

### **St Neots Mothers Union (MU)**

Mary Sumner founded the Mothers Union in 1876 and by 1892 it had spread to the Ely Diocese. From the MU Branch minute book, there was a branch in St Neots in 1912, with Mrs EJ Atkinson of Brook House as Hon Sec. She held this post until 1952 when Mrs Phyllis Hawkey of Wintringham Hall took over. The vicar's wife, Mrs Knights was the Enrolling Member from January 1922 until December 1942, Mrs Galley taking over in February 1943. The minute book records all meetings, members and accounts from 1938 – 1955.

Meetings were held mainly in the Church Rooms until the war years when the branch joined with Eynesbury Branch as the Church Room was being used by Evacuees. Eynesbury Branch closed in the 1950s but a branch continued in St Neots until the 1990s. In 1985 a branch of The Young Families MU group was formed but then closed again when the young mothers returned to work, their children having started school.

St Neots MU was reformed October 2001 with 9 members meeting in the Parish Room. Membership quickly increased and by the end of 2005 the decision was made to move to The Church Room as the membership had increased to 34. During the first few years fund raising efforts were concentrated on buying a new banner which was purchased in 2004 for £741.80 and can be seen on display in Church when not in use at MU Festivals. Over the years the branch has supported various MU projects – AFIA (Away from it All – enabling needy families to have a much needed holiday), the MU Literacy Project, and Wheels Appeal.

Closer to home, members have knitted blankets and baby clothes for the Special Care Baby Unit at Hinchingbrooke Hospital, and supported the Mid Cambs Womens Refuge by donating gifts of food, toiletries, teenage clothing, High Street gift vouchers and presents for the children at Christmas. In 2024 we provided and manned a Parent and Baby feeding and changing tent at St Neots Festival, which was much appreciated by those who used it. Some of our members also run a Relationships Course for inmates at Littlehey Prison

The MU is not confined to the UK. There are 4million members in 84 different countries. It is extremely active in Africa and parts of Asia, where the women are proud to wear their blue uniform.

Our monthly meetings on the first Thursday evening of the month in summer and third Wednesday afternoons in winter take place in the Church Rooms. We have a varied programme involving interesting speakers on subjects linked to MU causes, or our faith or sometimes more frivolous. All MU meetings and activities are rooted in prayer. For members unable to attend meetings there is the Indoor Members Prayer Circle.

Mothers Union membership is open to both men and women, married, divorced or single, the only criteria for membership is Baptism. For more information contact [catherinagriffiths@stneots.org](mailto:catherinagriffiths@stneots.org)