

NEWTON FERRERS AND NOSS MAYO WI
ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

When I wrote last year's annual report we had just begun the lockdown journey and could not hold our meeting in person. At that point we were full of hope that we would be back to 'normal' by the Autumn but were beginning to realise what lockdown meant to the village. Never did most of us imagine that I would be writing this year's Annual Report just as we are emerging from a *third* lockdown, though it must be said with much more hope than at any other time in the last 14 months.

When I tried to remember what life was like in the village in April and May last year I look back at the cooperation we were seeing in all parts of the community. The villages were divided into groups, based on location, with a coordinator who supported those in their group in any ways that were needed. Talk between members were centred around 'who had managed to get grocery deliveries', 'who had spare books/jigsaws to share', 'who had grown surplus plants' (we were spending so much time in our gardens' and the sharing of resources from yeast to a crowbar became common place. While not able to see anyone in person, apart from meeting in passing on trips to the local shops – the warm weather meant that standing around in the road became a welcome break from our isolation. Those shielding, for whatever reason, were particularly grateful for cheerful chat on the phone or outside their front doors. As one of our members said

"There have been highs and some incredible lows for some of our members but we are all very grateful for the village we live in, the people who live here and the support we have all felt. How grateful everyone has been not only to the local stores (P.O., Butcher, Chemist, Co-Op etc.) but also to the postmen (and women), bin collectors, pubs offering meal deliveries and all the other delivery persons. We couldn't have functioned without them and more especially the volunteers who are providing support and information to the vulnerable in Newton and Noss. I'm sure the applauding on Thursday evening was not only for the fantastic health staff but also for the brilliant local support we have witnessed."

Apart from small group tea parties in August in groups of six, our meetings have been all held on zoom (and never has the technology been more needed). Despite the age of the many of our members, lets just say over retirement age, it has been fantastic that the majority have embraced the new format and joined in at least some of the meetings we have offered – on-line speakers, coffee mornings, book groups, quizzes and very importantly the popular craft sessions.

So in a year where we have been so restricted in what we could do, where we could go and who we could see what have we been doing as a WI?

As Angela reports below the craft group grew with the addition of enthusiastic ladies from around the village, some who are not members of the WI but who were proficient with a needle. Many of us enjoyed the chance not only to help with making the scrubs, headbands and bags but it also seemed to give a focus in those first few months when everything seemed very bleak.

popular this has been and even members who are not part of the book group, like me, have enjoyed reading along.

In November many of us were hoping to meet again in small groups for another tea party afternoon but this was not to be. The committee set up 'caring' groups between them to enable us to keep in touch with the members, especially those who were living alone or shielding. Throughout the year a newsletter had gone out by email to all members on line – initially weekly- what was I thinking of??!! – that was when we were told the lockdown would be for 12 weeks and it didn't seem so onerous ! - and then twice monthly. This enabled everyone to catch up with news , recipes, photographs, and anything that members had been doing! For those not on line these were printed and delivered by hand with any Devon News we received. From 2021 birthday cards will be sent to members too – we are trying to keep in touch with everyone.

In 2021 Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo WI reached its 100th birthday and what a lovely start to February with our Centenary meeting . Party bags were delivered so that we could celebrate with a small bottle of fizz and a cupcake. Hats were encouraged and what a treat to see everyone in their 'finery', well at least from the waist up! There were 55 ladies (from our membership of 63) on line including 4 presidents from Yealm Group branches and 5 previous presidents of our own from the last 40 years. It was very special to see a number of ladies joining in one of our zoom meetings for the first time, from Wales to Sherford through to Brixton, Yealmpton via Alston and Membland to Newton and Noss villages.

After the 'almost' audible rendition of Jerusalem, our current president, Jill Alexander read a story she had written of a fictional founding member from 1921 and the life that she would have been living. Following this we heard from previous presidents, - Helen James, Jean Ellis, Janet Cattanach, Emma Parker and Carrie Dixon with tales of their time as president. Emma finished her slot with a complete surprise by revealing and then reading the letter she had received from Buckingham Palace on behalf of the Queen congratulating us on our 100 year celebrations. A few tears were shed around the villages as this was read to us.

We finished with a slideshow of 'old' photos (thanks to Mel Ellis) bringing back memories of events and members.

We hope to be able to celebrate in person in the summer in style – celebrating the centenary and hopefully the return to some sort of normality.

By the end of December a number of members were able to go to Derriford Hospital for the first wave of the vaccine. Now the majority of the members have had both vaccinations or are at least part way through. It seems amazing that we are nearly a year on from the start of the first lockdown. The thought of meeting again in our hall and in large groups is both exciting and slightly taunting in equal measure. Through the year as strange as it has been, we have all enjoyed some of the different ways of

internet like the history of knitting provided some diversion. We've only had one outside demo making a macrame pot holder for plants. Sharing ideas and materials has been an important link for many members.

Newton & Noss WI Environment Project Report

Just before lockdown our WI agreed to spend some funds on wildflowers to improve the village environment. We had planned an event involving the school to plant seeds just after we were told to stay at home. 3 of our members managed to plant the seeds with help from husbands, working in Covid safe pairs. These did not do very well as the area was shaded by trees. We have added more seed and bulbs and continue to stop these areas being cut. The spring bulbs planted in the autumn were much more successful and we hope these will naturalise under the grass and gives us an even better display next year.

Report for WI AGM BOOK GROUP

We have been lucky to have been able to continue with our regular bi-monthly meetings throughout this last year thanks to Caroline who held gatherings in her garden when allowed when I was ill and to all those members who struggled to get to grips with the technology of ordering books on line and Zoom meetings.

We have had a consistent attendance of 13 ladies split over 2 sessions so that the groups on line are manageable and everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the discussions in a happy and relaxed environment.

In January each member introduced a book which was meaningful to them and this list was circulated to our WI membership as a whole, as well as the bi-monthly titles.

One of the main benefits of the club is encouraging ladies to try titles that they would not normally pick up and I am hoping that it won't be long before we can ALL enjoy meetings in person in the WI Hall.

Newton & Noss WI Craft Group 2020- 2021 report

Surprisingly this has been a very busy year for our craft group. We started lockdown by almost immediately becoming involved in making piles of laundry bags for medical staff at Derriford hospital, using old duvets and curtains - whatever could be donated. We liaised with a sewing group based on Derriford and started making scrubs with donated fabrics. Then we put out an appeal and lots of ladies in the village joined in and contributed their skills and fabrics. Some big rolls of fabric ordered online and patterns eventually saw us producing over 35 sets of scrubs which went largely to local care homes once the hospital had enough. We also produced huge numbers of headbands (mainly crocheted), and hats, everyone contributing whatever skills they could offer.

By the middle of May we were starting to get the hang of Zoom and our online meetings have continued for the whole year. Some members sadly have not joined these meetings but we hope to see them again for real, soon. It has always been such a pleasure to see peoples faces on zoom.

Members have been involved with various knitting projects : lap blankets and twiddlemuffs for care homes, small baby clothes and blankets for the hospital prem baby unit and for Trevi House; cat blankets for a cats rescue centre, and koala blankets for Australia.

A number of members also made lots of pennants for the DFWI anniversary. Some of these pennants are now being made into lap blankets.

Those with sewing skills have also made a lot of "bosom" bags for ladies at Derriford having a mastectomy as well as heart shaped cushions for them travelling home after surgery.

We have had a few demonstrations from members showing what they had been doing. A number of videos on interesting subjects sourced from the internet like the history of knitting provided some diversion. We've only had one outside demo making a macrame pot holder for plants. Sharing ideas and materials has been an important link for many members.