

# **DEVON WI NEWS**



July / August 2025 Year 105 Issue 139 Cost 35p



Karen Keast walks the South West Coast Path

Bideford Quays WI

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Please send items to **news@devonwi.org.uk** The opinions expressed in Devon WI News are not necessarily those of the Devon Federation of Women's Institutes .

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# **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT**

# Dear Members



It's been a busy WI day! First a Committee meeting and then attending a lovely birthday party at Dawlish, celebrated in true WI fashion with delicious food and cake - nothing like it!

Travelling from one to the other was the biggest challenge with the road closure on the A380 - following the Sat Nav had me chasing down country lanes and even meeting a deer on the road, never a dull day in WI.

Were you able to watch the virtual Annual Meeting? It's certainly different from an in person one, not the same, not as good ? Definitely not the same but on reflection it gives a greater opportunity for more members to participate. Without all the travel, think of the co2 emissions that were saved!

This is my last missive as Federation Chairman as my tenure has come to an end. It has been an enormous privilege to hold that position and one that I have enjoyed, there have been challenges, highs and lows but hopefully we have moved forward. My grateful thanks to all the Trustees, for their support and all they have done for the Federation. Several of the Trustees are also stepping down, you will be missed but every good wish for your 'retirement'!

There are several new Trustees stepping up. I look forward to introducing them to you at our Annual Meeting in Exeter on the 3rd July. I hope they will find the role as rewarding as I have.

My very best wishes and I hope to meet some more of you as I continue as an Adviser.

Zuelyn

**Evelyn Watson** Devon FWI Chairman

#### 300+ Club

The June draw has not yet taken place as we are waiting for the entries to arrive for the new 300+ Club year.

If you wish to join or to know your numbers please contact <u>roz.matterface@devonwi.org.uk</u>

# From the office

## New officers:

Firstly thank you all for stepping into these important roles. We (Ali and Lindsay) are here to help and look forward to working with you. You can reach us by telephone or by email and we will always get back to you as soon as we can.

## A couple of quick hints/tips:

New Members Packs - please email Lindsay with any new members details on

#### enquiries@devonwi.org.uk.

MCS - Ali and Lindsay are both able to help with this. You should have received the manual from the previous MCS representative, but if that doesn't help or you have a problem that you cannot solve, please get in touch.

#### mcsinfo@devonwi.org.uk

Flyers - these are sent out with the Devon News each month. If you do not think you have received a flyer, it is worth checking back through your emails. A handy tip would be to create a folder for Devon News and Flyers in your email inbox and put the emails in there. The emails with attachments come out monthly and this would make it easier to find them again.

DFWI Bank details are below. Please **remember to email the person you are paying and copy in Beverley our DFWI bookkeeper.** <u>bookkeeper@devonwi.org.uk</u> When making payment please use codes if provided or **make clear which event** you are paying for. It can be impossible to match

paying for. It can be impossible to match payments especially with personal Bank transfers when you may forget to mention your WI. <u>bookkeeper@devonwi.org.uk</u>

Devon Federation of Womens Institutes Sort code 08-92-99 Account no 67185081

#### MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT from WI Advisers :- wiadvisers@devonwi.org.uk <u>Membership Matters from WI Advisers</u> wiadvisers@devonwi.org.uk

Now that the majority of Annual Meetings have taken place and the newly elected Committees are settling into their role we, the Advisers, would like to thank all those WIs who welcomed us to their meeting. It has been a pleasure to meet so many of you and see the wide variety of speakers and activities that you put together for your members. The extra curricular sub groups also demonstrate an amazing palate of choice from arts and crafts, book club, outings to places of interest, walking, skittles etc. the list is endless, though " coffee and chat" and "ladies who lunch" pop up regularly, even a "nibble and tipple"!

Remember we, the Advisers, are here to support your Officers and Committee members in making your WI the best it can be. We can't do the job for you but can make sure that you can access the right information to carry out the role. Keep in touch!

#### Becoming an Adviser- a journey.

Having recently had the privilege to be appointed an Adviser, the Membership Support Committee has asked me to write about my journey and my reflections on what it has felt like.

My journey started 4 years ago when I saw on Facebook that the next meeting of my local WI included a speaker I was interested in hearing. I knew very little about the WI, it was still jam and Jerusalem so far as I was concerned, but I paid my £4 visitor fee, enjoyed the talk and was persuaded to come to the next meeting. By the third meeting, I'd had a warm welcome and made friends, which made it an easy decision to join. Fast forward several months, the Committee needed more members. Despite knowing very little about the workings of the WI and being a newcomer, I was nominated, agreed to stand and was elected.

Joining a committee is a really good way of learning about the running of a WI, the roles of Officers and getting to know members. I enjoyed being part of the team and I could do as much or as little as I wanted. I admit I didn't do much, but I learned a lot. The WI Handbook tells you pretty much everything you need to know.

12 months on, we needed a new Secretary but had no volunteers. Facing the prospect of my WI being suspended, I decided it was the opportunity to give something back in return for the friendship and kindness which I had received. So, I stepped up to become Secretary. It was a steep learning curve but most of what I needed to know is somewhere in MyWI and a course at The Firs was useful. With help from other more experienced members, it didn't take too long to get on top of things. As Secretary, I also learned more about the part which the NFWI and Devon Federations perform and there is always something to be learned from other WI Secretaries.

My experience has been that the role is not difficult, but can be time consuming, so sharing tasks among other Committee members is important. It not only frees up some of my time but is useful experience for them. I have enjoyed being Secretary.

Then, much to my surprise, I was asked to consider becoming an Adviser. I had never given a thought to this, but the more I explored the role, the more interesting it became and the more I saw the potential for making a much bigger contribution to the organisation I have grown fond of. After conversations with several Advisers, I agreed to start the training programme.

The first step was to attend, as an observer, 3 meetings of the Membership Support Committee, for us to get to know each other and decide if we both wanted to start formal training. During this time, I completed the compulsory Learning Hub Adviser Training Modules, I had to become very familiar with the Constitution. The ability to navigate MyWI gained as a Secretary was a big help too. I also completed other online courses on Conflict Management and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. After the 3 meetings I was appointed an Adviser in Training by the Board of Trustees. I have been taken to various Annual and WI Suspension Meetings as an observer and then allowed to conduct some proceedings under the watchful eye of an Adviser. I was formally appointed an Adviser when both the Committee and I felt my training had reached an appropriate level.

As an Adviser I am enjoying being part of a close, happy team which supports and helps each other. I have felt cared for, given every encouragement and involved in opportunities to develop my knowledge and experience as they have come up; whilst not being allowed to get ahead of myself. I'm all too aware I still have a great deal to learn.

Visiting other WIs and engaging with members is fun. I've been surprised by just how different WIs can be, though there is always tea, cake and a friendly welcome. Another surprise has been the sheer variety and complexity of the situations and issues which Advisers deal with.

There is a lot of travel and diaries can become very busy. Sometimes the work is frustrating. Other than the authority contained in the Constitution, Advisers have few other powers so can only advise and recommend, which WIs are not necessarily obliged to follow. These situations can test our interpersonal skills, the art of persuasion and patience.

The most rewarding part of my journey has been in discovering the ways Advisers can make a real difference to the WI. A highlight has been my involvement with requests for a WI suspension which the Advisers have been able to keep open by becoming actively involved in the setting up of new Officers and Committees.

Becoming an Adviser has been a thoroughly positive and worthwhile experience for me and it can be for you, too.

## A New Adviser

This year is my first as an Adviser and I had the lovely task to visit other WIs for their AGMs. I want to thank the WIs that invited me for the warm welcome I received from them all.

It was interesting to me to see how the process takes place in WIs other than my own.

.....

I am happy to say that all went smoothly on my visits and there was a lovely mix of returning and new Officers and committee members.

Being a new adviser, I wanted to get to know some of the WIs that I would be an adviser to and introduce myself to them so, I invited them to join me for a cup of tea at the Honey Farm in South Molton.

After visions of me sitting there alone with my cup of tea, I am happy to say that I met with 18 Presidents, secretaries, treasurers, or committee members from the WIs invited.

After introducing myself, they were soon all talking with each other, lively conversation all about WI, their roles and just getting to know other in their area. Some of the WIs expressed an interest in making a link to our group, who hold a very informal group meeting once a year.

It also became abundantly clear that officers especially, like to meet with other members in the same role so they can exchange ideas, realise that others have the same issues they do, make new friends. As everyone was leaving, several members asked when the next one was going to be, and I happily agreed to hold another meeting at a later date. *Lesley* 

# **Committee Information and Roundup**

# COMBINED ARTS COMMITTEE

We are pleased to announce the names of the three finalists for our One Act Play competition.



Carole King from West Down WI. Pat Williams from Shebbear WI and Maureen Cook from Sidford WI.

The play will now move from paper to stage as preparations take place for the grand final. This will take place towards the end of the year when members will be able to watch all three and select the overall winner .

Congratulations to all our finalists.

The Coffee Art workshop Flyer on October 24th is with your secretary. We look forward to seeing you there.

Please put the Annual Carol Service on Wednesday 3rd December, at Exeter Cathedral, as a date not to be missed in your Diary.

# p.wyatt@devonwi.org.uk

# ENVIRONMENT, RESOLUTIONS and CAMPAIGNS COMMITTEE

Summer is on us, and it's our launch of the Pocket Meadows this month, and thank you for all those of you that have sent bookings in – the deadline for bookings is the 30<sup>th</sup> June, and if you want to come but are worried that the booking form will not reach us in time, just email me with your details.

The Great UK WaterBlitz report has just been published! If you would like to read this you can find it at <a href="https://earthwatch.org.uk/greatukwaterblitz/">https://earthwatch.org.uk/greatukwaterblitz/</a>

And if you want to get involved then the next World Wide Water Blitz is during Friday 19 September - Monday 22 September 2025. Sign up is on the same link as the report.

66% of datapoints across the UK showed poor water quality Between countries, England had the worst water quality in the UK, with 74% of tested sites showing high levels of nutrient pollution.

It is great to hear so many of you are already involved in making a difference to saving lives by doing something for the Bystanders can be Lifesavers campaign – let us have your stories and your pictures.

# Each year 11 million tons of plastics enter the ocean primarily from land-based sources and is set to triple by 2030 i

<u>Plastic Free July – Be Part of the Plastic Pollution Solution</u>

Going plastic free is pretty difficult! So instead of going completely free for the month, just choose something that is achievable. I will try not to use cling film for the month and will instead use my bees wax covers and the old Chinese takeaway boxes that I never get round to throwing away (I knew they would come in handy).

To help the world fight against the use of single use plastic it is of no use a few people doing it perfectly, its better if lots of people, like us, try - even if its imperfectly. Making a small change makes a massive difference. So, can you give it a go and share your tips with us – what worked? what didn't?

# **Dental Health Matters**

We had insufficient takeup for our planned Dental Health matters event so had to let our expert speakers know that this was cancelled. However your WI has received a plea from Dr Bridget Ashton, the Vice President of Plymouth City WI, to write a letter or send an email to your MP. If you haven't been sent the template or suggested wording please ask your WI committee or contact the office at The Firs to get it sent to you.

Could Wis keep track of how many letters or emails are sent and any responses? Although this resolution was passed last year the campaign continues.

Finally, watch out for our Resolution Discussion Days – we don't have the dates yet but as soon as we do we will let you know.

Have a great summer.

# jackie.bufton@devonwi.org.uk



FOOD, CRAFT AND SKILLS SUBCOMMITTEE

We are thrilled to announce that we are hosting an Afternoon Tea at Longdown Village hall on Tuesday 28th October. Our guest speaker will be talking about jane Austen. The flyer is with your secretary now.

janet.connolly@devonwi.org.uk

<sup>4</sup> DEVON WI NEWS July/August 2025

#### News and Information from DFWI

## SPORT and LEISURE COMMITTEE

The Winter Skittles competition for 2024/5 ended with a tense match at Longdown Village Hall Skittles alley on 24th May. The finalists were **High Bray &Charles WI** and **Exminster WI** and the match could have gone either way as the two teams were well matched. In the last two rubs the winners edged ahead—Congratulations to High Bray &Charles WI. The teams enjoyed a tea provided by members of the Sport & Leisure committee after receiving their awards.



Left the winners with the Shield, Right the runners up with the cup



Thank you to the helpful husbands who picked up Skittles and helped carry the tea.

The next round of Skittles is open for applications. If your WI can't form a team on its own you can join with a neighbouring team. Their should be at least five rounds to play (for those who last the course). Good luck to all!

# Croquet Days are back at Barnstaple.

The flyer is with your WI—there are two dates in August. Enjoy!

#### **Congratulations!**



The winner of the free prize draw in this booklet was announced at the NFWI Annual meeting. She is from Highweek WI and both she and her WI win £500. I bet you wish you'd entered now!

#### Keeping costs down.

The Board of Trustees are aware that the Federation income is mainly form the WI fees and wish to give value for money.

There are always upkeep costs with any building and the gates to The Firs were looking very shabby and have been in need of attention for some time.

Sadly we did not take true "before and after " photos as one side of the gates were green with algae but we tried to take some partway through as two of our trustees tackled the task of cleaning and repainting.



#### Darts?

Some Wis have asked about having a Darts competition. Devon WI used to run one—would your WI be interested?

..... And finally

Watch out for Whist! Details to come in September

#### **Bursaries**

At the Annual Council meeting in Exeter on 3rd July there will be two Bursary awards of £100 for Wis to use for a special speaker or extra event. All Wis will be entered into the draw for these and a reserve picked in case the WI doesn't wish to use it. The winners will need to submit evidence of use.

We will also be announcing the criteria for applying for a music bursary which will be application only and will be drawn later this year.

If the Bursary account continues to earn sufficient interest more awards will be made next year.

#### **Financial matters**

#### Adviser visits to Annual meetings.

In the last issue of Devon WI News there was an error regarding payment for WI Adviser visits. We hope that most of you will continue to pay as you always have without reminders and at present will only send an invoice when a WI has not presented payment. If we were to raise an invoice every time this would be an added task and may lead to higher charges. We are always trying to keep costs down to benefit our WIs.

If an Adviser attended your Annual meeting at your request and you have not yet paid please make arrangements to do so.

#### **Postage costs**

Occasionally a WI will send an item to The Firs with insufficient postage paid and we will be given a card to notify us with the requirement to pay £5 for delivery. This is not a small amount and the Board have had to make the decision that we will allow the item to be returned to the sender.

We are sure these are genuine errors but hope you will understand why we cannot pay the extra costs—if we do it for one we should do it for all

# News from WIs around the county

Inspiring Women in Devon WIs



Sybil Heathcock has been a much respected and loved **Sampford Spiney and Horrabridge WI** member for 29 years, with over 20 as secretary. Now she has decided to put away her minute book and retire.

Her ability to organize probably stems from her years as a teacher. When the committee decided on trips Sybil would book the coach and venue, then make sure we all knew where we had to be for pickup at what time. Always making sure no one was left behind.

Our most memorable trips have been to the theatre, Exeter Christmas market followed by the W.I. Carol Service and, of course, the Spring Council Meeting in Torquay.

Sybil is also a valued member of St John's Church in Horrabridge and has been a keen bowler. Thank you Sybil for all your hard work over the years from us all..



# Front Cover story: WI's Own Salt Path Walker

With the film of the moment being 'The Salt Path', **Bideford Quays WI** have their own 630 mile Salt Path walker who they are in awe of knowing how difficult walking the path can be and in British coastal weather over such a distance in roughly 10 weeks!

Karen (Kaz) Keast who is a member of Bideford Quays WI is currently walking the South West Coast path continuously over 10 weeks to raise funds for Cancer Research UK. She started in Minehead on17th May and her aim is to finish on Friday 25th July at South Haven Point near Poole. An amazing challenge I'm sure you will agree.

Her Just Giving page shows her preparation for this and offers regular updates. Karen started with a target of £1000 but this has been more than doubled. Her latest target is to raise £4000—could we smash that for her

and for Cancer research?

Training walks are going well, a little less mud on the actual walk though please!!



NB Karen does not want to give talks on this



You can find more details about Kaz, her reason for this challenge in aid of Cancer Research UK at JustGiving.com and searching for Karen Keast, or by using the QR code on the right. Donations can also be made there which would be greatly appreciated.

Hi Guys I'm still in the planning and preparation stage right now. At the moment it looks like it will probably

take me around 63 days including a few rest days to complete it, starting 17/05/25 finishing 18/07/25 ish. If

you know of anyone along the South West Coast Path route who might be able to provide any assistance such as a lift to and from the path to accommodation/campsite; or a back garden or somewhere to pitch my

Diana Little's fundraising Race for Life In memory of WI member Janet Cattanach

## Done it!

tiny tent for a night, that would be super helpful. Thanks so much 🧡 🧡 🧡

If any WI along the way wishes to help Karen we can help you get in touch.

Diana Little is a member of the Newton Ferrers & Noss Mayo WI



Noss Mayo WI

A BIG THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU WHO HAS SO GENEROUSLY DONATED TO THIS WORTHY CAUSE.

#### I've raised £2,800 so far for Cancer Research 🕅 🖏 💞 .

In February while still training Karen's update said :

£2500 could fund the PETReA trial for 5 days. This trial aims to help decide how to treat lymphoma, a cancer of the white blood cells.



Picture far left Visit to Burnham Nurseries in Aug 2023

Picture left Presentation of commemorative medals to pupils of Horrabridge School along with past president Pat Kerslake in April 2023.

South West Coast Path National Trail 🕝

CARDIER

English Chan

## More WI news



Members from Lifton WI had a very civilised NFWI Annual meeting watch party. They enjoyed the meeting at the home of Treasurer. Jill.





**Maypole Judging** 

Liz Roberts and Karen Jenks of **Newton Abbot WI** felt it was absolutely wonderful for to judge the decorated Maypoles at the Kingsteignton Ram Roast.

There were 20 entries, which then had to be taken down to 6, and then the final 3. Not an easy task they had to say. All the entries were wonderful.

The winner they chose was the amazing Bee Hive. Liz and Karen are members of the DFWI ERC committee too and decided that it had a strong connection to the 'Pocket Meadow' launch that DFWI, are doing very soon.



After Exbourne, Sampford Courtenay, and Jacobstowe WI emerged from a guided tour of the medieval underground passages at Exeter they had smiling faces. Exeter is the only city in the UK to have underground vaulted passages of this type, they were designed to house the pipes that brought clean drinking water from natural springs outside the walled city. Kelly WI visited Nancy Astors house on the Hoe in Plymouth recently. Members thoroughly enjoyed a really

informative



and interesting tour learning how Nancy Astor led the way for women's representation in Parliament.

A number of WIs have visited recently and it's well worth recommending to members .

The ladies of **North Tawton WI** together with members of **Zeal Monachorum WI** spent a gloriously sunny afternoon recently being shown how to play bowls by North Tawton Bowls Club. Whilst not everyone managed to hit the jack, all agreed they'd had a fun afternoon .





15 years and going strong.

On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June **Dawlish WI** celebrated their 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, in attendance were Evelyn Watson DFWI Chairman, Maureen Hunter WI Advisor, Jan Lendon Past President of Dawlish WI, members from Cofton, Kenn & Kennford and Kenton & Powderham WIs. The Mayor Anthony James and consort plus Jill King and Angie Weatherhead from Dawlish Celebrates Carnival.

Maureen, Jan and Sue Lavender our current president blew out the candles on a beautiful cake made by member Ann Golpin and as you can see in the picture surrounded by rats! Members dressed up in Red, White and Blue or 1940's dress and we had some lovely outfits.

Our speaker was Becks Pearson from Devonshire Land Girls, the talk was fascinating. Members also bought in family memorabilia as a show and tell. Becks is working with the Longest Yarn 2: Britain at War and especially a life-size knitted Land Girl Daphne Hedges who was a rat catcher during WW2 in Devon. When she goes on display in September she will be surrounded by rats knitted by Dawlish WI and other Devon Wis. The rats will eventually be sold to support veteran charities.

A fun night was had by all and we look forward to the next 15 years.

Dates for your diary		
Activity	Date	Closing date (if relevant)
DFWI Annual Council meeting 2025 Corn Exchange, Exeter	3 July 2025	
Pocket Meadows launch (ERC) Liverton or Barnstaple	9 July or 15 July	30 June 2025
Training for Presidents and Secretaries The Firs	15 July 2025	asap
Training for Treasurers The Firs	16 July 2025	asap
Wis Working Together: Sharing ideas	25 July 2025	asap
365 training—see emails	Various	asap
Croquet at Barnstaple (S&L)	18th August or 21st August 2025	26 July 2025
DFWI Holiday Lincolnshire	29 September—3 October	30 June 2025
Kwerky Krafts Coffee Art workshop Teign Valley Hall (CA)	14 October 2025	15 September 2025
Afternoon Tea with a speaker re Jane Austen, Longdown	28 October 2025	ТВА
Exeter Cathedral carol concert	3 December 2025	ТВА
Skittles Winter Games from October 2025 (S&L)	Final: 18 April 2026 TBC	1st August 2025

The list above shows all events that we know about to date. For information on a specific event see elsewhere in this Devon News, contact the relevant committee, look on our website **devonwi.org.uk**, or contact The Firs.

If the closing date has passed please make contact to see if there are any spaces left.

Please note that **we do not give refunds** for events booked, unless we have to cancel, as we may have to refuse other applications and can incur booking charges. If you book and cannot go please try to sell on your space to others in yours or neighbouring WIs. Some events should be booked through your WI while others may be individual bookings, For instance holidays or overnight stays will be by individuals. Online bookings will usually be personal too although a group of members may book together.

## ..... And More WI news

#### Bradninch WI

The crafty members of the Bradninch WI have once again been busy decorating the main bus shelter in the centre of the Town, an activity the has become somewhat of a tradition.

With the first of the year celebrating the return of Spring with a garland of flowers, which sits pleasantly on the bus shelter. These are made of various materials as well as recycling previous display pieces to good effect.

Following on from this the VE Day 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary was also been commemorated in a similar way. With the Ladies having knitted their fingers to the bone to produce members of the UK armed forces and flags, to add to the bunting around the roof and Guildhall railings.



Also to compliment this display on the afternoon of the Bank Holiday Monday on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025 a NAAFI tea room was recreated in the Bradninch Guildhall, set with 40's memorabilia, information about Bradninch during the war, old newspapers from 1945 and war time posters.

Members baked scones for the cream teas and cakes for sale, with some dressing in 40's style to complete the atmosphere of the event. All of which was very much appreciated by the afternoon's eager customers.

Apologies if your WI isn't featured in this edition—there were so many submissions, thank you! I have kept some for the September edition.

There was much feeding of treats and stroking of fur when **Kingskerswell WI** hosted Therapy Dogs Nationwide with canine stars Santos, Bambi and Loki in June.



Therapy dogs visit a wide variety of places including hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, schools, prisons and coroners courts bringing joy and calm, and changing lives for the better. Our members certainly felt better for their visit. We highly recommend this exceptional charity run by volunteers.



Following their annual meeting in May **Cofton WI** held a plant sale. Two green -fingered members, Eileen and Gill, worked hard potting and nurturing a variety of

plants. It was a great success not only did it raise funds for their W.I., they were able to make a donation of £137 to the Devon Air Ambulance.



Halberton WI had a very informative talk from Rob and Adrian from Devon Blood Bikes. Photos show some members with the bike.

