

Oakham WI Newsletter

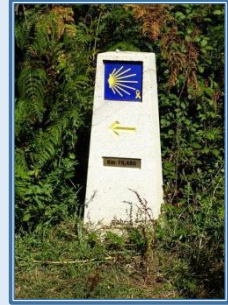
May 2025

Next Monthly Meeting - 27th May 7.15pm for 7.30pm start

Alison Emery - Adventures walking the Camino Way

We are looking forward to welcoming Alison Emery to our May meeting. Alison is a member of her local WI and will be sharing with us her story in walking part of the Camino Way Pilgrimage to Santiago De Compostela.

People have many reasons for making the pilgrimage, such as spiritual, cultural and to experience their beautiful surroundings. In Alison's case, she had joined a running club after her husband's cancer diagnosis. Walking the Camino with eight friends from her club helped her to cope.



FROM OUR PRESIDENT

From our President ...

In my covering email for this newsletter, I have stressed the jeopardy in which Oakham WI currently finds itself and I do hope you realise that this is a pivotal moment for the group.

I would personally urge each of you to consider how you could contribute to our WI – shaping and protecting the community we have built together. In particular, and most urgently, I am asking you again to consider joining the committee. PLEASE SPEAK TO ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

I'm sure many of you have the necessary skills to be an Oakham WI Committee Member – it's not rocket science! The main qualities needed are enthusiasm and proactivity, alongside good organisational skills and IT literacy. Our current committee members would be pleased to work alongside you, providing full training and support, so you wouldn't be navigating the role alone.

As mentioned in my covering email, we will soon be asking you, via an Oakham WI Membership Questionnaire, to tell us what you want from your membership and hope that every one of you will respond honestly. The survey will of course be anonymous, but if you feel you would like to make your views known separately, please address your email to me at oakhamwi@gmail.com or speak to me in person at our May members' meeting.

On a lighter note, I hope you have all been enjoying the dry and mostly sunny weather we have been experiencing over the past weeks, relishing your gardens and the beautiful countryside both in Rutland/Leicestershire and further afield. PLEASE send in your photos of your horticultural delights and your travels for inclusion in the next newsletter!

Jackie

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Your WI is what you make it!

YOUR engagement is vital to the future of the group and to this end we will be asking again for your thoughts on what YOU want from YOUR membership.

Currently the committee is not receiving adequate support for the activities and events it offers - a situation which can not continue.

Look out for the 'Oakham WI Membership Questionnaire' coming to YOUR inbox soon!

How do you contribute? Do you....

appreciate show-friendship
attend respect assist
participate join-in
committee-member welcome help
encourage teach support share
guide show-empathy
complement listen

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Remember for the meeting:

- Please remember to have the correct money (£1) for the door fee together with £1 for the raffle if you want to take part.
- Wear your lanyard so that everybody knows who everybody is.
- Any small change for Peppers - a safe place.
- Bring your cheque book if you do not use internet banking.

Please also ensure that you carry a note of who we can contact in the case of an emergency and details of any medication that a first responder might need to know about. This should be carried in an easily accessible place when attending meetings and events.

Payment for events/activities

When paying for events/activities in which you are taking part, could we please ask that you pay either directly online by bank transfer (the preferred option) to:

Oakham Women's Institute

Sort code: 08-92-99

A/c no: 67228391

or by cheque, handed directly to our Treasurer - Linda B - or another member of the committee acting on her behalf.



We would prefer if you **DID NOT** pay cheques into the WI account, because although these show on our bank records, we have no reference with which to reconcile the payment; we can not see who has made the payment, or what it is for.

Your cooperation in this matter would be very much appreciated.

Oakham WI WhatsApp group

If you would like to join the Oakham WI WhatsApp group- a fun and informal way of keeping in touch with other members, sharing local information, etc - please email Jackie on oakhamwi@gmail.com, giving her your mobile number and she will send a link for you to join.



Please remember WhatsApp is an open forum, visible to many of our members, and sensitive, confidential or private information should not be shared.



Our dear friend Marion is moving to Ipswich to be closer to her son, Matthew.

At our next monthly meeting, you'll have the chance to sign a card for her—an opportunity to share your well wishes and to let her know how much she'll be missed as she embarks on this new chapter.

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Recent Events

Our April meeting



At our April meeting we had a very enjoyable talk from Paul Reid, principal dresser to the stars.

He shared with us some of the secrets of the trade and what his job involved as well as showing some of the costumes worn.

An entertaining evening.

For those considering a visit to the West End he gave details of how to get cheaper tickets through

<https://www.todaytix.com/>



May Ramble

Four members enjoyed the beautiful sunshine on a walk from Manton to Brooke and return via Martinsthorpe. The scenery was stunning with views across to Gunthorpe Hall and to Rutland Water. Martinsthorpe is a deserted medieval village and is only one of eight parishes in England with zero population. The Old Hall Farmhouse is the only building remaining and is currently being restored. We agreed it would be a lovely place for a holiday.



Val, Jill and Phil with Old Hall Farmhouse in the distance



Jackie,
Val
and
Phil



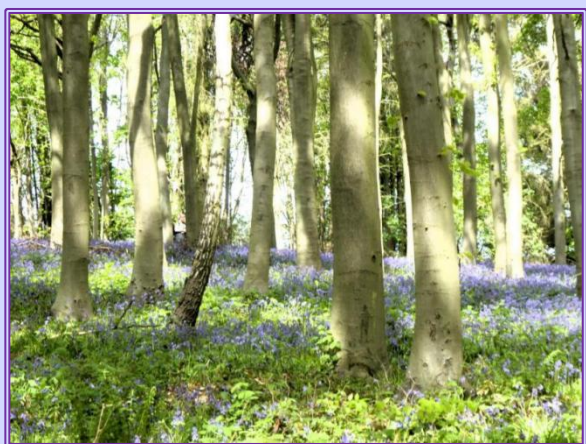
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Recent Events

Barnsdale Bluebell Amble



We paused at the café to enjoy some refreshments, warmly welcomed by the friendly and accommodating staff. The café is set in picturesque surroundings, offering lovely views over the water. From here, the Rutland Belle picks up and returns visitors, taking them on a scenic tour around the reservoir.



If you've never signed up for an amble or a ramble before, why not join in when the sign-up sheet becomes available at our monthly meetings?

On Monday, April the 28th, nine members walked leisurely from Barnsdale Car Park to the Harbour Café at Whitwell before returning to the car park. A lovely two hour walk.

The weather was glorious and on our stroll, we witnessed nature's breathtaking springtime spectacle, the beautiful bluebells. In spring, this woodland bursts to life with a vibrant display of bluebells carpeting the ground, stretching endlessly into the horizon as shown in the photo on the left.



Our next Amble is on September 18th when we will be walking along the Oakham canal path, followed by our Edith Weston walk on October the 15th. In addition, there are monthly, slightly longer rambles, both giving the opportunity to enjoy the fresh air and each others company. Our walks always end with a chance to unwind over tea, coffee, and cake or a shared meal. If you're unable to join us for the walk, we'd love for you to come along for the refreshments and social gathering afterwards.



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Recent Events

Visit to Cambridge Botanic Gardens

Six members of Oakham WI travelled with three members of Wymondham WI by train to Cambridge, where we enjoyed a ninety minute tour of the forty acre gardens. Our guide was knowledgeable and friendly and gave us an interesting history of the gardens and the various plants in it. We learnt about the importance to the centre of Darwin and also about how the garden is encouraging bees and wildlife. We saw a garden that is never watered, except by rain and the beautiful jade vine.



After lunch we had free time to wander in the garden and enjoy the sunshine before having an ice-cream and then returning home. We all said we would like to revisit the garden and see it in different seasons.

On this page are photographs of some of the beautiful flowers we saw on our tour through the scented and the bee gardens.

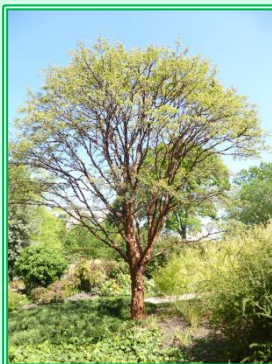


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Recent Events

More images from Cambridge Botanic Gardens

On this page are photographs on the trees, water, and plants grown in the hothouses as well as us enjoying lunch!



Above are some of the beautiful orchids grown in the hothouses. To the right and above is the impressive jade vine from the Philippines, with Mel, our guide showing how the vine is polinated by bats. The plant can be used to make a lovely dye.

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Recent Events

Visit to Le Blanc Foundry

On 15th May 2025, nineteen members of the WI visited the Le Blanc Fine Art Foundry, where we had the opportunity to meet Hywel Pratley a renowned sculptor. During the visit, Hywel shared insights into the history of the Foundry, explaining that it was established in 1973 by Lloyd Le Blanc, an American-born sculptor, and his wife, Jude, also a sculptor. The Foundry specialises in bronze sculptures crafted using the lost wax process, a technique renowned for its precision and artistic detail.

Hywel then took us into the various processing rooms and guided us through the sculpture processes, illustrating each step with examples.

Before sculpting, the artist researches to capture the subject's likeness and essence. The process begins with a detailed clay model, refining features and proportions. A silicone or plaster mould is then created, leading to casting. A wax replica is produced, encased in heat-resistant material, and melted away to form a cavity for molten bronze. Once cooled, the bronze hardens into its final shape. The finishing touches include polishing, refining details, and applying a patina to enhance colour and texture.

Hywel Pratley, was commissioned to create a seven feet tall bronze statue of Queen Elizabeth II for Oakham, Rutland. To make the Queen Hywel first developed a clay model, refining the details to achieve an accurate representation. Once satisfied, he moved on to the casting process, where The Queen was transformed into bronze. The statue stands seven feet tall and is mounted on a stone plinth. The statue is accompanied by three bronze corgis at its base—a tribute to the Queen's beloved pets.

The bronze memorial to the late Queen Elizabeth II, her first memorial statue to be erected in the UK, was unveiled on 21st April 2024 in the Gardens beside Oakham library.

Twenty seven scaled-down versions of the full-sized statue were made to represent the age the Queen Elizabeth II was coronated.

We were treated to tea or coffee, accompanied by a couple of delicious slices of cake. After this delightful refreshment, we watched a fascinating film about the making of the Queen's statue. To view the film, go to: <https://www.hywelpratley.com/> then scroll down to the media section and select The Making of a Bronze Statue: Queen Elizabeth II.

We concluded the wonderful afternoon with a leisurely stroll through the well tended gardens, admiring the sculpture collection, which featured figures of animals, birds, and still-life pieces.

The tour was really interesting, Hywel was so enthusiastic, and the gardens and sculptures were beautiful.

Hywel can also be seen in Amazing Portraits series 4, episode 4:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00284wr>

Photographs from the garden and member comments are on the next pages.



Above: The stages of production.

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Recent Events



Nineteen members with Hywel seated



A lovely interesting afternoon.

A great afternoon, the garden was a joy. Thanks Jenny

What an eye opener to see the work and to meet Hywel Pratley.

I really appreciate the effort to make it happen.

Such an interesting visit.

The tour was really interesting; Hywell was so enthusiastic, and the gardens and sculptures were beautiful.

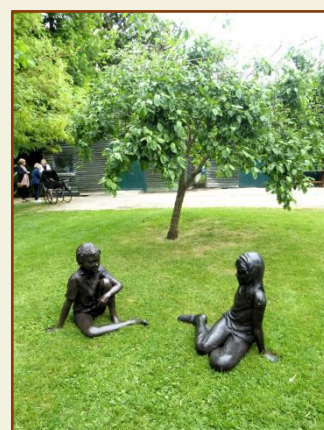
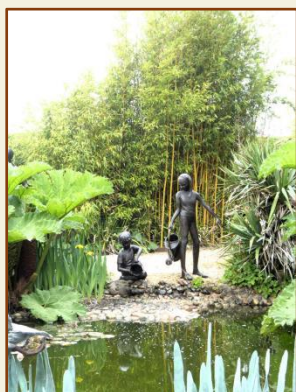


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Recent Events



Hywel explaining about making the maquette of the Queen.



Thanks go to Jenny Se for her hard work in organising the visit and for the report.

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Recent Events

History group

The Oakham WI history group, which usually meets on the second Wednesday in the month at The King Centre, Barleythorpe, last met on 14 May.

Diane B told us about the fascinating history of Alnwick Castle, home of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland and owned by the Percy family since 1309.



Liz He talked about the intriguing life of Jacquetta of Luxembourg (1416-1472), who had 14 children, including Elizabeth Woodville - the future wife of Edward IV.

The group welcomes new members – just come along and listen to talks on a wide spectrum of historical subjects, join in the subsequent discussion and find out if it's something you'd like to be part of!

Please note the group will not be meeting in June, because it has a visit to The Old Manor at Long Clawson instead. Therefore, the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 9 July, starting at 2.15pm.

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Upcoming Events

Rambles and Ambles

Most months we offer a walk or two in order that we can get out in the fresh air and improve both our physical and mental health. Our walks are described as rambles or ambles. A ramble is normally between 3.5 and 4.5 miles and will involve some gentle climbs with the benefit of lovely views of the beautiful Rutland countryside. Ambles tend to be under three miles and are often on flatter terrain. Both ambles and rambles end with a social coffee or light lunch.

Market Overton Ramble - 4.1 miles -Monday 7 July 10.15

For our July ramble we will start in Market Overton and walk across arable fields to Edmondthorpe. There are some gentle climbs rewarded by beautiful views across to Stapleford and Whissendine.

After our walk we will enjoy light refreshments at the cafe at the Lodge Trust in Market Overton. The cafe provides adults with learning disabilities the chance to take part in work-based training. Profit is put back into The Lodge Trust charity, which then enables them to give more people the opportunity to gain skills in catering, hospitality and tourism.

There will be a sign up sheet at the June meetings or you can email oakhamwievents@gmail.com with Ramble in the subject bar to add your name to the list, stating whether you want to walk or just join us for refreshments.



Social Sixes – Join Us!

The next Social Sixes event will take place on Wednesday, 25th June, at 2pm. If you'd like to sign up, there will be a sign-up sheet available at our Monthly Meeting on 27th May. If you're unable to attend the Monthly Meeting but would like to add your name to the list, simply send an email to oakhamwievents@gmail.com with "Social Sixes" in the subject line.

For those who haven't attended before, Social Sixes is a fantastic way to meet and get to know other members in a small, welcoming group setting. Once your name is on the list, groups of five will be formed, and a committee member will be assigned, making a group of six. This committee member will select a coffee venue and send you an email with the meeting details. All that's left for you to do is turn up on the day, buy your drink, and enjoy great conversation in good company.

We'd love to see you there.



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Upcoming Events

Summer Outing - Drayton House - Wednesday 16 July

This is a unique opportunity to visit an impressive house not normally open to the public.

We will be travelling by coach to the village of Lowick in Northamptonshire to visit Drayton House which has been described:

'One of the best-kept secrets of the English country-house world, Drayton has remained hidden, mysterious, rarely open, guarding its privacy' across more than 700 years. Though 'far less well-known than

the other Sackville house at Knole in Kent, Drayton similarly resembles a small fortified village in a parkland setting, retains outstanding C17 and C18 furnishings, and has not been subject to major alterations during the past 200 years.'

There is an article in the independent which gives an insight to this special building:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/saltburn-mansion-house-real-drayton-b2473869.html>

On arrival in Lowick we will visit St Peters church where the churchwarden will point out the main features of the church including the Jesse Window dating from around 1330 depicting 16 figures, the ancestors of Jesus.

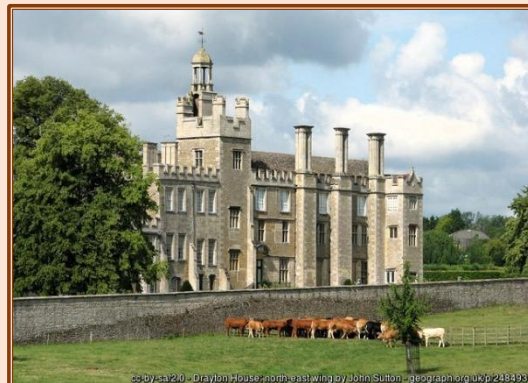
After our visit to the church we will have lunch at the Snooty Fox, a renowned gastropub: One review states: *"What a great place, from the moment we stepped in we were beautifully looked after. Staff could not do enough for us, and always on hand and chatty without being obtrusive. We had beer, cocktails and wine, all excellent and the food was outstanding across the board."* Linda our treasurer, has negotiated a special price for our lunch at this impressive restaurant.

After our lunch the coach will drive us through the grounds to the house where we will enjoy our tour before returning by coach to Oakham.

In order that this visit is affordable for as many members as possible it is being subsidised from our funds in accordance with the objectives of the WI. "To advance the education of women and girls for the public benefit in all areas, including cultural subjects"

We are therefore to charge £45 for this visit which includes return coach, the visit to the church, a guided tour of Drayton House, and a two course lunch, which I am sure you will agree is excellent value for money. (those who have already paid £50 will receive a partial refund.)

To book your place either sign up at the May meeting or email oakhamwi@gmail.com with Drayton in the subject bar.



By Drayton House: north-east wing by John Sutton, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=108786249>

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Upcoming Events

History Group Outing - Clawson Old Manor - Wednesday 4 June An Elizabethan & Jacobean Impropriator's House Reputedly the oldest house in the Vale of Belvoir

The history group have arranged a guided tour of Clawson Old Manor:

"Financed out of the income from the great tithes of Claxton, alias Clawson, Sir Andrew Noel, of Dalby and Brooke, started the rebuilding around 1580, and it was finished by 1610 probably by Sir Henry Hastings of Leicester, who came to live in it around 1620 when his wife died. Henry probably intended it for his second son Richard, who showed his constant interest in the place by carving his name with pride on the windowsills and the wall plaster.

Although there are many surviving houses that look similar from the outside, this is very rare having kept so much of its early insides."

The history group have opened this visit to other members but there is a maximum number of four places available. The cost of the tour is £22 and could those who have signed up, pay £22 into the WI bank account by 23 May.

The optional lunch at The Sugar Loaf, Ab Kettleby will be available at extra cost before the tour, please let Liz He know if you want to attend this in order that she can confirm numbers with the pub.

There will be a sign up sheet at the May meeting or if you are not attending email Oakhamwi@gmail.com with Clawson in the subject bar to register your interest.



By The Old Manor House, Long Clawson by Jonathan Thacker, CC BY-SA 2.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=112896277>

Tolethorpe - Wednesday 11 June - 7.30pm

There are still two tickets available.

See Alison at the May meeting or by email to oakhamwi@gmail.com with "mirror" in the subject line if you are interested. Tickets cost £16.50 or £15.50 for over 65s. Car shares will be organised nearer the time



Ferneley's Adventure Golf

If you would like to join in with our adventure golf session and lunch at Ferneley's on Tuesday 10 July, please email oakhamwievents@gmail.com with golf in the subject line to sign up.

The cost to play golf is £5.95, payable on arrival.

If you do not want to play golf, you can just join us for lunch and if you don't want to stay for lunch, there is no need.

We will order our lunch choices before playing golf and as in previous years, payment for both golf and lunch will be made on the day.



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Save the date - SOS Fashion show- Monday 15 September - 7.30 pm (revised date)

Some of you remember the fashion show we hosted in 2022 and have asked to do another one.

As well as raising funds for our WI, it was a fun evening where volunteers acted as catwalk models and we all had the opportunity to buy clothes at reduced prices.

We are hoping to host another show, with your support, and will need you to publicise the event and sell tickets to your friends and family.

We are sure that the show will be as successful and enjoyable as the last one. Below are a few photos to remind you of how much fun it was both for the audience and the models!



There will be 11 large rails of carefully selected garments. The clothing follows the seasons and there will be garments to suit all age groups, all sizes and all occasions.

This is being organised at the request of members and there will be a sign up sheet at the May meeting, to assess whether an adequate number of members volunteer to participate in the running of the evening, either by modelling, serving refreshments, welcoming guests or selling raffle tickets. There are lots of tasks that need YOUR input to ensure the smooth running of the event.

If it is clear, sufficient support IS NOT forthcoming, the event WILL NOT go ahead.



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Dates for your diary

Due to the lack of member engagement for the myriad events the committee has researched, costed, and planned over the past months, for the benefit of the membership, committee members WILL NOT be planning any events beyond those already arranged for the next couple of months, until we fully understand what YOU want from YOUR membership of Oakham WI. That's why we urge you to respond to our 'Oakham WI Membership Questionnaire' when you get it.

Date and time	Event
Tuesday 10 June 11am	Crazy Golf at Fernleys and lunch
Wednesday 11 June 2.15pm	History Group
Wednesday 11 June 6.30pm	The Mirror Cracked at Toilethorpe
Wednesday 25 June 2pm	Social Sixes
Friday 4 July	Federation Quiz
Monday 7 July 10.15am	July Ramble: Market Overton
Wednesday 16 July	Summer Outing to Drayton House by coach with lunch at the Snooty Fox, Lowton
Tuesday 9 September 12 noon	Petanque
Monday 15 September 7pm	Fashion Show
Thursday 18 September 10.30am	Canal walk and coffee
Monday 6 October am	Craft session
Wednesday 15 October 10.30am	Edith Weston walk and lunch
Wednesday 19 November pm	Craft session
Monday 15 December am	Christmas Table decoration

Remember you can also look at our website for details of future meetings and events and also photographs from previous events: <https://wioakham.wixsite.com/mysite>

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Community News

Join Us at Oakham Baptist Church's Friday Café!

Oakham Baptist Church is delighted to host the **Friday Café**, a welcoming space for the entire community. Whether you are looking to enjoy a delicious meal, engage in creative activities, or simply connect with others, there's something for everyone.

Location: Oakham Baptist Church, Melton Road, Oakham, LE15 6AY, near the level crossing,

Time: Fridays, 1:00–3:00 PM

Each week features a variety of engaging activities, ensuring there's always something enjoyable to take part in. Guests will be treated to a **complimentary lunch, homemade cakes, and hot beverages** in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Monthly Schedule - We have an exciting lineup of themed Fridays to enjoy, though activities may evolve over time:

1st Friday – Arty Friday - Get creative with arts and crafts sessions.

2nd Friday – Foodie Friday - Indulge in bake-offs, food tastings, and culinary fun.

3rd Friday – Special Pudding Friday - Enjoy themed desserts such as Crumble Friday, Chocolate Friday, and Trifle Friday, alongside board games. See the attached picture, taken on Friday, 16th May, when we celebrated summer puddings. There was certainly a moment of WOW when these were brought into the room - that said it all.

4th Friday – Curry & Quiz Friday - Savor a delicious curry while taking part in a friendly quiz.

This initiative is **open to everyone in the community**, offering a welcoming space for all to connect, participate, and enjoy good food together. So come along, bring a friend, and enjoy great food and company. Participation in activities is entirely optional—feel free to simply sit back, relax, and enjoy good conversation in a welcoming atmosphere

I am pleased to be helping with the Friday Café on the **first and third Fridays of each month**, and will attend as a guest the other weeks. If you plan to attend, please let me know so I can be sure to welcome you. I look forward to seeing you.

