

The East Kent Ploughing Match Association

Women's Section

1951 was the first year that there was a Women's Section of the E.K.P.M.A which was held at Adisham Court.

Records show that a Nonnington Agricultural Association P.M. was held as long ago as 1840 and continued for about 90 years apart from some breaks during the World Wars and during "Difficulties in the Agricultural Situation" in the depression of the 1930's.

Soon after the end of the Second World War, on the 25th of October 1945, the Shepherdsweil P.M Association, as it was then called, held the first match was at West Court, Shepherdsweil where, "despite rain and gale force winds, it is thought about 1000 people attended."

"Ladies" were involved selling catalogues at a shilling (5p) a time. Kate Hume and Angela Coleman being involved almost from the beginning. In 1950 the Association changed its name to the East Kent P.M.A and the possibility of a Women's Section was suggested by Ella Robertson, John Robertson's wife of Appleton Manor, but it was not thought to be financially possible that year. However she and a number of P.M members' wives formed a committee of their own and were able to put on their first show the following year.

They were a remarkable collection of Ladies, mostly Farmer's wives in their 40's or early 50's who had worked so hard during the war coping with shortages and the worry of children being evacuated from this hot spot of East Kent, followed by a difficult 5 years getting back to normal.

The first Chairman was Mavis Bones (Jack's wife) with Ella as Secretary supported by a friendly, capable committee of Marjory Brown (Gill Bradley's Mother) Marjorie Collard, Mrs Harvey, Peggy Hogben (Wendy Morris' Mother), her twin sister Molly, Marion Hume (Kate, Alison and Dick's Mother), Mrs Mummery (Frank's wife), Enid Plommer (John's Mother), Mrs Poile (Roger's wife), Maud Spanton (Averil Akehurst's Aunt) and Mrs Stevens with Kay Miles joining 2 years later.

They drew up the "Rules" which are almost the same as they are today. They had 12 Classes including Butter, Cheese and Wine as well the Poultry, Cookery, Preserves, Flowers, Handicraft and Children's Sections and a Raffle with "some hundred prizes". The Chairman was elected for 2 years and the 4 a year meetings were held in member's houses. It was said that "the array of over 400 entries must have made the eyes of the original doubters start from their heads!"

In 1954 it was reported "Experts claim that the Women's Section Exhibition has no rival in Kent including the Kent Show"

Many members of this original committee continued for many years and the first 10 years success was celebrated with a special cake and was summed up by the report that "The exhibits demonstrate that Country Women have apparently unlimited skills and ingenuity, not to mention artistic tastes"

Five Cups were donated and presented each year and in the late 1960's the number of people entering was still over 100. It was then decided to ask the local school to put on a small exhibition at the end of the marquee which gave interest to the many children who visit the annual Show.

Originally the Association A.G.M's were held at the County Hotel in Canterbury followed by a formal dinner to which the Ladies were invited. This continued for the best part of 20 years at various

venues until in the 80's the after Match get togethers became more informal and were held at a number of Member's farm houses and then in village halls where gradually the provision of food has been undertaken by the "expert cooks" of the Women's Section together with a Quiz and Raffle.

The Raffles generate the income to pay for the Marquee and the Prizes given on the "Day". These involve a lot of work and are vital to cover the expenses. Originally the prizes for each class were 10/- (50p), 7/6 (35p) and 5/- (25p) . Raffle prizes are donated apart from the first 3 which come out of the raffle money and these used to be Tea sets, Radios etc until the 1990's when the first prize was £100 and £1000 was made on the Match Day.

Inevitably the original committee members gradually gave way to new generations but their foresight and expertise set the high standard of cooperation so that the traditional country skills are still giving interest and pleasure to so many people thanks to Women's committee who are made up of a friendly, efficient group of Countrywomen.