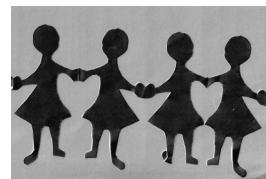


Women's Network

Exeter and Area



January 2012

30p

Stepping Out with the Women's Network

The Women's Network is an organisation run by and for those taking part. It has been successfully linking women, breaking isolation and providing safe and no-pressure environments for over five years. We, the networkers, have developed a whole range of regular socials and groups in this time, but are devoting this issue of our Newsletter to one of the things we do really well - leaving normal life behind for a time and exploring new territories, whether that's a trip out,



taking a holiday, or simply losing ourselves in a good book or theatre production.

Whatever your circumstances your life will be enhanced by stepping out with the women's network. We aim to keep costs low, so for instance our 4 day holiday was purchased through

a local paper for £10 a head. On day trips we keep costs down by purchasing group tickets and our Local Events page that Nicola produces each month shows a wide range of events that are either free or very low cost.

Taking a trip together is an excellent way to meet new people and get to know one another. A great day out is something you keep with you for a very long time, and when you can share your memories with others the pleasure is doubled. So why not step out on our next trip?

To find out more about the Women's Network call us on
07724 135011
or 01392 204640

We offer support and facilitation to make new connections and friendships.

We facilitate activities and events that are chosen by and for those taking part.

We are non-profit making and are not connected to any specific religious or ethnic group.

*Our aim is to empower women
Funding for Open Gatherings and
Facilitation is through Mind in
Exeter and East Devon*

A Holiday in Looe

This year a group of thirteen women travelled by train to Looe in Cornwall for our first Women's Network holiday! We shared two caravans for three nights with two women choosing to stay at guest houses nearby. Hardly any time was spent in the caravans as we had all our meals out, apart from breakfast. Despite feeling tired after our journey we were still able to venture out on the first night to the on site

Entertainment Centre. Here we bought drinks, one of us played bingo and I sang "My Heart Will Go On" (from Titanic) at karaoke!

We spent our first full day in Looe and all our photos show the fun day out we had! One of our group even went off alone along the cliff path to find a labyrinth. On the second day we had a lovely day out in Polperro, where we saw beautiful views of the

harbour and had an enjoyable ride on the tram. That evening we treated ourselves to a nice meal where we all managed to sit together at one table.

Between us we packed a lot of activities into our holiday. Some went ten pin bowling, others went on a shopping spree, some enjoyed sitting on the sea front watching the boats. Luckily the sun shone upon us at Talland Bay. Continued on page 3

- * Have you ever felt alone and wished you could go out and meet people?
- * Are you wanting to make new friends?
- * Is there an activity you miss or would like to try, and want to find other women who share the same interest?
- * Do you feel that you would benefit from the support to make this happen?

Joining the Women's Network

Joining the women's network is easy. We hold regular welcoming gatherings where you can find out more about us and meet other women joining or already in the network

Please call us on 07724 135011 or 01392 204640 for details

If so, the Women's Network (Exeter and area) could be for you. Why not contact us for more information and get on our mailing list?

A Day Out with Friends

As well as facilitated trips and outings, women in the network get out and organise events for themselves, as Glyn quickly found out.

It all started at a Women's Network group when I began asking if people would like to do something over bank holiday. Bank holidays can be a lonely time when you're stuck on your own at home.

I had been on a recent trip to London with the Women's Network but had never planned and organised a similar trip myself. We decided on a trip to Paignton and I invited all my new friends along including a

male friend and people from the Phew Centre and Bridge Collective. We all agreed on a date and I asked my son for help looking up trains on the internet. It felt scary but I knew everyone wanted to go because I'd found out what people like and where they'd like to visit.

On the day around nine people showed up at the station and we set off for Paignton. It was a lovely sunny day and we started out with fish and chips before taking a walk around the shops, down to the beach and along the bay to Goodrington for a

cup of tea. It was a nice relaxing day. Everyone on the outing looked out for one another and waited for one another and this gave me confidence to organise further trips including to Taunton, Exmouth and even three trips to London, sight-seeing!



"It all started at a Women's Network group..."

When I first joined the network I didn't have much confidence and never thought I'd be asking people to join me on a trip just a few months later! But I quickly started making friends and would never have found the confidence to do all these things without them!

Glyn

Theatre Link

Exeter is a great place for both theatre and cinema. The Network's *Theatre Link* is about us going together to shows, concerts and other events. It is good to have people to sit with and to chat to in the interval and after the performance.

We've enjoyed The Comedy of Errors - funny and frightening - an enjoyable evening out. We went to the Bike Shed for Circus Britannica. It was a bit hard to understand at first, but as usual everything got resolved in the second half. The film of Macbeth was followed by an open discussion with the star and the director. Sherlock Holmes was in the

open air - on a chilly evening! Seven of us went to Travels with my Aunt, which was life-transforming for the 'hero' and amusing for us.

How does it work? Once a month we have a planning meeting at the Exeter Phoenix. We meet at 7.00 and share information about forthcoming events.

We aim for a varied programme so that over time everyone will find something of interest. If you want company for music, plays, lectures, or anything of interest then come along with your suggestion

Judith and Mary

An Evening with Shappi Khorsandi

We had a great trip to see Shappi Khorsandi at the Barnfield Theatre. She is a hugely funny comedian with a performance that is big-hearted and down to earth. Shappi weaves the story of her life and relationships into a show that is moving and funny, touching deeply on many issues around being a mother, a daughter, a sister or a woman. What Shappi has to say is very relevant to us all, and her words continue to resonate long after the performance. It's great to get out and laugh together.



Nicola

Stepping into the world of books

The Womens Network book group is for anyone who is interested in reading books of any kind. It's not at all like a conventional book group, in which a book is chosen and everyone reads it and then discusses it. These book groups are difficult as the book chosen isn't to all the members taste and can be a struggle to read. No, at our book group we have a lovely simple system. Each meeting concentrates on just one genre



"at our book group we have a lovely simple system"

of books, fiction or non-fiction. So one month we may do romance, the next detective books or 'books I enjoyed as a child'.

There could be historical fiction, science fiction, animal stories, humour and inspirational books. Add to that non-fiction books on any topic - biography, self-help books, art, philosophy, or anything else of interest. Poetry can be included at any meeting if wanted.

Each book group lasts two hours

and people bring their books to show others, read from, and recommend. There is a wide range under each genre. For example, romance can include classics like Jane Eyre right through to books by Danielle Steel, 'chicklit' and even Mills and Boon.

In the last half hour of the meeting we discuss any book we are actually reading at the moment. This can be anything, not related to the subject of the meeting. So do please come along. It's lots of fun to discover new books you can enjoy and help others do the same.

Cherrie

Trips and Socials

The Women's Network socials are great places for getting together in a relaxed atmosphere and meeting other women. They are also places where lots of ideas for activities and events are explored. For instance, while we were writing this article at the Tuesday Social, Anita suggested an "Orange Wednesday" for afternoon cinema when two people can go for the price of one. Her idea was taken straight to the planning meeting and will be on the next monthly flyer. If women fancy a cinema visit all they need do is drop by to the social on a Tuesday and arrange a trip.

At the Tuesday social we've had ideas for trips to Teignmouth, Lyme Regis, St Ives and even a holiday. Other groups have sprung from this social, including fun and sporting events. For instance, Jenny introduced the idea of golf and Anita, Sharon and Judith initiated the cycling group.

A second social was set up more recently on a Friday for people who could not make the Tuesday group. This is also developing as a

safe and supportive group.

I am a regular anchor for the Tuesday group and it's a very nice place to come for a coffee, a chat and to meet lots of interesting people. It's a very varied group, so you get all different topics of conversation.



"it's a very nice place to come for a coffee"

Both the Tuesday and Friday socials are great places to learn about local events and information - everything from a local knitting group to cinema in the park. Sue

Local Networks and Events



The Women's Network provides opportunities to link with other networks and events both locally and nationally.

For three years running the Women's Network has been involved with International Women's Day. This includes participation in making panels for a number of large banners that were later exhibited at Exeter Phoenix and the International Centre at the university.

It was at the above event that we first met Kate Lowe who runs Tawe Valley Ventures at the Forest Hut in Eggesford. This is a rural project that organises a wide range of courses or events, including forest walks, felt

making and singing. We have joined Kate for picnics at the hut, Norwegian walking and making Christmas wreaths from natural and found objects.

Another event the network supported was the local Respect Festival in June—a celebration of diversity with music, art, workshops, dance and more. Women from the network also took part in Exeter Pride—an event that linked with national celebrations of lesbian, gay and bisexual pride.

Many of the local events that women from the network take part in are advertised through our monthly Local Events page. This page is put together by Nicola and is made up of information provided by members. We are always on the look-out for cheap or free events that are accessible to all.

Events include Festivals, courses, local markets, womens art groups, theatre, talks, craft events, charity lunches, exhibitions, and heritage events

Through our fundraising events we link with other charities and this year held a 'Cake Break' for the MS Society, making over £100. The organisation of such events starts with a core group of women and then many others contribute with cakes, making tea etc.

As a network we are part of Mind and Promoting Health and Emotional Wellbeing (PheW). Women support one another to attend the different activities on offer in these organisations. Most recently several women from the network have attended a computer course run by the Learning and Development team at PheW. Jo

Looe Holiday continued

Although the water wasn't warm enough for paddling or swimming some had Cornish ice creams.

Well over one hundred photos were taken including shots of Joan and me posing with a dishy fireman, Alison with a bloke covered in poppies, Pat with an unknown toyboy and Mary dancing on the beach! Before going I

was concerned I might not be included in the activities, but the nice thing was that although some chose to do their own thing *no-one* was left out! The holiday was a great success and we all had a fabulous time!

Postscript: We didn't manage to visit the Monkey Sanctuary in Looe. However, we were able to do so when

we returned to Looe for a day trip in July.

Gloria



A MONTH IN THE LIFE OF A WOMEN'S NETWORK MEMBER

Hooray!... My new 'flyer' arrives in the post!... I sit down to 'digest' it, and start booking out some times in my diary for the coming month! The following is what I decided to fill the month with.

Anna



WEEKLY SOCIALS

We meet in a place aptly called a 'Meeting House'. Initially I felt quite daunted, but the groups are usually small and always friendly and fun - I soon found myself joining in!

GAMES EVENING

What a selection!... These have either been donated or loaned, to the group. There are games for pairs, games for small groups, or even games for a larger group, involving us all! There is lots of laughter, as the great fun is enjoyed! I had forgotten the fun of the competition in Ludo - who would be the first to throw a 6 on the dice?... (I had last played this as a child!).

CREATIVE SPACE

A 'space' to do WHATEVER - maybe something in a craft sense, be it mending / repairing articles of clothing, knitting, making felt toys, or even drinking cups of tea!! I have said I will join those who are going to knit squares for a charity blanket - my limited knitting skills can just about cope with that!!

ENVELOPE STUFFING

Every month the 'flyer' gets sent out to every single woman in the Network, hence a lot of folding and stuffin' is required! This was the first group I plucked up the courage to go to, and was left with the thought, how can envelope stuffing feel so good?... It can in the Network!

BOOK GROUP

As with all groups, no pressure to participate, but those that do are very interesting. My reading of books has been sadly lacking of late, but attending this group, has made me want to get back to it, and who knows?... Maybe one day I will go along with a book of my own to talk about!

PLANNING THE NETWORK

This is fun and interesting! Firstly, between us all, an agenda is drawn up, to which members present can add to or amend. Information about local events and activities suggested by women in the Network is brought along to discuss their place in the flyer. We have discussed the Guidelines that form the basis of the Network. At Planning Meetings, we also make the decisions that affect how we take the Network forward.

TRIPS AND OUTINGS

Day trips or a weekend away...they all happen in the Network. Local cities, or places on the coast—take your pick, or maybe even suggest one you would like, and before long, that could happen too! A weekend away was a relatively new thing for the Network—but it worked fine, and was enjoyed by all!

Like all the groups I have been to, I was initially daunted, but before I knew it, I had contributed too, with a single word that was required, and I can't even remember what that word was!