



'No Good Days But The Present Ones?' Readers' Letters to Woman's Way 1963-69

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No Good Days but the Present Ones? *Readers' Letters to Woman's Way, 1963-9*

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I am almost 50 years of age and I remember no good days but the present ones. I remember cooking on an open fire ... I remember the dark, dismal homes of the countryside, lit by candles and oil-lamps, the dark, drab paint chosen to hide the dirt ... heavy kitchen tables being carried out to the yard for the weekly scrubbing. I have no regrets for the days that are gone.

Mrs K., Carlow, *Woman's Way* letters page, 30 November 1963

Mrs K. went on to praise 'plastics, cookers and heaters' for the changes they had wrought in her life. Despite the accelerated provision of electricity and piped water to urban and rural dwellings that changed Irish women's lives forever in this decade, Mrs K.'s detail about domestic facilities and tasks was unusual in the *Woman's Way* letters page. Equivalent British women's magazines of the late 1950s and mid 1960s featured many letters that were celebrations of (specific) new houses and elegies for old, but neither novelty nor nostalgia spurred Irish women to put pen to paper to the same extent about their living and working conditions. Although they contributed 'handy hints' about cooking and house maintenance, when they mentioned houses, services and even families, it was in the context of a general discussion.¹

Over the past forty-five years, academic studies of women's magazines by Cynthia White, Janice Winship, Margaret Ballaster & Ros Beetham, Jennifer Scanlan, Joke Hermes, Nancy Walker and Valerie Korinek have routed Betty Friedan's earlier, selective analysis which concluded that these publications oppressed women. All the authors mentioned above, while they acknowledge magazines' consumer-driven agenda, agree (with differing emphases), that women read magazines both for practical information and for fantasy, not passively, but in a critical, often resisting way.² And women write to magazines in a variety of voices, too. Not all letter-writers to *Woman's Way*, as we shall see, subscribed to the buoyant optimism of the decade, or agreed that there were 'no good days but the present ones'.

Although *Woman's Way*, which began in April 1963, was not the first Irish women's magazine, it was the first to have a readers' letters (as opposed to a problem) page, and maybe that was why it was greeted with rapture by its early readers.³ Changing economic and social conditions, including improved spending power and transport, meant that this magazine achieved countrywide circulation and a penetration of rural Ireland, in particular, which had not been attained by any of its predecessors. Its first editor was Sean O'Sullivan, and Caroline Mitchell took over in 1965. From the start the magazine urged women to take part in political and public life, O'Sullivan lamenting in 1963 that there were only five women in Dáil Éireann; if there were seventy-eight, 'things would really simmer'. He returned to this theme several times. Mitchell, in her turn, reminded readers of their political responsibilities.⁴ The magazine featured columns by broadcasters on television and radio and by people in public life – Charles Mitchel, Monica Sheridan, Frank Hall, Frances Condell (the first female mayor of Limerick) and Al Byrne (at that stage more famous than his brother Gay). An array of journalists including Monica McEnroy, Mary Leland and Maeve Binchy produced long articles on women in prison, women's legal rights, prostitution, bedsitter life, children in institutions, the educational reforms, birth control, nuns, prison reform, adoption, and many other topics. A four-page article by Máire Comerford on the women of 1916 marked the Rising's fiftieth anniversary.⁵ Problems were answered initially by Maura Laverty, but from late 1963 by Angela Macnamara, who also had a problem page on *The Sunday Press*.⁶

READERS' LETTERS

There were in or around 1744 letters written to *Woman's Way* between April 1963 and December 1969.⁷ Its title changed from 'Pen to Paper' to 'Over To You' in 1965, a phrase, significantly, borrowed from broadcasting. Every letter

published won a guinea (£1 1s.) for its writer, and from mid 1968 one letter in each issue was awarded a Prize Bond and given prominence on the page.

Letters to magazines or newspapers cannot be read as 'pure' evidence of public opinion in any given era. Not all people read magazines and newspapers and of those who do, not all write letters. Doing so requires, first of all, literacy, and second, confidence and third, the time and wherewithal to compose a letter and post it. Then there is no way of knowing what selection criteria were employed by editors in deciding what letters to publish. They could decide to publish a balance of letters on a particular topic, or to save a number of letters on the same topic and publish them all together. It would not be useful, therefore, to compare the number of letters that were, say, sympathetic to birth control with those which opposed it.⁸ It is useful, however, to look at the kind of issues that prompted women (and some men) to write in, and the tone which they wrote.

The magazine commented happily in 1964 that it could not publish even a fiftieth of the letters it got; it is surprising, therefore, that some correspondents' names featured several times over the years.⁹ What spurred people to write? What can loosely be called women's status (including contraception and also marriage, earning mothers, and other issues peculiar to women), made up 18 per cent (332) of letters in these years. Children, young people, education/training accounted for 14 per cent (244). Miscellaneous/current affairs made up over a quarter of all letters (27 per cent, 467). The largest category of all, and one common to British magazines as well at this time, comprised three subcategories – 'Handy Hints', 'Things They Say/Do' (funny things children, husbands and other relatives said or did) and consumer suggestions ('Why Don't They'). Always very short (three or four lines only), this kind of letter made up 45 per cent (783) of all letters sent in. Mrs M. Stakem from Co. Westmeath and Mrs B. Landers from Co. Kilkenny made a cottage industry of these short letters between 1966 and 1969, each writing in at least twelve or thirteen times.¹⁰

It would be impossible to do justice to all these categories, so this article confines itself to the women's status, and the miscellaneous categories. Letters on young people, with their discussion of the introduction of free secondary education and the ongoing seesaw between denigration and defence of modern youth, deserve an article on their own. The 'Handy Hints/Why Don't They' category would be an excellent source for the historian of consumption and material culture.

MISCELLANEOUS

These letters usually reacted to articles in the magazine and were sometimes prompted by current affairs, suggesting that *Woman's Way* correspondents read newspapers, listened to the radio and watched television.

Concern about Travelling People, or 'itinerants', was constant. 'Fair-minded' Port Laoise wrote in 1964 that 'in God's eyes the tinkers are as important as any other group of human beings', and two years later Mrs K. Crotty, Waterford, referred to 'the grave injustices the itinerants have suffered at our hands'. Several other letters on this topic were published right down to December 1969 when John McDonald won a Prize Bond for saying that Irish people should not be shocked at the anti-immigration attitudes of British MP Enoch Powell, 'considering the kick-around our itinerants get'.¹¹

Many comments about matters religious had to do with contraception and will be discussed in the context of women's status, but inevitably in this decade of Vatican II, other aspects of religious belief and practice were explored. It was unfair that mixed-marriage couples couldn't adopt children, M.P.L., Dublin, wrote in 1968. The new informality of the Catholic Church was welcomed by some, deplored by others. When Mrs J. Andrews, Castlecomer, praised Fr Michael Cleary for 'coming down to the level of the people', H.B., Mallow, reacted sharply: 'Did He [Christ] worry about coming down to people's levels?' Sheila Kerr, Belfast, hoped the 'human kindness and charity' of England's new Cardinal Heenan would be emulated in Ireland: 'It is time that the Irish hierarchy stopped hiding behind a veil of awe'. In 1969 there was some controversy about whether women should continue to cover their heads at Mass. The previous year, Mrs M.L., Waterford, was upset about the Kennedy-Onassis marriage, wondering why 'Jackie' had put herself outside the Church: 'we all loved her'. Other readers wrote in to wish the former Mrs Kennedy well.¹²

Cáit Ní Mhuineacáin, 'An Muilleann Chearr', wrote in 1968 to disagree with Fr Cleary's claim that teaching children Irish did not prepare them for decent employment in British cities. (The slanted, oblique acknowledgment of the persistence of emigration should be noted and will be referred to in the conclusion, below.) Yes to compulsory Irish but no to corporal punishment, a group of Roscommon friends decided early in 1967, while 'A Parent', Tuam, called for less Irish in schools and more health and hygiene. Aidín Ní Chaoimh, Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, defended the language, and Damhnait Ní Néill, 'Port Láirge', took issue with the magazine's 'weekly comment', which, although in favour of the language generally, was against compulsion.¹³

The relocation of civil servants from Dublin to Mayo in 1968 provoked a

series of letters. Miss M. McC., Co. Sligo, and A.C., Castlebar, in two separate letters flatly contradicted 'Eileen' some weeks earlier who had claimed that it was nearly impossible to buy nylons west of the Shannon. A strongly worded letter from Mrs T.M.R., Dublin 4, expressing horror at moving her family to the 'dire poverty' of the west, showed that 'Eileen's' fear and loathing were not unusual. But Mrs M.H.D., Dublin, pointed out that she had lived in both Athlone and Castlebar, that there were at least half a dozen 'charitable and recreational societies' and the shops were as good as those in Dublin. She closed by wondering how many Dublin dwellers extended a helping hand to people who had made the far more common move in the other direction.¹⁴

Other letters were on topics as diverse as clothes sense, expensive weddings, unannounced Sunday visits, and the plight of islanders.¹⁵

WOMEN'S STATUS

Women working outside the home (or not), birth control and family size; women on the land, women and politics and unmarried mothers, were the issues that came up most for discussion. A mild discussion about hospital versus home birth (mostly in favour of the latter) meandered along between 1966 and 1969.¹⁶

The magazine's emphasis on women's rights was appreciated almost immediately. Mrs M. Bentley, Dublin, wrote delightedly that when her daughter expressed surprise at a work colleague who had to go home to make her brother's tea, another colleague said, '... Have you been reading *Woman's Way* too?' L.G.O., Kerry, wrote in some months later to assure readers that women were going to insist on equal pay in her part of the country at any rate, though she was vague on the details of how they would manage it.¹⁷

The question of whether married women, and specifically mothers, should work outside the home was debated as vigorously in 1969 as it was in 1963: only a small number of letters can be referred to here. Working unsupervised and being your own boss was the best thing about staying at home, Stay-at-Home Mother, Thurles, commented in 1965, comparing it with what must have been an unhappy working experience: 'with every action watched and every word you say contradicted and criticised'. 'Co Leitrim Granny' believed women should have their own money, but worried that if a couple became too dependent on two wages, they would never start a family.¹⁸ Mrs M.O'S., Bandon, was not in favour of mothers working outside the home, and Mrs J.C., Delvin, believed the working mother neglected the home and family. Mrs J.M. O'F., Sligo, reluctantly agreed with her, because she believed it was important for mothers to do something away from the family.¹⁹ But Nóirín Doyle,

Cobb, found that she had more time and energy for her baby when she came home after a day's work, and 'Delighted', Shantalla, Galway, said she was a better-tempered wife for working. John Hutton, Sallins, had to give up work and stay at home with the family for health reasons; his wife got a job and she was now 'happier and years younger'.²⁰ Mrs John Cunnane, Castlerea, wrote in 1963 that she was glad she had given up work to stay at home when her children were small, and Mrs Anne Molloy, Dublin 9, echoed her the following year, but Cunnane was a National teacher and Molloy a hairdresser, and both jobs, the women admitted, could be resumed when their children were older.²¹ Not all women were this lucky. Home-based earning was difficult, too, and a number of home-knitters in particular wrote in to complain about the terrible pay; M.M.G., Cavan, was paid only 1s. 7d. an ounce, and hoped 'the women's rights campaign, long overdue' would do something for her.²²

Letters about contraception featured far more often than those on paid work, and again, only a representative sample can be given here. Readers' letters on this topic only began to be published in 1966, although the magazine had referred to it already. Sean O'Sullivan was against artificial birth control, as was Angela Macnamara.²³ As time went on, the editorial content of the magazine cautiously favoured birth control, though Macnamara continued to oppose it in the problem page.

The first readers' letters on contraception were responses to an article by Monica McEnroy, when the pope's decision was still awaited. A.M. objected to this 'untimely, aggressive and irresponsible article'; the magazine should not 'rouse the public to a state of readiness for contraception when a decision is still being awaited from those best-equipped to give [it]'. 'Prospective Wife' invoked God's private relationship with the couple, and quoted the old saying: 'If men were to have every second child, there would never be more than three in a family.' Elizabeth Dalton, a mother of 5, practising the safe period since after the first was born, anxiously awaited the pope's decision, but thought that challenging his authority was 'going too far'.²⁴

Letters opposing contraception usually did so by praising the unplanned family; Mrs E.R. Kirwan, who had four children, admitted resenting every pregnancy at first, but said she 'would not be without' any of them. The very idea that children could be planned was difficult for many couples who had married in the hard times of the 1940s and 1950s to reconcile with their experience of triumphant struggle against the odds, and many wrote in to express this. Typical was Mrs Eilis Ryan, Enniscorthy, with ten children under eighteen on a 'small wet farm' and the house 'full of song and laughter': 'I sincerely thank God that we left the planning of our family to Him'. Mrs A.J., Rathangan,

wondered why people needed to plan their families, especially in modern times: 'with all modern conveniences it's a shame to hear Irish Catholic mothers talk of family planning'.²⁵

Happy Mother, Laois, wrote in 1964 that she was annoyed at being commiserated with on the birth of her seventh son – 'And I'm sure all-girl families feel the same', but it was not long before the seven-child family was seen by some readers as problematic in itself, regardless of the children's sex. Mrs A.G., Roscommon, described children as a 'blessing', but believed the 'hardship and squalor' of big families made family planning necessary. Mother-of-seven Mrs P.C., Monkstown, liked big families in principle but thought couples should space out the births. Mrs M.E.D., Laois, had five and 'wouldn't mind' another five, and was disgusted in hospital to hear other mothers talking about contraception, but believed planning was a 'decision' for husband and wife. Mrs N.W., Dublin, referred to the 'mental anguish of ill-timed pregnancy'. 'Mental anguish' was perhaps too mild to describe the plight of Mrs A.F., Wicklow, who had had nine children, four of whom had died and 'every second one' of whom was 'handicapped'. Her priest had told her that the laws of the Church couldn't be changed: 'Every mother will understand the heartbreak I have suffered.'²⁶

There were many other letters on this topic, up to 1969. A whole page of letters in September 1968 reacted to the papal encyclical. M.F., Tullamore, was disappointed with it, but marriage was for bringing children into the world, and selfish people made bad parents. N.G., Mayo, did not agree, and quoted theologian Karl Rahner on the conscience of the individual. The letters were about evenly balanced for and against, though this could have been an editorial policy. There was, however, no discernible regional pattern.²⁷

Contraception concerned married women only; discussion of unmarried mothers was linked to the need for sex education, a point made frequently and vehemently by Angela Macnamara on the problem page. K.M.D., Co. Dublin, called for long prison sentences for 'unmarried fathers' and this was typical of the tone of correspondence on this topic, which began in 1967 and continued for the rest of the decade. Mrs P.D., Tullamore, linked unmarried motherhood to the lack of sex education, but Mrs Rita Johnson, Dublin, a mother of four daughters, did not believe that 'any girl attending a city convent' was ignorant of sex education; pregnancy is 'the incidental penalty a girl must suffer when she deliberately flouts the teaching of the 6th commandment'. At least four readers wrote in to disagree with her. Two articles the following year on the 'Pregnant from Ireland' phenomenon in British social workers' case loads prompted one unmarried mother to praise mother-and-baby home Sean Ross Abbey in Roscrea for the kindness she had experienced there, and to urge other

pregnant unmarried women not to go to England. A claim (made by a writer to the problem page) that there were no unmarried mothers twenty-eight years before, made Mrs Alice Drennan, Dublin 8, 'smile': 'Perhaps my part of the country [she must have been a rural migrant settled in Dublin] was different but we had quite a large number and it was the same in my mother's day.' She praised Angela Macnamara's 'kindness and commonsense'.²⁸

Politics came up very occasionally. 'Party Worker', Bray, thought it 'dreadful' that so few women took an interest in politics, M.K., Co. Carlow pleaded for more women TDs. Mrs B.D., Mallow, criticized women for their political apathy, P.K., Dublin 14, encouraged more women to get involved in public life, as did E. Hurley, also Dublin 14. These letters were few and far between; it was a slow-simmering issue compared to family planning.²⁹

Courtship was sometimes discussed. Mrs B. MacC., Leitrim, caused controversy in 1968 when she advised mothers not to 'throw [their daughters] on the rubbish heap, namely the dancehall'. She had 'placed' her four daughters in 'good positions'. Two were doctors and had married doctors, one was a bank clerk and married a bank official, and the airhostess married a pilot. Four readers challenged her. Mrs Miriam Luby, Co. Dublin, said that she was married with 'six wonderful children and a devoted husband, whom, may I say, I met at a dance'. 'Five Foxtrotters', Dublin 7, also protested, claiming they had all met their 'well-educated' boyfriends at dances; three were engaged and two 'doing steady lines'.³⁰

Not every woman wanted to find a husband, although Louise Dennis, Wexford, in 1963 suggested that women rejected marriage through 'fussiness' and a love of 'the good life', and regretted it later. This was a common view, but it gave way later in the 1960s to the widely held opinion that single women were rejects. In 1968 N.B., Waterford, reacted scornfully to a *Late Late Show* guest who claimed that Irish women could not converse intelligently. If an Irishman heard a girl express an opinion, she said, 'he takes off so fast that even Arkle couldn't catch up with him'. 'Planted firmly on the shelf' herself because she was too outspoken, if she had her time over, 'I'd act the dumb cluck with the best of them'. This was obviously tongue-in-cheek: Ireland in the late 1960s still had a very high proportion of active middle-aged single women in the population, who had refused or missed marriage in the 1940s or 1950s. They may have been surprised to find themselves defended by Mrs Sheila O'Farrell in a prize letter in 1968 '[they] are not freaks, but wonderful women who make the world a better place to live in'.³¹

Farmwomen, so often overlooked in magazines worldwide,³² claimed *Woman's Way* as their magazine, too. 'Stay-at-Home', Athy, was twenty-one

in 1965 and 'could not be any happier than I am, living and working on the family farm'; she was also an active member of the Irish Countrywomen's Association and Macra na Feirme. Farmer's Wife, Kilkenny, noted in 1966 that there were 'no letters from farmers on your page' so she decided to give 'city readers' an itemized timetable of the farmwoman's day. Although her letter was not a complaint, it provoked two sour urban responses.³³ But this anti-ruralism did not stop farmwomen using the letters page to talk to each other. 'Flabbergasted', west west Cork (sic), told in 1967 of how a young farmer on a first date asked her age, occupation, pay, and cooking ability; whether she dyed her hair; the cause of her mother's early death and, significantly, whether she would be able to keep on her job after marriage. J.R., Dublin 6, on a visit to her home place, was asked by a young farmer on a date if her position in Dublin was good enough for her to save for a dowry, and a 19-year-old farmer's son asked 16-year-old C.L.C., Limerick, if she had any land.³⁴ S.F., Cork, pointed out, in farmers' defence, that they couldn't 'afford' to marry for love, but 'Thirty-Acre Happiness' wrote of how he had married a 'working-class city girl' and eighteen years and eight children later, they were still happy, despite having no money; 'not all farmers are the same', he reminded readers.³⁵ Mrs M.T., Co. Mayo, told readers that Knock Marriage Bureau had found that women, not men, were the reluctant farm spouses, because farmers' daughters didn't want the hard lives their mothers had. She assured readers that farm life had improved, with modern serviced houses and cars, and 'nobody makes a better or truer husband than a hard-working farmer'. Young women's flight from the land, often viewed in this decade as short-sighted and selfish, was explained by Mrs M.M., Limerick city: only the inheriting son could stay on the land, the others had to find work elsewhere, and she described the day she had to take the train to the city as 'one of the saddest I can remember'. On a lighter note, 'Weary-worn', Mallow, in 1966 highlighted the irrelevance to farmwomen of Al Byrne's recommendation that wives glamorize themselves for their husbands' evening homecomings:

Can he just see her in buttons and bows
 As she sits in her milking shed milking the cows?
 Hubby's been up all night with a pig,
 So he won't notice her curlers or wig –

... and more in the same vein.³⁶

CONCLUSION

In contrast to the frequency with which contraception was discussed in the letters, marital breakdown was never addressed at all. The magazine readily published challenges to Catholic teaching on birth control, so it cannot have been reluctant to publish letters questioning the indissolubility of marriage. Such letters must not have been written. Commentators on the liberalization of sexual behaviour in Ireland refer to 'divorce, contraception and abortion' as if in ascending order of gravity, but for *Woman's Way* readers in the 1960s, the order of the first two, at least, was contraception, with divorce a long way off. Husband-wife relationships were the subject of a long-running, semi-jocular back and forth from early in 1964 right to 1969, about whether husbands and wives should bring each other tea in bed; polish each other's shoes; remember each other's birthdays; give each other little surprises. Mrs E. O'Sullivan, Limerick, warned readers not to take their husbands for granted, in 1967; the following year Miss M.G., Cork, commented how awful it was when husbands took wives for granted. This was about as serious as it got, and when Mrs P.T., Drogheda, used a phrase from the popular TV quiz show, *Quicksilver*, 'Get down!', to illustrate how some husbands put wives down when they tried to do anything for themselves, the tone of her letter stood out starkly in contrast to the others.³⁷

Britain, or England, was rarely mentioned in the letters, either. Although it had slowed down since its highest point in the previous decade, emigration was still ongoing. The 1960s also saw thousands coming back to Ireland from Britain to make a new life. Almost every Irish person over twenty-five in 1963 either had relatives in Britain, or some personal experience of living there.³⁸ Over these years, however, there were only ten letters on emigration to *Woman's Way*, and over half of these deplored the emigration of young teenagers or pregnant unmarried women. When M.G., Lifford, commented in 1968 that 'we should thank God' for emigration, because 'without it, what would many a poor woman with a large family do?' she was drawing attention to an uncomfortable social reality. A more modern view of youth emigration as social failure was expressed by Mrs Brigid O'Donnell, also from Donegal, the following year. But why, Maureen Gogarty from Dundalk wanted to know, were Irish people who went to England 'scorned' when those who went to Australia and America were given parties and wished well? Joyce Peck, Goole, Yorkshire, reacted with annoyance in 1969 to a correspondent who had said that suburbs were making Irish people more English than the English. England wasn't all suburbia, Peck pointed out – she herself lived on a farm – and anyway, if English suburbs were so bad, why were so many Irish people coming to live there? When M. Attard,

Colchester, had outlined some years earlier the many advantages of having gone back to nursing after her baby was born, she did not point out that she could not have done this in Ireland.³⁹ Britain was an over-arching presence for Irish people, and those who spent money on an Irish magazine in preference to a British one, although willing and able to complain about life in Ireland, were probably unwilling to hold Britain up as an example, and would have resented advice or comparisons from friends and relations who had settled there.

The comparative absence of specific discussion on housing at a time of cataclysmic housing change in Ireland was noted at the beginning, but the letters written to comparable British women's magazines differed in other ways also. *Woman's Realm*, 1958–60, and *Woman's Own*, 1966, two magazines almost identical in structure and content to *Woman's Way*, carried many celebratory letters about specific relatives (daughters, mothers, in-laws) and musings on life in general and domestic life in particular that rarely featured in the Irish magazine. Discussion of political matters and social issues featured but the tone was mild, and the personal was separate and distinct from the political, or broadly social, in a way that it was not in *Woman's Way*.⁴⁰ Miss C.D., Dublin, wrote to one of the British magazines, *Woman's Own*, in 1966 about a farmer encountered at a Dublin ballroom who, when asked if he was enjoying the evening or not, replied that it made a change from looking at the cattle all day.⁴¹ Comparison of Irish dancehalls with cattle marts was common in Ireland, but British readers were not to know this; it was published as an amusing story. Had Miss C.D. sent her letter to *Woman's Way*, it would have provoked a flurry of letters attacking and defending farmers, dancehalls, and perhaps even cattle.

In November 1966 Mrs Oishi, Cheshire, told *Woman's Own* that she had used the letters page as an example of the humour, commonsense and 'outlook on life' of English women, in an article for a Japanese magazine. Earlier that year Mr A.R. Kimmings, Middlesex, complimented the letterwriters to *Woman's Own*, suggesting that 'if they could escape the day-long tasks of home and family, many would blossom into first-class novelists and feature writers'.⁴² Mrs M.L., Cork, however, envisaged quite a different function for the *Woman's Way* letters column: it should, she suggested, be compulsory reading for 'every priest, bishop and Dáil deputy in the country'.⁴³

NOTES

1. *Woman's Way* (hereafter WW) letters page 30 November 1963. *Woman's Realm* July 1958–December 1960: *Woman's Own* January–December 1966 (hereafter WR and WO).

2. Cynthia White, *Women's Magazines 1693-1968* (London 1969), pp. 123-303; Janice Winship, *Inside Women's Magazines* (London 1987); R. Ballaster, M. Beetham, E. Frazer and S. Hebron, *Women's Worlds: ideology, femininity and the woman's magazine* (London 1991); Jennifer Scanlan, *Inarticulate Longings: the Ladies' Home Journal, gender and the promises of consumer culture* (London 1995); Joke Hermes, *Reading women's magazines: an analysis of everyday media use* (Oxford 1995); Nancy Walker, *Shaping our Mothers' World: American women's magazines* (Mississippi 2000); Linda Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs: reading Chatelaine magazine in the 50s and 60s* (Toronto 2000); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, London, 1963), ch. 2.
3. E.g. the letters page, WW 26 April 1963; 15 May 1963, 1 June 1963. The magazine appeared fortnightly until autumn 1966. Previous and current titles included *Model Housekeeping* (1927-1966), *Woman's Mirror* (1933-56), *Woman's Life* (1936-59) and *The Irish Tatler & Sketch* (still current). None of these magazines had a readers' letters page..
4. 'By The Way' WW 15 May 1963, 31 January 1964: Editorial letter, 15 April 1965.
5. See, e.g. WW 1 March 1966, Mary Leland on women in prison, and on a wife's legal rights 15 March 1966; Veronica Kelly on prostitution, 15 May 1966, Heather Lukes on bedsitters 10 February 1967, and on wives who go out to work 21 October 1966, Veronica Kelly on children in institutions 15 April 1966, and at least three articles on education, by Veronica Kelly, 1 March 1966, Sheelagh Lewis 21 October 1966, and Maeve Binchy 7 May 1967; unmarried mothers McEnroy 3 February 1967; nuns Monica McEnroy 13 January 1967; adoption by J. McGinn 28 July 1967 and McEnroy 20 June 1969; 'Carve Their Name in Pride: women of 1916' 1 April 1966.
6. Maura Laverty (1907-1966), journalist, author of four critically acclaimed, banned novels in the 1940s, best-known to Irish people in the 1960s as a cookery writer, broadcaster and originator of Ireland's first TV soap opera, *Tolka Row*. Angela Macnamara (1931-), who took over from Laverty in late 1963, was the mother of four daughters. She had written a number of articles on family themes for the very popular Jesuit periodical the *Irish Messenger* in 1960-1, was a popular public speaker on family issues, and also answered problems on the *Sunday Press* from 1963 to 1980. The problem page in WW will be discussed in full by this author in a forthcoming book.
7. 'In or around' because some issues are missing in 1966 and an occasional issue in other years before and after.
8. Sadly there is no letters archive in *Woman's Way*, so it is impossible to do the kind of analysis Valerie Korinek did of editorial letters policy for Canada's *Chatelaine*, *Roughing It*.
9. WW 1 August 1964. Recurring names included Louise Dennis, Enniscorthy, Sheila O'Farrell, Cork, Jean Bunyan, Listowel, Eileen Quinn, Mayo, John McDonald, Naas, Margaret O'Donoghue, Buttevant and P.D., Tullamore.
10. Mrs Stakem, WW 15 August 1966, 14 October 1966, 11 November 1966, 1 December 1967 and so on up to 20 December 1968. Mrs Landers began a little later, 24 February 1967, 7 April 1967, 7 July 1967, and kept going till 19 September 1969.
11. Port Laoise WW 14 March 1964; Crotty, 1 March 1966; Enoch Powell 12 December

1969. Other letters on the Travelling people/itinerants were on 27 January 1967 (3); 16 June 1967; 7 February 1969; 18 April 1969.
12. WW Castlecomer 29 March 1968; Mallow 17 May 1968; 'veil of awe' 28 February 1969; head-covering 1 August 1969 (2), 19 September 1969; 'we all loved her' 15 November 1968, and other comments 13 December 1968, 20 December 1968 and 3 January 1969.
 13. Ní Mhuineanacáin, WW 29 March 1968; M.O.Roscommon 6 January 1967; Tuam, 13 January 1967; Ní Caoimh, 10 January 1969; Ní Néill, 3 October 1969. Other letters, 1/4/65; 18 November 1966.
 14. Miss McC., A.C., WW 26/4/68; Mrs T.M.R., 3 May 1968; Mrs M.H.D., 31 May 1968. Several other letters on this topic, positive and negative, 7 June 1968, 8 June 1969, 25 July 1969, 19 September 1969.
 15. Clothes, D.F Dublin, WW 14 December 1963; weddings, Noel Collins, Midleton, 30 September 1965; Sunday visitors Mrs P.F. Thurles liked them, but Mrs K.M. Sligo, did not: 19 May 1967; islanders, K.McSweeney, Dublin 5, 28 March 1969.
 16. Births, Mrs N. Scully, Dublin 9, WW 14 October 1966; Mrs E.R., Waterford, 11 November 1966: Once-bitten, Dublin, 18 December 1966; Mrs R.S., Limerick, 19/4/68; Mrs P.D., Offaly, 24 May 1968.
 17. Bentley, WW 31 August 1963: Kerry, 30 November 1963.
 18. Thurles, WW 16 October 1965; Leitrim, 30 April 1964.
 19. M.O'S., WW 20 January 1967; J.C., 8 September 1967; J.M. O'F., 3 November 1967.
 20. Cobh, WW 2 December 1966; Shantalla, 2 December 1966; Sallins, 21 October 1966.
 21. Cunnane, WW 31 August 1963; Molloy, 2 December 1966.
 22. M.M.G, WW 19 January 1968: other letters on this topic Mrs M.H., Drumcondra; Mrs T.D., Kilkenny 1 March 1968.
 23. 'By The Way', WW 30 November 1963, 14 March 1964; Angela Macnamara, 'Can I Help You' passim, but for example, 1 May 1966, 1 September 1967, 16 June 1967.
 24. 'The Pill: what readers think', WW 14 October 1966.
 25. Kirwan, WW 11 November 1966: Ryan, 21 June 1968.; Other letters in support of big families as such: Mrs A.J., Rathangan, 24 November 1967; Mrs N. Linehan, 9 May 1969.
 26. Happy, WW 29 February 1964; squalor, Mrs M.E.D., Laois, and space, both 26 January 1968; anguish, tragic story both 28 July 1967.
 27. All WW 6 September 1968; other letters, 27 September 1968, 4 October 1968, 4 July 1969 and passim.
 28. Jail, WW 24 March 1967; sex education, 2 April 1967; other letters, W.F., Mallow, 5 May 1967, Mrs Johnson, 6 October 1967, and disagreement, D.W., Portarlinton, 10 November 1967, B.Ryan, Kilkenny, 17 November 1967, P.D., Tullamore, 24 November 1967, Miss N.R., Birr, 1 December 1967. Pregnant from Ireland articles by Michael Keating, 19 July 1968, 26 July 1968; 'Irish unmarried mother' praise of Sean Ross, 1 November 1968; Drennan, 12 December 1969.
 29. Bray, WW 1 June 1966; M.K, 15 August 1966; B.D., 17 November 1967; PK., 6 December 1968 and E. Hurley, 13 June 1969.
 30. B.MacC., WW 23 February 1968: Luby, Foxtrotters, 5 April 1968, as well as 2 letters from M.G., Dublin 2 and A.O'G., Carrick-on-Suir.

31. Dennis, WW 14 October 1963; N.B., 16 February 1968: not freaks, 19 September 1969.
32. Canadian women were particularly annoyed about this, Korinek, *Roughing It*, p. 364.
33. Athy, WW 1 May 1965; Kilkenny, 15 January 1966; sour responses, Y. Kelly, Terenure, and S. O'Farrell, Cork, 1 March 1966.
34. Flabbergasted, WW 7 April 1967; J.R., Dublin 6, 19 May 1967; Limerick, 26 May 1967.
35. S.F. and 30-Acre both WW 21 July 1967, which also carried other letters on this topic from Mrs K., Midleton, and M.M.D., Rathcoole.
36. Knock, WW 15 August 1969; M.M., 11 July 1969; Weary-worn, 1 May 1966.
37. Tea in bed or not, C.H., Naas, WW 1 April 1965 (taking turns); A.B., Kilrush, 10 February 1967: married 6 years always got breakfast every morning in bed, husband great; M.T.B., Longford, 10 March 1967 (never a cup of tea); Mrs D.M., Castleknock, 28 April 1967 (women shouldn't be brought tea). Taking for granted, O'Sullivan, 17 February 1967; M.G., 1 November 1968; 'Get down', Mrs P.T., Drogheda, WW 8 November 1968.
38. Enda Delaney, *Demography, State and Society: Irish migration to Britain 1921-1971* (Liverpool 2000), pp. 160-298.
- 39 Persistence of emigration into 1960s, Delaney, *Demography.*, pp. 185-298. Lifford, WW 27 September 1968; 'failure', 25/4/69; Gogarty, 31 October 1969; Peck, 15 July 1969, and the letter to which she was reacting, Mrs J.O'Driscoll, Cork, 8 June 1969; Attard, Colchester, 1 November 1965.
40. E.g letters to WR July-December 1958 had 250 letters: family/friends (celebratory) 24 per cent (60) of all letters: housing and living conditions 18 (7.2 per cent) and miscellaneous with emphasis on musing, local history and custom, and curiosities 31.6 per cent (79). WO January-December 1966, 679 letters to the editor: family and friends 12.8 per cent (87), community and neighbours 5.8 per cent (40), miscellaneous 43.7 per cent (297), women's status and politics 3.3 per cent (23).
41. WO 6 August 1966.
42. Oishi, WO 26 November 1966: Kimmings, 19 February 1956.
43. WW 7 March 1969.