Tetbury Advertiser – November 2026

A light harvest supper is beginning to be a tradition for our October meeting, and this year was no exception as our members enjoyed a ploughman's platter of bread and cheese after listening to our speaker, Ali Warren, on 'The History of Bread'. Ali has been our speaker on a previous occasion when she spoke on the history of tea, which we accompanied then with tea and cake – we're the WI, so of course there was cake!

Starting with wild grains 75,000 years ago when our ancestors began to raise crops and establish themselves in a permanent location rather than relying solely on hunting which means relocating to follow animals, she took us through the records of yeast in bread in ancient Egypt, 14 types of bread in Pompeii, to the 'Assisa Panis' of 1266, which regulated weight, price and quality for five centuries until the' Making of Bread Act' of 1757, which addressed the same concerns but also prohibited bakers from using harmful whitening agents and fillers such as alum, chalk and powdered bones!

As we have learned from Ali before, she covers many historical aspects of her subject so she described the Corn Laws of 1838 and the backlash against them, the 1886 introduction of Hovis (an abbreviation of *hominis vis* - the strength of man), the Wonder Loaf of the 1920s, the invention in 1928 of a machine that sliced and wrapped bread, finishing on modern fermentation methods. Her final words were on the origin of the harvest festival. Originally the pagan festival of Lammas in August, it became a Christian festival in 19th century with Holy Communion incorporating bread from the first harvest of the year.

All of which had me grabbing my iPad before starting this article to understand more about the various Acts she mentioned and realising how easy it is to reach for a tablet to find information today. Long gone are the weighty encyclopaedias of my childhood, pretty much everything I need is there at hand on a tablet. And not just historical information, any household problem has me diving into YouTube, certain that there will be a video that will tell me whether I can solve it myself before calling in a professional. It made me realise that our members, who are mostly, like myself, of 'a certain age', are part of an unique generation that has transitioned from a totally analogue world to one that is almost, though thankfully not wholly, digital. AI will not replace the WI!

We will be at the Remembrance Sunday service on the 8th, then we will be holding our Annual General Meeting on the 9th. Once our annual report has finished, we will be relaxing into a short craft session.

The next coffee morning is on 23 November at 10.30am at The Snooty Fox and then it's our Christmas Dinner in early December, followed shortly by our Christmas meeting on the 14th, when we will be trying our hand at handbells. It's hard to believe how quickly the days have shortened and how quickly we seem to be racing towards winter – clearly I'm still in summer mode!

Rowena Palser

www.tetbury-wi.org.uk

