

**A collection of thanks, thoughts
and memories**

by
NWR members

for

Maureen Nicol

Founder Member
of

The National Housewives' Register

now

The National Women's Register



Hi Maureen

My name is Jill Cook and I have only been involved with NWR for around 7 yrs. I moved to a small town and was in need of company but did not seem to meet anyone. Then I came across NWR on the Internet and thought it was just the thing for me. Sadly there was not a group in my area, so I started one! So Burnham-on-Crouch was born and I have not looked back. I have made a wonderful group of friends and we have had so many great times, it was well worth the effort. Nearly 2yrs ago I volunteered to be AO for Essex and this opened the door to meeting lots of super people.

I would like to thank you very much for all your work and vision and to tell you that for me, NWR did change my life.

Many Thanks from myself and everyone at Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex.

Regards

Jill Cook, Burnham-on-Crouch AO

Although I have only recently joined Kingsbridge NWR, I have been lucky to go to many interesting discussions and some really good days out, very pleased to have joined.

Linda Sims, Salcombe

I joined NWR in the 1960's after leaving work to start a family and found it a life-saver! I made some very good friends, some of which I still have today in 2010.

Barbara Sharp, Prenton

I joined NWR, then NHR when I moved to Prenton 40 years ago. It helped me to meet people and make friends and think of other things than young children. I still enjoy going to the meetings and seeing the people I have met over the years.

Cynthia Herron N.W.R. Prenton and Bebington Group

**Dear Maureen,
Congratulations on your great achievement. Here are some thoughts from
members of the Chichester Group.**

**Best wishes,
Anne Briggs LO Chichester**

I first heard of NWR (NHR) when I lived in Cheshire. A friend of mine invited me to a meeting in her house, where her husband (a medical man) was giving a talk on his work. Unfortunately I did not join at that stage, as I had a very busy life, and lots of friends.

However, when my husband's company moved him south to Sussex, I now was in a strange new place, and all my friends were still in Cheshire!

I am a very gregarious person who loves company, so I needed to make some friends. I phoned the Organiser of the Chichester NWR, and went along to my first meeting. I was in some trepidation, but I need not have worried; the group made me so welcome. I warmed to the members immediately, and so I joined at once-that was about 1986, and I have been a member ever since.

I must be one of the oldest members (I am 75) and sometimes I think I ought to retire from the group, but people are so kind and friendly I would miss them too much. Both my husband and myself always say NWR seems to attract a particularly nice sort of person-and we have lots of very good friends there.

The meetings are always so interesting and help to keep one's mind active.

Unfortunately I do not manage to get to as many meetings as I would like, particularly in the Winter months, as I have quite a long way to travel, and driving in the dark is now rather difficult. However I do attend as much as I can and always enjoy myself- I thoroughly recommend NWR as a great organisation

Joyce Lemon – Chichester Group

I first joined the NWR (formerly NHR) in 1976 in Lymm, Cheshire following a recommendation from a new friend. My husband and I had just moved into the area from Cumberland (now Cumbria) and we only knew our immediate neighbours, one of whom invited us to go along to the local dramatic society, The Bridgewater Players. We were glad to meet some more people so we went along. It was a friendly group and I soon became engaged in backstage work. One of the crew told me about the NWR, its ethos and Maureen Nicol OBE. This organisation very much appealed to me especially as I was due to leave work to have my first baby.

I found the members were all under the age of 40; not only were they friendly but mothers as well. There was a varied programme of evening meetings, coffee mornings for the mums at home and a dinner party structure. We had outside speakers for some meetings whilst other meetings could include discussions on books such as Housewife by Ann Oakley and Margaret Mead's Growing up in New Guinea.

What I did discover was how erudite the Lymm NWR members were and this prompted me to consider further study. I had worked in local government, initially in education administration but I progressed into an interesting career in town planning, despite being only educated to 'A' level. I worked mostly in urban conservation until I left to have our first child. What Lymm NWR gave me was more confidence and a feeling that having children did not limit horizons. It was

after the birth of two children and a move to Bebington on the Wirral that I embarked on an Open University degree course. As well as doing this course I had another baby and was a member of the Bebington NWR, which introduced me to new, lively-minded friends, plus a baby-sitting circle.

In 1985 we moved again this time to Bromley Cross, Bolton. I was due to graduate in December and follow on with a teacher training course. I did try to contact the NWR but without success. We lived in Bolton for seventeen years and during that time I never went to the NWR, but I feel the confidence I had gained from NWR helped me pursue a successful career in teaching English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL). By 2002 our three children were adults and had left the nest so we decided to move south to Chichester where my aging widowed father lived.

In October 2002 we moved into our house in Summersdale, Chichester and within a couple of weeks I had phoned Anne Louise Briggs making enquiries about the Chichester NWR and the outcome was I went to my first NWR meeting in November 2002. I continue to enjoy my membership because the meetings are diverse, stimulating and accord with the enquiring minds of the Chichester NWR.

Gill Fielding, Chichester Group

Thank goodness for people like Maureen Nicol and her contemporaries who founded NHR in 1960. Without their vision and perseverance many of us would have had much less satisfying lives.

For me NWR has been a great source of friendship, support and stability for twenty six years. I joined NWR (NHR) when I moved to Chichester from Edinburgh in 1974, and I can only say that, at that time, I think it saved my life ! I had a toddler and a baby, and a husband who was working all the time. Before moving I worked part time teaching History, and I was able to do this because I had the support of my parents, but I was initially unable to work when I moved. Moving to a new city, and, indeed, a new culture, was very traumatic. We arrived at a time of bread and sugar shortages. Local shops would not serve these items to me because I was not a "regular"! I lived in a very pleasant area, but failed to find any like-minded people to talk to, so I decided to find out, if there was a branch of NHR in Chichester. Fortunately, some local girls had recently set up a group which I eagerly joined.

We were all in the same boat, in that most of us had moved, and had previously had stimulating employment before having children. We had wonderful discussions, and we did a lot of research into topics such as life in China and USSR, as well as looking at climate change, among other things. Not only did we do intellectually stimulating things, we had parties, and in the summer holidays we would organise outings which included our children. Many of these people are still my friends, even if they are no longer NWR members. I took on the job of LO in the late seventies for a few years, and I am now the LO again.

One of the great things about NWR is the support we all give each other in difficult times. In 1980 I had to spend three months in hospital, and the local group gave me tremendous help, for which I am eternally grateful. Other members are also keen to emphasise this aspect of NWR.

I have remained a member throughout all these years, and during that time my life has been enriched by other members. Some have moved on and others have joined, and new friends have joined our circle. People's lives go up and down, but NWR is there for us.

Most members of the Chichester group are over fifty now, but we still enjoy our discussion evenings, and continue to have social events. The NWR Annual Quiz is very popular, and as well as being intellectually challenged we enjoy a good themed meal on these occasions.

Sadly we do not have many young members these days, as the younger women all seem to have demanding jobs and families. Because of the trail blazed by people like the NHR pioneers and others there is better access to child care and work is the norm. Sometimes I am quite envious of these confident young women, but when I reflect on it, maybe our deal was not so bad, especially as we had NHR to help us along. It was definitely an organisation for Lively Minded Women, and continues to be so. Thank you to all those whose inspiration resulted in NWR.

Anne Briggs LO Chichester Group

As a newcomer to Sussex I found it hard to make friends as most friendships with children are made early.

I felt meeting up with people that were not in my day to day contact allowed me to experience a different outlook on life.

I have done many things that I would not have planned to do and met women that are both interesting and amazing in many ways.

Family life can have its challenges and having a group meeting can take one away from the hub of these difficulties and give time to just get away from it all .

I am able think about enjoying the future looking at the members' lives and experiences.

NWR allows a safe environment to explore many aspects of life.

Love Heather x Chichester Group

NWR has been a constant in my life since I first discovered it in 1985, or thereabouts.

I remember how nervous I was when I spoke in my first debate - yet it paved the way for a subsequent career training and teaching, amongst other things, presentation skills. I was a nervous chairperson at a day conference we held in 1986. Being the chairman at our day conference this year held no fears for me at all. I really have my time in NWR to thank for my confidence in public speaking, as where else would I have had the opportunity!

One of my very best friends is somebody I met at a meeting when I returned to Congleton after a few years in a different area. I also love walking through our small town and meeting many people I know through our thriving group.

I have enjoyed hundreds of NWR meetings and have always come away feeling energised and better informed

So I have many things to thank Maureen for which I do whole heartedly.

Sandie Boynton LO Congleton Group

I joined N.W.R. in 1976. It saved my sanity as I had my own Mum living with me, also my mother-in-law, and I was Principal of my Nursery School. I was sure that I was too old, 46 years, but I was made so welcome and what a relief not to discuss relationships, religion, babies etc. This branch was Yatton, North Somerset. Thank you N.W.R.

Anne Hill Yatton

I moved up to Northamptonshire with my husband and young family 19 years ago, leaving behind all our family and friends in the London suburbs. I didn't know a soul in the sleepy village we moved to, and wondered if I would ever make any friends. The wife of one of my husband's work colleagues offered to take me to an NWR meeting, and I enjoyed myself and decided to join. However, I still felt I didn't know anyone, and would often hear people greeting each other in the local town and think to myself, nobody will greet me because nobody knows me. Then one day it happened! A voice said 'Hello Sue'. At last somebody knew me, and it turned out to be the Local Organiser of the NWR! I am still a member, and am very grateful for the friendship and stimulating meetings that the NWR has to offer. I just wish I had heard of the organisation before I moved, as I'm sure I would have enjoyed being a member for much longer.

Sue Brewer Oundle NWR

I was a member in Birmingham for many years introducing my mum to a newly formed afternoon group. When I moved to Derbyshire I suddenly remembered NWR and got in touch. I now belong to the Matlock group and have just started a new group in Bakewell. Every single group has been very different but full of interesting people who end up being very good friends and if you're lucky a few very special friends. I always tell people if they are thinking of moving, don't forget NWR. There'll always be one nearby and it's a great way of joining in - THANKS MAUREEN

Lorraine Sinclair-Evans, NWR Matlock and NWR Bakewell

Woolton Hill NWR in the north of Hampshire is probably one of the newest groups to have been formed.

We have had much fun and friendship over the last 2 years and certainly widened our knowledge in a great variety of subjects.

Thank you Maureen for having the insight all those years ago to bring lively minded women together through the NWR organisation.

Angela Maxwell Woolton Hill NWR

I joined NHR 38 years ago, when feeling isolated as a young Mum after a move from Cheshire to Laleham, Middlesex.

It really helped me, being both stimulating and friendly.

Since then I've been a member of 3 other groups, in Dorridge, West Midlands, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs and now Warwick & Leamington, Warwicks.

Each one has been different and the age group has changed, but I've made life-long friends through NWR.

When you move to a new area, it is good to know you'll be made welcome by the local group.

An excellent idea, Maureen! Thanks

Lynda Burke, Warwick

I arrived in Milton Keynes in 1972 from Lincolnshire when it was more or less a green field site - a young wife and mother of a new baby. I attended a meeting in Stony Stratford given by the Head of an autistic school for children which was situated in our nearest village. It was standing room only and the evening was very successful. However, when I asked if I could join the group - I had never previously heard of NWR - I was told in no uncertain terms 'No, you must go away and start your own group'. What a daunting task! There was hardly any housing at my end of the city! However, I dropped a few notes through the letterboxes of my few then existing neighbours and invited them to a coffee morning and from this small beginning we grew into a viable group which lasted until I left the area some 20 plus years later. I arrived in Leamington Spa, not knowing anyone and my family of four children were now in their mid to late teens. I discovered a local NWR group from which I have formed some very long lasting friendships and will always be grateful to Maureen for NWR having such an immense impact for good in my life, never having met her. Thank you, Maureen.

Valerie Burcham, Warwick and Leamington Spa

I moved to the Midlands from London in the early 70.s soon found myself at home with small child knowing no-one, like so many before me...but I had one advantage, I read the Guardian with its wonderful Woman's Page, learnt about NHR and contacted the local branch. A local member happened to live near me, knocked on the door, took me along and we have been friends ever since...Typical story of NWR!!

But the NHR women scared me....all intelligent, educated and articulate ...I kept going to meetings but never uttered a sound - but as I listened I did start believing that perhaps I could do better than my four O levels suggested. One member had studied thought the OU, not for me I thought. But eventually I did get an OU degree and a PGCE and became a college lecturermy need for NWR receded , but several house moves later, in retirement and new to an area I met a lovely lady that told me about a group where I could make new friends.... NWR was back in my life! Now wherever I may live in the future a local NWR is a necessity.

I know this story is so typical of NWR members but for me it really did make a difference back in the 70's. I really think I may not have thought about higher education and all that that has given me in so many ways...a career , knowledge, confidence, friendships.....without the example of those feisty women in Birmingham's NHR

So thank you Maureen

Wendy Fuery Warwick NWR

Without you Maureen our Group would never have met each other, enjoyed our lively discussions and banter, made good friends, know we have someone there at times of need, found companionship, visited places we might not have done, learnt lots of things from each other, the list is endless.

Thank you Maureen for keeping our brains active by meeting with other lively minded women, may it long continue. Cheers!

Shoreham by Sea NWR

As an early member of the **Pinner NHR** Group, as it was then, and now nearing retirement, I wanted to say what a HUGE impact joining had on my life. Few local friends, twin babies, I needed company and brain food! 33 years later, those I met then are still a major part of my and now my husband's life. 22 for his birthday barbeque this Sunday for instance! You have brought whole communities together and made friends for life. Millions thank you as do I. Enjoy.

All good wishes,

Barbara Dulley

I believe that you were the founder of the NWR. It is a wonderful organisation and I want to thank you for its importance in my life.

I came to live permanently in the UK in 1997 from Australia. My neighbour, who was a member, suggested I join and I went from knowing very few people to having an extensive network of good supportive friends.

The Pinner Branch is an active and interesting group with many activities. Because of my work I manage to participate only in the walking group and book group, but there are also interesting talks and many social occasions involving husbands. Some of the men have formed their own group and also engage in their own social activities and plan dinners they organise and every few years put on a mixed social evening with a dinner for both men and women.

Another way I have seen the benefit of the group is in the support offered to some of our newly widowed members. At this awful time there has been help and also activities to assist them move on with their lives. When members are unwell themselves there is also support and assistance.

I love living in Pinner and am grateful to the Women's Register for making me welcome and encouraging me to participate in a range of activities. I am grateful to have such a supportive network of friends and I am sure many women in the UK are also grateful that you founded the organisation.

Sandra Hargreaves Pinner Branch

I've been in NHR/NWR for 34 years, dragged, fairly willingly, into it by mums on the estate where I still live, as I had my first baby. As the years went by it was great to be reading up and discussing topics other than babies, the next meal or preparing a Sunday School lesson and other 'serious' stuff. One topic I've never forgotten, from years ago, was Queen Victoria's Children. The name I drew from the 'hat' was Arthur, Duke of Connaught... No, me neither(!) and there wasn't a great deal to be found out about him in pre-google days. But every time I'm in nearby Windsor and drive down Arthur Street, past the Duke of Connaught Pub, I feel I'm meeting an old friend. Also, when a number of years later Prince Andrew named his baby daughters Beatrice and Eugenie I was one of the few who didn't need to be told that their namesakes were the daughter and granddaughter (I think!) of QVic.

Thanks so Maureen for getting us all started. Many novels, quizzes, play readings etc down the line I'm now the oldest in the group (still under 70, but we're all over 55). Many years ago we let husbands come to the Christmas Party and the BBQ, and now the array of Puddings is legendary!

Muriel Pepler (Burnham)

I joined the Bridge of Don, Aberdeen, Group of NWR about 15 years ago because I worked in a male dominated industry (Offshore Oil and Gas) and wanted to meet women. This brilliant concept of getting bright women together for an intelligent discussion evening, tempered of course with gossip, has enriched our lives and created an opportunity to make new friends. Our Group has fluctuated over the years but we still maintain a healthy membership of around eighteen. Some of our members have moved out of the immediate locality - but we still all meet up under the NWR banner for regular meetings and communicate by e.mail. Thank you Maureen for having the inspiration and drive to create such a worthwhile and longstanding organisation.

Jean Pritchard Local Organiser Bridge of Don, Aberdeen Group.

I joined NWR over 20 years ago when I had a young family - NWR nights were much-needed 'me time'. Over the years the group became close friends and if any of us wanted support/advice/information/company we could either pick up the phone or fire off an email and know that someone else in the group would come up trumps.

Then - disaster! - husband's job meant that we had to move, and leave all those lovely friends behind! So what did I do? I contacted NWR Head Office, who put me in touch with my local group here. I've only been to three events so far but everyone has been so kind and welcoming; of course they don't replace my 'old' friends, but in time they will become just such good friends and meanwhile they have probably saved my sanity.

So thank you, Maureen Nichol and NWR - 50 years on you are still helping women out of isolation, and giving us so much more along the way!

Rosi Taylor Maidstone

I read Maureen Nicol's letter in the Guardian in 1960---it was my younger daughter's first birthday!--- and thought then what a brilliant idea it was. I didn't join at the time, but when we came to Wales and I felt very much "cut off" I joined NHR then and have ever since felt so glad to be part of such a worthwhile organisation, a wonderful means of contact with many "like-minded women". One offshoot that is very important to me is the Postal Book Group. Many good wishes and much appreciation to Maureen for her brilliant suggestion!

Ruth Perry (Swansea NWR Group)

I moved to a new area in 1983 when my daughters were teenagers. How do you get to know people? Thankfully a wife of a colleague of my husband suggested I came along to an NWR meeting. The Group was welcoming and through the guidance and encouragement of its members, I feel I have expanded my interests and grown in confidence. As a Group we have shared happy times and I have felt supported in difficult times. Thank you Maureen Nicol as founder of NWR, I will be ever grateful to you, for the difference NWR has made to my life.

Elizabeth (Liz) Rosevear Chandlers Ford 'D' Group

Many of us were glad to find an NWR group when we moved to Stafford. It has brought us many friends and led us into experiences we would never have thought of trying.

Sarah Matthews LO Stafford

My sincere thanks to you for starting NHR/NWR. I joined when we lived for a short time in Essex, in 1984, and my children were small. I saw a poster in the local library, and started a long and happy relationship with the organisation. I've been a member of **Wokingham 1** for the last 25 years, currently doing my second stint as L.O. I've made lovely friends over the years, and our social life revolves mainly around our group activities. Long may NWR continue, despite changes in family life, which seem to flag up problems recruiting younger members.

With very best wishes, Sally Capel.

I arrived in a town and a country where I had no family and knew not one soul. After 6 months alone getting friendly with anyone I could talk to I saw the post card in the Library: 'come and meet lively minded women and have an interesting conversation'. Dubious perhaps of an all women organisation but I was met with such openness and friendliness that I was sold!

I went to my first NWR meeting and now, seventeen years later, the members of that group are my circle of friends, my support, my chums and my rock. Not to mention my job to which I have been dedicated for quite some years now, making sure that this wonderful organisation is still there for other women in similar circumstances – and there are still many of them! I cannot imagine being without them all, without their warmth, their humour not to mention their idiosyncrasies!

Thank you NWR, thank you Maureen, Betty and Mary.

Mary Dodkins Communications Coordinator

Dear Maureen

You are a wonderful lady whom I have had the pleasure to meet on a couple of occasions since becoming Membership Coordinator in 2008. You played a vital role in the creation of this wonderful organisation which will hopefully continue to serve many women for many more years.

With very best wishes

Kathryn Buckman Membership Coordinator

"NHR/NWR has meant more to me than I can say. The "friendships" made have become "extended family" and it proves what "One Voice" can achieve.... Thank you Maureen".

Margaret Paterson (ex National Group).

The number of friends that we have made, the interesting events and conferences that Margaret so enthusiastically attended and arranged is directly attributable to you and your vision. I know that Margaret would want to come along and give you a big hug and thank you for the huge impact that you and N.W.R. had on our lives. Well done Maureen, what an achievement, what a legacy.10/10

.John Lavelle husband of Margaret Lavelle AO sadly deceased 2009

I feel I have a great deal to be thankful to Maureen Nicol for founding NWR!

In the '70s and early '80s, when my children were small, we moved house several times because my husband was always changing his job. We moved house and area four times in seven years! Each time it was to a new place where we knew no one. I always joined NWR and thus had a readymade group of friends. I have been a member of my present group for twenty six years and much of my social life is still with this long standing group of friends. In fact now that we have retired we go walking and visiting places together in the daytime as well as attending the evening meetings! And of course I also belong to the Postal Book Group and the Email Group.

NWR also came to my rescue when I was made redundant from teaching and decided to try a new career. My eight years as an NWR Membership Co-ordinator were very happy ones and have given me friends all over the country.

Thank you Maureen and NWR. Eilis Coffey

Hi there Maureen

Wow what have you done! In setting up NHR (now NWR) you have brought joy, happiness and laughter to thousands of women over the last 50 years, not to mention the brain straining, and heated discussions we've taken part in.

I can't now live without NWR - it's a drug that I happily imbibe every 2 weeks. I joined in 1978 when my son was 6 months old. I am extremely thankful that I could return to the "old me" through this organisation, and also to grow, and have such support and good friends through some difficult times.

Aren't women, and especially you, Maureen, wonderful!!

Congratulations

Janet Tuffs

Member of Grantham NWR/Area Organiser EA02/Research Bank Organiser

My outstanding memory of Maureen is from the Durham Conference, in the year 2000 our Ruby celebration, the very first Conference I had attended. I found myself at the Conference Dinner with a delightful lady who was asking me about myself, how long had I been a member and where was Bar Hill? I told her that Bar Hill is just outside Cambridge and that I was a relatively new member, I'd had the sort of job that meant a very early commute and a late arrival home so evening activities were out of the question until I retired. I then asked her how long she had been a member and, I remember turning a delicate shade of puce when she told me, very gently, she was the founder member.

I am so glad that I did join NWR and actually meet Maureen, until then; although NWR had definitely filled part of the gap retirement had left, I hadn't really absorbed the history, or the concept, fully. I am so grateful that Maureen did write to the Guardian and that I had that opportunity of talking with her. My life has been much richer since joining NWR and becoming an Area Organiser has been an absolute joy.

Jill Smith AO

" Reasons to be grateful to Maureen? - really too numerous to mention!

In the "old" days we would mostly start our contributions with "I went to the library and borrowed this book on ..." Now, of course, if one has a computer the world is at our fingertips and we don't have to rely on them "having it in" or "getting it for us" when doing our research.

Although now only quite small in numbers compared with when I joined, Amersham South Group is made up of rock-solid friendship and co-operation, helping each other where we can, through good times and bad. Sounds like a cliché? - well it is really, but then so is "Housewives".

To sum up, National Women's Register is built on friendships and alliances nurtured over many years of being open-minded and talking and listening and understanding. We recently welcomed our oldest member when she moved from "up north" - Myrtle is 86 and she is turning out to be a very active member.

Thank you Maureen Nicol for responding to the newspaper article by Betty Jerman and for having such a simple, wonderful idea and for acting on it, and it is fantastic that both you have, as did Betty, lived long enough to see the fruition of the seed you planted. "

Marion Evans
Amersham South NWR

"Upminster NWR would like to say well done to Maureen for the wonderful work she has done and to say thank you for all the good years that we as a group have enjoyed and for the opportunity to make very good friends."

Jo Voak, Upminster LO

I joined NHR - as it was then - in 1967. It was a life saver. I was expecting my 2nd child - a daughter as it turned out - at the time. Not being very domesticated I was bored stiff with the usual domestic routine with no other stimulation though I loved my son very much. He was delightful but just not enough.

Then I read the Guardian letter and realised I was not the only woman to feel as I did.

We quickly became a very friendly group in Beckenham and 43 years on am still friendly with some of the people I met then. We had monthly speakers and the topics could include everything bar children and domestic issues. We quickly formed a babysitting group with tokens as a means of exchange and we also had a winter and summer party and a theatre group.

Long may NWR continue.

Valerie Crews Beckenham

I first joined the Wootton Bassett group in 1975 when I was a new mum, and it was a life-line as I was new to the area and had no relations or friends nearby. Several moves later, I joined the Dronfield group when we moved here in 2002. Now in my 50s and approaching retirement, again I knew very few people in the area. I was given a very warm welcome and immediately made many good friends. I've also belonged to two different correspondence magazines over the years.

NWR is a brilliant way of getting to know like-minded women when you move to a new area. I've tried other women's groups, but because of the way it's organised it's much easier to feel part of an NWR group quickly.

Sheila Pyke Dronfield group

My life was already full and fulfilling before I found NWR (Housewives Register) and I declined several invitations to join my local group. I didn't think it would be for me. How wrong could I be! I have met the most amazing, interesting and caring people. Some have become soul mates and most have become friends. I have enjoyed great debates, lively conversation and fun evenings during my 20 years of membership.

My thanks to all those that came before me and the effort they put in to make the organisation such a success.

Long may it last

Jan Fuller Deepings Group

I joined the Playing Place/Carnon Downs (Cornwall) NWR Group in 1979 – having moved from Somerset with two small children.

One of my first introductions to “village life” was an invitation to join the local NWR group: it offered friendship, a child-minding circle and an opportunity to discuss a wide range of topics. I am still a member of the same group – 31 years later!

Maureen Nicol is a name synonymous with NWR and I thank her for her inspiration back in 1960.

Members of the Playing Place/Carnon Downs Group send their very best wishes to Maureen on the occasion of the Warwick Conference.

LONG LIVE THE REGISTER!

Carole Allen Playing Place/ Carnon Downs \group

NWR Macclesfield gives us the opportunity to broaden our horizons both mentally by researching and discussing all sorts of new topics, and physically through various visits and walks. NWR provides a great contact point for people moving to a new area, and our members are extremely supportive of each other in times of trouble, as well as sharing in happier occasions.

Sue Humphreys

Macclesfield Local Organiser

Thoughts from Woodley Hampshire NWR Members

For me NWR came along when I had a small baby and needed to make friends and find interesting things to do. For many of my generation we were well educated but on having a family there was very little support to carry on with a career and it all came to a grinding halt with motherhood. Certainly those of us outside teaching found a return to the workplace well nigh impossible in the 1970's and 80's. Many of us lived far from our families and there was very little in the way of care provision for children then. So there was NWR with a ready made band of friends with similar backgrounds but a stimulating variety of views and opinions and here we still are so many years later still sharing our thoughts, enjoying stimulating conversations, outings to the theatre, walks, researching topics, listening to speakers and enjoying learning about other parts of the world. The area quiz is also a highlight for many members. More recently the members joining are older - today's young women face different challenges and need to get back to work quickly. However our new members enjoy the programmes we have and as women retire from the workplace NWR can provide interesting company and activities.

One of the Woodley NWR recurring themes seems to be choosing a country, finding out about it and having a great evening sharing what we have learnt before tucking in to a feast! I don't think we'll ever forget the Greek evening with at least four Greek salads, the memory of which still makes us laugh! Our latest meeting was a celebration of Bastille Day with a quiz, memories of French holidays, singing the Marseillaise, a touch of fancy dress mostly red, white and blue with the odd beret, followed by a great selection of French food and wine.

We've shared the many milestone events in our lives with births, marriages and deaths and you can always rely on someone at NWR to give advice or just provide a listening ear on the problems that life throws at you.

So a big thank you to Maureen Nichol without whom none of this would have happened. She has certainly touched many women's lives and let's hope NWR carries on enriching them in the future.

Marie

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When I moved to Woodley with my 9 month old daughter I felt I not only needed to find my way around in a new place but, having previously had an interesting and stimulating job for a number of years, wanted to meet others who were perhaps in a similar position . My sister-in-law was already a member of NWR in her home village and suggested I find out if there was one in Woodley. Fortunately there was and now, over 30 years later, I have made good friends, learnt a lot, laughed a lot and greatly enjoyed being a member. NWR has certainly made my life more interesting and I'm so glad it was there for me when I needed it.

Pauline

.....
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'When I gave up my job to have my daughter at the age of 35 my life changed completely as I had been working as a Higher Executive Officer in the General Register Office in London. Although I had made friends through ante natal clinic and then toddler group, I missed the companionship and stimulation of working in London. A chance remark to another mother while my daughter was having a dancing lesson led me to NWR. This gave me the interests and friendship that I had been lacking. Subsequently after watching another NWR member performing with the local operatic society, I too joined the society and that has opened up further opportunities and friendships to me.'

Deidre

I would like to add my thanks to Maureen Nicol and NWR. It has been a lifesaver for me as I have moved house and country with young children. I can say that almost without exception my close friends have all come from my membership of NWR. I started as a member in Bourne End, Buckinghamshire when my younger son was 18 months old, joined Randburg NWR in Johannesburg, S Africa and then Winchester group when we finally settled here. In South Africa I was National Organiser for a short while which provided me with the daunting prospect of appearing on TV and also the opportunity to visit the Zimbabwean groups who were organised under the name of Women in Touch. Amazingly I have been a member since 1979 with only a break of 3 years when I lived in New Zealand (where there was no NWR). It continues to provide me with very stimulating company and an excellent informal support group for everything from recommendations for a good handyman to support with the more difficult times that life throws your way.

Thank you

Anne Maroney (Winchester NWR)

The Salisbury group which was in existence in 1963, and maybe a year earlier, was started by Dorothy Wynyard who moved to Wiltshire from the Cheshire area. She doubtless was aware of the emerging Liberal Minded Housebound Housewives through being near to Maureen Nicol. I wonder if the two ever met?

Our group has flourished from then on. I joined in 1967 and we have maintained a membership varying between 30 and 40 since then.

We feel that we owe Maureen Nicol a debt of gratitude.

Rona Shellabear

My thoughts on NWR

How I could have failed to know of its existence until the early 80s is a mystery but my first encounter with **NHR** was through a neighbour who took me to a meeting in a village a few miles away. I don't even remember the topic for the evening but I do remember that it was like a breath of fresh air. I already had a good circle of friends in my own village and decided that a local group was just what was needed so I set about coaxing and cajoling them into helping me to start one. This was in Sherfield on Loddon in Hampshire. My family and I moved from the area in 1985 and, I'm pleased to say, the group is still thriving.

We moved to a village near Peterborough and the next stage in my **NWR** life started when I discovered the exhilaration of National conference. My first was in Leicester, which was chaired by a member of my new group. I remember feeling like a uni student (which I had never been) as a group of us sat into the early hours in one of the bedrooms, drinking wine, discussing the day's speakers and generally putting the world to rights. When Nottingham was chosen as the venue a few years later, I was on the organising committee. The buzz and sense of achievement when the conference came to fruition was worth every second of the eighteen months of hard work in planning and preparing it. Several of my fellow committee members from other groups have become firm friends.

I was even able to use the experience from that in a job application a few years ago. It was to become a registrar and I had to demonstrate that I would be able to stand in front of a group of people and take a wedding ceremony, for instance. They obviously felt that my example of taking the chair for one of the speaker sessions in front of a full lecture theatre of about 400 women fitted the bill and I got the job.

So thank you NWR for enhancing my life in so many ways.

Faith Oxford Deepings Group

NWR memories (Strathaven branch)

I enjoy going to NWR because:

"It is an opportunity to meet new people and share thoughts and ideas"

"I don't just sit and listen - participation is a vital feature of any club"

"There are no cliques, everyone respects your opinion - the important thing is to have one!"

"You are guaranteed to be accepted as you are"

"It's fun!"

And "as others see us":

"Are these loud ladies here again?"

"They sound like a gaggle of geese"

"We can smell their perfume upstairs!"

What NWR means to me

In October 1976 with an eight month old son we moved to Hertford knowing no-one. My mother heard about NWR in Andover where my parents lived at the time and it sounded interesting, so I looked in the library for the local group. I went to my first meeting with another newcomer to Hertford before Christmas and have been a member ever since. At my second meeting I found a space for my son (and me) at a local playgroup through a member – what a good start!

Since then I have been an active member for over thirty years and have been group coordinator on several occasions. It has always been an important part of my life here and the majority of my closest Hertford friends have come from NWR.

Over the years the group has grown, split into two and has been through various ups and downs. But it has survived and indeed has remained active, as a place for meetings and discussions and also occasional outings and visits. Most of the people joining are now older, often newly retired and some old members have returned. Some new members have moved to Hertford and have been members of NWR elsewhere. It continues to be a great group to be involved with and is still evolving.

Gillian Harman Hertford and Ware NWR

Members of the Byfleet NWR Group go for walks every fortnight and we explore the Surrey Hills with Daphne, our leader, and talk an awful lot. On occasions, we have climbed high enough to see London with Canary Wharf in the distance. At other times we have walked in another direction and seen the Shoreham Gap and the sun glinting on the sea. Thank you to NWR for getting us together - we continue to enjoy the friendship.

Meryl Somper – Byfleet

The **Leighton Buzzard** branch of NHWR was founded over 30 years ago and has welcomed many new members over the years. For one member who has moved house frequently, this is her third group.

Recent discussions have ranged over topics as varied as the Arab States, female political leaders, spices of the world and statues which make you stop in your tracks, amongst many others.

The discussion group has also spawned a monthly book group, a monthly walking group and a fortnightly scrabble meeting and coffee morning. We have to confess that the coffee morning is just an excuse for a good chat! But why not?

This celebratory year has given cause for much fun. We laughed at our reminiscences of the Sixties, applauded those who were brave enough to turn up in sixties gear (and had the legs), enjoyed seeing photographs of one another with the NWR shopping bag in far flung places and finally reverted to childhood, in a hugely entertaining kite flying morning on Dunstable Downs.

Thank you, Maureen. It's all down to you!

Thirty years ago, a number of us were new to the area, having moved to several larger housing estates which sprang up following the demolition of older large country houses. We were all young, with young children, and because the area was in the throes of expanding, few facilities existed to meet other like-minded women. Then one of our number discovered NHR, as it was then, and persuaded more to join. We still form the hardcore of the group, and are still as committed to NWR now as we were then. It expanded our horizons, saved our collective sanities, and we are proud to belong to the sisterhood!

Penny Waterfield Tadley LO

NWR MEMORIES from Byfleet and District.

From Gill Ankers -

I first joined National Housewives Register in 1974, shortly after my first child was born. A neighbour, who was a GP's wife and who had older children, invited me to go the Group she belonged to, one of two in Heswall on the Wirral. Having given up my teaching job some months before I was in need of some mental stimulation and thoroughly enjoyed being a member and meeting others of a similar age and in a similar situation. We met fortnightly but rotated the day of the week from Monday through to Thursday and back to Monday – I see from the website that they still do! It was a bit confusing but the idea was that if you wanted to enrol for, say, a night-school course on a particular evening, you only had to miss every fourth meeting, not every one.

Seven years later, after a four year posting to the Far East, we were back in the UK and living two hundred miles from the Wirral, in Woking. Before I had time to consult the Register to find the local group, a neighbour asked me "Have you ever heard of NHR and would you like to join our Group?" The answer to both questions was "Yes" and so I became a member of Woking South. I mostly remember the Take Away Suppers. These took place on Saturday evenings when the volunteer hostess and her husband would provide crockery, cutlery, glasses and a hot oven and assorted couples would arrive with their chosen "take aways" – Chinese, Indian, Thai or good old Fish 'n Chips - and drinks, of course. A great way to hold an effortless dinner party.

After a while the neighbour moved away and I realised that there was a more local group just up the road in Byfleet and so I changed groups again. Now, more than twenty-five years later I still enjoy meetings and the challenge of researching a new topic. Of course, times have changed and we do most of our research on the internet now although a trip to the library can still yield some useful additional information. I have a lot to thank NHR/NWR for over the years – the company of other lively-minded women, good friendships, support in difficult times and much more.
Thank you Maureen Nicol.

From Lorna Sandford –

I am a relative newcomer to NWR – I only joined ten years ago. I found I knew over half the group from other activities so it was very easy to join in. I have thoroughly enjoyed researching bridges, train journeys, gold, the Lunar Society and a famous school to name but a few of the interesting topics we have covered. Thank you Maureen for widening my horizons and making me think!

From Sue Widdup –

I joined NWR back in 1979 when it was called NHR. I was living in Chandlers Ford in Hampshire.

The meeting was so interesting that I can still remember the topic. It was about life in Chandlers Ford in the Second World War.

I was a member in Chandlers Ford for two years after which we moved with my husband's job. As my husband had a job which meant us moving every few years NWR was an excellent way for me to meet new friends.

My thanks go to Maureen for having the idea for ladies to meet one another in our homes and discuss various topics and keep our brains 'lively'.

From Marianne Evans -

I have reason to thank NWR twice over. The first time when I moved as a young mum trailing spouse from Shropshire to Surrey in 1977. A neighbour was a member of NHR and suggested I might like to join..... what a great suggestion that was. A few years later we had a spin-off book group which I also joined. Years passed, children grew, I did a post grad year at university and then returned to work and drifted away from the fortnightly meetings but stayed with the book group. Then came another spell as trailing spouse, this time in the Americas. They say that the hardest move is the one you make home, but NWR came to the rescue on our return. I picked up with the book group again easily as I had remained in email touch, swapping titles from my foreign groups with the one back home throughout my years abroad. However it was with great pleasure that I resumed membership of the original group and renewed old friendships and met new ones too. Thank you NWR.

From Sylvia Cobbett -

I have been a member of NWR for about the last 35 years and have a great store of memories, from researching mysteries, marriages, music and murderers etc. to being charged by goats on an evening ramble.

Attending my first conference at High Wycombe was unforgettable. Before the days of Sat. Nav. we went on a Grand Tour before discovering our destination, and on arrival we were separated into different groups. Very soon I found myself blindfolded, aloft on a table, and having to trust a group of strangers to catch me after plunging into their midst. We weren't strangers for very long!

From Judy Hawtin –

My earliest recorded attendance at a National Housewives Register meeting was November 1971. There were a number of us who lived in the same road – Wey Barton, Byfleet – and we would knock on each other's doors on alternate Monday evenings and go along to a meeting together. Sometimes we could walk round as many meetings were held in Byfleet. The leader changed every year and by 1975 we had a leader and a secretary. We had 31 members then and the subs for HQ were 35p a year. In those days we sometimes had debates, with two speaking for the motion and two against. Subjects included disarmament and comprehensive education.

I also have happy memories of social events with husbands, including Christmas parties and Summer barbeques. Once a year we went to the Open Air Theatre at Polesden Lacey and if it rained we all sat there in our cagoules and the actors carried on regardless!

In the seventies some mothers gave up work for a few years (if they could afford it) when their children arrived. The NHR was a wonderful opportunity to meet other women, discuss interesting topics and keep our minds active. Some of the members I knew then I count as special friends and we still go to the same NWR group, Byfleet and District.

**THESE SNIPPETS ARE TAKEN FROM
ICKENHAM NWR'S "RUBY BOOK"
CREATED TO CELEBRATE OUR 40 YEARS**

LIZ DACK

I became involved with Ickenham NWR as soon as we moved to Ickenham 32 years ago and it has been and is a great source of friendship and support. I have been Local Organiser for the Ickenham Group three times.

PAMELA FIDDIK

We moved to London; Earl's Court, Chiswick, Ealing and finally for the last thirty-odd years, Ickenham, where I joined NHR in 1976.

When our business was sold, I then worked for a friend in NWR, whom I had known for 40 odd years, for nearly 4 years, and then I eventually retired.

HILARY HUMPHRIES

When I returned to work it was through Jane Goodwin [& she wasn't running JGA then!] She was teaching at Uxbridge College & mentioned to me that the sports dept were looking for staff to help during Wednesday afternoons, when all students had to choose a leisure activity. I applied, was accepted & my first job was to escort a coach load of students to Richmond Ice Rink, & I couldn't even skate!

Jane Goodwin was L.O. the year I joined NWR [1974?], before we split from Uxbridge. I enjoyed coffee mornings, baby sitting circle & the evening meetings. NWR has given me lots of stimulation, motivation to use my brain, & lots of friends.

JANE GOODWIN

On our return to the UK in 1973 my first actions were to register Richard for a play group and contact Sally Crosher, who was then the Ickenham NHR local organiser. She arranged for us to have tea with Terry Newstead that afternoon and attend a coffee morning the next day at Val Trott's. She also brought round back copies of **The Register**. I was ecstatic to have this child escape and never missed the monthly meetings and coffee mornings.

A year later I was asked to be local organiser - not quite the honour I thought it was! That year, we set up the Ickenham Mother and Toddler Group and I started part-time work at Uxbridge Technical College. I enjoyed NHR conferences, and was elected onto the National Group when it was first formed in 1976. I couldn't believe how efficient and effectual some of its members were, I was very much in awe. The National Group met several times a year and kept in contact with a round robin newsletter (no email then!) I looked after overseas groups and understudied the **The Register** editor. With our travel concessions from Malcolm's job with BA, I was able to visit some overseas members and attended conferences in Canada, South Africa and Belgium. We ran an Ickenham one day conference on 'Nature or Nurture' in Uxbridge, and an International Conference at Newland Park College, with help from local NHR groups and Ickenham NHR members.

When in 1982, we moved to Botswana, following Malcolm's secondment to Air Botswana, it seemed natural to set up, with an existing postal member, an International Women's Register Group. The twenty strong group met alternately on Tuesday evenings and Saturday afternoons, with some very interesting discussions including witchcraft and superstition, and sex education. I had resolved when we returned to Ickenham that I had outgrown NHR, only to find Chris Powell on our doorstep the next day asking me to speak about Botswana at the forthcoming meeting. Once more, I was hooked!

Throughout the last thirty five years, Ickenham NWR has provided me (and my family) with a ready-made like-minded social networking group (who needs Facebook?) Malcolm even wrote an article for **The Register** about the number of NWR phone calls he took during my National Group days! NWR has encouraged and challenged me, quite separately from my work and career activities. Certainly, when the children were small, it was a comfort blanket, which included babysitting groups, parties and picnics, as well as the chance for some adult conversation. I remember with huge gratitude the welcome I was given when I made that first enquiry, and the support I have received since. I hope I have been able to make and will continue to make a contribution in return.

MAUREEN JOCKEL

During this time I was introduced to NHR. This group filled a gap in my life which has stayed until the present. I have made many good friends and had lots of great fun. Later we became NWR. We have broadened our horizons and expanded and now have a book group and a share club.

ANN MARGARET JOHNSON

In 1973 I left work to have Victoria and then Katy was born in 1976. I'd been attending WEA classes in Ickenham Library since 1970 and it was here, when Victoria was nearly two, that I was asked by a member of the class whether I'd heard about the then NHR. She wasn't a member herself but she knew someone who was – Mavis Shipton I think. Soon after Jane Goodwin contacted me and told me she had arranged for me to be taken to a picnic in Bayhurst Woods. At the time, 1975, the group was split into two, as it was so large. At some point I've acted as the local branch secretary.

What has the NWR done for me? It has given me friends, a feeling of belonging to a great group of women and of course stimulation and here I must mention the book group. I was in at the start of this group and although small the core has been together for about 33 years. We've read some great books and some real duffers but it's always stimulating. What I like about the whole group is its continuity and knowing that if needs be there are friends there that you can rely on. There have been fun times, especially on the Ickenham Festival floats and some great do's. We seemed to enjoy themed evenings at one time and I particularly remember dressing up as Dame Edna for an Australian evening. And of course who will forget the drenched ladies of Ascot when we did the scene from My Fair Lady for the festival float?

I look forward to being a member of Ickenham NWR into my dotage and at some point we may need to park the zimmer frames along with the cars.

What would I change? Well I probably should have stayed on at school but at the time I was anxious to get out into the wide world and start earning. However, if I had I wouldn't have met George, moved to Ickenham, joined the Ickenham NWR and written this.

DIANA MAY

Member of Ickenham NWR since late 1976, currently Secretary. Original member and some-time Secretary of the Book Group.

I really became part of the Ickenham community when Josh was born in 1974, after which Jane Goodwin, Denise Shephard and I started the Toddler Club at the Compass Theatre; from which many (including obviously myself) 'graduated' to what was still then the N. H. R.

The delights of belonging to the NWR will be extolled by other people; but I appreciate the chance to be with good chums and warm acquaintances, on a regular basis, especially not having time to gossip on the golf course nor banter over the bridge table. If ever Andrew and I contemplate moving away, we cannot think of another spot where we could possibly replicate this happy network of friends. *Floreat Ickenham NWR!*

ENID PAYNE

With the family having left the nest and finding myself alone I sought a new interest. Having read reports in the local paper of the NWR I made an approach to ? (memory fails me!!) and found a great welcome within the Ickenham group. Thank you.

I sold the family home in 2006 and created my home in the retirement village in Denham. A friendly environment with many new acquaintances and interests.

My membership of NWR helps me to keep my links with Ickenham, the area in which I spent the greater part of my life.

CHRISTINE POWELL

I joined the NWR in December 1976 and have enjoyed being a member and making many long standing friends over the years.

MAVIS SHIPTON

That year was particularly significant for us – we moved to Ickenham, I completed my course, and became pregnant. It was whilst looking at notices in the library after I finished work that I saw one for the NWR. (in Oct 1970). This was a life saver as I did not know anyone in the area. I quickly met up with a wide range of people and made wonderful friendships which remain as strong as ever to this day. We had the ubiquitous coffee mornings with babies crawling everywhere, outings, evening meetings with speakers eg on Gay Rights and discussions on The Abortion Act etc, as well as having fun with Safari dinners.

Our identical twin daughters were born in December 1970 much to our great delight. Also, in December 1970, the group decided to have a Christmas party which was very well attended by members and partners. Everyone got on extremely well and many sub groups were formed eg. for bridge - which continues to have 6 monthly reunions - to badminton, 'boozing', camping, caravanning etc. At weekends whoever was around met at The Orchard in Harefield (now Edwinns) on Sunday mornings for drinks and games on the lawns.

After a few years abroad we returned to the UK and I started working in the community and hospitals once again but finally decided to take early retirement from running a hospital social work team with increasing pressures on it and fewer staff to do the work. I then had the opportunity of renewing my membership of NHR, or NWR as it had become, and taking up golf again as well as helping my husband in his business and enjoying time with our children, one of whom has lived in Australia for the last 5 years. And that's not to forget the impact of grandchildren!

VALERIE TROTT

My first NHR meeting was a Coffee Morning in 1973 when my youngest of 3 children was about 9 months. Over the years I have enjoyed many meetings, outings and parties. During that time I have also made many lifelong friendships and know that there are always members ready to commemorate or commiserate in all our families' joys and sorrows (and give me lifts). You would go a long way to find a nicer group of Women.

SHEENA ROSSER

I joined NWR in 1975 when I first started working from home, and felt the loneliness oppressive. I was the only member without children, and I remember the L.O. Jane Goodwin apologising for the fact that everyone tended to chat about their families instead of all the heavyweight topics that were meant to keep our brains from stagnating!

I gave up IT work in 1999, but still pursue my tourism and artistic interests, as well as tennis at Swakeleys in Ickenham, badminton at Holy Trinity in Northwood, Photo Club at Northolt – and of course, still after all these years, NWR!

Dear Maureen

I can't really imagine what my life would have been like without NWR/NHR and am so grateful for the interest and friendship which I have gained.

When I joined, in my 20s, I would prop my newspaper on top of the fridge with a baby over my shoulder while preparing for meetings. Going to NWR was my intellectual stimulation and I made friendships which have endured to this day. My husband enjoyed hearing about meetings, and we always had a couple of socials with husbands each year so they knew each other too.

As the children grew and most of us started going back to work, the tone of meetings changed. We didn't have time to do much research, but NWR was still very important to us, to discuss things "off the cuff" and to keep up our friendships.

We went through a sad time when three of us lost our husbands and one of our members also died, but the support of the group was wonderful and saw us through.

Now in my 60s, I'm back to doing research again. It's a lot easier with the Internet. There's just so much information at the click of a mouse, but sometimes it's still nicer to get one's information from a book or paper. I have piles of newspaper cuttings which I keep, "in case the topic comes up in NWR!"

Thanks for giving me all this.

Best Wishes Mary Peterson

Dear Maureen,

I would like to congratulate you on the NWR! It is a fantastic organisation. I have made many friends and participated in many events I would not have done otherwise. I hope that it continues for many years in the future for further generations of women to be stimulated and have their lives enriched.

Yours sincerely,

June Burton (Treasurer and Member of Finchley and Whetstone - also formerly of Mill Hill, which unfortunately disbanded in 1980's).

This is our message for Maureen Nicol at the conference from all at Shenstone NWR. She is a very special person and hopefully she will enjoy seeing how much her time and work has been appreciated.

*With Best Wishes
from a happy and involved group in
Shenstone, Staffordshire.*



A newspaper cutting from 1971 with Pam Bayliss, founder of the Beccles Group.



This year Beccles had a vintage tea party celebrating 50 years and Pam, centre of the picture and still a member, gave a speech, and we toasted NWR and good friends.



Best wishes from Marion Watt, Beccles

"We would like to thank you for the inspiration of your idea that has given **Trentham group thirty-two years of friendship, interest and mental stimulation. We still have two founder members and the group has consistently had over 20 members with a programme of daytime and evening meetings as well as a thriving book group. NHR/NWR has seen us through the early years of child rearing, busy jobs and now in many cases a fulfilling and satisfying retirement.**

THANK YOU."



Our meeting last night here in Chepstow was about the origins of nursery rhymes and proverbs with the addition of any originals if anyone felt creative. We had one or two people who had been inspired and when I read out your email about the book you're compiling our immediate reaction was to send you one of these original rhymes:

Chepstow, Chepstow NWR,

How do your meetings go?

With occasional meals and frequent peals,

Interspersed with intellectual flow!

We all felt it summed up our feelings for NWR in a nutshell!

We are a group of 12, several of whom have belonged for many years now and in many towns. I for one am on my 4th group. When I read the newsletters I often think of the friends I made in Penyffordd, North Wales (1975), Dunblane (1880), St Ives, Cambs (1983) and now Chepstow, South Wales (1987). I've come full circle

round the UK and have felt so lucky to have had a group of women who welcomed me immediately to the new area. I joined when I was first married and moved to a village. I was working full time and had no children so didn't quite fit the pattern. However, the group enabled me to meet and become friends with others from the village and was a welcome diversion from my work and gave me valuable time on my own without my new husband. With the "ban" on domestic topics there was no problem with me feeling left out of the conversation and everyone seemed to be on my wavelength as they have at the other groups to which I belonged. I truly believe there is still a place in today's world for our type of group despite the whirlwind life the younger women seem to lead with family, work, the gym and evening classes. It's only by sitting down with other women and finding out about them and their opinions that friendships can be made. NWR really does give us space for ourselves to express ourselves outside the worlds of work and family. I have gone on a bit! Sorry – got carried away!

Regards Stevie Summers

I think I must have been the very person that NWR was designed for - dragged around the country at my husband's coat-tails and always having to try to make a new life and new friends.

I first joined "NHR" at Congleton in Cheshire when my elder son was three and I was pregnant with my younger son. A couple of years later we moved down to Berkshire, where I joined Wokingham 4 (or possibly 5) and then three years later back up north, but this time to Co. Durham, where I made a whole new circle of friends in Darlington. Like so many others, I eventually went back to work and had such a full and busy time there that NWR lapsed from my life.

Many years later, back in Berkshire (again) I finished work and realised that I did not know one single solitary person outside my work environment. I immediately thought of NWR but then a vision came into my head of the group that I had left 25 years before, full of youngish women with youngish children and my heart quailed just a little at the prospect of being the "oldie" of the group. However, I thought I would give it a try. I contacted Wokingham 1 and, what do you know - I am at the younger end of a thriving group of 40 lively, energetic and fun women, many of whom have known each other for upwards of 30 years, but still have space in their lives for newcomers.

NWR has always been there for me when I needed it - thank you so very much - long, long, long may it continue.

Ruth Nobbs Wokingham 1

What an amazing idea NWR has turned out to be. I don't suppose in the early days anyone could have foreseen how it would become so fruitful.

I joined my first group because my husband began working abroad during the week and my teenage children had plenty of their own activities to keep them busy. I wanted something for my own fulfilment. I so enjoyed meeting new people and talking about a variety of topics interspersed with visits to The Globe Theatre and walks around Hampstead Heath and Mill Hill.

When we moved house from Finchley & Whetstone one of the first things I did was to seek out the group here in Bramley in Hampshire. It was a wonderful way to settle quickly into the village, meeting new people and getting to know the local area. I enjoy the variety of walks, discussions and outings. One event I always enjoy is the Telephone Trail Quiz. I have been to quite a few of the annual conferences and enjoyed every one of them. A lively weekend spent in different parts of the country with, as we say, "like-minded women" – well done Maureen you have brought a lot of pleasure to a good many people.

Joan Roberts Bramley

I first heard of the NWR when I was in China with Liz from the Solihull group. I was looking to expand my social group following the death of my husband and she suggested I join. When I returned to England I contacted my local group and I have never looked back. I now have many friends and I love the meetings, walks and Book Group, finding them both stimulating and interesting. Thanks for such a great organisation.

Sue Whitmarsh

Aston/Rotherham Group

Thoughts from Solihull

Dianne Outhwaite

I was invited to attend my first NWR meeting twenty years ago, having recently moved into the area. I am so grateful for the many friends I have made over the years and the stimulating/informative and entertaining evenings and events I have attended. That one evening twenty years ago has had a great impact on my life since then, in a way I couldn't have imagined at the time. Well done and thanks Maureen for an idea which has stood the test of time. Long may NWR continue!

Ann Perks

What I really like about NWR meetings is the welcome they extend without fail to old and new members alike. I've been a member now for 21 years. I joined as a young Mum looking for an opportunity to make friends in a new area and continue to enjoy meetings as a breath of fresh air in a busy working life.

Maria Graham

NWR was a lifeline for me when we relocated here 22 years ago. My husband had his work, my son school and I knew absolutely no one. My first meeting was very enjoyable and fun. Everyone was so welcoming and I soon became a fully fledged member and am still enjoying NWR 22 years later.

Ann Banks

I joined NWR 12 years ago when I had recently moved to live in a new area and was looking for new friends. I certainly fulfilled that wish and have enjoyed many and various activities over the years and hope to do so for many more years to come.

Elizabeth Mance

I was invited to join the local NWR group in 1984 and have been a member ever since. It led to friendships that still go on today.

Hilda Burnett

I've been a member for 20 years and especially enjoy the conferences.

Lynn Welsher

I joined NHR, as it was then, when we moved from Bristol to Solihull with 2 small children in 1986. From the very first meeting I knew it was right – lively discussions, like minded women and the opportunity to be me! The first conference I went to was in Warwick in 1990 – I now had a baby as well but went on the Saturday, nipped home to feed her and went back for the Saturday Dinner where I sat next to Mary Stott !! I slowly got more involved and am now joint Area Organiser for MD04 where we have a lively committee from various groups and organise lots of interesting events for our area. I have been to nearly every conference since that first one and am delighted to be part of this year's committee.

NWR is not like any other organisation and I thank you Maureen for your inspirational idea in 1960. It has certainly enhanced my life greatly and continues to do so.

Hilary Bennett

NHR (NWR) gave me the confidence to move on "post babies", organising day conferences, evening dinners with speakers and the National Conference in Brighton. Friendships made during these periods remain today. It filled a void that being at home with a young family gave, while allowing "my evening out" time for regular meetings. Eventually the confidence gained, along with new skills gave me the encouragement to retrain and strike out a new career. Moving 150 miles from friends and family later in life, NWR was there again, making an instant group of friends.

For me it has been an invaluable part of my life. Long may it continue.

Chris Cole

NWR has given me friendship and fun, learning and debate and I have benefited from all these things thanks to you Maureen. Long may the organisation continue!

Jean Hamilton

NWR is a great organisation! It has fulfilled its original aims and much more besides. I don't suppose, Maureen, you could ever have imagined just what, from that first letter of yours to the Guardian, the 'Register' would grow to become.

Thanks to NWR I've kept my brain ticking over, explored new places, tried my hand at new activities, met many new people and made lasting friendships, just to mention a few things.

It has played a large part in my life for 27 years which is when I first joined Solihull group, and has undoubtedly played a part in shaping the person I have become.

As someone who moved down from Scotland, arriving in Solihull in 1983 with two small children and a new baby on the way, it would have been all too easy to become totally submerged in meeting their needs. NWR reminded me that, I, as a person, was still there! Little did I imagine in 1983, that in 1990, 7 months after our fourth child had arrived, I would be part of the Warwick National Conference Committee welcoming 400+ delegates!

Since then potential career paths have opened up and in more recent years I found I had the confidence to grasp quite a different opportunity, which has taken my life in a totally different direction today.

Throughout, NWR has always been a solid re-assuring presence for me, and it is still as needed and necessary today as it was in 1983, fulfilling its aim of allowing you, and reminding you, of the need '**to be you!**'

Thank you Maureen for writing that letter to the Guardian and triggering the organisation that has given me and so many thousands of other women so much.

My thoughts about being a member of NWR

I became a member a few months before my retirement from teaching, in 2008 at the age of 55. I was looking for the opportunity to mix socially with other ladies and to be involved with thought provoking discussions. I discovered that my wishes were fulfilled with my membership of the Solihull group.

I enjoy being welcomed into other people's homes and sharing with other women very interesting and varied topics. I have appreciated the courtesy shown in allowing each person to make a contribution to the discussion. I also enjoy getting to know other people. It is also of benefit to me to travel around my home town to locations which I would not otherwise have the opportunity to visit. I feel that I am enjoying my retirement much more with the companionship and stimulation that I am receiving by being a member of NWR.

Rosa Bishop Solihull



Memories of 26 years of NWR

In 1984, when my first child was nine weeks old, my husband and I were relocated by his firm. I found myself miles away from family and friends. The job I had taken maternity leave from was now to be a resignation. I was totally unsure of how I could fill long days stuck at home.

A well informed health visitor gave me a leaflet about the National Housewives Register and I have never looked back. When, two years later, we moved again, my first port of call was the local library where I was delighted to find there were several NHR groups listed. I chose the one in the middle of the list (very scientific). I have now been a member since 1986, enjoying all the lively minded evenings that have happened: the national telephone quiz is an annual highlight; the diversity of the speakers and the 'outings' but more importantly the evenings organised by our own members allowing us to learn, share and laugh.

Two spells as LO to 'give something back' and many, many lifelong friends later, thank goodness for Maureen Nicol and her vision, even if it wasn't quite what she envisaged when she wrote that infamous newspaper letter.

So, may I take the opportunity to say a huge 'THANK YOU' for everything that NWR has given me over the past 26 years.

Karen Vive (Wokingham 3)

I became a member of what was then NHR in 1982 when my eldest child was a year old. I cannot imagine what my life would have been like without it. I have made lasting friends, gained knowledge outside domestic boundaries and I hope become a lively (ish!) minded woman.

Thank you Maureen!

Sian Kellaway (Wokingham 3)

Thank you for many years of friendship, inspiration, humour and exchanges of ideas with people whom we would not otherwise have met. We have all learned a great deal. NWR has made a friendships and contacts in the area. We have never grown out of NWR; it has matured with us.

With best wishes from Leeds West NWR



Oundle and District Group was established in 1974 and is thriving.

Our archive records are a testament of how much pleasure our members derive from belonging to an organisation with our aims and the strong friendships which have been established as a consequence.

In 2007 our group was highly commended in the programme competition. The garden vouchers were used to buy a Hawthorn tree which was planted in Oundle churchyard. The photograph shows some of our members who were present on this occasion.

We send our very best wishes to Maureen and thank her for having the inspiration of founding NWR.

Hilary Delany - LO Oundle and District



Our group was founded in 1968. I am one of the two surviving founder members. Over the years I have gained good friends, intellectual stimulus and entertainment from our monthly meetings. Only decrepitude now prevents me from attending regularly.

About 1970, when it was still N.H.R and most of us were unable to go out to work, we realised that before Christmas we were having to cook for, and help at, numerous parties; - for nursery school, school and Sunday school, for Scouts, Guides and the Old Peoples' Day Centre. Our husbands all had Christmas parties at work. But nobody gave Housewives a party. So I said "We'll just have to give one for ourselves". It was so successful that it has been a high point of our year ever since. Nowadays such a party is a common phenomenon.

It also had a welcome side effect. We had one member who found herself quite unable to join in the discussions. Her lack of confidence may have been due to an idea that she was lacking in the same sort of education that the rest of us had had. She brought to the party the most perfect home-made mince pies. Our vocal admiration of her skill boosted her self-respect and increasingly she joined in our discussions. When she later moved on out of the village it was with vastly increased confidence and communication skills. I have since seen a similar flowering of personality for many of our members.

We recruited steadily by maintaining a high profile at village fetes and Sales with 'fun' stalls, such as a fortune teller, a quiz on famous women or other competition relevant to women's interests.

Jan Ridley, Goring(Oxon) N.W.R.

Here are a few thoughts from members of the Canterbury group.

" The NWR has enabled me to meet many nice ladies, make friends and enjoy an interesting programme of events, lectures and outings."

" Wow - I've been a member for over 25 years. My little ones attended coffee mornings at NHR in their carrycots. What a wonderful bunch of people of all interests and a fantastic support group. Something to look forward to every Thursday."

" I've only been a member for a few years but this has become a wonderful group with lots of new friends. The programmes are always interesting and varied - just as originally intended."

"With the help of all the friends I made at NWR I was able to cope with life after an unhappy divorce. I found life had a lot more to offer."

" The NWR has been great when my family has moved around. It's such a relief to know that I could probably find a new group of friends. I've enjoyed many good stimulating and thought provoking evenings and had opinions challenged as well as supported. Long may the NWR thrive!"

" I well remember the first time I was asked to research and present a topic to our group - what a nervous wreck I was! However, it was, and subsequent evenings have continued to be, challenging, educational and confidence boosting. I am hugely grateful to belong to such a stimulating organisation and to have made so many friends."

Lindy McDonnell and Helen Watson
AOs for SE09 area

I enclose 4 extracts from an album compiled at our ruby anniversary celebrations this April by past and present members of the Arnold NWR [Nottingham]

'Summer 1976 - I was invited to an NWR meeting [discussing George Orwell's 1984]. The children played, their clothes auctioned and my response when the others said 'we may have to close', as not many attended, was 'you can't, I've only just joined!' Thankfully the group did not fold and went from strength to strength. Then we introduced evening visits. Our activities and meetings were so varied. It's just great.' - **Nina Coombes**

'September 1983 saw me at my first NWR meeting. The subject - 'a woman's place is?' had me a little worried. Would everyone be rampant feminists or in frilly pinnies? A lively, but balanced discussion was a great introduction to the group. The friendships begun then have deepened, developed and extended to many new members. I can't begin to number the enjoyable events, the amazing adventures, delicious dinners, 'youth' hostelling as we have got older, stimulating subjects and hilarious hours spent with NWR members. NWR remains a hugely important and significant part of my life. Thanks to all the great friends in the group - there through joys and sorrows. Finally, without the NWR how could I have ever developed my auctioneering skills'

- **Wendy Pearson**

'Well, I was at a loss to know how to fill my time and meet new friends when Peter began nursery in 1987. I was directed towards a 'NHR' meeting one Monday afternoon and I have never looked back. I have made some very sincere and caring friends who have been supportive through many ups and downs and they are treasured people in my life. The meetings are always full of fun and laughter. Life would be quite boring without NWR. Thank you everyone - may the group continue even when we struggle in with our zimmers.'

- **Allison Colledge**

'In February 1981 I was asked if I would like to join the NHR. That was the beginning of a large part of my life. I have made so many good friends who have been there for me through good and bad times. I have been to many places and had so many experiences I wouldn't otherwise have had - stimulating discussions, speakers, theatre visits, trips, meals, not forgetting the fabulous Youth Hostel weekends and I have had so much fun and laughter as well. NWR has been a great part of mine and my children's lives [they have fond memories of Monday afternoons!] Thanks very much and here's to many more years!'

- **Jill Clarke**

Anne Wood [deputy L O - Arnold NWR, Nottingham]

I well remember my first introduction to NHR, in 1981. I had temporarily stopped work at Rolls-Royce, on the birth of my first child. Working mainly with men had left me without a circle of friends in the same position as myself. I knew hardly a soul in Toton, the suburb of Nottingham where we lived. Falling into conversation one day with another mother, as we pushed our prams back from collecting our child benefit, she told me about the local group, and I joined right away. It was a real life-line to me, and saved me from going completely scatty. I've been a member of NWR ever since. In recent years the demands of work have meant that I have been a rather inactive member in West Bridgford, where we now live, but now I've retired, I'm in a similar position to my younger self of thirty years ago. I don't feel the same lack of intellectual stimulation that I did as a young housebound mother, but I value the companionship of like-minded people. My life would have been poorer without NWR – thank you!

Susan Sullivan West Bridgford Group

NWR has been a significant part of my life for many, many years; almost without me realising it. I first heard of it from my elder sister when I was about 20; she found it a great lifeline when newly moved to West Wales, then far more "distant" than now, as there was no M4. At that time it was not for me. However a few years on I was in Hong Kong, with a small child, so was delighted to learn of a NWR group there, and the opportunity to meet like minded people. Maureen came to Hong Kong on a visit and we local NWR members had an opportunity to meet her.

When I returned to the UK to move to an area with no ready made social contacts again I was delighted when I was approached in the playschool playground by someone, who is now a good friend. Had I heard of NHR (as it was then)? Did I want to join - yes, to both. That was 25 years ago -my children have grown up and flown the nest, but my NRW friends are still here, we are growing older together, enjoying our lives and supporting each other through all life's stages.

Thank you Maureen for having the original idea all those years ago, and doing something about it. I certainly have benefited from it.

Clare Hewlett Horsley NWR

I didn't actually see THE letter in 1960 but learnt of NHR later when my husband shared a room at an IPM National Conference with Maureen's husband who was full of praise for what she had started. I eventually joined in 1967 and have been a member ever since. The last 33 years with Guildford NWR which has played a large part in my life and still does.

One highlight was being invited to the House of Commons for the 25th anniversary, meeting Mary Stott and having a G&T in the bar with Katherine Whitehorne.

NWR has led me into many things, LO several times, organising a conference, writing and directing pantos and many, many parties and events. All well researched in true NWR style as can be seen in the photos.

Heartfelt thanks for all the friends and fun NWR has given me.

Best wishes,
Cyn Ernest (Guildford Group)

Dear Maureen,

You have made a huge difference to all our lives. You must have heard this so often, but it is so true. Tonight four of us are together, Having a meal and talking about many happy memories of NHR. We all joined in the early sixties and still call it NHR. We meet approximately every four weeks and discuss a book. We think the two rules were very good.

1. Only biscuits and tea or coffee and
2. No domestic chat.

This meant we had many exciting topics and it stretched us all to make an effort. We could go on, but must keep this short. Have a wonderful evening.

With love from,

Bet Mawby Anne Mackaye Kate Walton Mary Heaney

NHR Upton Wirral, around 1963.

P.S. Elizabeth Holmes from Ellesmere sends her love.

I was a very shy person when I first joined NHR in 1979. In those days it was expected that each evening would be a fairly heavy topic and would be led by 2 or 3 members and we all had to take our turn. I was very nervous but made myself do the work beforehand and come with my 'essay' to read out. I was so nervous that my hands shook while I was reading. However, it stood me in good stead and I have gained confidence since then. I have had jobs (both paid and voluntary) since then where I have had to make presentations or just talk in front of others and have always been grateful that NHR threw me in at the deep end.

Brenda Droitwich

An Appreciation of our Founder,

Maureen Nicol

With retirement on horizon,
In nineteen ninety-four,
A time soon to enrich my life -
I started to explore.
Ideas came and went a lot,
I needed something new;
A Ladies' Group appealed to me
But what did each group do?
I rang HQ in Norwich town,
Researched N.W.R.
Their raison d'être appealed and I'd
No need to travel far.
Sixteen years have passed since then -
And what a lot we've done,
And what a lot of friendships forged
And so much has been fun!
Book Group, Quizzes, parties, talks,
Our programme covers all;
And Membership's expanded too,
It keeps us in its thrall.
So to our worthy Founder now
My sincere thanks I give.
We all appreciate your work - and yes,
It's helped me really live.

Thoughts from abroad

Maureen on behalf of members on the Sunshine Coast Qld. we thank you for your vision. Your foresight has given us the opportunity to form longstanding friendships, continue to stretch our minds and most importantly be open and willing to respect another point of view. It has given us the opportunity to do this in the spirit of friendship as we welcome each other into the comfort of our homes.

Congratulations from the ladies of NWR Sunshine Coast Qld. Australia.

Robynanne Bessell

Founding Member

"Thank you Maureen for having the inspiration to start such a wonderful organisation. Enjoy the Golden Celebration of NWR knowing you have enriched the lives of many women, including me!"

Robyn Tait, Sunshine Coast NWR Group, Australia

I have been a member of NWR Australia since 1974, it has given me a circle of interesting friends that encompass the world.

Janet Smith, Sunshine Coast NWR Group, Queensland, Australia.

Twenty years ago, I lost the greater part of my sight very suddenly. As a consequence, I had to remake my life. I had always been a voracious reader, but now this pleasure was denied to me. Through the Royal Blind Society, I was able to get talking books which filled some of the gaps, but I needed mental stimulation. I was introduced to NWR and it became one of the major influences in my new existence. I gratefully enjoyed the company of the other members, who through the years have become very good friends and the lively discussions have helped to keep the 'grey matter' working not stagnating. I eagerly await the next gathering of 'Lively Minded Women'.

Jean Feeney, Illawarra Day, NSW, Australia

I have been a member of Mulbarton NWR for almost 25 years, nearly a quarter of a century. During this time my fellow members have become my extended family. Friends through the good times as well as the not so good times. I have learnt so much from these dear friends as our interests and hobbies are so varied, and, even when we disagree, we agree to disagree. Our monthly meetings are a gathering place for lively minded ladies. With the cowbell calling us to order when we digress, as we invariably do. Needless to say the tea and scrumptious goodies are also much looked forward to. I could wax lyrical about my time with NWR but suffice to say Mulbarton I salute & love you all dearly.

Margaret Heimber Mulbarton, South Africa.

My Huge Debt to NWR

I joined WIT, or Woman In Touch, as NWR is known in Zimbabwe, in 1981 as a very shy and uncertain forty year old. I have to admit that I owe the organization a huge debt! Through WIT I grew and developed enormously, becoming LO of our group: I attended Toast Mistresses in order to learn to cope with public speaking, then becoming NO of the Zimbabwe division for several years. When I visited South Africa I met their NO, Margaret Turner at the time, and a couple of the committee who came out to the Johannesburg airport especially to meet me.

In 2004 and 2008 I made contact with two NWR groups in Queensland when I was visiting my family and I was warmly welcomed and made to feel at home, it was wonderful to find ready made friends there. I have been writing to some of these members ever since, for they have become good friends, and in fact some of them are here at conference tonight.

I am now living in Cape Town, which sadly no longer has an NWR group. So I have become a postal member of the South African organization and still retain my links with the Zimbabwe groups, the Australian groups and regularly correspond with Mary Dodkins, who I was delighted to meet in December when she and her husband came out to visit their son and family in Cape Town.

I consider myself so lucky to have had the opportunity to meet so many wonderful people in so many far flung places, and now to be here at this 50th anniversary conference is a culmination of my association with NWR over the past twenty nine years.

Thank you Maureen for following up on your idea in 1960, I am only sorry that I will not be present on Saturday evening to meet you in person.

Carole Aveyley
Individual Member, Cape Town

I remember being delighted to be asked to help Maureen by showing her round mainland side Hong Kong when she and her husband were deciding whether or not he should take a job there. I was the local organiser for ClearwaterBay NWR and a very appreciative beneficiary of what she had started years before. It had been a lifesaver to me on my return to England after the last overseas job and I had encouraged several newly arrived ex-pats to join in Hong Kong. I also remember my embarrassment when I got a puncture while taking my honoured guest around!

My thanks and best wishes to Mareen,
Heather Spackman.

I have been a member of Coventry NWR for about 25 years, joining just after my son was born. There was a daytime group, to which we could take the children. It was more social but was great to meet up with people and not feel so isolated. I used to go to the evening meetings when I could as well.

Special things I remember about our group are the time we had a chapter devoted to us by the Coventry Women's History Group in their book. When it was published we were invited to the launch. Our I think it was 10th Anniversary celebrations when we had a big do at a local hotel, with a buffet and a cake and invited Mary Stott. It was on the 3rd July 1989. However there was hardly enough food for everyone and us members had to hold back so everyone else had enough. It was awful. The hotel had let us down badly for the money we had paid.

We all remember our LO Eileen Larssen who had cancer and died in 1998. We have a photo of us all going for a pub meal after an evening country walk, one of the last times we were altogether before she died.

We did a murder mystery one year for our Christmas social, where we all dressed the part and I had to play 2 parts because someone was ill and got all confused. We all had good food and great fun and they did say they wanted to do something different. We remember all the quizzes and telephone treasure trails where we have got so frustrated we could not find the linking theme or come last in the quiz. We have had great fun at area workshops and Day conferences. One particular one was the Medieval one where a lot of us dressed up in the regalia to enter the part. We helped at the last National Conference when it was at Warwick and tried to allocate all the rooms for the accommodation to keep everyone happy.

For our group it has been a core of people, with some losses and additions, but we have been together supporting each other over many years. Some of us sing in a choir together, some do Charity work together or belong to other organisations. To us all it has been an enduring lifeline of companionship, a source of knowledge about life and different facets of it and it has come from the original idea that if we move there is a group of like-minded people we can contact to enrich and enhance our lives. So thank you Maureen.

Anne Thompson (Coventry LO)

Newcastle under Lyme NWR would like to send our thanks and appreciation to Maureen. Many of our group have been members since the 1980's and we are really grateful to Maureen for saving us from the isolation of our homes, giving us the opportunity to make lasting friendships and for the fun and fellowship of the National Womens Register. She really has made a great difference to all our lives.

Lynne Crush (L.O. Newcastle under Lym

Thoughts from your group – Kenilworth

'Thank You, Maureen!

Had you not put pen to paper some 50 years ago,
what would we do on Thursday evenings!

You are inspirational - really living the role as a
'lively minded woman'!

We are proud to have you as an active member of our group.

Love and best wishes from your friends in
Kenilworth NWR'

Maureen is a 'can do' person who quietly motivates others. She's the sort of person that it's hard to say 'no' to and you really don't want to as what she is asking is quite realistic to do, but you perhaps hadn't thought that was something you wanted to do!

To give an example - as well as NWR meetings I attend the same WEA literature class as Maureen and at Maureen's suggestion I compiled the class Anthology - to which Maureen was an enthusiastic contributor - not something I would ever have thought of doing without Maureen's suggesting it.

Dilys Skinner (Kenilworth Group)

'Many, many thanks Maureen for first writing to the Guardian and then following up the enormous response you had and creating NWR.

It was wonderful, when my children were very young, to find a lovely group of people from the Kenilworth NWR, happy to leave their husbands in charge of their children, whilst we all went off on most enjoyable day walks and wonderful walking weekends. We've all become great friends and as you know Maureen, as one of the group, we are still out there walking.

I feel I'm very lucky to know you personally for you continue to inspire us all in many different ways!

Love Sue Bell

Many thanks are due to Kenilworth NWR for coming to the rescue and helping to fill a small gap in my life, with lots of stimulating evenings and many happy hours in the local pub.

Margaret Schofield



Maureen is a good friend of mine. I realize that in this context that is a bit like saying that Nelson Mandela is your buddy, but it's true. We belong to some of the same groups, NWR of course being one, we walk, exchange plants, tease each other, and argue a lot about politics. We even organised a rather adventurous trip to China together once. Funny how when I say that it was one of my favourite travel experiences, Maureen always needs a bit of prodding before she agrees. I remember after this trip we arrived back at Guilin airport with just 12p of local currency. I casually challenged her to go and spend it...exactly. Typically in the face of a daunting challenge, even as in this case, ridiculous, she took it up, and returned in triumph with a small plate of cakes, and no money.

So, given that this is how I see Maureen, as just a close friend, it was strange to stand beside her at an NWR conference once and see people sidling shyly up to her, to tell her how she had changed their lives, and offer their thanks. It was then that I remembered that Maureen had changed my life too, and not by being a friend. I too had been stuck at home in the 60's with two small children, and the only conversation I seemed to have access to being about playgroups, and nap times. Then a friend had introduced me to the newly formed Housewives Register. I remember clearly how much it improved my life. I would arrive home feeling really invigorated after an evening of stimulating discussion, or an interesting speaker. I found myself at the local library researching things that had nothing to do with children or domesticity, and how good that felt, when being a housewife and mother seemed to be the end of the line.

Given that at that time Maureen and I had the same sort of problems, we even lived quite near to each other, though I didn't know her then, how was it that Maureen got to grips with this problem, and I, and to be fair, thousands of other women didn't? Well first of all (shock, horror) I don't read the Guardian, so would never have seen the original article. But more to the point, I would never have thought that I could, or should, be the one to do anything about it. I would have thought that it was at worst, not possible, and at best too difficult for someone like me to make a difference. And this is one of the things I admire about Maureen, when she sees a problem, she can't see why there shouldn't be a solution, or why it shouldn't be her who tackles it.

So, I salute you Maureen. If there were more people like you in the world, who thought that they could do some good, and did, it would be a better place.

Ruth Jennings

Thoughts from Rugby NWR

I am still enjoying NWR meetings after nearly 30 years. Three of our group are now in our seventies! I particularly enjoy research and discussion evenings but I often wish that we could persuade some younger women to join us as they have such different opinions and lifestyles compared to our present members.

Over the years our Christmas meetings have been especially enjoyable. I played the piano for a sing song and each year we would choose a country, sing carols and songs and have a meal with dishes particular to that country. We would also have a light hearted quiz about, for example, their customs and geography.

Not surprisingly we started with England, then Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, France, Poland and Italy etc. We had fun reliving our schoolday accents for renderings of "Quelle est cette odeur agreable" and "Stille nacht heilige nacht". The photo show our Scotttish evening in 1996.

It is obvious that with many more women out of the home during the day at work then the nature of NWR must adapt to meet the changing circumstances but I do hope that NWR can meet those challenges and prosper in the future.

Pat Petrie

I joined NHR/ NWR when my son was just a year old he is now nearly 37. I was missing adult company and my career etc. Then I saw the notice advertising the organisation in my local library and have been a member ever since. It proved to be just what I needed and I was made so welcome with a wide variety of topics and activities under discussion. Over the years I haven't always attended every meeting as I returned to work, but I am so glad I stayed a member. At last this year, I will attend conference for the first time.

Long may the organisation continue it really does fulfil a need

Nannette Craig Rugby

I joined Rugby branch when I moved there from Essex in 1989. I quickly settled into the group and have made some very good friends. My daughter was 4 years old when I joined. In 2008 it was a friend, Jean, from NWR who helped me shop for my mother of the bride outfit. Another friend keeps my husband supplied with homemade marmalade, in return I give her a constant supply of books to read. I have enjoyed many things at NWR meetings but a high point as been taking part in and organising the Angela Walker Quiz and the annual Fun Quiz. Long may it continue.

Eve Hoath Rugby NWR

I have been a member since 1977, having moved down to Warwickshire from Lancashire where I had never heard of NHR as it was then. How exciting – all those new people and new houses. I began to feel that if I saw any more lined velvet curtains I would cry.

Our annual table skittles evening - plus chips and quiche – is very popular. We include husbands and partners; but how come 12 very capable women have to take a back seat (because we are incapable) when it comes to adding up the scores?? Only men can do that. So the punishment for them is to get back ache re-setting the pins. Very enjoyable.

I think NWR is a very creditable organisation.

Kath, Rugby NWR

I've found it a great way of meeting local people, particularly when I was at home with young children. The topics are generally interesting and the book reviews and quizzes have been stimulating. The Christmas 'themed dos' and barbecues are great fun.

Hilary, Rugby NWR

In 1980 aged 32, I returned to the town where I'd lived as a teenager but now I had a husband and 2 small children. The only people I knew were my parents and their friends so joining NWR gave me a set of people to be my friends and do things with and find out about what there was going on here.

I like the fact that there is very little organisation and no formal business as everyone takes responsibility for different things. If someone fancies a trip to the theatre they organise it, likewise our annual skittles evening. And no-one ever is made to feel guilty if they don't come to some of the meetings, we're just pleased to see them when they do.

Jean, Rugby NWR

I'm a new member, having joined only last year, but already I really value the NWR. I have been studying at home, and after a while with little human contact you forget how to talk to people! What wonderful stimulating evenings we have and how friendly and welcoming my local group has been.

Best wishes

Sue Wagland Marlow

The Kendal members all agree with this

"I remember arriving in Kendal 25 years ago, not knowing a soul. My introduction to NWR opened up friendship, fellowship, stimulating discussions and after 25 years I still feel very involved with this wonderful organisation. Thank you Maureen."

Yvonne Rowan Robinson and Jenny Kelly

Local Organisers for Kendal

The **Leighton Buzzard** branch of NHWR was founded over 30 years ago and has welcomed many new members over the years. For one member who has moved house frequently, this is her third group.

Recent discussions have ranged over topics as varied as the Arab States, female political leaders, spices of the world and statues which make you stop in your tracks, amongst many others.

The discussion group has also spawned a monthly book group, a monthly walking group and a fortnightly scrabble meeting and coffee morning. We have to confess that the coffee morning is just an excuse for a good chat! But why not?

This celebratory year has given cause for much fun. We laughed at our reminiscences of the Sixties, applauded those who were brave enough to turn up in sixties gear (and had the legs), enjoyed seeing photographs of one another with the NWR shopping bag in far flung places and finally reverted to childhood, in a hugely entertaining kite flying morning on Dunstable Downs.

Thank you, Maureen. It's all down to you!



I've been a member of the Dronfield group for 23 years and cannot begin to imagine my life without NWR. When I first joined I had two small children and was not working so I valued the fortnightly evening meetings which were just for me and the opportunity to get away from talk about toddlers. Over the years I have been very involved in our group - joint LO three times, treasurer, contact for enquiries and new members, newsletter editor - committee member for day conference on education and for a workshop on assertiveness. I've also been to a number of National Conferences, day conferences and Area meetings and value the national perspective and the link with other groups. NWR has given me stimulation, confidence, the chance to develop new skills and lots of stimulating discussion, laughter and fun in the company of lively minded women.

Thank you Maureen.

Jean Watson
Dronfield, Derbyshire

Penrith Branch of NWR

It is difficult to express how the Womens' Register has changed lives for the better. How grateful we all are for Maureen Nicol's inspired suggestion 50 years ago.

On a personal note it has given me new interests and I am sure together with others it has formed lasting friendships. Although many of us are mature in age the meaning and purpose of NWR will prevail for all age groups.

From all of us here in Penrith our heartfelt thanks to Maureen for enabling us to enjoy the stimulation and company of like minded women at our monthly meetings.

Long may the NWR continue.

Best wishes from the Penrith NWR group and Local Organiser,

Chris Whittaker

Since moving to a new area 3 years ago NWR has given me invaluable opportunities to meet people. Aged sixty and no longer working, joining the register helped me settle easily into my new community and I was encouraged to participate in lively discussions on both serious and fun topics and to help organise the group's activities.

The Dronfield group is almost thirty years old, innovative, progressive and actively welcomes new members of all ages whilst retaining and benefitting from some original members all of which has allowed the group to evolve over time. Our programme is interesting and varied and offers something for us all.

I have gained in confidence and am spurred on to research previously unexplored and interesting subjects. It is my exam-free uncertificated university.

Mags Baker

Here are some thoughts from one of our Lichfield members and I have also attached a photo of one of our lighthearted - but very on trend - evenings - A Wii Night!

"I joined NWR in 1982. The first two meetings I went to - with some trepidation as a new resident in Lichfield and with a real need to escape the clutches of the domestic round with a small toddler - were on 'Russian icons' and then 'the Birmingham Rape Crisis centre'. I remember thinking, 'well, this will certainly take me out of my rut!' I've made lifelong friends, visited many parts of the world from my sofa and been encouraged to 'think outside the box'. Thank you!"

About 12 years later, this member then recruited me - also in Lichfield with a toddler - and we discovered that we had been to the same school, 150 miles away, and a couple of years later a 3rd person from the same school joined us. Quite a coincidence? - Or lively minded women being united by NWR!

Best wishes
Charlotte Groves



Just wanted to get a "thank you" message to Maureen Nicol. I mentioned the 50th celebrations to my aunt-in-law, Anne Williams, who now lives in Bath. She remembered responding to Maureen's letter to the Guardian, and helping to set up the South West Region, then based in Bristol. She also wished to remember Mary Dalwood.

Best wishes,
Mary Korndorffer

West Kirby & Newton Group: A selection of our groups comments:

How did we land up sticking with NWR?

I heard about NWR whilst coping with my first baby in the doctors' waiting room. I met Brenda who had been to a Heswall group. We became friends, as did our baby girls (bridesmaids even) and we began our group. I was really scared, but it worked.

Founder member DOROTHY: member 45+ yrs.

My first NWR meeting! Everyone seemed so confident, I wondered how on earth I would fit in. (I needn't have worried though as they all so very friendly & welcoming). **Jackie: member 28 yrs**

I remember Jackie...she organised a comparison of newspaper reporting. Fascinating. My brain started to work again, I was with people who could make me think! **Marilyn: member 24 yrs**

Knickers! A splendid speaker evening about Victorian underwear. I would have to stay after that! **Val: member 9 yrs**

Headteacher for years, now bored and life a bit empty; golf and driving finished, I heard about NWR when I was 83 yrs old. Now I have a new world and have just taken over as L.O. at **90 yrs!! Jean.**

(is this a record?)

Moved here and knew no one except a neighbour. My first meeting was a food and wine evening so it was a done deal. **Claire: member 26 yrs**

Something with lots of laughs and variety; laid back but can be serious too. **Kate: member 12 yrs**

Back from overseas, life revolving round by babies then work I think I would never have known half as much about the many, many subjects we have covered over the years. **Maureen: member 30 yrs.**

Don't know why I joined, something to do with NCT I think. Why have I stayed even though I can't make loads of meetings? Well they are all such nice people.

Gilly:member 27 yrs

Desert Island Discs: Our overall winner :

A most memorable evening: Firstly Maureen said her luxury would be her lipstick and then, ostensibly straight laced Hilary declared that *her* luxury item would be a thong!!! A recent gift.

She held it up for all to see.

Laughter has been paramount to us all in our group along with friendship and intellectual stimulation. Our thanks go to Maureen for making it all happen.

I remember being delighted to be asked to help Maureen by showing her round mainland side Hong Kong when she and her husband were deciding whether or not he should take a job there. I was the local organiser for **ClearwaterBay NWR** and a very appreciative beneficiary of what she had started years before. It had been a lifesaver to me on my return to England after the last overseas job and I had encouraged several newly arrived ex-pats to join in Hong Kong. I also remember my embarrassment when I got a puncture while taking my honoured guest around!

My thanks and best wishes to Maureen

Heather Spackman

We as the Manchester Conference Committee (2006) would like to say if it hadn't been for NWR we would never have come together as a group from around the Manchester region.

At the beginning we were relative novices but by the end we felt like experts. It was a unique opportunity to get involved with an exciting event and see things from the other side. By the end of the experience we were tired but elated and the buzz lasted for several days!

It would be appropriate to say how much we achieved as individuals from organising the national conference and how we now appreciate the hard work that goes into events like this when you are back on the other side.

But maybe most importantly were the new friendships formed and how much we all enjoy our continued lunches in Manchester.

With many thanks Maureen for that original idea and tenacity to get it all going 50 years ago.

Best wishes from the
NWR Manchester National Conference Committee 2006



The Manchester NWR Conference Committee

Greetings to Maureen, and Thanks for all the good times we've had together which sprang from her initial idea and her dedication to carrying her idea through.

With best wishes,
Evesham NWR (Worcestershire)

Maureen Nichol made one small step
for a woman but one giant leap for womankind!

From
Rosemary Cross, Vale of Evesham Group.

In 1975 I was completing an OU degree in Technology. I was at home with my first child aged one with a second on the way. This final topic was on systems design and I had to find a problem and then set about solving it using methods taught in the course. I used the loneliness factor of a young mum, in a new area, at home with only a few neighbour contacts. My library research bought up the National Housewives Register and then my husband remarked a colleague at work had a notice up asking if anyone would like to join. That was the start of continued membership that included nearly giving birth to my second child at a meeting on locusts, hilarious camping trips, conferences with fascinating speakers, house exchanges when we lost the door key and let the wrong cat in one night and above all long term valued friendship. Needless to say I achieved a distinction in systems design. So thank you Maureen for having the insight and get up and go to instigate such a simple idea.

Sue Driver Vale of Evesham Ex Malvern

Maureen 's response –

Thank you for all the time and trouble taken to compile the Memory Books. They are a lovely tribute not only to me but to all the members of NWR and I shall treasure them.

I hope one day my grandchildren will be interested and hand them on in their turn.

My grandson, now 18, was somewhat startled to find my name and NWR mentioned in his A Level history books – he was studying the 60's !

SARDINES IN SUBURBIA by Christine Baxter, a member of Grantham group.

Housewives floundering in the Sea of Mundane
Repetitive ironing to deaden the brain
Crying children at night to disturb you
Squashed sardines in suburbia

1960 heralds the birth of a Prince
And there's a housewives' rebirth from under the chintz
As the new born son is tended by the Queen
NWR tentatively moves onto the scene

Still watching the first episodes of Coronation Street
And keeping their houses shiny and neat
Housewives now begin spreading their wings
And meeting with like minds to do other things

Feeding the brain that was no longer aware
Swimming not floundering and coming up for air
Having opinions and making them known
Meeting together and having a moan

Taking on projects and seeing them through
Reading books that are good for you
Talking with women you would never normally meet
Individually or together, finding your feet

Fifty golden years and the Register has grown
From the seeds of the 60s to trees full blown
All over the world its branches have pitched
And many women's lives have been enriched

Although times have changed there is still a need
For a place where women's minds can be freed
So wherever you live and whoever you are
There's always a friend with NWR