

The Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland



AGM 2024

Thursday, 28th March 2024

Europa Hotel, Belfast

Chairman's Report

Former Chairmen, Honoured Guests, Executive Members (past, present and future) and my Fellow Members,

I have almost reached the end of my tenure as Federation Chairman, I will hand over to the new Chairman at the end of April. I would like to take this opportunity to wish her the very best and hope she gets as much out of it as I did. It has been a most wonderful three years – were there challenges? Oh yes, many, but despite them I have enjoyed my time representing our superb organisation at home and abroad. During all my many attendances at WI functions, be it anniversaries, dinners, AGMs, ordinary meetings, or whatever, I have been met with the utmost kindness, respect and helpfulness. Our members are second to none and I am very, very proud to have been your leader.

I know we tend to blame the Coronavirus epidemic for everything and it did have a massive impact, not only on our organisation, but on all membership organisations. We lost many members and a huge amount of revenue; although our income dwindled, prices soared and bills still had to be paid. We are making progress, membership is back to pre-Covid numbers, thanks to new members joining us – some of them in the younger age group! Finances are still tight with unexpected expenses such as repairs to Federation House. However, the increase in membership fees, grant aid, fundraising and cost cutting exercises are making a difference. If the further increase in fees is agreed, we should be in a much healthier situation next year.

Decision making is never easy, whatever the outcome someone is sure to be unhappy but rest assured that none of our decisions were taken lightly. There was discussion, consultation and a majority vote, very often over a few meetings. We are well aware of the consequences but at each and every stage the ultimate aim was the welfare and sustainability of our Federation. Changes are inevitable and if we want to be able to celebrate our 100th anniversary in 2032 then we have to move with the times. Personally, I am not a great fan of change, I have always regarded myself as a conservative, with a small c, but even I can see that we cannot remain as we are and survive; but rest assured that the fundamental ethos of WI will never change.

Since October, I have gone to anniversaries in Armoy, Ballyrashane and Portrush with Exorna still to come. A wreath was laid by Sheelagh McRandal with Kathleen Verner and myself at the City Hall on Remembrance Day. I went to the Christmas Event in Armagh, delivered the knitted items with Sheelagh and Sandra Ledlie to the Salvation Army in Sydenham and St. Vincent de Paul on the Antrim Road. I attended The Townswomen's Guild lunch for International Women's Day at Stormont, the Young Farmers' Club Gala evening in Londonderry, a Seedtime Service at Ballyblack, the Ulster Farmers' Union dinner in Enniskillen and hope to join with the ICA and National Federation of England, Wales and the Islands at an event in Dublin looking at Women's Grassroots Activism in England and Ireland. I have also had the honour of doing a talk at Muckamore WI with further ones at Gosford, Lower Bann and Cullybackey still to come. We continue to be involved with the Strategy to End Violence to Women and Girls and the Good Relations/Together groups. I know how passionate the WI is about volunteering so hope you with all become involved in The Big Help Out in June this year.

They say 'the Devil makes work for idle hands' – so I'm keeping mine busy!

As my term of office draws to a close, I have many people to thank. The Executive team have been a tower of strength to me and without their support this would have been an impossible task, I am very grateful to each and every one of you. Kathleen my Vice-Chair, has given me advice and friendship which was invaluable, her experience and knowledge instrumental in helping me to fulfil my duties.

Sheelagh has had a very tough three years when our finances were severely curtailed but she has kept us up and running, sometimes chastising us if we wanted to spend more but always bowing the majority decision.

Kathleen and Caroline stepped up to the plate after Irene left, it was a very difficult time and at times they struggled but they did a magnificent job. Kathleen is a fount of all knowledge, when we need to know something she is our go-to person and Caroline not only edits our superb magazine but also keeps us up to date on Facebook. They are a great team and we would be completely lost without them.

Mary joined us in October 2022 and hit the ground running, she has been a great asset to our staff team and has brought in a huge wealth of knowledge and expertise. Our staff do a magnificent job and we all owe them an immense debt of gratitude. Thanks also needs to go to you our wonderful members, you are the glue that binds us all together and without you we would not exist.

Finally, before I end, I would just like to send our best wishes for a full recovery to His Majesty King Charles and to her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales. They are undergoing treatment for an illness that has touched each and every one of us at some stage but in the full glare of publicity. The last thing they need at this time is public speculation and conspiracy theorising.

This concludes my report.

Margaret Broome
Federation Chairman

The Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland



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Treasurer's Report

Madam Chairman, guests and members,

Good morning, ladies, it is a pleasure to see you all back here in the Europa Hotel for our AGM, with so many of you here it is a sure sign that we are getting back to normal again.

Today, I want to present to you, our latest Financial Statements, to bring you up to date on financial matters that are happening within the Federation and remind you of some issues.

First and foremost, the **Financial Statements** for the Year End 31st August 2024. These were presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting on 30th November 2023 by our Auditors, M B McGrady and Company. They are very concerned that we are still spending more than we are receiving as we have another deficit, this time of £42,188. They have warned that this is not sustainable and that reliance on reserves is not good financial management.

We continue to feel the effects of inflation, with insurance, light and heat, water rates, etc. all going up. Travel was up as we had more face-to-face meetings. We have to thank the Executive and its Sub-Committees for continuing, if possible, to hold meetings online and the ability of the members to share lifts and use public transport.

Good news is that the magazine continued to hold its own and had a surplus, some £2K more than last year. The number of members taking the magazine is 64-65% but why is it not more? We all agree that it is an excellent publication, so Institutes please encourage all your members to get one, let's not have any more sharers – at least not in the WI!

On the income front, membership fees were slightly down, indicating that we are still losing members, and we will not feel the benefits of the £5 rise in fees until this financial year end. As of this week our membership stands at 3,550.

Balmoral produced a surplus of £24,976, a most welcome increase of £2,825 on last year. Thank you to all those members who put so much effort into getting that result. All is set fair for this year and we hope that you will all rally round again, to make it another bumper year.

Our investments whilst down on previous years due to the volatile markets and the withdrawals that we had to make are reasonably stable fluctuating at just under £150.

Looking forward, we need to carry on with the maintenance of Federation House. We have brought the electrics and security systems up to date. Please will you remember that the FWINI is a charity – our charity, and we ask that you help us fund the cost of maintenance and equipment. Maybe you would like to follow the example of Waringstown WI which has nominated the FWINI as its charity of the year.

Regarding other sources of income, such as grants, they are becoming, in this economic climate more difficult to obtain, but that does not stop us trying.

The Executive Committee has a duty to manage the charity's affairs prudently and take a long term as well as a short-term view. It is aware that the current situation is not sustainable. To this end it has set up a Sustainability Working Group to look, in depth, at the needs of our members and the aims, governance and financial management of the Federation and to come forward with proposals to see it thrive in its second century.

A few other matters: Once again, I would like to remind you about **the Handbook**. It is an invaluable resource, giving you details of governance of the Federation and such topics as the running of your Institute, insurance, finance, etc – a handy 'go to'. I would encourage you all to have copies to hand in your President, Secretary and Treasurer's bags and refer to them regularly. We have brought some for the sales table to help you. The new WINI website is coming online. Please do use it.

Many of you have been complaining that the **Institute's Annual Financial Statements document** needs updating and simplifying where possible. I am pleased to tell you that I have completed the review with help from Brenda and the new document will be used from this year on. Treasurers, please use it when making your returns to Federation House, it is online and hard copy is available from Federation House. As it is a standard accountancy document it has not been possible to make a radical change to it but I have tried to make it more relevant to Institute activities and have added notes on the back page to assist Treasurers to complete it.

When we did the Survey of Membership, it became very clear that many members are not comfortable with handling and reporting on money and so will not stand as Institute Treasurer. We are very keen to assist you and there are various ways that we can do so:

The Handbook: The notes for Treasurers which used to be issued in September have been revised and enlarged.

Notes to All Treasurers continues as a regular feature on page 4 of the magazine, with reminders and topical hints to help Treasurers through the year. At least one of many good reasons for buying the magazine.

The new WINI Website is coming online and contains information in the Members Section.

We have offered, on many occasions to run meetings or short courses specially for Treasurers. We are still very happy to do so. They can be done face to face in different centres around the country or online. They will not be high powered accountancy sessions; every effort will be made to make matters as simple as possible. No previous experience needed.

Gift Aid, or should I say, the gift of Gift Aid. Not many things in life are for free but Gift Aid is. It is a very valuable source of income, which we hope will bring us at least £9.5K this year and at no cost to the member taking part in the scheme.

This will in no way affect a member's tax affairs and if by chance she should pay less tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed, she will be asked to repay the difference.

Some members worry that in signing a Gift Aid form somehow her private tax affairs will be divulged to the Federation. This is not possible. We have no access to any such information. The only information we hold, securely, is that she is a UK taxpayer and her address, which is needed so that HMRC can identify her as a current UK tax payer.

The Gift Aid information sheet will go out to each Institute Treasurer with the magazine this week. Please check it, delete anyone who has left your Institute and add any new members who are now paying income tax or has joined you. Return it and any Declaration Forms as soon as possible and not later than **30th April** to Federation House. We really appreciate your help with this.

A quick word on **Institute returns to Federation House** – you will be aware that we had a big push to get all members fees in by 15th December 2023. You rose magnificently to the challenge and most Institutes had their returns in on time. This had a big beneficial impact on our cash flow and averted difficulties with members not being insured. Thank you so much for all your help with this.

As ever we have the Sales Table with some exciting new products as well as some of our much-loved usual items for sale. Please browse and buy.

Before I finish, I must thank our loyal and overworked staff for all their help. It has not been an easy year. Mary has made such a difference, we don't know, how we managed without her and Kathleen and Caroline continue to be unstinting in their dedication to the WI. A big thank you to the three of you, we can't do without you all.

Madam Chairman, that concludes my report and it gives me great pleasure to propose the adoption of the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st August 2023 and the appointment of M B McGrady and Company as our Accountants and Auditors for the coming financial year.

Thank you.

Sheelagh McRandal
Federation Treasurer



FWINI Sub-Committee Reports

AGM

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Arts Sub-Committee

It gives me great pleasure to present the Arts Sub-Committee Report on all our events for the 2024 AGM. The annual Music Festival held on Saturday, 22nd April 2023 in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church Hall was a great success, with choirs from the Quoile and Slemish Areas, and the Institute choirs of Armoyle, Kells & Connor and Richhill entering nine different classes from Choral Folk to Sacred, own choice ensembles, and solo entrants. The ladies from Templepatrick WI provided welcome morning refreshments and everyone agreed that by bringing packed lunches, there was more time for the competitions, and it made for an earlier finish. The adjudication by Dr. Jayne Moore was excellent. Her constructive and encouraging assessments given following each class were very much appreciated.

The wonderful variety of artwork provided by our talented members for sale at the Balmoral Show in May 2023 made a wonderful and colourful exhibition. The Committee members were kept busy with sales of scarves and notelets and helping in the tearoom.

Following on from the success of the Open Days at WI Headquarters for the Federation's 90th Anniversary, it was decided that on 21st August 2023, the Sub-Committee Chairmen would host a cream tea for the past Chairmen and Office Bearers, and we would arrange a small display of members' artwork. We would then take this display, along with membership forms and past magazines, as handouts to the Belfast City Autumn Fair in Botanic Gardens on 23rd and 24th September 2023 to promote the Federation.

A successful and very enjoyable Festival of The Spoken Word was held in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church Hall on Saturday 14th October 2023 with a total of 31 entries over six classes. Morning refreshments were provided by Templepatrick WI. The adjudicator, Louise Nelson from Ballymena Academy, praised the members for the variety of prepared speeches, poetry and prose, and gave professional and encouraging critiques at the end of each class.

The Annual Coffee Morning and Arts Festival was held at WI Headquarters on Friday 9th February 2024. With the theme '*Nature's Symphony: Celebrating Wildlife and Landscapes*'. The judging by Jacquie Brachi and Carmel Kennedy took place on 7th February, when they admired the wonderful variety of the submitted work and agreed that by keeping the 3D Decoupage to an Open theme, we had more entries this year. The Coffee Morning was very well attended and although the number of painting entries was down on last year, the standard was very high. The ballot was well supported and the sales table, with the addition of scarves and handbags, did well.

We now look forward to the Music Festival on Saturday, 27th April in Templepatrick Presbyterian Church Hall when the Mezzo Soprano, Sheelagh Greer will adjudicate the competition and we hope that the choirs will be supported by a good audience attendance.

My thanks to all the Arts Committee members who have worked so well together – tirelessly, organising all our events along with commitments in their own Institutes and Areas. We look forward to the continuing promotion of the arts within the Federation, continuing to make small improvements in all we do and if we all do that, that is where change happens. We appreciate the work of the office staff and thank Mary, Kathleen and Caroline for all the work they do.

Lesley Dowds
Arts Sub-Committee Chairman

Balmoral Sub-Committee

It's hard to believe that, in just over a month's time, the Balmoral Committee will return to the Showgrounds to set up for this year's Show, which runs from Wednesday, 15th to Saturday, 18th May 2024. Preparations are well underway, and on Saturday, 11th we will 'load up' and transport all the necessary equipment to the Annex Hall in Balmoral Park. It will be our 3rd year in the Annex building – behind the Eikon Centre and opposite M&S, so we do hope that we will be easy to find.

Tuesday, 14th May is, of course, Competitions Day in the WI Hall when entries are taken to the Show by exhibitors and staged between 12noon and 4pm, ready for judging. It is also a very busy day for the Balmoral Committee, as produce for the teas and market stall arrive and all must be left ready for the Show to begin the next morning.

The Balmoral Show is an important event in the WI calendar. With up to 110,000 visitors expected from the UK and Ireland it enables us to showcase everything the FWINI has to offer, and it is also our main fundraiser in the year. The 'WI Teas' are enjoyed by both new visitors to the Show and by those who return to our Tearoom each year. Our market stall with homemade jams, chutneys, cakes, breads, fudge, etc. is always busy and sold out by the end of the week!

Ladies, we again ask for your generous help by providing items to sell on the market stall and as many traybakes for the teas as possible! Unfilled butter sandwich cakes (plain, chocolate or coffee) are welcome as these will be filled, decorated, and packaged at the show by some of our talented members! Scones are purchased fresh each morning and any donations towards the cost of these will be gratefully received. Produce may be left at WI Headquarters on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday of Show Week. You can also leave any items with members of the Balmoral Committee or any Executive Member. If you would like to help and are available for 4 hours any Show day, please phone WI HQ.

Fireside quiz sheets have been sent out and ballot tickets are now available – please return any unsold ballot tickets in time for them to be sold at the Show – these could be returned in an envelope via the Executive Member or a Balmoral Committee member, if you wish.

Our sincere thanks to all our sponsors and to the RUAS for all their help and support.

See you at the Show!

Heather Adamson
Balmoral Sub-Committee Chairman

Homecraft Sub-Committee

I am pleased to present my 3rd and final Homecraft report for this 3-year period. Firstly, I would like to thank the Sub-Committee members for their help and support over the last 3 years. They have been a great team, working hard and coming up with new ideas to encourage more members to try craft. The new Homecraft awards are introduced, and the new Full Circle is on display on the trophy table.

Unfortunately, crafts submitted for judging are down again this year with only 178 articles received for judging from October to February. Standards remain high with 30A+, 126A, 12B and 10 items returned for more work and 2 not as Syllabus. We held a One Day School at the end of September 2023, when 26 members took part in beading, wool embroidery, and unfinished work.

The Christmas One Day School in November was a great success, with 37 members taking part. Crafts offered were: a Christmas dove, macramé tree ornament, a pin flair bauble, folded Nordic star, Scandi style embroidery, a decorated candle and a glass snowman. Everyone went home with 2 completed Christmas items. The Sub-Committee tutored the One Day School and waived their fee, saving FWINI £656. The sales tables at the 2 events raised £299 for Federation funds.

Regarding the One Day Schools and Homecraft Weekends – it is difficult to organise these if we do not know what crafts you would like to see. All you have to do is send an email to Kathleen with your requests or telephone WI HQ and the requests will be forwarded to the Sub-Committee.

Trophy judging took place on 12th March 2024 and again entries were down. 3 cups will not be presented this year. They are the Eileen McCoubrey Cup for traditional white embroidery, the Peggy Adam's Trophy for white embroidery (including counted thread embroidery) and the Seapark Salver for newly enrolled members.

We had a very good Balmoral Show in 2023 when the Homecraft stall raised £1,864. We hope to do even better this year. Ladies, as usual, we need well crafted, knitted or crocheted toys for Balmoral Show 2024. These should be closely knitted and well stuffed, with no gaps that little fingers can poke out the stuffing! Health and safety regulations mean that we cannot sell toys with button eyes, so please make sure they are embroidered. Farm animals and dinosaurs are popular.

We will also accept fabric toys. Simple crocheted pram blankets are popular too and if you have no-one to give your Isobel Lusk cardigan to, we will try to sell them. We will also accept good quality homemade items for sale. There will be the usual display of crafts, provided this year by the ladies of Lisnagarvy Area. Hope to see you all at Balmoral!

A very successful Homecraft Weekend took place at the Drumalis Retreat & Conference Centre, Larne from 22nd – 24th March 2024, when crafts on offer were: goldwork, boxes, jointed teddies and unfinished. Old and new friends had a great time with good food and great craic.

Finally, my thanks to Kathleen, Caroline and Mary for all their help.

Brenda Richardson
Homecraft Sub-Committee Chairman

Home and Garden Sub-Committee

It gives me great pleasure to present my report for Home and Garden. Easter is early this year and hopefully will bring with it some good weather.

May 2023 saw us back at Balmoral with once again a successful Show. The King's Coronation as a theme proved to be successful as we had quite a few entries. Hopefully, that will continue for this year. The competitions for this year are advertised in the magazine. (The deadline for returning Balmoral Competition entry forms to WI HQ has been extended to: Friday, 19th April 2024.)

Once again, we are depending on the generosity of our fellow members throughout the four days of the Show.

One of our most popular events in the WI Calendar is our Christmas Event, which took place on 18th November 2023. Over 400 members attended the event in the Armagh City Hotel.

Our demonstrators on the day were Ruby Ferguson who gave us a lovely floral art demo on looking after winter pots and baskets and how to give them a festive feel. SD Kells then provided us with a fashion show. The models were members of the Home and Garden Sub-Committee, and we even had a gentleman model some of the store's excellent menswear. After lunch, Symphonia Handcrafted Irish Spirits gave us a great demonstration on cocktail making for Christmas. This was a great success.

The Competition was for a decorated traybake in the shape of a Christmas tree and the winner was Carol Cathers of Ballygawley WI. Carol was awarded the Romanian Platter.

Once again, we had our Christmas tree decorated with hats and scarves. These were later donated to St. Vincent De Paul and The Salvation Army. Plans are now underway for this year's event, which will take place on 23rd November 2024 in the Armagh City Hotel. Details will be published in the magazine.

We are delighted to be taking part in City of Belfast Autumn Fair which will take place in Botanic Gardens on Saturday, 14th and Sunday, 15th September 2024. Information about the WI competitions is published in the Spring magazine. We look forward to your support. Our work on raising awareness of Climate Change continues, watch this space for further action on this throughout the year. As you can see, Home and Garden have a busy year ahead.

I would like to thank my Committee for all their hard work and support over this last year and also to Kathleen Caroline and Mary, many thanks.

International Sub-Committee

Ladies, I wish to present my final Annual Report on behalf of the International Sub-Committee for this period. Thanks to everyone that has forwarded money to be sent to ACWW for their 'Rural Women in Action Fund'. The total for the year was £9,433.57.

Donations to the fund will support all ACWW's work including projects, advocacy and 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.

One of the newest Rural Women in Action projects to be announced is a 12-month programme entitled '**Planting the Seeds of Peace**'. The project is to be implemented in a school in Bucharest, Romania which is hosting 200 Ukrainian children. Due to the ongoing conflict, there has been a huge number of families having to flee from their own country. This project is to help some of the children from those families recover from the terrible impact of conflict through the therapeutic practice of gardening.

Monthly classes during the school year will be held to help them learn about horticulture. The participants will also attend practical gardening sessions. They will learn about growing plants, soil restoration and climate change. Horticulture has been found to be very therapeutic for those suffering from trauma and anxiety. The project will be implemented by ACWW Member Society the Geopolitical Alliance of Women, and the Association of Ukrainian Romania Teachers.

A new podcast has been launched with ACWW hosting alongside UNESCO on the topic of Women's Leadership. Episodes will air monthly. In the first episode, a number of speakers including the World President consider why we must continue to argue for gender equality in leadership. Other topics will include the role of women in peacebuilding, impact of climate change on rural women and women in agriculture. They will be available to listen to on the ACWW website homepage www.acww.org.uk/podcast as well as on the UNESCO website.

Women Walk the World is one of the best fundraising opportunities for ACWW and it's always well supported by those in our Federation. All that's required is satisfactory weather and a group of friends! More details are in the Spring magazine. Please remember to forward all your lovely photos to Caroline for her social media posts and for inclusion in the *Ulster Countrywoman* magazine.

All sponsorship money should please be returned to WI Headquarters before the end of June. 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.

Each year the **Evelyn Lord Trophy** 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 2023 should be awarded to Carnlough WI for their tireless efforts at raising money for ACWW.

The **Mary Boyd Competition for 2023**, was based on the creation of a shoe bag for travelling purposes. First place was awarded to Christine Rankin, Ards Peninsula Area Executive Member, Chair of the Magazine Sub-Committee, Donaghadee WI; followed by Ann Eccleston of Jerretspass WI in second place. All entries were brought to the ACWW Triennial World Conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Executive member Christine was one of those receiving a consolation prize consisting of a signed certificate by HM Queen Azizah, along with a beautiful trophy. At the recent World Rural Women's Day event, Christine was presented with her prize by Magdie de Kock, ACWW World President. Thanks again to those who entered the competition and made extra shoe bags to sell.

This year's competition is to create a foldable, lined shopping bag, sporting an international theme. All entries should be left at WI Headquarters by 30th August 2024. 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.

Our **Rural Women's Day Event** was held on the morning of 8th October 2023 in my home county of Fermanagh, followed by the Autumn Council Meeting. We were privileged to have Magdie de Kock, ACWW World President in attendance as our guest speaker. Magdie spoke about her childhood in South Africa and the conditions that still exist there today. The presentation was well received by the audience and as time permitted, Magdie was happy to hold a lively question and answer session.

Thank you to everyone that participated and donated during the morning. Almost £300 was raised for ACWW. We are looking forward to our next Rural Women's Day Event in the autumn.

We pass on our gratitude for the ladies that previously served on ACWW Committees - Margaret Broome (Federation Chairman) who served on UN Committee and Pamela Brown who served on Finance and Membership Committee. Our continued thanks to Edwina Marr who is currently an ACWW Trustee and Board Lead on Community Transformation & Projects.

The International Sub-Committee would like to express sincere thanks to the wonderful team of ladies in the office at Federation HQ. We appreciate everything that you do! In addition, my thanks to the fantastic ladies on my International Sub-Committee that have always been so supportive over the last three years. I couldn't have asked for better people to work with.

Finally, to you the members of the Federation, thank you for all your fundraising efforts relating to ACWW.

"Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile" – Albert Einstein.

Wishing you all an enjoyable AGM.

Rhoda Farrelly
International Sub-Committee Chairman

Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee

The Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee is responsible for the publication of our 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, Best Magazine Article and Best Poem published in the magazine.

The *Ulster Countrywoman* is now published six times a year and the Sub-Committee meet as and when is necessary, both in person and by Zoom from September through to May/June on the first Tuesday of the month.

The main responsibility of this Sub-Committee is to oversee the production of the *Ulster Countrywoman* magazine 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 an excellent way of keeping in touch with what our members get up to and important information regarding events and competitions.

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.

During the 2023-24 season we so far have produced 5 editions of the magazine – September 2023, Autumn 2023, Christmas 2023, New Year 2024 and Spring 2024. The Summer '24 edition (*deadline for articles/photographs: 30th April!) will be published at the end of May.

The Monthly Competition continues to be well supported and our annual Fireside Quiz sent out in October was greatly enjoyed by the membership. The winners were: 1st place - Pearl McMaster, Ballyclare WI and 2nd place - Caryll Trouton, Tartaraghan WI.

The Phyllis Gailey Literary Competition attracted a good number of entries and was won by Jennifer Gardiner of Kilrea WI for her story interpreting the title '*Just Like Granny Used To Do...*'. 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.

It was very pleasing to have an increase in the number of entries for the Scrapbook Competition. The Open class (Waringstown Cup) was won by Broughshane WI. Spa WI had a hat-trick in winning the Novice, Front Cover and Single Page for their lovely scrapbook.

The Best Magazine Cover competition (Quoile Trophy) was awarded to Heather Freestone of Portglenone WI for her beautiful winter sunrise paddleboarding scene that graced the front cover of the New Year 2023 magazine.

The Best Poem published in the magazine (Mourne Cup) was won by Hazel Campbell of Crumlin WI for her humorous poem entitled '*Sales Fever*' which told the story of 'bagging a bargain' in the sales and also aptly featured in the New Year 2023 magazine. Congratulations to all the winners and runners up in the competitions and to all those who enter the competitions.

Up and coming events:

--**The Bowling Competition** will be held on **Saturday, 20th April 2024** in Connor Presbyterian Church Hall, Kells,

--**The Quiz Final** will be held on **Wednesday, 5th June 2024** in Annaghmore Parish Church Hall, Portadown starting 7:30pm - *sharp!* **Teams need to be registered by 7:15pm.**

--**WI Golfer of the Year** will be held at the Riverside Course, Portstewart Gold Club on **Monday, 24th June 2024.**

--**The Photographic Competition** is our last competition of the year. The title '***All in a Row***' should see some very interesting images. Closing date for entries: 15th July 2024. Details of all these events are in the *Ulster Countrywoman* magazine.

It just leaves me to say in this my final report in the current Federation Executive, it has been a very different three years – a pandemic and then gradually getting back to the 'new normal', a very sincere thank you to a hardworking Magazine and Leisure Sub-Committee and our Editor for all that they have done behind the scenes over the past three years, taking us to where we are today and thank you, to you the members for your continued support.

Christine Rankin
Magazine and Leisure Committee Chairman

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