**REPORT ON NCFWI YEAR 2019-2020**

Well who would have imagined how our lives were going to be turned upside down since our AGM at Spinney Theatre at the end of October last year. Remembering how inspiring Dame Floella Benjamin was telling her story of having to face adversity day after day.

Our WI year started well with two coaches going to Kingston-upon-Thames for the Christmas Market followed by a very successful Literary Lunch where we heard about the poisons used in many of Agatha Christie’s novels.

The Christmas Craft Fair in the Tithe Barn at Wellingborough on 30 November and the Coffee Morning at WI House the following week were very well supported. It feels quite scary now how many of us were in the same rooms enjoying the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season.

On Friday 6 March some of us attended the International Women’s Day Afternoon Tea event hosted by Keli Watts Mayor of the Borough of Kettering in the very interesting Toller Church Rooms in the town with Lynne Stubbings as the speaker.

Workshops, Board of Trustee and Sub-committee meetings were held in WI House up until the middle of March. The Membership & Training meeting scheduled for the 19 March was done via email. We all sat in front of our computers with the agenda and fired off emails regarding the various items! Somehow Margaret managed to produce some minutes of the “meeting”! At that point we had not investigated “Zoom”.

But the week after on 25 March Finance & the Officers Meetings were held on Zoom and every following meeting from then onwards has been held virtually.

It was extremely disappointing to have to postpone and then cancel very well supported events particularly the two coaches booked to go on the Wren Churches tour on the 31 March and the really popular St George’s Day Afternoon Tea at Barnwell.

As the year progressed unfortunately lots more planned events and trips had to be cancelled.

All the committee members spend hours researching and planning to give us the members an interesting calendar of opportunities to take part in and raise some much needed funds to help run our Federation.

The earlier Ticket Allocation dates were working very well prior to lockdown, enabling tickets to be sent out with the Newsletters.

Three WIs should have been celebrating their Centenaries this year, Flore, Braunston and Lois Weedon & Weston. I do hope you will be able to hold your planned events next year and are able to celebrate when it is safe to do so.

As many of us became more familiar with Zoom the Trustees were very grateful to Kate Mawer who agreed to do a talk on Uncovering the History of her house. We decided to offer this as a free event to hopefully persuade members to try Zoom. This was very successful with over 70 members applying - thank you Kate.

I would like to thank all the Sub-Committee and Team members along with the Federation appointments, who have had a lot of extra work to do regarding postponing, cancelling and trying to re-arrange their planned items in this year’s calendar.

Very grateful thanks to the Trustees for their help and support during what turned into an unprecedented year. Extra meetings needed to be called, at very short notice, enabling information and the changing guidelines to be forwarded on to WIs as promptly as possible. Special thanks to my fellow Officers, Federation Treasurer Cate Purcell who had the mammoth job of refunding WIs for all the cancellations, my three Vice Chairmen, Margaret Foster, Annie Rodwell and Heather Smith who all co-operated well together with encouragement and enthusiasm.

Diana Babb, Barbara Bentley and Margaret Foster have “retired” from the Board all having given many years of service to the Federation. On behalf of all the members -Thank you.

Jackie our Federation Secretary, Claire our Events Secretary and Tina our Accounts Administrator have been very supportive and adapted very well to the changing circumstances during the year. Working from home and only going into the office when absolutely necessary, liaising with each other to ensure only one of them in WI House at a time has worked well. Being able to put all the staff on furlough from the 10 June when their work-load started easing enabled us to bring them back on part-time furlough from the 1 July.

I will finish by saying - The WI as an organisation will survive and continue to inspire, being everything you want it to be and what you make of it, while giving opportunities to all kinds of women to be involved. With the new vision statements - “**Bold and** **Inspiring:** **Growing and Relevant: Inclusive and Flexible”** shaping the future over the next five years, we look forward to when we can all meet in person and look back on this year, not necessarily with fondness, but grateful to our WI committees, who have adapted, seized opportunities, learnt new skills and kept in touch with members, strengthening ties and ensuring we will all have a WI to return to when it is safe to do so.

Thank you