

Report of the NFWI Annual Meeting on Tuesday 8th June 2021

The 2021 Annual Meeting was hosted on a digital platform. The National Chair, Lynne Stubbings, and most of the Board of Trustees were socially distancing in a room at The Royal Society of Arts. The three speakers for the day spoke from that room too.

Lynne welcomed everyone and the meeting opened with a recording of Jerusalem from the last Annual Meeting which was held in Bournemouth in 2019.

The appointment of returning officers and tellers for both that day and for the Public Affairs resolution was proposed and voted on. Then the Standing Orders were adopted. These digital polls were very efficiently done.

Lynne then went on to introduce the current Board of Trustees members and gave her address, this talked about the last two years and the positive ways in which the WI has coped at all levels. She spoke of the WI members who sewed PPE and the contribution to their communities. The WI Wanderers and a digital magazine were set up and she acknowledged the WI member from Balham who had been on The Great British Sewing Bee. The various campaigns have and are continuing. She also spoke of the heart-breaking decision to close Denman. However, the success of Denman at Home as meant that over 70,000 different people have been able to participate in these courses. Going forward, there will be an opportunity to say what you would like our future educational offering to be so look out for the consultation. Unfortunately, her address was interrupted by a world-wide outage of sections of the internet but eventually a message on the screen directed us to YouTube where the meeting continued.

The first Speaker was HRH The Countess of Wessex who spoke of her mother and how she got involved in village activities. The challenges that the pandemic has brought to women of all walks of life and how that has affected the causes that she supports was her main theme. Her talk was difficult to hear at times as she talked of the problems of women with sexual harassment and inequality in the workplace, violence in conflict situations and in the home. She called for pride in women as they are resourceful, resilient and tenacious.

She was thanked by Jeryl Stone.

Various certificates were then awarded and the Treasurer, Julia Roberts, gave her report. Julia always manages to make the finances understandable.

The second speaker was Dame Cressida Dick, Commissioner of the Metropolitan police. Again, a very competent speaker with much to say about the problems that women encounter in all areas. She compared the centenary of the WI and the establishment of the women police officers. Her talk covered domestic abuse and human trafficking. She spoke of the shock and distress that the Sarah Everard case brought to the police and the lessons that are being learned. She finally spoke of

legislation that has been passed enabling the police to prosecute in domestic abuse cases even where the victim withdraws their complaint and gave examples of the benefits of that law.

She was thanked by Ann Jones

Lunch followed and we were back in front of our screens by 1.35pm.

The afternoon started with the introduction by Melissa Green, NFWI General Secretary, of the new Board of Trustees for 2021-2023. After this she veered from the agenda to give her own thanks to The Board of Trustees and, in particular Lynne, for their help and support throughout the last 15 months of the pandemic.

The Public Affairs Resolution was then discussed. See below.

The afternoon speaker was Rt Hon the Baroness Brenda Hale of Richmond DBE. Baroness Hale was until recently the President of the Supreme Court and she spoke of her life from school days in Yorkshire and how she ended up in the Supreme Court. A gifted and charismatic speaker with plenty to say. I found her a joy to listen to.

She was thanked by Mair Stephens

The NFWI Chair, Lynne Stubbings, final address concentrated on thanks to the WIs who have welcomed her during the last 4 years as well as the NFWI staff and her fellow Board members, particularly those leaving the Board this year. She finished with urging us to be loud and proud about our great organisation.

Ann Jones and Jeryl Stone thanked Julia Roberts for her work over the last few years and Lynne Stubbings for all she has done as Chair of the NFWI.

The meeting closed with Land of our Fathers and the National Anthem.

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESOLUTION

A CALL TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE SUBTLE SIGNS OF OVARIAN CANCER

Every two hours in the UK someone dies of ovarian cancer. Making sure GPs and the public know what to look for will not only ensure the early detection and treatment of this disease but transform lives today and for generations to come. NFWI calls on WI members everywhere to help increase awareness of the subtle signs of ovarian cancer.

Proposed by Kitchen Dancers WI, Hampshire Federation

Kathy Heathcote spoke on behalf of Kitchen Dancers WI, proposers of the resolution. Ovarian Cancer is the 6th most common cancer and early diagnosis can enable a five year survival. Symptoms are vague and can be mistaken for irritable bowel syndrome or urinary tract infections. Kathy's daughter-in-law was diagnosed

with ovarian cancer and set up **Ovarian Cancer Action** to raise awareness with the public and GPs.

Ruby Adler, also of Hampshire Federation seconded this resolution from a young person's perspective.

Expert speaker, John Butler, who is a gynaecology cancer surgeon at the Royal Marsden Hospital spoke about the urgency of getting an early diagnosis. 25% of patients present late and their survival is greatly reduced. Barriers to seeking help are fear of wasting doctor's time and embarrassment about their symptoms. 40% of UK doctors (as opposed to 60% worldwide) refer their patients for further investigation which may account for the lower survival rate in the UK compared to other countries. One patient had seen her doctor ten times over a year before being referred. He urged women to be persistent.

NFWI had been unable to find an expert speaker against the resolution but in the interests of fairness, Toto James, Vice-Chair of NFWI Public Affairs gave a counter argument. She asked members to consider if the timing, impact and use of valuable resources was the right thing to do at the present time. She reiterated that WIs are educational charities and as such can promote awareness of the issues without a resolution. As mentioned above, Ovarian Cancer Action and **Target Ovarian Cancer** action groups are already raising awareness and there have been recent campaigns running in the press and tv. Would we be duplicating this work? Would passing this resolution be the best value for our resources?

***** The discussion on the resolution is available to watch for free on YouTube [here](#). Please discuss this resolution in your WIs and let your Delegate know your vote by 2 July 2021 at the latest.***