



KATHLEEN GRIFFIN (1899 - C.1991)

BORN: Francis Street, Ennis **DIED:** England

POSITION: Cumann na mBan Member

PORTRAIT BY MARIE CONNOLE

Inspired by the drawing of a pansy from a book of autographs collected by Kathleen Griffin. The floating flowers feature the silhouettes of Éamon de Valera, Michael Collins and Constance Markevicz. The open book displays a message written by Alice Milligan, political activist and writer.

BIO: Kathleen grew up on Francis Street (The Causeway) in Ennis. As a teenager she joined Cumann na mBan, a women's organisation that provided support to the Irish Volunteers. In 1917 she participated in the campaign for Éamon de Valera in the East Clare By-Election. During this campaign a number of high profile supporters travelled to Clare. Kathleen may have worked in the election office as she met many of these individuals on several occasions, including Michael Collins whom she greatly admired.

Kathleen's grand-daughter, Marian Trevillion, remembers her as 'A real rebel and full of mischief right to the end.' On one occasion Kathleen intervened when she witnessed several "drunken" Black and Tans accosting a boy. Kathleen bravely stepped in and told the men the boy was her brother, saving the boy's life.

The growing momentum for Irish Independence led to unrest between the British forces in Ireland and Irish republicans. Over the following years Martial Law was declared by the British government in order to try and quell the rebellion. This led to the suspension of many everyday activities and limiting the movement of persons. Bicycles and cars could only be used by military or those with a permit (such as doctors and postmen). A curfew was enforced and extended on March 1st 1921, from 6pm to 3am.

Kathleen often broke the curfew. One British sentry regularly warned her that he would arrest her next time they met. He never did. Instead, Kathleen and the soldier, William Rawlings, were married in 1922. The Rawlings raised their five children in Ennis during the 1920s and 30s. In the late 1940s Kathleen and William moved to England to be where their grown-up children had settled. Kathleen kept in touch with neighbours and visited Clare often over the coming decades.

The Revolutionary Years (1913-1923) were marked by radical change in political and social life in Ireland. Kathleen Griffin's life and her love for her husband exemplifies the importance of differentiating between people as individuals and the systems and governments they serve.

THE AUTOGRAPH BOOK

The autograph book was a treasured item that Kathleen passed on to her granddaughter Marian Trevillion. Marian donated the book to Clare County Museum for the 100th anniversary of the East Clare by-election on 10th July 2017.

The book contains the signatures of Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, Austin Stack, Count Plunkett, and the Brennan brothers – Michael and Patrick– leading Clare figures in the Irish Volunteers. An enthusiastic autograph hunter removed Éamon de Valera's signature at some stage.

Constance Markevicz and Alice Milligan are among those who signed the book a number of times indicating they must have been friendly with the younger Kathleen.

IRREPRESSIBLE WOMEN, A REFLECTIVE AND NON-PARTISAN ART PROJECT

'Irrepressible Women of Clare' are portraits exploring the perspectives of five women who lived during Ireland's Revolutionary Years (1913-1923). Artist Marie Connole worked with historian Brian Spring, military archives, newspaper reports, books and where possible, relatives of the women.

The project is accompanied by the online video 'Irrepressible Women of Clare'.

Commissioned in 2021 for the Decade of Centenaries Arts Projects by Clare County Council with the support of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Community Strand of the Decade of Centenaries Programme.

For more about the project visit:
www.marieconnole.com



ARTIST

Marie Connole is an award-winning Artist and Teacher whose research-based art explores folklore, history and storytelling. She has exhibited at the Irish Arts Center New York, NUI Galway, Trinity College Dublin, Eva International Limerick and Tulca.

FURTHER READING/VIEWING:

'Irrepressible Women of Clare', Video available on YouTube and www.marieconnole.com

The Autograph Book is on display at Clare County Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare

Murray, Sean, The signatures of Collins, Griffith and Markevicz are all in this book (but Eamon de Valera's is not), <https://www.thejournal.ie/signature-book-clare-3454277-Jun2017/> Accessed 14.10.21

Murray, Niall, 100-year-old autographs capture republican activity, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-20450018.html>, Accessed 14.10.21

ARTIST: MARIE CONNOLE

HISTORIAN: BRIAN SPRING

GRAPHIC DESIGN: EDEL BUTLER

clarearts.ie/projects/decade-of-centenaries-commissions



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

DECADE OF
CENTENARIES