solicitor

Photo: *The Irish Press*, 7 January 1959

Stella was educated at Miss Tuckey's School at Frankfort Avenue and later at the Mount Friends School, York. She was awarded a B.A. (Mod.), LL.B. at T.C.D. She qualified as a solicitor on the 14 October 1936 and practised until 1987.

Stella Webb possessed a strong sense of social justice throughout her life. Soon after the end of World War II she travelled to London to prepare herself for work abroad with missions from the Society of Friends in Greece and Austria. She regularly wrote letters home to her parents giving great detail of the work she was involved in and the people she met. She was one of the founding members of The Haven, a home for refugees, located at Clonliffe Road, Dublin which was established in 1951. The *Irish Press*, 7 January 1959 recounts the story of nine members of the Russian Orthodox Church celebrating their Christmas at the Haven and describes Stella Webb as “an active member of the Quaker Relief Service, she spent many years abroad on refugee relief work.”

In similar vein the *Dublin Evening Mail* of 6 December 1951 published a translation of an article in *La Pensee Russe*, a Russian newspaper published in Paris with the title “The Love of One's Fellow Man”. The article describes the welcome given to a group of displaced refugees from St. Martin's Camp in Austria who were accommodated at The Haven and specifically identifies Miss Stella Webb, Rev. Dr. Irwin and others who orchestrated their arrival in Dublin.

“What could be more noble, sympathetic and human than to give to worn out, tired old folk the possibility to return to normal existence after the destitution and horrors they have been through which had almost made them forget the normal life they once had.”

Stella Webb was Vice-President of the United Nations Association and Vice-President of the Irish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Sources: *findmypast.ie*; *Quaker Historical Library, Harrison, Richard S. A biographical dictionary of Irish Quakers, 2nd ed. Four Courts Press, 2008.*

## SHEILA MACBRIDE

no. **41**

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was the youngest of five children of Joseph and Eileen MacBride. Her oldest sister, Clohra, qualified as a solicitor in 1929 (no. 7 on the list). The two sisters were always close and Sheila followed Clohra into law, having attended secondary school at Our Lady's Bower, Athlone.

Sheila was financed in her studies and apprenticed to her sister. She came first in her class in her final examinations in April 1937 and was awarded the Overend Final Examination Scholarship. She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 6 July 1937, the 41st woman to qualify as a solicitor. Sheila obtained a position in the Land Registry as a legal assistant. She worked there until her marriage in 1942 to John Durcan also from Mayo, then a junior barrister and later President of the Circuit Court. Other than a few months of temporary work in a practice in Dublin, Sheila never practised law after her marriage.

She had three children, Paul, the well-known poet, Rose Mary, a solicitor and Ivan also a solicitor. She and her husband resided in Dublin. Both of them were sociable and involved in reading, golf and (Sheila only) bridge.

Sheila retained her links with Westport over the years and was also always in touch with her sister Clohra. Up to her last few years she lived an active life and was involved with her many grandchildren. Three of Sheila's eight grandchildren are solicitors. Sheila spent the last few years of her life in a nursing home. She died in 2004.

*Sources: Rose Mary Kirwan, retired Solicitor, daughter and Ivan Durcan, Solicitor, son*

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Sheila and Clohra  
MacBride at Mallow  
Cottage, Westport.

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no. **45**

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**JANE TERESA MCGOWAN**

Jane Teresa (Jenny) McGowan was born in Balbriggan, County Dublin in 1916, the ninth of eleven children of Joseph, a publican, and his wife Teresa (née Edwards).

Having survived the infamous ‘Sack of Balbriggan’ in September 1920, when the family was evacuated from their home and pub as the premises were razed to the ground by the Black & Tans, she was educated locally by the Loreto sisters, a relationship she cherished throughout her life, serving for several years on the national council of the Loreto Past Pupils Union, of which she was President in 1970.

Jenny graduated with a B.A. from U.C.D. in 1936 and qualified as a solicitor in January 1939, commencing practice with her brother Gerrard L. (Gerry) McGowan in Balbriggan. She retired from practice on the birth of her first child, Mary, having married Frank (F.X.) Glennon of Skerries in 1951.

A keen sportswoman, Jenny played tennis and hockey in her youth, winning her hockey ‘blue’ with U.C.D., and was Lady Captain of Skerries Golf Club in 1952.



Jane Teresa McGowan  
on her graduation day

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Jane Teresa McGowan  
(m. Glennon), Solicitor

Understandably perhaps with six brothers playing the game, she was an avid rugby follower - another interest she retained throughout her life.

On the sudden death of Frank in 1969 she returned to work with Gerrard, who had in 1959 been joined in practice by their nephew Joe (Joseph M.) McGowan. Gerrard himself died suddenly in 1971 and nephew and aunt continued in practice until Joe's sudden death in 1988.

In addition to her involvement with Loreto PPU, she was an active supporter for many years of both the Rehabilitation Institute and the emerging 'Itinerant Settlement Movement'. She also chaired the inaugural Board of Management of Skerries Community College, formed on the then ground-breaking amalgamation of the three secondary schools in the town previously managed independently by the De La Salle Brothers, the Holy Faith Sisters, and the County Dublin Vocational Education Committee.

Having developed a significant practice centred on probate and conveyancing, Jenny worked until her death on Christmas Day 1989, survived by her children, Mary (Ryan), Jim, and Jane (Hanratty) and her grandchildren Miriam and Richard Ryan, Frank, Louise and Joe Glennon, and Tom and Jack Hanratty.

The practice is carried on today by Donogh McGowan, son of Joe and grandnephew of Gerrard and Jenny.

*Source: Jim Glennon, son and Donogh McGowan, Solicitor, grandnephew*

no. 47

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**ELIZABETH KETTLE**

was admitted to the Roll on 13 February 1939, she was apprenticed to Francis Devine, 12 Dame Street, Dublin. Elizabeth was the only daughter of Thomas Michael Kettle and Mary Sheehy Kettle. Her father was a barrister, economist, journalist, writer and Home Rule politician who was killed on the Somme on 9 September 1916, (public memorial to Tom Kettle in St. Stephen's Green]. She was educated at U.C.D. (B.A.) and later T.C.D. After qualifying as a solicitor Elizabeth worked as an Assistant Solicitor in the Finance Solicitor's Office, Dublin. She married Joseph Michael Dooley, a law clerk. She practised as a solicitor until 1943. She died on 20 December 1996.

*Source: irishnewspaperarchive and Law Society Archives*

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no. 52

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**BRIGID HOGAN**

was born in 1897, in Kilricle, Co. Galway. Her parents were Brigid (née Glennon) and Michael Hogan, Chief Inspector of the Estates Commission (1863-1913). Brigid was educated as a boarder at the Loreto Convent, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. She had four sisters, Mary (Lafferty), Nora, (Sister Francis de Sales, founding member of the Columban Sisters), Nellie (Kennedy) and Ita who passed away in 1925. She had three brothers, Patrick (Minister for Agriculture, 1922-32), James (Professor of History, UCC, 1921-1963), Michael, (Colonel, Irish army and Quartermaster General Irish Army Equitation School (1928-1945), Manager, Aer Rianta Teo.

She became apprenticed to Patrick Hogan, Solicitor, Loughrea, Co. Galway and was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 12 February 1940. She worked with Arthur Cox, Solicitors as a conveyancing solicitor until her retirement. Brigid was secretary to the Irish White Cross, which was established to administer funds (mainly from America) for the relief of distress during the War of Independence. Brigid died in Dublin in 1973.

*Source: Ita Beausang, niece*

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Brigid Hogan, Solicitor

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## MOYA O'CONNOR

no. **53**

Moya O'Connor, Swinford, County Mayo, was born in 1917 and was educated in her local National School by the Sisters of Mercy, Taylors Hill Secondary School in Galway by the Dominican sisters and later in U.C.D. where she obtained a B.A. in Legal Science.

She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 14 July 1941. Moya practised with her father, Patrick O'Connor and her brother, Thomas V. O'Connor (President of the Law Society, 1972/3), with her nephews, Pat O'Connor (President of the Law Society, 1998/9), Tom and John for some time in the family law firm of P. O'Connor & Son.

She was Deputy Coroner for East Mayo for over 40 years and was also actively involved in many clubs and societies in Swinford and throughout County Mayo. She was Chairperson of the National Council for the Blind, Mayo Branch and an avid reader.

Moya lived in "The Cottage" with her sisters Bidy and Cara who predeceased her. Moya died on 13 July 1998. Her brother John W. O'Connor, was a barrister who practised on the Western Circuit, and he was a Judge of the Circuit and Special Criminal Courts until his death on 6 June 1978. Her four nephews, Pat (Coroner for Mayo), Tom (Consultant Solicitor), John (Circuit Court Judge) and Tony (High Court Judge) and two grandnephews, William and Christopher, were admitted to the Roll of Solicitors.

*"an outstanding solicitor, one of the longest serving and most distinguished in the county"*

(Judge Dan Shields in a tribute to Moya O'Connor at Ballina District Court following her death in 1998, *Western People*, 22 July 1998)

Source: Pat O'Connor, Solicitor, nephew, and family.



Moya O'Connor,  
Solicitor

Mayo Solicitors  
Bar Association  
Celebratory Dinner  
to honour solicitors,  
Joseph King, Westport,  
Michael J. Egan,  
Castlebar, and Moya  
O'Connor, Swinford,  
having completed 50  
years in practice as  
solicitors.

Photo: Paul Heverin,  
*Western People*, 30  
October 1991.

## EITHNE PATRICIA MCMULLIN

Eithne Flanagan (née McMullin) was born on 3 January 1918. She attended Loreto College Cavan from 1930 to 1935. In 1935 Eithne commenced a degree in languages at University College Dublin. At the end of her first year however she decided to change course to pursue a B.A. in Legal and Political Science. In 1936 she began a five-year apprenticeship to become a solicitor with Aiden McCabe, Solicitors, Cavan.

In 1938 she graduated from U.C.D. and in 1940 she was conferred with an LL.B. degree. She was admitted to the Roll on 24 January, 1941. Initially she was employed as a solicitor by V.P. Mc Mullin, Solicitors, Ballybofey, Co. Donegal. She became the first female solicitor in Donegal, an event which was reported in *The Derry Journal* on 3 December 1941. An early experience gives a flavour of the practice of law in Donegal at the time. Without a car, the only way to get to the courthouse in Ardara was by the narrow-gauge railway known locally as “the wee train” from Stranorlar to Glenties and thereafter by bicycle for 7 miles to Ardara. One of Eithne’s earliest experiences and memories was of accompanying the State Solicitor for Donegal, Mr Willy Tom Mc Bride to the Court in this way. On one occasion Eithne recalled they both arrived in Ardara soaking wet having cycled through heavy rain. Willy Tom insisted they should go to the local hotel declaring that “Bridget and Mary” would give them breakfast and look after their wet clothes. A surprised Eithne reminded him that he would be very late for court to which he replied “the District Court cannot start without me”.

Eithne married Plunkett Flanagan in April 1944 and following her marriage moved to County Sligo. Her first child was born in January 1945. Eithne decided to return to work after the birth of her second child in October 1947. She commenced working with Howley and Armstrong, Solicitors, in Sligo and remained in that position for a period of approximately four years. As a woman however she was permitted to work effectively as a clerk only, rather than as a solicitor. In or around 1951 Jimmy Rowlett, solicitor, who had been a partner in Howley and Armstrong, Solicitors, left that firm to start his own practice and she joined his practice for a further period of four years. The family (she and her husband by then had 6

Eithne Patricia Flanagan (née McMullin)



children) moved to Dublin in January 1960 and her first job in Dublin was with Terence Doyle and Sons. Thereafter she worked for Alphonsus Grogan and Son. In June 1970 she commenced employment with P.C. Moore and Co. In 1978 she took an anti-discrimination case against her employer under the Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act 1975. Her case was successful at first instance. Her employer appealed the decision to the Labour Court where she lost her claim.

Following the litigation Eithne left P.C. Moore and commenced a new position as law agent of the Irish Nationwide Building Society. She remained in that position until she retired in 1985 aged 66 years. She relished her role as law agent of the building society from 1978-1984, where she had full autonomy in the running of the legal department. These years were undoubtedly the happiest years of her career. Eithne Flanagan died on 2 January 2018, one day before her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

*Source: Doirbhile Flanagan, S.C., retired Circuit Court Judge, daughter*

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## LUCY FAGAN

no. **55**

Lucy Fagan was the daughter of Mr and Mrs P.J. Fagan of 15 Usher's Island, Dublin (House of the Dead). Lucy was educated at Dominican College, Eccles Street, Dublin and U.C.D. (B.A.) (N.U.I.). Lucy served her apprenticeship with her uncle James Fagan, Solicitor. She passed her Final Examinations in April 1940. She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 27 January 1941. Lucy practised in Dublin from 1943-1948, sometime after which she emigrated to Northern Rhodesia. In an article in the Irish Independent of 17 February 1950 it is noted that Lucy was admitted as a solicitor and barrister in Northern Rhodesia and was welcomed by the Chief Justice, Sir Herbert Cox, as the first woman member of the profession in North Rhodesia. The article also states that Lucy carried out welfare work in Germany in the period between ceasing practice in Dublin (1948) and arriving in South Africa (1950).

*Source: Yvonne Murphy, 1st cousin once removed; Irish Independent 17 February 1950*



Lucy Fagan, Solicitor

## MARY (MAUREEN) TERESA CORBOY

Mary Teresa Corboy (or as she prefers to be called, Maureen) is a formidable woman of 101 years who has seen the world change and evolve around her as she did over time.

She was born on the 12 September 1918 in Caherconlish County Limerick, one year before the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, one hundred years ago, which allowed women to qualify as solicitors in Ireland for the first time.

Her father John was a doctor and her mother Josie was a talented pianist who studied music at the Conservatoire in Paris. She had five siblings; three brothers and two sisters; four of whom qualified as doctors, and one who became a Jesuit, (later to be appointed Bishop of Monze, Zambia.).

After leaving secondary school in the Ursuline, Thurles, Maureen went to university in U.C.D. She spent one semester of her B.A. in the Sorbonne, Paris, where she studied French. Her close friend Emer de Valera, later Emer Ó Cuív, studied with her there. Maureen was regularly taken out to experience Paris with Emer when her father would visit, the then Taoiseach, Éamon de Valera.

She graduated with her B.A. in 1939. She then achieved her LL.B. in 1940. She was always very proud to say that she held two degrees. She trained as a solicitor with John J. O'Connor, in an office at 7 Upper Ormond Quay. She became the 64th woman admitted to the Irish Roll of Solicitors on 30 July 1942.

Despite having qualified in 1942, Maureen had what could be regarded as an extremely modern career trajectory. Upon qualification, employment prospects were very limited in Ireland. So, she decided to seek adventure and a life overseas. She applied for a job in the Crown Colonial Legal Service in Hong Kong, which she was offered.

She received a letter in the post addressed to a 'Mr. M. T. Corboy' informing her that upon arrival in Hong Kong she would be staying in an 8-man dorm for one night before being moved to a more private residence. Assuming they had made a mistake, as it was very uncommon to be a woman and a solicitor at the time, she wrote back saying that she was looking forward to beginning her new role, but that the initial lodging arrangements would be unsuitable for her; an unmarried woman in her early 20s. Weeks passed as she waited for a response to come by boat, only to be disappointed when the reply came to say that upon reflection, and in light of this new information, the job was no longer available to her.

Undeterred, and as resilient as ever, Maureen did the next best thing; she moved to Cork where she spent a year working as a solicitor. After enjoying her time in the



Mary Teresa Corboy  
(m. Sheehan) on her  
graduation.

Rebel County, she decided to seek employment in Manchester where some of her cousins were living. With World War II still raging across Europe, she experienced first-hand the impact war had on the city. Maureen worked there as a law clerk for a number of years. She could not practise as a solicitor in the UK as her Irish legal qualification was not recognised there. When the war was over, she returned to Ireland.

Maureen then worked with Orpen & Sweeney, Solicitors, as a conveyancer. There she made several friends, including Helen Griffin (nee Walsh, number 87 on the list) whose future husband, Frank Griffin, subsequently became a Supreme Court Judge. Maureen has always been described as very sociable and witty woman who was good fun to have worked with. One other close friend of Maureen's throughout her career was Mary Thornton Nolan (number 63 on the list.). They met aged 22 and today, aged 100 and 101, remain friends. Mary Thornton was apprenticed to her father, Alfred G. Thornton of Castlebar and qualified on 17 July 1942, two weeks before Maureen.

Maureen decided to try her hand at the District Court, so she went to work with Trant McCarthy, Solicitors. She was in and out of court every day, walking along the quays in Dublin wearing her signature red beret. She was often sent down to work the more difficult cases as they found that Maureen, one of the few women practising in that area, had a certain charm with the Judges and would rarely have a bad day in court.

Maureen practised as a solicitor until she married in 1951. She was considered to have married very late in her life, at age 33. Her husband, Cornelius Sheehan, was also a solicitor. As she was working in private practice, her position was unaffected by the marriage bar which was still in place at the time. However, she decided at that stage to leave legal practice.

She has five children; Joanne, Robert, John, Mary-Rose and Jane. She taught them all to value their education, and the importance of gratitude and kindness. She was a keen tennis player and swimmer, and often brought her children along on her daily adventures down to Seapoint to embrace the elements and glory of the Irish Sea.

Maureen had volunteered on a part-time basis with Oxfam for a number of years. Upon the untimely passing of her husband Con in July 1980, she decided to increase the number of days she spent volunteering per week. She was initially based in the first branch of Oxfam opened in Ireland, just off Grafton Street, and then moved out to the branch in Dun Laoghaire when it opened; closer to home and to the sea. Maureen volunteered with Oxfam for 28 years and, at age 86, had been their longest serving volunteer.

Now, aged 101, she is the mother of five children (two solicitors), has nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Three of her grand-children followed directly in her footsteps and studied law. All of her grandchildren have been influenced and inspired by her fearlessness, bold conviction and strong sense of self. She has taught them to embrace adventure, explore the globe, say yes to opportunities as they come to you, to always be grateful for everything you have and to never underestimate the healing power of classical music and the simple joy of a swim.

*Source: Anna Sheehan, trainee solicitor, granddaughter*

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## JOAN M. MACAULAY

no. **67**

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Joan was born on 15 September 1921 in Carrick-on-Shannon but also lived in Listowel, Co. Kerry for most of her youth. She was initially apprenticed to her uncle's firm in Listowel, Marshall & Macaulay. She subsequently moved to Arthur Cox where she completed her apprenticeship. On qualification, she worked with Gerard Sweetman in G.D. Fottrell & Son in Dublin and then with Philip Smith in Louis C.P. Smith & Co. Cavan, before Joan and her late husband Myles, established the firm of Alfred Myles Smith & Co. in Cavan Town. The practice grew to be a thriving firm over several years, with Joan presiding as managing partner. They later acquired the practice of the late Patrick Cusack and opened offices in Ballyjamesduff as Cusack Smith & Co. and had a further practice in Clones. Her husband Myles died in 1976, leaving her to manage the firm which prospered under her stewardship.

By all accounts, she was a formidable and exacting opponent. The quality, extent and content of her briefs to counsel were held in very high regard. Her ability as a conveyancing solicitor, in both registered and unregistered title, was unparalleled and she was an expert in all matters of probate. She provided valuable advice to one of the first large property developers in Cavan and to several generations of the cooperative movement. Throughout her career she also provided advice to the farming community, including Macra na Feirme and the IFA. In addition, she was very closely aligned with, and acted for, the Killeshandra Co-op, laterally known as Lakelands.

In the early 1980s, she was appointed as a district court judge. However, within five weeks of being sworn in, she realised that the bench was not for her. She returned to her practice where she continued to work until a few short years before her death on the 13 January 2016. She was surely one of the longest serving solicitors in Ireland and certainly one of the longest serving female solicitors. She was a career woman well before her time and a role model and inspiration to her granddaughters Zoë Dillon (née Smith) and Margaret Kearney (née Smith), who also went on to study law and practise as solicitors. (see *Obituary, (2016) Gazette, May 2016, page 55*).

Source: *Margaret Kearney, Solicitor, granddaughter*

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Joan M. Smith,  
Solicitor

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Left to right: Colm Condon, S.C., Richard Johnson, B.L., Eithne MacInerney, Solicitor, Michael Houlihan, Solicitor, Dermot G. O'Donovan, Solicitor, Dermot G.O'Donovan, Snr., Solicitor, Judge Dermot Kinlan, Judge Niall McCarthy. 1975.



was the 69<sup>th</sup> woman to be admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on the 26 March 1943. Eithne was apprenticed to Thomas O'B. Kelly, 98 O'Connell Street, Limerick. She joined the practice of Dermot G. O'Donovan, 13 William Street, Limerick, as a conveyancing and probate solicitor. She married Andrew Hennessy, an Irish army officer who later worked with Trans World Airways at Shannon airport. They had three children. She retired from practice in the late 1990s due to deteriorating health. Eithne was a formidable person of very high standards who enjoyed a great following particularly among the firm's rural clients, many of them consulting her about non-legal matters, indicating a great trust they had both in her as a solicitor and a person. She passed away in 2004.

*Source: Dermot G.O'Donovan, Solicitor, Limerick*

## EILEEN NEILAN

no. **70**

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Eileen Collins (née Neilan) was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 14 December 1943. She was the youngest of seven children and her father P.J. Neilan was the State Solicitor in Roscommon for many years. Her older sister, Mary Neilan, qualified in 1931. (See No. 20). Eileen was 23 when she qualified and was expected to work in the family firm but she had bigger plans. She came to Dublin (against all the advice of her family and the local parish priest, who said she was flying in the face of Providence!) and worked with Eddie Gleeson in what was then Arthur O'Hagan, Solicitors. While there she met Eamonn Collins who was then working in the Probate Office. She thought he was calling to ask her about some papers she had lodged in the office but he was actually calling to ask her out.

She gave up work when she married in 1950 and having had five children, she took what was then an unusual step for a woman and went back to work in Mason Hayes & Curran in 1966 where she remained until retirement. She told her family many times how she walked up and down beside the letter box before posting her letter of application. However she loved being back at work and loved her time in M.H.C.

After retirement, she worked as a Commissioner for Oaths until she was in her 80s, going regularly to MHC and McCann FitzGerald, where the announcement that "Mrs Collins is now in Reception" was known to all. She died in 2017 aged 97, having loved her professional life.

*Source, Helen Collins, Solicitor, daughter*

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Eileen Collins,  
Solicitor, on her 90th  
birthday.

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## BEATRICE MUSHATT

Beatrice Mushatt (m. Elyan), (9 June 1916 - 11 February 1967). Born in Ireland to Jewish Lithuanian parents who had fled from the pogroms of the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century, Beatrice (fondly known as Betty) was the youngest of eight siblings who grew up in the Liberties in Dublin 8. A warm, kind-hearted girl who was loved by everyone, she was always community minded, doing voluntary work from a young age.

After attending Wesley College – a school that prided itself at the time on educating ‘girls who desire to secure such training as will fit them for professional and business careers’ – Beatrice secured a five-year legal apprenticeship with Andrew J. O’Flynn of Gort. A letter from the firm in 1935 shows that her mother paid the apprenticeship fee of £240 (a huge amount then, which would be roughly equivalent to more than €10,000 in real terms today).

On 30 April 1944, Beatrice received the news that she had passed her final exams for the Incorporated Law Society in Ireland for solicitors. Her B.A.(Hons) in Law from Trinity made her ‘the first Jewish woman to qualify as a solicitor in Ireland’, a fact that was marked in the *Jewish Chronicle* on her 28th birthday (9 June 1944). This wasn’t the only newspaper mention about Beatrice relating to her career; another, from the *Evening Mail* (17 April 1945), noted her first ever appearance in court - representing a man who was to be fined for not having a working lamp or reflectors on his bicycle at night.



Beatrice (Betty)  
Mushatt, Solicitor

*'District Justice Walter Malony welcomed Miss Beatrice Mushatt, B.A., who was making her first appearance in court as a solicitor. Wishing her luck in her profession, he hoped that he would see her often in his court. Miss Mushatt replied. She won her case.'*

After marrying pharmacist Arthur Elyan in 1948 Beatrice moved to Cork, where she started her own family. That same year she graduated with an M.A. in Law at Trinity College Dublin. The mother of three children, she continued to practise law, working from home on a case-by-case basis. Sadly, in February 1967, Beatrice passed away at the age of 50. She was so well-respected within the community that, prior to her funeral, her memory was honoured at a special service within Cork synagogue.

*Source: Simone Baron, Estelle Freeman, Alanna Freeman, daughters*



Beatrice (Betty)  
Mushatt, Solicitor

no. **76**

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**MARY TERESA JOSEPHINE SWEENEY**

(1917-1992) was born in Dublin in 1917. She was the eldest of two children and her brother Pdraig Sweeney was a veterinarian. Mary studied law in U.C.G. and then went on to train as a solicitor in the late 1930's. She completed her training with Henry MacDermot in Galway and qualified as a solicitor in 1944.

After she qualified she practised for approximately six years in the practice of W. B. Gavin & Company. She married Paddy Higgins in 1952 and had two children, Patrick and Michael.

She retired from legal practice and went into the family hotel business and ran Sweeney's Hotel in Oughterard, Co. Galway and was thereafter joined in the business by her eldest son, Patrick.

Mary was an inspiration for further generations of her family to follow in her footsteps into the legal profession. Her son, Michael studied law at U.C.G. and qualified as a solicitor in 1981 and practised until his death in 1990. Three of her grandchildren who followed the same path are practising solicitors: Dara Higgins, Olivia Higgins and Patrick Higgins.

*Source: Olivia Higgins, Solicitor, granddaughter*

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Mary Higgins,  
Solicitor.

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## NUALA EARLY

no. **78**

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was a niece of Helena Early and became apprenticed to Thomas Early, Solicitor. She was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 10 July 1945. She married Jack O'Brien, a diplomat, and the family moved to live in Canada, soon after she received her parchment. Nuala's son, Brian and daughter, Cathy became solicitors and her granddaughter, Emma O'Brien, graduated in law from T.C.D. and is training to become a solicitor in London.

*Source: Brian O'Brien, Solicitor, son*

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Nuala Early, on her graduation.

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## no. 81

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### MOYA DIXON

Moya Quinlan (née Dixon) was born on 28 June 1920 and was educated at Sion Hill College in Blackrock, Dublin and admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 9 July 1946 having served her apprenticeship with her father, Joseph H. Dixon, Solicitor, Dublin. Moya became the first female Council member of the Law Society of Ireland in 1969 and was re-elected for the next 45 years. She played a key role in the acquisition of the Law Society's premises at Blackhall Place and became the Society's first female President in 1980/81. Her son, Michael, became the Law Society's President in 2017/18. Moya was a key figure in the Dublin Solicitors Bar Association and served as its President in 1979. She was appointed to the Employment Appeals Tribunal and chaired many divisions of the EAT, serving for over 35 years. She was also appointed as a member of the inaugural Legal Aid Board in 1979. She served as Chairwoman of the Primary School Curriculum Review and was appointed to the first board of the Irish Hospice Foundation. She was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012 at the Irish Law Awards ceremony. Moya passed away on 12 February 2019 aged 98.

*"In all my years of practice, I have never felt I was either special or that I was in any way unique: I was just a solicitor who happened to be a woman, that's basically it."*

*[Moya Quinlan talking to Fiona Gartland, Irish Times, 28 May 2012]*



Moya Quinlan, Solicitor, and first woman President of the Law Society of Ireland 1980/81

[Photo: Paul Sherwood]



Josephine Mary Esther  
O'Keeffe

Josephine Mary Esther O'Keeffe (m. Joyce) 1925 – 2018

Josephine was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 29 July 1946 having studied law at U.C.C., where she was awarded a scholarship. The Cork Examiner reported that she was the youngest solicitor in Éire at the time. She practised with her father John H. O'Keeffe at Grand Parade, Cork until her marriage in 1950 to Thomas Joyce, when she retired as was common place at the time. In a further sign of the times, her son recalls her commenting that many clients preferred to see a male solicitor. We owe a debt to the pioneering ladies listed in the first 100 for changing that perception.

*Source: Anthony Joyce, Dep. Asst. Chief State Solicitor, son*



District Judge Eileen Kennedy

[Photograph: irish-  
photographarchive.ie/  
Lensmen Collection]

was from Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan. The daughter of P.J. Kennedy, Solicitor, she was educated at St. Louis Convent, Carrickmacross, and U.C.D. She trained as a nurse at St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin and during the Emergency served as a nurse in the military hospital at the Curragh, Kildare. She qualified as a solicitor in 1947 and practised with her brother, James A. Kennedy, in the firm of P.J. Kennedy and Son. She served as coroner for South Monaghan. She was appointed Ireland's first woman District Court judge in April, 1964. She presided over the Juvenile Court for many years where she was known for her compassionate approach to youth offenders. In 1967 she became the Chairman of the Commission on Industrial and Reformatory Schools which was tasked by the then Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, T.D., to carry out a survey of the reformatory and industrial school system. The Commission published its Report in 1971. District Judge Kennedy regularly spoke at events campaigning for reform of the law on children. In November 1969 she was appointed to be a member of the Commission on the Status of Women. She passed away in 1983 aged 69.

*"Eileen Kennedy more than justified the confidence placed in her, as her work in the Children's Court over the years testifies. Compromising a special blend of wisdom and compassion, her judgments were always fair, just and enlightened."*

(Charles Haughey, TD, Leader of Fianna Fail, Irish Times, October 13 1983)

## ANNIE JOSEPHINE MCGUINNESS

no. **88**

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Josephine McGuinness was born on 22 September 1925 in Castlebar, the second of the eight children of Richard and Margaret McGuinness of Milebush House, Castlebar. From her childhood years she showed an interest in learning languages and passed her Leaving Certificate and Matriculation in 1943.

Her academic achievements included a B.A. from the National University of Ireland in 1947. This was followed by her admission to the Law Society of Ireland on 1 December 1947. A competent linguist, Josephine enjoyed debating, winning the Solicitors' Apprentices' Debating Society Silver medal for Irish debate in the 1945/46 session. Her other linguistic interests included French and Latin. She began her career in 1948 in the legal department of Dublin County Council and specialised in conveyancing. During this time, she was conferred with a Diploma in Public Administration in 1952 from the National University of Ireland.

Josephine married William L. Carroll (Solicitor) in 1953 and subsequently practised in Kells, Co Meath where they set up home and practice. She was the mother of two children William T. (Bill, born 1956) and Rosa (born 1959). Having spent twelve years practising as a solicitor, the family emigrated to Tanganyika (now Tanzania), East Africa in October 1960 where her husband worked as a Resident Magistrate in Dar-es-Salaam. At this point Josephine ceased practising law. Together with her legal and linguistic talents she enjoyed reading and writing poetry. Needlework was a favourite pastime and her embroideries included pictures and her peacock fire screen, a family treasure. Josephine McGuinness suffered from cancer in the early 1960s. She died on 2 August 1963. Her husband William L. Carroll was a lecturer at the first School of Law in Blackhall Place.

*Source: Bill Carroll, son*

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Annie Josephine McGuinness on her graduation day.

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**BRIDGET PATRICIA POWER**

Brigid Patricia Power (1926-1991) (known as Pat) was born in December 1926 to John J. and Kathleen Power, Kilmallock, Co Limerick. After finishing Secondary School she completed a secretarial course in Loreto College, Georges St., Dublin and she attended Maestro A. G. Viani in the RIAM for singing lessons. She soon realised that she wanted to be a solicitor following in her father's footsteps. Her father John J. was the State Solicitor for County Limerick since 1922. Her brother Maurice had just joined the practice. In April 1947, at the young age of 20 years, she gained 3rd place in the Final Examination of Apprentice Solicitors. Four women took the top four places in that exam. By June 1948 she had served her apprenticeship with her father John J. Power, Kilmallock, Co Limerick. She was admitted to the Roll on the 19 April 1948.

She met her future husband Dr Patrick Fitzgerald, a Galway man, at the Galway Races that year. They were married in Kilmallock on the 10 October 1950. They eventually settled in Tuam, Co. Galway having spent some time in Oughterard, Dublin and Liverpool. Dr Patrick joined the Medical Practice of Dr Tom Costello. They had six daughters – Kathryn, Mary, Margaret, Eleanor, Patricia and Joan. Kathryn graduated in Music and Maths, Patricia graduated in Politics and History and the remaining four daughters followed in their father's footsteps and qualified in Medicine.

She had a great passion for music and horse racing. She was a noted singer and whistler who was called upon to entertain at social gatherings. She passed on her love of music and Justice to her daughters. She regaled us with many a story of her tennis playing days in her youth. She would cycle far and wide around Kilmallock to participate in matches and party afterwards with her sister Stephanie.

She practised briefly in Dublin in the late sixties. She did not always enjoy the best of health but she gloried in the successes of her daughters. One daughter, Dr Eleanor, is the Coroner for North Mayo today. The family legal tradition is being well served by members of Maurice's family in Hospital and Kilmallock Co. Limerick.

She passed away peacefully in the arms of her family in October 1991.

*Source: Kathryn Fitzgerald, daughter*



Bridget Patricia Power,  
Solicitor

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**MARY AGNES MOONEY**

born on the 2 January 1924, was the beloved daughter and only child of the late James J. and Nora Mooney. She was born in Cork and lived the early part of her life in the Sunday's Well Road area of the City, moving to the Western suburbs of the City in her later life. She attended Miss Cremin's primary school for her early education and St. Angela's and Scoil Ite (the school modelled on Patrick Pearse's Scoil Eanna, which was founded and managed by Annie and Mary MacSwiney, sisters of Cork Martyr and Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney) for her secondary school education.

She went on to become a B.A. graduate of University College, Cork. In 1917 Mary's father, James J. Mooney and his brother, her late uncle, John S. Mooney had entered into partnership under the style of Babington, Clarke & Mooney, Solicitors, located then and still at 48 South Mall, Cork. In 1919 they took over the practice and admitted their nephew (her cousin) John J. Nagle in 1938. Mary was apprenticed to her father in the firm and was later admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on the 2 June, 1948 and to the same practice at the same time. She practised in Babington, Clarke & Mooney until her retirement in the 1990s. She was extremely conscientious and honest. She was loyal to friends, relations and clients. Mary adhered to the cautious training she got throughout her years of practice.

Despite her very strong links to Cork she travelled extensively throughout Europe and Israel. Unfortunately, her failing eyesight necessitated her entry into St. Joseph's Nursing Home, Bon Secours Village, Lee Road, Cork in 2010 where she resided until her death on the 15 October, 2018. Despite her blindness she kept up to date and still managed to win the general knowledge quizzes in Mount Desert on a regular basis for many years. She is sadly missed by her many relatives and friends and her colleagues in Babington, Clarke & Mooney.

*[Source: Geraldine Keane, Solicitor and Kevin Nagle, Solicitor, Babington, Clarke & Mooney]*



Mary Agnes Mooney,  
Solicitor

## CAROLINE ROSE BOWEN

no. **93**

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Caroline Bowen Walsh was born at Clonea Castle, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford on the 17 October 1921. Her father John Kingston Bowen, the county surveyor, and mother Nancy (née Ryan), from Tipperary were both steeped in the love of the horse, breeders of winners on the point-to-point circuit and producers of numerous champions in the showing world. Caroline inherited a life-long enthusiasm for all things equestrian from an early age. Her childhood seaside home imbued her with a love of the sea.

Following her primary education in Dungarvan, she was a boarder at Mount Anville School until 1940. She enrolled in U.C.C. and was awarded a B.A. in 1943. This gave her eligibility to study for an LL.B. She passed her LL.B. Degree Examination in autumn 1946, becoming U.C.C.'s first female LL.B. graduate. She started her three year apprenticeship with Donal McClement on 28 March 1944, contemporaneous to her legal studies and was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 4 October 1948.

Her studies coincided with the privations of "The Emergency". As a consequence of this, she would cycle with her friend, medical student Winnifred White, the forty miles to her new home at Ballinaparka, for the weekend. This journey entailed a ferry crossing of the Blackwater at Youghal and during one such crossing, she met



Caroline Rose Bowen  
Walsh, Solicitor

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her future husband Tom Walsh of Ardmore, Co. Waterford. They were married on 10 September 1949, set up home at Ardmore and had two sons John and Peter. The Law Directories record that she was with Read and McNabb of Bray during 1950.

While rearing her family, she pursued her equine interests. Her sons were encouraged to ride and this led to her involvement with the Waterford and South Tipperary Branch of the Show Jumping Association of Ireland of which she was secretary for many years. She was on the Dungarvan Show committee and was prominent in organising many gymkhanas in Co. Waterford. She was also a keen supporter of the West Waterford Foxhounds. She was an avid gardener and chairperson of Ardmore Tidy Towns Committee and was recognised as the driving force behind Ardmore's sustained effort to win the Tidy Towns Competition. This was achieved on the 14 September 1992 when Ardmore was awarded the overall national award and the accolade of Ireland's Tidiest Village. She joined the Cork Altrusa Club in the 1970s.

She was keen to return to practice and with the encouragement and guidance of colleagues, resumed her legal career when she joined Guest Lane Williams at 32 South Mall in 1970. For the next 33 years she drove from Ardmore to Cork and back, a round trip of 80 miles, each working day. She moved to Ronan Daly Hayes (R.D. Jermyn from 1974) for a few years after that and returned to Guest Lane Williams in 1977, re-joining Ronan Daly Jermyn in 1978 to lead its Probate Department until she was "retired" having turned 65.

She was far from happy to be put out to pasture and joined O'Keefe Buttimer, (now Frank Buttimer and Company) in 1987. Here, she was at her most content and flourished as the firm's Consultant Solicitor dealing with all aspects of Probate, the Administration of Estates, Wills, Trusts and related matters. She continued to work at Frank Buttimer and Company until September 2003.

She joined the Society of Young Solicitors with friend and colleague Moya Quinlan, when they were not young but they travelled and revelled at legal conferences, at home and abroad. She was the first, or amongst the first ladies to attend the male only dinner of the Southern Law Association which caused some debate at the time.

In a word she was energetic. The word "can't" was not in her lexicon. She was hard working with a strong Christian ethos and a firm conviction of Noblesse Oblige (to whom much is given, much is expected). She died on 30 November 2003. She was predeceased by her husband Tom in 2001 and is survived by her sons John, Peter, daughter in law Joan, grandchildren Sarah, Myles and Hilary.

*Source: Peter Bowen Walsh, son*



Carmel Killeen, Junior Vice-President of the Law Society, 1985.

Sarah Carmel Killeen (known as Carmel) was born on the 12 July 1925. Her parents were Michael and Nora Killeen. She grew up in Bagnelstown, Co Carlow as her father Michael was Station Master there. She attended the local National School and Secondary School. For her post Inter Cert (now known as the Junior Cert) she travelled to Dublin and attended Loreto College, St Stephen's Green. Thereafter she attended U.C.D. and was conferred with the degrees of B.C.L. and LL.B. She became apprenticed to John Foley of John M. Foley & Company. Carmel qualified as a solicitor on the 15 October 1948. She was the 94<sup>th</sup> woman to be admitted to the Roll of Solicitors. Carmel returned to work in John M. Foley & Co in Bagnelstown as a caretaker solicitor, due to the untimely death of her master John Foley, for a period of time to enable Mr Foley Senior's son John to progress his legal studies to qualify as a solicitor and continue on the practice in Bagnelstown.

Thereafter Carmel headed for the bright lights of Dublin where her working career spanned Dublin Corporation (now Dublin City Council), McCann Fitzgerald Roche & Dudley (now McCann Fitzgerald), Orpen Franks and finally Dublin County Council retiring as assistant Law Agent in 1987. During her career Carmel's main practice areas were conveyancing and commercial law. While in Dublin County Council she was the lead conveyancer in the purchase of Malahide Castle and Estate.

Carmel was a very active member of the Law Society having been elected as a member of the Council for many years. In November 1985 Carmel was elected as Junior Vice-President of the Law Society. She continued to be an active member of both the Council and ordinary member to the Law Society for many years after her retirement from Dublin County Council and as a practising solicitor. Carmel was also an active member of the Medico-Legal Society and became President of that Society in 1982 -1984. She was also a member of the Officers of the Local Authority Solicitors Association.

Carmel had wide interests both within the profession and outside. She was active in the Community of Mount Merrion and in particular the Active Retirement Society in Mount Merrion where she lived from 1954 until her death in 2003. She was devoted to her parents who came to live with her in Mount Merrion after her father Michael's retirement. Carmel had one brother Dr Thomas Colm Killeen who practised as a General Practitioner in Dublin 1.

*Source: Ruadhan Killeen, Solicitor, nephew*

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## FRANCES MARY CALLAN

no. **95**

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(known as Mary) was the daughter of Mollie Dillon-Leetch (3<sup>rd</sup> female Barrister in Ireland) and Christopher E. Callan, Solicitor, Boyle, Co. Roscommon. She served her apprenticeship in her father's firm and was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors on 17 December 1948. She worked with Alexis Fitzgerald, Solicitor, in Dublin for a number of years and returned to Boyle to practise in the family firm until 1960/61. She entered the religious order of *La Sainte Union des Sacre Coeurs* taking the religious name Sr. Christopher and became Mother Superior of the Order for Ireland and England. She was Principal at the Bower School in Athlone. Mary Callan died in February 2017.

*Source: Christopher Callan, Solicitor, nephew*

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Mary Callan,  
Solicitor, Boyle, Co.  
Roscommon, later Sr.  
Christopher.

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## MARY MATTHEWS

Mary (Mairin) Matthews was one of six children of Frank and Kathleen Matthews, hoteliers of Falcarragh, Co. Donegal. She studied Science in U.C.D. and graduated with an Honours Degree in Science, majoring in Chemistry in the summer of 1946.

While an undergraduate in U.C.D. she commenced her apprenticeship with Pa O'Donnell, Solicitor in Dungloe, Co. Donegal and studied Law at U.C.D. from 1944 to 1946. She was enrolled as a solicitor on the 7 July 1950. She commenced working with the firm of Brannigan & Matthews in Drogheda Co. Louth in 1954.

After her marriage to Peter McMahon in late 1956 she changed her surname to McMahon. He was a science teacher when they met and she encouraged him to study law. In 1961 she set up her own practice in Dunfanaghy Co. Donegal. Peter McMahon qualified in 1963 and joined Mary in her practice, They opened a branch office in Falcarragh.

In 1967 the family moved to Downpatrick, Co. Down and Peter McMahon commenced working with the firm of Coleman Hanna solicitors. Mary McMahon commenced working as a science teacher in a secondary school in the area. She remained in the teaching profession after the family moved to Dundalk in the mid 1970's. She was appointed the first Head of the Nursery Unit at Cloughoge Primary School, Newry and completed post graduate studies in Early Childhood Education at St Mary's University College in Belfast.

Mary McMahon had five children, three of whom qualified as solicitors. She passed away on the 29 May 1997.

*Source: Eimear O'Doherty, Solicitor, daughter*

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Mary Matthews (m. McMahon) on her graduation day.

Our research indicated that there were a number of women who completed their Final Examinations between 1923 and early 1950 but were not admitted to the Roll until after the 100th female name on the Roll.

#### **MONICA GALLAGHER (M. MCGINLEY)**

was apprenticed to Eugene Gallagher in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal. She had been awarded an LL.B. from Victoria University in Manchester and commenced her three year apprenticeship on 5 April 1932. Monica passed her Final examinations on 25 October 1934 but due to family commitments she was not admitted to the Roll until 29 March 1955.

#### **BLAINAID DILLON (M. O BROLOCHAIN)**

passed her final examination in October 1940 and was not admitted to the Roll until 1963. She was noted in a news item in the Irish Law Times, 17 April 1948 reprinting an item attributed to “Nichevo” (Irish Times) as being

*“a fine gaelic scholar, she was educated at the Ursuline Convent in Sligo, took her degree in National, became apprenticed to the firm of Arthur Cox in Dublin, qualified as a solicitor, and then like a sensible girl, got married to Eoin O Brochain of the Valuation Office. She now finds that the care of a couple of small children is a whole time job... She is petite and vivacious, having none of the traditional attributes of the blue-stocking, and is the absolute antithesis of what I always imagined a woman solicitor to be.”*



*“The number [of women solicitors], however is increasing, although in proportions too small to cause alarm to the advocates of male predominance in the profession... only a small number of women solicitors take out annual practising certificates but if the present trend continues the proportion will be considerably higher in the next generation.”*

Eric A. Plunkett, Secretary of the Law Society, 1942-1973

*[Eric Plunkett, “Attorneys and Solicitors in Ireland” in Record of the Centenary of the Charter of the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland 1852-1952, page 70.]*

Class of 1956, newly qualified solicitors with the President of the Law Society of Ireland, Dermot P. Shaw.



Law Society Annual Conference, Killarney, 1959. Margaret Foley, Solicitor, bottom left, is the daughter of Finola Foley (née O'Connor) (no. 15 on the list) and Frank Foley, Solicitor. She subsequently married Andy Smyth, Solicitor, also in the photograph.

## CONCLUSION

We wish to thank all of the people who engaged with us on the project over the last few months.

There was a great sense of pride from the various firms that were associated with the women and at a personal level from relatives - daughters, sons, granddaughters, grandsons, nephews and nieces, many of whom followed a legal career themselves.

The digital archive contains material collected to date (January 2020).

We are hoping to receive further material on over half of the names on the list which we can add to the online catalogue version of the archive during 2020.

Please send information to MARY GAYNOR,  
Head of Library and Information Services,  
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