

wf

GRAPEVINE



Our fellowship is with Christ and one with another

Winter 2023

No. 209



Fun, Faith and Fellowship

- *We are an ecumenical organisation for Christian Women.*
- *Our activities are spiritual, intellectual and social. Whatever we do, we uphold and share the Christian ideals of fellowship and family life.*
- *We meet in local branches, regionally and nationally, with programmes consisting of church services, talks on a wide range of subjects, parties, outings, coffee and chat.*
- *With shared interests and common values we become friends.*

Alternative Fellowship Prayer

Lord we ask you to watch over our Fellowship
and to direct its purposes,

To be at the centre of all of its activities
and to fulfil its prayers.

Make it outward looking, compassionate and caring,
and enable its members to be united in its aims.

May the Holy Spirit's power guide and sustain us
and His energy renew and inspire us.

For Christ's sake. Amen

**Women
in Fellowship
welcome you**

www.womeninfellowship.org.uk



Photographer Caroline St. Leger and friend

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Front Cover: Delegates at St. Edmundsbury Cathedral
Back Cover: Candle Stand, St Edmundsbury Cathedral



Frances, Rev. Rupert Toovey and Kate



Friends at Rottingdean



Dear Members,

I am writing this after returning from “This Curious Life” Autumn Conference in Bury St Edmunds – all superbly organised by the East Anglian branches. We began with our service in St Edmundsbury’s Cathedral and then at Culford School we heard from three wonderful speakers about their own ‘curious lives’ and that of local girl Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Each had faced very different challenges and judging from the feedback, many of us felt great admiration for the way they overcame their challenges and adversities. And of course, there was plenty of time to socialise with old friends and new!

For anyone who has not attended a national event before, or not for a while, I can highly recommend them and please do come and experience being part of our special fellowship.

Women in Fellowship needs to adapt to survive, and we need everyone to participate in whatever way they can. Please do consider helping your branches and Central by supporting events and by continuing to encourage new members.

Historically some branches have implemented a lengthy joining process which can deter new members. I ask branches to consider the WF guidelines –

“Membership is usually by introduction through existing members, who shall communicate to prospective members the ethos of WIF”.

We can still grow and continue to connect women with women whatever their Christian beliefs and their backgrounds.

As we were all together before the service, Central executive held our latest committee meeting in St Edmundsbury’s Cathedral. Noting the need

to adapt and wanting to continue the branch contact made by Emily and her team, we have agreed

to set up flock groups of branches by region. Two Central committee members have been allocated per flock and will be making contact with a view to arranging informal meetings in the Spring. Tunbridge Wells are ahead of the game – see page 31 – with news of their regular annual meeting to which nearby branches and past and scattered members are invited. There will also be a map and a list of all the branches on the website.

We recognise that many branches are struggling with forming branch committees and are running on a more informal basis. Therefore, in order to reduce the range and volume of communications, we would like there to be a single nominated contact at each branch. Also, in 2024 we intend to introduce a digital monthly Central newsletter which will be sent to the nominated contact at each branch. This will include news of national and regional events and booking information.

The news is dominated by the humanitarian and economic crises in the world. As we head into the winter months there might be a sense of darkness and despair. The theme of this Grapevine edition is “Light”, and we pray that there will be peaceful times ahead.

Happy Christmas to you and your families

With love and fellowship.

Alison



It was so very kind of you to send me such a wonderfully generous message following the death of my beloved mother. Your most thoughtful words are enormously comforting, and I cannot tell you how deeply they are appreciated at this time of immense sorrow.

Charles R.

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**Our Website Manager can be contacted via:
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Website Manager Needed

We are looking for a Website Manager with reliable Word and Excel skills who would be willing to help support the Women in Fellowship website. Knowledge of using Dropbox is desirable as is an ability to work with the technical support company. If necessary, training will be offered.

The Website Manager does not need to be a member of Women in Fellowship but will need to understand its ethos and be enthusiastic to help its members and to attend meetings if required.

If not currently able to, the Website Manager should be willing to learn to upload documents and photographs to the website. And some knowledge of using WordPress would be useful.

It is desirable that the Website Manager understands GDPR and how it works in practice and to be aware of cyber security. It would be useful to have access to a reasonable broadband speed and to be able to work with a variety of systems including Windows, Apple and Linux.

Editor's Message

Welcome to the Winter 2023 edition of Grapevine. Like most of you, we have had a very busy summer. When you live close to the sea it's amazing how many friends and family invite themselves for a visit! Despite the extra work we love it.

This edition celebrates 'Light'. As we leave the golden days of Autumn, and the nights draw in, light becomes so important to our wellbeing. Those who suffer from SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) know all too well how the lack of light affects our mood. Candlelight provides a warm glow and brightness we often associate with Christmas but can lift our spirit at any time of year. We celebrate birthdays and anniversaries with candles (too many at my recent birthday!) and light them at vigils and memorials. An article in this edition explains some of the use of candles in the Church.

Several events in the past months have allowed us to do what we do best, enjoy the fellowship of members from branches other than our own. West Sussex hosted a memorable Regional Day which

might serve as a template for others. Members met at St.Christopher's for its Annual Open Day and over 100 of us spent two inspiring days in Bury St. Edmunds at the Autumn Conference. Mark your diary for future events including Annual Day, hosted by the Scattered Branch and the Retreat at Launde. If you haven't attended a National event, give it a try, you won't be disappointed.

Please note if your branch report is due at the end of April, there is a list on page 43. For any membership address changes please notify Sally Davies so she can amend the list for Grapevine delivery. Email. membership@womeninfellowship.org.uk

And, as we enter the church season of Advent, may the light of our Saviour shine on you all.

*Dinah Taylor
and Jane Powl*
Editors

Wear your badge with pride!

Badges available from the Literature Secretary for only £2.00



Delia Button Awarded MBE

We were delighted that one of our members, Delia Button, was awarded an MBE for services to the community in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Delia started raising funds in 1987 to buy a portable foetal heart monitor, in memory of her baby Charlie. Since then, she has raised more than £100,000 for numerous local charities by organising many events. Delia has actively supported neonatal baby units, by organising events such as the Morris 1000 24 Hour UK Challenge, a sponsored drive from Land's End to John O'Groats and charity auctions, fashion shows and balls.

Following her diagnosis with multiple sclerosis (MS), Delia became a major fundraiser for Helen Ley House, enabling people with the most severe forms of MS to have time away from home and to give their carers a much-needed break.

In 1991 she set up Rufus' Friends Fund in memory of her brother. For 30 years, the charity has supported families by giving grants to allow them respite. Her fundraising efforts also go further afield than the local community. For example, after the 2004 Tsunami in Thailand, she coordinated a collection



which raised over £6,000 to donate to the cause. Since 2005, she has been a member of the Samaritans, volunteering every week at the Coventry branch supporting callers. Delia is an ambassador for the Samaritans by raising awareness through talks and outreach work, which has also led to her influencing others to volunteer.

She also volunteers for Silverline, an organisation which supports lonely elderly people. Each week, she spends time chatting to those affected by loneliness.

NSPCC Nottingham Hub named Jenny Farr House

Jenny Farr MBE, a member of the Nottingham Branch, recently met the Duchess of Edinburgh when Sophie was visiting the NSPCC's charity's hub in that city. Jenny, who is 90, has been fundraising for more than 60 years and has helped to raise more than £10 Million for charity.

Jenny began working with children as a physiotherapist at Nottingham City Hospital and was

inspired to support the charity after working with children who had contracted polio. The Nottingham hub is named Jenny Farr House in recognition of her long service and support.

Jenny is an example to us all of Christianity in action and we can be proud that she is a member of Women in Fellowship.

WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2024

THE RETREAT

March 12th-14th

Our Retreat will be in the beautiful setting of **Launde Abbey** in Leicestershire.

We will be led in retreat by the Revd Dr Cathy Wright who is Chaplain of Launde Abbey.

For this year only we have held the price to £250pp



WF AGM

April 25th, Benn Hall Rugby

ANNUAL DAY

May 14th

Our day will be organised by the Scattered Branch at **Chavenage House**, Gloucestershire and will include lunch, a service and a presentation by the talented Leslie Smith who will become Queen Elizabeth I.

The cost will be £65pp



NATIONAL PRAYER HOUR

June 27th on Zoom

Theme 'Justice and Peace'

Members are asked to submit prayers on the theme to nationalevents@womeninfellowship.org.uk

WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2024

Iona Pilgrimage **2nd-8th September**

Booking through McCabe

AUTUMN CONFERENCE **21st-22nd October**

Our Conference will be at the **High Leigh Conference Centre**, Hoddesdon.

Cost about £150pp TBC



PILGRIMAGE TO IONA **2-8 SEPTEMBER 2024**

Plans for the pilgrimage are now well advanced. We shall be meeting up in Glasgow for the first night, then travelling by coach through the Trossachs to Oban from where we transfer to Mull by ferry. We then drive to Fionnport for the ferry to Iona. The next four nights will be at the St Columba Hotel. There will be optional talks and walks to learn about the Iona Community on one day and the extensive wildlife on another. On the last day on Iona, we can book a visit by boat to Staffa and Fingal's cave. On all days there will be time for relaxation and contemplation and there will be services in Iona Abbey as well as our own devotions led by Pamela Soult. On the return journey to Glasgow, we will visit Luss Church and enjoy a boat trip with lunch on Loch Lomond. After the last night in Glasgow, we shall be able to join guided sightseeing before heading home.

At the time of writing (at the end of October), 21 people, including some husbands, have booked for the pilgrimage leaving six rooms available: three doubles, two singles and one twin.

Further information is available on the WF website, or you can contact me by email frances.good@btinternet.com.

Frances Good

ABERGAVENTNY – 18 Members

Our year has continued much as last year with just six meetings, each one organised completely by one member who was able to choose the date, the venue and speaker. We have sadly lost one of our dear friends, Pat Cleary who had been ill for some time, but have been encouraged by welcoming two new members.

Our membership tends now to be centred in Herefordshire, but we are happy at the moment to cling on to our Welsh identity of Abergavenny; not least because it does keep us alphabetically first in the Grapevine! We hold on to the true and tried tradition of holding a Quiet Morning in Lent, a Summer Lunch with guests and an Advent Service in December.

Our meetings have included an efficiently yet challenging Church Crawl in deepest Wales. Not for

the faint hearted, we had to negotiate driving along narrow country lanes, one behind the other but we managed without mishap. John Porter-Davison, the husband of a member, wrote a poem about the adventure which is printed below.

Our Quiet Morning was held at the ASHA Centre in the Forest of Dean which we have been to several times and is much loved by us all. To keep us all in touch with one another, one of our members organises an informal get together for the alternate months that we do not have a meeting. We usually have a pub lunch but we have visited a beautiful garden this year too.

Although we are a small, geographically wide-spread group, we are determined to keep going.

On visiting country churches

Easily missed

The door is locked, no entry and no key.

With luck, an observant neighbour meanders across, to let you in.

Failing which, you drive away dispirited and thwarted to return another day . . . perhaps.

Time wasted or maybe not?

You have at last found a church, although thought lost.

You have spent some hours of searching, but then found what?

Within, is silence – one we rarely know.

A quiet, that is unusual and takes us with a mild surprise.

Slowly, it permeates our day. Creeps up on us, at first elusive, then wraps us in a sense of wonder.

A change takes place; we recognise that something intangible has occurred.

Perhaps it is faith, seeping through the walls from down the centuries.

The very stones, preaching within their silence.

Sit in a box pew, wrapped in the oak that sheltered the farmer in his faith, down the centuries.

Let your eyes wander over the sacrifice of youth and parents, in mindless, countless wars.

But above all, be quiet. Let your mind focus on this:

Faith is timeless and everlasting.

jpd

BRISTOL II – 36 Members and 1 Honorary Member

Members of the Committee have about half a dozen meetings a year when decisions are made upon all subjects amidst fun and laughter. We even share occasional lunches. Why not give being a Committee member a try? One tends to get to know more about our wonderful Fellowship members.

A few highlights from our programme over the last year include the following:

- We enjoyed a lovely service with members of WF Bristol 3 in Clifton Cathedral on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of Ecology. Canon Bosco MacDonald led our service beautifully and included a delightful and unexpected tour of the cathedral following the service.
- We are privileged to have an accomplished botanical artist living locally and she gave us a delightful and informative talk on the history of botanical art. She had examples of her own work and some of her notebooks on display and answered many questions from the appreciative audience.
- We enjoyed a Coronation Tea of scones and cakes, provided by the Committee. This was to have been held outside, but inclement weather drove us indoors. However, this did not spoil enjoyment of the occasion or the delicious tea.
- In August this year we had a picnic in a member's garden. Everyone brought their own food, (not for sharing!) and a chair (if they could). No waste, no dietary problems and all the hostess had to do was to put out some tables, chairs and water. It proved very popular on a lovely summer's day.
- Informal monthly coffee mornings, held in members' homes, are proving very popular and our book group has read a rich variety of authors and held much friendly discussion.

Like most other groups we have our challenges; a generally ageing profile of members means there is a smaller pool of people to run the branch. We are soon to have an open discussion for all members to discuss future ways of working.

BURY ST. EDMUNDS – 42 Members and 2 Honorary Members

We have enjoyed a good year of fellowship although our numbers attending meetings have declined due to ill-health and caring for those at home, but we have kept in touch by our flock system.

We have had some excellent speakers during the year – a very amusing talk from a local Auctioneer; an excellent and informative talk on East Anglian Air Ambulance – it was quite staggering to learn how much it costs each day to keep the helicopters in the air. July saw us enjoying a delicious tea in our chairman's beautiful garden on a really lovely sunny afternoon and in September we held our annual service.

By the time this report goes to print we shall have enjoyed Autumn Conference "A Curious Life" which we have been organising with other local branches. The Conference Service is being held at St Edmundsbury Cathedral and then on to Culford School for three very interesting speakers – I know a full report will be in Grapevine soon.

Sadly, one of our long-standing members, Gabrielle Corfe, died peacefully after a long battle with cancer. She had always been a faithful member and she is greatly missed by us all.

CAMBRIDGE — 33 Members

Another year has flown by, and we have been able to fully enjoy getting together, usually in members' homes or at a local village hall. Zoom came into its own last November when many of us listened to a hugely informative talk about the development at King's Cross. The year finished on a happy note: a delicious Christmas lunch to which husbands and partners were invited.

Our January AGM was, as usual, well attended and two Co-Chairmen were duly elected. We have had a full and varied programme, starting in February with a talk about life as a female butcher during the war: her display of equipment was rather sobering! Eyebrows were raised when our programme was distributed: the talk by a prison librarian (most interesting and thought-provoking) was followed a month later by a speaker whose presentation was entitled 'Life Behind Bars'. Nothing to do with prisons this time, but a fascinating and amusing insight into life as a publican in a small, family-run village pub for over 60 years!

The subject of our Lent meeting was 'The Road to Emmaus' which was beautifully depicted by pictures

of art through the centuries. Later in the year, three members spoke about their experiences visiting Oberammergau. Our Annual Service was changed to September this year in view of the October Autumn Conference taking place in Bury St. Edmunds.

Other meetings have been relaxed get-togethers where everyone has had time to chat, swap books and just enjoy each other's company. We are all looking forward to a Christmas lunch together and another varied programme in 2024.



Committee

CHELMSFORD — 18 Members, 4 Honorary and 1 Associate Member

We began 2023 with our AGM bringing many of us together to enjoy the hospitality of a member's home. In February we met twice, for Pause for Thought and a talk from a professional Lady Toastmaster.

Our Lent meeting was well attended, led by a local church leader guiding our thoughts to look at Christian spirituality. Sadly, no-one could attend the National Retreat this year.

Another Pause for Thought in April and one of our members attended the AGM bringing back an enthusiastic report. In May many of our members

and some guests heard an interesting and quite inspiring presentation by a counsellor whose work includes speaking with young people, helping with bereavement and counselling women facing a mastectomy.

We shared a picnic lunch in June and thought about ideas and prayers spoken by a visiting Kenyan Bishop who was impressed by the good relationships he saw developing between African and UK Christians. In July members and some husbands met for a summer lunch together. One husband was even brave enough to swim in the

adjacent pool! A few of us got together on a hot August day for coffee and a bring and buy sale for St Christopher's. A great time for a chat as well as raising funds.

In September our planned speaker could not attend, so we enjoyed sharing our thoughts on some books we had read recently. An interesting variety provoked good discussion on many topics including local Essex murders, peaceful gardens and missionaries in China.

We have an Autumn service planned, with a focus on the Good Samaritan story and how it is working in today's world of refugees and asylum seekers. One member will be going to the Autumn conference, and we look forward to the news she brings back. We will end the year with another speaker in November and a Christmas lunch with carol singing.

The number of active members are decreasing but those who continue to meet show great care for each other and keep in touch with others who are not so mobile.

CHELTENHAM I – 39 Members and 3 Honorary Members

2022 started on a more optimistic note than 2021 because there was a greater feeling of normality after the trials of the Covid 19 pandemic. Our AGM and Ploughman's lunch in January was held with open doors and coats for air circulation. We quickly forgot the regulations surrounding Covid!

Our usual coffee morning with a Bring & Buy followed in our new "home" at St Philip & St James Church. We experienced many enthusiastic speakers on various subjects. A local charity organiser gave us

a talk about "Cheltenham Open Door" which was very well received. The charity provides companionship, free meals, showers, and help with referrals to other services for those in need. It was an eye-opening talk on the social needs in our local community. Other talks followed on diverse topics such as "Birch, Beer & Bibles in Tudor & Stuart Education", "The Beguiling Barbara Cartland" and "Laurie Lee". We had a visit from a support dog named Kevin and his mistress who illustrated the physical help and companionship support dogs offer.



Enjoying Lunch



As usual we joined with our companion groups for joint meetings and church services. The Spring & Summer Programme finished with a successful summer lunch at the home of a member.

After our Summer break we returned with vigour to a new term with a talk on “Berry Aneurysm” given by one of our members and a very popular presentation on “An Introduction to Foraging”. We are all very keen to follow up on the tips we learned. A shorter WF Autumn Conference was held in Gloucester and

we were very well represented by 17 members. Our branch has also managed to support other National Events. The term continued with a talk on the delicate subject of “Surrogacy” and drew to a close with a lively talk, with sound effects, on “A Clipper Round the World Yacht Race” followed by our joint service and a wonderful celebratory Christmas Lunch.

Our programme secretaries worked hard to keep us uplifted and entertained throughout the year and we are very grateful for all their hard work.

CHELTENHAM II – 46 Members and 2 Honorary Members

The leaves are turning yellow, the weather has turned cooler – the Autumn Season is approaching and it's time for our report for the Winter edition of the Grapevine. As always, our resourceful Programme Secretaries produced a selection of lectures which kept our curiosity and interest very much alive throughout the year.

The 2022/23 season commenced with a talk entitled ‘Gloucester Folk Tales’. These extraordinary stories of local folklore gripped our imagination and rivalled those of the Brothers Grimm. The following presentation on ‘Gems and Precious Stones’ was brilliant, (no pun intended), and elicited many questions from the audience. To keep our botanical interest up we also enjoyed a lecture, accompanied by beautiful slides, on ‘Flowers and Mythology’ which illustrated the magic of Greek myths and legends and their worldly connection through a multitude of beautiful and exotic, field and garden flowers. Antiques and bygone weren't forgotten and featured in a talk by an expert, aptly entitled ‘Fake or Fortune’, where, of particular interest, was the story of a Chinese vase bought for £1 and later sold at auction for £ 380,000!! The Commissioner of the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Prevention department addressed topics like misogyny, abuse of women, crime and antisocial behaviour, giving us figures and statistics and also advice on how

to report, prevent them and keep safe. Another important lecture was our last one, which took place before the yearly outing and the summer lunch. It was called ‘Adventures in Nepal’ and was given by two local doctors, one of them a WF member. It chronicled their trekking expedition in Nepal, undertaken to raise awareness for a children's charity called Kidasha whose aim is to improve physical and emotional wellbeing, to reduce neglect, use and abuse and to increase participation in learning and positive employment for children and youth living in urban poverty in Nepal.



Enjoying Lunch

Our Summer Outing took place in June when we visited the gardens at Highnam Court, a local mansion. These extensive gardens have been lovingly and painstakingly redesigned and recreated by their owner, with particular emphasis on roses. We experienced an explosion of colours and scents and afterwards we enjoyed tea and homemade cakes in the orangery. For our summer lunch venue, we chose

a country pub in a nearby village set in picturesque surroundings. We opted to eat in the conservatory which faced onto lovely meandering fields. From our vantage point, at regular intervals, we were delighted to be able to enjoy, puffing away in clouds of white smoke, the delightful Toddington Steam Train. What a lovely way to end another lovely WF year!

EAST CHESHIRE — 45 Members and 4 Honorary Members

We are now permanently resident in a village hall location after a one-year trial. Our membership has remained strong. Sadly, two long standing members passed away during this year. A new initiative for the Branch this year has been the setting up of a WhatsApp Group particularly to allow any urgent messages to be passed quickly to the many members in the group.

Attendance at our meetings has been high, we regularly have two thirds attendance. Our programme has remained varied with some excellent speakers, and we continue to share Services and meetings with our sister branch, North Cheshire.

A couple of highlights from this year are the Coronation Meeting where we welcomed Joelle Warren, Vice-Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire who shared



with us an animated and illustrated programme of life from her appointment to the role and the inside track on the many royal visits she has been involved with. Fellowship has been an underlying theme throughout this year and in July we joined with North Cheshire Branch for a Quiet Day. This was hosted by our Secretary, Tress Attwell in her beautiful garden and we were so lucky to have good weather.

Our leader was Rev. Georgina Watmore whose theme was Pathways to Faith. At the end of the time together, Georgina conducted a very poignant and simple Communion Service in the garden, shared by all those attending. It was one of those special WF moments that last in the memory for a very long time.

Since then, our Annual Service has taken place in St Peter's, Prestbury. Another memorable event where we were joined by members of North Cheshire Branch. The Service was joyous and uplifting,



accompanied by the most wonderful organ music... and of course, followed by afternoon tea!

Looking forward, we have three members of the Committee stepping down this year and say a huge thank you to them. Wonderfully we already have three willing volunteers to take their places and other

members who are volunteering to take on smaller roles. So many members are helping to manage our meetings and look after each other. The other piece of good news is that we have continued to recruit new members to the Branch this year.

East Cheshire is a happy place!

EASTBOURNE — 31 Members and 1 Honorary Member

We began the year in mid-January with our AGM, followed by a delicious lunch at the Royal Eastbourne Golf Club. There was a good turnout, despite heavy rain the day before, and some local flooding! We have a few new members this year, and are optimistic about our Branch.

In February we had an excellent talk about 'The Life and Poetry of George Herbert' by David Jackman, the husband of a member. He is President of the Proclamation Trust and made this talk most interesting. In mid-February we held the first of our 'Pause for Thought' meetings entitled 'Neighbourly Love.' We have a steady core of members who enjoy these, both because of the varied topics, and also the prayer time. In March, we learned about the Enthum Foundation from Lilian Simonsson. This foundation looks after asylum-seeking children in Eastbourne. It was most illuminating and helped us to see how large the problem is, as well as understanding how a house, donated by a supporter of the foundation, could really help the 16 lucky children who lived there. In early April, our speaker was Frances Farrer Brown, the WF representative for St Christopher's Hospice. We all learned about how much the hospice is able to do using online technology to teach and train medical professionals around the world. We held an Easter sale of produce, and a raffle, to raise money for the Hospice. It is so exciting to know that both national and international events are supported, and that bursaries are given annually to a few medical professionals from Third World Countries to take part in the 'Fellowship in Palliative Care' programme.

In May our annual Ascension Day communion service was held at St Michael's and All Saint's Church in rural Berwick. The vicar is delightful and most welcoming, and several congregants serve us coffee and delicious cakes! Our meeting in June occurred at an amazing NGS open garden in Seaford, called 'Driftwood'. The weather was glorious, and home-made cakes accompanied the coffee. This was such a popular visit that we will return in 2024! The second Pause for Thought meeting was in July, with the theme of 'Monarchy'. We held a second meeting in July, to attend the Kipling Garden and church in Rottingdean. The sun shone, and a few of us had a lovely morning and catch-up over coffee. We always have a Summer lunch on the first Saturday of August, and invite any spouses to join us. This was our Centenary, and we had a splendid time. We were pleased that National Chairman Alison Osborne, and her husband David, were able to join us. Alison gave a short speech of congratulation and encouragement, suggesting that members need to actively volunteer



Pause for thought

and accept management roles to help the branch. The hall was beautifully decorated; a local caterer supplied a lovely array of salads, and a member made the anniversary cake. We all had a glass of wine and toasted the friendship and fellowship that WF offers. A large raffle raised money for St. Christopher's. In September we had a talk by the Head of the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance. This is such an important service, totally dependent on charity and we learned a lot. October saw a small group meet to visit a garden centre in Hassocks. There was much to see and buy and 2 cafes! Some members added a visit to an ancient Downland church nearby, famous for Medieval wall paintings.



Chairman Alison at Centenary

The remainder of 2023 holds a visit to The Beachy Head Story, plus a pub lunch, a games afternoon in November, and a Christmas sale of home produce to raise money for St Christopher's Hospice. We finish the year with a Christmas Carol Service at All Soul's Church.



Joan, Sylvia and Jenny

GUILDFORD – 53 Members and 7 Honorary Members

Our membership remains constant. Sadly, we have lost 2 long standing members: Toni Alford, an honorary member, in April 2023 and Julia Darnell in June 2023.

It has been good to welcome two new members into our branch of Women in Fellowship.

Our annual service in September 2022 was held at St Mary's Church in West Horsley. It is always lovely to come together in this way after our summer break. Our Autumn talks covered a wide range of topics including sign language, teaching in India and one of



Painhill Park



Gardener's Question Time

our own members gave us a fascinating insight into Japanese stitching, which was followed in the New Year with a practical workshop. 2022 concluded with an Advent talk that saw us 'Bethlehem Bound' with some of those present at the Nativity. In December we celebrated our annual 'Christmas Words and Music.'

Our AGM was held in January 2023. Spring talks included a Gardener's Question Time hosted by two of our green fingered members, Being the Queen's

Florist, Volunteering with the National Trust, the work of the Clink Charity, and an informative talk on St Christopher's Hospice. Two evening meetings with supper were enjoyed by many, with a talk by Garry Richardson, sports presenter, and on the second occasion a talk on a prominent career as a Barrister and Judge.



Bluebell Walk

We continue to have a thriving walking group whose members enjoy a variety of walks that often culminate in a welcome pub lunch. We held two garden meetings; one in May and in August and, although the weather was not as kind as last year, it did not dampen the fellowship, enjoyment, and happiness of both occasions. In the glorious June sunshine, we enjoyed an outing to the picturesque Painshill Park near Cobham. We look forward now to meeting together for our next annual service in September.

HARROGATE — 23 Members and 1 Honorary Members

We have had another interesting and varied programme of events, speakers, and outings this year. Although we are a small and ageing group these activities are always well attended. Having moved to the Church Hall last year has relieved the pressure on the diminishing number of members able to host a sizeable group in their own homes.

We had a fascinating visit to the Thackray Medical Museum in Leeds. It showed us how far medical

research and procedures have moved forward, particularly over the last half century. One of the most sobering exhibits to our generation was the "Iron Lung" that was used to help polio patients to breath. We all remembered the dread of this essential aid. There were also pointers to what the future might hold.

We are planning a visit to the Treasurer's House in York in November.

We have had speakers on various topics. We heard about the big four gems: Diamonds, Sapphires, Rubies and Emeralds. Where they came from, their chemical composition and how to tell a fake from the real thing! Tony Burkett told us about Robert Adam, architect to the nobility, and Judy Blezzard gave an interesting talk on Music's Untrodden Paths.



Introduction to Yoga seemed an unlikely topic for our ageing group but was very well received and all joined in. Mostly done on a chair but the breathing and stretching exercises were beneficial to everyone.

We always support the local Amateur Dramatic

society, who are excellent. We saw a black comedy called "The Cripple of Inishmaan" and are about to see "Shakespeare in Love".

Of course, interspersed with talks and outings we have coffee mornings, pub lunches, tea and cakes, and fellowship mornings and a visit to a garden centre.

HERTS – 41 Members

The Herts Women in Fellowship enjoyed a full programme for 2023 and maintained membership of 41 by adding 2 new members after losing 2 members. Our AGM/Coffee Morning was well attended, and we voted again to contribute generously to St Christopher's Hospice. We enjoyed a talk from the local area Samaritan's charity and will hear from a local homeless charity in November. We enjoyed a social brunch and an autumn ramble as well as our



We used one of our fellowship mornings to celebrate the Coronation and many thanks to our gallant band of bakers for providing a lovely spread.

The Book Group is very active and provides us with many thought-provoking discussions. We also have a book exchange and sale annually with proceeds in aid of St Christophers.

To conclude, this year we are looking forward to a talk about "Balmoral at Christmas" and our Advent meeting with sherry and mince pies and we are going to share Childhood memories of Christmas.

Sadly, we lost one of our members this year; Judith Radcliffe had joined us fairly recently from Winchester. We enjoyed her company.

We are a thriving group and move into 2024 with expectation of more fun, mutual support and friendship.



Sally Burton

annual 2022 Carol Service and Flock Coffee Morning. One of the highlight events was the presentation by our own member, Sally Burton, who concluded her year as High Sheriff for Hertfordshire. She contributed much time, energy and knowledge to many aspects of this very demanding role. She did have the sad duty of announcing the death of the Queen while serving

in this honorary position. Members were able to view Sally present the formal announcement online.

In all a very memorable year as our branch threw away ZOOM and members graciously opened up their homes!

LEAMINGTON SPA & WARWICK II – 33 Members

We are delighted to welcome 3 new members to our branch this year. 2023 started with our AGM, followed by three meetings featuring speakers. These gave us a fascinating insight into how the Stratford-upon-Avon literary festival has grown over the last 15 years, a moving account of a life in care and a talk on recycling by Warwick District Council.

We have also had several meetings on a gardening theme, which have proved very popular with our members. A demonstration in May on “Ideas for Summer Containers” was followed by tea and cake in the speaker’s garden. In June we had a visit to Broughton Grange and walked around the fabulous gardens in groups. The walled garden, designed by Tom Stuart-Smith in 2020 was spectacular and the stumpy and woodland garden looked great. Then in September we had a very interesting demonstration on propagation held at the historic Hill Close Gardens in Warwick.

We also had a very convivial evening at our annual Bring and Share Supper Party, to which members partners are also invited. Unfortunately, the hot weather had broken, but a good time was had by all!

We share our Lent, Autumn and Advent services with the WF1 branch. The Lent service was held on Ash Wednesday at St Peter’s Church, Barford, led by Reverend John Horton and assisted by Mrs Ann Fawcett and a small choir. We then walked to our Chair’s home for refreshments and fellowship.

The Autumn Service at St James Church, Old Milverton was led by Reverend Sue Fairhurst with the theme “Celebrating God’s Creation”. It was very well attended by both WF1 and WF2 and was followed by lunch at the house and garden of one of our members – a very lively meeting of friends old and new catching up!

LONDON – 17 Members, 6 Associate and 2 Honorary Members

The London Branch has been indebted to one of its members for providing the most interesting inclusions in our event programme this year. On the 14th March several of our branch, and even more from North London, attended and enjoyed an exclusive, private tour of two Royal Chapels. We were hosted by Jon Simpson, Serjeant of the Vestry and Head Verger, who gave us a fascinating insight into their history and some snippets of life in this Royal Palace. The Chapel Royal (more of a Victorian

chapel) is still used for Royal Services and attended by members of the Royal Family. Our branch member attends services there most Sundays as it is open to the public. The Queen’s Chapel was built by Inigo Jones, begun in 1623 and completed in 1626, for the Catholic wife of Charles I, Catherine of Braganza.

The next occasion, which she also hosted in June, was an insight into the writing and creating of Icons. Of the talk, she writes, “Dr. David Wright, a retired



Icons

army doctor, now a very gifted writer of Icons, enthralled us with the history of Icons and how they are constructed. Entitled “The Arcane Art of Preparing and Painting Icons” he told us that it is the only art form that has never changed. David brought samples of his work and gave us an illustrated lecture of the process from conditioning the lime board and making the design. He showed us his expensive special paints (including gold leaf) and many brushes. An Icon may take a year to complete. We thoroughly enjoyed the talk and he left us with a desire to learn more and appreciate Icons in a new light.”

MIDDLE THAMES — 31 Members and 4 Honorary Members

Another year has flown by, and we have had another interesting programme. Our two in-house events proved popular. The first, ‘Contentious Issues’ did by its very nature, bring about lively and thought-provoking discussions, enjoyed by all. The second, Bring a Book, provided some interesting reading.

The Fellowship lunches were well supported with much chatter and bonhomie. Our New Year Lunch, held at a lovely restaurant and the Summer Lunch, held in the beautiful garden of one of our members, both with husbands or partners, are always important and successful parts of our programme.

Our two speakers were also a great success. Dr Helen Fry gave an amusing and insightful account



of secret service activities during the war and a talk by a conservationist gave us an in-depth look at how wildlife, in the Chilterns, has changed over the centuries.

At a Quiet Morning, a vicar told us about his aims and ambitions for the café he has opened at a local church. He is trying to attract more people to attend church and provides a meeting place especially for the lonely and the young. By the end we all wanted to work there.

The theme for our Founder’s Day was ‘Healing.’ The service and vicar’s address were thoughtful, appropriate, and compassionate for the suffering in the world today. We were able to welcome our Executive Chairman Alison Osborne and two former members. After the service we had a very good lunch at a local pub.

Although most meetings have been well attended and the atmosphere has been convivial, over all there is ambivalence about the continuation of the branch. With no younger members joining, as with other branches, we are finding it difficult to fill the offices.

To avoid going down the path of closing we will be trying a new format. The branch will be split into 3 groups, one responsible for each term. The events will be simplified, and everyone will be asked to participate in a small way. For example, the

Fellowship lunches will be held either in a restaurant or if in a member's home everyone will make a small contribution. All other events will be dealt with in a similar way.

NORTH LONDON – 45 Members and 4 Honorary Members

I joined our branch in the 1970s when my children were small and it was a supportive and caring group which I could attend with my children. Many of those who were members then are still members and we have grown old together. Our membership includes women born in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Japan. The majority of our members live in Hampstead Garden Suburb, and some of the most popular meetings are those held in members' homes. We meet twice a month or so, and the Branch is run by a committee of five who share out the work. Our previous Chairman, Elinor Delaney, is now an Ordinand serving at St Jude on the Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb. Our congratulations to her. The best supported event of the year was our Annual Service followed by lunch which was held at St Jude's. The recently appointed and enthusiastic Priest took the service and our treasurer played the piano.

Many of our members are accomplished speakers, and knowledgeable about their subjects. We rely on our members for home-grown entertainment. We enjoyed the illustrated talk given by a member in her home, about the Burne-Jones stained-glass windows in Birmingham Cathedral. Another member took us on a guided tour of the burial grounds at St John's Church, Hampstead, full of the memorials to



people of national importance, including for instance Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, actor manager, and that of a former Chairman of our branch. Inspired by the thought that we only learn of members' lives at their funerals we had a most interesting meeting where members talked about themselves. The Coronation tea in May was a very popular event with fifteen enjoying celebratory cake. We had a lovely June meeting "Art in the Garden" at a member's home where we were provided with paper, paintbrushes and paint to produce drawings and artwork, accompanied by a delicious tea. Our "Summer Sundowner" evening party for members and their husbands was held in September, on one of the hottest days of the year, but it was delightfully cool in the member's garden where it was held. Our accompanying photo shows this event.



We enjoyed having Frances Farrer-Brown, Charities Representative, talk to the membership about the projects at St Christopher's Hospice which Women in Fellowship support. Two of our branch members recently attended the interesting Open Day at St Christopher's.

We have joined forces with the London Branch of WF and we reciprocate with them, each inviting the other branch members to meetings. In July, they joined us to attend a concert in the “Proms at St Jude’s” programme. London WF have included us in their visit to The Chapel Royal at St James’s Palace, an outing to the new Battersea Village,

and excellent guided walks in the City of London.

At the heart of our branch is Christian fellowship and the support we give each other. We would like new members, and those who have joined in recent years attend local churches.

NORTHAMPTON – 29 Members and 2 Honorary Members

Northampton Women in Fellowship have enjoyed a wonderful year of fellowship, interesting meetings, and two stand-out events. Our AGM, which, as always, was well-attended, began the year. The committee took the decision to hold speaker meetings in a church hall, which has ample parking and easy access for all. We also invited husbands who were chauffeuring members to attend these meetings so as many as possible could come along. This proved to be a good decision as our attendance increased. We also extended invitations to the wives of our guest speakers and some prospective new members.

The Lent Reflections, thoughtfully led by Canon Amanda Cuthbertson gave members the opportunity of some quiet prayerful time, and was followed by a light lunch. Prayers, Coffee and Chat meetings have continued throughout the year, ably led by some of our members. We also attended an Advent Service led by Revd. Lulu Pelly, one of our members, and a Pentecost Service taken by Canon Beverley Hollins.

Our first stand-out event was the Coronation Celebration Lunch. The committee served a delicious meal – coronation chicken or quiche, a selection of salads and breads, followed by summer puddings and trifles. Husbands were also invited, and everyone entered into the spirit of the occasion, wearing red, white and blue together with Union Jack ties, or scarves. It was a wonderful event.

The Summer Tea Party was our other big event. It took place on a beautiful sunny day, and was hosted by Suzan, one of our long-standing members. Suzan provided the drinks, together with strawberries and cream, whilst the committee provided an amazing spread of sandwiches, cheese scones and then tempted us with cakes and bakes. It was a glorious occasion, not least because members were invited to walk around the grounds and enjoy the colourful gardens.

We have bid farewell to Joanna Edmunds who has been a member for many years, and more recently served on the committee. Joanna has moved to be closer to her family. We were sad to learn of the passing of Jean Jauncey. Our fellowship continues to support members via our Flock System and our wonderful Gillian, who telephones members regularly to check on their health and well-being. We continue to ensure that the needs of our members are supported and prayed for.

As autumn approaches, the committee are hard at work preparing another varied and interesting programme for 2024, hoping that attendance continues to increase.

RUGBY II – 11 Members

We have had another year of wonderful fellowship starting last December with a lovely evening of prayer, carols, and a delicious supper. Our Christmas event is always a joy, and the partners and husbands join us. Our AGM in January was well attended, and the Fish and Chip supper was enjoyed by all. At this meeting we had a chance to start planning the year.

We take it in turns to host the monthly events as we are a small group and this year we have had some fun tasting strawberry jam (the home made jam was a clear winner), discussing our current favourite books, reading our favourite poems, playing board games, going for a walk, getting together for our annual barbeque at the home of one of our members, and gathering for a fabulous feast of a Harvest Supper together with partners at the end of September.

Despite the sadness of losing one of our most treasured members, Fiona Moore, at the beginning of May the big event of the year was of course the Coronation of King Charles III. We decided to invite members of Rugby I to this event and quite a few came to our tea party. It was a lovely occasion when we came together to celebrate not only the coronation but to comfort each other as well just a day after Fiona's passing. We found strength in each other's company and fellowship that day.

We have recently been informed that Rugby I is going to disband which is sad news indeed. We wish them all well and hope to invite them to join us at some of our events.

SALISBURY PLAIN – 24 Members and 2 Honorary Members

We have enjoyed a happy and varied series of meetings over the last year. They have ranged from our Advent Service and our Lenten Quiet morning, beautifully led by two of our own members, and attendance at the Ascension Day Service at Salisbury Cathedral, to a talk by a local farmer on Regenerative Farming for the Future, via a visit to Wilton House – the lovely Palladian Home of the Earl and Countess of Pembroke which has been in the family since 1544. We shoehorned in an extra gathering in May to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III with an afternoon tea party and our annual Summer Lunch was held in pretty miserable weather in a village hall overlooking a cricket pitch in a picturesque village in an AONB. To look at one of these in a little more depth, our brilliant Chairman, Sonia, reports that the farming talk was extremely informative. He was excellent and gave an interesting and helpful insight into how changes he has made on his 1600-acre farm has brought-in improved soil quality. They now use no artificial fertilisers, less bought-in feed,

spend fewer hours on the tractor – so less diesel is consumed and are producing great tasting beef and good crops whilst keeping costs down. HOW? By using the non-tilling method and planting directly into the harvested field, planting cover crops for the cattle which stay outside year round and by moving the herd daily and systematically around the fields. An additional benefit is that he has had to call the vet in less frequently which he attributes to moving the herd daily to new grass.



Coronation Day

We have welcomed several new members, one of whom some of you may recall as Valerie Stone (now Valerie Arnold). She and I served on Exec together 20

years ago, so it is lovely to welcome her back to WF after an absence of some years.

SHERBORNE – 20 Members, 1 Honorary and 1 Scattered Member

We enjoy meeting in Fellowship each month in a village hall or a member's home and support each other in love, prayer, and compassion. This year we sadly lost two much loved members, Maevis Rogers and Mary George. Mary died just before her 100th birthday.

We have had interesting talks including "Mountains and Maharajas", "History of Kingston Lacy – Four centuries of the Bankes Family" and we were joined by members from Wells WF and Bath WF for a talk from a former Equerry to HRH Prince Charles, as he then was. That day we also celebrated the 90th birthday of one of our members. Our summer party was held in a marquee in a member's garden on a glorious day, celebrating the Coronation. Red, white, and blue was the order of the day and we had caterers for the occasion.

Our annual service was held in a delightful painted church in the hamlet of Silton. It is a gem, with wonderful views over the Wiltshire countryside. Our Lent meeting was led by a retired priest, who told us stories with great meaning, and conversation about them lasted over our lunch.

We play croquet for fun, not competitively, and combine the afternoon with a cream tea and a Bring and Buy sale for St. Christopher's Hospice. Perhaps we shall get more competitive with practise. At Christmas we have a morning of carols and coffee at a member's house and have a catered festive lunch in a village hall.



Group at Meriel's

We are a small group and have adapted to what is suitable for our branch. We should like to have some new members but, like so many other organisations, know that younger people are so busy that they are not forthcoming. Several of our member's are involved in looking after grandchildren from time to time. We are thankful for Women in Fellowship for social, intellectual, and Christian well being and appreciate one another's company.

SHREWSBURY – 46 Members, 1 Honorary and 1 Associate Member

40 years! We celebrated our Ruby anniversary in October. We were delighted that Pamela Soult could

join us for lunch. We began with a glass of wine and canapés, then enjoyed a delicious lunch, after

which one of our founding members (our Honorary President) gave a short presentation about how the branch came about. Diana Odgers was the Executive Scattered Secretary who had recently moved from Kent to Shropshire. She invited a small group of friends to tea to tell them about WF. Before the branch could properly get off the ground, her teenage daughter was tragically killed in a car accident. After a year or so, another Odgers daughter prompted her mother to rekindle the plan in honour of her sister and thus the branch was formed. A few of those early members still attend meetings.



The branch was formed as All Age when all others were Wives and Seniors – despite severe misgivings by Executive. A prescient decision at the time, considering the reunification of age groups in the early 2000s.

We are fortunate that our branch is still in existence and strong when so many have folded – thanks to several very good recruiters in branch and a willingness of members to take responsibility to join the committee and take office. Four joined in the last year. We thanked all those who have been chairmen and officers – many numerous times. Our membership spans from those in their late 50s to early 90s.

We have about 6 meetings each term which usually include a walk, perhaps a visit, a church service and talks which always include lunch. Traditionally we met in homes but prompted by Covid, we made a successful transition to village halls, benefitting from

easy parking, space, no furniture moving and reduced availability of hostesses due to downsizing. Although we regret the intimacy of homes, that format is not sustainable today.



Hon. President Diana Baart (lt)

In the past Shrewsbury had a reputation for not being very good attenders of national events. We're pleased to say that has all changed now – we have become WF groupies! We are reliable supporters and send a healthy contingent to most events. We are delighted to have hosted numerous Regional, Annual Days and Conferences. Over the years we have had five members on Executive.

Presentations were made to the two original tea party attendees, and we ended the day congratulating ourselves, wishing the branch and its members many happy years of fellowship in the future.



40th Anniversary

TWICKENHAM — 34 Members and 2 Honorary Members

This year has been a successful one for our branch in terms of the variety and quality of visits and talks. We are also pleased to have recruited one new member, welcomed one returner, and have two or three more prospective members.



We have had a mix of daytime and evening meetings to enable both older and younger members to participate, together with visits to local places of interest, such as the Poppy Factory in Richmond, and Marble Hill House. Our January AGM is now a Zoom event enabling many more members to attend.

Monthly drop-in gatherings for coffee at a local garden centre continue to be well supported, and our twice-yearly small socials of 4-6 people in members' homes, started during Covid, are popular. Larger social occasions include a summer party to which partners are welcome.

One of the outstanding talks in the year was about the 2022 visit to Oberammergau by two of our members. Although the talk was given some time after the visit the timing provided the speakers opportunity for reflection, and so it was not only informative, but thought provoking. We have also continued our tradition of a Lent Lunch followed by a talk on an appropriate subject, and an Annual Service, this year's theme being Community. All National events have been attended by members, as well as an excellent Regional Day organized by the West Sussex branch.

WALTON ON THAMES — 22 Members

2023 saw us welcome 3 new members at our AGM in January but we sadly lost Elizabeth Vevers, a longstanding honorary member, in March.

We continue to have monthly events which are mainly to do with walking, visiting somewhere or eating. Members are responsible for organising one event per year, usually in pairs, and notifying Susannah, our programme coordinator. We also hold 2 joint services plus a Lent meeting with the Weybridge branch.

In early September, on a gloriously hot day, several of us visited Brookwood cemetery near Woking. This is the largest cemetery in the UK, over 220 acres, and is a grade 1 listed historic park and garden. We were led by one of the volunteer guides who pointed out many graves and mausoleums of the rich and famous, many of whom had come out of London on a

special train where even the dead had to have tickets!

A fundraising strawberry tea and summer luncheon raised money for St Christopher's and we also visited the theatre, National Gallery and had a guided street art tour of London. Two of our members will be attending the Autumn Conference in Bury St Edmunds.



WIMBLEDON – 92 Members and 2 Associate Members

How enjoyable to be back to normal after Covid for our AGM in January, having improved our online skills during lockdown and now including companionable 'exercise' walks across the Common as a regular feature of our programmes. We currently have 92 members and 2 associates and are delighted that two of our members have joined the Central Executive Committee: Alison Osborne as Chairman and Alison Neilson as Treasurer.

Our Spring programme included talks on Crufts and the Kennel Club, Living Well in Later Life, and the Gothic Revival. We visited the garden at the Old Rectory of St Mary's Church in March: an exercise in blending the traditional with the modern. A pancake supper with one of Joan Olivier's renowned quizzes was a great success. For our Lenten meeting Sr. Dorothy lead us in Christ's steps on his journey to Calvary.

In the Summer we enjoyed our regular items: the Ascension Day Service, Coffee and Cuttings and

a lovely Summer Party with relaxing jazz music provided by a professional singer, daughter of a member. The Coronation was celebrated with afternoon tea in a garden, and we had talks on Breakspear, the only English Pope, and the Wit and Satire of Gilbert & Sullivan. Our occasional city walks take us to unexpected and fascinating parts of London.

This Autumn we visited a local Community Garden project. An afternoon with everyone reading a favourite poem with a common theme was worth repeating. There are talks on Share and Care Homeshare; the work of SSAFA, and Agatha Christie, Queen of Crime. An afternoon Piano Recital and our Christmas Carol Service will complete this year's programme.

Sadly, three of our well-loved members have died this year, with Susan Mayo being awarded the British Empire Medal in her last months for her services to the community. We have been glad to welcome two new members and two returning members.

WINCHESTER III – 45 Members and 2 Honorary Members

Our branch have enjoyed fun, food and fellowship throughout the year! We have had a very varied programme: General Sir Antony Walker KCB, a member's husband, talked to our members (with husbands, as several had been in the Forces) about his life in the army. Kim Wilkie, the international landscape designer, spoke to us about his fascinating eco designs. An academic at the University of Winchester gave us an account of the life of Charlotte Yonge, a local author, philanthropist, and church builder whose 200th anniversary is being celebrated this year. A representative of the Cyber Bobby Scheme explained how we can protect ourselves from online scams. A former English teacher told us about a scheme to teach children empathy through literature, a core life skill every child should have in

order to understand others' feelings and points of view.

We hold three church services a year jointly with Winchester I branch and also invite this branch to some of our other meetings.



Summer Lunch

Each year we organise Fellowship evenings with a dinner and speaker, inviting members and their husbands. This year we first organised a film showing of 'The Man Who Never Was', the secret plan to fool the Nazis into believing where the British would next attack. At the Fellowship evening we then heard the riveting story by a descendant of the man who came up with the audacious plan. At our next Fellowship evening, internationally renowned architect (and a

member's husband), Prof Robert Adam, showed us the beautiful houses he has built in the Classical style.

We have also organised trips out: a walk through Winchester looking at unusual trees that we pass and never really notice; a guided tour of a local medieval cemetery; an afternoon at a National Trust property; a visit to a local vineyard that makes top class champagne.

WOLDINGHAM – 65 Members

We continue to thrive, united in Christian friendship, at our fortnightly meetings which are so ably organised by our enterprising Programme Secretary. We are fortunate in that if a booked speaker fails to materialise, there is home talent and experience amongst members – thus we learned some interesting background information on the workings of the NHS and the beautiful stained glass windows in our St Paul's church. Early in the year 'professional'

Speakers focussed on Africa, with a moving account of the genocide in Rwanda by a Sister of St Mary of Namur, and a description of the Born Free Foundation by a vibrant Celia Nicholls. Other diverse subject matter has covered the beginnings of the RSPB, how the Banoffee Pie came into existence and the life of Dame Agatha Christie.

Before our annual charity Tea Party for Croydon Vision in July, eighteen members visited Windsor Castle on a glorious day in June. A different visit to local Titsey Place, one of the largest surviving estates in Surrey, gave us a glorious outing and reunion after the summer break. We have happily also visited other Fellowship groups – the Regional Day in West Sussex, and Tunbridge Wells meeting in Rotherfield, but National events are more of a geographic challenge.

However, of course, we do not fail in our financial support and appreciation of Central and St Christopher's Hospice.



Windsor

Report from Scattered Secretary

I have now been in post for 6 months and gradually getting to know our members who live all over England and Wales. I met two members in Ripon earlier this year when we had a relaxed lunch including husbands!

We are continuing with Zoom meetings bi-monthly which some members feel is a good way to keep in touch. **On 13 December at 10.30 we are hosting a Zoom Christmas quiz to which all WF members are invited. To participate contact me, Judy Little, at scattered@womeninfellowship.org.uk by 11 Dec. and I will send you the link. Wear your Christmas jumper and festive headgear.**

We are also trying to meet up on a regional basis for lunch and chat. The December venue will be in Bristol, January somewhere in Surrey, and early spring we are gathering in Devon.

Scattered are organising the 2024 Annual Day to be held at Chavenage House, Tetbury, Gloucestershire on May 14th. We are delighted to welcome back Lesley Smith as our main speaker. Lesley will be impersonating Queen Elizabeth I, as that will be in keeping with the age of Chavenage House which was built in the 16th Century. It promises to be a wonderful day and early booking will be essential as numbers are limited. Bookings open on February 19th and there will be more information on the WF website.

Women in Fellowship Prayer

Lord we beseech Thee, watch over our Fellowship;
exalt its purposes, bless its undertakings and fulfill its prayer.
Grant to its members to be of one mind concerning it's aims.

May the Father's power govern and sustain us,
the energy of the Holy Spirit renew and quicken us,
for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen

Wear your badge with pride!

Badges available from the Literature Secretary for only £2.00



Branch of the Month

Have you noticed the regular monthly feature “Branch of the month” which can be found on our website home page? The aim is to create a photographic showcase of the fun we have in branches, for

anybody who might consider wanting to join us. We would really like to feature your branch. All we need is a short paragraph and up to six photographs of 2 or more events of which you are proud.

Spotlight on Tunbridge Wells

Tunbridge Wells has hosted a ‘mini’ regional event for several years. Every November members from several nearby branches are invited to a meeting at Rotherfield Village Hall. This year delegates attended from Hayward’s Heath, Eastbourne, Woldingham, a Scattered member and several from Five Ashes which sadly closed a few years ago. It was good to see past Chairman Emily Hutchings in conversation with our current chairman Alison Osborne. Meetings like this provide an opportunity to renew friendships and talk about the way our branches operate at a local level.

We were welcomed with coffee and biscuits provided by a stalwart kitchen crew who later provided a lunch of finger sandwiches and delicious cake and brownies. Linda Weekes, Tunbridge Chairman,

opened the meeting with the Fellowship Prayer before introducing the speaker, Rukshana Masters, who spoke about her ‘Passion for Fashion’.

Rukshana grew up in Poona, India where she dreamed of being a fashion designer and dressmaker. Following her graduation from university she had the opportunity to travel to the United States where she learned pattern making, cutting and other dressmaking skills. Ultimately, after her marriage, she and her husband settled in England where she pursued her dream. Rukshana used Sari fabric to make her unique range of clothes and sold to large London shops in the 70s. Later she organised fashion shows to raise money for charity and eventually had her own boutique. Her life story was fascinating.

It takes a team to organise an event like this and Tunbridge Wells did a splendid job. The atmosphere of congeniality, fun and friendship set us up for the long winter ahead. Thank you to all who were involved.



Alison models a jacket



Linda Weekes and Rukshana

West Sussex Regional Day, 5 September 2023

In the beautiful surroundings of the West Sussex Downs, representatives of 13 branches and 1 Scattered member, met for a day of prayer and fellowship, laughter and relaxation. Kate Beale, West Sussex Chairman, and her team had organised a memorable day that enabled some to renew old acquaintances and others of us to form new friendships. Sullington Manor Farm was an ideal place for such a gathering. On the hot day we were grateful for the shade provided by several historic barns and the ancient Downland church.



Registration

Following coffee and delicious homemade biscuits, Kate welcomed us and introduced Gail Kittle, owner of the complex, who told us something of the farm history. The theme for the day, 'I will lift mine eyes

to the hills' (Psalm 121) was well chosen, as Gail pointed out a nearby hill which was the location of an Iron Age community. We then walked to the church where the Rev. Canon Mark Standen, conducted a service of hymns and prayer. The 121st Psalm was read by Kate and several members of the West Sussex branch led intercessions. There was a strong feeling of unity being amidst so many W.F. women gathered in prayer and song.

Before lunch we had time to explore the farm site, to admire the picturesque holiday cottages and wander through the small country graveyard. Several of us searched for a Commonwealth War Grave located there. This was also a time for conversation with old and new friends.

Lunch was again homemade by Gail, and we all agreed it was delicious! Frances Farrer-Brown asked that we draw a numbered ticket to indicate at which table we were to sit. A splendid idea that resulted in many of us meeting women new to us.

The speaker, Rev. Rupert Toovey gave a most interesting and entertaining address titled, '*Sussex Art, Faith and Church*'. As an art historian and chairman of Toovey's Auctioneers and Valuers, he is an expert on the subject. Rev. Toovey is a





Sullington Church



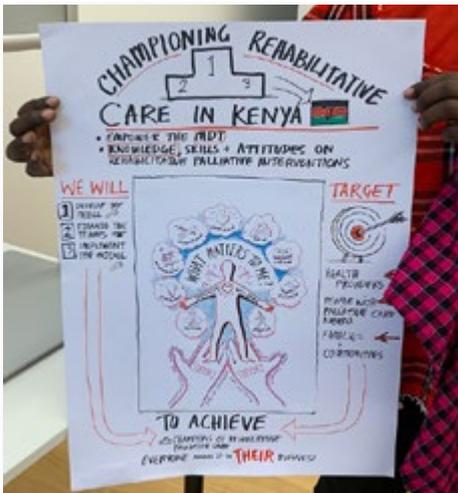
self-supporting priest who still works in the family business. He is involved with charity work and says it is his mission to speak to groups about art and the Christian faith. Most of us could have listened to him all afternoon, given the chance. Rev. Rupert said that he was impressed with our gathering and Women's Fellowship and offered to speak at a future event if asked. We hope that the offer will be taken up.

Following tea and more homemade treats we reluctantly headed for home. Speaking personally, and for the others from my branch, this was one of the best W.F. events we've attended. Well done West Sussex branch!

St Christopher's Report

The Open Day was attended by 14 WF members and as ever, the welcome was warm, and we were treated like royalty. After a service led by the Chaplain we were given an update on WF funded projects. These include the Carers Development project which we have funded for 3 years since 2021. Maaike Vandeweghe, Head of professional Learning then explained about the Advanced Clinical Nurse Practitioners training. This is a 2-year programme for 10 learners which would not have been possible without the WF funding of the pilot programme. A change in the format then allowed for brief presentations from all 14 students attending the Multi-Disciplinary Academy. These followed a lunch where students were seated with the delegates which gave us a chance to talk.

The delegates put me to shame with their language skills. They came from Malta, Indonesia, Kenya, Armenia, Croatia, Gravesend and Newcastle upon Tyne. The main theme of the session was that clients are people and not just patients. We must help them to live until they die, to paraphrase Dame Cecily Saunders.



I was particularly pleased to learn about the support, help, encouragement and backup that the students have always received when their time at St.Christopher's is over. Having terrific ideas is all very well, but ongoing support and suggestions from one's peers, as well as comradeship, are vital.

I have done various talks this year to branches and want to spread the word about the work we support at St.Christopher's.

Frances Farrer-Brown

Bury St. Edmunds, October 25-26, 2023

On a bright sunny morning more than 100 delegates began arriving at the historic St. Edmundsbury Cathedral. Although largely rebuilt in the 1500s, a church has stood on the site since the 11th century. We were welcomed by members of the organising branches, Bury St. Edmunds, Cambridge, and Stour Valley I and II who guided us to the registration desk. Some fortunate members had booked a tour of the town or the Cathedral prior to the service. The adjacent Priory Gardens is the site of ruins from the Benedictine Abbey, one of the largest in England. From there it is possible to get a good view of the Cathedral Millennium Tower, completed in 2000.

The theme of the conference was 'This Curious Life' and the service, following a warm welcome by Sue Cockram, led by The Very Reverend Joe Hawes, Dean of St. Edmundsbury, reflected this in the readings and address. Alison Deane read from Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' and Alison Osborne, our National Chairman read Job 38:1-15. The four familiar hymns were sung with great enthusiasm accompanied by the magnificent pipe organ. Following the service, we adjourned to the cloisters for tea and cake before departing for Culford School where the main part of the conference was held.



Cathedral Dean, The Very Rev. Joe Hawes

Again, the organisation was impressive, and we were quickly given key fobs and shown to our accommodation in the student residence blocks. Sadly, our sunny day changed and several of us were caught in the rain that continued for the rest of the conference. After settling into our room we met in Centenary Hall, the main building of the school. A listed building set in 480 acres of grounds, the house has had several transformations and several owners, the last being 5th Earl Cadogan. In 1935 the estate was bought by the Methodist Board of Education and



The Dean with Frances, Alison and Emily

run as a boy's school but in 1972 the school became one of the country's first co-educational boarding and day schools when pupils from East Anglican School for Girls joined the boys. A photo of the impressive staircase is included in this article.

The first of three speakers, Lucy Lewis informed and entertained us as she related her experiences in the Army where she became the first woman to operate as a Bomb Disposal Officer. She subsequently served with the Royal Military Police overseas and was part of a small female delegation to Jordan hosted by the royal family. Lucy's anecdotes had us all laughing as she recounted incidents on official occasions when she was the only female officer in attendance. Lucy also acted as a Mountain Expedition Leader in Sardinia, Iceland and Ecuador. Following her retirement as a Major she raised a family and in 2018 made history for a second time when appointed as University Marshall at Cambridge. She now leads one of the oldest Constabularies in the world. Lucy has written a book about her experiences, 'Lighting the Fuse'. One wonders when she finds the time!

Wednesday evening provided a time to socialise as we enjoyed a pre supper reception

followed by an excellent meal. The catering for this event was first class, all dietary requirements were met, and the food was delicious and plentiful. Most of us retired early after a long day of travelling but a few stalwart souls gathered to chat as the night drew in.

After a full English breakfast, we were treated to our second speaker, Belinda Gray, a former nurse and gardening instructor. Belinda's passion for plants came about after she moved with her husband





and children from London to her old family home in Suffolk. She was running a gardening school when diagnosed with breast cancer. Fortunately, she recovered after treatment and her zest for life returned. Wanting to express her gratitude, in 2014, she and her husband organised what was to be a one-off art and sculpture sale and exhibition at their home. It was an enormous success and out of that experience has grown the charity *Art for Cure*. Several exhibitions have been held resulting in raising over £1 million. The money is distributed throughout East Anglia for cancer research and also as one-off grants to small businesses related to post cancer breast care and to agencies that support women and families post mastectomy. An added benefit came to artists who were just beginning their careers and have been helped by exposure to the galleries and art collectors who support *Art for Cure*. Belinda and her team of volunteers have also undertaken several gruelling bike rides including one in Vietnam and another in India. As she said, 'Do we lead our life or does it lead us?' Something to ponder.

Following lunch, we were introduced to the last speaker, Mark Mitchells, a well-known lecturer in East Anglia. His subject was the life of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Physician and Suffragist. Mark's illustrated talk took us back to the 19th century when this remarkable woman achieved so much. As a child in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, Elizabeth showed great academic promise and also a streak of independence.

She trained as a nurse at The Middlesex Hospital and later, due to her skill, was allowed to spend six months 'shadowing' surgeons. She continued to train despite her male colleagues' objections and ultimately through the school of apothecary became the first woman to qualify as a physician and surgeon. Elizabeth went on to achieve many other 'firsts', co-founding the first hospital for women and staffed entirely by women, the first dean of a British medical school and later, when she retired, the first woman elected to a school board and the first female mayor in Aldeburgh. This remarkable woman found time to marry and raise a family. As Mark told us, she is not widely known outside of Suffolk although a few schools have been named for her. We all agreed that she deserves a statue and much greater recognition.

All three speakers emphasised the 'curious life' that is influenced by twists and turns of fate, decisions made and circumstances beyond our control. They gave us a lot of 'food for thought'.

As we departed Culford School it was apparent once again that Women in Fellowship is an organisation that recognises the best in women and the Christian ethos that defines us. I felt privileged to be a part of the group and humbled by the achievements of three remarkable women. I should add that the organisers of the event showed themselves to be remarkable as well, it was an outstanding two days.



Tour of the Priory Gardens

CONFERENCE PICTURES



Culford School Library



Lucy Lewis with delegates



Mark Mitchell



Belinda Gray



Culford School Staircase

In Memoriam

Bury St.Edmunds	Gabrielle Corfe	August 2023
Cheltenham I	Ka (Kathleen) Boreham	9 August 2023
Eastbourne	Margaret Prentis	October 2023
East Cheshire	Paddy Keates	22 April 2023
	Pauline Pitt	23 June 2023
	Valerie Hartley	26 January 2023
Guildford	Toni Alfred	April 2023
	Julia Darnell	June 2023
	Hannah Vaizey	29 August 2023
Middle Thames	Pearl Bayley	
New Forest	Ishbel Orme	August 2023
Oxford	Sue Brown	June 2023
Rugby	Fiona Moore	4 May 2023
Sherborne	Maevis Rogers	14 April 2023
	Mary George	14 June 2023
Shrewsbury	June Whitaker	August 2023
Warwick and Leamington	Diana Johnson	9 September 2023
Wimbledon	Susan Mayo	8 February 2023
	Wendy Hildreth	15 February 2023
	Vernie Stilwell	26 March 2023
	Gill Bartlett	Funeral – October 2022
Worcester	Jean Oram	August 2023
	Nancy Murray-Peters	September 2023

Correction : In the summer edition an obituary was written for Margaret Mack Smith, Worcester Branch. We wrongly named her as Mary and apologise for this error and any distress it may have caused. In addition, Brenda Patterson, Jennifer Shaw and Anne Starkie were listed in error as members of Leamington Spa, they were members of Twickenham.

Diana Johnson, 9 September 2023, Leamington Spa and Warwick I

Diana Johnson, who died on Friday 9th September aged 93, was one of our longest standing and valued members. Although handicapped by ill health in later years she remained a devoted and involved supporter of Women in Fellowship. She was a member for more than 54 years and served in several committee positions, culminating in becoming Executive Committee Charity Representative to St. Christopher's Hospice. A role that was of great interest to her as it followed her nursing career. She gave talks about the National Trust and Parkinson's Disease from which she suffered latterly and was a committed member of her local church. Diana and her husband Roger had three sons and Roger cared for her with great devotion for several years. They had recently moved to Cumbria to be near their son.

Life Well Lived

A life well lived is a precious gift,
of hope and strength and grace,
from someone who has made our world
a brighter, better place.

It's filled with moments,
sweet and sad, with smiles and sometimes tears,
with friendships formed and good times shared,
and laughter through the years.

A life well lived is a legacy,
of joy and pride and pleasure,
a living, lasting memory
our grateful hearts will treasure.

Anon

In Candlelight

When we enter a strange church or even our home parish many of us will light a candle and say a brief prayer. That small votive candle means something different to each of us. It may signify the loss of a loved one, celebrate the birth of a grandchild or a wedding, remember a friend or family member in need. Our prayer may be one of thanks or of hope, but that small flame remains burning long after we've said our words.

Candles have long been used as an important symbol in Christian worship. In past centuries candles were expensive and added to the glory of the service as well as providing much needed light. We have continued that tradition despite the advent of electric power.

Our altar candles are lit for worship in a very specific order. The candle on the Gospel side, the side with



Paschal Candle

the pulpit, should not stand alone. It is lit after the candle on the Epistle side and extinguished first. We also have four candles to mark the Sundays of Advent and the Paschal Candle which is lit at Easter and at baptisms and funerals. It represents Jesus' resurrection and triumph over death and is a symbol of hope and new life.

The Advent wreath contains coloured candles for the Sundays leading up to Christmas. The last candle to be lit is the Christ Candle. The colour white is for purity because Christ is our sinless, pure Saviour.

In a quite unique way candles radiate messages of romance, security, hope, spirituality, mystery and many more. Candles are a burning example that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Deeply rooted in almost every religious and spiritual practice, creed and nationality, there is something peculiar and symbolic in a solitary flame and the aura of light surrounding it. It communicates with our souls and speaks beyond words. No matter how thick the darkness, the light of one candle conquers it. Perhaps it is for these reasons that lighting that small votive can provide comfort in grief, hope in despair or joy in thanksgiving.

As we prepare for Christ's birth and the New Year ahead may you be blessed with a candle to light your way.



Candle for Ukraine

Thanks for the Little Things

Thank you God for little things
that come unexpectedly
to brighten up a dreary day
that dawned so dismally.
Thank You, God, for sending
a happy thought my way
to blot out my depression
on a disappointing day.
Thank You, God, for brushing
the 'dark clouds' from my mind
and leaving only sunshine
and joy of heart behind.

Helen Steiner Rice

For Advent

Advent is a time to remember, to prepare, to have faith, to know that in the gloom and darkness of the world, there is light, a true light, which will not be overcome. To remember again Christ's coming into the world, for He is that light. Lord, help us to let the light of Jesus Christ shine upon us. To renew our belief in Him, and to reflect His light in the way we live and in all that we do.

Pamela Halford, Bristol I

Shine in Me

Lord,
Let the glow of Thy great love
Through my whole being shine.

Amy Carmichael (1868-1951)

A Candle in my Heart

Light a candle in my heart
That I may see what is therein
And sweep clean your dwelling place.

An African Girl

Light in my Heart

O God, give me light in my heart and light in my tongue and light in my hearing and light in my sight and light in my feeling and light in all my body and light before me and light behind me.

Give me, I pray Thee, light on my right hand and light on my left hand and light above me and light beneath me, O Lord, increase light within me and give me light and illuminate me.

A New World

Give us, Father, a vision of your world as love would make it:
a world whose benefits are shared, so that everyone can enjoy them;
a world whose different people and cultures live with tolerance and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built on justice and justice is fired with love;
and give us the courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Branch Reports for Summer Grapevine

Copy date: 30 April 2024

The following branches are invited to submit an annual report for the summer edition.

Birmingham, Bristol III, Canterbury, Cheltenham III, Haywards Heath, Lancaster, Leamington Spa & Warwick I, Medway Towns, Newbury, Northumbria, Nottingham, Oxford, Sheffield, Solihull, South Trent, Stour Valley I, Stour Valley II, Truro, Tunbridge Wells, Wells, West Sussex, Weybridge, Winchester I

Please include, at the top of the report, the number of members and their category,

Members, Honorary or Associate. All copy must be sent in Word (Doc X) format and photographs sent as attachments with titles.

Please send directly to the editor at dicam1943@gmail.com. Copy can be sent at any time but will not be accepted after 30 April.

Amendments to the membership, change of address etc. should be sent to: membership@womeninfellowship.org.uk

Thank you.

Q R Code

Use this QR code to see the WF website on your mobile phone or tablet without having to type in the web address. Open the built-in camera app on your phone or tablet. Point the camera at the QR code and tap the banner that appears on the camera screen of your phone or tablet. You should be whisked to our website as if by magic!



W.F. Literature can be ordered from Caroline Oldroyd, tel: 01932-858153 or literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk Caroline will be at National meetings where possible, but please order anything needed well in advance.

Please note that any amendments to the membership list for receipt of Grapevine should be sent by email to: membership@womeninfellowship.org.uk

All items available from the Literature Secretary

New Anthology of Prayer	£3.00	Notelets (<i>Sold in packs of 5 of one design</i>)	£1.00
Spirit of Wives (<i>free to new members</i>)	£5.00	Passionflower (<i>by Susan Walker, Sherborne WF</i>)	
New Members' Pack	£6.00	Fuchsia (<i>ditto</i>)	
<i>(Information for New Members, brief history and St Christopher's leaflets, Service Book, revised History of WF, Anthology of Prayer and WF Information card)</i>		Hellebore (<i>ditto</i>)	
Service Book	£1.50	Wives at Tea (<i>by Liz Taylor-Webb, East Cheshire WF</i>)	
History of WF	£2.50	Wives at Church (<i>ditto</i>)	
<i>(Revised March 2019)</i>		Garden of Delight (<i>by Ros Plumley, Tunbridge Wells WF</i>)	
Grapevine Magazine	£1.50	Mixed pack of 6 notelets (<i>one of each design</i>)	£2.00
WF Information Card	20p	Pack for Visiting Priests	£2.00
Prayer Card	20p	<i>(Brief History, Service Book and Information Card)</i>	
Alternative Prayer Card	20p	WF Pin Badges	£2.00

Recruitment Leaflets are available free of charge

The WF prayer can be found on the website and in the service booklets.



Branches are asked not to send money when ordering literature

The Secretary will send a bill with the order which covers the cost of the literatures as well as P&P and instructions for payment. The Literature Secretary has a stand at Annual Day, Autumn Conference and the AGM where literature can be bought or orders placed. Please pre-order by email at least 3 days before an event and the literature will be ready for collection and payment at Founders' Meeting, Autumn Conference or the AGM. You can email the Literature Secretary with your order: **literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk**.

Garden of Delight



Notelet Designs

Stop Press: All Women in Fellowship notelets have been reduced to half price – what a bargain!



The six designs are now £1.00 for a pack of 5 notelets of one design or £2 for a mixed pack of six, one of each design.

They would make an excellent Christmas gift.

To purchase please email your order to Caroline at literature@womeninfellowship.org.uk. There are plenty of each design but do purchase now to avoid disappointment.



Wives at Church



Wives at Tea



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