

How did you find WILPF?

"I remember the exact date.

It was May 24th, 1982 and I had been invited to a picnic on the beach at Lancing, which was near Worthing where I used to live. I had a child of about 3 and my youngest son was only 8 months. The picnic had been put on by Sybil Cookson for International Women's Day for Disarmament.

I saw this very tall, elegant, but shabbily dressed woman, marching along the beach in her wellies, and I took her to be Sybil. She made a b-line for me and immediately started telling me all about WILPF and gave me a leaflet, so I read it. I had just started to become involved with CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) and women who were going to support the actions of Greenham Common Airbase in Berkshire. I said I would read it all and come and see her, so I did. She lived in this house in Sompting, which had been the home of Edward John Trelawny, the poet, which was very interesting. She told me they had a local branch in Worthing and that I could easily join, so I filled in the paperwork. She was very keen to get me to the meeting and offered to pick me up in her dilapidated Morris Minor when I could get a babysitter, which I did.

So I went to this afternoon branch meeting. It was in a house. It was very, to me, what looked old-fashioned looking, as a 30 year old, and the meeting was very formal. There were about half a dozen women in the room, with china teacups and small cucumber sandwiches, which were passed around. Everyone was very polite. Most, well, all the women in the room were well passed 70, so I felt a bit out of place, but I thought 'I want to join and I have to see what's happening'. So they started their business, which I found quite bizarre, because it struck me as something that went back to pre-war times.

Then I discovered the reason I was at the meeting: there had been a motion, supported by most of the branch, that they should close down because they were getting too old. Sybil had brought *me* as the person who was going to be the new member, so they couldn't close down. Put in that position, I said 'I'm sure I can find some more, younger women to join and I'll work out how to do it', and I left it at that."