

## Denman Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Five members of the Cheshire Federation Board of Trustees attended a meeting in Birmingham organised by Helen Carey, former NFWI Chairman, to discuss the need for a maintenance fund for Denman. The speakers were Helen Carey, Sir Hugo Brunner, Christine Hounslow, Liz Eaton and Carolyn Davies who all fully supported the need for Denman to continue to be the focus of our education remit.



Helen made it clear that doing nothing was not an option as education is a key purpose of the WI and Denman is the focus of that purpose. It is over 30 years since the last fundraising for Denman and we need to do so again for all those who have joined WI since, who will do so in the future and because we owe it to our founding members to maintain Denman. £2.8 million pounds is needed, which sounds huge, but is what is needed to invest so that the interest is what is used to maintain the building. There are many who could help raise such a sum other than WI members such as educational trusts and individuals who support the aims of WI. Therefore, we all need to be Ambassadors for the WI and Denman.

Sir Hugo Brunner, son of the Lady Brunner a founder of Denman, made it clear that a systematic approach is needed to this fundraising and that NFWI must be behind the Denman fundraising effort. The Trusts, which could be of assistance, would expect that in view of our charitable status and in making a case for help. He emphasised that there are various trusts which can be approached and we must not be afraid to ask for money.

Sir Hugo reminded us that WI is a much respected organisation throughout the country as can be seen from our campaigns, which have been adopted nationally such as Clean for the Queen, which has been adopted by keep

Britain Tidy, and how many women have advanced in public life locally as well as nationally as a result of personal development in the WI?

Christine Hounslow, Denman Ambassador for Wiltshire, spoke next giving her reasons for setting up the Saving Denman Fund. She described her mother's WI working and saving hard to contribute £9 over three years to buying Denman at the end of WWII when money was so tight. We are asking for much less.



The most important issue is the need to separate Denman accounts from NFWI accounts as any Trusts approached will think NFWI is well off therefore Denman does not need help.

The Saving Denman Fund is approaching the Heritage Lottery Fund; has a collection box in Denman Foyer and is seeking a visit from the Minister for Education to question the withdrawal of funds from non-educational activities and the effect on the development of women.

So far the group have raised £24,000 in eight weeks. And £1,000 was raised at our meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April. She asked Federations to hold two big events in aid of Denman in the next two years. A steering group will help share ideas. Two years is the target as Denman celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018.

She also stressed that while Denman needs to develop into 21<sup>st</sup> century ways of learning it is still a key part of our educational aim because of the building of friendships and confidence from staying there.

Liz Eaton, who has done Cycle Cuba, which raised £85,000 and Cycle Kenya is now working on Cycle Iceland for 2018 and is inviting members and friends to join her. She did stress that you need a year to get fit and it will be tough.

Further news of this effort will be coming soon through WI Life and Federations.

Our final speaker before lunch was Carolyn Davies NFWI Board Member who gave the Welsh perspective. Three members of NFWI board are from Wales whose membership is 17,000. Some members do find it difficult to travel to Denman but they do not want to see it go especially as WI founded in Wales. And how are we going to tell the media that Denman is closing? After such a successful year in 2015 how can we do that?

After lunch we worked in groups to come up with ideas for fund raising and to discuss issues we felt important. These were raised in the question and answer session. Pat Tulip Chair of Denman and Ann Jones Chair of Wales and Vice-Chair of Denman dealt with a wide range of questions and assured us that Denman is not up for sale and that the NFWI is fully supporting the Save Denman campaign.

Before the final remarks we heard from Julie Summers, writer of Jambusters, who like all our speakers was passionate about all that Denman has given women and can continue to do so.

In her final remarks Helen pointed out that 89% of Federations are supportive of Saving Denman and 41 of the 69 Federations were represented at the meeting. Lady Denman said "Trust the members" so as Victoria Wood said "Let's do it".

All five of us felt the day had been worthwhile and are now even more keen to save Denman after the passion and fire as well as the facts of the meeting.

