



BSWI MONTHLY REPORT

7 JANUARY 2025



Introduction

The first meeting of 2026 was held at the Water Lane United Reform Church. In the absence of the President, the Secretary welcomed 28 members and one new visitor. She expressed hope for a lasting relationship with the elders of the United Reform Church, acknowledging their support in helping the group settle into its new monthly venue.

Members were invited by the Secretary to sign up to a rota of helpers, which would assist in the setting up of tables and chairs before each meeting. She also reminded everyone about contributing £1 in a bucket, buying raffle tickets, voting for the competition with the theme 'Tartan', and browsing the book sales.

The Hospice Movement and Isabel Hospice

Maggie Eccleston introduced the evening's speaker, Barbara Doherty, by providing background on her journey to becoming the current President of Isabel Hospice.

Barbara Doherty began her presentation with a summary of the history of the hospice movement. She traced its origins back to medieval pilgrimages and highlighted the care provided to tuberculosis patients in Ireland during the early twentieth century. As the need for tuberculosis care declined, attention shifted towards supporting cancer patients.

The development of cancer care saw significant growth in the 1930s with the establishment of Macmillan Cancer Relief. The 1940s marked a pivotal moment with the influence of Dame Cicely Saunders, whose work greatly shaped the modern hospice movement with her views on holistic care. St Christopher's in Sydenham became the benchmark for modern pain control and patient and family care in the 1960's.

In 1982, a group of volunteers in Welwyn Garden City headed by Isobel Last began to encourage specialised nurses to visit terminally ill patients in their own homes in all the towns of East Hertfordshire – an area with a total population of more than 270,000. They have since opened a Day Hospice, an In-Patient unit and Hospice at Home. These services are available for all residents of east Hertfordshire.

Isabel Hospice will need £10 million in 2026 with only one third provided by the NHS so fund-raising activities are crucial to its survival. Volunteers may offer to run a marathon or organise an activity in memory of a loved one. They have 600 volunteers who visit patients, help with administration or work in one of the 17 shops run by the organisation.

Barbara finished her talk by asking WI members to support the Isabel in as many ways as possible and to sign up as a volunteer.

Maggie thanked Barbara for her excellent talk and insight into the workings of such an important local organisation for us all.

Notices

- After a break for coffee and cakes, the new programme for February and March was confirmed and details will be given in the President's newsletter.
- The Treasurer explained the recent Quarterly review of BSWI's finances and the Secretary thanked her for all her hard work in ensuring we recently received over £600 in Gift Aid.
- The proposed Resolutions for 2026 have been published in the recent WI Life magazine and were summarised by the Secretary. She asked all members to vote for one of five and the results will be forwarded to HFWI.
- The £ in a bucket raffle and the general raffle were drawn
- The attendance register was circulated so that members could add their birthday months for future updating of the birthday book
- The competition on "Tartan" was won by Mary Duckworth
- The next monthly lunch will be at Skew at 12.30 on 15 January

(Notes taken by Barbara Bradbear, Secretary BSWI)