

Review by Dónall MacDonaill, Associate Professor, Chemistry Dept, Trinity College, Dublin.

*On Call in Africa* tells the uncommon story of Norman P. Jewell, a medical graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. During the Great War Norman served as a British Army officer in East Africa returning to Dublin to take up a Fellowship at the Royal College of Surgeons. As a consequence of his military and colonial associations, Norman was targeted by the IRA on Bloody Sunday, his life being saved by having moved on the expiration of his lease some days previously.

A colourful account by any measure, but as a member of the academic staff in Trinity's Chemistry School, I confess that it was the chapter on Norman's wife, Sydney Elise Auchinleck and Trinity's first female graduate in Chemistry that captured my interest.

The Auchinleck family embodied some of the complexities and contradictions of Irish identity. Settling in Ireland in the 17th century Ulster plantation, they were Anglican by religious persuasion, Gaelic by surname.

Sydney was one of the first female undergraduates in Trinity, taking 'Experimental Science', essentially a joint degree in chemistry and physics with the option of majoring in either; Sydney chose chemistry. This was a time of immense change in Trinity's educational landscape and the account of Sydney's experience certainly made all the more real what previously I had understood in more abstract terms.

Of course, this was also a period of cultural revival and political upheaval in Ireland and Sydney's family witnessed these developments at close quarters. Sydney's father, Hugh Auchinleck, was a professor in the Royal College of Surgeons and it was here in 1882 that he hosted a meeting "to re-establish the ancient, national game of Hurling".

Shortly afterwards Hugh was elected president of the newly formed Dublin Hurling Club, with Michael Cusack as vice-president. The political vantage point of the Auchinleck family was no less remarkable, having moved to no. 7 Harcourt St., sometime prior to 1901, immediately adjacent to what would later become the Sinn Féin Bank at no. 6. Harcourt St.

*On Call in Africa* is primarily about an interesting period in the history of East Africa. However, in telling the tale of two remarkable people, we also get a window on Ireland a century ago and the history they lived and witnessed.