

Annual General Meeting 2022

Sub-Committee Reports

Arts Sub-Committee

It gives me great pleasure to present the Arts Sub-Committee report on all our events for the 2022 AGM. We continued facing the challenges of event date changes and unfortunately the cancellation of our 'Stand Up Speak Up' Workshop and Evening of Light Entertainment. The Committee received a welcome grant from The Community, Heritage and Culture Fund which enabled us to run a successful series of ten One Day Schools throughout October and November. These included Acrylic Painting classes by artist Helen Galway, and Beginners and Advanced Calligraphy, Cutwork and Sculptured Lettering by Jacquie Brachi. All materials were supplied to the members attending and we have stock for future workshops.

On the 26th June 2021, we held a very constructive meeting with all the choir conductors who helped us agree a revised music programme for future festivals. Due to the restrictions on singing together and their halls being unavailable, most choirs were unable to practice until the New Year and some will not be able to until this September. Those who are now meeting are keen to go ahead with the Music Festival - now planned for Saturday 21st May, in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church Hall, when the adjudicator will be Mr. Sam Murray. The choirs are looking forward to singing together during the 90th Anniversary Service, to be held at 3.15pm, Sunday 25th September, in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh.

The Executive had suggested that it would be an idea to have a WI fashion scarf, so we introduced a Federation 'Design a Scarf' Competition. The remit was that it must incorporate the WI farm gate and the flax flower that is synonymous with Northern Ireland, subtly incorporated into the design. Our winning member, Therese Mageean of Saintfield WI, has come up with a beautiful interpretation of A Country Women's Song in a watercolour landscape. She has depicted The Mountains of Mourne, a cottage and the farm gate all overlaid with the image of the flax flower and washed in the soft blues and pinks of an evening sky. Aware of sustainable fashion, the Donegal based company Pixailli, printed Therese's design onto soft, eco friendly cotton muslin, to produce a lovely, lightweight, wraparound scarf that can be worn in a variety of ways. They are available to buy today at our AGM, at a cost of £15.00 and will also be on sale at Balmoral Show and WI Headquarters. The Executive also asked that we design and produce a set of notelets for the Federation depicting a landmark building from each of the six counties. With thanks to the artist Allan Lindsay, husband of our Committee member Maureen, they are now ready for your sales tables at £3.50 per pack of six with envelopes.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the members of my Committee who have given me constant help and advice over the past year and to express my appreciation for the work that Kathleen and Caroline do to keep the office running so smoothly.

Lesley Dowds

Arts Sub-Committee Chairman

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Balmoral Sub-Committee

Preparations are now well underway for this year's Balmoral Show, which runs from Wed 11th to Sat 14th May. It is hard to believe that 3 years will have lapsed since our last visit! Time brings changes, and Balmoral is no exception. The RUAS has recently erected a new building – known as 'The Annex' – directly behind the Eikon Centre. The WI has been allocated half of the Annex, with an internal layout similar to previous years. Signs on the exterior walls, and Downtown Radio nearby will help visitors to find us! This year the WI celebrates 90 years since the first Institute was founded in Garvagh in 1932. Our Balmoral Fireside Quiz sheet, entitled '90 Memorable Years', seeks to remind us of a few of the achievements and world events that have happened over the years – I'm sure many of you won't need to 'Google' the answers! Tickets are now available for our 'Grand Prize Draw', with a record number of 21 prizes donated by members, Institutes, hotels, shops and businesses – a sincere thank you to all. Quiz sheets and ballot tickets will be distributed to all Institutes; it is important that all ballot tickets are sold, if any Institute has tickets left please return them to WI Headquarters as soon as possible so that they can be sold at Balmoral or redistributed to

other Institutes. The closing date this year has been extended to 23rd June. Balmoral Show provides us with a wonderful 'showcase' for our organisation. Visitors admire the talents of many of our members, children love to take something home from the 'Lucky Dip' or a hand knitted toy and, of course, the market stall, with all kinds of homemade produce for sale, is always popular. Over the years our 'Tearoom' has also become increasingly popular with both visitors and exhibitors. Scones are purchased fresh each morning from a local bakery, served with a selection of delicious homemade traybakes provided by members and tea or coffee. (Refills available, free of charge!) Ladies, we rely on the support of all our members to help make this event a success. (On a practical note – we realise that biscuit tins are no longer so readily available, so if you would like a tin or container returned, please label both lid and base clearly with 'please return to (name, Institute, Area)' and we will do our best. You may be able to arrange collection by someone attending the Show). Items for the Show can be left at WI Headquarters from Mon 9th to Fri 13th May. Thank you once again, we hope to see many of you at the Show!

Heather Adamson
Balmoral Sub-Committee Chairman

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Homecraft Sub-Committee

Ladies, although Covid is still around, we have completed a year of nearly normal activities for Homecraft! The normal work of the Sub-Committee has been carried out, along with some activities involving the members. Judging during the period October to February resulted in 258 craft articles being received for judging. This resulted in 23 A+, 206 A, and 16 B marks being awarded. There were also 13 items returned unjudged. This resulted in 103 Ribbons, 1 Silver Spinning Wheel, 1 Gold Spinning Wheel and 4 Full Circles being awarded. Entries were well down on previous years which we presume is due to the pandemic. Trophy judging took place on the 7th March again entries were down. Homecraft have 21 trophies, however, only 11 have been awarded this year.

We held a One Day School in November, with 3 full classes for Sprigging, Applique and Hinged Box. Sadly we had to cancel the Homecraft Weekend as only 28 members booked, this made it unviable to hold. Hopefully next year's event will take place with a waiting list for places. The revised 2021 Syllabus is now in use and the old 2015 one should not be used. I would like to point out that the Syllabus is for guidance, so please read it carefully, especially the points to be judged and the tips. If you have any questions, please get in touch with your Area representative or telephone Kathleen at WI Headquarters who can then contact one of the Sub-Committee to contact you with advice.

Two very successful workshop classes were held for Carrickmacross Lace and Gold Work. We hope to hold more in the Autumn but perhaps over a different timescale. Looking forward, we have been considering ways to encourage more members to try craft. There will be the usual One Day School in September and another one in November which will feature Christmas crafts. Watch the magazine and Facebook for Homecraft events! I realise that over the past 2 years a lot of members lost their crafting mojo, I know I certainly did for a while. 2022-23 is a new year and we are learning to live with Covid, so hopefully you will all start crafting again entering for Ribbons, trophies and coming to One Day Schools, etc. I look forward to seeing you at the Balmoral Show, where we will have a display of crafts and a sales table and our usual knitted animals. I would like to thank Kathleen for keeping me straight regarding what I can and cannot do. Finally thank you to the Sub-Committee members for their support, hard work and ideas to promote Homecraft in the Woman's Institute

Brenda Richardson
Homecraft Sub-Committee Chairman

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Home and Garden Sub-Committee

It gives me great pleasure as Home and Garden Chairperson to present my first report. This report covers from the AGM on 10th June 2021 to the present time. We as a Committee had started a long-term project to help the fight against climate change. Our Plant a Tree for our Future project was launched in August 2021 and to date over 8,000 trees have been distributed to all the Institutes. We look forward to seeing photographs of them being planted. As the trees are only part of our fight against climate change, we as a Committee will provide you with information and ideas in our

monthly articles in the magazine. We hope you find them informative. Sadly, the Belfast Autumn Flower Show and Festival of Food and Flowers were also once again cancelled.

We were delighted to be able to hold the Christmas Event in The Crowne Plaza in November and thank you to all members who supported us. Proceedings commenced with Claire Tosh from All Seasons, Dunmurry who showed us how to expertly decorate a Christmas Tree. Next up was Helen Wilson from The Little French Barn who upcycled a piece of furniture, which was added to the ballot. After a lovely lunch and a chance to browse among the stalls, Tracey Jefferies gave us a demonstration on soda bread with a twist.

The Competition for 'A Handmade Ornament for a Christmas Tree' was won by Lesley Martin of Ballievey WI. The event finished with the ballot and the singing of A Countrywoman's Song.

We look forward to your support of our Competitions at the Balmoral Show in May. Details are in the magazine. This has been my first year as Home and Garden Chairperson and I would like to thank my Committee for all their help and support over the past year. Thanks also to Kathleen and Caroline in the office for their help with the above events.

Teresa Feeney

Home and Garden Sub-Committee Chairman

International Sub-Committee

I am delighted to present my first annual report on behalf of the International Sub-Committee.

Firstly, thanks to all members that continue to support the international aspect of our beloved organisation. Despite the unprecedented challenges of the last few years, many of the members of our Institutes still managed to complete their annual ACWW Women Walk the World. It was wonderful to see so many photos on Facebook and in the Ulster Countrywoman of ladies out on their walks together, sharing much needed social time, whilst at the same time, raising essential funds for ACWW.

This year's walks are now underway. What could be more enjoyable than being out in the fresh air, chatting with your friends, getting a little exercise and of course, supporting the amazing work done by ACWW at the same time? To help raise awareness of ACWW and the great work it does, please publicise your walk by forwarding photos and articles to the Ulster Countrywoman, The Countrywoman magazine of ACWW and for Facebook, where Caroline is doing a fantastic job at promoting all aspects of our organisation. Please return all sponsorship money to WI Headquarters before the end of June, clearly marked as 'Walks' money. Just a reminder to the organisers of the 'Walks', if you could please ensure that all participants complete the Health Questionnaire available for downloading from our website. This is for insurance purposes just in case of accidents, which hopefully will not occur. Fingers crossed that the weather will be kind.

Last year the 'Walks' raised over £2,200 which was added to the money donated to fund projects, giving over £4,400 to be used for projects. The Women Empowered Fund has six priority focus areas, which the ACWW Projects Committee headed by our very own Edwina Marr, will use to fund projects. When our International Sub-Committee was allocating these funds, we chose to select one of the focus areas only as our funds were more limited in comparison to previous years. We chose to allocate the full amount toward Sustainable Water, Sanitation and Energy, which covers projects to improve access to water, water conservation and security, and access to sanitation facilities.

Also, Pennies for Friendship is always an integral part of raising much-needed funds for ACWW. Small amounts add up to a larger amount. In addition to supporting the WE fund, we have paid £1,300 to Pennies for Friendship. Our overall donation to ACWW was greatly reduced for last year due to the conditions that Institutes faced. However, it was still a sizeable sum of money. The total forwarded to ACWW was £5,700. Thanks to everyone that donated towards this total.

Each year the Evelyn Lord award is presented to a WI member, Institute or Area that has shown a great contribution to an international cause or carried out impressive work at an international level. It was unanimously decided that the Evelyn Lord Trophy for 2021 should be awarded to Ann Eccleston of Jerretspass WI for her amazing banner creation depicting a visual representation of 'Women and Armed Conflict' marking International Women's Day and the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the ground-breaking treaty on women's rights signed in 1995.

The Mary Boyd Competition for 2021, was in the form of a photographic challenge with entrants tasked with capturing an original image depicting 'A Woman in Action'. Eileen Millar, Vinecash WI

was our worthy winner, with second place awarded to Alison Coyle, Ballyblack WI. Congratulations to Eileen and Alison and thanks to all those ladies who entered. A reminder that this year's Mary Boyd Competition, on the repurposing of a used item of clothing into something new to wear, is ongoing. A photo of the original piece needs to be submitted along with the finished item of clothing. Closing date is 31st August. Details of the competition are on our website, in the Ulster Countrywoman magazine and also on Facebook. Please encourage your Institutes to join in the fun. The report from The Membership Working Group recognised the work of the International Sub-Committee but acknowledged that WI members could be better informed. As a result, the Committee decided to improve international communication to individual Institutes. To do this, I will forward a short report after our International meetings to all International Officers that provide me with their contact details. It is encouraging to have so many ladies already contacting me and I look forward to corresponding with them. Hopefully, it will mean that each Institute within our Federation can have a direct link with our Committee and will receive timely information to update their members with.

This year, the International Sub-Committee plans to host their Rural Women's Day Event on the morning of 8th October 2022, followed by the Autumn Council meeting. A similar format to previous years is intended – bring and buy sale, ballot and speaker. We are delighted that Tish Collins ACWW Executive Director, has just been confirmed as speaker. It should be an extremely informative and enjoyable presentation. Thanks to Edwina Marr for helping to make this happen. Arrangements are currently underway for a number of our members to attend the long awaited ACWW European Conference to be held at the Golden Jubilee Hotel, Glasgow from 19th to 23rd September 2022. The theme for the Conference is: *Diversity is our Strength*. It will be a great opportunity to hear updates, make new friends and gather ACWW information to pass on to our members.

We are very fortunate to have three of our wonderful ladies serving on committees of ACWW. We pass on our gratitude for their service and dedication – thanks to Margaret Broome (Federation Chairman) serving on UN Committee, Edwina Marr on Projects Committee and Pamela Brown serving on Agriculture Committee. The Federation is extremely proud of you all!

The International Sub-Committee would like to express its thanks to our fantastic, hardworking 'girls' in the office. Nothing is ever too much trouble for them and they are a joy to work with. Kathleen and Caroline are excellent ambassadors for our organisation.

In addition, I would like to thank my super Committee for all their support to me in my first year and, for the way they work together to create a very harmonious atmosphere, whilst getting the job done. Finally, to you the members of the Federation, a very big 'Thank You', for all the fundraising you do to support ACWW. Any amount is always gratefully appreciated, no matter how small. Together we are improving the lives of women and their families worldwide.

Rhoda Farrelly
International Sub-Committee Chairman

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Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee Report

As the name implies, the Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee is responsible for the publication of our monthly magazine, the Ulster Countrywoman, and the organisation and running of the following sporting events and competitions:

Sporting Events: Bowls, Quiz, and Golf - disappointingly, due to the government Covid restrictions the Bowls and Quiz planned for 2022 had to be cancelled, however, we are back on course to find the 'WI Golfer of the Year 2022' with our tournament taking place in Newtown Stewart Golf Club on Monday 20th June.

Competitions: Photographic, Literary, Scrapbook, Best Magazine Cover, Best Original Article and Best Poem published in the magazine.

The Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee meets on the first Tuesday of the month; September through to May. Due to Covid restrictions, we have been unable to hold some of our meetings in person but have been making great use of Zoom! Our main responsibility is to produce the Ulster Countrywoman as an engaging read by providing interesting articles, stories, monthly book reviews, competitions, puzzles, photographs and include other news items sent in by our WI members. Our Editor, Caroline Hamilton, is responsible for the finished publication choosing and editing these

items. Caroline has worked extremely hard in very difficult circumstances during the pandemic to produce and maintain an excellent standard of the Ulster Countrywoman. I am sure you will agree, our magazine is something to be proud of.

The front cover is chosen from photographs sent in by the members, which is also a competition (The Quoile Trophy). The magazine is distributed to members throughout Northern Ireland, various other organisations and also sent by members to friends abroad. For the 2021-22 season, we have so far produced five editions of the magazine – September 2021, Autumn 2021, Christmas 2021, New Year 2022 and Spring 2022. Two more editions are planned for release – May 2022 and Summer 2022, taking us up to the end of the WI season in June. (Seven magazines in total this season, still priced at £1.50.)

The Scrapbook Competition 2022 was judged recently. Entrants were tasked with depicting the previous WI season, Sept 2020 to June 2021 – a difficult time to document due to the pandemic, however several Institutes still had a story to share. The Scrapbook trophies will be presented today at our AGM and huge congratulations to Broughshane WI on their hat-trick – winning the Open section (Waringstown Cup), Single Page class and Best Front Cover!

The end of January was the deadline for our Phyllis Gailey Literary Competition and the winner was Lynn Colgan of Ballyclare WI, for her story interpreting the title *'It Never Rains But It Pours'*. An apt title after the uncertainty of the past two years, but still left quite open to interpretation, with writers encouraged to let their imagination take flight, and a variety of very different intriguing tales were submitted. Lynn will be presented with the Phyllis Gailey Trophy at our AGM today and her winning story has been published in the Spring magazine. Well done also to the runners-up: **2nd place** – Frances Kerr of Tartaraghan WI and **3rd place** – Maureen Steele-Graham of Desertcreat WI. Their stories will also be published in consecutive issues of the magazine.

The award for the Best Poem published in the Ulster Countrywoman magazine (Mourne Cup) was won by Lesley Dowds of Ballysallagh WI and will be presented today at our AGM. Lesley's poem entitled *'June Morning'* was an uplifting addition to our Summer 2021 magazine.

The Quoile Trophy for Best Magazine Cover will be awarded at the Autumn Council Meeting in October, as by then we will have more covers to choose from. The Dorman Trophy for Best Original Article published in the magazine will also be presented then – so plenty of time for more submissions.

The Photographic Competition is our last competition of the season. The title this year is *'Summer Days'* and the deadline has been extended to 26th August 2022, leaving lots more time to capture a Summer snap as the weather improves and the bright nights come in.

2021 was a disappointing year for a hard-working Committee, but hopefully some normality is returning and better times are ahead. We look forward to getting the magazine and our other events back on track again in 2022.

Looking Forward...

2022

The Spring 2022 edition of the Ulster Countrywoman has just been published!

- May magazine – Deadline: Wednesday 6th April**
- Summer magazine – Deadline: Tuesday 31st May**
- WI Golfer of the Year – Monday 20th June, Newtown Stewart Golf Club**
- Photographic Competition – Title: *'Summer Days'* Deadline: Fri 26th August**

Please continue to send in interesting articles, news items, poems, jokes, photographs, etc. for consideration.

Christine Rankin
Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee Chairman

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