

WI News 2008

December: ~ Christmas drinks and nibbles were held on Sunday 7th December in the village hall, for the over 60s in the village and a good time was had by all.





WI Christmas Drinks & Nibbles, 7th December 2008

~ December's meeting had a decidedly festive air as members exchanged Christmas gifts, made crackers, tested their brains with a seasonal quiz and sang carols. The skittles team was pleased to round off the year with a win and a draw.

November: ~ WI walk: We were lucky once again to have a sunny and dry day for our walk, which started at Biddestone and provided contrasts of high open farmland, shady woodland lanes and a river valley for 17 walkers.

We headed down Ham Lane to Slaughterford Bridge, after passing the remains of an old mill wheel and crumbling buildings, then crossed two weirs which were quite spectacular after the rain. We then followed the By Brook to Ford for lunch. A gentle climb through beech woodland eventually brought us on to another lane leading away from Slaughterford and into open farmland, with beautiful views towards Colerne and Bath. The path around several fields brought us back to Ham Lane and Biddestone.

~ Nature Up Close was the subject of Ian McGuire's slides which captivated the audience at this month's meeting. Ian is a committed conservationist with a particular interest in all birds and owls in particular so that his knowledgeable commentary really brought his beautiful photography to life.

The calendar is now filling as Christmas approaches. The newly formed Book Club meets on 24th November, then several members are off to the Festive Lunch at Bowood on 26th November. WI will be providing a cake stall at the Christmas Fayre on 6th December and this is quickly followed the next day by their annual offering of Christmas Drinks & Nibbles for retired village people. Members are invited to exchange wrapped Christmas gifts to the value of £2.50 at the December meeting. Looking ahead to January 17th, a Burns Supper Party is planned and tickets are now on sale to WI members.

October: We were pleased to welcome two new members to the October meeting, when RAF Police dog handlers came along to talk about their work. Displaying the heavy protective clothing worn as the dogs, usually German Shepherds, are taught to apprehend criminals, the handlers also explained how other dogs such as spaniels, setters and pointers are trained to seek out explosives, drugs and guns. The star of the evening was Sasha, an enormous German Shepherd, who was very happy to be stroked and fussed but who, her trainer assured the gathering, would keep a vice-like grip of a criminal when instructed to do so.

The newly formed WI book club has now had its inaugural meeting and anyone wanting more information should contact Mary Humphreys on 01249 654450.

September:

~ WI Walk

The first day of our Indian summer was a great treat for the twelve WI walkers, friends and Ben the dog. Our coffee shop stop was at the Sweet Apple in the pretty village of Marshfield, then on to Doynton to start walking.

We crossed fields of clover and maize approaching the southernmost edge of the Cotswolds. The path through the farm brought us between two ponds, through a kissing gate and onto the Cotswold Way. A lane alongside the wall of Dyrham Park eventually brought us to the ornate entrance gates, giving us a wonderful view of the Baroque mansion and St. Peter's Church nestling against the hillside. Turning right, once more on the Cotswold Way track, we followed the Dyrham Park wall through several fields, climbing gently and admiring splendid views over the valley to Hinton Hill and ancient strip lynchets. A left turn revealed views towards Bristol; we headed towards Hinton Hill, past fortified remains of the hill fort, and spotted a herd of fallow deer grazing in the park beyond.

A steep hill led us down to The Bull at Hinton and a delicious lunch and rest. The last leg of our walk, over the common, to join the Monarchs Way and the pretty River Boyd, through fields and hunting gates, past Doynton Mill and into the Church-yard returning to the starting point

~ The sad story of the assassination of the Tsar of Russia's family at Ekaterinburg provided the background for a fascinating display of clothing of the time at September's WI meeting. Valerie Threlfall portrayed a typical day in the life of a Russian princess by showing the various outfits she might have worn, starting with her nightwear, then delicate handmade broderie anglais underwear and an elegant costume for the daytime followed by a stunning evening gown with a heavy jet train. These outfits were all complemented by wonderful jewellery and beautiful accessories. Members winced at the thought of the tightly laced corset and laughed at the drawers of the day which were hidden beneath the costumes. But the numerous layers of undergarments were contributory factors to a slow death for the daughters of the Tsar as, in anticipation of flight, their valuables had been sewn into their underwear and consequently shielded them from some of the shots which eventually killed them. Mrs. Threlfall has accumulated a wonderful collection of clothing and gave a very entertaining presentation.

Results of the August treasure hunt were awarded with first prize going to Viv and Steve Penney, and Sylvia Stables was congratulated on receiving a Civic Award.

August:

~ Flower & Produce Show: This year's weather was, as usual, cited as the main difficulty facing the entrants in the Annual Flower & Produce Show. Too wet, too hot, too dry, too cold or just coming at the wrong time - these were the frequently heard complaints from the local gardeners who staggered into the Village Hall bearing their many entries to the Show. But as usual a healthy array of fruit, vegetable and flowers graced the competition tables. The cooks came up trumps with lovely cakes, pastries and preserves. The flower arrangers produced delightfully artistic displays, photographers had spent their year with cameras in hand, paintings and handicrafts drew admiring gazes and the children's entries were much admired. Altogether a very attractive show which was appreciated by all who came along to support the occasion and its subsequent auction. The trophy winners this year are:

Overall champion: Pat Woodward
WI Trophy for Men: John Woodward
Vaughan Cup for Ladies: Janet Elms
Novice Cup: Glennis Clark
IK Alderman Shield for home baking & preserves: Katy Barrett
WI Vase for floral art: Pat Woodward
Hughes Cup for top WI member: Janet Elms
Woodward Cup for photography: Pat Woodward
John Gilbert Cup for 11-16 yr olds: Amy Holgate
Singer Cup for 5-10 yr olds: Abbie Elms
Kirby Cup for under 5 yr olds: George Elms

July:

~ Music was heard wafting on the breeze when members gathered in the delightful garden of The Old Rectory for their July meeting, by kind invitation of Nick and Dorothy Wheatley. Business was kept to the bare essentials, so that everyone could enjoy the lovely surroundings and bowls of strawberries and cream at their leisure. The melodies of the trio Speakers Corner brought back many a happy memory, getting toes tapping and the more energetic on their feet dancing.

WI walk ~ A party of 15, plus newcomer Rufus the dog, headed for Great Bedwyn for their monthly outing last week. Starting off along the towpath of the Kennet and Avon canal, the walkers passed several locks busy with holiday-makers in their colourful narrowboats, before reaching the Crofton Pumping Station, which houses the oldest steam-powered beam engine in the world. Turning from one stretch of water to another, Wilton Water, the group stepped out to the pretty village of Wilton where they

enjoyed substantial refreshment at the Swan Inn. Following a gentle climb, the 46 feet Wilton Windmill came into sight; the last working windmill in Wiltshire. After lovely open views the path now took to woodland where there was an abundance of wildflowers, butterflies and delicious wild raspberries. As they emerged from the trees the group disturbed several deer which were grazing in the meadow. The last stage of the walk was an easy descent back to the towpath and the starting point in Great Bedwyn.

~ There was a convivial hubbub in the Village Hall when the WI served their annual lunch, this year in aid of the Wiltshire Air Ambulance. About 65 people partook of an appetising cold buffet followed by a mouth-watering array of desserts and cheeses, all provided thanks to the generosity of WI members. Approximately £613 was raised for the Air Ambulance Appeal.



WI Buffet Lunch 2008

June:

~ Pat Hunt was in charge when about 20 members gathered for a light hearted bingo evening at Kay's house recently. Most were total novices at the game but Pat and Pam good naturedly kept order and everyone had a very enjoyable time.

~ WI Walk: The WI walkers chose a bright sunny day for their latest expedition which kicked off with coffee at a farm shop in preparation for the delightful walk from the pretty thatched village of Chilton Foliat, through woodland, across rivers and fields

eventually to join the Kennet and Avon canal towpath leading into Hungerford. The fast flowing river Kennet, with carpets of white water crowsfoot, was home to families of coots and moorhens while orchids were in abundance on the marshy ground approaching the canal. The towering figures of Morecombe and Wise quite adjacent to the A4 were quite a surprise and a sight which few had noticed before. After lunch the circular route led back past Leverton and the walled garden which was the subject of the TV programme "A Victorian Kitchen Garden". Sadly it has reverted to being rough grass again. A cup of tea and some tempting purchases at the farm shop rounded off a relaxing day out.

~ Fiona King gave a fascinating talk about some of the quirkier aspects of English law when she attended this month's meeting. Members were both amused and informed by her presentation and will take to heart her closing advice regarding the correct way to escape from a locked ladies' loo. Remember, girls, do not climb on the toilet roll holder! If you hurt yourselves your action could be viewed as having been a contributory factor, thus reducing any damages you might be awarded. Jacky Lacey reported enthusiastically on her trip to Liverpool where she had represented the Institute at the national AGM, voting on two resolutions of importance, only the first of which was carried - stopping the imprisonment of the severely mentally ill and banning bottom trawling fishing.

May:

~ Imprisonment of the mentally ill, bottom trawling, poetry and delicious puddings - the recipe for an interesting and varied meeting held recently. The first two topics were discussed prior to debate at the national AGM in Liverpool after which, if approved by members, they will become subjects for the organisation to act upon.

The mysterious expression "bottom trawling" is a term applied to a form of fishing where heavy metal trawls are dragged along the sea bed, resulting in damage to its ecology and indiscriminate netting of fish and marine life, much of which are unwanted by-products subsequently abandoned having been wantonly killed in the process. After these serious topics the meeting took on a more lighthearted air as favourite poems were read and a selection of tempting puddings was tasted.

April:

~ After picking up in the village and Chippenham, a full coachload of mystified members, husbands and friends set off into the great

unknown. Various theories as to the eventual destination were put forward as the coach travelled westward on a gloriously sunny evening. At each parting of the ways new thoughts were aired. It became clear that somewhere in Wales was the goal when the old Severn Bridge loomed on the horizon, and the prestigious St Pierre Golf Club was passed. Thereafter the countryside was stunning as the drive took in the Wentwood Reservoir and Forest, climbing steep hills to reveal wonderful views across the valleys. The wild flowers - wood anemones, cowslips and primroses - made a delightful splash of colour with the promise of bluebells soon to follow and the fields of gambolling lambs confirmed that spring had finally arrived. The route ran alongside the River Usk for a while before reaching the town of Usk with its formidable prison. Not long afterwards the Huntsman Hotel at Shire Newton came into view and it was announced that this was the mystery supper venue. A happy crowd relaxed over their meal before embarking on the surprisingly short return journey fortified by chocolates, a pleasant final touch to a very successful outing organised by Alison Shackell.

WI Walk ~ A mild sunny April morning saw a group of ten walkers gather at the White Hart at Ford for an invigorating cup of coffee before setting off across the fields to Castle Combe via Long Dean. A good weather forecast meant that caution had been thrown to the winds and waterproof trousers had been left at home. However the bright blue skies eventually turned grey and a sharp shower resulted in a bedraggled group arriving in Castle Combe where they enjoyed a reviving lunch at the other White Hart. Work was afoot in the village to return the buildings to a state of normality after the recent filming there. The next stage of the walk, once again in the sunshine, led past the back of the Manor House Hotel and across the golf course, before crossing the brook to climb an old coaching route. Primroses, wood anemones, bluebells and cowslips were plentiful and in the margins of the streams marsh marigolds provided a brilliant splash of gold. The last leg of the route included a steep drop down to the brook which was something of a challenge, given the muddy terrain. The only casualty of the outing was Margaret who took a tumble at one of the stiles but still managed to bounce back up with a smile.

~ Members were delighted with a trip around the coastline from Northumberland to Wales, when Robert Harvey described the contrasts of rocks, limestone, shingle, flora, fauna, wildlife and a garden made from single shoes, flotsam and jetsam on a beach in Kent. The talk, entitled "Saving our Coastal Heritage", was accompanied by beautiful photography. Pat Hunt, Vice President, chaired the meeting and introduced Miriam Trotman, who explained the formation of the WI in Stony Creek, Canada and her own role as

a WI Adviser.

March:

WI Walk ~ Lunch first, at the "Who'd 'A' Thought It" pub at Lockeridge, was the way the March WI Walk started, due to heavy rain. The sun gradually appeared as we walked up the High St. to Lockeridge Dene, and the sarsen boulders, resembling sheep lying low in the grass; they are nicknamed "grey wethers". A bridle path opposite brought us out past a horse gallop in a field, and on to West Wood, where we walked under towering, graceful beeches to Hursley Bottom. We continued through woodland, past the Forest Enterprise's woodland car park, eventually joining the White Horse Trail. This is a 90 mile trail visiting Wiltshire's eight white horse hill figures. After crossing a lane then a stile, we climbed gently uphill, passing early bluebells and wood anemones on our way to reach a high field, with beautiful views of Wiltshire - much admired, despite a bracing wind. The gentlemen walkers paused to look at two rusty corn binders (used to harvest sheaves of corn) in the corner of a farm yard. A stile and steps brought us down to a lane near Manton, where we headed back towards Lockeridge, passing pretty cottages and gardens and climbing over yet more stiles.

~ Despite the appalling weather members turned out in force for their Annual Meeting at which Kay Sambell was elected President for her third and final term of office. The committee's report on the year's activities proved just what a lively Institute this is, drawing members not only from the village but also from the surrounding area. The Betty Wiggins Rosebowl, awarded annually to the member who has achieved most points in the monthly competitions, was won by Jenny Hayne. She was on a lucky roll that night, also winning the draw for a bursary to Denman College, the WI's Adult Education College. Cyril White, a retired professional photographer, kindly came along to take pictures of the various groups within the Institute - the whist players, skittlers, walkers, committee, programme planners and finally the entire membership present that evening. These photos will provide a valuable record for the Institute's scrapbooks which date back many decades. Following on from a talk by two magistrates a group of members spent an interesting morning in Chippenham Magistrates Court seeing for themselves just how the judicial process operates at this level.

February:

WI Walk ~ The weather forecast for the day was not promising but, fortunately, the rain held off until the very end of our walk in the Mells area. En route a pleasant coffee stop was enjoyed at the

Beckington Farm Shop before 12 walkers and one dog set off through the churchyard of the fine parish church at Mells. We paused briefly to look at the gravestone of renowned First World War poet Siegfried Sassoon, before heading across neighbouring fields in the direction of Colliers Way. Colliers Way provided easy walking for almost a mile, alongside the disused railway track of the old GWR Radstock to Frome branch line. Thereafter we descended into the Wadbury Valley, a delightful wooded area where the footpath followed closely alongside Mells Stream. Converted mill buildings and clusters of snowdrops and daffodils provided scenic distractions and the steep sided valley was covered in ferns, moss and lichen. The path soon passed under a metal railway bridge which provided suitable shelter for our picnic lunch. From here the footpath led on to the site of the disused Fussells iron works which ceased production in 1894. In the Nineteenth Century the ironworks were the leading producers of iron edge agricultural tools. Substantial remains of the complex can still be seen including evidence of the complicated system of culverts used to channel water to points where power was need to drive machinery. We eventually arrived back in Mells at about 2.15pm after a very interesting walk in bracing conditions.



~ Flower power, mini skirts, the price of petrol, space travel, along with plastic flowers on the President's table, brought back nostalgic memories of the 1960s at the February meeting. Alison Shackell fired 60s questions at the members, whilst The Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers and many more 60s stars entertained us with their music, after which chocolate gateau and Babycham were served. Louise Williams presided over the meeting and welcomed three visitors. The Potter and Paint session and the Burns Lunch had been enjoyed. Plans were made for the Annual Dinner on March 4th at The Langley Tap, the Mystery Trip & Supper on April 22nd, a visit to The Magistrates Court and various Wiltshire Federation events. Members were asked to make suggestions for our Charity of the Year. The next meeting will be held on March 11, which will be our A.G.M. with a photo shoot to follow.

January:

WI Walk ~ The sun was shining, to our surprise! Minchinhapton was our planned January walk, but, due to the heavy rain of previous days, Lacock was our saviour once again! We followed the route to Reybridge, passed by pretty cottages with snowdrops abundant in the gardens, and crossed the raised footbridge where the River Avon was in full flood. There were signs of extensive flood damage to the road. We joined the cycle path following the route of the old Wilts & Berks canal; even the canal water level was high, which kept Ben, the dog, entertained retrieving branches. We continued on past a renovated brick bridge, admiring the early catkins on the bank, to Squirrels Rest. We retraced our steps to Bewley Lane and on to The Bell for lunch, before continuing back to Lacock.



WI Walk 22nd January '08

~ There was a very good turnout of members and of men for the first meeting of 2008 when Stephen Williams came along to talk about life in the trenches during the First World War. Dressed in full army kit of the time he set the scene by building a 7ft high section of trench with the aid of which he was able to describe most graphically the horrendous conditions which the British forces endured. Although various ingenious devices were developed to help alleviate the dangers that soldiers daily encountered; their life expectancy was appallingly low. Mr. Williams has amassed a fascinating collection of memorabilia and a vast wealth of knowledge which provided the background for his talk. He too was intrigued by some of the wartime items that members had brought along and was interested to hear their history.

Some of the events which WI members will be attending in the near future include a Potter & Paint session, a drumming workshop, an attempt at archery and a coach trip to Kew Palace and Gardens.