

# NFWI AGM in Cardiff 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024



We arrived at The Royal Albert Hall in good time along with the other thousands of women, determined on enjoying themselves. Luckily there were no problems with the trains that day!

Upon arrival we met up with the ladies from the Unofficial WI dressed in daisies. It was just so much fun!



Of course, the Conference started with Jerusalem, accompanied by the organ, an amazing feeling for all followed by-

## The Chairs address

Anne Jones (NFWI Chair) warmly opened the meeting and welcomed all those present in the hall as well as members watching by zoom.

This conference will focus on Domestic Violence and abuse against women.

She explained that since our last AGM meeting 24,272 new members had joined the WI, an average of 66 new members per day.

There are now 17 virtual WI's and 7 WIs in prison.

New Podcasts are now available, and the first one has had 1500 downloads so far.

The WI Handbook has been revised.

New Advisor modules are now available.

Health and Safety, Governance and Safeguarding Policies have been updated. There is a new Menopause policy, and the Constitution has been reviewed.



Her hardest decision as Chair was definitely the closing of Denman College. However the funds from this has meant that there is free learning for all where our members can improve their personal development with the WI Learning Hub. It provides the following on a monthly basis-

- 54 Courses offered
- 6000 individual Courses booked by members
- 3884 members are attending courses

With effect from October 2024, Federations will receive £10K per year to provide Face to face training.



A NFWI Lottery will be launched on WI Day, 16<sup>th</sup> September. It will provide a new source of income to sit alongside the NFWI Raffle.

There will be a 10% Discount from 5<sup>th</sup> June until 9<sup>th</sup> June at the WI Shop.

## Treasurers Statement on the Consolidated Financial Accounts as at 20/09/23

- The Income and Expenditure Account shows a Net Deficit of £709K.
- This included an unrealised loss in investment values of £200K.
- The Balance Sheet shows Total Net Assets of £13.29 Million.
- A New Fund-Raising Manger has been appointed.



### Guest Speaker-Nazir Afzal OBE, Chancellor of the University of Manchester

He was the Chief Prosecutor for NW England, Chief executive of the county's Police and Crime Commissioners and recently National Advisor to the Welsh Government.

He gave an excellent talk about domestic abuse and how 5K of women in this country have been forced into marriage.



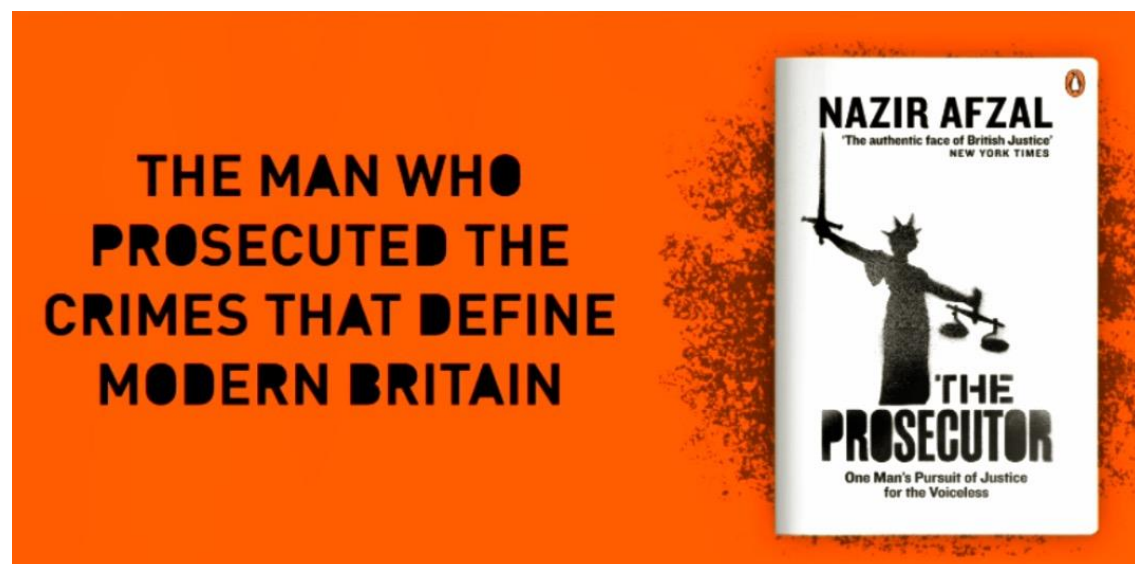
He also talked about how in 2004 12 women were killed in the name of honour. He relayed many a horrifying story and the main message was that there was a lack of understanding. Victims found no one believed them. Things have however improved over the years with the introduction of National Guidelines for every police station.

He talked about The Rochdale child sex abuse ring in Manchester and had to admit “we got it wrong”. Members of the ring were finally convicted in 2012.

One of the victims of Stuart Hall who was eventually convicted of child abuse felt that Nazir had changed her life for the better because he listened to her.

1 in 4 women suffer domestic violence.

1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted.



Nazir believes that there should be a change in some men's attitude, thinking that women do not have choices. This should be addressed in young boys as early as possible.

He received a standing ovation-A rare event for a speaker at a NFWI AGM.

## Resolution

### **Dental Health Matters**

`There is a chronic shortage of NHS Dentists and people are suffering health issues as a result. The NFWI calls on the Government to increase investment in the training and retaining of dentists and to review the current inadequate NHS contracts in order to ensure everyone can access a NHS dentist wherever they live`.

The wording of the Resolution was not changed.

#### **Argument FOR**

Eddie Crouch the Chair of the British Dental Association gave us an excellent talk at the AGM.

On 24 April, NFWI hosted an informational webinar to help WI members **learn more about the dentistry resolution before going to the WI Annual Meeting**. Eddie spoke on this webinar as well and gave us an insight into dentistry today.

If you would like to see this webinar it is On My WI-

<https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/public-affairs-and-campaigns/news-and-actions/watch-now-resolution-webinar>

#### **Argument AGAINST**

Unfortunately, a speaker could not be found to argue against, so to provide a balanced debate a few points were raised for consideration. These are as follows-

- We are looking at this Resolution at a time when there has been a substantial focus on dentistry.
- Can the WI's contribution make a difference?
- Many of the changes to fix this must be made by the Government. Is there enough at local level that the WI can get involved with?

## Questions from WI members

Points raised were-

- One of our members is a dentist and thinks there should be more children and teenager's check-ups. She had a child with liaisons above his teeth, he had been self-harming.
- We should concentrate on oral hygiene and fluoridation first. Concentrate on the basics. We should concentrate on education.
- Armed Forces, as they move around, they have to apply on a fresh waiting list each time. There should be an automatic transfer for Armed forces and their families.

## The Resolution 'Dental Health Matters'

has gone forward with 95.53% of the votes in support

4578 voted FOR

214 voted AGAINST

## Lunch



It seems to be tradition now for many of our members to sit on the steps of the Albert Memorial and eat their packed lunches. A sight to see!

## Afternoon Speakers

### Melanie Brown



Melanie opened up about her devastating experience of coercive and controlling behaviour in her 2018 memoir *Brutally Honest*. In 2024 she re-released the book with three compelling new chapters documenting her 'rise from the ashes'. The book concludes how she deals with the ongoing PTSD of abuse, reconnecting with her family and learning to trust and love once more.

She was the keynote speaker at the NFWI AGM and was interviewed by Victoria Derbyshire.

Melanie is now the Patron of Women's Aid.





It was pointed out that the WI invented girl power, but Melanie and the rest of the Spice Girls took it to a new level!

Melanie told us all how the abuse started quietly and insidiously at first. She did not notice it to start with and then she started to question. It was drip by drip. You start to question yourself. There was a lot of gaslighting and love bombing. Your life becomes their life.

They do not stop until they are stopped!  
She felt a lot of Mum guilt and shame.

Melanie believes that we should educate from young. Parents need to show children what a healthy relationship looks like.

Once the abuse ended, she had to learn how to breath again-Who am I now?

On the Women's Aid Website it states 15 Red Flags, which she felt were the timeline of her marriage. She had a lightbulb moment when she took pen to paper and wrote about her experiences.

The abuse not only happens to you but to your family. She lost contact with her family and had to reconnect.

Melanie has set up a petition for the Judicial College to commit to compulsory training, and the government to implement the recommendations of the Harm Panel Report.

They have just over 20,000 signatures at the moment, they need 25,000 signatures.



To sign up go to the link below-

<https://takeaction.womensaid.org.uk/melaniebrownpetition>

What can the WI do about Domestic Abuse at a Route level?

It is great to have another women's support, have compassion. **Melanie started to heal when she was believed.**

A Selfie(below) was taken by Melanie and Victoria from the stage of the audience. Them taking a photo of us and us taking a photo of them!



## Timothy Watson



Timothy joined us to speak about his experience on the Archers as Rob Titchener in the high-profile domestic abuse storyline between 2013 and 2016. The storyline followed Rob Titchener as he abused Helen Archer and used coercive control which alienated her from her family and friends.

Members of the Unofficial WI jokingly said that they would boo him as he entered the stage, but after all he was only acting!

He was interviewed with Teresa Parker from Women's Aid who was instrumental in helping with the storyline.

The benefit of the story being played out on the Archers was that it felt like a real lived experience relived in real time over 3 years.

In 2015 there was a campaign against coercive control and the Archers storyline added weight to this. 'The Archers effect' raised so much awareness. The legacy of the storyline is that this can happen to anybody and anywhere. The Archers story is after all based in a middle-class rural area.

Again we asked what can we do? The same answer came back-Inform our younger generation.



## Prizes

### Winning £200

- Lady Denman Cup-Creative Writing-Susan Keith -Wiltshire Federation.
- Recruitment Awards-

24 or fewer Hayling WI—increased it members from 21 to 68.

25-50 Codicote, Hertfordshire-increased its members from 39 to 115

50 + Members- Frinton on Sea increased it members from 147 to 198.

## Closing Statement



Anne Jones (NFWI Chair) said a final goodbye as this was her last day.

She reflected over the last 3 years on things she has learnt-

- Leadership-she has done things she never thought she was capable of and learnt so much about herself.
- Supporting Roles- are just as important-help your leaders to lead.
- Relevance-What's next? We are the guardians of this organisation, leading it forward as it constantly changes and evolves.
- Fun and friendship-Sisterhood, kindness and friendship.

The next AGM will be virtual, possibly in the first or Second week of June 2025. An actual date will be confirmed in the Autumn.

There will not be an in-person AGM until 2027.

Anne Jones left us with a final challenge-

Reflect on your WI experience and say Thank you to someone who has made a difference!

All those present at the conference joined in singing-

Jerusalem, Land of my Fathers and God Save the King.

Thank you for all your votes and participating in the debate on this year's Resolution with your WI members.

Christine Grove  
Linked Delegate