

ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19
of the Board of Trustees



Registered office: WI House,
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Charity Reg. No. 1016766

STAFF

All our new staff have settled in well over the year. Lauren Saunders and Charli Clark work in the office 2 days each a week and Anila Patel in the Finance Office. Susan Miller continues as our Federation Secretary and Denise Ainge comes in to clean each Thursday. We have made a slight change to our office working hours this year to suit both the office efficiency and the staff.

We always welcome members to come and visit us at WI House, even if just to say hello or drop in for a cup of tea. The Gift Shop continues to sell a variety of WI branded goods should you need a gift

or raffle prize, however we have now discontinued the Gift Shop.

Our hallway is brightened up with the fortnightly vase of fresh flowers or an arrangement from WIs on the WI House Flowers Rota and the artwork on the walls displays the talent of our WI members. So if you have a framed piece of artwork or craft you wish to show, please bring it in for visiting members to admire.

WI MEMBERS IN LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND

There are 136 WIs in Leicestershire & Rutland and 4,500 members

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairman: Janet Kirk
Vice Chairmen: Glenice Wignall
Heather Roythorne-Finch
Treasurer: Linda Martin
Elected Members:
Anne Allison, Rita Caves, Maxilyn Geary,
Mary Hobbs, Julie Judd, Clare Robertson
Smith, Gail Wooliscroft, Susan Woollard,

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Art & Crafts: Eileen Williams
County News: Jane Harris
**Finance &
House Management:** Linda Martin
Fund Raising: Rita Caves
Food & Flowers Clare Robertson Smith
Leisure Activities: Alma Wright
Membership: Joy Hoult
**Public Affairs &
International:** Glenice Wignall

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees is made up of twelve elected members who volunteer and give up their time and energy to run the Federation for the membership. This year was an election year as it is a two-year term of office. Three currently serving officers were retiring and as we only had three new candidates stand for election a vote was not necessary.

The Committee continues to hold some meetings in the evening to try and make serving on the Board more accessible to women with other commitments during the day. We also receive training from NFWI to help us run the Federation efficiently, as well as doing strategic planning to cover our obligations to the Charity Commission and the members of the Federation, as well as having fun.

The Board members oversee the work of the other county committees, are responsible for the employment of the staff and the smooth running of WI House. We try to plan for the future and are moving over to Office 365 which will slowly be introduced to all WIs to take advantage of all it offers.

The Trustees oversee the Annual Council Meeting and its speakers, arrange the Mikron theatre event, help judge or arrange judges for our Federation entries for any NFWI competitions and help with the arrangements for the NFWI Annual Meeting. We also attend many outside events to represent the WI, as well as visit WIs. This year we arranged for our Millennium page from the Denman book to be made into notelets for WIs to use. We also had an interesting few weeks dealing with the media over the LOROS baking issues.

ART & CRAFTS

The Art and Craft Committee work hard to encourage our WI members to try new crafts or to revisit crafts that have been done in the past.

Over the last year we put together 3 Dabble Days, spread out over the county and through the year. These are always popular and usually have a waiting list. Please put your name on the waiting list if you would like a ticket – you never know – someone may have to drop out.

We took part in the Christmas Open House at the House which was a lovely day. It gave us a welcome opportunity to meet and speak to members.

The Committee put together a display of crafts for the ACM in March and members of the Committee are available on the day to answer questions and to note down any suggestions that you have for workshops. Our workshops are also popular and are usually held at the House. This year we learnt how to make Felt Hares, a small mat in Canvas Work and the intricacies of Hardanger Embroidery. Again, we are sorry that the Art workshops have not been available to us. Please be assured that we are trying to find a suitable tutor. All of the Dabble Days and workshops are advertised in the County News and please look out for the flyers at your WI meetings.

Our Committee always welcomes observers at our meetings. If you would like to observe and get to know how our Committee works, please contact the House. Also, if there is anything that you would like us to include for a workshop or Dabble Day please let us know, again via the House.

FINANCE & HOUSE MANAGEMENT

The Committee has continued to work to maintain WI House and garden in good order. No major work has been carried out on the House this year.

We replaced the office computers in August 2019 with the help of grant funding from the Leicestershire and Rutland Masonic Charity Association. We are very grateful for their generosity.

Shop in a Box sales have reduced over the year as we ran down the stock of non WI-branded items. We introduced the "WI Rules" tea towel and our own design notelets and have continued to send boxes out to WI and Group events. If you have any suggestions for items with a Leicestershire and Rutland connection that we could stock, please let us know.

Sales of Taylors bulbs were steady this year and we received almost £200 commission for our funds. The Monthly Draw also continued to attract a high level of hopeful support!

We held Speakers' Audition evenings in Leicester, in Rutland and in North West Leicestershire to enable as many people as possible to attend, and these were well-supported. Morning coffee and lunch time auditions at WI House have been less popular. We are looking for new venues for the audition events so get in touch if you have any suggestions or would like to host an event.

We thank you for your continued support of our Committee and its events.

FUND RAISING COMMITTEE

Our last event for the Centenary Year saw us returning to Rutland for our Autumn lunch. The guest speaker was Lesley Smith, Curator of Tutbury Castle, giving her costumed performance on Sex and the Tudors. The lunch was very well attended and enjoyed by all.

Unfortunately, our Spring lunch in May 2019 at Devonshire Place in Leicester, did not run according to plan. Our speaker, a presenter on the TV programme Gardeners World, failed to appear just before the lunch was due to commence owing to travel problems on the rail network. By a strange quirk of fate, two musicians called Going Back, happened to be preparing to entertain at a later event that evening. Fortunately, they agreed to play for us after our lunch with music from the 60s and 70s. Our Federation Chairman decided that in the circumstances we should give each table two bottles of wine and soft drinks free of charge. The musical session was greatly appreciated, and many were dancing seemingly forgetting that the speaker had not turned up.

Apart from our lunches, we like to organise other varied events and in June held Tea and Song in Hinckley. The entertainment was provided by Debbie Lacey performing Songs from the Shows followed by a delicious cream tea.

We do hope you will continue to support our events. Keep a look out for our varied programme we are working on for 2020 and book early to avoid disappointment.

FOOD & FLOWERS

Our WI year got off to a festive start with the first of two all-day events featuring a cookery demonstration, wine talk, home cooked two-course lunch and flower demonstration at Long Clawson. This was followed closely by a very successful Christmas workshop in North Kilworth where our guests made a door hanging or table decoration.

Sadly, in January Julie Judd resigned from the committee for personal reasons. Julie had worked very hard as a committee member and Chairman and we were sorry to see her go.

In March the F&F team coordinated a selection of competitions at the ACM. It was great to see so much talent on display and we look forward to lots of entries next year, especially from your children or grandchildren.

We heralded Spring at Packington with our second all-day extravaganza, and in the summer organised visits to the beautiful gardens at Whatton House. These sold out very quickly, and we were fortunate that three of the four days were blessed with sunshine. September saw the return of our popular Taste and Try evening, kindly hosted by Castle Donington WI, to round off our activities for 2018-19.

During the year we were delighted to welcome Margaret Lawrence, Hinckley Canalside WI, onto our committee. We are a diverse group of ladies with an interest in some aspect of Food and/or Flowers who want to pass on their enthusiasm to everyone else!

We are always open to suggestions and more than happy to welcome observers to our meetings, usually at 9.30am on the first Monday of each month at WI House.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Another busy year for the Leisure Activities Committee organising many activities and outings for members, most of which you supported. 49 WIs joined the Darts Competition and members commented on enjoying the social aspect of this competition in the first round – good luck to the finalists who progressed to the next stages. Thanks to two members of the Board of Trustees who undertook to organise the 2019 Skittles Competition.

Members have enjoyed outings to the Christmas Market at Stratford on Avon, to Windsor and Weston Park, Shropshire. Taster sports this year were Table Tennis, Curling, Archery and two Croquet sessions, when the British weather gave us lovely sunshine. Our three Suffragette walks in Leicester City Centre proved very popular and will be followed this October by four A-Z walks, again in Leicester City Centre. We plan to bring you Leicester City Centre Ghost walks in 2020.

MEMBERSHIP

This year we have taken a considerable amount of time visiting, helping, advising and encouraging WIs. We find as Advisers, that all WIs run their meetings, although under the guidance of the Constitution, in a unique and individual way to suit them. Some open with the singing of Jerusalem one or both verses, some start with refreshments, others end with them. Some read their minutes, others don't. Committees have several sub-committees to spread the load. Some have very few committee members and manage perfectly well, whilst others are abounding with willing hands. Speakers from outside your WI bring in fresh and interesting ideas, but do have some meetings with social time to talk and share the skills of your own WI membership.

Where possible we encourage and engage in Federation arranged activities, outings and events to assist you in expanding WI meetings from more than one meeting a month. Those WIs who work within Groups share skills and offer smaller WIs opportunities they may otherwise miss out on. This is all part of the ethos of our organisation. This year Membership Committee organised a Saturday morning training session for all WI officers which was fully booked very quickly and made full use of all the facilities in WI House. We are regularly putting small pieces of advice in County News to keep members updated with the changes by NFWI and reminding members of the routine of other annual matters. We also ran another very exciting and successful Federation Quiz, spreading ourselves around the counties. We held a meeting for WIs with less than 20 members registered on the MCS, so ideas could be shared and exchanged.

WI House receives a mountainous amount of enquiries from women who have moved to our area or who are just interested in being a member of the WI. These enquiries are also forwarded onto WI Secretaries and we hope you follow up these approaches as prospective new members can swell the numbers.

While WI Life is constantly showing young and flamboyant new members who are extremely enthusiastic and very knowledgeable, we must not forget our established members' wealth of knowledge and tap into this resource too. We all need each other.

We may not have formed any new WIs during the last year but we have certainly put our time into helping the ones we already have.

We would all like to thank Ruth Green who has continued to serve our Committee since retiring as an Adviser. She has decided the time has come to step down, but never fear she is still busy with other committees.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & INTERNATIONAL

The Committee has maintained an active and interesting programme of events, furthering its role of keeping abreast of current issues in local and national life.

In addition, through the Resolution Adviser, the Committee maintains the Federation's annual cycle of resolution selection. It has been very encouraging to see how many members voted this year. The Committee organises a Resolution Conference, providing expert speakers on the shortlisted topics. We also have responsibility for promoting the Federation links with ACWW. This year over £4,000 was donated to Pennies for Friendship.

Our programme continued with the successful events of Science Question Time and a faith visit to the Evington Mosque.

We have two Climate Change Ambassadors representing the Federation.

Many thanks to those WIs that have taken part in the LOROS Rota for baking cakes this year.

COUNTY NEWS

County News continues to be a valuable resource for WI committees. Having a printed copy also allows individual members to keep up to date with what the Federation committees are providing.

Advertising on the back page gives notice of local services, various events including theatre and musical productions and items for sale. It is a particularly useful platform for small businesses to reach a large audience in Leicestershire and Rutland. Special rates are offered for regular advertisers, charities and WIs.

We would encourage members to buy their own copy and at £3.50 for 11 copies, it represents very good value for money.

We are hoping that talented photographers will continue to send us photographs, especially seasonal ones, suitable for the front page.

The three volunteers who produce County News depend on input, not only from the Federation committees, but also welcome articles, reviews, recipes, photos and artwork from members to reflect their interests and talents.