

# Empowering Women: The Women's Institute

## [B2]

Fondata nel 1915 con lo scopo di gestire le provviste di cibo durante la Prima guerra mondiale, quest'organizzazione femminile è diventata il centro di numerose attività a sostegno dei diritti delle donne.

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Britain's largest voluntary women-only organisation, the Women's Institute, known simply as the WI, has been inspiring and [enabling](#) women for 110 years. In that time, the WI has [campaigned](#) on many important [issues](#) and has produced huge quantities of cakes and [jam](#).

## RURAL LIFE

Why does [jam](#) matter? When World War One began in 1914, many farms, food producers and rural communities suffered [shortages](#) of labour. The foundation of the Women's Institute (WI) [aimed](#) to [boost morale](#) and, importantly, to [secure](#) food [supplies](#). Jam production and the [pickling](#) of fruit and vegetables was an important part of the war effort. The movement was founded in 1897 in Canada, and the first British WI group was inaugurated on the Isle of Anglesey in Wales, in 1915.

## LIFELONG LEARNING

Today, there are more than 180,000 WI members in 5,500 groups across England and Wales. Members include Queen Camilla, while the [late](#) Queen Elizabeth II was a lifetime supporter. There are even WI groups in women's prisons. Members pay an annual subscription (currently £51) and groups meet eleven times each year. Meetings involve projects and talks on subjects as diverse as [flower arranging](#), business skills, cooking, climate change and wellbeing. The WI focuses on lifelong learning, skills, volunteering, contributing positively to local communities, and self-development.

## CAMPAIGNING

Many of the founders and original leaders of the Women's Institute were suffragettes who had been involved in the successful campaign to gain the vote for women. As World War One came to an end, their campaigning continued on political and social [issues](#): housing, equal pay and keeping Britain [litter-free](#). Since the 1950s, WI campaigns have included malnutrition, recycling, HIV/AIDS, [midwifery](#), plastic pollution and mental health.

## INTERNATIONAL

The Women's Institute aims to connect, support and empower women across the Commonwealth and has groups in the UK, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. In 1924, the WI adopted the hymn Jerusalem as its [anthem](#), composed by Hubert Parry from the 1804 poem by William Blake. It is traditional for the hymn to be sung before many meetings today.

## CALENDAR GIRLS

The 2003 comedy film Calendar Girls tells the true story of a Yorkshire-based Women's Institute group that created a nude calendar to raise money for charity after one of their members lost her husband to cancer. Helen Mirren and Julie Walters star in the film, which also became a stage play and musical. [www.thewi.org.uk](http://www.thewi.org.uk)

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# Glossary

- **anthem** = inno
- **flower arranging** = composizioni floreali
- **aimed** = mirare, avere lo scopo di
- **litter-free** = pulita, senza rifiuti
- **midwifery** = ostetricia
- **shortages** = mancanza, scarsità
- **campaigned** = lottare, fare campagne
- **pickling** = mettere sottaceto, in conserva
- **enabling** = dare i mezzi per permettere a qualcuno di fare qualcosa
- **jam** = marmellata, confettura
- **boost morale** = sollevare il morale
- **secure** = assicurare, ottenere
- **supplies** = provviste, rifornimenti
- **late** = defunta, scomparsa
- **issues** = temi