

My life in the WI by Valerie Allen

I have been involved with the WI since I was a teenager. My mother was very involved with Wiggington, Hertfordshire WI. At various times my mother was President, Secretary and Treasurer, so it was natural that I should go along with her from the age of 15.

When I was 16 I went to a Barnardo's Home to train as a Nursery Nurse. This home was very close to the WI Marcham and Denham College. We were very lucky to be able to go to Denman College to learn cookery as part of our training. The Cookery School was then in an old Nissan Hut, but we had gas and electric cookers and also a small Aga. When we were 'off-duty' we were able to go to Marcham WI meetings, which we enjoyed.

When I had finished my training and a year as a Staff Nurse, it was time to move on and as I had met my husband (John) by then, I looked for a job in Banbury. I was employed at the Maternity Hospital at the Elms, near to the Horton Hospital. After a very happy year there John and I decided to get married and we moved into a small cottage near Warmington in April 1957. I then joined the local WI there to help me get to know people.

Five years and two children later, we decided the cottage was too small so we moved to a house in Kings Sutton in June 1962, where we still live to this day. Very shortly after moving to Kings Sutton I joined the Kings Sutton WI and it was a great help to me with meeting people and making friends. I was made President for the first time in 1967 (and another five times since then), and I was also Secretary seven times. I now enjoy being on the Committee and taking on other jobs where needed.

I can remember on May 31st 1965 I was lucky enough to win our WI Ballot for the '50th Anniversary Buckingham Palace Garden Party.' I still have my invitation and pictures of the event. Friends from Kings Sutton WI looked after my children until John returned from work to enable me to go to this event.

You can see that the Women's Institute has played quite a big part in my life, (and my husbands)! John has helped and supported me over the years doing lots of chores at home so I could remain involved with all that goes on our WI.

Valerie Allen.