



100 Years of Mothers' Union in Coventry Diocese

1919 – 2019



The Early Years

The Mothers' Union.

Royal Patron: THE QUEEN.
Patrons: HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY; HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

CERTIFICATE OF AFFILIATION.

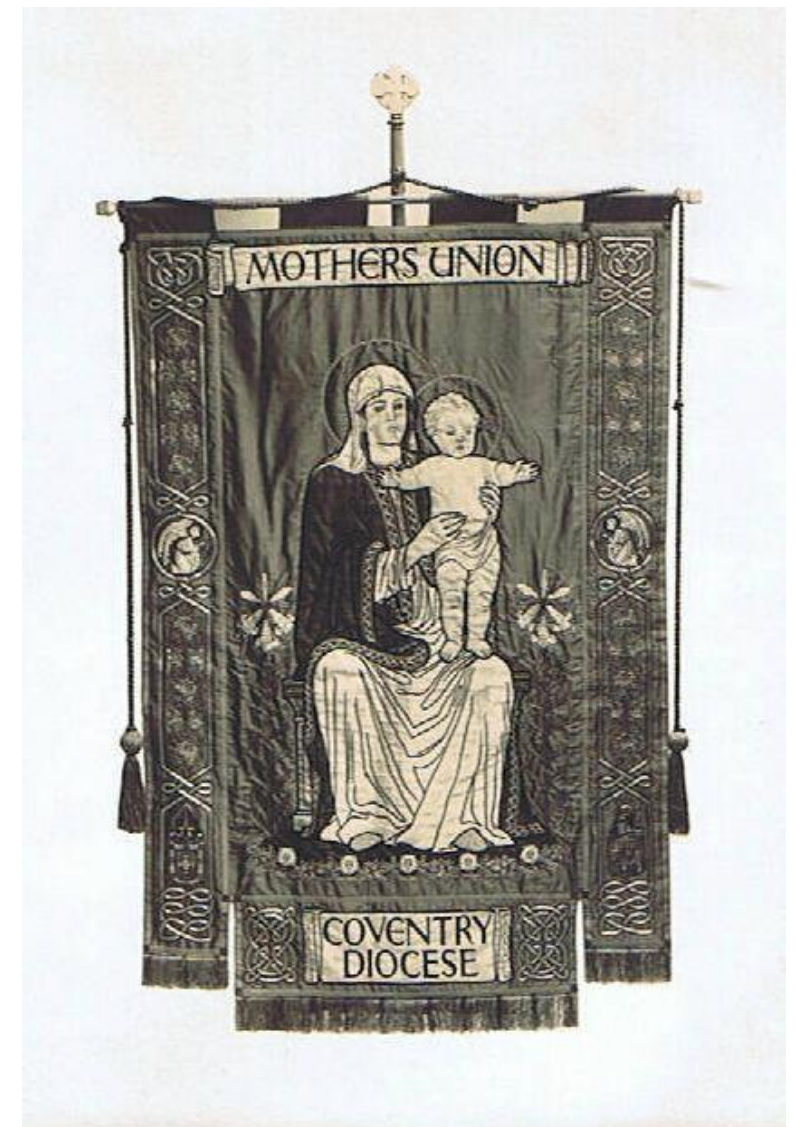
This is to Certify that the DIOCESE of COVENTRY
is in full union with the **MOTHERS' UNION (Incorporated)**
and is entitled to all the advantages arising out of such affiliation, so long as the Terms of Affiliation are being fulfilled.



Emily Dillwyn Signature of Central President.
Signature of Diocesan President.
Rosa S. Maudslayi Signature of Central Secretary.

Date December 1919

N.B.—THIS CERTIFICATE IS IN FORCE UNTIL FURTHER RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL.



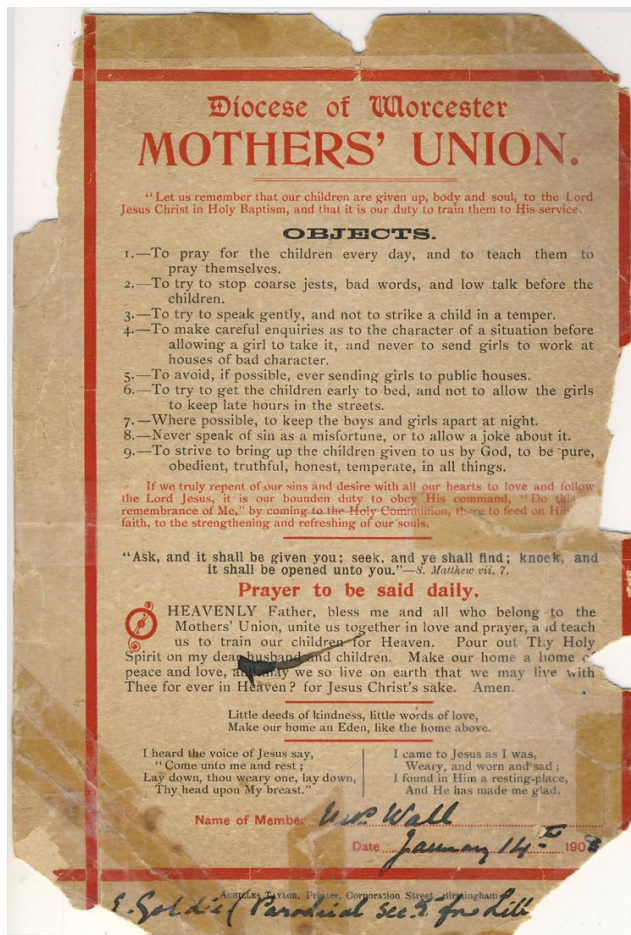
The original banner,
destroyed in the Coventry
Blitz in 1940

- 1918 The new Diocese of Coventry is formed and inaugurated
- 1919 Coventry Diocese Mothers' Union is affiliated to the central Mothers' Union
- 1925 Mary Sumner House built
- 1926 Golden Jubilee of Mothers' Union

- First President Lilian Rice serves from 1918 to 1935
- Alison Winser succeeds her in 1935. Wife of Revd R B Winser

Mrs Rice retired in 1935. Archdeacon's wife Mrs Holland spoke of the great feeling of affection and love which all the members of the Union have for Mrs Rice, for her wonderful gifts of sympathy and understanding and of her deep spiritual influence. Bishop Mervyn George Haigh said, "The Mothers' Union in the Diocese of Coventry is a great power for good."

There were 154 branches and over 3,000 members



An early membership card
dating from 1908



Wellesbourne Members 1930



Midsummer Revels 1930

Call to Renewal 1933

Launched by the Archbishop of York, William Temple, in June 1933, the Call to Renewal aimed to revitalise the organisation by arousing in members a stronger sense of being a worldwide body united in prayer ... An important component of this experience was, however, the focussing of patriotic love and imperial pride on the motherland of Britain, centred on the recently built headquarters, Mary Sumner House ... The Call to Renewal's timing was significant. It was issued after discussions at Central Council had revealed lukewarm commitment to a policy of total opposition to divorce reform. The need to shore up internal loyalty to the MU's position was reflected in the name of the campaign as well as its motto, "be ye not set to the pattern of this world but be ye transformed!"

From A History of the Mothers' Union by Cordelia Moyse P105

Wartime Mothers' Union Rising to the Challenge



The EM [Enrolling Member i.e. Branch Leader] then spoke on “The Building of a New England” from the Workers’ Paper. The chairman’s remarks were based on the importance of worship public and private during these anxious days.... Mrs Gosling and Mrs Kendrick proposed votes of thanks to the Vicar and Mrs Fortescue for giving the Mothers such an enjoyable time. The Rev and Mrs Fortescue in reply said that their intention had been to give the members a few hours of happy relaxation and if this had been achieved, they were content, tho’ the bombers overhead would not let them forget the war entirely.

Shottesbury July 1941

Moving on after the War

- 1946 Mrs E Marjorie Howard, wife of Provost Howard, elected President
- 1946-47 – Call to Rededication and Affirmation of Promises

Mrs Bingeman had received a letter from Mrs Howard, the Diocesan President about Evangelism in the MU and hoped we might do something about it in the Parish

September 1953

All MU members are asked to pray for the Queen in her Coronation, and special leaflets of prayers were to be ordered.
April 1953

1956 Banner Procession



Rebuilding the Cathedral

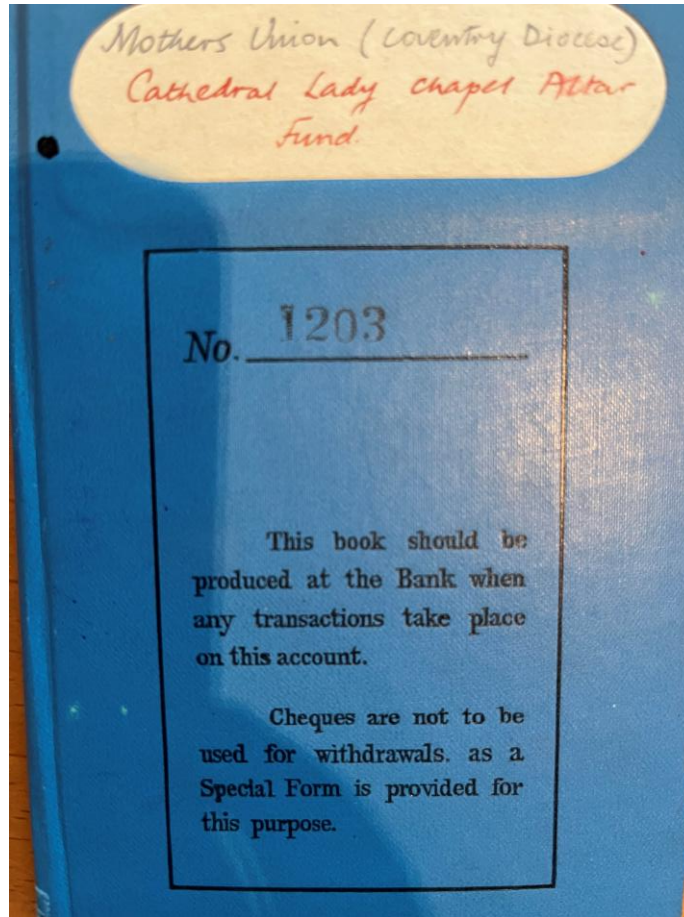
Branches were asked to contribute towards the rebuilding

There was to be a Coffee Morning and Afternoon Tea with Bring and Buy Stall at Lady Helen Seymour's to raise money for Coventry Cathedral kneelers

Wilmcote Branch April 1960

Edith Hoare (President) and Mrs Greenwell (Secretary) attended the Consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962. Members had raised £350 for the cost of the Lady Chapel altar. "Each member is to be asked to pay 1/- [5p] towards this – money to be sent in by 1st October [1960]."

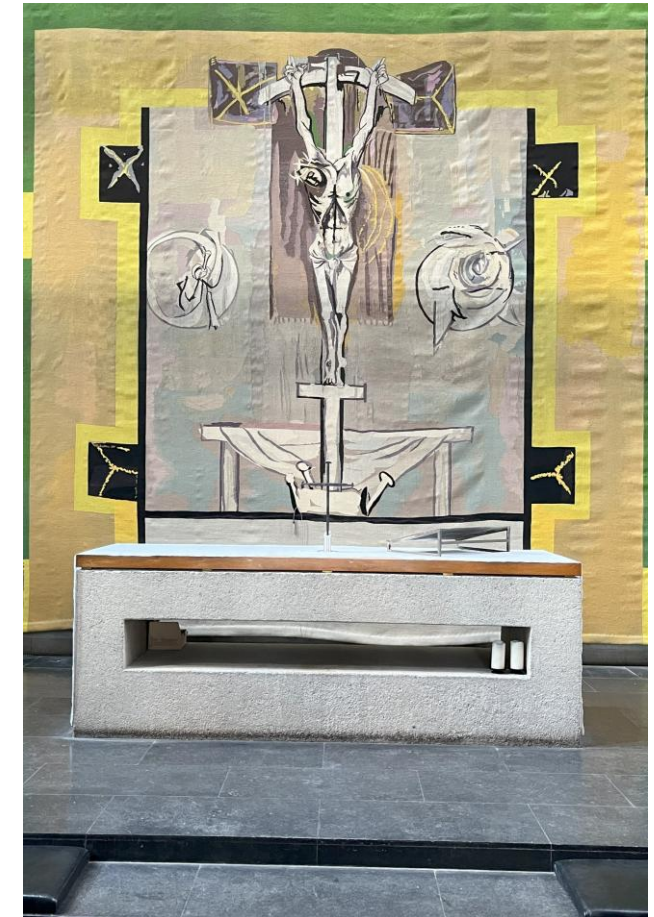
Rebuilding the Cathedral



INITIALS.	AMOUNTS DEPOSITED.	AMOUNTS WITHDRAWN.	BALANCE.
<i>St J</i>			285 15 6
<i>St J</i>	26		288 1 6
<i>St J</i>	67		294 8 6
<i>St J</i>	3		297 8 6
<i>St J</i>	510		302 18 6
<i>St J</i>	2		304 18 6
<i>St J</i>	10		305 8 6
<i>St J</i>	5		310 8 6
<i>St J</i>	781		317 16 7
<i>St J</i>	318		
<i>St J</i>	22		321 13 9
		321 13 9	X X X

Account Closed

*NATIONAL PROVINCIAL COMMISSION
SALTSBURY COMMISSION
AND BEEKSLEY COMMISSION
WORKING IN CO-OPERATION WITH
THE COVENTRY CATHEDRAL
BANK LIMITED*



A Diocesan Service in 1962



‘The Bishop of Coventry, Dr. Cuthbert Bardsley (centre) with guests and officials at the Styvechale Church hall before the Mothers’ Union service in the Cathedral. On his right is Mrs. R. H. C. Hallifax, president of the Central Union, and on his left, Mrs. Julian Hoare, president of the Coventry Diocese Mothers’ Union.’

1950s and 1960s A Time of Questioning

Presidents

1946 – 1953	Marjorie Howard, wife of Provost Howard
1955 – 1957	Mrs Lismore
1959 – 1963	Edith Hoare

Mothers' Union spearheaded a Christian Family Year in 1962, and many Dioceses held special events in conjunction with other family organisations. Canon Eric Patey, a controversial speaker in Coventry, was a keynote speaker, talking about the state of the family, including teenage pregnancy rates, moral decline and its causes, pressures of increased leisure and available cash, and the need for strong leadership from parents. His comments were not universally welcomed. Some members felt he was crude, even un-Christian while others thought he was relevant for the current generation.



At the Deanery Festivals, veils are now worn by those members carrying banners, and it was unanimously passed that we should order these veils @ 5/- [25p] each, to be paid for out of MU funds

St Andrew's Wilmcote 1952

Young Families Department

A Young Wives Committee was formed as early as 1916 “to interest twentieth century mothers” but it was disbanded in 1937 after disagreements with the central MU about its views on birth control and divorce!

In 1945 a new Young Members’ Department was formed, which included a mission to start up open groups

St John’s Young Wives Group celebrating their 21st birthday in 1979

Just before leaving the Chelmsford Diocese I was asked to form a Combined MU and Young Wives Evening Meeting, which we started with a Beetle drive. Young Wives Committee voted on having this, but MU Enrolling Member disapproved! I’m afraid I was rather a rebel!

Jeanne Clarke 1968



Working with young families: some hot topics from 1950s and 1960s

Suggestions for Branch Discussion and Action

Have you a local problem of mothers of young children going out to work? Are the arrangements for their children to be looked after adequate? Do you know how girls are trained at school to look on their possible vocation as wives and mothers?

From Presenting the Mothers' Union c.1955

Contraceptives: nothing is to be done nationally about their sale but it can be taken up locally. The matter of advertisements for contraceptives sent to engaged couples was discussed

Watch and Social Problems Committee 1962

About 28 young women were [at Foleshill], all very nice and friendly, in a pleasant drawing room; two West Indians and one Indian who has married an Englishman. I told them about the MU and how it could help. A shy little Mrs Hunt sitting by me asked how she could tell her son and daughter, teenagers, about sex, as she had never mentioned it to them and had often felt she should as they were beginning to go out with other people. Her husband had never said anything either. She bought one of the booklets.

February 1962

1970s, 1980s and 1990s A Time of Change

1973 – 1979	Margaret Backhouse
1980 – 1982	Ann Campling
1983 – 1986	Pat Coldwells - moved away when her husband was appointed a Canon at Windsor
1987 – 1988	Muriel Thomas
1989 – 1994	Mollie Jones
1995 – 2000	Audrey Hobley

Presidents Together

L-R: Mollie Jones, Margaret Backhouse and Audrey Hobley



New Dimensions 1974



A year ago yesterday the Central Council of the Mothers' Union, meeting at Egham, Surrey, reached its momentous decision to open its membership to all baptised women — even those remarried after divorce. In this interview the MU's Central President, Mrs. SUSAN VARAH (inset),

answers questions about the effects of this and other changes in the MU's constitution, and about the MU generally, put to her on behalf of the "Church Times" by the Rev. BRIAN RICE

A major review and revision of the rules for membership

For the first time

- Women who were divorced could join or remain members
- Unmarried women could join on an equal footing (not as associates)
- Men could join

1976 Centenary of the Mothers' Union

In October a special service was held at the Cathedral



Margaret
Backhouse talks
on local radio,
and then stands
on the steps with
Bishop Simon
Barrington-Ward
and Muriel
Thomas, Diocesan
Secretary



1983 General Meeting held at Coventry Central Methodist Hall President Pat Caldwell



1994 Mothers' Union hosts BBC Songs of Praise The guest presenter is Pam Rhodes



1995 The Quilt of Family Life

- Panels were designed by Felicity Howatson, ecclesiastical embroiderer based in Long Itchington, and stitched by branches all round the Diocese
- The resulting quilt was raffled to raise money for the Overseas Fund



The New Millennium - Moving Forward

2001 – 2003

Wendy Thomas



2004 – 2009

Felicity Hawke



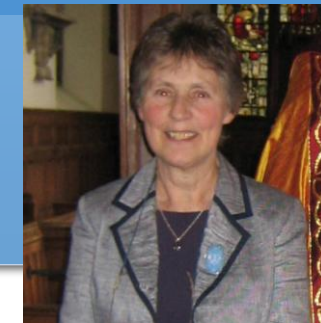
2010 - 2015

Diana Sliwinski



2016-2021

Jane Hill



The New Millennium - Moving Forward

- Journey of Hope – a Time Capsule travelled around Britain and Ireland, passing through Coventry
- Two new projects launched from Mary Sumner House for the millennium
 - Literacy and Development Programme overseas
 - Parenting 2000 in the UK and Ireland
- Central Trustee Board included more Trustees from overseas
- Wave of Prayer links were reallocated to include newly formed Dioceses

Parenting

- Coventry hosts the first Facilitator Training Event at Offa House in 2001
- 7 members from Coventry are trained, although only 2 continue to get their accreditation
- Parenting Groups start, the first one in Kenilworth



Passionate *about* Parenting

- Coventry has hosted three further training courses
- Many groups have been run from Kineton to Bedworth and Alcester to Rugby
- Three staff/trustees from Coffee Tots in Coventry are among those trained to deliver groups



What Should We Tell the Children about Relationships and Sex



- In 2004, amid concern at the high number of teenage pregnancies, Coventry City Council commissioned Coventry University to develop a Parenting Programme to help parents talk to their children about relationships and sex
- Di Sliwinski and Felicity Hawke were asked to be part of the steering group which shaped the course
- MU Facilitators ran the course primarily in Warwickshire alongside the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership
- By 2014, funding cuts meant that the course was no longer resourced by local councils
- In March 2016, Coventry Mothers' Union acquired ownership of the course from Coventry City Council, and revised and reprinted it



Reaching Out Across the World

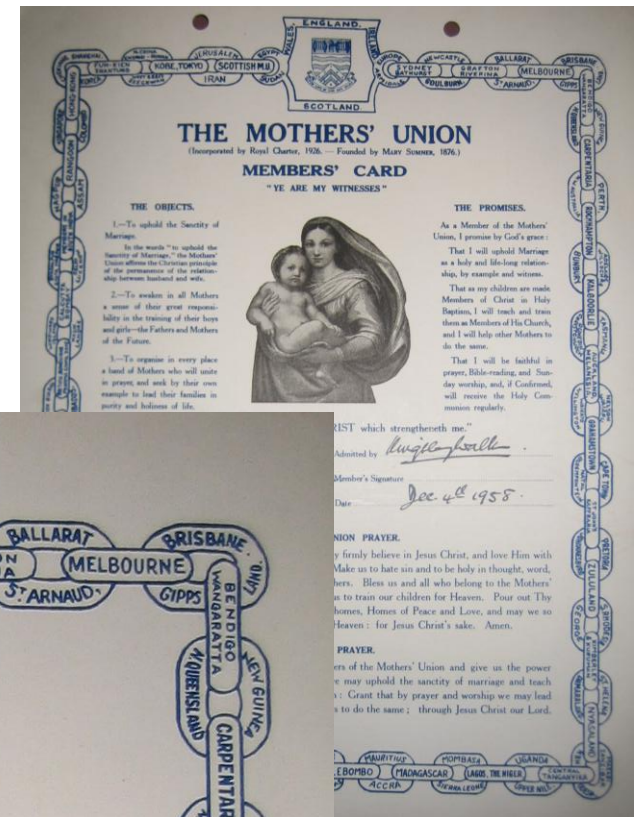
MU set up overseas links from the earliest days between Dioceses

Early links in Madagascar and
Nigeria in 1930s
Groups were usually led by
British members living overseas



The membership card had all the countries linked around the edge

Many of these countries no longer have members, like Iran and Japan, while others have joined, like India and the USA



Talks to branches about overseas topics

A number of branches have seen, or will shortly be seeing, the new Overseas Film Strip "The World Wide Mothers' Union". I shall be very happy to show this film strip to any branch caring to see it.

December 1951

Our speaker Mrs Mary Beal spoke to us on MU Overseas. Mrs Beal and her family had spent 9 years in Uganda and was well aware of the needs of our members overseas. An electric light bulb would cost £4 and a gallon of petrol £30, a new tyre £100. Families were large – six children was a small family, many had 15 children or more. They needed our prayers and help. A Bring and Buy was held for Overseas Work and a grand total of £14.54 was handed to Mrs Beal.

June 1980

Isobel Mold gave a very interesting talk on the Overseas Department. We were all surprised at how much work is done by Mothers' Union and the sums of money raised for transport, medicine and education, it certainly makes one proud to be a member of such a worldwide organisation.

June 1993

ZAMBIAN LINK
Mrs Dorothy Clay has recently moved to Coventry Diocese and was delighted to learn of our link with Zambia. Mrs Clay's husband was parish priest from 1986-1990 in Luanshya in Central Zambia where they naturally came to know MU members very well. Rev. Peter and Mrs Clay would welcome the opportunity to share some stories and souvenirs of Central Zambia with Members of the Diocese. Their address is:-
78 Eastlands Road, Rugby CV 21 3RR.
Welcome To Coventry Mrs Clay.

1990

Felicity hosting Provincial Presidents
Susan Akinola of Nigeria and Maud
Patten from Indian Ocean





Madagascar

**Links and friendships are
still important today**



**Lesley Eldridge (Secretary) Fibi Lumu
(Nigeria) & Audrey Hobley (President)**



Kenya



Zambia



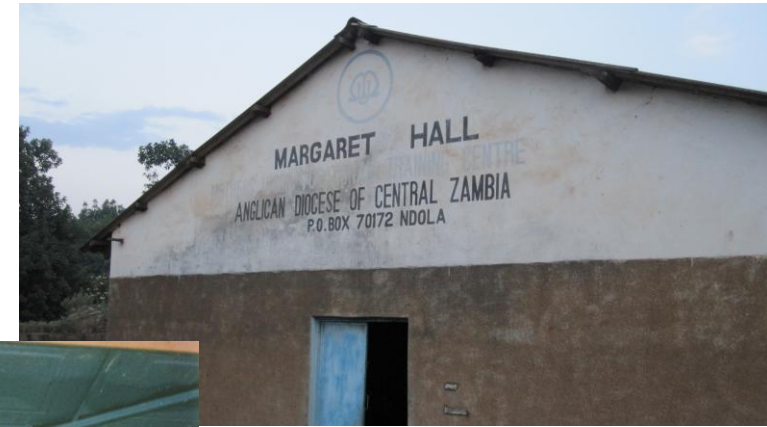
Zambia



Seychelles

Margaret Hall, Zambia

- Tailoring School built in Central Zambia and named for Margaret Weijnberg, whose husband built it
- Over many years MU supplied sewing machines and materials, often through TWAM (Tools with a Mission)
- In 2009 Felicity Hawke visited Margaret Hall and was shown how teaching sewing skills to young girls helps them to earn a living



Margaret Weijnberg (left) with David Wheeler from TWAM, Mary James, Barbara Roberts and Evelyn Warwick

Linking with the new Diocese of Kapsabet

- When Coventry Diocese linked with the new Diocese of Kapsabet in Kenya, MU was asked to support this link.
- In 2019 Jane Hill visited Kapsabet, and later Bishop Paul and Mama Seline returned the visit



Campaigning and Social Concern

Mothers' Union has been concerned to improve conditions in society favourable to family life right from earliest days

Members have always been encouraged to take part through

- Learning
- Finding out
- Writing letters
- Working to help others
- Joining marches and demonstrations

Today we can use the internet and social media too

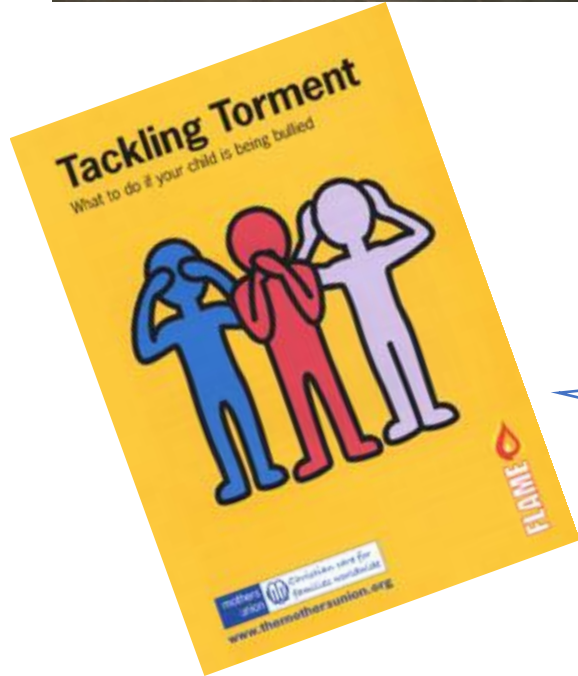
Early campaigns may seem strange now!

- In 1927, there was a deputation to the Home Secretary asking to raise the marriage age from 12 for girls and 14 for boys to 16
- Members have often been asked for their views on marriage reform and divorce, abortion and sex education
- They have also campaigned on family allowance, working mothers and the welfare of children in hospital
- Recent campaigns focused on flexible working, the commercialisation of childhood, debt relief for developing countries and modern day slavery
- Currently focusing on domestic violence

Coventry Members have supported many campaigns over the years



Debt Relief



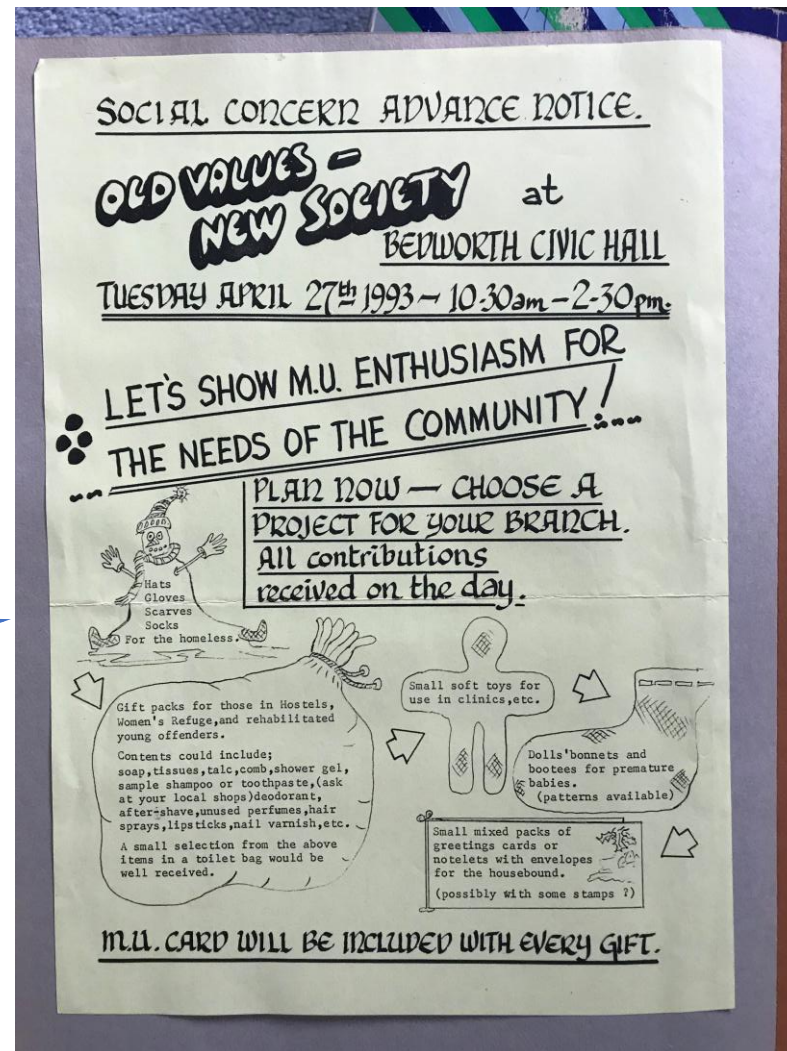
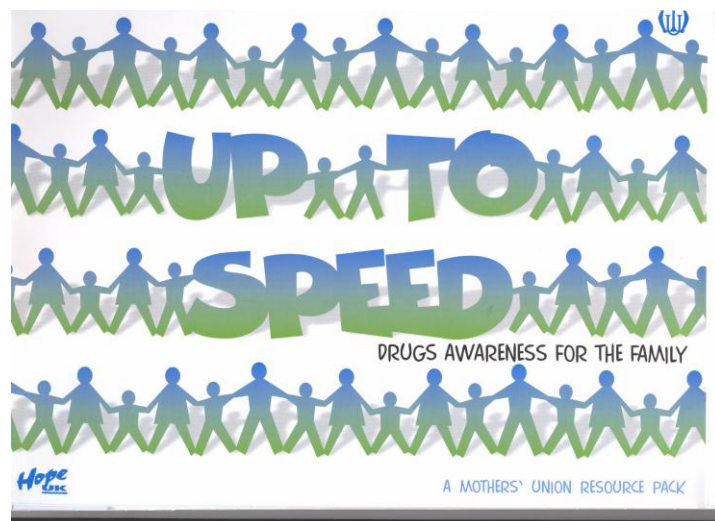
Bullying



Commercialisation of Childhood



**Flexible
working**



Mothers' **UNION**
#NoMore1in3
End abuse and violence now

**Domestic
Violence**



Media Issues have always been an area of concern



Wilmcote 1952

Mrs Bingeman had received a letter from Mrs Kemp, suggesting we should write to the BBC asking for change of time of the programme "Hello There" held at 9.30 a.m. Sundays, as it was thought this programme interfered with children attending Sunday School. It was agreed to do so.

The magazine *Honey* came in for criticism – it was suggested by Mrs Carnegy as being a very good girls' paper but it has shocked some people

March 1962

Long Itchington 1986

The speaker was John Watkins talking about "How Computers affect our lives". It was as Mrs Marriott said most enlightening. Mr Watkins said in an ordinary working day how the Computer affected us, starting with the weather forecast then our post, credit cards and even a visit to the local supermarket, all these were affected by the Computer. Mr Watkins did not think it took over our jobs but in fact in many cases improved working conditions. A most interesting evening.

Members have also offered help and support

The year began with a group of children from Wood End in Coventry visiting us here at St Giles [Exhall]. They had come for their annual treat to enjoy watching our local Pantomime.

During the summer holidays 3 MU branches including our own entertained a group of children from the Edgwick Centre in Foleshill. We opened up our Church Hall and provided entertainment in the adjacent park, games in the hall and finally a well-supplied table of eats!



1996

Many local events were also held, and discussions arranged about how to attract and support families. "How to be witnesses and not be repelling, interfering, criticising?" There were children's missions, garden parties, parents' evenings and a Home and Family Week.

Christian Family Year 1962

Many members knit baby clothes including hats for babies on ventilators, in hospitals



Away From It All – holidays and days out for families under stress

We hired a bus for selected families to visit Hatton Park, the same bus hired for a cinema visit families could not have afforded. Shoes from Clarkes which I had the boys measured and fitted in Bedworth. A family selected for AFIA told me of their thoughts, all they wanted was emulsion and a couple of rolls of wallpaper for their living room and hall. I saw the completed living room transformed – a needy family supported by MU.

Joan Evans c. 1990



Fun, Fellowship and Friends

Members have always found ways to enjoy each others' company and social events have always been part of the programme



Midsummer Revels in 1930



St John's Young Wives BBQ 1987

The Outing to London was the next subject for discussion. It was decided to go by an early train on either 10th, 12th or 17th July. Lunch and High Tea at Lyons Corner House, Dean and Dawson to be asked to quote for Chara [Charabanc, i.e. small coach] to meet train leaving Wilmcote 8.50 after lunch to Mary Sumner House and Service and on through city. Return by 7.10 train from Paddington. Arrange for about 20.

April 1934

1939

All returned to the Vicarage [after the meeting] where tea was served. Afterwards the mothers returned to the Porch and joined in an enthusiastic game of darts. Mrs Highman getting the highest score was awarded the prize. Then followed 12 hands of whist, Mrs Brooker and Mrs Teel being the prize winners

1957

A Christmas present of a marmalade mincer was given to the Vicar and Mrs Churchill, who sincerely thanked all members

1980

A party for members and their husbands was held at the vicarage on Wednesday 6th February. Members and husbands were welcomed with a glass of sherry. A game of "Mr and Mrs" caused quite a lot of fun and laughter. Delicious eats were served followed by more games. A most enjoyable evening was had by all, with grateful thanks to the Vicar and Mrs Marriott

NB by 1982 members and their husbands were welcomed by a glass of hot punch!

In 1984 the party was for members, husbands and friends and they were served a glass of wine!

2018/19

Recent social events and fundraisers at St John's, Kenilworth have included a Pamper Evening and a Pudding Party



Kenilworth Deanery Outing to Colwall,
where Mary Sumner married. 1993



New members at Kineton 2008



At Edinburgh for the
General Meeting 2017



Cream Tea at Bishop's House on Bishop
Colin's Retirement 2007



Trustees Christmas meal 2009

The same but different!

- We still support marriage and family life
- We campaign for the protection of children and families
- We meet regularly to pray and for services and quiet days
- We welcome anyone to membership who is a baptised Christian and supports our objectives
- We have more ways to do it now – internet, email, podcasts ...
- We can draw on a wealth of experience from our members, not just rely on clergy

Our faith and fellowship is still at the heart of all we do for Mothers' Union