

## Education

Her mother had grown up during the 1860's in a grand villa on a Co. Offaly estate, she informed her children of the estate's delights with the result that her daughter Cesca as a teenager challenged the constraints of class & gender that she assumed would await her life. The family home was in Folkestone from 1908 to 1913 however she spent as much time in summer as possible in Ireland. During 1906 & 1908 when she attended the boarding school in Malvern, she objected to the English students' opinions of Home Rule also argued with her history teacher. This archive summarized how a person from a leading Anglo - Irish Protestant family (*brought up in a vicarage in Kent*) adopted the identity of an Irish irelander, then became a staunch nationalist: (*Anthony Fletcher [History Today volume 56 issue 4<sup>th</sup> April 2006](#)*) [[iv](#)]

Along with her mother & sister Margaret she moved permanently to Terenure in South Dublin. [[v](#)]

Painter / poster designer Francesca Georgina Chenevix Trench also known as Chenevix Trench was born in the vicarage of St. John the Baptist Church, Tuebrook, Liverpool. [[vi](#)]

## India

Cesca Trench spent time with the Bishop of Calcutta who was a relative by marriage during the years of 1912 to 1914. Though she disagreed with the bishop's Unionism she found that the country was fascinating. [[vii](#)]

## Religion

She identified with the 'Pan - Celtic' tendency within the Gaelic League with their attractions for Protestants who sought a version of Irish Identity not in line with Catholicism. From 1914 Cesca Trench participated in the Cumann Gaelach na nEaglaise; an organization that promoted the use of Irish within the Church of Ireland. Her story in their newspaper 'The Gaelic Churchman' covered her belief in reincarnation also that Christianity was required to be reinvented through occult exploration & syncretism that would suit the instinctive spirituality of all Celts. [[viii](#)]

## Scoil Acla

She spent time each summer in Ireland as an adult where she attended summer schools, notably at the influential Scoil Acla on Achill Island. (*Gillespie page 23*) [[ix](#)]

From 1909 Cesca Trench attended Irish – language summer colleges in Achill, Aran also in Connemara. (*Maume*) [[x](#)]

Attendees at the Scoil Acla summer school on Achill Island among them English - born Cesca Trench were provided with topics of Irish Nationalism. She changed her name to Sadhbh Trinseach. She embraced Folklore also the Irish language. [[xi](#)]

Cesca Trench attended Gaelic summer schools on Achill Island during 1911 to 1913. She met her future husband Diarmuid Coffey in Achill. The school subjects included phonetics, Irish conversation, dictation, grammar then ceilidh dancing in the evenings. (*Fletcher*) [[xii](#)]

An article by Byrne Patricia in *The Irish History* 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012 entitled *Achill Island 1912: A Microcosm of Swirling Political Movements* was discussed events at Scoil Acla, which ran from 18<sup>th</sup> July to 10<sup>th</sup> August during 1912 - 1913. Two Anglo Irish Protestant sisters Cesca & Margot Trench travelled to Achill to attend the Scoil Acla summer school. Those students reflected the swirling currents of the Irish political movements i.e. Home Rule, The Gaelic League, Irish language, cultural

revival also land ownership movement. During her visits Cesca Trench sketched endlessly various people on beaches, musicians, cottages, mountains, céilís also several students in traditional dress. [\[xiii\]](#)

## Friendships

At Scoli Acla Cesca Trench developed several friendships with students involved in Conradh na Gailge i.e. Claud Chavasse, Ella Young, Lily Williams also Angus O 'Farrelly. She met her future husband Diarmid Coffey in Achill. (*Gillespie*) [\[xiv\]](#)

## Nationalism

Cesca Trench became an Irish Nationalist along with her sister Margaret also her cousin Chene Malvix Trench. Dermot Coffey taught her to speak the Irish Language: he was instrumental in her entrance into the Irish - Ireland Movement; the members of which purchased Irish - produced products. They fostered Irish Literature, art or culture. Trench opened an account at Dublin's Gleason's store. During 1912 in the campaign for home rule the Trench sisters collected signatures to enable Irish taxes to be lodged in an Irish treasury. Cesca Trench was involved with the import of guns for the Irish volunteers. She joined the women's auxiliary branch Cumman na mBan, there she studied first aid. She founded a new branch of Cumman na mBan in Lusk village, north Dublin during July 1914. That same month she witnessed the Dublin's Batchelor's Walk massacre. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April she left home to join her comrades at St. Stephen's Green plus she delivered first aid supplies to the G P O Headquarters. Following the Easter Rising Trench continued to attend Cumman na mBan meetings. (*Gillespie*) [\[xv\]](#)

Cesca Trench aged fifteen developed along with her sister Margot nationalist sympathies. She was influenced by her experience in Malvern (*an English public school*) also by one cousin Dermot Trench, he encouraged the sisters to join the London Branch of the Gaelic League during 1908. He provided them with their first Irish language lesson. During 1910 Cesca Trench adopted a Gaelicised version of her name as Sadhbh Trinseach. (*Maume*) [\[xvi\]](#)

Anthony Fletcher (*Emeritus Professor of English Social History at the University of London*) transcribed papers of his artistic great - aunt Cesca Trench who had as a young nationalist penned an exploration of her youthful patriotism & vigorous activism with several quotes from her diary in an article titled *A Young Nationalist in the Easter Rising*. He perused her extraordinary archive, held in the family's possession in Co. Wicklow, it contained letters, sketches plus personal papers, along with her diary of the years 1913 to 1916. Cesca Trench participated in an active role in Irish politics in the first months of the Great War. When the Easter Rising broke out on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1916 she felt duty bound to act. Her diary recorded her hopes & fears as one who believed in Ireland's freedom. On several occasions between 1913 & 1918 Cesca recorded her sense of living in a historic time. Her cousin Dermot Chenevix Trench was an influence on her, under his tutelage that Cesca opened an account at Gleason's in Dublin, which sold Irish goods only. They collected signatures in 1912, during the revived home rule agitation, for a petition for all Irish taxes to be lodged in an Irish treasury. Cesca Trench's uncle, Henry Butcher (*Unionist MP for Cambridge and a leading classical scholar*) owned a house at Killarney where he introduced her to the Kerry landscape. Unfortunately during October 1910 they fell out because he opposed the Irish language as a compulsory subject for matriculation at the new National University. She returned to Dublin where during June 1914, she was at Howth with the Coffey family (*as Diarmuid Coffey was aboard the Asgard*) as she witnessed the gun running of 26<sup>th</sup> July. Cesca Trench started a new branch of the Cumman na mBan organization at Lusk, north Dublin. In her speech to those present re their responsibility as Irish women; she stated that '*God did not make you Irish for fun. He made you Irish because he has work for our country in the world... you wouldn't like it if our boys here ever had to fight and they were shot or cut in the leg or arm or head and you could do nothing.*' (*Fletcher*) [\[xvii\]](#)

## Cumman na mBan

When she heard that the Sinn Feiners' had risen, that they had '*got all the principal bridges*' on April 24th, 1916 Cesca Trench was in no doubt but that she was called out to assist. She penned in her diary the following quotes: '*I took all the ammunition for a rifle in my bag and also some bandages and compressed food,*' also she wished to '*get to some Cumann na mBan people to see what was doing.*' Jennie Wyse Power, a senior Cumann na mBan colleague living in Henry Street, attempted to dissuade her from becoming involved but she was determined at least to deliver her first aid things. She supplied those to the GPO. She also attended the reading of the Proclamation of the Republic. Cesca Trench described the three quarters of an hour she spent inside the building that nothing was organized, her colleagues were not in attendance as a period of '*mental distraction.*' To make bandages she '*tore various underclothes in strips and rolled them up and fastened them with red cotton*'. She bought needles, iodine, lint, cotton wool also oilsilk in Terenure. Cesca Trench was annoyed she had left her *Irish Times* behind, that contained the proclamation, an article on spring fashions & next the plays announcement for the Abbey Theatre, '*a most curious document which will be historical.*' '*When Padraig Pearce had surrendered the Rising was quickly over. Sixty-four of the actual insurgents were killed during the week but the civilian casualties were four hundred & fifty killed also two Thousand six – hundred & fourteen wounded plus one hundred & sixteen soldiers also sixteen policemen died during the week.*' She penned that '*Grey is the evening when Irishmen die.*' Cesca Trench's account added to the evidence of those who manned the garrisons. Seventy - nine women who had been in the garrisons were arrested. General Maxwell released them all, commenting that the best thing to do with '*all these silly little girls*' was to send them home. (Fletcher) [\[xviii\]](#)

She was present on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1914 at the landing of arms by the volunteers at Howth, Co. Dublin. She joined Cumann na mBan; she became an executive member also secretary, she remained an active member until her demise. Cesca Trench was an active member of the Gaelic League's Craobh na gCúig nGúgí, she was elected to its executive committee during 1915. Following the 1916 Easter Rising she joined the National Aid Association that supported prisoners' dependents. [\[xix\]](#)

She joined Cumann na mBan also assisted with first aid during the Easter Rising of 1916. [\[xx\]](#)

Following her Scoli Acla visits Cesca Trench became an energetic political activist through her involvement with Cumann na mBan, Howth gun running also the 1916 Easter Rising. Her last diary entry prior to her demise was for a Cumann na mBan meeting. [\[xxi\]](#)

## Paris

From 1912 - 1914 Trench studied art in Paris at the atelier of Émile - René Ménard. While there she befriended Czechs & Poles as fellow - sufferers of nationalistic oppression. She identified with the residents of France's oppression of Alsace - Lorraine region. She expressed her dislike of several of her fellow students; according to Pyle 53 '*they had no morals.*' Her studies provided her with an increased colour interest for her art that she continued to develop. [\[xxii\]](#)

Cesca Trench moved to Paris in France to study art during 1913. (Gillespie) [\[xxiii\]](#)

While she attended art college in Paris from October 1913 to May 1914, Cesca Trench established herself as a formidable political activist. She sketched cartoons about the Home Rule struggle also Celtic costume designs for the Gaelic League paper *An Claidheamh Soluis*. She also designed a propagandist poster for '*The Gaelic League.*' She completed in charcoal '*Dance*' & '*Turf Diggers*', then during 1914 a powerful plein air landscape. (Fletcher) [\[xxiv\]](#)

## Artistic Activities

She sketched political cartoons in support of the Irish Home Rule along with poster designs for the *Gaelic League* paper *An Claidheamh Soluis* edited by Padraig Pearse. She painted Irish scenes & produced an Irish '*National Dress*' Costume. (Gillespie) [\[xxv\]](#)

Under her name as Sadhbh Trinseach from 1813 - 1918 she produced artwork, designed post - cards also posters. [\[xxvi\]](#)

She was best known for her political cartoons & posters. [\[xxvii\]](#)

### **Dublin's Art Colleges**

While she studied art in Dublin her 1913 most famous Gaelic League poster visually contrasted a future Gaelic Ireland & west Britain. During 1917 she was commissioned to paint murals at the Irish College in Carrigaholt, Co. Clare. (these have been restored twice firstly in the 1930's then during 1982) [\[xxviii\]](#)

From July 1914 to 24<sup>th</sup> April 1916 Trench was employed at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin. She then studied art at the National Museum. She produced a play about Brian Boru, painted sketches at Carrigaholt Irish Cottage. She also produced sketches for Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League & she created Christmas cards. She became a friend of Lily Yeats of *Dun Emer Press (Gillespie)* [\[xxix\]](#)

From July 1914 to April 1916 Cesca Trench worked at the Dublin School of Art also in her home studio. She studied Celtic art in the National Museum. She organized a pageant play about Brian Boru. Trench painted murals at the Carrigaholt Irish College. She produced portrait sketches at Sinn Fein & Gaelic League meetings. Cesca Trench created Christmas cards for the Gaelic League. (*Fletcher*) [\[xxx\]](#)

### **Publications**

Cesca Trench contributed several political cartoons. She reported on Paris fashions that promoted supposedly 'Celtic' styles of women's attire during 1913 in the revived *An Claidheamh Soluis*. A story by Trench was serialized in *The Gaelic Churchman* during 1922. She recorded a conversation with her future husband Dermott Coffey. She also penned several unpublished articles. '*Her writings bear witness to the dreams, frustrations and expectations of the era with its cultural & political ferments of the pre - 1914 era with its reaction against Victorian constraints.*' [\[xxxi\]](#)

### **Marriage**

Cesca Trench married Diarmid Coffey on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1918. They lived at her family residence in Terenure, Dublin. [\[xxxii\]](#)

Cesca Trench married Dermott Coffey during April 1918 (*they had been engaged since 17<sup>th</sup> March 1917*) then travelled to the Kerry Gaeltacht for their honeymoon. (*Gillespie*) [\[xxxiii\]](#)

According to this site Cesca Trench was wife of Hugh Diarmid James Coffy. [\[xxxiv\]](#)

### **Demise**

Cesca Trench's demise occurred of 'Spanish' influenza on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1918 at her family home in Dublin. [\[xxxv\]](#)

Aged twenty - seven years Cesca Trench caught the Spanish flu: she passed away on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1918. (*She was mourned by the Gaelic League as Sadhbh Trinseach*) (*Gillespie*) [\[xxxvi\]](#)

The demise occurred of Cesca Trench on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1918 while she was aged twenty - seven in Dublin. [\[xxxvii\]](#)

The death occurred on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1918 of Francesca Georgina Chenevix Trench when she was aged twenty- seven years in Dublin City, Ireland. [xxxviii]

Cesca Trench's significant art career was cut short by her demise during the 1918 Spanish Flu. (*The Connaught Telegraph* 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021 page 23) [xxxix]

Following her demise of the Spanish flu on October 30<sup>th</sup> after a few days of high fever. The Dublin branch of the League recited the rosary in Irish at her graveside. Several letters of condolence were sent to her husband, her mother also her sister. Her aunt Francie wrote of Cesca's '*fine, generous and unselfish nature*' and of her '*gifts of intellect and charm.*' The Headmistress at her school recalled an '*ardent and radiant spirit*', who was '*the very incarnation of youth, strength and vitality*'. '*Her life was devoted to Gaelic culture and the Irish people,*' recorded an obituary the *Gaelic League Journal*. Their constant refrain was the loss sustained by her death to Ireland. (Fletcher) [xl]

Following Cesca Trench's demise Emily Weddel (*then a nurse at Dublin's Meath Hospital*) sent a note of condolences to Margot Trench that featured '*It is so terrible and especially for you... We have it very hard here too,,two nurses died in past week.*' She requested Margot to pass on condolences to Diarmuid with '*He came in here the other night looking for the doctor, but I had no idea how bad things were. It is a terrible blow to him and for your poor mother and for you. She was so special and so young.*' [xli]

#### Footnotes

[iv] A Young Nationalist (<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/young-nationalist-easter-rising#sthash.PR4HOJWG.dpuf>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]

[v] James Joyce (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/james-joyce-in-context/AD48A2EBDC5C35F7DFD25F50A1885893>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[vi] British and Irish Artists (<https://www.artbiogs.co.uk/1/artists/trench-cesca>) [Assessed 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[vii] James Joyce (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/james-joyce-in-context/AD48A2EBDC5C35F7DFD25F50A1885893>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[viii] Ibid.

[ix] *The Connaught Telegraph*

[x] Trench Cesca (<https://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a9809>) [Assessed 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xi] A New Map (<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/a-new-map-of-ireland-honouring-some-of-our-outstanding-women-1.3800439>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xii] A Young Nationalist (<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/young-nationalist-easter-rising#sthash.PR4HOJWG.dpuf>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]

[xiii] Achill Island 1912 (<https://www.theirishstory.com/2012/05/21/achill-island-1912-a-microcosm-of-swirling-political-movements/#.YAyC-ej7TIU>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]

[xiv] *The Connaught Telegraph*

[xv] Ibid.

[xvi] Trench Cesca (<https://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a9809>) [Assessed 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xvii] A Young Nationalist (<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/young-nationalist-easter-rising#sthash.PR4HOJWG.dpuf>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]

[xviii] Ibid.

[xix] James Joyce (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/james-joyce-in-context/AD48A2EBDC5C35F7DFD25F50A1885893>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xx] A New Map (<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/a-new-map-of-ireland-honouring-some-of-our-outstanding-women-1.3800439>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxi] Achill Island 1912 (<https://www.theirishstory.com/2012/05/21/achill-island-1912-a-microcosm-of-swirling-political-movements/#.YAyC-ej7TIU>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]

[xxii] James Joyce (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/james-joyce-in-context/AD48A2EBDC5C35F7DFD25F50A1885893>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxiii] *The Connaught Telegraph*

[xxiv] A Young Nationalist (<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/young-nationalist-easter-rising#sthash.PR4HOJWG.dpuf>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]

[xxv] *The Connaught Telegraph*

[xxvi] James Joyce (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/james-joyce-in-context/AD48A2EBDC5C35F7DFD25F50A1885893>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxvii] A New Map (<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/a-new-map-of-ireland-honouring-some-of-our-outstanding-women-1.3800439>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxviii] James Joyce (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/james-joyce-in-context/AD48A2EBDC5C35F7DFD25F50A1885893>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxix] *The Connaught Telegraph*

[xxx] A Young Nationalist (<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/young-nationalist-easter-rising#sthash.PR4HOJWG.dpuf>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]

[xxxi] James Joyce (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/james-joyce-in-context/AD48A2EBDC5C35F7DFD25F50A1885893>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxxii] Ibid.

[xxxiii] *The Connaught Telegraph*

[xxxiv] British and Irish Artists (<https://www.artbiogs.co.uk/1/artists/trench-cesca>) [assessed 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxxv] James Joyce (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/james-joyce-in-context/AD48A2EBDC5C35F7DFD25F50A1885893>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxxvi] *The Connaught Telegraph*

[xxxvii] British and Irish Artists (<https://www.artbiogs.co.uk/1/artists/trench-cesca>) [Assessed 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxxviii] Cesca Trench (<https://www.geni.com/people/Francesca-Georgina-Trench/>) [Assessed 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xxxix] A New Map (<https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/a-new-map-of-ireland-honouring-some-of-our-outstanding-women-1.3800439>) [Assessed 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021]

[xl] A Young Nationalist (<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/young-nationalist-easter-rising#sthash.PR4HOJWG.dpuf>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]

[xli] Achill Island 1912 (<https://www.theirishstory.com/2012/05/21/achill-island-1912-a-microcosm-of-swirling-political-movements/#.YAyC-ej7TIU>) [Assessed 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021]