

# Mothers' Union



These articles could not be considered to be complete without a reference to that iconic institution, the Mothers' Union. It was the brain-child of Mary Sumner, who was married to the Revd George Sumner. (George was ordained into the Winchester diocese and was scion of a distinguished family, his father having been Bishop of Winchester and his uncle, Archbishop of Canterbury. George was eventually consecrated to the suffragan bishopric of Guildford in 1880). It was in 1876, while George was rector of Old Alresford in Winchester diocese that Mary called a meeting of women in the parish to pray and focus their thoughts on marriage and family life. From that small gathering in the vicarage drawing-room, the Mothers' Union has evolved into a worldwide organisation with over four million members, including anyone who has been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity and who promises to support the aims and objects of the society — men as well as women. As a Christian charity, the MU seeks to support families of all kinds. Members are now in over 80 countries in which they share a vision to bring about a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships. The MU headquarters is at Mary Sumner House in Westminster, where there is a paid Central Executive and staff. However, the society is led by a Worldwide President and Council elected by members. During her six-year term of office, the President aims to visit members throughout the world. The MU's patrons are Her Majesty the Queen and the Archbishop and Bishops of the Anglican Communion.



Mrs Mary Sumner

with a table lamp. Mrs Bodie gave a most interesting history of the MU in the Diocese from the time she inaugurated the first meeting in St Paul's Church in the 1920s [over 90 years ago!]. After St Paul's was established, branches were formed at St Margaret's and St Andrew's and so on. It was her wish that the work she had done to lay the foundations of the MU would be recognised as a gift from St Paul's Church to the diocese. Today in our diocese, there are three branches (the Cathedral; St James, Aberdeen and at St Mary-on-the-Rock, Ellon, plus a number of individual members in Aberdeenshire, Orkney & Shetland. Members in our diocese have been responsible for many local projects including the provision of garments for babies in the neo-natal unit; toiletries for women and children in refuges run by Grampian

An edition of Aberdeen & Buchan Churchman dated January 1959 gives an interesting insight into the beginnings of the Mothers' Union in the Diocese. Mrs Elizabeth Bodie gave a presentation on the work of the Mothers' Union'. Lady Aberdeen, Mrs David Gordon, in tribute said that Elizabeth Bodie WAS the Mothers' Union' and on behalf of MU members in the Diocese presented her



VISIT TO LADY ABERDEEN 2001: left to right] Mrs Doreen Baillie, MU Diocesan President; Lady Aberdeen and the Revd Carole Fox, MU Diocesan Secretary. Lady Aberdeen (a former Diocesan President) had been unable to attend a special service held the previous evening to mark the MU's 125th Anniversary

[left] JOURNEY OF HOPE - TIME CAPSULE [The capsule travelled the length and breadth of the British isles and after coming to Aberdeen was accompanied by members to the Brechin Diocese] A Visit to the Town House (left to right Maureen Dewar (St James' Aberdeen); Secretary; Pat Simpson (Cathedral) Marketing Co-ordinator; Alison Stephen (Ellon) Branch Leader] holding the capsule; Revd Tim Bennison (MU diocesan Chaplain); Lord Provost Margaret Smith; Ursula Simpson (Buchan) Branch Leader; Florence Cal Anglia (Cathedral) Secretary; Pat Marshall (Buchan) Trustee; Moira Middleton (Cathedral) Trustee; Eileen Flett (Cathedral) Branch Leader.



Women's Aid; and knitted hats for mariners —plus 'away from it all holidays' for needy families. Lang may their lum reek! [Acknowledgements to Doreen Baillie and Carole Fox for help with historicity!]

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