



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

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

## Welcome

"I'm thrilled to be part of the member team behind this exciting project, working alongside the talented professionals Valentina Bold, Elizabeth Bryan, and our Project Archivist, Rachael Muir.

As Convenor of the SWI Heritage Group, I'm proud that members are at the heart of this initiative. We meet monthly to ensure that what you value about our shared heritage is reflected in all that we do.

It's such an exciting time because the SWI is a dynamic movement, constantly evolving in response to what matters to women. Our next step is embracing The Crichton Opportunity which will see a dynamic home for our heritage on The Crichton Estate, Dumfries.

So, while we celebrate and preserve our rich past, we also recognise how it continues to shape our future. From handwritten letters to modern activism, every piece of our story matters.

We'd love more members to get involved with our project – have a look at our achievements so far and see what you could do! Please join our happy team at our next meeting!"

Susie Finlayson, Convenor, SWI Heritage Group  
JOIN OUR GROUP at <https://shorturl.at/r0afK>

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## Meet the team

### Meet Valentina

"Hello, I'm Valentina Bold, the SWI Heritage Project Manager. I've been in post for a few months and enjoyed meeting members online and in Institutes across the country.

My background is in community heritage. I spent thirty years as an academic, working in Scottish cultural heritage at home and abroad, and for the last four years I was Heritage Officer with the Crichton Trust. My special interests are in women's lives and creativity, sharing memories through performances and new creative work, as well as books and articles."

### Meet Elizabeth

"Hello, I'm Elizabeth Bryan, the new Heritage Volunteer Coordinator at SWI. With over 30 years in the voluntary sector—most recently with Age Scotland—I'm excited to dive into the SWI's rich history. I'm especially looking forward to meeting members, hearing their stories, and exploring the incredible work happening across local Institutes and Federations.

"I've always loved personal correspondence, and I believe we've lost some of that magic. I can't wait to uncover the gems in the archive – handwritten letters, lived experiences, and insights into women's lives over the past century. It's a privilege to be part of this journey."

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## **Work begins on magazine archive**

Watch: <https://shorturl.at/NNnKM>

We have just taken delivery of the first batch of 20 years of SWI's member magazine, *Scottish Home and Country*, from our digitisers, Automated Document Services in Livingston.

Your help is essential

Over the coming months, digitised batches of SWI magazines will be shared with all Federations, inviting members to explore the stories within. Members can read them at home or host fun 'archiving parties' during Institute meetings. The stories held within the magazines are hugely inspiring and it's amazing to see what our 'foremothers' got up to!

The goal is to make each magazine searchable online, unlocking the hidden treasures they contain for future generations to be inspired by.

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## **Volunteers rock**

Volunteers are at the heart of the SWI Heritage Project. Their dedication helped secure National Heritage Lottery funding and continues to shape how we preserve and celebrate our legacy.

SWI members Margaret Dick and Elizabeth Hay have worked tirelessly at The Ballast Trust over the past few months, learning new archiving skills and helping record our central collection with care and precision. Their passion, especially for embroidery and craft, brings vital knowledge to our records.

An eye for detail and commitment to the accuracy of our collection is essential to it's future.

"If the database is going to be used by people all over the world, the vital information about how items have been made has to be there."

Margaret Dick, Luss SWI

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**FROM THE ARCHIVE**

Linen tray cloth

Margaret Dick with her favourite piece.

Object: Linen tray cloth

Craft: Embroidery

Condition: Excellent

Margaret says: "I was drawn to the linen tray cloth because I like working on linen myself. I've used lots of these stitches, like this hem stitch myself, but there's an enormous amount of it.

The quantity and the time it would take to sit and work this tray cloth is what I find quite fascinating. The stitches are so even... it's fantastic work.

It says something about the SWI in past times where that kind of standard was the norm. It has survived in excellent condition, too."

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**Members making a difference**

SWI Heritage Project Manager, Valentina Bold, was out and about in April, visiting Dingwall and Hawick to talk with members about what they feel is important about SWI's heritage. This was not only fun and interesting, but also proved very useful for the project, so thank you to everyone involved!

A fascinating visit to Abernethy Museum with SWI member Evelyn Scobie also gave Valentina insight into Perth and Kinross Federations' collections.

Amongst all this dotting around the country, Valentina has completed a series of test interviews with members and is in ongoing discussions with potential partners TRACS (Traditional Arts & Culture) and Glasgow Women's Library. Onwards and upwards!

"It's all very positive for the future, and exciting to learn about the SWI's rich heritage."

Valentina Bold, SWI Heritage Project Manager

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## **The team is ready to record!**

To kick off the oral history arm of the SWI Heritage Project, a series of training sessions has begun.

The first group of six oral history trained volunteers are good to go, and recording is now under way. Volunteers have been trained in recording and best practice for GDPR and copyright, and they can now cascade training within their areas.

We'll be offering further training sessions – four across Scotland – by the beginning of autumn.

The first two will be in Inverness and Dumfries. Email [volunteer@theswi.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@theswi.org.uk) for more info on a training session near you, or if your Federation or Institute would like to host one.

We'd also love to hear from you if you have a story you'd like to tell our volunteers!

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## **Upcoming heritage events**

### **Intergenerational skill share workshops**

Part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund funding we received will enable us to deliver skill sharing events in partnership with The Young Women's Movement. Please invite any young women aged 16-30 to join the fun at these FREE events!

### **Needlefelting for beginners**

Saturday, June 21st | 1-3pm | Glasgow Women's Library, 23 Landressy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1BP

SWI member Jean Shaw will be presenting a class on needlefelting for beginners for women aged 16-30.

BOOK at <https://shorturl.at/WRE6z>

### **Pyrography for beginners**

Saturday, July 5th | 11am-1pm | SWI Central Office, Suite 8, 1 Carmichael Place, Edinburgh EH6 5PH

SWI member Helen Bissett will deliver a session on pyrography for beginners for women aged 16-30.

BOOK at <https://shorturl.at/ij7qn>

## Curious Festival, Royal Society of Edinburgh

Curious is the Royal Society of Edinburgh's festival of knowledge. It brings together a range of leading thinkers and invites curious minds to gather, learn, discuss big ideas, ask questions, and explore diverse topics over two weeks of free events.

We are hosting an event called MakMerry as part of this. Our event will include a talk about SWI history from Valentina, a craft skills' workshop, and end with a tea party.

FIND OUT MORE at <https://rse.org.uk/curious/>

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### Spreading the word

Next month, Valentina is attending the Oral History Society conference in Glasgow and will present a paper: "If you know a good thing, pass it on": Voices from the Scottish Women's Institutes.

This is a fabulous opportunity to shine a spotlight on the SWI Heritage Project as the event attracts an international audience of experts in their field.

As Valentina is a member of the Community Archives board within the Scottish Council on Archives, she has already spoken about our work at the Council's conference earlier this year.

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### Hot from the archives

Watch Rachel Muir, Project Archivist for the SWI at <https://youtu.be/dpQLwL9vt14>

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### Get involved!

We're recruiting Heritage Archivist Volunteers – do you want to get involved?

- In-person at The Ballast Trust, Johnstone where you'll help catalogue photographs, correspondence and handcrafted items.
- Online in your own home by creating a fabulous record of early SWI magazines containing amazing stories of members' role in the inter-war years.

Email [volunteer@theswi.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@theswi.org.uk) to find out more.

"You'll learn as you go along – I'd never done it before, and I thoroughly enjoyed it."  
Elizabeth Hay, Drymen SWI

## **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 at <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.

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

All proceeds of the sale of these items goes towards the SWI 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.

SHOP NOW at <https://rb.gy/h5xdht>

## **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.

SHOP NOW at <https://rb.gy/cqpc16>

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## **More opportunities for SWI volunteering**

### **SWI Junior Dippers**

SWI Junior Dippers groups are thriving across Scotland, engaging young people in hands-on crafting, cooking, and baking activities. These intergenerational sessions allow experienced SWI members to pass on traditional skills, fostering community connections.

Email [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk) to find out more.

### **The Royal Highland Show**

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 click the link below. All stewards receive a free ticket for the show and have ample free time to explore the event.

Email [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk) to find out more.

### **Represent members**

Volunteering as an office bearer with the SWI is a rewarding way to develop leadership skills and help shape the organisation's future. Whether as committee

member or Board Trustee, you'll gain valuable experience while making a meaningful contribution to Scotland's longest-running women's movement.

Email [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk) to find out more.

## **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 at <https://www.theswi.org.uk/event-diary.html>

### **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 <https://www.facebook.com/ScottishWomensInstitutes>

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

Subscribe to SWI's Eventbrite page here <https://shorturl.at/h19na> 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.

Get in touch with us at [hello@theswi.org.uk](mailto:hello@theswi.org.uk)

Alternatively, if you have a grumble to share, please follow our complaints procedure at <https://shorturl.at/yJGeE> to ensure that you receive an appropriate and timely response.

<https://www.facebook.com/ScottishWomensInstitutes>

<https://www.instagram.com/scottishwomensinstitutes/>

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