



# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WI



## Who we are and what we do

The National Federation of WIs (NFWI) is the largest women's organisation in the UK with over 220,000 members. It is non-sectarian and non-party political and as such is able to influence national and international affairs by becoming involved in campaigns for the environment, education, health and other areas of particular concern to women.

WIs were started in Canada in 1897 by Adelaide Hoodless, a farmer's wife, who wanted women in rural communities to support each other in their daily lives by learning new skills, taking part in social activities, to have fun and to make new friends. Although no longer confined to countrywomen, these aims are still relevant in the 21st Century. The first WI in Britain was established in Anglesey in 1915. Please see [www.thewi.org](http://www.thewi.org) for the full history of the WI.

We see ourselves as "a modern voice for women" and that includes you!



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January 2021

Dear New Member

I would like to welcome you warmly to the Surrey Federation of WIs. We are a band of around 8,000 members, spread across 167 WIs in Surrey.

Membership of the WI offers you a community of like-minded women. You will be able to make new friends, acquire a diverse range of skills, visit new places and campaign on matters that are important to you, both in your community and nationally.

In addition to your own WI, which will offer you a monthly meeting, workshops, visits and much more, you will also be able to access a broader range of activities provided by the Federation. The wider community of the Surrey Federation offers you two major events each year, the Annual Council Meeting in March and the Autumn Federation Meeting in October. As well as keeping you up to date with current developments, you will also enjoy both challenging and entertaining speakers.

The Federation also provides you with the opportunity to take part in cross-county events e.g. a Literary lunch, a Croquet day, a City Safari, a day at the races and much, much more. You can also attend cookery and craft workshops run by experts in their field, enter competitions and join a Science or Camera Group. Currently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a programme of events is being offered via Video Conferencing. For details of Surrey Federation Events go to the website [www.surreyfedwi.org.uk](http://www.surreyfedwi.org.uk) For NFWI events visit Denman at Home at [www.denman.org.uk](http://www.denman.org.uk) The opportunities on offer are endless.

The Federation's monthly publication Surrey WI News, available currently online via the SFWI, will ensure that you are made aware of all such activities, and will keep you entertained with articles and stories about WI life in Surrey, along with the Federation's continually updated social media platforms and website.

You can participate in as much or as little as you wish. Your membership of the WI is what you make it. I hope that you will be inspired.

Very best wishes,

Carol

Carol A. Gartrell  
Federation Chair



## Your WI

Your WI is a place for fun, friendship, laughter and learning.

Your WI meets a minimum of eleven times a year with an events programme arranged by its own committee. As well as these monthly meetings, most WIs have regular interest groups and activities.

As a member, you take part in electing a committee and President every year, ensuring that each WI is run by the members for the members. The on-going strength and vitality of your WI is important, so please consider helping the committee during your membership.

## Your Group

Many WIs belong to a group of neighbouring WIs. They take it in turns to meet together, once or twice a year to "share" a speaker, arrange an activity, outing or demonstration. The Group is a good way of meeting with other members from nearby WIs, and a great way to widen your circle of WI friends.

Please ask your WI committee for details of your Group.

## Your Federation

Your WI belongs to Surrey Federation (SFWI).

Our role is to support the purpose of the NFWI, and we do this through a wide range of activities that allow members to turn their interests into achievements and their concerns into campaigns. We offer you the opportunity to discover your talents, learn new skills and improve the quality of life in your community, alongside all that is on offer in your own WI.



## Surrey WI News

Through our monthly publication, Surrey WI News, we aim to keep you informed of forthcoming events, news, views and opinions from our members and other relevant organisations. This is available online through MYWI and in a hard copy at your WI meetings. Please ask your committee if you don't see it.

## Social media

In addition to SFWI published materials, you may wish to follow us at:

- **Facebook:** Surrey Federation of Women's Institutes
- **Twitter:** @SurreyFedWI
- **Instagram:** [www.instagram.com/surreyfedwi](http://www.instagram.com/surreyfedwi)



## Website

You can check our website for more information:

[www.surreyfedwi.org.uk](http://www.surreyfedwi.org.uk)

## Board of Trustees

The SFWI is run by a Board of Trustees with sub-committees delivering a wide range of events for members from all areas of the county.

Up to fifteen volunteers are elected by Surrey WI members every two years to serve on the Board. The Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and the Treasurer are elected annually by the Board. Further members may be co-opted.

## Sub-Committees and Working Parties

Each SFWI sub-committee deals with a specialist area as follows:

- **Home Economics, Craft & Gardening:** helps members to improve their knowledge and skill in a variety of subjects e.g. cake-decorating, creative card-making, sugar crafts, lace-making, cookery, gardening and many more. They organise demonstrations, lectures, and courses.
- **Events, Leisure and Fundraising:** organises events in art, literature and sport in order to raise funds for the SFWI. This committee also organises the annual audition day for speakers wishing to be included in the Surrey Yearbook. The Yearbook is distributed annually to all WIs and is a useful tool for WIs when planning their annual programmes.
- **Digital Working Group:** publicises and promotes the wide range of educational opportunities and events offered, encourages more members to take part in them and keeps them up to date with advances in the digital world.



- **Membership:** supports the organisation, growth and development of the WIs and their members through training, positive promotion and visiting WIs.

**Public Affairs** activities are a link between NFWI and WIs and their members, taking campaigns and resolutions and turning them into local ways our members can work together to support these ideas.

To help our organisation thrive, we need different ideas from new committee members. Why not ask to attend the committee of your choice as an observer – to discover if you would like to join the committee? Just contact a member of the committee or the Federation Office, details of which you will find in this pack or in the Yearbook, of which your WI committee has a copy.



## Resolutions

The WI has a rich history in campaigning and these all start with a resolution. These resolutions respond to a concern or event that a WI feels strongly about.

Each year, in May, your WI will be asked to vote on the NFWI resolutions. These are then taken to the National Annual Meeting where a final discussion and voting takes place. The selected resolutions then become a mandate and campaigning starts.

Over the years, members' concerns have ended in campaigns, for example:

- Keep Britain Tidy (1954)
- Freedom from Hunger (1961)
- Free Family Planning (1973)
- Equality of Opportunity (1975)
- The Dangers of Acid Rain (1980)
- Compulsory DNA testing (1990)
- Care of the Environment (2005)
- Care not Custody (2008)

## WI Advisers

Your WI is a place for fun and friendship. To support our WIs, SFWI has appointed advisers, who have been trained by NFWI. They are linked to the Membership Committee above and their role is to:

- start new WIs;
- give help and advice to members;
- help with resolutions;
- run training days on many aspects of committee work;
- visit annual meetings when requested.

If you wish to contact your adviser, please email [sfwizdr@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sfwizdr@yahoo.co.uk) and you will be put in touch.

- SOS for Honeybees (2009)
- End Plastic Soup (2017)
- Link Together to Alleviate Loneliness (2017)
- Make Time for Mental Health (2018)
- Get on Board for a Better Bus Service (2019)
- Don't Fear the Smear (2019)
- End Modern Slavery (2020)
- A Call to Increase Potential Stem Cell Donor Registration (2020)

Please see [www.thewi.org.uk](http://www.thewi.org.uk) for full details.

## Subscriptions

On joining the WI and then annually in April, you will pay your subscription to your WI Treasurer.

The amount you pay to your Treasurer is divided three ways. Approximately 50% of the fee is kept by your own WI towards its running costs. 25% is paid to SFWI towards its expenses, including the staff salaries. The remainder is paid to the NFWI which covers the cost of eight copies per year of the members' magazine *WI Life* and the running of that tier of the organisation, campaign resources, national activities and national training for volunteers to help run WIs at a local level.

The subscription is reviewed annually by the NFWI, discussed at the National Council and then fixed. Members are notified of the next year's subscription rate during the previous autumn.

The WI is a national organisation whose subscription represents very good value. The more you become involved, the greater your enjoyment and the better value your subscription becomes.

Your own WI uses the subscriptions (supplemented by fundraising) to run your WI. These funds are required to be used in accordance with charity law and accounted for annually to members and SFWI. You are entitled to 11 free meetings a year provided by your own WI. Many WIs offer free extra activities, however costs for 'extra' activities are to be paid by the member, not the WI. Please refer to [My WI](#) for full guidance regarding subscriptions, use of funds and charity guidelines.



## Additional Information



## Your Federation Office

In October 2006, the Federation moved into new, purpose-built offices situated to the north of Guildford town centre on the site of the former Queen Elizabeth Barracks. This is where the day-to-day business takes place, and where the Federation Secretary and staff work closely with the Board of Trustees and sub-committees. It is where the beautiful anniversary wall hangings are displayed, and the Surrey Centenary Commemorative Book can be viewed.

Training courses are also held within the building.

The office is open between 10:00am and 3:00pm Tuesday to Thursday. It is closed to visitors on Mondays, Fridays, Public Holidays and during August.

## Contact Details

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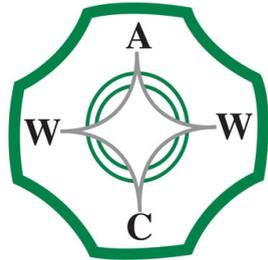
W: [www.surreyfedwi.org.uk](http://www.surreyfedwi.org.uk)

# Associated Country Women of the World

When you join the WI you become connected with the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), as the WI is a member society.

ACWW links together over 300 societies with a total membership of more than 9 million women in about 80 countries. All societies are, like the WI, non-party political, non-racial and non-sectarian. They work together to raise the standard of living of rural women, to promote international friendship and understanding and to be a voice for countrywomen in international matters.

WIs in Surrey contribute to the "WI Pennies for Friendship" voluntary scheme which is the backbone of funding for the projects of ACWW.



In addition, members have contributed to special projects such as "sending a cow to Uganda", building and equipping a grain store in Kenya and helping survivors of the Tsunami in Sri Lanka.

You can choose to become a member of ACWW and get more involved if you wish. Our ACWW Representative can be contacted through the Federation office. She is happy to visit WIs and talk to them on all aspects of ACWW.



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