

## ***"Hats Off to BWI"***

*By Laura Green*

**"Hats Off to the BWI" was the theme for the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Brooksdale Women's Institute on January 16, 2003. In her welcoming address, Anne Innes commented "We are here today to remember the past, celebrate the present and anticipate the future. 80 years is a milestone to be celebrated".**

**It was 80 years ago that the first meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Angus Matheson. Today, a BWI member of 55 years, Rosina Morris makes the old Matheson home her farm home.**

**Brooksdale WI is privileged to have two living charter members, Frances Rowland, age 103 and Jean (Cormack) Smith, age 97. Present at the celebrations was Jeanne (Innes) Coulthard who was secretary from 1935 – 38.**

**Many dedicated members have gone before us leaving a legacy for all of us to continue. Early history has the members involved in war work by making fruitcakes and knitting socks for the Canadians fighting in WW II. Today the members are continuing to support projects in the community, at home and abroad. Education, agriculture and health issues are the current areas of focus for their meetings.**

**Karen Haslam, Mayor of Stratford was the guest speaker for the celebrations. She is known as an entertaining key-note speaker. Her theme for the celebration was 'hats – their history and the many "hats" that women wear today.' She has 390 hats in her collection and she wears a different one every Sunday to church. Haslam even wore hats in the legislature while serving as Perth County MMP.**

**Sixty members and guests renewed old acquaintances and viewed the 6 volumes of the Brooksdale's Tweedsmuir histories which were on display. The celebrations were an excellent way for members to be proud of their past their present and look forward to their future.**