

Annual Council Meeting 2026— Thank you for coming!



Three speakers - Heartwize, who will become our charity of the year, Leicestershire Lord Lieutenant, and Adam Henson, Farmer and Broadcaster. We received lots of positive feedback about the day so thanks to everyone who made it a success. Two of our talented WI members from Kirby Muxloe WI, created the beautiful pedestal and table displays at the ACM. And a huge thank you to Wigston Magna WI for the Raffle.



<p>Federation Chairman Glenice Wignall glenicewignall@lrfwi.org</p>	<p>Federation Treasurer Mary Hobbs maryhobbs@lrfwi.org</p>	<p>Federation Secretary Tina Lee fedsec@lrfwi.org</p>	<p>Office Manager/ Accounts Lois McKinder wihouse@lrfwi.org</p>	<p>Finance finance@lrfwi.org</p>
--	---	--	--	---



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

WI House, 135 Loughborough Road, Leicester, LE4 5LQ

Tel: 0116 2661342 Email: wihouse@lrfwi.org

Opening hours: Mon-Wed 9.30am—2.30pm

www.leicestershire-and-rutland.thewi.org.uk or scan QR code

Find us on Facebook: Leicestershire & Rutland Federation of WIs



From the Board



We are delighted to share that this year's Annual Council Meeting (ACM) was a great success. The event was filled with laughter, engaging discussions, and a wonderful sense of community. Our speakers were thoroughly enjoyed, and in particular Adam Henson was very warmly received, bringing both insight and humour to the day. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all members for their continued support and for helping to make the event such a memorable occasion. We hope you all enjoyed it as much as we did.

Looking ahead, the National Annual Meeting is just around the corner. All WIs should now have received information regarding the watch party arrangements, as well as details about selecting a delegate to represent your WI. If you have not yet confirmed your delegate, please let the office know as soon as possible so that arrangements can be finalised. We look forward to another inspiring event and to your continued involvement.

Glenice Wignall

Chairman Leicestershire & Rutland Federation of WI

From the House



We are pleased to share that staffing levels at WI House are beginning to improve, and we are making steady progress in strengthening our office cover. Thank you for your patience and understanding during this period, as the team continues to balance catching up on outstanding work, maintaining the day-to-day running of the House, and preparing for the upcoming National Annual Meeting. Your continued support makes a real difference as we work through this busy time.

A reminder that WI House is currently open Monday to Wednesday, from 9.30am to 2.30pm. We appreciate your cooperation with these hours and encourage you to get in touch during this time for any enquiries or support. We look forward to welcoming you and continuing to assist you as best we can.

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.

Via Learning Hub – and how to access it

Dear Members, If you have not already used this new website, I recommend it to you – it is **mostly** free to WI members.

What is Via?

Via replaces the old WI Learning Hub. **VIA is the WI's digital home for learning**, bringing courses, talks and ideas together in an accessible, clear, welcoming space for everyone. While WI members access the majority of learning for free, VIA welcomes all learners.

How do I access Via?

Simply type **Via** into your search engine (Google for example). You will see **Via Learning Hub Home Page**. Click onto this. You will see a home page which says: **Lifelong learning, VIA us!**

I would now recommend that you go to the **top right hand corner** of the page and **click on Login**.

Then click on **WI Member Login**. If you use My WI, it will already have your user name and password – so all you have to do is click on **Sign In**.

If your details are not there, then use the email address that is registered on the MCS for you and create a password.

Then click **View all Courses** and you will see multiple course that you can access. The categories are on the left hand side bar if you are looking for a specific topic - see below:

Wellbeing & Lifestyle(17)	Business & Finance(21)
Accessibility & Awareness(4)	Technology & Digital Skills(20)
Arts & Crafts(36)	Maths & Language(16)
Food & Home(2)	History & People(43)
Science & Environment(5)	Federation & WI(5)

Membership Committee

If you type **WI Meeting Packages** into the Search Bar at the top of the page you can see these resources.

The WI Meeting Packages do cost £30 – economic in the context of speaker charges - and can be downloaded to show at a WI Meeting. So, you can have a back up if your speaker suddenly cancels or you can schedule a package into your WI programme of speakers.

Make the most of your subscription and enjoy! Mandy.

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 May 2026 in light of the Supreme Court judgment.

To recap:

‘ In May 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 May 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 May 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 May 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.

Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all members for their continued support of our events. Your enthusiasm and involvement are what make these occasions so enjoyable and successful.

We are delighted to announce that Roy Carter is back by popular demand, this time performing in Barkby Thorpe on 12th May. The first event was a tremendous success and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended, so we encourage you to book early to avoid disappointment. Plans are also underway for our Autumn Lunch, with further details to be shared soon—so do keep an eye out for updates!

Finance and House Management Committee

The Finance and House Committee would like to remind all WIs that subscriptions are now due. We kindly ask that these are submitted promptly to ensure there is no disruption to your WI's cover. Please note that if subscriptions are not received during April, your WI will not be covered by insurance for that month. To avoid this, we strongly encourage you to return your completed form along with payment as soon as possible. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

We are also pleased to highlight the holiday that was launched at the ACM, which has already generated great interest. As always, spaces are filling quickly, so we encourage members to book early to avoid disappointment.

Public Affairs Committee

The Public Affairs Committee would like to report that the recent resolution briefing held at WI House was well attended and has successfully opened up thoughtful discussions ahead of the National Meeting in June. It was encouraging to see members engaging with the issues and considering the resolutions in detail.

As we move closer to the National Meeting, we would like to remind all WIs of the importance of participation. Please ensure that a delegate is appointed and sent to represent your WI so that your votes are properly cast and your voice is heard at a national level. Thank you for your continued involvement in this important part of WI life.

Arts & Crafts Committee

The Arts and Crafts Committee is pleased to share that a range of new events have recently been released, offering plenty of creative opportunities for members to enjoy. It is wonderful to see such strong interest already, with many sessions filling up quickly.

We encourage members to book early to avoid disappointment, as places are limited and demand is high. We look forward to welcoming you to these upcoming events and seeing your creativity in action.

National Annual Council Meeting 2026

We urgently need all WIs to return their completed delegate slips to WI House as soon as possible.

These details are used to ensure that each WI receives the correct mailing, which is sent out directly from National. Any delays in returning slips may result in incorrect or missed communications.

If you have not yet submitted your delegate slip, please do so immediately. Thank you to those who have already returned theirs.

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

Events—What's On?

2026:

Saturday 9th May— (Physical) First Aid Course for adults, St Peter St Paul Church Hall, Market Square, Uppingham, LE159QH—Free

Thursday 14th May— (Physical) First Aid Course for adults, Beedles Lake Golf Club—Free

Tuesday 19th May—Market Bosworth Treasure Hunt, The Square Market Bosworth—£8

Thursday 21st May—Market Bosworth Treasure Hunt, The Square Market Bosworth—£8

Thursday 4th June—National Annual Meeting Watch Party, Goodwood Bowls 8a Crofters Dr, Leicester LE5 2FH

Thursday 4th June— University of Leicester Botanical Gardens evening tour, Glebe Rd, Oadby, Leicester LE22LD - £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, St Helens Church LE65 1AA —£10

Saturday 12th September— Mental Health First Aid Champion, Church Rooms, Quorn, Loughborough, LE12 8DP—Free

Thursday 17th September— (Physical) First Aid Course for adults, Mary Forrayn Centre, St Peters Catholic Church, Leicester Rd, LE10 1LW—Free

Saturday 19th September—Lampshade Making, WI House, 135 Loughborough Road, LE4 5LQ—£25

Wednesday 7th October— (Physical) First Aid Course for adults, All Saints Church, Church Street, Oakham, LE15 6AA.—Free

Monday 26th October—Ghost Walk, Frankie and Bennys, St Peters Square LE14SA —£10

Saturday 7th November— Autumn Dabble Day, The Langton Village Hall LE8 0PJ—£25

Saturday 28th November— Stratford Christmas Market, Coaches from WI House, Burbage & Oakham—£20

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.

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

Gopsall Villages WI

Our speaker in January 2026 was our member, Gill Lawrence, with a talk on Chile and Easter Island (Rapa Nui). Gill visited South America in October 2025 for three weeks starting in Santiago and during that time travelled 10,000 miles and packed and unpacked 10 times in 7 different hotels. She showed some amazing photographs of Chile, including the graffiti in Valparaiso, the Torres del Paine in Patagonia, the Moon Valley in the Atacama Desert and the wonderful statues in Easter Island. Report of the 'holiday' to Chile are also in the February and March editions of the Market Bosworth Aspect magazine. As always, a lovely, interesting presentation from Gill.



In February 2026 we had a welcome return visit from Roxanne Dinsdale, this time with a demonstration of Egyptian clothing and dance moves. Roxanne has been a professional Middle Eastern dancer, snake charmer and fire eater since 1985! Members were encouraged to join in with the moves and the use of the veil. Everyone could participate - even if seated. A fun time was had by all.

March brought some unusual visitors to Congerstone Village Hall in a talk on 'My journey to becoming a taxidermist' by Carol Manchester. In a very amusing and most interesting presentation, Carol told us how she had eventually become a taxidermist after spending her countryside childhood looking after and bringing wild animals back to health. One of her most amusing and unexpected stories was how she has a regular order in November to provide preserved rats and moles for 'PestTech', an annual pest control conference for professionals involved in rodent control



Carol clearly had a great love of the creatures that she came into contact with, either to restore them to an active life or to preserve them for posterity. She told us in detail of the painstaking processes involved in each stage of taxidermy, even down to using small amounts of cosmetic lip filler to get 'exactly the right expression'. Carol brought with her some examples of her work, one of which was a beautiful Kingfisher preserved forever for a gentleman who had watched it for several seasons on a river bank before it died.

North Kilworth WI

At their February meeting, North Kilworth W.I. welcomed Mel from Cross Counties Farm Vet's. A day in the life of a farm vet is a mixture of the inevitable emergencies/problems, and also routine testing and preventative work. TB testing is one of the important jobs. Positive results can be catastrophic for the farmer. TB, which is a notifiable disease, is spread by badgers, deer, and from cattle to cattle, for example when in transport or at markets. Another large part of a vets work is routine blood sampling and types of testing/screening which can be useful for prevention of diseases. Currently there is government funding for BVD testing (Bovine viral diarrhoea) Help is often required by the farmer for breeding of his herd - investigations before breeding can identify animals which may have problems giving birth. Animals will be scanned if they have fertility issues, and scanning is also routinely carried out during pregnancy.



Around the Counties

Wing WI

Transcription: Wing WI Minutes of First Meeting
held at Wing School Room 23rd October 1926

A meeting was held in the School Room on Saturday afternoon Oct 23rd to hear an address by Mrs Bland of Brighthurst, Market Harborough, on the subject of "Women's Institutes". There were 40 present at the Meeting & such was the interest aroused by the address, that it was decided to form an Institute in Wing on the spot. Tea was served after the address & afterwards Mrs Bland kindly consented to inaugurate the "Institute" & 36 out of the forty present joined as members.

The Members then voted for those to be on the Committee and eleven were elected. They then voted for the President & Vice President, when Miss Brocklebank was elected President & Mrs. Worrall Vice-President. Miss Brocklebank then passed a vote of thanks to Mrs Bland for her kindness in having given such an interesting address on the "Women's Institute Movement" & for the help she has given in forming the Wing Institute.

The Committee then met and elected Miss Routh as their Secretary and Treasurer, and Mrs Neill as reserve Secretary and Treasurer.

It was decided to hold the first meeting on Wednesday Nov 3rd at 6.30 in the School Room & Mrs Bland kindly promised to help and also to give a Demonstration on Slipper Making.

It was decided in the future that the Meeting should be held on the 1st Thursday of each month at 6.30 in the School Room.

List of Officers for 1926 and 1927

President Miss Brocklebank

Vice-President Mrs Worrall

Sec & Treas Miss Routh

Res Sec & Treas Mrs Neill

Committee for 1926 & 1927

Mrs H Dexter

Mrs Hickling

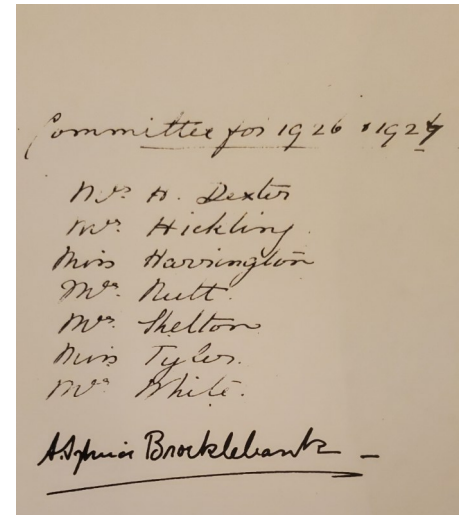
Miss Harrington

Mrs Nutt

Mrs Tyler

Mrs White

Signed by Miss Brocklebank



LRFWI COUNTY NEWS CALENDAR 2025/26/27

COUNTY NEWS ISSUES 2025/26	DEADLINE FOR ITEMS TO BE SUBMITTED	RELEASE DATE FOR COUNTY NEWS ISSUES (3 rd Mon of month)
JUNE EDITION	1 st May 2026	18 th May 2026
JULY/AUGUST EDITION	1 st June 2026	15 th June 2026
SEPTEMBER EDITION	1 st August 2026	17 th August 2026
OCTOBER EDITION	1 st September 2026	21 st September 2026
NOVEMBER EDITION	1 st October 2026	19 th October 2026
DECEMBER 2026/ JANUARY 2027 EDITION	1 st November 2026	16 th November 2026

Around the Counties

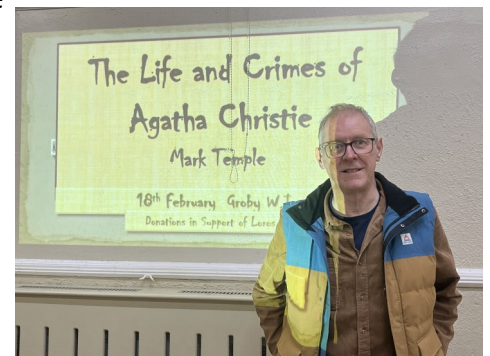
Groby WI

Our speaker for February was Mark Temple talking about 'The Life and Crimes of Agatha Christie' and what a fascinating life she led. Agatha was born with the name Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller in Torquay in 1890 and was of British and American descent. She died, aged 85, in 1976.

Her books have sold over three billion copies and she is the most widely published author of all times, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare! She wrote 80 novels and short story collections as well as fourteen plays. She wrote romantic novels from 1936 under the pseudonym of Mary Westmacott and it is said that they were slightly reminiscent of her own life. She also wrote four non fiction books including an autobiography and an entertaining account of the many expeditions she shared with her archaeologist husband, Sir Max Mallowan. Probably one of her best known plays is The Mousetrap, first performed in 1952 with Sheila Sim and Richard Attenborough and it is still playing in London! I have seen it but feel that it is very dated now.

Agatha came from an upper middle class family and was not educated in her early years as was the norm then, but did go to school in Paris aged 15. In 1914 she secretly married Archibald Christie and at that time began nursing wounded soldiers, after which she became an apothecary assistant, this was probably where her extensive knowledge of poisons came from! She had a child in 1919, Rosalind, but sadly the two did not get on until Rosalind's own husband died. Her first published book was in 1921 in America, The Mysterious Affair at Styles, and featured Hercule Poirot. We obviously have to give Miss Jane Marple a mention, she acts as an amateur consulting detective in Agatha's novels and short stories. Archibald was the financial advisor for the British Empire Exhibition Tour in 1922 and he and Agatha travelled worldwide but she continued to write. In 1924 she was paid £500 per book. Agatha was the first author to introduce a woman as the murderer. 1926 was the start of dark times for Agatha, first her mother died and then Archibald was having an affair with Nancy Neele and the marriage ended. In December 1926, Agatha mysteriously disappeared and her car was found abandoned down an embankment but she was nowhere to be seen. 11 days later she was discovered in Harrogate and what happened to her during that time is one mystery that has never been solved!

In 1930 Agatha married archaeologist, Max Mallowan, she was 40 and he was 27 but they stayed together until she died. The couple spent much of their time during the 1930s and 40s on archaeological digs at Nimrud in Iraq.



Leire WI

At a recent meeting, we welcomed Dr Pamela Mason who shared her extensive knowledge on the plays by Shakespeare and, in particular the role of horses within these. Her interest started at school when she played the part of Helena in A Midsummer Night's Dream and then her role of Desdemona in Othello which birthed her interest in feminism. She explained the plots and intricacies of many of Shakespeare's play with a passion and enthusiasm which was captivating. Dr Mason has taught in schools and the Open University and worked for the Shakespeare Institute and founded the charity Arden RDA which provides horse riding for the disabled.

This month we had an evening of line dancing expertly led by Charlotte Fermin of "Boots 'n Beats" who runs groups for all ages in Kibworth and Mkt Harborough. Charlotte also entertained on Cruise ships until 2019. We learnt several routines to music, not always facing in the right direction and it was a lot of fun. We finished with a group photo and the winner of our cowboy hat competition was Stephanie.



Around the Counties

Market Harborough WI

The Market Harborough WI had a wonderfully creative evening for our February meeting.

We invited Sharon Badger, a local florist, demonstrator and teacher, to show us how to make a beginner's flower arrangement. We all came prepared with some foliage and a mixed bunch of flowers. Sharon demonstrated and explained how to arrange the foliage and flowers for maximum effect. We were then let loose to have a go ourselves! The results were amazing and we were all exceptionally proud of the wonderful flower arrangements we had created. On a dreary February evening it was lovely to see the hall full of spring colour and the scent of all the flowers was lovely too!



Blackfordby WI

At our March meeting we said goodbye to long standing member Jean Mason who is leaving Blackfordby and Blackfordby WI to pastures new!

So we decided to see what the mysterious Artificial Intelligence (AI) had to say about her.

According to AI, *"Jean Mason is a prominent, long-serving member of the Blackfordby Women's Institute."* I think we knew that!

Jean's Key Contributions and Milestones - she has been a member of the Blackfordby WI for over 61 years. Sixty-one years of friendship, service, cake, laughter, raffles, meetings, trips, planning, organising and being part of the heart of this community.

There has been a great deal of community representation by Jean.

On 9 November 2025, she laid the commemorative wreath at the War Memorial in Blackfordby village on behalf of the WI.

AI also suggested that her local involvement included serving as a trustee for the Blackfordby Methodist Church. Whether the technology has got every detail exactly right or not, we all know that supporting the church and village life has always been close to Jean's heart.

And we believe she was part of the local community who helped get Blackfordby Village Hall built — and she was on the original Village Hall Management Committee.

It even said that the Blackfordby Women's Institute was the primary group driving the project, as they required a new permanent home for their activities and village social events.

Jean is much like the WI we know — determined, practical and community-minded.

Our President Jenny Carr mentioned that she was only five when Jean joined Blackfordby WI

Jean was presented with a card and some flowers from her friends at Blackfordby WI and wished her well in her new home at Oaklands.

Though she may be leaving Blackfordby, Jean will always be part of Blackfordby WI.



Around the Counties

Whissendine WI

At our February meeting it was my turn to talk for five minutes about an inspirational woman of the last hundred years and I chose the Polish writer Zofia Kossak. She wrote articles during the war in support of the Jewish population and against the Germans, she was an active member of the Polish resistance, she got arrested and sent to Auschwitz but survived. There was so much I could have said so it was hard to put it all into five minutes but she was an inspirational woman as she stood up for human rights and what she believed in. There are statues to her in Poland and she was also my sister-in-law's grandmother.

Our speaker for the evening was the irrepressible Billy Ivory talking more about his career as a script writer (Made in Dagenham, The Great Escaper, and loads more). This time he brought some slides which delved a bit deeper into the process of writing a script, illustrated by some scenes he showed us from his film Burton and Taylor. He is such an enthusiastic person and regaled us with lots of funny anecdotes, often going off at a tangent to talk about something else. We all enjoyed the fact that he asked us questions about how we thought things might be done, how to set scenes and then he showed us clips so we could see what he meant. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening, Billy is such good company, an excellent speaker and a thoroughly nice man!



Markfield WI

In February our speaker was Rebecca Spilane, a Fraud Prevention Officer with Leicestershire Police. Rebecca's talk was mainly about telephone fraud and the ways and means fraudsters use to enable them to commit fraud. She had many useful tips on dealing with impersonation scams (such as someone claiming to be from your bank) and investment scams. We learned that in these days of AI voice cloning and identity theft it's not a good idea to keep someone talking on the line thinking you're wasting their time indeed we should say as little as possible. One of the most frequent scams is someone calling on behalf of a relative or close friend who quickly needs help. I'm sure we all think that we are scam savvy and wouldn't be fooled but our emotions can get the better of us in such a scenario. The person scammed might not tell anyone as they feel so stupid and as Rebecca pointed out it's one situation where victims of a crime are blamed for their part in it. Rebecca's talk was extremely interesting and educational with a lot of humour along the way and hopefully we will pass on tips we learned to others as she requested.

Our members also took part in the appeal to replace weathered and faded poppies surrounding the 18 soldier stillage at the British War Memorial sending a total of 87 poppies.



Countesthorpe WI

Countesthorpe had a great evening with Hannah's Easter chocolate demonstration. She made an amazing Easter bunny which also became our main raffle prize. Hannah told us how countries grow and make chocolate, the different types of chocolate and why it has become very expensive to buy in the shops due to climate change. She brought along lots of their chocolate animals, cats, dogs, bunnies, truffles, chocolate sweets in various shapes and sizes. They also take orders for birthday cakes in their shop in Leicester. Our ladies loved Hannah and her mother's presentation and they brought along lots of chocolate goodies for our ladies to purchase for the friends and family. We can highly recommend their chocolate demonstration to other WI groups.



Loughborough Ladies

The Loughborough Ladies enjoyed a retro beetle drive after the cancellation of a speaker due to ill health. It proved to be a big hit, lots of fun with plenty of chance for a good old chin



Around the Counties

Ullesthorpe WI

Our first meeting of 2026 was in February. Unfortunately, the speaker couldn't make it so we were very lucky find Jo Coverson, a local Zumba teacher.

This was completely different, not the Fashion on a Ration as expected. Members took part in an hour's exercise called seated Zumba! Jo brought bells and shakers, and we exercised to music from the Sixties. It was a fun afternoon, and we soon realised how important upper body exercise is.

At the monthly craft club meeting members were shown how to draw simple pictures using the techniques of etching. Meanwhile the Book club ladies went to see Wuthering Heights.

Trips are being organised to The National Arboretum, Concordia and the Museum in Lutterworth.

We have welcomed 3 new members so far this year and several visitors. We meet on the second Thursday each month at 2pm in Ullesthorpe village hall.

Thank you to people who have contacted us about the History of Ullesthorpe WI in readiness for the 100th celebration.



Kirby Muxloe WI

Our speaker for March was Roxanne Dinsdale on Myths of Middle Eastern Dance.

Roxanne began by dancing for us and what a show it was, showing off her incredible moves. She explained about the different hip, torso, chest and arm movements and even got us hip wiggling in our seats and practising arm moves! Roxanne told us about the origins of belly dancing and how it had developed from Indian dance troupes travelling through the Middle East many centuries ago. Each country developed their own style and Hollywood had an influence too. The dance form is still evolving today.

Roxanne's costume was stunning - an emerald green satin skirt with a gold bra top both of which were heavily decorated with gold beads and gems.

She brought along other beautiful costumes used for other styles of dance and showed us how she uses props such as veils, sticks and angel or butterfly wings. A very entertaining evening.



Little Bowden WI

March brought a lovely breath of Spring as Little Bowden welcomed the lovely and very creative Rosemarie Oliver, Floral Artist to our WI. Rosemarie gave us a whistle-stop talk on creating our own floral masterpieces using foliage from our garden and a few flowers bought at a supermarket to bring Spring and Easter into your home and onto your front door. Rosemarie shared 'It's all about shape, form and placement!'

From creating a simple hand tied bouquet - top tip always adding your stem on the diagonal with a quarter twist, to a wreath framework using willow, twisted willow, dogwood etc, cut in the green from your garden, so easy to work with to twist into a circle - a wreath you can then save and reuse throughout the year. Rosemarie demonstrated how to make and add small wired bunches of foliage in mixed shape, form and fragrance as well as Spring Bulbs and Easter embellishments. She introduced us to the floral art of 'Kokedama' and how to use elements of this in wreaths and arrangements before moving onto making a simple wooden frame for bouquets/arrangements to avoid the use of oasis or as an alternative to a hand tied. Once again, with top tips and humour, on weaving and tying a frame, before placing foliage and blooms into position. Rosemarie finished our whistle-stop talk with a more traditional table oasis demonstration using garden foliage in a variety of sizes and colour with a few floral highlights, sharing once again top tips on conditioning flowers such as roses before arranging and how to prolong blooms as they look weary to how to correctly wet oasis allowing you to reuse again and again. A fabulous evening with us all feeling inspired to go away, have a go and bring a touch of Spring into our homes.



Around the Counties

Glenfield Park



Well that was a magical evening. Bishop Fox's talk had the clever and intriguing title "A Magical History Tour". He began by insisting he really was a bishop and the only one to be a member of the Magic Circle. Magic is the oldest performing art in the world and the first account was in Ancient Egypt. The oldest trick with cups and balls was actually depicted in the tomb of Beni Hasan and for thousands of years this was the one that was always mentioned whenever the topic of magic came up. The Bishop then surprised us by performing several variations with the reaction of how did he do it. We learnt about the development of magic through the ages up to the Golden Age of Stage Magic which involved Houdini and comprised many great magicians. A very flamboyant one was Chung Ling Soo who brought colour and scale to the theatre. There would be up to 20 people on stage. Chung Lee Soo was the master of illusion in more ways than one as he was in fact not Chinese but English. Bishop Fox then performed some Chinese ring tricks involving two members of the audience. How did they manage to link the rings together when there were no gaps. But if we knew that it wouldn't be magic. A really fascinating and entertaining evening.

We also managed a trip to the Bell Foundry in Loughborough where we had a guided tour of the site and learnt the history and also the process of producing a bell and also the framework needed for support. A thoroughly interesting and informative experience. Very worthwhile

Illston on the Hill WI

Illston-on-the-Hill WI prepared themselves for a luxury cruise around the Royal Yacht Britannia – and were not disappointed. Bill Hayley, who spent 27 years in the Royal Navy, including many aboard the Royal Yacht, brought the subject vividly to life with his extensive knowledge.

Britannia was in service from 1954 to 1997. Designed with three cleverly hinged masts to pass beneath bridges, she combined magnificent state rooms with smaller, cosy spaces—likely favourites of Queen Elizabeth II, where she may have relaxed in private.

On Her Majesty's final departure, the clocks were stopped at 3.01 and have never been restarted, marking an emotional moment before the yacht was decommissioned later that year. Britannia was also the last Royal Navy ship where crew slept in hammocks, while officers and guests had bunks or beds. With around 200 crew on board, the kitchens were always busy.

The yacht travelled widely, including to the Antarctic and St. Lawrence Seaway, assisted in evacuations from Aden, and attended the Hong Kong handover. It also hosted U.S. presidents, and later, Zara Phillips and Mike Tindall honeymooned aboard.

Now berthed in Edinburgh, Britannia attracts thousands of visitors. This was a fascinating, entertaining talk, rounded off with refreshments and friendly chat.

Cossington WI

For the Members Meeting at Cossington we welcomed Libby Jelly.

We were shown seated Chi Kung and relaxation. Libby showed us gentle moves suitable for beginners. Also exercises to help de-stress which all members found really useful. Afterwards she stayed and answered



questions on fitness.



Also in February our Social committee organised a Crazy Golf afternoon at Charnwood Golf Centre. 13 members had a fun afternoon with most in agreement that the last hole was impossible with only 2 members achieving it.

Around the Counties

Thurnby & Bushby WI

At our February meeting we were visited by our local tree wardens Melanie and Bruce Wakerley, who gave us an interesting and engaging talk on the role of a tree warden and the importance of trees to our environment. We learnt about tree preservation orders, which can cover areas as well as individual trees, and how they prevent any cutting of trees. public on their rights regarding trees in neighbouring gardens. Melanie and Bruce are also involved in wildlife conservation in general encouraging wild verges and “no mow” areas where the natural flora can flourish. We were reminded that it takes a very short time to cut down a tree that has taken years to grow.

Harby WI

As a campaign by Harby WI to attract more visitors, especially the younger generation, and bearing in mind current economic austerity, our committee introduced two new attendance categories. The first as a GUEST, whereby any lady is welcome to any meeting whenever they wish. The second category is an OPEN meeting, which goes one step further by welcoming men. We hold three open events per year, with the committee choosing subject titles that appeal to a mixed audience. The open meetings proved popular, especially with our husbands. Both categories are charged a small fee at the door. This spring, we raised our profile by holding a baking stall at the Harby Community Market. The table was chock-a-block with cookies and cakes and everything in between. After three hours of trading, an unexpected sum of £250 was raised.



Witherley WI

Nina welcomed members and one visitor, a former member, Marilyn S. The meeting was very well attended.

March was an exciting month, with several fun activities taking place, including the St Giles Hospice Quiz, 'Agatha Crusty, the Village Hall Murders' performed by Baddesley Amateur Theatrical Society and the Annual Council Meeting at Leicester Grammar School.

The Group Show will be open to the public from 2pm to 4.30pm.

A Summer Outing to Harvington Hall, Kidderminster, on 5th or 11th August was discussed and members were asked to indicate their interest.

Members were advised that it is now a mandatory requirement for them to provide an email address and contact details when on WI outings in case of an emergency.

Our 60th Anniversary Party will take place on 17th October in the Parish Rooms. Catering will be provided by Angie Spencer and singer Ben Morrison will provide the entertainment. We are very lucky that one of the original WI members, Jan Rowlands, is still a current member.

Our speaker for the evening, Analize Jones, gave a wonderful presentation on handwoven bags produced in her homeland, the Philippines. After the presentation, she sold examples of these beautifully made and reasonably priced bags. Elisabeth A thanked Analize for a very informative and entertaining talk.



Thank you to Gill C, Kim W and Pauline F for the lovely refreshments after the talk.

Visitors and new members are always welcome at our friendly WI.

Around the Counties

Hinckley Canalside WI

At our March meeting the speaker was **Tracey Akehurst, The Drunken Botanist**, who shared her knowledge on the history of so many of the drinks familiar to us today. We learned that in the patriarchal society of ancient Rome, sobriety was linked with female virtue. Women found to have drunk alcohol were punished, even put to death. One way of policing was for male relatives to kiss women to detect traces of wine on their breath.

Dating back to the 16th century, on Twelfth Night men would go with their was-sail bowl into the orchard. Cider was poured over the tree roots, sometimes over toast laid at the roots. Then they would make lots of noise, singing, banging pots and pans together, and firing off guns, to scare away any malignant spirits. The ceremony is said to "bless" the trees to produce a good crop in the forthcoming season.

In early 19th century India, medicinal quinine was recommended to British officials and soldiers to prevent malaria; it was mixed with soda and sugar to mask its bitter taste, creating tonic water. An interesting and wide-ranging talk.



Sheepy WI

A Taste of Chocolate at Sheepy WI

Sheepy WI members enjoyed a truly indulgent and informative evening at our recent meeting, when we welcomed The Bittersweet Chocolate Co.

Based in Breedon on the Hill, the company is known for carefully blending high-quality chocolate with natural ingredients to create unique and enhanced flavour experiences. Their chocolates are made without preservatives, bulking agents, or artificial sweeteners, with each ingredient thoughtfully selected to complement both flavour and texture.

We were treated to a fascinating talk by Nigel Holling, who took us on a journey through the history of chocolate. From its origins around 1000BC with the Olmec civilisation, through to 1879 when Lindt began producing chocolate in the form we recognise today, it was an enlightening presentation.

Nigel also explained the different types of cacaos, where they are grown, and the processes involved in harvesting and transforming cacao into chocolate. It was both educational and delicious as throughout the evening, we got to sample a variety of chocolate and tried to guess the amazing flavours that are produced by Bittersweet Chocolate Co.

At the end of the evening, we had the opportunity to buy some of the delicious chocolate he makes.

A great evening was had by all; I think I'm right in thinking we were all full of chocolate by the end of the evening!



Around the Counties

A musical Cream Tea Event

On Thursday, 12th March, several of our members visited Kirby Muxloe Village Hall for a "soulful" afternoon at the Musical Cream Tea charity fundraiser event.

The highlight of the event was guest singer Roy Carter with his impressive history in legendary acts like



The Foundations and The Drifters. Roy delivered a fantastic performance, leading the room singing iconic Motown classics that brought back wonderful memories for everyone.

Of course, the afternoon wouldn't have been complete without the delicious cream tea. A huge thank you to the organizers at the Leicestershire & Rutland Federation for putting together such a harmonious event.

North Kilworth WI

The North Kilworth WI had their first visit of the year, in March. We had a very informative visit to Stanford Hall which is situated just 2 miles from North Kilworth. We were treated to a talk by the current family owners, Nick and Lucy Fothergill who are descendents of the Cave family. They shared the 600 year family history of the Hall through the reigns of many kings and queens. Our tour was then completed by Ginny and her knowledge of the hall was faultless.



Stanford Hall is currently open to the public until mid April, and we enjoyed a cream tea in the cafe and a walk around the grounds.

Wigston Magna WI

For our March meeting we had a seated exercise class taught by Nisha. The exercises are a safe and effective way to improve mobility, strength, and cardiovascular health without the risk of falls. The exercises focus on movements like reaching and marching but Nisha also incorporated laughing therapy and breathing exercises. We had a lot of fun and the exercises could easily be done at home. We also had a very enjoyable lunch at our local Italian restaurant with 16 members attending.

Groby WI

As far as waste treatment goes, it takes one day to clean sewage and 1.4 billion litres is treated every day. 60% of renewable energy is made from sewage with the electricity used in the processes for water and waste. Excess electricity is sold back to the grid. The 'sludge' that is produced from the waste is heated, the gas burned off and it is then given to farmers for fertiliser. It was interesting to learn that medicines taken obviously go through us and can actually affect the water and there are currently many investigations into the effects this has on the water although chlorine does help.

Leanne made us howl with laughter at the unbelievable things that block the sewers: excess amounts of toilet roll, disposable nappies, incontinence pads, baby wipes, dead goldfish, hamsters, gerbils, toys, socks, pants, jogging bottoms, mobile phones, money, jewellery, false teeth, fats and oil. Some of the sewers are absolutely huge and a sofa was found in one of those, it beggars belief!. A 'fatberg' in a Birmingham sewer weighed 300 tonnes - the size and weight of 250 elephants. It costs £10 million annually to clean the sewers, 70% of 40,000 blockages each year is caused by wet wipes. Severn Trent are pledging to make rivers safe for swimming. Where there is a burst water main and supplies are affected, bottled water will be provided for collection from stations but they will deliver to vulnerable members of the public who are unable to collect it. They also have schemes to help with paying bills. All correspondence is available to either large print or braille. I think maybe we all take water and waste processing very much for granted but certainly Leanne's talk was an eye opener.



Advertisements

Monica (Wing WI) Member

Contracted by the Rutland council to provide Home based care



Do you need help with:

- Domestic cleaning
- Personal Care
- Medication and meals
- Disability support
- Hospital to home discharge
- Live in carer
- Respite care and holiday support
- Help with pets



For a CQC registered, safe and trusted carer
Call Monica 07716183474
Office 01536605365

Percurra North Northamptonshire
2 Tresham Street
Kettering NN16 8RS

Advertising Rates 2026

Charity rate £5.00

Commercial rate (including WI members business advertising)

Months	1	3	6	12 = 10% off
Small	£16	£47	£95	£171
Medium	£21	£63	£126	£226
Large	£32	£95	£189	£340

Please pay on receipt of invoice only.

Please send material for County News to **WI House** by email: fedsec@lrfwi.org or post to arrive by the **FIRST** of the preceding month at the latest. **Any WI announcements can be made in County News.**

We do not accept any responsibility for any adverts published in County News.



MARTIN TIBBLES

PAINTING & DECORATING SERVICES

For all your home and Exterior re-decoration requirements by a qualified tradesman.

Covid Vaccinated

Contact Martin on

0116 2910489 or 07855 412 945

Free estimates and advice given.

Excellent references

nearly 40 years experience

with

COSSINGTON OPEN GARDENS

COSSINGTON, LEICESTER. LE7 4UW

SUNDAY/MONDAY 24TH/25TH MAY

11.00am-5.00pm

TICKETS £7.50 (will cover two days) **Children under 16 free**

Many Gardens Open – All within easy walking distance

VARIOUS STALLS

REFRESHMENTS

PIMMS STALL

Bees and Bird Displays

STEAM ENGINE FIRE ENGINE BARREL ORGAN

VARIOUS MUSIC PLAYED DURING THE TWO DAYS

JERUSALEM JAMMERS DANCING DISPLAY

THE SILEBY SLAPPERS (Drummers)

U3A UKELELE BAND

COSSINGTON HISTORY DISPLAY IN CHURCH

FREE PARKING IN TWO CAR PARKS

LEICESTER MODEL RAILWAY GROUP

PROFITS – 50% LOROS and 50% Church Maintenance

Secretary – Penny Weston-Webb – pennywestonwebb2022@gmail.com

07754892842



Creating big smiles
all round

01858 540 317

01572 898 147

0116 298 4744

homeinstead.co.uk/mh



Each Home Instead® franchise office is independently owned and operated.

