

The Largest Remaining Reserve of Manpower: Historical Myopia, Irish Women Workers and World War Two¹

Jennifer Redmond

Introduction

On the outbreak of war Ireland declared a 'national emergency' and announced its neutrality in the impending global conflict. Neutrality was seen as a vital test of Ireland's newly established independence, an expression of self-determination and national identity, yet it was viewed with scepticism by some. The sceptics included John W. Dulanty, the Irish High Commissioner in London, who supported the policy but was reported to have commented to the Secretary of State for the Dominions, Sir Thomas Inskip, that Irish neutrality would not last more than a week as a result of attacks on shipping.² Neutrality is viewed in hindsight in a more nuanced way because the assistance given to the Allies, including the supply of necessary labour to the British war effort, can be viewed as compromising the ideal of neutrality as representing total impartiality and non-involvement.³ Irish citizens were to experience the heavy impact of war despite Ireland's neutral status, and the many thousands of Irish people in Britain also experienced the deprivations and hardships of 'total war.' As Sir Llewellyn Woodward, official historian of the war, observed: in the autumn of 1940, the 'Germans had turned to indiscriminate night bombing in order to break British morale and to destroy British factories and communications'.⁴ The women factory workers discussed in this article were among the civilians working in such British factories and were therefore directly affected by the exigencies of war.

Irish women fulfilled a vital role in the British 'home front' economy throughout World War Two. Drawing on newly available primary source material, this article seeks to illuminate the profile of those Irish women who resided in Britain during the early years of the war and engaged in work in the many factories scattered across Britain, filling vacancies in vital industries. Indeed, a number of industries *preferred* to employ women where the work required deft fingers.⁵ As many Irish women migrating to Britain to work were single (and some left their families at home), they often were not tethered by domestic duties as their British counterparts were. By using their labour, employers and the government in Britain thereby avoided the tension between the requirements of the wartime economy and the need to retain women as the anchor of family life, debates discussed extensively in the work of Dorothy Sheridan and Penny Summerfield among others.⁶

The source material discussed in this article reveals the spectrum of wartime experiences, from well-paid employment in war-related industries to sickness and injury as a result of civilian bombing campaigns. Irish people travelling back to their homes and families were doing so for a number of reasons and for varying lengths of time. Thus despite Basil Brooke's scornful observation in Glasgow in September 1939 that the Irish were 'running away' on the boats, the source material reveals that not all wanted to flee the war: many were simply returning on holidays, evacuating children, or paying a visit to loved ones before joining the British forces.⁷

Travel permits: a unique source

Travel permits were compulsory as a form of identification for those travelling between Ireland and

Britain or Britain and its territorial islands during World War Two. Travel permits were used in lieu of passports as a form of photographic identification which passengers (apart from those in the armed forces) had to possess to undertake journeys by sea. They were issued at a specially established office in Dublin for travel from there. When in Britain, Irish people had to apply to the Irish High Commission in London, now the Irish Embassy, or its branches in Liverpool and Scotland. Passengers required an exit permit from the British Passport Office in order to proceed with their journey. Applicants had to provide two photographs (one for the permit and one for their file), proof of their birth, and a fee of 5s.

The restrictions on unnecessary travel between Britain and Ireland in June 1940 were viewed as an inconvenience and led to demonstrations by seasonal agricultural workers outside the British permit office in Dublin.⁸ However, the travel permits provide the historian with an important opportunity to understand the demographic profile of Irish migrants in wartime Britain as this was the only historical period in which such detailed information was systematically collected. From these forms we can discover the age, gender, occupation and origin of the applicants, in addition to their employment status and reason for requesting a travel permit. For women, we can also discover their marital status and the nationality of their husband in cases where the forms are filled out correctly.⁹ They are therefore a historical boon that provides more detailed and nuanced information about emigrants than census data (the usual source for migration statistics). Simply put, they offer a snapshot in time of Irish women workers in Britain during World War Two on a scale unparalleled in any other source. While permits were needed for journeys both to and from Ireland, as stated, the records referred to in this article are specifically those applications made in Britain by Irish people wishing to return home.

Table 1 shows the number and proportion of women who went to all areas of employment in Britain during World War Two, using data calculated by the Irish government. As can be seen, while female recruitment was initially lower than male recruitment, women benefited as the war went on from the gender specific bans on travel as the Irish government was concerned to maintain adequate numbers of men in fuel and food production in Ireland. When the travel restrictions on Irish women were lifted completely in July 1946, the numbers of women leaving for opportunities in Britain rose sharply. This reflected the lack of employment opportunities for women in Ireland and the relative abundance of such in Britain.

Table 1: Travel permits issued to Irish women for employment in Britain, 1940-1946

Year	Number of Females	Percentage of Total	Total
1940	8,884	34%	25,964
1941	3,272	9%	35,132
1942	14,448	30%	51,711
1943	19,003	39%	48,324
1944	5,890	43%	13,613
1945	6,094	31%	19,279
1946	19,205	64%	30,034

Source: Calculations made from tables in *Statistical Abstract 1947-1948*, Department of Industry and Commerce: Stationery Office, Dublin. Figures have been rounded to the nearest percentage point.

While Table 1 represents those who left Ireland to seek employment in Britain, the applications from those wishing to return to Ireland are more illuminating in their detail. There are over 23,000 extant travel permit application forms from Irish people in Britain, which additionally includes applications on behalf of over 4,000 children being brought back to Ireland by their parents or relatives. While this is not a complete collection of the forms, what is left provides us with the most detailed demographic information about Irish women working in war-time Britain we have ever been able to analyse. What emerges from the analysis of the records is the vast range of occupations they held, ranging from the professions to the unskilled sectors of the economy. The period covered by the cache of forms – 1940 to early 1942 – coincides with the first shortages of labour supply experienced by the British government. During this time women were targeted to enter the munitions factories, being directed away from other areas and, in 1941, compelled to work in munitions factories through the Essential Work Order.

The ubiquity of Irish women is indicated in an anecdote from a munitions factory in Chorley, Lancashire, where high staff turnover and problems with wages were not helped by the factory having forty women by the name of Anne Clark employed at one time.¹¹ Travel permit data alone will not capture all the women who worked in wartime factories in Britain as it only reveals those who wished to return to Ireland and it is likely that the number of ‘Anne Clarks’ was much higher than we will ever be able to calculate.

Morally problematic workers: the image of the factory girl

As documented by Louise Ryan and others, the factory girl was viewed by many as a morally problematic modern worker in independent Ireland. A well publicised speech by Aodh de Blácam (later a member of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems) in 1936 condemned the phenomenon of the ‘factory girl’, claiming that ‘womanhood was being denaturalised’ by the employment of women in industry.¹¹ As Ryan points out, the Irish Women Workers’ Union (IWWU) was quick to rebut such comments, arguing that most young women employed in the factories were ‘good girls’ who lived with their parents. As with most things, the truth most probably lay somewhere in between these two ideologically opposed, idealised versions of Irish factory girls.

The debate on the appropriateness or otherwise of factory employment for women was continued in the newspapers upon the announcement of the 1937 Constitution when Gertrude Gaffney, female columnist in the *Irish Independent*, attacked its wording on women: ‘The death knell of the working woman is sounded in the new constitution.’¹² Such hyperbole contained an element of truth – working women were not the ideal women of the constitution. When the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems (1948-1954) took evidence from interested citizens, the Irish Women Workers’ Union again pressed their case concerning the poor conditions and status of factory workers. Louie Bennett, IWWU President, stated:

I should say that the women, for instance, who have emigrated having been in industrial employment here, have found conditions on the other side a thousand times better than here. The factories where they have gone have every possible arrangement for their comfort – hostels and canteens. [...] Of course, they got good wages and were well catered for in the hostels and above all many of them told me that they find their status there is considerably better than what it is here. Women workers are given much more respect in England than here.¹³

Bennett made her point forcefully, it seems, due to a perceived hostility from the mainly male panel to which she was addressing her remarks. Her tone appears justified when one reads the comments in the Commission’s final report in which women’s greater propensity to be swayed by social rather than economic factors in emigrating appears as a ‘fact’ in a number of places. Indeed, in a transcript of evidence from the Irish Countrywomen’s Association, (seemingly interviewed on

the same day as the IWWU); Aodh de Blácam is recorded as making the following disparaging remark: 'To-day it was mentioned that women did not get a fair crack of the whip in this country. My opinion was that, in general, conditions are equal but that the women do not avail of them.'¹⁴

Lest we fall into the trap of believing in Irish exceptionalism, however, it is important to point out that factory work was viewed also as a problematic area of women's work beyond Ireland. It was viewed with some suspicion by commentators in both Britain and Ireland since the expansion of industrialization. As Susie Steinbach has observed of the nineteenth century, the confines of life in domestic service, where a girl was monitored and 'kept respectable' were in stark contrast to factory work which ...

appeared to observers to encourage a lifestyle in which employees often lived far from their families, were at liberty to fraternise with strange men, made enough money to buy baubles and bangles, and generally posed a danger to themselves and the smooth functioning of society'.¹⁵

According to Steinbach, however, in Britain factory workers 'were no more sexually promiscuous than others and were less likely than domestic servants or sweated workers to become prostitutes'.¹⁶ The paradoxical discourse that existed on female factory workers thus encompassed two opposing strands of thought: that they were frivolous, flighty and vain, or, conversely, good, solid workers who should be respected. As Long and Marland have highlighted, in relation to the aftermath of the First World War, when much was made of the phenomenon of greater female involvement in industrial work:

Writers discussing factory girls sought to defend girls from allegations of vanity and frittering away their wages on luxury clothing and beauty products while simultaneously implying that factory girls were coarse and clumsy, attracted to garish make-up and vulgar fashion'.¹⁷

This was an image Irish women working in Britain had to counter in conjunction with racial prejudices evinced by some co-workers and managers as will be discussed below.

The factory awaits: wartime opportunities for Irish women in Britain

Britain's home front efforts were hit first by a shortage of skilled labour and then by a shortage of male labour, and thus the way was paved for the mass mobilisation of women workers to British armament and war-related factories. The number of women employed in Britain averaged 6,227,000 per year between 1938 and 1945, although it is not known how many Irish women this included.¹⁸ At the peak in 1943, workers employed in the three departments responsible for the munitions industries – the Admiralty, the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry for Aircraft Production – numbered four million.¹⁹

Irish women going to work in the munitions and aircraft factories in Britain were crucial to the British war effort despite their proportionately low numbers in comparison to men. As Peggy Inman observed, Irish labour had its own niche in the British labour market that was to prove critical:

The contribution of Irish labour to war production should not be underestimated. It is true that less than 30,000 workers was a small contribution to the Ministry of Supply's munitions labour force, which at its peak amounted to some two millions. But Irish labour was valuable to Ministry of Supply production out of all proportion to its numbers. This was first because Eire was a source of heavy male labour when British supplies had almost run dry; and secondly because Irish labour, apart from the minority of men and women who applied to work in particular firms and districts, was mobile and was not subject to the preference rulings under which British labour was allocated. Recruitment from Ireland therefore gave the Ministry of Supply a margin of labour to use at its own discretion for urgent and difficult demands.²⁰

From an Irish perspective, Britain offered a multitude of possibilities for workers hit by factory closures, wage freezes and higher living costs at home.²¹ As Muldowney has calculated, the cost of

living index for food rose by 120 points (70 per cent)²² during the Emergency and the overall cost of living was raised by two-thirds, affecting the ability of low paid workers to adequately provide for their families as wages increased by just one-third.²³ While the Irish government initiated such schemes as the Construction Corps for young, unemployed men, Irish women were not provided with special opportunities for work at home.²⁴ Thus, the lure of higher wages, the chance to gain valuable training and, perhaps most importantly, the ability to contribute to the family economy through remittances, drew thousands of Irish women across the sea to belligerent Britain. Irish women also made a transition from lower paid roles in domestic service to factory work once they had arrived in Britain, availing of new opportunities for higher earnings, more time off and less socially restrictive working environments.

From March 1941, all women aged nineteen to forty had to register at employment exchanges in Britain, the age being raised to fifty by 1943 to cope with increasing demands.²⁵ British firms working for the Ministry of Supply were able to make use of female labour in Ireland as many already had offices there, including such firms as Ford and ICI. Initially no official agreement existed between the British and Irish governments with regard to labour recruitment. However, in July 1941 representatives met in Dublin to decide formal arrangements for the recruitment of workers from Ireland. While the drive for male labour was effected through a number of agencies, female labour recruitment remained more centralised and was organised primarily through the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) at Bridgend in Wales. The ROF agent's work was extended to meet the needs of other industries under the collective title of 'British Factories' as the war progressed. Irish women were employed in a greater variety of work than men and were recruited centrally and then allocated to where they were needed. Irish women were employed also as recruiters in the Dublin headquarters and in key provincial towns in Ireland.²⁶

Irish wartime voluntary workers in Britain were considered to be 'conditionally landed' legal aliens with the right to work in Britain as long as they complied with the travel restrictions, the terms and conditions of their employment, and were vetted by their local police every six months. If men did not stay in Britain longer than two years, this status also protected them from conscription to government-controlled employment or the armed forces. The large scale mobilisation of Irish labour is one of the key factors in the assessment of Ireland's neutrality policy as porous, although individual motivations to leave Ireland may have had nothing to do with the politics of neutrality and everything to do with economic necessity. However, as James B. Wolf observed in this journal in 1996, although 'the overpowering motivation of migrating Irish workers was their individual economic well-being, the result raises questions about the reality of Irish neutrality'.²⁷ This is verified in the testimony of Noreen Hill, an emigrant recruited directly from Cork to a munitions factory in Britain. Referring to a recruitment poster for British war work she saw at her local employment exchange, she reflected: 'I didn't think it strange at that time, but I did afterwards when I thought about it, that the Irish government allowed all those posters to come out, although we were neutral'.²⁸

In Britain, the Ministry of Labour worked with the Ministry of Supply in recruiting Irish workers to the armaments factories. Munitions work was prioritised and women were often transferred from other areas of the economy to work in producing armaments. Irish women recruited directly from Ireland were considered 'mobile' workers and were transported to different factories according to the work needs. They were, for example, among the hundreds of women workers transferred from a factory in Bridgend, Wales, to the Midlands in 1943-44 to facilitate the recruitment of unemployed local male workers who were previously employed in the mines and only fit for light work.²⁹ Work was also 'diluted' in skill to suit unskilled workers and part-time work was made available to women with family responsibilities.³⁰ In this way women's labour can be seen as malleable and secondary in importance to that of men.

Table 2: Workers travelling from Eire to work for Ministry of Supply and Ministry of Aircraft Production (in thousands)

Year	Ministry of Supply			Ministry of Aircraft Production		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1942	17,296	11,297	28,593	6,410	2,448	8,858
1943	7,785	3,606	11,391	413	53	466
1944	1,947	1,450	3,397	1,970	863	2,833
1945	1,236	936	2,172	113	91	204
Total	28,264	17,289	45,553	8,906	3,455	12,361

Source: Information from Peggy Inman, *Labour in the Munitions Industries*, (London, 1957), p. 173.

Although women were recruited in smaller numbers than men, their participation rates grew steadily over the war period. As Table 2 shows, Irish women constituted 38% of Ministry of Supply and 28% of Ministry of Aircraft Production workers between 1942 and 1945. By 1944 over 40% of those recruited to Ministry of Supply positions were women.³¹ Inman also noted that the average age of female recruits from Ireland was lower than that of men and it was observed by a large ICI Metals factory that the women were 'better workers and fitter physically than the men'.³² For Irish women, though, there were instances of racial prejudice despite the positive light in which women workers were viewed by many. As Penny Summerfield's work has explored, factory 'welfare managers expressed surprise when the negative stereotypes of Irish women ('dirt and drunkenness') were not confirmed'.³³

Table 3 illustrates data taken from the research on travel permit applications and reveals the war-related areas in which Irish women stated they were working. This data represents women working in factories and those who describe themselves as on "war work", a term widely used to describe factory work that involved production of war related goods and thus we can identify these women as being most directly involved in war production.³⁴

Table 3: Irish women working in British factories

Aircraft Factory	Munitions	War Work	Factory Work	Total
34	117	18	407	575

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs Travel Permit Files, National Archives of Ireland

As can be seen, the use of the term 'factory work' by women describing their occupations is higher than any other designation and encompassed a wider range of skills and outputs than the other categories. This unfortunately fails to capture the sheer variety of jobs held by women in the war effort. There are, however, commonalities between the groups of women despite their different areas of work.

Some expected demographic attributes have been found when examining the profile of Irish women working in British factories as outlined in Table 4 below. Although the prevalence of younger, single women may be expected, it is interesting to note that the average age for this sample of women was in the late twenties. Thus it is likely that women had a number of years of employment experience at this stage.

Table 4: Demographic profile of Irish women workers (total 575)

Occupation	Average Age	Location of Majority of Workers	Marital Status	
			Single %	Married %
Aircraft Factory	31	London	82	18
Munitions	27	Manchester	89	11
War Work	27	London	89	11
Factory Work	26	London	80	20

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs Travel Permit Files, National Archives of Ireland

As Table 4 demonstrates, there was a typical profile of Irish women working in British factories with the majority being single and based in London. The most common county of origin across these groups was Mayo, this being the birthplace of the majority of factory and munitions workers; women in war work were most commonly from Kerry and the aircraft workers mainly came from Cork. This most likely reflects the existence of 'chain migration' or the transnational networks developed by emigrants throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which were highly effective in transmitting information about job opportunities through visits home and thereby promoted 'chains' of migrants from similar areas of Ireland to Britain.³⁵ The prevalence of the west of Ireland as a source of the majority of migrants is in line with the well documented higher rates of migration from those areas throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Unsurprisingly, there were low numbers of women who had children. Among the aircraft workers, just two of the married women were bringing back children with them, and they both had just one child. In the munitions factory, one woman was bringing her three children home under the evacuation scheme and one unmarried mother was returning with her child.³⁶ Other women in the munitions factory reported returning home to Ireland to see children who they must either have left in Ireland or evacuated at an earlier period in the war. Among the women 'war workers', only one had a child whom she was bringing home on holiday to see her mother. This suggests the long working hours in British factories were not conducive to family life, yet the need to earn a living meant that women were willing to leave children with relatives in order to continue working.

What were the conditions like for women working in British factories? Between the years 1938 and 1945 when working hours were recorded, women and girls (under eighteen years) worked forty-four hours a week.³⁷ With regard to pay, factory work was divided into two categories based on gender: thus a woman doing a job classified as men's work got the male rate of pay, while a woman doing a job classified as women's work got a lower rate of pay. The unions were concerned to maintain this principle so that the jobs classified as men's work would maintain their cash value when men returned to them after the war.³⁸ The problem was the difficulty in determining what could be defined as either men's or women's work, particularly as some of the processes had been 'diluted' so as to allow untrained or semi-skilled workers to replace the skilled men who had been called up. As Inman observed, 'practice as to what was men's and what was women's work varied from district to district and from factory to factory according to the state of employment and the strength of the unions.'³⁹

Although Irish women workers must have been acutely interested in the issue of remuneration, perhaps the debates on equal pay were in some ways peripheral: the necessity for wages to send home was paramount for many emigrants and there is much evidence to suggest that Irish women were diligent in doing so. Their attitudes towards equal pay, however, require further research and are not revealed in the travel permit applications. Indeed, whether Irish women were active in trade

unions in Britain and to what extent during this period would be a welcome addition to the historiography of women's working lives. Women working in the area of munitions, however, saw a steady increase in their wages over the war period: in July 1940 a female worker in the metals, engineering and shipbuilding industries earned 43s 10d; by July 1945 this had risen to 69s 1d.⁴⁰ Such wage increases were necessary to keep up with the rising cost of living in Britain, but even without such rises, wages were substantively better than what women would have been able to achieve in Ireland.

Conclusion

In 1975 Joseph T. Carroll's attempt to explore the experience of neutrality through the stories of those who lived through the war years was met with silence in many cases. As Carroll observed with regard to politicians, those 'who survive often go blank when prompted to stir their memories about the period, while being ready to give vivid accounts of events during the War of Independence which was twenty years earlier.'⁴¹ This silence seems to have descended almost immediately: in 1953 T. Desmond Williams had decried the fact that, in contrast to other small, neutral nations, 'not a single book has been published since the war by an Irishman on Irish foreign policy, and our administrators have steadily refused to throw light on the execution of neutrality.'⁴² Yet given the scale of recruitment from Ireland, it is likely that every family, if they did not have someone personally in Britain during the war, knew someone who did. The many Irish women who participated in war work in the British economy have not been adequately researched thus far, with the exception of Mary Muldowney's pioneering work in the area.

The cultural myopia that exists about Irish people and World War Two began in fact during the war, when the combination of neutrality, sensitivity towards the issue of emigration, and censorship meant that Irish people's contribution to the British war effort, particularly what Wood calls the 'factory front' was obscured.⁴³ Churchill's bitter speech in November 1940 referring to the loss of use of the Treaty ports and the 'most heavy and grievous burden' this put on the British people distinctly ignored the fact that thousands of Irish people in Britain were also affected by the pressures and hardships of war.⁴⁴ Similarly, while much attention has been paid in the historiography of British women's experiences in World War Two to considering whether or not the war acted as an emancipatory moment for women, studies of the impact of the war on Irish women has not fully considered this matter. Did Irish women returning to their homes feel differently about their place in society and in the workplace? Or was the exceptionalism of the war accepted as a reason for women's unequal access to jobs and unequal pay whilst in them? Did Irish women feel, as Arthur Marwick has phrased it, that they had achieved 'a kind of equality, or only a different kind of inequality'?⁴⁵ This can be contextualized in the wider issue that Sue Bruley has argued as critical in considering women's working lives in World War Two: we don't adequately know how they felt about their work and this consequently limits our ability to understand the wider impact of the mass mobilization of women workers.⁴⁶

Reflecting on the war thirty years after it ended, Carroll observed that '... no one ever asks 'Where were you in 1939?' Why should they? Ireland was neutral thanks to God and de Valera, and what more was there to be said?'⁴⁷ Indeed, our lack of commemorative activity and the dearth of knowledge in Irish society about Irish people's involvement in the Second World War can be felt today. Is this because it would denigrate our national memory of the Emergency which allows us to feel pride in neutrality? Or is it because the ordinary people, men and women, who worked in the British factories during the war have not been thought worthy enough to research in detail? The travel permits allow us to partially reconstruct this history by looking at the demographic profile of those workers, men and women, who were in Britain during this momentous time.

Trevor C. Salmon offered a succinct and clear exposition of the true status of Ireland's neutrality

when he observed: 'Geographical proximity, resource deficiencies, and consequent dependence upon Britain meant that "a certain consideration" for Britain, and non-belligerency rather than neutrality' existed in Ireland.⁴⁸ What can be added to this is the one resource Ireland *did* have: people. The women workers discussed in this article formed part of that vital resource, and their experiences illuminate the ways in which Ireland pursued a policy of 'friendly' neutrality throughout the war period. In addition to this, as Wood has recently argued, the movement of people to work in British wartime industries was of benefit to Ireland as much as to Britain: 'For the Irish state and its people, the social memory of the period 1939 to 1945 was defined by the relative deprivations brought about by the Emergency. Without the movement of labour to Britain these would have been much worse...'⁴⁹ While this may not be widely recognised, Mary Muldowney's study has found that women's recollections of their wartime experiences often contain a 'recognition that they were necessary to the war effort.'⁵⁰ The question remains, therefore, why their contribution is not remembered and cherished with pride.

Notes

- 1 The research on which this article is based was funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences through a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship held at the Department of History, NUI Maynooth (2009-2011) which the author gratefully acknowledges. The author would also like to acknowledge the kind assistance and constant support of Catriona Crowe of the National Archives of Ireland for her help in accessing the primary source material. The phrase 'largest remaining reserve of manpower is taken from Peggy Inman, *Labour in the munitions industries*, (London: HMSO, 1957), p. 176.
- 2 Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland in the war years, 1939-1945*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1975), p. 12.
- 3 Salmon argues that Irish foreign policy can be viewed more appropriately as one of 'unprincipled *non-belligerency*, the determination to stay out of war at any cost without regard for the upholding of neutral rights or the fulfilment of neutral duties' which he attributes to a more 'pragmatic view' of the Irish governments of the twentieth century. See Trevor C. Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland: an ambivalent and unique security policy*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 5.
- 4 Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *British foreign policy in the Second World War: volume 1*, (London: HMSO, 1970) p. 357.
- 5 Inman, *Labour in the munitions*, p. 176.
- 6 See Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing women's wartime lives* (Manchester University Press: 1998), Penny Summerfield & Gail Braybon, *Out of the cage: women's experiences in two world wars* (London: Pandora, 1987), Dorothy Sheridan, 'Ambivalent Memories: women and the 1939-45 war in Britain,' *Oral History*, 17:1, Spring, 1990 and *Wartime women: a Mass-Observation anthology, 1937-1945* (London: Heineman, 1990).
- 7 As quoted in Ian S. Wood, *Britain, Ireland and the Second World War*, (Edinburgh University Press: 2010), p. 141. Basil Brooke was a Unionist MP who became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in 1943.
- 8 Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, p.45.
- 9 Throughout the war different versions of the travel permit application form were used. Some ask for information on marital status and husband's nationality, while others do not contain such a question but officials have often written in such details as maiden name. Men were not directed to answer questions on marital status and this is only revealed in qualitative statements by applicants in response to a question as to their reason for return, for example 'I am returning to see my wife and children'.
- 10 Inman, *Labour in the munitions*, p. 183. According to Inman, the Chorley factory was the most important source of gun ammunition, particularly after the bombing of Woolwich. 'Anne Clark' would most likely not have been an alias as the workers had to produce original birth certificates or official telegrams from the Registrar General's office in Dublin to obtain travel permits or identity cards. While definitive evidence is not provided as to the nationality of these women, the implication in Inman's writing is that the factory had a substantial proportion of Irish workers.
- 11 Louise Ryan, 'Leaving home: Irish press debates on female employment, domesticity and emigration to Britain in the 1930s', in *Women's history review*, Vol.12 no.3 (2003), pp. 387 - 406, p. 394.
- 12 Gertrude Gaffney, *Irish Independent*, 7 May 1937.
- 13 8307-8/8 Arnold Marsh Papers, Manuscripts Department, Trinity College Dublin, Evidence of the Irish Women Workers' Union. The IWWU was represented by Miss Louie Bennett, Mrs McDowell, Miss Keegan and Miss O'Brien.
- 14 8307-8/4 Arnold Marsh Papers, Manuscripts Department, Trinity College Dublin, Evidence of the Irish Countrywomen's Association. The ICA was represented by Mrs. Bishop and Mrs. O'Neill.
- 15 Susie Steinbach, *Women in England, 1760-1914: a social history*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), p. 22.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

- 17 Vicky Long and Hilary Marland, 'From danger and motherhood to health and beauty: health advice for the factory girl in early twentieth-century Britain', *Twentieth century British history*, Vol. 20, No. 4, (2009), pp. 454-481, 475.
- 18 Calculation made from Central Statistics Office [Britain], *Statistical digest of the war*, (London: 1951), information taken from Table 2, p. 8.
- 19 Inman, *Labour in the munitions*, p. 3. In addition to the production of munitions the Ministry of Supply was also responsible for the chemical and explosives industry, the production of raw materials such as timber, cotton, iron and steel; the Admiralty was additionally responsible for shipbuilding and repairing; and the Ministry of Aircraft Production was also responsible for the light alloy industry.
- 20 Inman, *Labour in the munitions*, p. 56.
- 21 Mary Muldowney discusses the factory closures and consequent unemployment for women in Ireland in her monograph, *The Second World War and Irish women: An oral history*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007).
- 22 Mary Muldowney, "A world of its own": recollections of women workers in Guinness's brewery in the 1940s', in *Saothar*, Vol. 23 (1999), pp. 103-115, 112.
- 23 Bryce Evans, 'The Construction Corps, 1940-1948' in *Saothar*, Vol. 32 (2007), pp.19-31.
- 24 The chief aim of the Construction Corps was turf production for the Irish state to meet the nation's wartime demand for fuel. Young men were recruited through the unemployment exchanges and the Corps functioned as an adjunct to the Irish defence forces. For more on the Construction Corps see Bryce Evans, 'The Construction Corps, 1940-1948' in *Saothar*, Vol. 32.
- 25 Sue Bruley, "'A very happy crowd": women in industry in South London in World War Two' in *History workshop journal*, No. 44 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 58-76. See Also Arthur Marwick, *War & social change in the twentieth century* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1974).
- 26 Peggy Inman noted that in two towns the Irish recruiter was the daughter of a local doctor and the daughter of an employment exchange manager respectively. Inman, *Labour in the munitions*, p. 169.
- 27 James B. Wolf, "'Withholding their due": the dispute between Ireland and Great Britain over unemployment insurance payments to conditionally landed Irish wartime volunteer workers,' in *Saothar*, Vol. 21 (1996), pp. 39-45.
- 28 Noreen Hill's testimony is included in Mary Lennon, Marie McAdam and Joanne O'Brien *Across the water: Irish women's lives in Britain*, (London: Virago, 1988), p. 93.
- 29 Inman, *Labour in the munitions*, p. 186.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 177.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- 33 Penny Summerfield, *Women workers in the Second World War: production and patriarchy in conflict*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 59.
- 34 This colloquial term is used by many in the files and can be understood to designate those who are working in government controlled war related factories, e.g. producing component parts for radios, textiles or other war related items needed by the troops or auxiliary forces. There are other female workers who describe specific occupations such as "capstan operators" but for the purposes of this article I have focused on these four categories of workers.
- 35 For more on transnational networks see in particular Enda Delaney and Don MacRaild, eds, *Irish migration, networks and ethnic identities since 1750* (London: Routledge, 2007).
- 36 For more on the issue of unmarried mothers, see Jennifer Redmond, 'In the family way and away from the family: examining the evidence in Irish unmarried mothers in Britain, 1920s - 1940s,' in Mary O'Dowd and Elaine Farrell (eds.) *'She said she was in the family way': pregnancy and infancy in the Irish past*, (forthcoming, London: Institute of Historical Research, 2011).
- 37 Central Statistics Office [Britain], *Statistical digest of the war*, information taken from Table 188, p. 204.
- 38 Inman, *Labour in the munitions*, p. 353. Inman quotes evidence given by the Ministry of Supply to the Royal Commission on Equal Pay which was not published in their report in which they referred to the 'abnormal extension of the field of women's employment during the war', thus indicating a desire for jobs not to be re-classified as women's work and thus downgraded in pay after the war.
- 39 *Ibid.* p. 357.
- 40 Central Statistics Office [Britain], *Statistical digest of the war*, information taken from Table 189, p. 205.
- 41 Carroll, *Ireland in the war years*, p. 9.
- 42 As quoted in Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919-1989*, (Cork: Hibernian UP, 1990), p. 1.
- 43 Ian S. Wood, *Britain, Ireland and the Second World War*, p. 156.
- 44 Churchill made this reference in a speech in the House of Commons on 6 November 1940.
- 45 Marwick, Arthur Marwick, *War and social change*, p. 160.
- 46 Bruley, "A very Happy Crowd."
- 47 Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland in the war years, 1939-1945*, p. 9.
- 48 Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, p. 154.
- 49 Ian S. Wood, *Britain, Ireland and the Second World War*, p. 150.
- 50 Mary Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish women*, p. 70.