

Northamptonshire County Federation of WIs



Annual Report 2019/2020

of the Board of Trustees



Registered Office: WI House, 71 Park View, Moulton, Northamptonshire NN3 7UZ
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Staff

Laura our Events Secretary, who wanted a job with more hours, left for pastures new in December. Claire was appointed to replace Laura and luckily for us Laura was able to help train Claire in her role for a few days in December. The office at WI House is usually a hive of activity and certainly was up until 23 March of this year when the country went in to lockdown due to Covid-19. This meant re-organising with staff mainly working from home and ensuring only one member of staff at a time would be in the office. Claire was able to work from home straightaway and Jackie just going in to WI House as needed to open post and doing the admin work not able to be done from home. Tina was in as usual on a Wednesday and Friday to do the accounts and any banking.

The Government changed the Furloughing rules towards the end of May which meant that any staff who had not been put on Furlough by the 10 June could not be

brought back part time from the 1 July – 31 October. The Officers made the decision, after talking to the staff, to furlough all of them on 10 June. On 1 July they all returned to work, Jackie and Claire from home with Tina in the office, all working vastly reduced hours to normal. The dedication, loyalty and keenness of all the members of staff to adapt to the challenging times we found ourselves in made the transition as smooth as possible. Our very grateful thanks to Jackie, Claire and Tina for their help and support to the Board of Trustees, Sub-Committees, Northamptonshire WIs and their members.



WI Members in Northamptonshire

As at September 2020 there are 113 WIs and approximately 3,400 members in our Federation.

Board of Trustees

Chairman	Anne Seckington
Vice-Chairmen	Margaret Foster Anne Rodwell Heather Smith
Treasurer	Cate Purcell

Members: Diana Babb, Jean Bates, Denise Bott, Linda Brett, Ann Thorington, Barbara Bentley, Rosie Duddy

Co-options: Chris Carr

Sub-Committees

Sub-Committee Chairmen:

Arts, Sport & Leisure	Anne Rodwell
Campaigns & Concerns	Jean Bates
Finance	Cate Purcell
Media	Margaret Foster
Membership & Training	Margaret Foster
Travel	Ann Thorington

Publications:

Newsletter Editor	Margaret Foster
Yearbook Editor	Margaret Foster

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BOARD of TRUSTEES

We started the year with a full complement of twelve trustees who have been very supportive and busy arranging various events from Abba Sensation to Speakers Selection evenings. In July 2019 we hosted an Inter-Federation meeting and invited two representatives from each of our neighbouring Counties. This proved to be an interesting, informative and useful day, exchanging ideas and finding out what had worked successfully for each Federation. The Christmas Coffee Morning was well supported with Tracey and her team supplying endless cups of coffee and lovely cakes to all those present. The Catering Team also prepared excellent refreshments for all our guests at the AGM in October and for the Federation Sub-Committee members at our Focus on the Federation morning in January. We appreciate and extend our very grateful thanks to Tracey Hockaday, Ann Hobbs, Jenny Potter and Joyce Salisbury.



The Archiving Team made bags and have wrapped and labelled many WI tablecloths in suitable fabric to preserve them safely. Photos were taken of each one and listed in the Archive book. The next undertaking was sorting through the closed WIs' records and archiving in suitable boxes ready to take to the Records Office when, unfortunately, Covid-19 restrictions curtailed any further progress. We are indebted to Sue Kendall, Liz Garrod, Yvonne Read and Margery Palmer who have all spent many hours in the loft at WI House earnestly undertaking the not so glamorous jobs of sorting through everything in the dusty boxes to ensure the appropriate records and items are saved for the future.

The sub-committees plan activities, events and trips many of which this year proved very popular with record levels of interest for some and such a

shame when due to Covid-19 a lot had to be postponed and later cancelled. Numerous hours are spent by the Chairmen and members of the committees planning and researching possibilities. Like many members I have enjoyed and taken part in a varied range this year from the very well supported Literary Lunch to the excellent short break in Sunderland. Thank you to all the Chairmen and members of the committees for your enthusiastic input to ensure we have such a variety of events/workshops/trips to benefit from in Northamptonshire.

Flore, Braunston and Lois Weedon & Weston WIs all reach their centenaries in 2020. With some celebrations put on hold let us hope it will not be too long before your planned parties and events can be held.

I have been very fortunate to have Margaret Foster, Annie Rodwell, Heather Smith and Cate Purcell as my fellow officers who have unstintingly supported me in what became a very interesting year! When we listened to Baroness Floella Benjamin at our AGM in October last year and excitedly promoted what we had planned for 2020 of course none of us knew the unprecedented times we were going to face. A whole new vocabulary quickly arose from cocooning to social distancing. Many of us learnt how to Zoom to keep in touch and ensure all our meetings took place on the appropriate days. Extra meetings for Officers and Board were arranged as regulations and guidelines changed to enable us to keep up to date and pass on information promptly. Exceptional thanks to Margaret, Annie, Heather and Cate, I could not have done it without you and grateful appreciation to all the trustees for their help and assistance in this extraordinary year.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees thank you to all the WIs and members who actively support the federation throughout the year. We hope the coming year will see an end to the restrictions we have all been living under so that we can start to enjoy each other's company in person and not via a screen.

**Anne Seckington (Brackley WI)
Federation Chairman**

ARTS, SPORT and LEISURE

The members of Arts, Sport & Leisure continue with their quest to locate and explore interesting and inspiring speakers, crafts and events, hopefully, for all the members of Northamptonshire WI to enjoy.

Our WI year started well with events which included a Literary Lunch, a Sewing Machine Day, Christmas Craft Fair and Cake Icing Workshop and a series of Craft Mill visits. These events were, in some cases, over-subscribed but, we hope, thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended them.



Of course, as we moved into the Spring of this year Covid regulations were enforced which meant that all planned events, large and small were cancelled. So no Skittles teams playing, no County Walks took place and no more visits to the Craft Mill. No Rag Rug making, Easter Box of Delights or Iris Folding Workshops could happen, and alongside these we have had to cancel the Flower Festival at Kelmars and our annual Scrabble tournament.

Undeterred AS&L will continue to meet (via Zoom) and I would like to say a huge thank you to Carolyn Stone, Shirley Corke, Heather Smith, Chris Farmer, Liz Garrod and Denise Bott for their continued enthusiasm and commitment. Sadly Jo Stevenson and Linda Ferrier have stepped down from AS&L and we will miss seeing them at our meetings. Thanks to Aida and the team for planning the County Walks. Thanks also to Jackie, Claire and Tina for all the help and support they give to Arts Sport & Leisure.

**Anne Rodwell (Great Doddington WI)
Chairman, Arts, Sport & Leisure Sub-Committee**

CAMPAIGNS and CONCERNS

I am pleased to report a good attendance of committee members at the four meetings held this year, with requests to attend as observers from three WI Members. Jo Stephenson was elected as Vice Chairman of the committee, but has since sadly, due to personal reasons, resigned from the committee. We thank her for her input. The other members of this committee bring enthusiastic input to meetings, with various skills all so vital for our success.

An article has been submitted each month to the NCFWI News, by the Chairman of the committee, to inform and update members on the progress and action taken on NFWI Resolutions.

We organised an event looking at Climate Change and the garden, which also was taking in the beneficial effects of gardening and wildlife on mental health issues but, sadly, this had to be cancelled due to Covid 19.

Members of the committee have supported and promoted food banks, attended Show the Love events, promoted Campaigns at coffee mornings and the AGM.

Our Climate Ambassadors continue to give talks to WIs and engage with members with articles in the NCFWI Newsletter. Members recently took part in a Virtual Lobby of Parliament organised by the Climate Coalition to promote a green recovery after the pandemic. Unfortunately, events have been cancelled where we would have been able to engage with the public, i.e. Blakesley Show. Our Climate Ambassadors attended a Transition Town Northampton Film Night and raised the profile of the WI's involvement in Climate Change. They also were at a Daventry District Council emergency planning meeting where these issues were raised, also the need for public transport solutions. The committee is already looking at ways of working on the two new resolutions agreed by NFWI this year and plan an innovative and exciting future.

Our ACWW Officer, Jean Bates, continues to promote ACWW in an article in each NCFWI Newsletter, and offers talks to WI meetings. This offer has been taken up by many WIs this year, but

some cancelled due to the restrictions in place. The members of Northamptonshire Federation of WIs continue to collect items for recycling for charity and the monies gained that way have contributed also to donations from WIs to ACWW. Members have, on occasion, chosen which WE Fund they wish their contributions to support and can follow the projects on line. Plans for the Midlands Supporters Group meeting were cancelled this year.

Diana Babb, our Resolutions Officer, has kept members informed of the selection procedures for new resolutions, with articles in NCFWI Newsletter, and encouraged members to consider submitting resolutions.

Jean Bates (Helmdon WI)
Chairman, Campaigns & Concerns Committee



MEDIA

The Federation Newsletter which is usually produced eleven times a year, has undergone a necessary change since lockdown! We are most grateful to Claire Palmer, who has undertaken to put together a newsletter which is now being emailed out to WIs whilst we are unable to have it printed, packed and distributed.

As Editor I am extremely grateful to all WIs and individual members who send in articles and photographs, which are included whenever possible. I am once again most grateful to Maureen Coles (Overstone & Sywell WI) who, prior to lockdown, helped with the compiling and proofreading. I am also most grateful to Mik Chapman and Tom James of Contract Printing for all their patience and support.

Before Covid-19 changed our lives, Gwen Blackburn (Towcester Evening WI) continued to supervise the newsletter packing this year, with help from other members of the Board of Trustees when necessary and we thank them and all WIs who packed the newsletter each month. Their help has been invaluable and makes it possible for all our WIs to receive their newsletters in good time for their meetings during 'normal' time.

PR, Publicity and WI Life – Publicity is always extremely important to the Federation, and we are very happy to have Barbara Bentley (Quinton WI) once again carrying out this role in the Federation. Please remember that you can send in articles and photographs to Barbara or directly to WI Life if you so wish.

The Evening Telegraph continues to give us a monthly column where a WI in their circulation area is featured, giving details of past and upcoming events showing the WI at its best and we are grateful to them for this.

We also receive a great deal of help from BBC Radio Northampton to publicise our events when needed and this is much appreciated.

Website – Barbara Bentley (Quinton WI) has been busy updating our Northamptonshire pages and also guiding WI Web Editors through the process to update their own WI page. Basic details of all WIs are listed on the website and it is interesting to see that more WIs are choosing to add details of their programme and activities to this free site. If you have your own website, please remember to keep them up to date. Barbara, Sue Kendall (Rushton Village WI) and Claire, who works in WI House, do sterling work to keep our Facebook page up to date.

Of course, our Website and Facebook page are made all the more interesting by the photos and short articles sent in by our members, and without you our technology image would not be so interesting. Please keep up the good work by sending news of your own WI events to WI House for us to share.

WI Enterprises – Gwen Blackburn (Towcester Evening WI) continued to source a wide variety of

goods which are sold in the office. Don't forget, when we get back to some normality, if you have a special event coming up at your WI, or even a monthly meeting, you can request a box of Enterprise goods to sell. Gwen and her helpers, notably Sylvia Pitts of Geddington & Newton WI, Eileen Reid of Towcester Evening WI and Denise Bott of Welford WI, continued to be found at many Federation events, especially coffee mornings and the Annual General Meeting in October. We are extremely grateful to them for their continued hard work.

At this point I would like to extend our sincere thanks to Gwen for all that she has done for the Federation over the years. Sadly, for health reasons, Gwen found it necessary to resign in the early part of 2020 and she will be greatly missed.

Year Book – Both the Year Book and Speakers List were again produced in WI House and we are most grateful to the staff and those who assisted with proofreading.

With my sincere thanks to the Media Sub-committee – Gwen Blackburn, Barbara Bentley, Sue Kendall and Denise Bott.

Margaret Foster (Warkton Village WI)
Chairman, Media Sub-committee



MEMBERSHIP and TRAINING

I am most grateful to our WI Advisers and all members of the Membership & Training committee who have been most supportive to me and put in many hours helping to run workshops, visiting WIs and attending meetings. Needless to say, from March 2020, due to Covid-19, the work of the committee has consisted of keeping in touch virtually with WIs by telephone and email, attempting to support them at what has proved to be a very difficult time. Our sub-committee meetings have continued by meeting on Zoom and, despite changing times, we have been delighted to welcome two new co-options – Claire Bell (Cranford WI) and Jean McLeish (Bugbrooke WI).

We now have 113 WIs in Northamptonshire. Sadly three WIs suspended at the end of 2019 – Grange Park, Woodford and Guilsborough. We had hoped to work towards forming new WIs this year but, unfortunately, we have been unable to do this at the moment.

The Annual Meeting and Resolution Briefing Conference, which was to have been held on the 30 March, was cancelled, as was the NFWI Annual Meeting which was to have been held at the Royal Albert Hall in June. As a result, it was decided that the two resolutions which were to have been discussed, are now to be adopted by the WI to be worked on in the coming year. These are Stem Cells and Modern Slavery.

Over the last year there have been Presidents and Secretaries Workshops, workshops for Treasurers and MY WI Workshops for Treasurers.

We are most grateful to our staff for all their help – to Jackie, Claire and Tina – their support is very much appreciated.

Margaret Foster (Warkton Village WI)
Chairman, Membership and Training

TRAVEL

The WI year involves two calendar years – for this report the second half of 2019 and the first half of 2020 – and so is a report of very contrasting halves. The year began with a visit to Pershore Abbey and to Spetchley Gardens. This was followed by a very well received and much enjoyed visit to Sunderland. The calendar year ended with a visit to Kingston upon Thames.



2020 appeared to start very well with two full coaches booked for visits to some of Wren's churches in London; that trip to be followed by a coachload going to the Olympic Park. All the hard work for those visits and for the various trips planned for the rest of the year went up in the cloud of smoke known as Covid-19. However, the work has not been wasted. Whilst there will be no more outings in 2020, we are intending to run all of the missed 2020 visits in 2021.

None of the interesting and varied outings we try to provide would be possible without the dedicated efforts of Sue Richards, Diana Babb and Ann Jeyes – my sincere thanks and appreciation to them. Much appreciated vital input has also been received, initially from Laura Roman and, since December 2019, Claire Palmer, both of whom, respectively, were and are on the staff at WI House. My thanks go too to the Officers and my fellow Trustees for all the support received throughout the year, but in particular over the last few difficult months.

Ann Thorington (Welford WI)

Travel Officer

DENMAN COLLEGE

Well the report this year is of gloom!! – a case of two halves! During the latter months of 2019 things were on a very even keel – with predictions of a good inroad into our deficit. The new Head of Denman - Anupreet Jeetun, was slowly turning Denman's fortunes around. Obviously not everything he introduced was liked by all, but in the main it was definitely starting to show good results. Yes, student numbers were sometimes lower than would have been liked, but the outside events were making up for this. The cream teas continued to be a big draw (and very good they were too) and extra events for members and non-members to enjoy were also a sell-out, plus we were getting a good reputation for Weddings, birthday parties and wakes! – all these events added a great atmosphere to the College.

Our September sale was, as usual, a great success adding much appreciated cash into the teaching centre. We do have a great team of helpers – 'baggers and taggers', 'movers, shakers and humpers' and a great selling team. We had a lot of priced up stock ready for the March 2020 sale which did not happen and then the now cancelled September one.

In the Autumn we held a special raffle for Denman which many members contributed to, so thank you for that. At least you will be spared that this year!

At the beginning of the year a decision was made to strip the bedrooms of their individuality, as it was felt that if we were to be open more to the general public it should be more corporate (boring!!!!) – our precious items might be stolen and obviously would not be appreciated by Joe Bloggs! – all 'by the by' now.

Plans were in place for Northamptonshire to have another Federation visit in March 2021 and applications were starting to come in. Now sadly cancelled.

In March, well - Covid 19 arrived and the rest is history as they say. Obviously, Denman had no choice but to close and although it was hoped to open up from 1 July, again this was not to be, and as there seemed no end to this pandemic the future looked very uncertain. Staff were furloughed, and

now sadly face redundancy as the decision has been made to close Denman. As I write, this is still in the consultation period, but I fear, this will be the outcome.

The one bright spark on the horizon is the success of the Denman at Home programme. These are a variety of 1- or 2-hour courses, viewed via Zoom on the internet. There has been a good mix on offer, from yoga and crafts to cookery and history. They are priced at £5 a session and have proved extremely popular. For the time being these at least will continue.

However, questions are being asked every day and I am hoping Federations will at least put some

pressure on NFWI to question their decision again - but I do fear we are about to lose the Jewel in our Crown – the Jewel that over the last 72 years has been a haven and a safe place of learning for women of all ages – the one thing all organisations envied us for. Our forebears worked so hard to achieve this college and we are about to throw it away and we will NEVER get it back.

**Christine Farmer (Preston Capes WI)
Denman College Representative**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

2020

Zoom Talks

November 23 rd	Anne Frank, Her Life and Surprising Legacy
December 3 rd	Domestic Abuse Awareness

If you would like to join these events, please email events@ncfwi.org.uk

2021

Look out for the following events which we are hoping to bring you in the coming year:-

Sports Day	Photography Workshop
Mosaic Workshop	Science Lecture
Gardeners' Question Time	Cake Topper in Icing

Plus a wonderful selection of visits to many destinations including the following:-

Sezincote House	Grimsthorpe Castle
National Memorial Arboretum	Olympic Park
Sudeley Castle	Chatsworth at Christmas

