



## HISTORY OF INNER WHEEL

Perhaps the quintessence of Inner Wheel can be crystallised in the following words by Hilaire Belloc

**“From quiet homes and first beginnings,  
Out to the undiscovered ends.  
There’s nothing worth the wear of winning,  
But laughter and the love of friends.”**

Mrs Margarette Oliver Golding (nee Margarette Owen) in 1923 took the first step to form an organisation which today is considered as one of the largest organisation of women in the world.

Margarette was born in Blaenau Ffestiniog, Wales. The family later moved to Hay-on-Wye. She was trained as a nurse and served as such during the first World War. Jay French in her book Inner Wheel History writes – “It may very well be that her years of service in the nursing profession triggered off a deep desire to help all ailing deprived humanity.”

Mrs Oliver Golding was a successful business woman too. When the World War was over, she joined a firm known as Nurses Outfitting Association Ltd in Stockport. The wife of a Manchester Rotarian, she **started the Inner Wheel movement in 1924**. Prior to that, wives of Rotarians in many cities and towns, prompted by a concern for public welfare, had been volunteering, in the background, giving their time and energies to help in any service being undertaken by their men folk.

If Paul Harris in Chicago in 1950 formed the First Rotary Club, Margarette Golding on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1923 started the First Inner Wheel Club in Manchester. On the **15th November 1923, twenty-seven Rotary wives, led by Mrs. Golding**, met in a Cooling Room (because it was free of charge) **at Herriot's Turkish Baths, St Mary's Street, Deansgate, Manchester**; they discussed the possibility of forming an independent ladies' group run on Rotary lines. The objects of the Club, they explained, would be two-fold, to foster friendship and to offer much more in the way of service.

Jay French writes – “it was a curious first meeting place, held in the Cooling room of baths, On being asked much later why such an extraordinary ‘choice of venue’ had been made, Mrs. Golding admitted naively That it had been the only room that they could get for nothing. This thriftiness has always been the guiding factor of Inner Wheel. Even today the Inner Wheel members are faced with similar problems.

From the carefully preserved minutes – the First inaugural Meeting of the first IW Club for the world, twenty-seven members attended. The Objects were clearly defined as “Friendship & Service”. The next meeting, held at the Social Club in Lower Mosley Street, Manchester, which became their regular meeting place, was on **10 January 1924**, and **marked the actual commencement of Inner Wheel with the formation of the Manchester Club**. Since 1970, January 10th has become universally recognised as **WORLD INNER WHEEL DAY**, when we celebrate the anniversary of that first meeting. **Margarette Golding**, the founder, was elected as the first President and Mrs W. A. Nixon, the first Secretary. Thirty members were present, and six basic rules were agreed. The first rule was 'The name of the Club shall be 'The Inner Wheel'. Thus ingeniously, they respected the wishes of Rotary, and the use of the word 'Rotary' was avoided, while the link with the men's organisation was symbolised by reference to their badge – the Rotary Wheel. This link is still nurtured today and we proudly share the same ethical values and objectives. The basic rules laid down that day, with slight variations, continued to be used until the formation of the Association of Inner Wheel Clubs in Great Britain and Ireland in 1934.

In 1936, the decision was taken to mark the occasion of a Club’s formation by granting of a Certificate of membership (now called a Charter).

### **THE FIRST PERFECT SECRETARY**

Margarette Golding was ably assisted by Mrs Gladys Mabel Nixon, the first perfect Secretary, and the back-room girl who shouldered all the hundreds of routine work, sought no recognition and shunned the limelight. Mrs Gladys Mabel was founder Secretary of Manchester Club. She was the founder Secretary of District 5 and in 1935 was appointed Founder Secretary of the Association till 1939. “In Mabel Nixon, Inner Wheel had the most valuable vanguard” says Mrs. French. Mrs Nixon was also the Secretary of YWCA. “A quite unassuming personality, a kindly diplomatic pourer of oil on troubled waters, possessed of gay wit; a tireless worker behind the scenes an example to all who assume the duties of Secretary at any level in the organisation. In 1955, Gladys Mabel Nixon died at the early age of sixty-seven.

**Since 1924**, there are important dates and developments to remember, which show the evolution of our Organisation and its diffusion, first in Great Britain, then worldwide. News of the formation of the Inner Wheel Club of Manchester, and its achievements, began to spread. Rotary wives who had been meeting together, contacted Mrs Golding and gradually the movement spread throughout GB&I and by 1927 another five new Clubs started their journey: Liverpool, Macclesfield, Nelson, St. Helens, and Warrington. In 1928, thanks to the collaboration of the Rotarians of District No 5, the 1st Inner Wheel District was formed, "No. 5 Inner Wheel District Committee".

The administration of the Districts, which followed, was the same as Rotary District procedure. As more Districts were formed, they took the area number corresponding to their Rotary District. In 1931 there were 56 Clubs and by the end of 1932, 4 new Districts had been formed, 3 more in 1933 and the need for a central organisation was being suggested.

**On 6th May 1934**, at the RIB.I Conference, held in Douglas, Isle of Man, the delegates of the 79 Clubs from the existing 8 Districts, aware that it was necessary to have a Governing Body capable of guiding the growing number of Clubs and Districts, approved and ratified the Constitution, and adopted the name:- **The Association of Inner Wheel Clubs in Great Britain and Ireland**. In 1948 the Association of GB had five hundred clubs and thirty-five overseas clubs.

**The First Association President**-In 1953, 'Home and Horizon' did in-calculable service to the Inner Wheel. The writer Millicent Gaskell, was a member of Colne Club No. 19 District. In 1949, The President of the Association, Mrs. Gaskell recorded that she had received 734 letters, 18 postcards 165 Minutes and reports, 288 Bulletins, 51 Notices, "every word she had read with interest and nearly all with pleasure. In reply she had sent out 822 letters, 416 postcards. She had travelled 13,571 miles, addressed an aggregate of 6,000 members on her District visits and spoken to 2200 members at the Harrogate Conference. Moreover towards the end of her presidential years, she had gone to France to present the Charter to Inner Wheel Club of Valen Cicennes, the first French club to be formed.

Thus began a beautiful adventure of women, which is the heritage of the Inner Wheel organisation, known and shared by every member. **They follow the path of Friendship and service To Promote true friendship. To encourage the Ideals of Personal Service. To foster International understanding.**

**And the Wheel Moves On today in 100 countries!**