



Cog in the Tree

West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes

September 2022

Our Bull



Photo by Kim Slivinski

The giant mechanical bull that became the star of the commonwealth games opening ceremony is set to stay in the city.

The 10-metre sculpture is on display around the city, many of you have been along to see it. We have received several photographs.

Largely made of foam, the bull was due to be dismantled at the end of the games. However due to public outcry, Birmingham City Council have offered to find him a permanent home. The new location is yet to be confirmed, though it will be indoors due to the construction and materials used in the sculpture.

The 2022 commonwealth games brought new life to our city during its time here. A real buzz has swept through the area, with locals and visitors enjoying all that our city has to offer. A welcome break from our pandemic days. The summer heatwave quite literally shone a new light on the area too.

Some of our members have played a greater part in the games, some danced and performed in the opening and closing ceremonies, others volunteered for steward roles. Overall, the games have left us all with positive vibes.

Claire Woodland, Editor



200 Club Winner £10

Allocation No. 28, H Ford, Four Oaks WI

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

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



Chairman's Address



Hello everyone, what a summer we've had; endless sunshine, endless watering, hot, uncomfortable nights and the ever-present worry that it's going to be like this from now on! I'm writing this in the middle of August just as the weather is beginning to break

and I am glad for the cooler temperature even though I like sunshine. What I'm really looking forward to is the possibility of a bath instead of a shower, so long steady downpours that fill the reservoirs will mean that I don't feel guilty when I do indulge in a long hot soak!

The hot weather has made me very disinclined to do anything, especially if it involves physical effort and I haven't been too keen on thinking about WI matters either if I am being perfectly truthful. However, as a retired teacher of long-standing, I am conditioned to a fresh start every September so I am beginning to turn my thoughts to what I would like to achieve over the next year.

The list is long, but Firstly I think all WIs need to consider how to attract new members to offset the fall in WI numbers that we have experienced through the Covid years when we have gone from over 2,000 to just about 1,500. It would also be good if we could attract enough ladies to form new WIs in areas that may not already have an existing WI or where there are WIs that have a waiting list of prospective members. I would welcome suggestions as to how we may achieve this.

Secondly, I was very aware that one of the biggest joys for those members who attended the Annual Meeting was the opportunity to join up with members of other WIs and exchange news and views. With this in mind I would like to encourage WIs to link up with the WIs in their Groups for socials, friendly competitions and the possibility of listening to a Speaker who might otherwise be too expensive for one WI to afford. I will pursue this idea as soon as meetings restart.

I would also like to hold a zoom meeting of all Presidents to discuss what they feel the Federation should be providing for all the WIs since the very purpose of the Federation is to support members and make a cohesive strategy that serves everyone. To that end I am asking all members to come up

with suggestions to give to their Presidents as to what they would like to happen in the future. We must remember that we are part of a nationwide organisation that exists to benefit women in all areas of life, not just the provision of a monthly meeting with refreshments added in.

There has been quite a large change of Officers at the Annual Meetings and the Federation is intending to provide training for new (and long-standing) Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers. It would be helpful if you are an officer who is interested in joining the training if you would email me and let me know whether you would like to attend a zoom session or would prefer to meet face to face.

I know this has sounded like a wish list but I really am keen to make sure that all members of the Federation experience the best that is available to make the WI the foremost organisation to belong to.

Enjoy getting back together at your meetings in September. I hope to meet as many of you as possible over the coming year.

Lynn

News

ACWW

Hello ladies, thank you for your donations at the Annual Meeting raising £820 for the wonderful work of ACWW

Looking forward to all who will be coming on the ACWW Walk, Wednesday 14th September Bournville. Meeting 11-00am at the Round House B30 2AD. A really lovely get together

Cafes nearby for coffee and lunch

I shall be attending the ACWW European Conference Glasgow in September

Conferences are always very interesting and I will be meeting ACWW ladies from all over Europe which is really great!

I am sure there will be lots of information to give you

Pamela

ACWW Representative West Midlands

FEDERATION ANNUAL MEETING JULY 2022

The 48th Annual Meeting of the West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes was held on July 7th 2022 in the Hyatt Hotel.

The day began with coffee, tea and pastries served on the mezzanine from 10.15am. This gave members a chance to congregate and meet up with old friends from other WIs. The meeting began at 11.00am with a welcome from Lynn Smith, the Federation Chairman who then introduced all the Trustees. The real business of the day followed with the Treasurer's report and each Sub-committee chair giving her report on the activities covered over the past year. Every year a plea goes out to members to join a sub-committee to help with the organisation of events and activities and 2022 was no exception and we would really appreciate participation by non-trustee members.

In her address Lynn explained that we have lost nearly 500 members since before the Covid pandemic and urged all WIs to do their best to attract new members to join this wonderful Organisation.

Certificates and trophies were given out to the winners of various competitions and the morning ended with a tribute to Judy Massam who has retired as a Trustee after many years of service. Judy was much moved by the standing ovation she received from everyone present.

Lunch followed and gave more time for members to mingle and exchange news and views of life in their own WIs and to watch the rolling presentation of photos sent in by WIs capturing what goes on at their meetings. The display was prepared by Liz Galloway and members were very appreciative of seeing themselves on the big screen.

The afternoon session began at 2.00pm with an illustrated talk given by Ian Jelf, a Blue Badge Guide. He led us through an entertaining and informative talk about Birmingham from pre-history to the present day and left us wanting to know more about our amazing city and its environs.

Afternoon tea was followed by Ginny Davies who gave an illuminating talk on the trials and tribulations of presenting a one woman show at the Edinburgh Fringe.

The meeting ended with Lynn thanking all members for their continued dedication to the WI and especially the members of the Board of Trustees without whom the West Midlands Federation would cease to exist.



Over to you



Forty-eight ladies from invited WI's attended **Berkswell WI** Coffee and Bring and Buy Coffee Morning on a beautiful day. A lovely get together!



Pamela Griffiths, Berkswell WI

Craft morning at **Great Barr WI**. The ladies tried their hand at decoupage and made these beautiful fan cards.



Considering they had never done decoupage before they produced some wonderful cards.

Elaine Williams, Great Barr WI

The ladies of **Newton WI** have been very busy knitting teddies and baby items.



The teddies are to be shared between the play specialists, the children's ophthalmology department and baby items for the neonatal unit, at Walsall Manor Hospital.

Melanie Wisner, Newton WI.

The County trip to Barmouth was a fantastic day out.

The **Walsall Wood WI** Secretary Karen Jones enjoyed the day so much that she had a t-shirt printed with a photo of members paddling in the sea.



A brilliant reminder of a lovely day out

Sue Laws, Walsall Wood

Our first get together for coffee and a chat after lockdown and an opportunity to get to know some of our new members.



Aldridge WI

Monkspath WI took a group of Alpacas out for a walk on 29th June.

After first being introduced to the barnyard rabbits, goats, chickens and pigs, we were each assigned our own Alpaca. Even though some members were a bit wary at the beginning, we all had a wonderful walk around the beautiful fields near Henley-in-Arden.



Marylou Jeffs, Monkspath WI

Kings Norton Afternoon WI, celebrating our TIN (10th) anniversary. We made quick and easy Tin Foil butterflies for plant pots, as a keepsake.



Photo of our President Sally Saunders cutting the cake.



We had a lovely afternoon with plenty to eat. Even the downpour of rain managed to clear just before we left for home.

Barbara Evans, Kings Norton Afternoon WI

Public Affairs

The summer has been a busy period for Public Affairs with the writing of new streamlined Terms of Agreement for the work of the sub-committee, putting together a programme of events for the rest of the year and following up on NFWI campaign activity. Liz Galloway has attended a Public Affairs Coffee Morning (14 July) and a Climate Ambassadors Coffee Morning (22 July) with NFWI parent committees.

The NFWI team have been involved at government level with issues of sustainable energy, micro-fibres in washing machines (Plastic Soup campaign) and have attended the UN Oceans Conference in Portugal and the Westminster Climate Solution Fair. Climate Ambassadors from all Federations raised many topics and put forward further ideas on how members could work towards the implementation of climate change objectives.



Members were reminded of the run up to the Great Big Green Week (24 September to 02 October). On the Climate Coalition's website there are a great deal of useful and informative ideas about how to organise and event or an activity in your area, but time's running out!

A WMFWI Climate Ambassadors' get together has been arranged on Zoom at 10am on 24 August 2022. All members are invited to attend to find out what's involved in being a Climate Ambassador. Please email liz.galloway@hotmail.com for joining details.



The 16 days of Activism run from 25 November to 10 December and members are encouraged to respond by organising an event – more information on our WI website. Your WMF Public Affairs team has been putting together ideas for further WMFWI events and has arranged a talk on the theme by Simon Foster (WM Police and Crime Commissioner) and several other supporting speakers. This is a Zoom meeting on Wednesday 23 November at 7.30 pm. The event is free but you're asked to book your place and details of how to do this will be forthcoming shortly.

Liz Galloway has joined the City of Birmingham group, Preventing and Reducing Serious Crime Strategy. For further details: <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/>

Resolutions process for 2023:

The closing date for submission of resolutions is 02 September so has now passed by the time you see this. The submissions will be discussed at a NFWI Resolution Shortlist Selection Meeting in October.

Craft Items:

We are collecting craft items which have been prepared to support any of the ten current campaigns to display at our Federation Showcase at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on 02 November, 2022.

If you have any such items that you're prepared to lend for the day, please contact: liz.galloway@hotmail.com or ring Liz on 07920 015465.

There will be an **ACWW** walk around the Bournville area – for further details, please contact Pamela Griffiths, Berkswell WI.

SHOE BOX APPEAL



Please arrange for your shoe box items (whole boxes or single / multiple items) to be delivered to Julie Afridi Martin (Yardley WI) at her home (but please confirm beforehand on 07943 264418) Her address is

28 Vicarage Road, Birmingham B33 8PH.

Alternatively, items can be dropped off directly to the organiser in Acocks Green, contact Julie for details

Gardens in our Changing Climate.



We all need to change and adapt to changing circumstances through our lives. My career has taken me through phases as a professional landscape architect, designer of gardens, both ornamental and native, creator of conservation projects and the environmental assessment of engineering projects. I've been an allotment holder and a dedicated vegetable gardener and just recently adapted to a bionic knee which has relieved me of a lot of pain but challenged me to find new ways of planting without being able to kneel.

Climate change has caused me to adapt the species I grow – I've been doing it for some years but definitely got caught out this year as one of my precious acers, raised from a seedling bought at Westonbirt Arboretum was literally singed in one afternoon – pale green leaves now being two-tone green, brown and crumpled. But there's an upside as well – my three-year-old apricot produced forty-five fruits this year and my fig goes from strength to strength. In the veg patch, the sweetcorn's taller than me and the tomatoes and cucumbers are thriving.

I've been interested to read how experts feel we should approach this challenge because the fate of gardens all over the country hangs on whether the advice given is workable and easy to follow. At one extreme, there's the opinion, "my garden's becoming completely natural – I just leave it to nature". It reminds me of an anecdote my father used to tell of the parishioner who quoted this to his vicar who replied, "Well, I left mine to God but it just became a wilderness!" Others feel we should just adopt hard (but pervious) finishes like stone, sand and shingle.



It's most likely that we shall, in the main, have to turn away from the highly ornamental gardens of the past which require a high level of maintenance and regular watering but there is a happy medium. Many attractive plants thrive in dry conditions and advice has been available for years related to water shortage in some parts of the country. The Water Companies have been planting show gardens and handing out leaflets for ever.



It was only recently that I planted *Stipa tenuissima* and a number of other grasses and they've been stars of the show this year. Many wild flowers/"weeds" are well behaved in gardens and excellent in flower arrangements. I love ferns and there are so many that thrive in semi-shade and relatively dry soil. There's a wealth of plants which withstand dry conditions well - field geraniums from purple, pink, white, magenta, salvias, echinacea, lavender. A quick search on the web will produce dozens. Talking wild species, what better than the native golden flag iris or golden kingcup for the borders of your pond – sturdy and colourful? I must confess I feel justified in topping up a small garden pond because of the frogs, newts, dragonflies and myriad tiny insects it supports, but I do have a water butt nearby which fills from the roof.

As I see it, the task ahead is to find those plants which grow well and stress-free in our individual garden and it will include many really attractive plants, both native and exotic. We'll need to watch our plants more carefully and work out how soil type, drainage, root-run, neighbouring plants, local shade, micro-climate and other such factors are affecting them so that we can work with this changing climate and still find joy in our gardening.

Liz Galloway, Public Affairs

What's On

A very successful afternoon of WI croquet was held at the Kenilworth Club in July. The weather was kind to us because although it was sunny, there was a cool breeze to stop us from getting too hot. This was the first time we played in pairs rather than competing singly and it was most enjoyable. 32 members from several WIs took part and the winners were Angela Keithley from Silhill WI (on the right of the photo) and Christine Prince from Berkswell WI (on the left). They are shown accepting their trophies from Federation Chair Lynn Smith.



Dates for your Diary

14.09.2022	ACWW Walk at Bournville
24.09.2022	The Great Big Green Week
24.09.2022	Birmingham Pride
25.09.2022	
02.11.2022	Craft Showcase The BMI
22.11.2022	Cardiff Christmas Outing
23.11.2022	16 Days of Activism
03.12.2022	Carol Service St Martins in the Bullring

Christmas Outing Cardiff Tuesday 22nd November 2022



Join us for our Christmas outing to Cardiff and enjoy the many amazing shops, quaint Edwardian and Victorian arcades, restaurants and attractions all within a 5-minute walk of the Cardiff Christmas Market.

You can also take in the beauty of Bute Park, Cardiff Castle and many other sights all just a stroll away from the Market.

This trip is open to WI Members, family and friends.

Cost, excluding driver's gratuity, is **£25.00** (admission to the Christmas Market is free)

Closing date is Tuesday 11 October 2022

Pick Up points;

Allesley Village, Solihull, Yew Tree Yardley,
Cotteridge, Halesowen Leisure Centre
Boldmere, **Four Oaks**, Walsall Wood, Scott Arms
(Route and times to be confirmed from 8:00am return 16:30)

Please contact Kim Slivinski 07843 123748 if you would like to discuss other pick-up points, send entries C/O Kim at 136 Common Lane, Sheldon, B26 1LT. Include SAE