

## Shrivenham Women's Institute - Past and Present

This necessarily brief survey can only highlight a few examples of the Shrivenham W. I.'s involvement in the life of our village.

Lady Barrington was founder and first President of the Barrington Women's Institute, and meetings were held at Beckett Cottage. In August, 1919 it lost its purely local function, and, as the Shrivenham and Watchfield Women's Institute, became a member of the N.F.W.I. Since then it has always been active in support of Group, County and N.F.W.I. projects. In 1963 Watchfield seceded, and the name became Shrivenham Women's Institute.

Early records show that the meetings added a new dimension to members' lives. They heard talks on a wide variety of subjects, had cookery demonstrations, and classes in craft work. The annual W.I. Flower Show gave opportunity to display their skills.

1939-1945 saw the emphasis placed on the war effort. Lists of knitted garments for the troops and prisoners-of-war are impressive; members also mended bed linen, etc. for hospitals, and were much involved in First Aid, A.R.P. and make-Do-and-mend.

In the Sixties we note that the Shrivenham W.I. campaigned for weekly refuse collections, a High Street pedestrian crossing, and extension of the bus service, and also staffed the County library in the men's Institute.

The seat in front of the memorial Stall was presented to the Village by the W.I. in 1967. Our Golden Jubilee in 1969 was celebrated by the presentation of two wall clocks for the memorial Stall, and a memorable two-day Flower Festival with concerts and organ recitals in St. Andrew's and Methodist Churches.

County boundary changes enforced a transfer from Berkshire to the Oxfordshire Federation in October, 1974.

W.I. drama presentations for the Village culminated in the musical extravaganza "Diamond Decades" for the 60th anniversary. A successful Flower Festival, a Diamond Jubilee Dinner, and publication of the Shrivenham Women's Institute Cookery Book - 500 copies sold - crowned a celebration year.

In 1980 an oak tree was planted in the village to mark the Queen Mother's 80th birthday.

"Getting to know your W.I." in June, 1983 attracted many visitors with an impressive craft exhibition, a performance of "murder at the W.I." and a "fork supper." This was our contribution to the Three Parishes Festival.

In October, 1983 the Shrivenham W.I. team won the Oxfordshire Federation's Public Speaking contest at Yarnton.

Our W.I. organises the annual collection from Faringdon and distribution of concessionary bus tokens for Shrivenham and surrounding villages. It actively supports the Village Fete; members help with the luncheon club for senior citizens. Whist Drives, coffee mornings, etc. are organised to help a

number of charities. Visits to places of interest are popular, and members have attended residential courses at Denman College, and seminars at Starwell as well as county and national federation events. Sub groups include choir, Drama, Poetry circle, keep-fit and craft work.

Details of the monthly meeting are displayed on village notice boards.

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