



## **Welcome to Issue 30 – Members' news**

This is a print-friendly version of the Scottish Women's Institutes monthly member newsletter.

Scottish Women's Institutes was established in 1917 and is an inclusive and inspirational membership-based organisation. We are here to build an inclusive community, to have fun and form friendships, to campaign, to learn, to share and to socialise. We provide a platform for social activities and networking, and champion women's issues.

Find out more about us at **[www.theswi.org.uk](http://www.theswi.org.uk)**

Scottish Women's Institutes is a SCIO, SC053058

## 2025 – a year of hope and renewal

SWI National President Mary Burney reflects on a successful 2024 and looks forward to one of the SWI's most important periods

Happy New Year to you all – I hope this is a wonderful year for you and for the SWI, too.

We enter this important year in a much better position than we have been for a long time – we have managed to stem the decades of decline we have been seeing since the 1950s, and we have received the the first-ever major funding for the SWI. What an achievement!

This £127,175 award from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the SWI Heritage Project sets us firmly on the path to opening a Visitor Learning Centre in Dumfries in 2027. Not only will it house our nationally significant archive but by providing a diverse and exciting programme of workshops and courses it will provide us with a much-needed income stream for the SWI and reduce our reliance on membership fees. This is essential as we are at risk of disappearing within this decade if we rely on membership fees alone.

So, 2025 is a year of hope and renewal – and we will be focussing on membership growth to make the most of the momentum we have gained. Your feedback from the Office Bearers' Gathering in September and the membership consultation we conducted in November will inform the SWI Board's upcoming strategy day on January 24th and we will launch a Community Action Plan next month. Your help will be essential then, so we will be relying on you to join us in a concerted recruitment drive. It will be an enjoyable month of getting out and showcasing what the SWI does in communities across Scotland.

I'm so happy that our lifelong learning initiatives are taking shape, too. Proficiency tests are being developed and will now become SWIFTS (SWI Framework for Textile Skills). This modern concept will ensure that there is a clear learning pathway to take members from Beginner to Advanced in a range of crafts. A pilot will be carried out in spring to ensure it is effective before SWIFTS are officially rolled out this year. SWI Junior Dippers are beginning to fly, too, with six groups now around the country. Helped by funding and volunteers' passion our SWI Junior Dippers number have doubled in a year. Fabulous!

Finally, a huge thank you to everyone who took time to complete the SWI Membership Consultation 2024 at the end of last year. 1,268 members gave their views on the value of their membership and the future of the SWI, and I'm delighted to say that 96% of respondents were happy with their member experience. 97% also value the sense of community and 98% appreciate the fun and enjoyment the SWI brings. The areas we all need to work on – making the SWI more visible and welcoming new members and retaining them – will inform the Community Action Plan.

Take a look at the fabulous events and opportunities we have lined up for 2025 so far... it's going to be a great year!

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## **Exclusive 2025 Events**

### **In-person events**

#### **SWI Study Tour: Dublin and Ireland's hidden heartlands**

*13th–17th October 2025*

Join us for a delightful 5-day tour exploring the tranquil beauty and rich heritage of Ireland's hidden heartlands and the vibrant city of Dublin. This tour includes dinner, bed, and breakfast and access to excellent hotel leisure facilities throughout your stay.

#### **You will**

- Visit Belvedere House, Mullingar, Dublin, and Athlone.
- Immerse yourself in history and folklore as we explore cities, towns, monastic sites and historic estates.
- Discover the stunning Westmeath Lakelands, a serene haven of pristine lakes and picturesque countryside.

#### **What's included?**

See a full itinerary – <https://rb.gy/59d22q>

#### **Expressions of interest**

Expressions of interest are now being sought. Bookings will open to interested parties three days ahead of general release, so make sure you're the first to know by emailing [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk) – Flexible payment plans will be available, allowing you the option to spread out payments and secure your booking with ease.

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#### **SWI Summer School 2025**

*21st–25th August | Stirling University | Details TBC*

This year's event is shaping up and we're delighted that so many members have already expressed interest in attending! Take a look at our confirmed tutors and 3-day courses so far:

- 3D decoupage and iris folding Nan Middleton
- Temari balls (Intermediate) Kay Smith
- Advanced Dressmaking Gill Farragher
- Stained Glass Claire Gaunt
- Sanquhar Glove Knitting May MacCormick
- Watercolour Painting Brigid Collins

And this year's event will see the return of an 'Out and About' option where you can explore the Stirling area with our travel partners Dodds of Troon.

Residential and non-residential options with en-suite rooms will be available.

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## **1-day Felting Workshop**

In-person | Friday February 28th | 10am-3pm | SWI Central Office, Edinburgh | £45 members, £50 non-members | LUNCH PROVIDED

Limited spaces available!

Come join us for a fun-filled day of creativity at our 1-day Felting Workshop.

You will learn the art of felting and create your own unique masterpieces. No experience necessary! Our expert instructor Fiona Finlayson will guide you every step of the way.

All necessary supplies will be provided so you can start your needle felting journey, with enough materials to create a felted blue tit, and be able to take home your kit after the workshop to keep on crafting!

Book here - <https://rb.gy/lrobvn>

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## **How to make the 'perfect scone' workshop**

In-person | Station House Cookery School, Stewartry | Spring | Details TBC

SWI member and Board Trustee Linda McTurk's scones are the stuff of legend and 'never fail'. If you want to know from the best, now's your chance.

Following Linda's demonstration of how to make sweet and savoury scones, you'll make your own under her expert guidance.

Exact details are being finalised but expressions of interest are now invited, so make sure you're first to know by emailing [beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk](mailto:beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk)

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## **1-day Mosaic Workshop**

Friday 28th March | 10am-3pm | SWI Central Office, Edinburgh | Details TBC  
| LUNCH PROVIDED

Learn the art of mosaic and create your own unique masterpiece. No experience necessary - our expert instructor Helen Miles will guide you every step of the way. Email [beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk](mailto:beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk) to be the first to know when booking opens.

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## **Online events**

### **The Strength in You with Dee MacLean**

Inspirational Talk | Thursday February 27th | Online | FREE

Celebrate International Women's Day with a confidence-building online session led by life coach Dee MacLean.

Let's unlock your potential, together! Book here - <https://rb.gy/k1biqb>

## **SWI Tummy talks: Healthy veggie eating**

Thursday 17th April | Online

MEMBERS & NON-MEMBERS WELCOME

Richard of The Vegetarian Society will highlight the health advantages of vegetarian diet, and provide practical tips for incorporating more fruits, vegetables, and fibre into your meals.

Book your space here! <https://shorturl.at/vjc6N>

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## **A new focus on lifelong learning**

The SWI is committed to providing lifelong learning opportunities for members. The Evelyn Baxter programme is our flagship scheme and – for the first time in SWI’s history – four tutors will be travelling the length and breadth of the country to share their skills. This year’s craft is Macrame and all participants will learn a variety of techniques to create beautiful and useful items. All tuition will be arranged at Federation level and the deadline for Federation Secretaries to request one of our fabulous Evelyn Baxter Scholars is 27th January.

2025 also sees the launch of SWIFTS – aka Scottish Women's Institutes’ Framework for Textile Skills – an exciting new skills development programme to replace the old-style SWI proficiency tests.

SWIFTS aim to support textile skills development across various levels and disciplines in a modern and dynamic way and to test the programme and gather feedback a Beginners’ Knitting (pilot) is scheduled in West Lothian for spring 2025.

Member reaction has been excellent and all 10 spaces on the pilot were booked within a day. If you would like to be added to our waiting list or would like to express interest in future opportunities please email [beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk](mailto:beth.spencer@theswi.org.uk)

It’s going to be an exciting year!

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## **SWI Junior Dippers**

Central office staff returned after the festive break to a very welcome cheque from The Sylvia Aitken Charitable Trust – £1,000 to help set up new groups around the country – and a great piece of media about Dunbartonshire Federation’s success in Millig, Helensburgh courtesy of SWI Trustee Clare Greig (above). See the full story [HERE](#).

It’s great to see SWI Junior Dippers groups growing around the country – Junior membership within the organisation has doubled in a year. Well done all involved!

There are now groups in Federations across Scotland: Angus, West Lothian, Dunbartonshire, Aberdeenshire, Ross-shire & Sutherland and Perth & Kinross and we are very grateful to the WM Mann Foundation for £1,500 support for these groups.

SWI Junior Dippers groups give children the chance to learn new crafts and techniques while the SWI offers intergenerational skill sharing and celebrates its founder Catherine Blair's original vision of 'If you know a good thing, pass it on'.

As the SWI is now a SCIO, we can access funding from trusts and major funders to build on our charitable efforts in creating lasting and valuable contributions to Scotland's communities.

Thanks to The Sylvia Aitken Charitable Trust and the WM Mann Foundation for supporting our intergenerational skill-sharing activities.

Clare Greig will be hosting a members' information session for members interested in setting up an SWI Junior Dippers group – email [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk) to be the first to know and get more information.

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## **Scottish Handcrafts Championship 2025**

Call for entries! The Scottish Handcrafts Championship 2025 at the Royal Highland Show is a huge date in the SWI diary as members volunteer to judge, set up, steward and demonstrate throughout Show week.

This is a fantastic opportunity to be involved in a global competition at a prestigious event and SWI members have traditionally done very well with prizes for a variety of crafts and there are prizes for novices, too, so we encourage you to enter!

See the competition schedule here – <https://rb.gy/aihcw6> – the deadline for entries is mid-May (exact date TBC), so get crafting!

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## **Volunteering opportunities**

*Crafters and member helpers required* – email [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk)

## **The Creative Craft Show 2025**

Glasgow SECC | 6th–8th March

The SWI hosts make & Take sessions throughout the show, so member helpers and demonstrators are sought. All stewards receive a free ticket for the show and have ample free time to explore the event.

## **The Scottish Handcrafts Championship**

Royal Highland Show, Inverlorn |

19th–22nd June

The SWI runs and manages the Scottish Handcrafts Championship each year. If you would like to be a part of the team and become a steward for a day click the link below. All stewards receive a free ticket for the show and have ample free time to explore the event.

## New member offer for 2025

### Willowberry skincare

Looking for a bit of pampering and self-care this New Year? We're delighted to announce a new partnership with Willowberry skincare.

SWI members will now receive an exclusive 10% off Willowberry products which are designed especially for the needs of grown-up skin. Made with all-natural ingredients with a focus on vitamins, antioxidants and essential fatty acids, Willowberry products nurture and nourish skin, for a brighter, hydrated, radiant complexion. Just the ticket for cold, dark January days!

Use your exclusive member discount code **10offSWI** at the checkout at [www.willowberry.co.uk](http://www.willowberry.co.uk)

### Other benefits

#### Bloom and Wild

<http://www.bloomandwild.com/>

15% off flowers and gifts

**CODE: THESWI15B&W**

#### Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

<http://www.fredolsencruises.com/>

5% off all cruises

**CODE: WIScot10**

#### The Edinburgh Woollen Mill

<http://www.ewm.co.uk/>

20% off all clothing

**CODE: SWI24**

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### Putting members first

*Bank of Scotland charges dropped*

After talks with Bank of Scotland, SWI CEO Diane Cooper has secured special dispensation for all SWI Institutes facing BoS bank charges.

We're pleased to confirm that Institutes will no longer be asked to pay bank charges.

The SWI would like to thank Bank of Scotland for this gracious gesture and assure you that we are always working on members' behalf.

If you are faced with charges on an account with another bank and would like to switch to a fee-free bank see options at <https://shorturl.at/rusyA>

As changing bank accounts is notoriously difficult, we recommend the Current Account Switching Service (CASS) which will close your old account and move money, Direct Debits and standing orders across within seven days.

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## **Thank you for your feedback**

A huge thank you to everyone who took time to complete the SWI Membership Consultation 2024 at the end of last year. 1,268 members gave their views on the value of their membership and the future of the SWI.

This year members can make a huge difference and a Community Action Plan created for and by members will be released shortly with all members asked to play their part in promoting what we do in concerted campaigns. This will ensure that SWI continues to be a vital and enduring force for women across Scotland.

All respondents to the SWI Membership Consultation 2024 were entered into a prize draw to win a range of top prizes – congratulations to our winners!

- >> **£100 shopping voucher – Angela Reid**, Inverkeilor SWI
- >> **£100 SWI voucher for SWI Summer School 2025 – Ann Morrison**, Cameron SWI
- >> **£100 SWI voucher for 2025's SWI Study Tour – Rae Donaldson**, Crocketford SWI
- >> **£50 SWI voucher for any national SWI in-person class – Katrina Searl**, Leith SWI
- >> **£50 SWI voucher for any SWI event or workshop in your area – Dorothy Morris**, Cleish SWI

## **Well done everyone!**

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## **SWI Shop**

### *New Year offers*

Check out the New Year deals in the SWI Shop!

We have brand new A5 notepads in a range of colours and to celebrate we're giving a free pen with every notebook! This limited time only offer saves £1.50

**<https://shop.theswi.org.uk/products/swi-notebook-and-pen-bundle>**

Buy 2 and save £3! – **<https://shop.theswi.org.uk/products/swi-notebooks-bundle>**

Plus! Great bundles and offers on diaries, calendars, cookbooks and SWI Heritage Collection items.

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## **Member resources**

### *Member training session*

We're working on a great set of member training events for 2025 – everything from Federation Show Competition Tips to Marketing your Institute, Setting up SWI Junior Dippers groups and more.

With great tips from fellow members, these will give real-life experience of what works and what doesn't, helping us all learn from each other. If you know a good thing, pass it on!

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## **Catch up on recent events**

### **Meet The Great Tapestry of Scotland's Andrew Crummy MBE**

Catch up now - <https://shorturl.at/pgCO7>

### **SWI Skill Share: Chutneys & jellies demonstration**

Catch up now - <https://shorturl.at/8LPMb>

### **Christmas delights with The Hebridean Baker and Sarah Rankin**

Catch up now - <https://shorturl.at/JLEBS>

### **Meet Amanda and Julie – The Repair Shop's Teddy Bear Ladies**

Catch up now - <https://shorturl.at/j5Txq>

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## **SWI Member Insurance**

- Members are covered through SWI Public Liability Insurance when working with non-members (children and adults) such as the Junior Dippers workshops.

Please note: It's important to ensure that any event involving non-members (adults or children) is branded as a SWI event, and it is recommended to confirm that any event venue you use has public liability insurance.

## **Access to SWI events**

- Keep up-to-date with the exciting range of in-person and online events here - [bit.ly/3KiCrPd](https://bit.ly/3KiCrPd)

## **Monthly newsletter**

- Click here - [bit.ly/3ENy7EC](https://bit.ly/3ENy7EC) to subscribe to receive the latest news direct to your inbox. You won't be bombarded by spam. We are committed to keeping our members informed so your help makes all the difference!

## **Communities on Facebook**

- Don't miss out, join us on Facebook and keep abreast of what's happening for the SWI and across the membership in Scotland. Follow us here - [bit.ly/3u7BDom](https://bit.ly/3u7BDom)

## **Do you want to receive event alerts?**

- Subscribe to SWI's Eventbrite page here - [bit.ly/3VhO652](https://bit.ly/3VhO652) and never miss a thing.

## **Do you want general news?**

- Visit [www.theswi.org.uk](http://www.theswi.org.uk) for updates.

## **Not a member yet?**

- If you want to find out more about joining the SWI, please visit [www.theswi.org.uk/join-the-swi](http://www.theswi.org.uk/join-the-swi)

Contact us for any further information at SWI, Unit 8, 1 Carmichael Place, Edinburgh EH6 5PH or [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk) or call 0131 225 1724

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***Thank you!***