

Autumn Council Meeting

Saturday, 28th October 2023

Sub-Committee Reports

Arts Sub-Committee

The annual Festival of The Spoken Word was held on Saturday 14th October, in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church Hall. Lesley Dowds, Arts Chairman welcomed Federation Chairman, Margaret Broome, fellow members, guests, and the adjudicator Louise Nelson from Ballymena Academy. The morning refreshments were provided by Templepatrick WI and the winning trophies were presented by the Chairman. There were 31 x entries over 6 classes. The contestants received excellent and encouraging assessments at the end of each class by Louise, who praised the high standard of the entries.

Results:

- Magherafelt Trophy for Prepared Speech – Elizabeth Gray, Muckamore WI
- Armoyn Trophy for Sight Reading – Edwina Marr, Downpatrick WI
- Lambeg Trophy for A Poem by an Irish Poet – Joan Ward, Crumlin WI
- Phillipine McCoy Trophy for Humorous Verse – Anna Murphy, Kells & Connor WI
- Aileen Chapman Trophy for A Poem written by a WI Member – Anna Murphy, Kells & Connor WI
- Downpatrick Trophy for Own Choice Prepared Prose – Mary McLaughlin, Eglinton WI

The Annual Arts Competition and Coffee Morning will take place in Federation House on Friday 9th February 2024 from 10.00am – 12noon, when all the competition artwork will be on display. The presentation of prizes will commence at approximately 11.30am. ***'Nature's Symphony: Celebrating Wildlife and Landscapes'*** is the theme for the painting competition. For the 3D Decoupage entries, the theme is open, as it has proved difficult to source materials in the past when a theme was set for this class. Please see the magazine and website for information, including the Calligraphy and Good Handwriting details.

The 2024 Music Festival will take place on Saturday 23rd March in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church Hall. Proceedings from 10.30am. The programme is published in the September magazine and the music is available from WI Headquarters. It has been scanned and may be emailed to the choir conductors.

To help plan for a successful Drama Festival on Saturday 27th April next year, we are asking Executive Committee Members to let us know of Institutes in their Area that have a drama group, and if they are planning to enter. It was agreed that next year's Drama Festival will include a Duologue class.

The Committee look forward to continuing their promotion of the arts - the dates for your diary with further details will be in the magazine, website and on Facebook.

Lesley Dowds, Arts Sub-Committee Chairman

Balmoral Sub-Committee

This year, the R.U.A.S. held its 154th Annual Balmoral Show. With over 120,000 visitors over 4 days, it provided an ideal showcase for the WI, enabling us to both highlight the activities members can enjoy and to raise funds for the Federation in our ever-popular tearoom. For many, a day out at Balmoral Show is not complete without a visit to the Hall!

The Balmoral Sub-Committee is a hard-working team of ladies who work tirelessly before, during and after the show to make it a success. We rely on our wonderful members to 'make it happen' by contributing cakes, traybakes, jams, knitted toys, etc. for us to use in the tearoom or to sell on the stalls. Many thanks, ladies - you did not let us down! It was amazing to see the shelves, on Tuesday afternoon (before the Show started), stacked with tins and containers full of 'goodies' – all empty as the Show ended on Saturday evening! Thank you also to those ladies who came to help during the week. A special word of thanks must go to our main sponsors – Dale Farm, who once again provided the milk and butter and to Thompson's who donated the tea. The 155th Show will be held from Wednesday 15th to Saturday 18th May 2024 – preparations have begun, we look forward to seeing you there!

Heather Adamson, Balmoral Sub-Committee Chairman

Homecraft Sub-Committee

Since the AGM in March, the Homecraft Sub-Committee has been busy. We had a very successful Balmoral Show in May. The Committee made some tote bags and included a copy of the small WI cookbook. These, along with your knitted toys, baby blankets and various other items on our stall, raised a grand total of £1,864.48. Please keep up your supplies of knitted toys, blankets and any other items for next year's Show. The Committee are discussing what we can make to sell next year.

As announced at the AGM, the Homecraft Awards are being updated. We have sourced a replacement for the Silver and Gold awards. We are currently working with a local designer for a bespoke replacement for the Full Circle. We look forward to sharing these with you in the *Ulster Countrywoman* magazine. The new Awards will take effect from March 2024.

We held a One Day School on 23rd September, which 26 members attended. The classes were *Beading*, *Crewel Embroidery* and *Unfinished*.

The Christmas One Day School, scheduled for 25th November, is filling up fast with some crafts already full. Full details are in the magazine. There will be another One Day School at the end of February. Classes are not yet finalised, so watch out for more details online and in the magazine.

We are currently looking for a suitable venue for a Craft Weekend which we would very much like to run. Sadly, we had to cancel this event for the past two years. Last year, unfortunately bookings did not come in on time, which meant it appeared that we did not have the numbers and we had to cancel the event. To ensure that the Craft Weekend takes place next year, we would urge you to book early. Please keep an eye out for details in the magazine and online.

Finally, I would like to thank my Committee, and especially Kathleen, for all their help.

Brenda Richardson, Homecraft Sub-Committee Chairman

Home and Garden Sub-Committee

It has been busy since the AGM in March. The Balmoral Show was most successful with more competition entries and considerable interest in our displays. There was a small change in the arrangements as we combined forces with the Homecraft Sub-Committee for the competitions. We also expanded our activities for children. September saw the City of Belfast Autumn Fair back in Botanic Gardens, Belfast. Although, we could not run the WI competition this year, we put on an excellent display demonstrating the work of the Sub-Committee. We are looking forward to next year when it will be business as usual.

Much of our time has been spent preparing for our annual Christmas Event, which will be held, once again, in the Armagh City Hotel on Saturday 18th November 2023. This year, we have a demonstration of Festive Floral Art by *Ruby Ferguson Flowers*, a Fashion Show by *S. D. Kells* and, something a bit different, Cocktail Making for Christmas by *Symphonia Handcraft Irish Spirits*. The competition is a decorated traybake in the shape of a Christmas tree. Full details are published in the magazine and there are still some tickets available. Last year, we were overwhelmed by the response to our appeal for knitted items for The Family Appeal in aid of St. Vincent de Paul and The Salvation Army. We decorated our Christmas tree at the Christmas Event with gloves, hats, scarves and socks knitted by our WI members – and we have been asked to do it again this year! So, please get knitting. You can leave your articles in WI Headquarters or at the Christmas Event. Our campaign, *WI Against Climate Change* is still ongoing; we will have a stall at the Christmas Event and the articles in the magazine continue.

We are looking to expand our activities and will always welcome ideas. My thanks to the hardworking members of my Sub-Committee and to Mary, Kathleen and Caroline in the office for their continuing help and support.

Teresa Feeney, Home and Garden Sub-Committee Chairman

International Sub-Committee

Report on ACWW's 30th Triennial World Conference 2023

Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) held their 30th Triennial World Conference on 17-25th May 2023 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The hostess society was Women's Institute of Pahang, Malaysia. The Conference took place at the Putrajaya Marriott Hotel. There were nine delegates attending from Northern Ireland, including five with their partners. Two of which were celebrating their 40th wedding anniversaries. Thursday, 18 May was the start of the Conference.

During the morning, there was a welcome session introducing the Conference. This was followed by lunch and then area meetings. Area President, Ms Afrodita Roman addressed the European delegates. She discussed the many challenges during the pandemic with members continuing to organise events as far as was practicable.

The Opening Ceremony was held on Friday, 19th May and was a very special event, especially as it was in the presence of HM The King and HM The Queen of Malaysia, and The Regent of Pahang and accompanied by ACWW World President Mrs Magdie de Kock.

In the afternoon, there were sessions covering topics critical to ACWW's work and activities:

- **ACWW Revitalised** – World President Magdie de Kock, Area Presidents Afrodita Roman and Bonnie Teeples, and Executive Director Tish Collins gave an overview of changes made during the last Triennium. ACWW operates in accordance with a strategic plan. In February 2022, the Board adopted a new strategy for 2022-2026, titled 'Rural Women in Action'.

The key elements of ACWW remain unchanged. For instance, objectives remain the same – the relief of poverty, the relief of sickness, the protection and preservation of health, and the advancement of education for women in both rural and non-rural areas worldwide, to empower women and improve the quality of life. One of the new measures introduced was the Coordinator's Scheme. Its aim is to increase the depth and diversity of engagement with members worldwide. The new theme for 2023-2026 is *Sustainable Growth for the Future*.

- **Projects for the Future** – Looking at the link between ACWW's Projects and Advocacy work. Projects Committee Chairman Edwina Marr and UN Committee Chairman Marie Kenny were joined by ACWW Projects Participants.

- **New Pilot Projects** – These were selected in 2022 for the Rural Women in Action programme, with initial scoping visits conducted in Western Highland, Papua New Guinea and Rundu, Namibia. These visits help protect potential investment, assess suitability for project implementation, community safeguarding and partner reporting and identify challenges that the potential projects may face. Pilot Projects will enter their next phase and be reported in the forthcoming Annual Report.

- **Human Rights, Intergenerational Cooperation & the Voice of Rural Women** – Area Presidents Marina Muller and Irene Chinje were joined by human rights lawyer Claire Mahon and youth advocate Tharinda Arumapperuma to discuss ensuring rural women are being heard locally, nationally and internationally. Basic human rights are still unavailable to many in our world. For example, rural women make up over 25% of the world's population but continue to encounter barriers to quality, affordable, and accessible health care.

In the past Triennium, ACWW has funded 14 projects relating to nutrition education for rural women, assistance to grow and maintain kitchen gardens to support family nutrition, training and development for healthcare workers and mental health education for students.

Friday ended with a beautiful Malay Set Dinner and entertainment. Saturday, 20th May began with Conference Sessions for voting for the various resolutions. Five delegates from Northern Ireland took part in the voting process.

Conference Session 1 provided information on voting procedures along with adoption of the standing orders. Mrs Magdie de Kock, read her Presidential Address and Report. Then, Mrs Alison Burnet, Acting Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report, and Report of the Finance and Membership Committee. This was followed by an introduction of nominees for election to the Board of Trustees 2023-2026.

Conference Session 2 included the Report of the Projects Committee by Mrs Edwina Marr, Projects Committee Chairman. In addition, the report of the United Nations Committee was read out by Mrs Marie Kenny, UN Committee Chairman.

Resolutions voted on and passed were: Establishment of Rural Women's Employment Action Plans; Addressing Food Waste; Rural Gender Impact Analysis; Correcting typographical errors; 11.1.1 Special World Conference.

Conference Session 3 was held on Friday afternoon. Mrs Sheila Needham, C&M Committee Chairman read out the report of the Communications and Marketing Committee. Resolutions voted on and passed were: 30 Bye-Laws & Rules; Terminology – 2017 Constitution; Terminology – Change of Title; Bye-Law 4 The Countrywoman; Bye-Law 11.5 (Withdrawn)

Sunday, 21st May was devoted to Conference Day Trips which were booked prior to the event.

On our return, it was time to get titivated for our night at the palace! Every delegate had been invited to a grand Royal Gala Dinner at the National Palace. The palace was extraordinary, each room more opulent than the last. Her Majesty greeted her guests and sat at the top table with other members of her family. We were treated to a truly delicious meal and this was followed by a fantastic display of Malaysian dancing by several young people.

Monday, 22nd May began with a lovely thanksgiving ceremony. The ceremony included The Song of Peace, Candle Lighting for those who had passed away, and Essentials of Life – Land, Crops, Clean Air, Clean Water and Education were represented.

Conference Session 4 followed our morning tea. Mrs Alison Burnett, Food and Agriculture Committee Chairman presented her report of the Food and Agriculture Committee.

Resolutions voted on and passed: Titles of Officers; 3. Objects; 10.2 Categories of Membership – Pennies for Friendship

The afternoon session was **Conference Session 5**. The Area Report was presented by Mrs Linda Hoy, Area President for Canada. Mrs Magdie de Kock, Acting Area President for Central and South Asia presented the Area Report for Central and South Asia.

Resolutions: 10.7 Termination of Membership; 18.1.6 Removal of Trustees; Membership Rates

The resolution '10.7 Termination of Membership' evoked much discussion, as it was allowing the World President and Executive Director to be solely involved in the termination process.

It was suggested by some delegates that it could be improved by having at least one other ACWW board member involved. The vote was held, and it failed to go through in its present form.

Removal of Trustees and increasing membership rates were both passed. An individual membership will now be £30. There was a delicious Malaysian Street Food Showcase for our evening meal.

Tuesday, 23rd May began with **Conference Session 6**. Mrs Irene Hinds, Area President for Caribbean, Central & South America read her report. The Area Report for East, West, and Central Africa was delivered by Ms Irene Chinje, Area President for East, West, and Central Africa.

Resolutions: 26. Use of Electronic Communications (Withdrawn); 26.3.1 Use of Electronic Communications by ACWW (Withdrawn); 21.3 Procedure at meetings. The final resolution listed was passed.

After morning tea, the Conference Sessions resumed with **Session 7**. Ms Afrodita Roman, Area President for Europe delivered the Area Report. Also, Mrs Gail Commens, Area President for the South Pacific, delivered her Area Report.

Resolutions: Proxy Voting; 15.4.2 Trustee Positions. These resolutions were both passed.

Conference Session 8 took place in the afternoon. Area Reports were presented by Mrs Norjanah Razali, Area President for South East Asia and the Far East and Dr Marina Muller, Area President for Southern Africa. Then, Mr Nick Newland, Advocacy Director spoke about ACWW's Work with Intergovernmental Organisations. Nick was elected as President of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee in December 2022. Since then, he has strengthened partnership with the National Commissions for UNESCO, building on existing relationships, and just this month, Nick has chaired the Liaison Committee's first Forum of the mandate, with a working title of 'Changing Mentalities for Gender Equality'. This position places ACWW at the decision-making table within UNESCO.

Following on, the location of the 31st Triennial World Conference 2026 was announced – Ottawa, Canada!

A representative from The Canadian Tourist Board delivered a presentation on the various sights and places to visit there. A buffet dinner was provided in the evening and ACWW World President, Mrs Magdie de Kock, presented awards for the shoe bag and tray cloth competitions. Thanks go to everyone that entered the competitions from our own Federation. I had brought 29 shoe bag entries from Northern

Ireland and some tray cloths. A fantastic response and all beautifully made! Christine Rankin's shoe bag deserves special mention. She was awarded a consolation prize which consisted of a signed certificate from Her Majesty, Queen Azizah along with a beautiful plaque. Congratulations Christine!

Wednesday, 24th May had a shorter **Conference Session 9** at 11.30am. Mrs Bonnie Temples delivered the Area Report for United States of America. Mrs Christine Reaburn, TWCC Committee Chairman, read the Report of the Triennial World Conference Committee. Urgency Resolution – Unique Lead Delegates (Submitted March 2023) was passed.

The new Board of Trustees 2023-2026 was announced. Mrs Magdie de Kock remains as World President; Ms Afrodita Roman continues as European President and Northern Ireland's Mrs Edwina Marr is a Board member. Congratulations to them all.

At 2.30pm, a closing ceremony took place and ended with all the Flags of Nations of ACWW members being taken out of the ballroom. The hostess society could not have made us feel any more welcome. We were totally spoilt, and everything was just amazing. Thanks to the Women's Institute of Pahang, Malaysia including their President, Her Majesty Queen Azizah.

*Please note that the full reports cited within this report are available at www.acww.org.uk and a longer International report is available at www.wini.org.uk/downloads

Rhoda Farrelly, International Sub-Committee Chairman

Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee

Since March 2023, five issues of the *Ulster Countrywoman* have been produced – March, April, May, June and September. Our Editor, Caroline does a wonderful job in producing informative and interesting magazines from the articles sent in by WI members. The complimentary remarks reflect her expertise. For the year 2023-24, there will be in total six editions of the magazine - September, Autumn, Christmas, New Year, Spring and Summer. You will be billed £12.00 for all six in Oct/Nov. Each magazine will be longer featuring more of your photographs and high-quality content with less repetition. You will also see more of your news and photos on the FWINI Facebook and Instagram accounts as well as on the website.

To assist the Editor, we would be grateful if you could send in your content well in advance of the deadlines. Remember that not all articles have to be WI related and we encourage you to send in interesting and unique articles and photos including those for the front cover. Should you wish to increase your order of the magazine, please let Headquarters know.

The Golfer of the Year competition took place at Green Acres Golf Club, Ballyclare in June. This a most enjoyable day for all concerned. The Bowls and Quiz finals are in the early stages of planning – dates and venues to be confirmed.

The Phyllis Gailey Literary Competition '**Just Like Granny Used To Do**' is an opportunity to write an exciting story coining this phrase – closing dates for this competition and the Scrapbook competition are the end of January 2024. The Photographic Competition title '**All in a Row**' should produce many interesting images as you get out and about. We extend our congratulations to the winners of our competitions, the runners up and to all those who entered. Details of all competitions, closing dates and winners are published in the magazine, FWINI Facebook page and the website.

The Fireside Quiz will be delivered with the Autumn magazine at just still only a £1.00 – no price increases here. It's a fun way to pass an autumn evening and please send in your entries before the closing date.

The *Ulster Countrywoman* is the magazine of the Federation of the WI of Northern Ireland and as such is the showcase of what we do. The magazine is not only enjoyed by its members but also sent to family and friends abroad as well as the businesses and organisations who advertise with it. An excellent read keeping the WI 'connected'.

Christine Rankin, Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee Chairman

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