

£200 OFF*

PLUMBS REUPHOLSTERY

for readers of WI Life

Show your suite some love and return it to its former glory!

Plumbs would like to offer you **£200 OFF** our Reupholstery service, plus **FREE Accessories worth £50!**

Plumbs Reupholstery renovates your suite, chair or sofa from the inside out, so the finished furniture looks just like new. Whilst other Reupholsterers may only change the outer fabric, **Plumbs** make sure all internal springs and seat cushions are renovated before your choice of top quality fabric from **Plumbs** is expertly reupholstered onto your furniture. There are over 800 fabric choices, including over 450 plain options, many from leading design houses such as **Morris & Co**, **Swaffer** and **Sanderson**. Choose from fresh floral patterns and a wide range of plain velvet-style and soft chenille designs. Plus, we also have an advanced Aquaclean fabric range that means stains can be easily cleaned with just water.

Plumbs Reupholstery is delighted to offer readers a chance to save £200 when you spend £800 on **Plumbs'** Reupholstery Service*. Plus, claim Free Accessories worth £50! A Home Consultant will visit your home and show you the full range from which to order.

The expert craftsmen will then personally transform your furniture and the friendly transport team will



carefully deliver your reupholstered suite safely back into your living room. **Plumbs** is dedicated to providing a high quality service, coupled with value for money for a genuine British

product. Plus we also offer a 3 year Quality Reupholstery Guarantee! **How to claim:** To save £200* and claim £50! FREE accessories, call **01772 83 83 33**.

quoting **Offer Code: 'A707 WLE'**, and arrange for a **Plumbs** Home Consultant to visit you. This offer closes in the next 21 days. Terms and conditions apply.

SPECIAL OFFER

SAVE £200 OFF PLUMBS REUPHOLSTERY*

Plus **FREE** accessories worth £50!

Arrange your **FREE** Home Consultant Visit today, and we will also send you a **FREE** Plumbs brochure and DVD

Call Now **01772 83 83 33**

Lines open 7 days a week. Quote Offer Code: A707 WLE or visit www.plumbsreupholstery.co.uk/offer

Plumbs Ltd, Old Lancaster Lane, Preston PR1 7PZ

* £200 off Plumbs Reupholstery cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional reupholstery offer. Minimum order value of £800 applies. Antique furniture excluded from offer. † £50 Free Accessories included when you purchase Plumbs Suite Cover / Reupholstery or Curtain orders over £399 (some exclusions apply). Ask your Home Consultant for full details.



PLUS!
Free accessories worth **£50+**



WI Life Issue 98 March 2019

WI Life

the **WI**
INSPIRING WOMEN

REPORT

Food banks in crisis

What happened when the WI played **Cupid** to five couples?

(Clue: you'll need a new hat)



PLUS
Spring decorations
+
Easter doughnuts
+
Veggie suppers

Or post this coupon to: PLUMBS LTD, OFFER CODE: A707 WLE, OLD LANCASTER LANE, PRESTON, PR1 7PZ

PLEASE TICK APPROPRIATE BOX

☐ **Yes please.** I would like your Home Consultant to contact me to arrange a FREE visit and give me a FREE No-obligation Quotation for Reupholstery or Covers. I understand this visit is purely advisory and puts me under absolutely no-obligation to buy.

☐ **Yes please.** Send me a FREE Colour Brochure and further details of Reupholstery, Made-to-Measure Covers and Curtains.

MR/MRS/MISS

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Offer Code: A707 WLE

ADDRESS

PLEASE GIVE HOUSE NAME/NUMBER

POSTCODE

YOUR POSTCODE WILL HELP SPEED UP OUR REPLY

TELEPHONE

PLEASE ENTER AREA CODE WHEN REQUESTING A VISIT

EMAIL

Service available to over 98% of UK households (inc. Isle of Wight, Jersey and Northern Ireland). Please call to confirm availability. We have recently updated our Privacy Policy on how we process and use your data, to review it please visit www.plumbs.co.uk/privacy-policy it will also be detailed on the bottom of the letterhead you will receive with your brochure.

Plumbs

The National Magazine of the WI

LOVE IS...

TO THE WI'S FAMOUS 'THREE Cs' - COMMUNITY, CRAFTS
AND CAKE - WE'RE ADDING A FOURTH: CUPID. HERE'S HOW THE
WI BROUGHT ROMANCE INTO SIX MEMBERS' LIVES

Words ELEANOR WILSON



Photography DENISE WINTER

'We bonded over science... and mud'

A WI talk introduced Becky Greatbatch of Weybridge WI, Surrey Federation, to Search and Rescue, where she met Ian, her future husband

The second WI meeting I ever went to was at Langley WI, Essex Federation, and there was a talk given by a member of Essex Search and Rescue about training search dogs. The training area was just around the corner from me. I'm quite outdoorsy and I volunteered to hide in the woods so they could send the dogs to find me. I really enjoyed it and eventually I became a team leader. So when I moved to Surrey a few years later, I looked for the local Search and Rescue team.

In March 2012 I went on a 36-hour exercise with the London Fire Brigade and that was when – crawling through a search tunnel – I saw Ian at the end of it, dressed in Fire Brigade gear, covered in filth. He hadn't slept for 24 hours, but he was focused and friendly. We had a curry and discovered we're both

research scientists, so we were soon bouncing ideas off each other.

We were going out by August, within a year we were engaged, and in another year we were married. Our wedding stationery said 'Dr and Dr' instead of 'Mr and Mrs'. We both love hiking, rock climbing and listening to live music; we've published research papers together – our friends joke that we spend date nights having nerdy science conversations. We're both equally daft, and it works. As Ian said in his wedding speech: 'We found somebody with the same kind of crazy.'

After leaving Langley WI when I moved to Surrey, I went on to help re-form Weybridge WI, where I'm still a member today. I would never have heard of Search and Rescue and met Ian if it wasn't for the WI.

'My WI friends brought us together'

After Diane Walford of Helston WI, Cornwall Federation, lost her husband, her close-knit WI community offered her another chance at love

My first WI was Tibberton & Taynton WI, Gloucestershire Federation. I'd been there just under five years in 1996 when my husband had a sudden, but fatal, heart attack. Bang, that was it: he was gone. I was 43. The village and my WI community stepped in to be my support network, making me cups of tea and popping in to look after me. It was tough, but I was never alone and life eventually settled into a routine.

In 2004, another WI member sadly lost her battle with cancer. Once again the WI swung into action, making teas and cakes and encouraging her husband David to keep coming to our walking group events. They urged me to walk and talk with him because 'you know how he feels'.

I wasn't sure if it was my imagination, but David always seemed to be invited to our open events and there was a lot of whispering and giggling in the background whenever he came and sat by me. Obviously, they could see something we couldn't – soon David asked me to go out with him.

After a few weeks we let it slip that we were dating, and everyone said: 'We told you so.' Only then did we twig that they'd been setting us up all along.

We were married in 2006, and chose *Jerusalem* as one of

our hymns. WI members provided the flowers, rang the bells and wore their best hats. They made a special banner for us with footprints to represent the walks that had brought us together – and surprised us with it when we came out of the church. It was a magical wedding, but our lives since then have been full of just as many magical moments.

We moved to Cornwall a few years ago and I'm now a member of Helston WI, Cornwall Federation. They're just as supportive as my last WI; it's just one big caring network. Having been a widow myself, I'm aware that there are so many things out there that are designed for couples and when I was single I'd think, 'I can't do that'. But the WI doesn't see you as somebody's wife: you can just be you.

BELOW Diane and David in Porthleven
RIGHT Tibberton & Taynton WI congratulates the newlyweds with a banner in 2006



Photography POLLY STOCK

Amelia and Adrian share a love of antiques, now their joint enterprise
BELOW The radiant couple at their Christmas wedding in 1997

Photography EMMA STONER

'We were the height of gossip'

Amelia Holt, Programme Secretary of Burrowbridge WI, Somerset Federation, created a buzz when she fell for a WI speaker

The WI has been a great pick-up joint for me. My family have been members going back three generations. I joined Dodford WI, Worcestershire Federation, when I was 16 and only took a break to go to university to study art history. After I graduated in 1995, I came back home and re-joined the WI.

The speaker at the first meeting was a fine art auctioneer named Adrian. I thought 'Ooh, he's cute'. I needed a job, so I went up to him afterwards and he arranged for me to shadow him around the auction house where he worked.

I was playing hard to get, but Adrian was very persistent. Of course, it was the height of gossip when all the WI members who had watched me grow up in our tiny village realised that I was going out with a WI speaker.

I always imagined a romantic fairytale proposal. But what actually happened was that Adrian went to Zimbabwe for work and had to take anti-malarial tablets, which can have the side effect of causing



confusion. While he was away he sent me a massive bouquet with a card saying: 'I have a question to ask you.'

As soon as he got home, I was only halfway up the stairs with my coat still on, when he couldn't help himself and shouted, 'Will you marry me?' I said 'Yes'. Adrian still blames the anti-malarial tablets.

We had a Christmas wedding in 1997 and everyone got involved. My mother made the cake mix, another member lent her cake tins, a third baked it in her Aga and a fourth did the icing. I spent the last night before I got married at our WI party.

Adrian and I have been through a lot together, from his father's death to travelling round the world for two years. Eventually we settled in Somerset and started Levels Antiques, our antiques business.

I'm now a member of Burrowbridge WI, Somerset

Federation. The members are my chums and Adrian understands that it's been fundamental from the very beginning. You just never know what benefits the WI is going to bring. ►



ABOVE Handcrafted origami flowers and bunting set the tone for the big day
BELOW Becky (left) and Cathy carry toning bouquets at their wedding in 2018



‘The WI helped handcraft our wedding’

Becky Townsend found a warm welcome when she joined Aylsham WI, Norfolk Federation with her now wife, Cathy Townsend, Treasurer

I met Cathy at a women’s dance class and we got together five years ago. It only took six months after that for us to decide we were solid enough to get married. We didn’t announce it until a weekend trip to Cambridge in 2015 where we got properly engaged on a punt on the River Cam.

That same weekend, we found ourselves watching a play about the WI centenary. We learnt so much about all the good work the WI had done over the years, such as campaigning for votes for women, and we were just fascinated. When we got home we pootled along to join Aylsham WI, Norfolk Federation, and we were so welcomed – they were all absolutely lovely. We’re definitely the youngest people in the room, but none of what our WI does is just for retired people.

We planned the wedding for 2018, which was a long wait, but we wanted everything to be handcrafted and homegrown so there was a lot to do. I made placemats for all the guests and

Cathy folded hundreds of origami flowers for the tables and our bouquets. We also created all the invitations, orders of service and party favours. Only then did I tell the WI and before I knew it, members were saying, ‘Ooh, we could make bunting triangles’. It became a project for the craft group I hosted every month and, in the end, we had 600 bunting flags – crocheted, knitted and sewn by our family and our friends in the WI.

Our wedding day was absolutely cracking. My three daughters sang for us and our first dance was a routine we’d practised for a whole year – with waltz steps, a hand jive and a bit of everything in between. Our WI Chair and one of the committee members were guests. It was lovely to have them there, being very supportive and tearing up the dance floor.

I love that we made everything for the wedding day ourselves: it was all done the way the WI would do it. Having Cathy as my wife was a pretty good highlight too...



Main photograph BOO MARSHALL; GILL PAGE, THE BECK WI

‘Our wedding was just us and the WI’

Aleathia Richards, a member of The Beck WI, Norfolk Federation, and former NFWI Honorary Treasurer, married the tutor of her Denman course 18 years after they first met

I joined The Beck WI about 25 years ago in order to get to know the women where I lived – or so I thought. In June 2000 I led a federation visit to Denman, as the then Norfolk Federation Chairman. There were four or five courses to choose from but I picked the one on Jane Austen because it included a visit to Bath, where I’d never been before. That’s how I met the tutor, Ernie.

Since I was the group leader, Ernie and I walked around Bath together, chatting and sampling the water at the spa. I thought he was very nice and I invited him to Norwich to run some more literature courses, but I didn’t really get to know that much about him until about a month or so later. I was back at Denman and I thought, ‘What a good time to go and have lunch with Ernie’. We told each other a bit about our lives, and that was how it began.

We didn’t fall in love very early on, but we gradually became more and more attached to each other. Ernie lived in Wiltshire, 300 miles from me, and we visited on weekends for eight years before we decided it was crazy to keep driving around, so he moved in with me.

We’d been living together for 10 years in 2018 when we decided that if we were ever going to get married, we ought to do it. It was a very small wedding at a register office: just us and two members from my WI who came as witnesses.

Ernie is very kind. He doesn’t get easily worked up, whereas



Aleathia and Ernie sign the marriage register in 2018 to formalise their 10-year union

I can get quite fraught at times, so he keeps me calm and cheerful. He’s very knowledgeable about Shakespeare and music, from classical to Broadway. I enjoy it but I don’t know nearly as much as he does. He’s also written books for the WI about *Jerusalem*, about key WI figures and our role in the UK’s social history. Ernie and I are different in many ways, but we’re on the same side and we look after each other.