

***Marion cum Grafton WI***  
***90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration***  
***November 13<sup>th</sup> 2014***  
***McG WI founded Nov. 1924***

We have in our possession almost continuous McG WI meeting notes for the 90 years of our existence, except for the very first four years. Sometimes those notes have raised more questions than answers.

A printed 'potted' history written in 2004 (80<sup>th</sup> Birthday) has extra details of our WI. I'm not sure of the author, although it could be one of us here.

Items have then been selected from some decades, the war years highlighted in particular, in recognition of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the beginning of WW1.

Our meeting notes begin on the **6<sup>th</sup> June 1929** and are recorded in a dark navy blue book file. They are beautifully handwritten with ink pen. They begin thus :

***'6<sup>th</sup> June 1929. The monthly meeting was held 6<sup>th</sup> June. Mrs Gudgeon in the chair. . . . It was proposed that the Boroughbridge team of folk dancers be asked to give a display at the annual Fete.'***

A second meeting was held on **Monday June 24<sup>th</sup>** to discuss the postponement of the Fete due to the prevalence of whooping cough in the village. It was rescheduled.

It is interesting to note the great numbers of letters 'to'ing and 'fro'ing between the group and speakers and other local groups until you remember that this would be the norm for communication.

**4<sup>th</sup> December 1930**

***'after the meeting a number of committee and members, consequent to the general complaint of the coldness of the room, voted that we present a new stove to the Institute. The same being paid for by holding 2 or 3 Whist Drives.'*** This refers to a room in the Mens' Institute. Not sure where that was.

Demonstrations during the **1930's** included making 'loose covers, Locker and Jute rug making, eiderdown making, raffia work, fruit bottling, canning and jam and chutney making. It very often appears that a guest speaker then held independent classes on their particular craft to which members were able to further develop their own skills, for example -

**2<sup>nd</sup> April 1931**

***'5 classes and 2 lectures on Needlework and stitches have been held by Mrs Hey during the months March and April. 10 members joined the classes. . . . Some of the stitches learned were needle weaving, double running, Italian and Russian Hem stitch, pulled stitch, satin, crewel and stem stitch etc.'***

Interestingly a Dr Rust recommended that Nurse Mitchell of Ouseburn should give a talk on 'Home Nursing' and then prepare and present a number of classes, as in the prescribed syllabus for home nursing – unfortunately the terms for lectures were deemed too expensive. So Mrs Rust came in **November 1932** and demonstrated making a bed for the sick. What a busy couple! She was subsequently paid 2 /- twice monthly to deliver classes on 'Sick nursing in the home.' It appears from the notes that Dr Rust also took some of the lectures.

**5<sup>th</sup> May 1932**

***'A demonstration on Invalid Cookery was given by Miss G A Spence of Ripon. The following dishes were given: Egg jelly, Steamed fish, Feathered egg, Barley water and Beef Tea.'***

### **... the War Years for McG WI 1939 - 1945**

The meeting notes during 1939 contain some references to the growing political situation.

**Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> 1939**

***'The Whist Drive which was arranged for Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> was cancelled. The demonstration also failed to come, both owing to the International Crisis.'***

**Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> 1939**

***'It was decided to have a bring and buy stall at the November meeting, to try and make some money to help to buy wool to knit socks etc. for the soldiers.'***

**Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> 1939**

***'It was decided to have another bring and buy stall at the December meeting. Mrs Stevens of Ripon gave us a talk on the work to be done by the Women's Auxiliary Service.'***

**Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 1940** It seems from the records that January traditionally is the month for the children's party. In the monthly account, this is written ***'Mrs Norfolk and Mrs Ashton were asked to get the toys for the children's party in January, it was also proposed that the evacuees be asked to the party.'***

By **1941** the members seem to have become fully involved in knitting items for the soldiers and also fund raising.

**Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 1941.** The night after the annual children's party there was to be a Whist Drive and it was arranged to invite twenty soldiers to whist and supper.

It does seem from the records that there was an inordinate number of Whist drives, usually because the speaker or demonstration didn't take place.

Interestingly as early as **June 1941** the question of discontinuing teas at meetings was proposed and defeated. How many times has this thorny question reared its head!

**Annual Report 1941**

***'It has been a very difficult year, our secretary had to resign, as she was doing War work . . . no one would try to fill her place and the attendance was poor. The only real success has been the War Savings Group. £1333. 0s. 0d. was collected for War Weapons Week.'***

During these war years there are talks, demonstrations and even films given by The Ministry of Food, The Ministry of Information. After the annual children's party in **January '43** the home guard were entertained to a a whist Drive.

October **1943.** It was proposed to send 12/6 to members of the forces from the village. Also passed - that the pairs of remaining socks should be sent to the two members of the forces who are prisoners of war.

There are no actual references to the ending of the war during any of the meeting notes for Sept. / Oct. / Nov. or Dec. 1945. Perhaps the group's **21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Party** in **November 1945** took preference! A cake was made by Mrs Barley and past members

were invited, including Mrs Sadler who was a founder member in our WI.

Post war talks and demonstrations include 'aprons made from black-out material' 'surplus meat' ( pig oval has been crossed out!) ' a career in nursing.'

**December 4<sup>th</sup> 1947 / (first references to the new Memorial Hall)** (paying £2 per annum for the hire.)

And so we settled quite seamlessly into the Memorial Hall as the new monthly meeting premises, but noticeably still in the afternoon until the meeting on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1948 when it was decided to hold future meetings at 7.30pm (on Tuesdays!) No hint in the notes as to the reason for the change of time.

By 1948 it appears that delegates from our (local) WIs are now attending the London Conference with expenses being paid. By **December 1950** the Claro group had become too big and so a division was suggested. The group now consisted of Kirby Hill, Roecliffe, Boroughbridge, Aldborough, Minskip and McG. No name for the group yet.

Handwriting becomes a little less legible at this point – I blame the teachers!

### **... into the 1950s'**

New decade, new committee, **February 1951**  
**'Mrs Dyer was in the chair. 19 members present. After Jerusalem was sung the business followed.'** 1<sup>st</sup> reference to Jerusalem – why? Not recorded before? Perhaps influence of National WI?

Correspondence was received from Heinz Co. Ltd., The Food Ministry, Blind Welfare Dept., and British Railways – presumably some of these were replies to potential speakers for future meetings.

Meetings for this period seem to have settled into a routine

- Singing of Jerusalem
- Welcome from President
- Apologies and Numbers present

- Minutes read and confirmed
- Correspondence
- Business at the time
- Talk, demonstration, poem or play readings - vote of thanks moved
- Competition entries judged, results recorded
- Supper, hostesses noted.

The more unusual competition ideas included

- knitting on two matchsticks!
- Wool winding! (speedily)
- a dressed clothes peg
- a drawing whilst blindfold
- putting dried peas into a jam jar with two knitting needles (winner - 18)

I could go on but you get the imaginative and ingenious and sometimes bizarre competition ideas!

**Miscellaneous items from meeting notes in the 1950s'**

During this decade a decision had been made to start a Savings Group. **2<sup>nd</sup> December 1952** 'A report on the Savings group given by Miss Ramsden shewed 63 members had £440 in savings to date.'

**June 7<sup>th</sup> 1955** 'Mrs Langley, representative from Spenser Corsets Ltd. gave a very interesting talk on posture and the need for a good corset. She also displayed various kinds of corsets and brassieres.'

It appears that during the 1950's invitations were sent from one WI group to another inviting a specific number (say 4 – 6) of their members to attend the evening's proceedings. On the occasion of **McG's 30th Anniversary** six members from each of the other (local, group) institutes were invited to join the celebrations.

**Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> 1954**  
 ...'a letter from Mrs Tewdall, Chairman of the Group (was read) congratulating the Institute on it's anniversary.' After the

business meeting ***'Miss Proudley and Miss Curtis then ran a crazy (?)whist drive'*** . . and more games were played to finish the evening.

You'll notice, as yet, no mention of wine, at the meetings !  
However there has been a trend to enjoy a meal at the Three Horseshoes in Boroughbridge instead of a Christmas party in the hall.

Here we go again! **Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1959 AGM meeting**  
***'Members said they would prefer to have biscuits instead of cake and sandwiches with their cup of tea at them monthly meeting. They also said they liked being grouped round small tables rather than one large table.'***

The 50's WI meetings seemed to have a more informal feel to them after the 40's. Member's were perhaps more relaxed post-war and had become more aware of WI events and activities outside of their own local area. There seemed to be much talk and plans to travel locally, Bishop Burton, Hornsea, Leeds, and also further afield – to Edinburgh, London - to exhibitions at Earl's Court and as delegates for the AGM at the Albert Hall. There is greater involvement with the Aldborough Show and the Group Rally events.

It is a decade of social activity and growing community commitments, as demonstrated by the minutes recording the enormous exchange of written letters sent and received between WI 's in the area, invitations sent to guest speakers and to and from national businesses. During this time members were asked to collect waste paper, and many letters came from charities asking for volunteers to collect funds. It all suggests that the WI was having an influence on both national and local affairs.

In **June 1953**, the coronation year of Queen Elizabeth 11, our beautifully embroidered tablecloth was made for the 'Hanbury' Competition. The details of this and other royal encounters are held in the National Archives.

**... the 'swinging' 60s' or not?**

Here we go again. The competition for the first meeting in **January 1960** was for the most articles found in a member's handbag – Mrs Eliot was first with 54 articles! We have to presume that this competition was not announced 'til the evening's meeting.

Member's continue to attend Group Meetings and make exhibits for the Aldborough Show. They attend Spring, Autumn and National Council meetings, in turn now with Whixley. And I don't think I've mentioned the Group Rally. The Whist Drive seems to be the default entertainment and fund raiser.

As we already know thinking of others is natural for WI members and in **February 5<sup>th</sup> 1963**

**'A letter of thanks was read out from the Children's Home thanking the WI for the nice time the children had at the party.'**

Possibly the nearest we get to the swinging 60s are the competitions for the 'neatest ankle' and the 'best kept finger nails.'

And film shows are figuring quite regularly during this period.

At last - **July 11<sup>th</sup> 1969** a 'Wine and Cheese Party,'K which swelled the funds by £23 15s 11d.

### **... 'the 70s' to the present day!**

Did you know that Josie Daniels baked the cake for the Golden Jubilee of the McG WI for the **April 1974** meeting. **Miss E Simpson gave a most entertaining talk 'Be fifty and like it!'**

In the meeting notes of the middle seventies there are familiar names of members who will be remembered by some of the more senior members of our WI today: who remembers these past members - Myrtle Eastwood, Margaret Young, Thelma Popple, and many more – how young were they then!? In the 70s' meeting notes there are references to Winnie Cox – I hope she's here today! I'm sure she will be! Next most senior member, Jenny Lewis, then Pauline Kilburn. Their tangible legacy are the hand written meeting notes during the 90s, also Pauline Kilburn's Parish Magazine reports to this day.

These days they're all typed, edited, recorded and saved on the computer – but where the heck in 'cyberspace' are they? I hope we can pull together all records for the next 90 years!!

One constant at the meetings throughout the decades, bringing surprise, skill and always sustenance are the unsung supper ladies, or should we revert to 'supper hostesses' with the most'ess! What do you think?

I hope you've enjoyed this abridged but increasingly light hearted history of our WI group (reflects my state of mind!) – of which we should be very proud. Please be tolerant of gaps and mistakes made, no harm intended.

We've spawned some very talented members along the way. Remind each other of the ones I've missed.

Back in 1965 when the first of two village scrapbooks were produced, the embroidered cover was sewn by Mrs Anne Moss, one of our former members. The second scrapbook was compiled by Mrs Stott, line drawings were by Mrs Naish, other illustrations also by Mrs Stott and the book cover this time was embroidered by Mrs Backhouse.

Mrs Betty Wilson imagined how a derelict area to the side of the village hall could become the WI Garden that it is today. Linda Joynson and Cynthia Sutton continue to nurture and create a focus for contemplation.

To celebrate the Millennium in 2000 a wall hanging was presented to Christ Church. The wall hanging was originally the idea of Elsie Stockwell and was completed by members and villagers. Go and see it there in the church.

More recently the local school opened a new extension to its premises. Entering the school into a new open planned reception area, visitors are struck by a colourful collage sewn and collated by McG WW group.

***That's the point – we all play our part!***



You have your own memories now – cherish them, memorise them, especially the young amongst us – you may well be providing the future story for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations!

Written by Pauline Kilburn