



(Book 15)

WOMEN'S CENTURY

An illustrated history of the Women's Institute

Authors: Vorster & Denning

I was so pleased to be asked to review this book. As a long time member of the W.I. I was looking forward to getting a copy for my members to share and here it was in my hands to review. I have read other W.I. Publications over the years and not all have lived up to the 'hype'; many being a costly disappointment. **However, what a fabulous book this is!**

It starts with a brief history from the forward thinking Canadian, Adelaide Hoodless, who in the late 1890's began a movement aimed at educating women in domestic science and child rearing. It meanders to the beginnings of the W.I. in the UK, namely in Anglesey in North Wales in 1915. The first English W.I. Formed two months later in Sussex.

The easy-to-read book narrates the progress of the W.I. through the decades to the present. Indeed to the Centenary that was celebrated this year, it charts the war years, women's rights, education campaigns, needlecraft, not to mention cookery, tea making and, of course, a rather famous calendar! It outlines how Lady Denman, the first Chairwoman of the W.I., led an enthusiastic initiative to buy a college. This turned out to be the Marcham House near Allington, known as '*Denman*', vibrant to this very day with a varied menu of residential and day-courses for members, non-members and (wait for it) MEN.

The text of this book is powerful and enlightening but equally so are the wonderful photographs chronicling the history and changes over the decades. The W.I. Is a wonderful organisation embracing women at its core. The warm welcome is special and no one need feel lonely. The motto '*Inspiring Women*' is truly deserved.

This book needs to sit on a coffee table where it can be picked up at will, not be hidden in a bookcase. Every chapter will inspire and hearten you. What a wonderful Christmas /birthday present it would make for any woman or spouse/partner. At a retail price of only £14.99, it is a real bargain.

ANN FITZGERALD

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