

## NEWSletter

Number 60

## The WI's origins ...

Sally Lowe digs into the archives ...

**D**id you know the Women's Institute began in 1915? A meeting in Anglesey led to the formation of the National Federation of WIs two years later. This democratic, non-political and voluntary organisation was mainly formed by women who were involved in the suffrage movement. It was a response to the First World War – women were encouraged to revitalise the local community, grow food at home, and help keep up morale. By 1918, 137 WIs had opened. They passed their first resolution, which was to urge local authorities to take advantage of the government scheme for state-aided housing.

By the 1930s, over 290,000 women had joined. The hymn "Jerusalem" was adopted as an anthem in the 1920s, and meetings up and down the country provided women with solidarity, motivation, and friendship.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the British government asked the WI to help prepare for the evacuation to the countryside of thousands of children. The vital contribution the WI made to the war effort nationally was enormous; from obtaining extra rations of sugar so that British fruit could be preserved rather than left to rot, helping families to grow their own food, to caring for evacuees and organising activities for them, the WIs, now

with organisations in over 5,500 villages, did their bit.



*A newspaper clipping from the Tamworth Herald showing one of the founding members of the Newton Regis WI*

The women of Appleby Magna were no different. The Appleby-cum-Stretton WI held its first meeting in 1937. Its motto was "For Home and Country". Domestic science courses, dressmaking classes, a weekly knitting group, and a whist drive to raise money for wool to knit socks for soldiers soon followed. Herbs were collected and dried, and rosehips were collected to make a syrup – an essential source of vitamin C in the war, when citrus fruit was unobtainable. Some of the women even made gas mask covers. The Czech and Russian children living in the Ukraine were sent parcels of toys, and homemade blankets were sent to those fighting in France. The dedication of the WI in Appleby Magna was palpable.

Today, the WI continues to enjoy monthly meetings. The focus is very much the same – friendship, learning, social events and activities. It brings together women from all different backgrounds, and across all age groups.

## Anne Silins recalls ...

*Appleby's knackerman. A very necessary village profession*

**T**he village knackerman was a man who was respected by most country folk and often feared by we children. I once heard a mother, most likely at her wit's end, say to her child 'if you don't behave I will sent you to the knackerman' and usually that child would find their behaviour improved immediately.

In 1938, Section 57 of the Food and Drugs Act brought about reform in how diseased and dead animals were dealt with and how the collection of these animals should be handled. Up until the time of this new Act, how dead, diseased or unwanted animals were dealt with was a bit of a hit and miss. knackermen had performed this work, which many countrymen didn't wish to deal with. Often their much loved animals had become a part of the family, and a farmer couldn't bring himself to slaughter his animal. In 1948 this issue was again debated in parliament and licensing became even stricter. Documentation was required to trace where and how these animals were slaughtered and what happened to their bodies. The fear was that, with an increasing 'black market' after the war, knackermen could be selling any horse meat which came their way. Licensing was stricter, more paperwork for both the knackerman and the farmer was needed and it was traceable.

At Lower Rectory Farm when I was a girl Grandpa's favourite large, grey cart horse had become lame, no longer was Old Grey able to pull heavy wagons at harvest time, no longer could he pull loads of manure out to the fields. Grandpa put Old Grey into a meadow down beside the Snarestone Brook. For approximately a year he stayed and ate the lush grass. There was an old shed where he could keep warm on cold, wet days. Food was taken to him regularly, and most Sundays Grandpa and I would go to pat him, rub his nose and put a dry, old blanket over his back. With a snort now and again Old Grey showed his appreciation. But the time came when Grandpa knew Old Grey was in pain and perhaps the kindest thing to do was put him down. There was a problem, Old Grey would not go to a slaughter house said my Grandpa. Together we slowly walked him to the field close to the farm house, here he enjoyed a few days with all the food he could eat. During these few days Grandpa walked through our top field to the neighbouring Upper Rectory Farm. After a

shared cup of tea our helpful neighbour agreed to come with his large tractor and the digger and dig a deep hole into which our old horse would go for his well earned rest. Grandpa insisted that our wonderful, old horse was not going to a slaughter house, he would be buried at home in a favourite field. This was not the way it should be handled, but that is how it would be.



The local knackerman was required to come and do the deed, a shot into Old Grey's head. Old Grey was dealt with quickly, and I am told he passed away painlessly. I was not present to hear that bolt shot for I am sure the knackerman thought a young lass should not be on site to witness the end. I had been sent off to the kitchen to get him, our neighbour farmer and Grandpa a flask of hot tea. I noted later that they didn't drink the tea, so a rouse to get me away from that field. Old grey ended beside the deep hole in that field, so was easily pushed into the prepared hole with a covering of lime spread over him. Then good soil covered and blanketed him. The very sad happening was handled with love. Moving an animal which weighs over a ton was not easy and our neighbours help was much appreciated. A few days later Grandpa and I walked over the fields to Upper Rectory Farm and brought our neighbour a bottle of amber liquid which he told us was much appreciated.

The knackerman has been a part of country life for hundreds of years. They collected sick, injured and deceased animals. Sometimes the knackerman would make a little money from the carcass which supplied many things to the local community. Horse oils were boiled up to make "Neatsfoot Oil". This was used to soften leather and condition wooden cricket bats. Bones could be used to make handles for knives. The hides went to the local tannery to be made into leather goods and fleeces for rugs.

Nothing ever went to waste, we used to be a society which wasted nothing.

## What's on in June ...

As part of a packed Summer season these are the events we have planned for June ...

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June 12-3pm** Free exhibition: Family Histories. Do you have an interesting family history to share? We're looking at some of the Appleby Magna families, and what was happening in the village and in the wider world at the time these families were experiencing every day life. Do you know what your ancestors were up to in the Civil War?

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June 3.30pm** Ticketed performance: Professional genealogist Mick Rawle found out an interesting fact about his great granny whilst he was researching his own family tree. But he never thought it would lead to him going on a journey of discovery about the suffragettes, the vote, and the history of women's suffrage in England! Mick was the Chair of the Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society. He will be available for a Q&A session after his talk. Cellar Bar open from 1pm. Tickets available from Eventbrite, or on the door

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June 7pm** Ticketed performance: Get ready for the summer as local historian Danny Wells conducts a light-hearted investigation into the beginnings of the package holiday – and the unusual life of Midlands entrepreneur Thomas Cook. Don't forget your toothbrush! Cellar Bar open from 6pm. Tickets available from Eventbrite, or on the door

**NEWS JUST IN:** Introducing a new festival with a vintage vibe: Get ready for **MOORESTOCK!!** Hot tickets available now for the funkiest night of the year. Live bands The Perfect Numbers and The Purple Banned play tunes from the 60s. We're turning the Hall into a disco for the evening – turn on, tune in, drop out! Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July, 7pm. Cellar Bar open from 6pm. Tickets available from Eventbrite, or on the door

### How to get tickets:

Visit our ticketing partner, Eventbrite, call our Museum Manager on 07789238945, or visit the Cellar Bar.

All tickets also available on the door.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/sir-john-moore-museum-3900313>

There are a limited number of 241 tickets for most performances, and some free tickets for volunteers. You don't have to be a volunteer at SJMF museum to be eligible for these tickets. Staff at SJM Primary School and Happy Hedgehogs have access to discounted tickets.

The Cellar Bar will be open before, during, and after all events. Please ring Sally on the above number for more information.

## A right royal visit ...

Look who has been on a royal visit



The museum had a very important visitor at the beginning of April. Lesley Smith, playing perhaps her most famous role as Elizabeth I, gave a stunning performance. Dressed as the part and in character throughout, so told us all about her father, her mother, and her own glorious reign.

We're hoping to repeat Lesley's visit next year, but with a different character. Please get in touch with Sally at the museum if you have any ideas about who should visit us next!



Copyright A W Moore

On the wall in Appleby Magna church there is an intriguing plaque. It reads "In memory of Mrs Joyce Lewis". Nothing unusual about that, you might say. There are lots of plaques on walls in churches around the country commemorating loved family members. But Joyce Lewis was actually a Protestant martyr. She was burnt at the stake in 1557. Her second husband, Thomas Lewis of Mancetter, was a Catholic. But Joyce (sometimes known as Jocelyn, or Jocasta) was a Protestant. And in the days of Queen Mary, that was heresy. Formerly of The Moat House in Appleby Magna, and a de Appleby through her first marriage, Joyce became more and more involved in the Protestant faith, despite her husband's pleas.

After refusing to hear mass, the Bishop summonsed her. Joyce had other ideas, however. She was furious following the death of Coventry Protestant Lawrence Saunders, and she refused to go to see the Bishop. Instead, she forced the messenger to eat the Bishop's summons at knifepoint. She told the Bishop that by refusing the sacrament, she had not offended God. The Bishop gave her one month to see the error of her ways.

Her husband, faced with the loss of his lands and possibly his own life, took her to the Bishop himself at the end of the month. She was thrown in prison. After a whole year behind bars, many people (including the gaoler) thought that Joyce was so godly, that to martyr her would be a sin. But she continued to refuse the sacrament, saying that it was not part of Christianity, and she did not need to receive it.

Her final punishment was to be burnt at the stake. Her friends had given her a potion, so her death was swift, and she was able to endure the flames without giving her tormentors the satisfaction of hearing her scream. Over three hundred people were burnt at the stake under the reign of Queen Mary. Her father, Henry VIII, had demanded that the whole country convert to Protestantism. But Queen Mary, the child of Henry and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, remained constant to what she believed was the 'true' religion, and wasted no time in re-establishing the Church when she came to the throne. Bishops Latimer and Ridley are commemorated by a notice on a paving stone on the place where they were burnt at the stake in Oxford, 1555.

Joyce de Appleby has a small commemorative plaque in the church at Appleby Magna. And her sad story has captured the hearts of generations of worshippers.

*The clock in the museum says twenty past nine ...*

The museum has a few clocks in its collection. Of course, the clockwork in the old dormitories is the most well-known, but have you seen the Baker Clock?

One of two clocks made for the primary school by Henry Baker in 1944, who was working in Appleby Magna village at the time.



*There are not many of those about any more ...*

In 1915, Appleby Magna received a visit from a certain Mr Tuckey. He was Leicester County's Hedge Cutting Instructor. For two weeks he worked on Snarestone Road with nine boys, instructing them in the art of hedge cutting. It is unclear whether or not this form of instruction was ever repeated in the village.



@CentreSjmf

