

Name of Branch: Aldersyde Women's Institute

Location: Aldersyde is about 25 km south of Calgary and 10 km north of High River.

Organized: In 1914, by [Miss Maclsaac](#) of the Provincial Government, in a railway car.

Charter Members: Mrs. Cutts, Mrs. Barrett; other early members were Mrs. Ada Rowland, E. Bird, L. Barrett, LeClair, W.B. Way, B. Caron, A. Goodwin Coy, H. Slack, A. Bice, C. Morris, St. Clair

First Executive: Mrs. Cutts, first president

Disbanded: Jan. 1992



Activities: Aldersyde WI was active during both world wars, sending parcels to local men and women in the armed services as well as money and clothing to people who had lost their homes. During WWI, the Aldersyde WI worked tirelessly for the Red Cross.

In the early years of the WI, prominent women such as Nellie McClung were both members and advocates for women's rights. In 1928, Mrs. McClung spoke before 200 people at Aldersyde, using a hayrack as her stage.

The AWI branches were responsible for raising funds for and indeed operating many of the early social institutions in the province. In 1930, the Aldersyde branch purchased the Milt Thorne pool hall and renovated it to serve as a community hall. The WI ran this hall, hosting "card parties, bridal showers, dances and social gatherings until 1950 when the hall and contents were donated to the Aldersyde community" (p. 706).



Farewell for Mrs. O'Coffee, 1941. Back: Mrs. E. McLean, J. Srigley, ?, Mrs. Bailey, M. Rowland, B. Eccles. Middle: V. Jenkins, N. Derrick, L. Barrett, Mrs. Hobson, F. Lambert. Front: M. Lusk, R. Caron, B. Rowland, P. Rowland, Mrs. Jorgensen, Mrs. O'Coffee, B. Barrett.

The Aldersyde WI celebrated its 50th anniversary on June 11, 1964, declaring charter member, Mrs. L. Barrett, "Lady of the Day." A sixty-fifth anniversary was celebrated on July 17, 1979 at a picnic, where Mrs. Caron, the only remaining Charter Member, cut a special cake to commemorate the event.

Notable Members:

Book of Remembrance:

- [Margaret Lusk](#), who is fondly remembered as a kind, thoughtful and caring woman, especially where welfare and organizational work were concerned. Prior to coming to Canada, Margaret organized the Buittle Women's Institute in Scotland and was Honorary President of that branch until she died in 1955. Margaret came to Canada in 1926, where she served as Secretary and then President of the Aldersyde WI, devoting a great deal of her time to Red Cross and Cancer campaigns.

Life Membership:

- [Elizabeth Barrett](#) was given a Life Membership on her 85th birthday, on Dec. 5, 1961. She qualified as a teacher at the turn of the century, but only taught for six months before marrying in 1901. In 1910, she and her husband moved to Aldersyde. Elizabeth was a Charter Member of the Aldersyde WI, serving as Secretary and as Agriculture Convenor over the years, a fitting portfolio for an ardent gardener.

Sources: Okotoks and District Historical Society. *A Century of Memories: Okotoks and District 1883 – 1983*. Okotoks, AB: Okotoks and District historical Society, 1983. (Text and photos pp. 705-706); "Mrs. Margaret Lusk," *Book of Remembrance*. Vol.1 #43; "Mrs. L.W. Barrett," *Life Membership* #203-204.