

SCOTTISH WOMEN'S INSTITUTES MEMBERS' MAGAZINE – SPRING 2023

+++

Scottish Women's Institutes

Women Together magazine is produced for Scottish Women's Institutes members by the SWI team.

+++

Scotland's new groups

IT'S GREAT TO SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS RISING ACROSS THE COUNTRY

A whole host of new groups are springing up across Scotland as the SWI continues its post-Covid recovery.

We are seeing great demand for the groups in towns, cities and more rural settings

as women in Scotland begin to venture out in search of friendship and opportunities for lifelong learning.

At the end of January around 70 women met in Inverness' Beaufort Hotel to discuss what they wanted from their group.

SWI members Liz Benzie and Sheila Kerr organised a great get-together, with SWI's CEO Diane Cooper and Head of Communications & Engagement, Pauline Burnett, joining to explain the importance of the new groups to the organisation. It was great to see ladies from the Ross-shire & Sutherland Federation on hand to offer their insight and help facilitate the group discussions.

As the women ranged from twenties to eighties, plans were soon made to have both afternoon and evening groups. These look set to offer a great deal of fun for all involved as everything from white water rafting to origami are on the list of possible future activities!

Meanwhile, funding has enabled us to spotlight Perth & Kinross as a key area of growth for 2023.

After securing just under £5,000 from The Rural & Island Communities Ideas into Action fund, P&K's Evelyn Scobie and Edith Christie – the Federation's Past and current Presidents – have leapt into action with plans for three new groups in the area. These will be located in Scone, where there has been much interest following a charity day, Pitlochry, and Kinross.

Plans for the Kinross group are being put in place by Joyce Petrie and Jessica Munro, with a Prosecco launch scheduled for the end of February. We wish all involved well and thank them for their enthusiasm and hard work!

Just up the coast in Golspie another group is planned, this time with ideas to meet in a pub for a knit and natter. This relaxed approach definitely works for some prospective members.

On Mull Sheelagh Still is creating a new group for women in the Salen and Dervaig area and is seeing great interest on the island.

All power to you, Sheelagh, and to everyone else who is seeing member numbers rise throughout the country!

Ashmita Bhatteai, the SWI's new Membership Development Officer, has been hard at work sending out new member packs.

+++

Support for members

A great social media presence can be hugely beneficial in spreading the word about groups old and new. Information sessions and workshops for all members promoting events can be found on our YouTube channel Scottish Women's Institutes TV. You could learn how to use online creative platform Canva to create promotional leaflets and animated

Facebook posts, use Facebook to promote your group's activities, and create far-reaching events using Eventbrite for free.

+++

National Conference tickets now available

Have you signed up for the SWI National Conference yet? The two-day event takes place at Perth Concert Hall from 15th-16th September and it promises to be an exciting and inspirational programme of expert speakers, workshops and demonstrations.

There will be many opportunities to gain knowledge, hear from experts, see examples of craft and cookery, and network with women from across Scotland. Federations will also exhibit members' work, highlighting the talent in Scotland's communities.

As this conference is the jewel in the SWI crown this year, the SWI Summer School will take place in 2024 and an exciting programme of classes is being developed!

Members can snap up National Conference early bird tickets from just £30 until February 15th.

+++

THE ROAD TO THE SHOW 2023

The RHS lures crafters with rainbows

Last year's Overall Winner was Lou Washington, of Coldstream SWI.

The SWI is delighted to be hosting the Handcrafts Pavilion at this year's Royal Highland Show for what's set to be a celebration of crafts. The competition, which runs from 22nd- 25th June, is open to all crafters and SWI members did particularly well last year.

This year's theme is 'rainbows' and all entries should be completed online. The show organisers must receive these written entries between 24th February and 21st May. The crafted items can then be sent from 30th May (note that the last date for hand delivery is 17th June).

It's well worth applying as the Overall Winner scoops the Championship Masterclass Prize –an award of up to £500 for a workshop or course to be selected by the winner. The Reserve Championship prize of £250 is not to be sniffed at either!

For ticket details go to www.royalhighlandshow.org

+++

New award celebrates outstanding achievement

MARGARET WHITEFORD REMEMBERED IN EXCITING NEW WAY FOR MEMBERS

Margaret was a well-loved member of Midlothian Federation.

As an employee and then a member of the SWI, Margaret Whiteford was devoted to the organisation. To mark her passing, Margaret's family have donated an award in her memory. This special recognition will go to the member who is judged to have done the most for the SWI. Perhaps you or someone you know has done amazing work at Institute, Federation or National level and you would like to see their efforts recognised. If so, we would love to hear from you! Margaret Whiteford was a much-loved member of the SWRI. As an employee she was a popular and helpful Handcrafts & Homeskills Secretary from the early '90s until her retirement when she joined Ratho Institute in Midlothian. There, Margaret entered competitions and enjoyed patchwork, embroidery and machine sewing, and encouraged members to take part in all events. She was hugely enthusiastic about all things SWI, had many friends throughout Scotland, and her knowledge of SWI was extensive and proved very useful in her office bearer roles.

HOW TO NOMINATE A MEMBER

Ask your Federation Secretary to assist you with a nomination form. Please send completed forms to Margaret Whiteford Trophy, 42 Heriot Row, Edinburgh EH3 6ES, or email the required information to hello@theswi.org.uk by May 30th and mark your email 'Margaret Whiteford Trophy'.

+++

Remembering

DR JANE PLUMB

A tribute by Janette Smith, immediate past Chairman of Lanarkshire Federation In June 2017, Helen Telford of Jackton

SWI invited Jane to go with her to help set up the Handcrafts Pavilion at the Royal Highland Show. Jane was an expert craftswoman and was soon asked to join the Royal Highland Show Handcrafts Committee. Jane thoroughly enjoyed being on this committee. In September 2018 the Federation Secretary's job came up and soon Jane volunteered to take on the role as she was passionate about SWI continuing. She quickly learned the job and kept the office bearers, committee members and Institutes up to date with all the information coming from headquarters in spite of not always feeling at her best. She will be greatly missed by Lanarkshire Federation.

Anne Williams, of SWI Jackton, wrote...

Dr Jane Plumb joined SWI Jackton 10 years ago after a career as a cancer research scientist. In her retirement she developed her many awesome traditional crafting skills and so enjoyed competing at all levels, especially if she won! Her enthusiasm for all SWI events knew no bounds and she served as Treasurer of Jackton for seven years from 2015. We were all proud that she undertook the role of Secretary of Lanarkshire Federation. In her last week, Jane performed surgery on Fergus so that he would look his best for all his future SWI engagements. We have lost a popular and valued member! Anne Kerr, National President, wrote... Jane was a valued member of the Royal Highland Show Handcrafts Championship team since 2017 and her knowledge of crafts and expertise in making them led her to win several prizes at the Championship. She had a talent for display and will be greatly missed by us all.

BETTY MCFARLANE, INVERKIP

SWI Members of Inverkip Institute were saddened to learn of the death of Elizabeth (Betty) McFarlane. Betty had been a member of Inverkip for more than 30 years and was Competition Secretary for 23 years as well as being Handiwives Secretary. She also regularly attended Federation meetings representing her Institute. She was still a member last year when failing health meant she had to go into a nursing home. Betty will be remembered for her love of gardening and country life as well as for her lovely smile.

+++

Evelyn Baxter events near you

Evelyn Baxter was very active in the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes, serving in many offices at all levels. Her great interest in traditional crafts and their preservation resulted in a legacy which still endures today in the form of the Evelyn Baxter Scholarship. At Miss Baxter's request, two scholars are selected each year to be expertly taught a different craft each time, with a view to them then passing on their knowledge and skill to members across Scotland. This year's scholars are Kirsty Robb and Kay Smith and they are travelling the country to teach members how to make Temari balls.

What are they, you ask? Originally made from herbs and leather, noblewomen of Japan developed theirs from silk and kimono scraps, and in modern day Japan mothers make them for their children as part of New Year's celebrations. They are a symbol of great loyalty or a valued friendship and are also a symbol of young femininity. It is also customary to give a Temari-patterned kimono to a bride as a good-luck charm. Federations around the country are arranging training for members so please contact your Federation Secretary for info.

Federation	Dates	Tutor
Perth & Kinross	10 th -11 th Feb	Kay Smith
Roxburghshire	4 th -5 th March	Kirsty Robb
SC&WP	18 th -19 th May	Kay Smith
Fife	22 nd -23 rd May	Kay Smith
Selkirkshire	27 th -28 th May	Kirsty Robb
Moray & Nairn	9 th -10 th Sept	Kay Smith
Kincardineshire	30 th Sept-1 st Oct	Kay Smith
Ayrshire	6 th -7 th Oct	Kirsty Robb
Renfrewshire	9 th -10 th Oct	Kay Smith
Stewartry of Kircudbright	14 th -15 th Oct	Kirsty Robb
Berwickshire	21 st -22 nd Oct	Kirsty Robb
Dunbartonshire	21 st -22 nd Oct	Kay Smith
Argyll (Session 1)	23 rd -24 th Sept	Kay Smith
Argyll (Session 2)	25 rd -26 th Sept	Kay Smith

+++

An exciting new year lies before us all

NATIONAL PRESIDENT

AS ANNE'S TERM AS PRESIDENT COMES TO A CLOSE IN MAY, SHE MAKES THE MOST OF HER TIME...

Happy New Year! It already seems a distant memory as events start up again. It looks as though 2023 will be a bumper year of events and activities as we continue our post-Covid recovery.

I have been honoured to attend several Institute and Federation celebrations recently. Hawksland SWI celebrated its 90th anniversary with a delicious lunch and an interesting and entertaining history of the Institute given by Past President, Joyce Trainer.

Lanarkshire Federation also celebrated its centenary in November with a very well attended lunch. There, Lesley McIlhagger, a blue badge tour guide no less, gave a factual and entertaining talk on the history of "the Rural".

I also joined the ladies of Auldhouse SWI for their 90th anniversary lunch which was another very happy occasion. In November, I had the pleasure of presenting prizes at Selkirkshire Federation's Show – the event was a great success with many beautiful craft and homeskills items on display. What talented members we have throughout Scotland!

Mary and I were invited to attend a Parliamentary reception to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Royal Society for the Support of Women in Scotland. We heard of the illustrious history of RSSWS which was previously the The Royal Society for the Relief of Indigent Gentlewomen of Scotland, founded in 1847 to support women who struggle to make ends meet in a wide range of unforeseen circumstances.

The charity welcomes applications for aid at www.igf.org I was invited to Gilmourton SWI's most enjoyable birthday celebration to present loyalty certificates to three former Institute Presidents, one of whom had been a member for 60 years – quite a stint! Dalrymple SWI's lunch to celebrate 100 years was my first event of 2023 and was a lovely afternoon enjoyed by all. It made me consider that whatever the celebration and wherever the venue, there is always a warm welcome, friendship and delicious food! Thank you all for your kind hospitality.

Of course, not all members choose to meet up in person and I'm delighted to say that our Skill Share Sessions are continuing to attract great interest. Some have more than 350 people, many of whom are non-members, registering for them.

The macaron demonstration by Rachel Hanretty – also known as Mademoiselle Macaron – was very popular with many members posting their attempts on Facebook, which was great to see. Rachel took her passion for making macarons from her home kitchen to a hugely successful enterprise sending the sweet treats across the UK and beyond. The Hebridean Baker event was fabulous, too. His lemon curd cocktail will be a great addition for recipe hoarders everywhere!

Along with the upcoming National sporting events, I am looking forward to ‘meeting’ Great British Bake Off’s Peter Sawkins at the online event at the end of May – there’s a lot to whet our whistle!

~ Anne Kerr, National President

+++

MARCH 2ND-4TH

The Creative Craft Show and Scottish Quilting Show

PUBLIC EVENT | SECC, Glasgow

Come and join the fun at the best show in town. Scottish members will be demonstrating crafting techniques on each day and there are textile tutors, workshops and exhibitions throughout the show to give you great inspiration!

You'll find us on stand ZE16 and tickets can be purchased at the link – use code ‘SPRING40’ for a 40% discount!

Upcoming events

MARCH 16TH

National Curling Bonspiel

COMPETITION - Forfar Indoor Sport Centre, Suttieside Rd, Forfar DD8 3NG

We're looking forward to a great day on the ice – spectators and supporters welcome to come along to watch the tense battles!

APRIL 24TH

National Stadium Bowling

COMPETITION - Auchinleck Indoor Bowling Club, Cumnock KA18 2JZ

Teams will battle it out on Auchinleck's green carpet to scoop the trophy. Spectators welcome on the day!

APRIL 29TH

2023 National Small Singing Groups & Choirs competition

COMPETITION - St Matthew’s Church, Tay Street, Perth PH1 5LQ

Perth & Kinross Federation is hosting what will be an uplifting event. Spectators are welcome.

MAY 13TH

SWI AGM 2023

GOVERNANCE - Online from 10.30am-noon

You are warmly invited to register to attend the Scottish Women's Institutes AGM on Saturday 13th May, from 10.30am-noon. This year's AGM will continue with the new format which so many enjoyed last year:

- Welcome
- Annual Review
- Guest Speaker
- Member Discussion Panel

As this year is the triennium Board and Committee members will also be announced.

Bake Off 's Peter is set to be a showstopper

MAY 30TH

CELEBRITY SHOWCASE: MEET BAKE OFF'S PETER SAWKINS

ONLINE | 7PM | Free for members, £10 for non members

We are delighted to present The Great British Bake Off winner, Peter Sawkins, author of Peter Bakes and the newly released Peter's Baking Party.

If you want an insight into what goes on behind the scenes at the Bake Off tent, have any baking questions, or are interested in how Peter is using his skills to inspire a new generation of chefs and bakers, this event is for you!

Peter is the youngest ever winner of the The Great British Bake Off. A passionate baker since childhood, he credits the show as one of the reasons he embarked on his culinary journey. He hopes to inspire new bakers to have endless fun creating unique and vibrant bakes that the whole family will enjoy for years to come.

His latest book, Peter's Baking Party, includes simple recipes for novice chefs and challenging bakes for adventurous cooks, plus step-by-step instructions to develop kitchen confidence.

JUNE 22ND-25TH

The Royal Highland Show

PUBLIC EVENT - Ingliston

Come and join us in the Handcrafts pavilion and enjoy a day out with the hottest ticket in town. SWI members will be demonstrating crafting techniques on each day! For more information and tickets visit www.royalhighlandshow.org

APRIL 15TH

National Quiz and Matter of Opinion

COMPETITION - Banchory Town Hall, Banchory AB31 5NA

Hosted by Kincardineshire Federation, the National quiz will be held in the morning, followed by the Matter of Opinion competition in the afternoon.

For both events we are looking for teams of up to four and the deadline for entries is Friday March 24th. Spectators are welcome.

AUGUST 7TH

Outdoor Bowling

COMPETITION - Moray Bowling Club, Elgin

This year's competition will be hosted by Moray and Nairn Federation and the deadline for entries is Monday, July 3rd.

AUGUST 21ST

National Golf competition

COMPETITION - Loudon Gowf Club, Newmilns Road, Galston KA4 8PA

Ayrshire Federation is hosting this year's hotly anticipated event and the deadline for entries is Monday, July 17th.

+++

Brilliant bakes on a budget

Cost-saving on cakes doesn't have to mean boring results!

Chocolate orange macarons

Cost: 15p per macaron | Makes 16

YOU WILL NEED

- 1x silicon macaron baking mat
- 1x piping nozzle
- 2x piping bags
- 1x spatula

INGREDIENTS

- 110g ground almonds 225g icing sugar
- 50g caster sugar 185g dark chocolate Food colouring
- 125g egg whites (approx. 4 eggs) 150ml cream
- 40g unsalted butter

METHOD

1. For the macaron shells
2. Sift and mix the icing sugar and ground almonds.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites. When they start to form soft peaks add in the caster sugar. Once the egg whites have stiffened completely (when you can tip it over and nothing moves), add gel or powdered food colouring. Whisk the colouring into the egg whites until it has blended completely.
4. Add the almond / icing sugar mix in two or three goes.
5. Mix the dry ingredients and the egg white mixture gently by hand.
6. Pour the mixture into a piping bag. When you're pouring the mixture in it should fall in a ribbon-like fashion.
7. Place the silicon mat onto a baking tray, then line with baking paper.
8. Pipe out macaron discs approximately 3cm in diameter.
9. Let the macarons set on the baking trays for approx. 30-60 minutes. You should be able to touch them and not have any mixture come off on your finger – be patient!
10. Remove the silicon mat and put the macaron shells into the oven at 160° for 12-16 minutes. Half way into cooking turn the baking tray around.

11. After taking them out of the oven, let them cool down.
12. Match the macarons up into pairs, prepare the filling, pipe into the shells and refrigerate. Take out of the fridge two hours before eating.

For the orange filling...

- 1x food mixer
- 1x mixing bowl
- 1x piping bag

INGREDIENTS

- 125g icing sugar
- 125g ground almonds
- Juice of half an orange
- Zest of a whole orange
- A few drops orange water (or essence)

METHOD

1. Mix the icing sugar and ground almonds in a mixer.
2. After one minute, pour in the juice of half an orange, the zest of a whole orange and a few drops of orange water (orange essence).
3. When the mixture appears to be well mixed and blended, put into a piping bag and pipe onto one side of a macaron pair.

+++

Carrot cake cup cakes

Cost: 12p per cup cake | Makes 12

INGREDIENTS

- 166g all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 3/4 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
- 120ml vegetable oil
- 200g light or dark brown sugar
- 2 large eggs (room temperature)
- 80g plain yogurt (room temperature)
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 200g peeled and grated carrots (about 3 large carrots)
- optional add-in: 150g chopped walnuts, pecans or raisins

ICING

- 224g full-fat block cream cheese (room temperature)
- 115g unsalted butter (softened to room temperature)
- 360g icing sugar

- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/8 tsp salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (177°C). Line a 12-cup muffin pan with cupcake liners.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg together in a large bowl. Set aside.
3. Whisk the oil, brown sugar, eggs, yoghurt, and vanilla extract together until combined, and then whisk in the carrots. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and fold or whisk together until completely combined. The batter will be slightly thick.
4. Pour/spoon the batter into the liners, filling only about 3/4 full to avoid spilling over the sides. Bake for 21–23 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. For around 30 mini cupcakes, bake for about 12–13 minutes, same oven temperature. Allow the cupcakes to cool completely before icing.
5. To make the icing use a large bowl and a hand-held or stand mixer fitted with a paddle or whisk attachment. Beat the cream cheese and butter together on high speed until smooth and creamy. Add icing sugar, vanilla extract and salt. Beat on low speed for 30 seconds and then switch to high speed and beat for 2 minutes. Cover and refrigerate the icing as the cupcakes finish cooling. Cold cream cheese icing holds its shape better.
6. Top with optional garnish if desired. Cover and store leftover cupcakes in the fridge for up to 5 days.

TOP TIPS

Plain cupcakes can be made one day in advance, covered, and stored at room temperature or in the fridge. Icing can also be made a day in advance, covered, and stored in the fridge. If the icing is thick after being in the fridge, beat it with a mixer for a minute to help loosen it up. Iced or un-iced cupcakes can be frozen for up to 2–3 months – just thaw them overnight in the fridge.

+++

Nutella choc chip cookies

Cost: 21p per serving | 12 cookies

INGREDIENTS

- 125g softened butter
- 110g soft light brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 230g self-raising flour
- 100g dark chocolate chips
- 6tsp Nutella

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4. Line two baking trays with baking paper.
2. Blitz the butter and sugar in a food processor or beat well by hand until light and fluffy. Add the egg to the mixture and blitz or beat until smooth, then fold in the flour. Stir in the chocolate chips.
3. Divide the dough into 12. Take a piece and flatten in your hand.
4. Put ½tsp Nutella in the centre, bring the sides up and pinch closed. Put on a baking tray and flatten slightly. Repeat with the remaining dough, leaving at least 5cm between each cookie.
5. Put in the freezer for 20 mins to help the cookies keep their shape. 6 Bake for 10-12 mins until just firm on top. Leave for 1-2 mins on the trays, then carefully transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

These can be stored in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

+++

Frugal chocolate cake

Cost: 20p per slice

INGREDIENTS

- 250g plain flour
- 50g cocoa powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 200g sugar
- 75g mixed, chopped nuts (optional)
- 150ml vegetable oil
- 120ml cold water or soy milk
- 120ml orange juice
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 tsp vinegar

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees, gas mark 5.
2. Sift dry ingredients into an 8 inch square or 9 inch round baking pan.
3. Mix liquids (except vinegar) and whisk into the dry ones.
4. When batter is smooth, add vinegar and stir quickly, until it is evenly distributed. Put it in the oven, don't let it stand around (that has something to do with the vinegar).
5. Bake for 25-30 minutes... or longer until done.

Baking masterclass - Did you see our Skill Share Session with Coinneach MacLeod aka The Hebridean Baker?

+++

SWI Strategy 2022-2025

Working together for our future

In 2022 the most extensive survey the SWI has carried out gained member's feedback. A draft strategic plan was approved by members and is now being acted upon. The Strategic Delivery Plan outlines the short, medium and long-term milestones required. The Edinburgh headquarters is now under offer and its sale looks likely within months. New groups have been established around the country and are thriving. A series of member-led how-to videos is being developed to aid members and attract new members.

Diane Cooper CEO, Scottish Women's Institutes

As we roll out the strategy which will secure a sustainable future for the SWI, let's take time to consider what success looks like and how it can be achieved...

Last year the Board developed a new Strategy for the next three years. It set out a bold vision where women can truly find opportunities in being a member of the SWI, an internationally recognised and wellrespected membership organisation which is ambitious, relevant, and inclusive.

The Strategy has been developed to face the many challenges facing the SWI, such as decades of membership decline, Institute and Federation closures, antiquated working practices and systems, digital exclusion, layers of governance, a lack of support for members, an expensive office to maintain and no curation of our past heritage.

As part of launching the Strategy last year, we promised members a Strategic Delivery Plan, so across the following pages you will see the short, medium and long-term goals which will help us achieve our vision.

As the Strategy is for the next three years, many steps within it won't happen immediately, so we have identified what we can do in the short term, and what will take a bit longer, perhaps into 2024. And you will see the long-term goals which will take a long time to realise. One example of that is membership growth. Although we are seeing uplifts now, it will be two years before our membership numbers have increased considerably and we see the full benefits.

This Strategic Delivery Plan will be reviewed by the Board on an annual basis as there may be things that are out of our control – some curveballs just happen. No one expected a cost of living crisis when the Strategy was developed, for example, so a bit of flexibility might be essential. However, be assured that goals will be met wherever possible.

You'll see from the Strategic Delivery Plan that some things have been driven forward since we launched the Strategy last year and many others are being done.

Our next update will be at the AGM on May 13th, an online event to enable the maximum number of members to attend. We will produce an annual review which will advise on all achievements.

Of course, members will help to shape our future. We read, listen to and value all members' feedback, whether that be at events, through emails and letters, or at our new Federation peer group meetings. Feedback is essential and I would encourage you to consider becoming a National office bearer as we currently have opportunities on committees or the Board. It's a really timely opportunity to step into a position and help deliver the Strategy.

By ensuring members are at the heart of everything we do, by 2025 we will be seen as a confident organisation which educates through its rich history and is uniquely positioned to pass on skills to future generations. We look forward to working together to achieve great results!

Our charity's governance structure

The Board of Trustees makes all decisions for the future of the SWI.

These decisions are based on recommendations or information provided by the CEO and members across the whole organisation.

Members' views can be delivered via the traditional channel of office bearer to national committee, or via email to future@theswi.org.uk

Any decisions made by the Board are then implemented by the CEO and staff at central office.

+++

Delivering for members

This Delivery Plan illustrates the short, medium and long-term actions necessary to achieve the SWI's four strategic priorities.

Priority 1: Undergo constitutional change and create effective internal operations

Activity	Next Steps	Timescale	
Reform and future-proof the constitution	Develop the most appropriate SCIO model for the SWI and consult with members on changing SWI's charitable status to a Scottish Charitable Incorporated organisation (SCIO).	Winter 2023	Medium
Establish an executive staff team to lead the change	Identify senior roles for delivering the strategy and increasing organisational performance and recruit and appoint an executive team.	Summer 2022	Short

Develop the SWI as an attractive employer	Work towards achieving workplace accreditations and relevant policies, adopt modern day working practices, and ensure the emphasis is on staff and working conditions.	Ongoing	Long
Increase organisational performance	Implement digital transitioning to improve systems and streamline processes for operations	Summer 2023	Medium
Develop a skilled Board and staff team	Develop a culture of continuous learning and development across the SWI with strong leadership and a continuous learning and development policy.	Summer 2023	Medium
Improve the reputation of the SWI	Improve the SWI's reputation and contribution to Scotland by developing a communications plan which will increase internal and external engagement.	Ongoing	Long

What does success look like?

A more attractive prospect for members, funders, and employees.

Achieving SCIO charitable status will provide a high degree of protection against liability and will help to reduce the layers of bureaucracy and governance across the membership. In addition, it will open up greater funding opportunities.

By implementing a digital transformation which is safe and secure for members, the SWI will access valuable data and insight to build an efficient and effective organisation which drives membership growth.

The SWI will have an improved reputation which will attract and retain, recruit and engage with the right people.

Priority 2: Develop an improved membership culture and strategy for growth

Activity	Next Steps	Timescale	
Put members first, anticipate members' needs and provide support	Ensure members are at the heart of everything we do. Our members must feel engaged, understood, and valued. Develop a comprehensive membership strategy focusing on: <input type="checkbox"/> Membership journey <input type="checkbox"/> Joining <input type="checkbox"/> Onboarding <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> Communications <input type="checkbox"/> Involvement <input type="checkbox"/> Activities <input type="checkbox"/> Retention	Ongoing	Medium
Grow our membership	Develop training and support for members to regenerate groups or establish new ones, and offer training on tools such as Facebook, Canva and Eventbrite which enable them to drive growth.	Ongoing	Long
Develop attractiveness and relevancy to potential members	Enhance the promotion of membership and benefits to women and implement marketing on a National and local level.	Autumn 2023	Long
Introduce training for members	Enable support for members and implement a diverse range of training for members.	Winter 2022	Short
Review and improve member events and activities	Use membership feedback to review National events and activities and implement a refreshed calendar of events and activities	December 2022	Short
Demonstrate the value of membership	Develop a value statement for members and potential members and communicate the value of membership across all communication channels.	Ongoing	Medium
Build a member-centric staff team	Encourage the staff team to attend member events, and engage members as much as possible.	Ongoing	Long

What does success look like?

The SWI will improve its offering to women in Scotland by providing clear routes to membership and greater member benefits.

Everything from joining day-to-day operations, events and communications will be geared towards making the experience a positive one. By doing this the organisation will retain its existing membership and achieve continual growth of new members.

Priority 3: Reduce costs and overheads and develop income diversification throughout the organisation

Activity	Next Steps	Timescale	
Reduce operational costs, contracts, and overheads	Review budgets, contracts, products, processes, and practices to ensure value for money and a robust financial management is in place.	Ongoing	Medium
Put 42 Heriot Row, Edinburgh, on the market for sale	Prepare the office for sale and engage with an estate agent and lawyers for supporting the sale of the office.	November 2022	Short
Secure and locate smaller office space for SWI staff	Secure a new office space with a 3-year lease period ensuring it is accessible to both staff and members. Put all the relevant processes in place for relocation	Spring 2023	Short
Improve Shopify online shop	Identify new products and suppliers to develop and build an attractive range of items for sale.	Spring 2023	Long
Generate more income streams	Identify new opportunities to build and develop new income generation streams.	Spring 2023	Short
Generate commercial income	Enable new sponsorship and advertising channels to attract commercial interest and income.	Spring 2023	Short
Manage risk	Ensure the risk register aligns with 2022-25 strategy and is a standing item at each Board meeting.	Ongoing	Long

What does success look like?

A financially sustainable and secure organisation which no longer relies solely on membership fees for income. Instead, by developing and diversifying multiple income streams – from new product sales to non-member event attendance fees – more events, training and opportunities will be available to members.

This will be of benefit to all.

Priority 4: Develop an ambitious plan for a Visitor Learning Centre for all women in Scotland

Activity	Next Steps	Timescale	
Protect and preserve the SWI's cultural heritage	Curate SWI historic artefacts, protect and preserve our rich cultural heritage from the past 106 years for visitor enrichment and enjoyment.	Ongoing	Medium
Passing on skills	Further develop a skill sharing culture by identifying members willing to share them. Develop courses and workshops and links with partnership working.	Ongoing	Long

Develop a feasibility study and funding opportunities	Develop and secure funding for a feasibility study analysing visitor needs and the SWI's aspirations, the suitability of locations and the financial feasibility of the centre. Maintain discussions with funders.	Summer 2023	Long
Consider alternatives	Explore alternatives and fresh thinking regarding what is achievable within the financial scope and remit.	Summer 2023	Long
Review and improve member events and activities	Using membership feedback, review National events and activities and implement a refreshed calendar for members.	December 2022	Long
Build a project team involving member groups	Identify relative internal and external people, members with skills and abilities required to build a cohesive project team to take forward the vision. Build a process for member groups to be involved in various aspects including: Developing a vision document <input type="checkbox"/> Legal entity <input type="checkbox"/> Funding and financials <input type="checkbox"/> Developing an enterprising element (i.e. shop/ cafe) <input type="checkbox"/> Developing Heritage and Education zones <input type="checkbox"/> Location scoping <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging membership <input type="checkbox"/> Assessing social impact <input type="checkbox"/> Developing project marketing and communications.	Summer 2023	Medium
Continually communicate, consult, and involve members	Ensure members are regularly involved and informed about the various stages of development of the project.	Ongoing	Long
Engage with all internal and external stakeholders	Build and engage with potential stakeholders, agencies and partners to influence and drive forward the vision	Spring 2023	Short

What does success look like?

A SWI Visitor Learning Centre which is accessible financially sustainable and open to all women. It will have a café, shop, office and multi-use spaces where women can learn, share and socialise. It will generate income and boost the local economy by encouraging our current members to visit and attract tourists and passing trade to learn, attend events, eat and drink and experience the SWI's rich cultural heritage.

+++

Marion's marvellous adventure

Houston member Marion Dawson has seen the world and its attitude to women change a great deal in her lifetime...

Marion Dawson was born on 19 January 1913 in Houston, Renfrewshire, and was a long-term member of the SWI. In 2021 she became the oldest woman in Scotland, taking on the mantle following the death of Louisa Wilson of Glasgow. Louisa had reached the mighty age of 109 years and 16 days.

Marion has had a long and happy life and the past few years have been just as busy as the previous century.

On her 108th birthday in 2021, Marion received the COVID-19 vaccine at her church, which was being used as a temporary vaccination site by the local GP surgery. She commented that she "never felt a thing."

This year she celebrated her 110th birthday with a bouquet of flowers from all at the SWI, and a pair of beautiful knitted knee blankets from her friends at Houston & Crosslee SWI.

As we wish Marion many, many happy returns, we look at what has happened to women and Scotland over the years...

1910s

1913 - Suffragette Emily Davidson throws herself in front of the King's horse at Epsom Derby to push the case for votes for women.

1914-18 - The First World War ravages the planet.

1917 – Catherine Blair launches the first Scottish Women's Rural Institutes in Longniddry.

1918-1920 – The Spanish Flu pandemic kills more than 21 million people.

1920s

1920 - Women are "allowed to receive degrees" at Oxford University for the first time.

1926 - John Logie Baird reveals his new invention: television.

1928 - Women over 21 are finally given the vote.

1928 – Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin.

1930s

1931 - Construction of RMS Queen Mary begins at John Browns shipyard, Clydebank.

1932 - Amelia Earhart flies solo across the Atlantic.

1939-45 - The Second World devastates Europe.

1940s

1941 - Greenock and Clydebank are blitzed by German bombers.

1943 - The "Big Blitz" causes major damage in Aberdeen.

1944 - Orkney's Italian Chapel is built by prisoners of war.

1946 – George Orwell begins writing 1984 on Jura.

1947 – The first Edinburgh International Festival opens.

1948 – The National Health Service is created.

1950s

1951 - Dennis the Menace appears in The Beano.

1952 - Television transmissions in Scotland begin.

1953 - Queen Elizabeth II's coronation.

1955 – Dounreay nuclear plant opens

1958 – The first UK motorway opens.

1960s

1962 - The trams running in Glasgow

1965 - The death penalty is abolished in Britain

1966 - The Tay Road Bridge opens.

1968 – The UK first heart transplant is performed.

1969 – Concorde takes off for the first time.

1970s

1970 - The Equal Pay Act enables women to earn as much as men for doing the same work.

1975 – Women are given the right to open a bank account in their own name.

1975 – Reintroduction of the white-tailed eagle to the Isle of Rùm begins.

1979 – Margaret Thatcher becomes Britain's first female Prime Minister.

1980s

1982 – The Falklands War takes place.

1984 – The internet is invented by Tim Berners-Lee.

1986 – Poll tax is introduced in Scotland.

1987 – Aretha Franklin becomes the first woman to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

1990s

1996 – Dolly the Sheep, the first genetically cloned mammal, is created by scientists at the Roslin Institute.

1996 – First of the Maggie's Centres in the UK opens in Edinburgh

1999 – A Scottish parliament is re-established.

2000s

2000 – The Queen Mother celebrates her 100th birthday in Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee year.

2004 – Facebook launches

2005 – Ellen McArthur becoming the fastest person to sail around the world single-handed.

2007 – The iPhone launches

2008 – The Antonine Wall becomes a World Heritage site.

2014 – Malala Yousafzai wins the Nobel Peace Prize

2017 – The #MeToo movement launches

2019 – The coronavirus pandemic launches

2020 – Scotland becomes the first country in the world to make period products available to anyone for free.

+++

SWI TRIENNIUM 2023

The SWI needs you

The next three years will be a hugely exciting time for the SWI... could you help shape and develop our future?

Being a member-led organisation, members are at the heart of everything we do, whether that's putting on the best events and training for women in Scotland, or getting the best value for money for members. To adhere to the SWI constitution every three years there is an opportunity for members to represent others as National office bearers. There are currently vacancies on each of the following:

- Board of Trustees
- Finance Committee
- Education & International Committee
- Communications Committee
- Handcrafts & Homeskills Committee

Each of the committees make recommendations to the Board which has the ultimate say on what steps are taken on behalf of members.

Anne Kerr is SWI National President and current Chair of the Board. She will relinquish both posts in May, so is ideally placed to tell us what being a National office bearer means...

This is a National post in a time when the SWI has a new strategy to take forward...

"Yes, so Board and committee members will be helping to shape the future and ensure the sustainability of the organisation. We want future generations to enjoy what we have been able to get out of being a member of this great organisation."

What are you proudest of in terms of the Board?

"This has been the very first Board of Trustees in the history of the SWI, and we were faced with the challenges of Covid, so it has been quite an achievement to get to where we are now. We have achieved a lot. Based on our extensive membership survey we developed a new strategy and are now implementing that, so the next three years will be very interesting for everyone involved."

MEMBER MILESTONES

What is the benefit of being a Board member?

"You get to have your say and give your ideas on how the organisation should be progressing. The Board discuss policies, staffing, direction and details such as where the new central office is going to be, so you have input into all of that."

Is it a time-consuming role?

"No, we are only having four Board meetings a year and they have been hybrid meetings because of Covid. Some travel to Edinburgh and others join on Zoom and that seems to work well. It also opens the position up to women who are working as it takes less time out of their schedule."

Is there training for Board Members?

“Yes, that has been useful. Very useful. It makes sure everyone is thinking along the same lines of what is expected.”

Do National office bearers get paid?

“No, these are all voluntary positions. Reasonable travel expenses are paid, though. We do it for the good of the SWI. On a personal level, the skills you learn are very useful in other aspects of your life.”

What’s the role of the committees?

“The committees make decisions on different events and activities offered to members. They help decide what should run and what shouldn’t run, where there’s interest and where there’s not. They also make a range of recommendations to the Board on the likes of finance, communication routes and members’ levies.”

How much work is involved for committee members?

“Since Covid the committees have been meeting four times a year on Zoom for an hour or so. You get all the information ahead of time so you know what’s to be discussed and you can canvas local members’ opinions if that’s necessary.”

Do you need to have relevant experience for each committee?

“Well, members have to have an interest in that area. For example, for the Handcrafts & Homeskills Committee it’s helpful if they have knowledge of the subjects and can make suggestions about crafts but they don’t need to be experts! For the Finance Committee you should have some knowledge of financial matters – it helps if you can read a complex balance sheet.”

What would you say to anyone thinking of a National role?

“Go for it! You’ll get so much out of it and be helping to develop and strengthen the SWI to ensure it’s fit for the future. It’s also hugely rewarding and offers so many opportunities to you on a personal level.”

All application forms and further information can be found on the www.theswi.org.uk or email hello@theswi.org.uk

+++

My SWI life

This year’s Warnock Trophy top three entries celebrate members’ memories of the Rural

First Place – Norah Meikle

My connection with the ‘rural’ started when a new institute was formed in the village. I was 30 years old, married, 2 pre-school children and a baby on the way!

For the next 15 years or so, the second Thursday of the month was sacrosanct! My night out with the ‘girls’ and hubby’s night at home with the children!

Gradually, we started taking part in competitions, and attended meetings, organised by the Federation, which were usually held on a Monday evening or a Saturday – which fitted in with my full time job.

It was so interesting getting to know more about what happened under the ‘bigger umbrella!’ of the Federation. We even made it to a national final – what a wonderful experience that was!

We needed an institute rep on the H and H committee - did I volunteer or was I volunteered!! That was the real start of my involvement with the Federation and appreciating the work that was done for all our members to enjoy. Things “don’t just happen”!

Then, of course, one thing leads to another!! From committee to vice to Convenor. I was surrounded by a group of dedicated ladies who came up with ideas and together we carried them out. I got to know ladies from all across the county and what a catch-up we have when our paths cross again.

The next 'door' that opened was that of the Federation Executive. I was 'elected' (more a case of 'sole nominee'!) to the post of Vice- Chair, then on to Chair. These were a really brilliant 6 years. We had lots of fun while we 'organised' all sorts of events. The Federation Show was a huge part of our annual calendar, and, oh what joy, when all went smoothly – the entries came in, the judges judged, members and spectators came to view, teas were served and the hall was full of chatter.

As a Federation, we took part in many of the national competitions - all of which had their federation round first. Many a great night was held in a village hall and lots of fun in sporting settings.

I had the honour of being in the chair when the Federation celebrated its 90th Birthday. Fund raising events, supported by lots of willing helpers, (no arms were broken) followed by an Afternoon Tea at a castle! Happy days indeed!

As a Central Councillor, I sat on two committees. Well, that was such a brilliant and eye-opening experience! Seeing how the SWRI was run, by the members for the members. Alongside the serious work of the committees, many good, and lasting friendships were formed. Wherever we holiday in Scotland, and sometimes further afield, my husband says "we always meet a rural wife!"

I have learnt so much in so many areas through the 45 years that the 'rural' has been a constant in my life.

Second Place – June Nicolson

Life begins at birth.

My SWI life therefore could be described as an accident; it was not planned and anticipated; no preparations were made for its arrival!

My husband and I were a struggling, young(ish) couple; both working full time; two school age children – and a mortgage! So money was tight and so was time. Life consisted of childcare, housework and paid employment (not necessarily in that order!)

Nights out were few and far between. However, we were unbelievably lucky in the next-door neighbours whom we acquired when we moved into our country cottage! In a relatively short time they became honorary grandparents to our children, and experienced advisers to us.

So when the lady tentatively asked me one weekend if I would be able to transport her to the local SWRI meeting the following Tuesday evening because her daughter, who usually took her, was on holiday, it would have been very difficult to refuse. I reasoned that I certainly owed it to her – and after all it was only for one evening...

How wrong I was. The memory of my first night at a Rural meeting is still very clear. I cannot remember what the topic was for the evening; but I do remember that as she welcomed the members to the meeting the lady who was President at the time spotted my strange face at the end of a row. She walked from her table at the front right down the centre aisle and with a friendly smile shook my hand and welcomed me to the meeting. I was impressed.

At 'cuppie' time several other ladies spoke to me and explained the finer details of the competitions and the points system and so on. When the meeting ended and it was time to go home, I was handed a syllabus for the year and assured of a warm welcome the following month. That was it! My SWI Life had begun. As I have grown in that life I have held most positions on the committee; represented the Institute in a couple of National competitions; and met many really interesting people and made good friends who have enriched my life.

In recent years I have found myself looking back over my Rural life and inevitably comparing my experiences with those of new, younger members just embarking on theirs. And I am optimistic. Of course things are done differently; new social media platforms have brought the SWI to the attention of a whole new audience. Youngsters are encouraged to develop skills in Junior Dippers groups; and I think 40 years ago I would have been attracted to a group calling itself the Divas! But for the present my Rural life is good and I hope it continues to be so for some time to come.

Third Place – Isobel McGuire

I met my fellow lodgers as I made my way home, the weather beaten face of the retired shepherd was wreathed in smiles. 'It's the Rural tests' he said triumphantly. 'You know Mrs C goes in for them and if she thinks her baking is not perfect we get it with custard for pudding!' As a city girl, the 'Rural tests' were a mystery to me but, sure enough, we were treated to all Mrs C's 'failures'.

Two years later I was both a wife and a mother living in the country. Encouraged by a new neighbour I decided to go to a 'Rural meeting'. We were a bit late entering Ruskie hall, and the welcome that surrounded me that evening from all these lovely country women was unforgettable. I cannot remember the speaker or her subject but that evening I became an SWRI member.

Two or three sessions later, I became a committee member.

My contribution was to be 'hall keeper'. My duties each month were to clean out the fire, empty the ashes, then with newspaper and kindlers set and light it with coal from our coal bunker. Water was carried in two pails from the house next door to the hall and these filled the big urn in the kitchen. The floor got swept and an extra shovelful of coal made sure there would be a warm, cheery glow for all the members when they arrived for the evening meeting.

In the years that followed I was to become the Treasurer and Secretary, then had the honour to be the President. More importantly, the friendships made during Rural activities have been strong links that have made life more enjoyable and widened my horizons.

My landlady of old said that her education had ended when she left school at 14, then she joined the SWRI and her education resumed. She found being in positions on the committee taught her skills like book-keeping and organising a committee to work smoothly. It took her by surprise that she could do these things and more, like speaking in front of a room of women with confidence. I mirrored these feelings, there are always interesting happenings within the Rural community. It could be a visit to another Rural to share their celebrations; to Federation events; to a sports event or an embroidery class, and the county show was a yearly excitement. Today's committee contrives to make each session's programme original. We've had exciting trips to Tiree and Mull and look forward with anticipation to our next adventure. Our meeting hall is the old school now owned by Ruskie Rural. It needs continual repairs, a burn gurgles outside along its length and it echoes to the memories of happy evenings.

The enterprising committee members educated fellow members to use Zoom, with this new skill we kept in touch in these last difficult times of Covid.

A most precious item hangs on my wall, a framed award given me by Ruskie SWI – my Honorary Membership.

+++

Tell us what you think

We would love to hear your feedback. Please send comments, stories and pictures to hello@theswi.org.uk