

# FWINI Sub-Committee Reports

~AGM~

Thursday, 30th March 2023

Europa Hotel, Belfast

## Arts Sub-Committee Report

It gives me great pleasure to present the Arts Sub-Committee report on all our events for the 2023 AGM. The Committee was delighted that newly designed notelets produced for the Federation were selling well and that the WI scarves, launched at the 2022 AGM had sold out immediately, with reserved orders from Lady Anthony and Ann Jones the NFWI Chair.

Following the autumn and spring painting workshops our members submitted a wonderful variety of artwork for the exhibition and sale at the Balmoral Show.

Many of our Institute choirs had not been able to sing together until the new year and some not at all, due to Covid restrictions, so our annual Music Festival was changed from the usual month of March to 21st May. It was held in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church Hall, and we were warmly welcomed by the local WI ladies to morning refreshments. The high standard of the performances by the choirs and soloists made for a wonderful, varied, enjoyable and well attended Festival. Ballyblack, Kells & Conner, Richhill, Slemish and Quoile choirs all gave outstanding performances, after only being permitted to practice together from January. The standard marked by the adjudicator Mr. Sam Murray was exceptional.

In June, Kathleen facilitated a Zoom meeting for the choir conductors, to manage combined rehearsals for the 90th Anniversary Service. On Thursday morning, 18th August, it was the turn of our Committee to be the hosts providing a welcome to visiting members as part of the week-long WI Headquarter Open Days, to celebrate the Anniversary. Guests were treated to a tour of the building, a display of artwork and lovely refreshments.

The 90th Anniversary Service was held in Armagh Cathedral on Sunday 19th September 2023. Our thanks to the choir leaders for the time, energy, and dedication they put in to make for such an excellent performance of the two special anthems chosen for the service. Eileen Hearst from Ballyblack conducted the four choirs ensuring that their voices blended and Kathleen Gill from Quoile Area played for us.

A very successful annual Festival of The Spoken Word was held on Saturday 29th October 2022 in Templepatrick, with a total of fifty-three entries over six classes. The adjudicator, Shorna Meggitt, from The Ballycastle School of Speech and Drama, praised the high quality of all the entries.

The Autumn Arts One Day Schools were held at WI Headquarters during November with Anne Black demonstrating how to paint a Winter scene on the theme chosen for the Arts Competition in February, challenging the class to paint snow and Winter trees. Everyone went away with palettes and paints determined to practice. Jacquie Brachi held the Calligraphy class with all materials supplied from last year's grant money.

On the morning of Friday 10th February, it was just lovely to be able to hold our Annual Coffee Morning once more, the first after the Covid restrictions. It gives those who have entered a chance to show off their work to friends who come along for support. There were fifty-one entries in the Painting Competitions, adjudicated by Janice Lightowler from The Ulster Society of Women's Artists. The fact that the theme for the 3D Decoupage was left open encouraged more entries this year for Jacquie Brachi to judge and although the numbers were down slightly for Calligraphy classes, the Good Handwriting proved popular with eleven entries from Broughshane alone. Both judges were very impressed with the high standard of our members artwork, and we hope to encourage continuing participation by organising future one day schools in varying mediums. Our Chairman praised the quality of the exhibition before the presentations of the trophies and reminded members of the opportunity to display and sell their paintings at the Balmoral Show.

We have decided to continue using Templepatrick P. C. Hall as the venue for our upcoming events as it is central to the participating institutes, affordable and has the facilities for the different festival requirements. I hope that you will understand the difficulties we had during Covid in securing any venue and hopefully now things are much more positive and the Institutes with participating choirs, drama groups

and members keen to enter the Spoken Word Festival, will grow and we can once more move our venues to suit those taking part.

The Committee members continue to work together promoting the arts within the Federation and are busy preparing for the upcoming Music Festival on Saturday 22nd April 2023, and the upcoming art exhibition and sale on our stall at the Balmoral Show. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the members of my Committee. They have given me constant help and advice over the past year. I would also like to express my appreciation for the work that Mary, Kathleen, and Caroline do to keep the office running so smoothly.

*Lesley Dowds - Arts Sub-Committee Chairperson*

---

## **Balmoral Sub-Committee Report**

Good morning, ladies. It is hard to believe that, in just over a month from now, the Committee members will be in the Showgrounds setting up the tearoom and kitchen area for Balmoral Show 2023! This year we will again be in the Annex Building, behind the Eikon Centre, opposite M&S. Weather permitting, we will have 2 entrances – a ‘fire door’ on the main walkway and a larger roller door on the end wall. More signage will be in place above and beside these doors, so we hope that it will now be easier to find us. Our thanks to the RUAS and its staff, who are always there to help us with the layout and look after our plumbing and electrical requirements.

Balmoral Show provides us with a wonderful showcase for our organisation. My thanks to all of the Sub-Committees who organise competitions, displays, etc. – all contributing to making our WI hall an inviting and interesting place to visit, shop for some goodies from the market stall and, of course, sit down for a welcoming cuppa, scone and traybakes in our tearoom! Children (and grandchildren) are always welcome. At only £1 our ever-popular children’s ‘Lucky Dip’ is excellent value for money and the small knitted or crocheted animals are sold out every year - mostly to teenage girls! Also on sale will be our Balmoral Fireside Quiz sheets and our Balmoral Ballot tickets, with great prizes to be won!

We are indebted to Dale Farm who have once again agreed to sponsor the milk and butter and to Thompson’s who sponsor the tea. Most of all though, we rely on the members who generously provide all the home baked cakes, traybakes etc. and make all varieties of jam, chutney etc. that sell out every year. Helpers are always needed during the 4 days of the Show. Thank you to those who came last year, many for their first time. We hope you enjoyed the experience and, if possible, will consider returning this year. Thank you, one and all.

*Heather Adamson – Balmoral Sub-Committee Chairperson*

---

## **Home and Garden Sub-Committee Report**

It gives me great pleasure to present my second report for Home and Garden. Hopefully, spring has sprung, and we can enjoy the longer evenings. May 2022 saw us back at Balmoral Show with new premises. Although entries for some of the competitions were down, it was lovely to see so many people enjoying the show. Competitions for this year are advertised in the Ulster Countrywoman magazine and as the theme this year is the King’s Coronation, we are hoping for lots of entries.

Once again, we are depending on the generosity of WI members for help throughout the four days of the Show. The Committee took the decision not to hold The Festival of Food and Flowers this year. One of our most popular events on the WI calendar is the annual Home and Garden Christmas Event, which was held in the Armagh City Hotel on Saturday, 3rd December 2022. Over 400 members attended this event.

Our first guest demonstrator was Kathryn Stafford from *The Posy Barn* who gave us a fabulous floral art demonstration of seasonal centre pieces, wreaths, all for Christmas. Kathryn kindly donated her arrangements for the ballot in the afternoon. Next up was Angeline Murphy of *The Great British Sewing Bee* fame who showcased some of her own original textile designs. After a delicious lunch, chef Ronan McLaughlin of *Linden Foods* and Wendy Donaldson of *The Livestock and Meat Commission* gave a cookery demonstration on 'making the most of meat' during the festive season.

For the Christmas Event Competition, members were asked to design and make an original homemade Christmas cracker. The overall winner was Diana Thompson of Ballyclare WI who was awarded the Romanian Platter.

At the Christmas Event, the Committee had a special Christmas tree on display which was decorated with hats scarves and gloves, all created by WI members. These items were later donated to The Family Appeal, run by St. Vincent De Paul and The Salvation Army. We have been asked by these charities to contribute again for Christmas 2023. Hopefully, our talented members will support us once again.

Plans are underway for this year's Christmas Event on 18th November 2023 in The Armagh City Hotel – we look forward to seeing you. Details will be in the Ulster Countrywoman magazine. We look forward to seeing you at this event. Climate Change is still very much in our remit and the committee are still providing articles for the Magazine. My thanks to my Committee for all their hard work over the past year and to Kathleen Caroline and Mary for their support

***Teresa Feeney – Home and Garden Sub-Committee Chairperson***

---

## **Homecraft Sub-Committee Report**

Ladies, the Homecraft Sub-Committee has had a busy and successful year with the introduction of some new ideas. The normal work of the Committee was carried out and I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members for their support, help and ideas. Without them there would be no Homecraft activities. Unfortunately, one of our members, Ann Eccleston the rep for Gosford Area, has had to give up her place on the Committee. She will be sadly missed but we hope to see her tutoring some One Day Schools occasionally and wish her all the best for the future.

Judging during the months of October, November, January and February resulted in 268 items being received for judging. This resulted in 19 A+, 217 A, 17 B, 11 returned and 4 unsatisfactory. Cumulating in 97 ribbons, 2 Silver and 7 Gold Spinning Wheels and 1 Full Circle being awarded. Trophy judging took place on 6th March 2023 and again entries were down a little compared to previous years. Homecraft has 21 Trophies awarded annually, however, 4 will not be awarded this year as there were no entries for the Hobbycraft Trophy (for beginners), Burnside Trophy (for the best entry of crochet, tatting or knitted lace), Peggy Adams Trophy (for white embroidery, including counted thread embroidery) or the Brookeborough Trophy (for a team of novices who can each work a different craft).

A Homecraft One Day School was held on 1st October 2022 for Blackwork, Stumpwork and Beginners Machine Sewing. Unfortunately, the Blackwork class was cancelled. However, the participants went home with a lovely little tote bag and knowing how to do the relevant stitches they needed to complete a piece for judging. We held a new Christmas One Day School on 19th November 2022, to encourage members who do not normally do craft to learn something new. Over 30 ladies participated and had the choice of choosing 2 items from a list of 7 different crafts.

We intend to repeat this again in November this year - so watch the Ulster Countrywoman magazine for details. We also held a 3-week course for Limerick Lace and are looking forward to seeing the entries for judging. Yet again we had to cancel the Homecraft Weekend in The Lodge Hotel, Coleraine. By our Committee meeting on 2nd February 2023, only 18 members had booked, so after a lot of discussion it was decided to wait for another 2 weeks before making a decision. Unfortunately, by 16th February there was only one more applicant, so it was unfair to expect the hotel to hold rooms indefinitely, therefore the decision was taken to cancel. I would like to remind you - if we try to hold a weekend in the future, you need to get in early to apply, as hotels cannot hold rooms indefinitely.

Homecraft had a very successful Balmoral Show in May 2022, with our sales table raising £1,600 for Federation Funds. Thank you for all the contributions of knitted toys. We need your help again to help make the Show a success in 2023. As usual, we are asking for knitted toys. No teddy bears, as we have enough left from last year. Examples of patterns are available from WI Headquarters.

I would like to remind you for health and safety reasons we cannot sell toys with buttons or other pieces such as felt that could be pulled off by a small child. The knitting or crochet should be closely worked and toys should be well stuffed so that small fingers cannot pull the stuffing out. If you have other items that you think might sell, we will be happy to accept them. Please note that all items must be recently worked and new.

For some time now the Executive has been concerned about the increasing cost of the Homecraft awards. As can be seen from the accounts and heard in the Treasurer's Report this morning, the Federation is operating with a deficit. A Silver Spinning Wheel costs approximately £100, the Gold award £340 and the Full Circle £375. Last year's costs were £1,700 and this year this cost will be £3,000.

Unfortunately, we cannot continue to meet these costs and the Executive has taken the decision to source new designs for these awards which will be used from 2023-24. They will comprise of a silver coloured and gold coloured enamel brooch. A new redesigned Full Circle is being researched, to be ready for 2023-24. I know that this will be disappointing for some so therefore, there will still be the option for members to purchase the original Silver and Gold brooches at their own expense through WI Headquarters on reaching that goal.

***Brenda Richardson – Homecraft Sub-Committee Chairperson***

---

## **International Sub-Committee Report**

I wish to present my annual report on behalf of the International Sub-Committee. Firstly, thanks to all members that continue to support the international aspect of our organisation.

With the introduction of the new ACWW strategy, many Federation members continue to feel uneasiness about its implementation. Following agreement from their membership, some Institutes have decided to no longer donate to ACWW funds but instead to fundraise for local causes.

Obviously, this is entirely up to individual institutes. As a reminder, one of the larger changes has been to the funding structure.

Rather than having unrestricted funds such as 'Pennies for Friendship' for administration and restricted funds for project funding, it has now been changed to one overall donation 'pot' – 'Rural Women in Action Fund'. All donations for ACWW now go into this fund. Donations to the fund will support all of ACWW's work including all of the normal running costs. If you could please ensure that any cheques sent to WI Headquarters for ACWW are made payable to FWINI.

**Women Walk the World** – Hopefully, as the weather gets warmer, it will encourage our WI ladies to get out and about to support Women Walk the World. We're very grateful to all those Institutes that have been doing walks throughout the year for Women Walk the World. To help raise awareness of ACWW and the great work it does, please publicise your walk by forwarding photos and articles to our WI magazine, the *Ulster Countrywoman*, as well as *The Countrywoman* magazine of ACWW, and for Facebook, where Caroline continues to do 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 WINI website. This is for insurance purposes just in case of accidents, which hopefully will not occur. Our overall donation to ACWW continues to be smaller. The total going to ACWW for this year is approximately £4,700. Thanks to everyone that donated towards this total, through Women Walk the World and from other donations.

**Evelyn Lord Trophy** – 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. Our Committee unanimously decided that the Evelyn Lord Trophy for 2022 should be awarded to Ethel Simpson of Carnlough WI for her unceasing commitment and encouragement of others to raise money for ACWW. This effort is not solely for 2022, she has worked tirelessly over the years to be able to donate large amounts of money to ACWW. Well done Ethel and indeed Carnlough WI, for your excellent effort.

**Mary Boyd Competition 2022** – The Mary Boyd Competition for 2022, was based on the repurposing of a used item of clothing into something new to wear. The entries were all incredible for this competition. Thanks to all those extremely talented ladies that entered. After much deliberation, the Mary Boyd Competition winner was Jennifer Skelly, Moneyrea WI with Christina Haycock, Newtownbreda WI earning second place. In addition, due to the high number of beautifully crafted entries, it was decided to award three bonus prizes which are going to Brenda Richardson, Moneyrea WI; Olga O’Neill, Kells & Connor WI, and Barbara Huss, Drumbeg WI. This year’s Competition is to create a shoe bag for travelling purposes. All entries should be left at WI headquarters by Tuesday, 25th April 2023. Further details are available as shown in the most recent edition of the Ulster Countrywoman magazine and also on Facebook. Please encourage your Institutes to join in the fun.

**Rural Women’s Day Event** – Our Rural Women’s Day Event was held on the morning of 8th October 2022, followed by the Autumn Council Meeting. It was a very different, more relaxed format compared to previous events, but the ladies seemed to enjoy it very much. Thank you to everyone that donated in any way. Over £300 was raised for ACWW. We are looking forward to our next Rural Women’s Day Event in the Autumn.

**ACWW European Conference, Glasgow 2022** – Twenty delegates attended the ACWW European Conference in Glasgow in September 2022. This was a first Conference for some of us and it was very enjoyable. Seven ladies from the International Sub-Committee attended. The SWI had arranged a varied, interesting programme which added to the whole experience. Some of our ladies eloquently aired their views regarding the new logo and lack of consultation on the new ACWW strategy.

**ACWW Triennial World Conference** – Arrangements are currently underway for a number of our members to attend the long awaited ACWW World Conference to be held in Malaysia from 17th to 23rd May 2023. 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.

**FWINI ACWW Committee Members** – Thank you most sincerely, to the three very committed, hardworking ladies serving on Committees of ACWW. We pass on our gratitude for your service and dedication – thanks to Margaret Broome (Federation Chairman) serving on UN Committee, Edwina Marr on Projects Committee and Pamela Brown serving on Finance and Membership Committee.

**FWINI Office Staff** – The International Sub-Committee would like to express its thanks to our fantastic, productive ladies in the office. Nothing is ever a problem for Kathleen and Caroline. They are always so helpful. Not forgetting our newest member of staff, Mary. Thanks to Mary for all her valuable contributions from the short time she has been with us. In addition, my thanks to the wonderful ladies on my International Sub-Committee that are always so supportive.

***Rhoda Farrelly – International Sub-Committee Chairperson***

---

## 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; *Competitions*: Photographic, Literary, Scrapbook, Best Magazine Cover and Best Poem published in the magazine. The Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee meet on the first Tuesday of the month; September through to May. The main responsibility of this Sub-Committee is to produce the *Ulster Countrywoman* as an engaging read by providing interesting articles, stories, monthly book reviews, competitions, puzzles, photographs and other news items including those sent in by our WI members.

Caroline Hamilton, our Editor, chooses and edits the items for the finished publication. Articles and photographs received for publication should be of a high standard and WI news items should adhere to word counts where applicable. Caroline works extremely hard in producing and maintaining 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 (Quoile Trophy). The magazine is distributed to members throughout Northern Ireland, various other organisations and also sent by members to friends abroad.

During 2022-23 we have so far produced 5 editions of the magazine – September 2022, Autumn 2022, Christmas 2022, New Year/Feb 2022 and March 2023. Three more editions will be published – April, May and June 2023.

The Monthly Competition continues to be well supported and our annual Fireside Quiz sent out in October (London Underground Stations) was greatly enjoyed by the membership. The winners were: 1st place - Thelma Armstrong, Ballysallagh WI and 2nd place - Nancy Orr, Armoy WI.

The Phyllis Gailey Literary Competition attracted a good number of entries and was won by Lorraine Girvan, Downpatrick WI for her story interpreting the title '*Don't Make a Drama Out of a Crisis*'. This apt title was deliberately left quite open to interpretation, with writers encouraged to let their imagination take flight, and a variety of very different intriguing tales were submitted.

The number of entries for the Scrapbook Competition was disappointing with no entry for the Novice Class. However, the Open Class (Waringstown Cup) was won Broughshane WI, while Mosside WI had a double take in winning the Front Cover and Single Page classes.

The Best Magazine Cover competition (Quoile Trophy) was awarded to Wilma Buick, Kells & Connor WI for her Balmoral themed photograph that graced the front cover of the May 2022 magazine.

The Best Poem published in the Magazine (Mourne Cup) was won by Daphne Wylie, Pomeroy WI for her poem entitled '*It's Autumn*' which featured in the Autumn 2022 magazine.

The Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee are delighted that the return of the Bowling competition, held last Saturday 25th March, attracted a large number of entries. The overall winner and 'Bowls Champion 2023' was Anne Crozier, Collone WI (Gosford Area). The runner-up in 2nd place was Kate Mark of Myroe WI (Roe Valley Area). Congratulations to all the winners and runners-up in the competitions and thank you to all those who enter the competitions.

The Quiz Final will be held on Wednesday 24th May in Carnmoney Presbyterian Church Hall, starting 7.30pm sharp. Teams need to be registered by 7.15pm – updated details are on page 21 of the April magazine.

The 'WI Golfer of the Year' tournament will be held at Greenacres Golf Centre, Ballyclare on Monday 19th June – full details are on page 29 of our April magazine.

The Photographic Competition is our last competition of the year. The title '*Wet & Wild*' should see some very interesting images – closing date 31st July – again, full details are in the magazine, page 27 of the April issue.

We were disappointed to have to reschedule the Creative Writing One Day School due to the snowy weather conditions – a new date to be confirmed. The Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee are delighted to be able to run all our competitions this year and look forward to a positive year ahead. A very sincere thanks to a hardworking Committee and our Editor for all that they do behind the scenes and thank you to the members for your continued support.

**Christine Rankin - Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee Chairperson**

---