**WEST LAVINGTON WI Report for Parish Council AGM**

West Lavington WI is a friendly branch of the national organisation that welcomes all women to monthly meetings, occasional outings and lots of fun and friendship. In rural communities it is a welcoming and open forum in which to meet people and support each other.

The Covid epidemic was a real challenge to our WI, given that many of our members were not able to access online meetings and it was a huge relief when we returned to meeting in person in 2022. However, membership had dropped and it was uncertain whether we could remain viable.

I took over as President in April 2023, promising to try and retain our current membership and recruit more. Our aims put forward were:

* To retain and engage our current membership
* To actively recruit and grow our membership
* To engage with local community groups
* To ensure efficient management and administration of our branch

With an excellent committee recruited, our first recruitment event was our *Coronation Tea,* held to celebrate the new King’s coronation. This was a great success, attracting over 50 ladies to the village hall, many of whom have joined us on occasion for other events and some joining as members. We are repeating this successful event in June this year when we will hold our Strawberry Sparkle on Thursday 13th June in the village hall. All ladies from West Lavington and surrounding villages are very welcome.

Throughout the autumn, winter and into spring 2024, we have had some interesting speakers ranging from Pelham Puppets to Homeopathy and enjoyed a Feast of Ukraine and dressing up in saris. Every month is different and our members are also encouraged to showcase their own talents. A summer outing and extra activities such as Mah Jong and Skittles are also offered.

I am delighted that since last year our membership has increased from 14 to 25. We overlap with other village groups which helps to foster a real sense of community and inclusion. We have supported the Salisbury Women’s Refuge and we are hoping to get involved with other community initiatives to help our fellow villagers.

We meet on winter afternoons and summer evenings on the second Thursday of the month. This has proved very popular and, indeed, attracted people from other villages in the winter. We hope to welcome even more members this year – we are a very jolly bunch!

Sue Bastone

April 2024

President West Lavington WI