



Cog in the Tree

West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes.



Words from the Chair

Welcome to the May edition of the Cog!

I'm looking forward to attending this year's County

Show on Saturday May 10th at Aldridge Church Centre. With Trade and WI stalls and competition entries to view it's going to be an enjoyable day out. I look forward to meeting up with some of you on the day.

There's plenty of other events coming up: quizzes at Aldridge and Shirley, Croquet at Kenilworth and Skittles at Hockley Heath and Aldridge later in the year. You may have noticed that we have changed the booking process for some of these events, using one of the ticketing agencies to reduce the amount of administration work involved in organising these events.

I'm saddened to announce the recent suspension of two WIs; Castle Bromwich and Park Hall. Both were long established groups, Castle Bromwich formed in 1920 and Park Hall in 1971. They will be missed and I hope that members of both of the groups will keep in touch with each other.

The office is beginning to take shape and the Trustees are looking forward to inviting members to various events there. The first event is the "Watch Party"; for delegates attending the National AM on June 4th. Several WI delegate groups remain unrepresented, please contact wmfwi.pa@gmail.com if you would like to register as a delegate. Keep a look out for details of upcoming events, flyers and booking details will be with your secretaries soon.

Best Wishes,

Jackie Poyner, Federation Chair.



May 2025

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Forthcoming events

- 07/05/25 - NFWI online event, 12-1pm for International Women's Day; exploring the real-life consequences of misogyny.
- 08/05/25 - VE Day 80th Anniversary.
- 10/05/25 - County Show, Aldridge Church Hall.
- 20/05/25 - World Bee Day.
- 30/05/25 - Aldridge Quiz.
- 04/06/25 - National Federation Annual Meeting.
- 26/06/25 - Valerie Daggart Cup Submission Deadline.
- 04/07/25 - Shirley Evening Quiz (Stratford Rd).
- 10/07/25 - Lawn Croquet at Kenilworth.
- 04/10/25 - West Midlands Federation Annual Meeting.

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: 10/05/25

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.



Hobbs Moat WI



On 25th March, eight members of Hobs Moat WI completed a litter pick on the canal by Olton and surrounding streets as part of the campaign to keep our waterways clean. We all enjoyed the experience, chatting and knowing we were helping to keep our community tidy plus getting our steps in! We also managed to collect ten bags of rubbish.

Above, left to right: Susan Sparrey, Jeanette Thatcher, Joan Lovell, Anita Robbins, Linda Dance, Rose Wyton, Eve Hutton, Pamela Blattner.

Below left to right: Pamela Blattner, president Linda Dance and treasurer Rose Wyton.

Pamela Blattner.



Monkspath WI

Richard III themed visit to Leicester.

Monkspath WI went on a day trip to Leicester on 28th March 2025. We started at the King Richard III Visitor Centre where we had



a talk entitled "The King Under the Car Park". We learned the story of how Richard III came to be buried in Leicester and then found over 500 years later underneath a car park. We had time to explore the fascinating exhibits in the Centre before moving on to the Guildhall, which dates back to 1390. We ended the day with a guided tour in the Leicester Cathedral, focusing on Richard III's reburial and current tomb. We are happy to share our itinerary and organiser information with any other WI's that might want to organise a similar trip. It was fascinating, educational, and always fun to have a day out with other members.

Marylou Jeffs.



HalesOwen HawNets - WI Walking Netball Team

Our walking netball team was first established in May 2018 as part of the collaboration with England Netball. Since then, our numbers have grown but have gained and lost members over the years, we now have 19 members. We all love our 'Netball Family', our weekly sessions are full of fun and laughter, our What's App group is a hive of activity, our social events and holidays are well attended.

The age range of our group is 22 to 80, our holiday to Marrakesh last year was to celebrate our oldest members 80th birthday, the year before we journeyed to Liverpool to celebrate our youngest members 21st birthday, both pictured right.



We started entering tournaments in 2019, for a bit of fun, never thinking we would be any good. All those that choose to participate in the tournaments get to play, all are included. We have entered into tournaments all across the West Midlands from Stafford to Warwick, Droitwich to Nuneaton, our enjoyment and good humour has paid off. Pictured left, we won our first tournament at Nuneaton in July 2023 and below left, runners up



at Warwick in June 2024. Right, also in June 2024 we were tournament winners at Droitwich – winning every match!



We have entered into many of England Netball tournaments including Christmas, where we were runners up competing in Christmas leggings and hats. (below right)



Our latest tournament for England Netball was in March this year, where we narrowly missed out on being pool winners.



We have several more tournaments scheduled for this year, another holiday to celebrate more special birthdays, and many more social events. We are so diverse in age, background and interests, but are such a special 'family', we are there to support, encourage and celebrate each other in whatever life throws at us.
Lorraine Legge, President, HalesOwen WI





Tony Noble gave us a presentation about his life on board the Royal Yacht Britannia. He was a Leading Radio Operator on board from 1972-1976 and again from 1982-1985. During his service he made a total of 169 overseas visits and travelled over 164,000 miles.

Tony described the layout, galleys at the front and the royal apartments were at the back, with staff quarters below deck. Captained by an Admiral, the staff wore traditional buttoned sailors uniforms with plimsolls, to protect the deck and make no noise. The Royal State dining room sat up to 92 people. The drawing room at the rear was used by the Queen and the Duke to greet visitors and hold small receptions. The first ever royal walkabout took place to meet the ship's crew. The verandah deck was an informal lounge with master bedrooms behind. He once saw the Queen asleep on the sofa after dealing with her despatch boxes!

The Admiral and staff worked in the compass platform and bridge with the wheelhouse deck below. The steering wheel had been taken from the yacht of King George V. The copper, chrome and brass of the engine room were immaculately maintained. The Mess accommodated 40 staff, it was the last ship to remove hammocks.

Tony showed us images of the yacht alongside the QE2 returning from the Falklands with the Queen Mother embarking. Charles and Diana used the yacht in Canada and Italy. In New York, celebrity guests included Tracy Austin, Sophia Loren, Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra. Ronald and Nancy Reagan loved the yacht and became very friendly with the Queen. We were also told of the time in Los Angeles, when the state car stalled and was replaced with a school bus!



Image: [rmy_britannia_02.JPG](#)



The tradition of beating the retreat took place every evening. The yacht is now a visitor attraction in Leith and Tony was amongst volunteers who helped to maintain it, especially for the 2012 Thames pageant. Tony took questions and we all found it a fascinating insight to a remarkable career.

The knitted toys were on display from our 'Knit and Natter' group who produce them for the Linus Pre-mature baby foundation.

For more info see [Premature baby hats](#) | [Project Linus UK](#)

Sue Richards.

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



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

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Balsall Heath and Moseley WI



In April we were very pleased to welcome puppeteer Ellie Darvill (left) to our meeting who brought along the wonderful 'Why Bird' from BBC Playdays where Ellie had worked for over 12 years. She spoke entertainingly about her career as a puppeteer starting with the wonderful Cannon Hill Puppet Company at the MAC under the direction of John Blundell and she demonstrated a wide range of puppets.



We all had a go at lip synching and making puppets talk, and we finished the session with all the puppets singing to Bohemian Rhapsody with an amazing head banging finale! A real fun afternoon where we played a lot and learnt a great deal! Thank you, Ellie!



Karen Benjamin, President.



Hockley Heath



Joyce Duffield
about to start CPR

Hockley Heath WI had a great turnout for the April meeting to learn how to give CPR and how to use a Defibrillator. The demonstration was given by volunteers of Fast Aid (Charity 1117114) who are 'Empowering communities with lifesaving first aid'. This is particularly topical as Louise, our President excitedly pointed out, we are ahead of the game as the resolution is "Bystanders can be Lifesavers".



There were dummies to practice giving chest compressions. Those who were unable to kneel, observed and learned, to instruct others in an emergency.



Alison (right) from Fast Aid demonstrated how to use a Defibrillator and listen to the commands it gives, although the first attempt was thwarted by flat batteries. We also had a 'Decorate an Egg' competition, judged by the Fast Aid volunteers, the Pig Egg in the Style was the winner.



Alison Hall
learning
the skill.



Marion taking thumb prints from
Alison Ainsworth.

In February, our member Marion Kisbey gave an interactive talk of her role as a Scene of Crime Officer. It was close competition for Silent Witness! Our thumb prints were taken and two members dressed up in the protective gear worn by Officers at the scene of a crime. **Pat Roach**



Jo Findlay & Joyce Duffield
dressed in SoCO gear.



A Call to Action: Increasing Defibrillator Access in Our Communities

On 2nd April, Boldmere Bells W.I. in Boldmere, Sutton Coldfield, hosted a vital defibrillator training session. The session aimed to raise awareness and equip our members with the life-saving skills to respond to emergencies. We were fortunate to have guidance from the Charlie Ramsey Research Fund (crrf.org.uk) which provided valuable insights on how to access, use, and return defibrillators in an emergency.

This session sparked essential discussions, especially regarding the availability of defibrillators and Women's Institute meeting venues. We believe this conversation must extend to every W.I. across the country so we can collectively address the need for defibrillators in our communities.



In Boldmere, we are fortunate to have multiple defibrillators within a five-minute walk of our local venues. However, as we examined this further, a crucial question emerged: Are our meeting locations and other local venues fully equipped to respond to life-threatening emergencies?

In line with one of the W.I.'s National campaigns, which aims to empower bystanders to become lifesavers, we discussed the possibility of local WIs contributing to filling the gaps where these vital resources are lacking. Could we explore purchasing and donating defibrillators and bleed kits, which cost approximately £1,300 together? This could significantly improve the chances of survival in communities that currently lack this life-saving equipment.

The statistics regarding sudden cardiac arrests make this issue even more urgent. According to the British Heart Foundation, "over 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur every year in the UK, and only around 1 in 10 people survive". However, when a defibrillator is used

within the first few minutes of a cardiac arrest, survival rates increase dramatically. Research shows that without a defibrillator, the chance of survival drops to just 5%, but with one, that chance rises to an incredible 74%. These figures underline the critical importance of ensuring that defibrillators are available, maintained, and ready for use.

Unfortunately, many defibrillators are out of action due to a lack of adoption—something that we must address as a community. Adopting a defibrillator means that a local volunteer checks the equipment every four weeks, replaces the pads as necessary, and coordinates with



healthcare professionals after the device has been used. The sad reality is that many defibrillators are not regularly maintained and, as a result, become ineffective when needed most.

Could local WIs step forward to help? By adopting and maintaining defibrillators in our communities, we can ensure that these life-saving devices are always operational and accessible.

To further emphasise the need for more defibrillators, it's worth noting that "less than 10% of people in the UK have access to a defibrillator within 5 minutes of their location." The British Heart Foundation and other emergency response organisations have highlighted that widespread access to defibrillators could save thousands of lives each year. This is why every W.I. is invited to consider how they may contribute—whether by fundraising for equipment or volunteering to help maintain these vital devices.

For more information on the life-saving importance of defibrillators, please visit:

- 1) [Buy defibrillators from the British Heart Foundation online shop. 100% profits fund world-class life saving research.](#)
- 2) [Defib finder – find the defibrillators nearest you.](#)
- 3) [Sudden Cardiac Arrest UK Effective Peer Support - Sudden Cardiac Arrest UK](#)

Let's come together as a community to do everything we can to save lives. By purchasing and donating defibrillators or helping to maintain them, we can ensure that no one in our communities is without this vital lifeline—an initiative that aligns closely with the WI's core values of supporting and caring for others. Every second counts, and together, we can make a real difference in the safety and well-being of those around us. Let's take action now to ensure that defibrillators are accessible, maintained, and ready to save lives when needed.

Claire Thomas, BoBells President.

**April 2025 - 200 Club
£10 Winner - Number 99
Janet Sharp, Olton WI**



Bournville WI

Bournville WI welcomed David Bartley, a Black Country Comedy Poet, who entertained the group with jokes, poems and a little good humoured Tipton teasing. He is pictured with committee member Gillian Nakasuji. In other news, we continued to support our local foodbank with a contribution from most attendees.

Lisa Blackburn



Green Lane WI



Members of Green Lane WI presented their President, **Lynne Sayer**, with a lovely bouquet of flowers. They certainly put a smile on her face to know her WI friends care.

Belinda Piasecki, Committee Member.

WMFWI – Valerie Daggart Cup 2025



The Board of Trustees would like to apologise to members for the error in the flyer previously sent out to promote the Valerie Daggart Writing Competition.

The sentence selected for the opening of your piece does not come from Jane Austen's book, '*Sense and Sensibility*' but from the 1995 *Sense and Sensibility* screenplay written by Emma Thompson.

The Board of Trustees has decided that the sentence:

**“It isn’t what we say or think that defines us,
but what we do.”**

**will remain as the opening sentence for this year’s
competition.**

We hope that if you enjoy writing, whether as an amateur or a complete novice, you will enter this year’s competition.

Members are invited to submit a piece of writing in any form, such as poem, prose, short story of no more than 1000 words (no photographs please)

There is no charge for entering.

The winning entry will be awarded the 2025 cup at the Annual Meeting in October 2025.

Entry Details and Form

Please complete the entry form attached and email to quintonwi86@yahoo.com

or post to

Fiona Northey, c/o 95 Spencer Street, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham B18 6DA



WMFWI - Valerie Daggart Cup 2025

Entry Form

Please complete and include this with your written entry.

Entries must be received by Friday 27th June 2025

Title of Entry

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.....

Form of Entry e.g. poem, prose, story

Name of Entrant

WI.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Email Address.....

Phone number.....

Word Count.....

Date submitted.....

Please note

Entries are judged by an external moderator.

Entrants will be informed of the outcome by phone or email as soon as judging has been completed.

Entries will be returned to members or relevant WI at the Annual Meeting in October 2025.

The Valerie Daggart Cup will be presented to the winner at the Annual Meeting in October 2025.

