



Welcome to Issue 32 – 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**

Scottish Women's Institutes is a SCIO, SC053058

The Crichton Opportunity attracts fans

International Women's Day seemed the perfect time to formally launch the SWI's ambitious plans for a Visitor Learning Centre in Dumfries in collaborative partnership with The Crichton Trust.

The SWI, The Crichton Trust and the project architects, O'donnellBrown and White Arkitekter, laid out plans for the innovative building, the archives which will be housed there, and the plans for a dynamic programme of events to be held on-site, as outreach events in communities around Scotland, and online.

The Visitor Learning Centre, which will open in 2027, will become a beacon of learning, a home for our heritage, to tell the story of rural lives and showcase the role women in Scotland have played and continue to do so. Outreach programmes will ensure communities across Scotland are involved too.

The enthusiasm in the room was clear, with more than 40 supporters, MSPs and councillors, academics and regional and national stakeholders all excited by the possibilities. See what they said here - <https://rb.gy/w659gq>

We were delighted to be joined by SWI 'royalty' at the launch too! Three great-granddaughters of Catherine Blair, our founder, joined SWI CEO Diane Cooper for a tour of the proposed site and discussed outline plans for a community art project led by The Great Tapestry of Scotland's Andrew Crummy MBE. More details coming soon!

SWI Presidents' Assembly 2025

SWI National President Mary Burney welcomed representatives from 22 Federations to Stirling for the very first SWI Presidents' Assembly at the beginning of March.

Presidents or their chosen representatives discussed positive steps each Federation can take to embrace The Crichton Opportunity and promote the SWI and encourage membership growth in their own areas. This will support the Strategic Plan Update 2025-2026 which was launched on the day. You can see this here - <https://www.theswi.org.uk/about-us>

The day was a huge success with calls to make it an annual event, and attendees saying, "It was great to be able to meet up, chat to other Federations, discuss challenges and opportunities and compare strategies for the future."

Presidents left brimming with ideas including twinning with fellow Federations, launching new institutes, and getting behind a major recruitment drive for 2025. This is the year for action!

New groups for Scotland

This spring will see five new groups launch across the country! These events are a great chance to meet new people and learn more about SWI, so please encourage any friends or family in the areas to attend.

- >> **Winchburgh, West Lothian**, Sunday, 23 March, 2pm at Winchburgh Community Education Centre.
- >> **Fort William, Highlands**, Saturday, 5 April, 1pm at New Connections, Fort William.
- >> **Biggar, Lanarkshire**, Sunday, 13 April, 12:30pm at The Gillespie Centre, Biggar.
- >> **Paisley, Renfrewshire**, Saturday, 3 May, 2pm at Re:Hope Church, Paisley.
- >> **Dumbarton, Dunbartonshire**, Sunday, 11 May, 2pm at The Abbotsford Hotel.

If you have ideas of locations for new Institute groups get in touch by emailing membership@theswi.org.uk as we are keen to hear from members across Scotland.

Book a space at a launch here – <https://rebrand.ly/11fb2b>

Sign up to our new Heritage Newsletter

Now that the SWI Heritage Project has received major funding there will be lots more to report on, so SWI Heritage News will be released quarterly to keep you updated.

The first issue of SWI Heritage News will be released soon, so please click the button below to make sure you're on the list and get all of the insider info first!

Made possible because of our recent award from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to National Lottery players.

SUBSCRIBE NOW – <https://rebrand.ly/6e4967>

Do you know someone special?

Member of the Year nominations open

Nominees are sought for the Margaret Whiteford Trophy for Outstanding Member of the Year. This celebrates members who go above and beyond for their SWI communities. Members who are great ambassadors for everything we hold dear – supporting others, friendship, lifelong learning and sharing skills. Go on, nominate our special women and make someone's day!

Deadline for nominations: July 25th

NOMINATE A MEMBER – rebrand.ly/eljoovr

A fond farewell

Our wee events whirlwind, Charlotte Hughes, will be leaving us for pastures new this month.

Many of you will have chatted to Charlotte over the past three years as, along with the equally lovely Beth Spencer, she looked after bookings for major events such as the SWI National Conference, SWI Study Tour and SWI Summer School among others.

Good luck Charlotte – we'll miss you!

SWI Summer School 2025 – book now!

Last few spaces available!

More than 110 members have already booked their place at this year's SWI Summer School at Stirling University. Join us for three days of fun and learning over a long weekend with like-minded women in a stunning environment and immerse yourself in a single course throughout the weekend.

There's something to suit all tastes in our fabulous 3-day crafting workshops and if you'd prefer a guided holiday with all of the SWI trimmings, this year also sees the addition of an Out & About tour option taking in the highlights of the Stirling area – see the full itinerary below.

>> 3D Decoupage and Iris Folding – **Spaces available**

Tutors: Nan Middleton & Aileen Pittuck

>> Beginners' Calligraphy – **Waiting list available**

Tutor: Annette Reed

>> Felted Art – **Fully booked**

Tutor: Linda Irvine

>> Make a Tailored Jacket – **Spaces available**

Tutor: Gill Faragher

>> Quilt Making – **Spaces available**

Tutor: Ann Hill BEM

>> Sanquhar Glove Knitting – **Waiting list available**

Tutor: May MacCormick

>> Stained Glass – **Fully booked**

Tutor: Claire Gaunt

>> Stumpwork Embroidery – **Spaces available**

Tutor: Jane Currie

>> Temari Balls: beginners and beyond – **Spaces available**

Tutor: Kay Smith

>> Watercolour Painting – **Fully booked**

Tutor: Brigid Collins

Residential course

Members £570

Non-members £650

Non-residential course

Members £420

Non-members £500

You can choose to stay at Stirling University for four nights as a residential participant or attend the workshops as a non-residential attendee.

Residential participants enjoy bed and full board from Thursday 21st, to Monday August 25th. Accommodation is provided in en-suite single-occupancy rooms, complete with shared common spaces for relaxing with fellow attendees.

Non-residential participants will be provided with lunch on each day of your chosen workshop.

BOOK NOW - [**https://www.theswi.org.uk/summer-school-2025/**](https://www.theswi.org.uk/summer-school-2025/)

Summer School Out & About tour option

21st-25th August | departing from Stirling University

Join us for an exciting three-day adventure as part of the SWI Summer School's Out and About trip! During this tour, you can explore some of Scotland's most fascinating locations, including historic Stirling, the vibrant towns of Falkirk and Bo'ness, and the artistic hub of Birnam, before finishing with a leisurely afternoon in picturesque Pitlochry. Each day, participants will receive a packed lunch from Stirling University, and residential attendees will return in the evening for dinner and entertainment. Treat yourself to a trip filled with culture, history, and scenic beauty. A wonderful opportunity to discover, learn, and enjoy!

Your itinerary

Friday, 22nd August

AM - Stirling Old Town Jail – step back in time in this 5-star attraction.

LUNCH - Packed lunch provided

PM - Visit Stirling Castle and step back in time to the 15th Century. Highlights include: Castle Great Hall, Chapel Royal, Great Kitchens, and the Tapestry Studio.

EVENING - Return to Stirling University for dinner and evening entertainment.

Saturday, 23rd August

AM - Experience The Falkirk Wheel, the world's only rotating boat lift, which links the Forth & Clyde Canal to the Union Canal 35 metres above. Visit The Kelpies, the world's largest equine sculptures.

LUNCH - Packed lunch provided

PM - Visit The Bo'ness and Kinneil Steam Train and Museum with its heritage locomotives giving you an insight into Scottish Railways through the ages.

EVENING - Return to Stirling University for dinner and evening entertainment.

Sunday, 24th August

AM - Visit Birnam Arts Centre with its exhibition of Beatrix Potter and her time in Perthshire.

LUNCH - Packed lunch provided

PM – Explore Pitlochry best known for the dam and fish ladder, a pair of distilleries, and the Festival Theatre. Lots of lovely wee shops, too!

EVENING – Return to Stirling University for dinner and evening entertainment.

Residential

Members £570

Non-members £650

Non-residential

Members £420

Non-members £500

Booking details

You can choose to stay at Stirling University for four nights as a residential participant or attend the daily trips as a non-residential attendee.

Residential participants enjoy bed and full board from Thursday 21st, to Monday August 25th. Accommodation is provided in en-suite single-occupancy rooms, complete with shared common spaces for relaxing with fellow attendees.

Non-residential participants will be provided with packed lunch prepared by the Stirling University catering team on each day.

BOOK NOW – <https://www.theswi.org.uk/summer-school-2025/>

SWI cookery classes turn up the heat!

We have had fabulous feedback from the first in our new series of cookery classes around Scotland following SWI Trustee Linda McTurk's scone masterclass in Kirkudbright.

Our fabulous tutor Linda received 5 stars all round, and participants gave the following ratings for the class:

- 100% enjoyment
- 100% would attend a similar class
- 100% would recommend to a friend

If you missed out on this workshop, don't fret, we have one upcoming and more planned! See the below for booking details.

'Eat well for women's health' 1-day cooking workshop

Tues, 15th April 2025 | 10am-2pm | Garioch Community Kitchen, Aberdeenshire

Are you interested in learning how to look after your mind and body through the means of nutrition. Join us for a 1-day cooking session, where you will have the opportunity to prepare and cook two tasty, nutrient rich meals which will boost energy and support overall health, under the guidance of expert tutor Mandy Dambruso, from Garioch Community Kitchen.

BOOK HERE – rebrand.ly/5dfe52

SWI Workshops work wonders

Last month, the SWI office welcomed a full house of eager crafters for our latest 1-day felting workshop. The sold-out event was a fantastic success, bringing members and non-members together for a day of creativity, learning, and connection.

Under the expert guidance of Fiona Finlayson, participants enjoyed exploring the art of felting, creating a beautiful handmade felted blue tit to take home. The atmosphere was filled with laughter, conversation, and attendee feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One participant commented, "Brilliant tuition – friendly, relaxed, and super helpful!" Another noted, "The office team was so accommodating, even catering to my allergies for lunch."

Don't fret if you missed out on this opportunity, as more workshops covering different crafts are now available to book—see below for details.

Book now for upcoming workshops

1-day Mosaic workshop

Fri, 28 March 2025 | 10am–3pm

SOLD OUT

Terrazzo Coaster mini workshop

Fri, 25 Apr 2025 | 10am–12pm

BOOK HERE – rebrand.ly/qw0lnj9

1-day Sewing, Upcycling, and Repair workshop

Sat, 31 May 2025 | 10am–3pm

BOOK HERE – rebrand.ly/7n7cvm3

1-day Watercolour workshop

Sun, 6 April 2025 | 10am–3pm

BOOK HERE – rebrand.ly/yr15x5r

1-day Slow-stitched needlebook workshop

Sat, 10 May 2025 | 10am–3pm

BOOK HERE – rebrand.ly/o07nccc

All workshops take place at SWI Central Office, Edinburgh. Equipment and lunch will be provided.

Upcoming online sessions

Not all women are good girls

Expert Talk | Tuesday March 11th | Online | FREE

Join Susan Morrison, comedian, presenter and writer, as she explores the spectacular lives of four women, who changed history. But they were human, with faults & flaws. In association with the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. BOOK NOW rebrand.ly/0kmpm6m

Setting up a local SWI Junior Dippers

Member Training | Wednesday April 2nd | Online | FREE

SWI Trustee Clare Greig guides you through what's involved with sharing members' skills with children. She will inspire you with insight into how she launched her own group – and how they keep the mums involved too! [BOOK NOW](https://rebrand.ly/6j6excw) – rebrand.ly/6j6excw

A fresh look at healthy eating

Tummy Talk | Thursday April 17th | Online | FREE

Join us for an engaging online talk with Richard McIlwain from The Vegetarian Society as we explore tips for adding more fruits, veggies and fibre to our diets. [BOOK NOW](https://rebrand.ly/u55jnfr) – rebrand.ly/u55jnfr

Catch up on events

Missed out on recent SWI Evening Natter sessions? You can catch-up on all online talks on our YouTube channel. [WATCH NOW](https://rebrand.ly/e86aii7) – rebrand.ly/e86aii7

Competitions & benefits

National Golf Competition

Competition | Monday, August 4th | Gleddoch Hotel, Golf & Country Club, Renfrewshire
SWI invites entries to this year's Golf Competition hosted by Renfrewshire Federation.

This is a new style competition, so some rules and formats have changed. Read all the information here (rebrand.ly/4s1lan4) If you wish to enter more than two teams email hello@theswi.org.uk

[ENTRY FORM](https://rebrand.ly/4l96zaj) – rebrand.ly/4l96zaj

National Writing Competition

Warnock Trophy | Deadline September 15th 2025 | Open for entries

Unlock the power of your pen in this year's writing competition. We invite participants to explore the theme of 'The Weather' by submitting captivating written pieces in the form of a poem (max 20 lines).

Email your poem (on a Word document if possible) to hello@theswi.org.uk before 15th September, 2024.

[ENTRY FORM](https://rebrand.ly/ulzco4w) – rebrand.ly/ulzco4w

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Please note that there are new terms for claiming expenses for National competitions and events. The SWI Action Appeal Grant will be reducing to 30% for 2025 and expense claims must be made no later than 28 days after an event. After that they will not be accepted. This action is necessary to ensure a sustainable future for the SWI.

*****Great news for all Institutes and Federations!*****

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

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

We have sent a letter detailing the arrangement to all Federation Secretaries, so if your BoS branch is unaware of this development, please ask your Federation.

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

Volunteering opportunities

Shape SWI's National Conference 2026

Scottish Women's Institutes SCIO is seeking dedicated members to join the National Conference Committee to help shape and deliver impactful events for our organisation. This role requires individuals with vision, creativity, and a commitment to ensuring our conferences inspire, engage, and bring value to our members. Apply by 28th March 2025.

APPLY HERE – [**rebrand.ly/fipbsdH**](https://rebrand.ly/fipbsdH)

Share your cooking and baking skills

We'd love to hear from members who have a passion for cooking or baking and would be happy to run a workshop for fellow members. Perhaps you've demonstrated at local level before, or have a particular skill to share? If that sounds like you, please email [**hello@theswi.org.uk**](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk)

I'M INTERESTED

The Scottish Handcrafts Championship

Royal Highland Show, Inverlisk | 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. Go to [**rebrand.ly/aeuvz7z**](https://rebrand.ly/aeuvz7z) to see 2025 class schedule. Entries for crafts open 18th March!

I'D LIKE TO VOLUNTEER – email [**hello@theswi.org.uk**](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk)

Your exclusive member benefits

Willowberry skincare

www.willowberry.co.uk

10% off products

CODE: 10offSWI

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

Don't miss the new SWI apron

Crafted from high-quality navy cotton, this durable apron features a beautifully embroidered SWI logo for a touch of elegance. Designed for practicality, it includes a spacious front pocket, adjustable strap, and secure waist ties.

In stock now – just £16.95.

One size fits all.

[SHOP NOW](https://rebrand.ly/iqgzjsi) – rebrand.ly/iqgzjsi

SWI shows around the country

Federation Shows are a fabulous way to showcase the talent, creativity, and community spirit of the SWI, and we know how much effort goes into making them a success.

Ross-Shire & Sutherland

BULB, BAKING & FLORAL ART SHOW | 15th March 2025

Maryburgh Community Centre | 1:30pm

All welcome.

Berwickshire

25th April 2025 | Volunteer Hall, Duns

Join the fun on Friday 25th April 2025 6pm–8pm or Saturday April 26th 2025 10am–4pm.

Admission £3, all welcome.

The Fife Show

Friday 2nd May | Corn Exchange, St Catherine Street, Cupar | 2–4pm

10th May 2025 | Dalbeattie Parish Church Hall | 1pm–4pm

All welcome.

Send details of your show to hello@theswi.org.uk and let's work together to celebrate the incredible work of our members across Scotland.

Member extras

NEW SWI website

A brand-new website is currently being developed for Summer 2025 which will provide a one-stop shop for all things SWI, making your membership even better.

New joiners

From now on all new joiners from will receive an email with their joining information, including membership number, rather than a letter and a membership card. This helps modernise our services and work towards goals in our strategic plan.

NEW SWI Heritage quarterly e-newsletter

Now that the SWI Heritage Project has received major funding there will be lots more to report on, so SWI Heritage News will be released quarterly to keep you updated.

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 at www.theswi.org.uk/event-diary.html.

Monthly newsletter

Email **hello@theswi.org.uk** 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 at

www.facebook.com/ScottishWomensInstitutes

Do you want to receive event alerts?

Subscribe to SWI's Eventbrite page at **<https://shorturl.at/2btoh>** and never miss a thing.

Do you want general news?

Visit **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**

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

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