

On 14th February 2021 Prestbury Women's Institute will be celebrating its 100th Birthday

Prior to 1921 a few WI groups had already started up in Gloucestershire and this inspired two local women Maud Baghot de la Bere and Miss Constance Lilian Ratcliff to start a group in Prestbury. Women had learnt the importance of helping each other when men folk were away fighting in the war. Forming a WI was a way to carry on sharing skills and giving companionship to each other.

In January 1921 these two women were responsible for the organisation of a WI in Prestbury. Together with A Lidderdale, M Lidderdale, E Davis, F Yeo, M Kear, M Major, I Harvey, Hilda Seabrooke, C Slessor and L Pitt they formed the first committee and made plans.

They decided to hold the first meeting in the Men's room in the Hall in the High Street (now the site of the King's Arms Car Park) on Monday 14th February. One thing which has never changed in 100 years is that we still hold meetings on the second Monday in the month. It is understood that the hall lacked chairs because it is said people were seen carrying chairs, husbands and fathers taking them for wives and daughters. We do not take our own chairs now and certainly don't need husbands or fathers to carry them for us. The meeting was advertised in the February Parish Magazine and children at St. Mary's school wrote letters which they took home to their mothers. How lovely to be sharing our 100th birthday in the same Parish Magazine, though this time with very few children in school we are not able to ask them to write letters to take home.

A subcommittee was appointed to be responsible for providing and making the tea for which a small charge would be made. Tea remains an important part of our meetings. Though wine is occasionally served now!

The first meeting's business mostly covered the receiving of subscriptions (2 shillings for the year in 1921), filling in membership cards with a short concert to finish the evening. The following meetings saw the ladies enjoying demonstrations of various crafts and listening to interesting talks.

We are not sure how many women came to that first meeting, but we currently have a membership of 88. Sadly, our plans to hold our 100th Birthday Party in the WI Hall this month have been postponed due to government restrictions in the response to Covid-19. However, in true WI spirit we came up with a plan. Many of our members will be displaying the number 100 in their windows, decorated in a myriad of ways, for a week from Sunday February 14th. We hope our fellow villagers will enjoy seeing our decorated windows when they take their exercise. Give us a wave as you pass. We also voted for our preference from several designs for a new centenary flag. See if you can spot it flying from our flagpole in the near future.