

## Wincle WI Report

Wincle WI was once again a virtual get-together on Zoom for our May meeting, but it was very well attended and we all appreciated this month's inspiring speaker, Amanda Glennon.

The title of her talk was 'The upside of down'. 15 years ago Amanda had twins, Alice and Jo and when they were 5 days old it was realised that Alice had Downs Syndrome. There was no local support group, but through Google Amanda learned that the problem occurs when a child has an extra – a third - copy of chromosome 21. In about 1860 Dr Down was investigating this syndrome and noted certain common characteristics, like a flattened face and a single crease in the palm. One hundred years later geneticist Jerome Lejeune discovered that it was caused by the extra chromosome.

Downs Syndrome occurs in about 1 in 1000 births. There is no unique medical condition, but heart defects and hearing difficulties are common. Life expectancy is now over 60 (in the 1980s it was under 30 years old) and most children are in mainstream schools (in 1970s this was rarely the case). The future is bright as more adults are able to lead semi-independent lives, are in employment and can enjoy personal relationships.

Inspired by her daughter, Amanda founded the Cheshire Downs Syndrome support group and trained as a Makaton tutor. Unlike sign language, Makaton is designed to be used alongside spoken language. It is a huge help for Alice, but is also extremely useful anyone with hearing loss, memory problems or who has had a stroke. The most famous exponent of Makaton is Mr Tumble on CBeebies, who has helped to introduce it to children and make it more mainstream in education. And Chester is a Makaton-friendly city. We saw a video to prove that you can buy fish and chips there, using sign language. Amanda taught us 6 signs that are absolutely vital to a WI meeting: tea, coffee, sugar, cake, biscuit and more!

Also inspired by Alice, Amanda's husband left his job and became a children's author. Because Alice needed an operation to improve her hearing, he wrote a book about going to hospital and her brother, Jo, wrote an article about being the twin of a Downs Syndrome girl. Their cousin Jake now organises Makaton-friendly discos.

Hard decisions have had to be taken because of Alice – the family has had to become thick-skinned - but her future is positive: she will be to be semi-independent and able to cook, clean and look after herself, like many DS people these days. Not only that, but she has become a social influencer! She adores 'Strictly come dancing' and because of her there has been Makaton signing on the show, making it more inclusive.

To finish, Amanda showed us a new take on a familiar poster:

KEEP CALM

IT'S ONLY AN EXTRA CHROMOSOME

And she left us a very personal statement: "I wouldn't change my daughter for the world, but I would change the world for my daughter".

Not only had we learned a lot, we were all moved by this month's speaker. J Weeks

We are extremely optimistic that we will be meeting on June 1<sup>st</sup> for a local walk around Wincle – weather permitting! It will be a special WI meeting for us, as it will be the 1<sup>st</sup> time since September 2020 to actually meet as a group in person. Exciting times ahead! In July we are meeting outside

once again, for our garden meeting at Jenny Marsh's house. We are also using this meeting to raise money for the NHS Social Care & Frontline Workers' Day on July 5<sup>th</sup>, which is celebrating the 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday of the NHS. (The cake recipe for this special NHS celebration has been produced by a talented WI member, and the icing design looks amazingly colourful). We will use our raffle and a collection to raise funds for this great cause.



On June 8<sup>th</sup> the NFWI AGM will be rather different to the usual day, as they have organised some delegates to watch it live via Zoom, as well as a limited number of ladies actually attending. I have been lucky to be selected as one of these 'Zoom' delegates and will follow the day from the comfort of my home. A few ladies will be joining me throughout the day, especially to listen to the guest Speakers (Duchess of Wessex, Dame Cressida Dick and Baroness Brenda Hale). It should be a very interesting day.

Our WI members have been a great support to each other throughout this very difficult period during both lockdowns, and especially by joining the Zoom meetings each month if able to, and contributing to these evenings. We have managed to cope with the usual glitches, occasionally poor internet and in the process learnt a new IT skill- thank you to all of you!

If you would like any further information about our WI, please contact either myself on 01260 227209 or Judith Bayley on 01260 253129

Suzanne Henshall