

HENLEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 – 2017

Following the AGM in October 2016 we now have 9 on the Committee as one lady stepped down and another left Suffolk in December 2016, 2 less than last year. This may not sound much in relation to change but when catering for large numbers this is when we have noticed that an extra pair of hands is definitely a bonus.

We have 31 members this year as opposed to 37 last year. Combination of reasons: persons moving out of the area as well as age related illness or generally persons that have shown an interest but are no longer able to commit.

The Committee again did the catering for the Christmas Party at £10 per head including wine. We had a local talented group of singers, who although not world renowned, made for a very pleasurable evening. We again had our Carol Service in St Peters Church where we raised a respectable amount for one our local charities.

We had 65 or thereabouts attend our Winter Warmer in the Community Centre this year. Again, very successful as we still managed to keep the cost down to £5 per head and remain in a good position financially. However, the Committee felt that the formula for 2018 should be reviewed. With the decrease in our members, we felt a little tired and following our usual review we all felt that we would benefit from a change.

MARCH ACTIVITIES

The AGM in Trinity Park was held on 7 March. Mark Horton, one of the BBC presenters from Coast entertained us, speaking about his work including maritime history and our own coastline as well as stories relating to the making of the series and how it has grown in popularity over the years from when it first initially began.

We held our Birthday Meeting and were entertained by Stephen Bayfield, local Comedian who amused us about stories about his childhood and how his father worked as a gamekeeper at Glemham Hall. Indeed he was looked rather dapper in his tweed suit and union jack tie. It was a very enjoyable evening. Invitations were extended to our Chairman, Federation Secretary, Group Adviser and the Fynn Valley Group of WI's to which we belong.

Members also took part in the WI Spring Quiz held in Stradbroke. We did better this year coming second and that was on a knockout decider. We are getting closer to that 1st prize!

In August 2016 Joyce Hornsby eagerly arranged the Theatre Trip to Aldeburgh with the usual stop off on route at Flora's Cafe for Fish 'n' Chips at Dunwich. In addition to this, she still takes charge of the monthly book club which she holds in her own home, currently changed to the afternoons. As Group Organiser it fell upon her to assist in hosting the latest Meeting at Tuddenham on 28 March. Tuddenham WI have their own member who is a professionally qualified gardener. She gave a really good talk and brought along plants. We very much hope to have her come to us in 2018 as she had very good presenting skills which even engaged some of us less actively interested gardeners. Our President, Sue Herbert also took first place and won the Cup for her Garden on a Plate.

We are considering some further Summer Outings. One of which is Shelley's Tea Rooms attached to the Suffolk College where we hope to go in May and another to a garden event possibly still in the organising, but maybe Helmingham Hall as it is close by. As it is on our doorstep, we thought we would consider giving it a try with a lunch. In addition, the Theatre trip to Aldeburgh is scheduled with the usual format on route fish 'n' chips at Flora's. It still remains a firm favourite as well as Shelley's Tea Room which was very successful last year.

Following on from last year's report, 3 of us have been to Denman College. The only words to describe it are *fantastic and we want to go back!!!!* Two of us attended the Arts and Crafts Course incorporating The Pre-Raphaelite Movement as well as some of the local Museums in Oxford and the Student Union Library where we saw the murals of the young artists of the time including Dante Gabriel Rosetti, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. We also visited the home and studio of George Frederick Watts. In addition to this we had a guide / course tutor throughout the trip explaining everything both at Denman and at the visiting locations. What a treat this whole course was and indeed a good holiday. The accommodation was wonderful, the food splendid with waiter service in the evenings and a well-stocked bar where we could treat ourselves to a glass of vino if so desired. SEFWI provided transport both there and back which made it even more attractive and relaxing. Our other member attended the Gardening Course which I understand was excellent, again with several visits out & about including Blenheim Palace gardens. They too had a designated tutor / guide.

We still remain a financially strong and successful WI. The Treasurer continues to regularly update us on our financial position and we still deliberate over ways to both fundraise to support ourselves with provision made on occasions to assist outside agencies and charities. In addition, we have recently made a sizeable donation to Denman who still continue to thrive but need outside financial assistance with their buildings and maintenance project. The Saving Denman Appeal is still ongoing and is assisted by Women's Institutes all over the UK.

It is unfortunate that this year seen a reduction in our members but we have risen to the challenge and have been advertising both by way of the internet, emails and letter drops. We are not in a position at this time to say how successful this has been as we have only just had our Recruitment Drive in March. However, we know that we have managed to recruit one or 2 new members who we hope will join us in April.

As ever, we strive to develop new concepts in which we can make the WI both successful and interesting for everyone. We are pleased to say that Kay Swinger has volunteered to stay on for another year as the Events Organiser, which in itself can be a tedious task as she continues to make the bookings a year in advance in the hope that we have engaged a good speaker who will entertain, educate or enlighten us all with some new experience or knowledge. In addition, we have also embarked on our own homemade craft evenings.

Finally, we are pleased to report that Henley WI continues to thrive and be an integral part of village life for those of us who wish to take an active interest.

Alice Robertson

Secretary