

## 🌀 The Women's Institute 🌀

**F**inmere WI was formed on 20 February 1957, before which a coach travelled around villages, including Finmere, to transport members to Tusmore for meetings. After the initial meeting, a committee of ten was formed, consisting of a President, Secretary, Treasurer and two Vice-Presidents, Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer. The first monthly meeting was held on Wednesday 13 March in the old village hall at 2.30 pm. Originally, meetings were held on the second Wednesday of every month, in the afternoons in the winter months, and in the evenings in the summer. The annual meeting was held in November and changed to May in 1968 and to March in 1984. Membership has fluctuated from thirty-three at the initial meetings to a high of forty-seven. Current membership is now struggling at thirteen. A byelaw changed the WI name on 13 February 1974 to Finmere & Mixbury WI.

In its early years, the WI organised the children's party and harvest lunch. Current events include refreshments for the annual carol service and helping with the senior citizens' annual party. Finmere & Mixbury WI has won the silver cup in group competitions on the last four occasions. Other activities have included glove making, country dancing, square dancing and more recently line dancing. Drama classes led to a successful pantomime, written and produced by Mrs Mildred Tredwell. The WI has designed and made a collage of the village for the new village hall, presented a bench and helped with the cost of the Kissing Gate in the churchyard. As the WI moves into the next century, Finmere looks forward to increasing its membership and continuing to keep the WI movement flourishing in this part of Oxfordshire. Finmere and Mixbury WI is planning an entertaining programme based on its main interests: good food, good wine and good company.

### Inaugural committee members of Finmere WI.

President	Mrs T. (Mildred) Tredwell
Vice-President	Mrs Sheldon
Vice-President	Mrs V. P. (Nora) English
Honorary Secretary	Mrs C. Symes-Thompson
Assistant Secretary	Mrs J. Hemsworth
Honorary Treasurer	Mrs J. Treadwell
Assistant Treasurer	Mrs Hemsworth
Members	Miss Wyatt, Miss L. Haycock and Mrs Radford.



**The Finmere and Mixbury WI collage**

## The WI Pancake Race



### Pancake Day 1971

Mrs Kath Sheppard (President of Finmere WI 1970/71) presents a plate to Joy Stanbrook. Fringford were second, Evenley third. The photograph was taken outside the old village hall.

For centuries, villagers made their confessions on Shrove Tuesday before Lent, a period of penance, but by the Victorian era penance was giving way to pancakes. The historian James Blomfield faithfully records that in the 1880s Finmere church still rang the 'Pancake Bell' at 11.30 am. But he gloomily noted that by then its religious function had declined and it had become a signal for food.

*On Shrove Tide, or Tuesday, it was usual to ring one of the Church bells to summon the people to the confession of their sins (shrive or shrift, meaning confession) preparatory to Lent. This, in later times, degenerated into a signal for preparing the pancakes, which were commonly eaten on that day. (History of Finmere, 1887)*

From 1959 or before, Shrove Tuesday has been commemorated by the Women's Institute Pancake Race. In 1959, Mrs Ena Davis won and was presented with a copy of the WI Cookery Book by Mrs Mildred Tredwell, WI President. The race later became a competition between north Oxfordshire villages. In 1971, the race was held here and Finmere's Joy Stanbrook won.

In 1973, Finmere lost to Bucknell for the first time in six years. The next year, the rivalry intensified and Bucknell and Finmere WIs purchased a shield to be presented to the winning village. The race that year was in Bucknell. Four villages took part: Ambrosden, Bucknell, Finmere and Stoke Lyne. The race was run over 100 yards along Bainton Road and pancakes were tossed twice. Valerie Bennett won the new shield for Finmere and a new frying pan for herself. In 1977, the race was in Finmere from the Jubilee Tree to the school. Valerie Bennett won again. In 1978 and in 1979 Finmere preferred to hold a Pancake Party in the evening, instead of a race, and the Pancake race tradition in Finmere ended.