



## **ACTIVITIES OF ASHTON WI IN OCTOBER 2013**

The October meeting was well attended and Marjory announced that as we have six members attending the Worcestershire weekend at Denman College next March, it had been decided to split the annual bursary between these members.

The National Campaign, which is aimed at reducing the amount of plastic bags given out at retail outlets, is headed by Jen Creese. She has been writing to local MPs and to the Environment Minister, Rt. Hon Owen Paterson, to lobby the Government to bring forward the charging for plastic bags in England. Wales has already introduced a charge of 5p each bag and since 2011 have reduced the amount taken home by 81%. The replies received have all been similar in that the Government will not be enforcing this charge until 2015, when it is hoped that retailers and consumers will have time to adjust and prepare for these charges and by then a totally biodegradable bag will be introduced.

Our speakers this month were well known to us all – Vicky and David Ward, volunteers for the Samaritans. David has been a Samaritan for over 16 years and Vicky has recently finished her training. She explained what was required of a Samaritan and the job needed much patience and commitment. The service has around 18,750 volunteers, across the UK and Ireland and anyone from the ages 18 and 95 can offer their services.

The Samaritans was founded by a priest, Dr Chad Varah in 1953 and was the first 24 hour telephone helpline in the World. The Central Office of Samaritans is a national charity and there are 201 branches, all across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. It is not a religious organisation and is funded almost entirely on voluntary contributions. David and Vicky explained that the office is open 24 hours a day, and there are always two people on duty. They were there to give emotional support and most importantly a “listening ear” to the callers, who were often very distressed and needed to speak to someone, other than family and friends. They are not there to give advice, just to offer this listening support and encourage callers to get through their problems.

It is very demanding and emotionally draining and not suitable for everyone, they explained, but the initial training picks out the most suitable applicants. David and Vicky were thanked by Judith Hunter, and everyone agreed it had been a most thought provoking and interesting talk.

On 30<sup>th</sup> October 12 members attended the WFWI's Annual Council Meeting in the Severn Hall at the Three Counties Showground at Malvern. Two speakers entertained us after Federation business – the first was Jane Robinson, authoress, who has recently published a book entitled “A Force to be Reckoned With” – a history of the Women’s Institute. The first WI was formed in Canada by a woman named Adelaide Hoodless in 1897. She encouraged the women who often lived in outlying areas to grow vegetables and taught them animal husbandry; also to cook nutritious food for their families. By bringing groups together and forming friendships, began the basic principles of the Women’s Institute. In 1915 the first WI was formed in Anglesey, North Wales and from then on spread over the UK. Present day there are over 210,000 members and 66,000 WIs and still counting!

The second speaker was Kate Bliss, a well known face on television and appears regularly on programmes such as “Flog It” and Antiques Road Show. She has much experience in the valuation of antiques, especially jewellery. She told us of many of her experiences when buying various pieces and sometimes finding items for a few pounds only to find them to be worth many thousands!

The day concluded with the presentation of certificates for the many entries in the craft competition. We were thrilled when it was announced that Jenny Collier had received a third for her beautifully stitched table-cloth and Jane Williams-Thomas a second for the members’ choice art entry. Judith Hunter and Joan Richmond received high points for their floral entries.

The co-operative entry depicting the WI from 1918 to present day and future was won with by Hadzor and Oddingly with a very simple but explanatory display (see photograph)





*Ashton WI floral entries in the craft competition at the WFWI's Annual Council Meeting*



*Jenny Collier received a third prize for her beautifully stitched table-cloth*