

Hartest and District WI – Report for Parish Council, April 2017

The last year has been a very positive one in many ways for us. We have maintained a stable membership of 25, having 'lost' two members, one of whom is moving away and the other joined another WI that meets at a time more helpful for her. However, the latter has returned (we are more friendly and 'unstuffy' she said!) and a newcomer to the village joined recently. Currently we have two more ladies attending as guests and both have expressed an interest in joining.

Meetings and other activities have been enjoyable and most rewarding. For instance, on a perfect summer's evening last June we joined Mendlesham WI for a tour round Lodge Farm, Westhorpe, setting off on a specially adapted farm trailer. Our guides were cousins, Brian and Patrick Barker and Brian's mum, Claire. Stopping the tour at strategic points, our hosts took turns in telling us about the farm's history and how they run a commercial modern farm producing high yielding, high standard crops while maximising wildlife diversity. On our return, the Mendlesham ladies ruefully left us to attend a business meeting while we stayed and chatted with our hosts over tea, coffee and plates heaped with delicious homemade cakes. It was a truly unforgettable evening.

In September, it was Hartest's turn to host the Group Meeting; this event takes place annually and a number of local WIs convene for the evening to socialise, enjoy a first class speaker, compete for a chalice and have refreshments. This requires a good deal of effort as there can be up to 80 guests, but Hartest ladies are a great team and hosted an outstanding evening. Edward Crichton, auctioneer with Lacy Scott and Knight, was the speaker and his session went down a storm. He held an audience of 70 enthralled with his humour, anecdotes and wide ranging knowledge as he commented on and valued the items each WI brought along. There was tremendous applause when he finished and his last task was to judge the most likely antique of the future. This he decided was a ceramic poppy from the display at the Tower of London in 2014 and was owned by a member of Horringer WI.

These are just two of many memorable events over the past twelve months that have surprised and delighted us and seen members sharing and learning. Amongst other things we have had hints and tips on researching family history, learned how to massage one another's hands to ease away aches and pains and use our forearms to relieve stiffness in the neck and shoulders, we have spent a day with the horses at the Suffolk Punch Trust and 'crafty' members have been busy 'knitting' snoods without the use of needles and crocheting and knitting 'twiddle bands' for dementia sufferers. Who says the WI is all 'Jam and Jerusalem'?