**CHAIRMANS SPEECH**

Well this year seems to have flown by since we were all at our Centenary AGM last November in Kettering. We are grateful that many of you support all the events put on by our Sub committees. Arts Sports & Leisure have organised a varied range including a Literary Lunch, Christmas Craft Fair, Craft Workshops and a Science Lecture. This next year you can look forward to Getting Crafty at the Mill Shop in Daventry, An Easter Box of Delights and a Rag Rug Technique morning amongst many more in the planning! The team on Travel have had some excellent day trips this year and some of us enjoyed a four day holiday to the North East earlier this month. We now look forward to going to Kingston upon Thames for the Christmas Market next month, in March, A walking tour of the Wren Churches, then a visit to Olympic Park in April. Campaigns and Concerns Committee are busy planning their event on Saturday 16 May next year. Membership & Training provide Training Workshops for all WI Officers, the Annual Meeting and Resolutions Briefing Conference and next year two events for new members are planned.

This last year **earlier** Ticket Allocation Dates have been introduced and we hope that this will help those of you that apply for events etc., to know a lot earlier that you have got a place. Tickets will go out with your newsletters a month before the event enabling easier distribution to members and saving on office time and postage for the federation. This also allows us, in some instances, to put on another coach or another workshop if the event is over subscribed.

The Federation are always on the lookout for members to join us. If you have experience or an interest in Arts Sports & Leisure, Campaigns & Concerns, Media, Membership & Training, Travel or organisation and planning for the future and are interested in finding out more, ask to come along as an Observer to a meeting. We know that there must be many members whose contribution would be of great benefit to the Federation. Volunteering in the Federation brings along lots of opportunities to help shape the future and inspire others. There is more information on each committee in the Annual Report which was in your Delegates pack sent to WIs with the September Newsletter. There will also be a few leaflets on front of stage. Attending a meeting as an Observer does not commit you to anything but will enable you to find out more, before possibly being co-opted on to a committee. We want to encourage you to bring your skills to the committees and for you to learn new skills which could help in other areas of your life. It does not matter how long you have been a member, If you would like to be more involved and have a say in how things are done please contact Jackie at WI House – we would love to hear from you.

I have already mentioned our newest WI, Evenley who I have personally been on a really encouraging journey with this year. At the other end of the spectrum it was an honour for me to attend three WIs who celebrated their centenaries this year Chipping Warden & Edgecote, Ravensthorpe and Great Billing. They all did their members proud and held great events to mark this milestone in their history. Each one was very different, all in the same week in May - thank you for inviting me to be part of your special days. I have also been very fortunate to attend more WIs for the first time this year either for special birthdays or your Resolution meetings in May – thank you all for making me so welcome.

Do you access MyWI the member’s only website? For those of you not yet registered I would encourage you to log in and get the most from your membership. From essential news, information and advice for running your WIs to campaign action packs and special projects for you to try, including crafts and recipes, this is a great resource for all members. Simply search on line for MyWI and follow the instructions or you can even phone and speak to a real person during office hours and they will get you up and running straightaway.

I look forward to seeing some of you again at the Christmas Craft Fair in the Tithe Barn, Wellingborough on Saturday 30 November and the Christmas Coffee Morning at WI House on Friday 6 December.

I would like to thank the Trustees for their help and support during my first year in the “Chair” especially the Officers – Federation Treasurer Cate Purcell and the two Vice Chairmen Margaret Foster and Annie Rodwell for their encouragement and co-operation.

Jackie our Federation Secretary, Laura our Events Secretary and Tina our Accounts Administrator have been very supportive and promptly respond to my many enquiries and suggestions for which I am very grateful. Last but not least you the members for being so welcoming and friendly.

I would like to finish with the WI three key messages The WI is here to Inspire You, The WI is everything you want it to be and The WI is what you make of it. There are all kinds of opportunities for all kinds of women to be involved in the way that suits them as a WI member.