

Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo WI - Secretary's annual report **2019-20**

It is such a strange feeling writing the report when we cannot have an Annual Meeting this year. Due to the lockdown in March as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic we have been forced to cancel the monthly meetings in April and the Annual meeting in May and as this report is written it looks increasingly likely that we will not be meeting in person until at least the autumn. The support of the villages has been tremendous, especially for the vulnerable members and those living on their own. We have realised how fortunate we are to live not only in this part of the country but more especially in a caring and well resourced community with shops and businesses willing to work around the difficulties of the situation.

Looking back a year the last Annual Meeting seemed to be enjoyed by everyone, maybe a result of the cheese and wine (thanks to Jean for organising a great spread) but more probably that we all enjoyed catching up with friends, new members and remembering some of the highlights of the previous year.

We have had a fantastic assortment of speakers this year. We have learned how to make the perfect poison by Janet Sellick on her talk about Agatha Christie, how to make ourselves look like film stars with a demonstration on film make-up by Sharon Ammis and how to make delicious onion bahjis by Purdy Giles. We finished our meetings year being fascinated by the Russian Royals and Faberge eggs with Janet Cowland.

While we enjoy the speakers as we have discovered in the last few months our WI is not so much about the monthly meetings where we formally meet and listen to this wide variety of speakers, its about our members and its been lovely this year to see members taking the lead in the activities we have enjoyed.

Caroline organised trips out during the year. A trip to a Thorn House gardens in June found 25 ladies and 2 guests getting a tour of the garden and narrowly missing being caught in a thunderstorm.

Our annual trip to Pentille Castle in July for the usual wonderful shared supper and performance. The production was Midsummer Nights Dream and was enjoyed by 14 ladies. Also members enjoyed some splendid lunches locally and in Plymouth.

The Annual Devon Carol Service took place on Tuesday 3rd December in Exeter Cathedral. Caroline Parsons organised a coach which took the choir and those of us who just wanted to shop for the morning. As usual it was a great occasion much enjoyed by the congregation and the choir.

Other groups have flourished during the year. In September Pam Carter held an enjoyable lunch and skittle practice session for 10 willing ladies at the Westwood Inn at Lee Mill before the team was selected for the first match against Elburton. They were unfortunately very narrowly beaten on the last round by just 3. Thanks to Pam for organising the team, difficult during half term and many suffering with a range of injuries!

A new friendly Walking group began in the Autumn led coordinated by – Christine Wilson. The idea, I think, was to do about an hours gentle walk on a Monday from the Green followed by a coffee at the Post Office. ‘Weather permitting’ was the main instruction but I think that ‘rain stopped play’ was the more often than not the case! Much coffee was drunk and voices were exercised.

At the Presidents tea party in August in Jill’s garden the sun shone as ordered and we were able to enjoy the wonderful garden for a relaxing afternoon with tea and cake. Thanks must go to Jill (and John too) for all the hard work to make the afternoon possible and also to the committee who set up, served tea and Pimms and cleared away afterwards. Many hands always made light (or at least lighter) work!

In November the annual WI entertainment was a Cabaret style event on 2 evenings. The performances were varied and ranged from serious singing to poetry to comedy acts. These were interspersed with a sit down meal, organised and cooked by Jeanne Venning with some expert help before and during the evening events. It was extremely skilled to get a superb 3 course meal served hot to 60 guests each night. The whole event was organised by Jean Ellis and with support from some of the cast’s husbands everything went without a hitch (well almost!)

In January we had our second Singing Day. Many ladies, and a few gentleman, from Newton and Noss and from Yealmpton and Brixton enjoyed a wonderful, if challenging day of singing music from the music of the group Take That! Many thanks to Vicki Ingram for organising this as it was a treat to have a Denman tutor, Jo Sercombe, to come to our hall and give us such a fun day. The cake in the afternoon was also much appreciated.

Nicky Macdougall co-ordinated items to go to the Glenbourne Unit at Derriford Hospital. Things like small items of chocolate, smellies, etc were collected from members to provide ‘goody bags’ for those women with mental issues who came into care.

The Christmas lunch was well attended this year with an outside caterer taking the reins for the second time so that all members could enjoy a relaxing lunch without worrying about the preparation.

Angela Macpherson met with a small group of ladies to discuss ideas for an environmental project to work with the Parish Council and alongside the school too. In the past the WI had planted trees in both churchyards but this time the decision was to begin by planting an area of wildflowers. Because of the restrictions that came in, 3 members and their husbands had to do all the planting and unfortunately the involvement of the school will have to wait until later in the year.

Some of our members starred as extras (including Elary’s dog!) in the Dawn French series, The Trouble with Maggie Cole which was filmed in Noss and Newton during 2019.

who eagerly accepted our offer, even the vegan amongst them was catered for with various salads & bread. The play was the exquisite MidSummer Night's Dream. A truly magical evening, oh and our bar was pretty good as well for those not designated as drivers.

December

A full coach to Exeter for the WI Carol Service. As our excellent driver got us to Cathedral Green early we all took the opportunity to enjoy a coffee prior to rehearsals for those in the choir and shopping for the non singers. The service was wonderful, another great experience for all taking part. Well done to Joyce for being part of the team who put the service together. Perhaps some of us had a lump in our throats when we remembered the previous year our own Rev Anne Legge had taken the service.

The coach certainly makes for a more relaxing day and makes those large Christmas shopping bags easier to transport home

JANUARY 2020

What I think will become a WI regular, a way to kick off those post festive blues, a lovely lunchtime get together at The Teashop on the Green. Twenty two of us sat down to a very hearty lunch and as usual lots of laughter. This is an excellent way to share a social get together for those members who are unable to join us on other outings.

Well we should have been having lunch at The Bridge, Mountbatten in April, visiting the Ice Creamery in June and Pentillie in July but sadly all these have been cancelled because of Covid 19. Let's hope we can soon return to normality but in the meantime stay safe.

Caroline