



Welcome to Members' news – Heritage News Edition

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 registered Scottish Charity No. SC011901

Bringing our rich history to life

Welcome to this special update on the major project which will protect the SWI's artefacts, historical documents and photos which tell our story to the world.

With documents charting the set up of the very first Institutes, Mak'Merry pottery made by our founder Catherine Blair, and letters to and from the Royal Family, plus a whole lot more, academics across Scotland are very excited by the wealth of materials held in our care.

Over the next few months we will keep you up-to-date with key developments – and how you can help us bring some of the stories to life...

Protecting our heritage

The SWI archiving project

The SWI's offices hold a trove of remarkable artefacts which feature stories showcasing the evolution of women's roles, contributions, and unwavering resilience over time. From the initial governance documents to delicate craft items gifted by the Needlework Development Scheme (NDS), this collection encapsulates the essence of the SWI journey. It serves as a touching reminder of the remarkable spirit that defines women in rural communities.

As we navigate the cost-of-living crisis, a changing economy, and decades of membership decline, the urgency of safeguarding the SWI heritage becomes increasingly important. This is why we're spearheading a comprehensive archiving project, estimated to span two years or more.

The imminent sale of the Edinburgh office has heightened concerns about preserving SWI's heritage. We have a leaving date of September 22nd and will be relocating to a more economical office within Edinburgh in the next month. We will update you on that shortly.

While members have recently curated specific items, such as loan box craft materials, most artefacts have never undergone a professional survey or historical archiving process. This underscores the need to prioritise the protection of these invaluable historical assets which are of national importance.

The overall aim of the archiving project is to establish a curated and easily accessible heritage collection for the SWI. This includes creating an oral history repository, where the voices and memories of SWI members are immortalised alongside physical artefacts.

Who's involved?

To ensure the proper initiation of the archiving process and project, we have collaborated with many external stakeholders who share an interest in SWI heritage. These esteemed collaborators have generously provided guidance and expertise to advance this significant and ambitious heritage project. Our valued partners include: The University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, University of Stirling, National Galleries Scotland, National Museums Scotland, Craft Scotland, Traditional Arts+Culture Scotland, Business Archives Council and Historic Environment Scotland.

How will it be funded?

We are exploring potential funding support towards the archiving project, however if we were a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), this would significantly bolster funding opportunities. Over the next few weeks you will be asked your opinion on the SWI becoming a SCIO. This will not affect the current constitution but will enable us to seek major funding for all aspects of the heritage project as well as general SWI activities.

Archive storage space in Scotland is scarce, however we have been hugely successful in teaming up with **The National Archives Council** and **Ballast Trust** to secure a storage and archiving facility that will accommodate our needs over the next two years.

Special event

Share your story with us!

As members are the driving force behind this project, you can contribute invaluable insights, knowledge, historical perspectives, and unwavering support. For instance, did you walk to meetings by the light of the moon? Were you there when the SWI was invited to tea at Balmoral? Or have you been a member for many decades and have a story to tell?

We warmly invite all members who have an interest in this project, whether you have a specific story to tell or would just like to know what's happening, to join us for an informal online evening session. Our CEO, Diane Cooper, will explain how members can get involved to help us tell the SWI story and answer any queries you may have.

To be a part of this informative discussion on August 31st at 6pm, please reserve your spot by booking here **rb.gy/war2o** – all welcome!

Women In Scotland

Celebrating heritage at the National Conference

Heritage will be at the heart of the themes of the National Conference in Perth this year. SWI member Gillian Fraser-Paterson will be performing some key stories from the SWI archives and expert speakers will be sharing their knowledge throughout the event.

Adele Patrick | Founder, Glasgow Women's Library – **rb.gy/cba47**

Mary Lewis | Endangered Crafts Manager, Heritage Crafts – **rb.gy/iifbd**

Storytelling experience

Member and storytelling expert Gillian Fraser-Paterson will treat us to a special historical performance.

Message to Conference delegates

As the Conference nears excitement mounts and final arrangements are being made – keep an eye on your inbox for important updates on speakers and special events...

On **August 15th** you will receive an email featuring a full rundown of all the special happenings at the Conference.

On **September 1st** you will receive an email with your delegate pack and full programme.

Still to get tickets?

Check out the full schedule at **theswi.org.uk/wis2023/** for this two-day celebration of all things SWI.

Passes start at just £35 for members and £65 for non-members – and include lunch and refreshments!

Book your place here **bitly.ws/yqqb** or call our friendly team on 0131 225 1724 (during office hours) and we can take your booking over the phone.

Thank you!