



Outgoing President Pam Cheesley Hollinshead

A huge thank you, diolch yn fawr to you all across our marvellous Region! Your friendship and determination to uphold the needs of women and girls throughout the months of my tenure have encouraged and delighted me, making any difficulties worthwhile.

Highlights of the past two years? In reality there are so many, each Regional meeting brought us challenging and entertaining speakers plus, importantly, the opportunity to meet up – perhaps only now are we realising just how significant is that face to face contact.

Each Club's Charter celebrations in whatever form were a great opportunity to put on the posh frock, (something Louise and I have missed this year!) to meet up with Club members who are not so agile, and to purely enjoy each other's company.

I'm looking forward to taking a back seat, supporting Louise as she embarks on leading us as we celebrate 100 years of Soroptimist International, ably assisted by Yvonne Johns and Susan Haywood.

So, if you are able to attend Belfast Conference I'll see you there especially at Louise and my 'time to raise a glass' event, or at our virtual Change of Insignia in November. Either place we will be celebrating!



Good-bye from President Pam
Passionate about Programme Action!

Incoming President Louise Parry

Looking Back; Moving Forward.

What a difference 20 years makes!

For those of you that don't know, I was President of our Region from 2000-2001, moving on from the Millennium. Then I had Emily, aged 6, and Amy, not yet one and had started a new job. I don't think I can say I don't have time for things now.

This reminiscing is important for the first part of my theme for the year, 'Looking Back', and in this year of celebration I hope, and expect, all clubs to do the same and identify the matters to celebrate from the past in your clubs and tell us all about them over the year. I want us to shout about what we have done and achieved.

The year of celebration for Soroptimist International also looks towards the second part of my theme, for the year - 'Moving Forward'.

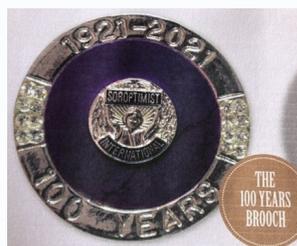
As members what do we want from Soroptimist International, what do we want from our Region and what do we want from our clubs?

More importantly we also need to look at ourselves and consider what we have to offer.

This year I want us to focus on us, us as clubs and us as Region and the things we can do to educate, enable and empower women and girls around the world.

The theme for the Federation President is 'Be Awesome' and I challenge all our Region members to work towards that as a goal over the coming year.

Let's Celebrate



Anglesey

September 2020 and the monthly walking group set off once again with members, their families and other SI club members after months of isolation.

This recent walk in September ended with a paddle in the sea at Traeth Y Ora but only a few members were brave enough, and all enjoyed a distanced drink and lunch at the Pilot Boat Inn when they returned.



£254 was raised at a virtual friendship evening with fabulous raffle prizes for everyone who bought tickets for the registered charity Stepping Stones. Stepping Stones provide counselling and therapeutic services to adults who are survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and includes support for family members.

Virtual social events, either via SI Anglesey or our friendship link SI Lancaster were attended by some of our members and it was good to see other Clubs face to face.

Again this year we will be collecting well needed items and goodies to fill Xmas shoe boxes for the charity Digartref. Babies, children and adults will be provided with some of the things that are needed to support them all.

Below is some of the work carried out by our wonderful member Barbara Dixon during lockdown. Mastectomy cushions, twiddle muffs, tragedy dolls and stuffed toys displayed here are just part of the work she has done. Hundreds of PPE items have already been sent to our local hospital, and at the same time she has been sending members a joyous weekly blog, full of interesting, and sometimes poignant conversations, about her ongoing personal health battle.



Bangor & District

Modern Day Slavery

Bangor Club investigated asparagus, cashew nuts and chocolate hazelnuts to discover if there was exploitation of workers at home or abroad. Three club members gave presentations at the September club meeting.

Mair found that cashew nut production has problems in India including acid burns to women from shelling cashew nuts.

Sheena discovered that child labour is a risk in West Africa, in the world's two biggest cocoa producing countries Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

Gudrun found that Peru was one of the main producers of asparagus. Child labour is prohibited by law in Peru but apparently 20% of children are engaged in work. 4% of asparagus companies have no checks on age when employing people. She also found environmental issues in the production.

Recycling, Reusing, Repurposing agenda

An agenda item on recycling has been introduced at each meeting so that members could focus on items that could helpfully improve our environment and enable members whom were self isolating to also participate. Bottle tops (a long standing collection started by our enthusiastic PAO Sian Kent and will eventually be converted to a recycled plastic chair!), duvets/pillows and cushions, stamps, bric a brac, toiletries, jewellery and children's books to name a few. Many, many different charities will benefit during the year. So whilst we recognise our financial donations may not be as generous as usual we hope our other ways of donating will help improve lives in other ways.

Birthday

Enid Griffiths celebrated a 'quiet' birthday 15th September - 98 years young!



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Bebington

Autumn 2020

During the Pandemic, S.I. Bebington have been keeping in regular contact, remotely via Whatsapp and email and holding our monthly meetings via “zoom” (or a phone link for those without internet access).

We have been involved in several projects including, donating to local food banks, Teams4u Christmas shoe boxes, Mary’s Meals schoolbags and our regular “goodie” bags for families at our local Neonatal unit. (See below)



We have also been keeping in touch “physically” but in line with Government guidelines. This has been once a week during the last month, as part of the Alzheimer’s Virtual Challenge to help them with much needed funds. Our activities have included a trip to Chester Zoo and local walks on our Wirral Peninsula.



Take on a virtual challenge

How far will you go for people living with dementia?

We're asking you to step, run, cycle or jog to help us be there for everyone affected by dementia during the coronavirus crisis. You can do your challenge when and where you



Birkenhead

It has been a difficult six months for all of us. Meetings and events have had to be cancelled.

S.I. Birkenhead managed to have one face to face meeting in September, but were then back in lockdown.

Our usual cheque presentation was cancelled and when we heard that the charities we were supporting had re-opened after the initial lockdown, we decided to send cheques to Tomorrows Women Wirral, Develop with Dignity and North Birkenhead Development Trust plus Tesco vouchers to Wirral Women’s Refuge. They were all really appreciative and we had some lovely thank you letters from them with updates on their work during the pandemic.

Through the magic of zoom several members met to discuss what we could do about the Glass House Project. Half took on the ethical production of tomatoes and wrote to M&S, Tesco, Asda, Aldi, Sainsbury, Claremount Farm and Vineyard farm.

Others interested in the ethical production of cocoa wrote to Mars, Cadbury, Nestle and Lindt. Other activities included a meeting in Birkenhead Park for a chat and a few zoom meetings to keep in touch. We started to organise groups of six on a rolling rota, to meet for coffee, but after the first group further restrictions put an end to that.

Some of us attended the distanced Regional Meeting where we heard Kevin Hyland speak.

However, we will continue to zoom and keep in touch by phone. Let’s hope we can meet face to face soon.

Chester

S.I. Chester continue to meet regularly and over the summer we were even able to meet face-to-face on a number of occasions for social and fundraising efforts.

One member hosted an afternoon tea / garden party so that goods could be collected for the local women's refuge; another member hosted a PIMS and canapés soirée and raised funds for the SIGBI federation project and a small group managed to meet for a walk followed by a visit to a café for coffee and cake, just hours before a local lockdown was enacted. We also continue to meet on Zoom for club meetings and other socials such as a book club.

We were exceedingly proud of one of our founder members Anne MacDonald being chosen to feature in the #whoisshe Soroptimist 100 centennial celebration campaign and her profile was posted on the SIGBI website in October. We are also incredibly pleased that two further members have joined the Region's Exec – Susan Haywood as Regional Vice President and Gillie O'Rourke as joint Regional Program Action Officer.

Our program action team had a win over Lockdown – we wrote to all the supermarket head offices and asked them to consider putting a food bank donation button on their on-line ordering system (a virtual version of the boxes often found in supermarkets for people to donate as they shop). We are very pleased to report that most now do this.



Members enjoyed a summer's afternoon tea, making a collection of toiletries for the women's refuge

Denbigh, Ruthin & District

It's been a difficult year.

S.I. Denbigh, Ruthin & District have found the first six months of this year difficult, to say the least. I'm certain many more clubs have felt the same.

Fundraising has been taken to a new height during the lockdown and social distancing causing such a tremendous problem to our charitable income.

Innovative thoughts from members are helping to keep things ticking over -

- making chutneys to order
- repairing jewellery
- even a sponsored hair growth!!!

The club has zoomed twice but technical difficulties are proving an obstacle to some members,



although the heart is willing the iPad isn't...

Ellesmere Port & District

We have had one face to face meeting in early September and a very sparse Change of Insignia (socially distanced)

Sadly we are back to square one, relying on ZOOM meetings. Members not on ZOOM are kept fully up to date via email or verbally.

We have a number of members with long service certificates:

- *25 yrs Anne Hartley
- *30 yrs Avril Prestidge
- *35 yrs Dorothy Cartwright
- *40 yrs Betsi Wikins
- *40 yrs Rita Jones

Connie Roddan 50 yrs, Catherine Cridland 45 yrs
These were presented to their families as sadly both passed away during the COVID period .

We are still doing what programme work we can. Val Singleton is in constant touch with the Women's Refuge and has collected household goods which have been picked up by The Hospice of the Good Shepherd. Members have taken goods to the Federation of the Blind local shop.



Heather Duggan is working tirelessly making and selling her crafts for our charity funds.

The Guides are continuing to collect items for us and have a consignment of plastic tops to hand over.

We are very proud that Rita Lewis has been given one of the Federations "Who is she awards" for her amazing work with Ellesmere Port Grocery and other projects local to our area.



Congratulation's also to Anne MacDonald OBE a past member of our club.

It was lovely to see Dorothy Clarke, S.I. Elmbridge, being honoured, she introduced us many years ago to the plight of two Tsunami orphans in Sri Lanka. The club continue to have a long lasting Friendship link with S.I. Colombo and will shortly be sending our Annual donation to them.

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Heswall & District

S.I Heswall and District have kept busy during lock down holding two innovative pop-up-shops in members gardens, one selling pre-loved clothes, shoes and jewellery raised an amazing £970 and one selling produce and plants raising £430 for two local charities, Wirral Fund for Children with Special Needs and Wirral Young Carers.



Booking a visit was recommended and every precaution was taken, with hand sanitisers and social distancing.

These fun and social events helped members keep in touch, enjoy a coffee, recycle, refresh their wardrobe and stock up on plants and preserves, while supporting two worthwhile organisations.

Llandudno & District

Members have kept in touch virtually with monthly officers meetings, speaker meetings and socials. Fran Lawson, fundraising officer for Mary's Meals joined us and told how they are helping communities while schools are closed.

We had a virtual exercise lesson from Stephanie followed by cheese and wine.

Some members got together for an outdoor coffee and chat in a local park.



"Twiddle muffs at the park"

Madhu had been busy knitting twiddle muffs which will be donated to a local EMI facility.

President Janet went on the Zip-Wire at Bethesda, sponsorship funds will go towards her chosen charity 'Feed the Minds'.



Over the past six months, we have sent over 20 letters and emails to MPs, MSs, Welsh government departments, councils, police, NGOs, etc to find out how the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Welsh Government Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Code of Practice are working in practice.

We have received some answers, most of which have raised more questions as we have come to understand the many problems with both systems. This is an on-going project and we hope to be able to provide some support and encouragement to survivors of modern slavery being cared for in North Wales.

Our treasurer Caroline has worked very hard on this project with the input of Ali Ussery and other members. We have invited other North Wales clubs to form a North Wales Working Group on Modern Slavery to share information and experience and help clubs work together.

Nantwich & District

The club has continued to be active over the last 3 months whilst working in new ways! We have donated our dinner money to local charities Cheshire Without Abuse (CWA), the Foodbank and local Homeless Charity Chance Changing Lives, raising over £500 so far.

We have made over 100 stylish masks to raise funds for CWA, and we are sending postcards of kindness to residents of a care home who cannot receive visitors.

Members have supported the Regional Project Glasshouse, challenging clothes suppliers about how they audit their supply chains to prevent modern slavery. Members have also held garden tea parties during the fine summer weather to raise funds for Empowering Girls in Nepal.

On the social front, we have been able to have socially distanced meet ups in a local café, which members have really appreciated. We have also run Zoom quizzes and games, enabling many members to take part.

Getting together at a local café.



We are managing the club with an Officers Group working together as a virtual team to involve members in projects and keep us all connected. This is proving successful in maintaining momentum and involvement.

Northwich & District

Like all Clubs, Northwich & District are currently unable to hold their member meetings because of the Covid 19 restrictions.

Unfortunately the events purchased by members at last year's Auction of Promises were cancelled as they involved group gatherings.



Some events did, however, take place. One was a tree planting ceremony at Marbury Country Park. Members worked with FoAM and purchased two disease-resistant elm trees which were planted in an elm walk.

This was to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Club and also the 100 year Anniversary of Soroptimist International which is promoting tree planting.

Another activity was Toiletries for Motherwell. During lockdown, girls at school/college could not access the free sanitary protection offered by the Red Box. Motherwell asked for products which could be distributed to girls in the Winsford/Northwich and Crewe areas to ensure that they had what was necessary.



In addition to the toiletries Motherwell also produced packs of stationery items supplied by the Club and needed by girls returning to school in September. The girls needed to have their own items as they could no longer be shared, again because of Covid.

For the SIGBI Day of Action in July, the theme was Communication. Northwich & District used the theme to hold a virtual coffee morning on Zoom. Members discussed communication and supporting one another. As an introduction to Zoom it was highly successful and a second meeting was held in August.

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Rhyl & District

We were full of expectation for our Presidential Year, as joint Presidents Susan Jones and Denny Owen.

Our theme 'Stronger together,' our plans were shattered, but extraordinary times brings a spirit of hope and positivity for the future. We are both proud our Club has 'worked together' and realised goals to support our chosen Charities, which shows great effort, often in extreme of weather (rain) and sunshine.

Friendship, above all to each other has seen us through personal traumas of ill health, loss of loved ones and stresses and strains of lockdown. Particularly, our seniors looked over by our Welfare Officer Shirley Whiteway. Nurse on the frontline, was given much support whilst having to isolate from family in order to practice.

Soroptimists in action always giving their best

During lockdown members have continued to be busy with activities to raise funds for our chosen charities.

A coffee morning was held in Shirley W's garden for Empowering Girls in Nepal raising £526.



Joyce opened her garden on behalf of Ty Gobaith/Hope House Children's Hospice which raised £929.08.

Esther hosted a garden party, Poems & Pimm's which was well attended and we ensured we obeyed social distancing rules by having two sessions. This event raised £1,010 for CLEFT and will be match funded by a further £500 in December, bringing the total to £1,510.



Shirley Jones and Sheila Henri, joined by "Soroptimists" Peter and John, provided the entertainment.

Pearl has been busy knitting and continues to raise funds for the Masaka Girls Dormitory project.

Runcorn, Frodsham & District

Like so many clubs, Runcorn and Frodsham have continued to connect with each other one way or another and have had some happy and successful Zoom Business meetings, Programme Action planning group meetings and a Coffee Morning. Those not able to join have been kept informed and have been consulted about club decisions.

During lockdown and now with increased measures we have been unable to meet for our usual social dinner meetings. Unable to fundraise in the usual ways, members made a decision to generously donate the amount they would have spent at social events to our Club Charity account. This has enabled us to donate funds to Halton Haven Hospice, Water Aid and the Federation project.

Members have also been busy making Mastectomy Comfort Cushions and recently delivered the latest batch to the Countess of Chester Hospital.



We are now planning 'Operation Christmas' when we aim to support disadvantaged local children and families and women victims of trafficking, working in partnership with City Hearts.

South Caernarfonshire

We have all had a very stressful and extraordinary year, a year we think we shall never forget and it still isn't over.

We have tried to keep everything together in these difficult times with zoom meetings once a month either in the afternoon with tea and cake or after six with a nice glass of chilled something and a few nibbles!

We heard that our student nurse Hellen, from the Itala school in Zambia has finally passed all her nursing exams. We are so thrilled for her and she is very excited about starting her new career. Supporting Hellen through school and university has been a 7 year project and we are proud of how much she has achieved.



Hellen, our happy nurse!

Some of our members managed a "social distancing" garden tea party in one of the members' garden. They were blessed with good weather and had a good catch up!

Four members managed to do the British Heart Foundation Bridge walk but as we couldn't make London due to Covid-19 we walked the bridges of the Lleyn raising just under £2000.



Our Bridge Walk

Wallasey

Some of Wallasey members managed two socially distanced 'meetings' outside in New Brighton during August. It was good to see each other again, re-affirm our determination to keep going as a Club, and discuss a few business items.



September saw the composition of the Club's first newsletter that was distributed either electronically or via 'snail mail' where needed, and forwarded to our Friendship Link SI Solihull. The newsletter contained some PA information, including donations made by the Club from funds raised during last year, and key Region and Federation items to ensure everyone was kept informed.

Donations included £200 for the Empowering Girls in Nepal project, £300 to Wirral Holistic Care services and, the most recent, £500 to Tomorrows Women Wirral for a projector to enhance taught sessions at the Centre. Secretary Lesley keeps in personal contact with TWW, and some members follow the Centre's Facebook page which is very informative.



Our PA Officer, Sheila, has joined the 'Wirral Community Champion – help keep Wirral well', network. She receives the latest information, advice and directives from the Wirral public health team about COVID-19 in order to share with members who, in turn, can share with their wider contacts in the community.

Keep safe and well everyone.

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