

Thornborough & Thornton W.I. report: April 2015



Unless you have previous knowledge of these things, you could be forgiven for thinking that *Blood Bikers* or *the Blood Runners* are a group of vampires on wheels or a nasty chapter of Hell's Angels: neither is true. That's just a name to tease. These people do deal in blood and yes, they cart the stuff around on motorbikes but they do it to save lives. Their official title is: SERV – Service by Emergency Rider Volunteers – definitely in the angels' category, because, please note, they are volunteers! This special group of people (men and women) agree to be woken up in the middle of the night, whatever the weather, travel maybe hundreds of miles to collect or deliver blood needed for a life in trouble. Most of us who spend the night asleep never see these people (the analogy with angels persists) and very few of the listeners at our W.I. meeting had heard of them either. But what an amazing, fantastic and brilliant service they provide.

This organization began in 1962 when the friend of an unwell man in Whitechapel Hospital set off on his bike to collect 'product' from a blood bank on the other side of London. Usually, certain amounts of blood are transported in daylight hours, but blood is an expensive product with a short shelf life, so hospitals have to keep only a basic supply. In emergencies, speed is of the essence, and that's where these rapid response riders come in. Their motto is: *'One day – we may have the ride of your life!'* Slightly chilling, but re-assuring too.

Since 1962, SERV has also taken on the task of delivering breast milk to babies (often premature) whose mothers are unable to feed them and now, as a highly regulated organization, linked to the NHS, they are licensed to carry other items too. Alistair Borland MBE was the man who gave the talk and he is the brains and inspiration behind the whole operation. His dream is to work with South Africa, Spain and France with a view to making SERV a world-wide service. You hear some astonishing people at W.I. meetings!

For those who don't know (can there be anyone who doesn't?) this year marks the centenary of the W.I. and there will be (and have been) parties and events all over the place to celebrate. One of these is at Waddesdon Manor on Tuesday 16th June, and of course the Bucks County show's theme this year for the W.I. is how this organization has inspired women for a hundred years. Both venues are easily accessible to us, so hope local readers of this blog will be inclined to venture forth, as well as all our members.

Cath Sayer