

Report on ACWW European Conference 2022

19th – 22nd September at The Golden Jubilee Hotel, Glasgow.

Twenty delegates from our NI Federation attended the Conference. In addition, a husband came along, James Brown. James was a welcome addition!

The hostess society was Scottish Women's Institutes and they provided a very warm welcome for all participants. This included a beautiful tartan goody bag with a range of local makes including a brooch made from coffee pods (definitely a favourite with everyone)!

Day 2 was when the conference began with the President of Scottish Women's Institutes, Anne Kerr opening the conference. This was followed by Glasgow's Deputy Lord Provost, John Millar, welcoming delegates to the city.

European President Afrodita Roman welcomed delegates and introduced ACWW World President Magdie de Kock by video link along with Deputy World President Alison Burnett. Magdie had already accepted an invitation to attend the ACWW USA Conference. She wished members a rewarding conference with deliberations and conversations being fruitful. She emphasised the ACWW theme for this triennium "Diversity is our strength".

Keynote speakers:

Tuesday, 20th September – Daniel Adams, Executive Director, Mary's Meals

This Scottish charity began in 2002 by feeding 200 children in Malawi and the charity is now reaching more than two million children every school day in 20 countries around the world, including Malawi, Haiti, Liberia, India, Myanmar and Indonesia.

As Executive Director of Mary's Meals UK from 2017, Daniel is passionate about seeking a more just world for everyone – most especially for those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalised.

Following on from this, ACWW Committee reports were presented.

Tuesday, 20th September – Aneela McKenna, Mor Diversity

Mor Diversity provides equality, diversity and inclusivity support to organisations in the private, public and third sector in the UK and internationally. Their vision is to be a catalyst for change, leading by example and supporting organisations to create inclusive cultures to allow everyone to bring their best selves to work.

Aneela specialises in the design of bespoke training and innovative solutions to bring out diverse perspectives, new ideas and fresh thinking.

To finish off the afternoon, a fashion show using pre-loved clothes took place. Donations from clothes sold went towards the ACWW Rural Women in Action Fund.

Wednesday, 21st September – Sandra Campbell, Mercy Ships UK

Mercy Ships deploys hospital ships to some of the poorest parts of the world, delivering vital, free healthcare to people in more than 55 countries, many of which lie on the lower third of the World Health Organisation's Human Development Index.

Sandra is a retired nurse from Aberdeenshire and volunteers on the ships as an admission nurse for two months of the year, travelling to the likes of Guinea, Congo and Madagascar.

Afterwards, ACWW Society Reports were presented by Latvia, Iceland and Romania.

Wednesday, 21st September – Linda Bauld OBE FRCPE FRSE FACSS FFPH

Linda is the Chief Social Policy Advisor to the Scottish Government. She was a regular contributor to UK and international media debates on public health during the Covid-19 pandemic. She has also conducted research on Covid-19 and appears almost daily on national news to advise the public.

Professor Bauld is interested in the evaluation of complex public health interventions and how they can inform health policy, and has conducted research on obesity, tobacco control, drug and alcohol use and inequalities in health.

In addition, Wednesday, 21st September had a presentation on ACWW Through the Decades by Alison Burnett, ACWW Deputy World President, and Tish Collins, ACWW Executive Director. A short question and answer session followed this with some of our Northern Ireland delegates asking questions concerning the recent changes.

Craft workshops took place each day including making jewellery from recycled items and everyone had the opportunity to add their own stitches to The Great Tapestry of Scotland.

Thursday, 22nd September – Excursion Day

All delegates were invited to visit Robert Burns Birthplace and Museum and The Burrell Collection. Depending on whether you were a unicorn or a thistle determined which group would visit each destination first!

A beautiful lunch was served at Stewarton Area Centre by the members of Scottish Women's Institutes' Ayrshire Federation.

Each evening we were treated to a tasty meal followed by entertainment including SWI choir 'Rural Blend', Scottish dancing, piping in the haggis, Romanian singers, Romanian poem which was also read in English.....

For the final evening, everyone was invited to a drinks reception, followed by a gala dinner. Entertainment was from the traditional Scottish band 'The Rural Revellers' and the evening ended up with the majority of ladies up dancing and following the excellent tuition of country dance tutor June Templeman.

A very rewarding experience where many new friendships were forged and old ones renewed. The ladies from the Scottish Women's Institutes did a fantastic job in terms of hosting.

Rhoda Farrelly
Chairman of International Sub-Committee