

PARISH MEETING APRIL 2024

Ashendon WI Report

Mr. Chairman we are again pleased to be able to address this meeting to give an insight into the contribution our WI makes for women in this village.

We meet once a month on the evening of the Second Tuesday.

It is a time when ladies get together not only to socialise but to offer support when it's needed.

Currently, we have 19 dedicated and enthusiastic members led by Vanessa Bates, our President.

We are proud of our WI's continuity within this village since 1939, 85 years. It is to be cherished and celebrated. Over these years the WI, as an Organisation, has had many achievements; votes for women, highlighting health issues and many, many others. Indeed, our Organisation is now highlighting the need for clean rivers for people and wildlife and, although on a completely different trajectory, our latest focus is on dentistry issues.

Since our report at this meeting last year, Ashendon WI members have been enlightened on topical issues;

- *Fly Tipping –*

We have all seen a steady increase in fly-tipping nationally. We heard how our Council was dealing with it and how to report it.

- *The WW2 issue and slogan, Digging for Victory*

– it was a jolt of realisation to hear that the threat of starvation was a fact in the war years but by the end of the second World War our country could provide 200 days of food. A reminder of the benefits we enjoy today.

- *We heard how elephants are relocated to a safer area.* The speaker highlighted why the populations of so many species are declining and what conservation organisations are doing about it.

- *We have recently learnt how to “read” an English Country Church.*

- *We heard from an “Animal Wrangler”....* Who would have known, it was Jan Pike?

Jan gave a truly fascinating talk on how animals (in this case, her pet mice) can be manipulated and trained to feature in film to enhance a plot.

Our meetings also incorporate a fun element;

- we relaxed and laughed through a styling night with four members demonstrating modelling skills,
- we relished a soup supper while admiring members' memorabilia (it's amazing what's hidden away!), one speaker was unable to visit at very short notice but members resourcefulness kicked in – ladies played word games, played cards and even a beetle drive.

Interaction at meetings is so important. We made Christmas wreaths and teacup flowers. These activities allow members to move around relaxing and chatting while they produce much admired items.

Although our talks form an important basis of our meetings each month our interests and, importantly our enjoyment of belonging to Ashendon WI, extends further:

It is important to us to support our village.

At the Love Your Church Service we were acknowledged for our display of Remembrance poppies in November and our Christmas decorations besides the contribution many members make to the Services and maintenance of the Church. We formerly supported the Community Pub Initiative.

We organized the Howes Fish and Chip van to visit Ashendon for a Coronation Celebration Supper. This was such a successful initiative, the Van now visits on a regular basis.

A donation was given to Brill Memory Café from “present swapping” at Christmas. If you would like to know more about ‘present swapping’ please come to our December meeting.

Our subscriptions don’t cover the cost of running our WI. This may be seen as a disadvantage but, actually, it can work as a ‘positive’. We held a very successful and enjoyable fund-raising event last year. We invited an Auctioneer who, after our supper, valued inherited family pieces. We welcomed ladies from Grendon Underwood and Chearsley WI’s and five guests from our Village. As an aside, apparently spoons are collectable!

There is much to be gained from membership of our WI!

- Members were enlightened by a visit to Camphill at Milton Keynes. An inspirational place where adults with learning difficulties and autism live and work in a supportive and empowering community.
- Although a miserable day, we enjoyed a visit last August to Ashridge made more memorable by being driven by Richard Bates in Bernie the Bus, Ashridge has a delightful tearoom where we were able to enjoy lunch after a walk round the estate guided by a trail of amazing art works.
- We meet fellow WI members.
Particularly at County events – recently at an Investigation and Discovery Day when we heard about the use of hydrogen as an alternative to fossil fuels in domestic heating, transport and across industry.
The work being done to restore and regrow reef- building corals damaged by bleaching, overfishing and the rise in ocean temperatures.
Research into the use of pesticides on farmed crops and the development of alternatives that are less harmful to wildlife and the environment whilst helping to increase crop yields to feed a growing world population and how Artificial Intelligence is affecting and will affect all our lives in the future.

Fellow residents, I could go on.... But I will leave you with this thought:

Any lady who has been attracted to any of the activities highlighted in this report, please do come and join an active, fulfilling and fun WI.

See you there....!