



## **Welcome to Heritage News - Autumn 2025**

This is a print-friendly version of the Scottish Women's Institutes quarterly heritage project 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 is a SCIO, SC053058

## Highlights from this quarter

As we head towards the end of the first year of the HLF-project, we would like to thank our committed, and diligent, volunteers for all their hard work in 2025.

We have held heritage craft events in partnership with the Young Women's Movement, Dundee International Women's Centre, WHALE Arts, based in Wester Hailes, and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

A very exciting, new series of member Podcasts, professionally recorded, is now live online. These are fascinating conversations, shedding new light on SWI history, and broader social and women's histories, and Scotland's rural heritage: [Member Podcasts | Scottish Women's Institutes \(SWI\)](#).

We look forward to continuing this important work in 2026 and hope, if you are not already involved, you might consider joining us as a volunteer!

\*\*\*\*\*

## Members Invited!

You're invited to join us in celebrating the progress of the SWI Heritage project!

As the National Lottery Heritage Funded Project reaches its half-way point, join us for a special celebration of all we've achieved so far.

Together, we'll reflect on our first year, look ahead to 2026, and enjoy:

- Inspiring talks,
- Creative activities
- A heritage-themed lunch.

This event is for members, volunteers and the Heritage Group. Whilst we cannot cover travel or other expenses, refreshments will be provided.

Monday 15 December, 10:30am - 3pm, Perth YMCA

Sign up - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-joyful-celebration-of-swi-heritage-project-with-our-amazing-volunteers-tickets-1916250108659?aff=oddttdtcreator>

## **SWI History Makers Podcast!**

The SWI Heritage Project has been capturing the voices of rural Scottish women, preserving their remarkable memories and experiences. Through this work, the project celebrates the enduring influence of the Scottish Women's Institutes (SWI) on women's lives and communities—ensuring their stories are shared today and cherished for generations to come.

Enjoy ten SWI History Makers Podcast episodes presented by Jennifer Reoch. The first 5 episodes are available now, with new episodes released every Monday.

This inspiring series explores the impact of the SWI, how one woman created Scotland's largest women's movement and how it continues to shape lives today.

Listeners can expect stories of cooking, crafts, friendship, heritage, and the many ways the SWI connects women across generations and around the world.

Watch now - <https://www.theswi.org.uk/heritage/member-podcasts/>

### **In the footsteps of Catherine Blair: A Visit to East Lothian**

Sincere thanks to Dr Hanita Ritchie of John Gray Centre Haddington, who welcomed Valentina, Mairead Blair and artist Andrew Crummy into the collection this October. We were able to handle original documents and important books, including a signed copy of Blair's Rural Journey.

Hanita also took us over to the East Lothian Museum stores, where Museums' Officer Katherine Weldon showed us rare Mak Merry pottery and a collection of beautiful Federation embroideries. We were especially touched to see the 1922 tablecloth produced by Haddington in 1922, with patterns formed by the names of members and office bearers.

The final part of a wonderful day was driving back into Edinburgh via Hoprig Mains, Blair's farm, and Longniddry, where we took tea in what was a reading room in 1917, hosting the first Scottish Women's Rural Institute meeting. We also stopped off at Andrew's studio, and saw his working models featuring Mak Merry inspired designs.

Learn more about the John Gray Centre - <https://www.johngraycentre.org/>

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Call for Volunteers: Take part in archiving from the comfort of your own home**

One of the great treasures of the SWI heritage collection is the charity's membership magazine, 'Home and Country'. First published in February 1924, by the 1930s 'Home and Country' had become a monthly publication illustrated with photographs and advertisements and with a huge readership across Scotland.

The SWI Archiving from Home volunteer team have been digitising copies of 'Home and Country' magazine so that the publications will in the future be available to everyone online. The catalogue of will describe the content of each issue of the magazine enabling researchers to find the information that they are looking for more easily.

Using their own computer or laptop, SWI Archiving from Home volunteers read and research digital copies of the 'Home and Country' magazine. They then select and record key information from the magazines on a form and our archivist, Rachael Rennert, incorporates this information into the SWI Catalogue.

Together the Archiving from Home team is making great progress through the 1930s magazines and are looking forward to exploring SWRI's experience during the war years next.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Hear from our volunteers**

"With every edition that I process I feel as though I'm uncovering a small piece of history"  
Clare Greig, Millig SWI

"Archiving the Home & Country magazine from the 1930s makes me feel part of a wonderful thread of strong Scottish women"  
Eleanor Black, Earlsferry & Elie SWI

"Why do I love archiving the SWRI magazines? They are informative, historical, comical, amazing, interesting, compelling and enjoyable"  
Marsha Adams, Kinghorn SWI

"Scotland's old inspiring story we inherit from the past is ours now to maintain her glory, and to our Heritage, hold fast (adapted from Thornton Stuart's winning verse, The Rally as written in the January 1930 issue of Home and Country)"  
Evelyn Anderson, SWI Heritage Project Archivist

Click here to hear more about becoming a volunteer at home -  
<https://youtube.com/shorts/MirDbJ6ZSxQ?si=jy8iSm4ajq6zsR97>

\*\*\*\*\*

## **SWRI Cookbooks – Recipes from the past**

These books capture authentic, regional Scottish cooking, the recipes are deeply rooted in local traditions and were contributed by women who cooked daily for families, farms, and community gatherings. Many include variations that reflect specific villages, islands, or even individual households, preserving culinary techniques that might otherwise fade from memory.

Three classic SWRI cookbooks are available now on the SWI website, providing recipes from 1925, 1931 and 1946, look out for more being added in the future.

Read the classic cookbooks – <https://www.theswi.org.uk/heritage/swi-archive/>

\*\*\*\*\*

## **RSE Curious Festival**

Mak Merry: Friendship, Crafting and Scottish Women’s Institutes’, Dumfries

This sold-out event, on Saturday 6th of September, was part of the Royal Society of Edinburgh’s annual ‘Curious’ Festival. It was led by SWI Heritage Manager Dr Valentina Bold and expert Sanquhar knitter May MacCormick. The history and legacy of the SWI was explored through a presentation from Valentina on the origins of SWI and the HLF-supported project – digitising the archives and recording oral histories.

The day included a skills’ transfer workshop as May offered a live demonstration and a chance to try Sanquhar knitting. The event closed with a tea party in the spirit of SWI meetings, with time for reflections and conversation. Part celebration and part rediscovery, the session allowed a rare look at how crafting and community have shaped the lives of thousands of Scottish women.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Dates for your diary**

### **Online Heritage Group**

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 sustainable future. The December meeting, due to the festive season, has been rescheduled.

The next three dates are:

Thursday 4th December 6 – 7 pm

Thursday 29th January 6 – 7 pm

Thursday 26th February 6 – 7 pm

Sign up - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/swi-heritage-group-monthly-meeting-tickets-1289560824139?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

### **Online Oral History Clinic**

This monthly drop-in session is open to existing SWI oral history volunteers. Chaired by the Heritage Manager, Dr Valentina Bold, it offers an opportunity for peer-to-peer discussion about recording and processing oral histories -- and any challenges that arise along the way.

The next two dates are:

Wednesday 10th December 12 – 1 pm

Wednesday 11th February 12 – 1 pm

Sign up - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/oral-history-clinic-tickets-1566389957529?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

\*\*\*\*\*

### **SWI Heritage: Preserving the Archives 2**

Wednesday 4th February 12 – 1 pm

Following the successful event in October, another chance to join SWI Archivist Rachael Rennert, and Heritage Project Manager Dr Valentina Bold, for a drop in session. This is a chance to discuss what type of records you might find in your Federation or Institute, what to do if caring for these records becomes a concern or issue, and what might be the future options for their preservation.

Sign up - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/swi-heritage-preserving-the-archives-2-tickets-1964056878996>

## **A word from our friends**

### **Young Women's Movement**

Do you, or someone you know, have a story to share about the last 100 years of the YWCA in Scotland?

The Young Women's Movement, formerly known as YWCA Scotland, would love to speak to people who were involved in the YWCA in Scotland from 1924 to the present day.

They'd love to hear if you:

- Worked or volunteered for YWCA
- Stayed in a YWCA hostel
- Delivered or took part in activities or events with the YWCA

Learn more - <https://www.youngwomenscot.org/our-programmes/young-women-remember/>

### **Protests and Suffragettes**

There's a brand new mural in Glasgow, thanks in part to the team at Protests and Suffragettes!

The team shared their research on the mighty Mary Barbour with the mural artist Jeks, highlighting Mary's pivotal role in Govan's 1915 rent strikes.

They also spoke to several community groups in Govan, gathering their thoughts on what causes a modern day Mary Barbour might be campaigning for, so the mural reimagines her as a contemporary activist for the area.

Cool!

Learn more - <https://protestsandsuffragettes.com/about/>

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Support SWI's Heritage Project**

#### **SWI cook book**

From simple starters and scrumptious soups through to mouth-watering main courses and delightful deserts, the cookbook has been created by members, professional chefs and celebrity chefs including:

- Lady Claire Macdonald OBE
- Nick Nairn
- Tony Singh.

## **Heritage notelets & postcards bundle**

5 greeting cards (A6) Each card features traditional Scottish crafts –embroidery, knitting, and historical textiles.

10 postcards (A6) A nostalgic set of black-and-white images of SWI members from days gone by, capturing friendship and community.

\*\*\*\*\*

**\*\*\*Member extras\*\*\*Member extras\*\*\***

### **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 [here](#).

### **Monthly newsletter**

Click [here](#) 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 [here](#)

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

Subscribe to SWI's Eventbrite page here and never miss a thing.

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

Visit [www.theswi.org.uk](http://www.theswi.org.uk) for updates.

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

Alternatively, if you have a grumble to share, please follow our complaints procedure [HERE](#) to ensure that you receive an appropriate and timely response.

\*\*\*\*\*