

Guidance on preserving the archives of Scottish Women's Institutes



Introduction

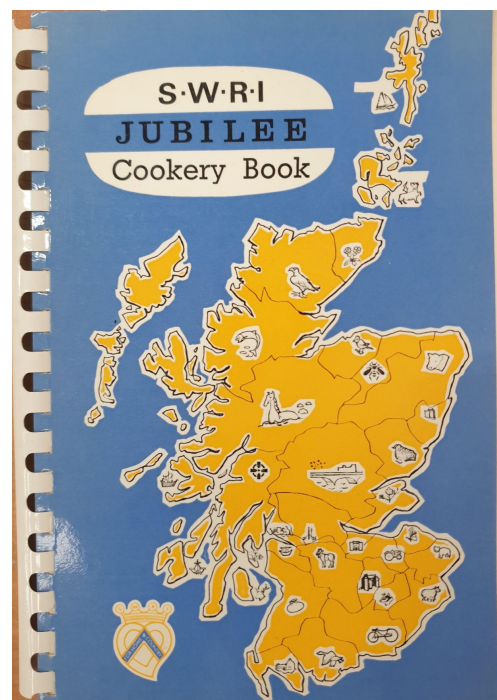
"...it was said that the SWRI was the greatest social development in rural Scotland for 100 years." (Report, Central Council 1963-1966. Archive ref. SWI/1/1/1/1/9)

The heritage of the Scottish Women's Institutes represents a significant aspect of Scottish society. It chronicles the transformative journey of women's rural life from 1917 onwards, highlighting their activities, challenges, and resilience. The collection also showcases the pivotal role of women in governance at local, regional, and national levels.

Furthermore, the collection illustrates the educational activities that have empowered women over the decades, enabling them to participate in society and seek personal growth and empowerment.

Work is underway to further our understanding of the records held within the SWI Head Office archive by cataloguing them in accordance with international archive standards. This will help to improve our knowledge of what records exist, whilst also increasing their accessibility. However, this work does not address the many records that have been created by SWI Institutes and Federations across the country over the last century, that are now being stored in members' spare bedrooms, attics, living rooms, and garages.

An Institute and/or Federation's history and activities can be understood from its historical records and memorabilia, so it is vitally important that each Institute manages their records accordingly so they aren't lost or accidentally disposed of.



This guidance explains what type of records you might find in your Institute, and what to do if caring for these records becomes a concern or issue. It will also provide future options for their preservation.

Why do we manage archives?

Exposure to an organisation's memory can show today's members that your predecessors have already weathered uncertainties, technological and organisational change, growth and recession. Whatever your organisation, whatever your sector, your archives capture today's experience, knowledge and know-how for tomorrow's teams and members.



Many of the records held by Institutes form what is known as a 'community archive' where the subject-matter of the collection is a community of people, and in this case, the records reflect the women of the SWI community in a specific geographical location.

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Why are the historical records of the SWI important?

With over 100 years of history, the journey of the SWI and its members showcases the lives of women and the challenges they have faced. We learn from the past through records and information, which allows the SWI to present to future generations, and draw inspiration and guidance from the experiences of Scottish women. The records of the SWI exemplify the organisational resilience of the organisation across the decades, overcoming challenges such as wars, the digital revolution, and the recent pandemic, and can demonstrate how women have adapted and supported one another. These themes are of huge interest to the academic community, and particularly social historians.

The SWI is now embarking on a significant heritage project which includes cataloguing the archive of Head Office, developing an oral history project, and seeking a long-term home for the SWI's historical collection. As part of this, it is also important that we gather a further understanding of SWI records being held within Institutes, Federations and other archive services, to help fill gaps in the SWI's story.

Institutes play an essential role in the survival of their own archives. If records are not managed carefully, or deposited with a local archive service, they can be at risk from:

- destruction (accidental or purposeful)
- poor physical storage (leading to damp, mould, and pests)
- loss and splitting of records, which leads to loss of context
- failure to manage any personal data contained within records

Advantages of archives for institutes and its members:

- Institutes can use archive material for marketing purposes, such as on social media
- Provide documentary evidence for incorporation into website and timelines
- Provide inspiration for future activities, conferences, and events
- Increases pride for members into a club's heritage
- Opportunities for sharing unique stories from a club's past

What records should an Institute be keeping as part of their archive?

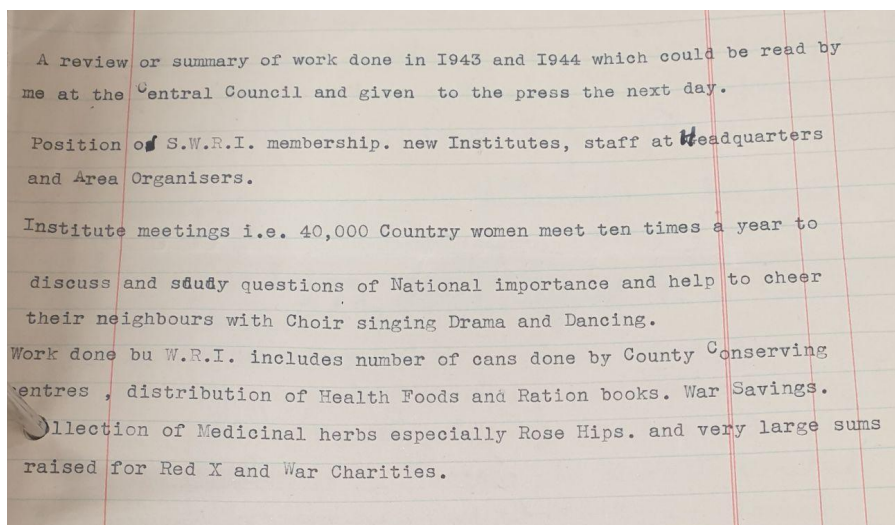
Key records include:

- Constitutions/Rules/Memorandum & Articles of Association
- Board and committee minutes
- AGM minutes and papers
- Annual reports and accounts
- Membership records
- Publications produced by the organisation
- Photographs and publicity materials
- Scrapbooks and albums
- Objects, such as trophies, awards, and artwork by members

A full list of suggested records can be found in the Appendix.

What should we do if we have historical records relating to SWI activities?

Historical records are best held in environmentally stable and secure conditions to reduce physical deterioration, and to prevent loss or damage. Improving packaging and storage is one method of achieving this. For example, reboxing records using acid-free archive boxes, and ensuring items are stored off the ground, and away from any water sources helps to improve preservation conditions.



An Institute may wish to continue to manage their records locally, and retain ownership and responsibility with members. If that is the case, then the Surveying Officer recommends registering the archive in the directory of archives managed by the Community Archives and Heritage Group. A list of records should also be sent to the Surveying Officer as part of the larger mapping exercise taking place in 2024.

<https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/contribute-to-the-site/add-archive-directory>

Alternatively, professional archive facilities can also be provided by your local-authority archive service. Should an Institute no longer be able to store their historical records appropriately, advice on depositing the records can be provided by your local-authority archive team. The UK National Archive's 'Find an Archive' search facility includes archive services across Scotland, including several examples of SWRI records already deposited with local archive services:

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive>

- Fort William branch,
<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/N13698599>
- Rousay branch,
<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/N13921447>

- Argyll Federation,
<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/N13643774>

We want to donate our records to our local archive service - what next?

In the first instance, and time allows, prepare a list summarising the records that you have in your care. Secondly, notify your local-authority archive service. They will help you review any records you might have and provide assistance for their transfer, and will be able to tailor advice accordingly from any list you can provide. A list can be simple but should provide clear information on the different types of records, and their location eg. number-up boxes. For example, the following key information should be included:

Description of record	Dates	Extent	Location
<i>Minute books</i>	<i>1932-1967</i>	<i>5 volumes</i>	<i>Box 1</i>
<i>Recipe book</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1 booklet</i>	<i>Box 1</i>
<i>Box of photographs</i>	<i>c.1990s</i>	<i>4 bundles</i>	<i>Box 2</i>

Finally, the records list should also be sent to the Surveying Officer as part of a larger mapping exercise to understand where records of the SWRI are located.

If you have a significant amount of records and would like an archive survey or guidance on any records that you hold in the first instance, please contact the Business Archives Surveying Officer for Scotland by email: surveyingofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

Further resources:

Community Archives & Heritage Group (CAHG)

CAHG promotes the work of community archives across the UK & Ireland. Community archives are records that remain in the community, rather than cared for by the local authority archive service, or held privately). Their resources include guidance on digitising, cataloguing, displaying collections online, and caring for objects.

<https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/>

Scottish Council on Archives (SCA)

The SCA provides leadership for the archives and records management sector in Scotland. They host events for the archives community, and deliver advice and research.

<https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/>

Archives and Records Association

The Archives and Records Association is the leading professional body for the UK and Ireland's record-keeping sector. This includes archives, records management and conservation.

<https://www.archives.org.uk/>

Appendix

Records for Permanent Preservation



Key Records

The following records are of historical interest both to the business and the wider research and archive community.

- Constitutions/Rules/Memorandum & Articles of Association
- Statutory registers e.g. register of directors
- Board and committee minutes
- AGM minutes and papers
- Annual reports and accounts
- Summary membership records
- Publications produced by the business
- Photographs and publicity materials
- Scrapbooks and albums

Other Record Types

The following records should also be selected for permanent retention:

- Records that summarise the businesses key aims and objectives
- Records that record key events in the businesses history or local area
- Records that document the company's ownership of assets
- Records that document the businesses relationship with key bodies such as the local Council or industry bodies

Breakdown of Key Record Types

1. Corporate/ Governance

- Memorandum and Articles of Association
- Minutes
- Annual Reports
- Directors' Reports
- Board papers

- Business continuity plans
- Company prospectus
- Register of directors
- Register of shareholders
- Trademarks and patent files
- Major project files
- Major contracts and agreements
- Business plan
- Business correspondence
- Company structure

2. Financial

- Journal ledgers
- Day books
- Nominal and Private ledgers
- Annual accounts
- External audit reports
- Finance minutes
- Balance sheets
- Profit/ loss sheets
- Pre 1920s invoices (if detailed)

3. Production

- Stock books
- Technical records: maps, plans, drawings
- Repair books
- Product files
- Job files (particularly significant projects)
- Laboratory books
- Pattern books/ sample books
- Glass plate negatives, photos, negatives of machinery/ products
- Product manuals

4. Communications

- Press cuttings and articles
- Key media events
- Corporate communications
- Speeches
- Company promotional brochures
- Circulars to shareholders
- Corporate correspondence

5. Human resources

- Manuals and employee handbooks
- Organisational charts
- Performance management
- Training manuals and literature
- Accident register

6. Staff records

- Photos of awards, sports and social events
- Staff photos
- Wages books
- Staff clubs and societies
- Staff magazines and publications
- Memorials/ plaques
- Committee minutes

7. Property records

- Property deeds
- Asset registers
- Photographs of premises
- Architectural plans and drawings of site/ buildings

8. Sales and marketing

- Advertising material
- Product packaging, samples, pattern books
- Point of Sale
- Marketing campaign literature
- Brochures
- Market research
- Major customer files
- Marketing plans (target customers etc)
- Order books
- Price lists
- Product and service catalogues
- Launch events
- Sales figures

9. Technical records

- Plans, drawings and photographs of products
- General arrangement/ as built plans/ final drawings
- Record sets
- Sketches (for 'significant' projects)

10. Objects

- Memorabilia
- Point of Sale
- Glasses, jugs, awards, certificates
- Signs
- Advertising
- Artwork

NOT to be archived

- Post 1920s invoices, cheque stubs, bank books, receipts
- Medals/ trophies/ objects
- Cash books (only retain if top level ledgers are missing)
- Postal books
- petty cash
- Publications by trade associations that can be found in libraries
- Other companies' manuals/ advertising
- Shareholding vouchers
- Timetables
- Plans and maps duplicated elsewhere
- Quotations
- Tender documents
- Daily timesheets
- Duplicates
- Daily work in progress sheets
- Superseded plans