



Welcome to Issue 42 - 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

President's New Year's Message

I'd like to start off by wishing everyone a Happy New Year for 2026. I hope this year is kind to you and filled with amazing memories.

2026 is an exciting year for the SWI, with lots going on. Last year saw the addition of several Institutes, bringing our total membership to around 8,700 members across 440 Institutes. This year will mark our next Members' Consultation, giving you the opportunity to share what you love about the SWI and what we could do to make it even better.

A plethora of events brought members together in 2025. From Federation Shows and Summer School to knitting festivals and a memorable trip to Dublin as part of the SWI study tour, members from across Scotland had the chance to meet, share laughs, and learn new skills from each other. 2026 will present even more opportunities for members to come together, including this year's Members' Gathering (previously the National Conference) in Dundee, which is sure to be one to remember. We'll have competitions, craft workshops, entertainment, inspiring speakers and more, making it a truly memorable and enjoyable event.

The Heritage Project is now halfway through its two-year cycle. I'd like to say a big thank you to all our members who have volunteered, both in person and online. One of the highlights was the wonderful SWI History Makers podcast, which I was fortunate enough to be part of. These podcast episodes have helped unearth years of fascinating stories. All ten episodes are available on the website and are absolutely worth taking the time to [listen to](#).

This year marks an exciting step forward for our lifelong learning programme with the launch of SWIFTS. This new initiative will replace traditional proficiency tests with a flexible, modern learning pathway that supports members as they develop their skills from beginner through to advanced level across a range of crafts.

Lastly, 2026 is the Triennium year, where members can apply for a Board or Committee position, you can find out more by attending our pop in [Q&A session](#).

In May at the AGM, I will be stepping down as National President. It has been wonderful to be part of the Board. I've had so many incredible opportunities to meet members, travel across the country, and help implement changes to support the organisation. I would strongly encourage you to consider being part of the Board if this is something that interests you. You don't need to have all the answers or years of experience with the SWI, just an interest in helping shape the future and a willingness to give it a go.

Members' Gathering 2026 - Book Your Accommodation

Travel & Accommodation

To help you plan your trip and make your visit to Dundee as easy as possible, please visit our Travel & Accommodation page, where you will find a wealth of information including how to get to the Apex, booking your accommodation, exploring Dundee and more!

Book your accommodation - <https://dacbres.bzon.uk/event/swi-members-gathering-2026/>

Location: View the [Apex City Quay Hotel & Spa, Dundee on Google Maps](#).

Accessibility Guide - <https://www.accessable.co.uk/dundee-city-council/access-guides/apex-city-quay-hotel-spa>

Online talk: Meet Ailsa from Game of Wool

Join us for an online conversation with Ailsa Stephen, contestant on Tom Daley's Channel 4's Game of Wool. Listen to Ailsa discuss her experience on Game of Wool and her journey into crochet and knitting. She'll also take part in a Q&A session to answer all your knitting and crochet questions.

Ailsa, from Largs, discovered her love of crochet and knitting during night shifts in 2017 and has since developed her skills to create a wide range of handmade items. She has participated in Young Farmers craft fairs and had her work displayed at the Royal Highland Show during the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

28 January, 7pm, Zoom

Meet Ailsa from the comfort of your own home Book Now:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1975278804076?aff=oddtcreator>

Upload your 2026 Federation Events

Calling all Federations, do you have events already planned for 2026 that you would like the wider SWI network to know about?

You can easily upload Federation events to the new SWI website with the click of a button.

To upload a Federation event to the website all you need is:

- Event details including the date, time, venue, contact email address and the type of event you are hosting.
- An image that can be included alongside your event, such as a poster or general photo which relates to the event.
- A brief summary of what attendees can expect from your event.

Once submitted a member of the Central Office team will review the details and upload your submission.

Come along to the website walkthrough session on 19 January, hosted by Marketing and Comms lead Bobby to see a demonstration, [book here](#)

Upload your event: <https://www.theswi.org.uk/lifelong-learning/events/>
Scottish Handcraft Championship 2026

The Scottish Handcrafts Championship 2026 at the Royal Highland Show is a huge date in the SWI diary as members volunteer to judge, set up, steward and demonstrate throughout Show week.

This is a fantastic opportunity to be involved in a global competition at a prestigious event and SWI members have traditionally done very well with prizes for a variety of crafts and there are prizes for novices, too, so we encourage you to enter!

There are lots of new categories this year to get everyone involved from fancy pants to a hat crafting competition for charity.

Download the Competition Schedule:

<https://www.theswi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/RHS-2026-Handcraft-Competition-Schedule-additional-info.pdf>

Buy your ticket to the Royal Highland Show:

<https://royalhighlandshow.seetickets.com/content/ticket-options>

All Podcast Episodes Are Now Available

We're delighted to share that every episode of the Scottish Women's Institutes (SWI) podcast series is now available to listen to! Hosted by Jennifer Reoch, this inspiring collection of conversations celebrates the voices, memories and experiences of Scottish rural women and explores how the SWI grew to become Scotland's largest women's movement.

The series covers a wide range of themes, from heritage and friendship to cooking, wartime contributions and the SWI's global connections, offering listeners rich insight into women's lives across generations.

Drawing on personal memories, archive material and expert insight, the podcasts offer a rich and accessible way to explore SWI heritage. Whether you are a long-standing member, a new member, or someone with an interest in women's history, community life or rural Scotland, the series provides a thoughtful and inspiring insight into the strength and diversity of women's experiences.

With all episodes now available, listeners can explore the series in full and discover the stories that have helped shape Scottish Women's Institutes for over a century.

Get Comfy - Watch every episode:

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

Photography & Writing Competitions - Entries Now Open

Photography Competition - Theme: "Hands at Work" -

Capture people's hands in action:

crafting, gardening, cooking, knitting and tell a story through your lens.

Submit your entries:

<https://www.theswi.org.uk/events/national-photography-competition-2026/>

Writing Competition - Theme: "All Things SWI"

Submit a 250-300 word newspaper-style article (including a headline) exploring the memory, meaning, or magic behind anything SWI related.

Submit your entries:

<https://www.theswi.org.uk/events/national-writing-competition-2026-the-warnock-trophy/>

Beginner Knitting SWIFTS Courses – Perth & Banffshire

Kickstart your crafting journey with the SWI! Beginner knitting courses, led by SWI members Dorothy Morris and Susan Clarke, will take place in Perth and Banffshire this February as part of our SWIFTS programme.

Want to find out more? We will be running an open online session on Tuesday 20th January to learn more about the beginners' knitting SWIFTS course – open to anyone curious to get started. Booking information to follow soon.

With more subjects in the works, 2026 is set to be a busy year of learning and skill-building with SWIFTS – don't miss out!

Sign up for the online information session:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/introducing-the-swiffts-learning-pathway-qa-session-tickets-1979998125694?aff=oddtcreator>

Evelyn Baxter Craft Scholarship – Deadline Extended

Good news! We've extended the deadline for applications for the Evelyn Baxter Scholarship until the end of today, Friday 9th January 2026.

If you are a skilled traditional broad-edged calligrapher and were thinking about applying but hadn't quite finished your form, this is your chance!

This scholarship is a fantastic opportunity to:

- showcase your skills
- inspire and teach others
- travel across the country and share your passion

If you have a love for your craft and an enthusiasm for passing on your knowledge, we'd love to hear from you.

Apply Now:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SYZL28H>

Coming Soon - February Events

Online Cooking for One with Jane Hogg

February 11th - 7pm

This one-hour session will cover:
Step-by-step guidance on simple dishes

Tips for portioning and enjoying solo cooking.

Either grab your ingredients and cook along, or sit back, watch, and get inspiration for another time.

COMING SOON

Online Talk: Pearls of Wisdom

February 16th - 7pm

Join Frances Carlaw, The Pearl Lady, for a lively, illustrated talk about pearls, the only living gemstone.

Learn about The history and science of pearls over 5,000 years, how pearls are formed, sourced and receive expert care advice.

Perfect for pearl enthusiasts, jewellery lovers, or the simply curious.

Sign up:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1975278059850?aff=oddtcreator>

Volunteers Wanted - Creative Crafts 2026

We're looking for tutors to lead make & take sessions & member helpers for the Creative Craft Show at the SEC in Glasgow, 5th-7th March 2026.

If you've got a craft you'd love to share, or would be interested in chatting to prospective members about all the amazing benefits you get as an SWI member we'd love to hear from you.

We'd need two hours of your time and you'll receive free access to the Creative Crafts Show on the day you volunteer.

Email Anna.bain@theswi.org.uk for more information.

Wendy Wu Tours Exclusive Offers

Our membership discount partner Wendy Wu Tours, have some exciting offers available for members, on top of the 5% discount they offer.

If you are interested in any of the available offers please email Keith at Wendy Wu Tours for more information.

BOOK BY JAN 31

Offers include:

Free flights or partner flies free:

Save up to £1000 per person across all destinations and tours, selected dates across 2026 & 2027

Solo Traveller Sale:

Save up to £1680 per person

Solo travellers can enjoy up to 50% off airfares or free or half price single supplements. Across all destinations and tours, selected dates across 2026 & 2027.

No Regional Flight Supplements:

Save up to £250 per person

fly from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Belfast and Dublin with no flight supplement T&C's apply

Email Keith at: Keith@wendywutours.co.uk

Member Discounts

Wendy Wu Tours: 5% off all tours, can be used in conjunction with other offers

CODE:SWI5

Take a look - <https://www.wendywutours.co.uk/>

Bloom & Wild: 15% off flowers & Gifts

CODE: THESWI15B&W

Take a look - <https://www.bloomandwild.com/>

Willowberry: 10% off skincare products

CODE: 10offSWI

Take a look - <https://www.willowberry.co.uk/>

The Edinburgh Woollen Mill: 20% off all clothing products

CODE: SW25

Take a look - <https://www.ewm.co.uk/>

The Crafty Kit Company: 20% off craft kits, supplies and gifts

CODE:SWI20

Take a look - <https://www.craftykitcompany.co.uk>

Please Note that all discounts are only available online and are not for in store use.

Member Support & Benefits

National Benefits:

- Take part in national events – From the SWI Summer School and Study Tour to the Members' Gathering and competitions.
- Learn new skills online – Enjoy free online events, a library of YouTube "how-to" videos, and scholarship opportunities.
- Use the membership toolkit – Access ready-made templates and ideas to promote your Institute and celebrate members' achievements
- Enjoy exclusive discounts – Take advantage of great savings and special offers just for members.
- Stay connected – Receive our monthly members' e-newsletter and quarterly Heritage Project updates.

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](#).

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 and never miss a thing.

Do you want general news?

Visit 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 or call 0131 225 1724

Alternatively, if you have a grumble to share, please follow our complaints procedure to ensure that you receive an appropriate and timely response.
