

Lucy Hingley – a short biography

Lucy Hingley was the daughter of an Iron Founder whose business was in Dudley. Her family home was in Salwarpe and although reluctant to initially become a member of the WI, a friend finally persuaded her to attend a meeting – and from that inauspicious beginning Lucy Hingley became an ardent and positive force for the fledgling WIs within Worcestershire during the late First World War years.

She started a WI in Salwarpe in 1917 and was the Delegate from Salwarpe who attended the second National Conference in 1917.

She was elected as County Chairman in 1920, an Office she held until 1931 when she retired on grounds of ill health. In those days the retiring Chairman became President of the Worcestershire Federation of WIs. In that capacity she presided at the majority of Council meetings until her death in 1942 when the Office of President was allowed to lapse.

Lucy Hingley lived at Middle Hill Park with two sisters and she was an energetic WI member, being President of Broadway WI and starting and being President of Three Hills WI.

She was generous in every sense and WFWI owes much to her leadership over a long period. In her speeches at Council Meetings she constantly set before the members the highest ideals of patriotism, loyalty and service. She inevitably had her critics who on occasion felt she crossed the thin line that separates leader from autocrat!

In appearance Lucy resembled Queen Mary on whom she is said to have modelled both her manner and style of dress! At one meeting she spoke at she is remembered for saying: 'Of all our possessions in this world there is only one that matters – our character, for it is the only one that we take with us into the next world.'

She was also great fun and hosted Christmas parties and summer dances at her home.

She was a keen gardener and animal lover, she was a staunch supporter of the agricultural side of WI involvement and was never tired of reminding her members that 'Agriculture was the Birthplace of the Movement' – as indeed it was at the beginning of World War 1. Though not a great handicraft worker herself, she could criticise with knowledge (!) She was extremely active in helping to set up various exhibitions. The County Shield was her gift jointly with Dowager Lady Plymouth and many years later, she also presented the case for it made by her own work man from an oak tree on her Estate. When the Co-Operative Section of the then Exhibition schedules became a regular feature she joined with Mrs Holland-Martin to present the Co-operative Cup. (a continuation today in the annual floral art and craft schedules of our Annual Council meetings)

On public questions and especially those that closely affected women and their homes, Miss Hingley had clear and decided views. It is believed that it was in the welfare of each Institute, and through the Institute, in the personal well-being of all its members, her real affection of the Movement was centred.

Following her death in 1942 the WI members of Worcestershire generously donated to a Memorial Fund and it was this fund that endowed a bed in the Worcester Royal Infirmary as well

as providing furniture for WI House. Medical Staff agreed/offered to give WI members an annual medical memorial lecture and these took place at the hospital for many years. This was greatly appreciated by the Federation as the lecture came under the 'education' remit of the WI.

The Lucy Hingley Memorial Medical lectures continue to be organised today by the Public Affairs Committee. With the passage of time and along with the advances of the NHS the medical lectures have been widened to embrace many allied professions and services that make up 'medicine' in the modern era.

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One of the most popular women in Worcestershire—Miss L. M. Hingley—whose honoured associations with the Women's Institute Movement are of treasured memory.