



In **January** we all enjoyed learning about the history of Belly Dancing. Ishtar demonstrated some beautiful costumes and dances and then some of us had a go at dancing ourselves. It was great fun and good exercise.

In **February** Caro and Ginny from Wild at Heart Foods talked about foraging for foods and setting up their business. They brought along delicious samples for us to taste. It was an interesting and enjoyable talk and many of us were inspired to start foraging and cooking.



In **March** Sophie Winship, who runs a cake decorating business from her Ottershaw home, gave us an entertaining demonstration, full of useful tips, on how to decorate cakes without too much expense and in simple and striking ways. Download Sophie's Cake Decorating tips from the Tips and Ideas button. To find out more about Sophie's business, Highly Decorated, go to the Links page.

In **April** we had the pleasure of meeting Sarah Brummitt who gave us some tips on the secrets of good style. Sarah is an image and personal branding consultant. She helps women to look their best, at any age, so they can simply get on with their lives. Sarah explained that each one of us is unique and we need to look for different things in our choice of garment,.. ..comfort, boldness, feminine, classic, glamorous etc.



In **May**, Grace Evans, Keeper of Costume at Chertsey Museum, told us the fascinating story of a glamorous gown worn by a young debutante in 1937. We were interested to hear about the influence of Hollywood on fashion, the construction of the gown, the couture house, Xenia which made the gown, the social whirl of "the season", the etiquette of being introduced at court and to see images and a film which brought the era to life. We were also intrigued to hear that Muriel, who wore the gown when she was 17 years old, lived at

Woking and later became a member of the WI.



In **June**, Claudine Martin, a yoga and meditation teacher, led us through three different ways to meditate. We learnt how deep breathing and the use of a mantra can calm the mind and body, how to use beads to focus the mind and joined in with singing a Kirtan. Yoga sound meditation can help to free the mind and when practiced regularly can be of great benefit physically and mentally. We all felt extremely relaxed by the end of the session.

We had a wonderful evening on the 1st of **July** when we held our first summer garden party. Apart from the social side of the evening there was a 'famous faces' and 'babies' fun quiz with photos of celebrities and the committee members as children pinned around the garden. Some humorous conversations were had when trying to work out the committees identities (our ages range from 30-65!). To tie in with two of talks this year we held jam and cake competitions where members could submit a jar of homemade jam and/or bake and decorate 5 cupcakes. The cake category was won by the wonderful woodland themed cakes (see photo) and the jam category was won by our president!



Each winner received a trophy, a rosette and a prize to keep. All entries were then tasted/eaten with much discussion about the type of fruits or techniques used. The evening was rounded off by ladies playing garden jenga or noughts and crosses or simply enjoying a glass of wine with friends in the conservatory.

We had an informal **August** meeting attended by about 25 members. Hannah Lane led us on an interesting walk around Ottershaw giving us a fascinating insight into the history of the village and how it had developed over the years. After the walk we sought refreshment in a local pub which has been in the village for over a hundred years!

In **September** we had a visit from Wellers Auctioneers & Valuers, a well-established auction house founded in 1866 and historically linked to the famous Surrey livestock auction markets of Guildford and Farnham circa 1965. Wellers has diversified away from agriculture in the last 25 years and are one of the UK's largest and most diverse auction houses, specialising in Reverse Logistics, Fine Art, Jewellery & Antiques and Architectural Antiques & Reclamation. Salerooms are based in Chertsey and Guildford, Surrey, and Bletchley, Milton Keynes.



In **October** we met Adrienne Dines. She was born in Dublin. One of her earliest ambitions was to be a seanachai, a traditional storyteller, but the nun assured her that wasn't possible. We learnt however that it is possible as she has become an entertaining and engaging story teller demonstrating how she drew on the experiences of her life to develop her stories. Her books include Toppling Miss April, Soft Voices Whispering and The Jigsaw Maker.

Our first annual General Meeting, in **November**, was a great success with lots of members attending and a visit from our WI Adviser. We finished off the meeting with Shwapping - a chance to revitalize our wardrobes - and much fun was had choosing clothes and trying things on!

In **December** we rounded off our first year with our Christmas party which was attended by nearly 60 members and we were pleased to welcome guests from Trumps Green and Chertsey WIs.

We enjoyed mulled wine and nibbles and Sophie Winship, our very own star baker, inspired us with some easy and fun ideas for decorating Christmas cakes. Some members had a go at making a snowflake Christmas tree and a Gingerbread house. Some of our members organised a festive bingo game to raise funds for our chosen charity MAMA and finally we had a visit from Secret Santa!

