



## Fressingfield Women's Institute

Fressingfield WI enjoyed a very good year for 2022 and a very important one as we celebrated our centenary. We began with the shadow of the pandemic still hanging over us but got back to normal fairly quickly, enjoying monthly meetings, trips and other events. New members joined during the year and our numbers are back up to 21 currently.

We have again enjoyed a full range of speakers. Some have conveyed to us their passion in life, be that painting, craft and flower-growing, being an auctioneer or a West End stage manager. We also had speakers from four very worthy charities, the Suffolk Lowland Search and Rescue, the Waveney Foodbank, Prickles Hedgehog Sanctuary and most recently the Service by Emergency Response Volunteers. Our community Police Officer, based in Halesworth, most gave us a talk last month. We have a full program of speakers taking us to April 2024. Ladies over the 18 interested in joining can come along for £4 which includes listening to the speaker and tea and cake during the break. We are a friendly bunch and always ready to welcome potential new members and their ideas.

By this time last year, we were already considering the question 'How are we going to celebrate our centenary?' A Centenary bench for the village was our first thought. With help from the parish council a very beautiful wooden bench was commissioned, a concrete base was made and then the bench installed outside the Sancroft Hall in October. Later that month it was blessed by Rev Susan at an afternoon tea event attended by many villagers and made its appearance in the Diss Express later that week.

Alongside this another idea was also developing which would make a more direct link to the establishment of Fressingfield WI in 1922. The result was a Murder Mystery evening including our Summer Meal in July. The play's setting was Fressingfield WI in 2022 organising their centenary celebration – very clever. A fantastic evening was had by all. We welcomed several visitors including our Federation Chair, Celia Davies, members from neighbouring WIs and our own members' guests. We were greatly helped in our thespian endeavours by the Fressingfield Players.

We have also been involved in a number of other activities in 2022. Our President has twice presented the history of the WI on local Park Radio and this has helped promote our own branch. We have continued to run a stall at some of the Fressingfield Community Produce Markets. These have been very successful and have helped boost funds and attract new members. Some of us enjoyed a trip to the Southwold Summer Theatre in August and were delighted to find it had been recently refurbished. The play was good too. Then, in October, another fantastic evening – the chocolate tasting and quiz. This was very well attended, proved to be a good fund-raiser, and was great fun. Our walking group has kept going this year though numbers are dwindling. The same is true of our book group. In an attempt to boost numbers it was decided to open this up to anyone locally and no longer limit it to WI members.

One really lovely thing is that several of our newer members have thrown themselves into helping with events such as the bench blessing and the chocolate evening. And some have even agreed to join the committee! Very soon we are hosting a Mama Mia singalong to the film including Greek snacks and a cocktail or two. A cheese, chocolate and wine tasting is also being planned with a relevant quiz. Both these events will be open to non-members. Our President has just had an interview about her career path published in the National WI Magazine, WI Life, which has well and truly put Fressingfield WI on the map in Suffolk and beyond!