

British Institutes Send "Thank You"

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These have been put to good use in the Evacuation Camps.

"We send our thanks and good wishes to the Canadian Women's Institutes."

Greetings from Scotland: "The Scottish Women's Institutes send their greetings to their sister Institutes in Canada and their heartfelt thanks for all the sympathy and help they have sent us during the war.

"May the friendship and goodwill which link Women's Institute members throughout the world be a solid foundation for that international understanding which is so essential if peace is to be preserved and men and women freed once more to pursue their work for the good of humanity."

Then there follows the list of gifts from Canadian Institutes:

"Gifts sent by Canadian Women's Institutes during the war years 1939-1944 in England and Wales—eight hand sealing canning machines and thousands of packets of vegetable seeds and tomato seeds have been sent from the Women's Institutes of Ontario.

The War Distress Fund was inaugurated by the Women's Institutes of New Brunswick in May 1941 with a gift of 270 pounds. The Women's Institutes of British Columbia, the Women's Institutes of Ontario and Alberta, the Mille Isles Women's Institutes of Quebec, have all contributed and by December 31, 1944, 808 pounds had been sent by the Women's Institutes of Canada.

"Other gifts too many to enumerate have been received by individual Institute members. Of all the



Above is a group picture taken at the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, while Miss Elizabeth Christmas, general organizer of Women's Institutes for England and Wales, was visiting there. In the picture are, the following: Front, right to left: Mrs. J. E. Houck, Brampton, area chairman, Women's Institutes; Miss Edith Collins, Women's Institutes Branch; Miss Elizabeth Christmas and Mrs. M. McIntyre Hood, Toronto. Back row: M. McIntyre Hood, Ontario Department of Agriculture; Prof. W. H. Sproule, O.A.C. and Dr. G. I. Christie, president, O.A.C.

gifts none have been more welcome than the thousands of packets of seeds of vegetables and tomatoes, sent regularly every spring for the past four years by the Women's Institutes of Ontario. They have been distributed to every county and have found their way into thousands of villages.

"A new class has been added to the schedules of village flower and vegetable shows: The best collection of vegetables grown from Canadian Gift Seeds. It has been a popular class, with amazingly good entries, for Canadian seeds have taken kindly to British soil, especially tomatoes, leeks, carrots, lettuce and cabbage.

"The hand sealing machines sent by the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario have been used particularly in Warwickshire, Hertfordshire and Kent. Preserving of the surplus fruit crop has been the Institutes' wartime job, and these fruit growing counties were most grateful for the canning machines which helped them to deal effectively with many hundreds of pounds of plums.

"At the Women's Institute Guild Rally held in York in 1943 and 1944, members sent tomatoes and vegetables grown from Canadian seed; honey, bottled fruit, apples, homemade cakes and other produce from their homes and gardens to a gift stall. These gifts were given to Canadian soldiers.

"The thousands of Institute members and their families who have benefited from the products of the canning machines and the seeds will always remember the practical generosity of the women of Ontario.

As Her Majesty the Queen has said: "The seeds have indeed been seeds of friendship which will flower for many a long year."

Help given through the War Distress Fund—The money sent so generously by Canadian Women's Institute members to help those members in England and Wales who have suffered through bombing has been distributed in the following counties: Cheshire, Devon, Essex, Glamorgan, Hertfordshire, Kent, Northumberland, Suffolk, and Surrey.

"The members who have received grants all write of their deep gratitude, not only for the practical value of the gift but for the thought and sympathy which prompted it."

There follow a number of interesting letters from these members. Miss Moffat of Porteynonm, Glamorgan, writes: "The generous gift from Canada not only helped me financially, but comforted me with a wider realization of the real "sisterhood" of Women's Institutes. The president of Brookland, W.I. East Kent — "The Christmas present from Alberta arrived when we were starting an Institute library. It was unanimously decided to buy books about Canada which will bear an inscription so that future members as well as we, will remember the kindness of Alberta."

muir is headed "Canadian Hospitality":

"We want to tell you of our deep gratitude for all that you have done for us in these years of war,

"We should like especially to thank you for your goodness to your war guests from Britain — our children. They will always love Canada, and not only remember the beauty of your great land, but the warmth of your welcome when they came to you, and your constant kindness in ways large and small.

"The young airmen to whom you have also given so great a welcome, write letters home speaking of their happiness with you and tell us how much you have made them feel as if they belonged to Canada. Wherever they are they will always remember you and thank you." Signed Susan Tweedsmuir, president, Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes."

Letter Friends

Under "Letter Friends" there is the following:

"Canada, among the Dominions, has the greatest number of letter friends with Institute members in Britain. British Columbia has 110; Ontario, 93; Quebec, 85; Manitoba, 63; Saskatchewan, 40; New Brunswick, 15; Nova Scotia, 9; Alberta 4 and Prince Edward Island, 3; making a total of 422 friendships in all. There are many Institute links as well. Many an Institute meeting has listened enthralled to stories of life on the prairies, in the Maritime provinces, or beyond the Rockies, and stories of life among rationing and bombs have found their way to Canadian Institutes. Out of these letters have grown permanent friendships. Soldier sons and husbands serving overseas have spent their leave with Institute friends and many exchange visits are being planned for after the war.

"Canadian members may be interested to know something of the work of Women's Institutes in England and Wales during the war. To harassed housewives the Institute meeting has been a rock in a shifting world. One Women's Institute president wrote:

"We had 17 bombs on this village during the flying bomb attack last autumn as well as bombing earlier in the war. Our meeting place was damaged more than once, but we have not missed a committee or a monthly meeting since the war started, and Women's Institute friends in Canada will know what a help this has been to those members who have been tied to their homes."

"In the safe areas rural housewives have cared for mothers and children evacuated from the bombed cities. At the request of the Ministry of Food, Women's Institutes have set up preservation centres all over the country where the surplus fruit crop could

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be preserved co-operatively. In the five years that the scheme has been working these centres have made 5,400 tons of preserves, of which 4,000 tons have been jam.

"Thousands of members have joined the Produce Guild to improve their technical skill in gardening, cookery and in the care of livestock.

Opposite the beautifully illustrated and colored page entitled Medicinal Herbs is the statement: "Hundreds of tons of herbs have been collected by the Women's Institutes members for medicinal purposes."

"The special meat pies allowed to rural workers to augment their meat ration have in many places been distributed by W. I. members and in some cases have been made by them.

"Women's Institute members now run 300 market stalls on the co-operative basis for sale of produce.

"Because the basketry trade has been unable to satisfy the demand, centres have been set up to make baskets in which to gather the potato crop. Women's Institute members have made more than 2,000 large potato baskets at these centres.

"In peacetime the Women's Institutes were noted for their handicraft skill and they have turned this to good use during the war. They have supplied teachers and organized classes for the 'Make Do and Mend Campaign'. Aid to Russia was given by lining 2071 garments with fur, often from rabbits reared by members for the purpose.

"The luxury crafts of quilting, linen embroidery, art, have given way during the war to Thrift Crafts which eke out the clothing coupons. Some members regularly teach handicrafts in hospitals to the wounded and sick and others have prepared work which has been sent by the Red Cross to prisoners of war to relieve the boredom of captivity.

"Since August 1944 Women's Institute members in addition to the knitting they are doing for the Services, have undertaken knitting for liberated Europe.

"Five tons of wool a month is being knitted into children's garments and thousands have already been despatched. Letters from soldiers serving in the liberated countries tell how thankfully these are being received.

"The Institute magazine, Home and Country, has recorded many other activities, particularly War Savings Groups, help in canteens for the Forces, and Music and Drama Festivals which have been carried on in a limited form during the war for the comfort and pleasure of Women's Institute members, the Forces and the general public. Side by side with this work, Institute members have been discussing the problems of reconstruction in the countryside. They have given evidence to government committees on Housing, Planning, and Education. They have been invited to give evidence to the Royal Commission on Equal Pay for Equal Work. Their survey showing the villages in need of an adequate water supply and drainage system, received great publicity in the Press and in Parliament.

"Residential Schools have been held at which Institute members from all over the country have discussed Social Insurance, the Education Bill, and the need for international co-operation. Instruction has also been given in local government, public speaking and discussion group leadership.

"The 24th annual general meeting of the National Federation of Women's Institutes was held in Royal Albert Hall, London, on June 8, 1943. It was the first annual general meeting of the war. Institute members felt richly rewarded for all their efforts when they were honored by the presence of Her Majesty the Queen, the President of Sandringham Women's Institutes in the County of Norfolk.