Kirkandrews- on- Eden WI November 2018 meeting.

President Margaret McKenna welcomed members to our November meeting.

There was a business meeting, minutes were signed, apologies were taken and the County News was read. Margaret gave details of the new committee and then introduced our stand-in speaker. Unfortunately Maureen, the speaker for the evening, was unwell but her place was ably taken by her husband Fred.

“My Mum the Mill Girl” was his story of his Mum who was one of 500,000 women who worked in the Lancashire cotton industry. Lilian Roberts was born in 1907 at 27 Tin Street, Oldham and because all her family worked in the mills it was inevitable that she would also work in one. Oldham in the 19th Century was a small village which grew into “The Cotton Spinning Capital of the World” with over 300 mills. She started work as a half-timer at the age of 12 when she spent half a day at school and half working in the weaving shed at Ashley Mill for six pence a week. She loved the work and progressed from 2 looms to 4 and then 6 and she was earning good wages but then became a sample weaver which meant a cut in wages but increased status. The samples she produced were shown to prospective buyers at the Manchester Cotton Exchange.

She had a comfortable family life with her parents, a sister who died at the age of 16 and a half-brother. 1928 was an important year because she was able to vote and this started her political life. She married a spinner called Fred and they bought a house in 1932 for £500. This house was sold to Pakistanis and was due to be demolished in 1952 but has been preserved. Although she was sacked when she married she received a dispensation to go back to work until the birth of her son Fred and this brought an end to her work in the Mill.

After WW2 she worked in a jam factory but sore fingers stopped that but the intrepid Lilian went to work in a chippy until she was in her 70’s. She moved into an apartment in an Alms House and then into sheltered accommodation in Haydon Bridge to be near her son and his wife and died peacefully in Hexham Hospital soon after. Her ashes were scattered on the moor above Oldham.

Fred spoke of the work in the mills, the effects on the family’s health and education, work conditions and the politics of the time and gave us an important insight into life in the Lancashire Mills.

Fred was thanked by Margaret Parkinson for the remarkable story of a “Mill Girl”.

The competition for an old household utensil was won by Sadie Bell and second was Rosalind Bell. The drawing was won by Glynis Milburn.

The next meeting in December is our Christmas Celebration meal.