

# Bantracht na Tuaithe

The Irish Countrywomen's Association



ICA 100 Exhibition

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## ICA FIRSTS - FACT SHEET

**1910** The Society of United Irishwomen was founded. Its first projects involved healthcare & nutrition.

**1911** The Society acquired a free space at the RDS Spring Show for the exhibition and sale of Crafts.

**1919** Eleanore Gibbons, an Association member from Waterford introduced Montessori teaching into Ireland.

**1929** The United Irishwomen organised the first Summer School in Ireland. It was organised by Lucy Franks and Olivia Hughes and held in Slievenamon, Co. Tipperary. There were four voluntary teachers and eighteen students. During the day, the girls were taught cane, rush and leather work, and in the evening learned singing and Irish dancing. The only accommodation provided was two wooden huts on the side of the mountain. They slept on make-shift beds which they provided themselves. The Summer Schools continued annually around the country until An Grianán was opened in 1954. Rosturk Castle, Co. Mayo was the venue in 1938.

**1930** The Country Shop opened at 23 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin with the aims of supporting both country crafts and the work of the United Irishwomen.

**1931** Olivia Hughes was instrumental in the setting up of the National Council for the Blind in Ireland.

**1933** A United Irishwomen member attended an international conference in Stockholm and became founder friend of the Associated Countrywomen of the World. The ACWW holds an international conference every three years. This triennial conference was held in Dublin in 1965 and 1986 in Killarney.

**1935** The Society of the United Irishwomen changed its name to the Irish Countrywomen's Association to avoid being associated with a subversive organisation at the time, the United Ireland Party.

**1947** The first Country Market was initiated by Olivia Hughes in Fethard, Co. Tipperary, to enable members to earn income locally through the sale of their produce, mainly eggs and poultry. Westport Country Market was opened in 1947 by Muriel Gahan.

**1950s** The ICA promoted the introduction of rural electrification.

**1954** The first Adult Education College opened in Termonfechin, Co. Louth. It was sponsored by the American Kellogg Foundation and became known as An Grianán.

**1957** The first Farm Guest-House Management Course was held at An Grianán.

**1960** The ICA supported the setting up of the Credit Union. Founder Nora Herlihy was an ICA member and Country Markets gave the first contribution of £5.00. This was used for administration.

**1960s** The ICA campaigned for the introduction of Rural Water Schemes.

**1969** The ICA opened a Horticultural College for Girls at An Grianán.

**1970s** The Association campaigned for the lifting of the marriage ban to allow women to remain in civil service jobs after marriage.

**1977** The ICA became affiliated to COFACE – the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Community. COFACE is responsible for bringing policy on the family before the EU.

The ICA has very close associations with the Women's Institute of Northern Ireland. The members regularly attend courses at An Grianán and are guests of many Guilds around the country. The annual European Awareness week at An Grianán keeps the members fully informed of all developments within the EU.



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