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Chairman's Update



I really do want to begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year but it is hard to follow it up when you consider the current situation regarding the pandemic. However I do hope that, by the time you receive this, many of you will have already had your first vaccination.

In December I was invited to a virtual coffee morning with Stannington WI. What an entertaining morning we had with the highlight being Chris Bound's retelling of her telephone conversation with the PM Boris Johnson. Maybe she will put something on the website? On the subject of meeting members, which is of course difficult at the moment, of all the unlikely places I met a member of Jesmond WI in the dentist's waiting room just after Christmas. I was very remiss and didn't ask her name and of course we were both fully masked. But I hope to see you, unmasked, at some time later this year and of course flashing super smiley teeth.

There has been many highlights since the last Newsletter with Chris Butterworth of Thropton WI celebrating her 70th birthday by walking 70 miles to raise money for North Northumberland Hospice and Kim Suleman of Cullercoats WI receiving an award from the Mayor of North Tyneside for her tireless work in organising laundry bags and twin hearts for the local NHS and for making poppies and co-ordinating poppy displays in the local shops. Well done ladies, you are what the WI stands for and show the real spirit of the Organisation.

The Office has received more donations to funds, three very large donations came from Acomb WI, Halton Lea Gate WI and Guidepost and Sheepwash WI and several other donations were received from Garden Village WI, Southridge WI, Stamfordham WI and individual donations came from Moira Bengtson and Noreen Brent. My very grateful thanks and those of the Board go to you all for your generosity and kindness in what has been an unprecedented time for us all.

You may remember that our Annual Council Meeting at the RGS was postponed twice last year until April of this year and I did mention in the December Newsletter that the situation may change and indeed it has. Once again we have postponed until October this year. You will be notified of the new date in the next Newsletter and let us hope that we will be able to proceed this time.

☪ Irene Brotherton ☪

Sadly, just before Christmas, the Office was informed of the death of former Chairman of Tyneside Federation, Irene Brotherton. Irene served three different terms as Chairman and was a member and founder President of North Gosforth WI.

She was certainly quite a character and many will remember her roles in the Tyneside show alongside Ding Bell (the time she once dressed in a pink tutu springs to my mind).

A message of condolence was sent to her son Tony and all the family on behalf of the Federation.



100 Club Draw

Drawn on 19 January 2021

1st	Carol Icke 152 Shotley WI
2nd	Gill Rollings 87 Eglingham WI
3rd	Fiona Marshall 197 Cornwell on Tweed WI

Finally I do feel that at times like this we need something to make us all smile and I found just what I was looking for in a book I read recently entitled "Dressed for War". It was a biography of Audrey Withers who was editor of British Vogue during the Second World War. She was a no nonsense lady and was aware of the need to keep spirits up for the many readers of Vogue but even she despaired when she realised that the government of the day had so much control over people's lives that they could stipulate the width of a gusset in a pair of ladies knickers. Please tell me it will not come to that in 2021!!!

Stay safe and well

Marj x

News from the Committees...

Combined Arts – Moira Bengtson



Hello Ladies, and a happier and healthy New Year to you!

As Combined Arts Committee can't meet to plot wonderful events for 2021, I thought I'd share my thoughts on the new "roles" developed during the past ten months. Costume-wise, I seem to have donned my chef's apron a million times a day as himself's menu has become increasingly important to him, and my wardrobe of going-out clothes has been swapped for 3 pairs of jeans and a few tunics and jumpers. Make-up department is reduced to applying moisturiser daily, with chocolate-flavoured lip balm as a treat! The dramatic heels and unusual shoes that I love have given way to dog-walking boots, plus daytime slippers (safe ones for going up and down stairs) together with more flighty little backless numbers for slipping on during nocturnal visits (don't get excited here) to the bathroom.... The weekly red-carpet days involve "dressing up" in a coat and matching face mask to wear whilst visiting Tesco for our "Click and Collect" order, and we're ever grateful to the cast of pickers, packers and loaders who have helped us to stay safe so far.... A massive applause to them!

During this latest lockdown, we'll just have to hope for a drama-free existence and wait patiently for the next act of our Combined Arts lives. It'll be spectacular when we can all be together again. Stay safe Ladies and keep sparkling...we need all of our characters to be intact! With love, Moira x

Treasurer – Norma Birch

Unfortunately we did not sell any winning tickets for the National Raffle, however the Federation did receive £405.38 as a result of sales which during these difficult time is amazing. This has given a bit of a boost to our finances and the Board of Trustees thank you all for supporting the raffle.

Sports and Leisure – Barbara Kilkenny

2021 has arrived and the committee wish you all Happy New Year. It might not seem quite that yet but we WILL remain positive and hope that by late spring we may be able to move towards bringing the WI back into our lives in ways that we are used to. The Queen has cancelled her garden parties but maybe we will start filling up our so far empty 2021 diaries. From the committee, stay safe and well.

Public Affairs – Pat Douglas

A Happy New Year to everyone from Public Affairs. We will all be looking forward to better things in this year, helped by the vaccine.

Have you made a personal resolution as well as choosing one of the five short listed Resolutions put forward? And has anyone taken up Veganuary and / or Dry January for a healthier you and start to the new year?



Keep safe and positive!

Craft – Karen Coleman

Just to remind you of the.. drum role please.....

Make a mask for Marj!

competition for all members of the Federation. Which has been relaunched this month.

Design a mask to be worn by the Federation Chair at 'official WI events / meetings'. The mask must represent Northumberland WI and be fit for purpose. The fabric closest to the face must be washable at 60 degrees minimum, the ear loops need to be adjustable for best fit.

Marj will try on each mask and will be photographed wearing her 5 favourites. These will be published in the Northumberland News and you can vote for your favourite mask - voting for one mask only and each member can have one vote.

You can vote by phoning the Office at Cresswell House on 0191 217 0808 (please leave a message if no reply) or email: federationoffice@northumberlandwi.co.uk The top TWO winners will become the property of Northumberland Federation to be worn at official events. When not being worn they will be displayed at Cresswell House then in due course when no longer needed, they will be kept in the Federation archives.

Each entry is £2.50 (includes postage for the return of the masks not selected). The prizes are: First - £10 and Second £7.50. Closing date for entries is Friday 12 February; voting in March newsletter, closing date for voting Monday 8 March; winners to be announced in April's Northumberland News.



Members' Information:

Craster brighten up the place - Marion Gallon



We planted 1500 bulbs in a socially distanced fashion of course to brighten up the approach into the village. We erected and attached another 1000ish poppies to the magnificent display of 4000ish that we put into the harbour last year.

WI in a flurry! - Jennifer Graham

December brought a flurry of WI activity for the Widdrington Station & Stobswood Committee with having to contact all our members to get their Resolution choices and their agreement to the Constitutional changes.

This then followed with us making up a Christmas gift bag for each member which included a gift, a Christmas tree bauble, a Christmas card and cracker and a sanitiser of course! Three of the Committee called at each of the houses to distribute them and have a little chat on the doorstep! It was lovely to have some personal contact rather than e-mail/text/phoning them.

This was followed up with a sizeable donation to our local foodbank who are in desperate need of help from a small number of families prior to the lock-down, to 40 families now in great need.

A request to Nancy (our Federation Secretary) for some way for one of our members with sight difficulties who doesn't have computer access but wished to be able to read WI Life, had a satisfactory result after Nancy had contacted National. They have an arrangement with the Blind Association who dictate the WI Life onto a CD which will be sent to our member every month she was delighted!

My Zoom Experience - Alison Scrimshaw

As a Prudhoe WI member I was included in their calendar of speakers for a Christmas Floral workshop. Little did I know that when agreeing we would be unable to meet. To keep in contact with our ladies we have been holding regular Zoom meetings, so I was asked to hold a Zoom demonstration rather than a workshop, with the ladies doing their own arrangements later.

Well, I love the normal interaction with the ladies and get great pleasure in seeing them take their arrangements home, so this was going to be very different. I did a trial run at home, set up my iPad and recorded myself ensuring everything I was demonstrating was in view and all bits were to hand. I didn't like just hearing my own voice so decided to play Christmas music in the background. The evening of my demonstration arrived; I was excited but also anxious that it would all go well. I demonstrated 2 Christmas table decorations, and everything went without a hitch. The ladies all enjoyed it and I hoped they would then do their own at home.

What did I learn from this? Next time wear a plain colour top so that the smaller details I was demonstrating can be more easily seen. Although I didn't have my audience with me, I still enjoyed being able to share my ideas. Next year hopefully, we can do it in person.



70 miles before 70 around Thropton

To mark her 70th birthday Chris Butterworth of Thropton WI planned to walk 70 miles between 9 November and 8 December hoping to raise money for charity, which she completed a week ahead of schedule before her birthday on 1 December. The walk was in aid of North Northumberland Hospice and in memory of WI member Mary Bathgate. She was at our last meeting in early March when the speaker was from the hospice but died later that month from Covid. Mary had nursed her daughter Diane through her terminal breast cancer and hospice nurses assisted in the final weeks.

Over £1,400 has been raised so far. If you would like to make a donation visit:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Christine-Butterworth

Well done Chris!

Longhorsley loose a dear friend

It was with much sadness that we announce the passing of long-standing member, Eleanor Ricalton. She had been a member of Longhorsley WI for 59 years, with the exception of a short period when our WI was suspended.



In the earlier years she was Treasurer and among her more recent duties, she distributed the Federation Newsletter to members, kept the register and held our monthly raffle. She loved knitting, crocheting and sewing and was an active member of our village community. She became unwell during the first lockdown and was diagnosed with cancer. She will be sadly missed by all her friends in the WI and in our village.

Zoom Speaker recommendation from Prudhoe WI

We thoroughly recommend Jenny Elliott - of the Tyne Rivers Trust. She was very interesting and informative about the local projects the charity is involved in up the Tyne Valley and also the role of volunteers within the organisation. She charges £35 for 30 minutes. Contact her on 01434 636 902 / 07817 237 455 or E: j.elliott@tyneriverstrust.org

Secretary Enclosures: Affiliation Fees 2021 Form and accompanying letter from Marj. Yearbook amendments No3

More news of what is going on in WIs around our Federation next month, including Norham WI's inspired idea of a "travelling case."

Deadline for articles for March newsletter – Thursday 11 February 2021.



Prudhoe's virtual Christmas Party - Anne Leech

We had our virtual Christmas party where members wore their Christmas jumpers and had a glass of their favourite tippie, mine was a G&T. The Committee made up little bags for every member which had a knitted fairy, a gold fir cone, fruit cake, sweets a little glass fairy and a Christmas card.

The members said they really enjoyed opening them, it was like getting a Christmas stocking. Even the bags were made with old WI news magazines.

Hope you all had a good Christmas and let's hope 2021 shows promise of things getting back to normality.



A Host of Angels in a Box - Juliet Novis

It would have been Warden in Hexham's 99th celebration on 9 December and a very special Christmas "meeting in a box" was created by member Jane Hale. It included lovely handmade items, and short bread, chocolate, jokes, paper angels, fairy lights, raffle ticket etc, including a potted primrose which really raised our spirits!

The box, based on the theme "A Host of Angels", was delivered with a note to break the seal at 7pm so that all members opened theirs at the same time, just as if we were at the meeting.

It was suggested we might like to make a contribution towards a book of Angels, paying tribute to all the people who had helped us through these strange times. These will be bound together to fill the gap left by our lack of Minutes. We also sang "Hark the Herald Angels Sing".



What a wonderful way to bring us all together and a "meeting" none of us will forget - but, in case we did, also in the box was a dainty little Angel keyring to keep as a reminder!

Ponteland Village go for something stronger - Rachel Bowey Bland

We set up a new group recently called the 'Coffee (or Something Stronger) Club' which we set up to bring members together, to catch up with WI friends and to alleviate some of the loneliness lockdown has inevitably caused. We decided to start it when meeting 6 people was allowed but before we could have a first get together the rule of 6 was stopped so we decided to move to Zoom.

We have had 2 morning and 2 evening meet ups, and they have all gone really well! The plan is to do them face to face as soon as we can.

