

Spring Lunch 2026



Our Spring Lunch in May was a truly lovely occasion, bringing members together to celebrate the season in great company. We were delighted to welcome Charles Hanson as our

guest speaker, who entertained us. The event was filled with warmth, laughter, and a real sense of community, and we hope everyone who attended enjoyed it as much as we did.



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



I am pleased to announce that the wonderful speakers we had at our ACM, HeartWize, will be our charity of the year in 2026. Of course it is very much the decision of each WI whether they donate to the Baldwin Trust, or whichever charity they see fit as long as it is aligned with the WI guidelines.

HeartWize is a charity dedicated to equipping schoolchildren and community members with lifesaving skills like CPR and AED use. Founded by two cardiologists from Glenfield Hospital, HeartWize has trained over 40,000 lifesavers, empowering communities across Leicestershire, Rutland, and beyond.

Glenice Wignall

Chairman Leicestershire & Rutland Federation of WI

From the House



We would like to share an update from WI House regarding a change in our Federation team.

After her time as Federation Secretary, Tina Lee has now left her role. We thank Tina for her dedication and contribution to the Federation and wish her all the very best for the future.

We are pleased to announce that Lois McKinder will be stepping into the role of Federation Secretary from May 2026. Lois joined us in June 2023 as part of the admin support team, focusing primarily on events. In August 2024, she expanded her responsibilities to include accounts, demonstrating her commitment and capability within the organisation.

We are delighted to see Lois take on this new position and look forward to the future with her as part of the Federation team.

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.

New Guidance for Guests, Visitors and Sub-groups



On the 8th April, an email was cascaded from our Federation Secretary to all WI Secretaries about new guidance for the above groups.

The full guidance can be found on My WI , under Running your WI, Resources and Guidance; here is the link:

<https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/running-your-wi/members-resources>

Here are some selected points:

Sub-groups must be self-financing. Some sub-groups are open only to members, some are open to both members and non-members. .

If a WI wishes to open a sub-group to non-members, then it should be open to all to avoid discrimination. You should consult with your own members and the NFWI advise taking advice from the NFWI before doing so.

Sisterhood groups Separate guidance is in place for Sisterhood groups, which are sub-groups that are open to all and are attached to existing WIs or federations; these groups aim to offer support and welcome to the transgender community.

Open Meetings, Guests and Visitors The NFWI usually refer to 'guests' as anyone who attends an 'open meeting', whereas 'visitors' is more about women seeing if they wish to be members. Visitors usually visit up to three times before joining. However, this is up to individual WIs to decide.

If WIs are opening some of their meetings to guests, they must bear in mind two things – firstly, they must maintain a clear member benefit (for example, keeping the majority of their meetings for members only and only opening those with a wider appeal). Secondly, they must follow the principle of 'open to all', which means, for example, that you would need to apply the same rules to anyone who wished to attend.

Monthly Draw

Congratulations to our Monthly Draw winners!

April 2026

1st Prize £25 Nina Daws — Springbrook & Scraftoft WI

2nd Prize £15 Val Risdale — Humberstone Heights & Belgrave WI

3rd Prize £10 Clare Robertson Smith — Ullesthorpe WI

Thank you to all of the members who have supported the Federation by buying a Monthly Draw ticket!



Denman Trust Grant—Free First Aid Courses

The first of the MHFA Champion and British Red Cross Physical First Aid courses have taken place at Hinckley and Market Harborough, in March and April respectively.

Both courses attracted the maximum numbers of participants and were well received.



MHFA Champion Course

The senior trainer (working for MIND) Paul Stuart- Thomson is excellent – knowledgeable, personable, and willing to share his own experiences.

100% of participants indicated they would recommend the course to others and feedback also showed a big confidence and knowledge uplift.

All participants receive a certificate of attendance.



MHFA England offer a range of free resources at [Resources · MHFA England](#).

The One Day MHFA awareness and skills course qualifies you as an Adult MHFA Champion and will teach you to:

- Recognise the main signs and symptoms of common mental health issues
- Provide initial support
- Guide a person towards appropriate professional help
- Be mindful of your own wellbeing
- Develop an understanding of how you can create and maintain a healthier workforce or community
- Knowledge and confidence to advocate for mental health awareness
- Skills to support positive wellbeing

British Red Cross

Physical First Aid for Adults Course

Our trainer was Carla Ballington, a former nurse with a wide range of experience.

It is a tightly paced course, condensing a wide range of first aid treatments (about 16). Delivery is through discussion, information, and practical sessions.



The quality of tuition is very good. There are no tests to pass on this course as the emphasis is on awareness.

All participants are given a First Aid Workbook and Certificate of First Aid Learning.

Denman Trust Grant—Free First Aid Courses

Remaining Free First Aid Courses

DATE	COURSE TYPE	VENUE
Thursday 11 th June	(Physical) First Aid Course for Adults	Ashby Baptist Church.
Tuesday 16 th June	Mental Health First Aid Champion	Methodist Church, Oakham.
Saturday 12 th September	Mental Health First Aid Champion	Church Rooms, Quorn.
Thursday 17 th September	(Physical) First Aid Course for Adults	Mary Forryan Centre, Hinckley.
Wednesday 7 th October	(Physical) First Aid Course for Adults	All Saints Church, Oakham.

Flyers about the above courses are released 3 months prior to the course date. If you would like to book for a free place, please contact your WI Secretary or email wihouse@lrfwi.org with a booking form.

The federation will pay up to £10 in travel expenses.

In return, we ask that for your own WI and a neighbouring WI, you either:

do a write up about your experiences or

you can request that you talk briefly to WI members about your experiences

We also encourage you to book a **free** Heartwize visit to your home WI. Heartwize focus on the problem of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and teach basic resuscitation skills. For the **Heartwize Resuscitation Training Programme**:

Tel: [01455 687993](tel:01455687993)

Mob: [07976 275038](tel:07976275038)

E-Mail: heartwize@heartwize.org

By investing in these two strands of training the LRFWI are offering a balance of health education provision across the two counties.

Finance House & Management

FAO WI Officers : Multi membership and pro rata subscription rates – April 2026

WIs still have the discretion to exercise flexibility, that is to set their own WI share of the subscription - after a committee discussion, which must consider the WI's finances for the coming year. The NFWI and LRFWI share cannot be reduced.

Remember that if you do reduce the WI portion, this reduction must be applied across pro-rata rates for new members joining later in the year.

The NFWI Board of Trustees have now decided that WIs can pro-rata multi members if they so choose.

As multi members only pay the WI share to their second WI, the pro rata rate paid by multi members should be the same as that paid by other members - so all members are treated equally.

Leisure Committee

FEDERATION SKITTLES 2025/6 FINAL

What a fantastic finale to the 2025/6 skittles competition. Congratulations to Narborough & Littlethorpe who won the skittles trophy this year.

After 4 legs Narborough & Littlethorpe had won 3, with Waltham on the Wolds winning 1.

Ashby Spa and Waltham on the Wolds then played a final leg to decide the runners-up. This time Ashby Spa won a leg making it a draw. Amazingly, they had both knocked down a total of 144 skittles overall so it was on to sudden death! Sue C and Pauline bravely stepped up to do the honours and Sue knocked a magnificent 8 skittles down, making Ashby Spa the runners-up. It was a very pleasant evening with true camaraderie all round.



The entry form for the 2026/7 competition is available now. To help out with winter driving, we will not be playing matches in December and January. Smaller WIs are actively encouraged to enter as you only need 4 in a team to take part and they don't have to be the same people for each match. The faces of the ladies pictured are testament to how much fun you could be having but it's not all about winning - it's primarily about having fun with like-minded WI friends. We look forward to receiving an entry form from your WI!

Would you like to be an IFE?

What is an IFE? The initials IFE stand for Independent Financial Examiner and it's pronounced 'iffy', though these folks are far from iffy!

LRFWI has a scheme whereby members (and non-members) are trained to become IFEs to examine the accounts of our WIs at the end of the financial year. As financial statements have to be prepared and checked before WIs annual meetings, most of the work will take place during August, September and October.



IFE's are highly valued by the Federation, and the work they do is very important. If you'd like to join our band of IFEs, please do get in touch. Full training for this role will be given.

For further details please contact the Office on 0116 266 1342 or wihouse@lrfwi.org

2025 Charity of the Year— The Baldwin Trust

The Baldwin Trust has gratefully received donations totaling £1,393.34 from WI members, and extends sincere thanks to all WIs for their generosity. This valued support helps ensure that trips can continue to run at affordable prices throughout the season.



Events—What's On?

2026:

- 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
- Saturday 27th June and Saturday 4th July**—Crewel Workshop, WI House 135 Loughborough Road LE4 5LQ—£40
- 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

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 can fill up before the deadline.

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 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 can be transferred to another member.

Around the Counties

Great Bowden WI

This month we invited Clare Farquhar to demonstrate how to make badges to wear at meetings. Using felt, we each chose two contrasting colours for a backing, added a name disc, and finished with a pin. Some added extra decoration to personalise their badges, and we look forward to wearing them.



Our visit this month was to the Loughborough Bell Foundry, founded by John Taylor and based in Loughborough since 1839. It is the last working bell foundry in the UK, supplying bells to over 100 countries.

We enjoyed a guided tour and learned about its history, including the casting of the "Great Paul" bell for St Paul's Cathedral in 1881. During the First World War, the foundry produced shell cases, and a 47-bell carillon was later built in Queen's Park to commemorate the war.

The museum opened in 1986, with a Trust established in 2016 to protect the site. A major refurbishment in 2024 has preserved the Grade II* buildings and enhanced the museum.

We saw the full bell-making process, from casting to tuning, all carried out on site, with around 25–30 bells made each year. We thoroughly enjoyed the visit and learned a great deal.

Woodhouse Eaves WI

Woodhouse Eaves WI enjoyed a well-attended meeting on 18th March, where local historian Mark Temple shared his digital archive, exploring how Maplewell Road has changed over time. He encouraged preserving photographs and records, as these become valuable sources of social history. The journey began with Oak Cottages (often misnamed Slater's Cottages), once home mainly to farm labourers. Nearby stood the Primitive Methodist Chapel, later repurposed as a bus depot; its graveyard likely became a driveway, as graves could not be built over.



Further up were Avery King's stores, Virgo outfitters, and the Tudor House restaurant, reflecting the village's popularity with 19th-century tourists. The site later changed several times before redevelopment in 2017.

Opposite stands the Curzon Arms (formerly the Anchor Inn), renamed by landlord William Hunt. Nearby Hunts Row cottages once housed residents including Dr Walton. The area later became housing known as Hill Rise.

Higher up were Liberty Hall and the Co-operative store, with views towards Windmill Hill and the village fairground.

Mark's knowledge and members' memories brought the past to life, though the talk ended before reaching the top—leaving everyone eager for another part!

Hathern WI

It is with great sadness that I report the passing on Sunday 26th April, of the longest serving member of Hathern WI, Sheila Swift.

Sheila joined Hathern WI in 1956 shortly after marrying into the village, when her mother-in-law 'suggested' that it would be a good idea to become a member to enable her to get to know people in the village. A suggestion which Sheila valued for the rest of her life. She took on every role in Hathern WI, and in the 1980's joined the Board of Trustees, also becoming Chair of the Arts & Crafts Committee and becoming a craft judge. She excelled in all forms of craft, and became a tutor at Denman College, travelling there by bus on one occasion, just to prove that it was possible. She remained a stalwart member of the WI joining in zoom meetings on her phone during lockdown and only stepping down from the Committee two years ago.

Hathern WI will not be the same without her, she will be sadly missed by all who knew her. Without her encouragement I wouldn't have become President of Hathern WI and vice-Chairman of the Federation. The photograph shows Sheila proudly showing off her Hathern WI top at a lunch last summer.



Wakerley and Barrowden

Wakerley and Barrowden WI members have proudly contributed 520 knitted and crocheted poppies to the *Standing with Giants* installation in Normandy. The project was expertly coordinated by Helen Broom and Caroline McBain. The poppies have now been sent, and we look forward to learning the total number received for this meaningful tribute.



Pictured are our dedicated WI knitters and crocheters with their impressive collection of poppies (left to right): Sue Edwards, Sarah Preston, Pixie James, Helen Broom, and Caroline McBain.

Around the Counties

Little Bowden WI

For our April meeting, Little Bowden welcomed Alan Marchant who gave a fascinating insight into the crucial role women played during World War II at Bletchley Park. Alan briefly outlined the role of the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS), why it made its home at Bletchley Park in 1933 - a strategic, secret location in the countryside offering excellent transport links to London as well as its position between Cambridge and Oxford, for recruitment. At its height Bletchley Park employed over 9000 people of which about 7500 were women, all signing the Official Secret's Act on their first day. Initially debutantes, followed by linguists, mathematicians, those good at solving crosswords, librarians and so on with an age range of 16-24. They worked eight hour shifts around the clock and billeted in the local area making the days far longer when travel, often by pushbike was included. These women carried out roles such as administrators, index card compilers and despatch riders with some going onto work on Bombe and Colossus machines. After the war, they returned to their normal lives unable to talk about their work until the 1970s, at which time their work finally began to be recognised. Queen Elizabeth II unveiled a memorial in 2011 with veterans still coming together annually to remember their work and the part they played.



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.



Forest Group

Kirby Muxloe hosted the first Forest Group meeting of 2026 on 24th March 2026. Sixty members of the Forest Group attended.

Our Speaker was Jed Jaggard of Up An' At Em History. He gave us an hilarious, and occasionally gross, whistle stop tour of Medicine Through the Ages, beginning with Hippocrates. He brought with him a selection of tools used for procedures such as bloodletting and trepanning and, of course, removing parts of the body which usually ended in death.

Who knew that a cure for the plague was to take a live chicken, shave its bottom and strap it to the buboes until the chicken died?



Who also knew that after battles dead soldiers' teeth were pulled out to be sold as false teeth?

He was a brilliant speaker and everyone enjoyed his talk. This was followed by supper provided by Kirby Muxloe and a raffle. A lovely evening.



Around the Counties

Anstey WI

At our April meeting Anstey WI's previously booked speaker had to cancel, so we welcomed back Kyle Newman of the Musical Memory Box. She leads a number of singing for the brain groups, which she had explained to us in January. This time she made us into a singing group. We started with a series of warm up exercises to open the lungs. This caused a great deal of giggling. I

believe you will see why.

We then had a very enjoyable singalong, including popular songs from our youth (for most of us) and singing rounds. Great fun was had by all.

Sheryl Bramley reported back on the County Annual Council meeting, attended by four of our number. Adam Henson of Countryfile fame proved an excellent speaker.

We then enjoyed refreshments including delicious homemade cakes, thanks to our new rota.



Glenfield Park WI

Richard Warren gave an engaging talk to Glenfield Park WI entitled "*Leicester's First Suburb*"—Highfields. In the 17th century, Leicester had only one public well and suffered from diseases such as cholera and typhus, leading to plans for a new suburb. Southfields was chosen, but corruption scandals left the council bankrupt, so plots were sold off. Early buildings included a C of E school and a poor house where Joseph Merrick briefly lived.

Initial housing on Conduit Street was poor and later demolished, but Thomas Merrick Evans later built improved homes for the middle classes in Saxby Street, with indoor bathrooms, gas lighting, and decorative brickwork—many still stand today.

Notable residents included Mr Bunny, whose music school became De Montfort University, and Charles Keene. An amusing feature was separate boarding houses for ladies and gentlemen opposite each other.

We thoroughly enjoyed this informative and entertaining talk. The name Highfields simply comes from the high fields at one end of the area.



Glenfield WI

Our meeting this month focused on household waste and what happens to it. Sarah Varnham gave an

interesting and thought-provoking talk on reducing landfill waste, the importance of recycling, and separate food waste collection. We also learned how manufacturers are reducing packaging, and how recycling materials such as aluminium saves significant energy.



Great Bowden WI

Just recently, Great Bowden WI visited the Houses of Parliament. Fifteen members travelled to London, passing through airport-style security before beginning a guided tour of Westminster Hall and the Palace of Westminster, including the Lobby and Chambers. After lunch in the Jubilee Café, they watched the Speaker's Procession and attended a Q&A session with local MP Neil O'Brien.

The group also observed proceedings in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. It was a busy and very enjoyable day, with thanks given to Steven Whelband and Neil O'Brien for their support.



Around the Counties

Whissendine WI

Our March meeting began with Marion Lawrie giving us a short speech about Eleanor Roosevelt, her chosen inspirational woman. It was interesting to learn that she was a Roosevelt by birth and married Franklin D Roosevelt, a fifth cousin once removed. She was the longest serving First Lady of the United States and though widowed in 1945 she went on to serve as a United States delegate to the United Nations General Assembly and took a leading role in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She was, in her time, one of the world's most widely admired and powerful women.

Our speakers for the evening were Charlotte Winn and James Mann from Vine Farm telling us all about their dairy herd. Their milk goes to make local cheeses and ice-cream but one of their more enterprising ideas came about during the pandemic when they opened a self-service milk hut where you can buy a reusable bottle and fill it with milk. This has been very successful and they now have several milk huts locally. It was interesting to learn that every cow has its milk analysed every day and tested for various things including fat content and I was fascinated to see pictures of the milking turntable where the cows step on to it and by the time it's done one rotation they are milked.

James' mum was there too and gave us a history of the farm, now in its fourth generation and it was lovely to see pictures of people and buildings over the years, from humble beginnings to where they are now.

The evening finished with us all nibbling on samples of cheese that their milk goes in to, absolutely yummy!



Ratby WI

This month we welcomed Heartwize to our meeting to offer demonstrations on resuscitation and defibrillator training. The charity offers training in both schools and businesses and also to groups by donation. Heartwize was formed due to a lack of knowledge where bystanders can be vital to the life of people who suffer cardiac arrest, they promote the need that everyone should have the knowledge to offer first response resuscitation saying bystanders can be life-savers in the very sense of the term. The ladies gained practical knowledge of how to do compressions for resuscitation and also got to try using a defibrillator. In Ratby the defibrillator is stationed outside the council office and when you ring 999 the code for the unit will be given to you and the operator will talk you through the procedure.

Ratby WI meets every 2nd Wednesday at 7pm and visitors are welcome.



Barrow Upon Soar WI

At the beginning of March, 12 of our ladies all but the very early 5.15am start, thoroughly enjoyed a minibus trip to London which included first a tour of the House of Commons, then they met with our Local MP Dr Jeevan Sandher. After the tour the ladies split into small groups and visited various other attractions - The Churchill War Rooms & Tate Modern. They all agreed that if You have the opportunity to do the HOC tour it is very worthwhile.

At our March meeting we held our Annual Skittles supper with Tilly Yates being awarded the Lister Cup by the reigning champion, Carolyn Drake for her excellent score of 14 over two rounds.

In April it was our Annual Quiz night, this year was a challenging but fun quiz arranged by Committee Member Dea, in which 7 teams of 3 or 4 ladies played two picture rounds, one was identifying the cartoon characters, the other was matching the actors/singers photo to their birth name rather than their stage name. Who knew that so many people had adopted a different name for their stage work!! This was followed by a game show round, a music round and finally what's in a name? Our President, Clair Andrews presented the Quiz Trophy to the 'Kinky Ladies After Breakfast' team & the runners up only one point behind were the 'Very Old & Very Young' team – in this team was a very special visitor to our WI – Baby Noah. He is our very FIRST Barrow WI Baby, born prematurely in January he is now home & doing very well. Some of us very lucky ladies even got to have a cuddle with him!



Around the Counties

Illston on the Hill WI

The members of Illston-on-the-Hill WI had a treat at their April meeting. The usually brief business meeting was enlivened when Rhena Sturgess read her highly amusing poem, which had won second prize at the County Meeting in March. Who knew that a poem about underwear could provoke such laughter? We are delighted that Rhena shares her talents with us.

Our speaker was Philippa Guy, a Colour Me Beautiful consultant based in Melton Mowbray. Philippa explained how her own wardrobe had been transformed in the 1980s when the Colour Me Beautiful approach showed how colours affect appearance. She moved from a palette of black, white and grey, which was smart but unflattering, to colours that suit her skin tone, hair and eyes, helping confidence and reducing costly shopping mistakes.

She described how the original "four seasons" system has evolved to focus on depth, warmth and vibrancy, allowing more flexibility in colour choices. We also learned about six "style personalities", illustrated with photographs of well-known people. Most of us identified as "classic" or "natural", with a few "romantics" among us.

The evening ended with tea, coffee and cakes, while members explored which colours of fabric and make-up suited them best. Thanks go to the Committee for organising this enjoyable occasion and to members who provided refreshments.

Hinckley Canalside WI

The speaker at our April meeting was Admiral Sir James Perowne.

He was a former Admiral of the Royal Navy and retired in 2002, after which he applied for the post of Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle. He was the official representative of the Queen at Windsor Castle. He told us about the house where he lived, in the grounds of Windsor Castle, and that he and his wife were invited to several private dinners with the Queen and Prince Phillip and other members of her family - including the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations and the 70th Wedding Anniversary celebrations of the Queen and Prince Phillip. He told us about the royal weddings and funerals that took place at St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle and that the last celebration there, in the Queen's reign, was the Queen's Platinum Anniversary. The last time he saw the Queen was at his retirement celebrations.



It was a really interesting talk and we all enjoyed it.

Broughton Astley WI

At our April Meeting we had the welcome return of John Parnell, previously he had given us a very energetic meeting with his Hoola Hoop Presentation but this time it was "Juggling and other Circus Skills" and we were not disappointed. John explained the history of the Circus, we were all surprised that Circuses were started in the UK back in 1768 by an ex Cavalry Officer Philip Astley. Originally it was only people on horseback copying the skills of Cavalry soldiers picking up dropped swords, it slowly developed to the modern Circus. John also presented his juggling skills with a variety of different apparatus, including balls, diabolos and spinning plates. Several members had a go at trying out their juggling skills and there was lots of merriment involved. Our craft group will be making Tote Bags and Suffolk Puffs at their next meeting.



Broughton Astley WI

After the success of our group of members who got together to create more poppy nets for our 2025 Remembrance installations, the group has continued to meet monthly to work on a variety of projects. January was for our village Green Hearts display, February we crocheted, and in March we had a workshop run by SmARTSY Glass fusing, which was enjoyed by everyone.

In April half of our group made Morsbags (tote bags) with Ruth and the other half sewed Suffolk Puff buttons guided by Lesley, both of which turned out really well. So in May the group will swap projects so that everyone has a go at both - and the Suffolk puff buttons may be used to decorate some of the Morsbags!



Around the Counties

Coleorton WI

Our March WI meeting took place on Wednesday 4th at 2pm at the Beaumont Centre, where we welcomed 46 members and 6 visitors. After business was discussed, including subscription reminders and upcoming trips, our speaker was introduced. Emily Bell, a professional declutterer based in Surrey with family in Coleorton, gave an interesting presentation on decluttering, covering why, what, and how. She shared insights into buying and consuming less and the need to streamline possessions. An amusing discussion about the number of mugs in our homes led to agreement that 70 mugs for a family of four may be too many! She also offered practical organisation solutions once decluttering was complete, which were well received.



Afterwards, Brenda, a WI member for over 50 years, was presented with flowers and a card for her 90th birthday. We sang Happy Birthday, and she cut her cake, which was shared with everyone. In her speech, Brenda spoke about how important the WI had been to her, especially during difficult times, and how much she looked forward to meetings. After the raffle and competition judging, members enjoyed tea, coffee, and refreshments.

Cossington WI

At our Easter Members Meeting we welcomed Joanne Richer.



Joanne has become known for her talks on Forage with colour. She talked about discovering lost and forgotten edibles. Told us about different mushrooms we can eat and which plants are safe and which plants to avoid which are very poisonous.

She stayed and answered many questions afterwards. As it was Easter we had our Easter Bonnet parade. There were some spectacular hats made by our Members.

Gilmorton WI

Gilmorton WI celebrated their 80th Anniversary with a tour of Stanford Hall which was very interesting followed by afternoon tea in the ballroom. Over thirty members attended followed by a photograph on the grand staircase.



We have had some excellent speakers recently, Paul Read who was a dresser to the stars of West End shows and gave us a very fascinating behind the scenes account. We have also had a talk by Guide Dogs for the Blind who brought along two lovely dogs.

Gopsall Villages WI

At the first meeting of the new 2026 - 2027 season, Gopsall Villages WI welcomed Paul Read to the village hall for a lecture entitled 'Reach for the Stars'. As we listened patiently to the usual opening business with Paul's display of clothes, hats, wigs and shoes standing tantalisingly in front of us, little did we realise what a treat we had in store!

In a highly entertaining and very interesting talk, Paul described to us his crucially important role as a dresser for the stars of stage and screen. We learnt that being in charge of a star's costumes before, during and after a performance is only a minor part of a dresser's job. They also play a key liaison role between their stars and the rest of the cast and the production team, and have to ensure that their stars have everything they need to give their very best performance every night.

During the talk we also learnt some very useful tips. These included getting rid of the smell of sweat in clothing with a spray using a mixture of half water and half vodka, and how cheap Primark T-shirts make ideal sweat-absorbing under garments. We also marvelled at the time it must have taken to stitch individual hairs into a human hair wig which understandably cost thousands of pounds.

Definitely a speaker to book for your WI!!



Around the Counties

Thringstone WI

All in one week at Thringstone WI, our meeting began with Rachel Greaves who is a local author and illustrator. The stories of Ruffle an Airedale Terrier and his adventures, the children's stories have just grown and grown. Many new characters bringing pleasure to all the schools she visits. Also we celebrated one of our founder members Sue Henderson who looks after the competition each month, her 80th Birthday. The following week Thringstone WI hosted the Group meeting for Bardon Hill, Susan Oxborough is our Group Secretary. We welcomed Sue Lobb from the Board of Trustees to hear the Group news. We were very much entertained by Bishop Peter Fox performing his magic, which completed our successful busy but very enjoyable couple of weeks.

Coleorton WI

Our April WI meeting was held on Wednesday 1st April in the Beaumont centre where we welcomed 46 members and 3 visitors. After business and updates on trips and events planned we had a talk given by Bill Henley on behind the scenes working on the Royal yacht Britannia. He had many amusing anecdotes and we learned much about his life on board serving the royal family in particular the late Queen.



After the raffle the competition for nautical memorabilia was judged by Bill and tea and refreshments prepared by members was enjoyed and a good opportunity for a catch up with each other.

Earl Shilton Afternoon WI

Easter bonnet parade

Easter bonnets were on parade at the April meeting of Earl Shilton Afternoon WI. Some very creative head-gear was on display, decorated with fluffy chicks, flowers, bunnies and eggs, and everyone had lots of fun. The afternoon was made even more enjoyable with an interesting talk about Laura Ashley, given by Jo Goldby, who also kindly judged our bonnet competition and picked the winners. Thanks go to all the members who took the time to decorate the bonnets.

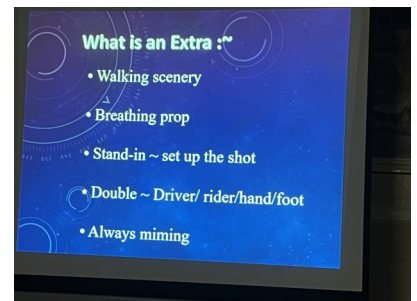


Groby WI

In March, a group of Groby WI members attended the WI Annual Council Meeting at Leicester Grammar School. It was an interesting day with presentations, speakers, and stalls selling a variety of products. Morning speakers included Dr Doug Skehan, Consultant Cardiologist at Glenfield Hospital, who spoke about HeartWize, a programme promoting awareness of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, teaching resuscitation skills in schools, and improving access to defibrillators in communities. Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, Mike Kapur, also spoke about his role as His Majesty the King's representative for Leicester and Leicestershire.

The afternoon speaker was Adam Henson, well-known farmer and BBC1 Countryfile presenter, who spoke about his work at Cotswold Farm Park, founded by his father to protect rare farm breeds. His talk was both fascinating and humorous.

At our April meeting, speaker Mike Newbold gave a talk titled 'My Extra Life, being an extra in films'. After early retirement in 2005, Mike began a 20-year career as a supporting artist after appearing on the set of Last of the Summer Wine. His first role as 'an old guy walking down a lane' led to many more opportunities after securing his Equity Card and an agent. Mike has since appeared in numerous productions, including over 100 episodes of Doctors, Downton Abbey films, and various other roles, sharing humorous and fascinating stories from his unusual post-retirement career.



Around the Counties

Whissendine WI

This month, Sarah spoke about Billie Jean King, the award-winning tennis player and equality advocate who famously won the 1973 Battle of the Sexes against Bobby Riggs.

Our speaker was Mike Burton, who gave a fascinating talk on 'Tales from Old Melton Mowbray', exploring its history as a hunting hub for nobility and royalty, with examples such as Egerton Lodge. He ended with the origin of the phrase 'Painting the Town Red'.



Sheepy WI

Chris and his wife Emily run a small flower farm, Cabbage Patch Flowers, which they started in 2022 to build an environmentally friendly business that also benefits customers. Chris explained the sustainability issues within the flower industry, noting that around 86% of cut flowers in the UK are imported, often with a carbon footprint up to 20 times higher than locally grown bouquets. Many flowers travel from countries such as Ecuador, Colombia, and Kenya via the Netherlands.

He described how imported flowers remain fresh through chemical treatments and cold storage during transportation by planes, lorries, and ferries, all of which add to their environmental impact. Chris also highlighted concerns about chemical exposure for florists, with studies showing significant pesticide residues on flowers and evidence of these chemicals being absorbed by those handling them.

In recent years, more small-scale local flower farms have emerged, providing organic, sustainable flowers and unique heirloom varieties not commonly found in commercial flower shops. These locally grown flowers offer environmentally friendly alternatives with distinctive character. The presentation was interesting, enlightening, and enjoyable for all.



Witherley WI

What has been happening in March? We beat off stiff competition to win first prize in the St Giles Hospice Quiz which raised £470 for the Hos-



pice. The Baddersley Amateur Theatrical Society play was very entertaining and everyone enjoyed it. Sheila B read out a highly amusing account of the Annual Council Meeting.

Nina informed members of forthcoming events to look forward to, including, Devonshire House Lunch in April, Book Sale in June and St Giles Hospice Lunch in July.

We were excited to hear that we had two successes at the Group Show in early April. Mal S came 2nd with her Easter Bonnet entry and Jane Mill came 2nd with her Easter Card entry. Congratulations, ladies.

The Summer Outing to Harvington Hall will be on 5th August.

WI Subscriptions for 2026-27 were collected and a new WI membership form was handed out for members to complete.

This month we were entertained by members of The Royal Society of Scottish Country Dancing of Leicester. The room was full of laughter as we performed a variety of dances, including a Jig and a Square Set. It was hugely enjoyable and great fun. It was great to see so many members joining in the dancing. Liz B thanked the visitors for their lively and entertaining dancing.

Following all their hard work on the dance floor, members were rewarded with cakes and sandwiches. Nina thanked Gail B, Gene R, Carol H, Anne B and Kate C for the delicious refreshments.

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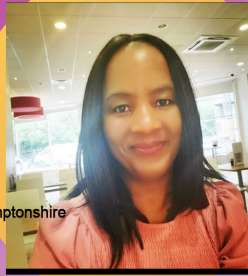
Monica (Wing WI) Member

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