



Brightwell-cum-Sotwell WI

July 2026

*History of the traditional
British Toastmaster*

**B-c-S WI Meeting
Tuesday 14th July**

History of the traditional British Toastmaster with Jim MacLeod

What a wealth of stories and anecdotes Toastmaster Jim MacLeod had to share with us. But first he explained that the role of Toastmaster or rather Master of Ceremonies was uniquely British and does not occur anywhere else in the world. He is the mainstay of many corporate, civic events and weddings. It is his duty to liaise with the venue, act as presenter, consultant and ensure that all the proceedings go off without a hitch and deal with any problems which may occur; being able to think on your feet is paramount!

The bright red tailcoat was first introduced in 1894 by William Knightsmith a London Master of Ceremonies to distinguish the toastmaster from waiters or butlers who all wore traditional black and it has been adopted as the standard of dress ever since.

Jim turned out his pockets for us to give us an example of some of the items carried to hopefully meet all eventualities; these included a lighter, cigar cutter, paper clips, hair clips, small mirror, torch, tooth pick and even a charger cable for mobile phones.



Weddings are very much the mainstay of the business and Jim provides thoughtful gifts for the wedding party, one of these is a silver sixpence for the bride which traditionally is a good luck charm symbolising wealth, prosperity and financial security. Many of us did not know that this was mentioned in the final line in the rhyme:

*“Something old, something new,
something borrowed, something blue,
and a silver sixpence in her shoe.”*

Thanks to Marion and Trisha for the refreshments.

Business News....

- Helen reported that we had a very successful stall at the fete, raising £282 (not £350 as reported earlier) this was an increase of over £40 on last year. She thanked all those who helped on the day as well as those members who provided cakes, plants, garden produce and jarbolas.
- Special thanks also went to Lesley who helped with setting up the stall and running the Jarbola. Members will be very saddened to hear that Lesley's husband, Eric, passed away on Wednesday of last week.
- There will be no meeting in August as this is our summer break. Our meeting on Tuesday 8th September will be 'Games Night'.
- Copies of Inspires magazine were made available and Helen highlighted several OFWI events which may be of interest to members. Mention was also made of the VIA online courses.
- There is a Bridge Taster session in Wallingford on 1st August. For more details contact Tom Rogerson on wbceducationtomr@gmail.com
- Annie wanted to let members know that she has booked a place on the OFWI event 'A Match Made in Heaven' - artisan chocolates and wine tasting on 9th September at Blewbury Village Hall should anyone be interested in joining her.



Village Fete pictures....

Our WI stall laden with goods and members manning the stall. Many thanks to all who helped on the day setting up and dismantling the stall and those who provided baked goods, plants, produce and jarbola jars.



Our stall all ready for sales!!
The Jarbola sold out within the first hour - *everyone a winner!!!*



OFWI What's On....

Click on the link to find details of OFWI'S Denman funded workshops, talks, days out, holidays and more.

OFWI What's On

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