

**WOMENS INSTITUTE, DEVON, SPRING COUNCIL MEETING
TORQUAY 13TH. APRIL 2016**

After an early start from Newton Poppleford we arrived at the Riveria Leisure Centre, Torquay in just over one hour. The new road has made a vast difference. Previous journeys have taken nearly two hours. We were able to have Coffee and look around the various stalls before the Meeting began.

We sang Jerusalem and then the Chairman of Torbay Council was welcomed by Julie Ayre, the County Chairman. The Councillor then welcomed us all to the Bay and wished us a good time.

Adoption of various Reports were voted by the Delegates and the Board of Trustees and Sub Committees were introduced by Margaret Noon. One Trustee Miriam Gent was retiring after serving on the Board for many years. She was presented a handsome bouquet by the County Chairman.

The Federation Accounts were then presented by Valerie Styles . We were given a short and hilarious resume on what W.I. Advisers are, and do. If you should wish to become one there is a training programme. At present there are 12 in the County and they have 223 Institutes to visit and advise when requested.

Julie Ayres, the County Chairman, then addressed us. She was pleased to report that ACWW had reached their target for their latest project providing 48 Birthing Units. At the moment the Executive Committee were working on a Mission for the Future and Strategic Plans. "The W.I. aims to inspire. It is up to you what you make of it". Plans are going ahead to Twin ^{with} the Powys-Brecknock Federation. The President from Powys introduced herself and looked forward to exchanging ideas and visits in the near future. There are 26 Institutes and 500 members in her Federation.

Next came a presentation from the Calvert Trust which is based on Exmoor. It caters for people of all ages who have a disability and the Trust encourages the folk who come for a day or to stay longer, to achieve challenges that they never thought they would

accomplish. The facilities are numerous. Maybe this could be a Charity we could support.

We then had a presentation on Torre Abbey which is just next door to the Leisure Centre. The House looks very interesting and the gardens were lovely too. Well worth a visit.

The morning session finished with "Fashion through 100 years", including a lady in her 1950's wedding dress, accompanied by her husband. We then adjourned for lunch and a breath of fresh air.

It was a pleasure to visit & go in with you!

The afternoon began with the usual Competition Awards, Draws, and Raffle Prizes. Then we had the Guest Speaker Benjamin Mee of "We Bought a Zoo" fame. He was living in France with his family, a journalist, writing a book. He came from a large family, so when his father died they decided to buy a big house on Dartmoor with 13 bedrooms which would accommodate them all. There was a great amount of land attached the property so Ben had the idea of a Zoo. Money was very short but they kept going until his wife was diagnosed with a brain cancer and died shortly after leaving him with 2 small children. He opened the Zoo in 2007 and out of the blue had a phone call from America asking if Ben would be interested in making a film which was made in Hollywood with Matt Damon starring as Ben. This boosted his finances somewhat. In the meantime he was given an Hon. Doctorate at Plymouth University and at present is involved in several scientific projects with ^{the} University and Schools in the South West. It was a most interesting talk with a Power Point presentation.

The County Chairman then presented Valerie Styles, the Retiring Treasurer with another handsome bouquet and thanked her for all the hard work of keeping the books in order for so many years.

The Meeting closed with The Torbay W.I. Singers giving an excellent rendering of a few songs from the Shows.

Once again it had been a most enjoyable day. Pity more of you did not come – next time perhaps! I enjoyed being your delegate.

Thank You.

John G. ...