



Welcome to Women Together magazine

This is a print-friendly version of the Scottish Women's Institutes free online magazine.

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 SCIO SC053058

Women Together

July 2024

Scottish Women's Institutes members' magazine

On the cover:

Showstopping volunteers

Members make their mark at Scotland's greatest show

My SWI whirlwind

CAKES, COMPETITIONS AND CAPERS WITH SCARY SPICE – IT HAS BEEN A BUSY TIME FOR NATIONAL PRESIDENT, MARY BURNEY

The AGM in May ended my first year as National President and I can't fathom where the time has gone or comprehend the number and diversity of the places I've visited during that time but, whether for a meeting, presentation, sports event or a celebration the welcome and hospitality offered by SWI members has been second to none.

2024 started with a visit to Killin for their Centenary Celebration, a wonderful afternoon which you can read more about in this edition of the magazine, followed quickly by visits to Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Dumfriesshire, Peeblesshire, Caithness, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Stewartry – some more than once – culminating in a visit to East Lothian for the Centenary Celebration of Athelstaneford Institute – as well as enjoying the get together I discovered the village is the birthplace of the Saltire flag – and my final visit was to Roxburghshire Federation who celebrated their Centenary with a fabulous party at the end of June. See page 6 of this magazine for a feature on this event.

I started to count how many beds I have slept in – other than my own – over the last six months but I gave up because it made my head hurt! Unfortunately I missed a visit to Kincardineshire and the Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland's AGM as I was double booked, but fellow members of the Board of Trustees were able to represent the SWI on these occasions.

I did manage to travel to London for the Annual Meeting of the National Federation of Women's Institutes of England, Wales and the Islands in June. This was their first attempt at a hybrid AGM which proved very successful.

Hearing thousands of women singing Jerusalem to the organ being played in the Albert Hall is a memory that will live with me forever. The resolution 'Dental Health Matters' was debated and passed and will now be developed into a campaign to address the chronic shortage of NHS dentists and what can be done to help people who are suffering health issues as a result.

The theme for the meeting was centred around a current campaign focussing on violence against women and girls a difficult subject treated with sensitivity and humour by the three key speakers. Mel Brown (Scary Spice) who left an abusive marriage and is now an ambassador for Women's Aid as they helped her to rebuild her life after the break.

Timothy Watson, well known for playing Rob Titchener in The Archers spoke of his storyline which saw Rob abuse his wife Helen Archer through the use of coercive control which alienated her from family and friends (some ladies got very excited and stood up to chastise him). The value of bringing these issues to light by including them in a popular soap was discussed.

Finally, we heard from Nazir Afzal OBE, who was Chief Crown Prosecutor for North West England and is best known for tackling cases involving violence against women and the sexual exploitation of children. He outlined some famous trials which he has written about in his book The Prosecutor, which is currently being adapted for a British multipart drama.

Closer to home, having successfully applied to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) at the beginning of the year, the Board of Trustees is working, in conjunction with the CEO, to implement the requirements this change of status demands. The new draft constitution has been circulated to members for comment and feedback, and we now have a new charity number.

As the national SWI status is now Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), it has a new charity number.

The online Heritage Project Group continues to meet regularly with three volunteers – Susie Finlayson, Phyllis Hannah and Heather Coutts– agreeing to lead on different aspects of the project – another feature for you to read on page 36. A recent face to face get together in Glasgow gave members the ideal opportunity to view updated plans for the laundry building at the Crichton and to suggest to the architects what they would love to see included in the space.

Thanks go to all who supported the Scottish Handcraft Championships at the Royal Highland Show. This bumper edition highlights many of the entries, prize winners, volunteers and staff whose help is invaluable at this very busy event. Our new permanent space can accommodate many more entries so why not have a look at the 2025 schedule and have a go?

Following the sad death of Joan Hutchison, the Board is now looking for a new Trustee. I would welcome applications from any member who is interested in volunteering in this way. Application forms are on the SWI website and can be submitted until the end of July. The Finance Committee is also looking for two new recruits – forms also on the website. Why don't you consider joining us?

My thanks also go to all who make my life as President much easier by offering hospitality, acting as travel companions, advisors, sounding boards and giving me a shoulder to lean on along with all the fun and friendship.

I'm now looking forward to a few quieter weeks when I can attack the weeds that are suffocating my garden. I hope you all enjoy some summer sunshine whether at home or away. Keep us up to date with your adventures!

Mary Burney, National SWI President

Showstopper cake for Roxburghshire bash

It was smiles all round for members in Roxburghshire as the Federation celebrated its centenary in June.

A fabulous chatter-filled celebration afternoon tea was held at Jedburgh Rugby Club, where members were treated to wonderful entertainment from the Earlston Eukele Band.

The star of the show, though, had to be the cake baked by Ann Redpath of Towford SWI and iced by Julia Scammel of Wilton Dean SWI – who was “relieved it made it to Jedburgh in one piece!”

Roxburghshire Federation President Susie Finlayson and her amazing team worked hard to make the day special.

Afterwards Susie said: “It was an absolutely fabulous afternoon – someone suggested afterwards that we should make it an annual event and that’s maybe not a bad idea!”

Happy 100th birthday Roxburghshire Federation! Here’s to many more – and many more parties!

Muir of Ord’s mega makeover

Just two years ago Muir of Ord SWI closed due to lack of members, however a bold revamp and a new name resulted in the group being resurrected as Tarra Gals SWI, and wow, what a difference! Members recently embraced the community spirit for Muir of Ord’s Gala week, yarnbombing the village in the most delightful way! Well done Tarra Gals!

Outstanding members to be honoured

Nominees are sought for the brandnew Margaret Whiteford Trophy for Outstanding Member of the Year.

This award 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.

The award is named after the late Margaret Whiteford. Margaret was a well-kent face as she worked at the SWI central office for around 15 years. She was passionate about the SWI and became a member of Ratho SWI.

To honour Margaret’s love of the SWI her brothers, nieces, and nephews have gifted the Margaret Whiteford trophy to ensure that she is not forgotten.

The winner of the very first Margaret Whiteford trophy was Maz Thorn, of Powmill SWI, Perth & Kinross Federation.

Maz is an inspirational woman who has spent the past few years supporting fellow members locally and nationally. She has dedicated hours to getting members online and created simple user guides for Zoom and the Chromebook and iPads rolled out to members in 2022.

As one of SWI's Digital Champions, Maz has truly embraced the transition to digital which was accelerated during the pandemic. She was nominated by not one, but eleven members – members she has helped get online, feel connected, and feel less isolated in their own homes.

Runners-up in the highly competitive contest were Ruth Williams of Orkney Federation and Lynne Davidson of Moray & Nairn Federation.

Ruth is a remarkable woman and has dedicated almost thirty years of her life to being Treasurer for Orkney Federation – only standing down just before her 82nd birthday!

Charismatic and hardworking Lynne was nominated for her can-do attitude, superb organisational skills, and for being such a passionate ambassador of the SWI at both local Institute and Federation level.

The deadline for nominations is July 26 and winners will be announced at a special event in September. We encourage all members, old and new, to nominate! Go on, make someone's day! Download the form here – rb.gy/0o69j3

Jessie has it all sewn up

This year's flagship SWI education programme is in full swing, with members across the country being taught the art of basic dressmaking by this year's Evelyn Baxter Scholar, Jessie Meikle.

Jessie, of Ravenstruther Institute, is an expert seamstress and took part in a threeday scholarship training session last year before embarking on a tour of Scotland's SWI communities.

Members of Argyll Federation were Jessie's most recent students and learned how to measure themselves properly, adapt a pattern to get a perfect fit, and make a trial copy of the garment to create a bespoke pattern.

Details of next year's Evelyn Baxter Scholarship which is on Macrame will be announced soon.

SWI NATIONAL FEE INCREASE ANNOUNCED FOR 2025

Despite the economic challenges over the past few years, including a significant 30% drop in membership in 2021/22, we are proud to have a strong community of 8,600 members.

By staying true to our core aims and focusing on attracting new members, we can ensure a sustainable future for SWI.

The Board of Trustees has worked carefully to avoid increasing the national fee since 2021.

However, to ensure that SWI continues to work towards a sustainable future, there will be a modest increase of £5, payable by November 2025. The fee will then become £30 for a year.

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED FOR SCIO STATUS

Some Federations have yet to respond to central office's request for Federations and Institutes to acknowledge the SCIO. This is a legal requirement for OSCR, the charity regulator. If you are still to submit SCIO acknowledgements, please chase them up and get back to us as a matter of urgency. If there are any questions or problems, please let us know.

New groups continue to flourish

The first meeting of newly formed Largs SWI was a wonderful night with an amazing 66 ladies in attendance. There was a craft session and a short quiz and great enthusiasm for the next meeting. All thanks to the newly formed committee who worked so hard to get the group up and running – well done Wendy, Sharon, Susan and all the committee, and to Kay and Nan from Ayrshire Federation for being so supportive.

Meanwhile, there have been three new launches. The first, in Edinburgh's Newhaven in May, attracted a small but enthusiastic group who have just started meeting in a free venue – their local ASDA – on the first Wednesday of each month, and they are planning a social on the third Wednesday of each month. too, The first will be a yoga session.

A new group for Falkirk launched in April and members are currently enjoying meeting up for local walks twice a month. These groups are growing organically, just like the group in Wormit which started in March. Members there are currently sourcing funding to help with their activities. Good luck to them all!

You could help steer the SWI

The SWI is on the lookout for a new Board Trustee to help lead us strategically. We also have two vacancies on our Finance Committee, so if you share our passion for learning, friendship, and enjoyment, and you can bring experience to these governing roles, we'd love to hear from you! The following vacancies are open to all members.

BOARD TRUSTEE - one vacancy

The Scottish Women's Institutes SCIO is seeking to appoint a Board Trustee who can help strategically lead the organisation. This role requires someone with the vision and expertise to guide our organisation towards a sustainable and thriving future for our members. The ideal candidate will share our passion for learning, friendship, and enjoyment, and will bring valuable skills and experience to our governance team.

FINANCE COMMITTEE - two vacancies

In addition to the Trustee position, we are also looking to fill two vacancies on our Finance Committee.

We seek individuals who have a background in finance and can contribute to the financial oversight and strategic planning of the organisation. These Committee members will play a crucial role in ensuring the financial health and sustainability of the SWI.

We invite applications from members old and new who are enthusiastic about taking on these leadership roles.

Annette remembers a special SWI tradition

Sandhead SWI member Annette Torbet is the latest member to contribute to SWI's new Oral History Project. Her reminiscences about life in rural Wigtownshire sparked a story which has been published in a special edition of *The New Moon*, a magazine produced by The Crichton Trust. Here's the article in full...

Women making the most of the moon

Living in a rural community has many benefits, but the most surprising one is quite unexpected if, like me, you're a townie who moved to the country. The sky at night – and how bright the moon is!

It's difficult to over-estimate the effect a full moon can have on countryside living. Nighttime can seem like noon when the moon's glow bathes lanes and paths, so it's little wonder that members of Scottish Women's Institutes tapped into its illuminating properties and programmed their monthly meeting around it.

"I remember older members telling me that fifty years ago they walked to the meetings by the light of the moon, picking up fellow members along the way," says Annette Torbet of Sandhead SWI in Wigtownshire. "It was widely done around the whole country because the women may not have had access to transport and there were often no streetlights, but they could still find their way to and from the meeting easily. They would walk half a mile there and half a mile back, chatting and laughing as they went."

With a full moon each month it was an ideal way to plan the gettogethers and it harks back to much earlier times in human history. The Harvest moon got its name as it enabled farmers to work late into the night, helping them to bring in the crops from the fields in September. Meanwhile, many of the Moon's wonderfully evocative names – Wolf, Buck, Strawberry, Sturgeon – have come to us from Native American culture and reflect what was abundant at the time.

Perhaps we could rename the moons based on something closer to home and honour those early SWI members. Shall we call them Friendship, Laughter, and Cake?

IMPORTANT NEWS FOR SWI OFFICE BEARERS

There are a few important updates to be aware of, and some deadlines which are set by the charity regulator OSCR, so must be strictly adhered to. Plus, a new event for Office Bearers is in the works...

SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE - WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE A new document is available. Please ensure this document is cascaded out to all relevant members who work with children and young people including SWI Junior Dippers groups and members engaged in community work with children and young people etc. Please see document here - rb.gy/b05lp0

ARCHIVING GUIDANCE - HOW TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE FEDERATION AND INSTITUTE RECORDS EFFECTIVELY SWI Archivist Rachael Muir has written a helpful and easy to follow guide to ensure members fully understand how to take care of their local SWI papers, photographs and items, and the steps to take to successfully archive them. See document here - rb.gy/uv4cui

DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR MEMBERS We kindly request members' feedback on the draft constitution. Due to OSCR requirements, we have a limited window to gather individual members' input. Please note that Federation Office Bearers' suggested changes have already been implemented into this document. Please send any feedback to hello@theswi.org.uk by 15th July, the deadline set by OSCR. See document here - rb.gy/yxvsa5

URGENT SCIO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS Federations and Institutes must acknowledge the SCIO as this is a legal requirement for OSCR. Unfortunately, not all Federations responded by the deadline of 3rd June. If you are still to submit SCIO acknowledgements, please chase them up and get back to us as a matter of urgency. If there are any questions or problems, please let us know at hello@theswi.org.

Calling all Office Bearers

All Office Bearers are invited to a special event in Edinburgh to discuss 'Preventing Institute Closures'.

Federation and Institute Office Bearers are invited to share their views and discuss ideas on revamping groups in Scotland's communities.

Spaces will be allocated on a first-come, first served basis and may be limited per Federation. Our venue, Ps & Gs church, is located in the city centre of Edinburgh. We look forward to welcoming you!

10am-4pm, September 23rd, Ps & Gs church, 10 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RH. Light lunch will be provided. Book here - rb.gy/36jvpd

New fund for SWI Junior Dippers

Great news! The SWI national body has been successful in securing a funding pot of £1,500 for SWI Junior Dippers projects across Scotland. This funding is thanks to the W. M. Mann Foundation, which was particularly interested in members passing on skills and encouraging the growth of SWI Junior members.

We now invite applications for up to £300 from Federations and Institutes around the country. Perhaps you run a Junior Dippers group, or maybe you would love to start a new one – we want to hear from you!

The grant is available to members interested in nurturing the next generation of SWI Junior members. The SWI Board is very clear that the children and young people should eventually become SWI Junior members.

Here are some ideas of how the grant could be used:

- bringing children and young people together to learn new skills, particularly in crafting, cooking and baking activities
- raising awareness of SWI Junior Dippers programme through an open day or digital advertising to promote learning and skill sharing in your local community
- providing opportunities for SWI members to share their much-valued skills with children and young people.

We are keen to hear your ideas! Any Institute or Federation can apply, but please channel your application through your local Federation. Find out more here.

A community celebration

On Saturday 6th January 2024, Killin SWI celebrated its 100th birthday with past and present members, friends and invited guests at The Killin Hotel.

After lunch Killin Drama Club provided an excellent showcase of music, fashion and special events from 1920 to 2024.

A lot has happened in the 100 years since the first meeting, so Fiona Boath, of Killin SWI, remembers the highlights...

- Killin SWRI held its first meeting in January 1924, and by 1925 there were 110 members.
- Meetings were first held in Killin Public Hall (now Tralee & Grants Laundry), in 1936 meetings moved to the newly built McLaren Hall.
- During the war years meetings were held on the week of the full moon to combat the blackout restrictions.
- In 1926 the first children's treat party was held in November to mark Armistice Day, 120 attended that party and were entertained by a ventriloquist from Perth. In 1936 the treat changed to what we now know as the SWI Christmas Party, this tradition continues and in 2023 53 children from Killin Primary attended.
- In 1927 the first whist drive was held to raise money for St Dunstons (now Blind Veterans UK), and these continued until 2011.

- Through the years there has been a variety of guest speakers, and our archives have some syllabuses dating back to 1950.
- Until 1974 – Killin SWI 50th Anniversary – there was a Burns Night in January, for the rest of the 70s this became a social evening and from the 1980s it became The Birthday Party.
- In 2015 the SWRI was renamed SWI Scottish Woman’s Institute but remains to be known affectionately by many as “The Rural”.
- In the last twenty years many of our fellow Institutes have closed. Prior to the pandemic, Killin’s membership had fallen to around 20. When we restarted the decision was taken to move to a smaller hall, and the church community rooms fitted the bill.
- Going into 2024, we’re pleased to say our numbers have increased and we have moved back to the McLaren Hall. We now have 34 members and won the trophy for most new members. We hope to continue to go from strength to strength and welcome members old and new for many years to come.

Cruise the world!

Special member offer

The SWI has teamed up with awardwinning Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines to offer SWI members a very tempting discount – up to 10% for existing customers – with 5% discount in addition to the 5% Oceans Loyalty Club discount. New to Fred. Olsen customers can save 5% on their first sailing with them too and that’s on top of any current offers. Book online here www.fredolsencruises.com/ or call on the booking hotline on 0800 0355 108. To redeem your discount use the code WISCOT10 when booking.

SWI Members get 20% off Edinburgh Woollen Mill

This voucher entitles you to 20% off ALL CLOTHING redeem In store or use online code **‘SWI24’** at WWW.EWM.CO.UK Order by FREEPHONE 0808 202 0242

*20% off on all clothing. Valid until 31/08/2024 at EWM. One voucher per person per transaction. Vouchers cannot be used with other discounts, sale items, discount vouchers or cards. Excludes concessions and alcohol. Voucher is not exchangeable for cash. Product pictured is subject to availability. Actual product colours may vary from image shown. The Edinburgh Woollen Mill. Reg. Address: Pure Pay Retail Ltd, One St Peters Square, Manchester, M2 3DE. Reg. Number: 11741716.

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Exclusive member offer

15% off all flowers, plants and gifts

The SWI has teamed up with Bloom & Wild, the UK’s most loved online florist, to bring you 15% off up to three orders of flowers, plants and gifts. That’s a fantastic offer which could save you up to £35! All orders are delivered in 100% recyclable packaging too! Order online at www.bloomandwild.com SWI MEMBER CODE: **THESWI15B&W**

Around the Rurals

SANDHEAD – SWI Sandhead ladies had a fun bowling afternoon with 16 members – some taking part, others watching in the lovely afternoon sun!

GRANITE CITY SWI - Granite City's summer outing was an 'Angus Adventure'. Members visited independent businesses to support local before hitting Pleasureland in Arbroath! Ladies went back to their youth and went on dodgems, waltzers and played penny falls before ending the day with high tea. A fun-filled, laughter-filled day!

LONMAY SWI - Roberta Watson has been made an honorary member of the SWI, having joined 74 years ago as a newly wed when her mother in law took her to a meeting. Roberta has been an active member over the years and is a great asset to the SWI!

ABERNETHY SWI - The Abernethy ladies took a trip to the Cowden Japanese Garden in Clackmannanshire for a guided tour and lunch in cafe afterwards. The group was very lucky with the weather and had a fabulous day.

Historic outing for Fintray

Report by Jay Turner, Press Secretary for Fintray SWI.

President Janice Ross-Munro welcomed ten members to our June summer outing for a private tour of the key public rooms at Kemnay House.

We were shown around by Alex Burnett who has taken on the management of Kemnay House from her mother and grandmother, whom Fintray members remembered from early North East of Scotland (NEOS) open days. Kemnay House will be participating in NEOS again in September this year.

Alex gave us a very interesting tour interweaving the history of the building with that of her ancestors and the paintings and furniture they collected. Some of the Burnett family had significant European roles and connections in the 18th century and later, which are evident in the contents of the house, and are all clearly now of great historical significance.

Once back in Aberdeenshire, the Burnett lairds focused on modernising farming practices, planting woodland areas on their land, and facilitating railway and other developments.

There were connections with many estates in the shire, including the Grants at Monymusk and the Burnett family at Crathes Estate. Like many of Aberdeenshire's big houses and castles, Kemnay also benefited from the services of John Smith's architectural practice. After the house tour we enjoyed excellent tea and cakes prepared by another family member. Sadly, it was a bit late, cold and damp to walk around the garden, but we can come back for NEOS in the autumn. The grounds are also interesting in terms of landscaping, the plant collections and the paths.

Fintray SWI meeting highlights from last SWI season include: David Loumgair, community fundraising co-ordinator for Charlie House, who spoke about the charity which supports children with life-threatening or life-limiting conditions. The new centre is about to open near Woodend Hospital and will be a much-valued asset to these families. Fintray has raised funds for Charlie House on several occasions.

At the March meeting local food maker Liz Campbell told us all about her company Udney Provender which includes making unusual flavoured vinegars and their own local honeys. Last month our talk was provided by Fintray member Sandra's mother, Shona Docherty, who spoke about the Queen Mother's Clothing Guild. There is a very hard-working team of knitters in the Dornoch and Tain area making socks, jumpers and other useful child and adult clothes for distribution to homeless people and families across Scotland.

For information on Fintray SWI's programme for 2024-2025, contact Jean Skinner at jeanskinner60@yahoo.com. We look forward to welcoming new people, either as members and guests (£5 per visit).

Ayrshire lassies head up north

Nan Brown of Craigie SWI reports on Ayrshire Federation's Inverness Weekend...

The summer sun was shining as 39 Ayrshire Members and friends boarded our coach and set off on our biennial weekend trip, this time to the Inverness area.

Our first stop on route was a coffee break in Alexandria before travelling the beautiful journey up Loch Lomond side, in all its glory, through Tyndrum and to the rugged mountains of Glen Coe.

Second stop was at Fort William for lunch, before heading to our hotel at Carrbridge. Wow, what a fantastic vista our country delivers. Saturday morning started with a trip on the Strathspey Steam train to 'Strathbogle', (aka Broomhouse).

We had a couple of hours in Aviemore for lunch, before a very informative visit to The Highland Folk Museum in Newtonmore reliving how life was in the past. In the evening we were entertained by a piper on the old Packhorse Bridge, Carrbridge.

Sunday, although not so sunny, took us to Inverness and a sail down the Loch, although no one won the prize for spotting Nessie. The rest of the afternoon was spent, at our leisure, in the Highland capital.

Monday came too quickly, as we headed home, via House of Bruar, then Pitlochry for some retail therapy, rounding off a friendly fun packed weekend with dinner at Park Hotel, Kilmarnock.

By hook & by crook

All the fabulous winner in the global Scottish Handcrafts Championship

Class 1: Beadwork Corsage

1st Gillian Chapman

2nd Mary Finlay (Gargunnock SWI)

3rd Christine Cuthbertson

Class 2: Temari ball Christmas decoration

- 1st Ella Purves (Coldstream SWI)
- 2nd Rowena Barnet
- 3rd Jane Currie (Gargunnock SWI)
- 4th Lynne Davidson (Duffus SWI)
- 5th Sarah Plummer (Makerstoun SWI)
- 6th Mary Finlay (Gargunnock SWI)

Class 3: Needle felted sheep

- 1st Jan Little (Newmill & Teviothead SWI)
- 2nd Linda Wallace Smith
- 3rd Jennifer Alexander (Auchencloigh SWI)
- 4th Louise Washington (Coldstream SWI)
- 5th Sarah Plummer (Makerstoun SWI)
- 6th Gary Staerck

Class 4: Picture in wet felting depicting a season

- 1st Linda Wallace Smith
- 2nd Kate Aspinall
- 3rd Jennifer Alexander (Auchencloigh SWI)

Class 5: Corn dolly

- 1st Louise Washington (Coldstream SWI)
- 2nd Eliz Howieson (Newmill & Teviothead SWI)
- 3rd Gillian Chapman

Class 6: Wooden bowl

- 1st Thomas Schyma

Class 7: Origami flower

- 1st Gillian Chapman
- 2nd Rowena Barnet
- 3rd Katharine Huggett (Blackford SWI)

Class 8: Fancy dress costume using recycled materials

- 1st Claire Tuck (Blackford SWI)
- 2nd E Huda Bladon
- 3rd Katharine Huggett (Blackford SWI)

Class 9: Painting - "Seascape"

- 1st Susan Brown
- 2nd Gillian Chapman
- 3rd Katrona Templeton (Kilmaurs SWI)
- 4th Jennifer Alexander (Auchencloigh SWI)
- 5th Mary-Jane Lawrie
- 6th Jane Scullion

Class 10: Pencil drawing depicting a season

1st Louise Washington (Coldstream SWI)

2nd Mary-Jane Lawrie

3rd Gillian Chapman

Class 11: Montage of 4 photos depicting the Four Seasons

1st Caroline Tullie (Newmill & Teviothead SWI)

2nd Rosalind Stuart-Menteth (Innerleithen SWI)

3rd A Frances Rideout

4th Gillian Chapman

5th Jennifer Alexander (Auchencloigh SWI)

6th Elaine Duncan (Baldernock SWI)

Class 12: Photograph - "On my Holidays"

1st Andrew Hall

2nd Mary-Jane Lawrie

3rd Mrs L P Bilton (Abbey St Bathans SWI)

4th Gary Staerck

5th Gillian Chapman

6th Claire Tuck (Blackford SWI)

Class 13: Sewn party dress

1st E Huda Bladen

2nd Jane Currie (Gargunnock SWI)

3rd Katharine Huggett (Blackford SWI)

Class 14: Planter in basketry

1st Malcom Farrow

2nd Louise Washington (Coldstream SWI)

3rd Bryce Reynard

Class 15: Three items, three different crafts displayed on a 30cm square board

1st Rowena Barnet

2nd Julie Christie (Campfield & Glassel SWI)

3rd E Huda Bladen

4th Claire Tuck (Blackford SWI)

5th A Frances Rideout

Anne Marie Maciver (Online SWI member)

Rosalind Stuart Menteth (Innerleithen SWI)

Class 16: A Christmas themed toy (novices)

1st Astrid Harper (Leith SWI)

2nd Gillian Reid

3rd Olive Kirkpatrick (Clarebrand SWI)

Class 17: Summer hat

1st Sue Paice

2nd Mary Finlay (Gargunnock SWI)

3rd E Huda Bladen

Class 18: Summer bag

- 1st Debbie Hayes
- 2nd Mary Finlay (Gargunnock SWI)
- 3rd Alison Cran
- 4th Alice Knight
- 5th Phyllis Hannah (Tarra Gals)
- 6th June Drylie

Class 19 : Adult's cardigan using two or more colours - any ply

- 1st E Huda Bladen
- 2nd Sue Paice
- 3rd Marie Henderson

Class 20: Boot socks, double knitting

- 1st Arlette Colley
- 2nd Lynne Bilton (Abbey St Bathans SWI)
- 3rd Sybil Stuart (Fochabers SWI)
- 4th Susan Marion Ross (Silvie & Ruthven SWI)
- 5th S Grimes (Sorbie SWI)
- 6th E Huda Bladen

Class 21: Pair of mittens - any size, any ply

- 1st E Huda Bladen
- 2nd Sue Paice
- 3rd Arlette Colley
- 4th Jenny Drant
- 5th Mary W Stewart (Lochmaddy SWI)
- 6th Margaret Crawford (Polmont SWI)

Class 22: Neck warmer - any ply

- 1st Vanissia Lingg
- 2nd Jenny Drant
- 3rd Linda Wallace Smith
- 4th Sue Grimes (Sorbie SWI)
- 5th E Huda Bladen
- 6th Margaret Crawford (Polmont SWI)

Class 23: A shawl in fine lace knitting

- 1st Kathleen Anderson
- 2nd Sue Paice
- 3rd Joey Stickle (Unst SWI)
- 4th Mary W Stewart (Lochmaddy SWI)
- 5th Janice Boswell (Ecclesmachan SWI)
- 6th Sybil Stuart (Fochabers SWI)

Class 24: 2-ply extra fine hank of Shetland yarn for lace knitting. Hand spun from Shetland sheep

- 1st Caroline Clapp
- 2nd Rowena Barnet
- 3rd Katharine Huggett (Blackford SWI)

Class 25: Three hanks of hand spun yarn using different natural fibres and dyes inspired by "The Four Seasons"

1st Margaret Beith (Blackford SWI)

2nd Katharine Huggett (Blackford SWI)

3rd E Huda Bladen

Class 26: Hank of fancy yarn i.e. slub, loop or spiral

1st Katharine Huggett (Blackford SWI)

2nd E Huda Bladen

3rd Laura Baigrie

Class 27: An article in homespun yarn - knitted, crocheted or woven

1st Margaret Beith (Blackford SWI)

2nd Katharine Huggett (Blackford SWI)

3rd E Huda Bladen

Class 28: Purse or make-up bag

1st Bennie Museum Weaving Group

2nd Marie Henderson

3rd E Huda Bladen

Class 29: Table runner using own handwoven or handspun material

1st Marie Henderson

Class 30: A 2D or 3D table decoration

1st Julie Christie (Campfield & Glassel SWI)

2nd Kathleen Brander (Tullynessle & Forbes SWI)

Class 31: A bookmark using two or more colours

1st Kathleen Brander (Tullynessle & Forbes SWI)

2nd Mary Finlay (Gargunnock SWI)

3rd Julie Christie (Campfield & Glassel SWI)

Class 32: A decorative mat of any size or shape

1st Mary Finlay (Gargunnock SWI)

2nd Kathleen Brander (Tullynessle & Forbes SWI)

Class 33: Canvaswork, a sampler depicting a garden

1st Caroline Tullie (Newmill & Teviothead SWI)

2nd Doris Dingsdale

3rd Alison Delaney

Class 34: Free machine embroidery, flower(s) - an article/item

1st Katharine Huggett (Blackford SWI)

2nd E Huda Bladen

3rd Sue Paice

Class 35: Item in stumpwork depicting the theme

1st Jane Currie (Gargunnock SWI)

2nd Alison Delaney

3rd Louise Washington (Coldstream SWI)

Class 36: Easter card incorporating embroidery

1st Jane Currie (Gargunnock SWI)

2nd Mary Finlay (Gargunnock SWI)

3rd Linda Stewart

Class 37: Christmas tree skirt, patchwork or applique

1st Ella Purves (Coldstream SWI)

2nd Georgina Jarhe (Coldstream SWI)

Class 38: Patchwork lap quilt - 40" square

1st Rowena Barnet

2nd E Huda Bladen

3rd Alison Delaney

Class 39: Two applique table mats

1st Sue Grimes (Sorbie SWI)

2nd A Frances Rideout

Class 40: Painted stone - flower (up to and including age 4)

1st Harry Lawrie

2nd Wren Hall

3rd Willow Hughes

Class 41: Garden in a baking tin (ages 5-8)

1st Hollie Violet Maciver Pidcock

2nd James Lawrie

3rd Alice McKeown

Class 42: Halloween mask (ages 9-13)

1st Rebecca Ure

2nd Struan Webster

3rd Freya Templeton

Class 43: Model of a snowman (group entry)

1st Hollie Violet Mciver Pidcock

Class 44: Collage depicting a season (by members of SWI Young Dippers groups)

1st Freya Cartney

2nd Katie Morrison

3rd Xanthe Harvey

Class 46: Neck crook with plain horn head

1st Kate Elliot

2nd James R Currie

3rd Iain Paterson

Class 59: Stick made by a lady

1st Kate Elliot

A massive thank you to the SWI RHS team

We couldn't have done it without you!

The SWI has enjoyed links with the Royal Highland Show since the inter-war years, when it helped to promote the government's drive for living healthy lives and making the most of resources at home. Nowadays, the Scottish Handcrafts Championship promotes excellence in crafting and is open to all makers across the world. The Championship is run and managed by a committee of members who set the schedule, arrange judges and set up and dismantle the displays. What a team!

The competition is fierce, and objects are judged not only on their content and the skill involved, but also on how they have been finished.

As the SWI is committed to promoting education and sharing skills, each Royal Highland Show features expert demonstrators. This year's fantastic tutors were Jen Hogg who demonstrated her fantastic sewing aids and The Harris Tweed Florist, Sheena MacRitchie, who had everyone making beautiful Harris Tweed flowers. Heritage crafts were explored, too, with corn dolly making with Elaine Lindsay of Something Corny, while SWI member Helen Bisset taught attendees the art of pyrography, a skill originating from prehistoric times!

THANKS TO OUR FABULOUS STEWARDS!

Mary Stewart

Elizabeth MacGregor

Linda McTurk

Jacqui Christie

Morag Wilson-Mayberry

Janice Boswell

Janet Amos

Monica Stewart

Janis Lauritsen

Emma Richmond

Victoria Watt

Annie Coltherd

Dianne Wilson

Catriona McAuley

Astrid Harper

Irene Young

Janet Wallace

Elizabeth Macdonald

Nicola Mentiplay

Lynne Bilton

Lynda McClurg

Irene Baptie

Norah Meikle

Kathleen Ferrier

Marsha Adams

Doreen Cuthbert

Janey Ferguson

Lynn Wilkins

Morag Ellis

Kate Willis

Emily Willis

Lynne Davidson

Jane Currie

Karen Robb

Dominique Schroder

Kirstie Broadfoot

Lesley Masson

Linda Hartley

Jean Johnstone

Rebekah Searl

Katrina Searl

Margaret Dick

Helen Gibson

Sandra Cartledge

Janice Dagg

Moira Stewart

Catherine Williamson

Elizabeth Farr

Janette Smith

A gift for the future

SWI FOUNDER CATHERINE BLAIR'S FAMILY SUPPORT THE HERITAGE PROJECT

When Scottish Women's Rural Institutes (SWRI) was founded in 1917, it was the brainchild of a formidable woman and ardent suffragette, Catherine Blair.

Now, more than a century on, Catherine's family has been inspired by the SWI's plans to protect its heritage and has donated a precious family heirloom to the organisation.

Catherine's greatgranddaughters, Mairead, Catriona, and Morag have gifted a ginger jar hand painted by Catherine. It depicts her two daughters dancing in the garden and will become a centrepiece for the Visitor Learning Centre currently being planned on The Crichton Estate in Dumfries. This will help tell the story of this innovative and formidable woman.

A busy farmer's wife, Catherine was a champion of women's rights and throughout her life she was a strong voice for rural women in particular.

As the campaign for women's was in full swing, Catherine moved into the barn with her two daughters and a maid. This was just before the 1911 census, and meant she would be counted as a head of house in her own right.

Before the First World War her home at Hoprig Mains, East Lothian, became a safe haven for suffragettes. Initially, women who passed the farm on the long walk down to London were given tea. However, by 1913, Catherine was sheltering suffragettes in her barn.

Catherine was a woman of means, but also a champion of the ordinary Cottar woman. It was a dairy maid's passing comment that she had no one to talk to which spurred her on to help isolated women in rural communities.

When she heard of the new Women's Institutes being established in Canada and England she was inspired to launch the first Scottish Women's Rural Institute in Longniddry.

Catherine saw the benefits that such craft skills could have on women's independence. The idea was that it would enable rural women to meet up with others to ease loneliness and learn new skills such as painting or embroidery which could help them earn them an income of their own.

Catherine's actions led to the biggest women's movement in Scotland with more than 50,000 members around the country. In 1919, shortly after the first Rural was formed, Catherine gave a pottery painting demonstration which led to members of the Rural decorating blank pots, known as biscuit ware. However, as time went on, Catherine established the Mak'Merry studio in a garden outbuilding on her farm. Catherine called herself the Heid Painter and was assisted was Betty Wight, a daughter of the grieve at Hoprig Mains.

Mak'Merry Pottery was then established in 1920 as a trading arm of the SWRI. Using pottery as vehicle for artistic expression, Catherine gave lonely and isolated country

women an opportunity to socialise, make money of their own and be less reliant on their husbands sharing money.

Initially, members invested small sums of money and produced food items for sale – but they soon moved into producing fine crafts, one of which was pottery decoration. The Mak'Merry studio became a commercial business. Pots were bought in from areas such as Bo'ness and Kirkcaldy and decorated. By 1932 its success was such that 'Mak'Merry' pottery was registered as a trade mark. Much of the decoration was inspired by the local area with fruit and flowers a common theme. However, inspiration was also drawn from the designs being developed at the Bough studio in Edinburgh. Mak'Merry pieces were frequently highly coloured using blue, yellow, red, green and turquoise.

Popular at home, Mak'Merry also developed an overseas market with pieces sent abroad to the likes of Canada, Egypt, and the USA.

During the years, pottery painting classes were organised in various Rural Institutes. Items were sold at the Highland Shows and bought by Queen Mary and the late Queen Mother.

Adapting suffragette slogans and adding her own telling phrases, Catherine produced items with slogans such as 'Deeds Not Words', 'For Home and Country' and SWI's motto: 'If you know a good thing pass it on', most items are now in museum collections. However, few displays tell of the enormous social history they hold. They symbolise a tumultuous period of change in rural Scotland.

Because of Catherine Blair's vision, women went on to take up governance roles, become an army of helpers throughout World War II, and work with government departments to upskill women in matters such as hygiene in the home, growing food and providing for others. All while bettering their own lives.

Progressing a unique partnership

SECURING A HOME FOR SWI HERITAGE HAS MEMBERS AT ITS CORE

The future of the SWI has been in members' hands since 1917, but the need for clear decision making is especially important now if we are to secure a viable future for the SWI.

The creation of an income generating Visitor Learning Centre was set out by the Board of Trustees in the SWI Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

When an opportunity for a collaborative partnership with The Crichton Trust was identified in late 2023, a new SWI Heritage Group was established to ensure that members are involved at the project's core. In May, members met with architects and members of The Crichton Trust to offer their ideas on what members would require from a Visitor Learning Centre.

Members will soon be invited to give the architects their thoughts on how the building can be used, and how it can help the SWI thrive for future generations. You too can help shape the future.

Members are leading the way

The collaborative partnership has had members at its heart since the SWI Strategic Plan was developed in 2022.

Early November 2023

Federation office bearers attend an event on The Crichton Estate in Dumfries. 73 office bearers from across Scotland look at Crichton plans, assess opportunities for the SWI, and take a tour of the building which could become a shared Visitor Learning Centre.]

Late November 2023

A new SWI Heritage Group is established to ensure that members are involved at the project's core.

December 2023

The Board of Trustees approve progressing with the partnership, affirming plans to safeguard SWI's heritage.

March 2024

Representatives of the Boards of SWI and The Crichton Trust meet in Edinburgh to progress their collaborative partnership on a nationally significant project.

Early May 2024

Members of the SWI Heritage Group meet with architects, O'Donnellbrown, and members of The Crichton Trust in Glasgow to offer their ideas on what members would require from a Visitor Learning Centre.

Late May 2024

Leading academics with a focus on women's history, Scotland's past, and rural communities meet with the team from O'Donnellbrown Architects. During a tour of the Museum of Rural Life they offer their insight into creating a fit-for-purpose research and education facility. This will help to ensure that the Visitor Learning Centre will focus on past, present, and future heritage of the SWI.

"It's vital that our history is not lost"

MEET THE THREE POWERHOUSES STEERING THE SWI HERITAGE GROUP

Susie Finlayson of Roxburghshire Federation is the new Chair of the SWI Heritage Group

"I've been an SWI member for more than 10 years and am currently Federation President for Roxburghshire in the Scottish Borders and a member of SWI's Board of Trustees.

I live in Hawick with my two springer spaniels and an occasional husband (when he's not working overseas!). I'm passionate about handicrafts, especially embroidery and knitting, having been taught both crafts by my granny who was a very typical rural lady of her day.

I'm really excited by the Heritage Project and its potential – it must both preserve our records and artefacts while also bringing the stories and voices of rural women to the attention of a much wider audience. This is a vital part of our history and one which must not be lost."

Heather Coutts of West Lothian Federation shares the Vice Chair role

"The Heritage Group really pricked my interest and I just had to stick my nose in! We have got to save our heritage and the preservation of all things Rural is sooo important!

I first went to the Rural with my mother when I was about 10 and I loved it but work and three children meant it was 2000 before I had time to join a Rural in my nearest village. I was secretary for a good few years, then Federation Secretary, incorporating Show Secretary.

When it closed after Covid, I joined Ecclesmachan which is a happy, happy, lovely friendly group. I also fell in with the Lady Zoomers, established at the start of Covid and still running today – it saved our collective sanity!"

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Phyllis Hannah of Ross-shire Federation is fellow Vice Chair

"I've been a member of the SWI since around 1998, and have belonged to three Federations starting at Stirling & West Perthshire with Ruskie Institute, then Banffshire Federation with Auchindoun Institute, in Dufftown. I am now with Ross-shire Federation and was the power behind reinventing the Muir of Ord Institute when it faced closure in 2022 and rebranded to the now Tarra Gals SWI.

I've been Show Secretary for our two annual shows since 2017, and inherited the management of the trophies which spiked my interest in the names behind them. When I discovered there was very little known about the ladies I started my own research which grew arms and legs and became an almost complete history of the Ross-shire Federation since its first Institute in 1918."

Could you help shape our story?

SWI'S ARCHIVING PROJECT OPENS FOR MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

A vital element of the SWI Heritage Project is the SWI Archiving Project which starts this month (July 2024).

Key SWI documents, photographs and crafted items are being stored in special conditions at The Ballast Trust in Johnstone, and it's there that our Project Archivist, Rachael Muir, has been organising artefacts. She now has them categorised well enough to open volunteering opportunities to SWI members.

In this exciting development, Rachael and The Ballast Trust are willing to host up to five volunteers on Thursdays from the end of July. Members of Largs Institute will be among the first to volunteer as the new group expressed interest in getting hands-on with the SWI Archiving Project.

Initially, there will be two strands of volunteering work. Firstly, the Central Council minutes will be catalogued in detail. These tell the fascinating story of the SWI's governance throughout the decades until 2018 when the Board of Trustees was formed.

As a window on all National business and Federation reports these hold vital information on the role women played in helping the country get back on its feet after the First World War, the challenges they faced during the Second World War, and the way women adapted to more peaceful modern times. The members' magazine, then called Scottish Home & Country will be catalogued by members too, and this holds a raft of wonderful stories and insights into SWI life. The magazine's content will be scanned and digitised, which members can also assist with.

Perhaps your Institute would like to be involved? Or you as an individual? We would love to hear from you! Find more information here - www.theswi.org.uk/heritage/

Volunteering opportunities begin at The Ballast Trust, 18-20 Walkinshaw Street, Johnstone PA5 8AB on 25th July, from 10-4pm, and Thursdays thereafter. All volunteering is by appointment only, and volunteers must bring laptops. To get involved email hello@theswi.org.uk with 'SWI Archiving Project' in the subject line.

HOW TO DO YOUR BIT AT HOME

One of the first actions taken by the SWI Heritage Group was to request guidance for all members on how to archive their own local Federation and Institute artefacts.

We're delighted to report that Rachael has created a member-specific guide to help you assess the items in your care and how to categorise, store, and archive your items.

By following The Ballast Trust's tried and tested process it will ensure that all work done by members across the country is consistent. The guidance is available here - rb.gy/uv4cui

Inspiring young women of Scotland

The Young Women's Movement celebrates the next wave of the fairer sex

Meet just some of the exceptional women who the Young Women's Movement named their 30 Under 30 for 2024.

The Young Women's Movement is Scotland's national organisation for young women and girls' leadership and rights. The charity supports all young women and girls across Scotland to lead change on issues that matter to them, and the SWI is proud to support their 30 Under 30 programme.

It recognises young women and girls in Scotland who are creating change in their own lives, their communities and in society. This could be through their job, their school, a voluntary role or in their day-to-day life, and nominees can be from any walk of life.

The charity aims to showcase a range of experiences and achievements, and is keen to

hear about any and all inspiring stories – maybe you have an exceptional young woman in your family or friend group?

If so, email your story to hello@yougwomenscot.org

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Sophie Wallace, 26, Glasgow

A journalist, broadcaster and senior PR executive, Sophie Wallace has spent the last decade paving the way for women with working-class roots in the media.

Raised in a tiny, rural village in Falkirk, she began writing a weekly column when she was just 15 for her local newspaper, before graduating with a BA (Hons) in Multimedia Journalism from GCU in 2019. She went on to enjoy a career reporting for some of Scotland's best-loved local radio stations, sharing stories that were closest to the hearts of the communities in which she was based.

Sophie began working at STV shortly after graduation and quickly secured a role as a regular news presenter, anchoring and producing the station's late and weekend bulletins. At the age of just 23, she made her debut on the STV News at Six, Scotland's most watched news programme, alongside veteran anchor John Mackay, before travelling to London to work as a reporter and producer at Good Morning Britain.

Now a senior PR executive at leading marketing firm Tigerbond, Sophie has helped raise thousands of pounds for children living in poverty and Scotland's unpaid carers.

She's passionate about supporting women from working-class households into careers in media and is often invited to deliver talks to students and school pupils who have an interest in journalism and writing.

+++

Kirsty Pallas, 29, Oban

Kirsty is a mountaineering and rock-climbing instructor and has been a member of Oban Mountain Rescue for 10 years.

She's also a trainer for Scottish Mountain Rescue on their rigging and avalanche rescue courses, teaching team members from across Scotland the skills for working in more technical and risky environments.

Coming from a mixed heritage background, Kirsty is very aware that the outdoors has historically been dominated by white, middle-class, straight men.

Over the last few years she has worked on increasing diversity and inclusivity within the outdoors, both through her organisation Our Shared Outdoors, and her job at Mountaineering Scotland, by raising awareness within the community and reaching out to affinity groups.

Emma Prach, 19, Cumbernauld

Emma is a young creative, campaigner and advocate for intersectionality in mental health. They are the founder and CEO of the non-profit organisation Project Sonrisa which aims to start more meaningful conversations about mental health by engaging people in the transformative powers of the creative arts.

Project Sonrisa was founded during the Covid-19 pandemic and has since won awards and continues to make a positive impact. Their documentary *Our Minds*, which Emma produced, directed, and filmed, explored topics that are under-represented in mental health such as the LGBTQ+ community, religion, rural deprivation and much more.

Emma is also a Trustee and Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament, campaigning and advocating for the voices of young people in their constituency. Emma's work in SYP includes a campaign they ran 'Assess Your Access', which encouraged and raised awareness of accessible practices when using social media.

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Kathryn Smith, 24, Paisley

Kathryn dedicates her time to helping to support vulnerable individuals and to advance the rights of under-represented groups. Her dissertation focused on Digital Feminist Activism in Scotland and she was able to offer support to feminist groups promoting social change.

She then joined the National Advisory Council for Women and Girls in Scotland where she gathered opinions and views on a range of intersectional issues within her community to feedback to the council. Kathryn regularly works with UN Women UK, serving as a delegate on their Commission on the Status of Women, and is currently in conversation with them on a project to tackle gender-based violence online. Similarly, she worked with the Obama Foundation to support girls' rights to an education, and campaigns have ranged from period poverty's impact on education and diversifying curriculums.

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Amy Lee Shergold, 28, Glasgow

Amy Lee is a PhD Researcher at University of Glasgow's School of Cancer Sciences. Her thesis for her PhD focused on cancer immunology at the CRUK Scotland Institute (Beatson) and in her final year, she received an award as the most promising PhD student of the year.

Being from humble roots in Glasgow's Denniston, she is particularly interested in improving accessibility in STEM for people from marginalised backgrounds and improving the communication between scientists and the public.

Amy Lee uses her knowledge to help Scottish charity GIRLvsCANCER support people impacted by cancer, writing on medical and social consequences of cancer, interviewing people with cancer and helping to plan the future of the charity.

Supporting rural women of the world

ANGELA CASSELS ON HER 'DAY JOB' AS TREASURER FOR SWI SISTER ORGANISATION, ACWW

How did you get involved with Associated Countrywomen of the World?

I'm a member of Shiskine Institute on the Isle of Arran, and Alison Burnett is also a member there. She has been involved with ACWW for many years, having been Treasurer and then Vice President until May last year. She piqued my interest in the organisation, so I became an individual member four years ago, and Shiskine Institute joined the worldwide community too. Alison asked me to put my name forward for the International Treasurer role last year and I had to think about it quite a lot before I said yes!

It's not an easy job, but it has been fascinating for me, having to look at budgets and money coming in all the time! The sixteen Board members, lead by World President, Magdie de Kock, are all volunteers and come from fourteen different countries

The SWI national body is a member organisation – what does that involve?

Yes, the SWI has been a supporter of the ACWW for a very long time. Madge Watt, one of ACWW's founder was also the founder of the Women's Institute movement and was the inspiration for SWI's founder Catherine Blair, so we go that far back! So the SWI pays an annual fee to the ACWW and has a commitment to the future of the organisation. Any member of the SWI can also join the ACWW in their own right. Being an organisational member means you have a say in what the ACWW does, and it gives rural women in Scotland a voice. Even on Arran you see the hands of women in many of the businesses. Quite often it is the man who may head up the business, but then when one looks at who else is involved, there is usually a woman or women who are an important force.

Would you like more SWI members to become involved?

Alison and I have talked about advocacy and about trying to do something with the MSPs and the Scottish Government. but it would be good to get women from different parts of the country together to discuss opportunities to increase advocacy for rural women. We want to raise issues that are part of women's lives because women are part of the future. I think Institutes and Federations would find that quite interesting, as part of their contribution to women's lives worldwide.

What kind of projects does the ACWW support?

We did a very big project in Mongolia last year, working with a local organisation supporting women who had been subjected to familial abuse. The project involved was a conference with 300 rural women from one part of Mongolia, all of whom had been in abusive relationships. The women came together to support each other, talk about the issues, and find ways of advocating for change in their own community. The ACWW's role involves funding and helping to support the local organisation, and we have UNESCO backing and funding for the project too. I was just so proud when ACWW got Police Scotland involved in the project as we looked at what they were doing for women who had been identified as suffering abuse within their home and it was very good. So Police Scotland put together a presentation of the work that they do, how they handle it, and how they work through with the court, and it was translated into Mongolian.

Another project, jointly funded by UNESCO, is a grassroots project in Romania for youngsters who have come out of Ukraine because of the war. The local education department is putting quite a lot of money into these children as many are being helped in Romanian schools. ACWW is now funding a project that uses agriculture to help them. Because it's such a hands-on activity, it's helping to ease their trauma, and helping them to talk. There will be numbers of groups of youngsters helped in that sort of way over the coming months.

All of these projects are being written up and are available on our website so that other communities around the world can learn from them. They will be able to see what has been done and say 'we could get that', 'we could do that', or 'we could get help from local funders'. So it's about making ACWW's work sustainable.

Is ensuring the projects remain in place after your funding ends important?

Absolutely! The way we delivered the work of the ACWW has changed. We used to fund a large number of small projects with a smallish amount of money. Having reviewed that, we decided that it was good for that small group of women but it didn't mean that when the funding stopped, that activity would continue. So, we changed the strategy to focus on smart agriculture, rural women's health, and education and community development. Now the projects are funded in a more sustainable way because we do some capacity building with the people in the project. We fund it, but a local organisation works with us to ensure that when our funding finishes they are committed to the project, and continues to support it. Over the last year, local organisations have really come on board and they see the benefit. They not only see money coming in, but also that they have a role to play later on.

Tell us about the UNESCO link...

The work that's done locally in projects depends on some of the work that's done in UNESCO and the other organisations under the UN banner. A lot of that is at a very high level, has to be there in order to affect governments and local politics. Then the two come together, so we get funding, mainly from UNESCO, which helps with certain one-off projects. Over the years, we have gained not just consultative status with UNESCO – since we were part of UNESCO since 1947– but also, the member of staff who is the advocacy director, has chaired one of the consultative committees for the last two years. That means we're quite influential, along with the group of big international women's organisations in terms of what happens in UNESCO.

And you're recently started podcasts?

Yes, again, in partnership with UNESCO we are doing podcasts about women in leadership roles. They are short, about 20 minutes or so, and UNESCO thinks this is an important way of trying to give women more confidence to think of themselves as leaders, and to challenge things that they're coming up against in their lives.

Each year SWI members get involved with ACWW's Walk the World – tell us about that...

At the end of April every year, we have a day where women walk the world, all in their local areas, with their friends. It's a great day to join with fellow ACWW sisters worldwide in raising awareness and funds for our vital work. We call it Walk the World and you'll find a compilation of pictures and little bits of video about it on ACWW's Facebook page. This year, our Institute did Walk the World on Arran. The weather was atrocious but we walked from the village to a local farm park, where we were very kindly given tea and coffee and dried out in the big shed.

On the same day, there are rural women across the world walking with either something on them to say, 'We are walking the world for ACWW', or carrying a banner – you'll see examples on Facebook. We were just a group of eight, but it was really good to walk together and feel that we were doing something that probably millions of women across the world were also doing that day. All thinking about the same things, such as thinking about women's health, women's ability to lead, women's challenges, all these sorts of issues.

To find out more about ACWW and the work they do in communities worldwide, go to acww.org.uk

Thank you!