



Cog in the Tree

West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes.



Words from the Chair

November 2024



As I write this, I am reflecting on our 50th Annual Meeting held at Austin Court on 7th October. We were pleased to see so many of you and hope that you enjoyed the day. Despite a couple of hiccups with our morning speakers, we enjoyed a very interesting talk from the Knowle Donkey Sanctuary. I hope that some of you will be able to visit and see the work that they are doing with the Donkeys in their care. Our afternoon speaker Karl Hinett was truly inspirational and to listen to the story of his life, his time in the Staffordshire Regiment and his road back to recovery was amazing.

In October the clocks go back, the days get shorter, it goes out with Halloween and November comes in with Bonfire Night. When I was a little girl, I thought that Bonfire Night was magical. It was always celebrated on 5th November whatever the weather. On the streets you would see effigies of Guy Fawkes made by children asking "Penny for the Guy" and they would use that money to purchase fireworks. On Bonfire night the "Guy" would be put on top of the bonfire and go up in flames. The week before my grandfather and father would start preparing the bonfire and my grandmother would find some old clothes to make a Guy Fawkes that we stuffed with newspaper to put on the top to burn.

I remember that we always went to Woolworths to buy a box of Fireworks. My father always took out the "Bangers" as I did not like them. Neither did I like "Jumping Jacks" and I remember the boys used to set them off just as you were walking past; I used to run home as fast as I could. As a treat my father would always buy a "Catherine Wheel" as he always told me that they were special just like me. The Bonfire was lit, the rockets placed in empty beer bottles, the fireworks in a bucket of soil and the Catherine Wheel was pinned to a post. My father would light the touchpaper and I would wait in anticipation for it to spin and produce its amazing sparkling display sometimes helped by my father encouraging it to spin using a long stick. We always had hot potatoes, roasted chestnuts, bonfire toffee and toffee apples. The potatoes and chestnuts always cooked on the bonfire. Why did it always rain? The next day was spent in the garden with my grandfather clearing away all the debris. The one thing I do remember is the smell that lingered in the air for the whole of the next day.

November 5th is very different now from when I was a child but I'm sure that seen through the eyes of children today that it is still as magical as it was to me over 70 years ago. Now we also celebrate Diwali about the same time of year and the fireworks and celebration seem to go on for days. Two very different reasons to remember and celebrate November.

We have two more Federation events planned before we say goodbye to 2024. The planned outing to Waddesdon Manor on 21st November has been very popular and our last event is our Christmas Celebration on Saturday 7th December at 11am at St Martins in the Bullring. It is always a joyous occasion and we hope that as many of you as possible will be able to join us and celebrate bringing to a close our 50th Anniversary Year.

Cathryn

In this COG Issue

Your WI News	P2
ACWW	P5
200 Club	P5
Events	P6
Annual Meeting	P7
Crafts & Winners	P8

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CHARITY NUMBER 1012552, REG.COMPANY NO. 2723008



Your WI News

Monkspath WI



Adventure Golf

A group of twelve want-to-be golfers (above) from Monkspath WI played 18 holes at the nearby Four Ashes Golf Centre last month. We played in three teams with the winner of each team being put forward for the grand prize – a box of “Tee-Bags”. Kath Hall (pictured right below) took home the coveted box of Yorkshire Tea, presented by our President, Vee Bentley, (below left, a Yorkshire Lass at heart!). We did not award a prize for the most balls hit into the water but probably should have! We all enjoyed a cuppa in the clubhouse before the event and some even stayed afterwards for lunch. **Marylou Jeffs**



Mere Green WI



Mere Green WI received a bursary from WM Educational Trust and enjoyed a very informative trip to Wedgwood at Barlaston in September. A factory tour was included and members were able to see the skill of the hand painters working behind clear screens after hearing a brief history of Wedgwood. On site there is vast museum, shop and excellent restaurant. A very memorable day out on what seems to have been the last day of summer. **Sue Phillips**

Quinton WI



Quinton WI's first meeting after the summer break, welcomed federation guests from Bournville, Harborne and Halesowen. We had a harvest craft theme session, there was a myriad of craft items to choose from to decorate your bottle, with everyone adding their own unique style. A lovely evening of networking and for people to showcase their talents, with the added bonus of being able to take your own completed work home. **Nicola Lambert**



Balsall Heath & Moseley WI



BH&M WI attended a foraging walk, sampling unusual tastes from the overlooked plants of hedgerows and meadows along the River Rea in Stirchley. Pictured above, Stephanie Bale from Sustainable Life explains



the dangers of giant hogweeds, before introducing us to the seeds of an edible hogweed variant, which had a papery, nutty taste. We also tried the seeds and flowers of Himalayan Balsam (an invasive species), White Deadnettle (mushroom flavour),

Rowan Berries, Plantain and wild Horseradish. Please do not sample wild foods unless you are with an experienced forager, as it is easy to confuse edibles with their poisonous look-a-likes. Below, we are deterred from munching rosehips due to their internal barbs, best removed by boiling and straining through muslin. All enjoyed the walk.

Sustainable life lead courses in foraging, bushcraft skills, fire and toolmaking, Check their website at [Sustainable Life Birmingham – Teaching Sustainability and Green Skills](http://SustainableLifeBirmingham-TeachingSustainabilityandGreenSkills)



Bournville WI



Above: Bournville invited John Butterworth to give a talk about “The nurse who changed Guinea Bissau”, an account that is revealed in his book “God’s Needle”, the term coined in the region for penicillin. There was also a competition for the most interesting nursing or medical item.

Below: Bournville members **Sheila Line** and **Sally Dermont** took up the Trustee’s Challenge and produced these fabulous donkeys to be delivered to Sutton Park Donkey Sanctuary. They will go for sale in their Sidmouth Headquarters for the upkeep of donkeys across the country. I’m sure you’ll agree these are fabulous! Fantastic work ladies.

Lisa Blackburn



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Hockley Heath WI



Hockley Heath WI visited the Barn Studio, Earlswood Craft Centre where pots were chosen to have a go at ceramic pot painting. Everyone enjoyed the painting session and left pots there to be fired. The end results proved much better than first imagined! We have some creative members amongst us. Photos courtesy of Sue Palfreyman & Pat Rhodes

Painters were: Julie Lyons, Chris Oldfield (visiting WI member from Kirby Sigston) Ann Ford, Ginny Mosson, Marion Kisbey, Frances Griffiths, Pat Rhodes, Alison Ainsworth, Jo Findlay, Jackie Mellows, Sue Palfreyman.



This was naturally (& deservedly) followed by a lovely Afternoon Tea at Wave Restaurant, across the yard at the craft centre. Additional members joined us for afternoon tea – Judith Beardmore, Pat Sheffield, Caroline Durk & Sue Allso.

The October Meeting saw the group taking part in Paracise at The Baptist Church, Hockley Heath. Dawn came to get us all moving to music. It was fun and very enjoyable; it definitely warmed us up and raised our heart rates a bit.





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Part of the Park Active Programme





Pat Sheffield. Gail Hare, Yvonne, Isabelle & Di Wheeler.

Photos by Joyce Duffield.
Report by Pat Rhodes

Paracisers – Maggie Crook, Carla Jones, Ann Ford, Caroline Durk, Sue Allso, Jackie Mellows, Julie Lyons, Jo Findlay, Pat Rhodes, Alison Ainsworth, Marion Kisbey, Judith Beardmore, Ginny Mosson,



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Harborne WI



"I will survive" Divorce, Cohabitation & Women – past, present and future.

Pauline O'Rourke is a solicitor and family law expert at New Leaf Solicitors, Birmingham and a WI member. She gave a fascinating talk starting with a brief history of marriage law, how marriages were ended for women (including the bizarre incidents of selling wives at auction) and the treatment of women's property and assets. Pauline brought us to the present day – the changing role of women in society, divorce and dispelling the myth of the 'common law marriage' and how women can best protect their wealth in future relationships.

Pauline is donating her speaker fee to her chosen charity: [Anawim - Birmingham's Centre for Women](http://Anawim.org.uk) :[Anawim](http://Anawim.org.uk). A woman's centre providing trauma-informed alternatives to custody and advocacy for women experiencing abuse, poor mental health and economic inequality. **Lynda Gibbon**

ACWW

With the decision of West Midlands Federation not to support ACWW in the future I would like to say a big "Thank You" to all the WI's who have been very generous in their support of ACWW over many years.

If your WI wishes to continue supporting ACWW the donation should be sent to head office at:

The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR
Thanking you again,

Pamela Griffiths

Past WMFWI ACWW Coordinator



Harborne Village WI Fundraiser

Members have had fun creating a crocheted advent calendar to be raffled at a Craft Fair in November supporting Birmingham Hospice. Inspired by "Have a Go at Crochet" workshops run earlier in the year, novice crocheters worked alongside more experienced WI members and community volunteers to complete their contributions to the finished piece. With no cardboard or plastic in sight, the everlasting advent calendar can be reused year after year. The project was organised by HeartUpcycling - a charity fundraising initiative started by one of Harborne WI's members. Read the full story and find links to the free pattern and lots of useful tips on making up the calendar on the website:

<https://heartupcycling.co.uk/2024/10/02/advent-calendar/> or simply type Heart Upcycling into your search engine. **Lynda Gibbon**

200 CLUB ANNUAL DRAW

137 - Wendy Amass - first prize - £250

105 - Pamela Ratner - second prize - £100

35 - Joan Boland - third prize - £50

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Boldmere WI



Above: Boldmere ladies, Michelle, Judy, Dawn, Jean, Mary & Lyn, having fun at Streetly skittles.

Below: Enjoying the sun in Birmingham during lunchbreak at West Midlands Federation Annual Meeting are Jean, Liz, Sandra, Janice, Judy & Enid.

Patricia Platt



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

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

Next deadline: 10/11/24

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*

Forthcoming Events

02/11/24 - Bournville WI Autumn Fair

21/11/24 - Christmas at Waddesdon

07/12/24 - Christmas Carols at St Martins

10/05/25 - County Show, Aldridge Church Hall

Great Barr WI

At this month's craft morning Great Barr had a go at macrame with great success, this photo was taken during the evening by one of the ladies, I'm sure you will agree it's most effective.

Elaine Williams
Media Officer



Editor's Pick

[March for Clean Water](#)

The March for Clean Rivers is being held in London on March 3rd, 11am until 3pm. Wear blue to give the effect of a human river flow! Petition the water companies and others who pollute our rivers. The march begins at London Albert Embankment, SE1 7HW. For more information follow the title link above, or the WI's link below.

[My WI | Register your interest: River Action UK's March for Clean Water](#)

16 Days of Activism against Gender based Violence.

November 25 – December 10th 2024.

What can your WI do to raise awareness and support women? Perhaps organize a clothes donation to your local shelter? Enlist a male ally? Share events or examples on social media?

Birmingham based charity ANAWIM will be uploading a new article each day to inform people of its varied manifestations. Have a look here: [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence - Anawim : Anawim](#)

If you need help with domestic abuse, you may find support at ANAWIM on 0330 0560 065.



WMFWI Annual Meeting 2024



A warm sunny day heralded the annual conference at Austin Court, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the WMFWI, with **Jeryl Stone**, NFWI Chair, & Cathryn helping to cut one of the beautiful anniversary cakes made by **Christine Tout**, of Quinton WI.



The board coped admirably with the unexpected challenges of the day brought by COVID. Left to right below: **Dawn Statham** (Safeguarding Officer), **Claire Woodland** (Chair of Craft) **Iris Montgomery** (Resolutions Officer), new trustee **Fiona Northey**, **Lynn Smith** (Chair of Membership) **Jackie Poyner** (Vice Chair WMFWI) and **Liz Galloway** (Federation Treasurer), and **Cathryn Marsh**, (Chair of WMFWI).



Below: Retiring board members Iris Montgomery and Lynn Smith were presented with enormous parlour palm houseplants, as a symbol of thanks for their efforts over the years. Lynn stepped down as Federation Chair at the 2023 annual meeting after three years service. Iris served as Federation Treasurer for twenty-two years, until last year, both having given an extra year on the board of trustees.



It is clear from the delight on their faces that this was a happy surprise. We hope they enjoy their future participation as valued WI members.

This leaves a vacancy on the board of trustees; what could **you** bring?



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

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

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Annual Meeting - Clare Woodland, Chair of Craft

The Donkey Sanctuary

Hello all, the board of trustees and I would like to say a sincere thank you to each and every one of you that knitted, crocheted, sewed, and felted donkeys for our



Trustees Charity Challenge, what a fabulous



selection there was. As some of you will be aware the project was for the donkey sanctuary in Sutton Park, unfortunately Sutton Park sanctuary has permanently closed down, and the donkeys have been rehomed around the UK. This left us with a bit of a problem, we have all these crafted donkeys! Luckily **Mark Roberts of Knowle Donkey Sanctuary** was willing to step in as our guest speaker, and he also gratefully accepted our handmade donkeys to sell, to raise funds for donkeys, real ones and crafted ones at Knowle Donkey Sanctuary, 7

their sanctuary. You can visit the Warwick Road, Knowle, Solihull B93 0EE, open Saturdays 10-4pm or by appointment on other days. They also produce local honey!



Trustees Trophy

Rather disappointingly there were only two entries this year for the Trustees Trophy. The brief was a collage using any medium for our national 'Clean Rivers' campaign. The standard of both entries however was exceptional. First place was awarded to **Ruth Isles** of Silhill WI, (left) and second place to **Dawn Statham** of Victory Belles WI (right).



County Cup

Back in April we held our inaugural County Show at Bromwich Hall. The entries in all classes were of a very high standard and so well prepared. The outright winners of the group diorama were **Newton WI** for their nursery rhyme themed entry. The Cup was officially awarded at the WMFWI Annual Meeting at Austin Court.



Montgomery Shield

This year's Montgomery Shield was Paris Olympics post box toppers. The standard of entries was once again fantastic, very well thought out and produced. The winning entry was Streetly WI, which was designed and co-ordinated by **Doreen Meacham**. In her absence, fellow contributors from Streetly, **Pauline Purkess, Nola Boulger** and **Wendy Amass** were delighted to accept the award. Judges commented "lovely and colourful, depicts the sports very well, medals well done as is the Eiffel Tower. Congratulations". Second place went jointly to Arden WI & Hockley Heath WI, third to Boldmere, fourth to Solihull and highly commended to Four Oaks.



50th Anniversary Embroidery

The craft committee have appealed to all WIs to design and stitch a 9 by 9 inch square design to show what your WI is all about. The finished designs will be added to a federation map background. The completed wall hanging will be used at our future events, and will be taken on the road as a visual representation of our county. It will also be used as a tool for the membership board in their recruitment campaign. We look forward to seeing the finished designs.

Please see page 11 for further details.



Competition News

Next year's competition details will soon be heading for your secretaries' inboxes and the December COG.

Trustees Challenge - to make mice toys for the Cats Protection League, patterns will be made available.

Trustees Trophy - to design and make a mosaic bee bath for our national campaign 'SOS bees'.

Montgomery Shield - to create a Twiddle lap quilt.

Save the Date

Next years **County Show** will be Saturday 10th May 2025 at Aldridge Church Centre, the home of Aldridge WI and the newly formed Aldridge Crofter WI. The show theme is Alice in Wonderland. Details and schedule to arrive soon. Hopefully we can expand on last year's successful event, and more WIs will take part.

TTFN, **Claire Woodland, Chair of Craft**

Valerie Daggart Cup



I was delighted to be awarded the Valerie Daggart trophy when I won the short story competition on the theme of Inspiration. My story was titled 'Delivery' and it described the transformative effect of an invitation received in the post. It was very moving to be told after the reading by many members how it had resonated with them. Thank you all.

Geraldine Wall, Kings Norton Afternoon WI.

Thanks to Liz Galloway for the photo.

Editor's note: we hope to publish the story in the December edition.

Guest Speaker: Karl Hinett



On the theme of 'Inspiration', Dudley soldier Karl Hinett delivered his story of injury in Basra from the heart. In 2005, aged 19, he was a gunner in a Warrior tank with the Staffordshire Regiment when they encountered rioting. Damage to the vehicle's sights by bricks & grenades forced them to open their hatch, to coincide with the arrival of a petrol bomb. With bare hands to exit the tank, he escaped as a fireball, eventually taken to Selly Oak hospital with thirty-seven percent burns to his hands, face & body. Since then, he has endured over 100 hours of operations to free his hands. He has also ran 127 marathons, earned his pilot's licence, trekked to the North & South poles and attempted Everest whilst fundraising. Truly Inspirational.

He is an ambassador for the SCARFREE Foundation, a medical research charity. Read more here: [Karl - The Scar Free Foundation](#)



Craft Committee

We need your input!

***We want to create a wall hanging to commemorate the WIs
that are part of our West Midlands Federation in this
our 50th year.***



Either as a group, or a talented individual, we would like you to design a fabric square.

The design should include the name of your WI, and be a visual representation of your group (only one design per WI). You could show your meeting place, your town/village, the activities you typically take part in.

The squares will be added to a backdrop, with a map of the county in the centre. Threads will join your square to its location on the map. The finished wall hanging will be taken to shows and events, and will be used as a recruitment tool, to showcase all WIs.

You can embroider, quilt, applique, use beadwork, cross stitch, or any other stitchcraft. The square must not be knitted or crocheted. Your finished design will measure 9 inches x 9 inches with a 3 inch undecorated border all around (total size of fabric 12 inches square, the round picture above is for design ideas only.

The deadline is June 2025. We look forward to seeing your designs.

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200 CLUB 2025



Shares cost £5.00 each and the return will be £10.00 per monthly draw from

October 2024 – September 2025.

At the year end the minimum prize will be £100.00, so the more shares bought, the higher the prize.

The 200 Lottery Grand draw will take place at the Annual Meeting 2025.

Application forms with **stamped addressed envelope and cheque** made payable to WMFWI should be sent to Federation Treasurer at:

103 Middleton Hall Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham B30 1AG

Payment may be made by **bank transfer** with ref. of WI name and 200 Club,

e.g. GT BARR 200C. Bank details Sort Code: 30-97-78 A/C No:02011724.

In this case, transfer should be notified to (wmtreasurer@icloud.com) by email.

Liz Galloway, Federation Treasurer.

GOOD LUCK – BE IN IT TO WIN IT!

200 CLUB 2024/5: Application form

I wish to purchase on behalf of *(WI to record individual names if multiple stakes required)*

INDIVIDUAL _____ **WI** _____

Address _____

Number of shares _____ at £5.00 each (Valid for one year to 31st August 2025) cheque
(enclosed) or bank transfer for £ _____ with a **stamped addressed envelope**

Payment by **bank transfer** will need ref: WI name and '200 Club'. Please email notification of transfer
and other necessary details to wmtreasurer@icloud.com. (Mob: 07920015465)

Signed _____ *(Further forms are available from Liz Galloway)*

