

**HAUGHLEY PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
MONDAY, 9 MAY 2022
HAUGHLEY WI REPORT**

As requested by Haughley Parish Council (HPC), here is the Annual Report for Haughley WI for the previous two years.

The Year The Pandemic Stuck

2020 started with our usual meetings for January and February and in March that year we had a fundraiser meeting with guest speaker Charlie Haylock. Then everything stopped due to Covid 19. Initially all forms of communication within our group ceased as, like everyone else, we struggled to comprehend and understand what sort of overall impact the pandemic would have on ourselves, families and the wider world.

Communication with Our Members

It soon became clear that contact with our members was vital. A monthly newsletter was put together which was either emailed or posted through doors. The Committee kept in touch by telephoning our members.

As part of the much larger National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI), whose membership numbers 250,000, we thankfully had resources we could call on as to how we should be functioning as a village group. It was made clear by NFWI that doing nothing was not an option. Many WIs started meeting via Zoom but with a largely elderly membership there was no appetite in our Group for this and so a Meeting in a Bag initiative was started in November 2020. The Committee did however conduct their monthly meetings via Zoom or where possible in a back garden.

A bag for each member was put together in accordance with NFWI guidance meaning it had to contain something educational e.g. a plant together with notes about that plant, how to grow it etc. As our meetings include refreshments the bag included individually wrapped coffee and biscuits as well as the monthly newsletter, a quiz, the monthly WI magazine and other suitable items. These bags were then distributed amongst the Committee to deliver in person with socially distanced doorstep deliveries and chats. This initiative was very successful as for many of our members this was their only contact with the outside world.

Support for Haughley WI During Pandemic Restrictions

Thanks to our Treasurer, Rosemary Welburn, we were in pretty good financial shape when the pandemic struck. However, in recognition of the WI's crucial social role in the community and our inability to fundraise, we were very grateful to be given a one-off donation from the Parish Council in April 2021 to help keep us viable until we were able to resume normal activities.

Our First Face-to-Face Meeting

Our first face-to-face, and very successful, meeting was risk assessed, adhering to all legal restrictions fish and chip supper in July 2021 in the Village Hall. Our meetings have continued on a monthly basis since then, always following Government guidance and that of the Haughley Village Hall Management Committee (HVHMC) which has meant our ladies have felt relaxed and confident attending them. And we are pleased that we have reintroduced our very popular monthly lunch club as well as planning a number of trips during 2022.

Participation in Haughley Village Life

We are delighted that our participation in village life has now resumed. We hosted a Haughley Community Cafe morning in September 2021 and sold home-made cakes from our stall. This was our first fund-raising effort since March 2020, and it was very successful, raising £163.00. We have since hosted another in March this year and will do so again in September. We also

had our ever popular traditional cake stall at the Village Christmas tree lights switch-on event last December.

Haughley WI Membership

When meetings ceased in April 2020 Haughley WI had 22 paid-up members. Two of our longest serving members left the group as well as one of our Committee members. Determined that Haughley WI would not only survive, but thrive even in adversity we launched what turned out to be a successful publicity drive the focus of which was an excellent article on what our WI is and does inviting ladies to a free taster meeting. By the September 2021 general meeting membership had grown to 33, including a new Committee member, and is still growing. To date our membership stands at 36, hopefully soon to be 37. We plan a leaflet drop promoting our group to the new developments in Haughley.

Changes to Subscriptions and The Yearly Programme Generated by the Pandemic

The NFWI financial calendar now runs from March to April instead of January to December as previously. Therefore subscriptions are now collected in April each year (not January) and our yearly programme runs from April to March, not January to December.

The 2021/22 Programme

From July 2021 we are pleased to have been able to run our usual monthly meetings. As the previous year's programme had been for the large part cancelled, the speakers we had booked from April until December 2020 were simply rebooked for the 2021/22 programme.

The 2022/23 Programme

Our 2022/23 programme began with an open event last month when Charlie Haylock told us all about his key role as voice coach for the actors in film "The Dig", based on the true story of Sutton Hoo starring Ralph Fiennes and Carey Mulligan.

We are confident that Haughley WI will continue to provide friendship, education and fun for its members and will thrive as a financially stable community-oriented organisation.

And on a personal note as President of Haughley WI, I am incredibly proud of what our WI has achieved over the last two incredibly challenging years and thankful for the continued support and hard work of our Committee.

Marian Adams
President
Haughley WI