



theWI  
INSPIRING WOMEN



The Federation Office, Evelyn Suffield House, Norwich

# Information for New Members

## How Did It All Begin?

Originating in Canada in 1897, the WI was founded by Adelaide Hoodless, a farmer's daughter who lost her fourth child through ignorance of basic hygiene. The first meeting was attended by 101 women at Stoney Creek, Ontario, and urged that lectures and demonstrations in domestic science and home-crafts be made available to rural women.

The first WI in the UK met in September 1915 at Llanfair PG, Anglesey, North Wales.

The first 22 WIs in Norfolk were formed in 1918 and the following are still in existence: Barnham Broom & District, Ditchingham, Hardingham, Hethersett, and Hingham. The Norfolk Federation was formed on the morning of Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1919. Lady Evelyn Suffield was the first Chairman.

## What It's All About?

We have now grown into the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK. We are non-sectarian and non-party political.

The aim of the WI is to provide a democratically controlled educational and social organisation for women, offering quality of life in the community, and enabling them to develop their own skills and talents

## How Does It Work?

Every WI is affiliated to a Federation and there are 69 County and Island Federations. Those Federations are, in turn, affiliated to the National Federation based in London.

There are over 220,000 members who belong to some 6,300 WIs located in England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

## National Federation of WIs

The National Federation (known as "National") is run by a Board of Trustees, elected by secret ballot, every two years by all WIs and Federations.

There are several sub-committees covering all the topics which WIs are interested in. Members from all over the Country are appointed to serve on those committees.

Like Federations, there are also paid administrative staff who help to run the numerous facets of the organisation.

The National Federation is based at 104 New King's Road, London, SW6 4LY, website [www.theWI.org.uk](http://www.theWI.org.uk)

## County Federations

Federation Boards of Trustees are also elected by secret ballot every two years by all the WIs in that Federation.

Just like National, there are various sub-committees, with members appointed from the county.

The Norfolk Federation currently has over 4,700 members in 152 WIs.

## WIs

The Committee is elected annually by the members, again by secret ballot.

We all work together on the issues that affect us at every level; whether it be education, leisure, the local community, women's welfare, the environment or international affairs, a WI somewhere is interested and active.

Everyone who serves on a Committee, at whatever level, is a volunteer.

## How Does Your WI Work?

Each member pays an annual subscription when she joins the WI. This is reviewed every year and fixed by the National Board of Trustees.

The subscription is divided between your WI, the Federation and National.

As part of your subscription, you will receive eight copies of *WI Life* a year. This magazine is produced by the National Federation. It is posted to you at home and is full of useful information.

The three levels of the organisation are governed by a Constitution. Your WI may also have some bylaws, pertinent only to them.

All WIs must hold 11 meetings in the year and once you have paid your subscription, you are entitled to attend these meetings without any extra cost. August meetings are traditionally a time when WIs have a summer party or outing instead of a meeting. Many WIs will also have a “bring and buy” stall or a raffle, but these are optional.

At the monthly meeting, there will be some official business, a speaker or demonstrator and a chance to chat to fellow members over refreshments.

As well as their monthly meeting, a lot of WIs have craft groups, book clubs, walking groups, darts and bowling teams, who will meet during the month.

Your WI is run by a Committee, nominations for which are sought the month before the Annual Meeting (normally November). The Officers are the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer. The number of other committee members is set by the WI's bylaws.

### **Dual Membership**

You can belong to more than one WI. You will have a main WI, to whom you pay the full subscription and will pay about half the subscription to your second (or third!) WI. You will have voting rights on WI matters at all WIs you belong to but can only vote on National or Federation matters at your main WI.

### **Associate Membership**

If someone has problems finding the time to attend meetings, the WI Associate Scheme may be an option. Associates receive *WI Life*, and can take part in all National activities open to WI members. Associates also receive the Federation's monthly newsletter and are entitled to take part in Federation activities.

If you would like more information on either of these options, please contact the Federation Office for more details.

# WI Jargon Explained

As with any organisation, there are lots of terms and abbreviations, which a new member can find confusing! So here are some of the most commonly used ones:

## ACWW



Associated Country Women of the World. The WI is a member of ACWW, working together with other women's organisations across the world to raise the living standards of rural women, to promote international friendship and understanding and a voice for countrywomen on international matters. WIs can donate to ACWW by collecting loose change. This scheme is called 'Pennies for Friendship'. The Board of Trustees choose a specific ACWW project and money raised by WIs goes toward that.

## AFM

Autumn Federation Meeting (or known simply as "Autumn Meetings"). Four or Five meetings held in various venues around the County, at different times and days, to enable as many members as possible to attend. There are usually two speakers – one on a social concern topic, the other more light-hearted. All the Sub-Committees are present with a stand, together with other items of interest.

**Annual Meeting – also known (incorrectly!) as the National AGM:** The National Annual Meeting, held in June, in different venues around the Country. It is usually known by the city in which it's held (for 2018, "Cardiff")! Every WI is linked in a group of 4 or 5

WIs, who take it in turns to send a delegate. Delegate expenses are paid for by the WIs they represent. Members can attend as Observers (or Visitors), but have to pay. It is at this meeting that all WIs cast their votes for the Resolutions. There is always a big-name guest speaker or two. The Federation arranges coach travel and, because of the distance, organises a one or two-night stay.

## Annual Meeting:

Held by every WI to elect the officers and committee.

## BoT

The Federation Board of Trustees. They are responsible for the overall running of the Federation.

## Denman

This is the WI's own educational college, in Oxfordshire. More information can be found later in this booklet.

## FAM:

The Federation's Annual Meeting, held in March, in Norwich. Each WI is represented by one voting delegate and other members of each WI are welcomed as paying guests. This is an all-day event, at which there is some business in the morning and an interesting guest speaker in the afternoon. There is also time to view each Sub-Committee's stand, giving details of events and what they do.

## FO

Federation Office. Also known as The House or The Office.

## Group

Neighbouring WIs form a Group to meet together once or twice a year. The advantage of being in a Group is that they can often afford more expensive speakers. It is also a good way to get to know members from other WIs.

## The Harnser

The Norfolk name for a Heron and the symbol of the Federation.



## MCS

Membership Communication System. When you join the WI your details are entered onto this national database. This information is used to send out *WI Life*, for National to plan interesting events and is a tool for your WI to keep in touch with members. Every WI should have an MCS Rep, who keeps the information up-to-date and is the only one with access to that information. Details are never passed to third parties.

## My WI

Is the National dedicated WI website, exclusive to members. You can access all sorts of information from here. Make sure you give your MCS Rep your email address and you will automatically be sent login details.

## NFWI:

Refers to the **National** Federation of Women's Institutes.

In Norfolk, though, it also refers to OUR Federation – the **Norfolk Federation** of Women's Institutes, run by a Board of Trustees, elected every two years by Norfolk WIs.

If you receive any correspondence and can't decide who sent it – check the address!

## Resolutions:

Every year members put forward suggestions for Resolutions. Resolutions are proposals for campaigns. A shortlist of possible Resolutions is sent to every WI and every member votes for a Resolution they care about. From this, the most popular Resolutions nationally go forward for full debate at every WI meeting in May. The voting results of those debates are given at the Annual Meeting and if a majority "Yes" vote, the Resolutions will become national campaigns.



Lady Evelyn Suffield  
Norfolk's First President and then  
Chairman  
1919 – 1945



# Federation Sub-Committees

## Arts & Crafts

Since joining the WI you may have been surprised at the variety of activities available to you as a member.

The Arts and Crafts Sub-Committee is responsible for providing activities involving visual and creative arts to all members within the Federation. The aim of the Sub-Committee is to promote all aspects of the arts for your enjoyment, in the form of demonstrations, exhibitions, competitions, and organising trips to exhibitions and Museums.

There are opportunities to attend all-day workshops at the Federation Office, or around the County. These have been as diverse as ribbon embroidery, stained glass and cookery demonstrations. There is also an annual Craft Day at Bacton, with a variety of courses to choose from, with skilled tutors on hand to assist.



“The Centenary Salver”, a co-operative competition, is held annually and all WIs within the Federation can take part. The theme of the competition is decided by the Sub-Committee and various crafts are undertaken to interpret the theme.

We can also arrange for our Pop-up Shop, of donated craft items (such as embroidery silks and knitting wool), to be available for WI meetings.

The year culminates in a large sale known as “Unwanted/Unfinished”, held in Evelyn Suffield House.

Some courses are available to certificate level should you wish to take your interest further; for instance, we also organise Food Hygiene Certificates. The Sub-Committee aims to reflect the requirements of members and therefore suggestions for future activities are always welcomed.

## Communications



Our role is to connect with members old and new, to reach out to future members and to help the Federation and its Sub-Committees promote the WI and what we do in Norfolk. We do this through the *Norfolk WI News Magazine*, our website and social media.

We also tell the public at large how fabulous an organisation we are, get people involved in our campaigns, our crafts and our leisure activities.

The Sub-Committee manages our Digital Team, a National initiative at Federation level, designed to inspire, enthuse, educate and guide members to develop their digital skills. As part of that remit we organise the monthly digital training courses, which take place at Federation Office.

Communications – spreading the fun and friendship!

## Leisure Activities

The Sub-Committee encourages members to take part in sporting and leisure activities. We organise demonstrations, lectures, instruction and competitions in leisure and sporting activities. Suggestions for events are always welcome.

Among the regular events which take place are 10-pin bowling and darts tournaments. The Bridge Club meets on Wednesday mornings in The House and hold bridge lunches twice a year. The Mah Jong Club also meets fortnightly in The House. There are taster days for activities that members have expressed an interest in, including Petanque, dance days, Canasta, Tai Chi and much more besides.



Leisure Activities also arrange outings to places of interest, such as the WI Fair and the Tiptree Museum in Colchester (including a cream tea!), together with the annual Federation holidays (recent holidays have been in Northumberland and Cornwall).

## Membership Advisory

This is the committee to which the WI Advisers are attached. Perhaps you have heard these people mentioned in your WI and wondered who they are!

These members are trained by the National Federation and appointed by the Federation to help with the smooth running of the WIs and to give help and advice to new committees. We aim to make sure that WI members know everything that is available to them and to help them get the most from their subscription.

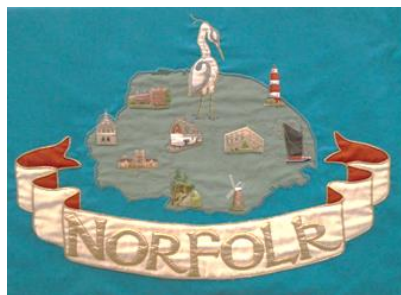
Their role is to create a link between the members and the County and National Federations.

WI Advisers are always looking for opportunities to open new WIs and

trying to help with any problems that the existing ones may have.

They run training days on all aspects of committee work, on public speaking and on the expectations of Treasurers, Secretaries, Presidents, committee members and new members. These are informal sessions where you can learn with friends in small groups.

WI Advisers visit WIs, by invitation, at their Annual Meetings, to help with elections, and are always available to give help throughout the year.



## Public Affairs

The aim of this committee is to keep members up-to-date on matters of public concern. We advise, initiate and undertake to follow up work on National and County mandates of social concern, including the National Green Hearts campaign and International Women's Day. The Sub-Committee includes the following Norfolk Federation appointments: ACWW Representative, Environment Officer, Climate Ambassador, Resolutions Adviser and Science Representative.

So that our voice is heard, the Federation has appointed Committee members to represent the WI in other organisations: these include Age UK Norfolk, CPRE, Community Action Norfolk and the Norfolk Bus Forum (which the Federation chairs).

This sub-committee arranges conferences, study days, courses and visits on diverse topics such as science and the environment, health and home, and women's affairs locally and globally. The annual Women Walk the World, part of ACWW, is a popular event organised by the Committee.



One of our most important jobs is to guide WIs through the Resolutions, organising information days for members, with experts to give us more background information before we cast our votes.



## Sales & Marketing

The Sales & Marketing Sub-Committee are responsible for sourcing the range of gift items for sale in the Federation Office and at Federation Events. They also ensure that all the stationery requirements of a WI are stocked, which includes the National WI diary.



our professional printers and 13 photos chosen for the calendar, with the best photograph being awarded The Judges Calendar Cup.

The Federation Calendar is also organised by the Sub-Committee. This is an annual competition, where members are invited to submit photographs on a chosen theme. These are then judged by

The Front Office in The House has an excellent range of items for members and the public – from pens to children's books, useful tins to pretty serviettes and much more. Boxes of goods can also be provided for individual groups to take out to their own meetings.

## Federation Events Team



This very busy Team is responsible for the large-scale fundraising events, including regular Celebrity and Literary Lunches, the bi-annual Garden Party, Christmas Fair and many other events that usually involve food and entertainment!

What do our members enjoy? Eating, talking and shopping! We combine all this with our regular monthly **Nosh & Natter lunches**, usually held on the first Friday of the month at The House. Menus for the year are published in advance and booking is essential! You can book using the Magazine's application form.

With all events that include food, please make us aware of any allergen or dietary requirements when booking – we do try to cater for everyone.



## Western Area

Because of the diversity of the County, a group of members have established a Committee who organise various events in the far-west of the County. You don't have to live in that part of Norfolk to attend! The Western Area Committee kindly contribute to the Federation from these events.

## And there's more ...

### Royal Norfolk Show

This is an important event in our annual calendar, when the Federation attends the two days of the Show to promote the organisation.

Every year there are two or three competitions for WIs to enter. Our large marquee has a different theme each year and the competitions reflect this. The entries form a large display, showcasing members' talents and each Sub-Committee has a stand publicising the work they do and what is on offer. We also provide hospitality – the famous WI tea and cake! Everyone involved is busy with preparations in the week before and it is an extremely demanding but fun two days meeting members and the public.



The marquee after the event!

## Norfolk WI News

magazine is published every month. Contact the Editor either by post or email [magazine@norfolkwi.org.uk](mailto:magazine@norfolkwi.org.uk) with your news and reports.

You have probably seen members collecting their copies of the Norfolk WI News Magazine, and hopefully you have been given a copy for yourself. The

It is full of information about everything that is happening in the Federation: classes, outings, holidays, competitions and much more. A lot of events are only advertised in the Norfolk WI News.

Some WIs provide the magazine for free to members, or you can subscribe to it yourself – for 30 pence a month you'll have all the information you need at your fingers tips, including the Application Form for all events, which is published each month. Speak to your WI Secretary about receiving your copy!

## Denman College

Named after the first National Chairman of the WI, Lady Denman, this is the WI's own education college and was opened in 1948. The college is a pleasant country house set in rural surroundings, not far from Oxford.

Bedrooms are furnished by Federations – Norfolk has two rooms: Poppy and Lavender, appropriately decorated.

Day school and residential courses are on offer, and are extremely varied. There are workshops and lectures on everything from architecture to Zumba, and everything in between – crafts, cookery, singing, dancing, aromatherapy and photography to name but a few. There are opportunities to visit places of interest as part of a course and, for the more energetic, rambling in the Cotswolds.

The Federation also arranges regular residential visits. Travelling by Federation-organised coach, you have the opportunity to choose from different courses, stay in beautiful surroundings,



with all your meals provided, enjoying the company of fellow members, all whilst being looked after by the Federation's Denman Ambassador.

As anyone who has been to the College will tell you, Denman is an opportunity not to be missed, so sign up for a course now and see for yourself.

Pick up a copy of the Course Brochure from the Federation Office to see what's on offer!

## Bursaries

The Federation is very lucky to be able to offer a number of bursaries. Your WI may well do so, too. Bursaries are open to all members, to be used for a variety of educational opportunities. Some are for use in Norfolk only and some to help with the cost of attending a course at Denman. The Bursaries are drawn in March and announced at FAM.



Both the Bursaries and 500 Club are advertised in Norfolk WI News and you can apply for either of them using the Application Form.

## 500 Club

This is run along the lines of the lottery, open to members only. There are 500 shares available, at £5 a share. Half the income supports the Federation, the other is given in prizes. There are three prizes, the numbers being drawn at the monthly Board Meeting. You can apply for as many shares as you wish.

# The Federation Office Belongs to You!

The Federation Headquarters is at Evelyn Suffield House in Norwich (just a stone's throw from John Lewis). It was bought by members in 1952, who raised the money to buy the House and was named after the first President and Chairman, Lady Evelyn Suffield. So it belongs to all Norfolk WI members!

It is the hub of WI life in Norfolk and all Federation Sub-Committees meet here. The House's opening hours are:  
Tuesday - Thursday 10.30am-3.30pm  
Friday 10.30am-1pm.

## So what will you find when you visit...?

To start with, you'll always find a warm welcome!

On the ground-floor there is:

*A fully-equipped kitchen* – where you can make yourself a cup of tea or coffee for a small donation

*A dining room* – which is also used for craft days and where the Bridge and Mah Jong Clubs meet

*The Committee Room* – this is where the Sub-Committees meet and some workshops are held

*The Front Office* – which sells all the WI stationery and gift items, and is staffed by volunteers. You can leave your parcels in the Front Office while you do more shopping!

*The Members' Room* – where you can sit and relax with a drink, eat your lunch, wait for your bus, meet a friend, browse the book exchange. There is also a loo!

*Car Park* – we are very lucky to have a car park at the rear of The House, accessed from Surrey Street. Parking is available for anyone attending an event at Evelyn Suffield House and at other times may be available. Ring the Office the day before to check availability; the website calendar also has information about availability.

*The Garden* – is maintained by the volunteer Gardening Gang and a WISP (WI supportive partner). It is a haven in the centre of the city, where you can sit and relax – weather permitting!



Upstairs is the busy office, from where all the administration is undertaken. The Federation employs three members of staff: The Federation Secretary, the Finance Officer and an Administration Assistant. If you have a query, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Photocopying (both black and white and colour) is available for members, at a small charge.



## Norfolk Federation of WIs

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The Federation is a registered charity, number 227411

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Website: [www.theWI.org.uk/norfolk](http://www.theWI.org.uk/norfolk)

and find us on



We hope this booklet has answered some of the initial questions which you might have about our exciting and ever-expanding organisation. If you would like any more information, please ask your WI President or Secretary, or contact the Federation Office.