



Cog in the Tree

West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes

January 2021

Doing things differently

The Board of Trustees would like to wish all of our members a Happy New year!

Usually at this time of year WI's are busy signing up new members and renewing old memberships, in these uncertain times we are all having to do things a little differently. Membership for 2021 is not due for renewal until April, which if nothing else gives us all time to pay for our Christmas expenses first.

Some WI's have been working hard to find new ways of connecting with their members, they have made use of the available technologies, such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, and other online conferencing software. Some WI's have existed solely on Facebook and other social media, Facebook Portal, and Chat Rooms have become invaluable. Older technologies such as Skype and telephone conferencing are also useful tools.

Some WI's have paused for a while due to a lack of digital access for their members. We all thought the lockdown situation would be a short period, but it now seems to be never ending.

WMFVI trustees have continued to meet digitally throughout the entire period via Zoom, e-mail, Whatsapp, and a good old-fashioned telephone, along with the odd bit of snail-mail. We don't have all the answers but we are still trying to find solutions to problems as they arise.

We can offer help and advice where needed but it really is down to individual WI committees to make plans for their own group. We suggest trying out digital applications where possible, at the very least use e-mail as much as you can, it's quick, free, and simple to use.

Where technology is a problem, a phonecall, text-message, postcard, or a socially distanced driveway visit can mean so much to a member who feels isolated and forgotten about. It's also important for members to remember that your committees and trustees are unpaid volunteers and they are struggling too. We must all support each other through these tough times.

The Cog is at least one way we can stay in touch and share our triumphs and disasters. The 'Over to You' page is a great way to keep up with, and steal other WI's ideas for projects, and staying in touch with your members. We want to hear from you so that we can send out a publication that is both useful and interesting to you all.

Claire Woodland, Media Chair



Meetings in a bag have been a popular way to stay in touch for many WI's.



Funds not spent on venue hire have instead been spent on small craft kits, printing of puzzles and quizzes. Refreshments such as drinks sachets and biscuits have also been included. Hand delivered or by post where needed.

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

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



200 Club Winner £10

34 - Pamela Griffiths, Berkswell WI

Chairman's Address



Hello all WI members,

I would like to wish everyone a safe and healthy New Year and to thank you for the many kind email messages and cards that I received. I hope everyone had as good a Christmas as possible in these times of constraint. If I am truthful,

I was actually quite relieved to be cooking just for two and not the usual Christmas family feast for thirteen! I was lucky enough to see all three of my sons and their families in Rowheath Park, Sutton Park and Kingsbury Water Park respectively where we met for socially distanced walks and exchanged gifts. I must say that I am not a great fan of picnic lunches in December and hope never to have to do it again.

Throughout the past lockdowns the Federation Trustees have been keeping in contact with all of our Presidents and Secretaries by phone and email and it has been lovely to hear news from each WI. However, we are saddened to hear reports that some of our members feel let down and that they have not received value for the money spent on subscriptions. No-one could have foreseen this wretched pandemic nor the on-going effects it is having on all of us. I would like to say that a great deal of background work has continued even though much of it has been done either from home or in carefully controlled meetings.

NFWI continues to produce WI Life magazine which is packed with cheering tales of the things that members have been getting up to, with lots of recipes to try and craft projects to attempt. If you have on-line facilities My WI continues to provide up to date information on all aspects of WI life and Denman At Home has produced many talks and courses to keep our brains fit and healthy. As always much work is being done on the Resolutions and our on-going campaigns.

At Federation level we have continued to produce editions of the Cog with many contributions from members, quizzes, recipes and craft projects. We still meet monthly via Zoom to continue with our usual work of keeping the Federation going and planning for the future and, as mentioned earlier, we have been keeping in touch with individual WI's.

I continue to be amazed and impressed with the many and varied ways that our WIs are involving their members in all sorts of projects and just generally keeping in touch with each other. Special thanks must go to all WI Officers and Committee members for their dedication to the concepts that the WI stands for. Despite the current lack of meetings which we all so much enjoy, there is still a great deal going on and all for just under £1.00 per week so I would urge all members to stay with us to ride out this situation in the hope and expectation that matters can only improve and we will be back to business as usual well before the end of this new year.

On a brighter note, many of our members have already had the vaccination and many more will be receiving theirs very shortly so we can look forward to a safer future. In my garden the hellebores are blooming bravely in the snow, the azaleas, camellia, magnolia stellate and the dwarf rhododendrons are all laden with buds and the bulbs are beginning to poke their heads above ground.

Out on my daily walk yesterday I was cheered by the sight of a group of miniature daffodils in full flower against a sunny wall. The nights are slowly but surely getting shorter and Spring will soon be here.

Best wishes for happier times ahead.



Lynn

Lynn's Christmas Quiz Answers from December Cog

CAROLS:

1. I saw three ships come sailing in
2. Away in a manger
3. We wish you a merry Christmas
4. God rest you merry, gentlemen
5. Hark the herald angels sing
6. Little Jesus sweetly sleep
7. O little town of Bethlehem
8. We three kings of Orient are
9. The holly and the ivy
10. Ding dong merrily on high

CHRISTMAS:

1. Charles Dickens
2. Helleborus niger
3. Pacific ocean
4. J.S.Bach
5. Norwegian spruce
6. Bing Crosby
7. Rose petals, dried orange peel and spices
8. Opening the poor box in churches to give alms to the needy/gifts to servants
9. Balthazar, Caspar and Melchior
10. A total of 364

ANAGRAMS:

1. Ornament
2. Cranberry sauce
3. Mistletoe
4. Saint Nicholas
5. Mincemeat
6. Turkish Delight
7. Clementine
8. Yuletide
9. Nativity
10. Twelfth Night



Over to you



These 12 twiddle muffs have been made by Charmaine one of our members and will be passed onto a care home. Charmaine has also made more that she has sent to a local hospital. She has put a lot of work into them with knitted flowers etc as the homes are asking for buttons not to be attached now.

Jan Parkes, Great Barr WI

I would just like to say how good the Cog has been. Well done to you all, I like the recipes the team have done, all the quizzes, and to be able to see what all the other W.I.'s have been up to. Next year the challenge is for Project Linus. I am sending a picture of items that I sent to Project Linus in July. I have supported this for many years.



Boldmere members have supported Beads of Courage Bags.



Judy Holmes, Boldmere WI

Aldridge WI committee surprised our ladies with a wooden decoration for their Christmas trees. An encouraging message and a word search were in the card that accompanied the gift.



The sentiments of our message are below and are now sent as a greeting to you all in our neighbouring WMF WIs

2020 has been a year of mixed blessings. Whilst it has brought a lot of sadness, loneliness and distress, it has also brought hope, thoughtfulness and kindness.

A time that brought out the best in people, helping family, neighbours, friends and even strangers.

We at Aldridge WI, like many WIs, sadly could not meet as a group during this time, but we hope that we came some way to helping our members 'weather the storm' with our phone calls, driveway chats and newsletters.

The fight continues as we enter 2021, but all WI ladies please stay strong, stay safe and remember 2020 as a year of fortitude and resilience.

Wishing you a happier and healthy New Year.

Hazel Wood, Aldridge WI

My Spanish Granddaughter Claudia who lives in Lorca Spain suffers from Cystic Fibrosis. I was telling her mother about the Trauma Teddies that we were knitting and explained that they are carried by the emergency services to give to children who are in distress following involvement incidents or trauma. The whole family are very involved in fundraising and thought it was a wonderful idea and said that sometimes some of the children undergoing treatment can be very distressed and wished they had a similar scheme. The photo shows Claudia holding the one I sent her.



Some more Teddies were handed in some time after the Annual Meeting and the pandemic and subsequent lockdown prevented them being passed on. I asked the Board of Trustees if I could send them to the Cystic Fibrosis Society in Lorca and as a result of that they are now being loved and cherished by children undergoing treatment.

Cathryn Marsh, Walmley Evening WI



Pat Smith (President) and Marion Rous (Secretary) with Christmas gifts for our members. We were assisted by Suzanne Allen (Treasurer) in wrapping and delivering them, together with WI Voucher Books, information from WMFWI and Christmas Cards, all in cotton shopping bags which we had made to celebrate Castle Bromwich W.I.'s 100th Centenary in 2020. All arrangements made to celebrate this occasion were, of course, postponed until 2021 due to the virus. We have been keeping in contact with Members by phone and are all looking forward to seeing each other again as soon as is possible.

Marian Rous, Castle Bromwich WI

Victory Belles WI have been busy holding zoom meetings, and chatting on our facebook group since this whole situation began. The digital tools available now have improved so much and have made keeping in touch so easy, even our 92 year old joins in. There is however nothing like an actual face to face conversation and we have made this possible as much as restrictions have allowed, with doorstep distanced visits.

Claire Woodland, Victory Belles WI

Time to think of our Wildlife!

When tidying up the garden, I hope you have gathered together any old wood you've found lying around and made a safe shelter for hedgehogs to spend the winter in a quiet corner. It's not too late and even if you don't attract a resident hedgehog this year, the many insects that'll make a home there will be a good food source for them next year. It can be as simple as a miniature log pile using live and dead wood, twigs and some leaves you've cleared over the winter with a moss or dead leaf-lined cavity in the centre.



Try to build in some large leaves or even a piece of recycled plastic to make the nest waterproof. I made this one very quickly earlier this year. You never know You may attract a rare albino hedgehog like the one we had on our allotment site a few years back!

The birds will welcome you topping up their feeders and leaving them a water supply that doesn't freeze now that the weather's getting colder. Think about protecting the feeders from squirrel attack and ensure they're high enough to be safe from cats. I love to natter to the robins that come and watch me digging, waiting for a chance to pick up worms. It gets worse! in spring, I whistle to them and although astonished, they often reply!

Have you joined the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch (29-31 January)?

You can sign up on the RSPB website for all you need to take part, including your free guide, help with identifying what you see and expert advice on feeding the birds. *Plus, you'll also receive 20% off in the RSPB shop.* You can make your count in your garden, on your balcony or the local park. It only takes an hour!



Campaigns:

This month I'm not going to list all the key campaigns or give you an update on them. I'm just going to set you a challenge, which is to go onto thewi.org double click on 'Our Campaigns' (in the green strip across the top of the page) and update yourselves on progress – *no annoying passwords to remember, I promise!*

When you get to the bottom of the page you could also sign up for the **Public Affairs Digest** as well.

I'll make one exception, WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) has reported that the greenhouse gas emissions associated with a year's worth of potatoes thrown away from UK homes is capable of **melting almost 1 million square meters of Arctic ice!**



Every year in the UK, roughly 7 million tonnes of food is wasted.

During the festive season this can include

- 2 million turkeys**
- 5 million Christmas puddings**
- 74 million mince pies**

Causing almost 270,000 tons of food waste.

I know that WI housewives are well aware of the need to avoid food waste, but these are the shocking national statistics and there are clearly many people/organisations out there who need our help or even advice to reduce these figures. So, now's the time to go to it, download the action pack and even in these difficult times, I'm sure you'll find opportunities to influence!

And now ... preparing for this year. It's certainly time to plant sweet pea seeds in root trainers or recycled toilet roll centres (using peat-free compost, or your own mix). My garlic and shallots are just showing through, those in the greenhouse a bit ahead of the row outside. Once the watershed of Christmas is passed, I always think it's exciting to start planning the year's crops.

I'm particularly keen on tomatoes and tried an RHS promoted last year called Tomande F1 (I grew them both indoors and out). They were amazingly successful and disease free - my first tomato weighed 14.82 oz (420 gms).



Another I'm trying for the first time is called Belladine F1 and has large conical fruits with tasty flesh and very few seeds – said to be very good for making sauce. Last year, I was so overwhelmed with tomatoes that I made quite a lot of sauce, which I froze. Making the sauce is easy, just cut them to about cherry tomato (halved) size, put on a roasting tray at a low heat in the oven for 4-5 hours, then pulp, bottle and freeze. It made an absolutely wonderful base for Italian dishes, much tastier than *passata* and sadly, *I've only got about three jars left!*

Liz

Crafts

Welcome back to the craft page and a Happy New Year to you all, are you going to try new crafts or brush up on familiar ones this year?

I am hoping to learn how to do waffle crochet and improve on my C2C (corner to corner) crochet skills.

A final reminder if you are making the table runner for the Trustees Trophy, the closing date is January 31st, entries received after 7th February will **not** be judged.

All entries must be posted to: Debbie Arkinstall, 31 Holliday Road, Erdington, Birmingham B24 9HA.

I am aware that some members support Project Linus and thank you for that.

Debbie

PROJECT LINUS UK



Patchwork Block of the month. I am hoping that the patch workers among you would like to contribute to this part of the page. But to get things going here is a simple block. As you can see, this one is based on triangles being made into squares.

There are 3 sizes of blankets/quilts that the project need, they are: - baby, approx. 36" square, child: - approx. 45" x 60", and teen: - 50" x 72". You need to use 100% acrylic yarn, please no wool because some children are allergic to wool and acrylic is easily washable. If you wish to create patchwork blankets, 100% cotton is to be used, they must be lined and all bindings to have no raw edges. This information is taken from - projectlinusuk.org.uk

Knitted block: Cast on 55 sts. (please note, this pattern is worked in multiples of 4 so you may wish to increase or decrease in order to get the desired size). **Row 1:** Knit, repeat on every alternate/odd row. **Row 2:** knit 26sts, sl1, k2tog, pssso, knit 26sts. **Row 4:** k25sts, sl1, k2tog, pssso, k26. **Row 6:** k24sts, sl1, k2tog, pssso. Continue in this manner until there are 3sts left; knit 3 tog. fasten off yarn.

If you have craft items for collection contact Debbie Arkinstall 0121 382 7401 email arkinstall.mama@outlook.com alternatively drop offs can be made to Country markets by prior arrangement.

Blanket Block of the Month

Crochet: Foundation chain, make 58 ch.

Foundation row: 1dc into 2nd ch from hook, 1dc into each ch, turn (57dc). **Row 1:** 1ch, 1dc into each of next 27dc, dc3tog, 1dc into each of rem 27dc, turn (55dc). **Row 2:** 1ch, 1dc into each of next 26dc, dc3tog, 1dc into rem 26dc (53dc). **Row 3:** 1ch, 1dc into each of next 25 dc, dc3tog, 1dc into rem 25dc (51dc). Continue in this way until there are 3dc left, last row: dc3tog and fasten off yarn.

Pattern taken from 200 Crochet Blocks by Jan Eaton.

Montgomery Shield

The outgoing Chairman Iris Montgomery has kindly donated a shield to the federation trophy cabinet. An annual competition will be held for Best in Craft to be awarded at the Federation Annual Meeting each year.



2021 members are invited to design and make A Thistle

Using any media: knitted, quilted, embroidered, painted, beaded, sculpted etc (excluding photographic) A4 size



I am hoping that the patch workers among you would like to contribute to this part of the page. It would be nice to have a simple quilted block of the month that can also be used for any Project Linus blankets.

Useful Books

The encyclopaedia of quilting and patchwork techniques by Katharine Guerrier

Compendium of quilting techniques by Susan Briscoe

Do have a look on the internet for preloved craft books, I have managed to get them for as little as 1p plus post and packing, which is approximately £2.50

Shropshire Federation

We have been asked by Shropshire Federation if we would like to take part in their knitting challenge. We have been asked to knit scarves 6" wide by 60" long as part of their 'Knit the Shropshire Way' challenge. All scarves when finished will be going to homeless charities in the West Midlands. If you would like to help, then please let me know so that I have some idea of participation. Hereford, Worcestershire and of course Shropshire Federations are all taking part.

Denman at Home

If you have access to the internet you can participate in dozens of courses, demos, craft-alongs, and talks via zoom.

Visit Denman website for details. www.denman.org.uk

Trustees Trophy 2020 – Table Runner

Closing date has been extended until 31st January. Judging will take place during February

Winners will be informed by post and receive postal certificates as we cannot meet to pass out awards.

Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic is still preventing us from organising or planning any entertainment events for the foreseeable future.

I have started to look into summer outings, I have received one or two suggestions for days out, I am still open to your suggestions and requests.

The entertainments sub-committee have been unable to meet, which is making arrangements difficult.

I have not had any further contact from Buxton with regard to the Gilbert and Sullivan festival contacted Buxton re HMS Pinafore, and so we must continue to treat it as cancelled.

One idea I have is to repeat a very successful trip I did with Yardley, to The Hat Works in Stockport followed by a visit to Broad stones shopping outlet for retail therapy and even afternoon tea! It was a fascinating place and well worth a visit.

Julie Afridi-Martin, Entertainment Chair

To contribute contact Julie at jtafridi@hotmail.co.uk or 28, Vicarage Road, Yardley B33 8PH. 0121 784 7010

Julie's Famous Quotes Quiz

1. Famous scientist - "Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe."
2. American novelist - "If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything."
3. Irish playwright, poet and author - "Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much."
4. Indian politician and statesman - "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."
5. Civil rights activist - "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."
6. Actress, model and Icon - "Imperfection is beauty, madness is genius and it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring."
7. British playwright, poet. "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."

Answers:

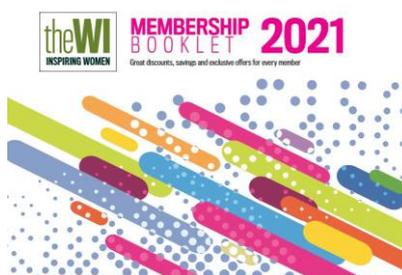
1. Albert Einstein, 2. Mark Twain, 3. Oscar Wilde, 4. Mahatma Gandhi, 5. Martin Luther King Jr, 6. Marilyn Monroe, 7. William Shakespeare

Dates for your Diary 2021

09.03.2021	WMFWI Virtual Annual Business Meeting
09.09.2021	ACWW Walk – Barston Lake
21.09.2021	Let's Get Digital Workshop - BMI
12.10.2021	WMFWI Annual Meeting – Carr's Lane
04.12.2021	Carol Service – St Martin's in the Bullring

Trustees will be making use of the available technology to bring the Annual Business Meeting to you via Zoom. You will receive notification in due course via email.

We remain hopeful that the later dates on our calendar will be able to take place in the physical world.



Membership booklets have been sent out to all WI's and should be finding their way to members shortly.

The Membership Booklet contains the **WI membership card** and **important WI information**, as well as a multitude of exclusive **offers, discounts and competitions**. We will send a copy of the booklet to both existing members who renew their membership and new WI members at the end of the year.

200 Club

There is still time to enter the 200 Club prize draw for 2021. Shares cost £5 each for the year. For a chance to win £10 each month and a lump sum Grand Prize at year end.

Please write your name, address, and WI branch on a slip of paper stating how many shares you would like. Send together with a cheque made payable to WMFWI and remember to include a stamped addressed envelope.

You have to be in it to win it! Remember the more shares sold the bigger the payouts.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year.

Iris Montgomery, Federation Treasurer.

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook for regular posts and updates. WMFWI: West Midlands Federation of Women's Institutes



Puzzle Page

Say what you see

Straw Straw Straw ←		UNMUN	Matter Matter Matter Matter
MAIL MALE	RO AD	Goodbye	
B R B R E E D E D	HOT HOT HOT HOT ←	Agent Agent	Pains Pains Pains Pains
BAD WOLF	LONG DUE	TIT TAT TAT TAT TAT	ME WE

NEW YEAR

WORDSEARCH

S	E	L	A	S	E	E	P	C	O	W	W	S	M
S	R	L	A	A	D	N	I	W	S	T	C	G	O
R	A	J	C	D	K	I	R	T	S	G	N	E	J
O	I	K	O	U	A	A	A	T	N	I	S	X	L
E	N	B	L	U	E	S	A	I	N	S	E	E	K
F	L	E	D	Y	G	R	N	N	W	O	N	S	P
L	A	R	W	G	T	N	G	H	I	L	O	I	S
A	A	E	H	H	I	C	E	L	L	I	H	C	S
T	N	V	E	G	A	N	U	A	R	Y	Y	R	R
O	F	G	E	B	I	D	E	R	I	T	X	E	E
T	E	B	O	M	O	D	D	A	I	S	O	X	D
E	T	O	S	N	O	I	T	U	L	O	S	E	R
E	R	E	Z	W	X	E	U	I	G	R	S	Y	Y
T	S	Z	S	W	C	T	Q	Q	B	F	P	E	K
S	S	E	L	A	C	S	T	I	F	P	E	E	K

Beginning, Blues, Chill, Cold, Diet, Dry, Exercise, Frosty, Ice, Keep-fit, New Year, Rain, Resolutions, Sales, Scales, Snow, Start, Teetotal, Wind, Veganuary

We want to hear from you. Send us your WI news, photographs, stories, events, and activities. Contact the Media Team at WMFWI.media@gmail.com

Answers in February Newsletter!

Riddle me this

1. What can you break without ever touching it?
2. What goes up but never comes down?
3. What can't speak but will reply when spoken to?
4. What can you hold in your left hand but not in your right hand?
5. What is black when it's clean and white when it's dirty?
6. What invention lets you look right through a wall?
7. What goes up and down but doesn't move?
8. I am an odd number. Take away a letter and I become even. What am I?
9. If two's company, and three's a crowd, what are four and five?
10. What begins with an E and only contains one letter?
11. What four letter word can be written forward, backward or upside down, and can still be read from left to right?
12. I am a word of letters three; add two and fewer there will be. What word am I?

December Puzzle Page Answers

Say what you see

All things being equal, Under the thumb, One step forwards two steps back, Safety in numbers, Read between the lines, Six feet under, Half baked, In two minds, Making up for lost time, Man overboard, Untouchable, Growing economy, Standing ovation, First aid, Try to understand, Shrinking violet

Christmas cracker

The batteries died, Short, Post Office, Egg, Comb, Fence, Bed, When it is a jar, In the dictionary, A hole, Fire