

WI News 2011

December ~ In the hope of walking off the excesses of Christmas indulgences, 20 walkers set off from the picturesque village of Poulshot. After following a muddy thoroughfare out of the village, we joined a lane and then slowly climbed to a footbridge over the disused railway line. We crossed the main road and dropped down to the famous Caen Hill flight of locks. Whilst enjoying seasonal refreshments by a lock, a dark cloud dropped its contents and dampened the spirits slightly! The quickest route to our lunch was chosen and a lane eventually brought us back to Poulshot and a delicious meal at The Raven.

~ The December meeting was very well attended for our talk entitled "Murder on my mind". Judith Cranswick, a retired head teacher from Swindon, told us about how she was enjoying her retirement and new career as an author of crime novels. She gave us an insight into the difficulties of actually getting a book into print once it is finally written, with numerous re-writes and alterations along the way to suit the publisher. She has had five novels published but it took six years to find a publisher for her first work. Judith read passages from her books to illustrate her talk and explained how important it is to visit the places where the story is actually set to avoid any errors. In between writing she is enjoying giving writing workshops around the country and on holiday cruise ships.

November ~ On a glorious Autumn day 16 walkers enjoyed a walk starting at Shearwater Lake. A climb took us up through woodland to Longbridge Deverill where we passed the church and ancient almshouses. A footbridge over the River Wylde and a climb on an old church path led us to a bridleway with magnificent views across the Wiltshire Downs. Southleigh Wood looked beautiful as we walked through; the sun filtering down through the tall trees. Tree felling was in progress and the air was filled with the fragrance of pine resin. A lane took us past Jobs Mill and a vineyard. The main road was crossed with caution; tracks and lanes eventually brought us back to Crockerton and a delicious lunch at the Bath Arms.



WI walk - Shearwater to Crockerton, 25th November 2011

~ Mrs Maureen Hinton entertained a packed hall with her talk entitled "A Victorian Christmas". She began by guiding us through her wonderful collection of Victorian Christmas cards, crackers, books and gifts much of which had been found hidden away in the loft of her great aunt. The second part of the evening consisted of a demonstration. We were shown how to make orange scented pot pourri, followed by

a delightful Victorian posy, a tied evergreen door swag and several other beautiful arrangements. This was all interspersed with amusing anecdotes and numerous flower arranging tips. By the end we were all inspired to begin our preparations for the festive season.

October ~ At the October meeting a representative from the Wiltshire Scrapstore came to tell us about the aim of the enterprise, which has now taken over larger premises at Bowden Hill, Lacock. The Scrapstore is basically a warehouse full of items that have been donated which would otherwise have gone to landfill, ranging from bubble wrap and card to fabric, ribbons, plastic tubs, sticky backed paper and much, much more. It is open to anyone, but is an Aladdin's cave for children and is particularly helpful for schools, preschools and youth groups, where they can enjoy choosing items for all their creative work. Besides a well stocked craft shop they run children's workshops and creative birthday parties. There is also a very active sewing group and they welcome volunteers to help with this and in many other ways. Towards the end of the evening we all enjoyed experimenting with a wide range of scrap items which resulted in a varied selection of Christmas decorations.

~ October WI Walk: Seventeen members, husbands and friends had an enjoyable walk in the Chedworth area on a glorious autumn day. Following coffee at Denfurlong Farm Shop we proceeded to the woodland car park close to the Roman Villa. Our walk took us along the stream, where a heron was spotted by some, up through the woods and across the fields to a section of the Monarch Way and into Chedworth village. We had an excellent lunch at the Seven Tuns pub and followed this with a visit to the beautifully kept St. Andrews church. Finally we climbed steeply back out of the village and into the woodland where we walked under an impressive stepped railway arch before passing the site of the Roman Villa on our way back to our cars.

September ~ We welcomed retired engineer Rodney Veazey to our September meeting to tell us about his adventures searching for mountain gorillas in Uganda. The wildlife experience involved trekking for approximately 5 hours into the dense Bwindi forest with Ugandan guides, before eventually finding a group of gorillas with which to spend some time. There are approximately 340 gorillas in Bwindi in twenty family groups and each family group is led by an enormous silverback. Due to the impressive conservation work in this area it has the only numerically stable gorilla population in the world. Finally, we enjoyed seeing videos of these magnificent creatures and of red tailed and golden monkeys. The talk gave us an insight into the important work of wildlife conservation.

Viv Penney presented a cheque for £542 (profits from the annual buffet lunch) to Avril Balmforth and Linda Durno of KSM's defibrillator scheme.

~ September's walk was rather blustery as we caught the tail end of Hurricane Katia, nevertheless we plodded on through the Broadmead Brook Valley from Shirehill to West Kington. We were rewarded with a display by ravens above us and herons by the brook. Our journey took us back along the high lane to the West Kington/Tormarton junction. A picnic and hospitality were enjoyed at Shirehill.



*WI walk, Shirehill. 12th September 2011
(Photo courtesy of Jenny Hayne)*

August: ~ The WI walk started in Arlingham on a perfect August morning. We passed pretty cottages on a lane, then followed the footpath through a field of maize, over pasture land and eventually reached the floodbank of the River Severn and onto the Severn Way. The river was peaceful and wading birds were spotted in the distance. We headed back to Arlingham on a footpath following the line of the drainage ditch; lunch was taken at The Red Lion.



*WI walk at Arlingham
(Photo courtesy of Jenny Hayne)*

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Flower & Produce Show 2011



*Floral and vegetables displays at the Flower & Produce Show 2011
(Photos courtesy of Jenny Hayne)*

This year's Flower & Produce Show boasted a most attractive display of entries, including intricate needlecraft, championship vegetables, delicious cakes and jams, delightful sweetpeas, skilful paintings, magnificent flower arrangements, and even the knobliest carrot and longest runner bean. Local photographers too came up with some very high quality pictures and children produced colourful collages and beautifully decorated eggs.

The overall champion was once again Pat Woodward whose husband John won the WI Trophy for Men. Other winners were Louise Williams (Vaughan Cup, IK Alderman Shield and Hughes Cup), Pat Woodward (WI Vase), Colin Burns (Novice Cup), Pia Andrew (Singer Cup) and Charlotte Clark (John Gilbert Cup). At the end of the afternoon Mary Humphreys conducted an auction of all the fresh produce, cakes, jams and flowers. Any profit from the shows helps to finance the annual Christmas Drinks and Nibbles which the WI generously serve to retired members of the local community.

July: ~ Walk on 29th July. Badminton is known for its horse trials and, on a drizzly July day, WI members and friends enjoyed their monthly walk through the park. Handsome stags were spotted before we arrived for lunch at the Old Royal Ship in Luckington. Narrow steps from the main street brought us to open farmland; after crossing old stone stiles we reached a lane eventually returning to Badminton with its picturesque thatched cottages and pretty gardens.

~ At the July meeting Marion Dale gave us a very interesting insight into the trials and tribulations of building an RHS show garden. She told us of her original career in marketing, her training at Lackham and then the ultimate application to be accepted by the RHS for the 2008 Malvern Show. The garden had to be planned in fine detail and the equipment, plants, sponsors and manpower sourced in just a couple of months. Then began a nerve-wracking 3 weeks of building the garden in all kinds of weather, praying that all the hard landscaping materials would arrive on time and that the plants would flower at just the right moment. Eventually there was the thrill of being awarded a Silver Medal and the joy of sharing the garden with the public. Lastly, a frantic 3 days to dismantle everything and leave the site in its original state. Would she do it again? She wasn't sure.

June: ~ The picturesque village of Biddestone was the start of our Midsummer Day walk. By Lane brought us to high open farmland, with spectacular views down the valley towards Bath. Weavern Lane, through shady woodland, to Slaughterford and the By Brook valley, lead us to the White Hart at Ford for lunch. A steady climb through beech woodland, then a drop down to Slaughterford, with a glimpse of the church. After a gradual climb we crossed farmland to Biddestone.



Midsummer walk from Biddestone, 21st June 2011

~ The Sahara Sisters entertained members at the June meeting. Some members took the chance to have a go themselves after demonstrations and a fascinating talk on the history of belly dancing. Many soon realised that it was not as easy as it looked. Kay Sambell gave the vote of thanks.

May: ~ The third week in May has been busy. After the wonderful walk on Monday 16 of us went to Bath Aqua Glass. There we watched the skilled workers blow the glass and make a number of items including a jug and a penguin. One of our members even tried her hand at glass blowing. It's harder than it looks keeping control of your breath whilst turning the pole with the molten glass on it. Needless to say it ended in disaster with a deep breath blowing a hole in the bottom! After some retail therapy 12 of us retired for a very pleasant lunch.



Viv tries her hand at glass blowing. Visit to Bath Aqua Glass, May 2011

~ The main thrust of the May meeting was the discussion of the two resolutions to be debated at the Annual Meeting in Liverpool. Barbara Sealy, accompanied by a member of the National Farmers Union, gave an impassioned plea for us to vote against the resolution concerning denying planning permission for mega farms. The resolution itself was confusingly worded and if implemented could possibly mean even more farmers going out of business, resulting in the importing of much of our meat. The second resolution regarding the closure of local libraries was also discussed in depth and this proposal gained the support of the meeting. Whilst refreshments were served, an assortment of items from the past, including ancient hair curling tongs, black nylons and old magazines, were circulated, bringing back many memories and causing much amusement.

~ Our May walk started at West Woods near Clatford; this wood is famous for its bluebells, but they were past their best. We strolled through the magnificent, quiet woodland and across soft downland in the Kennet Valley. In the pretty village of Lockeridge we enjoyed our lunch at the Who'd a Thought It, then passed an area of low Sarsen Stones known as Grey Wethers. A short climb brought us back to the woodland.



WI walk at Lockeridge, 16th May 2011

April: ~ Frampton on Severn walk - 15th April



By the Sharpness & Gloucester canal Frampton on Severn church

A small group of 11 WI members, husbands and friends had an enjoyable walk in the Frampton-on-Severn area on a gloriously sunny April day. As usual we started with a coffee stop and then proceeded to Splatt Bridge on the Gloucester and Sharpness canal. Initially we walked away from the canal passing an ancient barn and lots of beautiful spring blossom. Part of our walk took us through emerging woodland and from there across the fields to The Tudor Arms at Shepherds Patch where we enjoyed a very good lunch. Finally we walked back along the tow path enjoying the views of the Severn estuary and the various craft on the canal.

~ The scene was set in a Victorian drawing room complete with aspidistra, when we were entertained by Vera Hughes and David Weller who enacted the life of Florence Nightingale. During the course of the evening Vera changed from the young Florence, named after the city of her birth, to the frail lady who lived until she was 90. Persuading her parents that she would rather study mathematics than marry gave her a lifelong interest in statistics. She eventually trained as a nurse in Germany and after a brief spell working in Harley Street she went out to the Crimea to lead a team of nurses in the military hospital at Scutari, where she became known as The Lady of the Lamp. She was passionate about her chosen career and wrote many books and articles on the subject.

March: ~ Kites soaring in the sky, the turquoise colour of the kingfisher flashing across the Kennet and Avon canal and wild flowers delighted walkers after we left the pretty village of Chilton Foliat. Fish were spotted in the clear waters of the river Kennet. Our walk took us through woodland to open high ground with spectacular views towards Hungerford. The A4 was crossed, then the river Dun, which brought us to a wooden swing bridge at Marsh Lock. Shortly before Hungerford Church we crossed another swing bridge, through a Nature Reserve and back to the A4. Straight ahead and up a field we reached the quaint Hamlet of Leverton, past the long red bricked garden wall of Chilton House (which was featured in the Victorian Kitchen Garden programme many years ago) , on to Chilton Foliat and a very enjoyable meal at Cobbs Farm Shop.



We found some famous Friends!!! Daffodils at Chilton House.

February: ~ On a dull February morning day, members and friends enjoyed a walk with a hint of spring in the air. Through open parklands on the Bowood Estate snowdrops and early daffodils were admired and a herd of fallow deer, herons and Canada geese were spotted. A gentle climb on a track through woodland brought us to The George at Sandy Lane and a delicious lunch.

Just past The George we crossed the main road and took the road signposted to Bowden Hill. After about half a mile we continued on a minor road, enjoying views across Wiltshire. After crossing a stile and heading straight down a field, we walked through woodland along a valley, with a steep climb taking us back to Derry Hill.



WI walk - outside The George at Sandy Lane, 21st February 2011

~ With February being a dull month it was decided to inject some fun into a Saturday night with our take on a Gangsters & Molls Casino Night. Roulette and Blackjack tables were manned by 'experts' who were very willing to instruct novices in the art of gambling. Most lost their money quickly but great skill was shown by Graham Dean who won £450 and Marilyn Logan who won £150. Of course this 'money' was swapped for prizes as the currency had no value outside the Village Hall! Jazz music befitting the era was provided by Nick Gill and canapés were provided by WI members. Las Vegas here we come!!!!!!



Gangsters & molls casino night, 26th February 2011

~ Not many of the audience could say with certainty where Outer Mongolia precisely lies, but they were given an excellent view of the country by retired vet, Mick Ponting, who had helped to lead an Operation Raleigh group of young people to this remote area. Going ahead of the main party Mr Ponting was involved in buying equipment and horses which were to be their only form of transport.

Apart from helping to build a school and some bridges, the youngsters undertook 250 mile and 450 mile horseback treks through vast barren landscapes bordering the Gobi Desert, encountering nomadic Mongol people who, despite their own lack of possessions, extended warm hospitality to the adventurers. Food was very limited, consisting mainly of fatty pasties which were cooked over dry dung fires and even the horses had to search hard for grazing in the river valleys.

As a vet Mr. Ponting was able to offer limited medical treatment to the horses, camels and bison of the nomads, animals being an important form of currency for them. The colourful embroidered cloths and clothing of the region offered a stark contrast to the bleak Mongolian terrain. The whole trip must have had a profound effect on the young people taking part.

January: ~ There was quite a look of nostalgia on many faces when Jenny Lane gave her recent talk Take a Letter, Miss Jones! Having taken a multi-lingual secretarial training course as a safety net for her desired career on the stage, she had seen a vast change in office life from the rigid formality of the '50s and '60s when dress was prescribed and typing errors a nightmare to correct ,to the much more relaxed approach today when much work is done from home using modern technology. Jenny's acting talents gave added effect to her very amusing presentation.