

Annual Report of The Surrey Federation of Women's Institutes

1. Federation Overview

Co- Chairs Report - 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024

We started this period by finalising the transfer of the Surrey WI News' printing and publishing to the Federation Office. We are grateful to the Editor. This change responded to the basis on which the publisher produced the Magazine for Surrey. We felt unable to meet these financial changes.

We also reviewed the changes to the composition of our sub-committees. We are very grateful to one of our Trustees, who assumed the Chair of both Home Economics and Events, Leisure, and Fundraising until the Annual Council Meeting 2024. After that a decision was made to amalgamate these two committees under one Chair. To celebrate this merge, they choose a new title reflect the changed role: Skills, Activities and Learning Team (SALT).

The Membership sub-committee also changed its name to the Member Support Team (MST). They cover the needs of about 150 WIs composed of nearly 6,800 members, with only five advisers and the same number of helpers. We grieved for the loss of an Adviser in December.

The Trustees became the Trustee Team rather than the Board of Trustees, but the brief remained the same: to provide good governance in line with the Charity Commissioners' rules and support new initiatives in line with our organisation's aims and objectives.

We aim to communicate with our members by offering events and courses that reinforce their skills and knowledge while they enjoy the company of friends. Be prudent and conscious of financial limitations.

We have extended learning to companies that can offer a range of activities through their workshops, which we can not do without Denman College's facilities. So we began a partnership with Gordon Ramsay Academy for Cookery courses. We are also offering glassblowing and silver workshops. These can be booked directly as an individual to a WI Day or via Group Bookings.

We are beginning to develop a partnership with ATG, which can offer reductions on Group bookings for a theatre production they are putting on.

You took us by surprise with your enthusiasm for Surrey WI News. In addition to ensuring every member receives the magazine online on the same day, we are also printing up to 500 copies each month at the Federation Office. A team of volunteers comes in to 'bundle' these ready to send to members.

We made the painful decision to cancel the Autumn Federation Meeting in October 2024. The lack of interest from the members meant we sold too few tickets to make it a viable event. We cancelled to preserve our deposit.

Our Annual Council Meeting was successful, but again, low numbers meant we were unable to make a profit. Next year, we will follow the National Federation's lead and conduct our first post – covid Annual Council Meeting via Zoom.

All our Trustee Team have completed their Trustee Training, as well as other online courses offered by the National Federation of WI, such as Conflict Resolution and adviser training. We continue to ask our members to consider joining the Trustee Team. Our number of Trustees is appropriate, but succession planning is always in our minds, with the need for replenishment.

We are saddened by the suspension of WIs who are thriving but unable to continue due to the lack of members willing to take on the Officer roles.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team has highly engaged members and is seeking like-minded members to join it.

We also have a very enthusiastic Climate Advocate who wishes to expand the group. We have Climate Ambassadors embedded in WIs. Maybe they would like to join the Group.

One area of success is Surrey Federation's attendance at our Agricultural Shows and Pride Show. The Edenbridge and Oxted Show Committee worked hard to run a successful Quiz and Supper night, to raise money for our presence at the Annual show held over the August Bank Holiday weekend. There were more entries than ever to the various classes.

We took our Climate Advocate and her information with us to the newly re-started (after Covid-19) Cranleigh Show. We engaged to many women and their Families. We may return in 2025.

We took our gazebo on its first outing to Pride@Guildford. Such a joyful day, vibrant and fun and enjoyment for all. Many enquiries about local WIs, but also what could men do to support us! We were visited by the Mayor of Guildford and the organiser of Pride UK.

We awarded two grants and a Bursary this year. We are waiting on the completion of their various activities for report which will be shared in Surrey WI News.

In conclusion, we have worked within the framework of our strategic plan towards the strategic aims of the Federation.

2. Surrey Federation Sub-Teams and Working Groups

Skills, Activities and Learning Team (SALT)

During the year we combined the Home Economics, Craft and Gardening Committee and Events, Leisure and Fundraising Committee into a new team. The team have provided a wide variety of events for Surrey WI members to attend.

Two successful Auditions were held with a good selection of new speakers now added to the yearbook. Members visited the Headquarters of the Air Ambulance in Redhill, and it was fascinating to see the work they undertake. A Christmas Cruising trip to London was very festive and enjoyed by all who attended.

The Annual Supper Quiz was held at Worplesdon where team members produced tasty food for everyone to enjoy. We hosted a talk on Turner Paintings and those attending enjoyed a soup lunch provided by team members. Members and friends had a delicious lunch at Glenmore house, followed by a lively talk by author Cecily Blench.

Team members hosted a chutney making workshop and members took home some delightful samples, they also taught an autumn harvest session where members gain skills in using seasonal produce. Our cheese tutor taught a course where members made delicious cheeses. We are grateful to Richard Challoner School for hosting these. Members have attended workshops at the Chocolate School in Mayford, as well as a delightful Christmas Ideas Demonstration evening at the Gordon Ramsay Academy, Woking.

Members learnt to use their sewing machines, attended a Stump work embroidery course where they produced some delightful ladies and also had the opportunity to make some Fabergé strawberries on another workshop. These workshops were tutored by a team member.

Member Support Team (MST)

The MST is responsible for the welfare and development of the WIs in the Surrey Federation. SFWI has five WI Advisers, trained by NFWI who are reappointed annually by the Federation. They are given valued support by recently retired Advisers and other WI members. The team has nine members in total. Seven WIs were suspended this year mainly due to being unable to find committee members. Two new WIs were formed during this period.

MST members are also attached to groups within the Federation. They have been actively involved in 19 group meetings, social events and committee meetings, in person or virtual.

Team members collectively made 81 visits to WIs to offer support, advice and encouragement. They attended 42 Annual Meetings at the request of the WIs, to offer Support and help them conduct the business of the meeting. Annual meetings made easy workshops accounted for seven attendances by members of the team and between them they attended 10 courses to further their knowledge and skills. There were 15 attendances at county shows and promotional events.

Resolutions and Campaigns Team (RACT)

RACT, formerly Public Affairs, continues to meet regularly and aims to encourage awareness of, and involvement in, WI campaigns. This year there have been regular articles in SWIN on a wide range of topics including fair trade, environmental concerns, diversity, mental health and ending gender-based violence.

The team also mounted displays on neurodiversity at the Annual Council Meeting in March 2024. The display materials have also been used by WIs in their local areas. The display on Dental Health Matters at the Edenbridge and Oxted (E&O) show attracted very favourable comments.

The team works closely with our Climate Advocate and Resolutions co-ordinator and joined with the MST to present two successful Resolution Meetings.

For the 2024 NFWI AGM, the team proposed a resolution on the recycling of blister packs which unfortunately was not short listed. We tried again for 2025 with a resolution on graduated driving licences, which also was not short listed.

An active team that met monthly, other than December, our task is to make the resolutions and campaigns real, reasonable and above all achievable. We have concentrated on

bringing national and local WI matters to the attention of members via an article in SWIN each month and a display at each of the SFWI major meetings.

The Climate Change representative is part of our team. We work with her on projects, including making a plastic monster used in the E&O show this year, where it attracted a great deal of attention. This was the embryo for the monster she is producing for a theatre company.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDI)

This year has focused again on ensuring, where possible, that we look to future members and ways they will engage with us and the needs of all our current members. We have continued to use and develop our digital communication, whilst sending hard copies of information to those that need it. We have supported all NFWI policies regarding EDI and supported WIs and Members when this has been challenging. We have booked speakers for the upcoming Annual Council meeting 2025 to support the SFWI understanding of EDI.

3. Surrey Federation Roles

The Federation Archivist has worked tirelessly to sort and store donations from WIs. She is to promote displays of WI's artifacts around the County and at the Surrey History Centre to commemorate WI Day.

The Yearbook saw its last edition as a paper document this year. The Yearbook holds a great deal of information on SFWI as well as the Speaker information. We held two successful Auditions in the year for new Speakers who have been added to the publication. The 2025 edition will be available electronically.

4. Communications and Publicity and the Public Face of the Surrey Federation

Social Media Our social media presence has continued to grow in the past year, and it has been encouraging to have more interaction with members, WI, other Federations and outside organizations.

Surrey WI News (SWIN) has continued to be a major source of information and articles for our WIs. We had made the difficult decision to cease the publication of SWIN its hard copy format from December 2023. January 2024 saw the first online edition of SWIN. Providing a member has an email address registered on the NFWIs Membership Communication System this will appear in inboxes at 9am on the first of every month. The Federation office have been sending out photocopies when ordered by WIs or individuals so all will still be able to access SWIN.

Edenbridge and Oxted Agricultural Show (E&O)

Entries were slow to arrive for the Federation Show at the August Bank Holiday E&O Show but the week before the deadline there was an avalanche of entries.

The problem then was where to put 220 entries, compared to the 160 that we staged and displayed in 2023. The E&O Committee came up with innovative ways to achieve this.

Set up day on the Friday was bright and warm but with very strong winds presenting a few Health & Safety challenges as various obstacles flew around the showground. Saturday,

judging day, it poured with rain with the seams of the large marquee trying to surrender to the pressure of water. Exhibitors arrived in the tent trying hard to ensure their precious exhibits were kept dry even if this meant they did not.

Five judges spent six hours each judging all the exhibits - what a task. They were overwhelmed with the skills, talents and attention to detail achieved by all the exhibitors.

We were delighted to obtain sponsorship from the Gordon Ramsey Academy in Woking for our preserve classes. The 49 jars of preserves were judged at the Academy by two of their Chefs prior to the show.

It was so encouraging to have WIs participating from across Surrey including some of the London WIs. More exhibitors entered the show for the first time, some of whom also volunteered as stewards.

The weather for the two show days was perfect. The footfall of visitors to our marquee was continuous and their interest in and support for the WI and all it stands for and achieves so tangible.

The children's activities were a great hit – 'find the pollinators' and 'colour a tooth fairy' with prizes of stickers and bamboo toothbrushes.

Oxted Country Markets joined us again, selling their popular homemade, hand crafted and home-grown products and made a substantial financial contribution to the event.

Sadly, we did not this year receive an Agricultural Show award but as far as the E&O Committee are concerned this was the best show ever.

5. Interest Groups

The **Camera Group** meet regularly at various venues around the Federation and enjoys taking lovely photos as well as the friendship of the group, this is organised and lead by a team member. **Crafty Ladies** meet at SFWI Office six times a year where members share ideas. Everyone is welcome to come along with their craft work. The **Surrey Serenaders** held regular rehearsals and put on a few concerts.

Angie Leach and Jill Mulryan

Co-Chairs, The Surrey Federation of Women's Institutes