



Cog in the Tree

West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes.



March 2024



Words from the Chair



This year February seems to have quite a few dates of interest: Chinese New Year starts on the 10th; Shrove Tuesday is the 13th; Valentines' day and Ash Wednesday are both on the 14th and February this year also has 29 days making 2024 a Leap Year.

Several well-known people were born on the 29th February. The composer Rosini, the actor Joss Ackland, singer Leona Lewis and Paris Hilton. Superman's birthday is also celebrated on the 29th February and I wonder how many of our members will celebrate theirs.

Amethyst is the Birthstone for February and at this time of the year we see so many flowers of that colour. We see purple pansies, hyacinth, crocus and polyanthus. Our gardens are bursting into life with daffodils appearing and carpets of snowdrops can be seen everywhere. At the moment it is a bit wet, windy and chilly with a chance of snow but we know that Spring and Easter are just around the corner and hopefully some better weather to come will encourage all those lovely Spring flowers to emerge.

Best wishes, Cathryn

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

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



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Forthcoming Events 2024

- 08/03 - International Women's Day
- 09/03 - Million Women Rise March, Central London
- 19/03 - Stained Glass Workshop at Curborough
- 26/04 - City Nature Challenge
- 27/04 - The WMFWI County Show – Bromwich Hall
- 31/05 - Friday Quiz, Aldridge Church Centre, 7pm.
- 10/06 - WMFWI member workshop with Friends of the Earth.
- 21/06 - Friday Quiz – Shirley Community Centre, 7pm

200 Club Winner
January
Hilary Crosby
Of Barston WI
£10

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CHARITY NUMBER 1012552, REG.COMPANY NO. 2723008



Your WI

Mere Green WI



On a cold January 10th Mere Green WI Sutton Coldfield celebrated our 10th anniversary. About 50 ladies, including some past members and Cathryn Marsh, gathered at a restaurant for a celebratory lunch and to raise our glasses to our future. We were also treated to Samantha Oxenborough singing a medley of songs finishing with Jerusalem. Samantha sang at the opening of the Commonwealth Games. A most enjoyable afternoon. **Susan Phillips, Mere Green WI**

Bournville WI



Bournville WI reminisced about growing up in the sixties & seventies with a talk led by **John Ullah**, from the National Trust Back to Backs. He reminded us of the horror of Izal toilet paper, ironing from

the light bulb socket, and Sunday baths in the old tin bath, clean water dependent on sibling hierarchy. Here he is pictured with **Margaret Wills**, President of Bournville WI.

Moseley & Balsall Heath WI



BH&M met to discuss "Pockets of sedition" the history of pockets in women's attire, led by Anne Cummins (pictured right with Karen Benjamin) It is believed Christian Dior once said that "men have pockets to keep things in, women for decoration" but we're sure that we prefer our pockets more useful than ornamental. In revolutionary France, it was feared that pockets meant women could carry seditious pamphlets, hidden under their skirts!

*Pictured is **Pauline O'Rourke's** pocket.* Their usefulness continued to cause unease as suffragists adopted them, followed by wartime



women. Post war, the sleek lines of couture would be spoiled by their bulges, and as women moved away from land work and to roles within the home, ornament returned.

No pockets means nothing to hide, therefore no threat to the pocketed man. So, we made our own, ready to stitch into bags or the seams of our clothing.

(1) Summers, C. (2016) The politics of pockets [online] [The Politics of Pockets - Vox](#) accessed 23/2/24

Roxanne and Anne, sewing a pocket of sedition! More on the history of women and pockets can be found here: [The Politics of Pockets - Vox \(1\)](#)



Silhill WI

100th birthday celebrations for Sylvia Davis.



Sylvia joined us in 1995 and has been a loyal member since then, although unable to attend meetings for some time now, due to poor eyesight and mobility issues.



On 31st January she celebrated her 100th birthday and made the special effort to come to our February meeting to share her cake with her friends and confirm all that being a member of the W.I. has meant to her.

She was always an active member, such as when she dressed as a Victorian for a Group meeting in 1997 with **Rita Hiatt**, (below right) and manning our Sales Table with another member, **Eileen Doyle**, (below left) for countless years, thus winning the Margaret Williams Cup for Exceptional Services to Silhill W.I. in 2016.



A true lady in manner, generous and kind, and you will see from her photograph at the age of 90 in 2014, with members **Marjorie Bates and Doris Ellis**, (bottom left) that she has always been elegant and stylish (she was the one chosen to model clothes at one of our meetings - which she did to the manner born).



She has faced adversities in her life, she lost her loving husband in her fifties, but is always positive, cheerful and thankful for the life that she has had. At the age of 80 she met a man who was to be her partner for 17 years and they enjoyed dancing, travel and a great sense of humour. She is still giving wise advice to

young and old and is cherished by all.



One of her more frivolous pieces of wisdom, given long ago but still acted upon, was that "women of a certain age should wear large necklaces that draw attention away from necks and décolletage!"

We are honoured to have her as a member and a great role model.

Heather (Silhill W.I. Secretary)

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Streetly Evening WI

Mel Crooks gave members of Streetly Evening WI the idea to look back over previous resolutions to celebrate the work the W.I. has done to further important causes/issues.

We looked at six resolutions, namely: Equal Pay for Equal Work (1943), Keep Britain Tidy (1954), Clean Rivers for People and Wildlife, Road Safety (1922), Sport for a Healthy Population (2006) and Fireworks and Bonfires (1992).

After researching these issues each resolution was represented in collage form at a craft evening. It was interesting and surprising to find out when certain laws were passed.

Do we still need to work on these resolutions? Yes, we do. Have we resolved all these issues? No, we have not. We spent an enjoyable evening of team work, fun, crafting and a reminder that W.I. resolutions are important.



Nola Boulger, Chair,
Photos below and
Above right
by Brenda Maughan.



Great Barr WI



The Great Barr ladies showed the love during their craft morning by icing various biscuits, I don't think anyone had a crafty bite!

Elaine Williams, Media Officer



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The Show Schedule.

A New Year is well and truly upon us, and the emails have started to arrive in Judge's inboxes all over England and Wales with requests for judging at the various shows and competitions. Usually show organisers contact their preferred choice of judges at six months before the event, but sometimes we do get contacted at the last minute due to illness, etc. Then we wait for the schedule to arrive ...



The schedule is very important to a judge, it gives us an idea of the size of show, the variety of crafts covered and most importantly the location of the show. The schedule also gives the judge an opportunity to research a craft that they are unfamiliar with, and if necessary, to practise that craft if at all possible. What goes into the schedule is up to the show committee, the trophies and marks are awarded either individually or collectively. The most important part is the various classes that entrants want to have a go at. Personally, and writing from experience, the briefer the requirements for the class, the better.

For example: - EMBROIDERY.

Class A – Mounted Cross Stitch, no larger than A4 – to include the mount/frame.

So, what am I looking for here? Well, the overall piece must be no larger than A4 size INCLUDING the frame. It must have a mount and by implication a backing and it must be CROSS STITCH. Anything different to that is counted as NAS (not as schedule) and we are not obliged to mark the item. What you do for your embroidery is entirely up to you. You get the idea.

If the class has too much information, it does rather stifle the imagination and become too prescriptive.

A word to the wise: – A Victoria Sponge should ALWAYS be filled with Raspberry Jam and dredged with caster sugar, anything else and it's a sponge cake.

Next month – Judging Criteria.

Debbie Arkinstall, NFWI Judge.

Editor's Choice – Libraries!

Twenty-Five Birmingham libraries are under threat of closure as BCC makes difficult decisions to meet their budget. and the remaining eleven will become 'community living rooms'. I urge you to use your library, find out how you can help them stay open, and write to your councillors and MP, before they are lost for good. Follow the below link for the impact assessment.

Retrieved from BCC (2024) [EIA000346 Transformation approach to combine Libraries and Neighbourhood Advice and Information Services using a 'Community Living Room' concept | Birmingham City Council](#) accessed 25/02/2024

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

Send your contributions, with your name, to COGMEDIAWMFWI@gmail.com

Next deadline: 10/03/23.

Please send submissions by the tenth of the month to ensure inclusion. It may not 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



WI members can contact the Public Affairs Committee by emailing wmfwi.pa@gmail.com

The Public Affairs Committee is a small, enthusiastic group of WI members representing the region who are seeking out opportunities to engage in WI national campaigns and share these with members across

We meet once every two months (six meetings a year) for 90 minutes, on Zoom. If you'd like to get more involved, please email us. We'd love to hear from you.

City Nature Challenge 2024. April 26th-29th 2024.

Would your WI or WI Walking Group like to take part?

The City Nature Challenge is an international event, encouraging people around the world to find and document wildlife in their local community and using the iNaturalist app. Scientists use the information to measure the impact of climate change on plant and wildlife. To take part, plan a walk around your local community between 26th-29th April 2024, take photos of wild plants and wildlife and upload onto the i-Naturalist app. The results are published on 6th May 2024.



Full details here [City Nature Challenge](#) or for more information get in touch with us at wmfwi.pa@gmail.com

If your WI or WI Walking Group would like to register interest in participating in future citizen science events, please email the Public Affairs Committee wmfwi.pa@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

'Citizen science is the process of collecting information, by volunteers in order to help the work of scientists'

The Great BIG Green Week

Monday 10th June 2024 10.30hrs- 12.30hrs

Friends of The Earth HQ, The Warehouse, 54-57 Allison Street,
Birmingham B5 5TH

(a 4-minute walk from Moor Street Station)



Join us for a FREE workshop as part of The Great BIG Green Week. Led by Friends of the Earth campaigners we'll hear about successful climate and environmental campaigning. WI members can share their initiatives and we be inspired with craftivism projects.

Please email wmfwi.pa@gmail.com to book a place. Please include your name and the name of the WI group.



West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes

Quiz Evening

QUIZ!

On Friday 21st June 2024 at 7pm

At

Shirley Community Centre

Stratford Road, Shirley B90 3AD

(parking available)

Each team to consist of up to four members from your WI

Each WI may enter more than one team

Cost £24.00 per table to include coffee/tea and cakes

Supporters welcome at a cost of £4.00 to cover refreshments payable on the door.

Closing date 31st May 2024 using the tear off form below with a cheque payable to
WMFWI

Federation Quiz –21st June 2024

Please return to Jackie Poyner, 97 Denis Road, Selly Oak, B29 4JU by no later than 31st May 2024

WI _____ Requires _____ Tables @ £24.00 each

REMITTANCE CHEQUE ENCLOSED PAYABLE TO WMFWI

£ _____



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