

Report of Stapleford WI Committee - 2023/24

Stapleford WI is doing well with 44 members, one dual member and good attendance at meetings.

We were fortunate to have had some excellent speakers throughout last year, thanks to Yvonne Allison. Zed Grosvenor told us about skincare products and flammable fabrics. Zed is a chemistry teacher and a forensic science graduate. Sally Kingman explained how she discovered how to make hedgehogs by paper folding a book. Who would have thought making hedgehogs would be such fun. She brought enough books for everyone to make one and it was so enjoyable. Carol Pooke returned to give us an enthralling talk on the life of Margaret Anne Bulkley who, after a difficult childhood went on to become the first female doctor in the UK. However, as females were not permitted to practice, or even study medicine in the early 19th century, she performed her entire career as a man, James Barry! Alan Osborne gave an interesting talk on Women in the RAF and we were whisked to Costa Rica by Ray Munden who told us about his bird watching holiday. David Short told us about 'My Life Behind Bars' - he was a publican. He was wearing a sash presented to him by Newton WI as he had audited their accounts for 30 years, his talk was hilarious. I always wondered what would happen if a speaker cancelled at the last minute? Unfortunately our speaker from Cambridgeshire Search and Rescue was on a search and rescue when he should have been speaking to us. Fortunately, Graham Wylde was able to attend at short notice and tell us about his 'Maggie letters' which dated from the 1870s and gave us an insight into life in Victorian times for a young schoolgirl followed by Sue Clark and her daughter Wendy Suter who showed us the alphabet in British Sign Language. Members attempted to sign their own name and learnt how to order a drink.

The Book Group reverted to face-to-face meetings, firstly at the Rose pub, but when that closed after two meetings (nothing to do with us, we weren't too rowdy) we moved round the corner to The Three Horseshoes. We have read some amazing books and our membership is now at 14. The Craft Group has met throughout the year hosted by Margaret Beavis and have produced some stunning work. I have even finished a jumper within one year.

Members served refreshments at the annual Nachingwea Fair in early December at Great Shelford Memorial Hall and we are waiting to hear if this fundraising will be continued in this format, or a new idea going forward.

The Big Help Out was created by some of Britain's best-known charities and was held on the final day of the Coronation Weekend. Stapleford WI registered and 18 members took part by picking litter around the village, followed by a selection of delicious soups and rolls held in Cox's Close.

The annual BBQ in Tony Smith's garden was another highlight of the year with over 26 members and partners attending. Tony Hore helped with the grilling and we managed to escape the rain which came just as people were leaving.

Our harvest supper bring and share meeting was very well attended and new member Alice Oliver won the Produce Cup for her gingerbread and members enjoyed trying all the different entries. Other competitions throughout the year were: the Janet Smith Rose Bowl for a posy in a jam jar which was won by Yvonne Allison and the Craft Cup for a homemade article made within the last year was won by Jenny Wells The winner of the Rose Plaque for a horticultural photo/picture was won by Sue Clark with a framed photo of a bumble bee collecting pollen from a hollyhock. A new competition this year was

instigated in memory of former President Liz Hodgkins and was for homemade shortbread, her speciality. The prize of a beautiful glass tea light holder with Liz's favourite flowers, lily of the valley, was won by Eddie Ridgeon.

At the Village Show we ran the jam jar hoopla stall again and we were so popular, that there was always a queue of children waiting for a turn and several remembered us from the previous year and came to our stall first. Members turned up trumps and we had over 300 filled jars. Families were donating back empty jam jars for our stall next year We also used our promotional pennant to publicise ourselves.

Our initiative of 'Stapleford Cares' which are donations to Cambridge Foodbank continues. Celia Weir is a volunteer and takes our collections each month. The response continues to be overwhelming. We ask members to bring one item, but some months we have struggled to carry the donations back to the car. One of our speakers during the year was so taken with our collections, that she donated her fee to the Foodbank.

We have supported Federation events throughout the year including Curtain Up and the Annual Council meeting, where the main speaker was the food writer and broadcaster Tim Hayward. Tim is the proprietor of the highly popular Fitzbillies bakery. Other Federation events supported included a patchwork weekend, the jigsaw challenge, an outing to Lichfield which included a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum, Beth Chatto's Garden, Coco Chanel exhibition at the V&A and several lunches and coffee mornings. We also entered a team in the Quiz, which we unfortunately won, so this year we will be setting the questions and adjudicating on the night. We also supported CFWI's Auction of Promises by donating a Christmas Hamper and Member Margaret Beavis 'bought' a walk in Hayley Wood for 15 people in the spring to see the bluebells. Fingers crossed for a dry day.

St Andrew's Church Christmas tree festival was held in aid of the Stapleford Community Warden Scheme. Stapleford WI entered a tree devised and built by Amanda Boote and Wendy Gibson. The tree consisted of cones of Christmas carols sheet music, topped by an amazing angel made from Hark the Herald Angels Sing. The church asked to keep the tree over the festive period and was voted by attendees as the most popular tree.

I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say we are looking forward to more of the same this year.

Christine Wylde
Secretary, Stapleford WI