theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN

NEWS
DEVON WI

MAY — 2026

A fun and creative day of hand-crafting at Aylesbeare WI, creating birthday cards for 60 WI members!



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theWI INSPIRING WOMEN | Devon

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Printed By
Brightsea Print Group

Please send items by the first Friday of each month. Next issue due by May 1st, to:
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The opinions expressed in Devon WI News are not necessarily those of the Devon Federation of Women's Institutes .

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRS




What a joy it is to welcome you all back. The sunshine is finally on its way, spirits are lifting, and — in case you missed it — our adventurous group have safely returned from their little trip to the Moon. We're delighted to report that they brought back nothing but enthusiasm, inspiration, and a renewed appetite for cake.

Closer to home, the energy across Devon WI has been just as bright. We've had some fantastic updates from our members, from personal triumphs to new projects taking flight. Even better, we're thrilled to say new members have joined us, bringing fresh ideas, new friendships, and even more reasons to smile.

To everyone who has re-joined us this year: thank you. Your support, your humour, and your willingness to get stuck in are what make this community so special. We're genuinely looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the next six months — whether at meetings, events, or those wonderfully impromptu chats over a cuppa.

You'll also find a flyer in this newsletter with full details of our Members' Day. It explains everything you need to know, including why we were unable to hold the event in Plymouth in the end. We hope the information is helpful and clear.

Please remember your Adviser is happy to help with any questions you may have. And a big thank you to all the Treasurers who help prepare the accounts.

Here's to sunshine, shared moments, and a brilliant year ahead for Devon WI.

Warmest wishes, **Your Joint Chairs**

ARE YOU IN THE 300+ CLUB ?

Why not join the 300+ Club and be in with a chance of winning £25 every month? For just £10 per year, your number will be entered into a monthly draw, with two prizes of £25 up for grabs every month. Plus, there's an extra bonus draw in time for Christmas, adding a little festive cheer!

The 300+ Club runs from June, so now is the perfect time to get involved and secure your number. For more details or to sign up, please contact me or your secretary.

Good luck! **300plusclubcoordinator@devonwi.org.uk**

TREASURERS HELP

Please can you speak to your advisor if you are struggling to find a treasurer. We have had a treasurer volunteer to take on another WI's treasurer role (subject to location), to ensure no closures will resolt from a lack of treasurer.

DFWI BACS details are below. **Please remember to email the person you are paying and copy in Sarah Ford our DFWI bookkeeper.**
bookkeeper@devonwi.org.uk
Devon Federation of Womens Institutes DFWI **Sort code 08-92-99** **Account no 67185081**

DEVON FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES ANNUAL MEETING

ONLINE DELEGATE TICKETS	WED 1ST JUNE 2026	ONLINE VIA ZOOM 10.30AM START

TICKET REGISTRATION LINK

To follow shortly.

Please note that voting attendees (WI Link Delegates), will each require a Wi-Fi enabled device i.e. a smart phone, iPad or laptop in order to place votes during the meeting.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES ANNUAL MEETING

ONLINE OBSERVER TICKETS	THURS 4TH JUNE 2026	ONLINE VIA ZOOM 10.30AM START 4.30PM FINISH

This is registration only - no tickets will be issued – a confirmation of registration will initially be emailed and the Zoom link will be sent out in the weeks leading up to the event.

TICKET REGISTRATION LINK (WIFI REQUIRED)

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/nfwi-annual-meeting-2026-observer-tickets-registration-1541107226199?aff=oddtdtcreator

Latest date for registration: 19th May 2026

Every watch party that includes voting attendees (Delegates) must appoint a lead contact who will liaise with the NFWI on the morning of the event; this is to ensure all constitutional requirements are met and to report the number of voters in attendance.

Updates to information and speakers can be found on the NFWI website.

SUCCESSION PLANNING – ARE YOU LOOKING AT PROTECTING THE FUTURE OF YOUR WI?

We all have members that take the roles of President, Secretary or treasurer year after year but what if…

- One of them gets ill and can't carry on in the role.
- They have to step back to look after family.
- They feel like they have done it long enough.

WIs need to be more proactive instead of reactive, and be thinking about this long before it happens. This starts at committee level but ultimately it also comes down to members, it's your WI. So what can we do?

- After your Annual Meeting is the time to start thinking about the following year.
- If you are lucky enough to have a big enough committee, job share.
- Get to know the roles and what they involve, I promise they are not that scary! Have your officers talk to the group about their roles.
- Step up and volunteer in your own WI, there are always tasks that can be done by others that end up getting done by officers or committee.
- Don't assume the officers are going to do the role forever, circumstances can change overnight.

Officers talk about this with your members and encourage those that may be interested in becoming an officer at some point.

Members it's your WI, you are responsible for its running, officers and committee just facilitate it. It shouldn't have to be a 'well if no one steps up we will have to suspend' conversation. Let's have a plan before it gets to that.



IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR!

Annual Meetings have started and it's a time to reflect on all the good things your WI has done in the past year. The treasurer presents your audited accounts, the secretary gives her report and Advisers love to visit and see what you have all been up to.

After the meeting there is some paperwork to complete, that you were sent earlier in the year that needs to be sent to The Firs. You should send the Annual report form, financial statement, secretary's report and your programme for the coming year. Each and every one of these is read by your WI Adviser so we can get a picture of how your WI is doing even if we haven't visited you this year and then the information is put in your file at the Firs. It would be a big help if you could send them in as soon as possible after your Annual meeting as Advisers pick them up in June, with the exception of those that have later meetings.

ABOUT BYE LAWS

Bye Laws are not designed to be permanent, static rules. They are meant to be active, annually sanctioned guidelines that reflect the current operational needs of that specific WI. If you add a new Bye Law or alter an existing one please let DFWI know by highlighting it on your Annual Report.

Remember to review your BYELAWS at your Annual Meetings and of course to minute that you have done so.

If a byelaw was agreed in a WIs dim and distant past it is in place forever?
NO – For a byelaw to continue to be in place it must be read out and voted on at every following Annual Meeting. Just missing one year means the byelaw could be void.

SPRING WREATH MAKING EVENT

Broadclyst WI had a wonderful time welcoming the new season with a creative workshop led by our very own member, Sally. It was a fantastic opportunity for everyone to gather and explore our artistic sides. Using a variety of willow, wooden, and metal frames, their members crafted beautiful wreaths adorned with natural foliage, colorful ribbons, and silk flowers.

The event was a great success full of fun, laughter, and creativity. It proved to be a perfect way to celebrate the arrival of spring together.





HOT FROM THE ALLEY

Skittles final between Halwill and Ilsham. The victors were Ilsham. Tedburn St Mary provided the refreshments which went down well with everyone.

More in the June newsletter.

2026 QUIZ FINALS

The 2026 quiz final took place on Saturday 21st March with 15 teams taking part. **Congratulations** to Magnolia WI who were the winners with Aylesbeare WI were runners up. Picture shows Magnolia with the winners cup!



THE TOWN MILL AT LYME REGIS

Colyford WI in East Devon crossed the border to visit a hidden gem in the centre of Lyme Regis - The Town Mill.



After a lovely coffee in The Strawberry Tree Restaurant, specially opened just for us, our WI group was divided into two groups and taken on a very informative tour of the volunteer run working mill situated on the River Lim. Spelt was being processed that day, milled between the millstones rather than ground. We had the opportunity to individually operate a smaller millstone known as a Quern.

The mill site pre-dates Domesday, working in 1344, but was damaged during the Civil War in 1644 and rebuilt to what is seen today. It was sadly closed in 1926 after struggling to compete with cheap imports since the 1850's.
A group of residents joined forces to save it from demolition in 1991, having to source a new water wheel in the process, but it has been in daily use since reopening in 2001. It supplied locals with flour throughout COVID and it takes a group of over 30 volunteers to run it throughout the year.

Our millers were filled with fun facts! The origins of:

- Damsel in distress
- Run of the mill etc

And apparently many mills burned down during the Industrial Revolution when wooden cogs were replaced with metal ones. The sparking from metal hitting metal in the dense flour filled atmosphere often self combusted as the mill atmosphere is more volatile than gun powder!

UPDATE ON CRAFTING AT AYLESBEARE WI



Update on crafting at Aylesbeare WI. Back in 2024, Aylesbeare WI was awarded a bursary by Haytor Vale WI to be used for a craft day making birthday cards for members. Now we have used all the cards we made, time to do it again!

Three members organised ideas and materials, lined up a working venue at a members home and asked for crafting volunteers. 14 members came along (Thursday 19th March) and supported with a supply of tea/coffee/cake got creative they produced 60 cards in a variety of styles. It was a very productive morning, enjoyed by the crafters and the tea makers, and will be greatly appreciated by all our members as the cards are sent to them on their birthdays.





SHEILA, DAME OF SHOWBIZ



Sheila Parker, veteran Tiller Girl and Vernon Girl, dazzled Kingsbridge and Totnes members with her showbiz anecdotes at a soup and pud lunch.

For starters, she was famous before her next door-but-one neighbour Paul McCartney. He gave her lifts on his bike, accidentally broke her nose and complimented her on making it onto tv while he was still playing in a band at The Cavern Club.

For seconds (why not? Choice of four delicious soups) she appeared in the first ever televised Royal Variety show and shared the finale where every artist came on stage wearing top hat and tails: "when Prince Phillip came to congratulate us he said 'I suppose all this lot has to go back to Moss Bros' - he was right!"

Standing all around the 16 strong Vernon Girl troupe, were legendary names - Vera Lynn, Norman Wisdom, Bob Monkhouse, Benny Hill, Bruce Forsyth but none were top billing: that went to American superstars Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis Jnr and Liberace. Cliff Richard, Marty Wilde - the Vernon Girls were backing singers. Lily Savage sent an invite for a revival spot. Rock shows queued up for the immaculately dressed, identical bewigged, completely in time tappers and high kickers.

But the heartwarming tale of the generous dance teacher who mentored and funded her path to stardom was really the icing on the excellent puddings "She paid for four years of training and all she wanted in return was for me to pop back and take part in her local shows".

Sheila's showbiz sprinkles made for a dazzling afternoon of anecdotes featuring huge petticoats, towering plumed head dresses, leotards and endless legs dancing in perfect unison.

Sheila Parker, Entertainment Speaker, is based in Sidmouth.



ST. JOHN'S CHOIR

Sampford Spiney and Horrabridge W.I. held a musical afternoon in St John's Church, Horrabridge. The event was well attended by members and local residents. One Achord Choir from Plymouth entertained us really well and tea and cake was served. £260 was raised for our chosen charity for this year - Devon Air Ambulance.

£600 FOR ST LUKE'S

Elburton WI presenteda cheque for £600 raised for St. Luke's Hospice, which is our local Hospice. It was presented by our President and our Tresurer.





FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

Sue Byrd, president of Sidmouth WI, presented a cheque for £2,200 to Sharon Coombes, head of community engagement for Sidmouth Hospice at Home, the Sid Valley's own hospice service, on March 18th 2026. Funds were raised through a number of events for the public, which ran through the preceding year and included: running a cake and refreshments stall at one of the Sid Valley Open Gardens events launched by Sidmouth Hospice at Home, donating profits from one of the Sidmouth Society of Artists Open Studios, hosting an Afternoon Cream Tea, running a Quiz and Curry Night, and holding a Fashion Show in a local hotel in partnership with a local clothes retailer. The events were all led and run by separate groups of Sidmouth WI members, under the coordination of a Funding Group. Each event was a success and the Funding Group is currently considering which activities to run in the forthcoming year!

AN AFTERNOON OF BOLLYWOOD DANCE

Alphington WI invited Tedburn WI members to join us for an afternoon of Bollywood dance. Karina Garcia performed for us and also taught us how to wear a sari and a dance which everyone joined in. A fabulous afternoon.





COLYFORD WI MONTHLY FILM NIGHT

Monthly Film Nights are always fun at Colyford WI. Some of our members entered into the spirit when we watched Chalet Girls. Some films are thought provoking, some are tear jerkers but this one brought a smile to everyone's faces and they all managed to stay warm!



UPDATES FROM TEDBURN ST MARY WI

It continues to be an enjoyable and sociable year for the members of Tedburn St Mary WI. The ladies of this local group, now numbering over forty in total, have had lots on offer to them via their WI in March 2026. A lunch out was held at The Post Inn, a local inn at Whiddon Down. Tedburn St Mary WI aim to have a lunch out every month, providing members with the opportunity to relax and socialise, but also to give support to local businesses. A further lunch outing is planned for April.

Sadly, the weather continues to challenge the plans for a monthly walk, but Tedburn St Mary WI members hope to soon be out admiring the Spring flowers, along with the members dogs, who also like to join in with the fun!

The speaker at the March meeting was Mark Chambers, who delivered a comprehensive and informative presentation about the Teign Valley Railway. This was illustrated by his fascinating collection of vintage photographs of the railway. This presentation sparked lots of memories for members of family stories of the railway, and journeys experienced in the past. Mark conducts guided walks along the railway route, which members are welcome to participate in and find out more about this part of our local history.

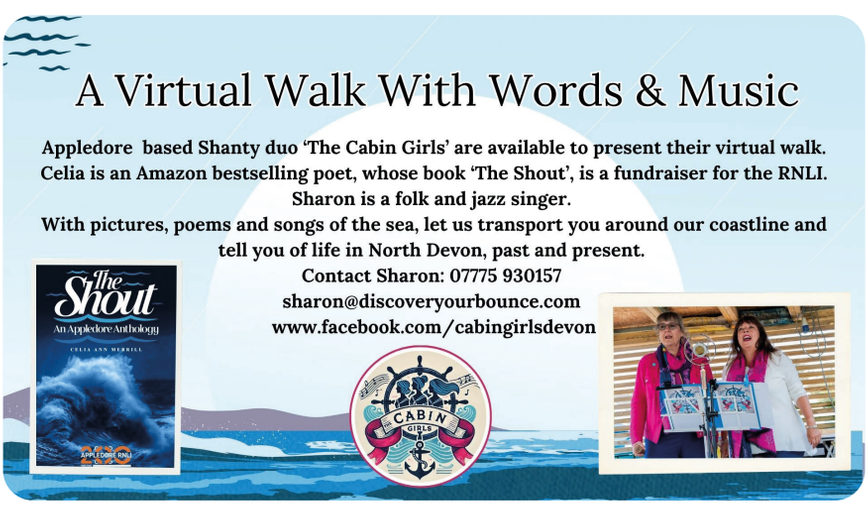
Tedburn St Mary WI crafting sessions are always well supported, and continue to offer a variety of art and craft active and projects for members to engage in.

Our regular meetings are held in Tedburn St Mary Village Hall on the first Tuesday of each month, at 7.30pm. As always, we love to meet prospective new members, and you will be warmly welcomed if you would like to attend. There are lots of activities on offer at Tedburn St Mary WI every month, including good speakers, walks, and knitting and craft sessions. Remember that the first meeting attended is free, to enable you to decide whether to join our WI. Just contact either Jane or Rachel.

President Jane:
Tel: **07814659526**

Secretary Rachel:
Tel: **01647 61868**







BIRDWATCHING ON THE EXE FOR NORTH TAWTON WI

North Tawton WI ladies seem to have a direct line to the weather gods when it comes to planning outings.

On what must have been the warmest day of the Spring so far, a group of us took off for a birdwatching cruise on the Exe. The keen twitchers in the group were not disappointed as there were plenty of birds spotted. But even those less familiar with all things ornithological - could appreciate the beautiful scenery.

There is something extra special about sharing an outing with friends as I am sure the photos demonstrate.





HOW HONITON EVENING WI SUPPORTS CHARITY WORK

We have recently been asked by some of our new members what Charities do we support. As a WI we do not support a designated charity each year. However, over the years we have supported many charities in other ways. Unfortunately, whilst documented in our meeting reports we do not have a separate list.

So, we put our heads together to identify how we have supported different Charites with various actions. We have supported the Trauma Teddy campaign that the Devon County ran, we have made jackets and hats for the Special Care Baby unit in Exeter along with small baby jackets for those who need them most. We are now supporting a knitting project for blankets for Hospicecare and R D &E, which are given to patients to keep.

We also collect urgently required items for Honiton Food Save using a different theme each month for example we had' Dental month',' Wash and shower month' and 'smell sweet' month. There has been support for another Honiton based Charity – Operation Rudolph. All these projects are spearheaded by individual members with others joining in. Over the years many of our speakers have been charity based (too many to name) often with collections made on the night. We now encourage any of our members who would like help in supporting a charity they support and falls within our remit to come forward and see what we can practically do to help. As you can see we are very active in our support of Charities.

EXETRAORDINARY WOMEN TAKE OVER

Exetraordinary WI of Exmouth volunteered to run the Devon WI stand at the Craft 4 Crafters exhibition in Exeter. We had such a lovely day with over 15 WI's visiting the stand, doing the flower activity and finding their penance. Very exciting - we had three enquiries for new members to join us and enquiries from two ladies that wanted to open a new WI in Torquay. We will be manning the Devon WI stand at the Devon County Show on Friday 22nd May, please do come and visit us!











COFTON WI MEETUP

We were pleased to welcome Martin Wrigley, MP for Newton Abbot, to our April meeting. He gave us a very interesting talk about his life as an MP. This was followed by a lively 'question and answer' session, with plenty of tea and cake.

SMILE FOR THE CAMERA!

We're on the hunt for high-resolution photos with people centralised, those submitted will have a chance to go on a cover page of the newsletter.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EVENT/COMPETITION	DATE	BOOKING DETAILS
National Federation of WI Annual Meeting	Thursday 4 June 2026 10:30am - 4:30pm	See page 2 Deadline 19 May '26
Devon Federation Online Meeting	Wednesday 1 July 2026	See page 2
Health Day Awareness	Wednesday 15 July 2026 10:00am - 3:00pm	See flyer for more details, you can speak to the office, or email **Jackie.bufton@devonwi.org.uk**
Devon Federation Annual Event Members Day	Wednesday 23 September 2026	Riviera International Centre, Chestnut Avenue, Torquay, Devon TQ2 5LZ. Look out for Flyers and communications coming through.
Devon Federation Holiday to the Lake District	Thursday 15th - Monday 19th October 2026	Booking forms and flyers with your Secretaries **janet.connolly@devonwi.org.uk** **Selling fast** – Hurry, all single rooms booked
Carol Service Exeter	Wednesday 2 December 2026 - Time TBC	Exeter Cathedral
Croquet	August	See Flyers
Devon Chairs Rosebowl		See Flyer
Next Board Meeting	20 May 2026	The Firs

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 office. 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.

300+ CLUB WINNERS
MAY - £25 EACH

503 Preston & Chelston
81 Shebbear

CALLING NO. 162

Are your our March winner of the 300+ Club lottery? Unfortunately we don't have any contact details or WI information for the winner. If this is you, please contact Carol - **300plusclubcoordinator@devonwi.org.uk** to claim your prize.

YOUR IT DOCTOR – HERE TO HELP

Personal, patient, and jargon-free support for everything from email problems to setting up on new devices.
it.support@devonwi.org.uk