



Cog in the Tree

West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes.



Words from the Chair

By now all your Annual Meetings should have been held and for those of you that have let me know of any changes to your officers, thank you. I have enjoyed coming along to your Annual Meetings, my apologies to those of you that I couldn't attend because of other commitments, hopefully I'll get there next year (if you invite me!)

For those of you that attended National's AM on the 4th June I hope you enjoyed the day. A small group of us met at our Spencer Street Office to watch the event via Zoom. The day began with the Company's Act Meeting which was to consider and vote on the proposed changes to our governing documents. The main meeting followed and included the business matters, the presentation of the 2025 resolution; "Bystanders Can Be Life Savers" and two guest speakers; Emma Bridgewater and Angel Strawbridge. The proposed changes to the governing documents and the 2025 resolution were all accepted. More information, especially on the governing document changes to follow.

So now the focus shifts to WMF Annual Meeting on Saturday 4th October 2025 at the Hyatt Hotel, Birmingham. Our guest speakers are Sarah P. Corbett, founder of the Craftivist Collection and Sarah Hussein whose book celebrates the women who raised awareness of environment damage in India in the 20th century.

There will also be the judging for the Trustees Trophy in aid of SOS Honeybees - to make a mosaic bee bath, and the Montgomery Shield - to make a "twiddle muff" themed patchwork lap quilt. Don't forget the knitted mice for the Cats Protection League as well. I do hope you can join us.

Jackie Poyner, Federation Chair.

Forthcoming events

04/07/25 - Shirley Evening Quiz (Stratford Rd).
10/07/25 - Lawn Croquet at Kenilworth.
01/09/25 - Deadline for 2026 resolution submission.
20/09/25 - Skittles Evening at Hockley Heath
04/10/25 - West Midlands Federation Annual Meeting.
03/12/25 - Sherlock Holmes at Birmingham Rep.

July 2025



In this COG Issue

Forthcoming Events	P1
Your WI	P2
200 Club	P2
Activities	P6
Annual Meeting	P6
Resolutions	P6

Editor's Choice #1

It's July! Time to count butterflies, as sadly they're in decline. The count runs from 18th July to 10th August, so grab a cup of tea and enjoy 15 minutes watching beautiful, peaceful, flutterings. For more info see:

[Big Butterfly Count](#) 

**Would you like to see your WI featured here?
We would!**

Send your contributions, with your name, and your WI name as the title to:
COGMEDIAWMFWI@gmail.com

Next deadline: 15/07/25

Please send submissions by the above date to ensure inclusion. It may not be possible to include all submissions. Texts may be altered to fit available space. Please send original images as individual jpeg files, documents as word documents, and include your WI's name in the email title.

Many thanks. **Lisa Blackburn, Editor.**



Quinton



In May Quinton held their Annual General Meeting (AGM). To kick off the meeting; members shared some delightful tapas-style refreshments accompanied by

an optional glass of Sangria, creating a relaxed atmosphere for socialising and catching up before the formal business proceedings began.



The AGM included a review of the past year; the financial report, the oversight of the current committee and designated roles. Tracey continues in her role as the long-serving president. Other relevant business such as resolutions and climate related issues were also shared.



Additional discussions were made up off planning for the coming year, including new activities and events.

The AGM concluded with all members feeling well fed, assured and confident in the year ahead for Quinton WI.

Nicky Lambert -Quinton WI member.

**June 2025 - 200 Club
£10 Winner - number 23.
Judy Holmes of Boldmere**

Hockley Heath



Eight of our members walked in lovely May weather along the Stratford upon Avon Canal and across fields to NT Packwood House, where they stopped off for refreshments. A steady 3.5 miles in total. Pictured are Frances, Pat – walk leader, Ann, Jackie, Jo, Joyce – walk leader 2, & Julie. Sue was taking the photo 😊



The June meeting was a talk and demonstration on wet felt making by Ursula Westwood at Hockley Heath Baptist Church. Followed by our

President Louise's home-made scones with cream and strawberries. All enjoyed the felt making; Alison and Ginny especially enjoyed the scones – always a winner!

Pat Rhodes



Arden WI

On 14th March 2025, Arden WI celebrated their **50th Anniversary**. The Institute was formed in 1975 thanks to Pat Taylor, one of the founder members who also served on the Committee and was an excellent Treasurer for over 20 years. Pat, we are delighted to say, is still an active member of the institute and continues to host institute fundraisers and provides her invaluable advice on Treasury matters which is greatly appreciated.



Mrs Pat Taylor
Founder Member
(1975 – to present)
Former Treasurer
(2003 - 2023)
Fundraising Hostess,
Institute Archivist, &
Valued WI Member.



The celebration was attended by members of our sister institutes, and the West Midlands Federation Chair and former Chair who we were delighted to welcome. We received many emails, congratulatory cards and messages. Our speaker for the evening was Simon Topman from Acme Whistles who gave an amusing and entertaining insight into the history of the company, demonstrating the various whistles he had in his collection and even valuing some of the whistles members had brought along with them.

A special anniversary cake, balloons were the focal point of the occasion, displayed on our vintage style cake table, which also included members' contributions of home-baked cakes, all of which were delicious and disappeared in minutes!

It was an immensely enjoyable and a memorable evening and one which will be talked about for many years to come.

Annie Jones, Joint Treasurer, Arden WI

Great Barr WI



At this month's craft, the ladies at Great Barr WI had an enjoyable morning making sweet and savoury palmiers.

I had it on good authority they went down well at tea time. **Elaine Williams.**



Crochet/Knitting members:

I have taken part in crocheting items for "The Longest Yarn", which toured the UK earlier this year depicting the D-Day landings in yarn to commemorate its 80th Anniversary.

A second exhibition is being made for next year - **The Longest Yarn Britain at War & D Day**. A crochet group friend and I have volunteered to fill a 5 x 1 metre panel with poppies – see photo for ideas. It will be joined together with 24 other panels from around the country to be displayed at Peterborough Cathedral next year forming a 100ft drop x 4 sides.

Your help would be much appreciated – knitted / crochet flowers all shapes & sizes red, white, blue, yellow, purple and also commonwealth flags WW2 era. Please contact me on paulineashleyjones@gmail.com or 07790804998 for further info / patterns etc.

There are also many patterns available on The Longest Yarn facebook page. We had a WI trip to see the exhibition at Peterborough and it is amazing – if you can catch it this time around.

Pauline Ashley-Jones

WMFWI, 95 Spencer Street, Jewellery Quarter
B18 6DA, Telephone: 07503 085852
CHARITY NUMBER 1012552, REG.COMPANY 2723008



Balsall Heath & Moseley WI



After our AGM, we became suffragettes for the afternoon! Led by Lynda Sharpe of Wise Women Lectures, we learned of civil disobedience and vandalism, mistreatment, the brutality of force-feeding, and dying for the cause. It is shocking that in 2025 there are still areas such as Afghanistan where women have limited rights, affecting health, education, work and relationships. Amazing that even in Birmingham in 2023, equal pay claim compensation was a contributing factor to the council's bankruptcy.

Deeds not words, as Emmeline Pankhurst would say, and we've been busy with good deeds, though not quite as political. We were tasked with making bunting for the open gardens event in Moseley. Together we've made eighteen sets of "Moseley in Bloom" bunting, even making it at our watch party for the National Conference! Multi-tasking indeed! Many thanks to Jen (centre) who co-ordinated and completed much of the work, and Lisa, Mel, Pat, Janet, and not pictured, Helen, Lesley, Marilyn, Anne, Sandra & Sue.

Lisa Blackburn



Bournville WI



Pictured in full Mary Quant mode is Ruth Ellen Lowe, accompanied by WI member Jenny Bleby. Ruth gave an interesting talk about MQ's life displaying her vast 24-year collection of Mary Quant memorabilia, below, valued at £80 - 100k.

She spoke of Quant's life, relationships, career, the inevitable topic of the mini skirt, and her own adored Mary Quant Mini Car.



A collection of clothes and children's toys was also held for the Crisis Centre, a charity that provides a safe haven for female victims of domestic abuse. Find out more at:

[How Can You Help? – Birmingham Crisis.](#)



WMFWI, 95 Spencer Street, Jewellery Quarter
B18 6DA, Telephone: 07503 085852
CHARITY NUMBER 1012552, REG. COMPANY 2723008



Smethwick historian Mary Bodfish gave Four Oaks W.I a presentation entitled, "Easy as ABC". Using illustrated projected images, Mary introduced the origins of writing with Mesopotamian clay tablets. These used a font known as cuneiform, which was followed by Egyptian hieroglyphs; the earliest use of brush, pen and papyrus paper. She informed us that the Phoenicians used picture writing, from

which the ancient Greeks developed a system using carving which was altered to more familiar alphabet. The Greeks invented cursive (joined-up) writing in 200BC, consisting of small and capital letters to compile an alphabet. The Etruscans used the Greek system with only 23 letters appearing as 'back to front'. Then, the Romans created the Roman demotic script, which was small, with capital letters denoting importance. This script was widely used around the world, including by Christian writers. The Celts who occupied Great Britain had no writing system, but the Angles, Saxons and Jutes used carved inscriptions called Runes, a mix of Greek and Roman lettering. The 7th century Christian church used Latin, the language used in all education. The Domesday book of 1086 used abbreviated Latin and we were shown an image of a page quoting the word Birmingham, the first time a place was quoted in writing.

In 1501, Aldus Manutius started printing in italic. Mary said that the writing style known as 'Secretary' appeared between 1525 & 1680. This was used for official documents and was adopted for everyday writing by the 17th century, Mary illustrated this with an extract of a letter by James Watt in that style. Copperplate alphabet writing appeared using quill pens and in the 1850's, Birmingham became the world's leading centre for the manufacture of steel pen nibs. In the 19th century, Vere Foster invented the Civil Service script, taught in schools. Fountain pens were invented in the 1890's. In the early 20th century italic calligraphy remained influenced by Roman Demotic script.

In the mid-20th century, Marion Richardson, a Birmingham teacher at Moseley School of Art, spearheaded the teaching of handwriting. **Sue Richards**



Who would have thought that there would be a WI get together event on board the Queen Mary II cruising the Norwegian Fjords!

Sue Richards, Programme and Minute Secretary for Four Oaks W.I was indeed on board and attended the recent gathering, along with representatives from Carmarthen, Chichester, Chester, Glastonbury and Horsham.

We all had great time getting to know each other and swapping stories.



Aldridge Quiz



Thank you to all the teams that entered this year's quiz at Aldridge Church Centre on May 30th. Congratulations to Aldridge WI who won the quiz (above) and Boldmere WI (below) who won the Table Top round. **Jackie Poyner**



Don't forget to follow us on Facebook for regular news, posts and updates.



<https://www.facebook.com/WMFwi>

Editor's Choice #2

Clean Rivers for People and Wildlife:

Birmingham River Champions are a citizen science group monitoring rivers in Birmingham, using a variety of sampling methods. As part of our Clean Rivers Campaign, is it something that your WI might be interested in organising a working party to help out with on a regular basis? Working with the University of Birmingham, it involves sampling once a month. For more info, see:

[Birmingham River Champions](#)



theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN

**WEST MIDLANDS FEDERATION
OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES**

**51ST ANNUAL MEETING
at the
Hyatt Regency Hotel
2 Bridge Street, Birmingham
B1 2JZ
Saturday 4th October 2025**

Cost £12

9.30am – Coffee and Pastries

10.30am – Federation Business followed by
Sarah P Corbett – Founder of Craftivist Collective

Lunch is not provided,

multiple lovely venues are nearby.

After lunch, a talk with Dr Sarah Hussein, Author
and Educator, whose book celebrates the women
who raised awareness of environmental damage
in India in the 20th century.

Book your ticket @ <https://ticketlab.co.uk>.

Please click on 'Find an event' and enter '51st
Annual Meeting' to reach the booking page.

Editor's Choice #3

This year's resolution, Bystanders can be Lifesavers, has caused many WIs to involve lifesaving first aid instruction as part of their event programme. How amazing that we could save a life! We're also still involved in other campaigns, last year's Dental Health Matters, and 2023's Clean Rivers for People and Wildlife (see left). We know we can instigate change! Is there something you feel passionate about that you would like to see change/improve? Discuss it with your WI and submit by 1st September 2025. Please see the NFWI guidelines for further info:

[My WI | Submit a resolution](#)

