

British W.I. members to host Canadians in '86

by Peggy Knapp
Guelph Area Vice-President

Just as our Ontario maples were changing to their autumn colours, thirty-seven British W.I. members arrived in Toronto to begin a 17-day visit with their Canadian counterparts.

Led by Mrs. Kathleen Platt of the Clwyd-Flint Federation, the party toured our provincial capital, snapping pictures of the harbour, Casa Loma, city hall, the Legislative Buildings, and ending their first day with dinner high atop the CN Tower with the Guelph Area President and Secretary, Mrs. Norman Coghlin and Mrs. John Playle.

Kleinburg's McMichael Gallery, the Cheecheemaun Ferry, Manitoulin Island, the nickel mines of Sudbury, Ste. Marie-among-the-Hurons, the Six Nations Indian Cultural Centre, the Mohawk Chapel, and Stephen Leacock's home at Old Brewery Bay, along with shopping and sightseeing, were all interesting parts of their itinerary, but it was the Women's Institute connection that was the real highlight.

Hilda Beechin at the Lee Home, and Nancy Dodsworth at the Hoodless, rolled out the welcome mats, proudly displayed our treasures, told our interesting history, and extended the warmest of Canadian hospitality to the visitors. The intricacies of our quilts was an endless fascination to the needlewomen of the group, as was the F.W.I.O. bi-centennial wall hanging at Queen's Park.

Three days were spent in each of the three subdivisions of the Guelph Area. The women were billeted in W.I. homes, shared in the life of the host families and visited the local points of interest. Subdivision 11 hosted a noon luncheon in Stratford, after which they took their guests to a performance at the Stratford Festival. Subdivision 10 arranged an evening dinner party, followed by a pageant called Canada in Song and Story. Subdivision 12 provided an evening meal followed by humorous skits and square-dancing. And the

Indian women of the Six Nations W.I., served luncheon at the Indian Cultural Centre.

Finally, on the afternoon of their departure, the group members, their hostesses, area board members, and provincial board directors, were entertained at a lovely farewell tea by the W.I. members of Halton District.

The thirty-seven visitors were hosted in sixty-three homes in the Guelph Area, by hostesses for whom nothing was too much trouble, and whose kindness will long be remembered by women who share the same goals, ideals, interests and concerns, even though they live half a world away.

As visitors and hostesses joined hands in the living room of the Tour Co-ordinator, Mrs. Wallace Knapp of the Ashgrove Branch, to sing their signature songs ("Jerusalem" and the "Ode"), before departure for their homes, smiles and tears mingled in a moving display of friendship which transcends all differences, and, in the words of the Mary Stewart Collect, make us truly "one".

Plans are now under way to make a return visit to Britain in the spring of 1986, when the circle will once again be completed in the sharing of international friendship.



Halton District W.I. hosted a farewell tea for a group of British W.I. members visiting the Guelph Area. Pictured from left to right are: Peggy Knapp, tour co-ordinator and tea hostess; Kathleen Platt, Clwyd-Flint Federation; Sheila Hayes, Deeside W.I. North Wales; Maizie Lasby, Halton District President. Photo courtesy of the Georgetown Independent.