

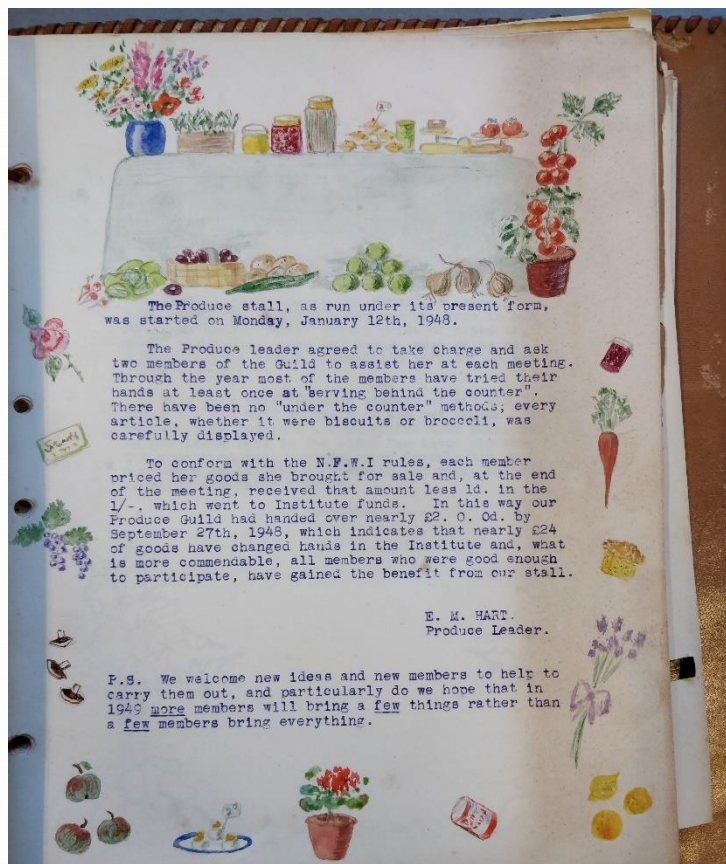
Lapworth Women's Institute produce logbook

CR2313/18

The Document of the Month for February is a logbook kept by the Produce Guild of Lapworth Women's Institute, which records events held between 1948 and 1968. The opening editorial entry of the volume explains how it was devised in a meeting of the institute, with members agreeing 'to write up items of interest'.

The Produce Guild of Lapworth WI appears to have been set up as an agricultural scheme, with members growing fruit and vegetables and rearing livestock. In the logbook, it is reported that members sold their produce at the institute's stall, with a share taken by the individuals and the rest going into institute funds. Some entries also recount the presentation of produce at various exhibitions and competitions.

With a handmade leather cover, colourful illustrations and a few photos, the logbook was evidently kept with care.

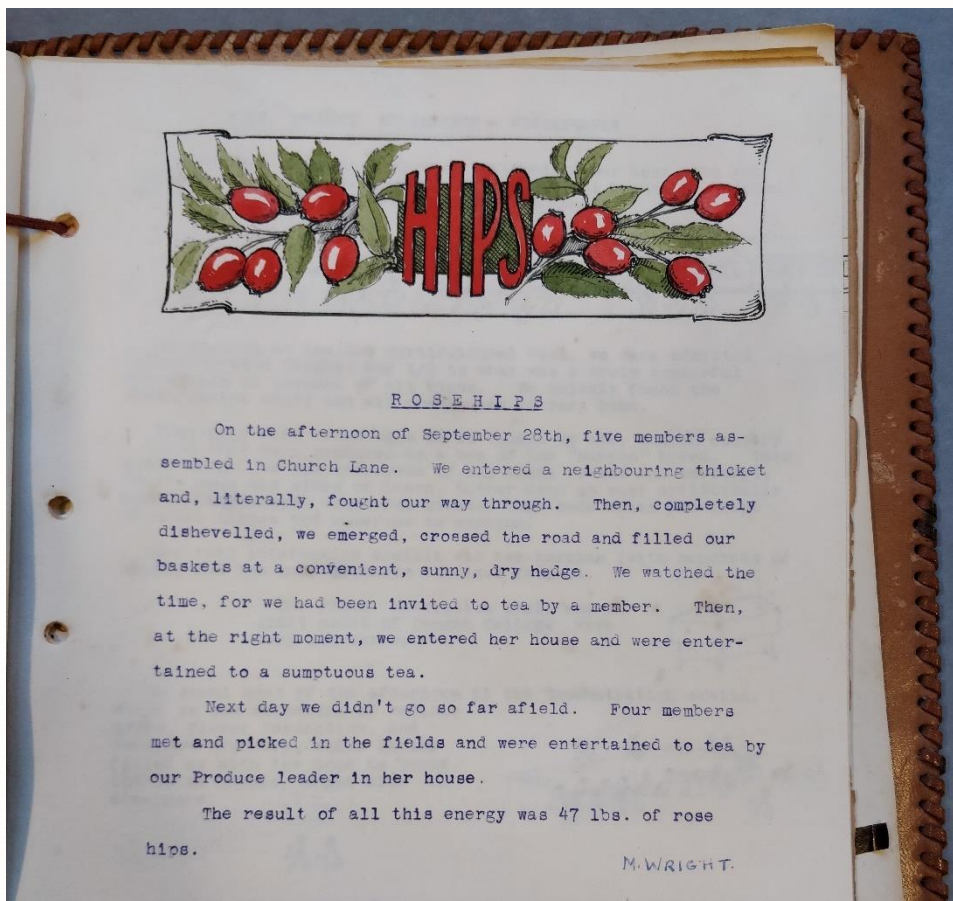


Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2313/18

The Women's Institute and food production

The Women's Institute was originally founded in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century, but the first meeting in Britain was held in 1915 in Anglesey, Wales. The growth of the organisation was rapid through the First World War, such that 137 local branches had been established by 1918.ⁱ There were institutes in over 5,500 villages at the beginning of the Second World War.ⁱⁱ

During its wartime beginnings, the Women's Institute was particularly focused on agriculture and the production of food, given the shortages that plagued Britain in this period.ⁱⁱⁱ Women were encouraged to grow their fruit and vegetables, with surplus produce sold on stalls. The aim of waste reduction also drove a campaign of jam making; in the Second World War, the first wave prevented an estimated 450 tons of fruit from rotting.^{iv}

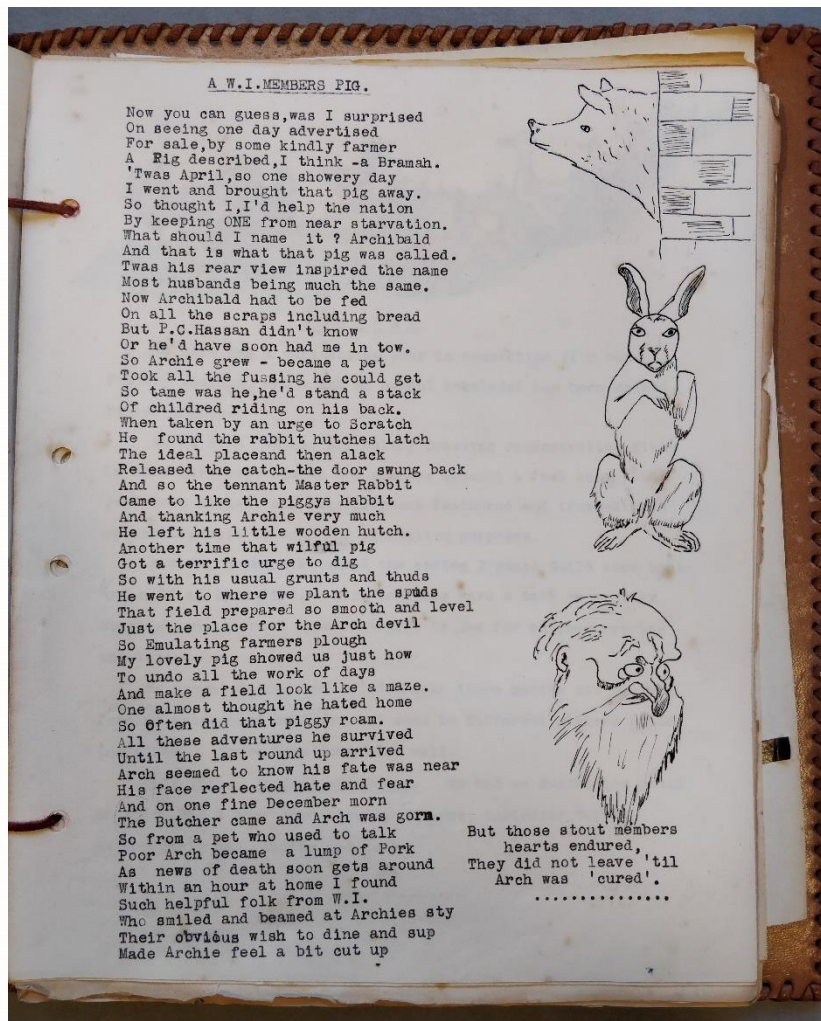


Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2313/18

Starting in 1948, the Lapworth WI produce logbook shows how this culture of growing and preserving continued beyond wartime, most notably in an account of rosehip harvesting, shown in the photograph above. A scarcity of oranges had

prompted the WI to collect 500 tons of rosehips during the Second World War, an alternative source of Vitamin C.^v Emerging 'completely dishevelled' from bushes on a hunt for fruit certainly seems to embody the make-do wartime spirit!^{vi}

There are also some light-hearted entries, including the poem about a WI member's pig, shown in the photograph below.



Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2313/18

Lapworth WI and village life

The Women's Institute has long been a part of village life, and the records of Lapworth WI certainly give a picture of community activity. Besides bringing food to the village with their Produce Guild, WI members appear to have been involved in the upkeep of the local environment; the collection contains several certificates of merit for Best Kept Village competitions through the 1960s and 1970s, and a flora

survey of the village's churchyard.^{vii} The Lapworth WI have also sought to preserve and promote the village's heritage, whether through plans and surveys of the churchyard and its monuments, or through a volume compiled to give an account of the village's history.^{viii}

Founded in 1941, Lapworth WI is still active today, though it has since enlarged to include neighbouring Kingswood, through an agreement finalised in 1997.^{ix} The group meets monthly at Lapworth village hall.^x

ⁱ 'History', *The WI*. Available at: <https://www.thewi.org.uk/about-us/history-of-the-wi> (accessed 25/01/2024).

ⁱⁱ 'What Did The Women's Institute Do During The Second World War?', *Imperial War Museums*. Available at: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-did-the-womens-institute-do-during-the-second-world-war> (accessed 25/01/2024).

ⁱⁱⁱ 'WOMEN'S INSTITUTE', *The Museum of English Rural Life*. Available at: <https://merl.reading.ac.uk/collections/womens-institute/> (accessed 25/01/2024).

^{iv} 'What Did The Women's Institute Do During The Second World War?', *Imperial War Museums*. Available at: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-did-the-womens-institute-do-during-the-second-world-war> (accessed 25/01/2024).

^v 'What Did The Women's Institute Do During The Second World War?', *Imperial War Museums*. Available at: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-did-the-womens-institute-do-during-the-second-world-war> (accessed 25/01/2024).

^{vi} See Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2313/18, Lapworth produce log book.

^{vii} See Warwickshire County Record Office, CR4214/19/1-5, Best Kept Large Village certificates and photograph; Warwickshire County Record Office, CR4214/21, St Mary the Virgin Lapworth Churchyard flora survey.

^{viii} See Warwickshire County Record Office, CR4214/23, Plan of St Mary the Virgin Lapworth Churchyard; Warwickshire County Record Office, CR4214/24, A history of Lapworth in the County of Warwick.

^{ix} See Warwickshire County Record Office, CR4214/12/40, Finalisation of enlargement with Kingswood W.I.

^x 'The WI', *Welcome to Lapworth.org*. Available at: <http://lapworth.org/the-wi/> (accessed 25/01/2024).