

Recipe for the Easter Biscuits

4oz (100g) butter, softened
 3oz (75g) caster sugar
 1 egg, separated
 7oz (200g) plain flour
 ½ tsp mixed spice
 ½ ground cinnamon
 2oz (50g) currants
 1oz (25g) mixed candied peel, chopped
 1-2 tbs milk



Caster sugar for sprinkling

Oven Temperature- 200*c/400*f/Gas 6

1. Lightly grease three baking trays
2. Cream butter & sugar until light and fluffy
3. Beat in egg yolk. Sift in flour & spices & mix well
4. Add the currants and mixed peel & enough milk to give a fairly soft dough
5. Knead the mixture lightly on a floured surface
6. Roll out to a thickness of quarter inch /5mm
7. Cut into rounds using 2½inch (6mm) fluted cutter
8. Place on prepared trays
9. Bake in the pre-heated oven for about 8-10 mins
10. Remove from oven, brush the biscuits with lightly beaten egg whites, sprinkle with a little caster sugar and return to the oven for another 4-5 mins or until pale golden brown
11. Cool on a wire rack

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Leicestershire & Rutland Federation of Women's Institutes

incorporated in England and Wales as a Company limited by Guarantee No. 02769771 Charity Reg No. 1016 766

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Find us on Facebook: Leicestershire & Rutland Federation of WIs



From the Board



Dear Members

The Federation's **Holiday Destination for the Year** will be announced during our upcoming **Annual Council Meeting (ACM)**. We hope to share more exciting details with you at this event, and we look forward to discussing the trip and how you can get involved in what promises to be a fantastic experience. Keep an eye out for more information during the ACM!

Looking Forward to 2026

As we embrace the challenges and opportunities of the year ahead, let's stay inspired by our shared mission: to create stronger, more connected communities of women. We have an exciting year ahead, with new opportunities for growth, learning, and making a real impact in our communities.

Thank you all for your ongoing support, and I look forward to seeing you at the **Annual Council Meeting** and in the months to come.

Glenice Wignall

Chairman Leicestershire & Rutland Federation of WI

From the House



The House continues to be a valuable space for our WI and is regularly used for committee meetings. Members are also very welcome to come in and make use of the facilities.

As spring approaches, we are looking for a few volunteers to help with the garden to keep it tidy and looking its best for everyone to enjoy. Whether you can help on a regular basis or just now and then, your support would be greatly appreciated.

If you are able to help, please speak to a member of the committee.

A gentle reminder to WI Treasurers to please wait until you have received an invoice before sending payment. This helps us to ensure that all payments are correctly recorded and allocated.

If members are making payments directly to us, please email finance@lrfwi.org to let us know that payment has been sent and what it relates to. This makes the invoicing process much smoother and helps us keep our records up to date.

Thank you for your continued support.

Please also note that **emergency contact details are now required for all event bookings**. Our updated booking form is available to download from the website. Alternatively, you can email wihouse@lrfwi.org and we will be happy to send you a copy.

We look forward to welcoming you to WI House soon.

Thank you

Membership Committee

The LRFWI Membership Committee is responsible for assisting WIs with any help they require. I hope you find the following items useful. Mandy Cutler, Membership Committee Chair.

Federation Quiz 2026 – Friday 3rd July



£7 per person – teams of four.

Are you up for a challenge? Will your general knowledge help you to reign supreme? Then gather together members, friends and family and enter a team at one of the four venues in this year's Federation Quiz.

ARET Centre Loddington LE7 9XE

Botcheston Village Hall LE9 9FF

Swinford Village Hall LE17 6AZ

Thorpe Acre Church Hall LE11 4LF

7pm for 7.30pm. Each team must have 2 WI members, the event is open to non-members, male and female. Light refreshments included. Bring your own drinks if you wish.

If you would like to book for this event, please **contact your WI secretary** or email wihouse@lrfwi.org with a booking form and pay by BACS. Please state clearly the venue you wish to book and if you have any accessibility requirements.

Access to My WI

The My WI website has moved over to a new login system. Following this change, whilst some members have accessed My WI without any issues, others have not been so lucky!

My WI

So here is some information I hope you will find useful - should you need it.

How to access My WI

My WI is either accessible from the **NFWI website**. On the top right hand side of the home page you will see a link to My WI.

Or you can type **mywi.thewi.org.uk** into your search engine. (This will take you directly to the site).

Reset your password

You need to reset your password the first time you login. You will find a help guide.

Problems?

If you're still unable to access the site after resetting your password, please use '**Contact Us**' on this link:

<https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/>

Alternatively email - mywi@thewi.org.uk and a member of the Digital Team will contact you.

N.B. MCS - You will need to use your new password to access this system as well.

Equality and Diversity: change to the NFWI membership policy

Policy change

In early December 2025 our Federation Secretary emailed all WI Secretaries an **NFWI Announcement**, updating members on membership rules from April 2026 in light of the Supreme Court judgment.

To recap:

‘ In April 2025, the Supreme Court in the UK ruled that the legal definition of a woman under the Equality Act (2010) refers only to biological sex. Since the ruling, we have reviewed our long-held practice and membership policy to ensure we are compliant with the law.

Today (Wednesday 3 December), we are announcing that from April 2026 we can no longer offer formal membership to transgender women. ‘

This is a subject about which members across the Leicestershire and Rutland Federation will have different views: some may be trans-inclusive, others trans-critical, others neutral.

NFWI Belief

This change is in respect to the NFWI membership policy and does not change NFWI’s firm belief that transgender women are women – the Equality Act allows the organisation to hold this belief.

In the same announcement, the NFWI acknowledged that for some the decision to exclude transgender women will be painful and stated:

‘We will be launching in April 2026 a national network of local WI Sisterhood groups, which will offer monthly opportunities open to all, including transgender women.’

The Sisterhood Groups are optional and a WI Committee cannot allocate funds to a Sisterhood Group; Sisterhood Groups will have to be self-financing.

WIs and complying with the Supreme Court Ruling

An updated Membership Registration Form will request people to say whether they are eligible for membership of the WI. **There will be no check on this: it should be self-policing and non-intrusive.**

All members, existing and new, will be asked to sign this updated form. This updated form will be available to use for the April 2026 renewal of subscriptions and, of course, for new members.

Any issues that arise as a result of using the updated Membership Registration Form , can be referred to your WI Adviser; contact details in the LRFWI Yearbook. WI Advisers will work with guidance from the NFWI.

Mandy Cutler, February 2026.

Subscription 2026 -27

Subscriptions rates are set by the NFWI Board of Trustees each year and your fee supports the running of the 3 tiers of the WI – National (NFWI), the Leicestershire and Rutland Federation and your WI.

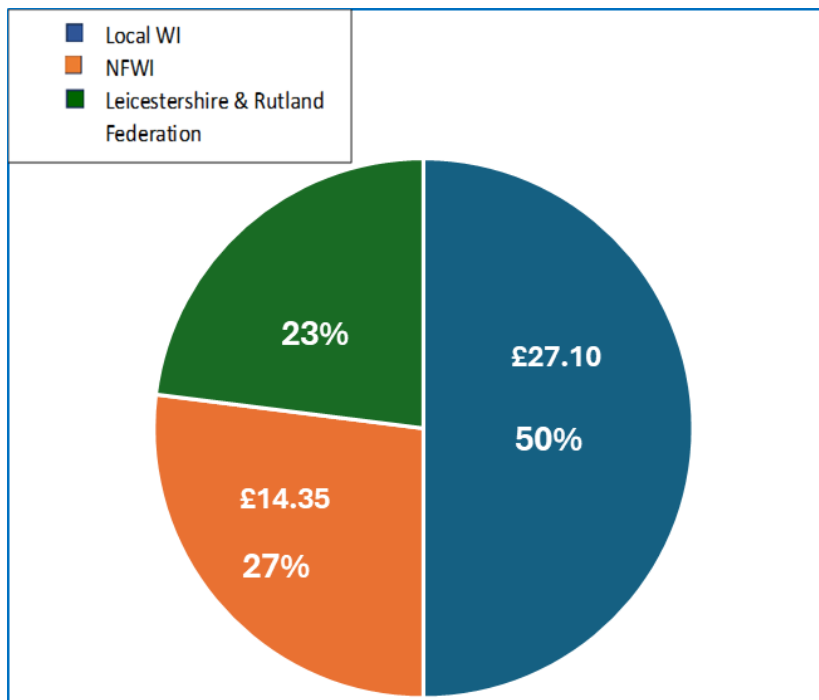
Total subscription	WI share	Federation share	NFWI share
£54.00	£27.10	£12.55	£14.35

WIs can apply the **flexibility policy** to the WI share of the subscription.

Multi members will pay the WI portion only to their second WI. If the WI is not utilising the flexibility policy, this will be £27.10.

Payments will be due from members in **April 2026**.

What does my membership include?



- A welcoming place to make friends
- 8 issues of WI Life magazine.
- Monthly NFWI newsletter on email.
- 11 meetings.
- The opportunity to involve yourself in exciting local and national campaigns.
- Bespoke member only events held virtually and at venues around the country.
- Member's book of discount offers.
- Training opportunities such as becoming a WI Adviser or Climate Ambassador.
- The option to be a WI committee member, a federation trustee and/or an NFWI trustee.
- Access to My WI.
- Access to the VIA online learning

platform, with many free courses.

- The opportunity to meet like-minded women from different backgrounds.
- A place for self-expression – each WI is unique and shaped by its members.

Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who continues to support our events. It's wonderful to see such enthusiasm. Our Musical Cream Tea event received over 70 bookings and our upcoming Spring Lunch Event is nearly full – so be sure to book quickly if you'd like to join us. Please also keep an eye out for our upcoming events, as there are plenty more opportunities to get involved and support our fundraising efforts.

Finance and House Management Committee

The Finance and House Committee would like to thank all our IFEs for their continued hard work and dedication, which is greatly appreciated. We would also like to thank WIs who have already returned their yearly accounts. If you have not yet sent us a copy, please ensure this is done as soon as possible.

Treasurers' training will be available later in the year for both new and long-standing Treasurers who would like additional guidance or a refresher.

Please also note that finance office hours in the House are currently very limited. We will respond to any finance queries as soon as we are able, and we appreciate your patience.

THE LEISURE COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU!

theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN



theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN

Ladies, we need more members on our committee!

It is a fun thing to do organising different events for the Federation. However, there's only 4 of us and we think there are a few more of you out there that could add your talents to our efforts and freshen up our ideas. Come and help us organise the things you and your W.I. want to do.

We meet once a month on the 2nd Wednesday, 10.00 -12.30am.

If you're interested, please get in touch.

Sharon Stone, Chair

sharonstone@lrfwi.org

Janet Harrison, Vice Chair

janetharrison19@gmail.com

Penny Weston-Webb, Secretary

pennywestonwebb2022@gmail.com

Public Affairs Committee

The 2025/26 Resolution selection results are in!

Between November and February, every WI member had the chance to have their say on the shortlist and the resolution they would like to see go forward to the Annual Meeting in June

The results of the 2026 resolution shortlist selection are:

2025/26 resolutions		Selections re-	Percentages*
1	Accessible public toilet facilities to promote dignity, health, and social inclu-	41068	44.7
2	Action on women's homelessness	24791	27.0
3	Nearer to Nature	6337	6.9
4	Love your Vulva – Self checking is your best defence against vulval cancer	6651	7.2
5	Every child needs a friend	13151	14.3
Total selections received		91,998	

This year 91,998 selections were cast. In the shortlisting selection stage the top two resolutions attracted a clear majority of selections from members (over 70%).

The NFWI Board of Trustees has agreed to put forward the top two resolutions to the Annual Meeting in June.

Next Steps - voting

WIs should now consider how they wish their delegate to vote on the shortlisted resolutions at the virtual Annual Meeting in June.

Each resolution will be voted on in turn.

All WIs get one vote for each resolution – for or against. WIs do not need to choose one resolution over the other.

WIs may choose to give their delegate discretion to decide how to vote after hearing the speakers and the debate at the Annual Meeting. Please ensure your WI makes it clear to your delegate whether you are granting her discretion.

WIs and federations are also encouraged to hold discussion events to allow members to consider how they wish their delegate to vote.

Events—What's On?

2026:

Saturday 28th March—Annual Meeting, Leicester Grammar School LE8 9FL

Tuesday 14th April—Market Bosworth Treasure Hunt, The Square Market Bosworth CV13 0LF—£8 **FULL**

Wednesday 15th April— (Physical) First Aid Course for adults, Our Lady of Victories Catholic Church, 1 Fairfield Rd, LE16 9QQ - Free

Thursday 16th April— Market Bosworth Treasure Hunt, The Square Market Bosworth CV13 0LF—£8 **FULL**

Saturday 18th April—Officers' Training, WI House, Leicester £5 (max of two per WI)

Saturday 18th April—Spring Dabble Day, Mary Forrayn Centre, St Peters Catholic Church, Leicester Rd, LE10 1LW, £20 **FULL**

Thursday 23rd April—Speakers Showcase, Leicester —£2.50

Saturday 25th April—Spring Lunch, Devonshire Place, Leicester —£34

Sunday 9th May—Physical First Aid Course, Uppingham—free of charge

Thursday 14th May—Physical First Aid Course, East Goscote—free of charge

Wednesday 27th May—National Holocaust Centre & Museum—£30

Thursday 4th June—University of Leicester Botanical Gardens evening tour—£14

Wednesday 10th June—University of Leicester Botanical Gardens evening tour—£14

Thursday 11th June— Physical First Aid Course, Ashby Baptist Church, 4 Brook Street, LE65 1HA.—Free of charge

Saturday 13th June—Rifle Shooting, Thurlaston Airgun, LE9 7TG—£38

Tuesday 16th June— Mental First Aid Champion Training Course, Methodist Church, Northgate, Oakham, LE15 6FH, Free of charge

Friday 3rd July— Federation Quiz , ARET Centre Loddington LE7 9XE, Botcheston Village Hall LE9 9FF, Swinford Village Hall LE17 6AZ, Thorpe Acre Church Hall LE11 4LF

Monday 27th July—Guided Walk Ashby—£10

Monday 26th October—Ghost Walk—Jubilee Square—£10

Secretaries/Treasurers—Don't leave your booking until the closing date.

You can add to the booking by phone at a later date if further members want to attend.

If you want to book as an individual, use the booking form on our website under: [Federation Downloads](#)

—email the form to wihouse@lrfwi.org or call 0116 2661342.

If you want to book with your WI, please contact your Secretary or Treasurer

Booking forms can be downloaded from the website or requested by emailing wihouse@lrfwi.org. Please don't wait until the closing date to book, as events may fill up before the deadline.

If you are paying by BACS, please notify finance@lrfwi.org once payment has been made.

Please note that cancellations after the closing date cannot be refunded; however, your place may be transferred to another member.

Around the Counties

Botcheston WI

Happy New Year from Botcheston WI (if its not too late to be saying!), We hope you all had a lovely Christmas and that the New Year finds you well.

At our January meeting we welcomed some husbands and friends to enjoy listening to 2 representatives from the Leicestershire and Rutland Blood Bikes who gave a very informative talk on the history and purpose of Blood Bikes – contrary to the title they transport more than just blood. Including blood they transport samples, human milk, maternity notes and equipment – this takes place out of normal work hours and saves the NHS from having to use taxis – 3000 calls in 2024 at approx. £25.00 per call, that's a lot!!

The service runs from 1900-0500 Monday to Friday and 24 hours weekends and bank holidays using 3 motor bikes, a car and a van, the reason that a car and van are also used is because when the temp is below 4' it is too cold to transport blood on the bikes. The group from time to time link up with other neighbouring areas to create a relay to get whatever is required from north/south east/west etc.

The service is funded wholly by donations and in 2016 the group achieved charitable status and in 2021 was awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service. After the talk Jonathan and Nick stopped for a chat and coffee.

Wigston Magna WI

At our February meeting we had a visit from Julie representing the charity Rainbows (Hospice for children and young people). Based in Loughborough it serves families across the East Midlands providing specialist palliative care for babies, children and young people.

The facility has 14 beds and has a real home from home feeling with different areas for different age groups. Lots of activities and experiences are organised for families to make special memories together.

Volunteering can take many forms from helping in their charity shops or the hospice garden, to supporting fundraising events or working in reception.

It has been rated outstanding by the Care Quality Commission. What an amazing place for families going through extremely difficult, challenging and terribly sad times.

Kirby Muxloe WI

At our February meeting, we were entertained by Dr Sue Ablett who spoke to us about her experiences cruising the Rhone and Seone Rivers in France.

The sunshine on her slides made us long for the summer and to be part of the cruise. She sailed from Avignon to Lyon, taking in Arles where Van Gogh painted some of his best known works. Beautiful slides, beautiful scenery, interesting information and amazing cakes, like little works of art.



Our Craft Group has also been making poppies as part of the Standing with Giants Appeal.



The statues have now been moved to Waddesdon. This involves carefully removing all poppies on their plinths for cleaning and where possible reapplying them. After prolonged exposure to the elements a number of poppies have deteriorated, hence the appeal to all WIs for help. Although there was quite a short timescale the group have knitted or crocheted over 100 poppies to be added to the appeal.

Around the Counties

Broughton Astley WI

Broughton Astley WI crafters have made a wonderful green hearts display for this year's *#Show the Love* campaign with display boards in our village hall and green hearts in the centre of the village. Both displays aim to draw attention to the issues of climate change and suggest small ways in which we can all make a difference - by upcycling and recycling, car sharing, shopping locally and of course, what many of us remember from our childhood, 'Make Do and Mend'!



Hinckley Canalside

Ann, Mary and Bron went on the WI holiday to Al-vaston Hall, a Warner Hotel just outside Nantwich in Cheshire last week. What a lovely place! The entertainment, food and all facilities were at a really high standard. We were part of a group of two coaches from Leicester who joined many others from other districts. Our coach driver was really entertaining as well as very knowledgeable on the areas we visited.



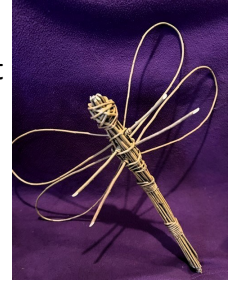
We had two one day trips during our stay to Chester and Liverpool. Chester was a really beautiful city with a surrounding walkable city wall, and Liverpool – well, we are all old enough to remember the start of the Beatles and of course Billy Fury! Some of our ladies



went on a city bus tour where they were able to appreciate the Beatle Story in more detail whilst others, who had done this in their youth, appreciated the dock and waterfront area and the Billy Fury connections.

Oakham WI

Oakham WI had a busy start to 2026. We began with our annual post-Christmas lunch held at Rutland Water Golf Club, attended by 40 of our members. Our history group and book club met up, and we held a “social six” where members meet up in groups of six at a variety of venues for coffee and a chat, a good opportunity to know each other better.



The speaker at our January meeting was excellent and thoroughly recommended. Caroline Bendix spoke to us about the history of bookbinding; a dry subject, you might have thought, but it was anything but. She had an easy-to-listen-to and amusing style, which made the subject fascinating and had all of us entranced.



In February members visited the revitalised Jewry Wall museum in Leicester. On arrival we enjoyed coffee in their cafe overlooking the site and then had a guide take us round the walls and explain about the baths that were there in Roman times. We then went round the interactive exhibits and learned about Roman life in Ratae (Leicester), which proved to be fascinating. This was followed by lunch in the cafe. This museum is well worth a visit, and we were well looked after by the lovely staff.

In February we held one of our monthly craft sessions, this time learning willow weaving. We were all proud of the fish and dragonflies that we made.

We are looking forward to another exciting WI year.

Little Bowden WI



For our February meeting, Little Bowden welcomed Jacqueline Oliver who gave us a fascinating talk on the history of wedding dresses. From the Regency Period where coloured fabrics, empire lines and yards of muslin were very much the choice favoured by a bride to the 19th century where we saw the introduction of white wedding dresses following the wedding of Queen Victoria, very much a softer and more romantic choice with the use of satin and lace. This was then simplified as we moved through the 1920s and 1930s with waist lines dropping and skirts rising slightly and then in the 1940s to early 1950s due to rationing it was very much, reuse, recycle and repurpose with a

bride wearing a remade dress or if lucky a dress from fabrics such as parachute silk. The 1960s brought simplified, elegant lines once again both long and short, with the 70s favouring a much more romantic folk style. No one will forget the big sleeves and metres of silk taffeta silk of the 1980s where opulence was definitely the choice following the wedding of Lady Diana Spencer and Prince Charles - we all remember those creases as the bride stepped out of her carriage! During the 1990s and 00s we saw the rise of celebrity weddings featured in the pages of glossy magazines, with dress choices simplified once again. So what graces the catwalk now in the 21st Century - the answer is anything, leaving a bride empowered to choose what is right for her!



Wing WI



Wing WI meets the Rutland Sea Dragon February 2026 meeting

Wing WI is 100 years old in October this year but we met our match in the 180 million year old Rutland Sea Dragon, We even had cupcakes for the occasion made by one of our members. Joe Davis from the Leics and Rutland Wildlife Trust started with a brief outline of the history of the nature reserve area of Rutland Water. Besides the successful osprey breeding programme the reservoir attracts countless other native and migratory birds as well as animals such as otters. Joe then described how he found the fossilised ichthyosaur in one of the wildfowl lagoons in 2021, Only the first step, a painstaking excavation and identification by paleontologists followed before the "dragon" was removed in heavy sections. It is currently being cleaned, a 2-year process, before it is brought back to be displayed in Oakham museum. Joe illustrated its full 10 metre size by unrolling a life-size poster on the village hall floor.

A successful meeting brought in nearly 30 visitors as well as WI members - "one of our best ever" was the verdict.



Hinckley Canalside WI

Our speaker at our February meeting, was Paul Gardner (Hinckley District Past and Present), who has a big interest in local heritage. He gave us a talk on Hinckley oddities, like marks on the walls of old buildings and photos of what they look like now. He then showed us a video of all the jitties and yards in Hinckley and told us about the history of them. There were 83 jitties and yards in Hinckley in the 1980's and 511 houses in these yards. 277 homes were unfit for habitation.



Around the Counties

Glenfield WI

This month we welcomed Dave Andrews who treated us to an entertaining afternoon with his talk entitled '100 Years of Auntie'. He started off with a potted history of how he came to live in Leicester via the withdrawing from a hat, of a slip of paper with Leicester University written on it. This was followed by a brief resume of his career in education and then his time with Radio Leicester. From then on, Dave gave us a history of the early days of Radio/TV and the BBC. One piece of information which caught our interest was the possible origin of the phrase 'back to square 1'. Apparently in 1927, The Radio Times printed a picture of a football field divided into a grid with the home goal mouth in square 1. This was to help those listening to a football commentary on the radio to picture the position of the ball during the game. So, if the ball was kicked back towards the home goal, the commentator would say, 'they're now back to square 1!'. A phrase which is now in common use.

We listened to recordings of dramatic events such as George V making the first Christmas Day Speech, the abdication speech of Edward VIII and Neville Chamberlain's announcement in 1939 that the country was now at war. Presenters who were once household names were recalled. Richard Dimbleby and Cliff Michelmore to name just two. Mrs Dale's Diary got a mention, Housewife's Choice and of course the still running Woman's Hour. Television arrived and children were able to enjoy the delights of Muffin the Mule, Watch with Mother and Sooty, whilst older viewers could tune into Dr Who, Dixon of Dock Green. Emergency Ward 10 or even Dr Finlay's Casebook!

Finally, we were reminded of the great Spaghetti-Tree hoax that Panorama fooled their audience with on 1st April 1957. I'm sure many people reading this will know exactly what I'm talking about,

and there's always Google for those who are too young to remember!!

Glenfield WI meet every second Wednesday in the month at St Peter's Church Rooms at 2pm.



Witherley WI

This month's meeting was held at St Peter's Church, Witherley, due to flooding in Atterton Lane preventing access to the Parish Rooms. Many thanks to the Church for allowing us to use this wonderful building and to the stoic WI members who attended the meeting.

January was a quiet month for the WI but we did have a very enjoyable visit to Hotter Shoes in Mancetter. We were spoilt with cake, alcoholic and non alcoholic, and most members attending either bought or ordered shoes or boots.

We have some exciting events to look forward to including, in March, the St Giles Hospice Quiz, 'Agatha Crusty, the Village Hall Murders' performed by Baddersley Amateur Theatrical Society and the Annual Council Meeting at Leicester Grammar School.

Members have expressed interest in a Summer Outing to Harvington Hall in Herefordshire. It is our 60th Anniversary in October and plans for a Birthday Party are well in hand.

Following on from last month's Resolution vote, the most popular resolution was Accessible Public Toilet Facilities, which will now go forward to the Federation.

Our speaker this month was Sheila Johnston, a member of Mancetter WI, who spoke about the Atherstone Shrove Tuesday Ball Game. The game originated in the reign of King John. To increase his popularity, King John travelled the country throwing gold out to the people. In Atherstone, this happened on Shrove Tuesday and started the tradition of the annual Shrove Tuesday Ball Game. The Game did not stop even during WWI and WWII. Nina Marshall thanked Sue for her very informative talk.

Many thanks to Sue D, Lynne L, Sarah S and Jan H for the delicious refreshments which followed.

We'd love to hear what you've been working on! Please send in a short article about what you've been up to lately and any exciting plans or events you have coming up. Sharing your updates helps keep everyone connected and inspired—so don't be shy, we can't wait to celebrate your news!

Around the Counties

Illston on the Hill

After a non-starter meeting in January due to snow, February brought Richard Warren to Illston-on-the-Hill WI to talk to us about **“Walks and Talks in Leicester”**

Richard, a former police officer who served in the Highfields area of Leicester, developed a deep appreciation for architecture during his time there. Surrounded by the stunning Georgian and Victorian houses of the neighbourhood, he found himself fascinated by the city’s architectural history and character.

Leicester, one of the oldest cities in England, has a rich and varied past. During Richard’s talk, we learned about the striking contrasts between the lives of the wealthy and the poor, particularly during the Industrial Revolution. At that time England became the centre of the woollen industry. As industry thrived, households doubled in number and the population trebled. To accommodate this rapid growth, new homes were built – often three storeys high, and sometimes even four – with different families occupying each floor.

Richard also shared intriguing details from the world of construction, the term *“footings”* originated from the fact that many house foundations were literally one foot deep!

He explained how Leicester’s landscape shaped many of its place names. Once a small town surrounded by open fields, areas such as *Southfields* and *Highfields* took their names from their geography – “Southfields” referring to the fields to the south and “Highfields” to the elevated land overlooking them. Similarly, the former workhouse, built on the crest of a hill was fittingly named *“Hillcrest”*.

Richard’s talk was both fascinating and enlightening, making familiar street names and landmarks suddenly take on a new meaning. Full of historical insights and local stories, his presentation brought Leicester’s past vividly to life. In addition to giving talks Richard also leads guided walks around the city, offering a wonderful way to explore Leicester’s unique heritage up close.

We ended our meeting in the normal way, with delicious cakes and coffee.

Ratby WI

The ladies of the Ratby WI enjoyed a craft evening for their February meeting.

We discovered the history behind the Chinese Lunar new year and each member decorated a red envelope with a coin and had fun finding out about their Chinese horoscope. We also decorated a Valentine’s Day book mark and rounded up the evening with a cup of tea and a piece of cake.



New Barkby WI

As New Barkby’s January meeting was cancelled, Shirley Franklin, Vice-President, welcomed members and two visitors to the first meeting of 2026.

Speaker, Jane, from Jak’s Art in Coalville, gave a power-point presentation on the art of “sustainable stone carving” – her choice of medium.

There were plenty of her creations of flora and fauna, demons, and statues and memorial tablets, some shown on screen and Jane had also brought some for display. A question and answer period followed on from the talk. Also, if anyone is interested, Jane offers workshop sessions in stone carving.

The competition for an “item made of stone” was won by Liz Henfrey, who had found a stone on a beach, which seemed to have a facial image on it.

The vote of thanks was given by Jean Brutnall.

Around the Counties

Barrow Upon Soar

In January we launched our 'Calendar Girls' Programme. You won't see any nakedness in our CN reports but there will be a lot of Sunflowers! For a Christmas gift each member had been given a small gift bag containing 2026 programme, packet of tissues & Sunflower Name Brooches.

For Our February meeting we held our first 'SHOW & TELL MEMBERS EVENING' the idea originally for this meeting was so that all the members could get to know each other. Members were encouraged to show and tell anything they were proud of. And what a selection! The 'show' part took the form of displays of work around the room which included Sugar Craft, Card & Lace making, Quilts, Painting, Panto Costumes to name a few. We were encouraged to mingle, chat to other members, visit the display tables and ask questions about them.

The 'tell' was a brief opportunity for members to show their item and tell other members how it had come about, all in 5 minutes - Bit like Speed dating, WI Style! We heard from One member with a life long mission to replant snowdrops, One who has raised over £48,000 in 35 years for children's cancer charities by knitting toys, One of our members heartbreaking story of her struggles with myeloma & how she still crafts, One who makes 'Project Linus' cuddle quilts for newborns, One who made a jelly roll bed cover by accident!. Then our three youngest members told us about an 'impromptu' book club they belong to. Our newest member told her story of her brain injury & how she copes with her life now not remembering anything before the injury & still amazingly raising a small child.



Anstey WI



Members of Anstey WI were delighted to receive a photograph of Marian Driver and Wendy Layton enjoying dinner and a glass of wine at the beginning of the federation holiday to Alvaston in Cheshire, so it came as a dreadful shock to hear on the day were due home to hear that Wendy had died. There was a great outpouring of grief, for Wendy was a valued and much-loved, longstanding member. I called her "Willing Wendy." She could always be counted on to volunteer. Her favourite tasks were judging the cakes in our annual baking contest, and collecting entrance money at our garden party. *Nobody* got past Wendy. She was also our friendly meet and greeter, often giving hugs to fellow members Her very well attended funeral at St Mary's church in the village demonstrated how well loved she was, by other organisations too. Several of our newest members were along with those who had known her longer. She leaves a gaping hole in our ranks.

The January meeting opened with a minute's silence in Wendy's memory, and our speaker, Vanessa Morgan, worried that she should omit from her talk "Tales Grandad told" an anecdote involving an undertaker and a corpse, but was reassured that Wendy loved a giggle. The tales were a fascinating glimpse of country life near Cannock Chase long ago. Vanessa read the tales from her Grandad's own writings in a wonderfully clear voice. The competition, "a favourite book" was won by a children's encyclopaedia owned by Sheila Timms, full of colourful illustrations Its extremely dilapidated state attested to how much it had been read. Someone even suggested taking it to TV's repair shop. Jan Darby came second with Margaret Hoskins and Beryl Boyes tied in third.



Around the Counties

North Kilworth WI

In January the North Kilworth WI welcomed Joanne Mungovin to give a talk on Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man, Joanne has spent many years researching the life of Joseph Merrick and written a book about his life and his family and friends.

We were taken on a journey through his life from his roots in Whitechapel, London where his father was born and his father's move to Leicester where he met Joseph's mother. Joanne shared the myth around Joseph's condition which detailed his mother being frightened by an elephant at the Humbergate Fair. (his condition is known as Proteus syndrome).

We enjoyed many photographs of locations around Leicester where Joseph and his family lived and the timeline of his life in these places. Our journey continued through his working years and on into his life as his condition worsened and the rejections he received from his family, friends and colleagues. Due to his condition and needing to work Joseph decided at the age of 17 to check himself into the Leicester Union Workshop in order to survive and stayed there until he decided to move to London to join the world of shows and exhibitions.

We discovered after a short time in the shows and exhibitions that he came back to London and was looked after in Bedsted Square by the Royal London Hospital where he was visited by many people including royalty. He died on 11th April aged 27 years.

Joanne gave an incredibly detailed account of his life and the members engaged in questions after the presentation was finished.

This was an evening we thoroughly enjoyed and we thanked Joanne for an extremely interesting talk.

Glenfield Park

After having to cancel the last meeting because of the weather it was very pleasant to meet up this month particularly as we had an excellent speaker in Dave Andrews talking about the Bones in the Carpark. Who knew that a small book about the kings and queens of England could lead to a love of history and reporting on the excavation of the remains of Richard the third. Dave graduated with a degree in history and quite by chance came to Leicester where he taught history for a number of years. He then decided he would like to go into broadcasting and while volunteering at Radio Leicester he had a lucky break and became a full time reporter there. He gave a brief history of Richard's life detailing how he became king after Edward the fourth. At the Battle of Bosworth as he charged at Henry Tudor his horse got caught in marshy ground and so he was buried at Greyfriars Priory. We then learnt how Phillipa Langley had been pushing for a dig to try and recover Richard's remains and this was eventually agreed. Dave was obviously chosen to report on the dig. He explained that Richard Buckley, the lead archaeologist, was very sceptical but as we all know on the first afternoon a skeleton was discovered in the carpark on the site of the Greyfriars Priory and from being a small town 90 miles from London, Leicester became famous and the world press descended. A thoroughly fascinating and informative talk enjoyed by all the members. Very worthwhile.

Next meeting is a talk by Bishop Fox entitled a Magical History Tour.

Do join us. We meet on the 1st Thursday in the Memorial Hall. You would be very welcome.

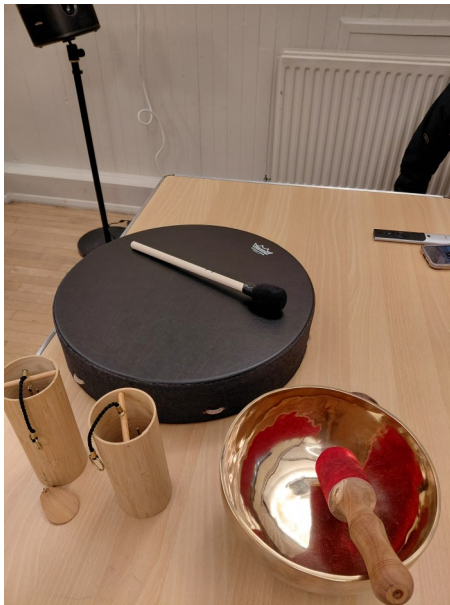


Around the Counties

Great Bowden WI

For our speaker this month we invited Hollie Danvers to talk to us about Holistics. This is a subject I knew nothing about but Hollie soon enlightened me.

We had been asked to bring a blanket to the meeting but we were in the dark as to why. Hollie explained she was going to give us a Sound bath and we needed to wrap ourselves up in our blanket as sometimes body temperatures fell during the Sound bath process. Soon we were all snuggled down under our blankets and with our eyes closed Hollie explained that sound vibration can help reduce anxiety and stress, lower blood pressure, help circulation and is generally relaxing. We concentrated on the various implements of sound Hollie demonstrated which included a drum and bells (see photo). After about 20 minutes under the spell we opened our eyes and did indeed feel relaxed and calm.



Hollie explained that all body parts are interconnected and that it was important to look after the skin, have a good diet and take vitamins, if necessary.

The session ended with a short question and answer session.

Woodhouse Eaves WI

Don't panic!

Well done, the Woodhouse Eaves WI committee! When the speaker for the monthly meeting on Wednesday 18th February cancelled at the very last minute, there was no panic, just a swift decision to switch to an evening of board games.

Around thirty members attended and, after welcoming our visitors and hearing news from the various clubs within the WI, everyone settled down to scrabble, spillikins and card games. Concentration occasionally lapsed on account of the liveliness of the conversation, but we all enjoyed playing games that we hadn't played for a long time or, in some cases, never before!



Thringstone WI

Thringstone WI celebrated the Chinese New Year at our meeting.

There is a history of over 3,500 years, rooted in traditions and myths. It evolved into a celebration of spring, renewal and family reunions officially fixed in the Lunar Calendar. Each member received a chart of the year of the Chinese zodiac showing the year they were born, the animal and their personality, this year is the year of the horse. Every member received red and gold envelopes, inside gold chocolate coins for luck and fortune. We couldn't run to gold coins. There were bowls of tangerines to bring good luck. We made Red and gold paper fan lanterns, the theme colour.

A lucky enjoyable meeting, as the date was on the day of The Chinese New Year.

Sheepy WI

At our February WI meeting the Sheepy WI members enjoyed a fascinating talk by Jon Smith of Warwickshire & Solihull Blood Bikes, the volunteer group that provides a vital out-of-hours courier service for the NHS. Jon is such a dedicated member of the charity and was truly inspiring.

We learnt how volunteer riders transport blood, samples, medication, donor breast milk and spinal fluid, between hospitals across the region, often during the night and in all weather conditions. The talk gave us a real insight into the dedication of the volunteers and the important role they play in supporting patient care and all in their own time and at no cost to the NHS.

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