



Welcome to Issue 33 – 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

New groups show appetite for the SWI

This spring will see five new groups launch across the country!

New women's groups play a crucial role in helping the SWI meet its 2025-26 objectives. Expanding membership and creating new groups aligns with SWI's goal of driving organisational growth and development by attracting a diverse range of women and intergenerational engagement, which is a key priority for SWI.

These new groups are vital to the SWI as they expand membership, foster community, and preserve traditional skills. We are empowering women, strengthening communities, and ensuring our mission of education, advocacy, and social connection continues for future generations.

In the past month we've held successful launch events at Winchburgh in West Lothian, and Fort William in the Highlands. Some great laughs were had with the ladies who are keen to get their monthly get-togethers sorted soon.

As we build momentum in the coming season, we have new groups launching in Biggar, Dumbarton, Dunfermline/Rosyth, Paisley and Stonehaven. See below for details.

- **Biggar** | 12.30-2.30pm, Sunday 13th April | Gillespie Centre, High Street
- **Paisley** | 2pm-4pm, Saturday 3rd May | Re:Hope Church, Gordon Street
- **Dumbarton** | 2pm-4pm, Sunday 11th May | Abbotsford Hotel, Stirling Road
- **Stonehaven** | 2pm-4pm, Sunday 8th June | Stonehaven Town Hall
- **Dunfermline/Rosyth** | 2pm-4pm, Sat 21st June | Parkgate Community Centre, Rosyth

If you have ideas of locations for new groups get in touch as we are keen to hear from members across Scotland. All launches are open to all women – let any friends or family members in the area know!

See upcoming launches here – <https://rebrand.ly/11fb2b>

Our commitment to lifelong learning

The SWI Evelyn Baxter Programme | Meet this year's Scholars

This month sees the SWI Evelyn Baxter Programme's first classes for 2025 begin at Federations around Scotland.

Named after SWI member Evelyn Baxter, a keen promoter of skill sharing, this is our flagship educational programme aimed at providing members with hands-on learning experiences in various crafts and skills.

SWI members apply to become Evelyn Baxter Scholars, and are trained in the craft chosen by the Skills & Events committee for the year. In the past two years these have been hugely successful courses in Basic Dressmaking and Temari Ball Crafting.

This year's theme is Macrame, and we have four scholars (a record number!) touring Federations around Scotland to share their skills in local workshops.

Contact your Federation Secretary for details or email hello@theswi.org.uk for more info.

Evelyn Baxter | 1879–1959

Born in Upper Largo, Fife, “Miss Evie” was a pioneering ornithologist, conservationist, and dedicated SWI member. She co-founded the Scottish Ornithologists’ Club, contributed to wartime efforts, earning an MBE in 1945, and played a key role in the SWI as Fife Federation Chair. Her passion for traditional crafts led to a love of handcrafted baskets and her collection is now in the National Museum of Scotland.

Introducing SWIFTS

Scottish Women's Institutes' Framework for Textile Skills

The SWI continues to respond to members’ needs and create exciting developments for members. SWI National Judge Pat Cooper and the Skills and Events Committee sub-group is working on modernising learning pathways by replacing traditional proficiency tests. So, a new SWIFTS (Scottish Women's Institutes' Framework for Textile Skills) programme is under way.

A pilot course, Beginners’ Knitting, is nearing completion in West Lothian and will inform the development of intermediate and advanced levels. Participants’ valuable feedback will help shape future courses.

Looking ahead, the SWI plans to expand SWIFTS with additional textile disciplines such as crochet and intermediate knitting courses. Homeskills courses are also being developed.

This initiative aligns with SWI's broader strategic goals, which include modernisation, membership growth, and sustainability.

Our commitment to communities | SWI Junior Dippers

The SWI Junior Dippers programme is advancing apace around Scotland. Aimed at engaging children and young people in hands-on skill-sharing activities, particularly in crafting, cooking, and baking, the programme is designed to encourage intergenerational learning, allowing experienced SWI members to pass on traditional and creative skills to younger generations.

Funding from the Sylvia Aitken Charitable Trust and the WM Mann Foundation has enabled us to support new and existing SWI Junior Dippers groups across Scotland with grants of up to £300. These groups operate in various areas, including Angus, West Lothian, Dunbartonshire, Aberdeenshire, Ross-shire & Sutherland, and Perth & Kinross.

The SWI has just awarded two grants of £300 for Junior Dippers for 2025 to:

Ross-shire and Sutherland Federation

Using the funds to bolster their existing SWI Junior Dippers group

Members say: “Since starting, we’ve had an average attendance of nine keen and enthusiastic Dippers. The children have been involved in stone painting, book folding, sewing with a machine, cyanotype designs, cross stitch and other crafts.

We try and have something new for them at every meeting. Our aim is to build on numbers by again contacting local primary schools and we also use the local media and social media to advertise what we're doing. We are participating at a pop-up shop in Dingwall where the children sell items they have made – an opportunity to promote the SWI Junior Dippers as well as SWI in general."

Echt Institute, Aberdeenshire Federation

Using the funds to start up a new group

Members say: "A short survey has been carried out to establish interest in our area and 16 families have expressed an interest, giving us a projected start up number of 20–25 youngsters. The value of intergenerational working is immense and SWI members in the area have a vast range of skills they can pass onto youngsters, their skill and enthusiasm for the crafts will be able to inspire and create a desire to learn more and promote the SWI to younger members of our community. There is a real need for such a group in this area which will benefit everyone involved."

Could you run an SWI Junior Dippers group?

We'd love to hear from you! Please contact SWI central office for more information by emailing **hello@theswi.org.uk**

Calling all crafters | The Scottish Handcrafts Championships are open

Competition classes for this year's Scottish Handcrafts Championships have now opened and entries are invited from all across the world. Hosted by the SWI at the iconic Royal Highland Show, this event is a must-visit for anyone passionate about traditional crafts.

When June 19–22, 2025

Where Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh

Theme "Life is a Celebration"

See competition classes here – **rebrand.ly/zglalha**

The deadline for entries is Monday, May 12th and the entry fee is £3.50 per exhibit.

A winner's journey

Get tips from SWI member Lou Washington of Coldstream SWI – she has scooped the Overall Champion prize twice and is a judge this year. Watch here – **<https://rebrand.ly/2dad8d>**

Our commitment to SWI's heritage | Funding success for major project

We are delighted to announce that the SWI has secured a £5,000 donation from The AEB Charitable Trust to support our Preserving Our Past heritage project. This will preserve and celebrate the SWI's rich history, highlighting the contributions of women in rural communities since its founding in 1917.

This donation complements previous funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and advances SWI's ambitious vision to embrace The Crichton Opportunity and establish a dedicated Visitor Learning Centre on The Crichton Estate, Dumfries.

It will contribute to cataloguing, archiving, and digitising SWI's nationally significant collection, ensuring it is accessible for generations to come.

Find out more

If you would like to find out more about The Crichton Opportunity join our SWI Heritage Group which meets online. Book here – <https://rebrand.ly/a6c4b9>

Support the project

Snap up a slice of SWI history with our fabulous notecards and postcards. Notecards feature beautifully crafted handmade items and the postcard show members through the ages. Great reminders of our wonderful organisation. Shop here rebrand.ly/axpwr5v

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>

Volunteering opportunities | Could you be an SWI Trustee?

Volunteering is a rewarding way to give back to the SWI community

A vacancy has arisen for an SWI Board Trustee – could you bring your skills to help shape the future of Scottish Women's Institutes SCIO in this voluntary role?

This is a unique opportunity to:

- Represent 8,600 members.
- Help to strategically lead the organisation.
- Play a vital role in guiding the organisation towards sustainability.
- Uphold the SWI's core values and vision.

The ideal candidate will share our passion for learning, friendship, and enjoyment, and will bring valuable skills and experience to our governance team.

To apply, see the application pack here – rebrand.ly/5ycqa38

This vacancy follows the departure of Linda Riddell of Berwickshire Federation – see what she enjoyed about her time on the Board. The Board sincerely thanks Linda for her dedication and contributions. WATCH NOW – rebrand.ly/4icf2vy

Co-optees sought for SWI Board of Trustees

As the SWI moves forward with The Crichton Opportunity, the Board is also seeking two co-optees outwith the membership to provide specialist expertise. These temporary roles will bring an external viewpoint and additional skills to the Board such as enterprise, income generation, heritage etc. This will help to inform Trustees' discussions and contribute to the organisation's growth and development. While they do not have voting rights, co-optees can actively participate in Board meetings, ensuring valuable insights are considered in decision-making.

We will keep you posted.

Be a helper at the Royal Highland Show

We're looking for member volunteers for the Scottish Handcrafts Championships at The Royal Highland Show, 19th-22nd June 2025 which attracts 22,000 people to Ingliston each year. The SWI is responsible for the set-up and smooth running of the event, so you'll be...

- Greeting members of the public
- Looking after handcrafted items
- Representing the SWI.

Typically, volunteers work four hours throughout the day, in shifts of 2 hours at a time and in return you'll get a free pass and plenty of time to see the animals, exhibits and displays around the largest show in Scotland!

We have volunteers for Saturday, so we are looking for helpers on:

Thursday 19th June

Friday 20th June

Sunday 22nd June

If you'd like to volunteer, please email **hello@theswi.org.uk**

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](https://rebrand.ly/eljoovr) – **rebrand.ly/eljoovr**

SWI Summer School 2025 – book now!

Last few spaces available!

109 members have already booked their place at this year's SWI Summer School at Stirling University – we have just 14 spaces left! 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.

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

Tutors: Nan Middleton & Aileen Pittuck

>> Make a Tailored Jacket – **1 space available**

Tutor: Gill Faragher

>> Quilt Making – **Limited Spaces available**

Tutor: Ann Hill BEM

>> Temari Balls: beginners and beyond – **1 Space available**

Tutor: Kay Smith

Visit <https://www.theswi.org.uk/summer-school-2025/> for more information.

SWI Skillshare Workshops gain fans

Have you heard about our successful new series of SWI Skillshare Workshops? They're getting rave reviews and selling out! So far, we've covered felting, mosaic and watercolour painting, welcoming both SWI members and non-members for a day of fun, friendship and learning. Don't miss out on upcoming opportunities to learn a new skill and meet new people.

What attendees say...

- "It was a fabulous day. Many thanks to our tutor"
- "An excellent day Very informative and also fun"
- "It was a great class, thank you!"

Book now for upcoming workshops...

Terrazzo coaster mini-workshop

In this two-hour class you'll learn how to work with Eco-resin, how to mix pigments, make terrazzo chips and cast a colourful coaster. [BOOK HERE](#) – rebrand.ly/qw0lnj9

Slow-stitched needlebook

Across a friendly, relaxed day you'll learn how to create a beautiful, personalised needlebook using fabric scraps and easy hand embroidery stitches. [BOOK HERE](#) – rebrand.ly/o07nccc

Sewing, Upcycling, and Repair

Whether you want to fix something, alter a skirt, transform a dress into a top or cover up a stain, Jen will teach you the skills to bring new life to your clothes. [BOOK HERE](#) – rebrand.ly/7n7cvm3

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](#) - 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](#) - rebrand.ly/ulzco4w

National Outdoor Bowling Competition

Competition | Monday, September 1st | Kirkcudbright Bowling Club

SWI is pleased to announce Stewartry of Kirkcudbright Federation is due to host this year's Outdoor Bowling Competition.

Some details are still to be finalised. More information will be shared with members as they are confirmed, and Federation Secretaries will be contacted once entries are open.

National Photography Competition

Competition | Deadline October 27th | Open for entries

Harness the potential of your camera in this year's photography competition. We encourage members to delve into the theme of 'The Natural World' by entering your compelling photos.

Please email your photographs as Jpegs to hello@theswi.org.uk before the deadline.

[ENTRY FORM](#) - rebrand.ly/7lht8bb

Please note that there are new terms for claiming expenses for National competitions and events. The Federation benefits (previously 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.

Your exclusive member benefits

The Edinburgh Woollen Mill

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

20% off all products, except sale and gift vouchers at Edinburgh Woollen Mill.

CODE: SW25

Wendy Wu tours

<https://www.wendywutours.co.uk/>

5% off tours

Can be used in conjunction with offers – this month's include massive savings on Christmas in Japan, Vietnam, China, India, Sri Lanka and South Africa, and huge discounts on last-minute trips!

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

Willowberry skincare

www.willowberry.co.uk

10% off products

CODE: 10offSWI

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 – rebrand.ly/iqgzjsi

Sale or return boxes are available – great for any upcoming SWI Shows! Email hello@theswi.org.uk to order.

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.

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

Dumfriesshire

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

All welcome.

Moray & Nairn Arts & Craft Show

Saturday 7th June | Nairn Community and Arts Centre, Nairn | 10am– 3.30pm

Ayrshire Federation's Flower & Flavours Open Day

28th June | Walker Hall, South Beach, Troon KA10 6EF | 10.30am–3pm

Tickets £10 – everyone welcome (bring your own lunch)!

Send details of your show to [**hello@theswi.org.uk**](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk) and let's work together to celebrate the incredible work of our members across Scotland.

Thank you!

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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