

MIDDLESEX FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES ANNUAL MEETING

I attended this meeting as the delegate for North West London WI and had an interesting and informative day.

Women's Institutes are organised in three levels: the local Institutes, County Federations (ours is Middlesex) and National Federation of Women's Institutes. Middlesex Federation is the organisation (and registered charity) which brings together the 43 local WIs in Middlesex. It has its own board of trustees, an office in West Drayton and a paid part-time Secretary. There are several committees for the various activities such as membership, craft and public affairs. Middlesex Federation publishes the Newsletter and a newly revised Speakers Directory. It organises a monthly fundraising draw, grants educational bursaries and provides Advisors who help local Institutes get established, hold their Annual Meetings, provide training for officers and, when necessary, close Institutes. Representatives of each of these Committees gave a brief report on activities to the Meeting.

In Middlesex there are 1516 members currently in 43 Institutes. Sadly Shoreditch Sisters did not recover sufficiently after covid and no members could be found willing to take on the officer roles so their WI was closed down during the year.

Pleas were made for new trustees to join the board of Middlesex Federation, particularly for someone to take on the role of Treasurer. If this interests you please get in touch with the Secretary for more information.

The Federation is in good shape financially. Its main source of income is subscriptions together with rent paid on a property in West Drayton left some years ago to the WI.

The Federation Archivist urged Institutes to tackle archiving to arrange and appraise their Institute's records, ensuring that Who, What, When, Where and Why is recorded for each item and that everything is kept in a dry place. Help is offered.

National AGM is on 5 June this year at the Royal Albert Hall. Observer tickets are available at £28 + booking fee. Details on My WI. Dental Health Matters is the resolution selected for consideration this year.

A change to the educational bursaries was announced. If a member is granted a bursary but is unable to use it, she can donate it to her WI to use to pay speakers. I realise on writing this that I am not clear how to apply for a bursary! No doubt the Federation Secretary will be able to help.

As well as all the Federation business we were inspired and entertained by two speakers: Danielle Brown MBE, competitive archer and winner of two Paralympic gold medals and Sally Kettle who rowed twice across the Atlantic, the first time with her mum, the second with an all-woman crew.

Danielle talked about the emotional and physical ups and downs of being a professional athlete, how she had learned to cope with distractions and pressure and how to fail. Her career was brought to an end when the Paralympic Committee changed the rules and her disability was no longer accepted. She now writes and talked to children and young people about critical skills for success.

Sally accepted a challenge from her boyfriend to row across the Atlantic. Four days into this race he had an epileptic seizure and had to be rescued. Sally asked her mother, to whom she had not spoken for ten years, to join her. The organisers disqualified them but the Ocean Rowing Society invited them to participate in a regatta. Subsequently she recruited three other women to race across the Atlantic, a trip fraught with difficulties. Her book on these adventures is called Sally's Odd

at Sea. She graduated in drama and is a highly entertaining speaker. She is Deputy Chief Guide and an Ambassador for Guiding.

Janet Cummins

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