



Cog in the Tree

West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes

January 2022

New Beginnings

January is a time for new beginnings, time to re-evaluate and plan for the future. After an uncertain 2020/21 and many broken plans, we are all looking forward to a new normal.

Speaker programmes are being put together, trips and outings are being booked, along with activities to suit various tastes.



West Midlands have welcomed a new WI to the fold in 2021, Blackberry Belles WI in Halesowen have a committee and officers in place and are now welcoming new members.

Traditionally we would be collecting subscriptions at this time of year, but we have a few months yet before that is upon us. This doesn't mean however that we can't begin to recruit for new members. Maybe you could invite your daughters, grand-daughters, sisters, nieces, neighbours, friends, along to join a meeting with you as a visitor, they may be pleasantly surprised by what they find.

The WI is still the largest women only organisation in the country, as members we should be encouraging more women to join us. The WI is an inclusive organisation, we should be promoting our diversity.

Where else can you have a meeting on gardening one month, burlesque the next, beekeeping followed by gin tasting, Henry the VIII and his wives and then Bhangra Dancing. Every meeting, every WI, every member, are all so varied and yet somehow, we all fit together.

Happy new year to you all, and happy new adventures.

Claire Woodland, Editor



200 Club Winner £10

B Green, Hobs Moat 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 surprise to wake up to snow in November! The different reactions of my grandchildren amused me: two were excited and rushed out to build a snowman, two were grumpy because their football fixtures were cancelled and the eldest, who is nearly 12, ensconced

himself by a radiator and buried his nose in "Robinson Crusoe". I love the first fall of snow, so I went out for a walk to enjoy the transformation of everywhere under a white blanket, but I was equally as glad that it didn't linger.

Last month I talked about the family Christmas arrangements but as it is only part way through December, I can't tell you how the day transpired. However, I can say that during family zooms I did convince everyone that I really am not prepared to spend an hour or so travelling to our middle son's new home to cook a traditional Christmas dinner in an unfamiliar kitchen. The consensus of opinion is that we will have cold meats with hot pigs-in-blankets, salads and roast potatoes as the main course. My grandchildren remain convinced that none of their parents can cook roast potatoes with crispy outsides and fluffy insides like Grandma does so I will be in charge of doing them. I just hope that the strange oven doesn't let me down.

I also have my fingers crossed that neither the weather nor Covid restrictions will prevent us from getting together. Last year was miserable with family and friends denied the opportunity to celebrate this lovely season. We usually invite friends and neighbours to join us on Christmas Eve to sing carols, drink mulled wine and eat mince pies and sausage rolls but we will be sensible this year and not hold the event.

It has been really enjoyable over the past year to attend meetings and to meet members and I hope to continue to be able to do this throughout next year.

I wish each and every member of our WIs a happy, safe and healthy 2022.

Lynn

PS. There is a recurring problem with my telephone land line so if you need to contact me to discuss a problem or simply to have a chat, please either use my mobile 07854 252889 or e-mail me on lynnsmith@blueyonder.co.uk

WORCESTER VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET OUTING

Blue skies, bright sunshine and a rather cold wind greeted us as three coach loads of WI members travelled to Worcester on our trip to the Victorian Christmas Market. The streets were packed with stalls selling everything from wines, foods, sweets, jewellery, clothes, toys, Christmas knick-knacks and myriad other goods too numerous to mention. Many of the proprietors were dressed in Victorian costume to add to the gaiety. There were chaps on stilts, street performers and a fun fair all combining to make a great spectacle.

We had plenty of time to enjoy the fun and sample the variety of foods and sweets on offer and many of us also visited the Cathedral where there was a Christmas tree trail laid out in the cloisters. Local schools, shops, businesses, and charities had provided trees decorated in splendid fashion. One tree was constructed entirely of child car seats, another was decorated with hands bearing Happy Christmas in many different languages and at least a hundred others to gaze at.



A most enjoyable day was had by everyone who went. Thanks are due to Julie Afridi Martin and Kim Slivinski who organised the trip.

NEXT OUTING

This will be to Cheshire on Saturday February 19th 2022 where our first stop is to visit Dagfields Crafts and Antiques Centre where you can find 25 Craft Workshops specialising in everything from handmade soaps to bespoke garden furniture as well as antiques and collectables. There is a Farm Shop and Butchers, and homemade food is served in two tea rooms.

Following this we move on to Bridgemere Garden Centre which is Britain's largest garden centre with six acres of award-winning show gardens and wildlife trails. You can buy from a huge range of top-quality plants and gardening products. The site also boasts a retail village with Hobbycraft, Lakeland and Cotton Traders. There is a restaurant and a separate café.

There has been some confusion reported over booking for this trip. The best way is to get the details from your secretary and then give your details to your Treasurer along with a cheque for £17.50 made out to your WI. Your Treasurer will then send a block booking with a single cheque made out to WMFWI to Claire Woodland who is the Trustee organising this trip. Treasurers, please remember to send a stamped, addressed envelope to Claire so that she can return your tickets.

Concerns have also been expressed over pick up points and unreliable coaches. On future trips we will be using International Coaches all of which are modern, comfortable and have on board facilities and we will work out pick up points when we know which WIs are intending to join us on this outing.

ANNUAL CAROL SERVICE 2021

Our Annual Carol Service took place on December 4th in St Martin's in the Bullring. This year's attendance was rather disappointing but understandably so with fears about travelling on public transport, crowds of people in the City Centre and the new Omicron Covid variant uppermost in many members minds. We welcomed a congregation of around 50 members who enjoyed a lovely service. We were able to sing favourite carols Joy to the World, O Little Town of Bethlehem, In the Bleak Midwinter and O Come All Ye Faithful accompanied on the organ by Philippa Done. The readings were Luke: Chapter 2; vv 1-7 read by Iris Montgomery (Hobs Moat WI), "Not a Disgrace" by Greta Zwaan read by Patricia Pearson (Walmley Evening WI) "A Christmas Story" the Valerie Daggatt Competition winning entry by Dorothy Shaw (Knowle WI) read by Lynn Smith (Bournville WI) and "Chaos at the Crib" by John Lester read by Sally Saunders (Kings Norton Afternoon WI). The New Inspirations Choir entertained us with a lovely version of Silent Night, a delightful Hawaiian Christmas song called Mele Kelikimaka and a spirited version of Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree. The service was conducted by the Reverend Jeremy Allcock who gave an uplifting address on the subject of the importance of two little words namely Thank You.

Afterwards members stayed for sherry, juice and mince pies and the chance to have a good chat; a rewarding morning which was enjoyed by all.



SURVIVOR LIGHTHOUSE

Hannah O'Neill works for a charity called Survivor Lighthouse which supports victims of abuse in Warley, Quinton, Harborne and surrounding areas. She would welcome the opportunity to visit WIs to speak about the work this charity does and to see if members can offer support. She can be contacted on: hannah@survivorlighthouse.com

TEAMS4u SHOE BOXES

Glen Duggins has been supporting Teams4u Shoe boxes for several years and she is happy to visit WIs to give 40-minute talks about the boxes and their contents which are not necessarily just for Christmas. She charges £50 plus expenses. If you would like her to speak at your WI, please contact her on: glenduggins@outlook.com

Lynn

Over to you

Four Oaks WI

had a trip to Chatsworth to see the house decorated and all the Christmas stalls in and around the house.

The day was cold but dry and everybody was in good spirits as it was the first outing in 20 months.



Pictured are our President Rose Gilbert and Treasurer Anne Solomon at the entrance to the House.

Sheila Spicer, Secretary Four Oaks WI

Great Barr WI

Spent an enjoyable morning at the Craft meeting which takes place on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. This month we were making Festive Horseshoes, and every one was different!



Elaine Williams, Great Barr WI

Boldmere WI

Craft Group making flowers to put on the railings at Wylde Green Station for the Commonwealth Games.



Judy Holmes, Boldmere W.I.

Bournville WI

Here are two photos from Bournville WI's trip to see the Christmas decorations at Aston Hall.



16 members enjoyed a very informative guided tour of the Hall followed by an Afternoon Cream Tea in the restaurant which is in the converted stable block. Here we are standing in the Long Gallery.



Lynn Smith, Bournville WI

Public Affairs

COP26 finished at the end of November, and I attended a Climate Ambassador Coffee Morning which was designed to let everyone know what had come out of the conference and what the next steps would be for the WI. It did give a clear steer on the way in which Federations should be thinking for 2022 and the recording is available to view on the WI's YouTube. Here are a few key points:

1. We should be proud of the way that the WI is respected and not underestimate our ability to influence through our 400 Climate Ambassadors and 200,000 members at the grass roots. **We can change attitudes.**
2. **Show the Love** will be happening in February and an Action Pack, and much more is available on our WIU website. Members are encouraged to extend their *green heart* approach by promoting issues which are particularly relevant in their locality or to their MP. A green heart should be sent to every MP and meetings set up wherever possible. If response is poor, members should persevere, write again, knock on doors.
3. Issues we can focus on locally (for example):

Sustainability of our food production, consumer information and choice; housing development and energy use, carbon footprint; our natural environment, gardening, wildlife, and resources; transport, public and private. I'm sure you have many more in mind and have already been planning action..

Actions to take:

- Pursuing crafting initiatives, green hearts, No more Loopholes bracelets, pillar box toppers attract attention, but members can build on this introduction to spread the word and explain the message to others ... **time to speak out.**
- Join the Climate Coalition in sending Boris Johnson a Christmas card in the post to help ensure promises made at COP26 are kept ... or just add your name to theirs.
www.theclimatecoalition.org (*I've sent mine*)

A **Campaigns Coffee Morning** was held in early December and a recording is available on the WI website YouTube.

See the Signs an Action Pack and further information is now available: to download:

<https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/public-affairs-and-campaigns/current-campaigns/see-the-signs>

The 16 days of activism against gender-based violence took place during the last two weeks of November and a webinar, **The Role that Men Can Play in Ending Violence Against Women** took place on 10 December. [Visit the \(national\) WI Facebook page](#) to see all our posts during the 16 Days and learn more about the work of WI members in tackling violence against women.

End Plastic Soup: Alberto Costa MP's Bill (supported by the WI) asking for all new washing machines to be fitted with a microplastic fibre capture filter received its first reading in the House of Commons on 30 November.

ACWW: Pamela Griffiths thanks all members who donated to ACWW this year and who were not at the Annual Meeting to receive her personal thanks.

Tips for a 'green' Christmas: (*with acknowledgments to NFWI Public Affairs*)



- Is your wrapping paper recyclable? **YES** if it holds its shape when scrunched into a ball.
- Six million Christmas trees are thrown out every year. Try using the **Recycle Now** website.
- Make a Christmas gift. Knit a reindeer from the pattern on our WI website.
- Use the (WRAP) [Love Food, Hate Waste portion planner](#) to avoid overbuying food
- **Food Matters:** [visit our \(WI\) website](#) for recipe ideas using leftovers
- Don't forget that seeds, plants, or tree saplings make a wonderful gift for a gardener

Do enjoy a wonderful and sustainable Christmas everyone, but don't forget to plan your **Show the Love** Campaign for next February ... *the lead time in the New Year will be very short!*

Liz Galloway, Chair, WMF Public Affairs.

Resolution Shortlist 2021/22

At the NFWI Resolution Shortlist Selection meeting on 5th October 2021 member and federation delegates shortlisted five resolutions which will now be taken forward for further debate and voting by members.

The shortlisted resolutions are:

1. Fit for Purpose – Fit for Girls
2. Appropriate Sentencing of Non-Violent Women Offenders
3. Equality in Law for the Menopause
4. Women and Girls with ASD and ADHD Under-Identified, Under-Diagnosed and Under-Supported
5. Tackling Digital Exclusion

Next steps

Every member now has the opportunity to cast their individual selection on the resolution they support the most. WIs are encouraged to hold meetings to provide members with the opportunity to discuss and learn more about each resolution. However, if this is not possible members can research the issues themselves and make their selection.

The selection slip can be found in the November/December issue of *WI Life*. To request a copy of the selection slip, please contact the NFWI on pa@nfwl.org.uk

The deadline for members' selections to reach their federations is **14 February 2022**.

If you have any questions about returning your selection slip, please speak to your WI committee or your federation.

In addition to completing the selection slip in *WI Life* and posting it to your federation, WIs can:

- allow members to submit their selections directly to the WI secretary via email or telephone;
- conduct an anonymous poll at a virtual WI meeting; or
- collect selections using electronic tools, such as via email or using a survey tool like SurveyMonkey.

A number of resources are available on My WI for each shortlisted resolution from the NFWI to support members in casting their selections.

Show the Love

Between 1 - 22 February 2021, WI members joined together to Show the Love for people, places, and planet - whilst being apart.

With February almost upon us, it's time to start thinking about the 2022 campaign.

2021 was by far the most unusual year for WI members to take part in Show the Love activities. Despite the challenges posed by Covid-19, WI members worked together to come up with innovative and ingenious ideas to Show the Love and raise awareness of the importance of taking climate action.

The NFWI saw the **highest level of social media engagement in the Show the Love campaign that has ever been recorded**, and during the campaign sent out over 450 resource packs to members across England, Wales, and the Islands. WI members continued to call on their MPs to take climate action at the highest levels of Government, championed community projects and raised awareness of the urgent need to take action for climate and nature.

Here are some examples to show you how our members celebrated a unique Show the Love 2021:



What's On

Dates for your Diary 2022

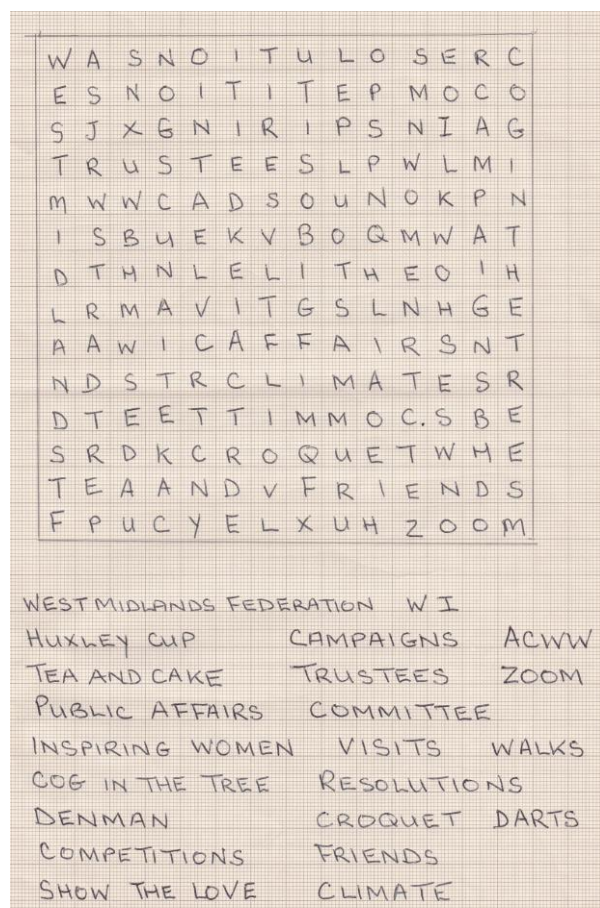
19.02.2022	Dagfields & Bridgemere Coach Trip
Feb	Show the Love Campaign
29.03.2022	Lariat Workshop with Jackie Gregory
Mar/Apr	Campaigning Workshop TBC

Dear Media Team,

Thankyou for your Puzzle Pages in the Cog. During lockdown I started the enclosed wordsearch (having done one previously in 1996!). so now it's finished thought you might be able to use it. Sorry that it is handwritten but I do not use a computer or printer.

Kind regards to you all.

Judith Ewings. Knowle WI



Cheshire Coach Trip with two visits

Dagfields
Crafts & Antiques



Bridgemere
GARDEN CENTRE



Situated near Nantwich in Cheshire, Dagfields is the largest Crafts & Antiques Centre in the Northwest.

7 Giant emporiums contain 50,000sq ft of antiques and collectables, with over 250 dealers on site.

25 Craft Workshops specialise in everything from handmade soap to bespoke garden furniture.

Homemade food is served in two tea rooms.

There is also a Farm Shop & Butchers.

Our first stop for a half day of antiquing is at Dagfields in Walgherton. Our second stop is Bridgemere Garden Centre just down the road in nearby Nantwich.

Bridgemere is Britain's largest Garden Centre.

Selling a huge range of top-quality plants and gardening products.

Six acres of award-winning show gardens. Great shopping facilities, and wildlife trails.

There is a restaurant and separate café.

The site also boasts a retail village with Hobbycraft, Lakeland, Cotton Traders, and Walter Smiths Butchers

Saturday 19th February 2022

Seats cost £17.50

Book by Post

Please send your name, your WI, cheque for £17.50 payable to WMFWI, and SAE to
Claire Woodland 21 Prospect Street,
Tipton DY4 0EE
Tel 0121 556 2998

Book Online

Find event details on our Facebook page @WMFWI, Website <https://west-midlands.thewi.org.uk/> and in your monthly emails from your secretary
£1.96 Booking fee applies

Closing Date Tuesday 1st February 2022

Your secretary has all booking details or click on the above link to book online with Eventbrite. Local pick ups available.

Book asap to secure your seat.