

Welcome to Lewtrenchard WI

Helpful things you might like to know:

The Women's Institute is a community-based organisation for women in the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. The movement was founded in Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada, by Erland and Janet Lee with Adelaide Hoodless being the first speaker in 1897.

NFWI stands for National Federation of Women's Institutes and is responsible for running our charitable organisation. Its headquarters are in Parsons Green, London. We belong to DFWI, the Devon Federation of Women's Institutes which is one of the 69 regional WI's that link local WI's to the NFWI.

The Tamar Group is smaller group of WIs local to Lewtrenchard from within DFWI and is currently made up of Kelly, Lamerton, Lifton and Lewtrenchard. We hold an annual meeting comprising of themed competitions, a speaker and, of course tea and something to eat. We take turns hosting the event.

Lewtrenchard WI formed in 1927. Meetings are held in the Victory Hall on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:00 pm GMT or 7:30 pm BST. There is a rota of all the members who take turns serving tea and coffee, biscuits or homemade goodies and bringing some flowers or a plant which we give to a member, who is perhaps ill or having a difficult time.

At the monthly meetings we open by singing Jerusalem then cover any necessary business, whether that is local, regional or national and wish happy birthday to those celebrating that month. For seven of the eleven meetings we have a guest speaker or a demonstration covering a range of subjects. As well an obligatory AM and a meeting to discuss and vote on the selected campaigns from National we also have an afternoon tea fund raising event and a Christmas party. The campaigns have included equal pay for women, Keep Britain Tidy, reducing plastic pollution and provision of cervical screening. Once a year we organise a local outing to somewhere interesting, usually followed by refreshments.

During the meetings we have clipboards on display that advertise upcoming events, competitions, items for sale and outings. These can be from our own WI or even from Devon Federation or National. Members can sign up for these and if they have any questions they can speak to the treasurer or secretary for more details. The fees are collected by the treasurer and she sends them off on everyone's behalf.

At these local meetings we hold a couple of competitions. There is a monthly competition open to all members, which can be a craft, baked item, flower arrangement, or even an interesting item from home. Points are awarded for first, second and third – normally judged by our guest speaker or a visitor. At the end of the year the points are added up and the member with the most points for that year holds the silver cup.

Flower of the month is another competition open to all members. Members bring in a seasonal bloom from their garden and all members then vote for their favourite using small change. The bloom with the highest value wins for the month and at the end of the year the results are added up and the member with the highest value collected for that year holds the glass vase. All the coins collected, called pennies for friendship, are sent annually to ACWW. ACWW are Associated Country Women of the World. One of their founding members was Madge Watt, who was central to bringing the WI to the UK. Devon WI have Society Membership of ACWW, which is one reason we promote Pennies for Friendship.

We have a monthly walking group who meet the fourth Monday of each month for an organised walk. We also hold a monthly coffee morning on the third Thursday of each at Alders.

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Membership is annual running from April to March and as of 2025 costs £51 paid pro-rata depending on the quarter in which you join. This entitles members to 11 meetings with speakers, demonstrations and activities; the opportunity to vote on the proposed resolutions the WI supports to improve the lives of women, a copy of WI Life (the national magazine). More importantly it offers friendship with other members of the local community and a support network.

There are three elected officer positions in the local WI – President, Secretary and Treasurer, who are supported by a voluntary committee taken from the membership. These positions are normally held for 1 year with the hope that they will stay on. The president is elected from the committee by the members at the AM and the secretary and treasurer are appointed by the committee at the meeting after the AM. At Lewtrenchard, we try to keep the same officer positions for three years with staggered changes so that there are experienced officers in place as new ones take their role.

We participate in the WI craft section of the Okehampton Show each August. Volunteers put together a display comprising crafts, cooked items and a flower arrangement set to the theme for that year. The displays are judged by official WI judges and points awarded. The entry with the most points wins the trophy for 1 year. Attendees of the show are also asked to vote for their favourite and that display wins the People's Vote.

We sing Jerusalem, written by William Blake, at the start of our meeting. This hymn had been used by the National Union of Suffrage Societies in the 1918 celebrations of women's enfranchisement, and many of the leaders of the NFWI, including Grace Hadow, had been part of that struggle to win the vote for women. The NFWI ran a competition for an 'Institute song' which ended in Jerusalem being chosen at the official Institute's song. By singing Jerusalem, the WI is marking its links with the wider women's movement, and its commitment to improving the conditions of rural life.

JERUSALEM

**And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the Holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark satanic mills?**

**Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.**

We hope this has given you a brief insight but if you do have any other questions please just have a chat with one of the members. We want you to feel welcome and hopefully become part of our WI family. Remember the WI is what you make it!