

## **HANDCROSS WOMEN'S INSTITUTE**

**1924 – 1952**

**By Mrs Ena Tulley (1897-1973)**

In 1924 Mrs Lindsay Smith was President, Vice Presidents Mrs T. P. Warren and Mrs Leicester Reed, Hon. Treasurer Mrs W. Snelling, and Hon Secretary Mrs H. Gibbs.

The choir was formed in 1924, and conducted by Mrs Boyd. To compete in the Lewes Musical Festival, Dr H. Darke was the adjudicator. The work for the combined singing was "Ye Watchers and ye Holy Ones". It was an enjoyable day.

Several members sent exhibits to the Brighton Exhibition in 1924 and gained awards and certificates,

On 9<sup>th</sup> June 1926, a Fete and Revels took place at Paddockhurst in aid of the East Sussex Federation, and Handcross sent a team of dancers for country dancing in suitable fancy costumes, and ran a cake and sweet stall.

The W.I. choir was now conducted by Rev. Pilkington, and in October 1928 a concert was arranged, the proceeds of which were divided equally between the Hospital Lewes(?) Guild and the Village Nurse's Cottage.

After a talk by Commander Wooley, the National Savings Scheme was started in 1930. Miss Morphy was appointed Hon. Secretary and still remains in this office in 1952.

In 1930 there were slipper-making classes, and as a result 14 pairs of slippers were sent to Dr Barnardo's Homes.

In 1931 Mrs Lindsay Smith resigned and Mrs Raymond Warren became President in 1932.

Since the beginning of the W.I. an anonymous donor has given 10/-, and pennies were collected from members for National Savings Stamps for all new babies born to members.

Once a year a "1lb day" was arranged when members brought 1lb gifts for the local hospitals. In 1936 Mrs Preston became President.

Twelve dozen new cups and saucers, and six bread and butter plates, with Handcross W.I. and the W.I. crest stamped on, were invested in, about this time the cost being £4-11-6.

Articles were made for the Personal Services League, including a double bedspread made of small knitted squares sewn together. Also £19 was collected for the Cancer Campaign. After the December Sale in 1928 we gave £10 to Handcross Parish Hall, £5 to the Nursing Association, £3 to the Deaf and Dumb Institution in Brighton, and £3 to an East End Mission.

There were "Keep Fit" classes, glove-making classes, and the cookery classes in the Hyde kitchen by kind permission of Mrs Raymond Warren were much enjoyed.

In 1929 the summer outing was to Cadburys chocolate factory at Bourneville. During the war, as the school was overcrowded owing to the evacuees, the Parish Hall was used as extra accommodation and the W.I. met in the Wesleyan Chapel and the Red Lion Hotel.

Work was done for the Lady Loder depôt for merchant seamen, Mrs Norris's work party, Mrs Preston's depôt for refugees, and Mrs R. Warren's Royal Sussex comforts.

One hundred decontamination bags were made for the A.R.P.

Pies for workers were sold, and in 1943 the number had risen to 9000.

Onions were grown and harvested for the Red Cross one year, and in the next the onions were sold and the money sent to the Red Cross.

Herb collecting had commenced at Nymans and at the end of 1943 107½ lbs of rose hips had been collected, 45 lbs of dried leaves, and 31 lbs of nettles. Foxglove seeds were also collected.

In January 1943, Handcross W.I. had reached its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and by collecting fruit and, from members, a lovely cake was made and iced and enjoyed by everyone at teatime. The oldest member, Mrs Brewer, cut the cake.

We started occupational therapy for prisoners of war as Miss P. Walton told us what was needed. Members met in my kitchen once a week preparing slippers, waistcoats, gloves, tapestry, embroidery, in fact anything they could make to keep them occupied. No handwriting was allowed, and seams left open for the censors' inspection. In 1944 we sent 10 parcels containing nearly 200 articles.

We continued Xmas treats for the schoolchildren although it was almost impossible to buy cakes, and bread was rationed. We collected points, did our best, and put on some very good spreads. We had "Make do and Mend" classes at the end of the war, also "Basket-making from the Hedgerows" (as cane was not then available) from Mrs Lawson, upholstery classes, Mrs Colwell, and dressmaking classes, Mrs Scaping.

At different times the Drama Group has presented plays at Cuckfield, Three Bridges, Warninglid, Staplefield and Balcombe as well as the enjoyable plays at our members' meetings and our Christmas Social which is held each New Year. They entered the Drama Festival with a play called "All the World Over".

Although we did not win an award for our W.I. tablecloth in 1949 (prize given by Countess Castle Stewart), we were pleased with our effort which was embroidered in small squares to make it a cooperative work and put together afterwards. The Sussex martlets were in each corner, the W.I. crest and W.I. badge were there, a rose, thistle, daffodil and shamrock, and "For Home and Country", "Handcross Women's Institute", "East Sussex Federation", etc.

We enjoyed the 1851-1951 Festival at Devonshire Park, Eastbourne on 8<sup>th</sup> May and we lucky enough to gain five awards out of seven entries.

When Denman College came into being, Handcross sent £10. About 6 or 8 members from other local W.I.s were sent invitations to our monthly meetings, and we have enjoyed their meetings in return.

Among successful competitions I can remember have been Scrapbooks for Children's Hospitals; the largest number of articles in a matchbox (108); Scrounging, Representing a song and a book and Household Hints for the book sold at the Eastbourne Rally (most of which were accepted).

Notable lectures of the past have been Mrs Warren, Miss Chute Ellis, Mrs Clowes, Miss Nettleship, Dr Habberton Lulbam, Mrs Dengate, Mrs Lampson.

In 1947 we joined the Guild of Learners and went to many enjoyable meetings. We gained awards at a Group Meeting in Burgess Hill for Handicrafts, and certificates were presented at the next meeting (13 entries gained 13 awards). In 1950 Miss Morphy became President. We regretted the loss of Mrs Preston although she still attended the meetings regularly and was still a valued accompanist.

Miss Preston has been a conductor for community singing for a number of years. Each year, in August, for many years, we have met for a garden meeting at Nymans, and that has always been one of the most pleasurable events of the year.

In 1952 Mrs T. C. Dundas became President and we hope will remain so for a number of years.

A telegram was sent to the Queen Mother when H.M. King George VI died, and a reply was received thanking the members for their kind thoughts and saying how much this helped her.