

Worthing Branch Activities

We got involved with the WILPF STAR campaign to stop the arms race, a European campaign, by getting people to sign petitions on the street. We, of course, weren't very popular at the time, because we were the 'Russian threat'. The political scene was very different and we had quite a lot of negative comments from the public.

We also raised money for sending Hazel Rennie on the WILPF Great Peace Journey, which was around the embassies of Europe, to talk about the threat of the arms race. This we did with little sales and we furiously made long dangly 80's earrings by the thousand, and managed to sell them.

We also lent our support to the actions of Greenham Common. Some of us would go in there when we could, or send supplies.

We had meetings to discuss whatever our next action might be. For example, we did one for Hiroshima day, a few years running. One particular spectacular one was when we walked the length of the precinct and laid down to be drawn around, in the style of what was left of the Hiroshima victims. When we reached the end of the precinct, we were approached by the police chief constable, who said that he would arrest us all if we didn't walk back down the middle of the precinct without speaking to each other. The precinct was probably about a 15-minute walk, so we walked down the middle and to each of our own amazement, when we got to the end, we all instantly decided we would sit down and sing. Of course the police couldn't arrest us because they were only going to arrest us if we talked and it was just that we all spontaneously had decided that that was what we should do, sing! Then I think the police went away, because it was rather a public place and people would just think we were some strange, left wing loonies singing on the seafront. So that was one story.

We did events and tried to get in on moneymaking activities. We were trying to raise awareness about the lack of water and water pollution around the world. We did an event where we had a stall at the local assembly room about a well-water project, which came with a children's game, the prize of which was a glass of water. This impressed all the children terribly, but unfortunately not the parents.

Every year in Worthing, the Mayor is allowed to have a charity event. Our Mayor was the only Liberal in Worthing and he did support us, but he was trying to stay under the radar. He said he would let us have a stall at his charity event, as long as we didn't advertise ourselves. So we went along with loads of games. It was around Easter time so we had loads of eggs and money-making

stuff, but there was no mention of who we were. We had a good day, we raised quite a lot of money and it was quite a busy day.

When it got to about four o'clock, the Lord Mayor's assistant came around and said, 'We're very short of stalls for our casino-night tonight. Yours was a good game but could you make it a bit better, buy some more expensive prizes and come back at seven o'clock?'

So a few of us who had agreed we had suitable frocks to wear agreed we'd go home, change and come back with our prizes and run it again. Now, this was where we were in the depths of the very conservative Worthing crowd; 'The Rotary Club', 'the Conservative Association', and all those people who hated us in Worthing, who thought we should be deported or put in prison. So we did feel a bit unnerved, but anyway, we went to the casino evening.

They were all very dressed up in their black suits and posh frocks, going around with wives urging them to spend money on every stall. They were lashing out money and they were getting drunker and drunker, throwing more and more money at us, taking eggs or no eggs, saying 'no it's all in a good cause darling'.

One woman said to me, 'who are you dear?' and I said, 'oh, we're the 'Women's International'. She said, 'Oh jolly good show! Do carry on the good work!' So that was a moment of relief that was over, but of course it wasn't over until we got out of the building with the money. We didn't want to be found out. Finally, the evening came to an end and we packed up.

We had rather a lot of money, which, in fact, was enough to go straight out and buy two pairs of heavy-duty bolt-cutters, for someone to take straight to Greenham Common.