Kirkandrews- on- Eden WI April meeting.

President Margaret McKenna gave a warm welcome to members and several guests at our April meeting. Apologies for absence were received and the minutes of the previous meeting were read by Jean Wharton, approved and signed. Items from the County News and correspondence received were noted.

Margaret then introduced Renata Breadon and the subject of her talk was “Growing up on the other side of the fence” We listened, fascinated, as she described how she was born in Germany before the Second World War and her early years there. The daughter of a Lutheran pastor, living in a small hamlet surrounded by rich farmland she had an idyllic childhood. However her father was promoted and they moved to a bigger town which she remembered had a tram! But storm clouds were gathering, war was looming and when it started her father had to join up as a soldier to protect his family.

At first the local party leader kept Nazi excesses to a minimum but gradually things changed. Windows were broken, friends disappeared and the Nazi Party became more and more evident with torchlight processions and summer camps. Meanwhile the list of names announced from the pulpit in the church of the injured, dead and missing became longer but then was stopped.

In 1944 there was a dramatic change when refugees started arriving from Russia (these were Germans who had been encouraged to emigrate there). It was a very hard winter that year and they stayed with families and in the church. There were never any shortage of food and so they were never hungry but in May 1945 on a very warm night her godfather, a parson, knocked on the door and offered the family, her mother, Renata and 4 siblings plus the nanny space in a van to flee from the advancing Russian Army and the threat of capture, rape or death. They left everything behind and fled to safety. Eventually arriving in Czechoslovakia where they were taken prisoner. Time was spent in camps guarded by former inmates of the concentration camps who were not kind however they were treated well by the Americans.

Eventually the family moved to Bavaria and were reunited with their father who had been a prisoner of war. The Lutheran Church provided a small amount of money and they were given care parcels by the Americans. One parcel came from a Church Ladies Guild in Edinburgh which contained a pair of shoes with a name in them. Renata’s mother wrote to this lady to thank the ladies for the parcel and a correspondence developed. This resulted in Renata going to Edinburgh to stay and start her nursing training. The rest, as they say, is history and she still lives there.

Pat Dixon thanked Renata for a very interesting and intriguing talk.

The competition for “a photo of yourself as a child” was won by Jean Wharton and second was Judith Swinsco. The drawing was won by Rosalind Bell.

Our next meeting is on Friday May13th in Beaumont Parish Hall when the talk will be “Encaustic Art and Beeswax Products”. All are welcome.