**Wantage Women’s Institute Annual Report for 2016/2017**

I am pleased to present our seventh Annual Report and I am happy to be able to feedback on a very successful, enjoyable and interesting year for Wantage Women’s Institute. I am pleased to report that our WI has run at full capacity with 83 full members including 8 dual members.

Our Committee has undergone some changes this year; however Liz Dickins has remained our most dedicated and hard working President.

Rita Hetherington has been our Vice President and Programme Planner, working hard behind the scenes to ensure the most interesting of WI meetings along with new committee member Sue Duff who has now taken on this most important task along with her role as meet and great for speakers and visitors.

Sandra Mitchell continued as Treasurer and has organised some great things this year, from a Denman Designer Day which takes place this March, organising the fabulous Christmas meal at the comrades club and hosting afternoon tea in her garden for our August meeting.

Eileen Webster has remained a committee member keeping everyone in the WI up to date with the welfare needs of our members, making sure those who are unwell are contacted on a regular basis. This is a really valuable service. Eileen has again been kept very busy this year.

Lesley Royan has continued in the role of coordinating our WI with Denman College, a big job in itself, but she also does the job of Minutes Secretary, working in tandem with myself (Diane Monnery).

Lynn Smith has been responsible for News and Views and bringing to our attention any relevant information or interesting trips that it might hold.

Jane Braithwaite has continued on the committee this year and as well as being a hardworking committee member she has been a valuable member of the events committee and has taken on the role of fire officer. Jane Braithwaite and Sue Duff have undertaken a first aid course this year and are now our official first aiders.

Our speakers throughout the year were interesting and very varied, organised by Rita Hetherington.

In April, David Castle spoke to us on a history of Wantage. Lots of our ladies had fond memories of some of the things and places he talked about in particular the Arbery store.

In May, Steve Roberts gave a captivating talk on his career in the police force “Tales from Scotland Yard”.

In June Frances Benton had us hanging on her every word with her “Pearls of Wisdom” she also had many of us digging in to our pockets and purchasing some of her amazing pearls. All profits to go to the Jabulani project, a very good cause. We are looking forward to the possibility of a trip to France to learn how to string pearls before a glass of wine or two.

July had Chris Caddy taking us on a history of the London underground. The talk was most informative and showed Chris’ obvious enthusiasm for the subject.

In September Mike Paine gave us a very interesting, amusing and well delivered talk on the history of Pinewood Studios. We were tested on our knowledge of film stars both past and present and we were taken on a trip down memory lane.

October had Kate Lace telling us about her change of career from army officer to romantic novelist in her talk “From Guns to Hearts and Roses”.

Of course November is always given over to the Wantage WI birthday party when again the committee did us proud and lunch was accompanied by a few sea shanties sang by “Short Drag Roger”

The Christmas meeting saw Dr Anne Borrowdale with "The invigilator who set fire to his trousers".

In January we had a members’ day where 5 of our members shared a little something about themselves.

The last meeting in February had Julia James talking us through a day in the life of a vet and quizzing us on our veterinary knowledge afterwards!

The Events Committee led by Rita Hetherington with Liz Dickins, Jane Braithwaite and myself (Diane Monnery) arranged some very varied and great events. In April we had our fourth St. George’s Day lunch which again was very well attended. Bistro 14 did not disappoint, nor did they disappoint when in October we returned for the Harvest lunch. It is sad that they no longer exist and we will have to search out new venues.

Jane Braithwaite has organised a regular “ladies that lunch” group that happens once a month and she has also run a regular Jig Saw club.

As well as the monthly coffee mornings and charity knitting group other regular events which have been set up include a Mahjong club and a cards club, hosted by Liz Dickins.

Other events have included lunch and cinema at the Wildwood kitchen, a May walk in Badbury woods to see the bluebells and a visit to John Lewis gardens in Winchester, and in June, a visit to Mottisfont gardens

June also saw the Queen's 90th birthday where we had a cake stall in Wantage Park. On the 13th June, some of us were privileged enough to attend the “Order of the Garter” ceremony however it was a bit of a washout with the weather and we didn’t get to see very much as the dignitaries arrived at the chapel in cars.

On the 1st July Linda Rees hosted a summer party.

Also in July our very own Carol Doughty ran a flower workshop for us.

September saw us rising to a rounders challenge thrown down by the Hendreds WI. I believe a fun day was had by all. I also believe we won!

Other outings include theatre trips to The Mousetrap, The Girls, and Evita.

My goodness we have been busy and I haven’t even mentioned last month’s Beetle drive!

Our Charn group met as usual twice a year once in April and once in October. In April, Ginny Davies who is a writer and performer took us “To the Fringe and Beyond” she acted, sang and told us about her experience performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival for the first time in her 50s.

In September, Brigadier Charlie Herbert talked about Ebola, “what happens next”. He was on duty during the outbreak so his account was from a person who saw what was happening first hand.  He also told us of his Charity ‘Wharfkids’ that he started to help children with their education. A truly inspirational speaker

The Coffee mornings have been well attended and a continued vehicle for existing and new members to get to know each other. The Charity Knitting continues to be led by Angie Bailey-Myers and Jill Vale, remaining popular with some terrific results. Since the start of the WI knitting group in October 2012 It has gone from strength to strength, providing many knitted and crafted items for charities all over the world.
The membership of 24 along with friends of the group have made 1246 items this year in addition to 104 little cotton sheets for the JR and we have collected 40 babygros for Eastern European hospitals.
Many WI members donated wool and more importantly their own time in making items such as bags, which have been sold to raise funds to buy more wool for the group. Long may it continue.

I would like to thank Mary Lawrence for keeping a fabulous photographic record of our events and also Jean Stirrup for managing the website, which, without I would not have been able to put this report together.

I would like to thank all members who have contributed to the successful running of Wantage WI - those of you who have set up the room and taken it down again, those of you who have made the refreshments for the meeting and done the washing up, those of you who have hosted coffee mornings and charity knitting, those of you who have manned the door OR made up the raffle prizes and to everyone for taking part and making us a very popular and friendly WI.

Diane Monnery

Secretary

8 March 2017