



## **Welcome to Issue 25 - 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](http://www.theswi.org.uk)**

Scottish Women's Institutes SCIO SC053058

## **Members make the SWI AGM a huge success!**

Many thanks to the many members around the country who made the AGM such an inspiring event,

National President Mary Burney was joined by fellow Board members Karen Johnson, Susie Finlayson and May Tosh to present reports on a successful year. They spoke about:

- Transformational change
- Membership growth and value
- Financial sustainability
- Preserving our heritage

Karen also hosted the membership panel section of the AGM, which celebrates members' achievements around the country. Attendees heard from Audrey Gibb of Cranloch SWI as the Institute successfully celebrated a centenary and managed to get a card from Queen Camilla! Caroline Hide from Orkney Federation then filled us in on exciting partnership work with Men's Sheds ahead of Orkney's plans for its 100th anniversary celebration, and May MacCormick of Mennock SWI then told us more about her project to preserve Sanquhar Knitting, and Wendy Cook and Gill Faragher from SWI's award-winning new group in Largs explained how they turned challenges into successes to scoop The Retson Family Trophy for the newest Institute with the most members.

Brenda MacLeod, Vice Convenor of Skills and Events Committee, reported on the committee's progress in the past year. The commitment to skills development is evident across regions, with classes ranging from temari balls to heritage crafts .

Thanks once again to our marvellous technical assistants Maz Thorn of Powmill SWI and Kath Hewson of Ettrickbridge SWI who ensured the smooth running of the event!

The AGM is now available to view online. You can see it here [shorturl.at/gcYke](https://shorturl.at/gcYke)

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## **Board Trustee and Finance Committee Vacancies**

A short film was made as a tribute to Joan Hutchison of Shetland Federation, who has been an active and much-loved member of the Board of Trustees for the SWI. Joan got so much out of being able to help shape SWI's future, so perhaps you would like to follow in her footsteps and take up a National position in the SWI.

We have the following vacancies, and all members can apply.

### **VACANCY – Board Trustee**

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

## **VACANCIES – Finance Committee**

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 Scottish Women’s Institutes.

We invite applications from members who are enthusiastic about taking on these leadership roles and believe they can make a positive impact on our organisation. Joining our Board of Trustees or Finance Committee is an opportunity to work collaboratively with others who are committed to the mission and values of the SWI, and to help shape the future of our organisation.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

If this is something that you are interested in, please download the relevant information pack and complete and return the application form by 31st July 2024.

- Go here for [Board Trustee Recruitment Pack](https://shorturl.at/Qj5xl) – **shorturl.at/Qj5xl**
- Go here for [Finance Committee Recruitment Pack](https://shorturl.at/1bBaJ) – **shorturl.at/1bBaJ**

Alternatively, you would like to have a chat and find out more about what's involved, please contact Chief Executive, Diane Cooper for further information **diane.cooper@theswi.org.uk**

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## **Congratulations to the 2024 winners of the membership trophies and awards!**

The Barbara Brookshire Trophy is for the institute with the greatest number of new members during the year. It is awarded to Corstorphine who have 21 new members. Congratulations Corstorphine. Keep up the good work!

The Stoneycreek Trophy goes to the institute with the second highest increase in membership. This year we have joint winners, Killin and Dollar, who have 15 new members each. Well done and congratulations ladies!

The Retson Family Trophy honours the newest Institute with the most members. This year it goes to Largs who have 54 members... well done and congratulations to you all!

We are currently locating the trophies and will get them out to the winners as soon as possible.

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## **Joan's cards bring royals cheer**

Royal Mail was exactly that recently when the SWI received two lovely messages from the Windsors...

The lovely notes were in response to Get Well messages sent on behalf of SWI members to King Charles III and Catherine, Princess of Wales.

The original cards were beautifully crafted by SWI member Joan Murfitt of West Lothian Federation, and featured a gorgeous daffodil for Kate and a swanky watering can for Charles.

They were made using the Iris Folding method which Joan is an expert in – you may have seen her demonstrations at one of our online sessions.

Joan says: "I was both happy and worried when asked to make cards for King Charles and the Princess of Wales. I decided that a watering can was appropriate for the King because of his love of gardening, and that suggestion was accepted, but I was asked to make a daffodil card for Catherine, as it is the national flower for Wales, and a nice symbol of growth and better things to come. Everyone knows someone who has or had cancer, but for two members of the Royal family to be suffering at the same time must have been hard, especially for Prince William and his family, and my thoughts were of them as I crafted. I know how I felt about my young family when I had cancer. The daffodil was a bit harder to make as it had to be cut out with a craft knife, but I find Iris folding very relaxing. It's maybe a bit harder now as arthritis makes my fingers stiff, but I was happy with the results and it was great to see the kind letters of thanks from their offices."

Thank you, Joan! We offer King Charles and Princess Catherine continued good wishes!

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### **New group for Newhaven!**

A small but select group of ladies attended the Newhaven SWI launch in Newhaven on May 26th, and three ladies have kindly volunteered to form an organising committee. Their commitment marks the beginning of a new chapter for the SWI in Edinburgh and they will establish and grow this new group. Many thanks to Brenda and Lynda from Midlothian Federation for their unwavering support.

More launches are being planned for September and will take place around the country. If you would like to suggest a great place for a new group or a relaunch of an existing one, please get in touch at [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk). We'd love to hear from you.

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### **SWI national fee increase announced**

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.

As members may have questions, the answers here may helpful – [shorturl.at/G9W6r](https://shorturl.at/G9W6r)

## **Women and children benefit from members' philanthropy**

News is just in that SWI's sister organisation, Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) has undertaken an exciting project in Romania. Called "Seeds of Peace", it is an initiative empowering Ukrainian children and female teacher refugees in Romania, building resilience and recovery from the stress and trauma of war. Find out more about it here, [acww.org.uk/current-projects](https://acww.org.uk/current-projects)

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### **A home for our heritage**

The SWI Heritage Project could see the creation of a permanent home for the SWI's collection on The Crichton Estate, Dumfries. A unique collaborative partnership is currently being explored with The Crichton Trust, and there is an opportunity for the SWI to be included in a planned Visitor Learning Centre which could celebrate both of our nationally significant stories.

Members are at the heart of any decision made as the Board of Trustees and members of the SWI Heritage Group work with The Crichton Trust and the project architecture team to develop a beautiful building which suits members' needs. Please join the SWI Heritage Group if you would like to help shape the future of the SWI.

Shortly, the team at O'Donnellbrown Architects will send out a survey to all members asking what you need from this exciting project. Perhaps it's somewhere you'll go often, or maybe not at all. You might use it as a hub for learning online or in-person, or you may prefer to host outreach exhibitions which could travel around the country. The opportunities are exciting and you can help to shape a dynamic and sustainable future for our beloved SWI.

The SWI Heritage Project feeds into a permanent home for the SWI's collection on The Crichton Estate, Dumfries. This Visitor Learning Centre will be in partnership with The Crichton Trust, and will celebrate both of our nationally significant stories. Watch the video here - [shorturl.at/vVImA](https://shorturl.at/vVImA)

### **Exploring options**

Members of the SWI Heritage Group had a hugely positive in-person get together in Glasgow last month. The meeting, which took place at Glasgow Women's Library, gave SWI members the opportunity to help shape the future of the SWI. They met with members of The Crichton Trust and Michael Dougall and Dana Cherepkova of O'Donnellbrown Architects to explore what SWI members would want the building on The Crichton Estate, Dumfries, to offer members. You can see their reactions below.

Three members have stepped forward to become office bearers of the SWI Heritage Group. SWI Trustee Susie Finlayson will act as Chair and Heather Coutts and Phyllis Hannah are vice-chairs.

There will be much to do in the months ahead, and there will be lots of opportunity to get involved with the collection and preservation of SWI heritage, so members are encouraged to join the SWI Heritage Group. The Group meets online on the last Thursday of each month, so please book your place here if you would like to participate [shorturl.at/wlmCt](https://shorturl.at/wlmCt)

**"If we don't go along these lines we will lose the SWI."**

**Liz Hay**, Former Convenor of the Handcrafts & Homeskills Committee of the opportunity the proposed Visitor Learning Centre provides the SWI.

Watch the full interview here: [shorturl.at/rhch6](https://shorturl.at/rhch6)

**"I'm looking forward to telling everybody how wonderful this will be."**

**Helen Braid** of Dumfriesshire Federation on the proposed Visitor Learning Centre for the SWI.

Watch the full interview here: [shorturl.at/cQGIF](https://shorturl.at/cQGIF)

**"It means that the Rural as we know it will not die."**

Jean MacDonald, President, Lanarkshire Federation, on why she's in favour of plans for a new Visitor Learning Centre in Dumfries.

Watch the full interview here: [shorturl.at/YiGvW](https://shorturl.at/YiGvW)

You can see more members' reactions here: [rb.gy/lcdc5f](https://rb.gy/lcdc5f)

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### **Listening to experts**

As work continues on developing ready-to-go archives and collections, the SWI and The Crichton Trust invited leading academics to meet the project architects to share their insight into what a Visitor Learning Centre could offer. The Visitor Learning Centre aims to be a dynamic hub of learning and outreach, so ensuring the building is fit for purpose for academic and research use, as well as engagement and student engagement, is vital.

### **The key learnings from the event were:**

To improve the international appeal of SWI's heritage by highlighting the worldwide connections with UNESCO-backed Associated Countrywomen of the World (ACWW), and rural women's groups including fellow WIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This will now be added to key outcomes in SWI's archiving project.

To increase focus on future heritage. The architecture team will now explore opportunities the Visitor Learning Centre can provide for future generations to participate in on an ongoing basis.

The academics, all with a focus on women's history and crafts, are hugely enthused by the project and will act as a sounding board as it develops.

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### **Jessie leads the Evelyn Baxter programme**

SWI members from Wigtownshire and Stewartry Federations had a fabulous couple of days at this year's Evelyn Baxter School on Basic Dressmaking. Our wonderful Evelyn Baxter scholar Jessie Meikle, of Lanarkshire Federation, taught the ladies how to adjust a pattern to get the perfect fit each individual's size.

Next year's Evelyn Baxter classes will be on Macrame, and scholars will be sought later this year. If you would like to become a tutor just like Jessie, and tour the country meeting and teaching members throughout 2025, keep your eyes peeled for more information in next month's newsletter.

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### **It's summer – it must be show time!**

SWI members are gearing up for this year's Scottish Handcraft Championships which takes place at the Royal Highland Show at Ingliston Showground from 20-24th June.

This year's theme is 'The Four Seasons' and we are in a new location. **You'll find us in the Shopping Hall on 13th Avenue.**

SWI members run and manage the Championships, looking after staging, judging, and stewarding the event. Go along and support them and see the beautiful, handcrafted items vying for the coveted prizes.

The competition is open to all crafters and makers around the world and attracts hundreds of entries. The top prize, Overall Winner, has been scooped by Lou Washington or Coldstream SWI for the past two years... who will win this year?

Next year's theme has just been chosen by the organising committee – it will be 'Life Is A Celebration'.

Tickets to the Royal Highland Show are available here, [rb.gy/yoe0v3](https://rb.gy/yoe0v3) – **come and see us!**

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### **Final preparations for SWI Summer School in full swing**

#### **SWI Summer School 2024**

*August 15-19th | Strathallan School, Perthshire*

There's much excitement at SWI office as final attendee packs are being produced for all students ahead of this year's sold-out Summer School. The packs will be sent out at the beginning of July and will include all information about the site and the expert tutors. We look forward to seeing you all there!

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### **Upcoming online events**

#### **FREE SWI Health & Wellbeing: Farm & Croft Wellbeing**

*Thu, 27 June 7pm*

Join us and Farmstrong Scotland for an informative talk about their initiative to help farmers to cope with the ups and downs of the job. Farmstrong Scotland is an initiative to help farmers, crofters, and their families cope with the ups and downs of farming and crofting by sharing things they can do to look after themselves and the people in their business. Book here: [rb.gy/ri77di](https://rb.gy/ri77di)

## **FREE SWI Heritage Group Monthly Meeting**

*Thu, 27 June, 6pm*

The Heritage group meet on a monthly basis to progress and contribute to the wider SWI Heritage project, with a focus on preparing the SWI Heritage for a Visitor Centre in Scotland. We extend a welcome to any member interested in this project, whether they have a specific story to share or simply want to stay informed and join the group. Book here: [rb.gy/hent9j](https://rb.gy/hent9j)

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## **Competitions**

### **Hot stuff at regional heats for this year's Ruralympics!**

Members all around the country have been putting their dribbling skills and dart-throwing techniques to the test as teams compete to go through to the National SWI Ruralympics finals in Kirriemuir this October. The latest team to qualify is Resolis SWI, who secured their place by winning at a fun afternoon in Kiltarlity. The National final will take place on Saturday October 5th at Webster's Sports Centre, Kirriemuir. Spectators welcome!

The teams are also in for this year's National Outdoor Bowling final, which takes place at Helensburgh Bowling Club this August. The all-day event, hosted by the Dunbartonshire Federation, will be at Helensburgh Bowling Club, on 26th August 2024. 112 Sinclair Street Helensburgh G84 9QE. Spectators welcome!

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### **Margaret Whiteford – Outstanding Member of the Year 2024**

*Competition | Deadline 26th July*

Make sure you don't overlook the opportunity to nominate that outstanding member who consistently goes the extra mile for everyone!

Take a moment to consider who is indispensable and consistently exceeds your expectations and contributes significantly to your Institute or Federation?

This year's recipient will follow in the footsteps of Maz Thorn (right) from Powmill SWI, who proudly received the trophy last year. You can hear from last year's nominees here [rb.gy/zpsokt](https://rb.gy/zpsokt)

It is as simple as filling out this form here [shorturl.at/sxHI9](https://shorturl.at/sxHI9) and sending it to [charlotte.hughes@theswi.org.uk](mailto:charlotte.hughes@theswi.org.uk) before the deadline of Friday 26th of July 2024.

All nominations are confidential. Both individual and group nominations are accepted!

## **SWI National Photography competition 2024**

*Competition | Deadline 4th November | Theme - Our Fragile World*

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

The competition prizes are:

**1st place - £25 voucher for SWI's online shop**

**2nd place - £15 voucher for SWI's online shop**

**3rd place - £10 voucher for SWI's online shop**

Please email your photographs as Jpegs to **hello@theswi.org.uk** before the deadline of Monday the 4th of November 2024. Entries will be judged after the deadline and the winners will be announced by the end of November 2024.

Click here **shorturl.at/rtSY3** to register and pay on Beacon - if you need a form emailed to you separately, please contact us to request one. Have fun and good luck!

## **SWI National Writing competition 2024**

*Competition | Deadline 30th September | Theme - If you know a good thing, pass it on*

Unlock the power of your pen in this year's writing competition. We invite participants to explore the theme of 'If you know a good thing, pass it on' by submitting your captivating written pieces in the form of an inspirational letter.

The competition prizes are:

**1st place - £25 voucher for SWI's online shop**

**2nd place - £15 voucher for SWI's online shop**

**3rd place - £10 voucher for SWI's online shop**

Please email your inspirational letter on a Word document to **hello@theswi.org.uk** before the deadline of Monday the 30th of September, 2024. Entries will be judged after the deadline and the winners will be announced by the end of October 2024.

Click here **shorturl.at/ozLPR** to register and pay on Beacon - if you need a form emailed to you separately, please contact us to request one. Have fun and good luck!

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### **And finally....**

SWI member Annette Torbet, of Sandhead SWI in Wigtonshire, has been reminiscing for an exciting project being undertaken by The Crichton Trust. Annette was interviewed as part of a celebration of the magazine called The New Moon which was originally created by patients at the Crichton Royal Institution during its time as a psychiatric hospital. Memories of SWI Institutes being planned around the full moon were of great interest and the following article is being printed in a special commemorative issue of the magazine...

## **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 get-togethers 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?

***Pauline Burnett, Head of Communication & Engagement, SWI***

**Perhaps Institutes in your area followed the full moon pattern? If so, we'd love to hear from you at [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk)**

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You can use our complaints procedure to ensure that you receive an appropriate and timely response to any feedback, comment, or complaint you may have here:

**[rb.gy/ek4d2a](https://rb.gy/ek4d2a)**

**Don't miss your member benefits**

**SWI Member Insurance**

- Please note, that 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 (adult or children) is branded as a SWI event and it is recommended to confirm that any event venue you use, has public liability insurance.

**Do you want to access SWI events?**

- Keep up-to-date with the exciting range of in-person and online events [here](https://bit.ly/3KiCrPd): **[bit.ly/3KiCrPd](https://bit.ly/3KiCrPd)**

- Federation Secretaries will find a new hub for information and how to book National Competitions here: [bit.ly/3KAB2ou](https://bit.ly/3KAB2ou)

#### **Do you want to receive this newsletter?**

- Click here: [bit.ly/3ENy7EC](https://bit.ly/3ENy7EC) 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!

#### **Do you want to join us on Facebook?**

- Our Facebook page - 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 here: [bit.ly/3u7BDoM](https://bit.ly/3u7BDoM)
- **Our Facebook group** - This is where members share pics, recipes, news and more. Join the group here: [bit.ly/3u4tCAM](https://bit.ly/3u4tCAM)

#### **Do you want to receive event alerts?**

Subscribe to SWI's Eventbrite page here: [bit.ly/3VhO652](https://bit.ly/3VhO652) and never miss a thing.

#### **Do you want general news?**

Check in at [www.theswi.org.uk](http://www.theswi.org.uk) for updates!

***Thank you!***