

WI News 2013

December ~ Dazzling winter sunshine was a great bonus when 24 walkers left the Ridgeway Sanctuary car park for their December walk and headed down a byway passing a tumulus, towards the pretty village of East Kennett. Tracks and field paths brought us to the West Kennett Long Barrow, where we enjoyed seasonal refreshments and admired the beautiful panoramic views, with impressive Silbury Hill ahead.

At the foot of the hill we crossed the main road and followed the Kennett into the historic village of Avebury. A brisk walk through the Avenue of Stones and a gentle climb brought us back to the car park. Two venues, The Who'd a Thought it at Lockeridge and The Red Lion at Avebury provided delicious lunches.



WI walk, December 2013

December ~ At December's meeting the group enjoyed an evening attempting to make mini Christmas trees with the lovely David Taylor from Westbury, with fun had by all. There was also a large collection of food to be donated to Chippenham Salvation Army, which will distribute it to those in need.

November ~ November WI walk. It was a beautifully sunny morning when 26 members, husbands and friends set off for a late autumn walk. We began with coffee at Allington Farm Shop and then drove to Wick where we set off to walk up the Golden Valley, alongside the River Boyd. The trees still had some colour and the ruins of the old ochre works, beside the river, provided an interesting talking point. We continued onwards and upwards to the pretty village of Doynton and then headed back across the fields to the site of the old quarry, now full of water and a haven for wildlife. Gradually we made our way back to Wick and enjoyed an excellent lunch at The Rose and Crown.



WI walk 22nd November '13 "Caught in a trap"!

~ The subject for our November meeting was “Clearing Rivers of Invasive Species” and Sam Stork from the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust gave us a very interesting and informative talk. We began by watching a film on the New Forest Native Plant Project where we could see the problems caused to ponds and rivers by New Zealand pigmyweed, parrot’s feather, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed to name but a few. Sam then explained about the Source to Sea project which covers the rivers in three counties, Hampshire Wiltshire and Dorset where they hope to gradually eradicate these non-native plants. The Trust hopes to get the support of all landowners and the various angling clubs for this project. Although they employ a small number of experts in the use of pesticides the main workforce comes from volunteers and corporate teams who do an outstanding job throughout the summer months clearing the river banks so that our native species can thrive. Finally, Sam told us about the effort which has been made on the local Bybrook River and the ongoing plans to educate and encourage more volunteers to help with this important work.

October ~ WI Walk: On a threatening grey day, eleven of us met at The Star Inn, Hullavington for early morning coffee before moving on to Sherston to start our walk. From Sherston we crossed the river and headed through Pinkney Park, a haven for pheasants and partridges. After crossing a couple of fields we could see Easton Grey House in the distance. Walking through Easton Grey was delightful; such picturesque cottages dating back hundreds of years. From here we joined the Fosse Way and looped back around to Sherston. It was a six mile walk and the rain stayed away, thankfully!

The highlight of the day was lunch at The Rattlebone Inn, Sherston, which provided excellent food.



(WI walk at Sherston and Easton Grey)

~ Unfortunately our speaker this month was unable to come to our meeting but we were delighted to welcome Brian Goodson, the Chairman of Village Link, who gave us a very interesting and informative insight into the work of the charity. The organization, which covers five parishes in north Wiltshire, depends on a group of volunteers who drive those in need of help to various appointments across the area. As Village Link was Kington St Michael WI's nominated charity this year, the President, Jenny Hayne, presented Mr Goodson with a cheque for £565, which had been raised at the recent buffet lunch. We concluded the meeting by playing board games whilst enjoying refreshments and a chat.



(Jenny Hayne presents a cheque to Brian Goodson from Village Link, 8th October 2013)

~ Members of both KSM and All Angels WIs planted bulbs near The Ridings on 5th October, to replace those dug up following pipe-laying. The bulbs were purchase with £100 donated by British Gas.



(Bulb planting, 5th October 2013)

September ~ The September meeting was how to make handcrafted chocolates, ably demonstrated by Deanna de Burgh from Mells. Her hobby/business was started as a result of a major illness. Using Belgium chocolate she has made all shapes and flavours, even sending a crown and corgi to the Queen for the Jubilee.

In August over twenty people visited Newton House near Yeovil, a listed private house open for one year to raise funds for two cancer charities in support of the owners' daughter who has breast cancer. The owners, Robin and Jane Cannon, showed the group round, giving a very informative and amusing history of the house and members were left to tour the gardens and enjoyed a cream tea.

August 2013 ~ The recent Flower & Produce Show organised by Kington St Michael WI, which has become an annual feature of the village calendar after 39 years, drew a fine selection of entries despite the difficult growing conditions of this summer.

Trophies were awarded as follows:

Overall winner - Pat Woodward

WI trophy for top man - John Woodward

Vaughan Cup - Liz McCarron Heal

IK Alderman Shield for home baking & preserves- Liz McCarron Heal

WI Vase for floral art - Pat Woodward

Hughes Cup - Liz McCarron Heal

Woodward Cup for photography - Pat Woodward

Novice Cup - Claire Broomsgrove

John Gilbert Cup for under 5 year olds - Elizabeth Clark

Singer Cup for 5-10 year olds - Charlotte Clark

It was particularly encouraging to see members of All Angels WI taking part in the show and the Hughes Cup which is awarded to the top WI member went to a member of the new Institute.

The afternoon ended with an auction of donated produce enthusiastically conducted by Mary Humphreys.

July ~ WI walk: A perfect summer's morning was enjoyed by members and friends for our walk, as we strolled along the Severn Way sandwiched between the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal and the Bristol Channel. We passed the famous Puton Hulks and the towers remaining from the first Severn Bridge. Pretty cottages and gardens were admired in Hinton and Brookend on this flat but interesting walk, with great views across the estuary.

~ The subject of the July meeting was "All Tied Up" and we soon found out why. Anne Fisher brought her amazing collection of scarves – all shapes, sizes and colours. She told us that in Roman times scarves were tied around the wrist to indicate allegiance and as time went on they were used for protection, modesty and a sign of wealth. In 1906 the introduction of the "permanent wave" and open top cars gave rise to a huge increase in the wearing of headscarves. Now scarves are very collectible and very popular. Finally, we all tried to follow Anne's example as she demonstrated a number of scarf tying techniques. It was a very enjoyable and entertaining evening and we all left determined to try and perfect our scarf tying before the next meeting.

June ~ The speaker this month was Brenda Spenceley who regaled us with tales of her time as a Games Maker at the London 2012 Olympic Games. She arrived in her official uniform and began by showing us the various pieces of official equipment which were issued to her, right down to a water bottle and baseball cap. We learnt that the volunteers were carefully chosen and thoroughly trained before they took up their posts at the Games. Brenda worked on security at the main Olympic site in Stratford and it was clear that the Games Makers became one big, happy family who thoroughly enjoyed helping to make the event such a resounding success. We all enjoyed listening to her anecdotes which brought back great memories of an Olympic Games which we could all be proud of.

May ~ The May meeting dealt with the resolution to be debated at the National Federation Annual General Meeting at Cardiff in June. The resolution, noting the continuing decline of our high streets and the damaging effect this has on local communities, was proposed by Sue Wilcock. It calls on members to make the high street their first choice for goods and services and on decision makers to work collectively to ensure the future prosperity of our town centres. The Chairman of Cherish Chippenham, Melody Thompson, joined us and explained how they are working to try to keep the centre of our town alive. After an unsuccessful application to the Mary Portas scheme, the local traders are joining together to enable Chippenham to become a Business Improvement District. She welcomed the support of the WI resolution. The meeting gave its support to the resolution with the added proviso of discretion for our delegate at the AGM. We then enjoyed light refreshments of cheese and pate whilst taxing our brains with an intriguing food quiz.

~ Daffodils! Following an approach from KSM WI, Wales & West have donated £100 towards the purchase of new daffodil bulbs to reinstate the grass bank by The Ridings. They have been most helpful and, following discussions, cleared some of the large stones that had come to the surface, replaced the topsoil and reseeded the bank as well as giving the donation.

April ~ The speaker at our April meeting was Keith Conway, a serving prison officer at Erlstoke Prison. His subject "The Work of a Prison Officer" was very enlightening. He told us that he had joined the service in 1989 at Shepton Mallet prison but had moved on to Erlstoke in 1991. At present there are 132 prisons in England and Wales and 80,000 prisoners, with a further 2,000 tagged on Home Detention Curfew. We learnt about the four categories of prisoners, their work and pay, their food and their education. The most worrying statistic was the fact that in future the ratio for prison officers to prisoners will be 1 to 30, making the job even more difficult. Keith ended his talk by telling us about his work with prisoner's families and his visits to schools in an effort to prevent an increase in the prison population.

March ~ WI Dinner: This year the WI annual dinner was held on the 19th March at Chippenham Golf Club. Thirty four members enjoyed an excellent three course dinner followed by tea and coffee in the brand new club house. It was a very pleasant evening with the added bonus of seeing the new golf club premises at first hand.

~ At the Annual Meeting of the WI various Bye Laws were adopted and a new committee was elected. Those standing down were thanked for their hard work and new members were introduced to the meeting. Jenny Hayne was re-elected as

President. The Committee's Annual Report and Treasurer's Report were both approved and, in the President's address, we heard that, following another very successful year, membership had now risen to 61. The Denman Bursary was won by Diane Steel and the Betty Wiggins Rose Bowl was awarded to Mary Humphreys for the most competition points over the past year. Our chosen charity for 2013 is Village Link.

February ~ At last we could walk!! After three months of cancelled walks due to weather conditions, 20 walkers enjoyed the February walk. We started in Bradford-on-Avon, passing historic buildings and grand mansions and great views over the River Avon. A gentle incline brought us to the hamlet of Turleigh with large fine Bathstone houses and pretty quarrymen's cottages, leading on to Winsley where an unusual curved stone squeeze stile lead us on to a path with stunning views over the valley towards Limpley Stoke and eventually dropping down to the Kennet & Avon Canal. A short walk took us to Avoncliff and the Cross Guns for our lunch. Then a brisk walk along the towpath where we were thrilled to see a kingfisher on the opposite side of the canal. We passed the 14th century tithe barn and returned to Bradford-on-Avon.



*WI walk at Bradford-on-Avon, February 2013
(Photo courtesy of Jenny Hayne)*

~ At February's meeting Veronica Shaw recounted how, feeling ready for a new challenge as her family grew up, she raised £25,000 and undertook a gruelling fitness campaign to enable her to take part in an attempt to complete the unfinished expedition to the South Pole started by explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. Along with a team of five she flew to South America on December 11th 2006. The trip got off to a bad start when she and the other members of the team went down with food poisoning and their plane was delayed by bad weather, but on Christmas Eve they arrived on the Polar Plateau to start the journey. Starting out in temperatures of below -35°C and wearing two layers of thermals, five pairs of gloves and two balaclavas as well as outer clothes, fur trimmed hoods, goggles and masks, Veronica was suffering with serious blisters on her feet by the time the team caught a glimpse of the South Pole on the horizon, but it was another eight hours before they eventually reached it on New Year's Day. Throughout the trek there was just a

vast white space ahead, the only sounds were of wind and skis. The team were fascinated to tour the Amundsen-Scott base, where 250 people live and work, before flying back to the Patriot Hills base for their return flight to Chile. At first Veronica found it hard to adjust to normal life but now she has taken on a new challenge by starting up her own company Mums & Co. to support single mothers and their children.

January ~ We started the New Year with an entertaining talk by Michelle Harper entitled "Marilyn Monroe". Michelle definitely looked the part with her blonde wig, white dress and white stilettos. She shared her enthusiasm and wide knowledge of the film star, who had had a rather sad and difficult childhood. During her career Marilyn took part in 30 films, had 44 affairs and 3 marriages, all of which ended in divorce. She died in Los Angeles, in suspicious circumstances, in 1962, aged just 36. Michelle also entertained us with part of her varied and extensive collection of Marilyn Monroe memorabilia ranging from photos and ornaments to a magnificent umbrella and a life-sized cardboard cut-out.