

# Berkshire News

.....the open **W**indow on Berkshire



**It's not difficult to guess the highlight of the year from the photographs that grace the front page of this edition of *Berkshire News*.**

On Monday, 8th September, to commemorate the third anniversary of the late Queen Elizabeth II's passing, we were delighted to host the Prince & Princess of Wales for tea & cake at Sunningdale WI.

On a beautiful, sunny, early Autumn morning, William and Kate were warmly welcomed by the Trustees of Berkshire Federation to meet Sunningdale WI members and share fond

recollections and memories of the Prince of Wales's grandmother, the late Queen Elizabeth.

The Trustees had baked over the weekend and Barbara Carr & Rachel Stansfield, complete with WI aprons, very kindly pitched in to host the kitchen and produce umpteen mugs of tea. A wide variety of cakes were displayed across a trestle table and the room was filled with sunshine, the smell of fresh cake and the sound of happy chatter!

In addition to affectionate recollections of the late Queen, the Prince of Wales was in good form making WI members laugh at his jokes.

Meanwhile, the Princess of Wales showed great interest in the various crafting activities of WI members,



especially the bereavement quilt initiative introduced by trustee, Marion Scott-Baker.

A huge thank you to Peggy Bailey & Elizabeth Morgan of Sunningdale WI for their good humour in helping

organise the visit, and to the members of Sunningdale WI for being so supportive on this very special occasion.

It was a wonderful morning and a memory that will be fondly recalled in the years to come.





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## Report Back by Berkshire Trustees .....

It really was a delight to welcome Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales, William and Catherine, to Sunningdale WI on the third anniversary of her late Majesty's death. They were so warm, chatty & friendly and genuinely interested in meeting us to learn about the WI.

Members of their Private Office accompanied them and ended up in the kitchen helping to dry the dishes. At the end of the morning, the Police bodyguards enjoyed wrapping up remaining cake to take back to Kensington Palace to enjoy with a cup of tea during their lunch break. Not a crumb was wasted!

WI members attending the event were asked to delve into their attics, cupboards and drawers to discover whether, over the decades, any family members had met the late Queen. It was amazing the number of photographs that appeared on the morning with lovely family stories to accompany them. Amongst the attendees, we also had several WI members who had, over the years, met different members of the Royal family so there were lots of happy memories to share with the royal visitors.

September marked the beginning of the craft courses scheduled up to Christmas. The 'Make a Christmas Rag Wreath' morning is fully booked so, if you missed out, a very similar course will be run in March/April to make a 'Spring Rag Wreath' so keep an eye on 'TryBooking'.

The move to on-line booking has been very well received by members with the 'Fashion on a Ration' lunch selling out within three weeks of being advertised. Going forward, 'TryBooking' will showcase all Federation activities planned, including those for which no payment is required. This will enable WI members to organise their diaries and book for the events they are keen to attend.



'Mix & Mingle', Henry Street Garden Centre, Arborfield

Signing up for a 'no payment required' event, such as a 'Mix & Mingle', enables the trustees to have some idea of numbers to expect on the day.

Next year, the Board of Trustees will be organising further 'Speaker Lunches' and introducing the 'Speaker Coffee' with coffee & cake and a 'top notch' speaker at an affordable cost. We do hope to arrange for a revisit by Dr Helen Fry who spoke at the Annual Meeting in April earlier this year. Helen spoke, without notes and in a very entertaining fashion, about woman as military spies in the last century. We believe members would very much welcome the opportunity to hear her speak again or, indeed, for the first time if they had been unable to attend the Annual Meeting.

We do urge WI Secretaries to regularly check their 365 email, especially at the very beginning of the month when the Berkshire Bulletin is issued. The Bulletin includes all events & activities available to members within 4-6

weeks of the Bulletin being issued.

Finally, the inaugural 'Mix & Mingle' took place at Henry Street Garden Centre, Arborfield, at the beginning of October. It was a very pleasant morning, well-supported, and it was lovely to be able to put a face to a name. Whilst chatting, it became clear that, as well as a social event, members who attended also saw it as an opportunity to raise matters of concern to them. Bearing this in mind, thought will be given as to how, at future 'Mix & Mingle' events, the Federation can include a 'drop-in service' to help members in the running of their WI. The trustees are committed to offering a support service to WI Officers in managing their WIs.

With very best wishes to all Berkshire Federation WI members for the festive season,

**Trish Kilgour, Chair,**  
Berkshire Federation of WIs  
t.kilgour@berkshirewi.co.uk

*"Women have a voice, and whenever they speak together, they are heard"*

*'A force to be reckoned with: a History of the WI' by Jane Robinson, social historian, 2011*

## Thank you to Ann Knee-Robinson for her many years of service to the Berkshire News

After many years of editing the *Berkshire News*, Ann has decided to retire from the role which she has served so loyally and reliably during years which have seen great change in the WI.

A member of Caversham WI, and currently their WI Secretary, over the years, Ann has played an

active role in the WI organisation including being a WI Advisor.

Ann's role as Editor of *Berkshire News* required her to be on the Board of Trustees. However, fascinated by the structure of the WI organisation, Ann nobly took on the role of trustee and undertook its responsibilities with grace and good humour.

We wish Ann a very happy retirement from editing the *Berkshire News*. We hope she will have more time to pursue her personal interests which include walking & keeping fit, cooking, gardening & reading. Ann also enjoys exploring old & new buildings with her husband and supporting him in his role as a priest of the Church of England.



## WI ADVISER CORNER

By the WI Advisers

### Top News for WI Members and WI Committee Members

#### Planning Ahead for Changes to your WI's Committee or Officers

**Autumn is the time to think ahead with your committee about who will stand for election again at your 2026 Annual Meeting in March and who wants to step down.**

Be prepared!

It helps to have as much notice as possible of coming changes, to identify replacements in good time for a smooth handover after your Annual Meeting.

Please ask who wants to stand down and tell your members too: you want people to step forward to join the committee.

If you think you will have any difficulties filling the Officer roles, please contact your linked WI Adviser or WI House as soon as possible, so they can give advice and support. See the Berkshire Year Book for your linked WI Advisers and contact details.

Invite WI members who you think would be good, or who want to join the committee, to come to a committee meeting and find out what is involved.

They can help with tasks at your WI meeting. You can develop committee members who would like to take on new Officer roles by involving them in the work. Encourage them to come along to our Treasurer, President and Secretary workshops or our Open Drop-In days, they will be very welcome.

There really are members who will step up and help your WI... they just don't realise it yet! Start showing them what they can do and the enjoyment to be had from helping. With encouragement, it can add so much more to their WI experience. And help get your new committee in place ready for the Annual Meeting in March 2026.

#### Resolutions 2026

##### Calling ALL WI Members! Play your part in choosing the Resolution for 2026

The November issue of WI Life magazine will include the short-listed Resolution proposals for 2026.

Every WI member has the right to choose the resolution they think is most worthwhile from the list of 4 or 5, using the form printed in the magazine (or copies). Make sure you make YOUR Selection and give it to your WI Secretary.

Every WI must collect your individual selections, total them up for each proposed resolution and send these scores to the Federation Secretary by the agreed date in early February 2026.

She adds them up for all Berkshire WIs and sends them to the NFWI team, who do the same for England/Wales. The National Board of Trustees look at the final scores and agree which Resolution will be put forward to the Annual Meeting for the National VOTE in June 2026.

In March/April 2026, NFWI will email out this favourite Resolution Proposal and there is more information about it in WI Life that month.

All WI Members then have a VOTE on whether their WI should support this Resolution or not.

It may not be the Resolution you personally preferred, so it is important to discuss the

proposal again; maybe invite a speaker on the topic concerned before members vote, usually at the May WI meeting.

NFWI provides good background information at both stages for members to read and learn about the issues involved.

Finally, each WI tells their Annual Meeting Delegate how they want them to vote on their behalf at the National Annual Meeting.

The Delegate should feedback to them how the Vote at the National Annual Meeting went. National's Public Affairs Team then draws up the campaign and materials to help WIs take action on the Resolution.

The WI is a democratic organisation and your views count! The WI has been campaigning on important Resolutions since 1918 which have made our lives better. When politicians hear what the WI is campaigning on, they sit up and take notice! We really can make change happen. Read about campaign progress and successes in WI Life and on 'myWI'. It is an exciting process and an important part of what WI is about.

This is a short summary of the process – there is more information in WI Life, on 'myWI' and in the mailing from National and Berkshire Federation at key times.

#### Natalie's Wish

**Before I begin, Trefoil is Girlguiding for adults; I am Chair of our local group called Riverside.**

One of my County Trefoil friends (Jane) recently told all the Berkshire members about 'Natalie's Wish'. Natalie was the daughter of one of Jane's friends who was a Guide leader in Berkshire years ago.

Natalie lived in Durban, South Africa and was involved with a charity called 'Reach for Recovery' which supports women after they have had mastectomies. Sadly, Natalie herself died of breast cancer a little while ago.

'Reach for Recovery' fits prosthetic breasts into bras. However, many of the post-op mastectomy women have never owned a bra so have nothing to put their prosthetic fitment into. Natalie's mum is now supporting this charity - as Natalie had wished so Berkshire County Trefoilers started collecting their



pre-loved bras – with wires taken out – the larger the better!

When I told our WI, Purley-on-Thames about this- they too have been bringing in their own pre-loved bras. The donations that did come in were all shapes, sizes, designs and colours - we learnt a lot about bras generally!

Between us, Riverside Trefoil and Purley on Thames WI have helped fill lots (LOTS) of bags which will be sent to South Africa.

**Alison Lewis**  
Secretary, Purley-on-Thames WI

#### History of Greensleeves Care and the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS)

Born from post-WWII compassion, Greensleeves Care continues the legacy of the WVS, providing dignified care for older people. Today, we offer award-winning and not-for-profit residential, nursing, respite and dementia care in our Berkshire homes found in Wokingham, Crowthorne and Old Windsor.

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

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## SUB COMMITTEES

### Health & Well Being

## Hypothermia

by Professor Margot Gosney,  
member of Beenham WI & Thatcham WI

**Hypothermia is defined as a dangerously low body temperature.**

Whilst a normal body temperature is 36.9 degrees Celsius, when it lowers to 35 degrees it is defined as 'hypothermia' and classed as a medical emergency. The most likely cause of hypothermia is exposure to a cold environment such as cold air or cold water.

#### What are the symptoms of hypothermia?

- the most noticeable is shivering
- as the body temperature drops further, adults may become confused with slurred speech, a weak pulse and slow, shallow breathing
- as activity levels reduce, lack of co-ordination in trying to walk or perform simple tasks

#### Who is most likely to develop hypothermia?

- those at extremes of age are most susceptible and especially includes those with poor mobility or those whose mental function prevents them from making sensible decisions such as the clothes they wear or moving from a cold area to a warmer one
- as we age, conditions such as stroke, Parkinson's Disease, underactive thyroid and severe arthritis as well as some drugs and alcohol all increase the risk of developing hypothermia

#### How to avoid hypothermia:

- remove damp or wet clothes as soon as possible
- breeze or wind reduces body temperature so be aware when outside
- importantly, our greatest heat loss is due to heat radiation from any area of the body that is unprotected so wear appropriate clothing, hats are essential, and mittens, somewhat surprisingly, are better than gloves due to the communal heat pocket created in a mitten
- layering of clothes: several thin layers are better than one thick layer and natural fibres, such as wool and silk, hold the heat better than cotton



hat, but for adults this is not as significant as it is in babies. This myth is likely to have originated from a 1970s US Army survival manual. Whilst we may not want to be seen wearing a bobble hat indoors, we happily put such hats on premature babies whose heads make up a larger proportion of the total body surface and those with less hair seem to miss the covering of a cosy bobble hat when it's cold!

#### What to do if you suspect that someone has hypothermia:

- call for urgent help from a medical professional
- get the person inside, remove anything damp or wet and use warm and dry coats or blankets
- do not rub the skin as this does not help the circulation to important organs and do not use hot water bottles
- if safe to do so, offer warm drinks and food unless your patient has fallen and you suspect a fractured leg

Look out for vulnerable friends, neighbours or family members. Remember that those facing financial hardship are most likely to cut down on heating and so should be encouraged to wear extra layers and use blankets



whilst sitting still. Finally, warm food and drinks help to maintain our body temperature.

Margot Gosney  
m.gosney@berkshirewi.co.uk

Many of us have heard about how great heat loss is from our head and the merits of wearing a woolly

### Leisure & Craft Activities with Berkshire Federation

## Trustee, Nina Derrick, is responsible for the Leisure & Craft activities organised by Berkshire Federation

*A member of Thatcham WI, Nina joined the WI after retiring from teaching. She attended Thatcham's craft club and joined the walking group so she got to know other members. Nina served as President of Thatcham WI for four years before becoming a Federation Trustee with the aim of contributing to the wider WI community.*

*Nina keeps active by swimming regularly and walking and, in the summer months, has recently taken up open water swimming. She is also a keen sewer and happy to try new craft activities.*

*Nina also enjoys travelling with her husband and visiting different parts of the UK to enjoy the outdoors and historic places.*

The 'Everyday First Aid' sessions run by Sue Stovell from the Red Cross have proved very popular and all attendees find the sessions interesting, helpful and very informative. We ran further sessions in September and will look to arranging more next year.

In Spring last year, Sulhamstead & Upton Nerve WI hosted a very enjoyable spring walk through the bluebell woods in their area which included the Tudor manor house at Upton Court. It was a sunny morning although a little wet under foot. On returning to the Church Hall, an excellent spread for lunch had been prepared by the SUN ladies followed by a short talk on St James' Way, a pilgrimage route that passes the church.

The 'Have a go Archery' session at South Oxfordshire Archery Club in July 2024 was a most enjoyable session, with excellent tuition from the club coaches. All participants managed to get some arrows on the target! Although rain was forecast for the morning



it held off until the last round of arrows.

In July this year, 'Have a go Archery' was followed by 'Have a go Croquet' and it was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. The tuition from Caversham Croquet Club was excellent and so encouraging, with the aim of giving everyone the confidence to consider joining a local croquet club. After some initial instruction, we commenced a game, being coached as we played. Due to the long, hot summer, the croquet lawn was very dry and the balls were rolling far. Nevertheless, we all managed to get a ball through a hoop! The croquet was followed by a delicious afternoon tea, prepared by ladies of the club.

Last month, September, we had a very interesting and enjoyable historical walk around Sonning followed by an excellent Ploughman's Lunch organised and hosted by the ladies of Sonning Glebe WI. It was a very sociable occasion meeting members from other WIs across the county. It was such a popular event that Sonning Glebe have offered to run a similar 'Walk & Lunch' in Spring next year.

Nina Derrick  
n.derrick@berkshirewi.co.uk

If your WI would like to host an event such as a 'walk & lunch' or a walk with coffee & cake or afternoon tea & cake then please get in touch with Nina who will be very pleased to hear from you. We notice at Berkshire Federation how pleased our WI members are to get together with other WI members across the county to enjoy a social time and make new friends.



## Chatting, Crafting and Community with Marion Scott-Baker

*Marion, Trustee & member of Thatcham WI, retired after forty-two years spent in Education as teacher and Head Teacher.*

*Marion has always been a keen sewer and embroiderer and loves to sew with friends. She was made 'Singer Sewing Hero' in 2023 for her work in teaching sewing & craft skills. Marion has a specific interest in Japanese textile history. As a WI member, Marion has been sharing these skills and interests with WIs across Berkshire and plans to expand that activity in her Trustee role.*

*As Marion says, "I feel passionately about the unique and important role of our organisation in offering friendship, support and education to women of every age and background. WI is a unique organisation with the needs of women front and centre."*

In a world of digital chatter, there's something quietly empowering about gathering with needle and thread in hand — and the women of Berkshire's WI have been doing just that.

This summer, members took on the challenge of adapting patterns to fit and creating bespoke summer dresses. Annie O'Neill of Redlands was the picture of style and creativity at her WI Summer Party, turning heads in her handmade dress — a true "Belle of the Ball."

Our crafting journey at WI House has embraced both the decorative and the deeply meaningful.

In September, members had the opportunity to learn the art of Japanese Sashiko embroidery by making elegant wooden pincushions whilst in November, we will be learning how to make silk poppies for Remembrance. Looking forward to December and the festive season, we have a course on learning to make reusable, sustainable Christmas crackers which can be personalised to suit your décor and your guests — and used year after year!

However, crafting in the WI is about more than beautiful objects — it's about compassion



*Marion discussing her latest project with HRH The Princess of Wales*

in action. Our current initiative brings experienced and novice patch workers together to create Bereavement Quilts for local A&E departments. These lovingly made quilts provide dignity and comfort when a child tragically passes away in A&E before being admitted to a hospital ward. The bereavement quilt replaces a clinical towel, in which the child would normally be wrapped, with something handmade & heartfelt allowing grieving families to hold on to a tangible expression of deep love and care.

These varied projects remind us that the joy of crafting lies not just in the finished product, but in the shared stories, laughter, and purpose that emerge along the way.

At Berkshire WI, threads of creativity are stitching our WI community closer together — one project at a time.

**Come and join us!**

**Marion Scott-Baker**  
m.scott-baker@berkshirewi.co.uk



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## BFWI AROUND THE COUNTY

### COOKHAM DEAN'S TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC - AUGUST 2025

In August, we extended our invitation to our members' Teddy Bears and what happened was described by some members as 'the best meeting we've ever attended'.

On one of the hottest afternoons of the year, the Committee put up the bunting, set out a strawberry tea with sandwiches and cakes and waited for our guests. The Raffle table was covered with marmalade, honey and bear related objects. Our guests arrived; arctophilia (love of bears) reigned! The Secretary said: 'Once one starts collecting bears they colonise you!' and they did.

They were welcomed by the singing of 'The Teddy Bears Picnic' and it seemed that 'every bear that ever there was' had joined us. Everyone had brought at least one bear. Our Vice President who was on holiday sent two fine young gentlemen bears one in his Henley Regatta Boater and Blazer to represent her. There were very old bears, bears with



famous labels (but no Steifs), there were Paddingtons and Poohs, (but not the Disney version). There was 'the Bear who never smiled', the Bear from the boy-next-door who wore his new owner's Christening dress which had been cut down from her great-grandmother's.

What they had in common was that they were loved and treasured. Their owners were only too happy to talk about them.

Many of us had grown up in the 1940s and 1950s when there was little to spare for luxuries like

Bears. So, we had some splendid 'hand me downs' – the oldest was 92 - and we heard about their previous owners. Several members were given bears quite late in their lives often by mothers who felt guilty for not doing so decades before.

One of our members makes bears. She fascinated us as she described the manufacturing process. The most difficult parts are their noses and paw pads. She never sells them but has a sixth sense if someone is under stress and a bear would cheer them. Several members are proud recipients.

The best was yet to come via e-mail the next morning. We held a quiz 'Bears in Books and on Screen'. One member had introduced us to her Paddington which she had had since the 1970s purchased with great difficulty in Yorkshire.

One question was 'Is it true that Jeremy Clarkson's mother held the first licence to manufacture Paddington?' Yes it's true, so one member after on-line research, is the proud owner of a Shirley Gabrielle Clarkson (Gabrielle Design) Bear with a three figure valuation!

Margaret Hill

### TILEHURST TRIANGLE WI GARDEN PARTY

Tilehurst Triangle WI ladies came together for a delightful garden party one Wednesday afternoon in August. The event which was organised by the committee was held in one of the member's garden where ladies were served an array of sandwiches, cakes and Buck's Fizz by some of their

husbands and partners.

Members gave a voluntary donation to their charity of the year, Blood Bikes, and almost £300 was raised, a very successful event all round!

Pauline Foskett



### SHAW-CUM-DONNINGTON WI VILLAGE SUMMER FETE



On a perfect summer's day residents of Newbury flocked to Shaw-cum-Donnington Village Summer Fete.

Shaw-cum-Donnington WI contributed to the annual dose of entertainment and community spirit with a very

popular cake stall. All cakes were donated by members.

The ladies wore aprons they had sewn themselves, raised £319.07 and as well as raising the profile of the WI locally.

Jean Anderson



## HAMPSTEAD NORREYS 50TH ANNIVERSARY



At the August meeting Hampstead Norreys WI celebrated their 50th anniversary.

This was a celebration with good food, wine, company and entertainment by The Agony Uncles. There were memories shared, plans afoot for future events and opportunities to chat, sing and dance.

The tablecloth on display was the idea of a past President. Back in 1983, she had the idea of asking all the members to sign the cloth. These signatories were then embroidered. It has been

updated since then with more members signing. It is a lovely record of both past and present members.

Our president, Geraldine Johnson, accepted a 50 year anniversary certificate from Nina Derrick, Vice-Chair of the Berkshire Federation of WIs. This will be framed and hung with pride!

Pam Scott

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