



Welcome to Issue 31 – Members' news

This is a print-friendly version of the Scottish Women's Institutes monthly member newsletter.

Scottish Women's Institutes was established in 1917 and is an inclusive and inspirational membership-based organisation. We are here to build an inclusive community, to have fun and form friendships, to campaign, to learn, to share and to socialise. We provide a platform for social activities and networking, and champion women's issues.

Find out more about us at **www.theswi.org.uk**

Scottish Women's Institutes is a SCIO, SC053058

2025 Summer School open for bookings

21st-25th August | Stirling University

SWI Summer School 2025 is bigger and better than ever!

This year's SWI Summer School is taking over the fabulous Stirling University for three days of fun and learning. Join us for a long weekend of creativity and fun with like-minded women in a stunning environment and immerse yourself in a single course throughout the weekend. This year also sees the addition of an Out & About tour option taking in the highlights of the Stirling area.

More than 100 members have already chosen from these fabulous 3-day workshops and tour, so don't delay!

- * 3D Decoupage and Iris Folding Tutors: Nan Middleton & Aileen Pittuck
 - * Temari Balls Tutor: Kay Smith
 - * Make a Tailored Jacket Tutor: Gill Faragher
 - * Quilt Making Tutor: Ann Hill BEM
 - * Stumpwork Embroidery Tutor: Jane Currie
 - * Felted Art Tutor: Linda Irvine (Fully booked! Waiting list available)
 - * Beginners' Calligraphy Tutor: Annette Reed (Fully booked! Waiting list available)
 - * Sanquhar Glove Knitting Tutor: May MacCormick (Fully booked! Waiting list available)
 - * Watercolour Painting Tutor: Brigid Collins (Fully booked! Waiting list available)
 - * Stained Glass Tutor: Claire Gaunt (Fully booked! Waiting list available)
- PLUS! Out and About Daily excursions operated by Dodds of Troon

Booking details

You can choose to stay at Stirling University for four nights as a residential participant or attend the workshops as a non-residential attendee – the choice is yours! In addition, you can also choose to spread your payments in the run-up to the event.

Residential course

Members £570
Non-members £650

Non-residential course

Members £420
Non-members £500

Residential participants enjoy bed and full board from Thursday 21st, to Monday August 25th. Accommodation is provided in en-suite single-occupancy rooms, complete with shared common spaces for relaxing with fellow attendees. Non-residential participants will be provided with lunch on each day of your chosen workshop. Class sizes vary according each course. In the event of your chosen class being fully booked please join the waiting list to be the first to know of any changes.

How to book

Reserve you space now at www.theswi.org.uk/summer-school-2025/

Exclusive 2025 Events

In-person events

SWI Study Tour: Dublin and Ireland's hidden heartlands

13th–17th October 2025

Join us for a delightful 5-day tour exploring the tranquil beauty and rich heritage of Ireland's hidden heartlands and the vibrant city of Dublin. This tour includes dinner, bed, and breakfast and access to excellent hotel leisure facilities throughout your stay.

You will

- Visit Belvedere House, Mullingar, Dublin, and Athlone.
- Immerse yourself in history and folklore as we explore cities, towns, monastic sites and historic estates.
- Discover the stunning Westmeath Lakelands, a serene haven of pristine lakes and picturesque countryside.

What's included?

See a full itinerary – <https://rb.gy/59d22q>

Limited spaces remain, so book now to avoid disappointment! Family members or friends who are non-members can come along too! Book now at <https://rb.gy/59d22q>

Learn to bake the perfect scone with Linda McTurk

28th February | 10am–3pm | Station House Cookery School, Kirkcudbright

SWI Trustee Linda McTurk's scones are legendary and foolproof too, so now's your chance to learn from the best! You will watch Linda's demo on three delicious scones – fruit, sweet milk, and cheese – then bake your own with her expert guidance.

Spaces are limited!

BOOK NOW at <https://rb.gy/s2g137>

Plus! Look sharp in the new SWI apron

Crafted from high-quality navy cotton, this durable apron features a beautifully embroidered SWI logo for a touch of elegance. Designed for practicality, it includes a spacious front pocket, adjustable overhead strap, and secure waist ties. Perfect for cooking, crafting, or any hands-on activity.

Pre-order now! Stock is expected to arrive at Central Office by 14th February 2025. One size fits all.

PRE-ORDER NOW at <https://shorturl.at/LCYIS>

Online events

The Strength in You with Dee MacLean

Inspirational Talk | Thursday February 27th | Online | FREE

Celebrate International Women's Day with a confidence-building online session led by life coach Dee MacLean.

Let's unlock your potential, together! Book here - <https://rb.gy/k1biqb>

SWI Tummy talks: Healthy veggie eating

Thursday 17th April | Online

MEMBERS & NON-MEMBERS WELCOME

Richard of The Vegetarian Society will highlight the health advantages of vegetarian diet, and provide practical tips for incorporating more fruits, vegetables, and fibre into your meals.

Book your space here! <https://shorturl.at/vjc6N>

Catch up on recent events

Missed out on recent SWI Evening Natter sessions? You can catch-up on all online talks on our YouTube channel.

WATCH NOW at <https://shorturl.at/BW1Sn>

Welcome our new Heritage team!

These posts have been made possible because of or recent award from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to National Lottery players!

Dr Valentina Bold, SWI Heritage Project Manager

Valentina is an internationally recognised expert on Scottish culture and community heritage: women's life stories, literature, songs, work and food. She specialises in sharing stories creatively.

For Scotland's Year of Stories, for instance, she directed a production of new songs and stories inspired by memories she recorded.

Formerly a senior academic, and research centre director, Valentina often works as a consultant to television, radio, theatre and film.

She is Convenor of the Scots Language Centre and edits The Review of Scottish Culture. Her books include 'Kitchen Conversations: A Women's History of Winchburgh', 'James Hogg' and 'Smeddum'.

Valentina said, "I'm really delighted to have this opportunity to work with members to understand, and celebrate, the SWI's rich and resonant heritage of the SWI. Heritage awareness is so important – both for building pride in the past, and a sense of wellbeing in the present. Guided by what you see as most important, I can't wait to record and share members' memories and experiences, and to discover the treasures in the Archives together."

Alice MacGregor, SWI Heritage Project Volunteer Coordinator

Alice is a volunteer coordinator with an extensive background in volunteer and people management in the public and third sectors. She has worked at The British Museum, The Barbican, and The Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, so brings a wealth of experience.

She has a proven track record of delivering heritage and arts interpretation to the public and was part of the team that gained the Museum of the Year for The Royal Albert Memorial Museum in 2012.

Alice is passionate about the benefits of volunteering to both individuals and organisations and volunteers in her own time with both the charity HomeStart and with Girlguiding. She is also a keen crafter with special interests in embroidery and tapestry work.

Alice said, "I'm thrilled to be joining SWI's Heritage Project as your Volunteer Coordinator. Most of my work will be facilitating volunteers, both new and established, to engage with and contribute meaningfully to this project. I will be contacting past volunteers and members very soon to assess interest in volunteering and get things in place to make future volunteering as accessible, enjoyable and worthwhile as possible."

Photography Competition winners

The results are in for the SWI Photography Competition 2024, and we are delighted to announce the winners! The theme, Our Fragile World, inspired a stunning collection of images capturing the beauty, vulnerability, and resilience of our planet.

1st Jayne Gutteridge, Golspie SWI, Ross-shire & Sutherland

2nd Eileen Martin, Leith SWI, Midlothian

3rd Sheila Clark, Jackton SWI, Lanarkshire

President's Award Mavis Briggs, Gateside SWI, Ayrshire

Our warmest congratulations to all the winners and a heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated. Your photographs serve as a beautiful reminder of our responsibility to protect and cherish the world around us.

The **2025 Photography Competition** theme is The Natural World – we can't wait to see what you capture next! Click the button below for more information and entry form.

ENTER 2025 PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION at <https://shorturl.at/SNgHE>

National Writing Competition

Warnock Trophy | Deadline September 15th 2025 | Open for entries

Unlock the power of your pen in this year's writing competition. We invite participants to explore the theme of 'The Weather' by submitting captivating written pieces in the form of a poem (max 20 lines).

Theme: The Weather

Please email your poem (on a Word document if possible) to hello@theswi.org.uk before the deadline of Monday 15th September, 2024.

Entry form available at <https://shorturl.at/27nr7>

National Golf Competition 2025

Competition | Monday, August 4th | Gleddoch Hotel, Golf & Country Club

SWI would like to invite entries to this year's Golf Competition which will be hosted by Renfrewshire Federation on Monday 4th August 2025 at Gleddoch Hotel, Golf & Country Club, Langbank, Renfrewshire PA14 6YE.

Please note: this is a new style competition, so some of the rules and formats have changed. You can read all the information at <https://shorturl.at/gvk9X>

If you wish to enter more than two teams email hello@theswi.org.uk

Entry forms can be downloaded at <https://shorturl.at/UJJQ4>

*

New SWI groups coming to Scotland

Our new Membership Officer, Lyndsey Alexander, has been working hard to expand SWI's reach for 2025, and we're thrilled to announce the launch of five new groups across the country!

These events are a great chance to meet new people and learn more about SWI, so please encourage any friends or family in the areas to attend.

Upcoming launch events

Winchburgh, West Lothian Sunday, 23 March, 2pm at Winchburgh Community Education Centre.

Fort William, Highlands Saturday, 5 April, 1pm at New Connections, Fort William.

Biggar, Lanarkshire Sunday, 13 April, 12:30pm at The Gillespie Centre, Biggar.

Paisley, Renfrewshire Saturday, 3 May, 2pm at Re:Hope Church, Paisley.

Dumbarton, Dumbartonshire Sunday, 11 May, 2pm at The Abbotsford Hotel.

If you have ideas of locations for new Institute groups get in touch at **hello@theswi.org.uk** as we are keen to hear from members across Scotland.

Volunteering opportunities

Shape SWI's National Conference 2026

Scottish Women's Institutes SCIO is seeking dedicated members to join the National Conference Committee to help shape and deliver impactful events for our organisation. This role requires individuals with vision, creativity, and a commitment to ensuring our conferences inspire, engage, and bring value to our members.

We are looking for members who share our passion for learning, friendship, and enjoyment and who can bring fresh ideas and valuable experience to the committee. Joining the National Conference Committee is an exciting opportunity to collaborate with others, contribute to the success of our events, and play a key role in shaping the future of SWI gatherings.

If this is something that you are interested in, please apply by 28th March 2025.

APPLY at **<https://shorturl.at/esC31>**

Help teach cookery skills

Feedback from our recent membership consultation shows there's a clear interest in SWI cookery and baking workshops, so we're thrilled to get our aprons on and develop these for 2025.

We'd love to hear from members who have a passion for cooking or baking and would be happy to run a workshop for fellow members. Perhaps you've demonstrated at local level before, or have a particular skill to share? If that sounds like you, please email **hello@theswi.org.uk** to get in touch.

The training facilities earmarked as possible venues are in the following locations:

- Cyrenians Flavour and Haver Community Cook School, Leith, Edinburgh
- Yarrow Cookery School, Longniddry, East Lothian
- You Can Cook, St. Boswells, Scottish Borders
- Garioch Community Kitchen, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire

Watch this space for updates and let's bring our love of food to life together!

Crafters required

*The Scottish Handcrafts Championship, Royal Highland Show, Ingliston
19th-22nd June*

The SWI runs and manages the Scottish Handcrafts Championship each year. If you would like to be a part of the team and become a steward for a day email **hello@theswi.org.uk**. All stewards receive a free ticket for the show and have ample free time to explore the event.

The Championship class schedule can be viewed at **<https://shorturl.at/81FqX>**

New funding for Junior Dippers groups

The SWI national body is thrilled to announce an additional £1,000 in funding for SWI Junior Dippers projects across Scotland, thanks to the Sylvia Aitken Charitable Trust. This funding aims to support members in passing on valuable skills and encouraging the growth of Junior members.

Applications are now open for grants of up to £300 for Federations and Institutes. Whether you already run a Junior Dippers group and want to enhance it or are looking to start a new one, this is your opportunity to make a difference!

Potential projects could include skill-building activities in crafting, cooking, or baking, promotional events to raise awareness of the Junior Dippers programme, or opportunities for SWI members to share their expertise with younger generations.

Applications must be submitted through your local Federation, with a deadline of 3rd March 2025. Successful applicants will be notified in early April, with funds distributed through Federations.

For full details on how to apply, including eligibility criteria and application guidelines, visit our website or contact us at hello@theswi.org.uk.

READ FULL ARTICLE at <https://shorturl.at/Jf69n>

Your exclusive member benefits

New member offer for 2025

Willowberry skincare

Looking for a bit of pampering and self-care this New Year? We're delighted to announce a new partnership with Willowberry skincare.

SWI members will now receive an exclusive 10% off Willowberry products which are designed especially for the needs of grown-up skin. Made with all-natural ingredients with a focus on vitamins, antioxidants and essential fatty acids, Willowberry products nurture and nourish skin, for a brighter, hydrated, radiant complexion. Just the ticket for cold, dark January days!

Use your exclusive member discount code 10offSWI at the checkout at www.willowberry.co.uk

Other benefits

Bloom and Wild

<http://www.bloomandwild.com/>

15% off flowers and gifts

CODE: THESWI15B&W

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

<http://www.fredolsencruises.com/>

5% off all cruises

CODE: WIScot10

The Edinburgh Woollen Mill

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

20% off all clothing

CODE: SWI24

Contact us for any further information at SWI, Unit 8, 1 Carmichael Place, Edinburgh EH6 5PH or hello@theswi.org.uk or call 0131 225 1724

Personalised Honorary Member awards

SWI's Honorary Members are wonderful, valued women who have supported our fabulous organisation for many years.

Honorary Members are recognised in the SWI constitution as long-standing supporters and allies who have contributed to the success of the organisation. Celebrating their dedication, friendship and support is the least we can do in return, so we are pleased to announce that personalised Honorary Member certificates are now being created to help Federations and Institutes thank the women who mean so much to them.

To order a personalised Honorary Member certificate, please email hello@theswi.org.uk with the recipient's name (please check spelling!) and details. Personalised certificates are £2 each (plus postage & packaging) and will be invoiced by SWI Central Office. An official record is kept when a member is awarded Honorary status, so please keep us updated, and you have any questions about Honorary Membership or the ordering process we are happy to help.

Institutes and Federations are encouraged to recognise SWI members in a variety of ways, and Loyal Service badges and certificates to present members are available at <https://shop.theswi.org.uk/>

Promote your Federation Show nationally

Peeblesshire Federation SWI

SPRING SHOW | Saturday 8th March 2025 | Newlands Centre, West Linton

Join Peeblesshire Federation at their upcoming Spring Show. Come along to Newlands Centre, Romanno Bridge, EH46 7BZ (on the A701) between 1pm-4pm and take in the

Colourful displays of spring bulbs, plants, floral art, handcraft, homeskills and community effort. There will even be a chance to spend some pennies at the sales table and raffle! Entrance fee: £5 includes tea, coffee, and home baking.

Talk up your Federation Show

This year, we want to do more to help Federations promote their local events to members and general public in neighbouring areas. Federation Shows are a fantastic way to showcase the talent, creativity, and community spirit of the SWI, and we know how much effort goes into making them a success.

To support your event, we are inviting Federations to send in details of their Federation Shows so we can help spread the word to a wider audience.

If your Federation is hosting a show this year, please let us know the date, time, location, and any key details as soon as possible. We aim to promote upcoming shows through our newsletter, website, and social media, encouraging members and non-members from neighbouring areas to attend and support your event.

Send details to **hello@theswi.org.uk** and let's work together to celebrate the incredible work of our members across Scotland.

Membership Consultation feedback

A huge thank you to all members who completed the Membership Consultation at the end of 2024. Your feedback is so important as it helps guide the organisation to a sustainable future.

Keeping you informed

In the coming weeks, each Institute will receive a set of cards offering first-hand information for members on key topics such as fees, heritage, recruitment and consultation results.

You can see the full results of the SWI Membership Consultation 2024 at www.theswi.org.uk.

Membership fee update for 2026

We deeply value each and every one of our members and remain committed to ensuring that your membership provides meaningful benefits, opportunities, and a strong sense of community.

As you may be aware, SWI is facing financial challenges, like many organisations, due to rising costs and economic uncertainty. After careful consideration and a full review, the Board has made the difficult decision to increase the national membership fee by £3 payable in November 2026. This decision was not taken lightly, but it is necessary to ensure that SWI can continue to deliver the activities, support, and services that our members value.

We want to be fully transparent about this change and will be sharing clear information, including a range of postcards showing exactly how membership fees are spent and what you receive in return. We are also exploring ways to demonstrate the additional benefits of being part of SWI, ensuring that your membership continues to be worthwhile and rewarding.

We understand that financial planning is important, which is why we are giving members plenty of notice and we are informing you now so that you have clarity well in advance.

Moving forward, we are also reviewing our fee-setting process to ensure that decisions are made earlier in the year, allowing us to communicate any changes as promptly as possible.

Your support and involvement mean everything to us. SWI is a strong and valued community because of our members, and together, we can ensure a sustainable future for our organisation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Thank you for being part of SWI.

SWI Strategy Day a great success

Last week, the SWI Board and staff gathered for an inspiring Strategy Day, where we reflected on our past achievements and the things that have worked well. We also discussed important updates to our strategy, focusing on growth and development, member priorities, financial challenges, and future opportunities. It was a day of shared ideas and strong commitment to a year of hope and renewal.

This year is pivotal for SWI's sustainability, and we are excited to share with you, our valued members, a refreshed strategy in the coming weeks. Together, we will build on the progress we've made, adapt to the changing landscape, and ensure a thriving future for SWI, including The Crichton Opportunity. Your support and involvement are key to our success, and we are confident that the future is bright for us all.

SWI charitable donations update

In response to changing donation patterns, in December the SWI Board of Trustees decided to take a broader approach to fundraising in the future. While we remain committed to supporting ACWW (right) at a national level, we also recognise that members may wish to contribute in different ways.

Our national fundraising efforts will continue to focus on key charitable initiatives, but there will also be opportunities for members to get involved in practical, hands-on support if they choose. We will share further details soon on how we can collectively make a meaningful impact across Scotland's communities.

Status of recent initiatives

ACWW Ongoing

Sandpiper Closed

Mercy ships Closed

Mountain view Closed

All donations are reported on at AGM each year and in published accounts.

Member extras

NEW SWI website

A brand-new website is currently being developed for Summer 2025 which will provide a one-stop shop for all things SWI, making your membership even better.

NEW SWI Heritage quarterly e-newsletter

Now that the SWI Heritage Project has received major funding there will be lots more to report on, so SWI Heritage News will be released quarterly to keep you updated.

SWI Member Insurance

Members are covered through SWI Public Liability Insurance when working with non-members (children and adults) such as the Junior Dippers workshops.

Please note: It's important to ensure that any event involving non-members (adults or children) is branded as a SWI event, and it is recommended to confirm that any event venue you use has public liability insurance.

Access to SWI events

Keep up-to-date with the exciting range of in-person and online events at www.theswi.org.uk/event-diary.html.

Monthly newsletter

Email hello@theswi.org.uk to subscribe to receive the latest news direct to your inbox. You won't be bombarded by spam. We are committed to keeping our members informed so your help makes all the difference!

Communities on Facebook

Don't miss out, join us on Facebook and keep abreast of what's happening for the SWI and across the membership in Scotland. Follow us at

www.facebook.com/ScottishWomensInstitutes

Do you want to receive event alerts?

Subscribe to SWI's Eventbrite page at <https://shorturl.at/2btoh> and never miss a thing.

Do you want general news?

Visit www.theswi.org.uk for updates.

Not a member yet?

If you want to find out more about joining the SWI, please visit www.theswi.org.uk/join-the-swi

Contact us for any further information at SWI, Unit 8, 1 Carmichael Place, Edinburgh EH6 5PH or hello@theswi.org.uk or call 0131 225 1724

Copyright © 2025 Scottish Women's Institutes, All rights reserved. You are receiving this newsletter as you are an SWI member. Scottish Women's Institutes SCIO, SC053058