7.1. Female Activism in Rural Civil Society: Women on Farms and in Agricultural Organisations in the Twentieth Century

Panel organiser: Varley, Tony, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland; Moser, Peter, Archives of Rural History Bern, Switzerland

The crucial importance of the impacts women have made in agricultural and rural economies and societies has long been recognised. Yet their many and diverse contributions to agricultural organisations, farmers’ parties and international agricultural organisations have been largely overlooked by historians. Such an omission has, if anything, tended to reproduce and even amplify the marginalisation of women in rural societies. In this panel we will consider the experience of women farmers and non-farmers in a variety of agricultural organisations. How did these relatively few, but often remarkably strong, women negotiate a way forward for themselves and their organisations? These questions can be studied by exploring the roles the women performed, the contexts in which they operated. This paper focuses on the role played by Louise Howard in the International Labour Organisation in the interwar years. Between 1920 and 1930, Howard, a former lecturer in classics at Cambridge, was the head of the Agricultural Service of the ILO. Howard particularly tried to promote the Agricultural Service’s role as an international hub for the circulation of statistical data and information on social questions concerning agricultural organisations. Howard at the ILO in the Interwar Years

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This paper focuses on the role played by Louise Howard in the International Labour Organisation in the interwar years. Between 1920 and 1930, Howard, a former lecturer in classics at Cambridge, was the head of the Agricultural Service of the ILO. Howard’s career (or rather lack of it) within the organisation has important implications for the historical analysis of women activists in agricultural organisations. Throughout her tenure, Howard battled with the organisation’s bureaucracy to increase both financial support for and international expertise on marginalised agricultural questions. Howard particularly tried to promote the Agricultural Service’s role as an international hub for the circulation of statistical data and information on social questions concerning agricultural labour.

Byrne, Anne

Dr Anne Byrne is a sociologist at the National University of Ireland who writes on gender, identity, rural, anthropological history, socio-biography and qualitative methodologies. Byrne is a farm heir. She is the founder and director of the Narrative Studies Group, Galway. Recent publications include (2017) Irish Journal of Sociology, ‘Your Voice, Your Story, Linked and Live’. Recent article (2017) sociologist and member of anthropologie. Byrne has also published in Ethnologie Francaise Vierdie après Arendt and Duhrfarb, 4(2), 2423–252.

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Caitriona Clearelon in modern history at NUIG, Galway, her publications include Native In Nineteenth-century Ireland (Dublin 1997). Women of the house women’s household right in Ireland (Dublin 2000). The story for change and everyday life in Ireland (1910–1922) (Manchester 2001). She has also published on other aspects of women’s history, on the history of households and on oral history methods and practice.

Moser, Peter

Peter Moser is Director of the Archives of Rural History in Bern and President of the Swiss Rural History Society. Latest Publication: Integration through Subordination, The Politics of Agricultural Modernisation in Industrial Europe, Brussels 2013 (together with Tony Varley).

Ribi Forclaz, Amalia

Amalia Ribi Forclaz is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. Before joining the Institute she was a research fellow at the Käte Hamburger Centre in Hamburg and a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Oxford, from whom she also holds a PhD. Her first book Humanitarian Impediments: The Politics of Anti-Slavery Activism, 1880–1940 (in press at OUP) offers a new perspective on the history of anti-slavery organisations and their interaction with imperial politics. Her current research focuses on the international history of agricultural labour regulation, ca. 1850–1970.

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