



An
Bhean Ghlúine

Midwife ~ Woman of the Knee ~ Handywoman

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This project will introduce you to some of the wonderful women who were midwives during the early part of the 20th century, when they were known as a 'handywomen'. Every local village had one and she was called on for all the local births. These women were mainly uneducated but learned about birthing from the women before them. One lady, Mrs Anne Kilcommins from Mountbellew, was known as 'Mrs come quick', Matt Kilcommins told me.

Bina Kelly

1902-1964 | Kilconnell, County Galway

Midwife in rural Ireland during the early part of the 20th century

Bina was born Sabina Kelly on 22nd January 1902 in Kilconnell, County Galway. Her parents were Thomas Kelly and Margaret McDonagh. Bina's mother was a midwife and Bina became one as well; between them they had nearly 80 years midwifery experience from 1890 to the 1970s. Bina never married; she was dedicated to her work and loved deeply by her community.

Image: Bina Kelly and her brother Jack Kelly. Photo: Kate Noonan.

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This project is funded by Galway County Council and The Heritage Council





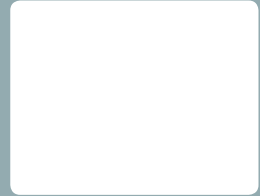
Above: Brigid Glenane's midwifery bag. Instruments include a breast pump, box of syringes and various other medical aids. Courtesy of Brigid Glenane's Granddaughter Patricia Ridge. Left: Brigid Glenane. Photo: Vera Mullins.

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Brigid Delia Glenane

Nee McGrath, 1912-2008 | Turloughmore District, County Galway

Brigid Glenane was born Bridget Delia McGrath on 3 May 1902 in Claregalway, Co. Galway. Brigid came from a very learned house where there was huge emphasis on education. Brigid was educated in primary school in Lackagh and on 6 July 1938 she entered a midwifery training course at Holles Street Maternity Hospital, Dublin. There was no grant for this course so she had to fund it herself.

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Mary Ellen Coppinger

1919-2010 | Moylough District, County Galway

Mary Ellen Coppinger was born Mary Ellen Connelly on 10 November 1919 at Brierfield, Moylough, Co. Galway. Mary Ellen sat her Secondary School exams in 1938 and then went to England in 1942 to train to be a nurse and midwife. Mary Ellen returned from England and took up a Community Midwife post at home in Moylough where she served her community for over 30 years. She met and married Mr Coppinger; they had a family and ran a successful furniture business in Moylough that is still there today.

Image: Mary Ellen is on the right of the photograph. Photo courtesy of Mary Dolan.



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Mary Kate Jennings

Née Carroll, 1921-2013 | Kilclooney, Ballinasloe, County Galway

Mary Kate was born in 1921, the only child of Michael Carroll and Bridget Raftery. Mary Kate decided to move to England where she trained first as a nurse and later as a midwife. She left Ireland on her own, knowing nobody. Mary Kate continued to nurse in London during World War II. Mary Kate ended up a patient herself and featured in a newspaper headline 'Nurse Nurses Nurse'.

Image: Mary Kate. Photo courtesy of The Jennings Family.



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