



# Our Wicklow Women

*Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary of the  
People's Representation  
Act of 1918  
(Women's Suffrage)*



# Our Wicklow Women

*The right to vote (suffrage) was extended to women in Ireland for the first time via the Representation of the People Act 1918. To vote in parliamentary elections women had to be property owners (or, the wives of property owners) over the age of 30, or university graduates. As a result of lobbying by women's groups, universal adult suffrage was achieved in 1922, with the establishment of the Irish Free State. These same voting rights were subsequently granted to women in Britain and Northern Ireland in 1928.*

In commemoration of the centenary of 'Votes for Women', *Our Wicklow Heritage* launched a public appeal for Wicklow Women stories. Seeking to highlight the vital contribution of women to Irish life and society, we appealed for your stories of Wicklow women who have made a difference in our community: stories of success, struggle, or of quiet diligence.

The stories submitted form the basis of *Our Wicklow Women*, an exhibition featuring thirteen truly inspirational Wicklow Women that will travel for display at libraries throughout County Wicklow. This booklet is a compilation of these stories. The full stories as submitted by our contributors are available to read on our online community heritage archive at [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org). We would love to continue this work and welcome new stories on our online community heritage archive at any time. Please visit and share!

*Our Wicklow Heritage* is a member of ICAN and is co-ordinated by the Wicklow Heritage Forum as an ongoing action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan, supported by Wicklow County Council and The Heritage Council. This project was carried out in association with ICAN as part of European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. Exhibition content was curated by Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer and Catherine Wright, Archivist, Wicklow County Council.



# Mairin (Cregan) Ryan

**Greystones (1891 - 1975)**

*Mairin Ryan nee Cregan, teacher, nationalist, musician and author, resided with her husband Dr. (James) Jim Ryan at Kindlestown House, Greystones from the 1920's until her death in 1975. They are both buried in Redford Cemetery.*

Born in Co. Kerry in 1891, Mairin carried arms, ammunition, and messages from Sean McDermott to Austin Stack and other Volunteer

## Nationalist Activist

leaders in Kerry during Easter 1916. Dismissed from her teaching post because of her involvement with 'the rebels', she continued to be active on republican business, working for the Prisoners' Dependents' Fund, and canvassing for Sinn Féin in the 1918 general election. A member of Cumann na mBan, she was active during the War of Independence, and worked as assistant to Robert Brennan, Sinn Féin director of Foreign Affairs. She enjoyed a successful career as a journalist and author. Her works included *Hunger Strike*, a play drawing on her own experience as the wife of a hunger striker, and two children's books, *Old John* and *Rathina*.

Read 'Bringing word of the revolution' by Rosemary Raughter on [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org) to find out more.



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①  
Mairin Cregan with  
her husband Dr  
James Ryan TD

②  
Cover of Old John  
(1936)

③  
Irish Volunteer  
button

# Jennie Wyse Power

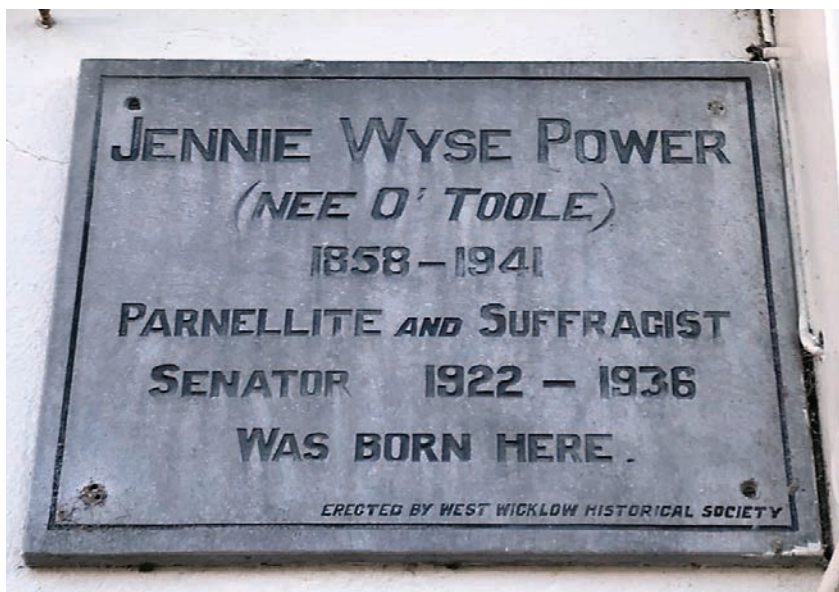
**Baltinglass (1858 – 1941)**

*Jennie Wyse Power (nee O'Toole) was born in Baltinglass, County Wicklow on 1st May 1858. She was an inspirational figure and a lifelong pioneer for female participation in Irish public life, remaining politically active until her late seventies. She died at the age of 82 in 1941.*

At the age of 23 Jennie became active in Anna Parnell's *Ladies Land League*, and later helped to found *Inghinidhe na hEireann*, the women's revolutionary society with Maude Gonne. She actively campaigned for Home Rule and was a lifelong advocate of women's suffrage. She served as vice-president of Arthur Griffith's *Sinn Féin*, co-founded *Cumann na mBan* in 1914 and acted as its first president. Indeed Jennie was one of the most important women of the Easter Rising. *The Proclamation of the Republic* was signed upstairs in her home on Henry Street in April 1916. She went on to become a member of Dublin Corporation and a Senator of the Free State.

**Women's rights activist,  
revolutionary, politician,  
businesswoman.**

Read *The Life Of Jennie Wyse Power Women's rights activist, revolutionary, politician, businesswoman* by Cora Crampton – West Wicklow Historical Society at [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)



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Plaque in  
Baltinglass, erected  
by West Wicklow  
Historical Society

②  
Portrait photo of  
Senator Jennie  
Wyse Power

③  
Jennie Wyse Power  
as a young woman



# Lizzie Le Blond

*Elizabeth Hawkins-Whitshed / Burnaby / Main / Le Blond*

## Greystones (1860 - 1934)

*Born in Dublin in 1860, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Hawkins-Whitshed grew up at Killincarrick House, Greystones. At nineteen she married adventurer and author Fred Burnaby, but shortly afterwards moved to Switzerland, where she quickly made her name as an alpinist, making more than one hundred ascents.*

Abandoning Switzerland for Norway and Lapland, she notched up a total of thirty-three climbs, twenty-seven of them first ascents. In 1907 she was a founder member and first President of the Ladies' Alpine Club, the first climbing association for women in the world. Lizzie recorded her mountaineering exploits in a series of books and articles, and in hundreds of photographs. She also travelled widely in Europe, the Far East and North America, and engaged in nursing and administrative work during World War I. Following Burnaby's death in battle in 1885, Lizzie married twice more. Active almost to the last, she died in 1934, and is buried in Brompton Cemetery, London.

## A Victorian Lady In The High Alps

Read *Elizabeth Hawkins-Whitshed of Killincarrick – A Victorian Lady in the High Alps* by Rosemary Raughter, Greystones Archaeological and Historical Society at [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)





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Lizzie in the Alps

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Lizzie as a young  
woman

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Atop a mountain  
peak

# Theodosia Blachford

**Rossana (1744 - 1817)**

*Born in 1744, Theodosia was the daughter of William Tighe MP, of Rossana Co. Wicklow. She married in 1770 and found herself widowed three years later with two small children, John and Mary. Theodosia survived both her children: in 1810 she nursed Mary in her final illness, while John died at Altidore in 1817 and Theodosia died in Dublin in November 1817.*

Being largely self educated herself, Theodosia keenly supervised her daughter's education. Mary would later achieve fame as the author of 'Psyche', whose admirers included Thomas Moore and the young Keats.

## Charitable Causes for Females

In about 1777 Theodosia 'fell in with the Methodists'. The founder of the movement, John Wesley, highly valued her contribution, visited her when in Dublin and preached one of his celebrated open-air sermons at Rossana. Impelled by her faith, Theodosia supported a number of charitable causes: these included the Leeson Street Magdalen Asylum and the Female Orphan House in Prussia Street, and in 1802 she opened her own institution, a House of Refuge for unemployed young women in Baggot Street.

Read 'Theodosia Blachford – One Of Our Jewels' by Rosemary Raughter at [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)



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Theodosia with her  
children

②  
Entrance porch to  
Rossanna House

③  
Old Sweet chestnut  
tree John Wesley at  
Rossanna

# Lucinda Sullivan

**Bray (1831 - 1881)**

*Lucinda Sullivan nee Brady was born in Bray in 1831. Trained as a nurse in Europe and London, she was an accomplished Victorian gentlewoman, artist, writer and philanthropist, promoting women's and children's welfare. Lucinda died in 1881 and is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin.*

Following a near drowning accident in Switzerland in 1872, Lucinda devoted the remainder of her life to nursing and caring for crippled children, as a thank-offering to God for her rescue.

In 1874 Lucinda raised funds to found the *Home for Crippled Children* in Bray. It was the first institution of its kind in Ireland, providing residential care and treatment for children with a range of crippling diseases, including rickets, tuberculosis and paralysis. A sunlight balcony was later developed for heliotherapy in the treatment of TB and the Home changed its name to 'Sunbeam House'. By 1877 its reputation prompted visits from William Gladstone, Lady Powerscourt and the Queen of Romania.

## Founder of Sunbeam House

Today, Sunbeam House is a major countywide multi-faceted disability service. Lucinda's legacy has been vast - 1000's of clients and 1000's of families have benefitted from the services initiated by her.

Read *Lucinda Sullivan Founder of Sunbeam House* by Delwen Giles at [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)





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Children at  
Sunbeam House

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Home for Crippled  
Children during the  
Bray floods

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Plaque to Lucinda  
Sullivan

# Kate Tyrrell

**Arklow (1863 - 1921)**

*Kate Tyrrell was born in Arklow in 1863 into a seafaring family. Edward Tyrrell and his wife Elizabeth had four daughters, of whom Kate was second eldest. As a child, she accompanied her father on voyages back and forth across the Irish Sea in the family schooner, developing a love of the sea that never waned.*

In 1885, Edward bought the *Denbighshire Lass*, a 62-ton schooner which Kate, acting as captain brought to Arklow. She was 22. When Edward died the following year, Kate became sole owner of the *Denbighshire Lass*. She took over control of the business and was an excellent captain, maintaining a highly disciplined ship. The law of the day did not recognize female ship owners or sea captains however, and Kate embarked on a long battle to have the law changed. Kate married John Fitzpatrick in 1896, whose name appeared on legal documents, until the law was changed in 1899. She died in 1921, aged 58

**The first Irishwoman to  
be called 'Captain'**

Information provided by Jim Rees of the Arklow Maritime museum, read the story of Kate Tyrrell, Arklow's 'Lady Mariner' on [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)



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Surviving picture  
of Kate Tyrrell



# Maria Curran

**Arklow (1862 - 1945)**

*Arklow's Maria Curran was born in 1862 and was a member of both Sinn Féin and Cumann na mBan. During the War of Independence. Her nephew Matthew Kavanagh was Commandant of the East Wicklow Brigade of the I.R.A.*

On 15 January, 1920, she was elected one of the first women councillors in Ireland and her appointment to the chair made her the first female council chairman in Ireland. Under her leadership, on 19 March 1920, Arklow UDC became one of the first local authorities to pass a resolution recognising Dáil Éireann.

## Arklow's Public Representative

To thwart confiscation by the RIC, on at least one occasion, Maria hid the council minute book in the chapel belfry across the road.

She was unanimously returned as chairman of Arklow UDC each year from 1920 to 1925, during which time she represented the people of Arklow at the funerals of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. She did not seek re-election after her 63rd birthday. She died on 20 May 1945, aged 83.

Read *Maria Curran - Arklow's Remarkable Public Representative* by Jim Rees at [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)



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Maria Curran



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Arklow crest

# Averil Deverell

**Greystones (1893 – 1979)**

*Averil Katherine Statter Deverell born in 1893, lived at Ellesmere, Church Road Greystones. During her life, Averil witnessed and played a firsthand role in momentous changes both for Ireland and for women. She died in 1979 and is buried at Redford Cemetery.*

Averil graduated with a law degree from Trinity in 1915 during World War 1. She served as a VAD Nursing Sister at Trinity and in Greystones, and as an ambulance driver in France. In 1918, cutting 12 inches off her cumbersome Edwardian skirt, she served in France and Flanders with the French Red Cross. Returning home, she trained as a barrister and became the first woman to practise as a barrister in Ireland. Entering the closed, male, confines of the Law Library at the Four Courts in January 1922 she was the first, and for 18 months the only, woman there. A keen amateur actress and golfer, Averil maintained a successful career as a barrister for the next four decades, retiring in 1969 as “Mother of the Bar”, commanding respect and affection in equal measure from her colleagues.

## A Trailblazing Life

Read more about Averil Deverell in ‘From Presentation to Pioneer’ by Liz Goldthorpe on [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)



①  
Miss Deverell's  
military passport  
1918 © The  
Honourable Society  
of King's Inns



②  
The Law Library  
at Dublin Castle  
in The Irish  
Independent, 14  
January 1931, pg9



③  
Miss Averil  
Deverell BL © The  
Honourable Society  
of King's Inns

# Josephine Heffernan

**Bray (1876 - 1962)**

*Josephine Heffernan was born in Dorset Street, Dublin in 1876. Moving to Bray in 1901, Josephine worked as a bookkeeper and trained as a teacher before travelling to America where she trained and signed up as a nurse serving in the US army. Josephine obtained the rank of chief nurse in the American army, of which there were only ten. She left the army with the rank of second lieutenant, the highest rank that a woman could possibly obtain.*

Her remarkable story came to light through the chance discovery of a bracelet in the French village of Rimaucourt by an 8 year old boy in 2002. The bracelet was marked Josephine G Heffernan, ABH 59 (American Base Hospital), USANC (United States Army Nursing Corps) and on the reverse had AEF.

## The Mysterious bracelet and the WW1 Nurse.

The story was unravelled with the help of the Bray Cualann Historical Society and a French film crew who made a documentary about her life and returned the bracelet to her living relatives in Wicklow in 2017. The handing over was filmed by RTÉ and French TV2

Read 'The Story Of The Josephine Heffernan Bracelet: From Bray To Rimmacourt France' by Brian White on [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)



①  
The Heffernan  
bracelet

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Image from RTÉ

③  
Josephine  
Heffernan

# *Dame Ninette De Valois*

**Blessington (1898 - 2001)**

*Dame Ninette de Valois was born Edris Stannus on June 6th 1898, at Baltiboy's House near Blessington. The family moved to Kent when Edris was seven but she retained a lifelong identification with Ireland until her death on March 8th, 2001 aged 102.*

Up until the 1920's the idea of an English ballet struck many people as ludicrous, ballet at that point meant the Russian ballet in all its glamour. Ninette challenged this perception and convinced people they could create their own national tradition. Invited by WB Yates to return to Ireland following her early success as a dancer and choreographer in England and elsewhere abroad, Ninette de Valois founded the Abbey School of Ballet in 1927, the foundation stone for ballet in Ireland today. Internationally she founded the Royal Ballet in the UK and was central to the founding of National Ballet Companies in Canada, Australia and Turkey. She was made a dame by King George VI in 1951, and in 1956 her company and school received a royal charter from Queen Elizabeth II, becoming the Royal Ballet.

## **Bringing Ballet to Britain**

Read 'Dame Ninette De Valois, The Wicklow woman who brought ballet to Britain' [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)





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Pictures of Ninette

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Royal Ballet

# Eliza Davis

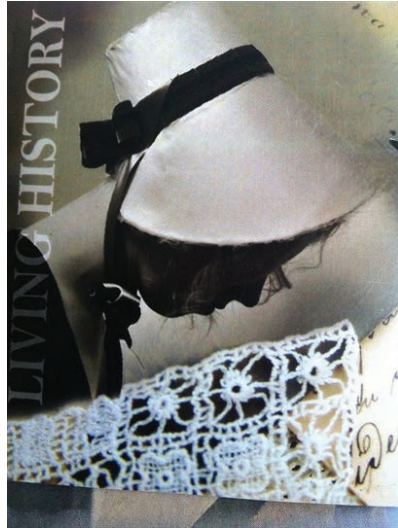
**Mullinacuff (1829 - 1898)**

*Eliza Davis, an orphan, was reared from infancy at the Foundling Hospital in Dublin. She lived in Australia for 53 years following her deportation from Wicklow Gaol, and died in 1898; according to her death certificate she was 69. She is survived by hundreds of descendants in Australia and New Zealand.*

Eliza was a survivor; a woman who through adversity from her birth, her epilepsy, her apprenticeship as a servant, the birth of her baby boy as an unmarried woman in 19th century Ireland; the alleged murder of her son, her arrest, trial, conviction and death sentence, commuted to transportation and her eventual life in Van Diemen's Land giving birth to nine children and being recognised as a midwife in her community.

## A Convicts Story

Read *The Tale of Eliza Davis Parts 1 & 2* by Joan Kavanagh on [www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)



①  
Eliza & Amos  
Eastwood

②  
19th Century cloth  
bonnet produced  
as a memorial to all  
women transported  
as convicts to  
Australia 1788-1853

③  
Historic Map of  
Van Diemen's Land  
c. 1854

# Anna Parnell

**Rathdrum (1852 - 1911)**

*Anna Parnell was born at Avondale near Rathdrum on 13 May 1852, the tenth of eleven children. Anna shared with her older brother Charles, a keen interest in Irish Nationalism and was a staunch activist on behalf of the poor as the founder of the Ladies' Land League in 1881.*

The Ladies Land League provided crucial support to evicted families at a time when many of the male Land League leaders were imprisoned. Finding the Land League records to be deplorably kept, the women compiled their own 'Book of Kells', with detailed information on every Irish estate. In spite of the male executive's ambivalence, and criticism from some Catholic Church leaders and many newspapers, numbers grew rapidly, with more than 500 branches of the Ladies' Land League throughout Ireland by the beginning of 1882.

## The Ladies Land League

Anna and the story of the Ladies Land League remain largely untold in Irish history books. Read *Anna Parnell- The Ladies' Land League And The Tale Of A Great Sham* By Rosemary Raughter (Greystones Archaeological & Historical Society)  
[www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)





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Avondale House,  
Rathdrum

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Anna Parnell. By  
Henry O'Shea of  
Limerick

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Police raid on  
Ladies' Land League  
meeting. Illustrated  
London News 1881

# Elizabeth Smith

## Baltiboy's (1797 - 1840)

*Elizabeth Smith nee Grant was born in Scotland in 1797 and married Colonel Henry Smith of Baltiboy's estate in West Wicklow in 1829. They had three children, Janey, Annie and Jack (grandfather of famous ballerina Ninette de Valois). Elizabeth, a remarkably intelligent and articulate woman kept a journal from 1840 until her death, stating that her purpose was to provide guidance and instruction for her children, yet it offers so much more.*

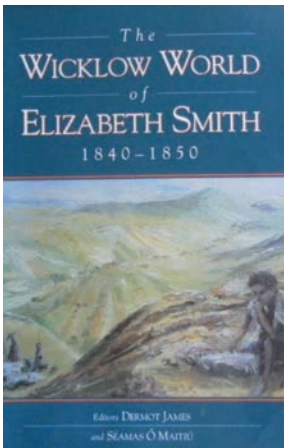
One of the major strengths of the journal is what it reveals about the Great Famine. Keeping a detailed record of the calamitous period, Elizabeth and her husband established their own programme of private relief in Baltiboy's for their most distressed tenants. By taking advantage of the British government's drainage loans scheme, the people were employed by the Smiths for as long as possible.

### A Journal of Wicklow during the Famine

Smith became well-acquainted with the wives and female relations of the tenants and labourers and recorded these interactions in vivid detail, providing a rich social history of their lives and daily activities.

Read more about Elizabeth Smith on  
[www.countywicklowheritage.org](http://www.countywicklowheritage.org)





①  
Baltiboy's House in  
West Wicklow

②  
Cover artwork for  
The Wicklow Owlrd  
of Elizabeth Smith

③  
Map showing  
Baltiboy's





**A note on**  
*the type*

The **Cardamon**<sup>™</sup> typeface family was designed by Brigitte Schuster and released as part of the exclusive Linotype Library in 2015. Cardamon is an old style serif design, whose proportions are inspired by 16th century punch-cutters Hendrik van den Keere and Robert Granjon. Due to this large x-height, good readability in small sizes is ensured in print and on screen. The roman weights have an oblique axis derived from the writing angle of the broad nib pen. The italics are notably distinct from the roman and has a literary tone. Cardamon is situated in the transitional style period, which contains elements of the pointed pen writing, and is also inspired by 16th century writing master Giovan Francesco Cresci as well as Robert Granjon's italics.

