

# HISTORY OF RAYNE WI

*Home (<https://www.raynewi.org.uk>) / History of Rayne WI*

## 100 GLORIOUS YEARS A HISTORY OF RAYNE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE 1918-2018

A founder member and first President was Mrs Dyer.

Mrs Linsell was first secretary and held various other posts until she moved away in 1930.

Members in those early days were Mesdames Hance, Vaughan; Blyth, Symmons. All street names we now know in the village. Mr. Brunwin was auditor for many many years.

Miss G Blyth became President in 1924 and in 1949 it looked like all the rules would have to be broken when Miss Blyth wished to remain as President. Eventually persuasion prevailed and Mrs. Dyer consented to stand, with Mrs. Brown (Betty Childs's mother) as Vice President.

Christmas Soirees were held at Rayne Hall for members and their children.

Meetings were held in various locations over the early years.

Layfields Mission Room; Rayne Place; Mrs. Akins's Garden Room (until the lease expired); Rayne House; The library at the Old School Room, and in 1954 the then NEW village hall became our home.

Monday appears to have been the most convenient day originally. Six winter meetings were held in the afternoon at 2.45pm and the Summer ones at 7pm. Eventually the time changed to 7.15pm and then 7.30 and became all evening meetings, changing to Tuesdays in 1934.

For many of the early years there was a pensioner's tea party. A follow on to this was that in 1952 the Over 60's was formed. (Sadly now non-existent).

In the summer the girls from the Workhouse (at St. Michael's) were brought or walked to the village and give tea party. They were all sent home with biscuits, cake and flowers.

Members also ran a competition to grow a good crop of potatoes, which were then sent to the workhouse. Eggs

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detailed. In 1924 Jerusalem was unanimously adopted in place of “I vow to thee my country”. Many meetings closed with the National Anthem.

From the 1920's, five or six local WI's would arrange a group meeting early in the year which became known as 'The Spring Group Meeting'.

Over the years membership has risen and fallen. Early-on attendance was low when the weather was bad as many had a way to walk to meetings, but at one time there were 100 members.

Members have always had to be urged to be on the committee. Delegates to the County and National AGM's have usually been found, but not always easily. Nothing has changed!

There have been

- choirs
- folk-dancing
- whist drives
- surprise teas
- drama groups
- a cricket team
- darts
- rounders

In April 1959 we had our first very own handicraft show. 39 members brought 133 entries, but the minutes do not state what the schedule was.

Mrs. Tepper presented a cup in 1965 to be competed for month by month throughout the year. In recent years a jewellery casket, presented in memory of Dawn Franklin, has replaced this.

AGM's were agreed to be held in November instead of December in 1959.

Duologues, monologues, frequently a dance (such as Sir Roger de Havilland), charades, singing and plays took place in social time. In 1936 tasteful music was rendered by members using comb and paper.

Collections were made to open Savings Books when members had a baby.

Classes included: saving on fuel and making fire lighters, practice in bandaging and bed making.

Talks and demonstrations included:-

- Umbrella covering
- How to feed Father, Mother and 3 children on 25/- per week. (now £1.25)
- The correct way to iron a tray cloth
- How to make a poultice and deal with wasps
- How to re-upholster a chair and remake a mattress
- Invisible darning

How to make a football from Golden Queen's

A debate was held as to whether “owing to the International situation” we should economize and wear out our clothes. The outcome was shaky!

At Christmas time, during the Second World War, comforts were sent to the boys from the village who were serving in the forces:-

- A pair of hand knitted socks
- 25 cigarettes
- ½lb sweets
- Stick of shaving soap
- Toilet soap
- A handkerchief

Members were asked if they could sweep the Home Guards hall and help make protective clothes for them.

The Army commandeered the Old School Room causing the OAP party to be cancelled.

In 1949 a recitation was given by Miss Betty Brown. (Is this our Betty Childs)?

In 1940, the Jam Centre was opened. The preservation of surplus fruit was the main summer pre-occupation of many WI members and others in the village. The jam was made, in most part, in Medley House using a special allocation of sugar and could only be sold in the village. Later, from 1941 to 1945, the jam had to be sold to retailers for purchase by the public using their ration books. It had to be inspected by the Ministry of Food. A profit was made and £100 given to Village Hall funds and £10 went to Denman (the WI College).

Taupouri WI, (in New Zealand), contacted us in 1947, wishing us to adopt them and they would send us food parcels. The first arrived in October.

Later, in 1952, Mrs. Foley, from Taupouri, visited Rayne and presented us with the silver vase which is now used on the Presidents table.

In the last few years our guest speakers have covered a wide variety of subjects such as:-

- Saturday morning pictures
- Memories of old Essex with the Rev. Robinson playing his accordion
- Foundlings and orphans
- Magistrates in the community
- Entertainment by a magician
- Scottish and Country dancing
- Identifying articles our Grans had.

Our most successful open evening was the talk on the new racecourse in construction on our doorstep. Great interest was shown and many husbands came along to join us. Discussion between the representative of the racecourse and the meeting was lively and informative. We almost enrolled some of the men – but we think that

- Flower arranging
- Card making
- Pottery
- Painting on ceramics
- Drawing
- Designing with pewter
- Parchment work

Our outings have always been fun and have taken us to such places as:-

- Bluewater shopping centre
- Lakeside shopping centre
- Theatre trips
- Mystery tours,
- Open gardens
- Christmas Markets

Throughout the year we work and play within the community. We also take part in the village and Church fetes. Each year we host a fashion show using our own members to model the clothes.

Two neighbouring members open their gardens for us to arrange delicious strawberry teas and we are joined by other institutes and friends. Our Darts team was most successful in 2001 and won the County Tournament becoming runners up in the following year. Bi-annually, around Shrove Tuesday, Rayne and Felsted Institutes set challenges to win the miniature frying pan. Supper and a good laugh is always an integral part of the evening.

In 2003 our President's brooch was kindly donated by a member who enjoyed the friendship of Rayne WI which is hopefully the feeling of everyone today. We now have a book for visitors to sign which helps us to evaluate their visits to our meetings.

Two of our members in recent years have had photographs accepted for the Essex WI Calendar. The National WI Life Magazine commenced in 2007 and is included in the annual subscription.

We hope that the future holds in store for us (amongst other things) a promised visit to the gardens of Highgrove House. Our fingers are crossed!

Gems from the past:-

- It was suggested a Rest Room in Braintree on Wednesdays would be a 'convenience'.
- A request was made to consider the advisability of having a motor fire engine in the neighbourhood. Braintree advised they were not bound to send to outlying villages, but hoped some arrangement could be made for all to benefit.
- In 1928 a resolution was sent to the Chief Constable of Essex to draw his attention to the speed of the cars

that it was not considered unreasonable for the patients at the Cottage Hospital to be roused at 6am.

- The Braintree District Council was urged to put in hand the matter of the village water as the supply was inadequate.
- A Resolution to the Postmaster was made to ask for a telephone kiosk in the village. Private subscribers were often called upon at inconvenient times as the public telephones closed at 7pm.
- A letter of protest was sent to the Folk Dance Committee. Dances chosen had music used only on one side of the record and meant unnecessary expense. Each dance was also in separate books.
- The meeting was small as it was a wet night and the Air Raid warning went at the time members were leaving home. Sadly that night there was no teapot and the fire went out due to lack of fuel. Not a good meeting.
- October 1943 Members were asked to give more hospitality to soldiers from America and the Empire. A doctor then gave a talk on sexual relations. It was also suggested a curfew be imposed for girls under 15.