



Cog in the Tree

West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes.



Words from the Chair



August/September 24



Where did the first half of this year go? What a busy time it has been. Not just for Federation, as we know that all the WIs have been very busy holding events throughout the year and we have all enjoyed seeing the photographs published in the COG.

We had our first County Show for many years, a Stained-glass Workshop. Darts Competitions, Aldridge and Shirley Quizzes, two new WIs opening and an Officers Training Zoom. We ended June with our wonderful Afternoon Tea at the Hyatt Hotel in Birmingham to celebrate fifty years of the West Midlands Federation. One hundred and sixty ladies had a very enjoyable afternoon with amazing food and being entertained by Neil who sang all afternoon. West Midlands Federation were so pleased to be able to financially subsidise the event which culminated in a well-attended occasion.

So now we move into the last six months of the year but before the year ends, we have Croquet, Skittles evenings in Aldridge and Hockley Heath, a visit to Waddesdon Manor, and our Christmas Celebration at St Martins in the Bullring to look forwards to. Nestled right in the middle on Monday 7th October is our Fiftieth Annual Meeting at Austin Court in Birmingham. We are very honoured to have two visitors from National attending; Jeryl Stone our newly appointed Chair of NFWI and also Paula Pierce, Chair of Membership. We will also be welcoming past Chairs of West Midlands Federation and guests from other Federations around the country.

This year we have adopted "Inspiration" as our theme and that is the title for the writing competition for the Valerie Daggart Cup and will also be the theme for the Christmas Celebration. We are fortunate to have many opportunities to have fun and friendship with a group of truly inspirational women.

Thousands of extraordinary women across the country have been meeting and causing a stir for over a century. Not just stirring cakes to share with friends or sell on a stall, but stirring up conversations that lead to long term change. Throughout history there have been many truly extraordinary and inspirational women who have contributed to change in so many ways and the list is not exhaustive; Florence Nightingale, Mother Theresa, Marie Stopes, Emmeline Pankhurst, Rosa Parks, and more recently Malala Yousafzai to name but a few.

Queen Elizabeth was also a WI member, an extraordinary woman and inspiration to us all.

This will be the last COG until September as during August, Federation along with most WIs will be taking a break.

Happy Holidays and thank-you for all the support you have given so far this year.

Cathryn



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Kath Ryan aka '**The cake lady**' at Four Oaks W.I

This title is used by the Royal family and the Armed Forces for the speaker at our recent meeting, **Kath Ryan**. Kath baked 2 million cakes for injured service personnel, which have been given out during 1,587 visits from 2009 to 2023.

Kath began her talk with how she started her charity, Cakes4Casualties, in 2009. Visiting her sister in Selly Oak hospital with some cakes, injured soldiers from the Afghan war were also in the hospital and asked her sister to share the cakes with them. From this, Kath started to visit with cakes which were looked forward to. Custard slices were very popular!

From this small beginning Kath started the charity, which during the Afghan war supplied 600 cakes a week, 2,400 a month and 28,000 cakes in a year. This was all funded by her own money and savings.

Images of injured soldiers that she visited with cakes were shown via PowerPoint. These were accompanied by stories of her visits to the hospital intensive care unit and although an ex-nurse, she never knew what she would see when visiting the soldiers. Despite the patients' life changing injuries, they could all smile.

Kath has made wedding cakes plus countless cakes for birthdays, many were to celebrate their 21st, which brought home just how young the injured sometimes were. Several who have received cakes have kept in contact with Kath.

In addition to British service personnel injured, Estonian soldiers also came to Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham, so Kath learnt a little Russian and Estonian to communicate with them. The hospital gave her lists of where military patients, both male and female were and visiting Kath noticed that mothers often suffered the most trauma. Other places visited with cakes are Headley Court and Stanford Hall rehab units, whilst there, Kath met soldiers with terminal cancer and made a wedding cake for one renewing his wedding vows before he died.

Kath designed cake trolleys which have been useful and sometimes themed for special occasions such as Valentine's Day, Christmas and Poppy Day. The Royal Marines showed their appreciation by presenting her with a sailor's cap with the headband, 'HMS Cake'! Military humour has recognized Kath by an adage going round which states "if you get shot you get cake".

The royal family has also recognized the contribution of Cakes4Casualties. Kath has met the King and Queen and has been invited to several royal functions, Prince Harry's wedding and the Invictus games. In 2011 she dined with Prince William who thanked her for her work and asked for a cake! Kath has also travelled to Florida and Canada to attend triathlons.

The meeting was pleased to be able to contribute to Kath's charity. **Sue Richards, Prog. Secretary**

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



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



Knowle WI



Knowle WI have spent very enjoyable Craft group mornings preparing Christmas shoeboxes for the Shoebox Appeal, which will be collected at our September meeting by our Teams4u Shoebox Appeal Co-ordinator, in readiness for packing with goodies for children in Eastern Europe. **Stephanie Withers, Knowle WI**

Yardley WI

Yardley WI were invited to take part in the local mediaeval parish church of St. Edburgha's flower festival. The theme was counties and we worked together on a floral representation of Lancashire (pictured right) including, the Blackpool tower, Lancashire rose, the Radcliffe family and the Blackpool tram, the football team of course, and a stick of rock. Having never done anything like this before, we duly moistened the Oasis to the point of saturation and let's just say there were just a few wet tiles by the high altar. Lots of people came to see the displays and it helped to make money for church funds. Thanks to Sue, Jayne, Roseanne and Bea for their input. Upwards and onwards. Christmas tree decorations next year now we've got the flower bug! **Julie Afridi**



Editor's Pick

It's the WI Week for River Action between 16th & 22nd September, (hence the page footer) with a call to action to raise awareness of the need to clean our rivers. Could your WI take part in a stunt, a yarn bomb, a river cleanse or test to support the campaign? There's a stunt information pack available, and/or water testing kits. More details at [My WI | Join us for The WI Week of River Action](#).

July 200 Club Winner
Mrs Wendy Amass
Streetly Evening WI



Boldmere WI



Boldmere WI greatly enjoyed the flower arranging session at their July meeting. Members went home with bouquets they made themselves from flowers paid for by Federation grant sent out last autumn. Thank you, Federation
Patricia Platt, Secretary

Featured in preparation above are Lynn, Mary, Maureen, Rita & Dorothy.

Right with completed bouquets are Linda, Janet, Marilyn and Gill.



Left: Dawn Davis, Sue Green, Janine Hall and Sandra Thom represented Boldmere WI in the Aldridge Quiz Night, coming fourth. Well done ladies for taking part.

Boldmere Ladies also enjoyed the Federation Afternoon Tea. Below is our Secretary Patricia Platt winning a raffle prize. **Judy Holmes**



Boldmere's amazing post box topper to celebrate the 2024 Olympics. Here are Ann, Patricia, Brenda, Mags, Judy, and Judas, Patricia's dog, all craft group members who met to secure the topper in place. Worthy of a closer look!



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Balsall Heath & Moseley WI



Balsall Heath & Moseley WI have had a busy month. We were asked by our local councillor Izzy Knowles to produce a panel of flowers to decorate the former HSBC building for Moseley Festival, alongside the local children's artwork. This meant several coffee mornings with cake whilst some of us learned new skills of crochet, knitting and weaving. We had a stall at the festival, where many members volunteered produce of crochet, knitting, quilting, plants and mystery books.

We made a small profit for a cold and blustery day, despite the rain!

Our member **Pauline O'Rourke**, consultant solicitor from New Leaf www.newleafsolicitors.co.uk (centre front below), gave a fascinating talk on Women and the evolution of their rights in relationships and divorce.



This was very well received and a second session has been requested. Pauline is happy to be contacted as an occasional speaker. Please contact her for availability at Paulineorourke@newleafsolicitors.co.uk.

This was followed by a welcome excursion to the local pub, see below.

In our book club, we've been reading *Strands* by Jean Sprackland, a story of the sea's daily offerings and the interrelatedness of all things. It received positive reviews from all. Our next book is *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver. August is our summer picnic and litter pick near Sarehole Mill. **Lisa Blackburn**



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Arts & Activities

Shirley Quiz



The Shirley Quiz was once again a huge success with everyone enjoying the evening. The winners were Hockley Heath who each received a box of chocolates and the Winner's Trophy presented by Cathryn. Yardley 'A' were gracious losers and members of the team accepted a wooden spoon as their prize. Thank you to all the teams that took part in this year's Shirley Quiz.

Jackie Poyner



Forthcoming Events 2024

28/09 - Skittles at Hockley Heath
05/10 - Skittles at Aldridge
07/10 - Annual Meeting, Austin Court
21/11 - Christmas at Waddesdon

50th Anniversary WMFWI

The WMFWI Afternoon Tea to celebrate our 50th Anniversary, at the Hyatt, was very well supported and enjoyed all. Musical accompaniment by 'The Goodfella' who played a wide range of easy listening numbers including Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis and Dean Martin hits. The food was very tasty and members were impressed by the care paid to special requests and dietary requirements. **Liz Galloway, Treasurer WMFWI.**



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

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

Next deadline: 10/09/24

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*

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