WI Secretary's Report

Prepared - 3 January, 2025

2024 was an exceptional year for Kirtlington's Women's Institute. We welcomed new Members – we now have the highest membership we've had for a decade. We had another year of interesting and creative events, as detailed in the annual accounts, we had our best year of fundraising at the Kirtlington Village Fete.

I would like to acknowledge the very valuable contribution of the Committee Members. The increase in attendance and Membership is a reflection of their hard work.

AGM and March Meeting
The Treasurer and Secretary's reports were delivered followed by voting for the three constitutionally required Members of the Committee.

- Alison Ace was re-elected President. Emma Lambert was re-elected Secretary and Di Hobbs replaced Hilary McPhee, who had resigned from the position of Treasurer after a run of six years.
- Caroline Rice resigned from her position arranging the annual calendar and overseeing the Raffle. Caroline not only completed the schedule for 2023 but also put in place the majority of the activities for 2024. Yet again she arranged a very interesting and broad calendar for us to enjoy.
- Thanks to Hilary and Caroline were expressed by the Committee and all Members.
- Alison invited Beni, Jenny and Mel to remain on the Committee to continue with their excellent social media work. Each agreed and the Members and the Committee thanked Beni, Jenny and Mel for their continued contribution to the Newsletter and social media comms and their additional support at meetings and fundraising events.
- Although the Newsletter was enjoyed by all, the Members voted to stop the monthly issues. It had been a COVID initiative that Jenny and Mel had continued but the time had come to let it go. Important Communications would be emailed to Members from December 2024 or, if appropriate, sent by WhatsApp.

After the meeting there was a quiz organised by Beni. The quiz questions contained information members had shared about themselves. We discovered that amongst our cohort we have a Member who motorbiked around the world, another who worked in Nepal and more than one skydiver.

Caroline had arranged a mixture of craft, exercise, speakers and social events. One of the favourites was Indian Block Printing provided by Marea Brown and friends. Not only did we have an excellent turnout but many guests attended as well, some of whom have joined us since. At the other end of the year, we had a wreath making lesson from Niki Pinker and a colleague. The results were fantastic.

In terms of exercise we started off with a class on the practice of Qiong by Isabelle Kandler. Some of our Members attend Thai Chi classes and were fascinated to compare the two. Kirtlington has an active Morris Dancing group and they kindly joined us in July to demonstrate and many of the Members had a go. We finished the exercise elements for the year with a very relaxed Gong Bath session provided by a local

practitioner, Zelda De Feitas. All who attended enjoyed the session and many are going to go to one of Zelda's classes. She generously donated a free 1:1 class to the raffle. It was a coveted prize.

Some of the Members attended a Tackley meeting to listen to Chrissie talk about her charity that saves hurt owls. It was such a good event that we arranged for Chrissie to speak to us in August. She came along with two of her owls. Many of the Members donated to the charity.

Traditionally June is our open garden meeting. This year was such a wash out that we had to cancel the event. Instead we played bingo. There wasn't a great turn out and the Committee have decided that it's time to sell the bingo set!

We rounded up the year with a Christmas Meal at The Oxford Arms. We arranged a new table layout and sat Members by surname, which worked very well as they had time to get to know ladies who they'd not necessarily had the chance to before. The evening went very well and the team at The Oxford Arms couldn't have been more helpful.

Caroline Rice is kicking off the year with a talk about Japan, a country she has visited regularly for work over 20 years. In February we're arranging a talk from a local gardener. And the rest of the year's activities are firming up nicely.

SUMMARY

In summary, 2024/25 was another successful year for Kirtlington's WI. We increased our Membership from 31 to 34, attendance at Members Meetings is generally up and there's consistent attendance at the monthly coffee mornings and walks organised by Di and Jenny. As always, the Members are invited to set up their own WhatsApp groups for other activities that they may want to do together.

I'd like to thank Di Hobbs for her support and hard work since she joined the team. She's very organised and pro-active – keeping us on track – and is a delight to work with.