**WARBOROUGH & SHILLINGFORD WI**

**Report to Parish Council**

**April 2024**

In planning our WI year for April 2023 to March 2024 we worried that our Centenary year 22/23 would be a hard act to follow but a review of the year past has shown me that we have had a very full and enjoyable programme.

Our monthly speakers have varied from craft-based talks and demonstrations to fascinating talks about the work of the Samaritans, the history of the Fairmile Hospital, Cholsey, how Magistrates Courts work and on a lighter note a fun talk about perfume. Linda Scurr talking about her keeping of Jacob, Manx and Wensleydale sheep was both informative and hilarious, whilst Matt Williams talked about his work with the Samaritans and also with the ‘Campaign against Living Miserably’ (CALM) dedicated to preventing male suicide as 75% of people who take their own lives are men.

We learned from Ian Wheeler that the Fairmile Hospital provided an enlightened regime of care and was a very far cry from the Victorian lunatic asylum of Bedlam.

We invited Mark Stevenson from his organic market garden in Warborough to join us in the hall having decided that a visit up to the farm would be a little too much for some of our members. The work he has done up there is truly inspiring.

Some of you would have recently heard Karen Wiles and her husband Brett talking about the Thames Patrols in the second World War. They spoke to us last July about the Women’s Voluntary Service (WRVS). It was launched in 1938 and had over 32,350 volunteers, many of them WI members. Part of their work was providing much needed food and tea at railway stations where troops were on the move and earned the praise of General Montgomery himself.

 My personal favourite was a talk entitled ‘The Forensic Experience’ given by a Crime Scene Investigator who worked for the Metropolitan Police. She now gives talks and workshops for all ages. She has a ‘body’ for these investigations, made by the crafter of the bodies in Silent Witness, and, as you might imagine, the workshops are tailored to each age group.

I should mention that we participated in many ways in the weekend of the Coronation of the King in May and we provided a lunch outside the Six Bells for our more senior residents, especially those living on their own. This was funded by the Parish Council.

We also went to Wallingford Museum, using a bursary we had won, and saw the special exhibition on Agathie Christie. This was just before her statue on the Kinecroft was unveiled.

A walk was arranged to see Swan Upping in July – an interesting and elaborate spectacle but with not a swan to be seen!

We celebrated Christmas with a talk about Norway with Norwegian food and drink and then later we returned to St Cross College in Oxford, having been there for our Centenary event, for a very splendid dinner.

We currently have 32 members.