

INSPIRING WOMEN, INSPIRING STORIES

40 YEARS OF IRISH
MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
MAKING IT WORK



Supported by the
European Commission



This publication of the personal experiences of some of Ireland's women has been produced by the National Women's Council of Ireland supported by the European Commission Representation in Ireland. The Council would like to thank Niamh O'Carroll, Project Director, Ruth O'Connor, Editor and Writer, Form for Design, Emma Hopkins, Paul Sherwood, Mike Johnson, Cian O'Carroll, and our other photographers, but most especially the women who shared their stories for this publication.



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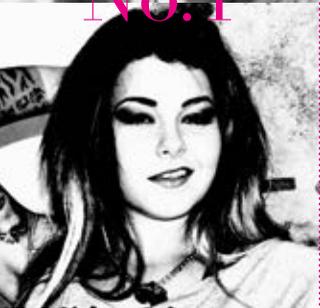
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INTRODUCTION

This publication looks at the lives of 14 Irish women, all daughters, many of them mothers and through their eyes tells how life has changed for women since the Irish people voted by referendum to join the EU in 1973. By telling the story of these women we hope to illustrate how much has changed in just one generation and also illustrate how many issues remain the same for Irish women. We are aware this is just a snapshot of the lives of some women and their stories and cannot represent the views and experiences of all the women of this island.

When the National Women's Council of Ireland was established by a group of feminists forty years ago and chaired by Hilda Tweedy of the Irish Housewives Association, Ireland was a very different place for women. As one of our featured women points out, many women had to leave paid work when they married. The sale and distribution of contraception was banned and women could not legally refuse sex with their husbands. Only three women were members of the Dáil and women continued to be subjugated by the church which had a firm grip on society and its institutions, leading to many injustices, not least the incarceration of women in the Magdalene laundries.

Forty years on, women in Ireland can be proud of what they have achieved. Key milestones on the path towards greater equality have been the end of the marriage bar in 1973, the complete liberalisation of contraception in 1991 and the introduction of divorce in 1995. Accession to the European Union 40 years ago afforded Irish women greater access to equality and employment legislation and remains a driving force in gender equality.

Today we see women with far greater access to education and with greater control over their sexual and reproductive health. Women in paid employment have greater access to State maternity benefit, though employer contribution in this area is often lacking and self-employed women are also at a disadvantage in this regard.

While great strides towards equality have been made in Ireland, many women, particularly those in poverty or in marginalised groups remain discriminated against and the structures in our society have not kept pace with changes in women's lives. Households headed by a lone parent are significantly more likely to be living in poverty and experiencing deprivation than other households. And 87 percent of lone parents are women.

Traveller women continue to experience widespread oppression and discrimination, they have substantially lower life expectancy and Traveller infant mortality remains almost four times that of the general population. Migrant women, including Roma women, experience racism, discrimination and social exclusion.

There is evidence of an increase in female entrepreneurship in Ireland, but leadership in many aspects of Irish society remains extremely poorly represented by women. Only 16 percent of TDs are female and only nine per cent of women sit on the boards of our top private companies. Despite the power that Irish women wield online through resources such as Twitter and blogging, fewer than one in four voices on our news and current affairs radio belong to a woman. Even with the passing of legislation for the X Case, Ireland will still have one of the most restrictive abortion regimes in the world.



Orla O'Connor

While life has changed for many women, many still remain dependent on their husbands or male partners for their income and beyond Child Benefit have no access to money in their own right. Currently in Ireland the labour force participation rate for women is 53.3 percent compared to 68.4 percent for men. Women are also far more likely to work on a part-time basis – almost 70 percent of all part-time workers are women. Of all women at work, 36 percent work part-time compared to 14 percent of men. Despite being more highly qualified than men, women are less likely to be employed, are disproportionately represented in the lowest paid sectors of the economy, are more likely to be employed on a part-time basis and are still paid less, on average, than men.

Women's work patterns have significant implications for their pension entitlements in their later years and women are far less likely to have a private or State Contributory Pension.

The issue of care is one of concern to many women and to society as a whole, as evidenced in some of our interviews. Having a family has a significant impact on women's participation in the labour force. According to the EU, in 2011, the Irish employment rate for women was 85.7 percent for a woman with a husband or partner but no children. It plummeted to 51.5 percent for women whose youngest child was aged between 4 and 5 years.¹ OECD figures suggest that Irish employment rates for women with three children are as low as 45.2 percent.²

There is an absence of state support for affordable childcare in Ireland with costs amongst the highest in the EU. The reduction of state support for carers places yet more pressure on those people, many of whom are female, who ensure the wellbeing of some of Irish society's most vulnerable members.

Violence against women has increased in these times of austerity and yet frontline services have faced stringent cutbacks. In 2012, there were 14,792 incidents of domestic violence disclosed to the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline. In 2011, there were 28,615 helpline contacts to Rape Crisis services, a 10 percent increase on 2010.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/ireland/ireland_in_the_eu/impact_of_eu_on_irish_women/index_en.htm#1

² OECD Family database www.oecd.org/social/family/database

The NWCI in collaboration with its 160-plus member organisations works to be the main catalyst for change in the achievement of equality between women and men in Ireland. In times of austerity, it is paramount that the needs and aspirations of women are clearly articulated and that women are seen to be an essential part of the country's economic recovery.

There are promising signs. One of our interviewees speaks about quotas encouraging more women into political leadership. The initiative by Vivienne Redding to bring more women into leadership on corporate boards is also noteworthy. There is, in Ireland a resurgence in interest in feminism. NWCI membership is growing and many young women, and indeed men, have joined in the NWCI's youth initiative the Y Factor – a movement which is empowering and supporting young people to become leaders for women's equality.

This, we believe, is an indication of the type of society that Irish people want to move towards and also of how vital the value of feminism is in shaping our country's future. If we want Ireland to be a different place for all members of society, both female and male in the next 40 years we must all take a proactive role to ensure that the attainment of women's rights and equality is at the centre of positive change in our society.

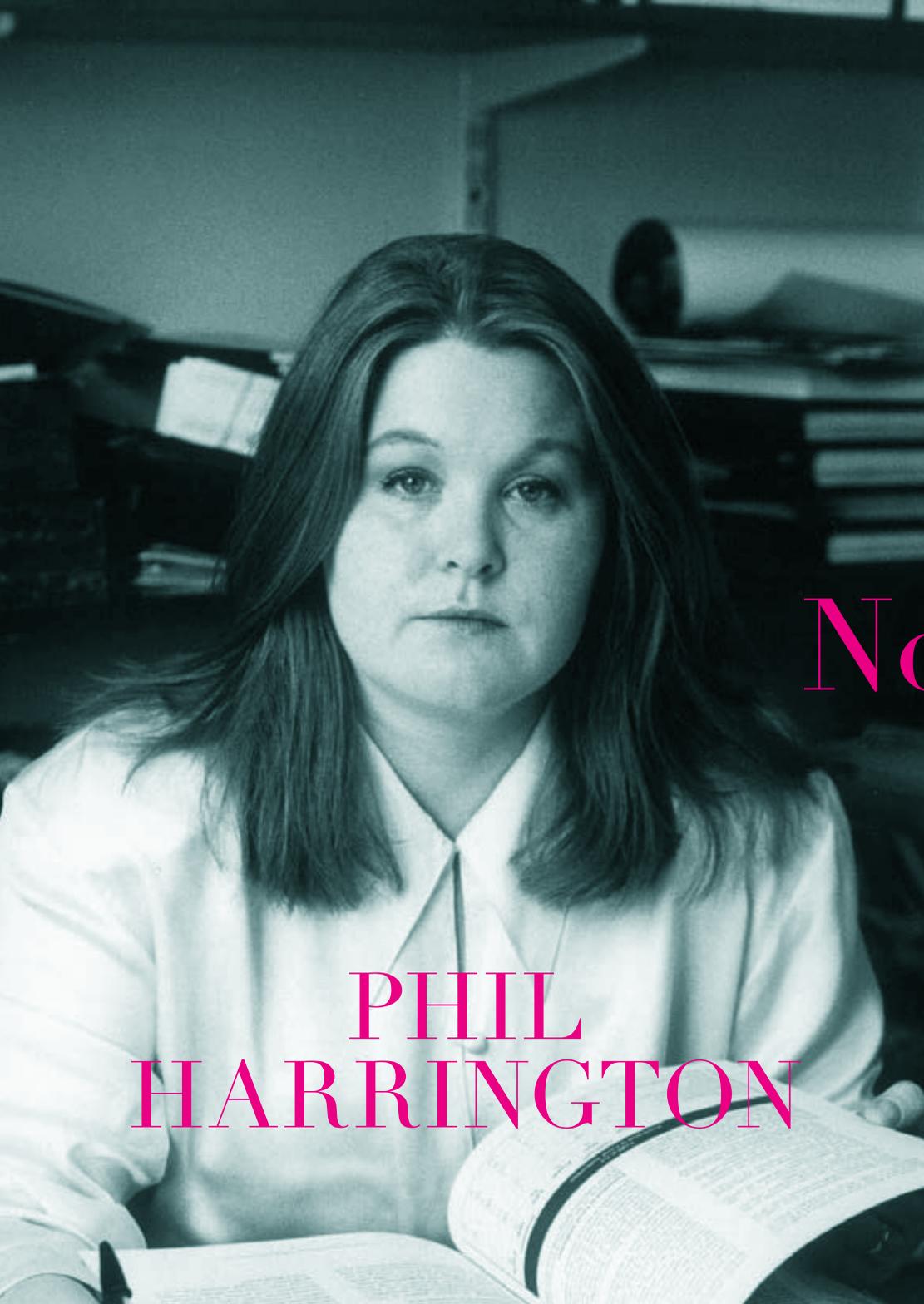
The National Women's Council of Ireland is open for new members. We are interested in every woman's story; if you have a personal case study which you think would be suitable for our website we would be delighted to hear from you. Please see www.nwci.ie for further information.

This National Women's Council of Ireland publication has been supported by the European Commission Representation in Ireland. If you would like to support the work of the NWCI please visit our website www.nwci.ie.

You can also follow us on Twitter or Facebook.

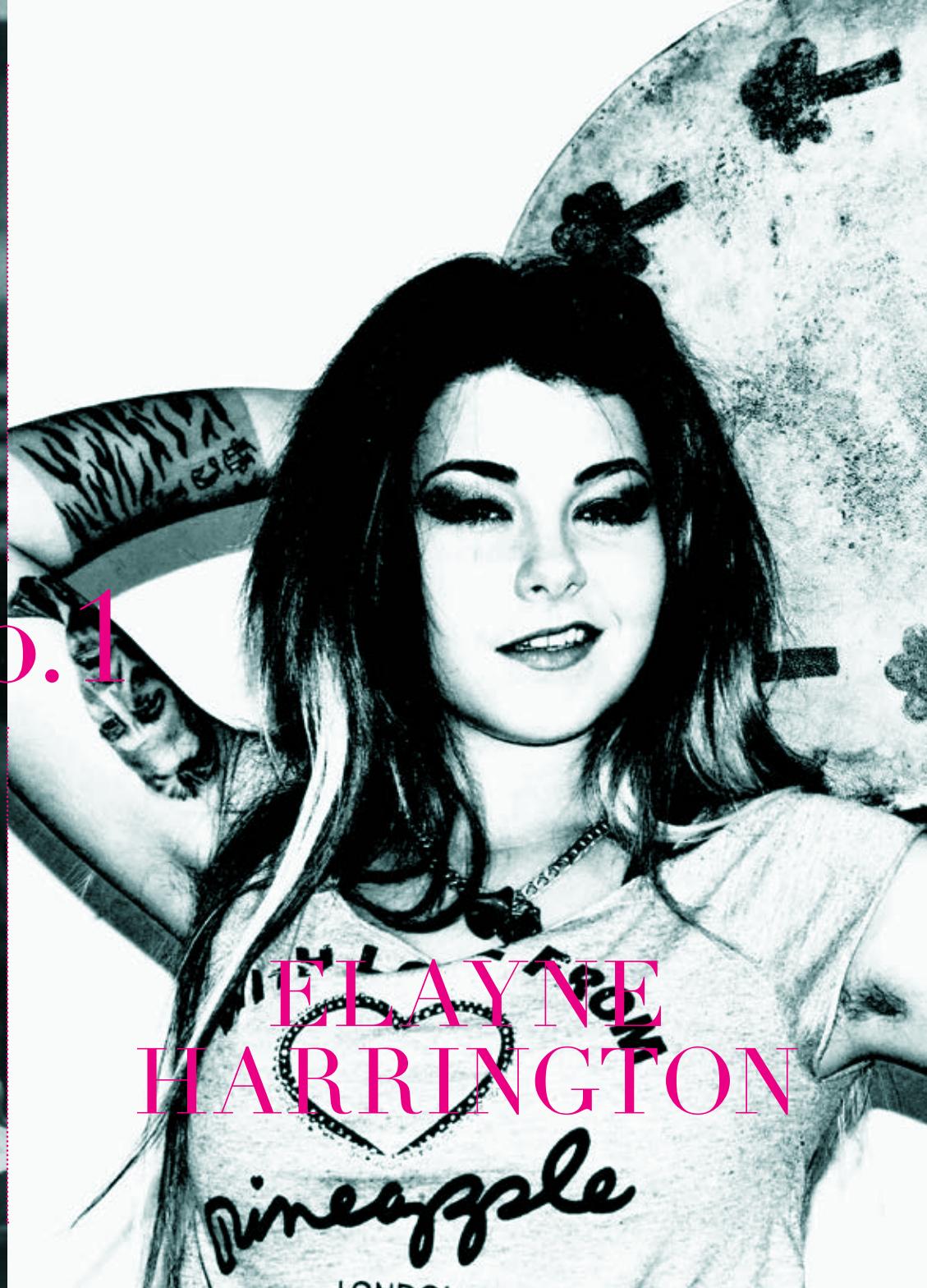
Orla O'Connor

Director of the National Women's Council of Ireland



PHIL
HARRINGTON

No. 1



ELAYNE
HARRINGTON

PHIL HARRINGTON

Philomena Harrington was the first female clerical president of her trade union and involved in top level talks for many restructuring and policy negotiations. During her career she was Equality Officer for the ESB group of unions, introducing many changes including innovative anti-bullying and harassment policies. She served as a board member on the National Women's Council of Ireland and Chairperson of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Women's Committee.

Philomena began working at the ESB in 1978 aged 18 and had her first child six months later. She and her partner took the unusual decision at the time that she would return to her secure job at the ESB while he stayed at home to mind the baby. She says she was "under terrible pressure" at the time to have the child adopted because she was so young and unmarried, but refused. She later had two more children in 1985 and 1987.

Philomena became local shop steward in 1984 – at the time one of few women in the role and later helped to establish the Joint Equality Council. Around the same time she became Equality Officer for the ESB group of unions, negotiating with people across

ELAYNE HARRINGTON

Elayne Harrington is a 26-year-old Dublin artist who goes by the performance name of Temper-Mental MissElayneous. This rapper/poet/ lyricist has been performing live shows for more than three years. Elayne is also active in community work, most especially with young children and teenagers in primary schools and youth centres where she mentors through a Hip Hop curriculum she has developed herself.

Elayne cites her political and musical talents as having come from her union activist mother and musician father. Having attended union meetings with her mother as a child she says she became aware of the needs of women in the workplace but also of parents in caring roles. "There were no crèches so I just went along with my mother sometimes." She feels that society is biased not just towards mothers but towards both parents in terms of parental leave and fathers' access to children if marital or partnership separation occurs.

While her mum is a confirmed activist – working against gender discrimination in the workplace for many years through the union movement, Elayne also says her dad was very open-minded and

No. 1

PHIL HARRINGTON

all strata of the business. “It was forward-thinking at the time,” she says of the ESB.

Philomena was part of the group which introduced the first anti-bullying and harassment policy into the ESB in the 1990s. “We came up with the policy that exists up to today. Legislation then caught up.” Philomena then went on to serve as Chairperson of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Women’s Committee for four years. “We would have argued that the policies being put in place ought to have been in place in unions also. The unions at the time tended to be quite old fashioned,” she says.

Philomena speaks of the ICTU National Executive: “Years ago they introduced four reserved seats for women in addition to, rather than instead of, the other elected seats. These seats were supposed to introduce women to the executive but very few women have ever taken up the role of President of ICTU so the question is ‘Does it work?’” She cites women such as Inez McCormack, first female president of ICTU and Roisin McDermott, former director of Women’s Aid as inspirational figures.

Philomena says being a working mother is a juggling act because it is very difficult to “do justice to this role while progressing in a career”. “In my experience parental leave was rarely taken up by men. Even when they put something in place the men don’t take it up because they might be afraid they mightn’t get a promotion but women almost accept that that will happen. There should be something in legislation that makes people take that parental leave.”

Philomena cites joining the EU as having had a beneficial impact on working life and also on unions. “What we were always trying to change was attitudes – with joining the EU our ideas got a bit more credibility,” she says. She says she was “definitely considered an upstart” in her younger days. “I think older women have a responsibility to teach young people about where we’ve come from in terms of women’s rights – they seem to think that feminism is a fait accompli and it’s not.”

not at all focused on gender-specifics. The decision was made that her dad would stay at home to mind the children while mum Phil worked in her steady job at the ESB. Elayne says that her dad would say: “You’re not a woman or a man – you’re a person first and foremost”.

While many observers might believe the world of Hip Hop to be a misogynistic one, Elayne says that this is not the case and that she uses the themes and origins of Hip Hop culture to teach young people about “affiliation and oppression and gaining your own sense of self”. “Hip hop is central to a sense of crews and a sense of community so I use it to develop that sense in young people,” she says. Becoming interested in Hip Hop culture and music from a young age (she asked for £20 for an Eminem album instead of an Easter egg, aged 11) she found that there were conflicting stereotypes of what it meant to be a woman, but that she navigated her way through them to garner her own interpretation of womanhood.

Elayne says that she believes there is still “latent misogyny” in Irish culture and that young men still get defensive at the mention of feminism. She says there are frequent negative comments posted on her social media pages if she posts anything that can be construed as feminist and that it is important to realise that “feminism is not about hierarchy, but about recognising that patriarchy is not healthy for society... it’s about love of your fellows”.

While she feels that some young women are becoming more aware of inequality, she says that many young people “don’t want to get into an argument about it”. She believes that young people are easily distracted by the media, by television (which she hasn’t watched since she was 17, though she is increasingly featured on youth TV) and by the fashion industry – being given “a set of standards to adhere to in terms of what it means to be a man or a woman”. She says it is important for young people to realise that “you don’t purchase freedom, or wear it”.

No. 1

ELAYNE HARRINGTON



DOROTHEA
MELVIN

No.2



OLWEN
DAWE

DOROTHEA MELVIN

Dorothea Melvin is a graduate of NUI Galway where she read English and History. While attending university, she established a group which would, in 1977, establish one of the first family planning clinics in Ireland. Dorothea was Director of the clinic in Galway until 1991, during which time she also established an STI clinic in response to the Aids crisis and the needs of the local and wider community.

Dorothea has also held directorial positions with Cultures of Ireland and the Abbey Theatre as well as chairing the British-Irish think-tank Encounter. She lives in Dublin with her husband Gerald Dawe, poet and Professor of English at Trinity College Dublin.

Dorothea opened the family planning clinic in a poorly-lit, run-down building in a Galway back street with the League of Decency parading up and down outside wielding enormous rosary beads. What now sounds like a comedy sketch was a harsh reality for the Ballina-native who says “You really had to be very brave and stick your neck out. I certainly remember people crossing the street to avoid me, but I was young and I didn’t care”.

OLWEN DAWE

Olwen Dawe is a graduate of The National College of Ireland where she studied Industrial Relations. Having worked in Irish SMEs across a variety of managerial roles as well as in HR Management in large corporates she established her own business, Irish Business Intelligence, in 2010. The focus of Olwen’s work is in the development of entrepreneurial capability through training, mentoring, advisory services and economic development projects.

Olwen is a strong advocate for female entrepreneurship, commenting and writing regularly on the barriers and opportunities women face in pursuing their career objectives. She is currently a member of the Network Ireland National Executive and will be President of this organisation in 2015.

“The challenge is that women are underrepresented in the entrepreneurial space – probably only 15 - 18 percent of entrepreneurial activity is attributed to women” says Olwen. “The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor shows there is movement in the right direction but there is still a lot of work to be done.” She states that while women have many characteristics that make them ideal for

No.2

DOROTHEA MELVIN

The clinic provided the pill, coil and diaphragm to women who otherwise would have had no access to contraception locally. Dorothea and staff at the clinic also trained regional doctors who similarly would have had no training in the area of contraception. Women came, not just from Galway City, but further afield – Roscommon, Sligo and Connemara – making long round trips to access their services.

Dorothea says it was easier to open the clinic in Galway because she “wasn’t of the town” and because students then were “already considered to have low morals!” When she eventually plucked up the courage to tell her mother what she was doing she was told that she “would never be put out of the house”. “She had struggled too when my father died. She was a strong woman and I was fortunate to have her,” she says.

An inspirational figure was Mary Robinson, not because she also hails from Ballina but because “She too was involved in the early stages of the contraception debate – she wasn’t afraid to stick her neck out and it was good to see other women who were plucky enough”. She laughingly recalls the day a man followed her into a local butcher’s shop in Galway shouting “Mary Robinson and her rubber goods”!

She believes that joining the EU had a strong impact on women’s status in Ireland. “When you think about Mary Robinson encouraging Josie Airey [who made legal history] to go to the European Court – it meant that we had another string to our bow and that we weren’t dependent on a male-dominated judiciary system.”

Dorothea says she was always one to “question authority” and believes that her access to education meant a deeper questioning of the status quo: “of religion... of men talking down from pulpits... of the ‘truths’ that had been handed down to you”.

While she says that there are still “pockets of resistance”, she believes that Ireland is now a better society for women but that it is “taken for granted now that women are on an equal footing to men”. “More women in business and more women in politics will make for a better society. There is no room for complacency,” she says.

entrepreneurship, frequently they do not “self-select – in the same way they don’t self-select for politics”.

While Olwen believes that certain strides have been made in terms of women’s status in Irish society, more “gallops” are necessary in order for “true equality” to be realised. She says that there are both “visibility issues” in terms of female representation and “perception issues for women around what we can and can’t do”.

Olwen says she has been fortunate to come from an academic, broad-minded household: “My mum was a strong role model and my dad was a self-proclaimed feminist,” she says. “I would never have seen that there weren’t opportunities and I am all for supporting other women to do what they want to do.” Olwen says that “visibility of opportunity has to be key” and says that while she feels the issue of Government quotas is a contentious one, that “there has to be some kind of a blunt instrument to enact change”.

Creating opportunity around entrepreneurship, Olwen feels that many people question the value of women’s networks and says that: “I’d love to say we don’t need them, but the reality is that if there isn’t the mechanism to get women to see their own potential ... it’s about accelerating the rate of change”.

She says that she thinks that feminism is still “seen as a loaded term, as almost militant”. “The reality is that feminism is for society. It’s about men, women and children and having an equal society,” she says. “It’s about a seismic attitudinal change – about how the generations see that feminism is about equality not about hating men or burning bras!”

The entrepreneur says that since Ireland joined the EU in 1973, she feels there have been more strategic and focused efforts through various pieces of legislation aimed at tackling inequality in the economic landscape. “However we’re not coming from a position of strength and more work is required to really see change in terms of women’s access to economic equality and the visibility of opportunity,” she says. “Governments and society in a broader sense need to recognise the necessity of cultural change in our attitudes to women – supporting them to take the steps they wish to, professionally and personally, to realise their potential.”

No.2

OLWEN DAWE



NORIN
SCULLY

No.3



BARBARA
SCULLY

NORIN SCULLY

Noirin Scully was born in the UK to Irish parents in 1935. At the beginning of World War 2 she returned to Ireland with her parents, both university graduates and teachers. Noirin married at 23 and had four children. When her youngest was nine she returned to work, later going on to establish Dataskill – a computer training company.

Noirin cites her mother as having been a great inspiration to her. “She was forward-thinking and radical,” she says. “She was liberated and a bit different, which I always admire.” Education was the norm in their academic household – Noirin jokes that she disappointed her mother by not attending university, opting for a secretarial qualification instead.

Her mother had graduated from UCC in the 1920s and had gone to work in England as she was unqualified to teach Irish – a requirement of the Irish Free State. Her own father had been a teacher of mathematics in St Colman’s College in Fermoy. The family lived in a house on the grounds and Noirin’s mother and siblings all went “as a matter of course” to university.

No.3

BARBARA SCULLY

Barbara Scully is a freelance writer and broadcaster, hosting a radio show on South Dublin FM and contributing regularly to TV and Radio such as Midday on TV3, Tubridy on 2FM and Newstalk. Having worked as PRO for The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Barbara took 10 years out of her career to become the stay-at-home parent of three daughters, one of whom has now emigrated to Western Australia.

Barbara became active on Twitter and made her way into commenting and broadcasting in the past two or three years. “If you’ve been at home with your children for years and haven’t been in the work environment, your confidence is on the floor and there’s no recognition of that,” she says. “I think employers should be more open to employing older women. We may be a bit saggy and baggy round the edges but we have so much more to offer!”

Barbara believes that the recession has been a great leveller for many women – it has necessitated many returning to work and “making you less afraid of failure”. She was a single mum at 26 and worked with the support of her family and childcare. She then

In the 1950s, having worked for a year, her mother sent the 20-year-old Noirin to teach English at a Loretto Convent in Seville, Spain. She says the experience allowed her to learn Spanish and “gain a deeper understanding of life from a political and historical perspective”. “The nuns weren’t a bit restrictive,” she says. “Our time, after teaching, was our own.”

Returning home she worked for three years before marrying her husband Michael, eleven years her senior, a customs officer and “One of three boys and not used to the ways of women at all. He got an awful shock when he married me!” she laughs.

She says that the “traditional role women played” was due to both the “poverty of the State” and “to the Church”. “The country was so poor that we had no expectations. Looking back we all expected nothing. It depended very much on what social group you were in. You knew you were going to look after the house and the kids. I had only one friend who you might class as ‘unconventional’ – where the kids fitted into what she wanted to do.”

Of contraception she says the lucky ones were those who had a regular menstrual cycle and could somewhat control when they might get pregnant. Others had babies in quick succession. “The clergy were thundering sins from the pulpit – you believed it because that’s what you grew up with. Some women were just too afraid of the priest to try to get contraception and some marriages broke up over it,” she says.

Prior to marriage she says she “worked for enjoyment and to earn some money” but that she didn’t necessarily want to “climb the corporate ladder”. When Noirin’s youngest child was nine years old, she returned to work for various companies before going on to establish her own computer training business, Dataskill, in 1988. She ran the business from home providing private and corporate computer training until she retired the business in 2000.

Noirin currently works on a voluntary basis for Leopardstown Park Hospital where she co-produces the hospital newsletter. “Women are excellent at volunteering. When you’re finished your working life, look at volunteering, you will get a lot out of it,” she says.

NORIN SCULLY

No.3

BARBARA SCULLY

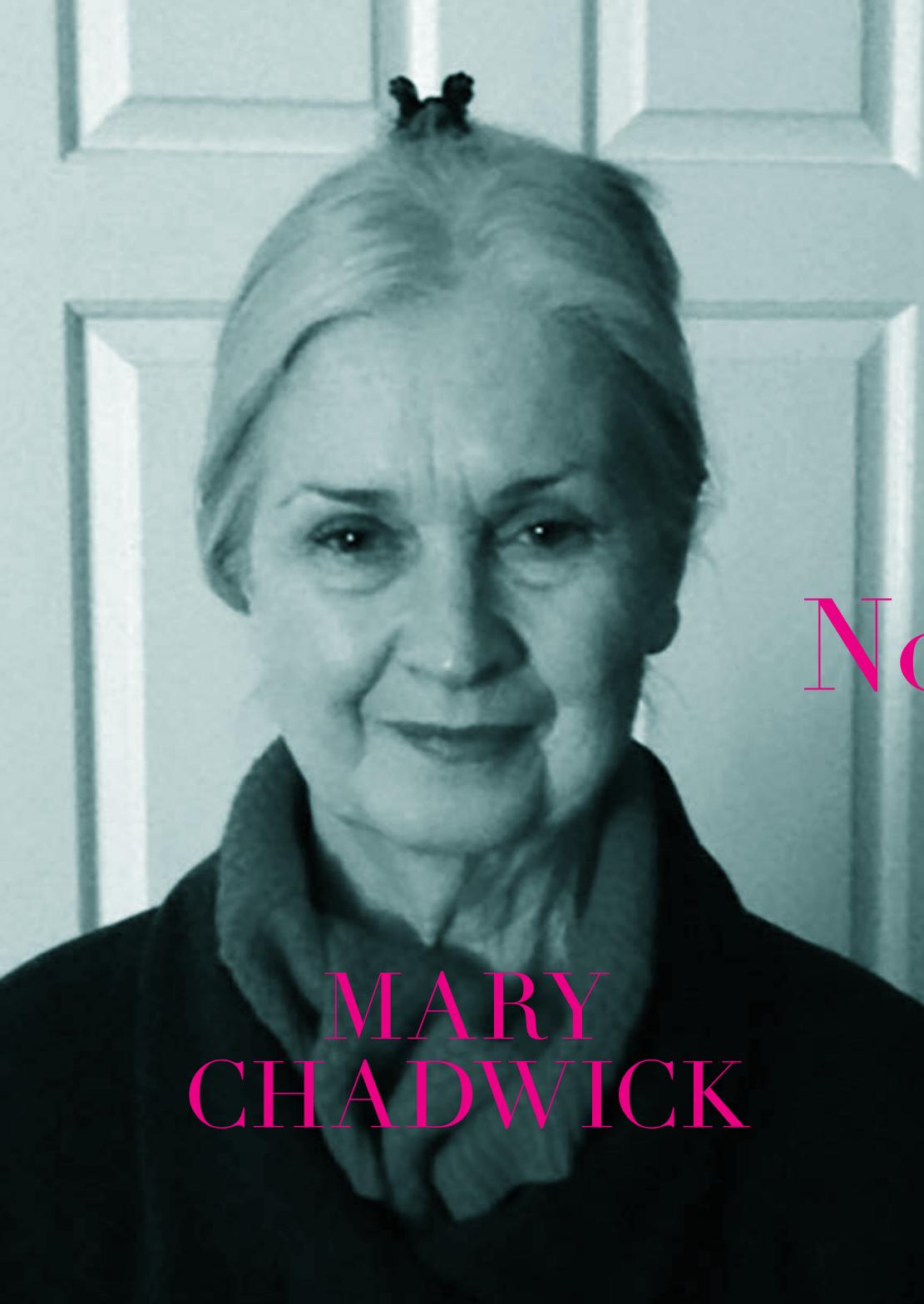
married after ten years and had two more daughters. She left paid work in 2001 when it became obvious that her family would not be much worse off financially on one wage by the time the crèche fees were paid.

“I know it’s not politically correct to say it because a lot of women don’t have a choice and have to work,” she says. “But the kids were very much in the periphery of our day and I started to realise that dropping them to crèche at 7.30am and collecting them at 6pm probably wasn’t great.”

Leaving her job was a conflicting time for Barbara: “There is still the feeling that you were walking away or letting down the Sisterhood if you do decide to take time out. I think women need to realise that it is a temporary thing but I also feel the world of work hasn’t changed as much as we need it to.”

She says that there is too much focus on childcare and not enough on “changing the workplace to allow more flexible ways of working, greater paternity leave, flexible working and care working hours”. “The constant thing of career being the absolute Ultimate and everything else having to fit around that is rubbish. My personal experience is that even with great childcare you don’t want to be working all hours – running the home is a job in itself. Women carry a huge burden and in lots of ways are maybe worse off than they were years ago.”

Barbara says there is much talk about women in the boardroom and crashing through glass ceilings but that “not all women want to be financially successful”. “A lot of women would qualify their success in a different way and I would like that to come more into focus as equally valid as those who take their place in the boardroom. There are thousands of women under the radar working without getting paid for it. Because it doesn’t generate a profit it’s not considered work – if they all downed tools tomorrow the country would come to a stop.”



MARY
CHADWICK

No.4



ALISON
BANTON

MARY CHADWICK

Mary Chadwick moved to England in 1962 aged 22 with a view to going to teacher training college. Mary sat the entrance exam and was accepted, but her husband-to-be was given a promotion so the decision was made that the couple would move to the south of England. Thus Mary gave up her place at university in Birmingham.

Having divorced when her two children were teenagers, Mary took the opportunity to attend university as a mature student and graduated with a degree. Her qualification led her to fulltime employment in Social Services in her local authority until she retired at manager level some years ago. Mary now helps to mind her two grandchildren since her daughter returned to work part-time.

Mary says that Britain was more liberated than Ireland when she emigrated, though says that despite the “Swinging Sixties” she was still a practising Catholic and her children were raised as same. “I came from a very strict background although I had a good education up to the Leaving Cert,” she says. “I did think England was more liberated. There was great opportunity here for people later on – I could go to college as a divorcee and as a mature student and enjoy four years in university which allowed me to get a pensionable job.”

No. 4

ALISON BANTON

Alison Banton is an entrepreneur and mother of two girls. She runs Brooke & Shoals – a successful Irish-made candle and body product range which is sold in over 70 stockists countrywide. Alison employs six people between her wholesale business and her retail store in Greystones, Co Wicklow.

Alison graduated from UCD with a Masters degree in Economics and went on to work as marketing manager for AIB Capital Markets in both Dublin and in the City of London. Returning from England, she worked as senior marketing manager in Irish Life Corporate Business. While still working the day job and a new mum, Alison began putting the plans in place to start her own business. She says that she loved scent from a young girl, inspired by her great aunt Molly and always “wanted to market something she was really passionate about”.

Alison established her first Brooke & Shoals store in 2004. She opened a second shop in 2008 before the recession hit hard and the store closed. Re-examining her business led to a change in direction in 2010 which saw her begin her wholesale business selling Brooke & Shoals products to stockists countrywide.

MARY CHADWICK

Mary says that while she feels let down by many public figures such as Tony Blair (“they turned out to be either liars or idiots”) she has had great regard for several female managers throughout her career whom she describes as “very strong and supportive women”.

She believes however that many women do not give themselves enough credit. “Women can be intelligent, popular, and attractive ... but their self-esteem is not what it should be. They’re well educated, doing all sorts of wonderful things, including rearing their children well – but they don’t rate themselves as highly as they should. I don’t find that as much in men. Women are more self-critical and lack confidence in themselves even when they are very able.”

She says that in spite of high expectations and increased opportunities for women she does not believe that there is complete equality and refers to the “tyranny of the womb”. “Women cannot have it all despite the media hype. The woman has to carry the baby so the woman has to take time out which impinges on her career in lots of ways,” she says. “A lot of men are not very progressive. I know many men who want their wives to go to work but equally don’t pick up the share of work in the home. Ordinary women can’t have it all unless they have a very unusual man... and they still carry the responsibility of the household in the majority of cases.”

Despite modern challenges and conflict, Mary believes there has been some progress. “When I look at my niece Alison running her own business and at other high profile women, that sort of thing wouldn’t have happened when I was young. I think there is no doubt that things are changing but I think the whole world has a way to go. I think even when they are intellectually, educationally and professionally equal, women don’t get the same treatment. I don’t think they are completely liberated.”

No.4

ALISON BANTON

She says that women put huge pressure on themselves to be the very best in all aspects of their lives. “There are girls who have gone to university and are very high achieving in their work life and who also want to be very high achieving in their domestic lives – perfect mothers, perfect housewives, to get to manager level in their careers... it’s a constant juggling act. You’re falling between stools but you’re trying to be perfect at everything.”

Alison says that she has strong family values and that working for herself means she can strike a good work-life balance. She wants to be a positive example to her daughters and to teach them that “having a career, finding a work-life balance and finding a little bit of time for yourself are things that they should try to achieve”.

“Being my own boss alleviated some of the juggling,” she says. “I made a conscious decision to be an entrepreneur so I can give my kids breakfast and wave them goodbye in the morning. Equally I am working harder than I ever worked before, but am doing it on my time and on my terms. I have created that world for myself.”

Alison says that girls her daughters’ age now know that “being female doesn’t stop them achieving things, because they see female role models that have achieved high levels in every aspect”. She says she is concerned at “how girls see themselves and how they value themselves” – “do they value themselves for their intellect or for what they look like?” She believes that it is not only young girls who feel pressure to look a certain way: “The boys too are under pressure to adhere to a certain perfect body image as well as being high-achieving intellectually.”

Ultimately she says that young girls must be encouraged, first and foremost in the home, to believe that they can do anything and become anything they wish. “Women are having a much bigger impact on society and on how our society is run – they are now much bigger influencers – and I think that is only going to keep on growing.”



ANN
O'CARROLL

No.5



NIAMH
O'CARROLL

ANN O'CARROLL

Due to the marriage bar Ann O'Carroll left her high profile job with Aer Lingus when she married in 1966. Ann worked as an air hostess and as a PR representative in the US. She has been involved in her community all her life and was one of the founding members of Adapt in Limerick which provides the largest refuge in Ireland for women experiencing domestic abuse. Ann lives in Limerick with her husband Cian; they have four children and ten grandchildren.

Ann says that in 1966 there was no option but for her to leave her job. "I wanted to get married and have children but I also really loved my job," she says. "I was sad leaving it. One just didn't think about it too much. Of course I was excited about my new life. But to be honest we were very conditioned, we just accepted that that was the way things were."

She says in hindsight that she's surprised women didn't rebel. "We just accepted that was the culture of the times. In many ways a generation of knowledge and intelligence was lost." Ann says that many young women of her era left school after what is now the Junior Cert: "Those who had the funds sent the boys to university.

NIAMH O'CARROLL

Niamh O'Carroll is the Director of O'Carroll Consultancy, a successful communications business in Dublin. She is married to Paul and is the mother of three children. Niamh is a graduate of University of Limerick and a Fellow of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland. Prior to setting up her own company, she worked in a variety of roles – at the Jesuit Communications Centre in Dublin, with Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico and as fundraising and communications manager with Trócaire.

Niamh says that she is very passionate about her business and strives to apply the highest standard to her professional life. "At our graduation ceremony at the University of Limerick we were told that our education had equipped us to bring excellence and relevance to all that we do," says Niamh. "I apply those principles every day."

"I have had amazing opportunities such as bringing the Global Gift concept to Trócaire – a project that has raised in excess of €25 million for the developing world. I brought the Thank You book to the Irish Hospice Foundation and helped to set up the first World of Difference programme at the Vodafone Foundation."

No.5

The thinking was that the girls were going to get married in their early twenties so they didn't need a university education."

Ann had an exciting time with Aer Lingus. She met The Beatles and some of the Kennedys and in Las Vegas she had "Hello Dolly" sung to her by Louis Armstrong. She lived and travelled all over the US as a "Cailín Fáilte" or "Hostess of Welcome" speaking with Rotary, Lions and Soroptimists clubs. She promoted Irish designers in New York and Hawaii and Irish tourism in media across the States.

When she married it "soon became clear that the husband was the most important person in the union" – that society showed it in many ways. "If you wanted to order anything for your home you had to have your husband's permission and signature and all the utility bills were in his name," she says. "There was no contraception... so most people had babies quickly. I had four children under five at one point. You didn't really have much power at all."

She says her husband set up a joint bank account and the house was in both their names though this was not the norm at the time. "Most women were given housekeeping money and farmers' wives would have had the 'egg money' or as it was called facetiously 'the running away money'."

"We were the crossover generation. We were also the generation who sought women's rights ably supported by Gemma Hussey and the late Nuala Fennell. After the bar lifted, some of my peers went back to work but most were still at home. Education has brought women more choices. It's great to see women get the chance to fulfill their potential but I know that when they have children many challenges remain. The amazing thing for our generation is to see how our sons have taken to co-managing the running of their families – having mostly come from a background where the house was the wives' domain and the husbands did the "big important job" of bringing home the money. The jury is still out on the outcome of removing the marriage bar."

ANN O'CARROLL

No.5

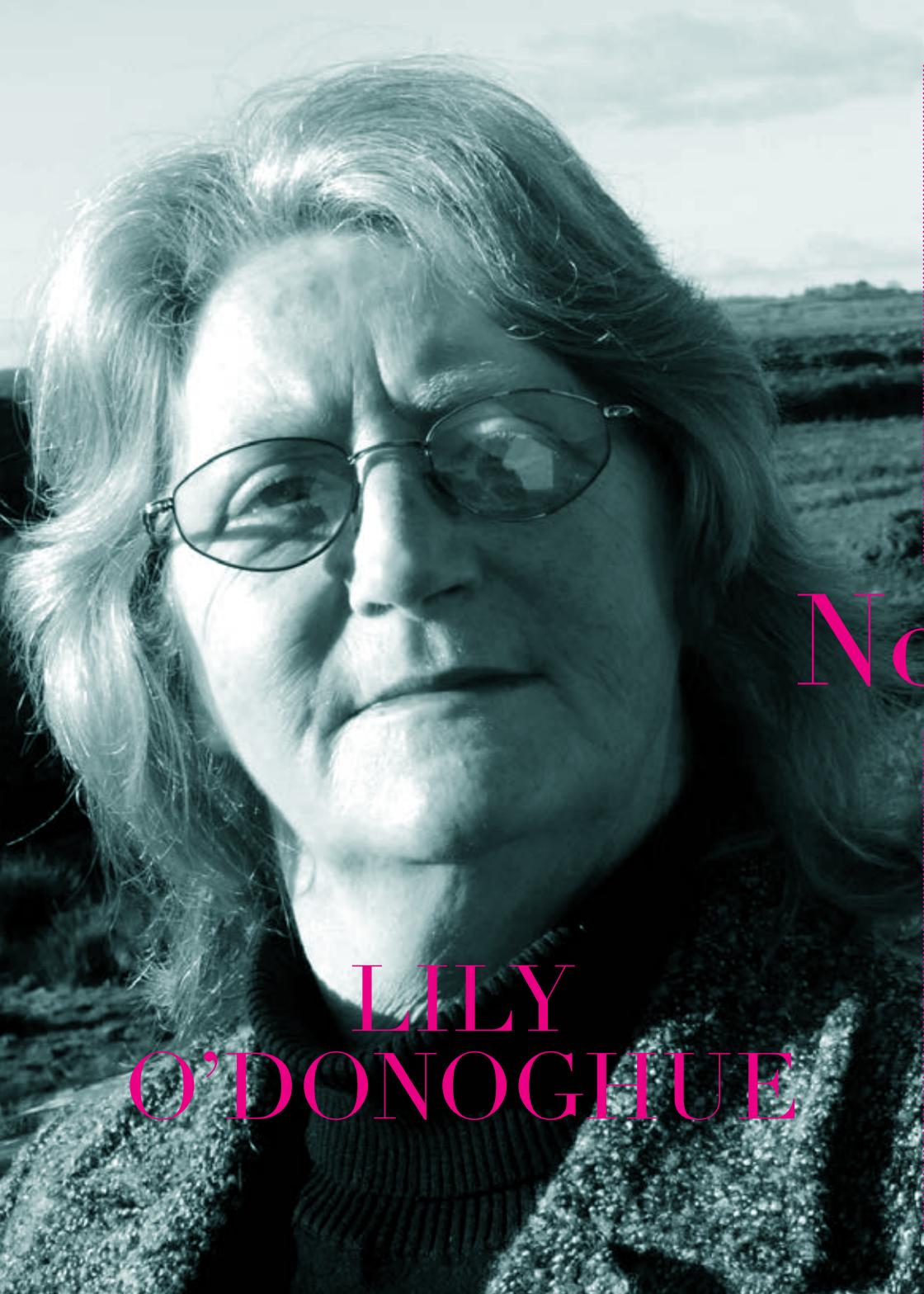
NIAMH O'CARROLL

Niamh says she is fortunate in that she came from a very supportive, gender-equal home environment. "I am one of four children – two brothers and a sister. Despite different journeys we have all ended up in careers that energise us," she says. Niamh credits her father who relished his career in tourism and her mother Ann who was "at home fulltime and with us every step of the way". "Without the marriage bar, which is so hard for me to imagine, Mum could have taken on any business role," she says. "Also in school there was no sense of being in anyway different to the boys," she says of her Jesuit education in Limerick.

Niamh says, however, that there remain many challenges for women and speaks of the guilt and self doubt which goes with working-motherhood. "You have to be confident to run your own business, yet like many women I have that negative voice in my head. It's the guilt that comes with juggling different roles," she says. "There are societal pressures to be a great mother, to work hard, look good, be a nurturing homemaker, a great wife and friend and to give to your community. While I don't deny that men are under pressure, it's a different kind of pressure and not as insidious as that which women experience."

Niamh says that there are also greatly conflicting messages around female empowerment. "I was fascinated recently by a female musical icon in her fifties who said that, in the back of her mind, she was still looking for a man to rescue her. The diet of pink princesses for little girls who are then pressurised to turn into vamps aged thirteen really worries me. And we have yet to see what impact being constantly plugged into social media will have for this generation."

"Tragically the word 'feminism' is still utterly misunderstood by many of my generation," says Niamh who believes that inequality towards women remains at the heart of all our institutions – in government, boardrooms, media ownership and the Church. "And yes while they aren't perfect, I absolutely believe in quotas," she says. "Something has to be done to accelerate the rate of change."



No.6

LILY
O'DONOGHUE



SIOBHAN
O'DONOGHUE

LILY O'DONOGHUE

Lily O' Donoghue was born in 1947 and raised on a farm in West Clare. She has worked as farmer, a carer and a community worker for decades and has successfully campaigned for services for families of children with autism.

Lily's mother insisted that all of her children, except the eldest son, attend secondary school. At 18-years-old Lily did her Leaving Certificate and decided to train as a nurse. She spent a year in Dr Steevens' Hospital in Dublin before going to England with her childhood sweetheart, Patsy.

The couple married and had three children in quick succession. Some years later they returned to West Clare to take over Patsy's parents' farm. It was rundown with no running water and they worked hard to develop the land, ensuring a viable future for their family. The couple went on to have four more children.

“People would assume that women in farming wouldn't have had a great role, but I think the opposite was the case,” says Lily. “A lot of women had farmyard enterprises long ago – chickens and

SIOBHAN O'DONOGHUE

Like her mother Lily, Siobhan O'Donoghue trained as a nurse when she left school. Having qualified, Siobhan changed her focus to youth work and trained as a professional community and youth worker. In the early 1990s she founded the Limerick Travellers Development Group before going on to work for the Community Workers Co-op. In 2001 she became the first employee of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland where she remains as Director. Siobhan is also Chairperson of the National Women's Council of Ireland. She has two children and lives in Dublin.

Siobhan believes that much has changed in Ireland in terms of career choice for young women. “When I was going to school in the 1980s your options were limited. If you were clever you opted to become a teacher or a nurse, the other options were work in a shop or as a secretary. They were gender-limited jobs. That has changed vastly but there is still a long way to go – girls in school have broader options but what happens to them in the work place? They still face the same old barriers.”

No.6

LILY O'DONOGHUE

turkeys – and the income they got from those kept things going. They would have been totally in charge of the running of the house and of the money. The man would be seen, for want of a better word, as “the boss”, but I don’t think people realise the role the women had on the farms.”

Lily began working outside the home around 2002 having achieved a Diploma in Community Development through a university outreach programme. Having cared for her own mother for many years, she began setting up carer support groups locally. She believes that the increase in women doing paid work has impacted on the numbers working voluntarily because women just don’t have the time for home and work life as well as volunteering.

Lily says that she is inspired by many local women who are not well-known but who are “strong women who give to other people – women in caring roles who had enough respect to look after other people”.

Lily says that whether women are more liberated now than in the past depends on “what people mean by liberated”. “Some people think that going out to work and having their own money is being liberated, but I think if we look at the broader picture of women’s salaries and women in politics... we have still a way to go.”

“Women in my day had no expectations,” she says. If they had their family and were happy in their home that was enough, but I don’t think that’s enough now. Women are more educated – it would have been thought that there was no need to educate women because they were just going to go off and get married anyway. Women have travel and education now and their expectations are higher. It’s probably why we have more separations and divorce now but I still think it’s a good thing.”

Lily says that the stock answer is that women shouldn’t have to make a choice between work and family but that “the reality is that they do”. “They have to take time out of their lives – if there are two people in the same job and the woman has a baby and takes time off, by the time she comes back the man has moved on in his career.”

Siobhan speaks frequently of the notion of “care”. “Where it was so blatant years ago, it’s less clear now but it’s still women who carry that responsibility,” she says. “I see younger, ambitious women and then they have children and that’s when their role in life gets redefined – trying to maintain a career and still have the burden of being the main carer. While men are taking more responsibility, the women still carry the main responsibility.”

In her capacity as Director of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland Siobhan sees the subject of care and the rights of women as becoming more complex in Ireland. As more women become economically active in Irish society, she says that the role of carer, specifically in terms of childcare, increasingly falls to women employed in the private home. “It’s a difficult dynamic – women’s careers being furthered on the backs of poorer women. Equality cannot be about making progress for some women on the backs of others.”

While she says that Irish society has made huge progress in the past 40 years in terms of family planning, access to education and careers, she believes that there remain stark problems in terms of violence against women, women in poverty and those in marginalised groups. “For middle class women access to opportunity has improved – our expectations for ourselves have moved – but for vast numbers of women in society that hasn’t translated in the way they live their lives. Take the amount of women working part-time in poorly paid jobs while being responsible for children – a lot of women see themselves making no progress.”

Joining the EU did, she says, force Ireland to step up to the mark in terms of equal pay and opportunities in the workplace. “Without that stick,” she says, “I’d say we’d still be 20 years behind. The EU influence helped to frame women’s rights as economic, social, legal rights as opposed to placing them in a ‘goodwill’ frame.”

“There’s huge potential and possibility for women in Ireland,” says Siobhan, who says “solidarity amongst women” is the biggest challenge. “The big push has to be for a state-supported childcare system. That really is a bastion of patriarchy,” she says.

No.6

SIOBHAN O'DONOGHUE

*COMBO DEAL - ANY CAKE SLICE + TEA/COFFEE € 4.50

GLUTEN, WHEAT, YEAST FREE, DAIRY FREE OPTIONS

MOCHA	€ 2.80
AMERICANO	€ 2.50
ALL TEA	€ 2.20
HOT CHOCOLATE	€ 2.80

No.7

MARY
HUSSEY

RUTH
HUSSEY



MARY HUSSEY

Mary Hussey co-owns Pure Foods, marketing handmade speciality baked goods that are wheat and gluten free and approved by the Coeliac Society of Ireland. Their goods are stocked in 15 independent stores and in numerous cafés and restaurants countrywide, including Avoca Café, Cavistons, Donnybrook Fair and Kilkenny.

Mary says that she greatly admires Ballymaloe's Myrtle Allen, Michelin starred chef, hotelier, food writer and founder of Eurotoques Ireland, as a strong female role model working in the food industry. She values Allen as a ground-breaker and someone "ahead of her time" in her appreciation of the quality food heritage of Ireland. "Outside of her passion for setting up her business she is very passionate about the people she works with and about using local produce" says Mary of Allen. "She has created an amazing empire, in the nicest possible way, a thriving business."

Mary Hussey is married and has three daughters. She owns and manages Pure Foods with middle daughter Ruth, though she says she would have been quite happy to work with any of her daughters. The women employ four people at Pure Foods as full and part-time

No. 7

RUTH HUSSEY

Ruth Hussey runs Pure Foods – a specialist gluten free bakery business – with her mother Mary Hussey. The business, which is based in Dublin, began retailing at farmer's markets in Marley Park and Dun Laoghaire and now retails countrywide.

Before going into business with her mum, Ruth studied architecture for six years at DIT Bolton Street. On graduating she worked part-time for two architect firms but, with the downturn in Ireland's building boom, found it increasingly difficult to obtain employment in her area of expertise. She considered emigrating, but began working with her mother part-time, baking and selling their product, before she realised that their niche business was growing. "I could see massive potential in it so I decided on a career change," she says brightly.

Ruth says that over 50 percent of her architect friends are now living and working abroad – in places such as London, Hong Kong and Canada. "I don't feel resentful that I had to change careers," says Ruth who describes herself as "determined and driven". While mum Mary handles much of the marketing side of business, Ruth

bakers. Mary handles much of the marketing side of the business having worked in this area part-time when she left her job at the bank following the birth of her third daughter. Ruth, she says, is excellent at the media side of the business – the company’s blog, social media element and their online shop.

Mary says setting up her own business was something that she always wanted to do but that it “took a back seat what with rearing kids and so on until it was something I could concentrate on”. She says that while having a career and small children was “difficult enough” she was very fortunate to have great family support. While her working life was unaffected by the marriage bar she says that it did affect some older friends and that after the lifting of the bar “choice was the biggest change – it wasn’t compulsory to have to leave work”.

Mary says that she did not experience much inequality in her earlier career but notes that she was not “competitive at that point and was quite happy to just do the job as a job – I wasn’t looking for promotion... but I do still think it is still a struggle for women to rise in the ranks”. She believes that being an entrepreneur allows for greater opportunity: “You work longer hours and harder as an entrepreneur but you get better rewards,” she says.

“Now it is quite possible for a woman my daughter’s age to set up on her own and be quite proud of it. When I was young it was more about staying at home, minding your family and looking after the house, rather than being out there in the ‘man’s world’, but that has changed completely,” she says.

She believes that feminism is now “Old hat – something hackneyed and negative” for most young people. “I don’t think young people even want to know about what that term means,” she says. “I think they feel very comfortable in themselves and feel equal and not downtrodden by men. I think they are more gender equal and feel that it is something that doesn’t affect them at all.”

MARY HUSSEY

No. 7

RUTH HUSSEY

designed the company’s packaging, website and branding and handles much of the creative side of Pure Foods and both women are involved in product development.

She says she and her mother have “similar personalities and work really well together”. “I think we come across as professional and passionate – I don’t see any barriers as a woman in business,” she says. She believes that it is an “exciting time for women in business in Ireland”. “If you’re good at your job I can’t see major problems for women. I feel very proud of ourselves for getting out there and doing our own thing. We get a lot of positive feedback,” she says.

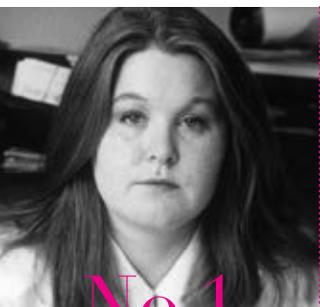
Ruth admires female figures such as chef, restaurateur and Irish Times food writer Domini Kemp. “I’ve met her once or twice – she seems really family-orientated, looks really well and seems to have a good work-life balance. I don’t have a family yet but I hope when I do get around to it that I will be able to work as well,” says the 29-year-old. Ruth says that while the food industry is quite gender-balanced “there is room for more famous female chefs”.

Coming from a family of sisters, she says that education was always very important in the household and that the girls were all grounded by their schooling and by sport. “Education was huge in our house – we were always pushed to do what we wanted to do. No matter what career I would have picked I would have gone for it,” she says.

Ruth says that women are much more liberated now in terms of access to education, freedom to travel alone and ability to work but believes that while there is less pressure to get married and have children young, there is still the sense that women should be “homemakers”. “I still feel like around the house you’re the one who is expected to do the cleaning and the ironing. I’m sure if you have kids you’re still the one expected to get them up and dressed for school. If you are both working it should be split 50/ 50. I don’t think that has changed – I think women are still seen as the housekeeper.”

INSPIRING WOMEN, INSPIRING STORIES

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS



No.1



PHIL HARRINGTON &
ELAYNE HARRINGTON



No.2



DOROTHEA MELVIN
& OLWEN DAWE



No.3



NORIN SCULLY &
BARBARA SCULLY



No.4



MARY CHADWICK
& ALISON BANTON



No.5



ANN O'CARROLL &
NIAMH O'CARROLL



No.6



LILY O'DONOGHUE &
SIOBHAN O'DONOGHUE



No.7



MARY HUSSEY
& RUTH HUSSEY