

Surrey Federation of WIs

A report by Linda on the 97<sup>th</sup> Annual Council Meeting held at Dorking Halls 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015.

Seven members from Ottershaw Night Owls attended including me as the WI representative. The day is a mixture of typical AGM business, info about SFWI personnel, Board of Trustees and their roles, entertainment and fun. There is the inevitable raffle, the centenary raffle and a Denman draw worth £300 to spend at Denman College. We didn't win.

The meeting opened with a resounding rendition of Jerusalem after which Beryl Dunham, Chair of Surrey Federation, welcomed guests and speakers and introduced the Board of Trustees and Staff. It was a good opportunity to put faces to the names we see in WI News.

This is a formal meeting and therefore required formal adoption of Standing Orders – WI Representatives held their blue programmes aloft to signify their vote. Minutes of the previous ACM were taken as read.

Chairman's Address – Beryl Dunham spoke of the success of the buttons and zips collection which will continue (so keep collecting from friends and family). These items are sent to Somalia to help the women who earn their living making clothes. Some WIs have enclosed letters of encouragement which have been warmly received.

As well as the baton relay events around the county (at Ripley on 19<sup>th</sup> May) a picnic in Hyde Park is planned for the final day.

Beryl confirmed that coaches will be picking up at Ottershaw en route to Buckingham Palace - £11 per person. This needs to be a separate cheque to the £25 for Garden Party. Tickets will be personalized and sent direct to members (you will be able to keep them after the event) It is possible that there may be additional tickets available later.

Appeal for comfort cushions – heart shaped cushions that, tucked under the arm, give comfort to mastectomy patients. I have the pattern and instructions if you would like to make these.

Treasurers Report. Jane Randell – delighted to see the hall full. 2014 accounts better than predicted as both income and expenditure were better than expected. The year end deficit of £2919 includes depreciation of fixtures and fittings so no Federation Funds were actually used to cover deficit. It is worth noting that the Federation has investments of £615,271 which as we all know can go up or down although their financial advisers have been instructed not to invest in high risk funds. The Tweak a Twenty fund raiser achieved £7665 against a budget of £2k. Commission is received from travel agent resulting from members' holidays. Overall the number of members has reduced for 2015 – a number of WIs have closed due to falling numbers or the inability to appoint a President or Treasurer.

Interestingly any profit from local centenary events will not be retained by SFWI but returned to the WIs.

The Report and accounts were adopted unopposed as was the Annual Review of 2014.

We heard from Ember Travel about a Canadian holiday devised for WI members – fully escorted with door to door transport.

The next speaker was Catriona Adams – NFWI Trustee and Chair of Science and Leisure who recalled successful women of Science – Marie Curie, Amelia Earhart, Helen Sharman et al and how essential is it to inspire girls today and encourage them to follow scientific careers. Since 1980 the WI has been concerned that women's education had been restricted to human biology but were now actively working with organisations in order to reach more women. Also working with Advanced Drivers to improve driving skills.

Chris Butterfield, who attended our first AGM, is Chairman of the membership subcommittee which is responsible for the welfare and development of the WIs in Surrey. This committee consists of WI Advisors, trained and appointed by NFWI, along with extra members who assist with the work of the committee. Forming a new WI is what they enjoy most. They also help WIs develop a good programme of speakers and activities, and amongst other things, attend County Shows to promote the WI. Busy ladies.

Sheila Webber – Denman Ambassador. Few places still available on Surrey at Denman Weekend 9 – 12<sup>th</sup> July. Those who have not been to Denman could attend a special day in October – tour of college plus a short course. Application forms will be available from Secretary soon.

Maureen Finn – Chairman of the Special Events Committee. This committee organises variety of events around the county including the Auditions, to generate income for Federation and which hopefully appeal to members. Lots to watch out for – Barn Dance in June, Christmas Show and tea in November and the possibility of a centenary garden party at Painshill Park on 16<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Betty Dominy – Chair of Home Economics, Craft and Gardening. Their aim is to offer members the opportunity to pursue and perfect skills in cookery and craft. E.g. Craft Day at Ripley, the knitting workshops, and the tailoring course that produced the impressive fitted jackets that were paraded later by the ladies who took part. Surrey pioneered a new baking course now being rolled out to other counties and delivered the 'Let's Cook' course in Children's Centres – literally a life-changing course for disadvantaged families. There is a huge need to improve the understanding and skills – pleased to report that more are planned. Following changes to new regulations there is a new Food Hygiene course for anyone giving or selling food – perhaps we should be taking part! Lots more planned – details in SFWI News.

Public Affairs, Leisure & Science (also known as PALS) role is to introduce and encourage participation in a wide range of sport, science and leisure pursuits – also arranges events and visits and encourages members to take an active interest and become involved in international and public affairs. Includes Camera Club and 3Cs Science Group.

Guest Speaker, Dame Sarah Goad Lord Lieutenant of Surrey spoke eloquently, expertly and with humour – on her role as the Queen's representative, assisting with the Honours system, garden party lists, etc. The post has military origins – although she was relieved that women are excused from wearing the uniform. She commented that in this year of a general election there is an extraordinary number of anniversaries ... Magna Carter, Battle of Galipoli, Afghanistan..... culminating in the Battle of Agincourt – as if we need a distraction from this year's election.

Before the lunch interval The Surrey Serenaders, dressed in distinctive emerald green, sang their competition songs.

Michael Portillo was the key note speaker for the afternoon. His talk ranged from reference to his family background, his political career which ended in 2005 to his subsequent reinvention as a TV personality travelling by train. He described himself as a former future Prime Minister. He was both candid and amusing, self-deprecating and happy to answer questions about his jackets..... (he has 14) and shared entertaining stories about the production of the TV programmes.