

GFS KNOWLEDGE BADGE

GFS stands for “Girls' Friendly Society”

GFS MOTTO

‘Bear Ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ’
Galatians 6 v.2

MRS MARY ELIZABETH TOWNSEND

Mary Elizabeth Townsend was an Irishwoman living in London. For several years she was concerned about young girls coming to the towns to go into service, often as maids in the big houses of the day. The work was hard, with long hours and low pay. Remember that in 1875 there were no benefits available to those girls if they lost their work and if they lost the support of their family, then they faced being sent to the workhouse. Mrs Townsend found that once the girls with whom she came into contact entered service, they were cut off from their families and so were very lonely. Remember most of them would be unable to read or write. Mrs Townsend believed that life would be more bearable for the girls if they had friends and someone to turn to when they were away from home, especially when they had a problem or were in need of support. Then with the support of others in the Church of England, Mrs Townsend put her ideas forward to a special meeting at Lambeth Palace in 1874. (Lambeth is the headquarters for the Anglican Church world-wide).

The Girls' Friendly Society was formed the following year in 1875. By the end of 1875 there were groups of girls in several parts of the country and by 1877 GFS branches could be found in Ireland, America, Australia and New Zealand, until today when it is found in many countries across the world.

POINTS OF INTEREST

In 1891, nearly a third of the occupied workforce of women, 1,257,800 out of a total of 3,818,500 were engaged in personal service and domestic servants provided 57% of the total employed membership of the GFS. By the year 1906 it was 49%.

The GFS was founded to emphasise the importance of Christian living and to give the girls a chance to develop their skills, including very often the skills of reading and writing. Today the girls also learn and experience the joy of mastering new skills.

WORLD PRESIDENTS FROM IRELAND

World Council was held in Ireland in 1981 when Mrs Beth Mayes, Killaloe & Clonfert diocese, held the position of World President. World Council was again held in Ireland in 2011 when Mrs Emila Corrigan from Tullow branch, in the diocese of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory held the position of World President.

CURRENT WORLD PROJECTS – 2017-2020 Sri Lanka – English for Employment Prospects

DECIDING THE WORLD PROJECT

At World Council all countries have an opportunity to vote on the various proposals and whichever gains most votes is supported by GFS members around the world for three years until the next World Council. Each country represented is allowed one vote each for their junior and senior delegates.

WORLD COUNCIL IS HELD EVERY THREE YEARS

Previous WORLD COUNCIL: Perth Australia 2017

NEXT WORLD COUNCIL TO BE HELD IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 2020

CURRENT WORLD PRESIDENT: Mrs Thembeke Pama

COUNTRIES WHERE GFS CAN BE FOUND

GFS can be found in over 26 countries:

Australia, Cameroon, England, Ghana, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, South Korea, Lesotho, Liberia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea,, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands (now Melanesia) South Africa, Sri Lanka, Unites States of America, Wales Zambia. The girls' auxiliary in Canada is affiliated to GFS World Council. **Affiliated to World Council held in Australia in 2017** were Canada, Honduras, Mozambique, Philippines, Rwanda, Uganda, and Dominican Republic.

LINK COUNTRIES OF IRELAND

England, Wales, Ghana.

The link country idea came about because it was felt that 3 years was quite a long time between world councils to keep up to date with what was happening in other countries. Link countries are often made up of old GFS members and new GFS members and through correspondence each one within the link receives support and encouragement. (Ireland would be the old member in our link with the other countries being the newer ones.) It is obvious from the groupings that they include members from different social and economic backgrounds, while each face unique problems they also face many of the same problems and so can be of help to each other.

MISSION PARTNERS:

GFS in Ireland currently has two mission partners:

Urban Development Programme (UDP) Nairobi from Jan 2019 onwards

Contact Roger Thompson (Partnership Coordinator for Kenya, Nepal & Zambia) CMS Ireland [web http://cmsireland.org](http://cmsireland.org).

Note : Bakers in Kiwoko Hospital finished 2018.

St Columba's Hospital in Hazaribagh, India. The money sent to the hospital from Ireland is used for the purchase of drugs for needy families in the area. Information about the hospital is included in the main resource pack.

ALL IRELAND PRESIDENT: 2018 - 2021 Mrs Alison Jackson

GFS PROMISE

Candidates and Junior Members: I promise with God's help, to learn to love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ, and to help other people

Members/Senior Members: I promise with God's help to grow in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be regular in public and private prayer and to promote friendship and purity of life.