



Swarden WI

Newsletter for May 2021

Welcome to what may hopefully be the last Swarden WI Newsletter. I say "hopefully" because that will mean normal life is returning, and will continue to do so as we move into June. Come July we hope to hold our garden meeting, with meetings proper then returning in August. With all that in mind, the need for something to keep us in touch with each other is removed as we will just be able see each other in person. Hooray!

I know many of you have enjoyed the newsletters over the past year and thank you for the kind words that have been passed on to me. It has been a pleasure to produce, even though quite hard work at times. It has served its purpose and will, I suppose, form part of our archive for future generations to read.

Let us all hope too that lockdowns are now a thing of the past. I hope everyone can now move on, look forward and, importantly, stay safe!

Carol Chandler



Wishing a very happy birthday to the following ladies who have had recent birthdays or have them on the horizon:

Lynda Embleton	12 May
Margaret Twort	16 May
Jocelyn Craig	20 May
Angela Wilson	21 May
Barbara Speak	4 June
Jan Barnes	9 June
Deidre Harrop	10 June
Judith Hardy	12 June

*Many happy returns,
Ladies*

The President's Table

When Gill last attended WI in February 2020 a rota was planned for the monthly flower arrangement. Having joined Headcorn Flower Arrangers, and in need of practice, she volunteered to do flowers for the following month. Little did she know she would be doing these arrangements for over a year! Gill will bring an arrangement to the garden meeting in July and hopes someone else will volunteer to take the silver vase home with them and provide August's flowers. The little vase was donated in memory of Miss Maidie Rathbone in 1971.

NUNS on a TANDEM? IT MUST BE FACEBOOK!



Facebook has proved a great way to keep up-to-date with local news and, most importantly, in touch with friends and family. Never has this been as beneficial as during the pandemic.

Rather reluctantly I began using Facebook some years ago when my brother Andy and seven Smarden friends cycled from Lands End to John O'Groats. It was great to see photos and read a daily report of their ups and downs. Facebook has since proved brilliant for keeping in touch with friends in the USA, in Australia, across the UK and as near as Smarden. Facebook (plus Nextdoor) has also proved the most effective means to promote events such as the Christmas Fair.

Since moving to Headcorn I continue to use the Smarden Community and Smarden Residents Facebook pages to keep in touch. The Headcorn Covid19 Support Facebook page has been great. It provides up-to-the-minute information, not only about forthcoming activities, but also instant reports of suspicious activities, what's for sale, wandering sheep etc. Every now and then something 'kicks off' and makes me angry (like overhearing certain conversations in the pub) but these sites are administered and offending posts can be removed. Some posts make for good entertainment as they get quite ridiculous (and make utter fools of those who post on them; every village has always had an idiot). The brilliant thing is that after a day or two, everyone forgets all about it and moves on.

Facebook has had some bad press and misuse not least trolling of high profile women such as politicians or other leading figures who use Facebook widely and are followed by thousands, even millions, because it's part of their job to keep in touch with people. Fortunately the rest of us can set our privacy controls so only our real friends can contact us or see what we post. We can unfriend people we decide we don't like, just as in 'normal' life. The positive aspects don't get reported and far outweigh any negatives.

So it's 8.45 am and I'm taking my first scroll of the day through my Facebook page (I generally check two or three times a day when I sit down before or after a meal). Here's what has come up today in the order they have appeared:

- A promotion for a Royal Opera House online production (I've viewed a few theatre and other productions)
- A friend in Yorkshire's photos of a fabulous walk she did yesterday
- Barbara Small, an old friend aged over 80 who used to live in Smarden, thanking her Facebook Friends *'who have helped me over the past year when lockdown has been difficult for me being on my own'*
- Patricia Hawkins announcing via the Smarden Facebook page that the Gallery will re-open
- Patricia Hawkins announcing that she has a problem with squirrels!
- A promotion for a Spring Food and Craft Market in Staplehurst
- My hairdresser promoting her business which re-opened this week
- Kathy Wilson celebrating her son's birthday
- A promotion for reading: *'it's called READING. It's how people install new software into their brains'*
- Comments on photos a lovely walk I did around Hollingbourne yesterday, including graffiti art of two nuns on a tandem
- Announcement of a closing down sale this weekend at a commercial tree nursery in Headcorn
- A promotion for the East Kent FWI's Zoom talk on 'Sex, Secrets, Scandal and Salacious Gossip of the Royal Court 1660 to 1830'
- The NFWI announcement that a WI member, Lawratu, will be a contestant on the Great British Sewing Bee
- Patricia Hawkins' photo of a flower; she is taking a different picture every day for a year

Finally I thought you might enjoy these photos from my walk which included a short section of the Pilgrim's Way. For more, follow me on Facebook (although Patricia Hawkins is far more entertaining!).



As you can see, most posts I receive are tailored to my interests and I do not receive anything from people I don't like.

It is not essential that you post anything at all. You can just use Facebook to see what others have posted and keep abreast of news.

I have posted twice on the East Kent FWI page; the first time was to share a photo of the Christmas gift we all received and in March I posted a photo of the lovely birthday card I received, painted by Geraldine. From the feedback I received other WIs were most impressed at what a caring sharing WI we have.

Facebook? It's worth having a look. You may love it or hate it but at least you will have seen it in action. You can always stop using it or take an occasional break.

Gill Bromley
April 2021



The Joan Boucher Cup for short story writing

As you are probably aware, the East Kent Federation runs a competition for the writing of a short story of up to 500 words, the lucky winner receiving the Joan Boucher Cup.

Smarden WI excelled itself this year, with Gill Bromley winning first prize and the cup, and Megan Shields collecting a runner-up prize. Exceedingly well done to both ladies. Here below are their respective stories.

The subject matter was 'Pets, Pictures and Promises'

PETS, PICTURES AND PROMISES

By Gill Bromley

"Hello Pet, on your own?" It was the first time I'd been called 'pet' and I wasn't sure I liked it but he had a lovely smile. Turned out he was from Lancashire.

I'd been stood up by my best mate Gail; my only mate in fact. We met for a drink after work on a Friday. I'd just read Gail's text; she'd a headache.

He pulled up a stool, told me his name was Ian and that he was down here for a few weeks working as a plumber on a building site. I hesitated when he offered to buy me another but only for a moment. I had nothing to rush home for, the pub was cosy and it was nice to chat to someone.

Two hours later he was telling me I was a "picture" and asking where he could take me to dine in style the following night. We'd got on so well. He was interested in me; he didn't judge me when I told him my life story. My parents dying when I was very young. Being raised in care homes. Ian walked me to my flat and to my amazement he didn't try anything on.

We spent the next three glorious weeks meeting after work for meals, walks and even a dance. It was rare to find a man who enjoyed dancing around here and it was lovely. Gail was a bit put out. She said she didn't care for him; "calling you 'pet' and a 'picture' all the time. It's patronising". I knew she was jealous.

I was smitten but even I was gobsmacked when, as his final day approached, he asked me to marry him. I just said "yes please". I'd no one else in my life apart from Gail. He said he'd be back in two months and planned to settle down here; we'd buy a little house, marry quietly and slip off to Venice for a few nights. I was so excited I was beside myself. I couldn't wait to tell Gail.

I was sad to see him go but I began counting down to his return.

Later that week I received a letter from my bank declaring I was overdrawn. I marched straight down there clutching receipts (I meticulously checked them off each month).

You've guessed it; he'd cleared me out. Every penny. I only had a few thousand pounds but that was my entire savings. He must have found my bank card when I was in the loo one time. I hadn't missed it; I only used it on Saturdays when I drew a week's cash

They eventually caught up with him; his name wasn't Ian at all and he actually came from Yorkshire. In court I met some of the other girls. The Judge said he preyed on 'ill-educated, lonely women who were bottom of the pile in life'. That hurt the most.

Turned out there were other Pets, Pictures and Promises

Pets, Pictures and Promises **By Megan Shields**

Now:

The pictures on the shelf taunted him, mocked his choices and his future, what little was left of it. His long slender fingers reached out and picked up one of the thick silver frames. Her face stared back at him, emerald eyes accusing.

"You have no idea, no idea what it's like with you gone." His voice caught on the last word and he sat the frame back in its spot, eyes filling with tears. "All those promises, what good are they now?"

Then:

"I promise to be your best friend, your partner in crime, your shoulder to lean on and, most importantly, the person who eats the bits on your plate you don't want. I promise to love you always, and protect you." She laughed a bit at his vows. Her eyes sparkling with love, the delicate laced veil framed her tan face, her black hair was piled up on her head, accenting her high cheek bones. All he could think was how lucky he was that she had chosen him.

"I promise to always ask before bringing home extra pets, unless they're a stray and need saving. I promise to let you have at least one shelf in the closet. I also promise to always share in your laughter and your pain, to try and protect you like you protect me, and to love you." Her voice was warm, carrying the meaning of the words straight to his heart.

Now:

He entered the back bedroom. It had been their room. Its once immaculate cream carpet and pretty, pastel curtains were now covered in rapidly-drying blood. That was the problem with light colours, they stained so easily.

"This is going to take a lot of scrubbing, and money." He spoke his thoughts out loud. "If I can't get it out I will have to buy a replacement carpet."

He shook his head and marched past the offending red. Opening the door that led to the en suite, he allowed himself to pause for a moment. The face that stared back at him was almost unrecognisable. His eyes had huge dark circles, his brown hair was looking oily and unkempt, its normal coif long past needing a tidy and its normal style nowhere to be seen, not fit to be in a picture, not fit to be the grieving husband. He gave a mocking laugh at his reflection and bent to look under the sink for a scrub brush.

Then:

"I know what you did, you slut. I know where you really were." He yelled into her face.

"I don't know what you're talking about, I was at the pet shelter, you know I go there on Thursdays after work." She was stammering a bit as she spoke, her voice shaky, out of control.

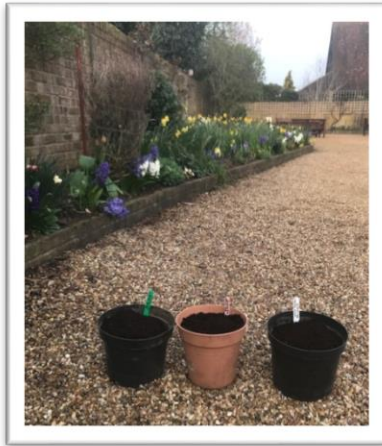
They had been married for three months. Three months of bliss, picture-perfect, at least to outsiders. He towered over her beaten form, gun in his hand.

"You'll never lie again," he pulled the trigger.



Easter seed bombs

Alison Stimson came up with the lovely idea of giving every member an Easter present consisting of a random seedbomb dressed up as an Easter Bunny, whilst Kathy Reynolds did the artwork for the beautiful little Easter card given with the seeds.



The weather hasn't been too kind for seed planting but hopefully we will get some great results from the bombs in a few weeks' time. In the meantime, Stephanie didn't waste any time getting hers planted!

Editor's note:

Having loved Lily of the Valley since I was a child, encouraged by my grandmother who had a garden full of them, I planted some in the garden about six or even years ago. Sadly, though, nothing ever appeared. Until this year. I now have two little sheaths of flowers and how happy was I when I saw them! Fingers crossed for next year too.



The morning air
 was quiet
 without a
 single sound
 when something
 gently beckoned me
 until I turned around.
 I heard a sound
 so delicate;
 a tender melody,
 and saw your
 orchestra of bells,
 all ringing
 just for me.

Anne Peterson

Smarden WI Book Club



Lucky Jim

by Kingsley Amis

(First published 1954)

Nobody really enjoyed our latest read, but all were glad to have read it. Kingsley Amis is an author that many had not read at all, but due to his reputation in literature, felt they should. The general consensus was that the humour (such as it was) was very dated; the plot was too simple and failed to properly engage us; the characters, (of their time, the 1950s) were difficult to relate to; the text featured an arguably excessive number of complex and rarely used words; and its saving grace was its comparative brevity.

The relaxed Smarden WI Book Club meets only in alternate months, on a Monday afternoon. This "relaxed" nature of the club refers to the lack of pressure on having to read a book in a comparatively short time. Also, the book choice is dictated by the members of the group. Thus a selection of fiction and non-fiction books are featured. A wide variety of years and genres are selected in the books chosen. For example, two novels on our schedule for the autumn are the classic *Silas Marner* by George Elliot published in 1861, followed by the current popular author, David Nichols, with *Sweet Sorrow*, published more recently in 2019.

Members of Smarden WI book club have responded positively to the challenges set by various lockdowns. Meetings, when allowed, have been held inside with more than six feet between each group member. After consultation by Elizabeth McLeish, our most recent meeting in April was by Zoom, organised efficiently by Lynn Carmichael.

Stephanie Atkins. 26 April 2021

Three good friends went for a swim,
The one who was fat wished she was thin.
The one who was curvy wished she was clever.
The one who was clever wished she swam better.
The really great swimmer wished she was witty.
The one who was witty wished she was pretty.
All three friends thought the other two fine,
If only they could let their own bright light shine.
So throw on your swimsuit if you're fat or you're thin.
Enjoy fun and friendship...love the skin that you're in!

Author and Artist unknown



Swarden WI News

Megan Shields has been busy recently raising newly-hatched chicks (ahhh!).



If anyone has any spare newspapers or ash from the fire to get rid of, Megan would be grateful for either. The latter is used for her chickens' dust baths!

Jam Jars

We very much hope that the annual Christmas Fair will take place on 30 October. Whether it does or not the WI will be making and selling jams, jellies and chutneys as usual. If anyone would like some jam jars, Gill Bromley has some spare, so please contact her at gillbrom57@btinternet.com, 01622 890214 or 07543 644911.



The first of our **monthly walks** was held on Wednesday 28 April, led by Angela Wilson. Members met at 9.30am and enjoyed a two-hour walk, some of which was on road but mostly on footpaths across fields.



The May walk will be led by Deborah Wells – more details will be provided near the time.



On Tuesday 4 May the first of our small social **afternoon tea/coffee mornings** was held outside in Kathy Gibbs' garden at the Dragon House and according to the rule of six.



As you know, similar events are being hosted by Honor Ferris on 20 May, Stephanie Atkins on 22 May and Gill Bromley on 16 June.



On Thursday 13 May at 7.30pm, in place of what would have been our normal meeting, a Zoom talk on **British Detectives on TV** was arranged. The speaker, Pete Allen, was recommended by our WI Adviser, Gwyneth Sutton, and excellent it was too!



Similarly, on Thursday 10 June at 7.30pm, another recommended Zoom speaker, Kevin Tooher, will be presenting **The Story of the Rose**. Zoom codes will be given nearer the time.

Finally, if you haven't get paid your WI fees for 2021 and you intend to remain as a member, please pay as soon as you can by cheque or bank transfer to Honor. If you have mislaid all the details, please give her a call or email.



Flower facts

Flowers beguile us with their lovely scent and striking beauty, but many flowers have hidden attributes. Flowers and plants have been used medicinally for thousands of years. Some flowers, such as the lotus, have religious or historical significance. Many flowers may also have unusual characteristics or forms. Dive into the fascinating world of flower-lore and gain a fresh appreciation for these plants.

- Roses are related to apples, raspberries, cherries, peaches, plums, nectarines, pears and almonds.
- Tulip bulbs were more valuable than gold in Holland in the 1600s.
- Ancient civilizations burned Aster leaves to ward off evil spirits.
- Tulip bulbs can be substituted for onions in a recipe.
- Chrysanthemums are associated with funerals in Malta and are considered unlucky.
- Saffron comes from a type of crocus flower.
- The largest flower in the world is the Titan Arums which produce flowers 10 feet high and 3 feet wide. The flowers smell of decaying flesh and are also known as corpse flowers.
- Almost 60 percent of fresh-cut flowers grown in the US come from California.
- Hundreds of years ago, when Vikings invaded Scotland, they were slowed by patches of wild thistle, allowing the Scots time to escape. Because of this, the wild thistle was named Scotland's national flower.

- The lotus was considered a sacred flower by ancient Egyptians and was used in burial rituals. This flower blooms in rivers and damp wetlands, but may lie dormant for years during times of drought, only to rise again with the return of water. Egyptians viewed it as a symbol of resurrection and eternal life.
- Scientists discovered the world's oldest flower in 2002, in northeast China. The flower, named *Archaeofructus sinensis*, bloomed around 125 million years ago and resembles a water lily.
- The juice from bluebell flowers was used historically to make glue.
- Foxglove, an old English name, derived from the belief that foxes slipped their feet into the leaves of the plant to sneak up on prey.
- Dandelions might seem like weeds, but the flowers and leaves are a good source of vitamins A and C, iron, calcium and potassium. One cup of dandelion greens provides 7,000-13,000 IU of vitamin A.
- The flower buds of the marsh marigold are pickled as a substitute for capers.
- Sunflowers move throughout the day in response to the movement of the sun from east to west.
- Moon flowers bloom only at night, closing during the day.
- Flowering Nicotiana is related to tobacco, from which cigarettes are made.
- Gas plants produce a clear gas on humid, warm nights. This gas is said to be ignitable with a lit match.
- When Mormon pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, they subsisted on the roots of the Se-go Lily Plant. This plant is the state flower of Utah.
- The corn starch-like powder known as arrowroot is derived from the plant, *Marantha arundinacea*, and is native to India. It was used by indigenous people to draw out the toxins from a poisoned arrow wound. Today, it is used to thicken pies and jellies.
- Angelica was used in Europe for hundreds of years as a cure for everything from the bubonic plague to indigestion. It was thought to ward off evil spirits.
- Blue cohosh, also known as squaw root or papoose root, was used by Native American women to ensure an easy labour and childbirth.
- During the Middle Ages, Ladies Mantle was thought to have magic healing properties.
- When Achilles was born, his mother dipped his head first in a bath of Yarrow tea, believing it had protective qualities. Yarrow is still known for healing and was used during World War I to heal soldiers' wounds.

The next time you walk through a flower garden, take a minute to consider the individual plants growing there. One of them may hold the secret for curing a dreaded disease. Another may have a long, illustrious history. Every flower has qualities and attributes worth admiring.



The Things we have been Missing expressed through Photography, Artwork and Words **THE WAY WE WERE!**



Meeting In Real Life ?!

Do you remember, a long time ago, meeting as a WI the second Thursday of every month? Expecting an enjoyable evening of socialising and learning something new. Hopefully renewing this habit isn't too far away ...?

Stephanie Atkins 12.05.21

A word of praise from Stephanie....Whoever tended the pots of flowers, situated each side of the main door, has done a brilliant job. They have never looked so colourful and attractive.

WHEN DID
YOU
LAST SEE
YOUR
~~FATHER~~
DOCTOR?



I appreciate probably half the W.I. Membership attend Charing Surgery. Amongst the other half, who are registered with Headcorn, I have yet to meet anyone who has seen a real life doctor in person since the start of the Covid pandemic. Nurses and admin staff – yes, but not a properly qualified real live Doctor.

Sadly I feel that this remote and second rate system of healthcare will remain as doctors seem to prefer it.



A beautiful Grey Heron
On the lookout for some
tasty fish
in
Stephanie and John's
garden

An original artwork
from
Geraldine Dyer



A sunny walk in May
"BLUEBELLS EMERGING"
in Biddenden
Woods



How gorgeous is this
from
Sandie Hughes?

“Honey Bee Molly”

Sandie has been
missing visiting her
grandchildren in
Australia, one of
whom is called
Molly.

Sandie calls her her
Honey Bee!

Spot the tiny bee in the picture



“The Turkey Trot”

Another thing Sandie has missed is
cooking Christmas Dinner for her
family so she painted the gleeful
turkeys that have escaped her
culinary attentions



Gill Bromley has produced this wonderful memory chart
of the people, places and activities she has been missing
throughout the Covid restrictions.....



(Sideways on to maximise the size!)

UNCURL, UNFURL, UNRAVEL, UNROLL

A poem by Kathy Reynolds, 14th May 2021

Uncurl, unfurl, unravel, unroll

Rather like *Wind in the Willows*' small Mole

Whose senses, when stirred by the calling of Spring

Cast off his seclusion and felt his soul sing

As he jumped for sheer joy in the warmth of the sun

A new chapter, adventure, so newly begun ...

In a similar vein, as our liberties grow

Make gently the change from a 'STOP' to a 'GO'.

We'll slowly break free from our tiny wee bubbles,

Inhale the fresh air and cast off our troubles.

See family, friends, enjoy all that is good ...

Travel, experience, live life as we should.

Yet – exercise caution, let's not move too fast ...

We so value our freedoms and need them to last.

So now we move forwards, all eyes on our goal,

As we carefully uncurl, unfurl, unravel, unroll.



Smarden WI – Better Together

Disclaimer: This is a work of fiction – Any similarity to actual persons.....(Kathy 😊)

Huge thanks to all contributors – just wonderful!