



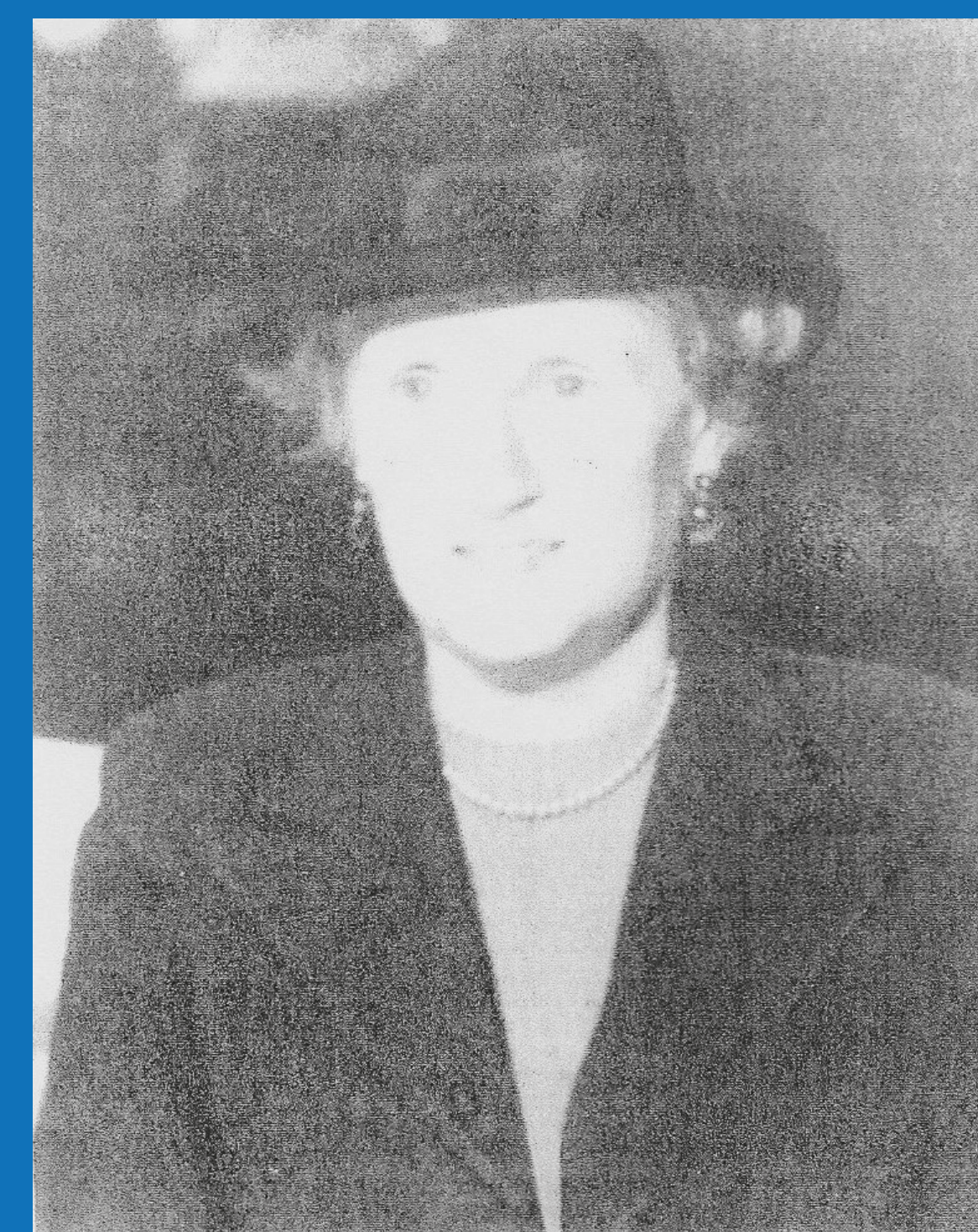
ROE VALLEY W.I.

Women involved
in family, friendship
and community

The beginning of the Women's Institute

On the 19th February 1897 the first Women's Institute in the world was formed in the province of Ontario, Canada. Celebrating its Centenary, the first W.I. meeting in the United Kingdom took place on 16th September 1915 at Llanfair PG in North Wales. It had two clear aims: to revitalise rural communities and to encourage women to become more involved in producing food during the First World War. The W.I. was then later established in Northern Ireland in 1932 as The Federation of Women's Institutes when Miss Dorothea Macausland opened the first institute in Garvagh.

While the outbreak of the Second World War slowed the formation of new institutes, those already in existence had a ready-made structure to help with the war effort, so much so that the Ministry of Food put its scheme for the Preservation of Fruit into the hands of the Women's Institute. The WI helped the war effort in many ways such as collecting waste paper, bottle tops, knitting and mending for the troops. Since then the organisation aims have broadened and it is now the largest women's voluntary organisation in the UK.



Miss Dorothea Florence Macausland, the Founder of the first Women's Institute in Northern Ireland, in Garvagh on Wednesday 7th September, 1932.

The Federation Formation

To ensure that individual institutes would form part of a single body The Federation of Women's Institutes was formed in Northern Ireland on 24 April 1932. In 1978 a headquarters was purchased, known as Federation house.

Prior to 1955 The Federation of Women's Institutes had been run on a county basis but in 1985 the Federation was reorganised into more manageable sections, 22 areas instead of 6 counties. Previously Limavady was part of the Co. Londonderry area under the responsibility of two Executive members, Eileen Glover of Money more and Helen Livingston, Garvagh.

At the AGM in 1985 a new team of 22 executive members was elected and Doreen Nicholl represented Roe Valley and served for 3 years. Since then Aileen Gault has served for 6 years (1988-1994), Lindy Scott, Terrydremond served 6 years (1994-2000), Emily Blair, Ballykelly served 6 years (2000-2006), Lindy Scott served another 6 years (2006-2012) and currently Roberta Bradley elected in 2012 to serve 6 years.

Pioneers of Garvagh

THE County Derry village of Garvagh has the distinction of being the first place in Northern Ireland to have a Women's Institute.

Miss Thea Macausland sent her nieces out on their bicycles to distribute leaflets inviting the women of the district to a meeting to discuss the inauguration of an Institute. "Sometimes we were chased because people thought we were collecting," recalls one of those nieces, Miss Vivien Macausland. Though at that time—1932—the movement was completely unknown in Northern Ireland, Miss Macausland succeeded in interesting enough women to form a group.

Belfast Telegraph,

Extract on the opening of the first Women's Institute in Northern Ireland at Garvagh, taken from the Belfast Telegraph.

The first W.I. meeting held in the United Kingdom on 16th September 1915 at Llanfair PG in North Wales. ©National Federation of Women's Institutes.

