

CFWI NEWS

Inspiring Women
for over 100 years

October 2026



Welcome to CFWI News, bringing you this month's events, Chair's update and stories from WIs across Cambridge.

Contact and support



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🌐 [CFWI website](http://cfwi.org.uk)

🌐 [Events on ticketsource](http://ticketsource)

🌐 [Enter the CFWI lottery](http://cfwi.org.uk/lottery)

Office open Monday
and Thursday 10am-
1pm and 1.30pm-3pm.
Tuesday contactable
by email only. *Please
call before visiting.*

Chair's Chat with Elaine Bailey



What a wonderful summer we have had. Its time now to enjoy the events CFWI have planned the next few months.
<https://cambridge.thewi.org.uk/events>

We are revamping the newsletter and I hope you enjoy the changes. We are introducing a new feature when we highlight a WI each month. The spotlight this month is Hardwick WI.

On Saturday 20th March we are having a Mad Hatters Tea Party. We would like WI's and individual members to get involved with an Auction. Could your WI put together a hamper that we could auction? Do you know someone who has a business that would donate? i.e. a meal, or treatment etc. Please email ideas for hampers and donations to me, via the office.

I know WI members are great at volunteering. We are looking for one or two people to tidy and replant the pots outside Girton HQ. Expenses will be covered.

Sadly, I must announce that our bookkeeper, Jules McGuire is retiring. Jules has done a fantastic job at keeping us at Federation on task. She will be greatly missed by the Board and finance committee.

Today, I have been to Audley End to celebrate 111 years on WI Day, along with many members of Cambridge Federation. I felt we covered the WI Mission statement of Connecting Women, meeting members from Essex, Hertfordshire, and Suffolk West Federations. I felt proud to be a WI member of such an amazing organisation.

Elaine x

☎ CFWI Helpline for October

Valerie Ridgman -1

Safeguarding Officer

Lesley Challands -

cfwisafeguarding@gmail.com

Independent Financial Examiners

Anne Bullman -

Ann Fletcher -

Val Neather -

Valerie Ridgman -

What's New...

WANTED PART-TIME BOOKKEEPER

Cambridge Federation of Women's Institutes is looking for a part-time bookkeeper to work at our office in Girton, Cambridge, for about 20 hours a month or 4 hours a week if that is more convenient.

The volume of work does vary across the year with the busiest time likely to be in the run up to the year-end (December) and the presentation of the accounts, so hours could be adjusted according to workload.

The office is open Mondays and Thursdays but hybrid working would be considered. It is a requirement of the role that the bookkeeper prepares a financial report ahead of each monthly board meeting and attend the meeting of the Board, if required. Also, to attend the Finance Advisory Panel which is every two months.

Experience of payroll is essential. Knowledge of Sage is desirable.

Hourly rate for the position will be dependent on the breadth of experience and knowledge.

Please contact WI office on 01223 234872 or email office@cfwi.co.uk for more details and the job description.

The CFWI 2026 Recipe Book is still available

If you would like to purchase one or more copies, please email the office (office@cfwi.co.uk) so that we can reserve one for you.

Each book costs just £7 and features recipes from Combined Activities lunches and special events held over the past three years.



We need a vacuum cleaner for Girton as our current one has come to the end of its life! If you have a spare to donate, we would be very grateful.



Shabby Chic Christmas Wreath Workshop

Saturday 5 December
2026

10am – 4pm
CFWI Office



In the morning we will make a fabric wreath and in the afternoon a wreath card.

Tea and coffee will be provided, along with soup and a roll for lunch.

Get creative and enjoy a lovely festive day with friends!



Join us for a Morning of Festivities

Brunch, Entertainment & Christmas Singing

Monday 14 December

10am – 1pm
Oakington Pavilion



Come along and enjoy a festive morning with a delicious brunch, entertainment and plenty of Christmas singing!

Booking CFWI Events

Please book via



Or www.ticketsource.com/cambridge-federation-wi
TicketSource Telephone Box Office Service – by calling 0333 666 3356
Or
By Post - Cash or cheque sent to the CFWI Office with written contact details.

Latest News

WI Day

The WI celebrated its 111th birthday last week and members of CFWI enjoyed a wonderful day at Audley End organised by Essex WI.



Holkham Hall on Wednesday 9 December 2026 – Holkham Hall by Candlelight. Perhaps one of Norfolk's most popular Christmas events, join us for Christmas at Holkham Hall for an unforgettable festive experience. **We still have a few places available.**

Save the Date

Jigsaw Challenge on Monday 22 February 2027 – once again being held at Oakington Pavilion. Teams of four with every team having the same 500-piece jigsaw which will be followed by delicious home-made soups and muffins.



Mad Hatter's Tea Party on Saturday 20 March 2027 - a delicious afternoon tea with lots of Mad Hatter twists. This is being held at Landbeach Village Hall at 3pm. Think about your outfit – come as the Queen of Hearts or the Cheshire Cat...!! This is an opportunity to bring family and friends.

Ceilidh on Friday 9 April 2027. Following the success of the event earlier this year, we have booked the same band and caller and are holding it in the bigger venue of Great Shelford Memorial Hall. There will be a ploughman's supper to keep you dancing – bring your own drinks and this is another opportunity to bring family and friends.

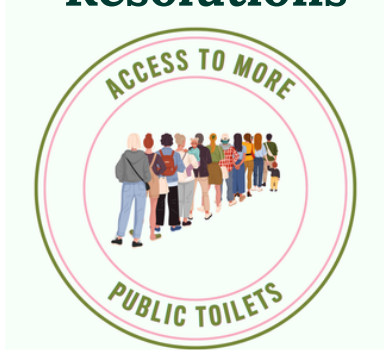


Swishing on Saturday 8 May 2027. Start saving your unwanted clothes, shoes, hats, bags and costume jewellery – we will also have a 'designer' rail.

Jesus Christ Superstar at Milton Keynes Theatre on Thursday 29 July 2027. The record-breaking West End production of Jesus Christ Superstar, starring Sam Ryder in the iconic role of Jesus is now coming to Milton Keynes Theatre for one week only and we have tickets.

Public Affairs

Support for this year's Resolutions



This year we had 2 resolutions, now campaigns – Access to Public Toilets and Women's Homelessness. The support notes for the Public Toilet Campaign are now available on My WI and we will be looking at ways that we can make a difference in Cambridge over the next few months.

We have already started work on the second campaign engaging with 2 charities that support women's homelessness – The Haven and Winter Comfort. Both organisations actively support women offering support, counselling and safe spaces for vulnerable individuals. Leading up to Christmas, we would like to launch our own campaign supporting both of these charities by providing much needed items.

We will be emailing out all the details very shortly but to get you started we will be collecting gloves, hats, scarves and socks (home crafted especially welcome) and full-size toiletries such as toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner or face cream/moisturiser.

Thank you for your support once again.



'Clean Rivers for People and Wildlife'

As a Federation we continue to actively support the 'Clean Rivers for People and Wildlife' Resolution, and we are delighted that one of our WI's has taken a lead in this. East Chesterton WI has previously led walks for us examining water issues and looking at water ecology but more recently they presented Maria Cleminson, the Mayor of Cambridge with a thank you card to the city council for recognising the rights of the River Cam (Shown in the picture) They are also in the process of presenting all the city councillors with cards.

Cambridge Council is leading on this, being one of the few English Councils that have recognised the local river's rights.



WI Members have asked what does recognising the rights of the River Cam mean? Well, as Cambridge is expanding rapidly, the incredibly important local chalk streams frequently dry out due to over abstraction and Cambridgeshire is one of the driest areas in the country so the River Cam is of upmost importance to us.



Hardwick WI

Inspiring Women, Enriching Lives



Background

- Hardwick WI was formed in 1958 and has been an active part of the local community ever since.
- We meet every third Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.
- We currently have 44 members, including 12 committee members. Each committee member has their own specific role, helping to make sure the WI runs smoothly and that members have plenty of opportunities to get involved.



Meetings

- Our meetings have a varied programme, with something different to enjoy throughout the year. We have speakers, activities and opportunities to learn, socialise and have fun together.
- Members can sign up for **CFWI and in-house events** at each meeting. This means members can share lifts and go with someone to the event.
- We also have a **raffle** at our meetings, which adds a little extra fun to the evening.

Examples of our meetings include:

- Tai Chi
- Mad Hatter's Tea Party
- Taiko Drumming
- It's Hell on Wheels – Life as a Driving Instructor



Groups

There are lots of ways to get involved outside our monthly meetings. Our groups and activities include:

- **Dining Out and Coffee Club** – opportunities to enjoy good food, coffee and company.
- **Walking Group** – regular walks and a chance to enjoy the local area together.
- **Good Read** – a book group where members can share their thoughts and enjoy discussing books.
- **Theatre and cinema visits** – trips to see performances and films together.
- **Garden visits** – opportunities to visit and enjoy interesting gardens.
- **Cambridge college visits** – exploring some of the historic and beautiful colleges in Cambridge.

We aim to vary the timing of our activities to accommodate those who are working in the week.



Walking Group



Dining Out and Coffee Club



Good Read



Theatre and cinema visits



Garden visits



Cambridge college visits



Community

Being part of the wider community is an important part of Hardwick WI. Over the years, members have taken part in a range of community activities and fundraising events, including:

- **Poppy making** to support local remembrance activities.
- Taking part in the **Christmas Tree Festival**.
- Organising an **afternoon tea fundraiser** for Cancer Research.
- Joining with **local WIs for group meetings**, giving members the opportunity to meet and socialise with other WI members.



Poppy making



Afternoon tea fundraiser

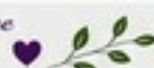


Christmas Tree Festival

We are proud to support our community and make a positive difference together.



Hardwick WI is a friendly, active group, offering members the chance to meet new people, try new activities, support the community and enjoy time together.





Out & About information

We love receiving your Out & About reports, and welcome reports from all WI's.

For the December/January newsletter, please remember to keep your report to 100 words or less and include a photo if possible.

Please send your September/October report to office@cfwi.co.uk by Monday 2 November.

Balsham WI

For our July meeting, our president Bridget Durham kindly welcomed us into her lovely garden and we enjoyed a relaxed evening of wonderful food, drink and plenty of chat amongst members.



It was the perfect setting and weather and a chance for members to catch up and socialise before we pause for our summer break. Although we had no official meeting in August, Balsham WI members still got together over the summer for some informal events. We visited a lovely open garden in Hildersham, enjoyed an al-fresco social event making and eating our own pizzas, and our Walking Sub-group braved a stormy evening for what ended up being a very wet walk! We were back in the Pavilion for our September meeting, joined by some members from Linton WI, and after a rousing chorus of 'Jerusalem', we welcomed our speaker, Lindsay Barrell.

Lindsay is a former WI president, a British Sign Language tutor and a Wellbeing tutor for the WI. However, tonight she had come to visit us dressed as her alter-ego, a burlesque performer, Ms Cherry Bomb! She even got us up to 'shimmy-along', which was great fun! It just goes to show there's more to WI than 'Jam and Jerusalem'.

Sarah Evans

Barton WI

Dr Rachel Meller wanted to discover how about 20,000 Jews (including members of her own family) had managed to escape from Nazi-occupied Europe to the comparative safety of cosmopolitan Shanghai.

There were a few written records to help her but a wooden box with a sunflower clasp, which she inherited when her mother's sister died, gave her research a great boost.

The box contained family photographs, souvenirs, travel documents and even examples of the ID cards German and Austrian Jews had to carry everywhere.

Rachel began to write the book, published in 2023, on which her talk is based. We found it a fascinating story.

Ann Killen

Out & About



Chrishall WI

June is our birthday month and we arranged a trip to Saffron Walden Museum for a private evening tour. It was very interesting especially as a lot of the exhibits have been found locally. We returned to a member's house for tea, coffee and cake and sat in her garden watching a beautiful sunset.



In July the son of one of our members came and gave us a wine tasting session. It was a very informative talk and we enjoyed discussing the different tastes of the samples he brought along. We don't have a WI meeting in August, so we had a bring and share lunch with husbands and partners in a member's garden. Again, we had lovely weather.

Jane Gravett

Melbourn WI

It was a very enjoyable evening having Susan from Mill House Millinery showing us some of the hats and fascinators she had made, and we were allowed to try them on. Susan had always loved dressing up and hats had a certain fascination for her. After spending most of her working career as an IT auditor, she by chance visited the V&A museum where there was a hat making exhibition and that changed her life.

After studying under many well-known milliners, Helen opened her own business in Saffron Walden, opening her own school and traveling extensively, showing some of the hats and the history of them. Years ago, hats were worn straight on heads; now, always put on on a slant, as we always see at the high society weddings. It was surprising to learn how some of her creations had been made. One, with ping pong balls covered with ribbon and decorated with the same coloured ribbon; another started life as an empty M&S square coleslaw box. She then showed us how to make a cone flower arrangement for a fascinator she had made, and we all had a go making one. It is so easy when you know how!! But even I managed to make one, and I am 'all thumbs' usually.

A very happy evening.

After the business part of our August meeting Fiona Rose talked about the life and work of William Morris. He was born into a wealthy family in 1834 at Walthamstow, and went to the local school which he didn't enjoy. He eventually went to Oxford, and firstly studied politics then design. Then in 1859 he met and married Jane Burdon and started married life in The Red House Upton (we had an enjoyable visit there some years ago).

Later in life Morris turned to painting and wallpaper design which proved very popular. As his business expanded he sold The Red House and moved back to London where some of his commissions included St James's Palace and dining rooms for the extremely wealthy. Sadly, he died at the early age of 62 but so many of his designs still can be seen on wallpaper and floor coverings.

Kath Thompson



Histon & Impington WI

We enjoyed an inspiring tale of how Tracy Mackness, daughter of market traders, turned her life around to be the success she is today. Tracy spent much of young life helping her parents on their market stall. All went well until she went astray in her teens, partied hard, got into bad company and ended up in prison.

Tracy decided to make use of her time. In all she attended 52 courses and ended up with qualifications as a gym instructor. When moved to an Open Prison she worked on the prison farm caring for the pigs, and learnt sausage making with a local butcher. On release from prison she put all she had learned to good use and with a little luck, some bluffing and a lot of hard work started her own business as a pig farmer. She now owns the prize winning Giggly Pig Company and sells her wares at horticultural shows etc. She also has a regular stand at Saffron Walden market. Tracy was an excellent speaker who gave her talk without benefit of notes. She showed that with determination and hard work one can overcome adversity and make a success of life.

Lindsey Barrell / Aka Ms Cherry Bomb entertained us at our August meeting. Ms Cherry Bomb arrived in full Burlesque regalia causing a gasp from the audience. She told her life story from being a young mum whose main role was providing a taxi service for her family to the present day WI member and Burlesque performer. Her story was quite touching in parts when she told how after moving she was unable to find friends (luckily her joining the WI changed this) to her glorious metamorphosis as a Burlesque performer. Her talk was hilarious and we all related to certain parts of it especially her definition of a crafter. A highly recommended speaker.

Mary Law



Hardwick WI

We enjoyed a summer walk along the river at Houghton Mill near St Ives in July finishing with drinks and cakes at the National Trust cafe!

Naomi Roy

Stapleford WI

Thanks to the long, dry summer, our annual barbecue was once again blessed with glorious weather. Nearly 40 members and guests gathered for a wonderfully sociable afternoon, with delicious salads and desserts provided by members, good conversation and, of course, the essential barbecue skills of Tony Smith and Tony Hore.

Looking back over our recent meetings, we have also enjoyed some very good speakers, whom we can recommend. In July, Alison Giles from the Whipple Museum gave us an intriguing insight into women scientists and their achievements, providing plenty of food for thought.

More recently, Steve Richards entertained us with an absorbing account of his forty year career in radio broadcasting with. The BBC, illustrating his talk with slides and playing extracts from various radio shows.

Joyce Dobson

Out & About



The Mordens WI

In June a group of ladies from The Mordens WI visited 'The Longest Yarn' exhibition at Peterborough Cathedral.

The exhibition displayed scenes from WW2 Britain all completed in knitting and crochet. Everyone enjoyed the day out.

Chris Boardman



Duxford WI



In July Duxford heard all about Chris Atkin's adventure cycling across Southern Spain. After flying to Valencia and purchasing a 7-gear B'Twin bike for the princely sum of 200 euros, Chris set off sight-seeing with two pannier bags containing his possessions and forward bookings for Air B&Bs.

Chris gave a bit of history or an item of interest for each of the many places he visited and described a couple of near disasters. His book about this journey and several others were available to purchase. It was a very interesting and amusing talk, which attracted a few of Duxford's cycle enthusiasts as guests.

August is traditionally a month where Duxford WI do something social as their 12th meeting of the year and this year we were very low key, meeting up for coffee and cake at the delightful Café Four in the centre of our village. Twelve of us enjoyed a lovely afternoon, sitting outside on the decking area and chatting – so much so that we completely forgot to take photos to record the event. Typical!

Lesley Hale

Swavesey WI

In June due to wet weather we had to cancel our Garden Party and instead enjoyed an evening of flower arranging. Members proved very creative. Our member Rosie baked a huge batch of scones which we enjoyed with jam, cream and Pimms!

On this occasion we launched our fund-raising for this year for the Arthur Rank Hospice. We look forward to a series of events to raise funds for this very worthwhile cause throughout the coming year.

In July we welcomed local author Sarah Harrison who delivered a very amusing talk titled "Laughing at Ourselves" finding humour in everyday stories and experiences.

At our August meeting we had a musical evening, brought to us by Kirsty Body of "Harmonia Music". Kirsty taught us how to play Ocarinas. Much fun was had by all. An ocarina is an ancient wind instrument.

Deirdre Burgess



Just for fun



Autumn Quiz

1. What season comes after summer?
2. Which tree produces acorns?
3. What colour can autumn leaves turn?
4. What fruit is carved for Halloween?
5. What is the autumn equinox?
6. Which animal stores nuts for winter?
7. Name a popular warm autumn drink.
8. Which bird migrates to Africa for winter?
9. Which months are autumn in the UK?
10. What is the Harvest Moon?

Find the answers on the back page.



Recipe For Preserving Children

I came across this book, *More Favourite Recipes*, when I was sorting files as Catering Coordinator. It was the second printed book following Federation's Golden Jubilee. The County Chairman at the time was Audrey King, who some of you will remember. The Federation at the time was based at 8 St Pauls Road, Cambridge.

Elaine Bailey

Here is an amusing recipe to start this nostalgic series:

Recipe For Preserving Children

1 grass grown field
1 brook
1 half dozen children (or more)
Pebbles
Several dogs and puppies (if available)
Into field, pour children and dogs, allowing to mix well.
Pour brook over pebbles till slightly frothy.
When children are nicely brown, cool in a warm bath!
When dry, serve with milk and fresh baked gingerbread.



Mrs B.L Newnham Papworth Everard WI

October Gardening Tips

-  Clear fallen leaves from lawns.
-  Plant spring bulbs like tulips and daffodils.
-  Prune dead or damaged growth.
-  Protect tender plants from frost.
-  Plant trees and shrubs while the soil is still warm.
-  Leave some seed heads for birds.
-  Reduce watering as temperatures drop.



A winning ticket is potentially a week away, we thank you for your continued support and if you haven't signed up yet, join the fun by visiting our page: [CFWI lottery](#).

A new look for our newsletter

You may have spotted that this edition of the newsletter looks a little different to previous ones. If you're wondering what's changed and why, take a look at the article below.

It was written by Sophie, daughter of our Federation Secretary, Helen Comiskey. Sophie works in Communications at the Wellcome Sanger Institute and spent two volunteering days helping us rethink the newsletter, explore a new tool and help create this new format. She'll be sharing this article within the Sanger Institute.

Many thanks to Helen and Sophie for taking the time to do this.

Elaine x

My mum has worked as the Cambridge Federation Secretary for nearly three decades. I never took a moment to consider, or even ask, what she was up to whilst I was at school. When the school bag went down, the cartoons went on!

The older I got, the more I understood about what my mum actually did in her job. Over the years, she's worked with countless Chairs and volunteers, and keeps the Federation's 45 Women's Institutes and more than 1,500 members connected. Alongside that, she keeps the office running - coordinating everything from IT and electrical issues to aiding committee meetings and making sure the kitchen is well-stocked. She does it all.



The CFWI celebrated its 100th birthday in 2019. Its purpose is to bring women together across Cambridge and its villages. Part of Mum's work involves sharing activities and events, and connecting back to the national Women's Institute. At its heart, the WI is about community, friendship and plenty of crafts, coffee and cake!

The end of Publisher

My mum has produced the CFWI newsletter ever since she joined, using the trusty Microsoft Publisher to put it together each month.

Publisher was revolutionary when it launched in the early 1990s. It held its own while tools like Adobe and Canva have become mainstream. But the good people at Microsoft have decided it's now time to pull the Publisher plug.

When Publisher started life, I had just been born. It wouldn't be long before I was renting videos, listening to tapes and proudly getting my first DVD. I enviously watched people around me playing Snake on the latest Nokia, tapping away on a Blackberry, or playing Minesweeper on MSN Messenger. MP3 players. Digital cameras. MP4 players. Slimline technology. It was all new, and it was constantly changing.

Then came smartphones, streaming, cloud computing and social media. Now we have AI tools that can write, design, create images and help us work in ways we couldn't have imagined when Publisher first appeared. It had a good run.

But it left my mum in a bit of a pickle. She had relied on it for so many years and had never needed to look for an alternative. So, I offered to help the CFWI recreate its newsletter - not just thinking about how it looked or how it was created, but stepping back and considering what it was actually there to do.

Over our two days together, we reflected on its purpose: to share information and connect its community. We considered who the audience was and whether a newsletter was still the most effective way of reaching them.

We then spent the two days getting to grips with the basics of Canva, creating a new template and using it to prepare the first edition.

Designing for a real community

One of the things I really enjoyed thinking about was how a newsletter can work for such a broad community.

In a world where so much communication happens online, newsletters can feel a little old school. But that's actually part of their strength here. The CFWI newsletter can be printed and shared with members who don't have a computer or internet access, while also being available as a PDF for those who prefer to read it online.

The experience was a useful reminder that good communication isn't necessarily about using the newest or fanciest tool. It's about understanding your audience, knowing what they need and making information easy to find, understand and use.

The best communication tool is the one that actually works for the people you're trying to reach.

A little closer to home

I wanted to share a glimpse into my volunteering leave, if only to remind colleagues that at Sanger, we're given two days each year to take time away from work and volunteer.

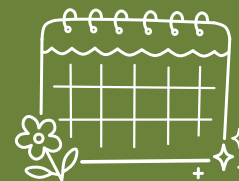
It can be an opportunity to step outside our comfort zones, help those around us, try something completely new, or take the skills we've built at work and use them somewhere they can make a difference. There's no one way to volunteer, and that's what makes the opportunity so valuable.

My two days were particularly special because I spent it helping my mum in her role, and some of the people who volunteer their time to keep things running smoothly alongside her.

Two days, one new Canva template and one finished newsletter later, the CFWI has a fresh new way to share its news, events and stories.



Dates for your diary



When	Event	Where	Closing date
October			
7	Coffee Morning with Games 10.30-12pm	CFWI Office	Contact Office
8	Knit & Stitch Show	Alexandra Palace	Closed
10	Craft with Us for Mental Health Day 10-1pm	CFWI Office	5 October
15	Schiaparelli Art Exhibition	V&A Museum	Closed
17	Speakers Showcase 10-4pm	Oakington Pavillion	28 September
27	Autumn Lunch 12.15 for 12.30pm	CFWI Office	8 October
28	Christmas Gnome Placemat 10-4pm	CFWI Office	7 October
November			
6	Italian Banquet 7pm	CFWI Office	19 October
11	Coffee Morning with Bingo 10.30-12pm	CFWI Office	1 November
19	Tour of Girton College 10.15am	Girton College	5 October
December			
5	Shabby Chic Christmas Wreath 10.00-4pm	CFWI Office	5 November
9	Holkham by Candlelight	Holkham Hall, Norfolk	12 October
14	Christmas Brunch	Oakington Pavillion	1 December
January			
12	Coffee Morning with Games	CFWI Office	TBC
14	Cinderella Ballet	Sadlers Wells Theatre	Closed

Events shown in bold are new on TicketSource this month. For more details about these and other upcoming activities please visit our events page: [View CFWI events here.](#)

Craft, Coffee and Chat

Join us for Craft, Coffee and Chat in the WI Office 11am-3pm on Tuesday 13 and Thursday 22 October. A £1.00 donation is appreciated to help cover the cost of tea, coffee and cake.



200 Club Winners

Congratulations to our August and September winners
Alison White, Heydon and Great Chishill WI
Linda Phillips, Burwell WI

Quiz answers: Autumn; Oak; Red, orange, yellow, or brown; Pumpkin; The day when day and night are approximately equal in length; Squirrel; Hot chocolate; Swallow; September, October, and November; The full moon that occurs closest to the autumn equinox.