

The Spirit of Wives



Young Wives Committee
Friday July 21st 1946
2.35 p.m.

Present:

- Mrs. Stephen Knight-Clute
- Mrs. Selwynne Central Pension
- Lady Baker Wilberforce
- Mrs. Mrs. Noel Campbell
- Mrs. Mrs. David West
- Mrs. Mrs. ...
- Mrs. Mrs. ...
- Mrs. Fisher-Rose
- Mrs. Coruswill Lee
- Mrs. Cecil Hubbard
- Lady Margaret ...
- Mrs. Selwyn
- Mrs. Julia ...
- Mrs. ...
- Mrs. Maude ...

Apologies were read from Mrs. Bayley, Mrs. Charles ... Mrs. De Vere, Mrs. ... and Mrs. Frank ...

After Prayer the ...

Celebrating 100 years

WF
 WIVES' FELLOWSHIP
 1916-2016





“ We ought, .. to hold it (WF) specially dear just now. The world is so full of divisions – financial, political and racial ”
Mrs Ford

“ What does WF do? As you probably know, as a body it does practically nothing. It is completely inter-denominational and speaks with no corporate voice on controversial matters, and would appear to have little influence, but actually it proves time after time, to be a power house whose energy spreads further than we know ”

“ When I joined in 1949, very nervous and shy, I soon learned that Lancaster was known as the ‘twin set and pearls brigade’. I wonder if anyone has a twin set these days and pearls have given way to less select, if more flamboyant, jewellery. Hats! A necessity on every occasion! And the teas. Sandwiches, cakes, cream, cakes stiff with fruit, scones and pancakes! All gone (fortunately)! Now we nibble a biscuit and say “I really shouldn’t, but I think I will ”
Barbara Hope

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“ Pearls are some of the loveliest jewels we have, and I like to think of the Fellowship as a string of pearls, a soft shining necklace linking Branch with Branch ”

Lady Milford, 1951

“ Looking back I realise how the Fellowship has run like a bright thread through the textures of my life - sometimes vivid and near the surface, sometimes less so, but always there ”

Winifred Brown, WFCC 1951-54
(written in 1999)

“ In a world of bustle, noise and altercation SWF to me means peace of mind, quietness of spirit and a heart full of gratitude to its founders and successive leaders ”

Norah Drake-Wilkes



Introduction

In 2012 when the need to plan for the celebration of the Wives' Fellowship Centenary was announced, a number of members asked, not unreasonably, whether the Official History of the Wives' Fellowship would be updated.

This planted the seed of an idea. The History was first written in the 1940s and has been revised and amended three or four times since; but those of us planning the celebration of 100 years of Fellowship felt it was an opportune time to compile a book reflecting not just a factual history of the past 100 years but a publication offering a deeper sense of what it means to be a Wife. Thus our working title, *The Spirit of Wives* came into being.

The small and committed working group, who have spent three years researching the archives and records to find the contents of the book before you now, were of one mind in our wish to record not just the facts of changes and developments over the past century but to try to capture the essence of the wonderful, stimulating and supportive spirit which is the Wives' Fellowship.

The following pages are our attempt to encapsulate the many remarkable women who have played a large part in our small organisation; the earnestly considered

debates, the fun and laughter, the good times and bad and the true meaning of our much loved Fellowship with Christ and one with another. Between us we have read all 190 volumes of the magazine, known as *Grapevine* since the Millennium, published biannually since 1920; trawled through the papers held at the Women's Library and dipped into the many and varied branch histories sent to us. There have been many changes in lifestyle and society since those early dark days in WW1. The world of our founders was very different to the world we find ourselves living in today. So we felt that it would be helpful to add some world and national historical detail to the contents to put the activities and concerns of the Wives' Fellowship into some kind of historical context.

The first WF Committee held its initial meeting on 21 July 1916 and is the first entry in the first minute book which became the treasured possession of the Wives' Fellowship a few years later. (HoW 1970)

For the purposes of this publication our organisation is referred to as Wives' Fellowship (WF) with acknowledgement that from 1934–2002, the Senior Wives' Fellowship (SWF) for older members existed in parallel with WF. Many WF and SWF branches were formed in the same localities

We are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.
(1 John 1 v.3)

and the various Constitutions over the years stipulated an age, or age range (approximately 40–53) at which WF members should move up or bridge to Seniors. For more recent members of the Fellowship these delineations may seem insignificant but our history shows that the existence of two Executive Committees and the relationship between the two arms of our Fellowship played an important and integral part of our history in the last century.

All the work was done prior to 2016 so does not include a record of the centenary year itself. The stories, poems, prayers and quotations used in the following pages have been gleaned from reports published in the magazines. Photographs have been gathered from various sources and every effort has been made to check that the information we offer here is accurate. We beg your forgiveness if we have failed in this regard. Our research has given us much to laugh about, much to ponder and even reduced us to tears. Above all it has been a true privilege to look back over the many and varied achievements of the membership.

It has sometimes proved difficult to discern, from the often reticent mention of service performed by members in the wider community and the good works undertaken, how much our membership has contributed

to society. One branch history did mention that their members gave their time and support to over 25 different charities, although there is no sign of members seeking publicity or glory. We have been given some insight into the strong, fearless and committed pillars of the community whom we should all be proud to acknowledge as the bedrock of our Fellowship. In 1916 the role of women in English society was very different to that which we take for granted today. Whilst we now expect girls will attend university and take up professional training across the board, our predecessors would, I believe, be astonished to discover in the ranks of the membership today not only teachers, doctors, nurses, accountants and lawyers but engineers, architects, designers, bankers, social workers and ordained members of the Church of England.

Through these pages we can also remind ourselves of the many aspects of our membership, and treasure the patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, sincerity and compassion we have been privileged to share, along with a deep faith and large dose of humour which enriches our Fellowship as much today as it has ever since we started over 100 years ago.

Jo O'Hagan

A WW1 hospital ward at Dunham Massey



The First Constitution: *'The YWF has been founded in connection with the MU so that younger, educated, married women who wish to find the Christian ideal for married life, parenthood and citizenship, may take counsel together and by study and prayer in fellowship, try to uphold the standard of Christ in the many-sided life to which they are called to play their part today.'*

1916-1920

In the Beginning

There was a group of friends – young, married, Christian women. They were well connected – the list of their husbands reads like pages from either *The Peerage* or *Who's Who* – and well educated, with lively minds and a desire to help others and support each other. It was half-way through the First World War, and many of them had husbands and brothers away fighting; they felt lonely and anxious but determined to see things through.

We know who most of them were – we have the minutes of their committee meetings and information from the early histories and magazines. They included the wives, daughters and nieces of bishops and archbishops (Liverpool, Winchester, Woolwich, Exeter, Newcastle and Chichester), headmasters' wives (Eton, Charterhouse, Repton, Harrow, Westminster, and Radley), wives of diplomats and politicians, barristers, solicitors, musicians, artists and academics. So they came from influential and important backgrounds. It was a world of nannies and maids, of pearls and sumptuous teas, but also a time of

“Lady Davidson had realised that there were a number of young married women up against all sorts of difficulties and problems. She thought we needed to get together and to have a time of quiet, with someone to give us counsel and help and advice. Personally I was feeling desperate at the time. My husband was missing in France, I had two small children and was finding it terribly difficult to carry on. We came away from it all so wonderfully refreshed and with more courage to tackle things”

Barbara Powell

women coming into their own, where they were expected to take a lead in the intellectual and political sphere of their country.

Some of them had got together through helping with the Girls' Diocesan Association (GDA), and in 1916 had decided to spend a few days in Salisbury in



retreat together. It was so successful that they had other similar meetings.

'I think it was Maisie Fletcher who made me go to Salisbury when it all began. I went with Celia Furse and we were both considerably intimidated. I remember that we bicycled over the first afternoon to her mother, Lady Newbolt's house, to get some pearls to put on! Everyone else was wearing them and we had none. But before the gathering was over we both felt that here was something we wanted, and when the Fellowship started we joined.' (Mary O'Malley).

Others became involved when the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, asked the Mothers' Union (MU) to set up a Young Wives Committee to discuss how to encourage younger educated women to join the MU. The first committee meeting met on



A VAD

“When I first remember the Wives' Fellowship, we were just a company of friends” **Hope Costley-White**

16 July 1916, chaired by Mrs Wyndham Knight Bruce, with Mrs Wilberforce, Central President of the MU (and responsible for the building of Mary Sumner House) also present. And one of the subjects recorded in those first minutes concerned the problem of age!

This was followed by an invitation from the Archbishop and his wife to 20 representative young married women to a conference at Lambeth Palace to discuss why the MU failed to attract the educated married woman. As Mrs Waterhouse recollected, 'We could have answered that question without any conference!' The MU appeared to contain 'more grandmothers than mothers', and simply did not appeal to younger women. Rather than interfere with the good work that the MU was doing, it was decided to set up another Fellowship to provide 'something for the more enlightened marrieds of the day'.

We are lucky to have some wonderful eyewitness accounts of this meeting in Lambeth Palace: there was a Zeppelin raid over London, and the whole household and other motley crowds descended to the crypt, to be greeted by the sight of the Archbishop 'sitting on a kitchen chair clad in an archiepiscopal red dressing gown reading in a glorious voice Revelation 1'. Meanwhile, Mrs Davidson 'plied him with hot water bottles and moved round comforting everyone' (Maisie Fletcher).

The Fellowship thrived somewhat haphazardly under its first elected Chairman,

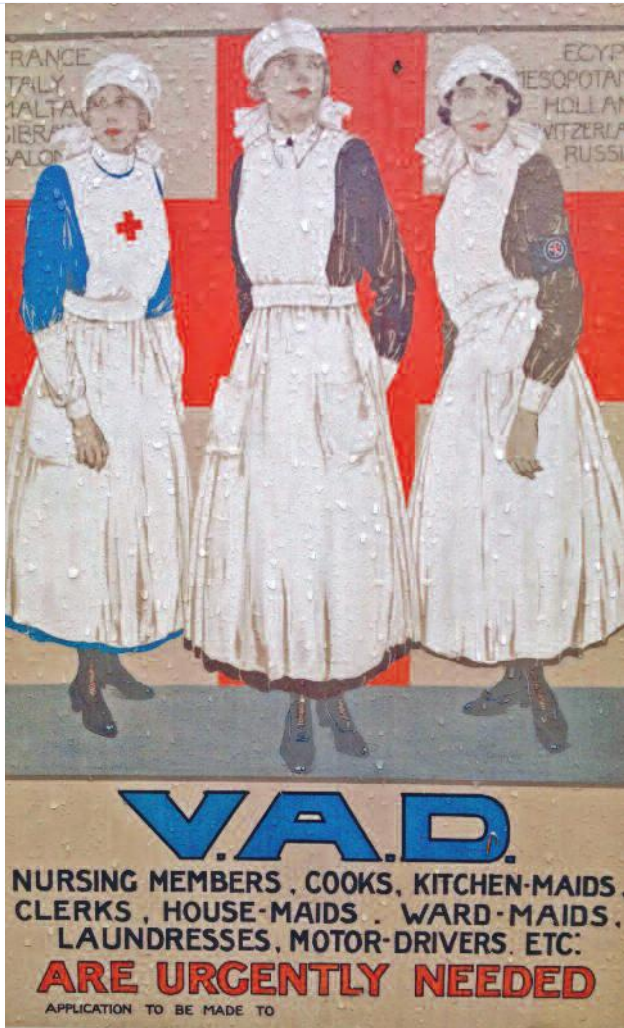


Marriage of Kathleen and Michael Falcon

May Ford, and her Secretary, Maisie Fletcher. 'We were neither of us endowed with any real business capacity', recalled Maisie, and May Ford corroborates that. 'It must be confessed that she had (to nearly the same extent as me, which is saying not a great deal!) a weakness in her grasp of the financial side of the Fellowship.' Yet despite a number of vital papers being left behind on trains and buses, a Constitution was drawn up and subscriptions were set. An explanatory leaflet (cost, 6d yearly for two leaflets), a motto and a service book were produced. The Young Wives' Fellowship (YWF) initially developed along diocesan lines, following the pattern of the GDA, so that by 1919 there were 27 branches flourishing in 21 dioceses. By 1921 an agreement was reached 'that members must be under 40 years of age or mothers with children under 15'. As Hope Costley-White

commented, '40 was the still distant horizon after which we expected to vanish away'. A spirit of joy and loving kindness and of great humour pervaded the whole enterprise.

The new members of this organisation were keen for their husbands to share the joy and inspiration they had encountered, so a joint conference for husbands and wives was held at Charterhouse in 1919. It was described by the chaplain, the Revd Harold Anson, as 'an almost reckless experiment which proved a striking success'. Although some husbands were apparently somewhat recalcitrant, about 60 people were present. A second joint conference was held in Winchester in 1920, and it was agreed to hold this annually, and for it to last from Thursday to Monday, to allow plenty of time for discussion. 'The general eagerness, among husbands, especially for more such gatherings, was additional proof, if any were needed, that



conferences are one of the happiest and most hopeful ventures of Fellowship.'

The first Annual Day was held on Ascension Day, 13 May 1920, in Fulham Palace.

The Josephine Butler Memorial House had been the recipient of a bursary from the GDA since 1915, when the first warden, Miss Higson, spoke to them about the work there.

The interest in the Josephine Butler Trust was transferred to the WF and continued from then onwards.

“ God and one woman make a majority ”

Josephine Butler

Mrs Nancy Preston (who was a founder member of Bristol, after her first husband died), said, 'In 1918, as a young war widow with a year old baby, I was struggling to make my way in life as a lecturer at Bristol University; and I was asked to give a course of talks to the just started branch there. There was freedom to give yourself away with complete trust, in sorrow and gladness – in despair and hope. One of the things that is frequently said to us old ones is "It was so easy for you to run a meeting ... you had plenty of domestic help." Help indeed! I remember when I was chairman at **Blackheath**, we had such trouble with the woes of domestic staff that we made a solemn vow in committee to bar the mention of troubles of staff during any meeting! Another thing that seems odd and unnecessary to me is that some branches call each other by their Christian names. I suppose it is searching for that old intimacy which was maybe easier in smaller meetings.'

WF was begun during the 'war to end all wars', at a time when 'the average time a young soldier could expect to survive after reaching the trenches, before being either killed or wounded, was three weeks'. Certainly a number of Wives' husbands were killed and many more will have had their lives utterly changed. At the end of the war, it was proposed to commemorate the end of hostilities and the signing of The Armistice with one minute's silence on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. In 1920, King George V unveiled the Cenotaph and the Unknown Warrior was buried in Westminster Abbey. Guests of honour were

about 100 women who had lost their husbands and all their sons in the war. The British Legion sold poppies to remind people of the Fields of Flanders, and the money raised was given to help those who suffered as a result of the war.

But it was not all sadness and mourning:

“ I recall with particular glee May Ford saying blandly before one early conference, when several members had expressed the gloomy conviction that their husbands would never come – 'Oh well, so long as one brings some man, don't you think?' ”

Mary O'Malley

after much campaigning by groups such as the Suffragettes, women over 30 were finally given the vote (providing certain property requirements were met) in February 1918, and by November of that year they could become MPs (Nancy Viscountess Astor held a seat in the House of Commons from 1919 till 1945).

Opportunities opened up to women of all classes: they were admitted to Oxford University, called to the Bar and obliged to do jury service. This resulted in a number of social changes, and the birth of a new type of woman. She smoked and drank; she cut her hair, wore make-up (and pearls!) and went to parties. This was the Jazz Age: the new energetic dances required women to move freely, so pantaloons and corsets were replaced by 'step-ins'. The first patent for a brassiere was issued in 1914.

Blood transfusions became more common, sticking plaster was invented, and X-rays

Continued on page 10



Wives' Fellowship Founders



Mrs May Ford



Salisbury Cathedral

Young Wives' Committee
 Friday July 21st, 1916.
 2.30 p.m.

Present: Mrs. Wyndham Knight-Bruce, Chairman
 Mrs. Wilberforce, Central President
 Lady Baker-Wilbraham
 Hon. Mrs. Nigel Campbell
 Hon. Mrs. Laird Cust
 Mrs. Ford
 Hon. Mrs. Foster
 Mrs. Fisher-Knave
 Mrs. Coruwall-Dee
 Mrs. Cecil Lubbock
 Lady Margaret Kisholton
 Mrs. Selwyn
 Mrs. Julian Steele
 Mrs. Parryler
 Mrs. Maude, Central Secretary.

Apologies were read from Mrs. Bayley,
 Cavston, Mrs. Charles Darwin, Mrs. De Vere,
 Faushaue and Mrs. Frank Seely.

After Prayer the Minutes of Meeting

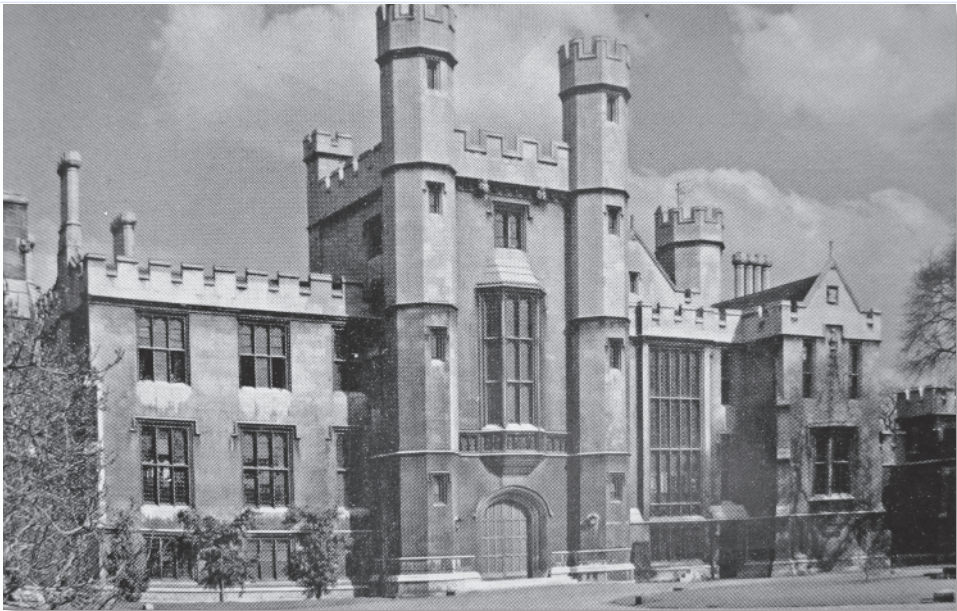
1916 Young Wives' Committee meeting



Lady Maisie Fletcher



Lady Mary O'Malley



Lambeth Palace



Mrs May Bush

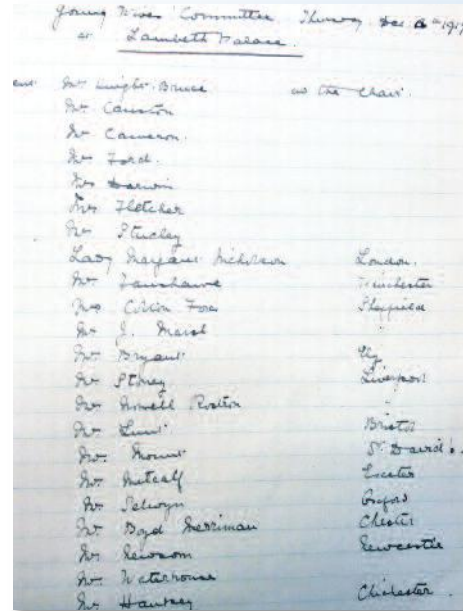
“ It is not what we are, or what we think that matters, but what Christ can do, and be, in us ”
Maisie Fletcher



Mrs Phyllis Selwyn and family



Archbishop Davidson



1917 Lambeth Palace attendees

Wives

Tall Wives, shorter Wives,
 Thin Wives and fatter Wives;
 Clever Wives, quiet Wives,
 Nice and full of chatter Wives;
 So many faces,
 So many voices,
 Over so many miles.

Brave Wives, cheerful Wives,
 Home Wives and working Wives,
 Artistic Wives, domestic Wives,
 But never, never shirking Wives!
 All so very different,
 But yet - so much the same;
 All one in Fellowship,
 With one common aim.

Philida Dally

were more widely available. The pop-up toaster was invented, enabling toast to be cooked on both sides simultaneously. In 1913 the first crossword was printed. In 1920, Rupert Bear first appeared in the *Daily Express* and little boys enjoyed Hornby clockwork trains.

Following the four years of austerity, our nation threw itself into many kinds of entertainment with enthusiasm. The Music Hall was very popular, as were seaside concerts parties and musicals. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company flourished in London, and dance music, especially Ragtime, was popular. Somerset Maugham published *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919) and Agatha Christie published her first novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920).



Jessie Higson, first warden of Josephine Butler Memorial House (Liverpool University)

The Perfect Hostess

*She came to me at the train,
And when I missed it, came again
With welcome all undimmed; for me
Fresh scones appeared, fresh China tea.
She told me – though some years had ranged*

*Since we met – I was unchanged,
The maid she lent to give me aid
Was not the abashing kind of maid;
No carbon balls with winter store
Were lurking in the bottom drawer;
The linen breathed of lavender,
The midnight biscuit box was there;
Her choice of bed-time books was mine,
She sent my breakfast up at nine;
The bath was boiling hot, and fit
For Kings the things to cast in it.
She did not hunt me out to view
The Ruin, or a cairn or two,
Nor seemed to entertain, yet still
I had no gaping hours to fill.*

*Her dinner-frock was quite as bad
As mine, the only one I had;
Her food was NOT the homely food
That's best described as Plain but Good,
And when she said Good-bye, I thought
She really meant it all; in short
She made me feel, though Home is best,
It's good to be a pampered guest.*

(Summer 1996 WF Magazine. The poem is anonymous and undated, but believed to be circa 1917)



A typical 20s sitting room

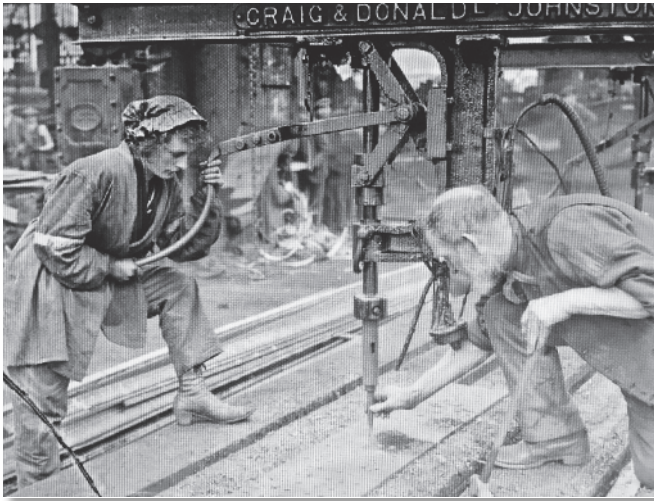


Mrs Edward Selwyn

“ The spirit of our Fellowship where aroused will, we hope, extend far beyond the bounds of our actual membership, for it is a spirit which can brook no limits. ”

Lady Fletcher 1920

Women in shipbuilding and below, JB Abercromby Sq (Liverpool University)



1920s

Growing Up

The euphoria of victory in WW1 still hung in the air and Britons had high hopes of a settled and secure future. However the start of the Irish Civil War (1921) and the Depression (1929) put paid to that.

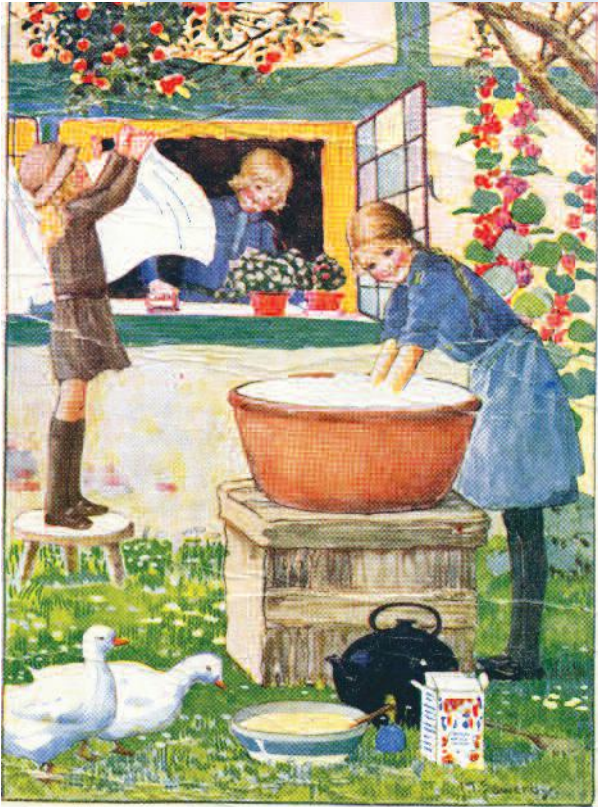
Strong support for, and alliance between, trade unions helped the first Labour government, led by Ramsay MacDonald, to be elected. There was much political unrest and the premiership changed hands six times. Britain's former pre-eminent industries such as shipbuilding, coal, steel and textiles struggled to keep up with productivity gains in the US and there was a sluggishness in switching to new growing industries such as chemicals and car manufacturing. Prime Minister Lloyd George had promised 'a land fit for heroes' but demobbed servicemen found it increasingly difficult to get work and women were forced to cede their jobs to the returning men. Unemployment was high, leading ultimately to the General Strike in 1926. Conferences

organised by **London** and **St Albans** were cancelled because of the strike.

Following the post-war League of Nations reallocation of German and Turkish colonies, the British Empire was at its largest, covering a quarter of the world and ruling over 1 in 4 people. Shortly, however, moves were made to declare the Dominions equal to Britain rather than subordinate.

Women had been emancipated and were pushing the boundaries in so many ways. All women over the age of 21 were given the vote in 1928. They were now empowered to pursue careers of their own and to take their place in public life. Legislation was introduced that protected women's rights and property, and improved the lives of women. The Widow's Pension was introduced and the first Marie Stopes Family Planning Clinic was opened. Many women, having left domestic service during WW1, were reluctant to return so household staff were scarcer,

contributing to the breaking down of longstanding class barriers. The Bright Young Things enjoyed new social freedoms that the lifting of wartime restrictions created; clubs and a degenerate nightlife attracted the young Flappers and the decade became known as the Roaring Twenties.



WHEN THE WEATHER'S DRY AND FINE,
WE HAVE OUR WASHING DAY;
WE HANG THE LINEN ON A LINE
THEN IRON, AND PUT AWAY.

Guides

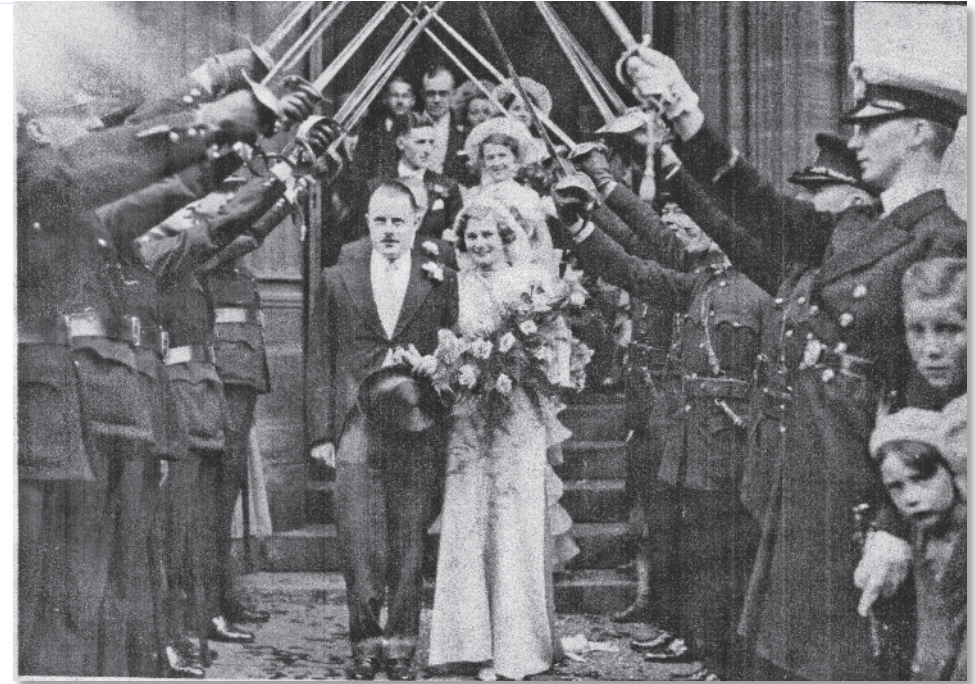
These were also exciting times; many innovations were introduced to improve and enhance the quality of life of ordinary men and women. Electric railways and new housing estates were built which opened the suburbs to commuters. The BBC was started in 1922, with a broadcasting fee of 10/-.

Radio Times, *Readers' Digest* and the *Oxford English Dictionary* were published for the first time. People could listen to the 'wireless' radio and enjoy a ride on a double-decker bus. New household appliances were available including the electric vacuum cleaner and washing machine. Frigidaire introduced the first refrigerator in the UK. Passenger lifts and traffic lights were developed, and in 1924 John Logie Baird sent rudimentary TV pictures over a short distance: he demonstrated the world's first colour TV transmission in 1928. A whooping cough vaccine was produced and Sir Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin.

Female athletes and gymnasts made their debut at the Summer Olympics in 1928. As a passenger, Amelia Earhart became the first woman to make a successful transatlantic flight from Newfoundland to Wales, and a woman swam the English Channel for the first time in 1926. The Mitford Girls were hitting the headlines, as were Virginia Woolf, Nancy Astor and Lady Diana Cooper.

The first talkie, *The Jazz Singer*, was released and Mickey Mouse made his debut in *Steamboat Willie*, the first animated film with sound. Books published included *The Great Gatsby*, *A Passage to India*, *Winnie the Pooh* and *Ulysses*.

By 1920 the WF motto had been created and a dedicated WF service had been devised. Close links with the MU were retained but



Eileen Cameron

the YWF became more independent in 1921 and suggestions for a new name were sought 'as it nearly always provokes a smile.' Married People's Fellowship or Fellowship of Marriage were among suggestions; they settled the matter by dropping the Young. The simple Constitution was revised to reflect these changes and stated that WF operated within the Church of England but was open to all denominations and that membership was extended to those under 40 or those with children under 16.

In 1924 there were 56 branches. The Central Committee comprised the officers, elected members, representatives of the GDA and MU, an adviser for literature and the secretary of the Hospitality Scheme. They also had paid secretarial help. The building blocks were now in place and as long as

“ The re-writing of the constitution resulted in some extraordinary amendments, which were argued over and further amended. When the said document was lost on a train we wicked ones prayed it would NOT be found! ”

Mrs May Bush

branches kept to a few broad-based rules, they could organise themselves as they wished. Individual and diverse branch traditions were established at this time. This has continued to be a characteristic of Wives ever since.

Up to this point the Central Committee meetings had been held in the south; in 1923 **Manchester** combined the Central Meeting with Annual Day. Guests attended the 8.30am



Female olympians at the 1928 games

service in the cathedral, adjourned for breakfast at a nearby restaurant, and travelled to Pendleton for quiet time in church. Lunch followed, where southern guests were amazed by a marvellous meal that they had till then only met in the 'cookery books' of the North Midland School. After lunch they attended the Committee meeting. Following this success **Liverpool** and **Carlisle** hosted these events.

On a practical note, it was agreed to commence all branch 'drawing room meetings' with a prayer, that members should wear labels and that a flock system should be adopted. Meetings should end with 'a simple tea at a small cost per person.' New

members should be invited to join rather than urged to do so. Branches were encouraged to join up with one another whenever possible. Towards the end of the 20s membership was depleted as women resigned having reached 40 and it was hard to recruit younger wives.

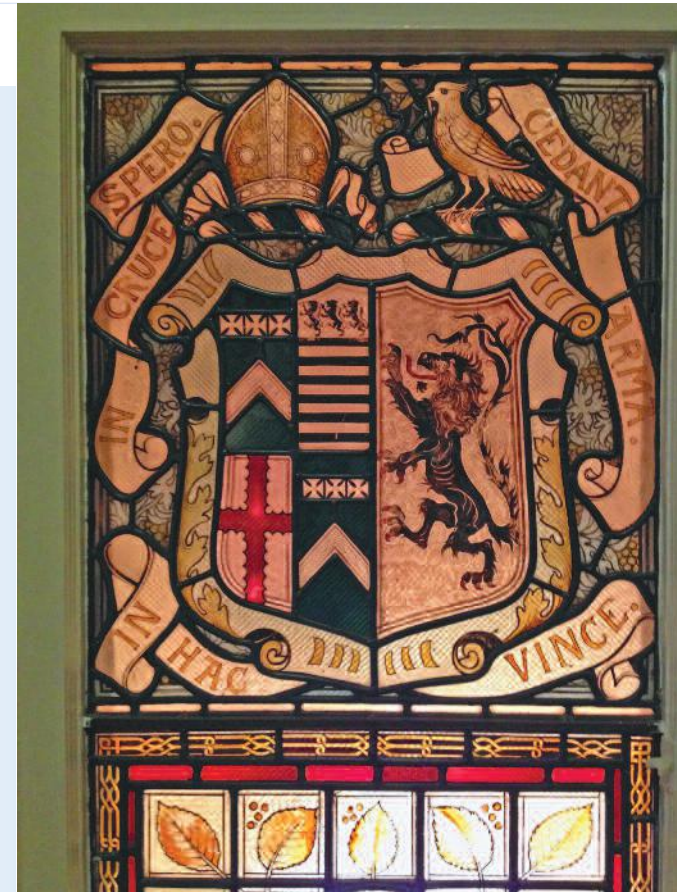
In order to enhance the fellowship that the new organisation so valued, Lady Fletcher suggested that spending uninterrupted time with like-minded people was advantageous. 'Those inspired gatherings which we call by the dull and rather forbidding name of Conferences' were deemed to be of enormous importance to the fledgling Fellowship as, compared to meetings and

lectures, it gave 'more time for thorough interchange of ideas and discussion of developments in matters religious, educational and civic.' They generally lasted four or five days. A reading list was circulated prior to attendance. **Sheffield's** conference had 'run the gauntlet of the terrible influenza epidemic' and at **Oxford's** it was anticipated 'that a few babies and their nurses can be accommodated'.

“My first joint conference was at Oxford two years ago, and it did need a little pluck to take that plunge; but pluck is no longer needed and personally I know of no more delightful way of spending a few quiet days... In conclusion, O doubting husbands! Take courage and know well that if you venture to the next joint conference you shall certainly find men of like passions to yourselves, who also smoke pipes and on occasion drink beer; you will also find men and women who take an altogether amazing interest in the ages and peculiarities of your children. But no one will talk religion at you, only the odds are that after twenty-four hours you will find that you want to discuss all sorts of unaccustomed things with them”

(A husband attending his first conference)

The tradition of a literature table at conferences began. The first Boys' and Girls' conference was held in 1926, at High Leigh in Hoddesden and cost 18/- a head. The importance of participation by husbands was recognised and so the first joint conference for couples was in 1919 organised by **Winchester** at Charterhouse. Lady Mary O'Malley recalled 'I can hear George Mallory



High Leigh window

saying to me after dinner on the last night of the Charterhouse Conference, the first one of all - "That was a real *Agape*".

In conjunction with residential events, the first WF Day was held when about 50 Wives joined the service in St. Margaret's and then adjourned to Westminster School to discuss 'The attitude of the Fellowship towards legislation on behalf of women and children.' The fact that Wives had the vote was mentioned; they felt they should use these powers on behalf of women

and children less fortunate than themselves and to give practical expression to their ideals. A letter to the two female MPs ensued, expressing interest and asking if there was any way in which *Wives* could give effective support to such measures. They also supported the introduction of Family Allowance and published articles about this contentious subject in the magazine. These appear to be the only occasions when *Wives* acted politically.

Towards the end of this decade it became apparent that a balance had to be maintained between those who placed great emphasis on the spiritual side of themselves and the



Ruth Mallory

Fellowship, those who loved the fun and social side, especially felt at the conferences, those who wanted to develop the intellectual side with more debates and lectures and those who valued the domestic and educational aspect, which catered for their children more directly. The need for this balance is still required today.

Alongside the more serious side, during this time, it seems as though there was any excuse for a party! Large gatherings were held in style; these were used to invite new members, to meet up with friends, to have fun and to chat. Prestigious venues were chosen and husbands were often included. Political and contentious issues of the day were addressed, especially involving the religious and educational training of their children, and very well-known and influential speakers were invited.

Links with India, Burma and Ceylon were established and other branches were started elsewhere overseas; visits were made to encourage these new branches. On arriving in India Lady Fletcher remarked that 'one found it rather hard to pray in the first days in Bombay when one dripped all the time' and described, for *Wives* at home, the situation of overseas Wives when 'every summer you must break up your home for five months and leave your husband and go away to the hills, or perhaps to England and the haunting thought that when the children are about six the dreadful separation must take place.' *WF* helped parents still living in India find schools and Happy Holidays for their children in England. Overseas conferences were arranged in the UK for *Wives* home on leave and care was taken to assimilate back any members returning to the UK.



Kathleen Falcon 1927. Twins Ann and Sybil

Ruth Leigh-Mallory

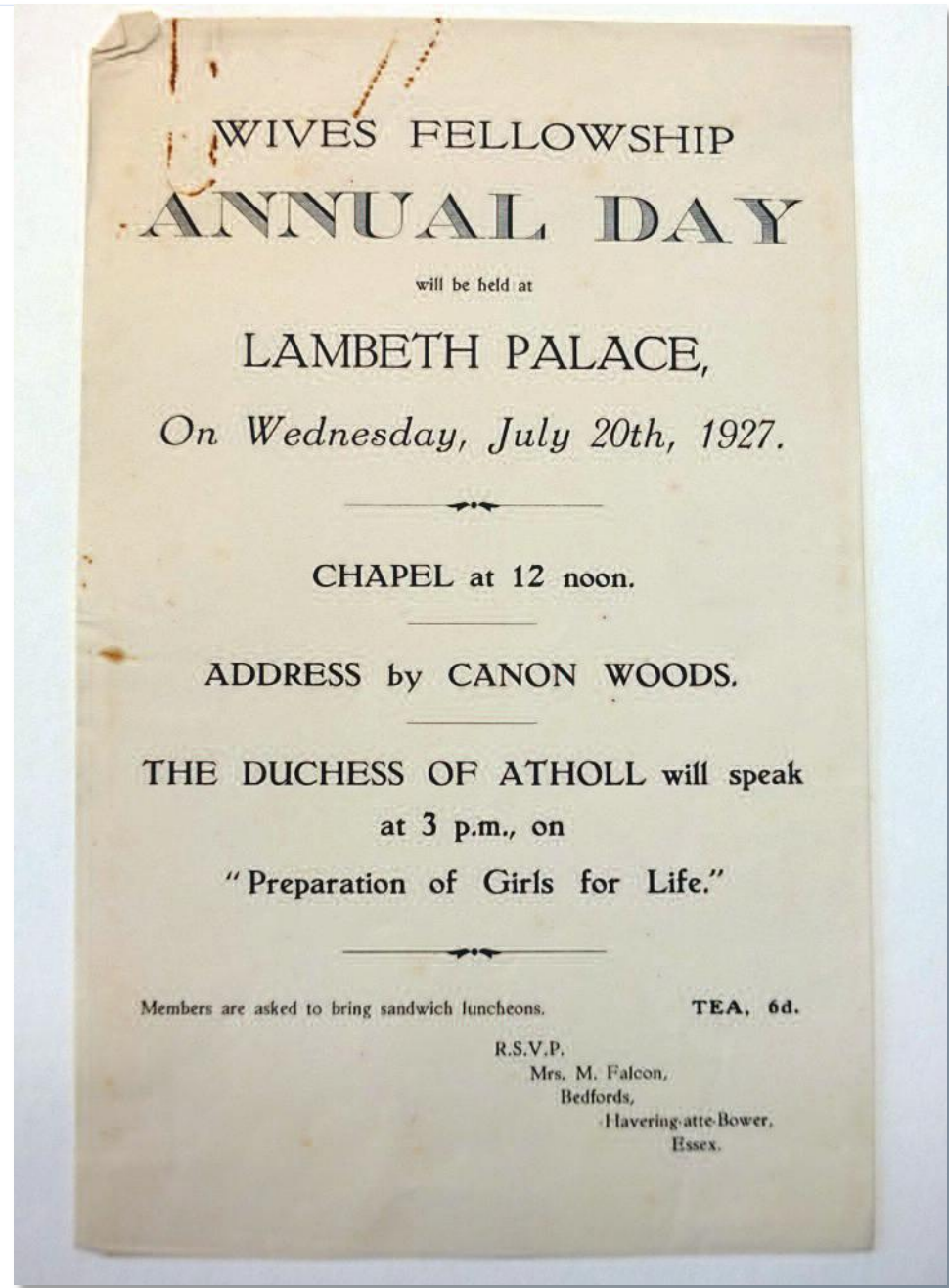
Ruth Turner, daughter of architect Hugh Turner, was born in 1892. The Turner family were close friends of William Morris and the family lived in an elegant mansion, in Godalming. In 1907 her mother died of pneumonia prompting Ruth, who was only 15 at the time, to become a devout Christian. Ruth met George Mallory at a dinner in 1913 and following an invitation from her father to join the Turner family on a holiday in Venice the couple fell in love. George wrote to Ruth 'it's too, too wonderful that you should love me and give me such happiness as I never dreamt of.' They married in 1914 and in 1915 George enlisted, joining the Royal Artillery, and was posted to the Western Front. On his return the family of five moved to Cambridge where he taught. In 1924 George embarked on his last expedition to Everest where he perished. Ruth was a very early member of WF and served as a diocesan representative in 1922.

In 1924 she was elected Central Treasurer and after George's death the family moved back to Westbrook House with her father. Having served her complete term, in 1927 she became Overseas Secretary. She was the first Secretary of the newly founded SWF in 1934. George Mallory's death was recorded in the October 1924 magazine. Hope Costley White wrote later: 'The news had been received only a day or two earlier of George's death on Everest. Their names were mentioned together at the beginning of our meeting and we stood in silence thinking of her, still here, and of him, there. For some reason I was called out of the room and in the hall I came face to face with Ruth, whom we had none of us expected to see that day. She was dressed in a pale blue cotton frock and looked almost her normal self. We talked for a few moments, as she summoned courage to face the meeting. "I hate self-pity," she said, "self-pity is always weakening – and when it comes to self-pity expressed in clothes!"

'This leaflet is rather in the nature of an experiment.' Thus the magazine was first published in October 1919 and was used to list officers and chairmen, recommend books, provide prayers, subjects for discussion and notify members of coming events. Diocesan reports appeared the following year and then in 1921 there is the first evidence that branches within those dioceses had been established. There was even a warning that the members' list should

not to be used for fundraising. Little did they know that 100 years later Grapevine would remain unchanged. In the 1926 magazine, book recommendations fell into the following categories – for Study Circles or Discussion Groups, Devotional, Biography, The World Call, Social, Magazines, Children, General and Drama. In 1929 another category was listed...Dealing with Sex.

The Wives' Hospitality Scheme was formed in an attempt to meet the



unquestioned need of friendship felt by lonely people of good education who by force of circumstances were deprived of home life. A secretary and committee were appointed and contacts were established with universities, colleges and music schools. In 1926 there were 56 guests on the London



register and between 30-40 hostesses who offered meals and friendship. One hostess reported 'Two South Africans have been to tea several times. Both very nice young men and so easy to entertain.'

Members were encouraged to be outward looking; Lady Fletcher stressed how Wives should work to engender fellowship between themselves and reach out to those outside the Fellowship. Practical and financial help was given to many organisations; **Durham** provided tea at the Thé Dansant for The National Institute for the Blind and

Malvern refurbished a holiday cottage for use by 'ladies of reduced circumstances.' They provided the food necessary for a fortnight's stay, the services of a woman to cook and clean, fresh flowers and the loan of a car for drives. Lady Baden Powell wrote an article extolling the benefits to girls of the Guides and another encouraged Wives to support the establishment of a Nurses' Association for nannies. **Exeter** donated to the Save the Children Relief Fund, which helped children 'in the most deplorable state of starvation and disease in Europe and Asia Minor', **Oundle** made garments for the local welfare centre and **Durham** held a fundraising American Tea. Josephine Butler Training College (JB) continued to be the unifying charity and financial help was given 'to train educated women for social purity work.' In 1925 WF guaranteed a full bursary of £75 a year, which paid for a student to take a one-year course. Miss Higson, Warden of the Josephine Butler Memorial House, spoke regularly to Wives about the work. Wives visited JB as often as they could.

As Wives developed reports of more light-hearted meetings began to emerge; **Liverpool** learned about lip-reading, **Northampton** had a lantern show of an adventurous lady's journey through Peru and Bolivia and **Lichfield** heard about Life among the Red Indians. **Kendal** reported that they did not meet in January as members were attending 'to all our children's holiday plans' nor in the summer which were 'devoted to guests who come to enjoy our

beautiful country.' As the decade progressed and Wives settled into the Fellowship more social events occurred. **St Albans** welcomed Noel Odell, the last person to see Mallory and Irvine a few hundred metres from Everest's summit, and Walter de la Mare spoke to **London** on The Magic of Poetry. **Liverpool** held a Husbands and Wives party and organised a children's visit, **Falmouth** had a garden party, children in **Oundle** had a fancy dress party and youngsters in **Eastbourne** had a Christmas dance. Visits to places of interest began; **Liverpool** visited the Hornby Library and a Montessori school and by far the most adventurous was **Bristol** who visited WD & HO Wills' cigarette factory, the Southmead Poor Law Hospital, The Bristol Times and Mirror printworks, the Council House and new housing estates being constructed.

A story about Mrs May Bush:

"On one visit to Surrey, May was dropped off at her hostess's house for lunch (having been to a church service), to find no one at home. A sudden torrential downpour found her searching for shelter, alas, there was none. No porch, nothing! In desperation, she rigged up a dustbin lid between two window sills 'to keep the worst of it off my hat.' Presently two more Wives arrived, and they joined May under the lid. Eventually their apologetic and flustered hostess arrived (she had gone to borrow a parlour maid) to hear them singing from the service sheet, 'Lord I hear of showers of blessing. Thou art scattering full and free, Showers the thirsty land refreshing; let some drops descend on me ...!'"



Indian Christian church



Wider Horizons

When WF was founded in 1916 Britain ruled the world. The British Empire spread across the globe and workers were despatched to every corner.

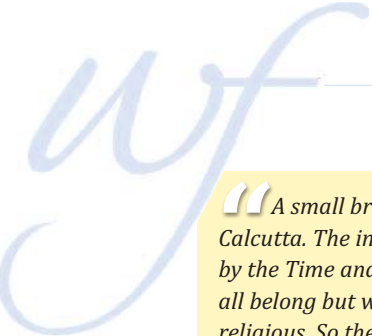
A great many of the men were married and their wives joined them in, often, intimidating and isolated environments. These women were not allowed to work outside the domestic sphere. Leaving one's home shores, though exciting, was tremendously stressful as well. Within the walls of their homes, women laboured as homemakers, wives and mothers. They were responsible for almost the entire behind the scenes activities that helped to sustain a typical British family. The daily tasks of maintaining the home and rearing children were extremely time-consuming. Fortunately, many colonial women also enjoyed a more luxurious life than their counterparts back home. A typical middle class family could afford three to six servants in the colonies, whereas in Britain they might only stretch to one. However, just as the need for support, friendship and spiritual sustenance was at the root of the beginnings

of WF in Britain, it was also requisite when families were separated from home and families in the Empire. Initially most were wives of British Army officers and at the beginning of the 40s there were over 2000 members overseas.

India

There were many overseas branches of the Mothers' Union and it is possible that it was through the MU that the first branch was founded in Assam. In 1922 the Mission of Help to India was despatched at the request of the Indian bishops in order to minister to the army and government officials and to the Anglo-Indians. They requested that a representative from Wives accompany them as it was felt that Wives would be heartily welcomed by the Club Ladies so Lady Fletcher volunteered (or was appointed). Not surprisingly, she was very concerned about leaving her family and home for five months. Also among the initial group was Miss Higson, the Warden of Josephine Butler House. Lady Fletcher embarked on a tour, the ex-pat wives did welcome

“ Keeping this overseas work alive, among constantly moving groups, often separated from each other by long distances and wild country, has been one of the most courageous chapters in the Fellowship history ” (1956 History of WF)



“A small branch has been formed in Calcutta. The intellectual side is catered for by the Time and Service Guild to which they all belong but which is definitely not religious. So the WF will have to emphasise the religious side. . . Then I came here (Assam) into this very far outpost of India. From this veranda one looks into a sort of no-man's-land, exquisite hills inhabited by very wild tribes, lying in that corner where China, Tibet and Burma meet. I can see a far spur of the Himalayas over a sea of hills. Well, right away here it is thrilling to go to a WF meeting at Mr and Mrs McLaren's, really some 30 odd miles from here, through such wild country! – and here to meet 12 members and eight prospective members,

and have a really fellowship meeting - so happy and delightful - and with the prospect, as a result, of three new branches starting here. Lectures at a club! Such a thing was unheard of... they had nothing but billiards, bridge and dancing and the bar. But the people came and really loved it and wanted it again. And of course the Church, as such, is mainly non-existent. Round about here within a radius of eight miles there must be about 250 Europeans one way or another, and there's not going to be a Christian service of any kind for them. That's pretty poor I think. They'll have tennis and bridge and dancing... but it's not much help to India to find Christ” **Lady Fletcher 1928**



Assam

the idea and several branches sprang up, with the emphasis on the spiritual and intellectual side of Wives rather than the already established social side.

Intercession for the Mission of Help: For the people we are going to, especially the younger wives and women: That through the Faith of those who pray we may find the right way to get in touch with them. That they may come to see the radiant joy of the Life in Christ ...and may learn what Fellowship in Christ can mean.

A year later Mrs Waterhouse, Central Treasurer, set sail aboard RMS Mooltan; coincidentally two fellow passengers were the secretaries of existing branches, and during six weeks she visited eleven branches already established; she set up another branch in Lahore and met several ladies who subsequently founded groups in their own stations. She travelled with this



The Harwood family in Ceylon 1947

message from home.

'I bring from the Fellowship at home earnest good wishes for the Fellowship in India. We in England have found the Fellowship to be three things:

1. A real and practical demonstration of what Christian Fellowship can be, because it depends on something deeper and more permanent than our often rather capricious likings of other people.
2. A very great support and encouragement in the spiritual life.
3. The greatest practical help in the bringing up of our children especially on the religious and moral side.'

On a second tour Lady Fletcher visited nearly all the Indian branches and gave 'new life to some that had lapsed.'

By 1929 there were 14 branches in India. A Central Secretary for India was appointed together with a Library Secretary and an Assistant Library Secretary. A lending library was set up whereby, in the first year, books were sent out as a gift from home to India and then circulated around the branches abroad. Subsequently readers' subscriptions augmented the collection. Some titles included *Christian Citizenship* and *Twelve Tests of Character* – there was no fiction. Branches were run on the same lines as at home – meetings, church services and social events filled the diary and from the outset it was acknowledged that age restrictions would not work in India.

During the 20s and 30s British attitudes towards India began to shift. This was partly a result of Gandhi and Nehru's protests. At the same time, India stopped being as important to Britain's economy as it had been in the past. Prompted by the fact that

“ Many of us live an unnatural existence – our children are at home, we may be transferred at very frequent intervals from some beloved station to an unloved one, we may at a moment's notice exchange a beautiful bungalow for an unwanted hotel, and our response will be one of willing acceptance or active hostility, according to our outlook on life, and it is among these difficult conditions that we so need a vital Wives' Fellowship that will steady us ”

Mrs Woodhouse, Central Secretary for India

Britain gave self-rule to the Irish Free State in 1921, it made it even harder to deny self-rule to India. In 1935 the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act. Branches' viability was further threatened by the constantly changing membership as Wives left the country, were posted to other cities or abandoned the towns during the hot season to escape to the hills. Also rural members were spread great distances and had to travel twenty to thirty miles on extremely poor roads to meetings. In 1931 there were 12 branches, in 1932 there were 11, then 8 and then 7. By 1935 there were only five branches remaining, a year later only two branches were mentioned, **Nagpur** and **Delhi**, and there was the first talk of Scattered Members in India. In 1938 the last report home was sent by the **Delhi** branch.

Ceylon

Britain established dominion over Ceylon in 1820. Initially coffee plantations were established. Tea was introduced from India in 1865 following the decimation of the coffee crop by disease. In 1925 the Tea Research Institute was established in Ceylon



Indian estate house

to investigate methods of maximising yields and economic production. By 1927 tea production in the country exceeded 100,000 tons, almost all was exported.

WF flourished in Ceylon far longer than the other outposts of the Empire and indeed had the most branches, membership of which fluctuated over the years. One founder member was Mrs Peter who served many times as Branch and Central Secretary and Chairman and was responsible for keeping Wives alive during the war years. Established in 1923 there are no details of early membership numbers but at its peak in 1963 there were 190 active members spread across six branches, all but one being inland. The central office was run by a Chairman,

Secretary and a Librarian. A circulating library was again set up which bought books suggested by Wives.

The island AGMs were held in rotation in Colombo, Kandy or Nuwara Eliya. A service was held in a local church before proceeding to one of the large hotels where the business meeting was held. Lunch followed, which allowed members to socialise – a great reward after having made a four hour arduous journey of up to 40 miles across 'twisting and hilly roads'.

Each branch held a monthly meeting in a local planters' club or, if the membership was small, in an estate bungalow. A lecture, an informal discussion

such as Home Hints and Recipes or debate was followed by refreshments.

As at home WF generously supported charity, both individual branch favourites such as The Evelyn Nursery for Orphans and their main beneficiary The Sisters of St Margaret's. Bring and Buy sales, Bridge, Canasta, Mah-Jong drives and stalls and raffles were held and monies raised were a valuable resource for the charities.

During the 40s, reports from the overseas branches gave another perspective to the war; they too had families and friends in the forces or in England, and were involved in war work in Ceylon. They commented that the Wives' Fellowship, and especially the magazine, had been a real help and inspiration to their members during this tough time.

*In 1946, following her husband's posting by Shell, Kathleen (Harwood) arrived in Colombo with a new baby, not knowing anyone. By good fortune, her new home was in the same block of flats as Peggy Strachan, who introduced her to Wives. At that time the **Colombo** branch was heavily influenced by the tea planters' wives, who were quite a force to be reckoned with, but thanks to the encouragement and kindness of Peggy and Mrs Cade, Kathleen came to enjoy her six years in this flourishing branch. Everyone dressed up in their best attire: this included hats which were an essential part of life anyway.*

In 1948 Ceylon achieved independence and was renamed Sri Lanka. Initially even more British workers embarked on a new life. This also marked the heyday of WF – most Wives were married to rubber and tea planters, engineers, doctors, teachers and research workers, coming to assist establishment of



Darrawella club in the 50s

the ethnic infrastructure. Branches embraced numerous nationalities – American, Australian, Canadian, Danish, Czech, German and Swiss. In 1950 the first Christian non-Europeans were invited to join and in 1961 a suggestion was made that Tamil and Ceylonese women be invited to be Associate members. Clarification from Executive was received, which clearly stated that non-Christian women were purely guests of members and 'to send notices of meetings direct to non-members would be to give them an official place in the Fellowship. The Christian character of the Fellowship should not be infringed!'

During the next two decades there was unease amongst the expatriates. The financial strain on members in the 60s was

palpable in the magazine as Sri Lanka introduced increased income and expenditure tax. Money became very tight in households, inflation soared and exchange controls were introduced. Members' subscription to WF Central Fund was waived in 1965.

Tribute was paid to Mrs Peggy Strachan, the Overseas Secretary who, during the lean years, was a 'tower of strength, ever encouraging the remaining members'. By doing a slideshow talk to UK branches about her nineteen years in Ceylon she paid for the magazine when they could no longer remit sterling. Inflation also made the purchase of books for the library service impracticable.

The education of Wives' children was a constant topic – from the pain of separation

to worries about paying for schooling at home. Prior to 1959 children had to be sent home at the age of eight, but then English schools were established to educate up to public school age. With restrictions on money being sent abroad families struggled to finance secondary education.

Membership began to decrease with the accelerated exodus of European planters and businessmen caused by taxation and ever-dwindling leave and educational allowances. Colombo became the sole branch with those remaining upcountry members becoming Scattered. Members returning home were warmly invited to join branches in their new locality.

Despite struggling for so many years, the nationalisation of the tea, rubber and

coconut estates owned by British companies in 1972 signalled the death knell of Wives in Ceylon. In 1974 the SWFCC's letter acknowledged the ending of our link with Ceylon and sent good wishes to the past members.

Other outposts

In 1926 Wives had spread to Cairo and by 1930 Kenya and Java had joined. In 1936 Lady Verulam started a branch in Salisbury, Rhodesia. Sudan got a branch in 1933 and Hong Kong in 1937. This branch was supremely successful as by 1944 it had over 4000 members although the membership criterion was lax: it was 'open to wife, widow, parent, brother, sister, child over 16, of all British subjects who were in Hong Kong on Christmas Day, 1941!' There were even short-lived branches in Jamaica and New Zealand. Sadly these branches did not survive long. Quite a number of ex-pats went out to Africa during the War and it was hoped to start branches there, but nothing came of it. There were also Scattered members in Sierra Leone, China and British Honduras.

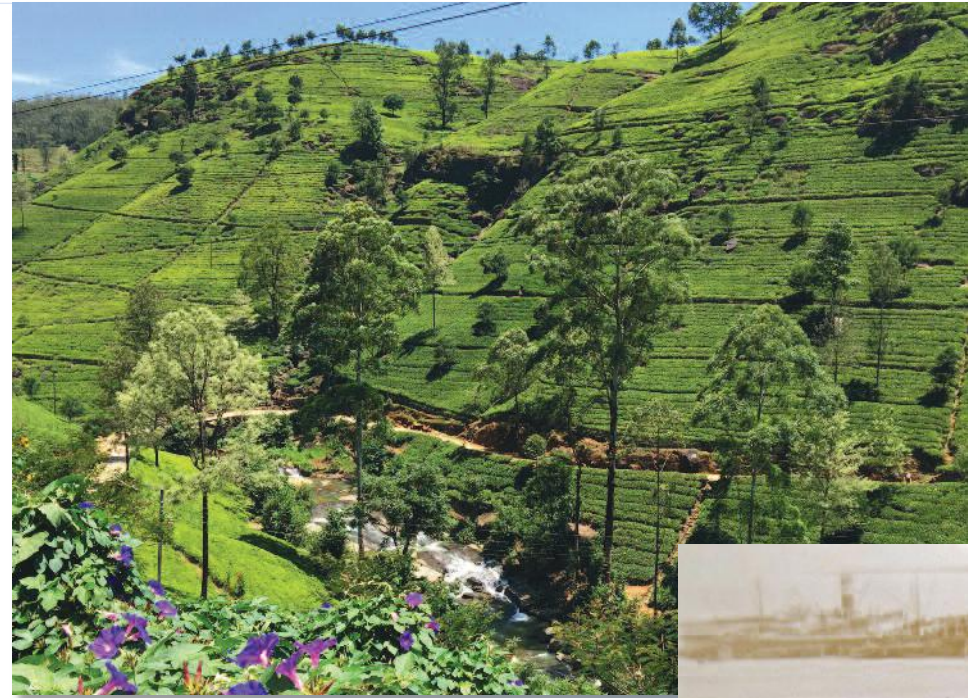
Contact from home

The first Overseas Secretary was appointed to sit on the Executive Committee in 1923 and she often had the opportunity to visit the branches she oversaw. Overseas Conferences were held in England from the early 20s for 'wives of British officers and residents of India, Burma and Ceylon' home on leave or 'furlough'. As well as members of the Fellowship, it was open to anyone on leave from India and Central Committee members were invited to meet them. Six Indian branches sent delegates and one remarked 'a conference like that just makes all the difference. One feels so enheartened and

cheered up, and we can go forward with fresh zeal and inspiration.' These continued well into the 30s, organised by Mrs Ruth Mallory.

Returning Wives were encouraged to seek help, via the Overseas Secretary, to find houses in the UK. Following requests from overseas members a series of lessons for children aged 4-7 on religious subjects was published.

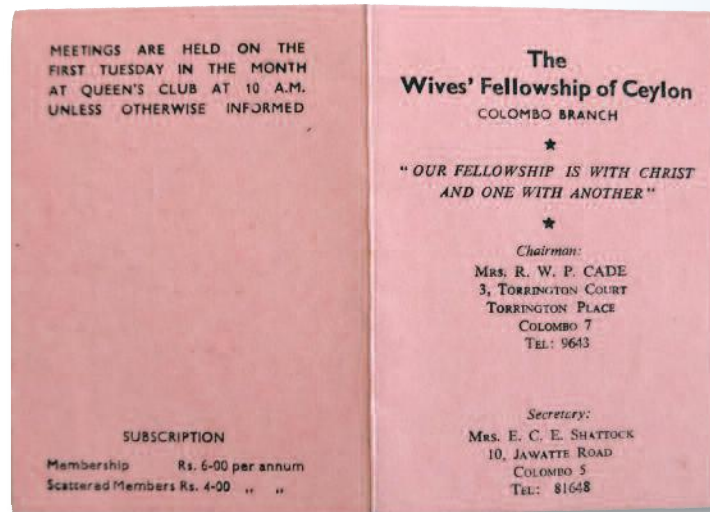
In the spirit of Wives great attention and assistance was provided to parents abroad to find schools and Happy Holidays for their children in England. Numerous notices appeared in the magazine offering such services and a register soon had 48 personally recommended places. One member who was returning to the Gold Coast asked if a member could arrange to visit and give her news of her baby girl left in Kent. This was duly arranged and the mother was very grateful.



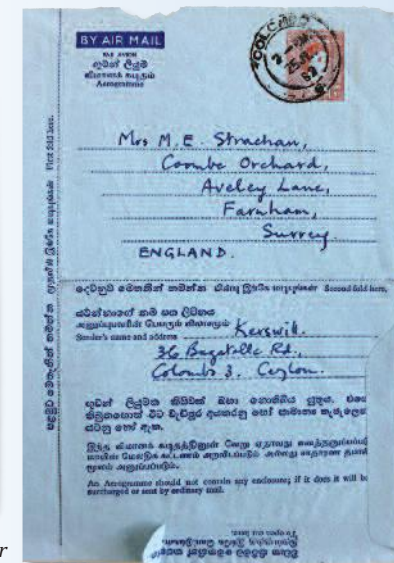
Ceylon tea plantation



Hong Kong



1966 Ceylon WF programme



Airmail letter



Jarrow marchers (National Media Museum)

“ We ought...to hold it (WF) specially dear just now. The world is so full of divisions – financial, political and racial ” Mrs Ford

The Fellowship Prayer (1937)

O Lord we beseech Thee, watch over the soul of our Fellowship, exalt its purposes, bless its undertakings, fulfil its prayers; grant to its members to be of one heart and one mind concerning its high aims. may the Father's power govern and sustain us; the wisdom of the Son instruct us; the energy of the Holy Spirit renew and quicken us, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen

1930s

Gathering Storms

After the Wall Street Crash in 1929 the outlook for the 30s wasn't good: during the Great Depression unemployment reached 25%, mainly in the north of England and Wales where older industries were based.

The Jarrow Crusade typified the desperation of families struggling to survive unemployment, poverty and hardship. After the 1931 election, a National Government was formed to deal with the economic situation, with Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister. Subsequently, there was more economic growth in the 30s than in any other decade. As in all times of economic transition, some industries declined while others rose. In the midlands and the south, the manufacture of cars, aircraft and electrical goods prospered and cutting edge factories were built for companies such as EMI, Hoover and Ford. With these new jobs, living standards rose significantly helped by an extensive housebuilding programme which saw 3m new homes built. The growth of the suburbs rescued millions from the

slums and laid foundations for a new age of middle class aspirations.

The Dust Bowl in the US and Canada was a period of severe storms that greatly damaged the agricultural prairies. The Spanish Civil and the second Sino-Japanese wars were waged and there was a significant rise in Fascist regimes; Oswald Mosley's profile increased and Mussolini came to power in Italy. Gandhi steered the movement for Indian independence, the Soviet Union experimented with collectivisation and in Ireland the British government ceased to have control over Irish affairs. Neville Chamberlain's desperate attempts to appease Hitler appeared successful at first, but our country found itself preparing for war again. In 1939 war was declared; men and women were called up to join the armed and civilian services, children were evacuated from major cities, valuable national treasures were moved to safety and petrol rationing was introduced as were identity cards.

Broadcasting House opened and the BBC

World Service began; later people would listen intently to the news bulletins. Following the death of King George V and the short reign of King Edward VIII, the Abdication Crisis hung over our country like a dark shadow. However, the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth was a cause for much celebration. An appeal was made to Wives by Lady Hart Dyke of Lullingstone Castle. She had created a silk farm and needed to buy mulberry leaves for the worms, in order to provide the silk for Queen Elizabeth's coronation robes.

Domestic electricity became more commonplace, which encouraged housewives to buy electric light fittings, cookers, vacuums and washing machines. Many dancehalls, swimming pools and football stadia were constructed. As car ownership increased, road safety was a priority. The Highway Code was introduced, as well as the driving test, the urban 30mph speed limit, and cat's eyes as a safety device on the roads. The General Post Office produced the Speaking Clock, the 999 emergency telephone number came into being and scientists split the atom, identified Pluto and the neutron, and invented the helicopter.

Fred Perry won the men's singles title at Wimbledon in 1934 and Great Britain won a large haul of medals at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. The BBC Symphony and London Philharmonic Orchestras were formed and the first Glyndebourne Opera Festival took place. Britain entered the golden age of cinemas as virtually every town and suburb now had one or more new picture houses and newsreels kept people informed. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone*

with the Wind were released. Superman and Flash Gordon made their debuts and Penguin introduced the first paperbacks. Billy Butlin offered a new form of family holiday when he opened his first holiday camp in Skegness.

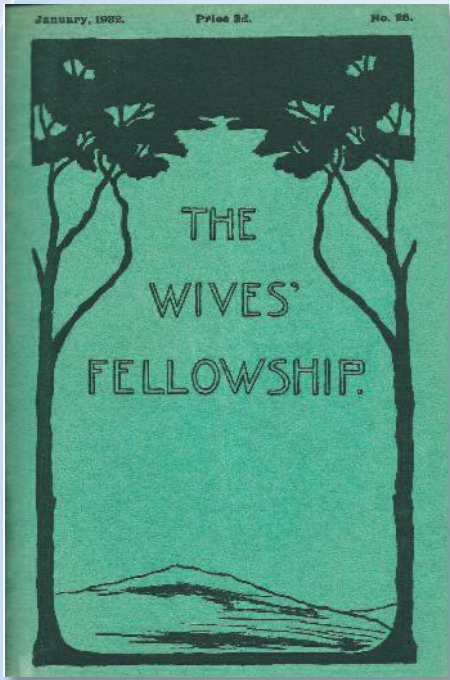
Women were becoming more confident, following careers of their own and even talking about equal pay. Amy Johnson became the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia, Marie Rambert set up her Ballet Club, Lilian Baylis re-opened Sadler's Wells theatre and Ninette de Valois founded the Vic-Wells ballet company. The new Shakespeare Memorial Theatre opened in Stratford-upon-Avon; the first important work by a woman architect. Benefitting from an interest in fitness, which saw rambling becoming a leisure activity and swimming becoming popular at the new lidos, the Women's League of Health & Beauty was set up by Mary Bagot Stack.

As the Depression tightened its grip, branches requested that the quota be reduced but having examined it, Central Chairman (CC) Lady Wilson wrote that the Executive advised that it would remain at 2/- for the 1800 members in the 36

Marriage of Barbara and George Heynes



George V Jubilee mug, Edward VIII and George VI Coronation mugs



1932 front cover of WF magazine
Susie Cooper tea service



UK branches. One reason cited was the possibility of having to engage a permanent paid secretary and another was the necessity to maintain central funds. The average branch sub was 5/- . **Northampton** stated that no delegates were attending conferences as it was too expensive. Changes were made to the structure of the Central Committee, with branches and their officers playing a major role. Even in 1931 'The perfect branch should possess a perfect secretary who should be saintly and systematic, business-like, and believing.' The first Branch Officers' Conference (BOC) was held in 1931 which would 'really help to unite all our branches.'

Just as women generally became more assured, Wives followed suit. They were keenly interested in many outside causes and gave practical and financial help. WF's confidence in its own thinking was demonstrated in 1937 when they finally severed close ties to MU over differences of opinion on divorce and birth control. Summoned to Lambeth Palace, CC Mrs Heaton and the MU Chairman had a 'very frank talk' which produced the result that WF was to be no longer 'affiliated to' but 'in association with' the MU. The exchange of letters between the two organisations was published in the magazine, which clarified WF's position and stressed that its members were free to hold their own opinion on controversial matters. Thus ended a close relationship, which had been mainly a happy one.

The Prayer Group, which had been formed quietly, was growing and helped those who wanted 'to learn more of the adventure of prayer.' Simple prayer plans and papers that suggested topics for devotion were available.

The age-rule was a contentious issue. Problems arose but answers were found! By

1934 there were so many names on the retired (over 40) Wives' list that a meeting was convened in London to determine whether a Seniors' branch should be formed. In 1984 May Bush recalled 'that the meeting was well attended, the atmosphere cordial and the enthusiasm overwhelming.' Simple rules were drawn up – the organisation was to be minimal – and Seniors were underway with May Ford as Chairman. Mrs Bremner exclaimed 'Providence appears to have returned Mrs Ford to London at the precise moment when she is needed to found the Senior branch!'

The preponderance of conferences continued and thorny subjects were discussed - the sanctity of life, suicide, nervous breakdown, capital punishment and infanticide. They were arranged on both national and local levels and sometimes included husbands. A Wife commented 'As I review in my mind those three days, I feel quite sure that it is only by taking part in a conference that one begins to realise what the WF stands for and its great possibilities.' One husband found the conference on euthanasia and abortion 'slightly indigestible' but enjoyed the talk by John Spedan Lewis, founder of the new John Lewis

Partnership. He stated presciently 'If there is one thing the WF Executive is to be congratulated upon more than another, it is their seemingly unerring flair for nosing out and capturing the finest speakers.' These conferences provoked much correspondence and follow-up reports in the magazine, 42 pages in 1933! At one, Sir John Reith of the BBC addressed the audience but the main issue reported was that 'a slight confusion between cream and salad dressing added an element of unexpectedness!' to their indoor picnic.

Other conferences were arranged for mothers with youngsters and for boys and girls. Themes became less spiritually challenging but just as relevant - in 1937 14-16 year olds learnt, How to Make the Best of Life. There were talks and discussions, and in the evenings there were games, singing and charades.

One reporter waxed delightfully about a Central held in Chelmsford and suggested that alternate meetings should be in the country. 'Fellowship is a heavenly gold dust scattered over the ordinary routine of our



1930s Ford Model A

days to glorify them...for surely modest little England has never sparkled with such regality of beauty this year.'

Organisers welcomed 170 members to Annual Day at Westminster – 'even the sixty who turned up unannounced!' The Seniors' first Autumn Day was held in Liverpool where, after breakfast, Wives toured the latest addition to the cathedral and some were taken on a 'quick trip through the marvellous new Mersey Tunnel.' It was announced that there were now 180 members, some of whom belonged to the four new SWF branches – **Liverpool, Bristol, Nottingham** and **Winchester**.

As war approached, in her 1938 letter, WFCF Margaret Harvey, hinted she may have to close WF down while members were 'engaged in work of national importance' but exhorted branches to continue for as long as



"In my experience, one of the things for which women abroad feel the need most strongly is some regular occupation which will provide a background to their social and other activities, and give weight and tone to their daily life. Now reading, if we set about it in the right way, will furnish us, whether at home or overseas, with a regular occupation, and a solid and spacious background to the necessary trivialities, social and domestic, of daily life"

possible and to work for peace. During the build-up to WW2, Wives tried to prepare by attending courses on First Aid in Chemical Warfare and on First Aid and How to Cope with War, organised by the Red Cross. Some branches and individual Wives adopted families in distressed areas. Support was given to the Lord Mayor's Relief Fund by raising money and sending clothes. Although WF continued to hold most local and national events, some conferences were cancelled but Quiet Hours were better attended. Evacuated Wives were asked to contact Executive so that they could be put in touch with other members in their new areas; hospitality was still very strong. Women generally were urged to do social and hospital work and training was given; many Wives took this up. Just a few branches closed – **Worcester**, as a country branch, decided to suspend meetings. Despite **Blackheath** being an evacuated area, twelve members remained. In some areas, where there were WF and SWF branches, these combined. Wives showed a determination to carry on as normal for as long as they could!

The overseas branches flourished; every effort was made to support them. During the 30s there were branches in India, Ceylon, Cairo, Sudan, Kenya, Java, Hong Kong and Southern Rhodesia.

Strong practical links were maintained.

Chislehurst twinned with **Assam** and sent a parcel of books each month. **Chichester's** twinned branch, **Kenya**, reported that they had ten inches of rain in a week and 'unless one could be back home by noon it was best not to venture out.' Their Secretary had been marooned overnight twice 'in a sea of mud', added to which her family had had to 'undertake a wholesale demolition of tonsils'. In Ceylon, **Colombo** initiated work across the branches to provide clothes and supplies for victims of a serious malaria outbreak.

Let us pray that 1930 may be a year of blessing to our country. For those who are called to leadership in Church and state that God will send down upon them the healthful spirit of His Grace. For our own homes, our husbands, children, servants and ourselves that we may be daily be renewed by the Holy Spirit. For a special blessing upon the Viceroy of India and for the help of God for all those, whether English or Indian, who rule or influence India.



Typical 30s kitchen

1930s

The magazine reflected that WF was becoming more outward looking and less insular during this decade. There were correspondence pages and world events were mentioned: articles appeared on the political situation in India, the plight of Jews in Europe and conditions in Russia. They reported on the rise of nationalism, disarmament and the build up to WW2. Our country's economic situation was discussed

as was how households could cut down on expenditure. Wives were avid readers and the Fellowship had their own book advisor in Vivyen Bremner who ran the Focus Book Corner for SPCK (a Christian mission organisation). She is best remembered for compiling the WF Prayer Card, the Anthology of Prayer and the Service Book. There were play reviews, and a lending library was started for discussion groups and children

and in 1936 the first pictures appeared.

Editorial space was also given to requests from outside bodies for help in poor parishes and children's care work, also for SOS messages:

Friendless and Far from Home: Will any members be kind enough to send a parcel or letter to one of Miss Eva Hasell's lonely settler families in Canada this coming Christmas? Their plight is piteous. Please help. Apply to the Editor.

There were also a number of more personal appeals:

Adoption: Some friends of a member, having no children of their own, wish to adopt a boy or a girl from babyhood. If anyone should know of a baby of good parentage for whom a really happy and loving home is required this would be a wonderful opportunity for the child.

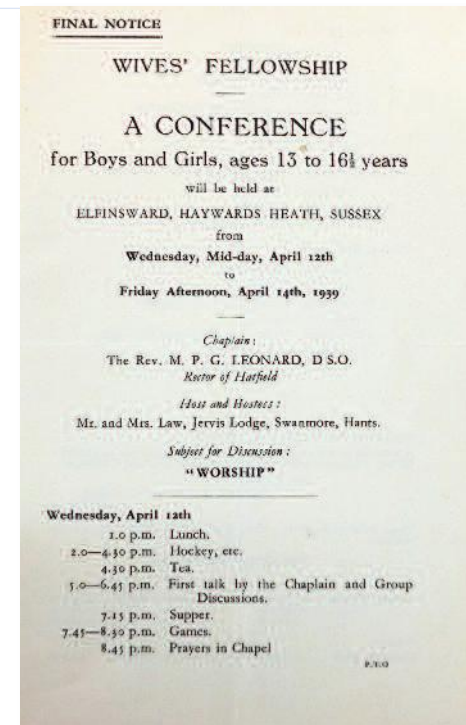
There were suggestions for sharing - the exchange of houses at the sea and in the country for part of the holidays, opportunities to pass on children's clothes. There was a situations vacant section, where recommended staff were advertised:

Governess very strongly recommended by Mrs de Falbe, WF Secretary Lichfield. She must winter in the south. Gifted as teacher and companion. Most dependable. Salary £100.

Josephine Butler was still the primary recipient of WF donations. Following Lady Fletcher's 1931 report that 'Josephine is not quite so well as usual this year' the bursary fund sent £100; later this was increased to £125. Amounts given by individual branches were published in the 1938 magazine - name and shame! In 1934 interest was shown in St. Michael's Fellowship - 'Some people find it difficult to realise that there can be any real



JB Training House (Liverpool University)



need for a society such as this, which devotes itself entirely to rescue work among girls of the professional classes.' They provided a maternity house, a nursery, a training home and aftercare for girls such as hospital and children's nurses, typists, governesses and daughters of professionals. This was adopted later by SWF as its charity.

After a quiet period following WW1, the Hospitality Scheme had a boost when Wives were invited to 10 Downing St to meet members of similar schemes. On her list, the WF Secretary held names from the Student Christian Movement and the National Union of Students as well as from the Dominions Trust. Names from the Actors' Church Union were added but no hostesses were willing to take 'repping actors'. During the war there was an urgent need for new hostesses;

wounded officers were invited for a holiday and men on ordinary leave were invited to homes. In entertaining those who were convalescent, a special grant of petrol, where it was needed, was arranged.

Within branches many difficult subjects, such as euthanasia and deep social problems, were tackled. 'Under the able and well-informed direction of Mrs Clarke, the **Godalming** Branch has this winter been pursuing the exciting study of Political Revolutions.' As concerns grew, **Chelmsford** examined The Nazi Point of View, and The Persecution of the Jews in Guernsey. **Mid Cheshire** learnt about Nazi Germany and **Newcastle** discovered Modern Germany. Branches did not shy away from controversial topics – **St Edmundsbury** 'bravely' looked at both sides of the divorce question and **Wotton-under-Edge** examined the Citizen of Tomorrow. The Lambeth Conference Report was discussed at length, both at home and in overseas branches.

Wives were concerned with the upbringing of children 'which is, after all, the primary business of most WF members.' Child psychology was a popular theme and often they examined the Difficult Child and the religious education of children. **Manchester** asked 'do our children require one amusement after another?'

In **Oxford** a noticeboard appeared at meetings for book recommendations, prams for sale or governesses' posts – 'the only notices forbidden are those of mistresses wanting maids!' and as their branch enlarged they held small tea parties to enhance fellowship. **Chislehurst** proposed that because those members who had large houses had retired and the remainder had domestic or financial constraints that would 'not stand the strain in these difficult times',

they would meet in a hall twice a year with smaller, interim, sewing meetings in homes. Executive echoed this with advice that meetings should have 'very simple teas and no one minds a crush.' In this light, **Guildford** took their own contributions to tea. **Liverpool** too moved to a hall and the committee provided flowers and tea.

Branches were already discovering 'the ever increasing difficulty in getting members to serve on the committee, act as hostesses, or go to conferences'. As branches flourished and were founded, others such as **Lichfield** struggled and **Newcastle** and **Cheltenham** reported that they had no young recruits because many women had small children but a shortage of domestic help.

Branches looked to those less fortunate – **Guildford** took 'inmates' of Guildford Infirmary on a motor drive and provided a large tea in a garden. Although work to clear the slums in London had begun earlier in the century, by the Thirties conditions remained dire for many families. **Guildford** visited the St Pancras Housing Scheme, **Thornhill** visited the 'worst housing in Dumfries' with a view to seeing how it could be improved and **Ware & Harlow** heard about the Isle of Dogs and Bermondsey. Many families were on unemployment allowance, through no fault of their own, and the family average per head available for food was seldom more than 7d. a day. Pitiful tales of illness and misfortune were listened to and money, clothes and food were sent. Practical support was given by WF. **Purley** entertained 12 mothers from a London slum. **Woldingham** had a talk by a Southwark 'working-class mother' about an invalid children's society which resulted in 40 children spending a day in the country. **Blackheath** helped a 'distressed (out of work) family move from a

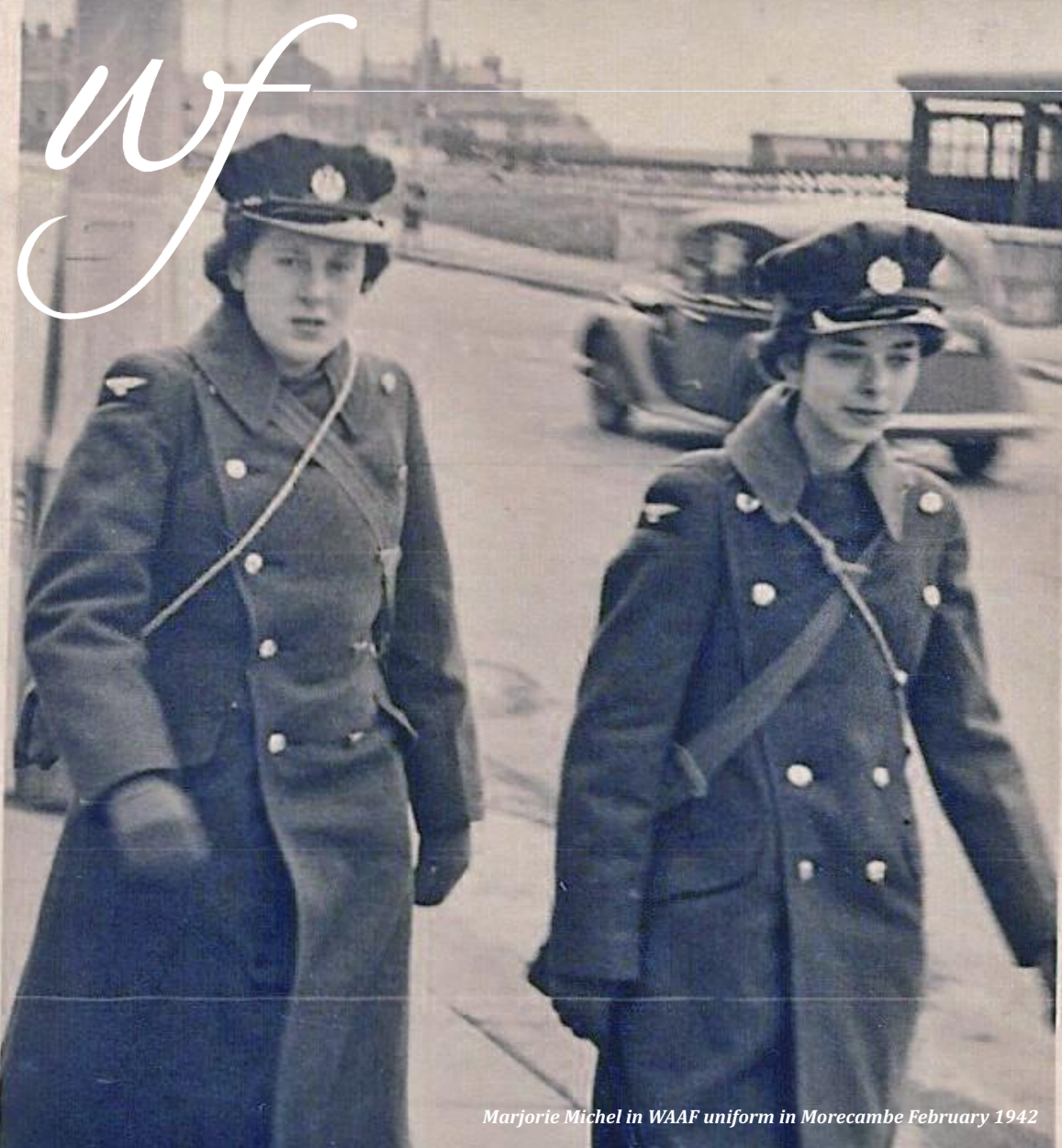
slum dwelling'. They provided furniture, equipment and utensils, and groceries. In 1936 **Guildford** formed a working party and distributed 330 garments to people in 'distressed areas' and **Haywards Heath** joined the scheme, which sent flowers to schools in the East End. **Oundle** collected clothes and toys that they sent to Victoria Docks and the Isle of Dogs. Prior to war breaking out, **Godalming** sent clothes and money to the Czechoslovakian Relief Fund. To this end they held a Half Crown Ball.

There is much evidence that branch events were also light-hearted, fun and fully enjoyed. **Cheltenham** held a Woolworth's party where everyone wore something bought from that shop and others had to

guess what! Outings included **Bristol's** to Portishead Nautical Training School and **Oundle's** to Farrows canning factory. Children were not forgotten – **Godalming** had 'a splendid lecture on birds' followed by a bird ramble and **Brasted, Westerham & Sevenoaks'** children toured the Tower of London.



Wedding of Beryl and Eric Winstanley



Marjorie Michel in WAAF uniform in Morecambe February 1942

“We know that the Fellowship can only be at its best if its activities are threefold; that is to say there is perfect balance between the spiritual, the intellectual and the social”

Irene Heaton

1940s

Keep the Home Fires Burning

This popular song (1914) of WW1 was taken up enthusiastically by people of Britain during WW2, and sums up the way Wives coped during the 40s. For all of them it was a time of anxiety and hardship, which they saw mirrored in the experiences our founders had undergone when WF was begun in 1916: ‘We remembered that WF grew up in the last war and realised that in another war we still felt the need for the spirit and ideals of the Fellowship in the difficult days ahead’ (Liverpool May 1946).

The effects of war were seen everywhere, and resulted in a time of frugality and making do, of reusing and recycling, songs as well as clothes (fur coats made into teddy bears; wedding dresses made out of parachute silk). As the SWFCC Irene Heaton

commented in her letter in October 1947, ‘When, during the war we all contributed our aluminium saucepans to the national need, we felt that it was so little to give when the need was so great. But Spitfires were built from our joint enterprise.’ It was important to Dig for Victory, and flower gardens were therefore turned into vegetable patches and spare ground made into allotments, and the produce supplemented the diets of all, the surplus being given to those who had nothing at all. There was a thriving black market for food and more especially for the goods that were imported: stockings, especially silk, were in very short supply, and many women resorted to drawing lines down their bare legs to give the impression of stocking seams, or staining their legs with tea or gravy browning.

The evacuation of families from the larger cities and towns also affected Wives: 'With the outbreak of war in 1939, it was inevitable that the changed conditions would make a considerable difference to our membership, in numbers alone, if in no other way' (**Liverpool**). Not only were members evacuated themselves, but a number were involved with various types of war work, as ARP wardens, in the ATS (**Northampton's** chairman resigned as she had begun working full-time in the ATS) and helping with the billeting of evacuees. Others worked in mobile canteens or helped put on weekly dances for soldiers. As a result, membership of branches fluctuated greatly, and branches came and went during the decade.

The blackout had a considerable impact on their day-to-day lives: **Northampton**, 'Determined to have a meeting of husbands and wives . . . met in July, defying the blackout.' Meetings had to be held in the daytime, and because of petrol rationing, members of widespread branches met less frequently. **Chelmsford** mentions that, 'We are hoping to have larger meetings now that basic petrol has come back, and we shall not have to rely entirely on infrequent buses or bicycles.' Food rationing was introduced in 1940 (and continued till 1954 for some commodities), and as a result, tea and sugar were hoarded: most branches mention in their reports that individual members were providing their own tea and biscuits ('nosebags') to help the hostess. No longer were members able to provide sumptuous teas from silver tea sets served by maids: the silver had been put away, and the maids had been called up to serve in the forces or as Land Girls.

Knitting featured regularly in branch reports: during the war Wives knitted for the troops,

and after the war they continued to knit for children in orphanages or care homes. **Oundle** proudly commented that 'we have a mending party, which mends for evacuees; and a sewing and knitting party, which has turned out over 1500 garments since the war started for various people in different countries.' **Rugby** knitted woollies for the men of the destroyers operating from Liverpool, and also for the Russian Red Army, for which they received letters of thanks from a British Rear Admiral and the Russian Ambassador. **Bristol** met every Monday at 2.30 'to knit Sea Boot Stockings for the Admiralty'. At the same time, other branches were sending parcels of clothes, toys and books to local evacuee homes. Like those in Britain, members in **Ceylon** also suffered rationing, knitted for the forces and generally did their bit to help the war effort. **Winchester** reported that, 'We have kept in touch with the two minesweeping trawlers, and have been able to send them two parcels each; and have had such grateful letters from them.'

Another feature of the war years was the hospitality offered to those whose homes were on the other side of the world, or who had lost everything in the bombing and air raids. Wives worked with the Dominions Fellowship Trust to offer care and entertainment to the Free French, Poles,

“WF was one warm heart and hearth, and that made of elastic. They mothered, sistered and hostessed royally when their own larders would often have been pitifully bare had it not been for the welcome practical additions made by the home parcels poured out by their overseas guests”

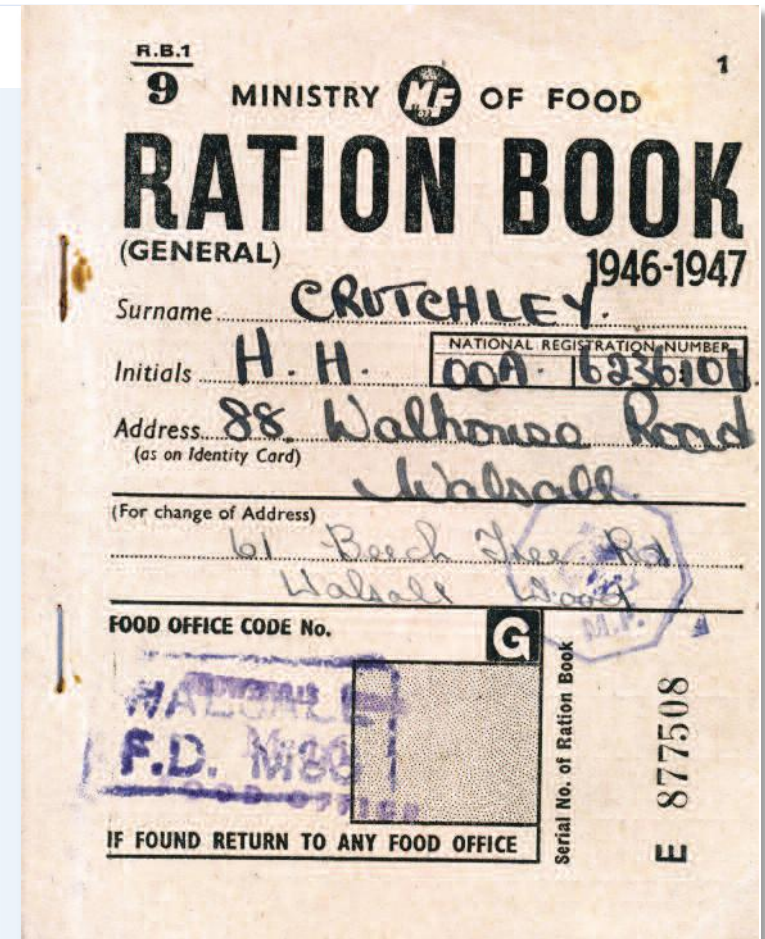
Greeks, Czechs and Americans, as well as to British men and women from every part of the British Empire during their leaves or convalescence.

As the Hospitality Secretary wrote in November 1944, 'it hasn't always been a small thing to provide hospitality suddenly for tired but vigorous visitors, with ration cards not available till next day, laundries probably blitzed, ceilings and windows shaky, and time already overfull; but those of us in London could many a tale unfold of slim Australian officers returning like Father Christmas, their pockets bulging with milk bottles, and arms laden not only with the results of their ration shopping, but with priceless additions such as matches and films.'

The national and international background of this period was primarily the war (1939-45), and its aftermath, when the world was trying to rebuild its shattered countries. Many displaced persons had to be rehoused or repatriated. During this period radar was developed, along with the kidney dialysis machine, the microwave oven, Velcro, Tupperware and the Frisbee. More important was the development of computers, particularly the Heath Robinson Bombe and the Colossus, as a result of the need to break the German ciphers and codes. Several

women who became Wives either during or after the war worked at Bletchley Park, and one at Sealand near Chester, making inserts for the cipher machines. Alongside this came a growth in understanding of quantum theory, nuclear physics, radiocarbon dating techniques, game theory and cryptography.

The radio was of great importance to households, whether to listen to comedies of the period, helping to keep up morale, *It's That Man Again - ITMA*, which ran from 1939-49, featuring Tommy



1940s

Handley, or to hear up-to-date news of the progress of the war. Radio shows that began in this decade included *Women's Hour* (1946), *Desert Island Discs* (1942), *Letter From America* (with Alistair Cooke, in 1946) and *Gardeners' Question Time* (in 1947, inspired by the Dig for Victory campaign). *The Brains Trust* was first broadcast in 1943, and a number of branches used this format in their own meetings. Films such as *Dumbo* and *Bambi* were Hollywood successes for Disney, and musicals such as *Ziegfeld Girl*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Carousel* and *Me and My Gal* provided entertainment for troops and civilians alike. Many of the popular songs of

the day were recycled from WW1; others, such as those sung by Vera Lynn, *We'll Meet Again* (1939) and *There'll Be Blue Birds over the White Cliffs of Dover* (1943), were very much of their time, as was *There'll Always Be an England* (1939), with its patriotic and morale-boosting words.

Despite the war, a number of important political initiatives were introduced. Churchill successfully steered the country to victory in the war, but the 1945 General Election was a landslide victory for Labour. Important policy documents were produced by Lord Denning (the Denning Report of

Office of the Director of
Voluntary Organisations,
Hotel Victoria,
Northumberland Avenue,
London, W.C.2.

9 JAN 1942

*The Russian Ambassador and Madam Maisky
desire me to convey their grateful thanks
for the knitted garments which have been
received from you for the Red Army.*

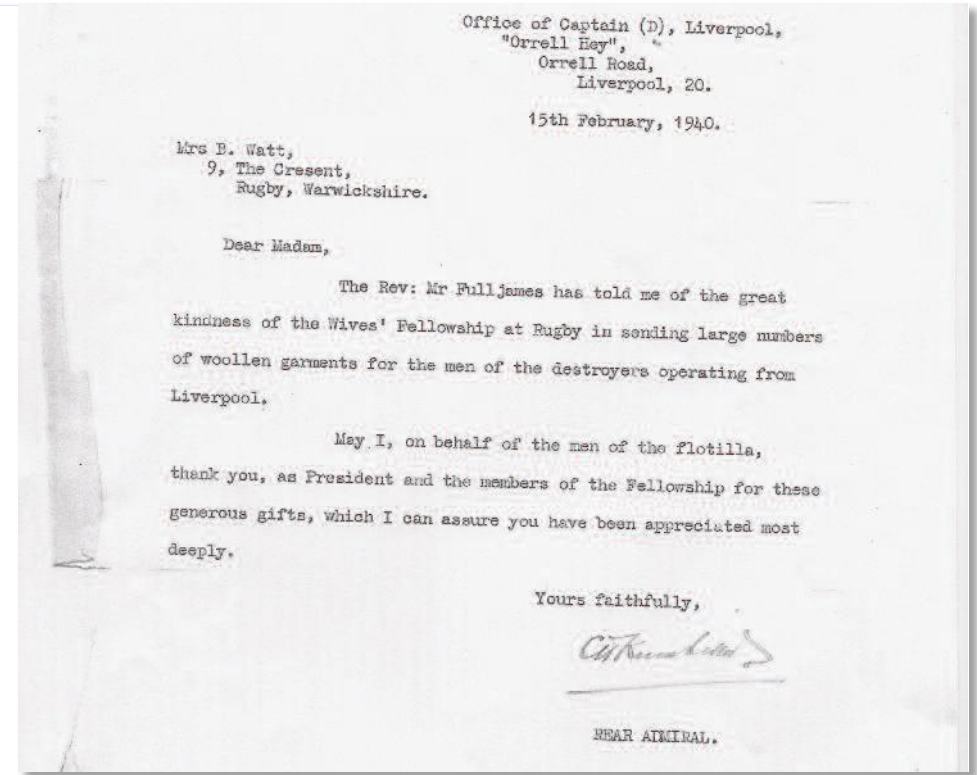
PER PRO

THE DEPOT FOR KNITTED GARMENTS
FOR THE ROYAL NAVY

Director of Voluntary Organisations.

J. B. Barden

Russian Ambassador's letter to Rugby



Rear Admiral's letter to Rugby WF re woolies

1947 on reconciliation procedures in marriage recommended financial assistance for marriage guidance – a topic very close to the hearts of Wives); and by Rab Butler (The Education Act of 1944, which meant that the state would provide a free, common and universal system of education for students up to 18). These were only part of the new Welfare State introduced by Labour. In 1945 The Family Allowances Act was passed, followed by The National Insurance Act of 1946. Finally, in 1948, The National Health Act ensured that there was a minimum standard of healthcare for all. Thus the state would look after its citizens 'from cradle to grave'. All these measures were discussed and debated by WF branches, and there are

frequent references to these topics, as well as to the 'colour problem in the Empire'. In October 1944, the CC requested that all branches discuss The Limitation of Families.

Cheltenham mentioned the inspiration of the Queen's broadcast:

“ If the years to come are to see some real spiritual recovery, the women of our nation must be deeply concerned with religion, and our homes are the very place where it should start . . . It is on the strength of our spiritual life that the right rebuilding of our national life depends ”

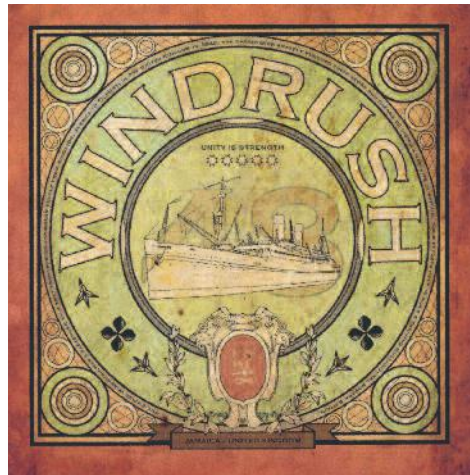
HM Queen Elizabeth, 11 April 1943

In 1948, the steamship Empire Windrush arrived in England with a contingent of Caribbean skilled workers to help with the reconstruction and to swell the numbers of nurses and engineers in Britain after the losses of the war. They were encouraged to migrate to Britain by the passing of The Nationality Act (1948). Heathrow airport opened in 1946, and the docks resumed their role as the centre of Commonwealth trade.

During the war, the magazine played an important part in keeping members in touch. An addendum to the May 1940 issue states: 'It is very much hoped to keep all members who are evacuated from their homes in touch with WF, and also to enable those temporarily living in the same district to meet each other.' As WFCC Margaret Harvey noted in January 1941, 'a large proportion of you are now Scattered Members and this magazine is almost your only link with the Fellowship.' In the early years of the war, the magazine was considerably thinner, and there were fewer reports from branches. Paper was of poor quality – there was a paper shortage – and the Editor commented, 'I very much regret having failed to get this number to you by Christmas. Only part of the delay was caused by the fact that the printers closed down for several days owing to an unexploded bomb nearby.' In May 1941 she said, 'War conditions make the actual business of printing slower and more difficult, as well as more expensive.' On one occasion the Magazine Secretary wrote: 'Notice to Branch Secretaries: The Magazine Secretary wishes to thank members who sent in reports which were in any way legible. Would members

with acute paper and ink shortage start saving up for next time please!' By 1949, the Editor was writing: 'NB Please send all MSS written on one side only of the paper', proof that production of paper had improved considerably!

Also included were some fascinating reports by Wives who were leading very different lives as a result of war. An article entitled Lights on the Blackout in London (May 1941) describes 'thirteen continuous hours of firing', and a 'terribly vivid and beautiful view of the skies of the London barrage'. It



mentions their siren suits (hers 'in plum-colour . . . with tasteful touches of dark blue' and her husband's 'tailor-made in navy, belted, buckled and pocketed plentifully'), and the earplugs 'supplied by a beneficent government', which an old lady refused on the grounds that 'I can hear perfectly well without them!'. Another details Life in a Munitions Factory: 'After a week or two I

began to sort my companions out and be less conscious of their unwashed conditions . . . In spite of oil and the noise of the monotony, I thank God for the good fellowship, the urgent sense of speed and the crude beauty of work.' The Editor in 1940 comments, 'in the waiting life which is the lot of so many women in wartime, there is a tendency to feel that one is not

HMS Walker Christmas 1939



1940s

being really useful . . . but we can turn our hands to anything, we are versatile and we don't shirk.'

Many Wives were forced to move (especially from London), and accounts of their difficulties and successes were included in the Letters to the Editor. One such reported 'There seems no doubt that members of the Wives' Fellowship do regard the WF as being of greatest importance to themselves and a link with others . . . We have, in fact, done two complete house moves, children, furniture and all. The second move was the more difficult owing to Hitler's invasion being due at any moment; also our worldly goods were

by then augmented by fowls and an aristocratic but prolific brand of guinea pig . . . Education is a problem in the country but we have solved it by sending Gillian to a nice expensive evacuated school five miles off, and Jocelyn daily to the village school. She struggles hard to acquire the local accent, and will succeed no doubt. . . '

Conferences continued throughout the war, despite the difficulties and were extensively reported upon, as were the meetings of the National Council of Women (NCW). The range of topics was immense, and although Wives did not have a corporate voice (another subject fiercely debated in letters



Marjorie Michel; WAAF party Bletchley Park June 8 1945

The Wives' Fellowship Annual Day

WILL BE HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE WIVES' FELLOWSHIP CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

AT

THE Y.W.C.A. CENTRAL CLUB

GREAT RUSSELL STREET and TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, LONDON

ON

THURSDAY, JUNE 17th, 1943.

Please send your name and Postal Order for 3/- to MRS.
LEONARD BROWNE, 3 St. Katharine's Precincts, Regent's Park,
London, N.W.1., before June 12th.

PROGRAMME.

- 11.0 a.m. Central Committee Meeting.
All members welcome.
- 1.15 p.m. Light lunch provided for those who have booked to come.
- 2.15 p.m. Miss **MARY TREVELYAN**, Warden of Student Movement House, will speak.
Subject:—
"IS ENGLAND A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY?"
- 3.45 p.m. Service in the Chapel conducted by
Brother Douglas, S.S.F.
- Tea. This may be had in the cafeteria.

NOTE—As these notices are unavoidably late in coming out, will members please book at once. Please bring a label with your name and branch and wear it at the meeting.

Great Russell Street is the first turning on the right off Tottenham Court Road (going from Oxford Street). The Y.W.C.A. is about 200 yards along on the right hand side (Do not confuse with the Y.M.C.A. Building which is also in Great Russell Street, but on the left hand side.)

sent to the magazine), it was clear that individuals were deeply committed to discussing major political and spiritual ideas. One such conference entitled *The Power of God in Human Life*, was a short one, 'lasting only from Tuesday tea-time to Thursday morning, when most of us went on to Annual Day'. 'I must confess', said one Wife, 'I went to my first WF conference with mixed feelings. I had some misgivings I might find myself immersed in a "good-goody" atmosphere, which, let me hasten to say, was not the case!' As Mrs Riley (SWFCC 1950) commented, 'It was a great discovery to find that in WF, God could be talked about without a "Sunday voice"!'

SWFCC Irene Heaton remarked in 1944, 'After we had followed with breathless interest and anxiety the invasion of France and all which followed, that never-to-be-forgotten D-day, the ordeals of London by flying bombs began. Although this we hope is now over, there is too little time left to organise an Annual Day.'

Winifred Brown wrote, 'I remember Central meetings from around this time. They were much smaller and were often held in someone's house where we sat on the floor or wherever we could . . . We had three Central meetings in those days . . . We would invade a usually quiet town and for a day it would be gay with flowery dresses and hats. I remember the hats especially (and one with the price tag inadvertently left on!). And there was always a book-stall.'

“ Everyone either sewed or knitted during the talks and demonstration. One couldn't let up from the 'make do and mend' during the war for one minute ”

Barbara MacDonagh Rugby 1943

By 1945, SWF had become established as an organisation in its own right with a full committee and meetings and conferences of its own. In September 1943, it was decided to provide a separate section in the magazine for SWF, and by December 1949 the Editor reported that, as the numbers in WF and SWF were roughly the same, it was important for them to share the pages of the magazine equally. As a result, there was no longer space for full reports of conferences or of individual NCW committee meetings. It was felt that two separate magazines would be detrimental to the Fellowship as a whole, since it was a vital link between the two halves.

WFCC Cynthia Willink summed up the sense of relief that the war was coming to a close: 'Since my last letter to you, what a change has taken place in the world scene! At last the dawn is breaking and the peace we long for is in sight.' She saw the future in terms of what WF could do to help those returning from war: 'We can share the essence of WF with the lonely and unhappy, we can welcome and help women returning from service to civilian life, we can make it our responsibility to know about, and to improve, conditions of life in our own town or village. Above all, we must stand in the name of God . . .'

It was a new world to which men and women were returning; life had been changed irrevocably by the war. The new breed of Wives who joined after the war had worked in the auxillary forces, to free men for fighting. There they had carried out jobs previously considered only fit for men – driving trains and tractors, or manning anti-aircraft batteries. One member of **West Sussex** flew planes to airfields during the war; another member



of the same branch was a Queen Alexandra Nurse in the forward dressing station just after the D Day landings. Weddings had been postponed till boyfriends returned home, so there were many more following the end of the war. In the photo of the wedding of Dorothy Loltgen (**Folkestone**), to her husband Walter Tyrrell in January 1945, she is laughingly explaining to him that her 'something blue' was her WAAF regulation navy bloomers or passion killers. Her ring

was made of 22 carat gold, melted down from her grandmother's ring; most brides could only buy 9 carat gold ones because of metal scarcity. Her veil had been lent by a cousin, and the bouquet of carnations had been kept in the freezer by a florist friend.

1947 was baby boom year! It was also a year of terrible weather: the magazine mentions many events being cancelled because of the 'big freeze' and the terrible floods. Mrs

Dingwall comments: 'We emerge from this appalling winter. . . Meetings have had to be cancelled, postponed or abandoned. But to those meetings which could be held, members came if not literally on sleighs, then quite literally through floods.' **Rugby's** children's party was cancelled in December 1946, because of the whooping cough epidemic. **Haywards Heath** reported, 'At our annual service we used the WF service for the first time, and it was very much liked.'

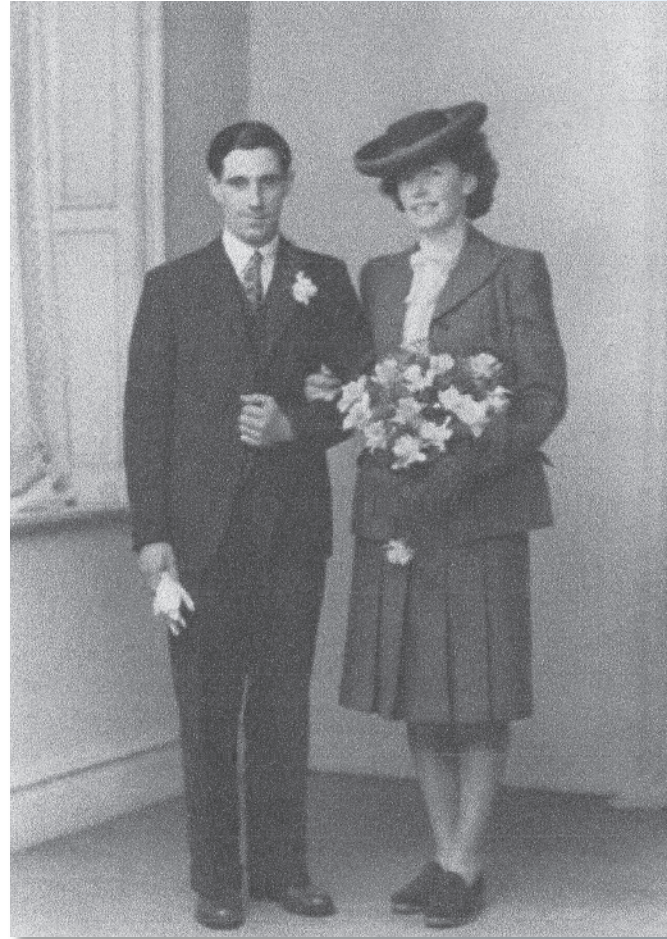


Jenny McCarthy

An important concern of both WF and SWF was the effects of the war on marriages: divorce rates in 1911 had been 1,000 pa; in 1946 they were 40,000 pa and by 1947 the numbers were 50,000. A major topic for discussion was the Denning Report, and Wives were encouraged to consider 'how we, a fellowship of happily married people knit together by a common purpose to uphold the highest Christian standards of marriage, can help stem this tidal wave that threatens the foundations of our social structure.' Lord Denning's second wife Joan was a member of WF, and her article in the magazine gives considerable insight into the important role she believed that the



Marriage of Dorothy and Walter Tyrrell



1946 Irene Bee's wedding

Fellowship might play in supporting marriage guidance.

'At our first meeting we had Miss Bilson to speak to us on Married Women and the Law, quite an interesting subject, but one that did not touch our sphere, as Miss Bilson's work,

as a solicitor, is among ill-assorted married folk. She said what a change it was for her to speak to women who had no matrimonial differences to be smoothed out!

Shortly after this meeting the flying bombs made their appearance, and it was felt best to

have no further meeting till things had quietened down. Accordingly our next meeting was not until early November, when we had "tea and talk" only, members having much to say to and hear of each other.' (Purley 1945)

Throughout this decade, there was a determination to pursue the aims of WF despite the pressures of war and of post-war reconstruction; members were aware of the profound need for prayer and spirituality, and the CCs' letters were full of encouragement and direction for spiritual reading. As Irene Heaton said, 'Busy and active we all must be, but we need constantly guiding, refreshing, strengthening to enable us to take our increasingly difficult part as Christians in the world.' The literature section of the magazine recommended a wide variety of titles, both religious and fictional, and branches and Executive were very aware of the importance of nurturing and educating children, both their own and those of the nation generally. Charitable works continued – the new Josephine Butler Memorial House was opened in 1947, and Wives supported this and the Fellowship of St Michael and All Angels, as well as numerous local charitable ventures.

“ I can't think what my life would have been without Wives ”

CC Irene Heaton on her retirement.

At the **Oxford** Conference in September 1949, Mrs Guy (SWF Executive) commented that she 'had actually heard a former member remark that the time for WF had passed, as if it belonged to old leisured days; but we had to meet the challenges of our times both as individuals and as a nation. . . WF was of value and worth offering to the next generation only if what we gained in training in this fellowship were spilling over and streaming through us for the good of others in our own homes and in wider circles beyond.'



Places Where We Have Worshipped

From top reading left to right: All Saints, Milford on Sea. Arundel Cathedral. Chichester Cathedral. St Mary's, Dedham. Douai Abbey. Glenfall House. Holy Trinity, Cookham. Launde Abbey. Rochester Cathedral. Royal Naval Chapel, Greenwich. Sherborne Abbey. Southwell Minster. St Christopher's Hospice Pilgrim Room. St Faith's, Bacton. St Margarets, Westminster. St Mary with St Albans, Teddington. St Mary & St Bartholomew, Hampton in Arden. St Mary Magdalene & St Denys', Midhurst. St Michael's, Bath. St Pancras', London. St Peter's, Norbury. St Peter & St Paul, Lavenham. St Wilfrid's, Harrogate and Central Methodist Hall.



Wives' Fellowship

Chairmen

1919	Mrs Ford (May)
1922	Mrs O'Malley (Mary)
1924	Mrs Wood (Katherine)
1927	Mrs Falcon (Kathleen)
1930	Lady Wilson (Rose)
1933	Mrs Bremner (Vivien)
1934	Mrs Clifton Brown (Delia)
1934	Mrs Heaton (Irene)
1937	Mrs Harvey (Margaret)
1942	Mrs Willink (Cynthia)
1945	Mrs Dingwall (Mary)
1948	Mrs Stallworthy (Peggy)
1951	Mrs Brown (Winifred)
1954	Mrs Gibbins (Mary)
1957	Mrs Garton (Mary)
1960	Mrs Hope Simpson (Joan)
1963	Mrs Sykes (Anne)
1966	Mrs Martineau (Molly)
1969	Mrs Willis (Gill)
1972	Mrs Bowman (Yvonne)
1975	Mrs Gammell (Patricia)
1978	Mrs Halford (Pamela)
1981	Mrs John (Eleanor)
1984	Mrs Purvis (Gillian)
1987	Eleri Wyn Burden
1990	Joan Ferrer
1993	Lis Stanley
1996	Barbara Mangles
1999	Maxine Stott
2002	Jane Hill

Secretaries

1918	Mrs Cameron (Eileen)
1919	Lady Fletcher (Mary/Maisie)
1922	Mrs Costley White (Hope)
1924	Countess of Verulam (Violet)
1927	Mrs Clay (Mary)
1928	Mrs Saunders (Margaret)
1933	Mrs Carter (Dorothy)
1934	Mrs Freeston (Mabel)
1935	Mrs Cobb (Sybil)
1938	Mrs Dingwall (Mary)
1942	Mrs Wyldbore-Smith (Rowena)
1945	Mrs Bevan (Phyliss)
1948	Mrs Gunn (Sybil)
1952	Mrs Robbins (Elsbeth)
1955	Mrs Metcalfe (Margaret)
1958	Mrs Buxton (Diana)
1961	Mrs Braithwaite (Mary)
1964	Mrs Howe (Shelagh)
1967	Mrs Willcox (Prue)
1970	Mrs Farrell (Ann)
1971	Mrs Buxton (Diana)
1974	Mrs Gardner (Nancy)
1977	Mrs Mack Smith (Margaret)
1978	Mrs Labrum (Carolyn)
1982	Mrs Barr (Vivien)
1985	Mrs Vince (Jenny)
1988	Lis Stanley
1991	Barbara Mangles
1994	Jane Hill
1997	Ann Hodson
2000	Lynn Broddie

Senior Wives' Fellowship

Chairmen

1934	Mrs Ford (May)
1939	Mrs Wood (Katherine)
1944	Mrs Heaton (Irene)
1948	Mrs Gammell (Mary)
1950	Mrs Riley (Catherine)
1953	Mrs Braby (Madge)
1956	Mrs Sumsion (May)
1959	Mrs Askey (Honour)
1962	Mrs Payne (Ray)
1965	Mrs Stallworthy (Peggy)
1968	Mrs Thompson (Rosemary)
1971	Mrs Garton (Mary)
1974	Mrs Drake Wilkes (Norah)
1977	Mrs Nicholson (Rosemary)
1980	Mrs Bee (Irene)
1981	Mrs White (Hazel)
1982	Mrs Bugler (Doreen)
1985	Mollie Jones
1989	Sheila Ferrar
1992	Margaret Presgrave
1995	Maureen Barnes
1998	Judith Duckworth
2001	Moira Edmunds

Secretaries

1934	Mrs Leigh Mallory (Ruth)
1939	Mrs Powell (Barbara)
1944	Mrs Riley (Catherine)
1947	Mrs Braby (Madge)
1951	Mrs Heawood (Norah)
1952	Mrs Palmer (Marjorie)
1955	Mrs King Farlow (Joan)
1958	Mrs Fawcett (Mary)
1961	Mrs Wing (Nell)
1964	Mrs Garton (Mary)
1967	Mrs Evans (Lilian)
1970	Mrs Shaw (Elizabeth)
1973	Mrs Marston (Barbara)
1976	Mrs Berry (Betty)
1979	Mrs Osmond (Mary)
1982	Pam Lucas
1985	Betty Blythe
1988	Betty Oakes
1991	Vivien Barr
1994	Jenny Vince
1997	Helen Colvin
2000	Sue Evans

United Wives' Fellowship

Chairmen

2004	Jane Hill
2005	Janet Wright
2008	Jo O'Hagan
2011	Rosemary Williams
2014	Eileen MacAulay

Secretaries

2003	Felita Hill
2006	Mita Johnson
2009	Caroline St Leger Davey
2012	Jeni Black
2015	Marilyn Cameron



Canvey island flooding (US govt)

1950s

From Mountain Top to Mini

With the world just starting to recover its equilibrium, the initial shots were fired signalling the start of the Korean War in 1950. The fiasco of the Suez Crisis in 1956 seemed to mark the end of Britain's days as a world power. As Mrs Morris notes in her letter to Ceylon Wives 'This has been a summer of much strain with the unrest in Europe, the war in Korea, strikes and discontent here at home, and a poor harvest for the farmers.'

In the immediate aftermath of WW2, when Stalin was seen as a valued ally against the Nazis rather than a murderous tyrant, thousands of Britons became Communists but then deserted in protest at the Soviet invasion of Hungary. The threat was deemed so severe that a Resolution was submitted that on this occasion Wives should have a corporate voice. The response from Central was that Wives 'would endeavour to meet the threat of Communism by study of the

subject and the Christian answer and by being alive to individual responsibility in the matter.' This was put into practice at Annual Day when the theme was The Challenge of Communism to Christianity.

The Establishment was rocked by the unmasking of the Cambridge Spies. The Soviet Sputnik was sent into space. At the same time Britain's world status was changing rapidly. As one colony after another chose independence, the Empire was slowly fading into history. India and Ghana were the first to leave. In South Africa the population was classified by their race and forced to carry ID cards. New Commonwealth immigration that transformed the face of the UK's cities, alarmed many working-class voters and the Notting Hill riots in 1958 exposed the ugly face of everyday racism.

Britain's first commercial nuclear reactor opened at Windscale in 1956, the hydrogen

“Quite simply we wanted to be good wives and mothers and good citizens, and we believed that the pooling of our ideas and our experiences, and joining in prayer and in worship, would help toward that end”

Hope Costley-White

bomb was built in 1952 and first dropped in the Pacific in 1957. This galvanised the nation and CND was formed in 1958.

Bournemouth and **Kensington** hosted a series of three One-in-Five talks, held nationally by Women's Voluntary Service, to teach 1 in 5 women what to do in the event of a nuclear attack.

The North Sea flood tested the mettle of those living on the eastern UK coastline and Britain endured the big freeze of 1955.

Wimbledon reported that 'in February, during the very cold spell, roads thawed enough to allow 12 to visit **Oxford Branch**.' Britons were inoculated against Asian flu although it was too late for **Lancaster** who

had to postpone meetings because of an outbreak. **Liverpool** wrote that 'despite the hard winter our members have been faithful in their attendance, and even the epidemic of influenza did not affect the programme.' The first polio vaccine was released and the first tranquiliser was prescribed.

The Conservatives came back into power and Churchill began his second term as Prime Minister, the party remaining in government for the remainder of the 50s. Churchill was succeeded by Anthony Eden and when he retired due to ill health Harold Macmillan was appointed. During this time Britain's application to join the newly established EEC was vetoed by France.



Jeanette and David Stebbings' wedding



At the beginning of the 50s, Britain was exhausted by the war. There were still bombsites in the cities, a housing shortage and rationing. 'Petrol rationing and a thick blanket of fog rather spoilt our children's party and Regional Day was also deferred' reported **Cheltenham**, and **Mid Herts** suspended their meetings. **Lancaster** declined to send anyone to the **Liverpool** conference and **Cheltenham's** Regional Day was postponed because of the Suez crisis and petrol rationing. However, by the middle of the 50s Britain's industry was running at full strength. A high demand for skilled labour in heavily industrialised Britain meant high wage packets for many. As Macmillan put it 'most of our people have never had it so good.'

Black and white television and transistor radios were available. **Coventry** had a talk from the BBC on Sound Broadcasting - 'a subject that was very popular despite the

impact of television on our lives.' Self-service supermarkets opened and the first patent for bar codes was issued.

Blackheath had a cookery demonstration where 'shortbread was made by an electric mixer.' Playground crazes were yo-yos and hoola hoops and when it was wet new-fangled plastic Lego and Barbie were popular before fish fingers for tea.

The first section of motorway was opened as Preston bypass (M6) and the most popular cars were the newly launched Mini, Austin A30 and the Morris Minor. The first passenger jet took off and charter airlines were given the go ahead. **Tunbridge Wells** took their children for an outing to London Airport. Hillary and Tenzing successfully conquered Everest, Roger Bannister ran a sub 4-minute mile and Donald Campbell broke several speed records.

The Festival of Britain in 1951 was described as 'a tonic to the nation'. The emerging teenage generation were better housed and educated and enjoyed unprecedented financial independence. National Service was still enlisting men until 1960.

When King George VI died, Mrs Riley (SWCC) expressed 'how privileged I feel to have been one of his subjects.' Elizabeth II was proclaimed Queen and crowned in 1953. At this time of celebration Mrs Morris proclaimed 'what an eventful year - the grandeur and the glory of the Coronation, the conquest of Mount Everest and the armistice in Korea.' Although six Wives won seats for the Coronation in the WF ballot, millions of people tuned in for the televised event, sharing the sets of the lucky few who owned or rented them. **Nottingham** sent flowers to a London parish for the Coronation.

The 50s gave us Teddy Boys and Rock'n'Roll -



Morris Minor

Elvis made his first TV appearance and Bill Haley taught us The Twist. ITV was launched and popular programmes were *Dixon of Dock Green*, *The Goon Show*, *Crackerjack*, *Andy Pandy*, *The Black and White Minstrel Show* and *Six-Five Special*. *The Archers* invited us to Ambridge and on the stage *The Mousetrap* and *Oliver* opened and *Look Back in Anger* spawned the term 'angry young men'.

Most girls left school at 15 and, after a brief training period, entered employment only to leave once married. There was soon a steady rise in married women returning to paid employment once children were in school. Notable women of the day included HM The Queen, Elizabeth Taylor, Fanny Craddock, Katherine Hepburn, Judy Garland, Rosa Parks and Rose Heilbron - Britain's first female KC.

Wives' issues identified during the 50s were the need to revise the Constitution and increase the membership. Emphasis was put on the importance of ordinary members and

with the predicted increased membership, making the organisation more business-like was paramount. Mary Garton was elected WFCC towards the end of the decade and then guided Seniors in the 70s. 'I'm pleased to see faces now instead of the backs of hats!'

The Constitution had been unchanged since 1922. Mrs Garton oversaw the revision and adoption of the new Wives' and Seniors' Constitutions. Opinions were that the phrase 'common standard of education' should remain, others preferred 'common cultural interests', there was general agreement that the Constitution should define Wives as a Christian society although some branches thought membership should be widened as far as possible 'so as not to exclude any who might be in sympathy with our outlook and yet not in formal communion with a Christian Church'.

During the 50s Wives maintained their affiliations and associations and received



regular journals from these organisations. Wives sent representatives to sit on all the NCW committees – Commonwealth & Migration, Cinema, Education, Arts & Letters, International Affairs, Moral Welfare, Public Service & Magistrates, Public Health & Child Welfare, Home Economics and Parliamentary & Legislation. Lengthy reports were published in the magazine. A postal vote in 1953/54 on affiliation to NCW narrowly agreed to continue. ‘The general feeling was that the affiliation question should now be considered permanently settled.’

A recruitment drive increased membership with many new branches being formed. **Winchester**, an ageing branch, wondered ‘where the younger wives of Winchester hide themselves?’ **Worcester** worried that there were too many ‘schoolmasters’ and clergymen’s wives in WF’ and **Tidworth** had representatives from Larkhill, Boscombe Down and Bulford camps. All three services

formed the majority of its 120 members. **Richmond & Twickenham** asked if they could invite unmarried women to be Associate members. The answer was an emphatic No! **Bristol** found it had to limit numbers to 70, **Cheltenham** to 50. With a membership of 364 within three branches, **Oxford** decided to form an Open Group to solve the closed-door situation and restore the quality of intimate fellowship. It was open to members of all three branches ie all age, was not to exceed 50 and have weekly evening meetings during term time in homes. **London** had 60 members and was known as the Second Scattered as most members lived in the country. Now that ‘the days of nannies and maids are over’ many branches organised crèches for young children, mainly run by Seniors, but **Kensington** hired a paid girl to care for the young.

Wives had been running at a loss for the previous two years so in 1954 the Treasurer increased the quota to 4/6, branch subscriptions ranged from 7/6 to £1. The Summer Central in Nottingham cost 25/- and the two-night Husbands and Wives conference cost 48/-. With its huge membership **Oxford** managed to reduce its sub by 5/- to 10/- in 1955.

1956 Cheltenham
Subscription 10/-
Quota 7/7
Central Fund 4/6
Josephine Butler Bursary 3/-
St Michael and All Angels 1d
Consequently it was proposed to increase the subscription to £1

Inflation began to increase costs for the Central Committee meetings that were attended by branch officers. ‘The cost of hiring suitable halls, of catering and of travelling, has risen very much, and it is particularly difficult to obtain catering of an acceptable standard for less than double what we had to pay a few years ago.’ Executive introduced the scheme that representatives should be reimbursed from Central Funds for half the cost of their fares.

In order to resolve **Coventry’s** financial woes, it was agreed that coffee mornings would be held. Either they were a huge success or takings were horribly meagre as in 1958 a total of 16 were held!

One Wife mused to the Editor, ‘I sometimes wonder if anyone reads the magazine. What is the real purpose of the magazine? Keeping in touch with branches and activities – not outside interests.’ This resulted in Book Reviews being curtailed in favour of Wives’ activities.

Popular subjects for branch talks were The Korean problem, The Union of South Africa, The Colour Bar in South Africa, Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, The Menace of Communism and Aspects of the Middle East Situation. The speaker at Annual Day in 1950 talked about Marxism. **Tidworth & Bulford** had a first-hand account of the first British Atom Bomb test (1952).

The Coronation was a very popular subject. Talks ranged from The Ceremony of the Coronation, The Regalia, Heraldry and Planning the Coronation Broadcast, to a personal account of the view from a seat in the Mall. Lady Hallam recounted her day in the Abbey and most branches held Coronation garden parties.

Prayer and discussion groups were popular – **Sevenoaks** pondered The Meaning of Suffering and the **Weybridge** study group considered the issues before the Royal Commission on marriage and divorce. A SWF conference debated The Family in Contemporary Life based on the official report of the Lambeth Conference. Several branches debated the re-aligned role of women. **Oxford** asked, Is Higher Education Necessary for Girls? and others wondered, Is it Better for a Girl to Marry at 20 than 30? and several discussed Graduate Wives.



Birmingham had 'a very large audience' for a talk on divorce. **Golders Green** wrote of a 'rather controversial afternoon when our Bishop's wife led a discussion on working wives and mothers.'

Perhaps **Haywards Heath** had the most exciting meeting when the speaker not only described the lifestyle of the American Indian in fascinating detail, wearing a magnificent feather headdress, but proceeded to demonstrate the art of fire making - with sticks and stones, on a dining chair in the middle of the hostess's sitting room!

Kenilworth experienced the 'Chairman's nightmare - a large combined meeting and the speaker did not arrive; but the situation was ably coped with by the Chairman who bulldozed members into recounting holiday experiences, setting a good example by giving a racy account of her own in Majorca'!

When **Bristol** celebrated its 40th anniversary it commenced with a sherry party for the committee and their husbands, along with Mrs Bush who was the branch founder and just finishing her term as Secretary. Next morning there was a cathedral service for 70 members before boarded coaches to Badminton where they ate their sandwiches in the vicarage, 'accompanied by the usual chatter', and then they were led on a tour of Badminton House by the Duchess of Beaufort.



Homemaker plate

With petrol more freely available outings were organised with gusto: **Lancaster** made a trip to see new technology in a rayon factory and **Oundle** toured Hotpoint. Other branches visited a laundry, a brewery, a toffee and a chocolate factory, a newspaper print works, the Rootes car production line, a waterworks, Cooper's marmalade factory and a milk bottling plant.

One of the most frequent topics for branch meetings was a make-up demonstration from Max Factor, Cyclax, Elizabeth Arden or Yardley. Other subjects covered a wide range from gardening, flower arranging, witchcraft to the Pestolozzi Village, NSPCC, YMCA and education - many with lantern slides. **Kandy** reported that they had an 'invaluable demonstration on lampshade making, which

we all agreed to be one of the highlights of the year' as did **Colchester** and **Tidworth**. **Lancaster** breeched today's political correctness boundaries, reporting a visit to the Occupational Therapy department 'a revelation in what the feeble-minded can be taught.'

Exchanges of children's clothes and Bring and Buys were keenly awaited, **Sherborne** included one in their first year. At some point most branches held Brains Trust events following the format of the popular radio show, on which a panel of experts tried to answer questions sent in by the audience.

Boat trips seemed *de rigueur* in the 50s. **Coventry** had a trip on a barge that had once conveyed coal. 'It was a mite dirty, also the engine vibrated, causing us all to shake like aspen leaves.' **Bristol** embarked on a new venture - a boat trip to an island in the Bristol Channel, undertaken only by the most intrepid members and their families, but in spite of rough seas and minor accidents, it was considered a great success.

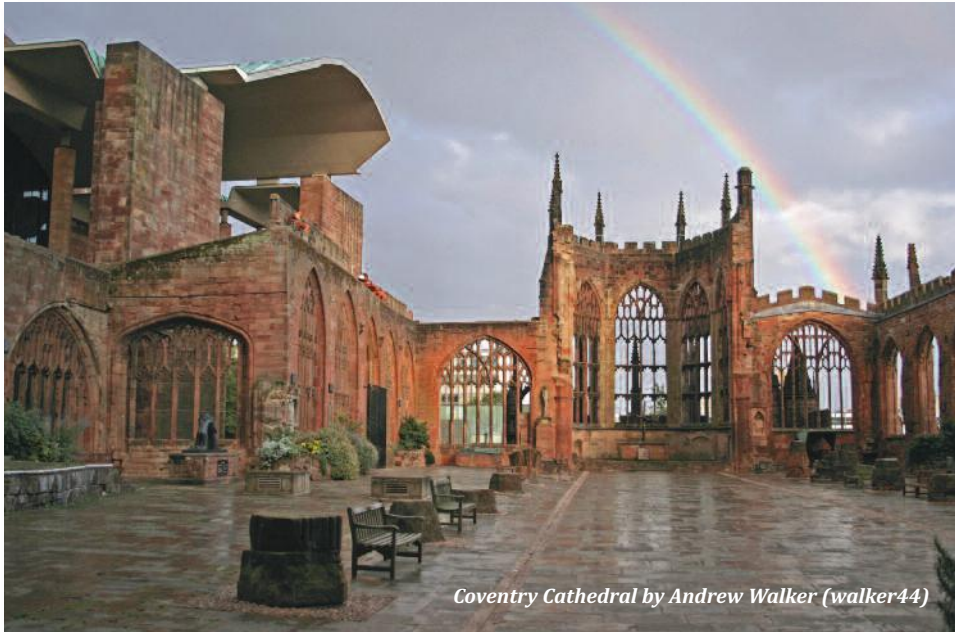
A magazine report on Annual Day recognised 'the great diversity of buildings in which we meet to worship - cathedrals, busy city

churches or those in the country town and quiet village - but always we are the same fellowship.' During Annual Day 270 wives boarded two steamers at Charing Cross pier to take them to Greenwich. As they passed under Tower Bridge they saw the decorations for the Queen's homecoming from her Coronation Tour. However, 'unluckily, the excellent organisation was upset when one of the steamers fouled its propeller. This delayed half the party, but added to the interest of the day!'

Another venue for Annual Day was Lambeth Palace and in 1958 the speaker in Coventry was Prof Basil Spence, architect of the new cathedral. He described his plans to incorporate the spirit of the old cathedral into the new and hang the largest tapestry in the world, designed by Graham Sutherland and woven at Aubusson. Flowers were arranged by local branch members and 'the Roman Catholic members who would not be attending the service would collect visitors from the railway station and ferry them to the church.' Afterwards Wives walked round the ruins of the old building and studied the model for the new. A sermon by the Bishop



Everest



Coventry Cathedral by Andrew Walker (walker44)

of Stepney 'gave us a picture of a cartwheel whose spokes are closest together when nearest the centre – the nearer members and branches keep to the heart of the Fellowship by attending national events, the more closely bound in fellowship with Christ and one another.'

After the war home life had changed. WFCC Winifred Brown was a 'shining example of how dedicated WF members got around difficulties to attend meetings. Undaunted by producing a baby during her term of office, she brought him to Executive meetings to sleep in a Moses basket in a back room'. Most members found it was no longer easy to escape to spend a couple of nights away from the family at a conference. In response conferences changed tack. To help with the difficulties encountered in running a branch

a Branch Secretary's Conference was held in Oxford, and two years later one was organised for Chairmen. The Central Chairman urged officers to join BOC and members to attend national events so they feel 'truly part of our great Fellowship.'

Boys and Girls' conferences were held although numbers were decreasing. The subjects investigated were challenging for children – Rules of Life, Why Should I Be Baptised? What Is Sin? They were abandoned shortly afterwards when only nine applications were received.

In 1959 **Oundle** appeared to have held the first Regional Day when they invited guests from neighbouring branches to a service, a picnic lunch and a tour of Southwick Hall. Members were asked to provide dozens of tea cups for the 70 guests.

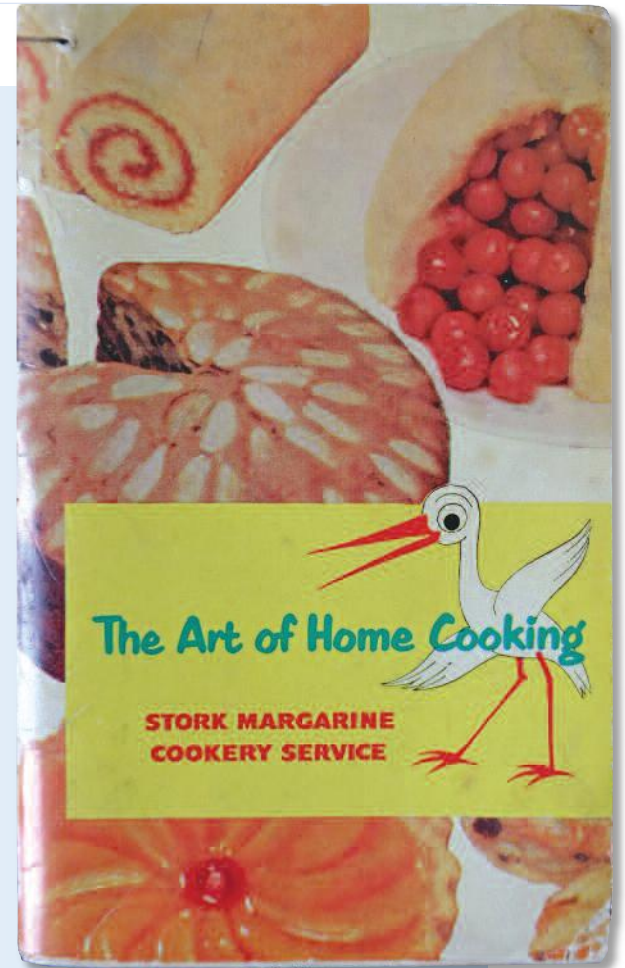
Oundle Shopping list

- 18lbs strawberries
- 140 sandwiches
- 210 biscuits
- 70 small cakes
- 2lbs sugar
- 7 pints milk

Two **Nottingham** Wives had a circuitous journey to the 1955 Summer Central – they had lunch in Swan and Edgars and then took the tube to the railway station for Oxted. After a while they realised that they were heading in the wrong direction so they leapt out and hailed a taxi and asked for Oxted. The cabby was flabbergasted, as it was 'south of the river' he did not know how to get there. Eventually they arrived and between them they managed to scrape together the £5 fare. When their hostess heard about it she remarked on the fact that they were carrying so much money and wondered if their housekeeping would suffer the following week.

Seniors decided to open up their Summer Central committee meeting to all members, not just the two voting representatives from each branch although hospitality for the night would only be provided for members of Central Committee, ie the two voters. The following year members attending Summer Central in **Medway Towns** were accommodated on-board the Training Ship *Arethusa*!

The thirtieth anniversary of the founding of Wives fell immediately after the War and we were not in a position to mark it nationally. However, when the fortieth arrived we



celebrated in style. Mansion House was booked but it was only available on a Monday - 'the fear that Washing Day might deter was quite groundless.' It was an oversubscribed success and 360 members attended. 'The police had been informed of the invasion' but everything went smoothly. Having sent greetings to the Queen and the Queen Mother both returned gracious letters expressing their interest in WF.

As well as the nine past Chairmen, the first Chairman, Mrs Ford and Secretary Lady Fletcher were guests. The throng assembled outside St Michael's, Cornhill while they waited for the city workers' organ recital to finish. The Egyptian Hall of Mansion House was a stylish and opulent setting. The special guests were welcomed by the Lady Mayoress. Founder member, Mrs Costley White, recounted the early days and reflected that there was a responsibility to cherish the Fellowship and to hand it on, its essence unchanged. Wives had begun simply and without hurry. It gave relaxation, many moments of fun and also deep spiritual meaning to its early members who shared their gifts in the making of Wives. She implored Wives to preserve the atmosphere for those who came after. The speaker was another founder, Lady O'Malley, who wrote under the nom de plume of Ann Bridge. She flew in from Ireland and spoke of her exotic and adventurous travels as a diplomat's wife.

'When we sat in the Egyptian Hall and I looked round on all the members assembled there, I felt very conscious of the wonderful feeling of fellowship, the common bond, which holds us all together. I looked at the early founder members and felt grateful to them for founding our Fellowship, a Fellowship which has meant so much to so many people over the last 40 years. I felt that it was a great privilege, not only to be able to meet some of them and hear them talk, but just to see their faces. As I looked, I saw written all over them, all the things which every wife and mother would love to have written on hers and I found myself

thinking quite simply, but so deeply, Oh, what a lovely thing the Wives' Fellowship is!' Mrs Williams, **Blackheath**.

A **Nottingham** wife who attended recalled the marvellous tea served and was horrified when she spotted a dropped cream cake on the gorgeous carpet. There was such a crowd that it was bound to get trodden in, so 'she did the wisest thing and moved away quickly in case anyone might think she was responsible!'

Spiritual interest grew in branches with more quiet days and prayer and study groups and the service book was revised.

Egyptian Hall, Mansion House



TS Arethusa

O Almighty God, look graciously upon our families and our homes. Remember, Lord, the place in which we dwell, and every town and village, and the faithful that live in them. Remember those that travel, those that are sick or afflicted. Remember those that do good deeds and forget not the poor. Send forth on us all the riches of Thy compassion, and grant us with one mouth and one heart to glorify Thy name.

Hospitality continued to be organised in association with the Dominions Fellowship Trust and the British Council. Three branches entertained 'students and coloured people' but six would not offer any hospitality at all. The tradition of Wives offering a welcome was highlighted when the Festival of Britain opened; **London** Wives offered members B&B for 5/-. A suggestion

was made that SWF members living near barracks and camps offer simple hospitality to sons of members doing National Service. **Tunbridge Wells** and **Sevenoaks** welcomed a cross-section of Commonwealth and European young people at their Students' Day. **Woldingham** welcomed 'the old people from St Pancras' almshouses' and the 'blind ladies from Croydon'.

Branches continued to raise money for their local charities as well as sending funds to the Wives' charity. Usually £170 was sent to the Josephine Butler Training House for a bursary. A plea was sent out for Wives to contribute to refurbishing the JB Student Rest House, **Liverpool** sent £20. The Hungarian Relief Fund benefitted from a donation from **Kenilworth** and **Chelmsford** aided the Uelzen Refugee Camp in Germany. Other recipients were mothers and children in Korean hospitals and the National



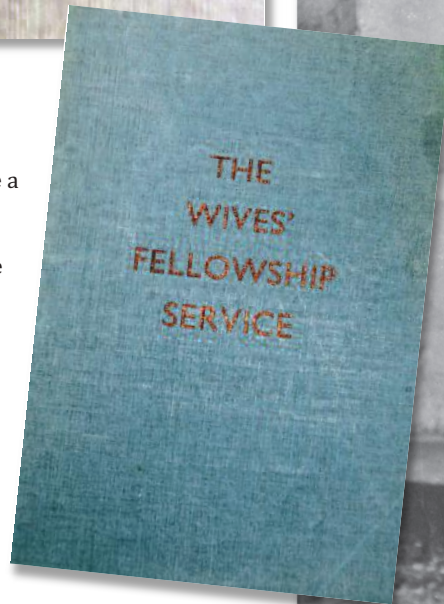
JB rest bungalow, Tranquillity (Liverpool University)

Association for the Paralysed and Medical Missionaries. **Richmond & Twickenham** went a step further by adopting a Polish widow and her three children living in Homburg, to whom they sent twice yearly parcels. The speaker at **Lancaster's** Regional Day was a representative from the Society for Guide Dogs. This generated so much interest that a local Guide Dog committee was established by Wives and still flourishes today.

Social events for children proliferated. **Wimbledon** had 90 children between them. **Aldershot** laid on a talk for older children about spiders and branches put on Guy Fawkes parties and summer picnics. **Woldingham** used home-grown talent to teach Scottish dancing to their children as did **Mid Herts**.

For husbands and wives gatherings, branches held dinner dances, **Haywards**

Heath had a talk about ghosts and **Solihull & Knowle** a talk about an Austrian holiday. **Radlett** had a wine tasting and **Tunbridge Wells** experimented with a cocktail party – a great success. Alcohol featured frequently with sherry tasting a popular draw. Indeed **Blackheath** had such a good party after a talk by Christopher Chattaway (pace setter for Roger Bannister) that they had to hold a Bring and Buy to replenish their funds!



1959 Janet Wright

Wf



Ray Payne (Chair) & Mary Garton (Sec) SWF

1960s

Winds of Change

The 60s was a decade of anxiety – the Troubles began in Northern Ireland, the Cuban Missile Crisis erupted, the Vietnam War began and Nelson Mandela was jailed for life. The Berlin Wall was built dividing East and West. Several military Wives were posted to West Berlin and Mrs Cornish opined ‘The Wall is very horrifying and distasteful and looks sordid and dirty and mean.’

There were several assassinations - President Kennedy, Malcolm X, seen as the man behind the Black Power movement and Martin Luther King, figurehead of the American Civil Rights movement in the USA.

Harold Macmillan’s Wind of Change speech in 1960 signalled Britain’s intention to grant independence to her colonies and during the 60s most African countries became independent. South Africa was declared a republic and left the Commonwealth.

The Profumo Affair rocked the Government.

The Night of the Long Knives was a major Cabinet reshuffle that took place in 1962 when Prime Minister Harold Macmillan dismissed seven members of his Cabinet, one third of the total. His successor, Alec Douglas-Home, served less than a year and then Harold Wilson swept Labour into power. When Churchill died in 1965, Wives attending an Executive meeting went to Westminster Hall to pay their respects. Abortion and homosexuality were decriminalised and divorce was allowed on the sole ground of irretrievable breakdown. Britain’s railway network was severely curtailed by Dr Beeching. Towards the end of the decade again Britain tried and failed twice to enter the EEC, hoping to galvanise its, by now, failing economy. Wilson defended his decision to devalue the ‘pound in your pocket’ in 1967.

At the beginning of the decade Britain was full of self-confidence; basking in unprecedented prosperity, shedding the

“ A lot of intellectual nonsense is talked about Christianity and it is fashionable to ‘opt out’. Let us go forward, making changes as necessary but maintain our aims and standards to ‘uphold the highest Christian standards of marriage, motherhood and citizenship’. Three vital issues, which must survive after the bubble of permissiveness has deflated to a wearisome bore. ”

constraints of the 50s and excited by a technology revolution. Unemployment was virtually zero, wages were steadily rising and optimism and new-found freedom were everywhere. Taking advantage of this wealth, millions of families bought their first cars; the Cortina, Escort and Capri being newly launched. Workers could buy a package holiday to the glamorous beaches of the Costa Blanca. Washing machines, fridges and televisions were also on the shopping list to help the emerging working woman. Teenagers listened to Radio Caroline and shopped in Mary Quant and Biba for new fashions.

Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Home video recorders, hand held calculators and compact audio cassettes were introduced. The first Intercity train ran, Concorde made

its test flight and the first public demonstration of a computer mouse and email was given. Kevlar, used for bullet proof vests, was invented and ATMs started to dispense paper money.

Princess Margaret married Antony Armstrong-Jones, Queen Elizabeth gave birth to Princes Andrew and Edward and in 1967 Prince Charles was invested as Prince of Wales at Caernarvon Castle.

New universities such as Warwick, Lancaster, Canterbury and Guildford were built and the new cathedrals in Coventry and Liverpool were consecrated. All these were popular topics for branch speakers and outings.

BBC2 was launched. Viewers were invited to *Coronation Street*, to look through the round window in *Play School* and to hide behind the



Margaret and Barrie Morgan

sofa while watching *Dr Who* or *Star Trek*. The box office hits of the decade were *West Side Story*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Sound of Music*, *Dr Zhivago* and Disney released *Jungle Book*, *101 Dalmations*, *Mary Poppins* and *Sword in the Stone*. Elvis Presley arrived in the UK and the 'hit parade' was dominated by The Beatles, Cliff Richard, Cilla Black, Bob Dylan, The Beach Boys and The Rolling Stones. The Mods movement became popular.

The most significant development for women in the 60s was the contraceptive pill, first made available on the NHS in 1961. Women could now choose to have children, further education and a career on their own terms.

Barbara Castle was appointed Minister for Transport and the production line women at the Dagenham Ford factory came out on a

“ It occurs to me that Shakespeare's words “the more I give....the more I have” are profoundly true of Wives' Fellowship. It cannot fully function if we are not wholehearted in all that we do. Let us all give to the Fellowship and we as individuals will gain immeasurably thereby ”

Mollie Martineau, WFCC

strike that instigated the Equal Pay Act. Elizabeth David introduced a generation of British cooks to Mediterranean food, Margot Fonteyn began her partnership with Nureyev, Mary Quant revolutionised women's fashion and Twiggy became the face of the 60s.

Perhaps two Central Chairmen stood out in the 60s, Peggy Stallworthy and Mollie Martineau. Margaret Stallworthy was a New Zealander who came to the UK in the 30s with her husband, Professor Sir John Stallworthy, and she joined **Oxford Wives**. She was WFCC between 1949-51 and then SWFCC between 1965-67. On her reappointment to office she remarked that 'The Fellowship has been weaving its golden thread into the texture of my living.' Her successor noted that Mrs Stallworthy had a 'wonderful gift of putting into words the things we feel about the Fellowship.'

Mollie Martineau from **Birmingham** joined Wives in 1954. She was firstly Editor of the magazine, then WFCC from 1966-69. When she reluctantly moved up to Seniors in her forties, she noted 'the wicked attraction that you instantly become one of the younger members again. How I laughed when I realised that bonus!' She steered the Wives' response to the crisis



Berlin Wall

at the Fellowship of St Michael and All Angels.

The 60s was a time of mixed fortunes for Wives with some branches holding waiting lists, new branches being formed and branches being renamed.

A loan of £10 was earmarked to help start up new branches, to be paid back in instalments. The desperate Troubles in Northern Ireland prompted the founding of a **Belfast** branch comprising Scatteredreds and Seniors. It is not known whether it welcomed both protestant and catholic members. **Haywards Heath** limited their numbers to 60, **Oxford's** plan to create an open branch was vetoed so a third Senior branch was formed – eventually 380 members across the city! In **Cheltenham** finding people to stand for committee was easier than today. At one of their AGMs seven members offered to stand and only two were required - three people stood for Chairman!

“Ours was one fellowship, not two, and SWF must do all in its power to make WF members feel glad to join us”

Throughout the decade Senior Wives grew vastly but eventually overstretched themselves and several branches merged. A change in the Constitution, increasing the age of moving up, caused a decline in Wives' membership and recruitment of younger women was challenging. There seemed to be a hiatus between Wives and Seniors and at the Autumn Conference concerns were voiced that there wasn't a strong enough link between the two arms. Suggestions were made to bring the two together by having a representative on each other's committee, sharing services, reciprocating hospitality and Seniors providing a crèche during meetings.

Because of the large number of ageing Wives a proposal was mooted that a home for elderly members of Senior Wives be started. Executive undertook a feasibility study but every businessman consulted strongly advised against it.

Our reputation was in danger of being tarnished – the Senior's Chairman warned that we were 'acquiring an unenviable reputation' for noise volubility. When **Blackheath** visited Charlton House the curator was impressed by 'our numbers, the volume of our conversation and our hats.' At a Fellowship conference 'it was suggested that we should try to have our meals in silence and a valiant attempt was made at dinner on the first night but halfway through a heartfelt cry came from one member 'Please may we talk at halftime?' Mrs Stallworthy decided that speech should be



1960s furnishings and fashion

permissible in moderation. On the whole we succeeded and, knowing the Wives' ability for talk, quite a remarkable feat!

The wording in a leaflet for visiting speakers was queried. Members complained that in spite of being warned, speakers were always taken by surprise when they met us, having apparently expected 'a set of rather stupid old ladies'. In future Wives would be described as a 'society of young educated women'.

A letters page was introduced in the magazine and one contributor queried Wives' relevance and how it might change in the future now so many young women were working. Another pleaded for more information to be published about what was to be debated at Centrals rather than the



reporting of old news. There were also questions about Wives having 'no corporate voice' and avoiding publicity. Indeed there appears to have been an upset in **Cheltenham** when a member of Wives was on the committee of The Cheltenham Standing Conference of Women's Organisations. She had to withdraw as the representative of Wives' Fellowship, as expressing her views was against the Constitution of Wives, 'which states specifically that the Fellowship has no corporate voice'. They got over this by the lady in question representing the WRNS instead.

An article by a new Wife challenged the general concern of a shortage of Wives in the 25-35 bracket. 'So what?' she asked.

In 1961 SWF Executive met 'to endeavour to find a solution to the problem of the growing numbers attending Central meetings - particularly Summer Central.' They did indeed come up with several ideas which form the blueprint for conferences held today.

It was recommended to hostess branches:

- that organised entertainment should take place prior to the meeting

- that individual hostesses should entertain their guests in their own homes with a simple supper or
- combine with other hostesses to give a buffet supper (this would reduce the fee)
- if conditions were difficult it was not necessary or essential to offer coffee after the service or tea after the meeting
- hostess branches should state clearly how many they could accommodate, when that was exhausted later applicants must make their own arrangements
- branches within a reasonable distance of each other could share the running of Summer Central
- there should be no limit on the numbers attending except when it was determined by the size of the hall

However there was poor attendance at the 1961 WF Autumn Central even with the new fare scheme to help two members from each branch attend every London Central Committee meeting. A request was made that future Centrals be held on a Thursday to enable late night shopping to be done - the outcome was the biggest ever attendance! The Scattered Members' Secretary sent her apologies - she was 'too busy and too tired to attend' the Central Committee. Centrals were renamed AGMs in 1969 and overnight conferences became a separate entry in the diary.

Affiliation with the National Women's Council (NWC) continued although there was difficulty filling a vacancy on the supposedly formidable NWC Scientific and Technological Committee. 'Why is it that WF is not afraid to deal with education, morals or world affairs, but is scared stiff of science?' A few years later the connection was debated - a close



result - 47 branches voted for continued alliance and 42 against.

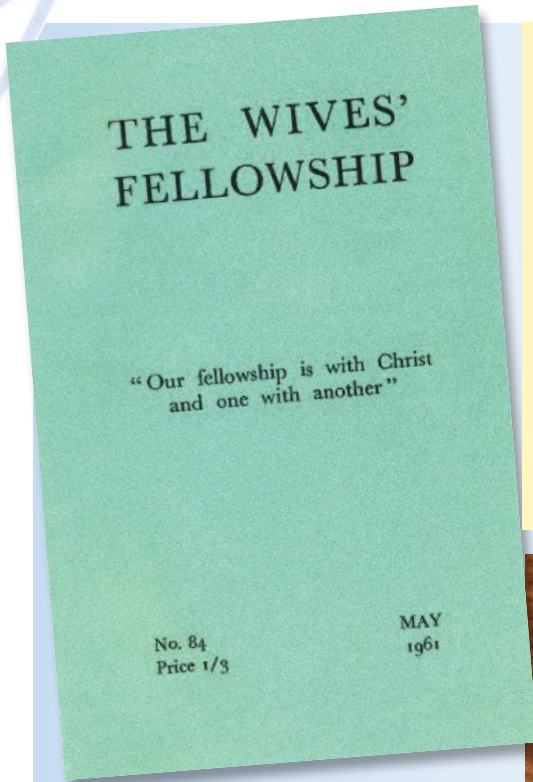
As a result of a Branch Officers' Conference, the Chairman of **Cheltenham** composed a letter to be sent to all her members expressing her wish to encourage the spiritual side of the Fellowship and inviting suggestions. This marked a new era in the history of the branch with morning meetings being much favoured since by then there were so many more children. It also became increasingly difficult to find people to look after these children and two Wives recalled one of their first meetings about this time when they took their babies and remembered keeping watch over the two prams outside the window of the Secretary's home while the meeting was going on. After that a crèche was started and sometime later the Seniors offered to help with this. Prayer meetings, rechristened Quiet Half Hours, were started again and also Study Groups, rechristened Discussion Groups. Perhaps the spiritual side was slipping from more programmes as **Northampton** abandoned its Study Group and **Chelmsford** its Prayer Group.



Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

There was vigorous debate about the parlous state of finances; there had been a deficit for the previous three years. Resolutions were passed that endeavoured to resolve the problem but **Richmond & Twickenham** feared that 'Executive have failed to grasp the nettle.' The quota was increased in the hope that AGMs 'would not be bedevilled by recurring money troubles.' Yet this was not to be and the whole





Magazine cover from 1961

decade suffered financial woes. Elected members of Executive were deemed superfluous and so none were recruited. In 1962, as a cost-cutting measure, it was decided that there should be only one Central Meeting per year.

Members were castigated tetchily; 'hopefully now meetings may again become occasions for fellowship, and not for the airing of many imperfectly thought out ideas that should have been thoroughly discussed in branches before being brought to Central Committee.' Typically branch subscriptions were about £1.

We started the financial year with £22.15.7d in hand and finish with £33.19.9d., so that the year we are considering produced a surplus of £11.4.2d. Since the close of the year, out of our balance of £33.19.9d., we have spent £16.5.0d on 12 chairs for the benefit of hostesses who find it difficult to provide sufficient seating.

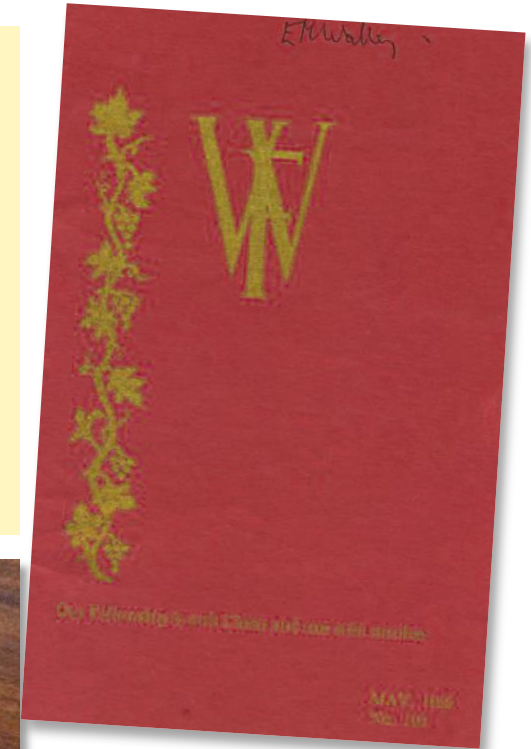
After paying for the chairs, we start our new year with £17.14.9d in hand. This good reserve has been achieved by a large membership (67), members' generosity to the Blind Party, and such good attendances at our meetings, this producing a nice bonus each meeting in 'Lecture Money' of £12.15.0d. for the year.

Our Quota to H.Q. still remains at 8/- .per head - this costs us £26.16.0d. We are once more asking members for 17/6. subscription and what you would like to give to St Michael's or Josephine Butler. We sent £22.4.1d to St Michael's and 15/-d. to Josephine Butler. We have spent £25.6.0d this year on lectures, some on fees and the rest on donations to the lecturers' favourite charity. For the benefit of new members I would like to say that we each pay 6d at our meetings - we call it lecture money - and non-members are asked to give 1/-.

(Woldingham's Treasurer's Report)



Spirit of Wives 1961-70



100th issue of the magazine was published in 1961

The magazine underwent some changes. The cost had remained at 1/- since the war and was now increased to 1/3d. Following an update in 1960 by Mrs Granville of **Oxford** who had 'expert knowledge of lettering', a competition was launched in 1969 to design a new cover and was won by a **Chelmsford** member. She created a grapevine and the intertwined W and F. The 100th edition was the first magazine to use this design and had a dark red and gold cover, followed by alternating blue and yellow covers. Hereunto the cover had been green but the new colours came in for criticism: 'it looks like a

wine list: the yellow is nicer than the blue.'

There were recurrent, topical themes for meetings across the branches. Examples were Juvenile Delinquency, Brains Trust quizzes, Understanding the Atom, Choosing a Joint of Meat, Reconstruction of the New Cathedral in Coventry, a visit to *The Times* printworks, the Hydrogen Bomb, World Refugee Year, the Pestalozzi Village, Oberammergau, Comprehensive Schools, Russia and Hat Making.

Radlett hosted Barbara Cartland. 'The temperature in a member's lovely garden was at least 80° in the shade, but Miss Cartland looked cool and serene and inspired us all with her vitality. What is more she supplied us with vitamin capsules and recipes for honey and lemon cocktails!'



“How can one capture the essence of a Summer Conference – the peculiar alchemy wrought by temporary freedom from domestic worries, complete strangers offering wonderful hospitality in their own homes, exciting visits and lectures so well organised that one simply allows oneself to be shepherded to and fro, and of course the delightful company of kindred spirits throughout”

One Annual Day speaker was Lady Longford who spoke about Queen Victoria. 'Listening to Lady Longford was a joy; she was elegant to look upon, had a particularly clear and pleasant voice, and was most entertaining.'

Several branches hosted speakers with first-hand knowledge of Churchill, Nightingale, Khrushchev, TS Elliot and Japanese PoW camps.

National events gently evolved – the first

conference without an associate Executive Summer Central meeting was held and also the first Seniors' Officers Conference. Annual Day in Coventry was enormously popular – 1200 guests came to see the new cathedral that they had heard so much about. However, a delegate at a BOC voiced the 'wish for sermons that did not moralise at us so much at Annual Days.'

As ever weather was varied – **Guildford** Wives hoped 'the pouring rain was sufficient to damp down the noise from the hall for the sake of local residents!' but at **Winchester** 'gay summer dresses and this season's enchanting hats' were on show. **Solihull** mused 'we look back on Annual Day with pleasure, but ask one question. "Where are those 20 members lost on the train between London and Hampton-in-Arden?" We worry about them.'

At SWF Summer Central, CC Mrs Stallworthy, remarked, 'If you could only see yourselves from my point of view you would realise what a glorious sight you are!'

“Neglect the nest, negotiate the necessary and nip to Nottingham for the night”

(Nottingham's invitation to Wives to attend Summer Conference)

Solihull outing to Wedgwood

The Changing Pattern

Ode to a Medway Hostess and her Guest -
Dressed in your wifely best you dined,
Put resolutely from your mind
Those nagging thoughts which harden
For

Behind your hostessly aplomb
You knew that you had left a bomb
Reposing in your garden.

Your visitor might think it odd
To find the Bomb Disposal Squad
Arrayed around to greet her
But

Variety – Men often state-
(How long before they detonate?)
Makes Housewife-life much sweeter.

MHP

Wives celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1966 with a service of rededication at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. To acknowledge the occasion and on behalf of Wives, Executive sent our loyal greetings to HM the Queen. Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Stepney and the Precentor of Christ Church officiated. The bishop, Evered Lunt, had a connection with us; he was married to a Wife and had taken services for Wives in the 20s and had helped Cicely Saunders set up St Christopher's Hospice. The hymns that were chosen were King of Glory, King of Peace, Blest are the Pure in Heart and When Morning Gilds the Skies. The very worthy speaker was Professor Charles Coulson who was a Fellow at Oxford and Cambridge, Professor of Maths and a Methodist Lay Reader. His talk was entitled Science and the Christian religion and branches were encouraged to read his book although few finished it!

In 1969 the Anthology of Prayer was published in response to requests.

Despite national support for Josephine Butler House and St Michael's, branches donated to individual causes too. Examples of beneficiaries were the World Refugee Fund, The Children's Society, Kenyan Relief Fund, Oxfam, Freedom from Hunger, British Empire Cancer Research Campaign and the Muscular Dystrophy Association. **Oxford** gave to the Marriage Guidance Council. Entertaining worthy groups began to decline but branches still gave groups such as the Blind Ladies of Croydon afternoon tea. **Richmond & Twickenham** adopted the Church of South India as the recipient of their giving.

The Victoria League and the British Council superseded the Seniors' association with the Dominion Fellowship Trust. **Canterbury** entertained a party of Commonwealth students from the Victoria League – 'or at least we expected them to be students – but some turned out to very agile, globe-trotting grandmothers.' Members were eventually asked to consider breaking affiliation with the Victoria League.

Formal dinner dances were popular with husbands and wives, as were wine and cheese parties but sherry proved divisive. Although **Oundle** suggested that a sherry evening be held in addition to their annual dinner, the idea was dismissed as they claimed 'sherry parties were too noisy and tiring.' Despite **Oundle's** view **Cheltenham** made a handsome profit of £5 on their sherry event even though some of the food was bought in and 'it was decided that cigarettes would not be provided!'

Birmingham's Christmas Carol party nearly foundered over a last minute discovery of the hall's prohibition on 'smoking and drinking!'



Christ Church, Oxford

Fortunately a hasty change of venue was made and they enjoyed their customary glass of sherry. Party planning in **Nottingham** was made difficult due to the uncertainty of some members attending and the extras who came unexpectedly on the night! A decision was made to hire silverware in the future as 16 members forgot to bring cutlery as requested.

"The Wives' Fellowship must be one of the very few women's organisations which manage to bring husbands successfully in and I should like to express the gratitude generally felt by WF husbands for the opportunity of a relaxed evening out as the guests of their wives"

(A husband)

It was not only the adults who enjoyed parties. **Cheltenham** continued to put on parties for under 8s and 8-12s and the Minutes list the food that was provided – dozens of sausage rolls, pounds of sausages, meringues, and in one case, 70 jellies! However teenage dances were abandoned. Perhaps **Nottingham** came to the same decision as one member recalled that the Wives parties were so popular they attracted gate-crashers and she had to collect her son and friends early. Nevertheless, in **Kenilworth** teenage dances were regular events. Dinner jackets could be worn – correctness was the key. Young men and girls had dancing lessons over the Christmas holidays and then a dance would be held by Wives for the enjoyment of their teenage offspring. David Blandford is quoted in the book *Prep School Children* that he was

Dear Lord,
I come, praising Your name and
Rejoicing in your goodness.
Thanking you for our Fellowship
And asking that you will link me
With other members in prayer,
So that we may all join together,
Remembering one another,
In fellowship with thee.

Pamela Halford



1960s man on the moon

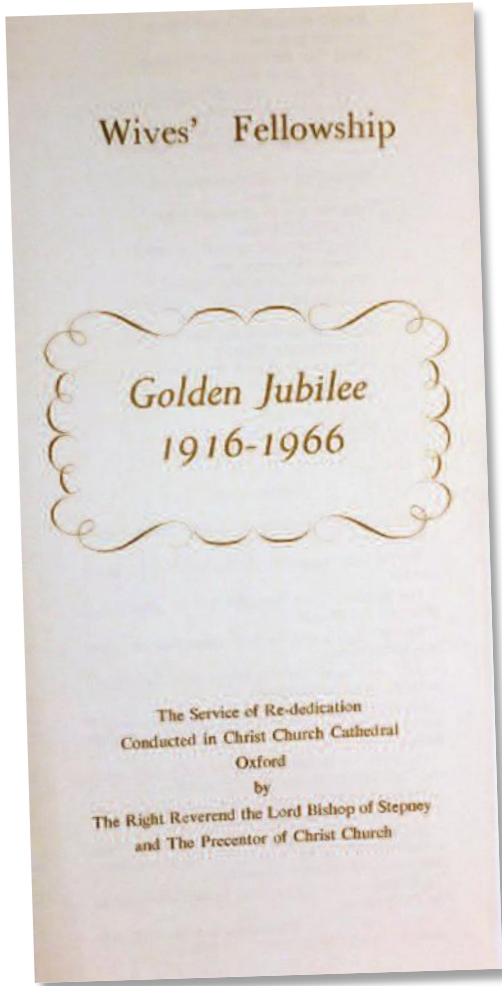
grateful that his mother was an active member of Wives, which ran social events he could attend in the holidays. At these he could escape from the boarding school ethos and meet youngsters of both sexes, including

his future wife. It was a social whirl for children in **Weybridge** with parties laid on for the under 5s, a panto trip for under 13s and a teenage dance.

Even though the 60s were swinging elsewhere, not in **Blackheath**. Some Wives were reprimanded by some Senior Wives for wearing pearls to morning meetings – ‘they should not be worn before 1pm.’ There was an occasion when a working wife produced a bought cake for an afternoon meeting tea. This caused great consternation, added to which the member wore trousers – unheard of at that time. A new member in **Sanderstead** remembered being driven to her first meeting by the branch Chairman in her Jaguar. She was always smartly turned out in hat and gloves and served tea from her silver tea service.

In **Aldershot** the tradition that each military command had a representative in the branch seems to have been discontinued by this time, but one woman was told by her husband’s Commanding Officer’s wife that one wife was to be a member and she was it! It was still a rather formal and dressy gathering, hats and gloves being worn and some found it stiff and cliquy. One member came, wearing a Robin Hood type hat with a tail feather, and fell asleep during the talk. The gesticulating speaker got caught up in the feather and from that day forward she was known as the archeress. One husband was a high ranking officer and they enjoyed entertaining Wives at their home. ‘His amusement at his first H&W evening in **Cheltenham** when he was introduced as “Norah’s husband”!’

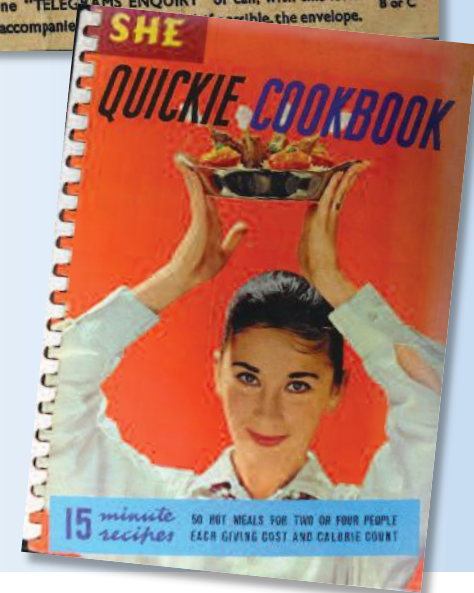
“When I took my son (then aged about 7) home after school and had had a Wives meeting either in the morning or over lunchtime, he would sniff the air and say “The house smells of ladies ” (A Worcester Wife)



Order of service at Christ Church Oxford for the Golden Jubilee



Midwinter plates



Wf Comings and Goings

The principle aim of the early members of Wives Fellowship was to create branches around the country to provide spiritual, social and intellectual support for young educated married women.

The administration of the Fellowship at a national level has taken a number of forms over time. All those who have played a role in the running of the Fellowship have been volunteer members. There has never been a headquarters or any paid administrative staff. It is perhaps for this reason that accurate record keeping has been patchy over the years. Until 2003, when some of the Executive papers were lodged with the Women's Library in London, boxes (of varying size and quality) were passed from one member of the Executive Committee to the next for storage in their own homes/lofts/garages or even barns. It is inevitable that some records have been lost or destroyed.

Since the true meaning and sense of fellowship one with another is experienced within the individual branches where, year by year, and decade by decade, friendships are formed and support for one another is given and received, it is important that we record the many branches which have provided the opportunity for Christian married women to come together in fellowship.

The best source of information on the growth and decline of branches is thought to be the reports given in the WF magazine (Grapevine). Lists of branches, chairmen and

secretaries have been included in these publications but in slightly different formats over time. The research undertaken for this book has produced the information that follows and is as accurate as is possible, given the absence of specific records on branches, membership numbers and the sometimes mystifying change in the names of branches, the explanations for which are lost in the mists of time.

The research carried out shows that early groups were based on the Church of England Dioceses around the country with WF Diocesan representatives forming the first gatherings of the Central Committees, which met three times a year (Spring, Summer and Autumn Central). Each representative gave reports of the activities of members within their diocese, so it was not until later that individual named branches sent reports of their activities to be published in the magazine. Again, early volumes contain somewhat ad hoc reports and it is impossible to say with certainty which branches started in any particular year. Further complications can be found with the introduction of Senior WF Branches for, in the first instance, women over the age of 40. Since the introduction of All Age Branches and the re-amalgamation of WF and SWF at Executive level in 2002, the specific status of branches has been even harder to identify.

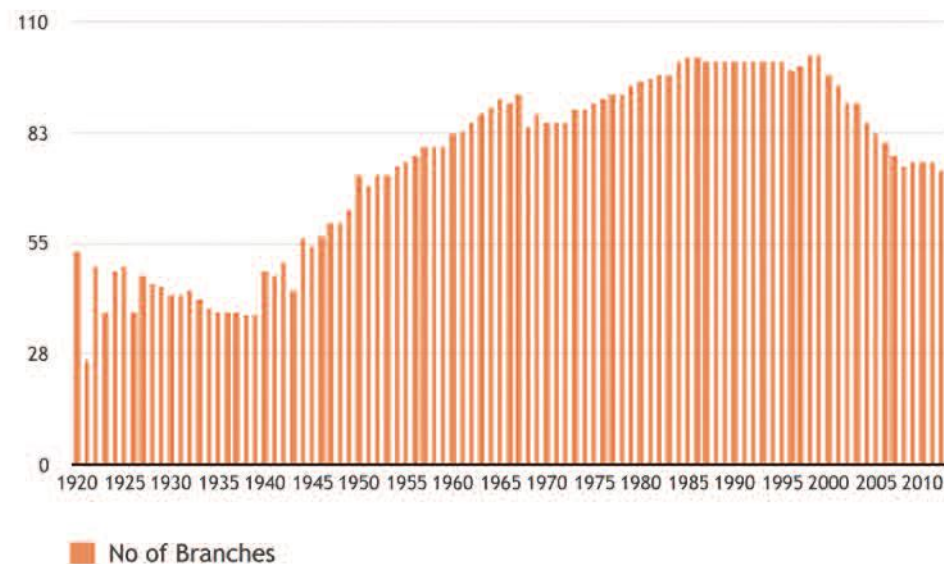
Many of the branches in existence today have direct links to the earliest meetings of WF. Others have been founded in new locations over the decades. The 73 branches

continuing to offer fellowship today are listed here, but we felt it important to record also branches that have come and gone over time, those that never really established roots, those that ran out of steam and others that metamorphosed into newer more relevant branches. We also recognise that at the height of membership in the 70s and 80s more than one branch existed in the same location as increased membership resulted in the formation of second and even third branches. **Nottingham** WF and SWF set up

South Trent SWF and WF which later renamed itself **Trent**. **Oxford** had four branches in the 80s and **Bristol**, **Cheltenham** and **Winchester** still support three branches apiece.

It is the membership of each and every branch which gives it a unique and special identity and it is only the commitment and enthusiasm of the individual members that can keep alive the Spirit of Wives in any place at any one time.

Number of branches throughout the century



The Muster of 2015

Abergavenny*
 Aldershot**
 Ashdown Forest*
 Bath**
 Birmingham*
 Blackheath I*
 Blackheath II*
 Bristol I*
 Bristol II
 Bristol III
 Bury St Edmunds**
 Cambridge**
 Canterbury*
 Chelmsford*
 Cheltenham I*
 Cheltenham II
 Cheltenham III
 Chichester*
 Cotswold***
 Coventry**
 East Anglian
 Scattered***
 Eastbourne*
 East Cheshire*
 Epsom**
 Exeter*
 Guildford*
 Harrogate**
 Haywards Heath*
 Kenilworth*
 Lancaster*
 Leamington Spa and
 Warwick*
 Leamington Spa &
 Warwick Seniors
 London*
 Medway Towns**
 Mid Herts I**
 Mid Herts II

Middle Thames**
 Newbury*
 North Cheshire*
 North London**
 Northampton*
 Northumbria
 Nottingham*
 Oxford*
 Oxted & Limpsfield*
 Richmond &
 Twickenham**
 Rugby I*
 Rugby II
 Salisbury Plain**
 Sanderstead*
 Scattered*
 Sevenoaks*
 Sheffield**
 Sherborne***
 Shrewsbury***
 Solihull*
 South Trent**
 Stour Valley I**
 Stour Valley II
 Trent***
 Truro **
 Tunbridge Wells*
 Walton-on-
 Thames***
 Wells***
 West Sussex***
 Weybridge*
 Wimbledon**
 Winchester I*
 Winchester II
 Winchester III
 Woldingham*
 Woodbridge**
 Worcester*

Opened and closed within 10 years

Bangor
 Basingstoke
 Belfast
 Brentwood
 Brighton
 Bucks South
 Campden Hill
 Carlisle
 Chelsea
 Croydon
 Derby
 Durham
 Earls Court
 Essex
 Falmouth
 Fareham
 Farnham
 Farnham and Tilford
 Folkestone
 Frinton
 Grange-over-Sands
 Guernsey
 Harrow
 Hartford
 Hatfield Peverel
 Huddersfield
 Lewes
 Lichfield
 Liphook
 Manchester
 Merrow
 Midhurst
 Misc & Westminster
 Peterborough & Ely
 Repton

Rochester
 Rudgwick
 Sloane Square
 South Kensington
 Surbiton
 Glasgow
 Thornhill
 Tonbridge
 Ware & Harlow
 Wotton-under-
 Edge
 Welland Valley

Gone but not forgotten

Bolton – 22 years
 Bournemouth – 54
 Colchester – 24
 Godalming – 14
 Golders Green – 25
 Kendal – 18
 Kensington – 12
 Liverpool * – 72
 New Forest
 & IoW – 31
 Newcastle – 18
 Oundle* – 68
 Pinner – 26
 Purbeck – 29
 Purley – 23
 Radlett – 67
 St Albans – 19
 Tidworth – 16
 Esher - 45

Start Dates and Records

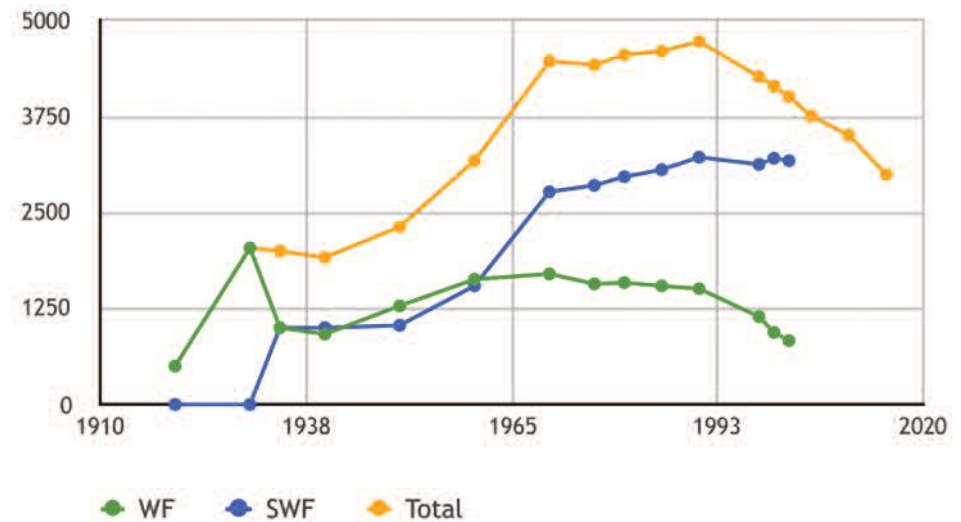
The Diocesan framework of early days WF makes branch start dates difficult to confirm. Hence the broad dating classifications of the list, based on earliest mention of branch names

* early years ** post 1945 *** post 1985

The geographical proximity of some branches to earlier ones suggests that it is possible that change in membership led to a change of name: e.g.

Golders Green to North London
Colchester to Stour Valley
Tidworth to Salisbury Plain
St Albans to Mid Herts

Membership WF, SWF and Total





Rubbish piled up during strike

“ We must accept change. More Wives are working, whether it is to help the family finances, to fulfil a need to express their own personalities, to use the training they once took or merely in a voluntary capacity and many branches are finding it difficult to get people to come onto the committee to take office ”

Yvonne Bowman

1970s

From Tribulation to Jubilation

The 70s is remembered by many as a decade of political unrest and upheaval in UK. Instability in government, demonstrated by five general elections in the decade, put Prime Ministers Wilson, Heath, Wilson again, Callaghan and Thatcher into office and reflected the turmoil and militancy caused by economic crises, rampant inflation and Trade Union unrest of the times.

The Winter of Discontent in 1978, with strikes by almost all key public sector unions including refuse workers, grave diggers and hospital workers, was the culmination of a decade of problems. Inflation rates of up to 25% per annum were recorded and costs and wages rose year on year in an effort to

keep pace. 1971 saw the abandonment of £sd in favour of the new decimal currency.

On 1st January 1973 Britain joined the European Economic Community (EEC).

The Yom Kippur War of 1973 sparked an oil crisis as OPEC raised the price of oil and limited supply. The US finally withdrew troops from Vietnam but the Cambodian conflict continued. President Nixon was forced to resign after the Watergate scandal and Russia invaded Afghanistan. The Shah of Iran was replaced by Ayatollah Khomeini and the Soweto township riots presaged the beginning of the end of apartheid in South Africa. The Northern Irish Troubles were at their height and regular bombings and attacks in Ireland and on the mainland were

“ The Treasurer, Mrs Bugler, told us that Wives were, at present, running smoothly with the recently increased branch quotas but the future was difficult to gauge. It was agreed that after decimalisation the quota should be set at 90p per head. She particularly asked that (where possible) NO money be sent to her between 1st January and 15th February 1971 to enable her to cope with the changeover, auditing etc. ”

part of life for all. In her Chairman's letter of 1973, Mrs Bowman lamented bombs exploding, embassies being attacked, hostages being taken and strikes.

The first Boeing 747 Jumbo Jet landed at Heathrow in 1970, heralding cheap mass international travel and later Concorde came into commercial service, crossing the Atlantic in only 3½ hours. The Sony Walkman, microwave cookers, pocket calculators and video recorders appeared on the market and the first patent was taken out on a mobile phone. Apple and Microsoft both came into being and IBM began producing computers for the home. North Sea oil came online and the first test tube baby was born in 1978.

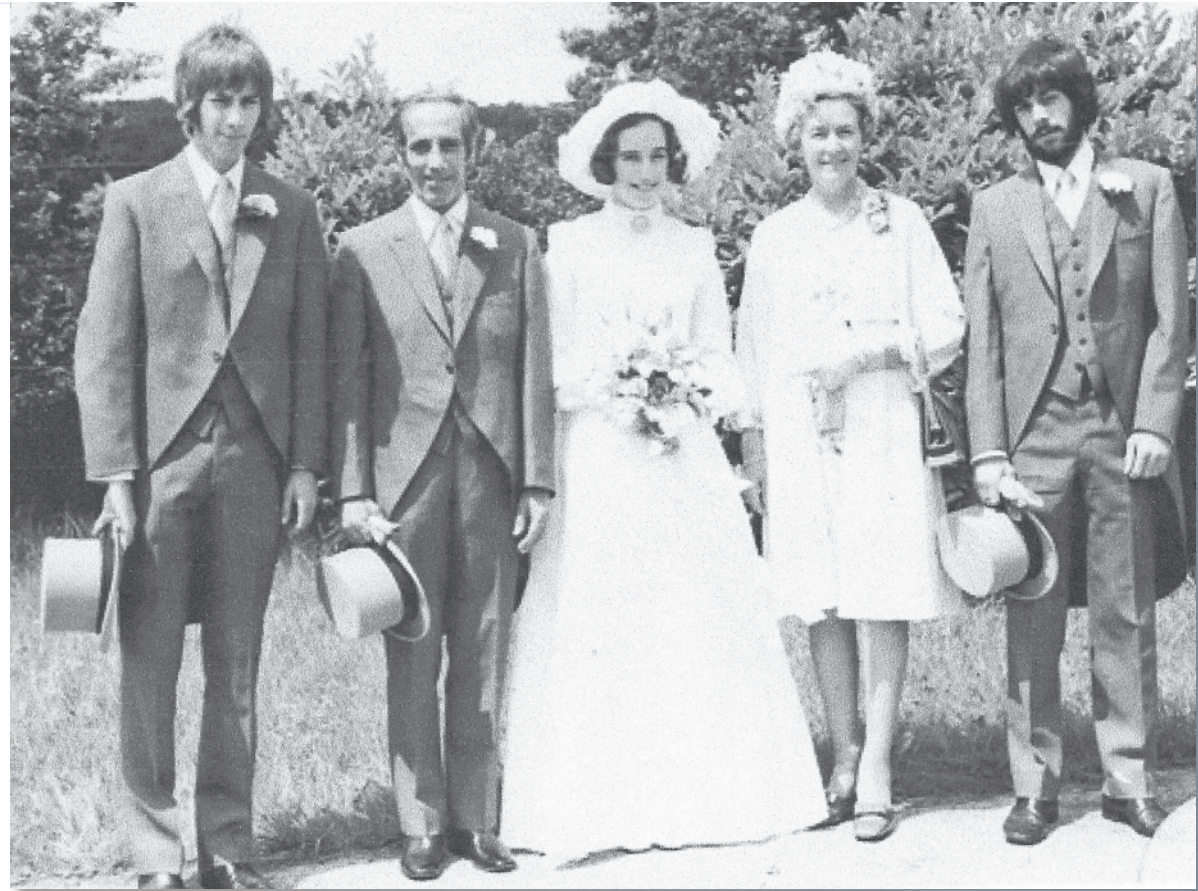
Despite the Beatles' breaking up in 1970 and Elvis Presley's death in 1977, the music scene was vibrant and innovative - Punk Rock reached its apogee. Teenagers were divided by their allegiance to David Cassidy, Bay City Rollers or The Osmonds. Whilst driving by coach through Mayfair, Annual Day attendees had the 'surprising experience of watching hordes of shrieking, screaming teenagers, held back by a solid line of police, serenading the Osmond brothers, who were staying in one of the hotels!' Films and plays that showed included *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Star Wars*, *Jaws*, and *The Exorcist*. The increasingly freedom-

loving youth culture attended the first Isle of Wight Festival.

Women of note included Germaine Greer author of *The Female Eunuch*, Celia Birtwell, Zandra Rhodes, Molly Parkin and Mary Whitehouse who (along with Lord Longford) organised a Festival of Light.

Mother Theresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in the slums of Calcutta. Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher were just three female politicians taking their places at the political top table. Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 1977, the year in which Virginia Wade won the Wimbledon Ladies' title. Women's contribution to the workplace and the economy was finally recognised by the introduction of the Equal Pay Act.

The 70s was a time of confidence, optimism and growth for the Fellowship. The ever-present debate over encouraging members to bridge to Seniors was illustrated by



Cathy and Robert Hartley's wedding

Wimbledon: 'A number of members left us this year and their going makes one wonder if, from our point of view, 45 is not too soon. Members in their 40s are the backbone of an organisation such as this; they have the social poise to make younger members feel at home; their children are older and they themselves are able to devote more time and energy to outside activities. We were very sorry to lose them and very pleased whenever they bridged back to us.' However they also reported that they had recruited

new members in their 20s. This was in spite of views expressed by a **Sheffield** member 'We exist in an aura of flowered hats, afternoon tea/morning coffee, large houses and pseudo-intellectual chit chat which is smug and exclusive.'

A revision to the Constitution in 1971 allowing Wives to move to Seniors 'during their 40s' was passed. The Constitution was amended again in 1979 and stated that no one over the age of 49 should belong to Wives and that no one

should bridge for more than two years.

Despite encouraging branches to split into WF and SWF, it was important that bonds were firmly maintained at all levels of the Fellowship. The two Executive Committees continued to hold a joint meeting in November each year and, in many places Wives and Seniors existed amicably side by side. Joint services and social gatherings, many including husbands, formed the bedrock of the interchange. The help of Seniors in providing crèche facilities during meetings was widely acknowledged.

Leamington Spa & Warwick bemoaned that 'after a fair amount of pressure from above we have regretfully separated into SWF and WF.' **Chelmsford** and **Hertford** Branches both experimented being All Age and suggestions for a new name for Seniors were

made – Lambeth Fellowship, Wives' Guild or Wives' Trust.

As the 70s dawned, the paucity of members was still evident and **Worcester** put out an urgent appeal for new members. However recruitment to WF gathered pace and a number of branches opened. It is clear from branch reports that whilst some members resigned every year it was relatively easy to replace them with new recruits. Some branches were enormous. **Bristol** were 'fortunate in having many kind hostesses to host meetings in their elastic-sided drawing rooms'. **Oxted** reluctantly took the step to move to a hall as they regularly had 50 attendees. In one year **Oxford I** had 171 members, **Oxford II** had 150 and **Oxford III** had 55. Perhaps Oxford were the first branches to operate a flock system, commended for disseminating information and maintaining the feeling of fellowship within a large group, and job-shared the chairmanship. **Liverpool** drew up its own Constitution.

There were also continuing problems of finding members willing to serve on committees. **East Cheshire** noted 'attracting new and younger members is a perennial problem while the browbeating of members into taking office is nothing short of a nightmare'.

Esher WF closed, citing too few members and no

one willing to take office and similarly **Northampton** came extremely close to closure in 1976.

The political and industrial unrest of the decade impacted on the day to day workings of branches and meetings had to be cancelled because of petrol shortages or power cuts.

East Cheshire had a three mile drive to the nearest hot oven for their Christmas coq-au-vin lunch and **Rugby** held a firelight talk on Elgar when the lights went out. The postal strike also threatened to disrupt the ongoing business of the Fellowship. Wives endured seven weeks of disruption but literature continued to be circulated with many branches offering help and acting as messengers. At Central, instead of pre-paying by postal order, Wives had to pay on the door for their lunch boxes.

Rail strikes and bread and sugar shortages were equally disturbing. When **Newbury** held a raffle at their Christmas party '2lb of sugar was the prize of the evening'. When the second General Election of 1974 was called, the date clashed with Autumn Conference at Winchester. Inflation throughout the decade was very high and there was constant concern about the cost of travel, administration and the rising cost of national



events. The cost of postage increased from 3¹/₂p to 9p between 1975 and 1978 and The Officers' Conference fee in 1972 was £3.75. It was clear that action had to be taken to combat the ever increasing overheads, so the Fellowship calendar was re-appraised. Considerable savings were made when WF abandoned Spring, Summer and Autumn Central Meetings and in 1973 held the renamed national AGM in the spring. WF Annual Day retained its place close to Ascension Day whilst Autumn Conference was organised by a branch for the whole membership. SWF settled on holding their AGM each spring at the YWCA in London and their overnight Summer Meeting was run by a branch with SWF Annual Day remaining in the autumn.

Looking back at the balance sheets of the past it is difficult to extract exact figures for the breakdown of membership costs but one can see that for WF in 1977



Northumbria's first service



WF quota 1976

Fares Scheme	40p
Magazine	65p
Central Funds	40p
Charity	15p
BOC	15p
Total	<u>£1.75</u>

There was a 33% reduction in quota for Army Wives.

WFCC, Gill Willis, visited every branch either 'personally, officially or incognito.' On her retirement, tribute was paid for her relentless work, 'for having shaken us up, chased us around, and made us think what we are, and where we are going.' She maintained a very high profile in WF 'looking, as usual, very gay and most definitely with it'. Not all officers quite managed to pull it off. 'We came to look on the Editor's appearance as the cabaret of these Central meetings, and she was in her usual entertaining form, splendidly dressed in a scarlet wet-look trouser suit!'

The **Ceylon** Branch reported that, where

previously only Christian Wives of all nationalities had been invited to join, now 'in the spirit of fellowship and in an endeavour to adapt to present needs and circumstances' they had been inviting non-Christian women. As they could no longer remain committed to the WF Christian ethos they asked that they be freed from the Fellowship. This request was granted.

Alongside the reports of parties and visits to places of interest, the magazines of the decade printed many challenging and interesting reports on the more serious side of life – Bereaved Families, the birth of a 'Mongol' child in the days before Down's Syndrome was the recognised term, and an article showing the indomitable spirit of one **Haywards Heath** member suffering a chronic illness but continuing to contribute to the community through her work with the disabled and her delight at the introduction of the Chronic Sick and Disabled Act.

It was suggested that the magazine become an annual publication but Mrs Garton wrote an open letter expounding her views and supporting its biannual publication.

The letters page continued to provide



a platform for members to air their views.

Spiritual fellowship was strong with numerous Bible Study and Prayer Groups; **Bournemouth** studied the new version of C of E Series 2 Holy Communion service, which was also discussed at the SWF retreat at Pleshey. Others sought to increase their ecumenical knowledge with talks on Russian Orthodoxy and Unitarianism. **Weybridge** arranged a joint service in a Quaker Meeting House which one **Esher** member found 'a difficult form of worship and felt happier at our more conventional service.' Others Wives looked outside Christianity. **Cheltenham's** Discussion Group had a series of meetings to discuss the Humanist outlook and during Lent **Bristol** and

Birmingham learnt about Judaism and Hinduism whilst elsewhere branches invited speakers from Sikh and Muslim communities.

Some talks reflected the major concerns of the day with particular worries being expressed about decalimisation and how to amalgamate accounts worked in £sd to pounds and pence. Great interest was shown in British membership of the EEC and later in the decade the development of the Channel Tunnel.

Wimbledon noted: 'An interesting development has been the trend towards articulate, informed discussion at the end of a talk. One speaker, a young and lively lecturer in

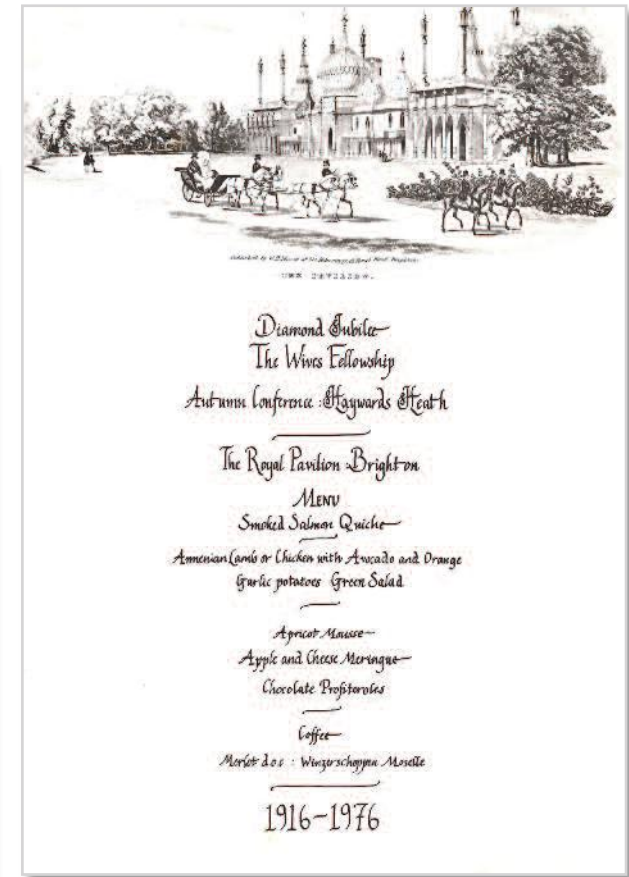
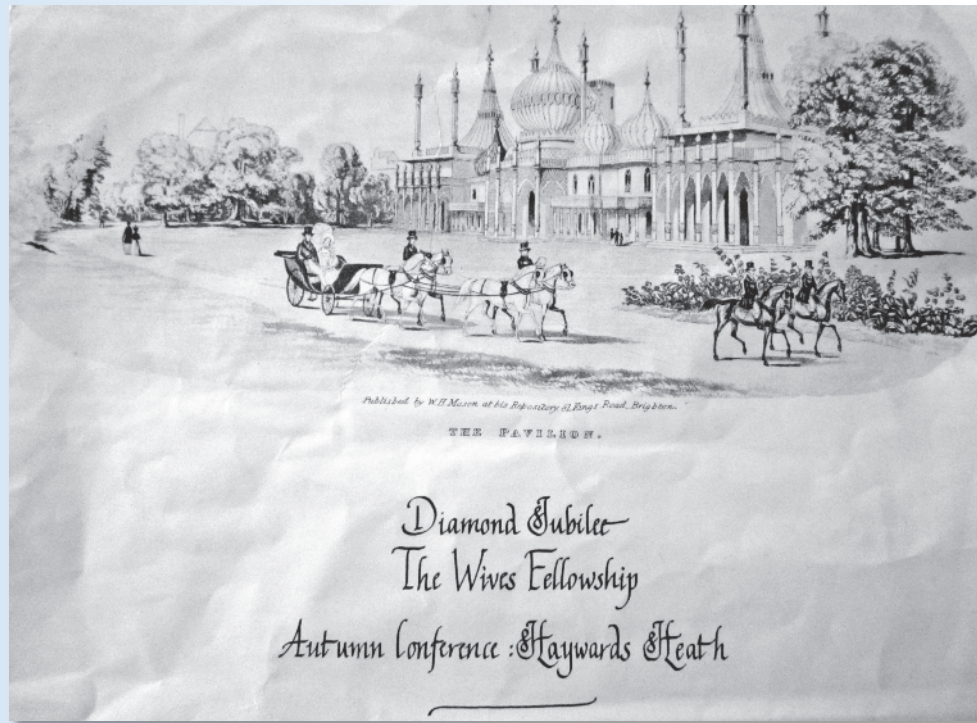
sociology, asked members to interrupt while she was actually speaking. The result was a full scale debate.'

Birmingham wondered if 'members really appreciated the illustrated talk on Modern Painting, where the very young lecturer was so appalled by the extreme antiquity of his audience that he felt he had to apologise every time a nude appeared on his screen.' Not all meetings were so entertaining; **Mid Thames** held a wig party - 'we looked awful!' and **Pinner's** stand-in speaker thrilled his audience with a talk about Container Services. Among other popular topics for talks were Diamonds, Shelter, Brook Advisory, Samaritans, Drug Abuse and

Chartwell, which had recently opened to the public.

Branches undertook a wide variety of visits; to glass works and potteries, art galleries and theatres and great interest was shown in the latest developments of the day. Talks on the use of home freezers, visits to the NEC in Birmingham and mention of the complications of the motorway network all reflect an awareness of the changes in the world. **Woldingham's** summer outing was to London Docks where they were shown over a cargo ship bound for the Persian Gulf and afterwards entertained to lunch by the Captain, his

officers and their wives. **Kenilworth** laid on a successful series of courses for its members – Bridge, Cookery and the World of Music and **Oxford** formed a Needlework Group. **Richmond & Twickenham** had '... a very lovely visit to Stonehurst Orchid Farm in Sussex where we saw the most beautiful blooms. Unfortunately, the day was marred by a car mishap to some of our friends but the rest of us were able to bring the not too hurt ones home and we feel that the help and



support we can give each other brings us closer together.'

Gill Willis suggested that branches followed a common theme for a year, initially conservation, following the Countryside Act in 1968. This resulted in a film on pollution being shown at an AGM, branch talks and letters to the magazine imploring Wives to be more active in preserving the environment. Later, anecdotes were requested of when branches held their Plant a Tree in '73 events.

National events flourished. Group travel was arranged by chartering coaches on trains to the main national events: 'The ticket collector at Euston was most impressed by the hats and the dark suited businessmen couldn't believe their eyes!'

Conferences and Regional Days of the decade addressed many challenging subjects from What Kind of Legacy Can We Leave Our Children to The Common Market and Industrial Relations. Members used their many and varied contacts to furnish the programmes with eminent and distinguished speakers such as the TUC leader Sir Jack Scamp in **Birmingham**, Fritz Spiegel the musician entertainer in **Cheshire** and CA Joyce, Rev Elsie Chamberlain, Elizabeth Manners and Gyles Brandreth who was described as 'a young, witty, articulate iconoclast' made a formidable combination in **Chelmsford**. Barbara Cartland, Earl Spencer, the Olympian Harold Abrahams and Monty Moss of Moss Bros entertained and informed members at a variety of events around the country.

At another Summer Central, delegates were urged to circulate and share their sandwiches during the lunch break - 'not possible for some, who had greedily eaten

their goodies on the train!' In 1972 Mrs Garton particularly welcomed **Belfast** branch members who had made the journey to Nottingham. The branch reluctantly closed later that year due to the difficulties and danger of travel and the members became the fifth Scattered group.

Annual Day in Warwick was inadvertently teetotal for some because 'the hotel hadn't anticipated so many women wanting aperitifs, so many had to go without because of a shortage of glasses' and the report of Oxford Annual Day mentioned:

“The usual WF type queues for cloakroom and drinks awaited us at the Town Hall. Has anyone else noticed how different the WF queues are from any other? Wives do not just stand and wait, but talk to everyone within range, sometimes even leaving the queue to greet someone at the other end”

During this time several innovations were introduced. Fellowship Days arose from a need for time away from the hurly burly of busy lives and less elaborate entertaining by members. The first was held at a Retreat House in Woking. **Weybridge** introduced Conference Dinners, now the traditional supper parties held on the eve of an overnight event and **Aldershot**, the table number baskets at lunch. X-X, a social gathering for ex-principle officers of Executive was also introduced. Towards the end of the decade it is clear that an increasing number of members were now working outside the home and meetings had to be arranged to accommodate these commitments. Despite this Regional and Fellowship Days remained popular dates in the Wives annual calendar.

The greater ease of travel ushered in a new era of holidays and pilgrimages. **Esher** and

Tunbridge Wells organised some WF holidays, which were of particular interest to widowed members, as these trips provided an opportunity to travel in the company of like-minded people. 1973 also saw the first organised pilgrimage to the Holy Land under the auspices of Inter-Church Travel. The 15 day, fully inclusive trip by air cost £135.

The highlight of the decade for WF came in 1976; the Diamond Jubilee of the Fellowship. As her Jubilee wish, SWFCC Norah Drake-Wilkes suggested a campaign to open more branches both at home and abroad, perhaps in Common Market countries, and WFCC Patricia Gammell emphasised the value of the Fellowship and related that two Wives had recently told her how WF had sustained

them through personal tragedies. The magazine published a collection of reminiscences from members.

The Wives' calendar was extremely full. Year-long festivities commenced with **Worcester** hosting WF Annual Day. The service was held in All Saints Church and the Bishop of Birmingham gave the address. Lunch was taken in the Guildhall. Mrs Bush 'a lively octogenarian and founder member of Bristol' cut the cake and Henry Sandon gave an entertaining talk on the Worcester porcelain works.

Lancaster had the honour of hosting the SWF Summer Meeting. The service at the university was taken by Rev



Guildford off to Autumn Conference

Arthur Ford, and was followed by dinner at the Town Hall. Another service was held the next morning and the afternoon entertainment was a film and talk on Beautiful Britain. For those staying on another night, four coaches set off to the Lake District for dinner in a hotel. They were then entertained by Dame Flora Robson who recited poetry with music in the Theatre in the Forest in Grizedale.

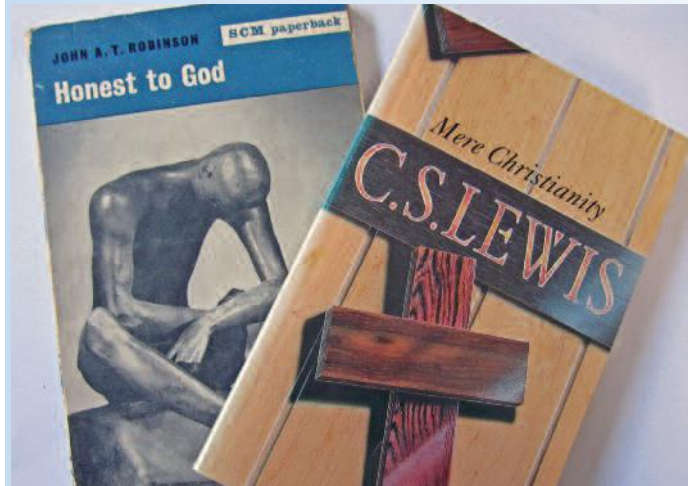
The SWF Conference was held at Farnham Castle in tribute to the role it had played in the early days of the Fellowship, with the theme of Christian Realities, which 'went to the heart of the Fellowship's purposes'. **London** Senior Wives were invited to a dinner at Lambeth Palace in the summer. Initially Mrs Coggan was to host the evening but at the last minute the Archbishop appeared, to the delight and consternation of the branch. They had hired the exact amount of crockery but were saved from embarrassment by the housekeeper who produced his personal tableware adorned with mitres.

It fell to **Haywards Heath** to host WF Autumn Conference. Commencing with a service in Ardingly School chapel, the guests then travelled to Brighton where they dined in the magnificent Royal Pavilion. There was also a regional Service of Thanksgiving held in Winchester Cathedral.

'From all over the country, by train, by coach, by car, on foot (and in the case of one octogenarian all the way from Formby, Lancs, by taxi)' 900 Senior Wives converged on Westminster Abbey for the final event of the Fellowship's Jubilee year, a memorable gathering for SWF Annual Day. The service of rededication was conducted by clergy from the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland,

reflecting the interdenominational nature of the Fellowship. A fleet of coaches then drove to the Festival Hall for lunch and a talk by Dr Una Kroll, an early supporter of female clergy.

In the early 70s, alongside the work of Josephine Butler Trust and St Michael and All Angels' Fellowship, individual branches continued to support local charities with donations or in practical ways within the community. Such activities included **Sanderstead's** weekly visits to children



Past CCs reunion in 1977

with cerebral palsy at St Mary's Hospital Carshalton, **Canterbury's** trips to the seaside with blind residents of a nearby Home and **Tunbridge Wells' Old People's** Outing when 30 guests were taken on an autumn tour in members' cars followed by tea. Elderly and disabled adults and children around the country benefitted.

The membership recognised that changes in society as a whole were having an impact on the two charities which had been supported up to this point and, with the eventual closure of St Michael's and the absorption of the Josephine Butler training scheme into the NHS, the time came to look for a new charity

We are the very models of a modern 'Senior Wife'

We indulge in deep discussions which are always free from strife,

We look forward every Wednesday to our meetings with the 'girls'

And we feel a sense of fellowship as we swap ideas at Pearl's.

Our Discussion Group's a model which no modern man could scorn,

We have waded through 'Humility' as expounded by Lord Porn,

We have grappled with John Robinson, we couldn't be more 'mod',

Though we had some tricky moments as we read 'Honest to God'.

George Hoffman's 'Let's be positive' we found exceeding wise,

Whilst that 'Smoke upon the Mountain' did not get into our eyes,

And in these troubled modern times we now restore our sanity

With the help of C.S. Lewis and his book 'Mere Christianity'.

C.J.

to support at a national level. After considerable debate, St Christopher's Hospice was adopted as WF's charity in 1974 with SWF following the next year.

With the demise of the partnership with the Victoria League the role of the Hospitality Secretary became more concerned with domestic work within Wives. This included accompanying children across London or other large cities, accommodation for distant members at Central meetings, hospitality for university interviews and accommodation offered by **Epsom** and **Weybridge** for Gatwick and Heathrow flights.

Tennis, swimming, barn dances and scottish country dancing were regular events.

Haywards Heath remarked that welcoming teenagers and their friends to dances 'provided an enjoyable debut into the world of the adult party.' Branch reports also made mention of visits to Wisley, Syon House, Sudeley Castle, Brighton Pavilion, Blenheim Palace, Canterbury Cathedral, and Warwick Castle.

Birmingham stepped back in time with a medieval banquet; they debated dressing up but lost their courage. **East Cheshire** were far more game and when they held a Hill-Billy Evening, everyone entered into the spirit of the party and came suitably attired, especially the husbands. In 1973 **Guildford** provided a Cordon Bleu hot dish followed by delicious puddings, coffee and accompanying sherry and wine all for the sum of £1. **Oxtd** Husbands and Wives were treated to a hot buffet but **Colchester** was far more cosmopolitan and entertained 150 guests to a Curry Supper and invited Sir Alec Rose to tell of his adventures circumnavigating the globe single-handedly. The inclement weather didn't dampen **Mid Cheshire's**

Garden Party but good use was made of the 'gay Hat Bar' run by two volunteers. It was also wet for **Rugby's** Pie and Cider Garden Party: instead of sweet cider, they served 'a mouth-twitchingly dry one, no wonder we made such a splendid profit on the beer'.

The **Cheltenham** branches held joint sports days, for mothers and children. **Oxford's** family carol singing was accompanied by their own children's orchestra. **Richmond & Twickenham** filled two coaches for a family outing to the Royal Hospital in Chelsea and **Nottingham's** young attended a lecture and demonstration on explosives. While **Newbury's** children were treated to the televising of the Basil Brush Show,

“Most of us had families and many had 'husbands home for lunch' so meetings were held in the evening. We all take pride that with no complicated organisation, a minimum of rules and no publicity, but simply with a live sense idealism the Fellowship has successfully achieved its Diamond Jubilee” **Ray Foulkes**

Liverpool's children were shown over the car ferry, Ulster Prince and a fig roll factory!

In 1979 the husband of a Wife produced a calendar reflecting the vital roles husbands played in the life of Wives.



WINE WAITER

This is dead easy because they only know "red or white", but care must be taken not to spill any onto your own carpet, and if you do, don't tread it in as if you were standing on someone else's.

Reaching Out

From its beginnings, Wives, as part of its inherited history from the MU and the GDA, was very socially aware. Education, especially of children, was seen as a high priority: book recommendations in the 1920s magazines included such titles as *Constructive Citizenship, Spiritual Psychology of Children and Christianity and World Problems.*

As the Young Wives Fellowship, it was 'recognised as an influential body of young women within the organisation of the MU', and was frequently asked to become involved in many of the Church's social projects. As Hope Costley-White commented, 'we wanted to be good wives and mothers and good citizens, and we believed that the pooling of our ideas and our experiences, and joining together in prayer and in worship, would help toward that end.'

Affiliations, associations, hospitality and charity support were key components of the Fellowship's charitable outreach. Initially, they were affiliated with the Parent's



National Education Union (PNEU), and then with the NCW with whom they had a long and fruitful connection. Other organisations WF had association with were the MU, the GDA and the Marriage Guidance Council.

The National Council of Women (NCW)

The NCW was founded in 1895 as a response to the unsatisfactory working conditions faced by many women at that time. By 1900 it had set up a number of Special Committees, to focus on particular issues. One of the best known of these was the Women's Patrol Committee, which became a forerunner of the Women's Police. Around the same time, the organisation began its campaign for equal pay for equal work, and was particularly concerned with the position of women in the armed forces. In 1918 it changed its name to the NCW of Great Britain.

It was in 1928 that the **Durham** WF Branch and many other Wives thought that more severe penalties should be sought for perpetrators of sexual offences against children and young people. It was agreed that we should affiliate

Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

(St Matthew 25: 37-40)

with the NCW to have a non-political voice and to be kept informed of legislation the NCW were trying to press through.

Following this vote WF was invited to send representatives to all the many numerous NCW committees. Thus began an affiliation which lasted for over 60 years. Our representatives worked very hard attending meetings. Throughout the 50s and 60s, it was particularly active in working to remove discrimination against women in all areas and in encouraging women to play a full role in society

From the 60s onward our affiliation was regularly questioned but it was considered valuable to look at the wider scope of women's interests. In 1990 WF severed the connection following a postal vote. Many Wives joined NCW as branch members or as individual members. These days NCW is much reduced and has very little sway with the Government. Its role is to organise link groups in schools and colleges.



The Hospitality Scheme

From the very beginnings of Wives, hospitality has been a cornerstone of our Fellowship. Consequently the Hospitality Scheme was formed with a dedicated Secretary. Firstly WF offered hospitality to officers and men of the overseas forces and then to students studying in London who needed friendship and a warm welcome. At the end of 1919 an appeal was made for help in befriending young men and women who had come to work or study from overseas and who knew no one. This was met with enthusiasm and in 1920 committees were formed in London, Oxford and Peterborough, with other dioceses encouraged to start similar schemes. An overnight stay or a meal was offered and country branch members began to offer weekend and holiday hospitality.

“ WF was one warm heart and hearth and was made of elastic. They mothered, sistered and hostessed royally when their own larders would often have been pitifully bare had it not been for the welcome practical additions made by the home parcels poured out by their overseas guests, and they not only took complete strangers into their households but constantly managed to write letters that lifted loads of anxiety and longing from many overseas families' hearts. When, again and again, the saddest news of all came, they wrote again as to their own circle and got letters back begging that those at the end of the globe might be allowed someday to show their gratitude in person ”

During WW2 Wives struck up a relationship with The Dominions Services & Allied Services Hospitality which had been founded in 1939 by Lady Frances Ryder to provide friendship and hospitality to men and women of the Empire services who needed entertainment and caring during their leaves and convalescence. Not surprisingly, the Hospitality Scheme became enormously important. One bonus was the tinned food and parcels proffered by grateful guests. 'Of one thing they can be absolutely certain, the unlimited gratitude of the mothers and fathers on the other side of the world. It is Empire building of the first order.'

In 1941 country members were asked to offer room for tired London families, to give them a few days' respite from air-raids and bombs.

When the war ended, this programme, renamed the Dominions Fellowship Trust, continued looking after the non-academic and social needs of young people from the Dominions who were studying in Oxford, Cambridge and some other universities. An Oxford member wrote about Paul, an Austrian wartime refugee who had settled in Australia. Having won a scholarship 'he found himself hurled across the world ... and came to me complaining that the undergrads were superior and off-hand and the Professors took no notice of him. I explained that no one rushed things at Oxford and that the half-fledged Oxford manner needed understanding. He wrote later to say how happy he was.'

During the 50s the Hospitality Secretary was busy enrolling hosts in London to welcome country members when they visited the Festival of Britain, and another appeal was made for offers of friendship to members' sons on National Service. In addition,

To a Town Mouse

Because you came, I rose at dawn;
With fingers scratched and nylons torn (no
gooseberry pie without a thorn)

I rolled out flaky pastry.

I washed the blackfly from the mint,
The new potatoes dug and skinned, the
parsley chopped, so nothing tinned
Should mar your country luncheon.

I cut a lot of prickly roses

And popped them into pots and posies, the
sort of thing which goodness knows is

Not at all my forte.

And while I finished shelling peas,

You smiled and said (you meant to please)
It's so much easier than deep freeze

To have things from your garden.'

Anne Haward (Chelmsford)

accommodation for the children of Ceylon members was sought during boarding school holidays.

Following the closure of the Dominions Fellowship Trust in 1961, Wives assisted the Victoria League. Formed in 1901, hospitality, friendship, education and welfare were the important foci. In the 60s Commonwealth students paid £2 10s 0d per week which went towards the expenses of the hostess.

By the 70s the need for and offers of help diminished and the Hospitality Secretary's role was abolished when affiliation with the Victoria League was ended. Nevertheless, hospitality has continued up to today when Wives still open their doors and welcome those visiting from other branches.



Josephine Butler Memorial House (JB)

Josephine Grey was born in 1828 to a prominent family. She married George Butler and together they supported the abolition of slavery and showed concern for marginalized women and the socially disadvantaged. After the tragic death of her youngest child she turned more to social campaigning on behalf of prostitutes and promoted education and moral reform. When the family moved to



Josephine Butler (Liverpool University)

nascent Josephine Butler charity was by Miss Higson, an acquaintance of Mrs Randall Davidson (the Archbishop of Canterbury's wife). She was invited to speak at Farnham Castle in 1915. In 1921, a year after the House opened, Miss Higson returned to speak to the Wives' Committee. She suggested that Wives should give active support by pledging a £75 pa bursary for a student in training. Her presentation was well received and although some dioceses fully supported the notion, several wanted to continue benefitting their own local 'Rescue Work.' Nevertheless a promise was made to raise a half bursary in the first year but with no firm commitment to continue.

However, the pledge did continue and in 1926 a bursary of £100 was raised.

In recognition of the support given, during the 1927 Summer Central in Liverpool, Wives were invited to tour the Abercromby Square Home.

Liverpool she opened her own women's refuge.

In 1907, a year after her death, Bishop Francis Chavasse appointed Miss Jessie Higson, a pioneer of moral welfare, to organise preventive and rescue work in the Liverpool diocese, out of which grew the Training House. For over 50 years students trained there, latterly in association with the University of Liverpool, as social workers, and acquired specialist skills focusing particularly on helping single parent families and strongly relating their Christian faith to their work. Our first introduction to the

“ It was extraordinarily interesting to see this in the flesh . . . to find it was a house, a real house with real people in it. To many of us it had merely been a vague name, if anything rather irritatingly connected with a tiresome subscription . . . but now it really does mean a Home . . . a real Working Body of wonderful women doing invaluable work amongst our less fortunate sisters ”

In the late 20s the sum required for the bursary was exceeded and a resolution determined that any surplus was sent to other charities, but before long there was no surplus and indeed it became difficult to raise even the bursary money. There were so many requests for funds from other societies that it was decided that Wives should not support outside movements except when they were deemed to accord with Wives' ideals.

The support given to JB continued and, with the help of Seniors, the bursary was maintained. When, in 1947, a replacement House in Alexandra Drive was acquired, Wives committed to furnish the Common Room and an appeal was made to increase donations in order that the full bursary could be raised without the help of Seniors. Although the bursary now stood at £175, only £100 was guaranteed, but it was not long before the full amount was donated.

Liverpool Branch adopted JB almost as its own and when the weekend rest bungalow, Tranquillity, on the Wirral was given by the Pilkington (glass) family for the use of the students, **Liverpool**, using money donated by Wives, undertook its practical refurbishment. As a mark of gratitude to Wives, the JB committee invited Wives to hold Central meetings there and an understanding emerged that JB was in the special care of Wives.

As Britain became wealthier and social issues came to prominence

in the 60s and the membership increased, donations similarly increased. In 1959 the amount given by Wives was £319, which easily covered the bursary of £225; ten years later it was £419.

In 1971 Tranquillity was sold as it was not being fully utilised. JB House itself faced an uncertain future and after an appeal, Wives gifted it £2000. Despite this cash injection the House was closed in 1974 and the Fellowship received a share of the sale proceeds: £1,564.47.



Jessie Higson (Liverpool University)



JB staff (Liverpool University)

The Fellowship of St Michael's and All Angels

The Fellowship of St Michael's and All Angels was created in 1903 by Agnes Parr. Having already founded St Monica's Orphanage in Vauxhall, she was particularly motivated 'to provide shelter, moral guidance and training to single mothers of good family'. In 1903, she established an organisation to help young unmarried women of the professional and upper classes who found themselves

pregnant. She saw the need for a refuge, discreetly situated in London, where young ladies could disappear from their family and society before and after their confinement.

During the 30s there was a series of articles in the magazine about social and religious problems. One such described the work of The Fellowship of St Michael's and All Angels. So great was the interest following another article in 1936 that Wives became affiliated to St Michael's but it was not until

1940 that any financial commitment was secured. At this point it became the special, though not exclusive, interest of Seniors, who raised the first subscription by a penny per head levy on all Senior members. An appeal in 1947 brought in some extra funds.

In 1969 the search began for new premises to house a Mother and Baby Home in Lambeth which would provide better accommodation for mothers, who paid £9 per week, and staff. St Michael's faced change

in the 70s when the local authority became a partner and Wives felt their involvement had become diluted. A vote in 1976 approved the decision to cease funding. The work of St Michael's continues in south London, and provides support to keep vulnerable families together.



"The battle is not yours, but God's"



"Michael and his Angels fought against the Dragon; and the Dragon fought and his Angels, and prevailed not."



The Fellowship

of

St Michael & All Angels



Companion in Prayer:

.....

Date

St Christopher's Hospice

St Christopher's Hospice, SW London, was established as both a medical and Christian foundation in 1967 by Dame Cicely Saunders. She was born in 1918 and trained first as a nurse, then as a hospital almoner and finally as a doctor. She was the pioneer of the modern hospice movement; combining expert pain and symptom control,

compassionate care, teaching and clinical research. St Christopher's has been an innovator in the field of palliative medicine, which is now established worldwide. In 2001 it was awarded the \$1m Conrad Hilton Humanitarian Prize for an organisation making an extraordinary contribution to the alleviation of human suffering. The Bishop of Stepney, Evered Lunt, was a founding supporter of Dame Cicely's project and it was

his wife, Patricia, a member of Wives, who suggested the partnership between Wives and St Christopher's Hospice. Following two years of discussions, the Charity was adopted in 1975. The following year Seniors concurred. Thus for the first time since 1943, the whole Fellowship supported a single cause. Wives particularly supported education, especially in the form of bursaries for overseas workers, and research within

the hospice, and the Executive St Christopher's Representative served as a Trustee of the Hospice.

During the 80s the first Open Days were organised and visiting Wives could see the wonderful work being done and when Dame Cicely Saunders attended the Wives' AGM in 1984 she described the ethos of the Hospice:

“ St Christopher's Hospice provides a Christian climate, a safe place to be, offering a chance to reach out to God again, and to help patients to take stock of their faith. The chapel is for all denominations, and it is used to help the spiritual growth in everyone. The staff must test their assumptions and must feel God's presence is there; they must look philosophically at the way of living. St Christopher's is not somewhere just to die, it is a place of travel, and is there to help all to adjust to the last few weeks of the patient, or to prepare for the last journey. Wives' Fellowship must feel that their support goes out to a great many people elsewhere as a result of the teaching and research being spread much wider abroad now ”





Dame Cicely Saunders

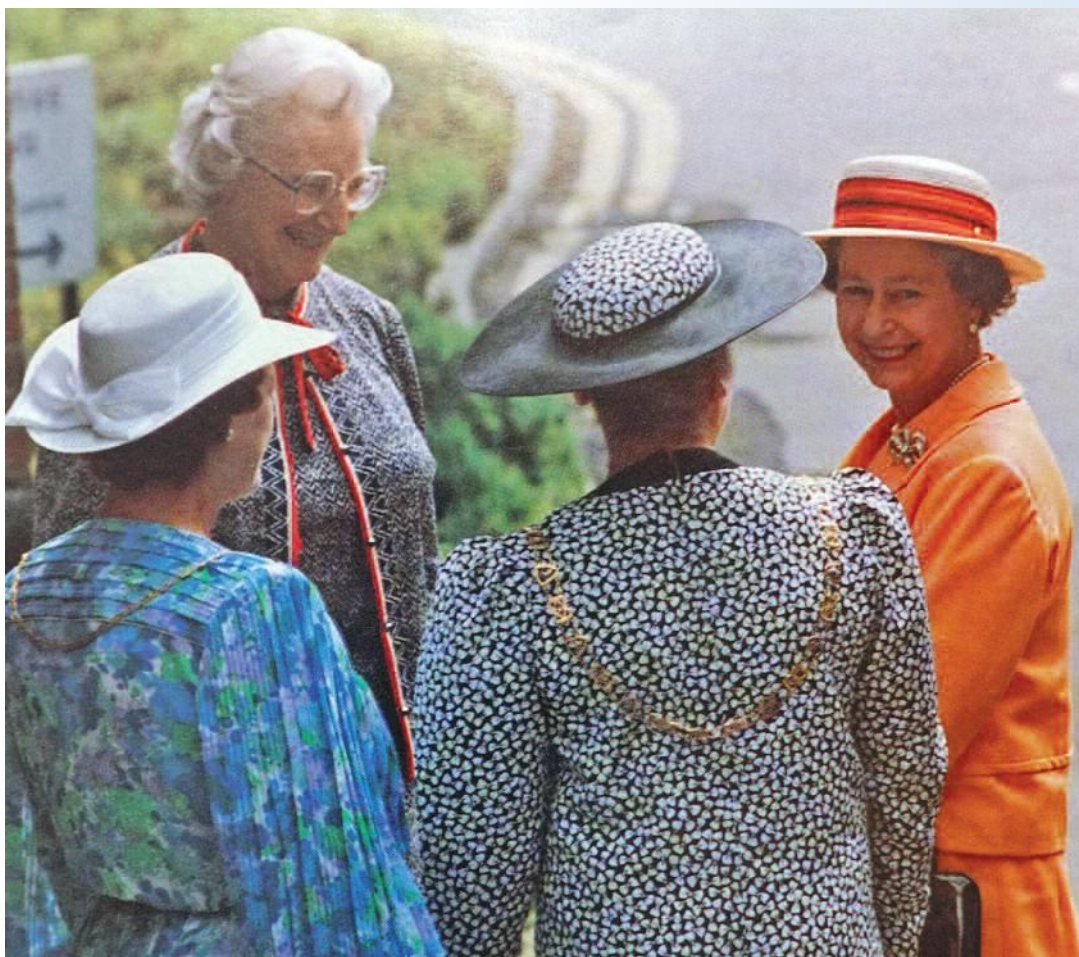
At our 90th anniversary lunch the CEO of the Hospice paid tribute to the support Wives had given.

A crisis caused by severe financial difficulties occurred in 2000, when there was a shortfall of £1m. This prompted the Millennium Appeal to which Wives generously donated. Once this crisis had subsided WF committed to fund four years of research to formulate a national standard for End of Life care in care homes. This work was awarded first prize in the Innovation Awards from the professional palliative nursing journal. We also continued to fund bursaries for overseas students: five beneficiaries in 2014. Latterly Wives have funded research into how a palliative care plan could be devised for patients with chronic heart failure.

Following legal changes, Wives relinquished its place on the St Christopher's Trustee Board. However, in recognition of the support that Wives provided for forty years, the Representative became a Vice President of the Hospice.

As Dame Cicely said 'St Christopher's exists

on a prayer and an overdraft.' To date WF has donated £1.25 million to the Hospice. One bursary recipient wrote: 'St Christopher's Hospice is the place where the seeds of palliative care learning were sown – now the tree is branching to spread the message among all young doctors, nurses, social workers and volunteers.'



HM the Queen with Dame Cicely

Anthea Cox

Some twenty-three years ago my sister, Sarah, was being cared for in the closing stages of her illness at a hospice in Norfolk. I was staying with her three children, spending as much time with her as I could during the day when they were at school.

She was in a six bed ward, but one by one her companions departed. I will always remember one afternoon when she and I were on our own. Sarah lay sleeping as I sat beside her and I must have looked lonely because a lady from the cafe appeared and suggested I join her for a cup of tea.

We chatted for a while and then she told me about Dame Cicely and her Polish friend who left her some money with which to buy a window in her first hospice. I told her I was familiar with this story because I was a member of Wives - whereupon she ticked me off! Why ever, she asked me, had I not made contact with her - a Scattered Wife - since it would have been her privilege to care for me whilst I supported my sister?

I wanted to share this story with you because it seems to me to exemplify all that is great in our Fellowship. The compassion of that Scattered Wife combined with the wonderful work of the hospice movement which we support through our donations to St Christopher's.



Chipping away at the Berlin Wall - US Gov

1980s

Peaks and Troughs

As the Cold War raged the world stage was dominated by three leading figures, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.

Assassinations, wars, and chemical disasters such as Chernobyl were all headlines in this decade and widespread famine caught the attention of Bob Geldof and spawned Live Aid. The Challenger space shuttle failed, the global stock market crashed on Black Monday and the Tiananmen Square Massacre occurred. Terry Waite was kidnapped, and when **Radlett** visited Lambeth Palace they lit a candle for him. On a positive note Presidents Gorbachev and Reagan met to discuss disarmament and diplomatic relations, leading to the INF treaty being signed and the Berlin Wall came down.

Margaret Thatcher held the post of prime minister for the entire decade and was pivotal in the year-long miners' strike and the recession of the early 80s. When Seniors held Summer Meeting in Coventry in the

heart of England the report noted 'a strangely still heart because all the factories were closed for the annual holidays and some, sadly, closed for good, as Coventry has been hard hit by the recession.' A national rail strike closed all mainline stations causing consternation on one Annual Day.

The short but fierce Falklands Conflict was the largest and most extended series of naval battles since WW2 and many Wives had husbands and sons involved. **Liverpool** opened their meeting with a moving prayer for peace in the South Atlantic. This decade also saw the Hillsborough, Zeebrugge, Alpha Piper, Lockerbie and Marchioness disasters. **Sevenoaks** and **Guildford** both remarked on the devastation caused around them by the Great Storm in 1987.

Mobile phones, compact discs, camcorders, desktop computers, disposable cameras and contact lenses came into everyday usage and the initial proposal for the World Wide Web was framed. **Oxford** had a talk on The Impact of Micro-Computers in the House.

“ Ours is a sustaining Fellowship from which we gain and grow. What we gain from WF is up to us, for WE are the membership ”

Pamela Halford

Rubik's Cube, Pictionary and Mastermind became popular and Game Boy was released in Japan by Nintendo. Organ transplantation, sophisticated diagnostic machines and pacemakers became commonplace and the first human genome project was initiated. Smallpox was finally eradicated but the first cases of Aids (HIV) were diagnosed. At a **Nottingham** meeting they asked Should We be Giving Aid to Aids? Glue sniffing gave way to crack cocaine and Ecstasy, and Prozac and liposuction became available. Plastic surgeons provided plump and fuller lips, one of the must haves at that time.

The Sloane Ranger first became prominent; young, upper class and middle class people who shared distinctive and common lifestyles. One archetypal Sloane was Lady Diana Spencer. After marrying Prince Charles she became a fashion icon all over the world. The paparazzi took a constant interest in her. The term Yuppie came into vogue. These were well-paid, young upwardly mobile professionals who worked in the City and had luxurious and acquisitive lifestyles.

The forces that motivated free enterprise and home ownership also drove rock music, new wave bands and Goths to drug and sexual experimentation, outlandish fashion ideas and loud music. It was a trend-setting decade and celebrities such as Madonna, Michael Jackson, Boy George, and Eurythmics made it what it was. *The Terminator*, *Back to the Future*, *Top Gun* and *Ghostbusters* and Andrew Lloyd Webber dominated the West End. The 80s saw an expansion of television channels with the emergence of Channel 4 and Sky and the introduction of daytime programming. Satirical humour was evolving with *Yes Minister*, *Spitting Image*, *The Young Ones* and *Blackadder* commissioned. The

protests that erupted after the release of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* were the first indication of a religious militancy among some British Muslims. Strong social trends developed. It became undesirable to wear real fur and faux fur began to be used by fashion houses.

Noteworthy women included the Greenham Common protesters, Oprah Winfrey, Madonna, Florence Griffith Joyner, Janet Street Porter and the biggest – Diana.

At the start of this decade not only did the Treasurer die during her tenure but the SWFCC, Irene Bee also sadly died in the middle of her term of office. This was a great loss to WF. Hazel White, the Vice Chairman, temporarily stood in until a new election.

Voting for officers was different from today. The whole Fellowship elected the Central Chairman in October; the winner was announced at Autumn Conference and took office at the AGM. Later Mrs Purvis suggested that branches should nominate a candidate from a list of eligible contenders and the Executive should make the final decision. It was usual for a surfeit of members to stand for Executive posts. Once elected the successful member was allocated a role, hopefully one that she was capable of performing! A popular venue for the AGM was Holy Trinity Church Hall, Brompton Road. 'What a perfect venue, close to Harrods (one member slipped off after the meeting



Linda Goodman, Alice Stebbings and Jane Teare

and bought a smocked Viyella dress) and the V&A ... and that priceless luxury seldom found in London, free parking outside!' The report continued 'Executive Committee took their places on the platform, one array of well-turned ankles under the table made it look more like a lovely legs competition.'

There was a certain ebb and flow of branches but Wives continued to evolve and, until the end of the 80s, it was steady and consistent. At one point **Oxford** had four branches, each with a very large membership. (After an inter-branch church service 120 of their members had tea in their Chairman's house!) Among all the branches that were founded in the 80s, perhaps the boldest was **Guernsey**, begun by a group of Scatteredes. From its beginning **Shrewsbury** was created as a single All Age branch although they still had to supply officers to both Wives and Seniors. **Aldershot** became All Age too. Mollie Jones attended the inaugural meeting of a new Scattered Group in South Wales but it did not flourish. ➔



The marriage of Lizzie and Allan Leroy

“ 1984? Time to take stock? What sort of branch are we? A happy mix of just come up, career ladies, full and part-time, energetic grannies and senior Seniors. Some of us live up remote country lanes, some in Essex villages, some in local market towns, some even in Chelmsford. We argue about daytime or evening meetings, with or without WF, with or without husbands, and what WF and SWF are all about. Perhaps as Seniors we have more chance to find out, as bereavement and ill-health teach us what fellowship means ”

Chelmsford

The age problem was a perennial one. A letter in the magazine asked 'Should we grow out of our obsession with the Age Question?' At BOC WF members were entreated to work more closely with Seniors. The reports subsequently stressed the active co-operation between the two tiers. Another constant was the affiliation with NCW but the membership voted to continue. Because of the premise that WF does not speak with a corporate voice, complex plans were drawn up to review draft proposals by Central before instructing the representative how to vote.

A new Service Book was compiled by a sub-committee comprising two Anglicans, two Catholics and two Non Conformists, which reflected the interdenominational makeup of the Fellowship. They drafted an alternative service which was included in a new book together with a revision of the current service. A new Constitution was drafted and **Winchester** produced a sample 'letter of introduction' for branch Chairmen to send to prospective members. **Tunbridge Wells** produced an enamel WF badge.



The BOC format underwent changes. Proposals for it to be biennial or a one or two-day meeting held triennially were put forward. The first residential BOC was held in 1988. WFCC Gillian Purvis referred to misgivings in some branches about the value of BOC and doubt of the relevance or necessity of such a conference but she argued that it was extremely important. At one BOC there was discussion about divorced and single members. The statement that 'The Constitution clearly states that WF is a Fellowship of married women, and we do not want quantity at all costs' put an end to debate and there was reconfirmation that divorcees could join as long as they were Christians.

A survey of Wives conducted towards the end of the decade suggested that less than 1.5% were under 30 and 22% under 40 and numbers were dropping, largely due to members returning to work. In their Central Chairmen's letters, both Gillian Purvis and Eleri Burden mentioned the problems associated with working wives; they urged branches to be more flexible and to plan their programmes in such a way as to welcome and include them. One Wife suggested that there were too many Wives from some professions and should we limit this? In response to the challenged role of women in the 1980s, **Haywards Heath** invited Wives to a discussion about women's rights, duties and responsibilities to themselves, their families and the community. Five invited women from varying backgrounds and careers formed a lively panel.



First notelet design

Some branches found it difficult to form committees. The cost of running branches was rising and some found it necessary to charge guests for Regional Days which had hitherto been funded by the host branch.

The question of the float from Autumn Conference was raised and it was decided that it should be passed to the next organising branch to be used 'as an emergency fund for unforeseen expenses. Foreseeable costs must be covered by the conference fee.' It was agreed that if it became 'embarrassingly large' it could be sent to St Christopher's or the WF account.

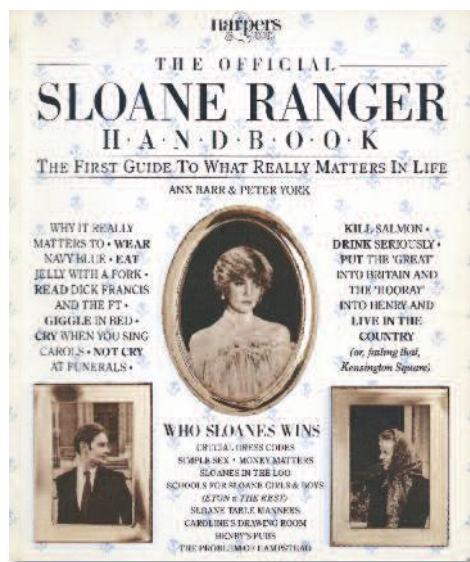
Executive duties can sometimes test Wives but they can also increase one's knowledge and skills. One Treasurer decided that

perhaps she should take an evening class in book-keeping to help in her role. However economics caught her eye 'ah yes, that sounds like money.' At her first class she discovered that it was an A Level course of 18 year olds who were banking students but WF had given her an unexpected A Level and a sympathetic ear for her exam-sitting teenagers.

WF Finances

1984	Quota	60p
	Fares Scheme	55p
	Magazine	80p
	Total =	£1.95
	<i>1588 members</i>	
1985	Quota	75p
	Fares Scheme	75p
	Magazine	£1.30
	St C levy	15p
	Total =	£2.95
	<i>1705 members</i>	
1986	Quota	75p
	Fares Scheme	85p
	Magazine	£1.60
	St C levy	15p
	BOC	15p
	Total =	£3.50
	<i>1698 members</i>	

Members contributed many interesting articles to the magazine on life abroad, holidays and current affairs. **Blackheath** wrote an article entitled A Visit to a Sikh Temple and a **Twickenham** Wife wrote about the adoption of a child. There were contributions from children, poems, obituaries of branch members and a regular book review by Tony Dale, called 'Still reading ...' The first black and white pictures appeared and the magazines were



embroidery, the Mary Rose, Tearfund and the Overlord Tapestry. **Worcester** studied the Warnock Report and several branches discussed the new Alternative Service Book and CS Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. **Lancaster's** study group read *Christian Lifestyle* by Edward Patey.

When **London** invited a police inspector to talk to them he admitted he was 'used to dangerous criminals, but how nervous he was at the prospect of addressing a roomful of mild-mannered Senior Wives.'

Outings included **Esher's** visit to the new Museum of London and **Sevenoaks** had their questions answered about the new Channel Tunnel. Other destinations included the National Theatre, a cruise ship, a Cordon Bleu school, a brewery and **Nottingham** visited the Pebble Mill Studios. Some branches travelled further afield, **North London** had a trip to Boulogne and **Eastbourne** ventured to the Loire subsequently followed by the Italian Lakes, the Black Forest and the Dordogne. In 1987 members of both WF and SWF visited the **Guernsey** branch to support it, this proved to be a memorable occasion.

Reports noted that many new babies were born to members – **Newbury** had four in one year. Sometimes babies outnumbered Wives and crèches were operated by many branches, often run by Seniors.

Conferences were still very important and both WF and SWF enjoyed a full calendar of events although the absence of hats was regretted as early as 1982. Events were well attended – Annual Day at Hampton Court, with a service in the Chapel Royal and a pub lunch, was attended by 314 Wives and 330 went to Tonbridge School. In 1985 Annual Day guests were treated to a river cruise to



Shrewsbury Regional Day

see the new Thames Barrier and in 1988 the venue was the Catholic Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral.

National events in the first few years of the decade were disrupted by dreadful weather, 'torrential rain, thunder and lightning.' **East Cheshire** remarked on the late frost on 26th June and **Sevenoaks** and **Guildford** both noted the devastation caused around them by the Great Storm in 1987. A Wife related her branch's journey to **Bristol** Autumn Conference when gale force winds and rain gave way to snow flurries as they stopped at Membury Services. Two of their party became separated and the remainder were getting worried as they sipped their coffee. 'Two sheepish figures emerged from the lorry driver's section next door with large steaming mugs of coffee which had cost half as much as our daintier cups!'

The theme of one Summer Meeting was Marriage, Can it Survive? As 'none of the

well-known believers of living together outside wedlock would come and speak publicly about their way of life...The Doctor played Devil's Advocate'. He considered three elements of marriage, permanence, fidelity and procreation and how differently they were regarded by the young of the day. He was later revealed as the husband of the **Rugby** Chairman. At the same meeting the Bishop of Lichfield commented that in his previous incumbency as Bishop of Matabeleland, a Senior Wife was somewhat different to a WF Senior Wife! Obviously briefing had been misleading at **Sevenoaks** Autumn Conference when 'the first speaker startled us somewhat by enquiring if we were all married!' **Guildford** experimented with the format when they hosted Autumn Conference. They had three speakers in the morning and after lunch the speakers formed a panel to which questions were posed from the floor. At Annual Day in **Lancaster** 'the address from the provost was,

designated winter and summer.

Wives' historic attention to the moral welfare of their children continued. **Chelmsford** invited a speaker on The Development of Faith in the Adolescent. Many branches had talks about the Moonies 'who fascinated and terrified us', often relating stories of rescues from the sect. The Year of the Disabled encouraged branches to find out more and **Kenilworth's** theme of the USA focused their study group for a year. **Leamington Spa & Warwick** arranged for Count Nikolai Tolstoy to visit, **Weybridge** welcomed Mrs Ann Barnardo and **North London** enticed Danny Abse to their meeting. Speakers included Phil Drabble, Colin Dexter discussing the Detective Novel with **Oxford**, Delia Smith at **Bury St Edmunds** on A Recipe for Faith as well as Prof Charles Fletcher, the TV Doctor and Maisie's son, and poet John Stallworthy, Peggy's son. Recurring topics were flower arranging, Christmas decorations,

to say the least, different! Having recently addressed the Variety Club, he had acquired the mannerisms from both Frankie Howerd and Leslie Crowther and the twinkle of good humour never left his eyes.'

Gillian Purvis remembered one incident at Autumn Conference:

“I was about to ceremoniously enter the Mayor’s Parlour, when I was introduced by the Mayor’s Mace Bearer as – ‘MISS Gillian Purvis, from the Wives’ Fellowship.’ The Mayor was holding a bowl of crisps, his wife turned to him and said, ‘I’m sure Mrs Purvis would like a nibble with you.’ During lunch on the second day, Gillian sat next to Edwina Currie, one of the speakers, who proceeded to go round the top table asking them all to sponsor her at a forthcoming Charity Swim”

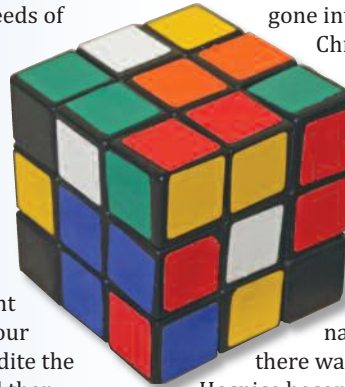
The age old conundrum of chatter in church still persisted. A magazine correspondent quoted Madge Braby: ‘Never talk unnecessarily in Church. The Church is Christ’s audience chamber. Talk only to Him. Keep other conversations for outside.’

1984 was the 50th anniversary of the founding of Senior Wives’ Fellowship and to celebrate, Annual Day was held in Chester. 325 members from 50 branches attended the service in the Cathedral and lunch at the Grosvenor Hotel. The guest speaker was Prof. Alan Gemmell from Gardener’s Question Time. One **North Cheshire** writer noted ‘How fortunate we are in Orwell’s 1984 to have the strength and fellowship of Wives to support us.’ The 70th anniversary of the founding of Wives’ Fellowship had not been marked.

The act of donating the proceeds of the sale of JB House to the Bereaved Children’s project at St Christopher’s presaged our association with St Christopher’s, which grew stronger to the extent that a member of WF was invited by Dame Cicely to join the Council of Management. This unique position was held right up until 2014. In later years our donations were used to expedite the bed replacement scheme and then bathroom refurbishment. Suggestions were sought from the membership on how the annual donation, then £5000, might be used by the Trust in ‘educational studies in the field of theology and social work.’

Following a division of loyalty as many local hospices were established, at a BOC, an announcement was made by the Central Chairman that a great deal of thought had

“For several days beforehand one rushes round in a fever of activity tying up all sorts of complex arrangements to ensure one’s family’s survival during one’s brief absence, but once one is actually en route, one’s mind is miraculously sponged clean of such domestic trivia and becomes increasingly receptive to the diverse stimuli which the conference provides. Times were certainly different on British Rail. One writer recalls ‘I picture the train to Cheshire held up at Euston for our own Doreen Bugler who had been delayed by the Underground’”
Sheelah Draper



gone into the choice of St Christopher’s and since it was the one unifying factor of WF the membership should continue to support it but ‘there is no reason at all why branches should not give money to their local hospices as well, though not in the name of WF.’ Subsequently there was discussion about the Hospice becoming the sole charity supported for a further five years.

Fundraising ideas were varied – from **Rugby’s** plant sale to a recipe book. The latter was vetoed by Executive as the capital outlay was deemed too great but individual branches were encouraged to

Senior Wives’ Fellowship Bournemouth Branch

invites you to their Regional Day in Poole on Wednesday 14th May ’86



For the sand on the beach
 For the gulls on the cliff
 For the slow river’s reach
 For the salt seas whiff
 We thank You, heavenly Father.
 From Words to Share (J.A.E. Young)



Annual Day Woburn

bring roneoed or photocopied recipes to the AGM for sale.

Branches continued to reach out to their community with **Canterbury** taking the deaf for an outing and **Eastbourne** inviting RUKBA (a charity for the elderly) members for tea. It was not only care for the outside community where Wives excelled, they also looked after each other. An example was given by a **Sheffield** Wife who had



Guernsey

been taken ill whilst in Rugby. During her three week hospital stay, **Rugby** Seniors visited every day, brought thoughtful gifts, offered overnight accommodation to her husband and most of all 'brought their warm friendship.' WFCC Gillian Purvis was completely supported after the death of her husband and Diana Odgers, Scattered Secretary, thanked her scattered members for their kindness when her daughter was killed. As one Wife declared 'Who cares for carers, Wives does!'

The weather impinged on activities rather more than usual during this decade – fog and rain dampened **Liverpool's** garden party. **Northampton's** children were battered by gale force winds on their outing and **Sevenoaks'** picnic was 'held in typically English style in the pouring rain.' Even **Guernsey's** beach party was abandoned. **Middle Thames** had a tricky winter when it cancelled its Christmas lunch because of snow, moved its wine tasting and dinner because of burst pipes and overcame panic when the main course was found to be off!



Mollie Jones' SWF Exec

Tennis tournaments were a popular fundraiser and social event and **Mid Herts** added croquet to the mix.

Birmingham organised a family outing to Warwick Castle, and their younger children went to the Puppet Theatre. Branches were starting to find it difficult to arrange activities that engaged their teenagers. However disco dancing lessons were put on by one branch for their teens, **Weybridge** laid on a roller disco and **Mid Herts** organised skating and squash lessons.

Haywards Heath's youngsters were taken to see the Royal Tournament, **Nottingham's** were taken down into the city caves and **Liverpool's** went to Speke Hall. **Sanderstead's** children's excursion was to Mount Pleasant Sorting Office.

Husbands and Wives' parties continued. **Bristol's** large membership meant that 70 were invited to one member's house and 'seats were found for everyone!' **Medway Towns** held a Caribbean evening, **Nottingham** hosted Paté and Plonk parties and **Birmingham** had Ham & Eggs!

Blackheath held an Antiques Roadshow event and **Woldingham** invited Hilary Kay to talk on Tomorrow's Antiques. **Harrogate** spent a day at Ripon Races and **West Sussex** had a snooker evening, perhaps inspired by the golden years of televised snooker.



The marriage of Sally and Charles Barker-Dodds

An Escape from Domesticity

*Rush with the children to school
Thaw out cakes and that apple fool
Soak the breakfast mugs in the sink
And give all the dogs a good drink
Sweep toys all under the stair
HONK! HONK! 'Hold on - I'll be there!'
Do face and brush through my hair
Slam door - and I'm walking on air!
I'm off for a Regional Day,
I feel quite light-hearted and gay!
There's time to talk and relax -
Look forward to LUNCH, not just snacks.
In Church I was 'free' I could pray!
No small boy's 'What did he say?'
Then a hubbub of Wives, so smart
As with Hostesses they depart.*

*Such a lunch, the table and flowers -
It must have taken her hours!
And everything's done with such ease
True fellowship, wanting to please.*

*And then it's a talk on 'The Arts',
And I've met a colleague from 'Barts'
All too soon, it's half past three,
Just time for a biscuit and tea.*

*Home! And they rush to the door
'Mum, Fido's been sick on the floor,
And I hug them all, and they say
'You're nicer when you've been away!
Mum, WHERE did you GO today?'*

Trisha Harris



Joan Ferrer and Sheila Ferrar

“ A contemplative Fellowship, a catholic Fellowship, a compassionate Fellowship, a companionable Fellowship. Whatever we do in the name of the Fellowship, needs to be measured against these four words ”

Margaret Presgrave

1990s

Spin, Spice & HRT

This was to be a decade full of startling news and one that provided the perfect bridge between the outrageous 80s and the dawn of the new century.

The 90s arrived with a bang in more ways than one; a hurricane and severe storms hit the UK, the Poll Tax Riots hit London, Geoffrey Howe made his famous resignation speech and Margaret Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister. **Twickenham's** speaker, the wife of a Tory MP, visited during the leadership crisis, 'giving it much extra topical interest'. John Major triumphed in the general election.

Across the world there was widespread redrawing of maps as Germany reunited, the USSR collapsed, Poland became a republic, Hong Kong was handed back to the Chinese and African nations merged and separated. Oxford members heard a first-hand account of the coup in Moscow. Leaders who were to motivate their countries were Nelson

Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Lech Walesa, Bill Clinton and Saddam Hussein.

After Britain's humiliating exit from the ERM on Black Wednesday, all the hard won gains of the 80s seemed to be lost. It marked the start of a deep recession. The housing market collapsed, inflation soared, unemployment reached 2.5 million and the collapse of Barings Bank and the popping of the Dotcom bubble also exacerbated the gloom. WFCC Joan Ferrer wrote 'In these hard times, when unemployment is widespread and money is short, do we exhibit fellowship? Are we actually looking at ways to help those members who have fallen on hard times?' Later she wrote that indeed we do: 'Our Fellowship came into its own in these difficult times through prayer and fellowship.' Numerous Westminster sex scandals helped set the Tories on a slow walk to electoral annihilation and in 1997 Tony Blair's New Labour won a landslide

victory and spin came to mean more than dizziness. The first Muslim MP was elected. The Sunday Trading Act allowed traders to open for eight hours on Sundays and ASBOs were introduced. The Child Support Agency was designed to bring fairer financial settlements to divorcing couples and the Nursery Education Voucher Scheme was started. Spousal rape became a crime in England and Wales. Notable political milestones were the Good Friday Agreement that ended the IRA's campaign of bombing and the establishment of Scottish and Welsh Assemblies.

Kuwait was invaded by Iraq, which led to Operation Desert Storm. **Chelmsford** had a Scattered Wife in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf War 'cast a long shadow' over **Bury St Edmunds** where one member's husband was serving. In her letter the Central Chairman asked Wives to pray for peace in the Middle East. **Abergavenny** noted that 'turmoil in Europe must not pass unheeded and here is a clear target for our prayer' as Chechen, Kosovan and Serbian wars were waged and British troops were sent to Sarajevo, following the Bosnian genocide. In Rwanda up to one million, mainly Tutsi people, were killed. Wives arrived in a subdued state and a minute's silence was held at the AGM on the morning of the Dunblane massacre. Other massacres followed at Waco and Columbine Schools, a Sarin attack in Tokyo hit the headlines and our farming community was rocked by the BSE crisis. More happily, **Blackheath** held a 'joyful celebration' on the return of Terry Waite from his captivity.

NASA landed a craft on Mars, the Hubble telescope was launched, DNA identification was used in criminology for the first time, the Human Genome Project commenced,



The Spice Girls

Dolly the sheep (the first mammal to be cloned) was born, biodegradable products were invented and the first genetically modified food went on sale.

The National Lottery was launched, the Channel Tunnel opened, legislation allowed polytechnics to become universities, Punch ceased publication and the Scouts admitted girls. The terms political correctness, risk assessments, the Euro, Viagra and climate change became common parlance. Entrepreneurship saw one **Bury St Edmunds** member set up an ice cream bus. George Carey became Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church of England voted to allow women to become priests prompting **Shrewsbury** to take 'a questioning view of the ordination of women.' HIV became a health risk for heterosexuals and there was increasing

acceptance of homosexuality.

The Queen dubbed the 40th anniversary of her accession her 'annus horribillus' due to various scandals damaging the image of her family. Fires broke out at Windsor Castle (Buckingham Palace was opened to the public to raise funds for repairs) and at York Minster, and the Royal Yacht Britannia was decommissioned. Princess Diana died in Paris. Thirty two million people watched her funeral on TV. **Aldershot's** outing to Kensington Palace was cancelled as tributes were still being laid at the railings in her memory.

As the economy flourished, Britpop and Cool Britannia became buzzwords and pride in British culture and patriotism increased. Contributors included musicians, Blur, Oasis and the Spice Girls and designers and artists,



Margaret Presgrave and Pamela Halford

Alexander McQueen, Damien Hurst and Tracey Emin. The 90s also saw an increase in rave and acid culture, creating a new scene of dance music, drug taking and fashions. It had its own uniform of neon colours, short skirts and crop tops. The Princess of Wales was the antithesis - a major icon and fashion influence on the majority. Elizabeth Hurley wore her infamous black Versace dress.

Sebastian Faulks published *Birdsong* and Terry Deary his first *Horrible Histories*. Popular films included *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Harry Potter* and *The Lion King* and on TV *Keeping up Appearances*, *Mr Bean* and *Teletubbies* were watched. The BBC launched its online news service and the London Eye began turning.

Helen Sharman was the first woman in space, Stella Rimmington the first female director of MI5, Betty Boothroyd the first female Speaker of the House of Commons and the first all-woman team to reach the North Pole were British.

The boom of membership up until this time to the possible bust of the Fellowship in the 90s as numbers diminished occupied our minds. How to attract younger women into WF, how SWF could be more flexible to



90s notelet

accommodate younger working Wives and the possibility of branches becoming All Age were major concerns. A survey found that 75% of Wives worked full or part-time. Christian marriage was severely under threat and WF found itself having to reassess its core values. There were so many options for women and WF asked them for commitment, which they found difficult. To tackle the first issue, evening meetings, crèches, and differing days were offered for meetings although as **Leamington Spa & Warwick** attested, it was the same core of loyal members who attended. Wives' multitasking skills are often put to the test but even **Shrewsbury** were astonished that 'the delicious lunch after the AGM, held at the Chairman's house, was served in between sending all four sons off to university and foreign parts that day!' WFCC reported that

'Wives are joining later, usually in their 30s and even early 40s.' Apathy in volunteering to serve as branch officers remained a problem and one branch asked 'is it only us who are suffering from this insidious disease?' No!

The age limit of WF members was raised to 53 but debate rumbled on - 'we discuss, we decide, but shall we ever be satisfied?' Subsequently Wives voted to increase it further but with Seniors disagreeing the motion did not

achieve a 2/3 majority and failed. Dwindling numbers in WF was a major concern and there were frequent references to this problem in the magazine, ways of rectifying this were discussed endlessly.

Bournemouth voiced their concerns that they had no Wives group and no younger recruits. In a recruitment drive **Bristol** held a New Member lunch which yielded 12 new Wives.

Lancaster suffered too; in one year they lost 8 of their 24 members to SWF. There was still reluctance by Wives to move up to Seniors. As **Coventry** SWF advised 'perhaps members of Wives generally should reflect that unless they

move in to modernise our thinking, we shall go on looking too old and meeting only at times suitable to the over 60s.' To cement relations between branches extra care was taken in programme planning and invitations to sister branches were issued. The four **Cheltenham** branches agreed that their officers would meet together four times a



Queue for the loo!

year to co-ordinate their programmes.

In her 1990 letter, the SWF chairman mentioned co-incidences; the biggest co-incidence being that Sheila Ferrar was chairman of SWF and Joan Ferrer chairman of WF, they were both Roman Catholic and both had had sons at Downside. No doubt this caused a great deal of confusion.

Although attire was far less formal than before and most members did not wear a hat to meetings, some did for national events. At Annual Day at Knebworth one commented that 'it was lovely to see so many hats.' WFCC Eleri Wyn Burden always wore one and encouraged Joan to do the same.

The BOC in 1991 posed three questions, how to encourage younger women to join, how can Seniors be more flexible to accommodate new, younger members and how to communicate news from Executive to branches? A suggestion that the whole membership should elect the CC was discussed but the status quo remained that 'Executive members are in the best position to elect a Chairman.' There was also clarification about divorcees; a member who became divorced could remain, a new divorced woman could join but a divorcee living with a partner should be asked to resign. However many felt that 'in a caring Fellowship there should be room for flexibility at branch level.' The NCW affiliation was put to the vote again; WF elected to sever the link but SWF continued.

Regional Scheme Meetings were used to ascertain branch views and to improve communication between branches and Executive. The Fellowship was in danger of fragmenting and a feeling of 'wholeness' was emphasised by Margaret Presgrave - 'It really matters that we see our Fellowship as a whole rather than as a mere collection of different branches'. The first joint BOC for WF and SWF endeavoured to meld the two, however this failed in the view of one attendee as they held both Communion and Mass. 'What a pity one service for all couldn't be arranged.'

Membership of some branches fell to alarming levels; at one point



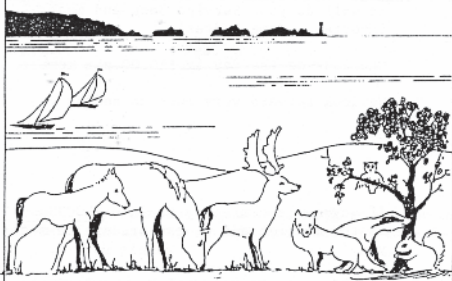
75th anniversary celebrations

“ So, as we celebrate 75 years of Fellowship, let us look back with gratitude ... and forward with hope ... and who knows – with a bit of luck I too might just make the centenary celebrations in 2016 ”

Pamela Halford

Harrogate had only ten members. Others, usually Seniors, were very large, a knock-on from the post-war baby boom. With 83 members, **Wimbledon** reported that approximately half attended meetings, still hosted in homes. WFCC wrote how disappointed she was to hear that several branches were to become All Age, 'we should strive to ensure that over the next 25 years the number of our branches increases significantly.' This was in contrast to a prescient report from BOC that it was 'a definite feeling of some of the members that eventually we will unite as one group of all ages.' Although called All Age the first

SENIOR WIVES FELLOWSHIP
NEW FOREST BRANCH
REGIONAL DAY
10TH MAY, 1995.



—At: MILFORD ON SEA—

branches were not as we know them now. The members were divided by age into Wives and Seniors and they had a Chairman and Secretary for both parts. They only had one vote as they could vote at both AGMs. A resolution from **West Sussex** that WF and SWF amalgamate was defeated at an AGM. Over the decade numerous branches did fold or merge, or become All Age but several opened, most often when branches divided or Scattered clusters decided to go it alone. **Medway Towns** voted not to split. Some branches, such as **Woodbridge** and **Salisbury Plain**, which were SWF, earnestly tried to start WF groups as they had no ready members to feed them. In 1998 there were 3189 Seniors and in 1999 there were fewer than 1000 Wives in 48 branches of which 14 were All Age. Only 180 members were younger than 40 and seven were younger than 30.

The magazine continued to publish articles submitted by members. These were often poems, prayers, book reviews (some of books written by Wives) and overseas experiences, both travel and living. One example was the tale of two Wives who sailed across the Atlantic. They also explored life experiences such as coping with cancer, advanced driving and their experiences of running a B&B. The Scattered Secretary's letter kept members informed with newsy updates of their families and movements, 'fellowship by post.' By reading the magazine closely one can follow members as they moved around the country. One example was Maureen Barnes who took on the SWFCC role despite her husband having severe Parkinson's disease. Her peregrinations included **Tidworth**, **Scattered (Hong Kong and Northumberland)**, **Radlett**, **Sevenoaks**, **Salisbury Plain** and **Truro**



A Worcester Tea Party

branches. What a wonderful gift to have a ready circle of friends wherever you move to.

A sub-committee was tasked with reinvigorating the magazine. A competition was launched for a new design for the cover, the prize was a £10 book token. Five entries were received and although a winner was selected, the design (a detailed cross-stitch sampler) was not used as it was not deemed suitable for reproduction and the cover remained unchanged. They also decided to revert to separate sections for WF and SWF and book reviews returned. Sets of back copies of the magazine were bound for posterity.

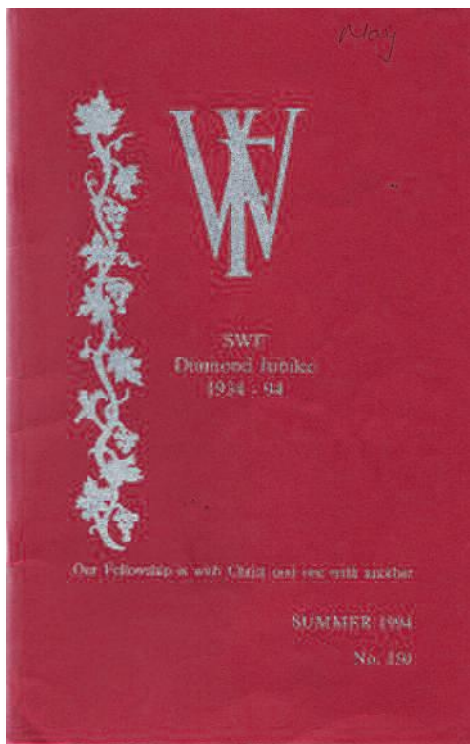
Sub-groups within branches

flourished although some prayer and discussion groups closed.

Northumbria studied Michael Quoist's *The Christian Response* and **Oxford** discussed the new taxation scheme for women. **Chichester** ran an embroidery group. The lunches provided at **Bristol's** Bridge Club became so grand that it was too onerous for the hostess, they went back to basics and the group was built up again. Despite the ageing membership babies were being produced regularly – **South Trent** boasted four babies in one year!

Some rural branches such as **Abergavenny** were very widely spread and members had to travel many miles to attend meetings. **Salisbury Plain** wrote 'it showed the scattered nature of the branch that





Diamond Jubilee edition of magazine

members boarded the same train as it passed through three counties' on the way to London. **East Anglian Scattered**s really were scattered, some had a 100 mile round trip to meet up and in one year they visited Burnham Market, Southwold, Sheringham and Norwich.

Camberley had a tour of Eton College, **Coventry** visited Chatsworth, **Cambridge** saw the Quaker Tapestries, **Winchester** toured a farm and **Worcester** took a dip in the Droitwich Brine Baths. **Epsom** looked behind the scenes at Derby Day 'even weighing in on the jockeys' scales - very brave.' **Haywards Heath** toured a member's

“ The past is our heritage and our example. The old aims and Christian ideals of the Fellowship cannot change ... but it is up to us to express them to potential Wives in a way that they will understand. We have so much to share ”

Mary Garton

Scandia Hus house. '50 of us trampled over her new carpets, oohing and aahing at her lovely house. She must have heaved a sigh of relief that it was a fine day.' **Stour Valley** went on a nightingale walk in a nature reserve followed by a fish and chip supper - 'the sublime to the ridiculous!' Other destinations included the Tate Gallery, Finchcocks Musical Museum, Cadbury World and Crown Derby. **Esher** had a shopping trip to Harrods and **Abergavenny** ventured further afield visiting Normandy.

Topics for talks ranged from the light-hearted to the serious. **Birmingham** aimed to 'balance the Christian, the culinary and the cultural'. **Lancaster** aimed for the culinary when Maxine Stott gave a cookery demonstration but due to grammatical laxity in the report, they appeared to hark back to Roman times 'and one of our members helped us to make delightful stuffed mice (complete with dresses and hats).' **Weybridge** asked themselves 'If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?' **Nottingham** examined Racial Awareness and Our Moral Dilemmas as Parents. **Harrogate** appraised Motherhood in the Nineties and **Oxted & Limpsfield** asked Is Marriage Relevant in the 1990s? Many branches did not meet in the school holidays but **Oxford**



Lis Stanley and Dame Cicely Saunders

decided to hold informal coffee mornings in committee members' homes to help engender fellowship. Home grown meetings flourished with branches realising the talents of their members such as a **Mid Herts** member talking about textile conservation or often, in sessions such as Wives and Lives, they discovered hitherto unknown facts about their friends. As many members of **Coventry** were celebrating their Silver wedding anniversaries they held a Here Comes the Bride lunch to which guests brought dresses 'in varying shades of crumpled grey', albums and other mementoes. A **Cheltenham** hostess had more than expected when, during an illustrated farm talk, 'two ducks and two geese made themselves very much at home on the pale gold sitting room carpet.'

Popular speakers were Mrs Bernard Wetherill, Lady Coggan and Sara Jones, widow of Col H Jones. All were the wives of

prominent men, who spoke of their own lives. Many branches borrowed ideas from others so there was a rash of talks on colour counselling, Childline, Women in the Ministry, Mrs Diana Lamplugh advising How to Beat Aggression in the Workplace, Reflexology, the Alexander technique and Romanian Orphanages. Ex WFCC Mollie Jones gave talks on keep fit and travels in Zambia. **Birmingham** appear to have had the first talk on Living with Dementia. The new science of genetic engineering also proved popular. After combing through programmes, Barbara Mangles, whilst Central Secretary, compiled a list of the top ten meetings: top of the list were Aromatherapy and HRT and for SWF it was Beekeeping.

Many branches celebrated their own branch anniversaries: **North London** did it in style. As their founding had been in 1945 they held a VE themed event. There was wartime dress, mementoes and Spam pie.

Church services were still a cornerstone of every programme and even in its first year **Shrewsbury** reported that they had worshipped in Catholic, C of E, Methodist and Congregational churches.

“Confidences are exchanged which would never be whispered, perhaps, on one’s home territory. Grievances and disappointments, hopes and fears are voiced. Some talk. Some listen”

Does this sound familiar? ‘So off we set! Crack of dawn, children organised, husband organised, animals organised, anything else? Just a car full of Wives.’ Travel to national

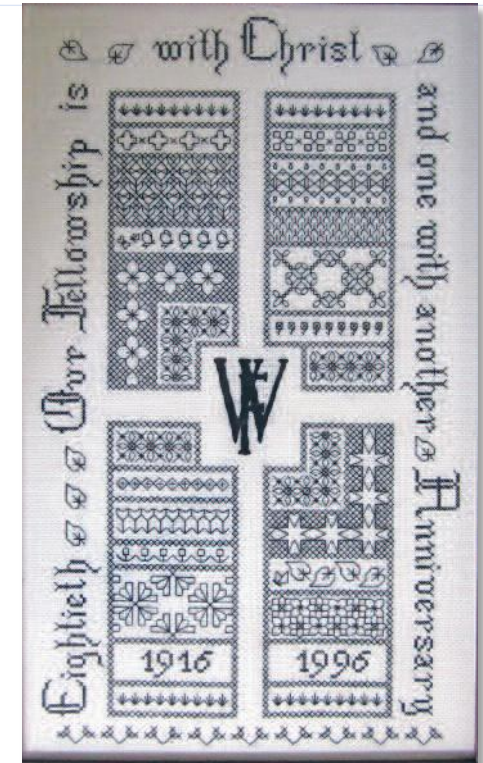
events continued by coach, car and train and when the ticket collector clipped the **Wimbledon Wives’** tickets he commented that there were four ladies just like them in the next carriage: ‘he had unerringly identified a quartet of Wives!’ They also discovered that their Chairman could milk cows! An AGM at Westminster Cathedral Hall was delayed by 15 minutes because of a bomb scare on the Underground and **Bristol** only managed to attend courtesy of ‘a kind London Transport guard who let us out of the Circle Line to head for a taxi.’ WF certainly widens horizons. The report goes on to say that it was their Chairman’s first train journey since college and she ate her first M&S sandwich! **North London** provided flowers and the coffee, bringing all the cups

“As members left the church, traffic was brought to a standstill as wave upon wave of WF ladies ebbed and flowed in a sea of hats, as they crossed the road to the Leofric Hotel. I have these memories of hats; memories of hundreds of Wives streaming across Broadgate and practically everyone was wearing a hat. Hats of every size and shape, hue and style, with flowers or feathers or bows. Hats that could confidently be sported at Henley or a smart wedding. These processions, so elegant, stopped and held up the traffic in Coventry for some time, much to the surprise of the worthy citizens of this city’.

‘We’ve a Fellowship that thrives To last us all our lives. Aren’t you glad you’re a Senior Wife?’



Judith Duckworth's Exec



A magazine cover competition entry

and saucers with them. Frustrations were vented in one report of an AGM when ‘the Constitution, which had been circulated the previous year, was discussed as if it had never seen the light of day before.’ A reflection of the change in lifestyle during this time is the fact that in 1998 half the branches were not represented at the WF AGM.

On their way to Autumn Conference **Nottingham** made a detour to the Aquascutum factory shop. With the car already loaded with ‘three enormous boxes of food and a surfboard’ they had another detour on their return to drop them off with the driver’s son who had just started university. **Guildford** thanked their Seniors with a Pudding Party for helping them entertain 250 Wives. Early arrivals at one

Annual Day ‘met the Central Chairman dolling herself up in the loos, anyway she looked the part, with a lovely hat.’ Who was more bemused at another Annual Day when Wives shared the lobby of a Forte Hotel with the Association of ex-boxers?

Despite some members’ reluctance to attend events outside their own branch and entreaties in the magazine to do so, there was no shortage of opportunities. In 1994 there were ten Regional Days.

Spirits were high at the start of this decade, the Fellowship was about to celebrate its 75th anniversary and did so in Holy Trinity Church, Coventry in 1991, when over 600, ‘a swarm of Wives’, attended a wonderful



Sheffield posh hats

service and lunch. To wear a hat or not to wear a hat was the biggest conundrum. The service was taken by Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward whose mother was a Wife. Joan Ferrer wrote in her letter that he had expressed his wish to support the Fellowship, indeed later leading the SWF Annual Day. 'We have now acquired a Wives' Bishop'.

SWF celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in 1994 with a service at Rochester Cathedral followed by lunch in the Corn Exchange. The speaker was the headmistress of Benenden who spoke appropriately about The Changing Status of Women from 1916 to the Present Day. Six past CCs read the intercessions.

“Wives is an oasis of refreshment and spiritual help”

(WF BOC 1994)

'The greatest gift this country has given the world this century is the hospice movement.'
William Rees-Mogg.

The bond between WF and St Christopher's Hospice strengthened. Dame Cicely, recently presented with the Papal Award of Damehood of St Gregory, spoke at several Wives events and as a 75th anniversary gift, Wives provided curtains for the chapel. Other speakers from the Hospice included Dr Thomas West and, christened by Charity Rep, Sandy Fisher, Dr 'Dishy' Dunlop. When Sandy died suddenly, Wives hastened to donate and £1750 was raised which bought display cabinets for the Study Centre.

The Fellowship joined in the Thanksgiving Service in Westminster Abbey to celebrate the 25th anniversary of St Christopher's. The first Wives Day at the Hospice was held for SWF in 1995. The St Christopher's Millennium Project was set up in 1997 and provided bursaries for overseas professionals to travel to St. Christopher's for training in palliative care. The Millennium

What Kind Of Wife?

Are you an active member, the kind that would be missed,

Or are you just contented that your name is on the list?

Do you attend the meetings and mingle with the throng?

Do you take an active part, and help the work along?

Or are you simply satisfied to only just belong?

Do you assist the meetings and help to make things tick,

Or leave the work to just a few; then talk about the clique?

Think about it! For you know right from wrong –

Are you an active member – or do you just belong?

Trisha Harris

Fund was launched in 1999 to build an Education Centre. Branches continued to raise money usually by sales and social events but **North London** had a novel way; a Wives' Weigh-In. They paid £1 to be weighed and another £1 for each pound gained. £200 was collected from a membership of 31! In 1993 £43,000 was donated to St Christopher's. Bravely **Blackheath** decided to put on a summer concert at the Royal Naval College, sponsored by a legal company. It was a sell-out, Dame Cicely attended and £8,000 was raised.

Food continued to be a big draw at social events and branches became more adventurous. **Kenilworth** held Indonesian and Austrian suppers, **Haywards Heath** supped Glühwein and munched mince pies while **Northampton** had a Polish Christmas Eve supper with twelve fish dishes. Their subsequent cookery demonstration was foiled by a dog that ate the pastry for the tart! **Woldingham** indulged in a champagne tasting and **Lancaster** had a Danish

Smörgåsbord and a Ranch Lunch. **North London** had a Polish cookery demonstration and **Sanderstead** sampled Greek and Italian delicacies. Not content to cook in a member's home **Solihull** travelled to Florence for a week of Tuscan cooking. **Coventry** held a progressive dinner party: 'horrendous to arrange but well worth it.'

South Trent prepared a family bonfire party and **Blackheath** maintained its Scottish dancing evenings. Swimming days were popular. The day of **East Cheshire's** lunch party was 'so hot that even a few Seniors took a dip, so you see there is life after Wives!' **North London** offered croquet and tea and **Bristol** held an Epiphany Tea and when a **Bury St Edmunds** member celebrated her 90th birthday she invited her guests to 'join her in English Country dancing on her lawn!'

When branches ventured outdoors for parties, more often than not the weather was too hot or too wet. **Solihull & Knowle** were 'washed away' at an open air Romeo and Juliet production. **Tunbridge Wells** had more than rain to contend with when they attended an outdoor production beside the lake at Hever Castle. The performance was delayed while the bomb disposal squad removed a wartime bomb from the water!

Husbands and guests were not forgotten. **Wimbledon** laid on a Swingtime dance party and then a Fellowship Dance for 200 guests from surrounding branches. **Liverpool** stuck to the mantra that catering for the 'Magical forty always seemed to see us through', even though actual attendance was never known beforehand. **Purbeck** experimented by 'not only bringing our own food but also our own plates and cutlery' and **Middle Thames** held a Burns' Night Supper with one of the husbands addressing the haggis.

Journeys and Junkets

Wives' reputation for travel is renowned – journeys to far flung branches have held no fear for members. With easier and more affordable travel and more adventurous participants Wives have become more intrepid and ventured into hitherto unfamiliar regions overseas.

Under the auspices of International Church Travel, a small group of Wives, under the leadership of the Archdeacon of Oxford, made two pilgrimages in the 70s. In the 90s Mollie Jones suggested that pilgrimages to the Holy Land be resurrected. Norman Wareham, a **Canterbury** husband and lay reader at the Cathedral ran seven in all which were led by Revd John Mothersole. Since

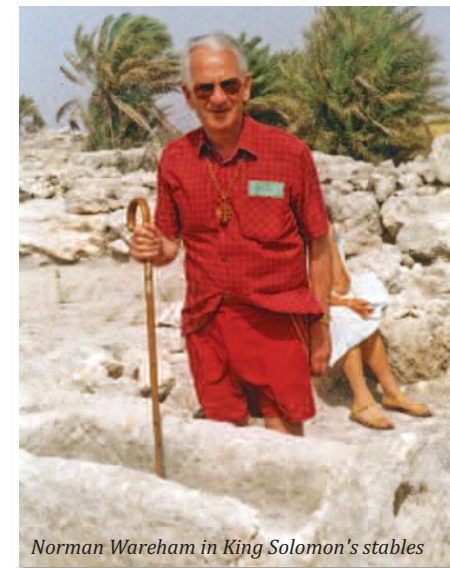
then pilgrimages have been organised by Maureen Barnes, Pat Lord and Jenny Jeapes and have been led by the Rt Rev David Rossdale, Bishop of Grimsby, Canon Ray Hubble, a **New Forest** husband, a **Cotswold** husband Revd Hugh Williams, **Salisbury Plain's** Revd Paul Abram and Revd Pamela Soult from **East Cheshire**.

The concept of pilgrimage is woven into our consciousness from an early age; remember the Canterbury Tales: 'thanne longen folk to goon pilgrimage'. We think of it as a Christian thing, but pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five pillars of Islam, and for millennia people have been travelling for the purpose of worship.

In addition to spiritual journeys, Wives have also travelled together in a more social and informal manner. In 1964 **Esher** organised a trip to Holland, then Sorrento, and other branches followed. Holland was the destination for **Cheltenham** too. In 1973 it was suggested that Wives used the services of Horizon and brochures were circulated. It was agreed to try the experiment for one year. It is not known what the uptake was, but 20 years later the Wives' Fellowship Holiday originated in Sussex. Two **Haywards Heath** Wives jointly initiated trips to European destinations. Subsequently an **Ashdown Forest** Wife took sole



Dead Sea ladies



Norman Wareham in King Solomon's stables

responsibility and, along with her son, the Wives' holiday became one of their specialities to which husbands were welcome and many lifelong friendships were forged. In 1986 a group of Wives visited the **Guernsey** branch.

The Pilgrim Prayer

*May the God who called our father Abraham
To journey into the unknown,
And guarded him and blessed him,
Protect us too and bless our journey.
May his spirit be with us on the way,
And may he lead us back to our homes in peace.
Those we love, we commend to his care.
He is with them, we shall not fear.
As for ourselves, may his presence be our companion,
May his confidence support us as we set out,
So that blessing may come to us and to everyone we meet.
Blessed are you, O Lord,
Whose presence travels with his people.
Baruch Adonai. Amen*



Oberammergau



Enjoying each other's company

Grapevine has published reports of all these journeys but there have also been several travelogues written by individual wives, recounting their often risky but exhilarating expeditions. These trips remind one of the courageous Wives embarking on trips to a new life in the Empire in the early days of WF. Expeditions recounted include a trip to Peking, an overland trip to Nepal, a solo round the world trip by train and bus, one from Beirut to Tehran and a coach trip to Calcutta in the 70s. Latterly, among others narrated are a walk on the Inca Trail and a trip to Tajikistan.

Italy



Holidays

- Italian Lakes
- Switzerland
- Charente Maritime
- Germany
- The Auvergne
- Southern France
- Austria
- Jura
- Brittany
- Oberammergau
- Ireland
- Alsace
- Northern Spain
- Normandy
- Guernsey



Ethiopia



Guernsey



Guernsey



Husbands in the Holy Land

Pilgrimages

- The Holy Land
- Oberammergau
- Santiago de Compostela
- Northern Greece
- Turkey
- Ethiopia
- Egypt
- Italy
- Austria



Oberammergau



Oberammergau



2000s

Coming Together

Thousands of revellers gathered across the UK. The final countdown to the new millennium began. Ten, nine, eight ... a collective intake of breath ... seven, six, five ... strangers gripped each other's arms ... four, three, two, one. As the clock struck midnight fireworks illuminated the night sky. A wave of euphoria engulfed the crowds but few could have predicted the explosive series of events that would define the first decade of the new century.

We were excited by the prospects that the new millennium would bring although fearful that as digits rolled over, the Millennium Bug was going to cause computers to malfunction and potentially affect everything from video recorders to power stations.

Few decades delivered as many stunning, life-changing moments as the noughties. The decade had only just begun when, on 9/11, al-Qaeda launched terrorist attacks in the

USA and provoked the Afghanistan War. As the autumn term began several branches had church services on the same day or shortly afterwards. In **Harrogate** the planned theme of service was abandoned and a special address was given by the minister. Osama bin Laden was eventually killed but it was thirteen years before multinational troops withdrew from Afghanistan. Concurrently, the UK and USA invaded Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein who they believed had weapons of mass destruction. Guantanamo Bay came into our lexicon. Wives at Summer Meeting held a two-minute silence when Britain was stunned by the 7/7 terrorist attacks on London's transport system. There were numerous mass shootings of the young across the world and Britain had a season of violent riots. The war in Syria and ISIL, the extremist militant group, became front-page news as did the huge migration of displaced people to Europe. Paris suffered two massacres at the hands of Islamic extremists

“ Nothing can replace the phone call that asks ‘how are you?’ and can I help?’, because that’s what we do best, caring and sharing together ”
(Weybridge commenting on the advent of email)

A New Century

Lord, as we start this new century, we thank you for our lives, our homes and our loved ones.

In this year of new beginnings, help us to look afresh at all our relationships: all that we are doing, and all that we hope to achieve.

Watch over us; as we care for our families and our Fellowship.

Help us to find the energy, the time, and the will to live our lives as you would wish.

Help us to grow in Your love and in the love of one another.

Give us the vision of what love can achieve.

And may love, laughter, and fellowship warm our hearts this year and every year. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Pamela Halford



Depression of the 1930s, causing hardship to families, businesses and countries. Greece concentrated minds in Europe as their exit from the Euro was debated.

The last 15 years have been shaped by man-made and natural disasters. As well as the thousands killed in the war against terrorism, worldwide weather caused huge death tolls - an enormous tsunami in SE Asia, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and earthquakes in Haiti, Pakistan, China and Nepal. Extensive temporary camps were erected for evacuated families and refugees and an outbreak of ebola threatened West Africa. Outbreaks of foot and mouth caused countryside mayhem with many rural branches having to cancel meetings. Areas of Britain saw unprecedented flooding during 2007 and Wives' offers of help to each other were overwhelming as the inclement weather affected

branch plans. When **Sanderstead's** lunch was held on the hottest day of the year, 'the gentlemen wilted and retired inside, to be found watching the football World Cup!' and even -4° and three inches of snow did not deter **Nottingham** members attending a cookery demonstration.

Labour had settled into government and indeed would be in power until 2010 after winning a third term. Tony Blair eventually relinquished the leadership to Gordon Brown. Public sector jobs swelled as did the debt, but by far the biggest change to Britain's social make-up was the Labour policy of mass immigration. The Conservatives eventually ousted Labour and David Cameron ushered in a new world of coalition, then won outright in 2015 after many Scottish constituencies returned SNP MPs. Westminster was rocked by the politicians' expenses

scandal and the IRA announced the end of its armed campaign. Fox hunting was outlawed and at one stage fifty pubs closed every week, partly due to the smoking ban. A blockade at petrol refineries in protest against high fuel taxes caused petrol shortages. **Liverpool's** Annual Service was postponed due to taxi drivers blockading roads. Same-sex civil registrations took place, followed by same-sex marriages.

Beagle 2 landed on Mars, Philae landed on a comet, a spacecraft reached Pluto, and the Large Hadron Collider was switched on. Xbox, Wii and Nintendo continued to develop. Flat screen televisions became ubiquitous, digital recording made TV catch-up simple, Wi-Fi and high speed fibre optic broadband made browsing the internet easy. The internet and its related offshoots, email, Google, Facebook, YouTube, Skype, Amazon and Twitter, transformed the way we lived, worked and played. Satnavs certainly helped Wives as they



Spirit of Wives 2001-15

travelled the country, relieving the passenger of navigational duties. Although mobile phones had been in existence for a while, it was the introduction of Smartphones and particularly the iPhone which transformed the way we communicated. The human genome project was completed and stem cell research, cancer therapies and bionic limbs became more sophisticated. Renewable energy became the buzzword with a proliferation of green initiatives.

We saw the appearance of the sandwich generation, boomerang kids, helicopter mums and NEETS as people grappled with higher life expectancies, better medical care and a reduction in state spending.

The Queen Mother died, aged 101, seven



Posting parcels to Afghanistan

months after her daughter Princess Margaret. On a happier note the royal household and the country had much to celebrate in the following years. Prince Charles married Camilla Parker Bowles and Prince William wed Catherine Middleton amid a media frenzy. The royal Diamond wedding anniversary and Golden Jubilee were quiet affairs; however, the Diamond Jubilee was marked with a wet Thames river pageant and parties across the country. Prince George and Princess Charlotte were born and the Queen became our longest reigning monarch in 2015.

The new Millennium Dome opened its doors, as did the Tate Modern, housed in a reused industrial building, an increasingly common concept. *The Lord of the Rings*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Avatar* were showing at cinemas and the Harry Potter films were released. We watched *The X Factor* and *Big Brother*, while *Strictly Come Dancing* put a spring in all our steps. Robbie Williams, Coldplay, U2, Amy Winehouse, Lady Gaga and Adele ruled the charts. Usain Bolt broke the 100m record and Britain had success on the F1 racetrack, on Centre Court, won a Rugby World Cup and The Ashes and collected an unprecedented number of medals at the London Olympics.

A prediction that the next few years were going to be difficult was well founded. At the beginning of the decade Wives began to face one of their biggest decisions, whether to merge the Wives and Senior branches. Many branches were struggling with severely depleted numbers and few committee volunteers were forthcoming. Tentative steps were made for branches to combine following the amalgamation of the Executive Committees. Maxine Stott and Judith Duckworth initiated this and Moira Edmunds



Bath Wives go to Coventry - with hats

and Jane Hill oversaw it. Jane became the first Chairman of the whole Fellowship for over 60 years. A redrafting of the Constitution in 2005 confirmed we were to be known as the Wives' Fellowship once again. Eventually, the majority of branches had no age rules; only a few adhered to age segregation. The unification of branches necessitated rethinking the timing and structure of meetings, ensuring that Wives and Seniors were fully integrated within meetings. **East Cheshire**, **Guildford** and **South Trent** ran crèches to entice younger mothers (**Stour Valley** had two new babies), and **Birmingham** started Coffee and Croissants after the school run, initially for mothers and latterly for grandmothers. An

AGM proposal that non-Christian women be invited to join was overwhelmingly opposed. In her Chairman's letter Maxine wrote 'I have managed to achieve punctuality on most occasions with one notable exception, when I was held up by a herd of roaming cows. This was compounded by my inability to find the very rural Terling church, only arriving eventually by courtesy of a local police escort!'

Another topic at the fore was retaining, recording and storing Wives' archives which were eventually deposited, at The Women' Library.

A Wives' internet presence was mooted in 2004 but dismissed as 'unnecessary'. In 2007

a website was launched to be a communication tool for members and an information portal for speakers and prospective members. It was completely overhauled in 2010 to be more practicable and became indispensable to Wives, receiving thousands of hits each month. The day to day running of the organisation was becoming almost entirely electronic, totally replacing paper and postage.

As early as 2003 BOC pondered, 'What if we embrace single women, those in long-term committed relationships?' A snapshot of views on this and other such topics was elicited from the membership via a questionnaire sent out to each branch in 2008. As a result it was decided that each member should now be canvassed individually to see if the whole membership was broadly in line with the branch view, which was favourable. In 2010, of the 45% of members who voted, 61% were in favour of a change to the Constitution, paving the way for a formal vote in the future.

Yet another review of the Constitution took place in 2014. The key issues were firstly to allow every member one vote on crucial matters, rather than the two per branch hitherto, and secondly to change the wording of one important clause to permit 'Christian women to join WF, whether single, married, widowed or divorced.' The first matter gained almost unanimous approval; the second caused considerable



Lancaster altar frontal

consternation and the issue threatened to divide the Fellowship. However, in 2015 the vote was held and the result was that branches could invite single women to join.

With an increasing number of women working and a decline in Christian

commitment, recruitment was an overarching obstacle to the continuance of

WF. Several branches closed,

Purbeck and long established

Bournemouth, and in 2000 membership dipped below 3000. By 2004, however, it spiked to 3800 members but again more branches closed and membership



dwindled back to 3000 and 74 branches. **New Forest** and **Isle of Wight** became satellite branches of **Winchester** and the once mighty **Oxford** branches combined into one with fewer than 70 members. **Woldingham Wives** made a unilateral decision

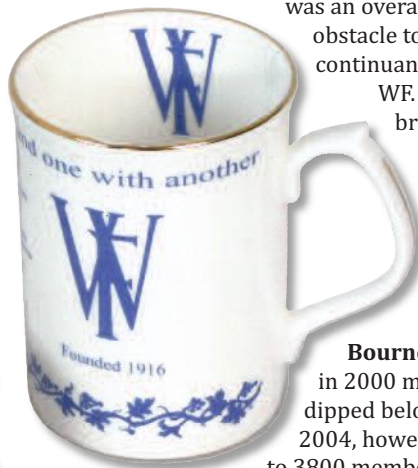
to change their name to Women of Woldingham and resigned.

Every aspect of Wives' business was inspected; clarification was given that divorced women were welcome as members. A new service book, the History of Wives, new guidelines, the card for prospective members, notelets and the constitution were reviewed, amended and republished. A new WF logo was designed to reflect moving forward into the next 100 years. Realisation that our centenary was just a short time away concentrated minds into putting

financial and organisational plans in place by creating a Centenary Fund and appointing an organising committee.

The magazine had gently evolved, there were more articles not related directly to Wives, such as accounts of members' adventures. Email addresses, recipes, and black and white and later colour photos began to appear. Photographs of Executive members were used to introduce them and the branch reports became livelier. In 2004 the magazine gained a name, Grapevine, which reflected the cover motif. Plans were agreed to make one issue of Grapevine an electronic version in 2015.

The Millennium provided a common theme for branch talks and events. **Winchester** held a Millennium Ball for St Christopher's. Husbands continued to feature in social events, as well as appearing as speakers, chauffeurs and choirs at conferences. **Wells** even had name badges made for them! **Coventry** celebrated



St George's Day in style with an English theme. The hall was decorated with red, white and blue, as were the committee. They ate fish and chips, had music hall and wartime songs, tested their knowledge of England, Georges and dragons and ended the evening with a Last Night of the Proms concert.

There was a trend among branches to utilise the home-grown talent within their members far more and speakers continued to be informative. **Bristol's** talk, with much audience participation (solely vocal), on Teenagers and Drugs was well attended. Other popular subjects were IVE, GM foods, Mercy Ships, First Aid, RNLI, Hearing Dogs, hats . . . far more light-hearted than in previous decades and there do not appear to be quite so many debates within branches. However, **Kenilworth's** long established Study Group included presentations of intellectual papers by members for discussion. **Lancaster** selected books on a

faith-related theme and conversation followed. **Exeter** divided the branch into small groups and debated issues such as the moral dilemma of single women using artificial insemination to conceive. **Kenilworth** reported 'a slightly disastrous speaker talking about violin making. He was our Chairman's nightmare speaker.'

Sub-groups within branches, such as reading, keep fit, bridge, prayer, walking and choir, were introduced and were very popular. **Bristol** appeared to have fun at their meetings: one was a Singalong Sound of Music evening and another was a fashion show when members were invited to try on 'chintz leggings which rather attractively blended into the sofa.' One of the most unusual visits was a tour of the Acme Whistle factory and the CEO proved such an entertaining speaker that he was hired for **Birmingham's** Regional Day. Following the success of Downton Abbey, Highclere Castle was a popular destination. The National

Memorial Arboretum and Highgrove were also included in calendars as was the Olympic Park. Golden Jubilee and Royal Wedding parties were numerous, from **Shrewsbury's** Strawberries and Sparkles to **Wimbledon's** black tie dinner. **Walton on Thames** trumped all other branches when they went, dressed in their hats and finery, to the home cinema room of a member to watch the Royal Wedding and toasted the couple with champagne! The excitement of the



Hothorpe Hall with L-R Jenny Jeapes, Maxine Stott, Claire Stewart, Jane Hill and June Jury

Windsor Castle Jubilee exhibition that **Chichester** visited was knocked into second place when the hostess ran out of milk. All was saved when she popped next door, HRH Prince Andrew donated a couple of pints. Walks gained popularity, being both healthy and cheap for branch funds, although **South Trent's** walk was, perhaps, badly planned as there were 35 stiles to lift dogs over! **Abergavenny** instigated popular Church Crawls round their very beautiful rural churches.

Several branches reluctantly moved meetings into halls because the number of Wives with large homes was diminishing as members downsized. After **Haywards Heath** moved to a hall they introduced smaller 'at home' coffee mornings to ensure the fellowship continued. Meetings which involved food were still well supported. Some branches shared lunch every time and for others tea

and biscuits sufficed.

Following on from BOC, branches were encouraged to think of different ways of running their branches adopting job sharing and flock systems. **Blackheath** introduced three committees per year to plan each term's programme and

Wimbledon was one of the first branches to go paperless, which heralded the widespread use of email. To counter this possible loss of fellowship **Cheltenham** introduced Email Tree coffee mornings.

A Millennium Annual Day was held in Coventry to which 900 guests travelled by bus, minibus, car and train. The service was held in the cathedral and lunch in a local hotel. An address was given by Dame Cicely Saunders. It was an uplifting service, extremely well enjoyed and appreciated by participants.



Cheltenham 3 Tea and Cakes



Art created by a **Coventry** Wife

Fellowship Conference one report remarked that thirty years previously Wives had been admonished for making too much noise in the lounge, this time they were too noisy going in and out of chapel. At another event at Launde Abbey one **London** member remarked:

“ The noise level in the Dining Room was proof that a Wives' meeting would never be a quiet one, but more importantly, would never be a lonely one and that, young or not so young, the Wives are naturally given to fellowship as witnessed by their generous bestowal of friendship and love to one another

Madeleine Tattersall

It was suggested that a collective noun for Wives could be ‘A cathedral of Wives’ or perhaps ‘A halo of hats’ and of course, there was the sport of ‘Wife Spotting’. ‘As we took our places in the cathedral, any student of fashion, glimpsing our congregation would have a snapshot of ‘the lady’s jacket’ of the 21st century as 99% of us had opted for one. Perhaps this is why you can spot a Wife at 100 paces across a car park!’ At Newark, ‘Clusters of Wives gathered on street corners and outside shops, and business in the restaurants on Castle Gate was booming. Why is it that Wives are so easy to spot?’ One of the most memorable conference speakers we have listened to was Eve Rose, a young charismatic priest, Senior Chaplain to a Mental Health NHS Trust. Movingly she described her tortured journey from a very troubled childhood to God. Fellowship Days and Conferences continued, being open to husbands every third year. Keeping In Touch for Executive (KITE) was begun as a social gathering for past members of the Executive Committee. A new name for Fellowship Conferences was mooted to differentiate it

“ There is something exceptional about being in such a huge congregation and we all felt privileged to be there sharing it with friends. It was reminiscent of other Wives' services over the years. All very special in different ways, all spiritually challenging and refreshing. All removing us from the daily routine and enriching our lives, our friendships and our fellowship

We are fortunate that we have entrées into such places as Knebworth House, Winchester School, Oxford University, Sandhurst RMA and Coventry, Liverpool, Rochester and Worcester Cathedrals. At Annual Day in Bath the chatter in the Abbey ‘only ceased when the congregation was called to order by the Rev Debbie Dewes commenting that she had been about to say “Ladies and Gentlemen” but had realised she could only see one gentleman in the building.’ Wives’ inability to curtail their chatting continued. At a

from the other conferences in the WF diary.

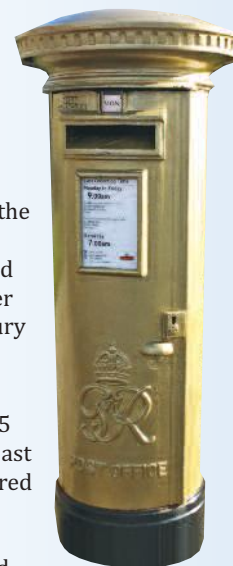
The increasing cost of national events and the difficulty of getting branches to organise and host them, led to a rethink of the Wives’ calendar. As a hangover from Wives and Seniors, there had been two overnight and two day meetings each year. This was condensed into one overnight and one day meeting with optional accommodation for those travelling a distance. In 2004 Annual Day in London cost £27.50. A ticket for the renamed Founders’ Meeting, which combined Annual Day with Summer Conference, in Shrewsbury in 2015 cost £42.50.

Over 500 Wives representing 66 out of 85 branches, including 17 past Central Chairmen, gathered to celebrate WF’s 90th anniversary at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. Kathleen Harwood, who joined Wives in Ceylon in 1947, spoke of the beginnings in Salisbury. Both ministers conducting the service were women. Intercessions were led by the oldest and youngest members and there was a choir of 40 Wives, husbands and a daughter. As is



Above: Guildford have lunch. Below left: 2012 Olympic post box

Below: London Olympic Ambassador Gail Budd



often the case for national events, the weather in Oxford was very blustery and showery. Members, having been encouraged to wear hats as tribute to earlier members, battled stoically. Grace, said by May Ford’s daughter, preceded lunch in

St Aldate's. The CEO of St Christopher's then spoke and thanked Wives for their long history of support. Commemorative mugs and trinket boxes were produced.

'The wonderful hats – they were magic – even though they did have to arrive in plastic bags!'

'Seeing so many Wives sharing communion, indicative of their deep commitment of faith and to the Fellowship, brought tears to my eyes.'

'The service and sermon were so inspirational and fully celebrated the essence of WF. One felt – yes, this is what WF means to me and has done for 30 years.'

'People in Oxford stopped us in the street and asked who we were and what the occasion was'

Annual services in different denominational churches continued within branches and one of **Chelmsford's** was organised by Quaker members in a Meeting House. During a

Wimbledon service the Rector told the congregation that 'not since the Reformation has a Catholic priest been invited to preach from the pulpit of St Mary's'. With a nod to the widely diverse faiths in England, branches

investigated other places of worship.

Mid Herts visited a Hindu temple, **Leamington Spa & Warwick** saw a Sikh temple, **Shrewsbury** a Greek Orthodox church, **Middle Thames** a Buddhist retreat, **Cheltenham** a synagogue and **Sheffield** toured a mosque.

Northumbria held an annual spiritual day which was much appreciated by members.

Lancaster discovered that their best



The poppy installation at the Tower of London

attended meetings were Lenten Quiet Hours held in a local convent. Looking back, there is an enormous increase in the number of women clergy who take our services and indeed Wives who have been ordained.

After contributing to the St Christopher's Millennium Appeal, Wives committed to fund a research nurse to evaluate End of Life care in care homes, and bursaries for overseas students continued. In 2011 we gave £50,000 to the Hospice. To raise funds **North Cheshire** held annual Farmers' Markets, **Nottingham** and **Shrewsbury** sold second-hand books, **Weybridge** held bridge teas, **Winchester** had plant sales and **Esher** conducted a Silent Auction. **Kenilworth** raised money by contributing to a communal branch Christmas card. **Wells** was fortunate to be presented with a handbag when a speaker from luxury brand Mulberry came to a meeting. This was raffled for St Christopher's.

Very few of the previous charitable deeds continued into the new century, however **Cambridge** reinstated the tradition of

Wells Summer Meeting

Autumn Conference

*I went to the WF Autumn conference
I decided I'd stay overnight,
My hostess lived in Old Knebworth,
She was talented, blonde — a delight
Her three dogs came out to meet us,
(the two Sue's, Mary and me)
I wasn't sure where to run,
Or where was the nearest tree!
For two of the dogs were enormous
Shetland ponies in canine disguise,
The third was a tiny King Charles,
With a permanent air of surprise.
It was late when we went to our bedrooms,
I decided to take a shower,
The shower head was enormous
And I didn't want too much power.
I should have worn my glasses — As the
dials I needed to see,
I knocked a small knob a mistake!
All hell let loose, stupid me!
Such clanking and banging and hissing,
I grabbed up my towel and ran,
Down corridor — on to the kitchen
To find dogs, people — a man.
Two men my hostess and dogs,
All came to my aid in a flash,
And back we all raced to my room
Oh! Why had I made such a hash?
A cloud enveloped the doorway,
It was like some mad crazy dream,
Visibility nil in the bedroom,
From my en-suite a steady stream....
My hostess was quite understanding
And set the controls a right
'You're our first guest you know, to indulge,
in a steam bath after midnight.'*

Pamela Halford





WF cloth and flowers

members making items for charity, sewing squares for comfort blankets for traumatised children and **Woldingham** continued entertaining the 'Blind Ladies', now known as Croydon Visual. **Blackheath** filled care packages for the troops in Afghanistan and Esher Wives were issued with an empty Smartie tube (who ate them all?) and invited to fill them with 20p coins. This was in memory of one of their members and the proceeds were sent to St Christopher's.

As well as group travel (pilgrimages and holidays), individual wives published reports of their intrepid world adventures to China, Tajikistan, the Antarctic, New Zealand and Nepal.

Social events for husbands and guests continued to take the form of supper or lunch parties. **Bath** persuaded husbands to



Solihull Birmingham Crown Court



West Sussex at Lordington Farm, Chichester

entertain the Christmas party guests with 'turns'. **Kenilworth** experimented with a take-away for their Husbands & Wives social which made for a very relaxing evening. However **Shrewsbury's** take-away curry was more of a necessity after the planned casserole went to the wrong village of the same name in a different county! Hopefully **Harrogate's** Pot Luck Suppers weren't quite that pot luck! **Solihull's** Christmas lunch was nearly a disaster as the supplier, having forgotten that the food was required hot, delayed the meal for forty-five minutes.

By the twenty-first century so few Wives had school-age children that dedicated events for them became rare. However some branches included them in carol services and **Cotswold** took theirs to a pantomime.

Husbands were invited to talks, **West Sussex** heard about Inns of England and the traditional Supper Parties flourished.

As Lynn Brodlie noted on her retirement as Secretary 'Pride in our past gives us faith for our future.'

The Business Meeting

Esher branch of Wives' Fellowship were desperate! The Chairman was short of committee members, they just could not be found, everyone had their reasons why not. This poem, written by a branch member did the trick. Once this was read to the members they got the message.

*The weary Chairman must cajole and plead,
About the Club's most pressing need.
Election time is here once more
And names are needed from the floor.
'Who will stand for the Committee?'
To miss the vote would be a pity.
If you want the Branch to thrive
Each one must help it to survive.
So pull your weight and do your bit,
It's not enough to come and sit.
Pretending not to hear her call,
The members huddle in the hail.
'She surely can't mean us', they cry,*

*And so they sit, and doze, and sigh
'We've done our bit and had our say,
We're not doing it again — no way.
We're far too old, or sick, or tired,
Our helping days have long expired.'
The Chairman says, 'I do mean you,
And what you say is just not true.'
So, with more determination
And with higher aspiration,
We'll fill each nomination form.
The new Committee will perform.
The members wake and sit up straight,
Even though the hour is late.
Goodness, gracious, such surprise,
The members can't believe their eyes.
Some, it seems, have been affected,
And now they wish to be elected.
The Chairman can't conceal her grin
As all the names are entered in,
'I knew you'd come up trumps,' she said,
And now the Branch can go ahead.*

Jenny Cornish



Blackheath 2 Wives at the BBC



A new notelet

One Fellowship

So, in fewer than 100 pages, we have endeavoured to record 100 years of memories. Inevitably there have been omissions but we hope that the personalities, stories, quotations and activities that we have chosen to illustrate a century of our Fellowship will have informed, entertained and uplifted you in equal measure.

The early days of WF are now beyond living memory but many long standing members will have recollections of numerous happy or inspiring events that have never been formally recorded. The intimacy of branch meetings in members' homes; the joyous reunion of friends from far and wide at national and regional gatherings over the years; the hundreds of special services in village church or vast cathedral and the wonderful hospitality given and received, can only be reflected in a small way within the pages of a book. The Spirit of Wives lives on in the members of today.

The opportunities that women of the 21st century enjoy are legion and have been hard won by those many campaigns for equality, justice and freedom that have been waged in the past century. Our founders would have been astonished but fascinated by the

changes society has witnessed over the years whether in terms of communication, transportation or education. Statistics show that the age at which people marry has risen significantly over the decades and the number of children in a nuclear family has fallen; but marriage and family life remain the ideal for many. We know too that children still thrive and prosper in the security of a stable family home. We cannot ignore the modern day pressures of work, childcare and an increasingly secular outlook on family life but should recognise that the young wives and mothers of today need as much support as ever if they are to continue to uphold the highest ideals of Christian marriage and family life that our Fellowship has espoused since it was founded. How we share the experiences that have nurtured members over the years with our daughters and granddaughters is the challenge we face for the future. Some members may be tempted to claim that they are part of history and not the future – back numbers with nothing to offer – but, when asked to speak at a conference in 1951, Lady Milford felt the same, considering herself too old to contribute anything 'but then I remembered a nice saying – "It is with back numbers that the fire is lit" – so she went!

“ I feel I have inherited a pair of earrings, much loved and valuable, and the fact that the setting has been reworked several times over the years does not detract from the brilliance of the stones. Diamonds of course. I hope they are still wearable for generations of Wives to come. That is our challenge, we need to find the way for today's busy young mothers ”

Mary Anne Turnbull

We too can reignite the flame of enthusiasm for a treasured truth and thus support the aims and ideals of our founders into the future. Wives' Fellowship has always been a loose-knit organisation with few rules and a strongly defended flexibility in the way branches are run. This gives us the perfect platform from which to relaunch a new and relevant fellowship of Christian women who can reinterpret the ideals of a spiritual,

intellectual and social sustenance to provide the friendship and solidarity that so many of us have enjoyed for so long, addressing the particular challenges faced by wives and mothers in 2016 and beyond.

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and in the days to come. Amen

“ The Wives' Fellowship was born at a period during the First World War which had much in common with this moment. Great upheavals had made their mark upon a group of thoughtful women. The spur of their own integrity drove them into an association more fluid than most organisations, less obvious in its aims, more intangible in its form of membership. With courage and humour and tolerance, they sought to find the answer to their problems, a way of living, and in so doing, their relationship with each other created a real and lasting bond on a deeper level than many other friendships. The moment has now come for the Wives' Fellowship to be born again ”

(1956 History of Wives, lifted from the last leaflet sent out by the Prayer Group in 1943, when WF and SWF split)

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www.wivesfellowship.org.uk





'Our Fellowship is with Christ and one with another.'

Liz Taylor-Webb