

60<sup>TH</sup>

# ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN JOINING AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA



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1959 - 2019

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# Commissioner's Foreword

Today marks an important milestone for An Garda Síochána.

We are commemorating the 60th anniversary of women joining An Garda Síochána as Garda members and celebrating the contribution women have made to the organisation and to society since then.

Sixty years ago these pioneers of policing in Ireland took the brave and honourable step of becoming a Garda and in doing so, not only helped protect the communities they served, but also inspired many other women to follow in their footsteps.

We have come a long way since the first twelve women joined An Garda Síochána in July 1959. Female representation within the ranks of An Garda Síochána is strong. Women perform duty across the whole range of operational units and bureaus. Every day the women of An Garda Síochána make a positive difference to individuals and the communities this organisation serves across the country and further afield.



*Commissioner Drew Harris*

However, that said, we have more to do. Not only do we need to encourage more women to join An Garda Síochána, we also need to continue to give female Gardaí the encouragement and support to apply for specialist units, detective duties and promotion so we can continue to increase female representation across An Garda Síochána.

I want to thank all female Gardaí- past and present- for the contribution they have made to the people of this country and in making An Garda Síochána a better organisation.

# History of Women in An Garda Síochána

The recruitment of women to An Garda Síochána had its origins as far back as 1917 when four women were employed by the Dublin Metropolitan Police to patrol the streets between 7pm and midnight. Though not actual members of that service, each morning they would present the Commissioner of the DMP (Sir Walter Edgeworth-Johnstone) with a report on the 'moral state of the streets'.

By 1919, Commissioner Johnstone claimed the experiment in employing women had been a success and requested the Treasury to sanction the employment of two additional women. During the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, the female assistants remained in place but were not replaced as they retired. Therefore, by 1955 only one female patrolled the streets of the capital city. During the period 1955/1956 four further women police assistants were appointed.

It was the Joint Committee of Women's Societies & Social Workers which was identified in 1956 by civil servants in the Department of Justice as *"the main source of agitation for the appointment of Women Police. They first raised the matter in 1936 and never ceased to press the issue since"*. During the 1950s this Joint Committee led a successful campaign for the recruitment of female police by making the issue a topic for national debate. This was achieved through media coverage and attaining support of numerous local authorities around the country.

In November 1953, the Garda Commissioner, Mr. Daniel Costigan, informed the Minister for Justice, Mr. Gerald Boland, that he was *"convinced of the present need for women police in Dublin; and their -*





- *probable assignment to other centres as the need grows*". Though the proposal was rejected by Minister Boland and his successor, James Everett, two senior civil servants (Thomas Coyne & F.C. Connolly) agreed to collaborate in support for recruitment of women into An Garda Síochána.

The Cabinet Minutes of 27 September 1957 authorised the Minister for Justice, Mr. Oscar Traynor, to take the necessary steps for the appointment of women to An Garda Síochána. Approval to admit women was outlined in a memo, dated 21 February 1958, from Mr. Peter Berry, Secretary of the Department of Justice, to the Garda Commissioner Daniel Costigan, which stated *"that provision has been made in the Garda Síochána estimates for the coming year for 400 recruits (388 men and 12 women)"*.

The preliminary announcement for female candidates was posted in the national newspapers on 16th/18th August and 27th/29th September 1958 and posters were also displayed outside all Garda stations. The number of completed application forms returned up to 31 October 1958 was 178. Interviews for women candidates were held from 14th – 17th April 1959. A total of 41 of the 44 women notified to attend for interview presented themselves, from which the successful candidates were chosen.

The assistance of the Home Office, London was sought by Commissioner Costigan to obtain the services of a suitably qualified female Police Sergeant to act as instructor for the new female Gardaí. Sergeant Doreen Prissick, Liverpool City Police was nominated for this role.



Sergeant Prissick, who arrived in Ireland on 7 July 1959, acted as instructor, supervisor and counsellor to the new female recruits until her return to Liverpool on 5 December 1959.

On completion of their 22 week training course on 7 December 1959 the twelve female recruits; known as 'Ban Gardaí', were allocated to Pearse Street Garda Station. Members from this initial group of women also performed duty at Store Street Garda Station.

Over the next fifteen years, the intake of female members to the service was less frequent. In the 1970s this pattern started to change with ten women recruited in 1975 and 46 in 1978. In 1983 the first all-female class was recruited. From the early 1970s a changing role for women in Irish society reflected the changing role of women in policing. With the removal of the marriage ban in 1973 women pursuing a career in An Garda Síochána could combine a career with family life.

The role of women in An Garda Síochána has changed. Female members have been integrated into all aspects of policing which they have sought to achieve, including rank structure. An Garda Síochána has reached a stage where gender is no longer a consideration in relation to appointment, allocation, or promotion.

In conclusion, An Garda Síochána has come a long way in 60 years. The standards set by those first 12 female Gardaí played no small part in this. In paying tribute to them and all those who came after them it is vital that we become an even more diverse organisation so that we can truly reflect the society we serve.



# Where We Are Now

There are 3,780 female Garda Members making up 27% of Garda members in An Garda Síochána.

26% of the Garda Reserve are female and 76% of Garda staff in An Garda Síochána are female.

*(all figures correct as of 31st May 2019)*



## Event Agenda | 10th July 2019

11:00AM	<b>Guests Arrival</b> <b>Coffee/Tea</b>
11:45AM	<b>Event Opening and Welcome</b> <i>Assistant Commissioner Orla McPartlin</i>
11:45AM	<b>Address by Garda Commissioner</b> <i>Commissioner Drew Harris</i>
11:55AM	<b>Address by Minister for Justice and Equality</b> <i>Charlie Flanagan TD</i>
12:05PM	<b>History of Women in An Garda Síochána</b> <i>Superintendent Goretti Sheridan</i>
12:15PM	<b>Panel Discussion</b>
12:40PM	<b>Guest Speaker</b> <i>Ellen O'Malley Dunlop</i>
1:00PM	<b>Event Close</b> <i>Assistant Commissioner Orla McPartlin</i>
1:00PM	<b>Light Lunch</b>



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