Understanding women’s experiences of changing



An archive image from the Scottish Women's Hospital First World War Remembrance project

Two very different small grants projects in Northern Ireland are helping to make a big difference to our understanding of women’s experiences.

Nursing during the First World War

A £4,800 HLF grant will help a project from the Royal College of Nursing to uncover the stories of professional nurses from Northern Ireland who served in the First World War and helped to raise the status of the profession.

At the outbreak of war, nursing was not a professionally recognised or regulated occupation. By the war's end in 1918, 23,000 nurses from the UK and its dominions had enrolled and in doing so helped to further efforts to have the profession regulated by Parliament.

The new project will research the history of these brave women, many of whom served on the frontline, to learn more about the training they received, the conditions in which they worked and the trauma they experienced.

The stories of five women from Northern Ireland will be shared in a booklet and exhibition to raise awareness of the experiences of nurses during the First World War and their wider contribution to the development of nursing.

Changing faces of West Belfast

In West Belfast, Footprints Women’s Centre over-50s group is using photography to explore the changing face of their area.

Once traditional businesses thrived in West Belfast, the landscape dominated by companies such as Bass brewers and Maguire and Patterson’s: factories that provided jobs and opportunities for the local community. But over the years these industries have closed and the sites occupied by housing.

[quote=Úna Duffy, Development Manager]“These two projects are helping to shine a light on how events on both the local and world stage impacted upon women and their communities.”[/quote]

A £4,900 HLF grant will help the group research the history of their area and identify historic photographs of the businesses and people that once operated and lived there. Accredited training will help them to record the landscape as it is today. The group will create an exhibition of their findings.

Úna Duffy, HLF Northern Ireland Development Manager, said: “When we look at the past a new perspective can often give us a new understanding of events.

"These two projects are helping to shine a light on how events on both the local and world stage impacted upon women and their communities. It shows how a modest grant can make a big difference to our understanding of our past and brings real benefits to real people in Northern Ireland.”