

MAY 2018

Soroptimist News

**Meru
Women's
Garden Project:
Study Tour**

**SIGBI
Conference
Liverpool 2018
Book now!**

**CSW62
SIGBI Team
hits
New York!**

- **SIGBI Members celebrate International Women's Day**
- **Directors applications: who will you vote for?**
- **UKPAC Study Day: coming up soon – have you booked your place?**

**Women inspiring action,
transforming lives**

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Welcome to **Soroptimist News** from the Editor



Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland is an organisation in Special Consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) since July 2013. This is in addition to the General Consultative status held by the umbrella organisation Soroptimist International. Soroptimist International is a recognised Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) representing women from all over the world.

Federation Office

2nd Floor, Beckwith House
1-3 Wellington Road North,
Stockport SK4 1AF, UK
T: 0044 (0)161 480 7686
F: 0044 (0)161 477 6152
E: hq@sigbi.org
W: www.sigbi.org

President: Susan Biggs

Immediate Past President:

Ann Hodgson

President Elect: Sue Williams

Vice President: Isobel Smith

Finance Director: Judith Lewis

Executive Officer: Gina Coad

Soroptimist News:

Editor: Sheila Manchester,

Written Image Ltd

T: 0044 (0)1202 684138

E: Soroptimist@written-image.com

Number 63 (hotel)

63 Bayswater Road, London W2 3PH

T: 0044 (0)207 723 8575

E: info@number63.co.uk

W: www.number63.co.uk

Change of address?

Please contact SIGBI Federation Office to change your details.

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Welcome to a very full issue of Soroptimist News! Members have excelled themselves with their activity and reporting – I have never received so many submissions!

This is fantastic so keep it up, please – the only downside is that we cannot fit everything in, so my sincere apologies if your news has not been included. We will try to include it in the next issue.

International Women's Day was the largest event in this quarter and how well did that go? Brilliantly, of course. It has to be the favourite 'Special Day' in the Soroptimist Calendar and this year, because

of the celebrations for 100 years since women in the UK won the right to vote, Clubs were out in force, in period dress in many cases, celebrating with every other women's group!

The other major news in this issue is CSW62 and we have extensive reporting on the very busy scene in New York.

And finally, we have more information about the SIGBI Conference in Liverpool – read on and book your places!



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NEXT ISSUE: 16th August 2018, deadline for submissions: 8th July 2018

Featured Objective 1: Environmental Sustainability (APD Naina Shah)

Featured Objective 2: Food Security and Healthcare (APD Rita Beaumont)

Please send your contributions and news to: Soroptimist@written-image.com.

Please ensure that your submissions are similar in length to the items in this issue - that is, concise.

Please ensure that photos are high resolution and sent as JPEG files, in the same email but not embedded in the text file. We are unable to use low resolution or low quality photos.

The Soroptimist News Schedule for 2018 is in the Members' area of the SIGBI website.



Empower Today Enable Tomorrow

President's message

Dear Soroptimist Sisters

Spring has arrived here in the UK and the clocks have moved forward onto British Summertime.

Our daffodils were just about to flower when the snows came from the East. The first storm meant we were snowed in for four days and the second storm meant I missed attending my Club's (SI Burnley) 75th Charter celebration.

In my last message I wrote about teams and the importance of those groups of people who keep "the Soroptimist Show on the road." I want to continue the theme by thanking all those Soroptimists out there who have written, emailed, phoned or simply hugged me over the last few months.

As some of you know my husband was diagnosed with a suspected brain tumour back in November 2017. Without my team around me then and now I could not have continued as Federation President. I am happy to report that as I write this David is making an excellent recovery and is gaining in strength daily.

However it has meant changes in our lives as private individuals and my life as your Federation President. My President's Support Group of Ann, Sue and Isobel are undertaking my official trips outside the UK. Ann will be in South West Pacific; Sue will be with SIA in Japan and Isobel will be with SIE in Lucerne.

I am concentrating on the UK and Ireland but that does not mean that I do not want to know what is going on in our Clubs outside the UK. So I am announcing here that I want to meet as many of the Clubs outside the UK as possible via electronic means.

I am already a user of Skype and What's App. So if you would like me to "attend" your Club meeting please contact me and I will see what I can do.

The Federation Conference in Liverpool is taking shape. I have registered; in fact I was the first to do so. Please come along and join me on the dockside in this vibrant city. The Conference Team is working hard to ensure that you have a memorable time in the "home of the Mersey Beat".

My travels around the UK have, in recent weeks, included SI Runcorn, Frodsham and District's 70th Charter, SI Sheffield's 90th and SI Rossendale's 70th.

I have also chaired the FMB in Stockport.

In friendship

Susan

**Susan Biggs, President,
Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland**





Programme Objective Economic Empowerment

Rayner Rees
Assistant Programme Director
Economic Empowerment, reports

After an amazing week in New York attending the CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) in the United Nations, I have realised that there are so many organisations trying to do the same as us in bringing support to women and girls across the globe.

There are so many ways in which we as Soroptimists offer support but one issue has had a profound effect on me and that is the issue of child brides and young widows.

Child marriage is a truly global problem that cuts across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities. Child brides can be found in every region of the world.

Across our Federation, there are many of our member countries where child marriage is a huge problem.

Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, with approximately 1 in 2 girls married by the age of 18.

In Nepal 37 per cent of girls are married before the age of 18 with the 2015 earthquakes leaving girls and women in an increasingly vulnerable position.

In Uganda, child marriage is also a result of poverty and parents marry their daughters in the hope of securing their financial security.

39 per cent of girls in Sierra Leone are married before their 18th birthday.

The Government of Sierra Leone is currently implementing "Let Girls be Girls, Not Mothers", a two-year national strategy for the reduction of teenage pregnancy.

It is estimated that 27 per cent of girls in India are married before their 18th birthday with 69 per cent and 65 per cent in Bihar and Rajasthan.

In Pakistan, it is estimated that 21 per cent of girls are married before the age of 18.

Most of the countries have made some progress in reducing the incidences of child marriage. The Nepalese Government is committed to end child marriage by 2020 and the Indian Supreme Court has made a landmark ruling over men having sex with child brides, stating that sexual intercourse with wives under the age of 18 is rape.

Child marriage is closely linked to poverty and in rural areas girls will be married off very young to improve a family's financial status.

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Poverty is both a cause and consequence of child marriage. Trafficking, whereby criminals prey on orphaned children and parents, is part of the reason for the rise in child marriage.

Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and the belief that girls and women are somehow inferior to boys and men. Girls are not valued as much as boys are – they are seen as a burden on their family. Child marriage is a complex issue. Poverty, lack of education, cultural practices, and insecurity fuel and sustain the practice. Child marriage is also driven by patriarchal values and the desire to control female sexuality.

Child brides face huge challenges with their freedom curtailed; girls frequently feel disempowered and are deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education and safety.

They are neither physically nor emotionally ready to become wives and mothers, child brides are at greater risk of experiencing dangerous complications in pregnancy and childbirth, contracting HIV/AIDS and suffering domestic violence and they are particularly vulnerable to pregnancy-related injuries such as obstetric fistula.

Girls who marry before 18 are more likely to face violence from an intimate partner throughout their life. The greater the age difference with their husbands, the more likely they are to experience violence. There can be little doubt that child marriage is a major violation of a girl's human rights and can sometimes be a form of slavery.

The hidden lives of child widows

A particularly severe injustice of this practice are child widows something we know less about. Child widows, some less than ten years old, face bleak futures.

Research is now revealing the hidden lives of these children, and it is time to hold governments to account under international law.

Young widows are mostly found living in remote rural areas, they are deprived of their basic human rights to health, education, and protection from sexual violence and economic exploitation.

They live a life virtually devoid of pleasure and must wear no other colour but white, they are banned from social gatherings, even with their families, temples are off limits and they are not allowed to remarry.

They must not leave the house or look men in the eye, as it is believed that they will bring bad luck.

They have been denied a childhood. With no one to protect them, their futures are bleak as they bear the triple disabilities of gender, marital status, and being underage.

These violations persist in spite of their rights being enshrined in CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, which have been agreed by almost all UN member states. We need to highlight the tragedy of the neglected child widows who have no big organisations to speak up for them, to reveal the conditions of their lives, and galvanise governments to address the human rights violations perpetrated against them.

Today, we have a unique opportunity to act on this momentum and accelerate our efforts to help change the lives of girls and young women all over the world. Ending child marriage requires work across all sectors and at all levels.

Perhaps we need to encourage the CSW to highlight the plight of child marriage and young widows as a separate, urgent issue to improve the status of girls and women.

Many of our Clubs have already begun projects aimed at ending this practice and these include:

- **SI Garstang, SI Bromley, SI East Grinstead and SI Bournemouth** are petitioning to reverse the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 in Bangladesh to remove the legal loopholes that will allow child marriage under certain circumstances.

- **SI Calcutta** is developing a Legal Awareness Programme for teenage girls of Lake School for Girls where they were introduced to legal recourses available when faced with issues like child marriage, sexual harassment, dowry, rape, cyber-crimes and divorce.

- **SI Kathmandu** is providing an Awareness Programme for school children on Child Marriage and Menstrual Hygiene for young girls.

Club reports

Economic Empowerment



SI Thames Valley: Toilets in Sierra Leone... to help the economy

The latest venture of the charity "The Kori Project" in Sierra Leone is to help women to learn to sew and thereby gain some economic independence.

Members of SI Thames Valley constantly work to help keep the Kori Project moving towards the goal of sustainability for the people of Taiama.

Thanks to their past efforts, fields are being cultivated, local schools have been renovated and provided with clean water and a piggery has been built and is now full of thriving pigs.

The Sandy Raffan Library built by the charity is now a well known cultural centre for the area.

Now a room, to be known as "Rose's Room" in honour of the charity's founder Rose Simbo, is to be built behind this library in which the local women can be taught to sew to enable them to have a potential income.

Toilets will obviously be a necessary facility so members of SI Thames Valley recently helped with this fundraiser to enable these to be built.

Along with other supporters of The Kori Project they organised an afternoon of a Taste of Sierra Leone. There were many stalls selling plants and cakes, a tombola and a bric-a-brac stall.

Supporting members travelled from

SI Lichfield to sell jewellery at amazing prices.

The Regional President came from

SI Stratford to sell their cards and soft toys.

Supporters from Kent were represented by a Kori Trustee, Brenda Tumber, who, along with members of her church is one of the leading fund raisers for the toilets. There was a great selection of hot food, a real Taste of Sierra Leone and even music from Sierra Leone which revived many a flagging spirit towards the end of the afternoon.

It was a wonderful occasion of Soroptimist team work and collaboration with other organisations – and there were also enquiries from the general public about Soroptimism.



SI Bombay Chembur, India and SI Cork Fistful of grain for the nomadic tribes

With a pledge to reduce poverty and hunger, SI Bombay Chembur, in collaboration with Pillai College of Education & Research (PCER), Chembur, organised an event, Fistful of Grain for the Nomadic tribes from the underprivileged section in their society.

SI Bombay Chembur Members and each student collected half a kilogramme of rice and lentils and the collection was donated to four nomadic groups of families who live near the Mumbai suburban railway stations.

Other than providing for SDG 2, this project

helped the students to understand the problem of hunger and also how little acts of charity can go a long way to bring a smile on someone's lips.

Enabling girls to stay in school beyond the age of puberty has been the goal of Club Members since they started supporting the 'Girls for Girls' project in Kenya, run by the charity Brighter Communities Worldwide. (Previously Friends of Londiana).

Partnering with their Friendship Club, SI Cork, the Clubs have been responsible for a thousand girls completing their education. The 'Girls for Girls' programme continues to expand in Kenya and is now being adopted by schools in Uganda.



SI Kirkcaldy: Fair Trade

SI Kirkcaldy celebrated Fairtrade Fortnight by donating a Fairtrade rugby ball to Kirkcaldy Ladies Rugby Team. On Sunday 11th March President Heather and Club member, Avril Eardley, visited a rather muddy pitch at Kirkcaldy Rugby Club. After spending a few minutes watching the ladies team warming up for their game against Howe Harlequins, they presented Team Captain Alison Massie with a match-quality ball.

The balls are made by Bala Sports, Glasgow, in their new factory in Jalandhar, India and Scottish rugby clubs helped with their design and testing. The facility is the first ball factory outside Pakistan to receive Fairtrade accreditation and all the parts of the ball are sourced locally. The workforce is currently considering how they will invest their 10 per cent Fairtrade Premium.

SI Kirkcaldy is pleased to support Ladies' Rugby in their home town and equally happy to support Bala which employs women in India in good conditions, pays them the same as men, and helps them look after their families by paying a Fairtrade Premium.

SI Pune Metro East

Sanitary Napkin Advocacy Programme - Empowering Rural Women

SIPME's ongoing project is now managed in Wai, by a self-help group of 10 women who have undertaken this income generating activity.

They handle production and accounts by themselves while the Soroptimists provide material and marketing support. The Club raises funds – asking for a contribution to meet one girl's yearly need of sanitary napkins. The collection keeps the production ongoing while the sanitary napkins are given free to underprivileged girls, mostly in rural schools.

This project and process serves SDGs-1, 8, 10. The economic empowerment for the rural women goes a long way to eradicate poverty and mitigate social inequalities. The current awareness of menstrual hygiene and usage of sanitary towels has given an impetus to this project resulting in increased demand and therefore more production.

It is also great economic empowerment for women workers here. Their economic strength helps them in achieving the three pillars of sustainable development – Economic, Social development and Environmental protection.



Programme Objective: Advocacy

Margaret Clark
Assistant Programme Director, Advocacy
 reports from CSW62 in New York

After lengthy and difficult negotiations a very successful Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) was achieved welcoming new language and empowering women and girls.

H.E. Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason, CSW62 Bureau Chair, the first Irish person to hold this important role said, "It is an extraordinary result by extraordinary people."

Soroptimists played an important part in achieving this by participative negotiations, statements, events and networking. The value of all delegates should never be underestimated. At the closing session of CSW62 the civil society were thanked for their valuable contributions and support in shaping the text.

'Leave no one behind', was a continuous thread throughout CSW62. Highlighting the 2030 Agenda as a Transformational Agenda to bring about lasting change, done in an integrated way that includes asking deeper questions about the purpose and direction of development and seeking deeper structural and political change.

It speaks of the need to tackle social, environmental and economic issues together. Throughout CSW62 we were made aware of this and the importance of extensive participation and deeper dialogue especially with indigenous communities where development projects affect them. There is a need to come together to offer hope and a fresh way of approaching some of the core issues.

During the negotiations with UN Member states, the phrase 'rural women and girls' was amended to: 'women living in rural communities' broadening the focus and included women who might have returned to their rural communities, for example after studying in urban centres.



SIGBI Delegates: Top row L-R: Daphne Pillai, SI Bombay Chembur, India, Sylvia Walker, SI Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean, Barbara Dixon, SIGBI Programme Director, Rayner Rees, SIGBI APD Economic Empowerment, Lynn Maher, UKPAC and Scotland. Bottom row: left to right: Peps Adiukwu, Nigeria, Anu Pradeep, SI Bangalore, India, Margaret Clark, SIGBI APD Advocacy, Sizani Ngubane, Woman of Distinction 2018.

Global Survey of Rural Women

Soroptimist International and Associated Country Women of the World have formed a partnership and are participating in the, "Global Survey of the Living Conditions of Rural Women," launched at CSW62 under the auspices of the International Forum on Rural Women.

Please distribute and encourage the completion of the survey widely in developed and underdeveloped countries. Results are anticipated in December 2018.

To access the survey go to www.ifrw.org.uk



Woman of Distinction Award

The Woman of Distinction Award winner, Sizani Ngubane, is the co-founder of the Rural Women's Movement (RWM), South Africa. RWM is a coalition of more than 500 community based organisations with a membership of 50,000 indigenous women and girls.

This grassroots movement led an intensive campaign to provide solutions to the issues facing rural women and girls, from violence to customary laws and practices that impede their rights to economic empowerment and obtaining full human rights.

Through Sizane's tireless efforts, championing the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality, all of RWM's projects use this powerful tool for change. Results have reduced transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancy, maternal mortality and eliminated abduction and forced marriages of girls in two communities.

Sizani's voice was amplified at the United Nations – to ensure that "no one is left behind".

Sizani was the keynote speaker for the NGO CSW62 Forum and she shared her story at the Consultation Day on stage and with our delegates.

Solutions to address the multilayered issues faced by rural women Interventions

As Soroptimists we seek to find solutions to address the multi-layered issues faced by rural women. SIGBI, SISWP, SIE and SIA gave presentations to provide valuable insights into the challenges they face and interventions to solve them.

SIGBI's successful Federation Project, Meru Women's Garden covers all of the interventions.

Examples of other projects and their interventions include:

SI Bombay Chembur's project 'The Power of the Second Chance' provides education in rural areas, motivating, inspiring and providing economic opportunities for all. These initiatives have been meeting the very real needs of the women and were identified through participatory consultations and evidence based need assessments.

SI Lurgan is campaigning for trafficked women who are often in isolated rural areas, seeing perpetrators going free and behavior becoming normalised. Presented for SIGBI by Joanne Harris SI Lurgan. Back row left to right: Dame Vera Baird QC, UK, Dr Daphne Pillai, India, Margaret Clark APD, Dr Barbara Dixon, Programme Director, Sister Annie, India, Poppy Ullet, NAWO Youth UK Front row: Dr Sylvia Walker, Caribbean, Peps Adiukwu, Nigeria, Dr Anu Pradeep, India.



SIGBI delegates collaborated to share best practice, 'Addressing the diverse needs of isolated rural women: Successful interventions.'

The session gave valuable insights into the plight of rural women and how different countries responded to the need of lifting up women from the poorest level to a dignified self-respecting life. Diversity is not an option it is a reality.

Dame Vera Baird in her conclusion said that as western Soroptimists reach out to help women in less developed countries, urban Soroptimists must do the same for local rural women, whose own numbers will never be enough to give them a loud voice and would therefore, continue to remain the neglected sector.



Widows Rights International

Rural widows were passionate to share the challenges in Tanzania. Although inheritance laws may have been introduced they are not always implemented and many isolated rural widows may never hear of them. Widows were only mentioned once in the Agreed Conclusions but with determination and commitment the plight of widows will be heard.

A request when lobbying and campaigning was to wear uniform so that the women could not be identified. A suggestion was funding for a uniform of T shirts. Often rural women do not have a voice so we must be their voice and leave no one behind.

Visa refusals

If you know of any woman who was denied a visa to attend CSW62, or any woman who did not apply for a visa for fear of being refused, please inform me as soon as possible as action is being taken to address this issue and ensure all women are included in the future – leaving no one behind.

Reflections from a first time CSW delegate: Julie Blackwood

As a first time attendee it did take some time to get into the routine and understand the procedure for attending the various presentations. CSW introduced me to the size of the global Civil Society. I was amazed at the number of NGOs, church groups, faith groups, associations, societies and organisations which comprise the voices to be heard by the United Nations.

I was also surprised and delighted to hear of the esteem in which Soroptimist international is held and recognised. It is certainly important that we retain consultative status. It was wonderful to meet Soroptimists from the other Federations, as well as members from SIGBI.

Although the theme was rural women, there were many other topics covered and the main strapline for the events was 'Leave no-one behind' which became the all-inclusive mantra in advocating gender equality and empowerment of women and girls across the globe. The objective of the sessions was to make the 2030 Agenda work for women and girls, creating the Zero Draft document which must then be implemented to ensure that – no-one is left behind.

Without going into too much detail of the different sessions I attended, the impression I came away with is that it is a huge objective and with so many different aspects, the United Nations has an enormous task in hand. It is easy to see how the Civil Society feeds into the different areas in the hope that their voices are heard and change will happen. Topics ranged from sex trafficking to the media, to rural women, education, health and STEM. This is not an exhaustive list at all.



We attended the offices of the High Commission and Penny Mordaunt, Secretary of State, arrived to hear about the activities of the day. We also learned that many of the women identified by the UN as being important attendees (who had been invited and paid for to attend by the UN), had been denied visas to the USA. This seemed to be a higher number than previous years and was to be taken forward and highlighted for the future.

On my return, the Club invited me to present to them as well as at the next Southern Region meeting. The local Rotary club has also invited me to present.

It was an amazing opportunity and I am still reeling from the enormity of the UN task and the involvement of so many organisations from around the world. It has taken Soroptimism to a new level for me, I have always enjoyed the wider, global reach and this has certainly provided me with a platform to look at this more closely in the future.

Thank you again.

Julie Blackwell, SI Winchester & District

I would like to thank all the delegates for your collaboration, commitment and camaraderie making it a memorable and successful CSW62. 'The time is right' for, 'Implementation, implementation, implementation', 'Leaving no one behind'.

SIGBI celebrations!



SI Barry and District was, in 1968, presented with its Charter in the Memorial Hall, Barry. The same venue was chosen for the 50th Anniversary Lunch.

Three founder members, Mary Edmunds, Diane Dixon and Vivian Liles, attended – still active Soroptimists and greatly valued. The 117 guests included Federation President Sue Biggs, Past Federation Presidents: Carwen Wynne Howells, Ann Hodgson and Amanda Rees, South Wales Regional President. Representatives of 11 Soroptimist Clubs including seven Presidents, were also present, with Club members Janice Charles, in her role as Mayor of The Vale of Glamorgan and Jane Hutt AM.

Guests received a copy of the Club history, which was written to mark the occasion.



SI Richmond & Dales

celebrated their 60th Charter with a very special year. The highlight was the Jubilee Weekend in June 2017, where members from Friendship Links SI Harare, Zimbabwe; SI Basel, Switzerland; SI Easter Ross, Scotland and SI Durham were welcomed to a busy weekend culminating in a Jubilee Lunch for 90 guests including Federation President, Ann Hodgson, as well as friends old and new.

One of the highlights of this special year was when the Club's wonderful Patron, Baroness Hale of Richmond was appointed President of the Supreme Court.



SI Drogheda President, Carmel Schmidt, hosted a lunch party earlier this year, to celebrate the Club's Diamond Anniversary. SI Drogheda Members, the current National President, Teresa Irwin, many past presidents of the Drogheda Club and their guests, together with Soroptimists from all over Ireland celebrated in the hotel where the inaugural meeting and Charter Dinner had taken place in 1958.

Three Past National Presidents who are members of the Drogheda Club are pictured, Margaret Geraghty, Carmel Schmidt and Rona Connolly. A wonderful time was had by all remembering 60 years of the Club.



SI Harrogate & District

Pat Shore was presented with the MBE for services to the community of Harrogate at Buckingham Palace in April by HRH The Duke of Cambridge Prince William.

Prince William was very interested in the work of Soroptimist International and spoke for quite a while about the abuse of women and children even discussing the problems of social media and the internet affecting children. Pat had a wonderful day and is delighted with her honour.

SIGBI Conference 25-27 October 2018



A message from Tricia Coll, Conference Chairman



The weeks are flying by and the Conference team is working hard, October doesn't seem to be on the distant horizon anymore.

Registration is now open, have you booked yet? Please come, Liverpool is an exciting and interesting place and the Conference intends to match that.

We have secured our final three speakers and are delighted to announce that we will welcome:

Ellie Bird Lenawarungu, Director of 'Amuka Foundation', is a former police officer with the West Midlands and British Transport Police, serving for over thirty years.

After her retirement Ellie (pictured below) went on to found the Amuka Foundation in Kenya working to deliver life skill and empowerment programmes to adolescent boys and girls. The word Amuka means to rise up in Swahili.



Professor Helen Pankhurst, is the great granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, leader of the British suffragette movement and granddaughter of Sylvia Pankhurst, campaigner for the suffragette movement in the United Kingdom.

Helen has worked for a range of international development organisations including ACORD, Womankind Worldwide and CARE International, primarily in Ethiopia.

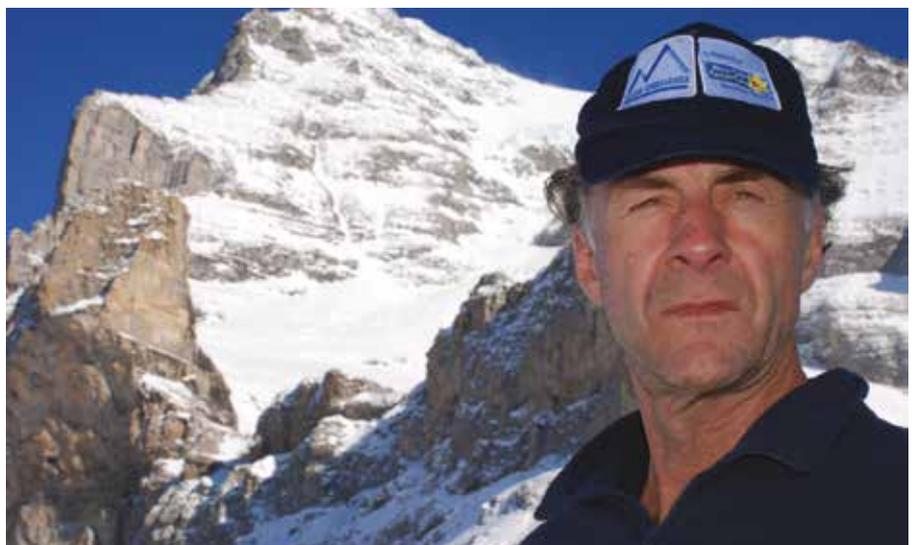


Terry Waite CBE Photo: Gemma Levine

The February issue of Soroptimist News highlighted the fact that Terry Waite will be speaking on the Friday morning of the conference.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes OBE

A former Army officer who became the foremost British explorer and holder of several endurance records. According to the Guinness Book of World Records in 1984, he is the world's greatest living explorer. He is also a prolific writer, poet and charity fundraiser, named the UK's top celebrity fundraiser by Just Giving, the UK online fundraising platform. He has raised £8.3 million for Marie Curie.



The ACC Liverpool



Photo: McCoy Wynne

Liverpool is a maritime city, where the River Mersey meets the Irish Sea. A key trade and migration port from the 18th to the early 20th centuries, it's also, famously, the hometown of The Beatles.

Ferries cruise the waterfront, where the iconic mercantile buildings – the Three Graces: Royal Liver Building, Cunard Building and Port of Liverpool Building, stand on the Pier Head.

Liverpool has world-class tourist attractions, with more museums and galleries anywhere outside of London. The city is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. It has one of the largest collections of Grade I listed buildings in the UK and Britain's largest cathedral.

So why not add a day or two to your stay in Liverpool and take advantage of the many attractions Liverpool has to offer.



Penny Lane, home of The Beatles



The Royal Liver Building

Conference location



Exhibition:

There is an excellent exhibition area within the Conference building and our aim is to have a well balanced and interesting mix of commercial, charity and Soroptimist stalls.

The Conference website also has a 'contact us' page for anyone who is interested in having a stall.

Also in this area, delegates will be able to meet some of the speakers who are bringing their books – you may like to get a signed copy!

Social Media Campaigners:

Last year's campaigners achieved great success in raising both our profile and awareness of issues that we highlight. If you would like to be part of a team of tweeters and bloggers please contact Lisa in the Stockport Office by email at hq@sigbi.org.

We are working to bring you an interesting and stimulating conference - to keep you in the ACC, rather than the many and varied surrounding attractions - Liverpool was the European Capital of Culture in 2008.

We really hope to see you there in October.

Why should you volunteer as a Steward at Conference?

Helping to make a Conference successful is a rewarding experience. It also offers new experiences and skills, as well as providing a great opportunity to meet many fellow Soroptimists.

As a volunteer, it is very much appreciated that you give your time freely and the Conference should then prove to be as enjoyable for the stewarding team as it is for everybody else.

There are many roles to fill – from meeting and greeting, facilitating registration, helping at the opening and closing ceremonies, directing delegates to the correct areas, assisting with the exhibition areas, helping with special needs, administering the AGM, ensuring a smooth flow of delegate traffic at all times – the list is a long one.

The only criteria is a wealth of patience and a friendly smile. All stewards will be given a guide and briefing pack to ensure their experience is not a daunting one.

Thank you to all those who have already sent their details and offered their services – it is very much appreciated.

Members who are willing to help and spread the load, please kindly contact Chief Steward Linda Beddows:

lindabeds@tiscali.co.uk or call 01253 726576 for more details and the requisite form to complete.



SIGBI 2018

Directors' Applications

**Soroptimist
International**
Great Britain & Ireland

**Nominations for Federation posts have been received as follows.
Please note the full nomination forms may be found on the Members' Only
Section of the SIGBI website under Nomination Forms for Federation Posts.**



**SIGBI Vice President
2018-19**
Name: Barbara Dixon
Club: SI Anglesey
Joined in: 1992

Statement:

Having served as Director of Programme since 2015 I have been privileged to be part of a team that truly believes in Soroptimist International and has its best interests at heart.

I would welcome the opportunity to build on the foundations now laid to make our Organisation stronger, more vibrant and Inclusive. We are a Membership Organisation and I strongly believe that change can only be implemented with the consent and co-operation of the Members and only by transparency and consultation can we deliver what the Members want. There have been many necessary changes in the Organisation over the past few years, and no doubt more to come, but if we are to survive I feel we must all move forward together, consolidate what has been achieved but also reflect upon what could be improved.

My passion is still Programme Action which I consider is our greatest asset for attracting and retaining Members. Taken in conjunction with the proposals for Vision 2021, I would welcome the opportunity of moving our organisation forward to become the leading organisation for women with Programme Action at the forefront.

Any new role brings challenges which I hope to meet with an open mind. Over the years I have occupied many roles in Soroptimism and I feel that I have been able to apply myself fully to the challenges I have faced, learning all the time. I am fully committed to steering our Organisation through the changes and ensuring its viability in the future.



**SIGBI Vice President
2018-19**
Name: Johanna Raffan
Club: SI Thames Valley
Joined in: 1987

Statement:

As Director without Portfolio for the last eighteen months and a Soroptimist for over thirty years, I am committed to the aspirations of Soroptimism.

With the Growth Plan in place, the development of Charitable status and the new Trading Company, I believe it is time to embrace change and to empower our Members to mobilise themselves in new directions. We will, I am sure, rise to the challenge.

As an Anglo-Norwegian, I am committed to a multi-cultural society, and Soroptimism has enriched my life by my contacts with other countries. I feel Soroptimism has qualities that need to be further developed and recognised.

We are a powerful agency for change - more PR strategies are needed, not only to attract new Members but also to heighten awareness of the Programme work we do globally.

Having NGO status means that we have a voice where it counts. Our Members are our greatest asset, and through them we are making an enormous difference to the lives of women and girls.

I believe we need to be more proactive in asserting our worth in order to raise consciousness and enable women to feel proud to join us.

My experience of setting up a large education charity and a small international charity gives me great insight into the problems and issues facing SIGBI over the next few years. I believe I can bring a wealth of experience to the role of Vice President and would consider it an honour to be elected.



**Director of Communications
2018-20**
Name: Gail Teague
Club: SI Bromsgrove & Redditch
Joined in: 1996

Statement:

I have been Director of Communications for two years and an active member of the Federation Management Board, participating in working groups for the Growth Plan and the Website Changes.

Communications are important in the cascade of the Growing your Brand workshops. The work we have done resulted in a reduction of members leaving. There is work planned to continue this reduction and I would welcome remaining in post to complete the initiatives the Board has started.

Communication is vital to the success of any organisation. It is essential that members feel informed and engaged in the organisation and its achievements. Communication is more important in a change environment and we are currently undergoing a period of change.

I worked for 42 years in the NHS, the last few years as a manager, so I have had years of experience managing communications within the NHS and Social Services to a wide audience.

Having already completed two years I am well versed in the intricacies of being a Board Member and leading a Committee. The Communication Committee is formed of Federation Councillors, and the current Committee is involved in delivering the workplan for 2017-18 that supports the strategic plan.

The organisation is going through a lot of change as it works towards Charitable Status. It is vital that we have a strong Communications plan to keep members informed and engaged in this as it progresses through the different stages.



**Director of Finance
2018-20**
Name: Ruth Healey
Club: SI Surrey Hills
Joined in: 2003

Statement:

I was involved with Soroptimist International at a young age when I was 'volunteered' by family to help with the activities of SI Cardiff, so I have grown up appreciating the wonderful work that this organisation and its Clubs carry out and the impact it has on the lives of women and girls.

However, the organisation is being challenged to be relevant and fresh to women of today and I would like to use my technical expertise and knowhow to ensure the Federation's ability to meet that challenge.

Finance Director of SIGBI will be a challenging role over the next few years not least due to the potential move to charitable status but also, with the other directors, ensuring the viability and relevance of the Federation moving forward.

Currently I am Finance Director of Hydrock Contracting limited, a £25m turnover business where my responsibilities encompass any aspect of the financial health of the company.

I have, however, worked in many small businesses and understand the pressures of managing budgets, keeping a tight rein on cash and ensuring good management information is available to decision makers in order that the company thrives.

I have a proven track record of developing strategies and business processes, utilising strong communication and influencing skills to implement policies, procedures and systems to enable businesses to achieve their objectives.

I feel confident that I can help SIGBI move through this period of change.



Assistant Programme Director: Education 2018-20
Name: Yvonne Gibbons
Club: SI Widnes
Joined in: 2008

Statement:

I am passionate about Programme Action and firmly believe it is the heart of everything we do.

For me personally, it is the reason I became a Soroptimist; I want to be able to make a difference to the lives of women and girls throughout the world.

Being a teacher, I firmly believe that education has to be at the core of what we do.

We must educate, or at the very least, support the education of women and girls to enable them to develop, thrive and reach their potential.

We must do this, whether that will be by improving their literacy, numeracy and communication skills; teaching them how to grow crops successfully; empowering them to say, "No" or developing any other skills they might need to become empowered.

I also strongly believe that we must educate men and boys too.

It is not enough just to teach or empower women and girls to say, "No", we must teach the men and boys to understand why any form of violence against women and girls is abhorrent and totally wrong.

If I am successful in my application, my hope is to be able to support and encourage our Clubs and Regions to undertake Programme Action work that educates or enables the education of women and girls and men and boys to make the world a better place for everyone.

If we improve the life and the life chances for women and girls then it follows that the lives of men and boys will be improved as a direct consequence.



Assistant Programme Director: Education 2018-20
Name: Carol Infanti
Club: SI Maidstone
Joined in: 2010

Statement:

I believe that my training and experience as a Home Economist has given me the appropriate skills to take on the role of Assistant Programme Director, Education.

Home Economists conduct research and advise consumers on the selection and proper use of food products, textiles and other consumer goods.

The home economist's role is very important because they deal with everyday life and the stress involved and teach people how to make healthy, economical decisions about their own lives and the lives of their family.

Home economics, which is also called human ecology, encompasses all aspects of daily living.

Those aspects include human development and relationships, consumerism, financial and resource management, housing and shelter, clothing and textiles and aesthetics.

Home economists research all of these areas and help people to improve or enhance their lives.

My work within Kent County Council (KCC) has given me the relevant management and leadership skills; managing teams of people and managing complex projects.

I see the role of APD as one of leadership, management, facilitation and encouragement.

Using these and working as part of a team I look forward to working with colleagues within the Federation.

In summary – we have strength in our vision, our gift is our time and our passion. I want to work with all outward looking women.



Assistant Programme Director: Environmental Sustainability 2018-20
Name: Naina Shah
Club: SI Chennai Downtown
Joined in: 2006

Statement:

The two years as APD have been immensely gratifying. I have used my knowledge, experience and passion for environmental issues to work with Clubs to empower women to become active agents of social and environmental change.

Clubs have partnered with local and governmental agencies to advocate environmental awareness. Clubs have engaged with new ideas to work with the next generation. For example, working with SI Madurai to support students who developed a water filter using rice husk which, taken forward, will reach villages for safe drinking water. This won a global level award.

Through projects, Soroptimists can empower and enable women to translate seven of 17 SDGs that directly impact environmental sustainability. With the current SI focus on Women, Water and Leadership, I have impressed upon the managing committee how women can be a catalyst for change and should play an important role in water management. Soroptimists need to work on this aspect as it is increasingly accepted that women perform an important role in achieving equitable access to water for all, and for all uses.

In sharing my experiences on sustainable technologies for safe drinking water and water treatment with the International President, I have been appointed by SIGBI to liaison for this IP appeal on Women, Water and Leadership.

The momentum of awareness on seven of the 17 SDGs, will be strengthened and continued should my candidature for the post be renewed.



Assistant Programme Director: Violence and Conflict Resolution 2018-20
Name: Nisha Ghosh
Club: SI Pune Metro East
Joined in: 2010

Statement:

Being APD has been a great learning curve. I have had the opportunity to interact with the Programme Team, adding my voice to ideas, planning and consultations that become a major part of Programme Action and the Conference.

Programme Reports on elimination of violence, peace promotion and conflict resolution enabled me to analyse the way Clubs address the focus areas. I connected with Clubs, when they needed my assistance for a better understanding of the Soroptimist role as advocates of SDG5. My thrust for this post remains:-

1. Encourage Clubs to take the gender based violence issues head on through their projects. Raise awareness of annihilating patriarchal structures in society that foster multiple forms of female oppression. Work with the next generation, before they harden their attitudes on violence against women.

2. Have Clubs understand the supportive role needed for survivors. Listening to women's stories can be an emancipatory experience. Inspire Soroptimists first to be just the listeners and then voice their anguish.

3. Remind Clubs through informed discussions to act in demanding the governments' commitments to end all forms of gender based violence.

4. Report projects so that they count in the global Impact of Soroptimist work.
5. Inspire Members' participation at CSW, to see the frontrunner role that Soroptimists play.

Understand the international commitment to the SDGs especially SDG5 to bring gender issues centre stage.



SIGBI Friendship Link Coordinator 2018-20
Name: Bhaswati Biswas
Club: SI South Kolkata
Joined in: 2005

Statement:

Friendship is a shared link between two people who value each other. It was also the starting point of the Soroptimist Organisation. Logically it is the underlying factor of linking of Clubs.

Such links open up a world of Friendship as did the link of my Club with SI Curitiba Batel in Brazil. It was during my tenure as Club President (2013-14) which marked the beginning of a new friendship. For the first time India had links with a South American Club. Communication between the links is so important.

As President, my visits to Regional meetings helped me to understand the Clubs and their projects. When two Members from the Club in Brazil visited the city, they were welcomed with friendship. Social media serves as an important platform and has given me friendship with many Soroptimist across the globe. An effective way to stay connected.

To carry this forward, as a co-ordinator, the main focus area would be to see that each correspondent knows, understands and enjoys the work so that communication between the links is maintained and strengthened. The Clubs should be encouraged to do more shared projects and jointly seek goals to transform the lives of women and girls. Periodic follow-ups to inform and update links would strengthen the friendship bonds. Perhaps a minimum level of communication can be set to make the links more vibrant.

Making a new link is just the beginning of the journey. I pledge to nurture that new connection.

Soroptimist International

Update: Women, Water and Leadership



The theme of CSW62 was “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”. Over 80 Soroptimists from all over the world travelled to New York to learn, network and advocate for women and girls in rural areas.

Women in rural areas face a multitude of issues including lack of education, discrimination, unequal pay, gender based violence, and lack of health services. They are responsible for growing the food that feeds their families and nations but less than 13 per cent are landowners. They must often toil from dawn to dusk with lack of clean water or sanitation facilities – and we know that they suffer the effects of climate change and disasters more than urban residents. For too long they have been forgotten and left vulnerable because of a lack of appropriate legislation or social protections.

Despite all these barriers, we were overwhelmed by the stories of these remarkable women who came to CSW62 to share their experiences with us. As Soroptimists we must be their voice and hold our governments accountable to ensure no woman or girl is left behind. Visit www.soroptimistinternational.org to read about Soroptimist activities at CSW62.

Soroptimist International President's Appeals Promote the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls in Rural Areas

Women, Water and Leadership, 2017-2019

The President's Appeal, Women, Water and Leadership, focuses on the important role women play in the water sector. In many countries it is the women living in rural areas

who are responsible for fetching drinking water, collecting water for their gardens in order to feed their families, gathering water for daily chores and dealing with wastewater. Though women in rural areas are experts in water, they rarely get to participate in the decision making process. Women Water and Leadership will provide women with the training to increase their individual capacities and prepare them to be key partners with men in decision making regarding the use of water.



Beverley Bucur
Director of Advocacy
Soroptimist
International
reports

The first project selected for the President's Appeal, Women, Water and Leadership in Agriculture, is underway. This project will provide the women of the Mwhoko Women Group (Kenya) the opportunity to be empowered to improve the food security of their families and their community, focusing on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7, on the challenges of poverty, food security; access to water; gender equality and environment.

The first training of the Mwhoko Women Group was conducted at the Mwhoko Resource Centre from 23rd – 24th February 2018. The training involved recording of the owners or lessors of the farm plots and the preparation of the demonstration farm at the Resource Centre. One acre of land was designated for the demonstration farm, and the remaining land was then plowed by a tractor and 25 plots, for the 25

women in the group, were pegged.

Soil testing was completed on the 25 farm plots and security fencing put in place. Once the soil testing results were received, the women began planting their crops.

The women and their families were also trained in how to construct multi-storey gardens at the Resource Centre. The community provided manure for mixing with soil and farm equipment, multi-storey garden kits provided by the project. Some members received the multi-storey kits for their farms, after the training, the rest of the members will receive them later.

The official launch of the project took place on 24th February. Dr Morris O. Omondi, from the Nakuru County Directorate of Agriculture, delivered a message on behalf of the County Governor, and a message from the Honourable M. Wangare, area member of Parliament was delivered by PA, Ann Nadir.

Soroptimist International Kenya Union President, Dorothy Shiroya, and Deputy Governor, Christine Chola launched the project. President Dorothy Shiroya urged the Mwhoko women, “Work together with the community, especially your spouse and youth, as this ensures harmony in the family. The Soroptimists International worldwide members are working hard to raise money to support the SI President's Appeal – Women, Water and Leadership.

“President Mariet has the Mwhoko women at her heart, due to your past success and the efforts you have put into improving access to water not only for yourselves, but also the community at large.

“The Mwhoko project is the first one of projects which will be implemented in five continents, so we are accountable to the rest of the world. The SI Kenya Union will support the Mwhoko women to ensure that the project is successfully implemented, and members of Soroptimists from the 11 Clubs will be encouraged to visit and support the project, both monetarily and throughout implementation.”

The project also included upgrades to the resource centre, including new furniture and an electrical connection. One 3,000 litre water storage tank for drip irrigation was also provided.

Through training and capacity building, the women will be exposed to better and modern farming structures, helping them move on from subsistence farming – growing crops and raising livestock sufficient only for one's own use – to commercial farming, and will be supported throughout the transition.

Soroptimists worldwide are encouraged to support the President's Appeal by making a donation through their Federation.



Soroptimist International

Update: Educate to Lead, Nepal



The International President's Appeal 2015 – 2017 supports projects in Nepal with a focus on improving the lives of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities by President Elect, Sharon Fisher.

Thanks to Clubs around the world, Educate to Lead: Nepal, has exceeded expectations. This President's Appeal focused on women and girls in rural Nepal and the implementation of our projects addressed SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 5 – Gender Equality and SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation.

20 projects are at varying stages of completion, being supported by the financial generosity of Soroptimists in the amount of £412,821.17. Projects chosen were based on best practice and projects supported by Soroptimist Clubs from around the world to assist the women and girls in post-earthquake rural Nepal:

1. Scholarships for girls to include books, fees, and uniforms and in many cases room and board due to the distance they needed to walk to come to school.

2. Skills training to provide economic opportunities.

3. Women's groups and Women's conferences as a mechanism to teach and provide support including human rights and gender equality. In many of these rural areas, women do not even know that sending their daughter to school is an option thus these young girls are subjected to a life of hard work, early marriage or trafficking.

4. Feminine Hygiene – Sending girls to a hut during their period, due to the belief they were cursed or unclean due to the lack of feminine hygiene products, is a significant issue. *Chaupadi* – segregating a woman when she is menstruating – was banned several years ago but it is still widely practiced, with the penalty, if applied, of just a few dollars.

5. Providing support for victims of trafficking and violence with computer literacy and English literacy.

6. Improving the quality of teacher training in rural areas.

7. Ensuring ongoing commitment to projects. Being accepted in rural villages is not just showing up once but returning again and again and being accepted into the community. We expect to directly touch the lives of at least 7,000 women and girls and many, many more indirectly.

Thank you for supporting these courageous women and girls who are hoping to have an equal voice in their community and beyond.

Educate to lead project updates

Strengthening Women's Education & Economic Empowerment:

Action Aid UK - £35,000. 150 women will directly benefit from this project in Eastern Nepal which aims to educate and engage women in income generating activities and reducing unpaid care work through community child care centres. Each of ten villages has a child care centre with women learning management and other skills by working in these centres to prepare them for other opportunities. Additionally, women who want to go to work can leave their children at the centre. The original centre was built with help from SI Oxford and this grant will continue their work and also the nine additional centres. Each centre will have a toilet, a sink and routine health checkups for the children as part of this grant.

FEDO (Feminist Dalit Organisation)

200 Women will directly be helped. The Dalit people is a marginalised group and live under a caste system. FEDO is a national level NGO-200 Women will directly be helped.

A Governmental Organisation (NGO) founded in 1994 to establish the rights of Dalit women by organising and empowering them for their mainstreaming into national development.

It has been working to promote the Dalit's rights and to eliminate caste and gender based discrimination and promote justice and equality in Nepalese society since its establishment.

The President's Appeal grant will provide school uniforms, bags and shoes for 200 school girls. The community will establish a multi-purpose learning centre to provide women with information, advocacy training will be provided to increase women's voices a school continuation campaign will be launched.

Roots for Life is a humanitarian, non-profit organisation, which stands up for women and children in Nepal on three levels. They provide emergency assistance with local partners.

They work to strengthen the social position of girls and women through education. They also fight against sexual exploitation, trafficking, and violence.

Thade Village Empowerment Programme Roots for Life & Unions of France and Switzerland - £26,000 – 200 children

A Soroptimist from Austria founded Roots for Life to help women and girls in Nepal. The Thade Village School was destroyed in the earthquake as was most of Thade Village.

"Roots for Life" has rebuilt part of the school but more children needed to be accommodated.

Through fundraising from the Swiss and French Unions, funds were pledged through the Presidents Appeal to complete the building of the needed classrooms to ensure the children were in

a classroom before the coming monsoon season. There will be more news coming from Thade Village with more projects in the planning stages.

Chrysangar Farm – In remote villages, women frequently must leave their children behind and find work. In this village the women organised themselves and put a little money in every month until they were able to provide loans to all to have a few chickens.

This provided food and also some extra money for the women. Roots for Life joined the group and together they formed the idea of growing vegetables and preserving them.

The markets were too far away to deliver fresh produce. They are learning how to improve their crops and are building a Farm Kitchen where they can process their food for market and also house visiting instructors. Several nearby villages now want training as well.

Days for Girls provides washable feminine hygiene products. In Nepal we will be in five villages teaching 5 – 6 women in each to form their own business making these kits.

1000 girl ambassadors will meet the villagers by reaching out to their families and friends and explaining that having your period is not dirty and encouraging an end to the practice of *Chaupadi*.

On a recent visit to a very remote village in the far west and after a village gathering with the pastor and village elders, the pastor said it was time the practice came to an end. The previous winter seven girls had died in these "red huts" from poisonous snake bites, exposure and others were victims of violence including sexual assault.

Mothers and infants also spend 21 days in these huts after the birth of their baby.

**For more information about the President's Appeals visit the SI website:
www.soroptimistinternational.org.**





Meru Women's Garden Project Study Tour 2018



Patricia Gatherum
Federation Project Liaison reports

We also were joined by John, a local chief who was very pleased with all the work the CIFORD people were doing, and to meet us. We shared lunch with them and some members of SI Meru who introduced themselves individually. They were very dedicated Soroptimists in a relatively new Club. After lunch we spent time with a question and answer session before returning back to our hotel, tired and inspired.

It rained all that night and we awoke to mud, mud and more mud. It did not however slow us down one bit as we set off to meet the women in their own gardens. We were divided into four groups so that overall we would see all the gardens. Our van was met at the bottom of a lane by the women whose gardens were in that area. We were given more kitenges and danced all the way up the lane to Lucy's garden.

The group is one year old and has 24 members. It is called Mwendwa and is performing well. Margaret explained how the project was working and some of the women spoke to us. We were also joined by other women from around the area. There was much dancing and presentations of gourds of very strange shapes.

Lucy showed us round her garden very proudly. Her most important thing was the water tank which she shares with those around her. She told us that she had learnt to boil the water every day for her children to drink. Selling her excess produce she had been able to buy a goat. Before we

On 7th April, 24 Soroptimists and one brave Soroptimister set off on an African adventure.

On our drive from Nairobi to Meru County we saw some wonderful sights, marabou storks on top of tall trees in the centre of the city, monkeys who swung from the trees to try to steal bread buns where we were having lunch and, everywhere, people on motorbikes. We saw one bike with a three seater sofa strapped to it and one with two pigs, a goat and three people on it.

During this ten hour journey we made new friendships and renewed old ones. There was much laughter as our vans drove over hundreds of speed bumps. At the end of our drive we were met by Margaret and the CIFORD team. A very noisy greeting involved us all donning kitenges (like sarongs) and dancing all the way to the CIFORD office. We made quite a stir. We went to bed that night very tired but glad to be in Meru at last.

We spent the next day at the CIFORD centre. Margaret and her co-workers told us all about how the centre was established.

We heard from the lady who runs the Alternative Rights of Passage courses and then the girls who had been on these courses entertained us. They were very brave as there were a lot of us. It was very moving to hear how empowered they felt having completed the courses. They sang songs and said poetry, it was truly wonderful.

Graduation Day

a poem by Sandra Dieffenthaler following her participation in the Study Tour

*Along muddy roads they walked for miles
The graduates with their beautiful smiles
Of gratitude and excitement
Happy for the opportunity
To gather as community
To celebrate their empowerment*

*A break from work in their gardens and fields
Celebrating education increasing yields
Of veggies and maize, provisions and peas
And a future faced with greater ease*

*Worries and troubles put aside for a day
A time to sing, to dance and to pray
To say thanks for an education
That enabled them to say no to FGM*

*Their spirits not dampened by the constant rain
"Blessings from God" was the constant refrain
Determined to make the most of the day
Certificate in hand and having their say*

*An opportunity for our members too
To see the strength of women who
With bare hands and great determination
Transform the lives of their sisters and children*

*An opportunity to graduate from our ignorance
And learn to rise above circumstance
To not complain 'cause the train's not on time
Or 'Barclays had a very long line'*

*To Margaret of CIFORD
We say a big 'Thank You'
To Cherio, Faith and Tyson too
Great choice you ladies of the Canterbury Club
Brilliant partnership with Child.org*



14 MAY 2018



left more women spoke to us about their experiences of the project. One said "Food helps us to grow young".

At the end of the visit we all agreed that we were not changing their culture but helping them to be more aware of health issues and more energy efficient ways to cook and grow their crops.

We returned to the CIFORD centre to be joined by the other three groups and the women from all four groups. We had lunch together followed by another question and answer session. We asked them what was their greatest need and they all said, "Clean water and more tanks".

On our way back to our hotel Sandra Dieffenthaler said, "It would seem that the people of Meru are at one with the "earth" - the rich red soil which we perhaps see as dirt that soils our hands, our clothes and our bodies but which for them is life giving - that which provides their food, the food for their animals, the clay to build homes. They all seem comfortable and perhaps comforted by the earth. They work it, they lie in it and they embrace it."

The tropical rain and thunder storms which preceded the graduation day did not dampen the enthusiasm of everyone involved. The CIFORD centre had been transformed with tents, balloons and even entertainment.

There was much dancing, singing and laughter. Women from all over the area were there in their best. There were people representing local government and of course our friend, Chief John.

Half way through the proceedings it started to rain again and very soon we were all sitting in pools of mud. The locals were not daunted by this and carried on. They say "Rain is God's Blessing".

We were entertained by small children, teenage girls and mature women, all in the pouring rain, they even fed everyone. All the women who had completed the garden project received a certificate, mostly from a very muddy Project Liaison. They were proud and I was very emotional. The project really is making a difference to these families.

We returned to our hotel invigorated and humbled in a way. We have so much in our lives and the Meru people are so happy with so little. We now know that our donations are being used well and in some small way Soroptimists are definitely educating, empowering and enabling these women and girls in Meru.



Meru Women's Garden Project Club reports

SI Ballina (above) held a most enjoyable Saturday Afternoon Tea Party in Gair Gordon's home to raise funds for the Meru Women's Garden Project. This was one of their Come Dine Events that are running throughout the year with all proceeds going to the Meru Women's Garden Project. They have raised over 400 euros to date.



SI Durham organised a "Food and Flowers" event in Chester le Street, County Durham, which raised £465 for the Meru Women's Garden Project. Also, SI Durham has set up a pilot project with Girlguiding South, in County Durham, known as "Shared Vision". As a result, additional funds for the Meru Women's Garden Project will be forthcoming from Rainbows, Brownies and Guides living in the county. President Judith and Members of SI Durham provided and served a variety of homemade soups, rolls and desserts for family, friends and other

local Soroptimist Club Members. After the meal Mary Peart, florist, gave a fabulous demonstration of festive flower arrangements. Following on from the flower demonstration, there was a raffle and the prizes were the beautiful decorations created on the day, festive table arrangements made by Margaret Barrow, a Member of SI Durham and other garden related prizes.

SI Falkirk hosted a 'McGonagall Night' to celebrate the work of Scotland's 'other' poet and tragedian, William Topaz McGonagall of Dundee. He wrote 200 poems, including "The Tay Bridge Disaster" and "The Famous Tay Whale", widely regarded as some of the worst in English literature. McGonagall has been lampooned as the worst poet in British history. His only apparent understanding of poetry was that it needed to rhyme. A twist to the evening's event was that everything from the welcome to the meal was in reverse! The vote of thanks to begin with; coffee for starters! Entertainment was provided by Michael White and Colin Ferguson (pictured with President Hazel Sinclair) who gave a recital of some of McGonagall's work. £1,800 was raised for the Club's charities, the Seagull Trust and the Meru Women's Garden Project.



SI Stourbridge reported that it has made an impressive donation to The Meru Women's Garden Project of £463 which was raised by their stall at the SIGBI Conference in Cardiff in October, "A Little Blue for MERU".

The Club sold quizzes on women's global health and women scientists' awareness and some beautiful commemorative 70th Club Anniversary stamps and gifts.

Awareness, Advocacy and Action for Justice UKPAC Study Day

Saturday 7th July 2018
Europa Hotel
Belfast, Northern Ireland



UKPAC Study Day 2018 is only a short time away

The programme is designed to feedback to members our progress on:

- the Prison Reform Trust and the use to which our Transforming Lives Report has contributed to the agenda;
- the full results of the slavery survey and how the information gleaned will help address the problems of slavery and human trafficking across the UK.

These are projects which many Clubs have been working on very hard and the committee felt it was important that Members had detailed feedback on the work done to move the agenda forward, based on our work.

There are differences between Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales in both these areas of work. We can learn from each other.



In the morning Dame Vera Baird DBE QC will speak about women in the criminal justice system and Peter

Dawson, Director of the Prison Reform Trust will be looking at opportunities for progress resulting from our report, "Transforming Lives: Reducing Women's Imprisonment." and the subsequent three year project, 'Transforming Lives' funded by the Big Lottery.

These will be followed by workshops which will explore restorative justice, the effect on families of women caught up in the criminal justice system and on the particular plight of Muslim women.

In the afternoon we will hear from The Honourable Justice Teresa Doherty CBE about the exploitation of children in peace and war followed by the full report and analysis of the results and responses to our UKPAC Human Trafficking Survey from KimAnn Williamson and Kay Richmond. These are backed up with breakout sessions on the survey's use and implications, on the pilot of child advocates and on the work of Unseen:

<https://www.unseenuk.org/what-we-do/projects>, including the Modern Slavery Helpline:

<https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/report>

We are very pleased that both Dame Vera and Justice Teresa are Seroptimists.

With the study day being held in beautiful Belfast it is an ideal opportunity to extend the weekend into a short holiday break. This could be based in Belfast or visiting other parts of Northern Ireland or going south into Ireland. There are so many fascinating and beautiful spots both north and south of the border that you are spoilt for choice



To look at some possibilities – these websites give a lot of information and suggestions.

- <https://discovernorthernireland.com>
- <https://www.discoverireland.ie>
- <https://www.ireland.com/en-gb/>

Full information is available on our website: <https://sigbi.org/ukpac/studyday>

About our partners for the UKPAC Study Day

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) was founded by prison reform campaigners, concentrating more on community punishments than on traditional prison reform issues.

PRT offers advice and information to thousands of people every year and carries out research on all aspects of prison.

The Restorative Justice Council (RJC) promotes high quality restorative practice for everyone.

The RJC provides quality assurance and a national voice advocating the widespread use of all forms of restorative practice, including restorative justice. The RJC's vision is of a society where high quality restorative practice is available to all.

Restorative justice brings those harmed by crime or conflict and those responsible for the harm into communication, enabling everyone

affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.

'Muslim Women in Prison Project' "Muslim Hands" in partnership with the Huddersfield Pakistani Community Alliance (HPCA) sponsored this project which was based on the fact that Muslim women in prison are not on the radar of the Muslim community and other service providers. This is often a forgotten section of the community.

Families Outside works to improve outcomes for children and families affected by imprisonment.

Imprisonment is a traumatic experience for families, and its impact is often significant and enduring. We provide help, advice and support for families of prisoners; assisting families with someone in prison. We also inform the

development of policy and practice.

The UK Training Delivery Group, comprising representatives from a range of government agencies and NGOs with a role in tackling modern slavery, has produced a suite of materials aimed at all public sector workers to raise awareness of modern slavery.

Unseen are working towards a world without slavery.

Their specialist care is the first step in the fight against slavery. Through supporting survivors, their provision gives them a safe place to recover from trauma and rebuild their lives.

Barnardo's is the largest provider of child sexual exploitation (CSE) support in the UK, working with sexually exploited children and young people for more than 20 years.

Their vision is that no child should be affected by sexual exploitation.

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3 booklets per pack
@ £1.00 a pack plus P&P.



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Pack of 50 @
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TO ORDER

The full list of retail items is available from Joanne or via the Members' area of www.sigbi.org/Members under "SIGBI Shop". There is an order form for items from SIGBI and from Corporate Insignia on the website. All items exclusive of postage and packing. Do not send money with your order.

SIGBI Ltd sends all orders by the most economical postage, cost is dependent on the weight and size of the goods. An invoice plus post and packing will be sent with your order. Contact: Joanne Voller, Sales Officer, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Ltd., 2nd Floor, Beckwith House, Wellington Road North, Stockport, SK4 1AF. T: 0161 480 7686 F: 0161 477 6152 E: hq@sigbi.org. To pay by credit card, provide Card Number, Expiry Date and Security Code (3 digit number on reverse of card) with your order. Please allow 7-10 days for your order to be processed. **All item costs are + P&P.**



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2000 Club

Members from these Clubs were the lucky winners: February 2018

SI Hoylake & West Kirkby	£100
SI High Wycombe & District	£100
SI Plymouth & District	£50
SI Tynemouth	£50
SI Bridgend & District	£25
SI Plymouth & District	£25

March 2018

SI Cheltenham & District	£100
SI Douglas	£100
SI Woking & District	£50
SI Bangor N.I.	£50
SI Yeovil & District	£25
SI Plymouth	£25

April 2018

SI Plymouth & District	£100
SI Corsham	£100
SI Nottingham	£50
SI Stockton-on-Tees	£50
SI Wigan	£25
SI Woking	£25



About the 2000 Club

The 2000 Club was set up in 2000 to raise funds for the upkeep of Number 63, our Club in London. Anyone can join, the cost is £1 per week.

Six winners are chosen each month by SI Plymouth. The first two win £100, the next two win £50 and the remaining two win £25.

Twice a year in the big draw, the first prize is £1,000, the two second prizes are £500 and the last two win £250.

There is a membership application form on the Number 63 website:

<http://www.number63.co.uk/>

In the mail

2nd February 2018 – Clubs/Regions/NA/Networks

1. New Data Protection Regulations
2. Letter from Judith Grocott, Director of Membership.
3. Easy Stages Guide to Having a Stand at an Event
4. Membership Month – May 2018
5. Membership Matters – February 2018
6. Meru Women's Garden Project Lapel Badges
7. Lobbying for UK Government to nominate someone for CEDAW nominations

16th February 2018 – Clubs/Regions/NA/Networks

1. Changes to adding new members to the SIGBI database
2. Federation Action Diary 2017-2018
3. Sharing useful information to other Clubs
4. New Federation Project 2019-2022
5. Club Photo of the Month – January 2018
6. Ravensbourne Project
7. Grant of Friendship – Australia
8. SIGBI Closed Facebook Groups

2nd March 2018 – Clubs/Regions/NA/Networks

1. Friendship Link Register Forms
2. SIGBI Liverpool 2018 Conference – Registration is now OPEN
3. Club Photo of the Month – February 2018
4. Federation Vacancies, Memorial Fund Applications and GM Resolutions – Deadline 31 March 2018
5. Weather

16th March 2018 – Clubs/Regions/NA/Networks

1. Existing School Clubs – Letter from Isobel Smith Director of Organisational Development
2. Friendship Link Register Forms
3. Club Logos
4. Membership Month 2018 – new retail items COMING SOON...
5. CSW62
6. Liverpool 2018 Conference
7. Knitted items for premature babies

6th April 2018 – Clubs/Regions/NA/Networks

1. New Federation Project Reminder
2. General Data Protection Regulations
3. Annual Returns UK & ROI 2018
4. Notices from SIGBI HQ
5. Membership Month – sign up to our Thunderclap
6. Jute Shopping Bag now in stock
7. Club Photo of the Month – March 2018
8. CSW62
9. Patron of SIGBI Ltd
10. Membership Matters – April 2018
11. No 63 Shareholders

**Educate,
Empower,
Enable**



SI Pune Metro East Grant of Friendship

To coincide with its Charter Anniversary Celebrations, SIPME offered Grant of Friendship (the second in eight years) to two members of SI Barbados, its Friendship Link Club - Pansy Griffith and Andrea Simon.

The guests enjoyed home hospitality, visited some of the projects in Pune and were introduced to various aspects of the Indian Culture as part of their GOF Programme.

They undertook a heritage walk through the old city of Pune. Pansy Griffith's remark "Where yesterday is still alive and well!" summed it up!

The guests also visited a dance school and saw an enchanting classical dance performance and were escorted on a journey into heritage and culture through the silk weaves of India. They interacted with most of our members over Chutney Chatters and other gourmet cuisines laid on by the SIPME members.

SI Midland East Region's Presidents' Reunion



Anne Brawn, SI Derby, writes: I was interested to read of SI Cheshire North Wales and Wirral Region's Reunions since 1985/6 and challenge "Can anyone beat this?" in the February magazine's Membership Matters

We in Midland East Region have been meeting since 1981.

Sadly, previous Region Presidents, Joyce Phillipson and Wendy Stock have passed away.

We started with 21 Club Presidents and although now down to five, we continue to meet for Sunday Lunch every April joined by the Soroptimists. The photo was taken on 8th April at lunch at Newtown Linford!

If anyone has any news of Dorothy Shane who returned to Ireland or Dorothy Parton who returned to Scotland, we would love to hear from you.

Email abrawn1@btinternet.com

Ann Nelson, SI Durham, died on 31st December 2017 aged 71. Ann was a Member of SI Durham from 2007 to 2017 and was President in 2013. She was President Elect in 2016 but stood down due to ill health.

Vera Waller, SI Durham, died on 14th December 2017 aged 82. She was a Member from 1989 to 2009 and was President in 1992.

Annette Simpson, SI Coventry, died suddenly on holiday in France on 25th October 2017 aged 74, after a heart attack. She was a loyal and active Club Member for 28 years and was Club President in 1999/2000.

Muriel Grimmett-Offley, SI Coventry, died on 28th October 2017 aged 86. Her stoicism in the face of illness was remarkable, she was still carrying out her undertaking role in her final months. A committed Member for 33 years and Club President in 1995/6.

Doreen Bailey, SI Tynemouth, Whitley Bay & District, died in January 2018 aged 91. Doreen joined the Club in 1986. She was an activist and ambassador for many Programme Action projects over 32 years as a Soroptimist, and was Club Membership Officer.

Jenny Richman, SI Torquay and District, died in January 2018 aged 97. She joined the Club in 1957 and became President in 1965-66, President of SW Divisional Union in 1968. An exceptional lady and an Honorary Member.

Elisabeth (Betty) Campbell, SI Falkirk died on 2nd March, 2018, aged 90. Betty was a Soroptimist for almost 50 years, joining in 1968 and was Club President in 1974. She began the Club's Leisure Hour, in the 1980s, for Members to socialise outside of the meeting times.

Ratna Dutt, SI Calcutta died on 17th March, 2018 aged 77. She was a Soroptimist for 30 years and President from 2000 - 2001. She served the Club as Secretary and Programme Action Officer and helped the Club with her generous donations to Club projects.

Margaret Cowan, SI Glasgow City died on 5th January 2018 aged 89. An inspirational Soroptimist for 53 years, Margaret held office as Club President and Secretary as well as receiving an Honorary Membership from SI Glasgow City and SI Scotland South Region.

Margaret Garnett, SI Pendleside, died on 9th March 2018 aged 89. She was a loyal Member for 40 years and was the President of Clitheroe Club in 1982-83 and joint President in 1994-95.

Anthea Parnell, SI Medway Towns, died of ovarian cancer in February 2018 aged 65. A Member for 25 years and Club President in 1988/89. Anthea will be fondly remembered for her love of travel, which she continued in her trusty camper van after her diagnosis.

Janet Gordon, SI Skipton in Craven, died on 14th January 2018 aged 82. A former headmistress, Janet (Jan) served the community she retired to in many roles, becoming a Soroptimist in November 2015 aged 80.

TO SUBMIT AN OBITUARY

Please send obituaries to Soroptimist@written-image.com, putting OBITUARY in the subject box. It should be written following the above format, including ONLY the Member's name, Club(s), age, time as a Soroptimist and offices held. Please do not send full descriptive obituaries. There is no fee. Longer obituaries may be submitted for the website. Please send to hq@sigbi.org

Obituaries

Elizabeth Ewan, SI Skipton in Craven, died on 15th February 2018 aged 84. A committed Soroptimist for 35 years, President in 1989-90.

Patricia Weyman, SI Eastbourne and District died on 23rd March 2018. She was a Member for only a few years but her support and humour were appreciated by everyone.

Marjorie Wedge OBE, SI Wolverhampton, a longstanding Member, died on 9th January 2018 aged 99. Marjorie became a Soroptimist 56 years ago and became an Honorary Member of Midland Chase Region in 2001.

Rhianna Chinn, SI Leamington and Warwick, died on 18th December 2017 aged 89. She had been a Soroptimist for 36 years and Club President in 1987/88. A year before her death Club Members presented her with her "35 years a Soroptimist" certificate.

Florence (Flo) Mary White, Honorary Member, SI Ellesmere Port died on 5th February aged 97. A member since 1977, Region Press Officer, Club President and Archivist and Friendship Link with SI Long Beach.

Ingelise Anderskov, SI Plymouth & District died on 2nd April 2018 aged 81. Ingelise was a retired Chemical Engineer who joined SI in Copenhagen in 1970 transferring to SI Plymouth in 1990. Ingelise was a committed and loyal Member for 48 years

Maywin Thomas, SI Barry and District, died on 10th April 2018 aged 86. She became a member in 1980 and was Club President in 1991-1992. Despite failing health, she attended the Club's 50th Anniversary Charter Tea in January - a loyal member for 38 years.

Pauline Birkett, Honorary Member, SI Bootle died on 14th March 2018, aged 82. Pauline joined in 1962 and was Club President three times and Regional President of SI South Lancashire 1971-72.

Ivy Crossley, SI Burnley and formerly SI Accrington, died on 7th February 2018 aged 67, a member for 19 years. She had been President, Treasurer and Programme Action Officer.

Elizabeth Blyth Mckerrow (Betty), SI Fylde died on 7th April 2018 aged 89. Betty was formerly of SI Preston, she moved to the Fylde coast with her friend, Olga, and together they joined SI Fylde. Betty held a number of offices and brought enthusiasm to all project work. Marjory Campbell, SI Fylde, died on 19th April at Brooklands in Lytham. Marjory had recently celebrated her 92nd birthday and despite suffering from dementia, she remained unfailingly cheerful and dignified. Marjory was always supportive of everything the Fylde club did and was a very gentle and friendly soul with many stories to tell.

IWD: International Women's Day



SI Abuja visited the women's wings of the Suleja Prison, Abuja to mark IWD. The women were very appreciative and one Club member, Kate Nomwhange, helped one inmate to be released the next week and helped another member, Ngozi Osuhor was also interested in following up for an appeal for three of the inmates who are on death row. They made the inmates' day one to be remembered.



SI Bath held a service at St Michael's Without, an evening of reflection and celebration.

From A Story of a Suffragette, read by Pat Stevens whose Great Aunt Laura Ainsworth was a suffragette, to the view of a present day woman, read by the Club President, Professor Helen Young, onto the future role of women through the eyes of four young ladies, read by Becca Tucker and Tilda Snook.

An outburst from the Walcot State Choir replicated the disturbance that the suffragettes made during a service held in Bath Abbey. Sister Soroptimists were joined by HM Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, The Right Worshipful, The Mayor of Bath and the Chair of Bath Council.



SI Canterbury fundraised at their International Women's Day Dinner at Howfield Manor Hotel and were able to present a cheque for £600 to Susan Booth, Fundraising Director of Target Ovarian Cancer. This charity was chosen from so many worthy causes because International Women's Day takes

place during Ovarian Cancer month. The Club is very grateful indeed to the restaurants who gave them vouchers for our Restaurant Raffle and to Howfield Manor for their donations to the wine hamper.



SI Eastbourne welcomed 150 delegates to a thought-provoking conference on International Women's Day in Eastbourne Town Hall. The event, described as "a roaring success" and "fascinating and inspiring" by delegates, was organised by Eastbourne and District Soroptimists in collaboration with the Mayor of Eastbourne, Cllr Pat Hearn. It was in support of the Mayor's charities: 'Embrace' and the Salvation Army's 'Rebourne Corner'. Mayor of Eastbourne, Cllr Pat Hearn, Vice Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex, Mrs Sara Stonor and President of Eastbourne and District Soroptimists, Lynne Chiswick, are pictured.

The conference also celebrated the centenary of the first women in the UK getting the vote and President of Eastbourne and District Soroptimists, Lynne Chiswick, drew attention to the fact that Eastbourne had one of the first Lady Mayors, Alice Hudson, in 1926, two years before most women had the vote. Distinguished guests included the Vice Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Sara Stonor, the Deputy Lieutenant, Mrs Deborah Bedford and the High Sheriff, Mrs Maureen Chownen.



SI Easter Ross celebrated by hosting their 7th Annual Ladies Highland Lunch with 74 ladies including Prue Watson –Scotland North Region President and members from other SI Scotland North Clubs attending the event at Kinraig Castle Hotel, Invergordon. The guest speaker was Professor Dame Sue Black, whose forensic

expertise has been crucial to many high-profile criminal cases, including the conviction of Scotland's largest paedophile ring and the British Forensic Team's exhumation of mass graves in Kosovo.

The event was a great success and raffle proceeds are split and used to provide the sponsorship for a year's training programme for a woman through Women for Women International with the remainder going to a local charity, which this year is Ross-shire Women's Aid.



SI Heswall took part in a special event organised by Tomorrow's Women Wirral (TWW), celebrating International Women's Day and the plight of the suffragettes. Chair of the TWW Trust Maureen Thompson, SI Heswall introduced the Press for Progress day. It was well supported with the ladies of TWW providing musical entertainment, a short play and refreshments.

The lady in the hat, Helen McKeown from TWW, dressed up as Emmeline Pankhurst and chained herself to the railings.



SI Jersey and Anne Hudson from **SI Lewes** (second left), attended the International Women's Day Breakfast organised by the Jersey Women's Refuge. The Refuge was established in the Island 30 years ago after four years of research, raising awareness and gaining support by SI Jersey. Rozelle Sutherland MBE (centre) who was the first Chair of the Refuge and has worked tirelessly ever since, gave an excellent speech about the 'battle' of those early days 'as surely things like that did not happen in our lovely Island'. 30 years on the Refuge is, sadly as busy as ever, but a trusted part of Island life, which has helped many women and children.



SI King's Lynn held a pop up shop in the Vancouver Quarter of King's Lynn shopping centre. The main focus was the Global Blanket Campaign with people invited to make squares. The Club provided the cloth and crafts to create a square and the day was a great success with 60 squares made. As well as creating squares for the Global Blanket they celebrated 100 years of votes for Women, collected sanitary items for a local project and old jewellery for the Diamond Education Grant charity.



SI Llandudno organised a walk on the promenade in Llandudno. They were joined by members of other North Wales Clubs, Regional President Hilary Laidler, local dignitaries and, with many others invited from local women's groups, there were around 120 people. Under police direction, traffic was halted for walkers to cross the road.



SI London Chilterns Region joined the London Landmarks Half Marathon. As it is the 100th anniversary of female suffrage in the UK, this new London event included a suffragist cheer station manned by Soroptimists in suffragette costumes and with sashes: Jen Simpson, Helen Byrne and Barbara Diamant, SI London Chilterns Region with Brenda Simpson, Associate Member. The event was a great success and the four Soroptimists had a brilliant day in London raising the profile of Soroptimists – well done ladies!

2018



SI Milford Haven joined the Soka Gakki International Buddhist group in Pembrokeshire and the Pembrokeshire Women's Festival Group to link hands across the Cleddau Bridge to celebrate International Women's Day and mark the centenary of women getting the vote in the UK. Undeterred by heavy rain the ladies were joined by more than 100 people of all ages, genders, local mayors and other SI Clubs. There was a festive atmosphere as the procession was led by Sambadoc, a local samba drum band. Attendees were asked to bring a scarf in a suffragette colour and this enabled us to span the half mile long bridge.



SI Poona Member Anu Wakhlu, who is President Elect for the National Association, received the 'Women of Excellence' award on IWD, at the Hague, at the World Economic Forum for Women. The award was given for Women's Empowerment.



SI Nigeria marked the day with 400 Senior Secondary School girls at New Era Girls Senior Secondary School, Surulere and Gbaja Girls Senior High School, Surulere. Their programme was Clean Happy Health: to Educate, Empower and Enable young girls and to stop them from dropping out of school and formal education, due to lack of sanitary products. A talk on personal body hygiene and cleanliness during the menstrual cycle was given and the highlight was the donation and distribution of washable and reusable sanitary pads to 400 girls.



SI Sevenoaks met for coffee and cakes at the Sevenoaks Book Shop in celebration of IWD, the Suffragette victory of securing the vote for women and 80th Charter anniversary of SI Sevenoaks – plus the power of literacy in furthering women's education. The bookshop had a window display dedicated to the women's suffrage movement and all books displayed in the window were written by women authors. It was an opportunity to raise awareness of these issues with members of the public.



SI Widnes booked the Community Area in Widnes Market to celebrate 100 years of votes for women. They gave out 100 cupcakes with edible versions of the Soroptimist logo on top, talked to people about Soroptimism and offered leaflets to take away and read – many good contacts were made.



SI Greater London's new banner was launched on a truly memorable occasion. The March 2018 International Women's Day march through London, celebrated the centenary of the passing of the Representation of the People Act in February 1918. That act – at last! – granted Parliamentary voting rights to (some) British women (those over thirty who met a property qualification). On the green opposite Parliament, waiting for the march-off; L-R: SIGL Past Presidents Noreen Goss and Irene Cockcroft, and President Yemisi Opaneye who designed the banner and had it made for her club as a legacy of her term in office.



SI St Albans marked IWD with three events: As "Guest Editors" to mark IWD on Radio Verulam, (The podcast is at: www.radioverulam.com/podcast/international-womens-day-soroptimists/). They then attended the St Albans Girls' School's 'International Women's Day Inspiring Women Careers Event for Year 8 and Year 12 Student Leaders'. Finally, at their Club Meeting Members wore Suffragette's colours of Green, Violet and White, symbolising Get Votes for Women but also chosen to represent hope, loyalty and dignity, and purity.



SI St Helens held a sale in the Town Hall with over 20 stalls showcasing a variety of women with small businesses, a beauty parlour hosted by the students of St Helens College, chances to try out activities such as badminton, tai chi and bricklaying, as well as local organisations offering education, health and support services to local women along with the Girl Guides. The hall looked great; so many talented and interesting women. Visitors included the Mayor and Mayoress and local MP Marie Rimmer who all had a go at bricklaying!



SI Slough Windsor and Maidenhead, SI Thames Valley and SI High Wycombe and District joined forces to hold a Conference to celebrate not only International Women's Day but also the 100th Anniversary of women gaining the vote. The theme was "What have we achieved?" The event, held in Maidenhead Town Hall on 11th March, was very successful. A number of local women's organisations attended. Two Mayors and two Mayoresses were in attendance. SI Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Club member Margaret Lenton, who is Mayoress of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, chaired the event.

Club News



SI Belfast President Sharon Hall is pictured with 45 backpacks donated to Mary's Meals. They contain toiletries, clothes, stationery and a toy and may well be the only gift these needy children ever receive.



SI Brixham has been giving out the monies collected during the President's year. The photo shows Mark Dunne, a biker member of the Devon Freewheelers receiving a cheque for £2,000 from President Wenona Pappin. Mark told the Soroptimists about the need for this 'out of hours' emergency transportation service all supported by voluntary contributions. Graham Gordon, a volunteer from Devon Air Ambulance, also collected a cheque for £2,000 from Wenona Pappin who told the Members just how vital this service was.



SI Buxton President Elect, Sue Barber organised a training day for nurses, podiatrists, carers and people with diabetes, Entitled BG (Blood Glucose) STAYING ALIVE. Sue also acted as host and gave a talk on the genetics of diabetes. Buxton's newest member, Helen Haywood managed the registration of delegates and was efficient in overseeing the buffet lunch and refreshment. Presentations by Rachel Mann Bradbury from Diabetes UK, Fire Officer Sandra Ward and another on the 5 Ways to Wellbeing completed the schedule. The day finished with an interesting talk by David Della Cioppa and Callum Sully of PT Corner, who spoke about Nutrition and Exercise.

22 MAY 2018



SI Cannock Member, Dr Janis Lomas's book has been published. 'The History of Women in 100 Objects' written with Professor Maggie Andrews, was featured in a national newspaper on International Women's Day. It discusses the washing machine, sanitary towels, Mrs Beeton's books and the scold's bridle! Both women are historians specialising in Women's History. '100 Objects' is available from Dr Janis: jan.lomas@gmail.com



SI Cheltenham visited the Sue Ryder Hospice at Leckhampton Court in Cheltenham to present a cheque for £1000 to Elise Hoadley, the General Manager and enjoyed a very informative tour of the 14th Century building. Club Members had voted to support Sue Ryder and Toilet Twinning, and held a Cava and Strawberries tea; a Tapas lunch and the annual Quiz.



SI Dewsbury had a stand at Dewsbury College during their Employability Week and spoke to many students about Jo's Trust and Dewsbury Soroptimists.



SI Drogheda Recently made a presentation to St Ita's a local Special Education school, to enable them to provide a specific literacy programme to their students. The Club President, Carmel Schmidt is pictured presenting a cheque for 3000 Euros to Ms Michelle O'Mahoney from St. Ita's.



SI East Grinstead Members, Sue Edgar and Janet Doyle, took to the airwaves on the Samantha Day Show on Meridian Radio. Samantha was interested to hear about SIGBI's international and local work. They spoke about the global range of Soroptimist International and its links with the United Nations. Local projects were also discussed, including their support for a women's refuge and upcoming activities.



SI Ennis awarded Donnah Vuma, the 2017 Clare Woman of the Year award. Donnah, a mother of three, lives in a direct provision centre on the Clare border. She is from Zimbabwe, but has lived in Knockalisheen with her family for three years waiting for her asylum application to be processed. Last year she was accepted on to the Place of Sanctuary scholarship programme at the University of Limerick. She has also helped raise awareness about the psychological and mental health effects of those living in enforced idleness in direct provision and been involved in many other community projects.



SI Glasgow City donated £500 to WaterAid's Untapped Appeal in January, which was 'matched' by UK Government to £1000. Joanna, a WaterAid volunteer in Scotland, accepted a cheque and gave an update of the outcomes of the appeal. Tombohuan is a tiny village in the jungle of Seirra Leone, where WaterAid has provided clean water and the residents showed their delight – the father in the picture is so happy that his children are free of diseases from drinking dirty water and can now go to school.



SI Ilkley's environmental and climate change group asked members to collect their junk mail over two weeks. The unwanted mail was brought to a meeting, along with guidelines as to how this can be reduced. 20 members accumulated four kilos of junk mail in two weeks. Jo Thornley of SI Ilkley, was horrified to just see how much waste paper is generated on a recurring basis and within a very short time frame. Ilkley Soroptimists are now filling in the Opt Out Form, to reduce unwanted junk mail, available from the Citizens Advice Bureau.



SI Kettering President Anne is pictured with guest speakers from Study Day in March. Inspirational speakers came from Women's Aid, Girls in Gangs and an award winning initiative by Community Police - The Blue Butterfly Badge.



SI Kidderminster held a lunch for 60 people to raise funds to send Lucy, a member's daughter, to Sierra Leone to help teachers at Street Child. Lucy will work with specialist training teachers and teach the children. Many were orphaned by the Ebola crisis and live on the streets. Street Child gets the children into families and back into school. The money that Lucy raised will be match-funded by the UK Government. Lucy raised £2,700 including £1011 from the lunch and £984 in donations. Thus with the match-funding the £2,700 raised £5,400 for the charity.



SI Londonderry enjoyed a talk by The Honourable Justice Theresa Doherty CBE, a Commonwealth Judge whose marriage and work have taken her around the world. She has been a Soroptimist in Sierra Leone, at the Hague and now in Bangor Co. Down. Her career on the bench began as a magistrate and then as a judge for 10 years in Papua New Guinea, where she unearthed many imprisonments and injustices by visiting the prisons. Theresa described the war crimes trials in Sierra Leone where child soldiers were drugged and cases of mass murder, rape and other crimes against humanity.



SI Newbury Member Dr. Billie Thirlaway, 100 years old on 1st September, 2017 celebrated with the Mayor and Mayoress of Newbury and all her fellow Soroptimists on 31st August.



SI Newbury Members, Dr. Billie Thirlaway and Mrs. Elizabeth Kay, being presented with their Certificates of 50 years of being a Soroptimist by President Jen Simpson of SI London Chilterns on 31st August, 2017.



SI Paisley raised £1500 for charities supporting mental health and homeless people at their recent Bridge Lunch. After a soup and sandwich lunch, members got down to the serious business of playing, with prizes for the highest scoring players.



SI Perth members held an open meeting inviting retired nurses to hear about nursing in the First and Second World Wars, from supporters of the Nursing Memorial Appeal. 1500 nurses' lives were lost, including many from the Voluntary Aid Detachment. A memorial will be dedicated to the nurses this summer and an ongoing legacy of the Appeal will ensure proper training for nurses in war zones now and in the future. £350 was presented to the Appeal.



SI San Fernando joined the Mayor of San Fernando to host the Light It Up Blue event for Autism Awareness and Acceptance. The event included chalk art for autistic children and their families, and performances by the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities Ensemble and a band, The Trebles of T&T. The mother of an autistic child who attends workshops at the Club performed a skit in which she made an impassioned appeal against discrimination, and advocated for the rights of autistics to be legislated by the Trinidad and Tobago government.



SI South East Region report that Jane Webb, Carol Infanti, Jane Barnes and Jan Doyle are forming a Relay Team for the Regional Presidency in the South East.



SI St Albans held an inspirational evening to celebrate Girls' Cricket in Hertfordshire. They heard about opportunities for the development of women and girls' cricket locally as part of planning for Phase 2 of the Soroptimist Audrey Collins Legacy Project (phase 1 ran from 2011-17). The finale of the event was the presentation of the Soroptimist Audrey Collins U13 League Trophy for 2017 to the winning team – Harpenden Cricket Club. Amy Price, the Herts Ladies Captain gave an inspirational talk about how playing cricket and leading the team is in her life-blood.



SI St Austell staged a Charity Fashion show at M&Co in Bodmin for The Invictus Trust a charity for young people with mental health problems. The photo shows Club members Maggie Hamilton, Pat Wakeford, Barbara Trenery, Catherine Hannaford, Ann Truscott, Shirley Clemo.



SI Stockton on Tees has been awarded a Mayor's Civic Award for service to the local community. President Caroline Allred and Treasurer Mauveen Brown were presented with the award by the Mayor, Councillor Maurice Perry, recognising their support of victims of trafficking, women's refuge, local schools, asylum seekers and providing suppers for a physically handicapped club.



SI Taunton held its 30th Annual Swimathon in February. It was a brilliant event with 72 teams from the local community taking part ranging from corporate companies to schools, families and youth groups and of course SI Taunton's own "Swans". At the end of the weekend £14,323 had been pledged by the 421 swimmers who swam a total of 125 miles between them. The money has kept coming in and has risen to £19,300 which will be given to three local charities, St Margaret's Hospice, Taunton Foodbank and MIND, Taunton and West Somerset.

In the 30 years since the Swimathon started over £630,000 has been raised and given to 78 local Somerset charities.

Send us your News!

Would you like to see your news in the next magazine? Please send your Club News to Soroptimist@written-image.com, putting either **Club News** or **Celebrations** in the subject box.

How to get published...

Keep your report concise so that we can include as many as possible – follow the way these reports have been written and look at the typical words published around 80-100 in each story. Please do not send long reports - there is not enough room for them!

If you have several reports, please send them in separate emails.

Photos

Your photos are very important and we aim to include a photo with every report.

However, we can only use high resolution, good quality photos – small photos taken on a standard mobile phone will probably be too small – iPhone and Samsung phones are usually fine if they are set to a high quality photo. There is no fee.

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SI South West & Channel Islands Regional Meeting in March welcomed three excellent speakers: Judith Lewis SIGBI Director of Finance, who is pictured in the centre of this photo with Daphne Dowsing, Regional President and Margaret Parkinson, Vice President. Alison Hernandez the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and Amy Peak, who started a charity to help women in the Syrian Refugee Camps with sanitary protection. 13 new members attended a New Members Briefing lead by Kay Turner, a Past Regional President.

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics



SI Bournemouth is celebrating the success of its Sixth Annual STEM Challenge.

32 teams of Year 8 and Year 9 girls from 11 schools created a solution to help people in the poorest parts of the world. Each team researched, developed and built a project for presentation to a team of judges. After three heats, the Finals and Prizegiving Evening at Bournemouth University was attended by Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Dorset as well as sponsors, guests, family and friends.

Local, national and international companies gave invaluable support in providing judges, venues and sponsorship. The Club was delighted to welcome Ann Garvie, SI International President 2013-15, to the judging panel.

Projects tackle issues such as water filtration and transportation, shelter, sanitation, safer food, improved health, solar power and recycling and human rights for all.

Examples include a rope ferry to help transport people and goods across water, a hand sanitiser, face visor and water purifier to help reduce the spread of disease, a flat pack cot raised off the ground but stable on uneven surfaces and a water tank made from recycled water bottle bricks including filtration from activated carbon charcoal from coconut shell. All production elements are from sustainable/recycled materials which can be locally sourced.

All girls are entered for a nationally accredited CREST Award from the British Science Association with 100% achievement to date.



SI Blackburn STEM ambassadors presented a programme to Year 7 pupils at a local high school, Darwen Vale, awarding a trophy to the winning team. This followed a similar event last year which proved very successful.

The objective was to educate, empower and enable girls from all backgrounds to aspire to careers they may not have previously considered.

Head of Science, Mrs Townson, was delighted with the reaction of the girls to the presentation which it is hoped will become an annual event.

The photo shows "The Winners", as they had prophetically styled themselves, with SI Blackburn Member Anne Jackson.



SI Central Birmingham has contributed funding for an exciting new Science and Space Project for students at the Queen Alexandra College (QAC) in Birmingham. The funds were part of the Valerie Evans Legacy. QAC has 230 students with varying types and degrees of disabilities and provides education for over 18s.

The funds enabled QAC to purchase books, DVDs, science equipment and science presentations. Students have enjoyed visits to the Big Bang Fair and to the Thinktank in Millennium Point in Birmingham. The Thinktank visited QAC to present their Electrifying Science Workshop teaching students about electricity.

It has been a great experience for the students and one that the College would like to continue. Thanks to the funding, over 170 students have benefited from this project during 2017/8. The Fundraising Manager and Project Co-ordinator from QAC came to the Club meeting in March and gave a wonderful presentation.



A small and not even yet formed new Club, **Salisbury Satellite Group** has been running ambitious PA projects. Their inaugural STEM involved three teams, who brought innovative project ideas for improving life in the developing world, to be judged by local female STEM professionals in April. £600 sponsorship from Gillo Industries and Wiltshire College, enabled cash prizes; Peter Aymes, Managing Director of Apsley Engineering, a local engineering firm, manufactured the beautiful winners' trophy.

Louise Oswald of Gillo Industries spoke of the importance of encouraging more girls to study STEM subjects, Esther Gordon-Smith of Highways England, Assistant Project Manager A303, talked about her career in engineering, Judges were Helen Harrison, Deputy Head of Construction at Wiltshire College, Rebecca Ingram, Aerospace Design Engineer at Gillo Industries and Fiona Butcher Fellow at DSTL.

The Mayor of Salisbury presented the award to The MSSL Filtering team from St Edmund's School: Emily Millman, Jess Softley, Charley Softley, Tabitha Munday and Lauren Lamberth.



SI Drogheda has encouraged girls to become involved in science and engineering careers, presenting a 'STEM for First Year Girls' event early in the new school year.

140 students from six local schools and four enthusiastic presenters, each an expert in her field, combined to give the girls an experience to remember and they were attentive and engaged. Comments included: "This is problem solving with cosmic implications," "The WOW moment was discovering that bricks to build structures on other planets were developed in Drogheda" and "I look forward to STEM Club now".

This half-day STEM experience is a different and new approach and other ROI Clubs are planning a similar event. SI Drogheda is already organising the September event!



SI Warrington held a half-day STEM Event for 66 girls from Great Sankey High School (Years 9 and 10), to show students coming up to GCSE subject choices how women can take up jobs in the STEM professions. Dr Margaret Emsley of SI Ashton, former SIGBI Federation President and a civil engineer, was the lead speaker.

The event, hosted by United Utilities plc, joined by Jaguar Land Rover, Liverpool Clinical Laboratories, National Nuclear Laboratory, Arcadis and Fujitsu plc – showcased the kinds of jobs on offer.

Based on **SI Crosby's** successful STEM event model using a "speed-dating" format, student groups rotated between the company presentations in which the speakers also explained how they had got their jobs – through work placement, apprenticeship or graduate entry routes.

SI Warrington's Jackie Alexander said, "the students were energised by female role models and surprised at the breadth of professional possibilities and the fact that a university degree is not the only way into exciting jobs.

Examples of student feedback were "STEM to me is an open door of opportunities whether you are a boy or a girl"; "I've learnt about the different routes I can take to achieve a job I love and not to close my eyes to different opportunities". We definitely felt we succeeded in widening the career horizons of the attendees."