Rivers

I still remember
summers as a child in Anglesey,
and yet I'd no idea it was in Wales one Mrs Watts
of the Agricultural Organisation Society
(there's a mouthful!)
first took up her trowel and cooking pots
to better feed a hungry nation, weary of war;
or that the first such W.I. in an English town
was started here in Bournemouth,
down the road, in Wallisdown.
The Vote and Women's Lib. - the rest,
we say,
is history.

Today I think of Lady Wimborne and Lady Chelmsford
mixing salads,
or hunting down some unsuspecting bird
deep amongst pine trees,
along the banks of the winding Stour,
whose steady course, soon joined by others
- the Cale and Lydden,
ploughs south through chalk and heathland,
bright, resilient. Women
I am proud to know,
have such grace and power.

James Manlow
Poet Laureate for Bournemouth

A poem written for Stour Power WI, and to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the Women's Institute, the first of which was established in 1915 to help the war effort.

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