

Holt WI

This month for us was a month with a difference. Holt WI is officially 100 years old and we celebrated our birthday in style, despite somewhat tempestuous weather, with a marvellous dinner at Ombersley Golf Club for members and guests. For this historic occasion we welcomed six past Presidents, the County Chair and guests from the old Woodbury Group, with whom we still maintain close ties. Lunch was generous and tasty and the celebrations were completed by Alan and Alana, who took us for a musical trip down some of the years being marked.



In keeping with WI tradition, we followed the expected colour theme of white, purple and green for all floral decorations and the cake. This last was an amazing confection, beautiful and delicious, the sugar flowers drawing much admiring comment. The invitations and place cards were bordered with these Suffragette / WI colours. Bespoke commemorative glasses graced the tables and innumerable scrapbooks dating back to the 1960s and bang up to date, were ready for perusal.

The banner, created especially by a member, with the specific intention of recording the names of current members, is truly a work of art. Each member embroidered (or had embroidered for her) her name on a leaf, which then became the centrepiece of this commemorative work. Again, maintaining the thematic colours, this banner will grace meetings in the future.

Speeches from our president, Gill Eves, the County Chair, Sue Stone and past President, Ann Winney, focused on different aspects of Holt's history, but all celebrated the fact that for 100 years, ladies have met in the village hall(s) every first Thursday of the month, with the sole exception of two years during the war, when coal rationing made the winter months impossible. Ann noted that this tradition started in the old village hall, a wooden hut, now lovingly preserved in a local garden, and continued in the current hall, now a venerable building in its own right. So, Holt WI has met regularly since 1919, the year after the end of World War 1, the year that Spanish flu wiped out millions, before all women had the vote, before anti-biotics, before air travel, before car ownership, before television and obviously decades before electronics, computers, plastics. And yet so many of the concerns of the WI remain despite the disparity in time. It is an organisation devoted to the promotion of friendship and fun, but with serious campaigning credentials. More of that next month, when this year's resolutions come under scrutiny.



One hundred years ago, ladies select
Formed Holt's new Institute, born of respect
For marching, campaigning, but softer skills showed
They jammed and they baked and knitted and sewed.
Years passed, then decades, and always they met,
Sometimes to celebrate, sometimes forget.
We carry onward; we laugh and we lobby,
We listen and learn, attempt a new hobby.
The issues may change, but values endure,
Help's always there for the sick and the poor.
The present is us and hist'ry was them
For one hundred years of Jerusalem.