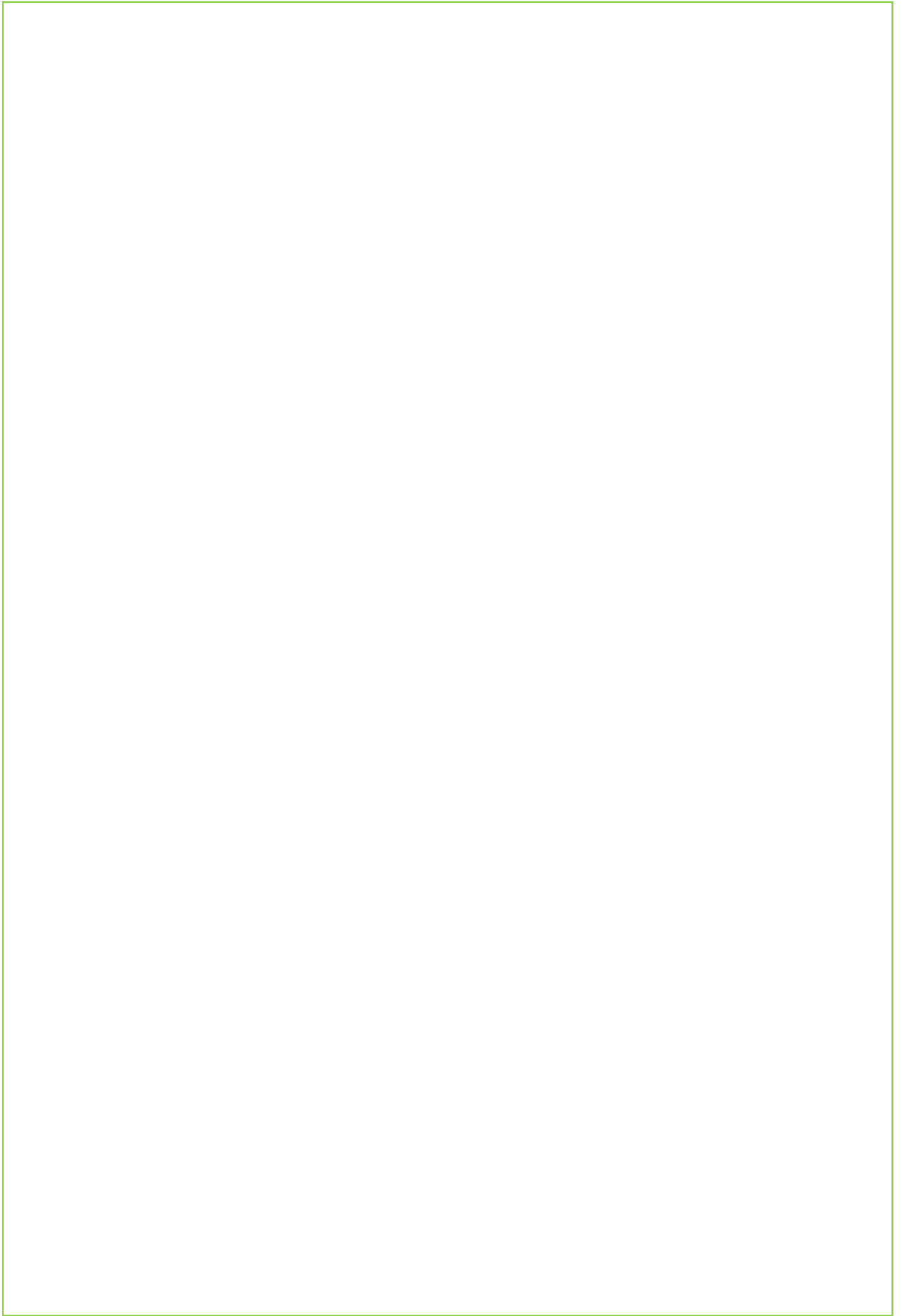




# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**IRISH COUNTRYWOMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

**REPORT OF  
THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD  
TO THE ICA AGM 2016**





***Irish Countrywomen's Association***  
*Bantracht na Tuaithe*

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## National Committees

The following are the details of the Officers, Regional Presidents, National Executive Board members and National Advisory Committee who were elected at the 2015 AGM on 23rd May, 2015 and will serve a three year term from 2015~2018.

### **ICA NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD:**

#### **NATIONAL OFFICERS:**

| <b>National President</b>   | <b>National Secretary</b>   | <b>National Treasurer</b>  | <b>Cathaoirleach NAC</b>  |
|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Marie O'Toole   | Shirley Power   | Mary G MacNamara   | Susan Potts   |

#### **REGIONAL PRESIDENTS:**

|                                 |               |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>South and East</b>           | Esther Cahill |
| <b>South and East</b>           | Dee Devereux  |
| <b>Border Midlands and West</b> | Barbara Meer  |
| <b>Border Midlands and West</b> | Helen Rutter  |

#### **FEDERATION PRESIDENTS SERVING ON THE NEB:**

|                     |                 |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Joanne Allen        | Mary Carthy     | Deirdre Connery |
| Anne Devitt         | Margot Hennessy | Chris Kelly     |
| Anna Rose McCormack | Liz O'Leary     | Alice Rowley    |

The responsibilities of the NEB are set out in the section 59 of the ICA constitution. The National Executive Board met on 8 occasions between May 2015 and March 2016.

#### **NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>National President</b> | Marie O'Toole     |
| <b>National Secretary</b> | Shirley Power     |
| <b>National Treasurer</b> | Mary G. MacNamara |
| <b>Cathaoirleach NAC</b>  | Susan Potts       |

#### **FEDERATION PRESIDENTS:**

|                                    |                                     |                                 |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Carlow:</b> Margot Hennessy     | <b>Cavan:</b> Anna Rose McCormack   | <b>Clare:</b> Joanne Allen      |
| <b>Cork:</b> Deirdre Hickey        | <b>Donegal:</b> Maureen Milligan    | <b>Dublin:</b> Mary Melia       |
| <b>Galway:</b> Sharon Kelly        | <b>Kerry:</b> Liz O'Leary           | <b>Kildare:</b> Mildred Keyes   |
| <b>Kilkenny:</b> Maria Landy       | <b>Laois:</b> Anne Cass             | <b>Leitrim:</b> Chris Kelly     |
| <b>Limerick:</b> Mary Moloney      | <b>Longford:</b> Mary Carthy        | <b>Louth:</b> Susan Potts       |
| <b>Mayo:</b> Alice Rowley          | <b>Meath:</b> Olive Carolan         | <b>Monaghan:</b> Lorna Soden    |
| <b>Offaly:</b> Maura Allen         | <b>Roscommon:</b> Monica Beegan     | <b>Sligo:</b> Kay Cunnane       |
| <b>Tipperary North:</b> Ann Clarke | <b>Tipperary South:</b> Anne Devitt | <b>Waterford:</b> Noeline Power |
| <b>Westmeath:</b> Gill Stanley     | <b>Wexford:</b> Deirdre Connery     | <b>Wicklow:</b> Madge Kenny     |

The responsibilities of the NAC are set out in Section 72 of the ICA constitution. Since the last report to the AGM the National Advisory Committee (NAC) has met on 3 occasions.

#### **FINANCE COMMITTEE:**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Marie O'Toole – <b>National President</b> | Mary G. MacNamara – <b>National Treasurer/Chair of Finance</b> |
| Shirley Power – <b>National Secretary</b> | Susan Potts – <b>Cathaoirleach NAC</b>                         |

## **PROCEDURES COMMITTEE:**

Mairéad O'Carroll – Cork Federation – **Cathaoirleach**  
Mary O'Reilly – Mayo Federation – **Secretary**  
Bridgid Keane – Waterford Federation  
Angela O'Byrne – Dublin Federation  
Mary O'Gorman – Kildare Federation

## **NATIONAL COMMITTEES:**

The National Executive Board felt it necessary that committees be formed in order to support and aid the development of the Association for the benefit of all members. The focus of these committees is to help move ICA into the future with confidence. The committees are:

**Competitions Committee:** Wexford Federation administer and organise The National Competitions.

**Handcraft Committee:** Chaired by Josephine Helly with committee members Elsie Moxham, Pat O'Looney and Margaret Clince.

**Development & Promotion of An Grianán Committee:** Chaired by Joanne Allen with committee members Esther Cahill, Anne Devitt and Liz O'Leary.

**Social and Community Welfare Committee:** Chaired by Helen Rutter with committee members Anna Rose McCormack and Mary Carthy.

**Membership/Recruitment Committee:** Chaired by Dee Devereux with committee member Alice Rowley.

We trust that you will support and encourage the committee members in their endeavours and we hope that the work of these committees will be beneficial in lobbying and progressing issues on a National platform that are both relevant and important to our broader membership base.

## **The ICA Year in Figures - 2015**



## National President's Foreword - Marie O'Toole

Dear Members,

I am delighted to introduce my first Annual Report to members which provides a comprehensive overview of the work that has taken place over the last year.



After a lengthy election process, the AGM in 2015 was an exciting time for myself, Shirley Power and Mary Mac Namara who took over the roles of National President, National Secretary and National Treasurer respectively. We were subsequently joined by Susan Potts, who was voted in as the Chair of the National Advisory Committee at the first meeting of the NAC. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Liz Wall, Mary Harrahill and Peggy O'Brien for their dedication and commitment to our Association during their tenure.

2015~2016 was an important year for ICA. We commemorated the Easter Rising of 1916 in March with a wonderful event at An Grianán. The publication of the ICA Book of Christmas was a highlight of the year as it is one of the most beautiful of all the recent publications by Gill and Macmillan. The ICA magazine of Home and Living came into being last year and we have already enjoyed two editions published by Ashville Media. We are looking forward to three editions each year going forward. The ICA marquee at the Ploughing 2015 was an excellent showcase of the work of ICA members both in Laois and around the country and we are indebted to Laois Federation for their organisation of the activities on site during this week. The Aldi/NPA/ICA Brown Bread Baking competition was a great addition to the National Ploughing. We are delighted that the winner, Margaret Sexton, who was a Non-ICA member, has now joined the new Roscommon Town Guild.

The ICA has joined with Muintir na Tíre, the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association, the Irish Postmasters' Union, Macra na Feirme and the Irish National Flood Forum who have come together to try and halt what is seen by many as the gradual decline of rural Ireland. The message is clear, that the government has to act soon to ensure survival of rural Ireland.

During this past year, Information Officer training was revitalized with more training to follow in the autumn for other officers. The Handcraft test booklet was updated earlier this year and the Arts Award booklet is currently being updated. The focus on heritage crafts continues in the ICA with the taster craft classes continuing monthly in Central Office and the first tranche of the Clones Lace course took place in October 2015 and will continue in April. Patchwork pieces of every variety were on display at the ICA stand during the Knitting and Stitching Show 2015 and a wide variety of handcrafts were demonstrated during the four days of the show. Lumra is another heritage craft which the ICA hopes to preserve and a book has been commissioned written by Reiltín McCanna which will be available to purchase shortly. The Royal School of Needlework has shown great interest in having classes in Central Office and we look forward to welcoming craft people from all over Ireland to participate in these classes. We thank Josephine Helly, Chair of the handcraft committee for her invaluable work in promoting and organising both 'handcraft' week and the craft classes at Central Office.

The refurbishment of the bedrooms in An Grianán continues and it was great to finally have a new driveway there too. I hope you approve of the new look in the dining room with round tables, which makes for a more homely atmosphere. It was sad to close the Garden Centre and say good bye to Thomas Smyth. We also said good bye to Maebh O'Herlihy who retired as the ICA counsellor. On a more positive note Wexford Federation has taken over the running of the National Competitions and

will continue to do so until May 2018 and I am delighted to advise that we have also set up three new committees and details of these committees are outlined in the 'National Committees' section earlier in the report. We wish all of these committees success in their future endeavours. We are also grateful to the Procedures Committee who have been in situ since June 2015.

My fellow Officers, Shirley, Mary and Susan have worked hard on behalf of the Association and I am delighted to advise that we have worked well as a team. I wish to thank them for their support and friendship.

I am indebted to the staff of Central Office and to Ann Flanagan and her staff in An Grianán, who have continued to be most helpful since I came into office. It was a great pleasure meeting so many of you at the AGM and at Federation and significant celebrations around the country. I am so grateful to you for your continued support.

I hope you enjoy reading this annual report and I look forward to your feedback, as always.

***Marie O'Toole National President***

## **Secretary's Overview - National Secretary, Shirley Power**

Fellow Members,

Since taking up the role of National Secretary it has been my privilege to meet many of you at occasions and celebrations held throughout the past year. Your enthusiasm, energy and positive attitude is overwhelming and I would like to acknowledge all the great work that members and Guilds are involved in across the Federations - enriching the many communities and neighbourhoods that ICA is a vital part of. Our leadership in community involvement is hugely underestimated.



It has been a busy first year with my main focus being on ensuring our compliance with the new Charities Regulatory Authority requirements and preparing the ground work relevant in adopting the National Governance Code. There is still a lot of work to be done going forward but I am confident that this will be duly completed as compliance will be instrumental in ensuring we maintain our charity status.

I would like to thank my fellow officers, the NEB, the NAC and the staff of both Central Office and An Grianán for their support, expertise and continuous engagement throughout the year. I look forward to seeing the fruits of the NEB & NAC enthusiasm throughout the coming year in the work of the newly formed committees that have been established by the Board.

As a board we are determined to work hard for ICA but we can only achieve our organisational goals with the help of you, the members. Ensuring positive and progressive interaction with you the members of our Association is vital, and through working together we can all ensure that our organisation realises its full potential in these challenging times.

I am looking forward to the year ahead and I thank you for your ongoing continued support.

***Shirley Power, National Secretary***

## Financial Overview - National Treasurer, Mary G. Mac Namara

### Audit 2015:

The audited accounts for the year ending December 2015 are included with this report. The Audit comments should be read in conjunction with the Audited Accounts.



### Central Office:

The audit highlighted that the Central Office accounts, which includes funds from Fees/Grants/Sponsorship/Sales of Goods, showed a surplus of €99,788.

### An Grianán:

The audit highlighted an overall deficit of €36k for the year. The Coffee shop has been leased since October 2013 and we continue to receive rental income from this.

We closed the Garden Centre during 2015 as it continued to make a loss.

Members and Non-members attended fifty nine different types of classes during 2015, with crafts accounting for 50% of all the classes attended.

There were improvements made to back stage and to the kitchen in the Spring of 2015.

The driveway at An Grianán got a makeover in November 2015 – this was well overdue.

### Support:

The support from members, Guilds and Federations for the upgrading of the bedrooms continued during 2015 and it is greatly appreciated.

### Sponsorship:

In 2015 we received sponsorship from Manor Farm Irish Chickens.

### Books:

We launched The ICA Book of Christmas in October 2015 and this has sold very well.

We also continue to receive royalties from the previous four books.

### Grant Aid:

The grant aid which we received during the year was €9k from the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and €20,900 from SOLAS.

### Financial Reporting and Compliance:

There is comprehensive reporting and close monitoring in place. The Finance Committee meet each month in advance of the Board meeting and report to the monthly National Executive Board meeting. Each item of the business is looked at and remedial action taken where necessary. Close monitoring and budgets are in place for both Central Office and An Grianán. An Income & Expenditure account is provided each month for An Grianán and quarterly for Central Office, with variances highlighted.

We are compliant in our VAT and Tax returns.



We have a property register in place with the details listed of the ICA properties.

### **Financial Priorities and Challenges:**

To ensure that items in the Budget can meet the costs for the year.

To grow the business in An Grianán, get more ICA members to attend.

To meet monthly targets and if not to take remedial action.

To arrest the fall off in ICA membership.

### **Accountancy and Audit Services:**

We went to tender for audit and accountancy services in 2014 and identified a preferred supplier for 2015. The appointment of G. Dunne & Company Chartered Accountant as auditor to the ICA for 2015 was put forward and ratified at the 2015 A.G.M.

*Mary G MacNamara, National Treasurer.*

## **NAC - Cathaoirleach of the NAC, Susan Potts**

My year as Cathaoirleach started on the weekend of 19th June, 2015 at the first National Advisory Committee training weekend. It is important for us to create a good dynamic and a positive working relationship with each other as Federation Presidents. We were given a wonderful presentation by Mary Hession on the preparation of meetings and public speaking with plenty of tips to make our role easier and more productive. All present felt this particularly helpful so early in our term of office.



I quickly came to realise that we all share a similar vision in our passion for the ICA. There is a need to grow our membership and more importantly a need to maintain it. To this end, the importance of “Open Days” or “Recruitment Drives” has to be emphasised. These are vital and can take many forms, for example, having small permanent displays in local hotels, libraries, gyms, colleges - really any location where there is a female presence is a constant reminder to people that we as an Organisation are here. An example of this can be seen in the first Federation led “Yarnbombing” event which took place in the Market Square Dundalk, this International Women’s Day 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 - a traditional craft, applied in a modern way, making us current and relevant to a wider range of women. We in Louth hope to make this a nationwide event for 2017.

Once recruited, maintaining our membership means a sharing of ideas, open dialogue and a readiness to listen and engage with each other. No more of the dreaded words “Oh we did that before...”

Information is key and sharing it the only way to grow and maintain our membership. It requires us to listen to each other and be open to new ideas like....web text, E-mail, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Every household has a least one of these free facilities and we all need to be using them thus showcasing the ICA to be the most wonderful Women’s association we members know it to be.

Finally, I would encourage you all to recycle the beautiful ICA Home & Living magazine by leaving it in to doctor & dental surgeries, hairdressers and other public amenity buildings in your local areas.

*Susan Potts, Chair of the NAC*

## Section 1 - Guilds and Membership

The Association's total membership is currently 9,350 members. The association continues to attract an interest in membership although realising the interest into actual membership is proving difficult in some Federations.

We sincerely welcome all our new members, both Guilds and individuals to ICA. The National Executive Board are delighted to confirm that ten new Guilds were opened from when the Executive report was last issued to date. We wish all the new members in these Guilds every success and lots of happy times together.

|                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Donabate Portrane Guild | <b>Dublin Federation</b>    |
| Cummer Guild            | <b>Galway Federation</b>    |
| Aclare Guild            | <b>Sligo Federation</b>     |
| Castlebridge Guild      | <b>Wexford Federation</b>   |
| Callan Guild            | <b>Kilkenny Federation</b>  |
| Roscommon Town          | <b>Roscommon Federation</b> |
| Bridgetown College      | <b>Wexford Federation</b>   |
| Crossmolina Guild       | <b>Mayo Federation</b>      |
| Moy Ballina Guild       | <b>Mayo Federation</b>      |
| Skibbereen Guild        | <b>Cork Federation</b>      |

### **Membership Enquiries received by Central Office May 2015 – March 2016:**

The Irish Countrywomen's Association receives many enquiries for membership and these in turn are referred to the Federation Liaison Officer in each county, who follow up and welcome women to Guilds. Since our last AGM, **424** women made enquiries to join the ICA.

## Section 2 - Publications, Communication, Member Benefits & Social Media

The ICA Book of Christmas was launched at the National Conference in November 2015. The press launch took place at a special dinner hosted by Dublin Federation in the Clayton Hotel Ballsbridge on 27th October, 2015. The book was published by Gill and Macmillan and was the final book in a set of four. Edited by Aoife Carrigy and assisted by the skilful photography of Joanne Murphy, the ICA Book of Christmas has proved to be very popular with both members and public alike. It contains a great array of ICA tips & ideas, recipes & practical advice, Christmas Gifts and treasured memories.



In 2015, the Irish Countrywomen's Association participated in a number of events in order to promote the organisation and meet and encourage women to join. These events are an opportunity for us to showcase ICA to its best potential. It also affords us the opportunity to meet and interact with like minded organisations and groups where we can learn and share ideas and best practice.

### **The two major events we attended were;**

- The National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska in Co. Laois from 22nd - 24th September, 2015.
- The Knitting & Stitching Show held in the RDS in Dublin from the 5th - 8th November, 2015.

## MAILING:

We hope you like the new look of the Monthly Mailing to Guilds. For members with internet access, the mailing can be viewed on the ICA website in the Member's Area. The mailing is also sent in browser format, by email, to those members who have provided an e-mail address to Central Office. If you would like to receive the mailing in this format please contact Central Office with your e-mail address.



## ICA MAGAZINE OF HOME & FAMILY:



The first edition of the ICA magazine was launched at the AGM in 2015. The second edition was issued in November with distribution of the magazine directly via the Federations in an effort to ensure that every member received their copy. The magazine has a very good mix of interesting features, tasty recipes, members articles, crafts and fun competitions. Ashville Media produce this wonderful magazine on behalf of the National Executive Board. The next issue will be out in April 2016 with another two issues planned for September and December 2016.



## MEMBER BENEFITS PROGRAMME:

The benefits of ICA membership continue to significantly outweigh the cost of the annual membership fee. We continuously strive to review and improve the existing members benefits while at the same time endeavour to add new benefits.

The involvement with the programme among Irish companies and Businesses continues to prove very popular and there are now more than 130 benefits on offer to ICA members. The programme is constantly being improved and updated and members should check the mailing and website regularly for the announcements of new companies which have joined the programme.

If members would like to suggest companies to join the Member Benefit Programme they may send their suggestions to Central Office for follow up.

## WEBSITE:

The website is intended to make searching and accessing information easier and more accessible for the user. The members section contains separate areas for (1) General Documents, (2) Monthly Mailings, (3) Speakers List and (4) Member Benefits Programme Details

Each Federation has its own Federation Page and it is wonderful to see the pages that are being regularly updated. We would encourage Federations to use the calendar more so that members and prospective members can see at a glance the exciting events and activities that are being planned and also taking place in the Federations.

An Grianán also has its own website. The website highlights the on-site amenities including the self-catering bungalows, local cultural activities and things to do in the area, internal accommodation photos, information about how to design your own holiday and information on weddings, civil ceremonies and conferences. This is more commercially appealing to businesses and more focussed on the business of An Grianán.

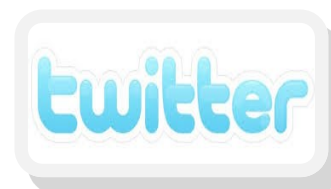
## FACEBOOK:

The ICA Facebook page has become very popular among members with more and more members joining the page. Over the year the ICA Facebook page has received 3,916 “likes” which is the amount of people who have seen and liked the ICA Facebook page. To become a friend of the ICA Facebook page please log on to [www.facebook.com/irishcountrywomensassociation](http://www.facebook.com/irishcountrywomensassociation)



## TWITTER:

2012 was the year that the ICA initially joined twitter. From March 2016, we now have 909 followers on Twitter. The office tweet regularly and have written (tweeted) 378 tweets. Twitter is used by the ICA to highlight events and activities, to view a press release, sign a petition or to vote.



## Section 3 - Training & Leadership Development

Training is a core objective of the ICA to support excellence in the association. To this end, training for all incoming National Executive Board members took place over the weekend of 19th - 22nd June 2015. This leadership training gave board members a thorough induction to the board including the importance of team work, confidentiality and clarity surrounding decision making.

The National Advisory Committee training weekend took place on the same weekend and all NAC members also went through a thorough induction process giving them a detailed understanding of their role on the National Advisory Committee.

Information Officer training took place on the 12th & 13th of February, 2016 at An Grianán. The role of the information officer is to be an informal support to a Guild; to support and encourage the Guild in everything they do; to inform and advise (when asked) on anything to do with the Guild, the Federation or the ICA Nationally; to share ideas from other Guilds across the Federation and ICA nationally; to help solve problems that may arise and to advise on technical issues pertaining to the rules of ICA and running meetings and AGM's.

The training was conducted by Caroline McCamley and it gave all 32 participants a clear indication of their role as information officer and a good foundation on which to commence their new roles within the Federations. It is hoped that further information officer training will take place later in the year.

Training for all Federation Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers will take place in the Autumn. This training will aim to reaffirm officers with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within both their Federations and ICA generally. It is hoped that following this intensive training, Federation Officers will in turn replicate the training at Federation level so that Guilds and Federations can work on implementing a common standard practise that will benefit all.





## Section 4 - Advocacy & Campaigns

### **CALICO DOLLS FOR TEMPLE STREET HOSPITAL and OUR LADY'S HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN, CRUMLIN:**

The Play Therapists in both Temple Street Hospital for Sick Children and Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin have been overcome by the response of ICA members in their efforts in making calico dolls for use with their young patients. They encourage and allow the children to colour in and make the dolls unique to themselves including their illness/condition. This allows them to express their feelings of being in hospital. The Hospital Play Specialists aim to prepare children for invasive procedures. These procedures can be mirrored on their doll, empowering them to know step by step what will happen – and they can become the nurse/doctor.

We thank you for the huge response to the call for Calico dolls. There have been over 3,000 thousand dolls made and donated to both Temple Street and Crumlin. The board were delighted with the positive response to this campaign as were the Hospitals.



### **‘WINTER WARMTH’ APPEAL:**

Our Winter Warmth Appeal was initiated with the purpose of helping Ireland's homeless people. A simple idea sparked a wave of generosity across our country. The concept was simple; people who no longer needed or wanted good quality clothing/usable items that they owned could donate it for the purpose of passing on to shelters and homeless centres. The appeal at our National Conference in Kilkenny was astounding and the following items were donated by ICA members in just a couple of hours; 280 Coats/Jackets; 28 Jumpers; 26 Sleeping Bags; 59 hats; 29 pair of Gloves; 44 Scarves; 24 pairs of new socks and 20 Trousers/Pants.

Following on from the November ‘Winter Warmth’ appeal, ‘Jacket Off Your Back’ contacted ICA in the hope of seeking our assistance to help them in the collection of good quality children's shoes. At the NAC Meeting in February, sack loads of good quality children's shoes piled in to Central Office, yet again showing the continuous generosity of our members in supporting those in need. Well Done!



### **PEARLS OF WISDOM CAMPAIGN:**

European Cervical Cancer Prevention Week took place from 24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> January 2016. This week long campaign promotes the importance of screening and preventing cervical cancer. This is the fourth year that the board has supported the campaign and have encouraged all women from 25 – 60 to avail of free screening. The Pearl of Wisdom emblem pin and print material was given to all Board Members. For more information see; <http://www.pearlofwisdom.eu/home/>



## MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLNESS:

The mental health & mental well-being of our members is of paramount importance and it is imperative that we continue to work towards eradicating the stigma associated with mental illness and ensure that those who need help are treated with dignity and respect and can access the help needed. The ICA joined forces again this year with 'See Change' in promoting the green ribbon campaign. Federations are encouraged to continuously raise awareness about positive mental health and where possible hold awareness raising events and mental health wellness workshops. It is important that we all look out for each other.



## COFACE:

The ICA is the only Irish member of the ConFederation of Family Organisations of the European Union (COFACE). Our National Secretary, Shirley Power represents our Association on the Administrative Council of COFACE. The Association was represented at a strategic workshop on 'New Start Initiative - Reconciling Work and Family Life', Administrative Council meeting and at the International Conference on Sustainable Goals and Gender Equality.



## FORAS EIREANN:

Forás Éireann is a permanent conference of voluntary organisations which have come together for the purposes of consultation and joint action to assist and promote social, cultural and economic developments in Ireland. ICA is represented on the Forás Éireann Council by Marion Lyon. Marion has presented three reports to the NEB. The Charlotte F. Shaw Trust, which is administered by Forás Éireann provides funds for 'the bringing of masterpieces of Fine Art within the reach of Irish People of all classes.' Funding is provided in many categories: Art Appreciation, Music Recitals, Music Festivals & Appreciation lectures, Literature Appreciation Lectures to include Poetry Readings and Social Arts to include public speaking.



## GO FOR LIFE:

Go For Life is a national programme for sport and physical activity for older people. The aim of go for Life is to involve greater numbers of older adults in all aspects of sport and physical activity. It is run by Age & Opportunity in partnership with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Local Sports Partnerships. The Go for Life programme has 4 different elements: (1) Leadership Programme, (2) Targeted initiatives, (3) National Grant Scheme and (4) Physical Activity Awareness Programme. Many Guilds and Federations, through the National Grant Scheme, receive funding for the promotion and providing of activities locally and this has proved very beneficial across the board, with some members also participating in the PAL's training to further progress their involvement with the Go for Life initiative. It is envisaged that PAL's training for members will be organised later this year, with training to take place in An Grianán.



## ACWW:

The ICA is affiliated to the Associated Countrywomen of the World. The organisation represents nine million women through its 450 member societies in over 70 countries. The aim of ACWW is to raise the standard of living of rural women and families through education, training and community development programmes. They also aim to provide practical support to its members and help them set up income-generating schemes as well as giving rural women a voice at international level through its links with UN agencies. The ICA became affiliated to ACWW in 1933, was represented at the International Conference in Stockholm and was a Founder Friend of the ACWW in 1934. The ICA hosted the ACWW Triennial Conferences of 1965 and 1986 and again in 2011. ICA members can be individual members of ACWW in addition to our National Affiliation. Members travel regularly to European Area Conferences and International Conferences as far afield as the USA and India. The 2016 Triennial Conference will take place at the University of Warwick, England, from 17<sup>th</sup>–23<sup>rd</sup> August. National President Marie O'Toole is a committee member of ACWW.

## NATIONAL LOBBYING:

The National Advisory Committee have been fundamental in bringing forward issues at National level for discussion and further development.



The following focus areas were determined and progressed:

1. ***The critical situation pertaining to the poor levels of English spoken by some HSE staff.***  
- Correspondence was sent to Minister Leo Varadkar.
2. ***The changes to the Contributory State Pension payments for women following changes made as part of Budget 2012, resulting in a reduced pension payment to recipients.***  
- Our concerns were forwarded to the Minister of the Department for Social Protection.
3. ***Lack of funding for women's refuges in many counties around the country. A request was made to call on our Government to honour the directive from the Council of Europe Convention combatting violence against women (Istanbul Convention).***  
- A request was submitted for immediate Government action to honour the directive of the Istanbul Convention, signed by Ireland on 5th November, 2015.

## Section 5 - Regulation & Governance

### CHARITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY (CRA):

Many changes are taking place in relation to the regulation and governance of Charities. The Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) is Ireland's national statutory regulatory agency for charitable organisations. The CRA was established on the 16th October, 2014 under the terms of the Charities Act 2009. It is an independent statutory agency under the aegis of the Department of Justice and Equality.



**Charities  
Regulatory  
Authority**  
**An tÚdarás  
Rialála  
Carthanas**

Under section 52 of the Charities Act, we are required to send an annual activity report which includes a copy of our Annual Accounts, no later than ten months after the end of our financial year end. The Irish Countrywomen's Association online registration under these new regulations is complete. However, there may be further information required from us going forward but the CRA have committed to work with the National Executive Board in determining these requirements and preparing adequate policy to ensure sufficient implementation and overall compliance long-term.

### GOVERNANCE CODE:

The Governance Code is a **Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland.**



Governance refers to how an organisation is run, directed and controlled. Good governance means an organisation will design and put in place policies and procedures that will make sure the organisation runs effectively. All Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations have a responsibility to provide and follow a code of good practice when it comes to how their organisations are run and it is the responsibility of our Board to make sure this happens in ICA.

In an effort to have clear guidelines for the running of our Association, to display confidence & trust and to demonstrate a high standard of governance for our members, the current National Executive Board is pledging to put in place a Governance Code. The code has been created **for** the sector **by** the sector and it makes good business sense to endorse the code and streamline our policies and procedures accordingly.



## Section 6 - Conferences & Events

The **Annual Garden Party** took place on Friday 26th June. This was the first National event of the new term of office and members turned out in force to wish Marie O'Toole well in her term as President. The sun shone brightly and all attendees were treated to a wonderful afternoon of Line Dancing on the front lawn with many members joining in. This was followed by yet another very successful fashion show. With the show well on the road, strawberries and cream were served on the lawn before the party moved indoors for a wonderful night of entertainment.



An important event in the ICA calendar is the **National Ploughing Championships**. In 2015 the championships were held in Ratheniska in Co. Laois from Tuesday, 22nd to Thursday, 24th September. The ICA marquee was a hive of activity with a strong programme of events co-ordinated by Anne Cass, Laois Federation President and her team of ladies from Laois Federation. With the ALDI 'Brown Bread' Competition finals taking place at the event, it draws members in great numbers to support and encourage the finalists. A large number of enquiries were received for membership.





The **Winter Conference** took place in the Newpark Hotel on Saturday, 7th November, 2015. Kilkenny Federation Committee hosted a Civic Reception on the previous evening which was warmly received by all who attended it. The meeting on Saturday proved very successful and was attended in large numbers. Kilkenny's display of crafts was amazing and greatly admired by all who attended and the display seemed to generate a great enthusiasm for members to get back to work on all the unfinished crafts they had in presses on returning home. The venue was chosen for its good reputation and its close proximity to the rail and bus services in the Kilkenny area and this appears to have worked very well for delegates.

One very welcomed aspect of the conference was the provision made for members to have their say. Members felt that the re-introduction of this time within the agenda gave them the opportunity to engage with the officers in both discussion and the expression of their opinions and ideas.



The Twisted Thread **Knitting and Stitching** show took place in the RDS, Dublin from Thursday, 5th to Sunday, 8th November, 2015. ICA decided to set a theme for the display stand this year and this proved very well and certainly looked very co-ordinated. The ICA craft teachers demonstrated a variety of crafts including chicken scratching, crochet, Carrickmacross lace, hairpin crochet, Blackwork embroidery, knitting and jewellery. In this way the ICA is at the forefront of retaining heritage crafts in Ireland.

The **ICA Commemorated the Centenary of 1916** with an event that took place at An Grianán on March 11th & 12th. With the house booked out for the weekend, the schedule of events and speakers for the event did not disappoint for those who were in attendance. The main event of the weekend took place on Saturday afternoon. It was opened by our National President, Marie O'Toole. Norah Clifford Kelly read 'Up for the Rising' and National Secretary, Shirley Power read the Proclamation. The line up of speakers was excellent, which included Lucy Keaveney, Mamo McDonald (Former National President), Mary O'Rourke (Former Teachta Dála), Joan Martin (CEO Louth Co. Council) and Padraig Yeates. From start to finish, the speakers engaged the attendees with their interesting talks and insights into many aspects of 1916 and the pivotal role that women played in this historical aspect of our history.



The 1916 commemorations recollect the events of the rising, which through their occurrence helped create a map of what makes Ireland the nation it is today. The men and women of the 1916 Rising envisaged a new Ireland, and Ireland which, in the words of the Proclamation, "guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and [which] declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally." They believed that this could only be achieved through complete independence. It is a very special year in our heritage so we hope members will engage & participate in events that are planned right across our country.



We would like to say many thanks to both members and Federations for continuing to designate **An Grianán** as your chosen ICA Charity. The fruits of your efforts and the response from Federations in fundraising is certainly now being realised in the renovation work and changes that are taking place there. We hope that these improvements will realise new business for An Grianán and in turn help the facility achieve its full potential as a college of excellence and in keeping alive and fostering its love of traditional, heritage and modern arts and crafts.

**Handcraft week** takes place in An Grianán from Monday 4th April until Friday 8th April and is completely booked out. Handcraft week is a fantastic means of trying out new crafts and this idea is replicated in the taster classes held at Central Office each month. We hope that such opportunities will encourage members to progress their knowledge levels in many crafts by attending An Grianán for further development and skills.

## Section 7 - An Grianán - Ann Flanagan, Manager

There have been many changes and developments in the college facilities, and in the courses being provided. In 2015 we saw the development of some new en-suite bedrooms in the college. Due to the generosity of more Federations we now have started to develop another section of en-suite bedrooms. I would like to thank all the Federations that worked hard to raise money to fund this development, without your help this would not have been possible.



Below is a taste of some of the events that are scheduled to take place in 2016 .

### **New Courses for 2016**

Mosaic Jewellery  
Guided Walking Tours  
Mindfulness  
Beirs Bont Embroidery  
Jiving One Day Course  
Downtown Abbey Themed Weekend  
Jive Weekend ( a fun weekend for everyone)  
Bed & Breakfast option with free time to tour and enjoy the beauty of County Louth

### **The Garden Party 8<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

This would be a lovely way to end your Guild year before the summer break and come up for the day. Showcase of Crafts, Flowers, Needlework Art work and assorted Gifts.  
Hot & Cold Buffet Al Fresco on the lawn with wine and lots of good food.  
Fashion show prizes for the most suitable dressed lady on the day.  
Dancing till late  
Raffle for lots of prizes.  
Garden Party Tickets €55.00 (option of Bed & Breakfast €45.00 )



I would like to thank all the ICA Members for their support over the year. An Grianán could not survive without you. With your help and continued support the college will go from strength to strength over the coming years.

Ann Flanagan  
Manager,  
An Grianán

## Section 8 - National Competition Results 2015

### TABLE QUIZ 2015

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Waterford Federation  
Minaun Guild  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Kildare Federation  
Suncroft Guild  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Cork Federation  
Botherbue Guild

### SHORT STORY COMPETITION 2015

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Maria Stephens, Longwood Guild  
Meath Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Miriam McKeever, Delgany Guild  
Wicklow Federation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Peg Prendeville,  
Ballyhahill/Loughill Guild  
Limerick Federation

### POETRY COMPETITION 2015

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Linda Nolan, Clogh Guild  
Kilkenny Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Connie McEvoy, Termonfeckin  
Guild, Louth Federation

### INTER FEDERATION CUP FOR CRAFTS 2015 (Re-usable Shopping/Craft bag)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Mary Curran, Waterford Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Mary Walsh, Limerick Federation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Marie Donnelly, Kildare Federation

### INTER-FEDERATION CUP FOR ART 2015

#### (Photography in Colour)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Phyllis Hamilton,  
Wicklow Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Helen Gibbons  
Donegal Federation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Mary Dervan  
Galway Federation

#### (Photography in Black and White)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Catherine O'Driscoll  
Cork Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Stephanie Sommers  
Kildare Federation

**OVERALL WINNER : Phyllis Hamilton**

### BAUMANN CUP FOR ART 2015 - PAINTING FLOWERS

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Margaret Smith  
Cavan Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Rita Horgan  
Limerick Federation

### ICA TROPHY FOR REPORTING 2015

**WINNER:** Kay Dunne, Mayo Federation

### BREDA McDONALD TROPHY FOR HOBBY

**WINNER:** Susan Potts, Louth Federation

### MURIEL GAHAN ROSEBOWL 2015

#### CHILD'S ARAN SWEATER

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Margaret Moran, Mayo Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Anne McLaughlin, Donegal Fed.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Maureen Lynch, Louth Federation

### MEMORIAL HANDCRAFT TROPHY

**WINNER:** Kay Roche, Kilkenny Federation

### PITCH AND PUTT 2015

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: **Meath** Federation with Kathleen  
Gerathy, Margaret McTigue,  
Mary Flood & Vera O'Rourke  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: **Kildare** Federation with Margaret  
Chamberlin, Mary O'Connor,  
Nora Whelan & Margaret Greene.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: **Carlow** Federation with Ann  
Edwards, Mary Timmins,  
Mairéad Phelan & Bernie Morrow

### BAUMANN SHIELD FOR MUSIC 2015

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Tallaght Guild, Dublin Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Kiltale Guild, Meath Federation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Ballinora Guild, Cork Federation

### ELEANORA GIBBON

#### SHIELD FOR MUSIC As Gaeilge 2015

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Ballybrak Guild, Dublin Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Ballinora Guild, Cork Federation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: **Joint 3<sup>rd</sup> Place awarded to**  
1. Ardmore/Grange Guild  
Waterford Federation  
2. Tallaght Guild, Dublin Federation  
& 3. Kiltale Guild, Meath Federation

### PATSY LAWLOR CUP FOR SET DANCING - FULL SET 2015

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Dunderry Guild, Meath Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Wicklow Town Guild, Wicklow Fed.

### PATSY LAWLOR SHIELD FOR SET DANCING - HALF SET 2015

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Ardcath Guild, Meath Federation  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Kill Guild, Kildare Federation  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Wicklow Town Guild, Wicklow Fed.

