

## W.I. History

This is a starter-for-one based on the first Minute book of the W.I. and Merry Bells records from the centenary booklet and from old ledgers held in the Merry Bells office.

From the first W.I. Minute book in the Archive room, Wheatley W.I. asked the Red Triangle Club (YMCA) for consent to use space in the Merry Bells for a year from October 1919, and the Red Triangle agreed to allow them to use this space free. W.I. members were entitled to membership and the benefits of the Red Triangle Club at 3d. per month. Despite its links to the YMCA, The Red Triangle Club had men and women sections. The W.I. had the use of a permanent room upstairs, but could book the concert hall for talks and events, probably at no extra cost. By February 1920, however, the Red Triangle were asking the W.I. for a contribution, but having been offered a year free, this was ignored until October 1920, when the W.I. agreed to offer £5 for the use of this room in 1921. The associated membership of the Red Triangle Club, which some members had taken up, was unsatisfactory and was dropped when the £5 offer was made.

This October 1920 entry is the last mention of the Red Triangle Club in the W.I. Minute book, but the Federation of Oxfordshire Red Triangle Clubs put on a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Trial by Jury' in February 1923, this being presented by the Wheatley Song Club. The Rev. Bell, vicar of St Mary's, was very involved with the W.I. and with access to singers in this and in his church choir, it seems that these may have been a source for the Song Club. But it was a separate village group and not an off-shoot of the W.I., which did have a number of sub-committees responsible for entertainment and amateur dramatics.