

## **Longstanton WI Annual Report April 2014-15**

Longstanton WI has enjoyed another very good year in this, the WI's Centenary year. Together we enjoyed a varied and interesting programme. We have a wider age range than many WIs nationally, and continue to attract new members, aided by our Treasurer, Alice, who is also good at publicity.

We started a page on Facebook, thanks to Alice, so more villagers may hear about us. Debbie has written reports on our activities, which were published in Longstanton Life.

Speakers have informed and entertained us: Dorothy's sister, Margaret Ledger, gave a really interesting talk, with slides, of her trips to Antarctica; Veronica Hewins spoke on the healing powers of spices, her life in India, and a demonstration of preparing some aromatic and delicious Indian dishes; Ann Mitchell spoke on the history and present-day activities and opportunities of the Girl Guiding movement, illustrated by slides. We discovered that our Debbie is a very highly decorated Queen's Guide! In the competition, for badges, we also discovered that Alice had been awarded a Blue Peter badge as a child! Lindsey Marsden spoke on "Looking After Ourselves", largely from the aspect of security, and Fran Saltmarsh spoke on "Corsets, crinolines and camisoles", a fascinating talk on the history of ladies' underwear, illustrated by some examples, including a facsimile of a Tudor corset, made by a blacksmith! We learned that the term, 'loose woman' was derived from an uncorseted woman, who was uncontrolled and thus not to be trusted!

Speakers from two charities told us about their services, Andrea told us of the Papworth Trust, and its work for people with disabilities, and Sue Hooks of Willingham spoke about Operation Christmas Child's shoeboxes. Anne took a couple of filled shoeboxes from our members to the OCC hub in Cambridge, and was very impressed by the efficiency of the volunteers, preparing stacks of shoeboxes for despatch and distribution overseas.

The annual Plant Sale and Bring and Buy was held in May, to raise funds for our WI's activities, and was popular as ever. In July we held a Members' Evening, having asked members to bring a garment which brought back memories. This was fascinating, and we learned a little more about each other's interests and lives.

We keep an eye out for ways we can help our local area, and again we made cakes to support the Over Day Centre annual fundraising run in May.

Our annual outing was a guided walk round part of Wicken Fen, where we saw and learned much more than we would have done without a knowledgeable guide, followed by a curate's egg of a meal at a pub!

The BBQ was hosted by Ian and Helen Cooper, and was a great success. We were amazed at what a diverse, beautiful and productive garden they have created in such a small space. They have moved over the border to Suffolk, and now have a much bigger garden, but we were very sorry to lose Helen, who was our Secretary for several years.

We had greater success in the annual CFWI competition at the Fenland Show at the end of August, coming third out of eleven entries. The subject was "Cambridge Life", and Alice crocheted a DNA double helix, which was amazing (and much better than one knitted by another WI)!

On the last day of October, the sun shone warm and bright for the presentation of the Centenary Baton. Eleven members, one husband, and Barney the Golden Retriever turned out at the village sign, opposite the Institute, and the occasion was great fun.

We sent teams to the annual CFWI Quiz, but they reported that they found the questions very cryptic and difficult this time.

We ended the year with a meal out at the Duke of Wellington at Willingham, rightly famous for its pies.

Our Craft group continued to meet in members' homes, when we work on crafts for WI projects, or our own. It has devolved into a knitting group, but I'm sure we'll attempt something else soon! There is much friendly chatter, and eating of cake; more members would be welcome – you don't have to be good at any craft, as members learn from each other.

Book Club continued to meet in members' homes, and our Book the Year was probably Dorothy's choice, "The Little Coffee Shop of Kabul" by Deborah Rodriguez. Our reading is widened by being in the book club, as we read authors new to us; also there is friendly chatter and, yes, cake eaten.

It is the willingness and participation of the members which make our meetings so enjoyable and successful. So many, many thanks to you all, for all helping to setting out the room before meetings, clearing away at the end, making and serving delicious refreshments, washing up, and by taking part in our activities. We can confidently look forward in this, the WI's Centenary year, to another year of fun and friendship.

**Anne Littlefair**

Secretary, Longstanton WI, April 2015