

Has visited hospital for 20 years

A presentation was made to the retiring hospital visitor, Mrs J. Maclean, at the annual meeting of the British Women's Overseas Club.

The president, Mrs S. Charlesworth, thanked Mrs Maclean for her untiring service during her 20 years as hospital visitor.

Members received annual reports from the president, secretary and treasurer, and heard plans for the forthcoming 25th anniversary dinner.

The meeting was held in St Matthew's Guild room.

A CHANCE meeting in a bus in 1946 between a First World War wife, Mrs Malcolm Mason, and a young wife with her baby who had just arrived in New Zealand led to the formation of the British Women's Overseas Club in Hastings.

The young wife, Mrs Mason said, found on her arrival in New Zealand that her husband had to re-join his ship in three days — she had nowhere to live and no friends or relations to help her.

Luckily, Mrs Mason was on her way from Hastings to Napier for a Red Cross meeting, and they were able to find accommodation for the young wife.

Mrs Mason realized that many war brides would be coming to New Zealand and felt there might be the need for an organization to help them.

Mrs Mason sent a letter to the local newspaper asking if anyone would be interested. The replies not only amazed Mrs Mason but the numbers staggered the Editor.

Along with all the enthusiastic replies was one from "Tui," who said, "These Englishwomen have been thankful enough to come to our country and enjoy its privileges and benefits. Surely New Zealand women are good enough to associate with. Needless to say, I am New Zealand born and proud of it."

The number of replies to that letter proved good publicity, with women pointing out that "Tui" overlooked one important fact — that being fortunate enough to be born in New Zealand she had many friends and relations, but the young war brides soon to arrive would have none.

As Mrs Mason said, "Like Ruth, they were following their husbands, and if it could be made easier we were going to help."

The inaugural meeting was to be held due to the interest of the then Mayor, Mr A. Rainbow, in the "Mayor's parlour" as both he and Mrs Mason thought "about 20" might come. In a last minute panic it was switched to the Hastings Assembly Hall because 200 women arrived!

Hastings Assembly Hall because 200 women arrived!

Mrs Malcolm Mason, centre, with one of the early committees, most of whom were war brides



Chance meeting in a bus in 1946 between a World War I bride and World War II bride led to the starting of Hastings British Overseas Women's Club

HAND OF FRIENDSHIP SPANS 25 YEARS

honorary secretary, Mrs A. Laing as assistant secretary, Mrs D. H. Stewart treasurer, and Mesdames L. J. Macersey and A. Reeve as committee members.

One of the first functions was a highly successful Christmas tea and "get together" for which the Mayor allotted £50. Rules were simple — no discussions of religion, politics or husband's occupations.

Hastings Assembly Hall because 200 women arrived!

An interim committee was set up with Mrs Mason as convenor, Miss M. Silvester as

This year the club celebrates its Silver anniversary, and Mrs Mason, its founder

Below: Mrs Malcolm Mason photographed in 1927 on her first visit to England after being in New Zealand as a First World War bride.



and first leader, is looking forward to the planned reunion.

Refusing to take credit for the club's success, she says, "It doesn't matter who begins an organization — it's the people who belong and carry it on who make it successful."

When a new member from overseas joins she is introduced at the meeting as "Mary Smith from London," then the president requests that all other members from that area stand, and they take care of "Mary Smith" until she is settled in.

Hospital visiting is considered important and Mrs Mason recalls the day the Matron of the hospital rang to say a patient from England was very ill and had no relations or friends in Hastings as she was passing through. Mrs Mason got one of her members to visit. By an amazing coincidence the visiting member was from Derby, so was the patient — in fact, they lived almost in the next street at one time.

At the 10th birthday party Mrs Mason proposed a toast, "To our long suffering husbands who have to put up with their wives crying on their shoulders when the letter they expected did not come from home."

Mr Harold Wilson, replying gallantly on behalf of the husbands, said, "On looking around I think we Kiwis are to be congratulated on our choice — Britain's loss as regards their brides is Hastings' gain."

As Mrs Mason explained at one of the first meetings, "These young wives have fallen in love with their husbands and are willing to follow them to a strange land, but they haven't yet had the chance to fall in love with the country."

Members going overseas for trips are able to visit members' relations and friends to give them first-hand news of their loved ones in New Zealand.

At the last Christmas party one of the items was community songs from different parts of Britain, and women from each particular part of the country led the singing with actions.

A member who had lived most of her life in South Africa before coming to New Zealand, told of her horror in trying to make the washing machine work and the stove to cook. In the end she had to ask one of the members to show her how to use them.

Another member said one of her most memorable days was when she had learnt to make bread and soap — they were living then in an isolated area and she was from a town in Great Britain.

This is an interesting club to visit — there's friendship and a helping hand for all British women — an opportunity to meet someone from your part of Great Britain, and to the visitor, a fascinating wealth of accents.

British Women's Overseas Club 25 years old

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the British Women's Overseas Club was celebrated at a dinner held in Hawke's Bay Farmers, Hastings.

The president, Mrs S. Charlesworth, welcomed 50 members and introduced the guest of honour, Mrs Vera Mason, the club's founder and first president.

Mrs Mason, who came to New Zealand 50 years ago as the bride of a soldier after the First World War, formed the British Women's Overseas Club shortly after the Second World War to offer help and friendship to the many young brides of returned servicemen then arriving in Hastings.

Since the war the club has welcomed many new settlers from all parts of the Commonwealth and is believed to be the only club of its kind in New Zealand.

Mrs Mason spoke of the joy and satisfaction the work of the club had always given her and delivered a message of congratulations and good wishes from the Mayor and Mayoress of Hastings, Mr and Mrs Ron Giorgi.

Toasts were drunk to absent members and to past presidents and committees.

Club's afternoon meeting

A talk on a new type of household cleaner was given by Mr Philip Freeman at an afternoon meeting of the British Women's Overseas Club, held in St. Matthew's Guild Room, Hastings.

Mr Freeman demonstrated some of the advantages of the product in its various forms and answered questions put by members.

A comedy sketch, "The Doctor Said," was presented by Mrs Lillian Phillips assisted by Mrs Pam Smith and Mrs Rose Godfry.

The visitors were thanked by Mrs S. Charlesworth, who presided over the meeting.

Trip through India described

A trip through India was described by Miss Pauline Tyers at an evening meeting of the British Women's Overseas Club held in St Matthew's GFS Room, Hastings.

Miss Tyers, who travelled across India in the course of a four months' bus tour from Thailand to the English Channel, showed coloured slides of the many temples and ancient buildings she visited.

Members were told of the beauties of India's architecture and the charm of its people and Miss Tyers confessed to a desire to return there for further exploration.

The president, Mrs S. Charlesworth, thanked Miss Tyers with a gift.

Musical programme for club meeting

A programme of music was provided for members of the British Women's Overseas Club at an evening meeting in St Matthew's GFS Room, Hastings.

Mrs Nanette Roberts and Mrs Jill Tobin, each sang a bracket of songs. Mrs Roberts, accompanied by Mrs V. Laing, sang "I Heard a Robin Singing," "What A Wonderful World" and "This Is My Beloved." Mrs Tobin, accompanied by Mrs Roberts, sang "In The Sally Gardens," "Love Is Kind," "I Know Where I'm Going" and an old nursery rhyme, "Oliver Cromwell."

Piano solos played by Mrs Roberts were "Tango" (Albeniz), "Andaluza" (Granados) and "Romance" (Green).

The president, Mrs S. Charlesworth, thanked the visitors and presented them with floral sprays.

A musical quiz was won by Miss M. Horne.

Basics of floral art described

The basic rules of floral art were described by Mrs A. R. Adamson at an afternoon meeting of the British Women's Overseas Club in Hastings.

Mrs Adamson demonstrated several arrangements requiring a minimum of flowers and foliage.

She was thanked by the president, Mrs S. Charlesworth.

Overseas visitors at club meeting

Visitors from Wales and Australia were welcomed by the president, Mrs S. Charlesworth, at an evening meeting of the British Women's Overseas Club.

A programme of competitions was held and the winners were Mesdames E. Isaacson, J. Brown and J. Sunley.

Members discussed plans for the annual outing in February. The venue will be decided at the next meeting.

Women's club's Christmas party

More than 70 people attended the Christmas celebrations of the British Women's Overseas Club.

Committee members presented a mini-musical called "Those were the days."

Mrs S. Smith provided the accompaniment.

The president, Mrs S. Charlesworth, supervised an exchange of gifts and the Christmas cake was cut by Mrs V. Mason. The programme included the singing of carols.