

SI SOUTH CAERNARFONSHIRE

History for Soroptimist International

Centenary Year

SI. South Caernarfonsire Club currently consists of 31 members and we all live on the Llyn Peninsular in North West Wales, in the county of Gwynedd an ancient Welsh Kingdom where the Welsh Language thrives.

The peninsula is over two hours from the English border and is surrounded by the Irish Sea and Cardigan Bay. It is beautiful and remote, the landscape consists of mountains and beaches and it is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Early Days

The first meeting held to look at the possibility of forming a club was held at Dwyfor Ranch Hotel on 29th November 1971. Seven local members were present and by the second meeting 12 people attended. The club was formed in 1972 and the first president was Rebecca Pollecoff, 1972-73. At that time the group would meet in the Crown Hotel in Pwllheli, the George in Criccieth and Plas Glyn y Weddw.

On 17th June 1973 the club was given its charter, Rebecca Pollecoff was president and Morfydd Jones was club secretary. The first Charter Dinner at the Woodlands Hall Hotel, Edern was attended by Thelma E Jarrett who was President of the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland and was from the Melbourne Club Australia.



The Club Insignia

The club insignia medallion is unique and was designed and made by Frances Aileen Cockle a club member and artist. It represents the Llyn, Mor and Mynydd, Sea and Mountain with the international S.I. symbol.

Later a chain was commissioned in silver gilt and each section has a symbol of the Llyn, a Chough, Ynys Enlli (Bardsey holy island), the Rivals, a Celtic Cross, a Daffodil (the national flower of Wales) and a cromlech (Burial Chamber).

We still have an annual Charter Dinner, which we traditionally hold at Christmas with a church Carol Service that is put together by members, followed by lunch, usually at Portmeirion, the famous Italianate Village created by Clough Williams Ellis.

TEN YEARS OLD

In 1983 when Kathie Davies Jones was president the club celebrated its tenth anniversary in style at the Linksway Hotel, Morfa Nefyn with over a hundred guests, some of whom had travelled a long way. Three Soroptimists came from Dublin and presented the club with a crystal decanter which the club still has.

The guest speaker was North Wales Euro MP Beata Brookes and honorary member Lady Olwen Carey-Evans who was a granddaughter of Lloyd George also attended. The club was congratulated on the good work they did in the community and the bonds they had formed locally and further afield.



Mrs Dorothy Cheesley, President of the Soroptimists Divisional union of Cheshire, North Wales and Wirral attended. At the time of writing 2019, Pam Cheesley Holinshead, Dorothy's daughter is president of the North Wales Region

1984

By 1984 Kathie was immediate past president and can be seen handing a donation which was part of the £835 raised that year, that would be £2773.37 today (2019). At the time of the photograph which follows the club was approaching its twelfth birthday. Some of the charities supported had been cancer charities, Guide Dogs for the Blind, equipment for the local hospitals, health centres and special schools. In 1983 Guides and scouts, Youth centre, British Red Cross, Talking Books and Dwyfor Friends of Gwynedd Youth Music were amongst the charities supported. At this time Rhian Owen was president and at the clubs friendship evening a performance was given by Mr Eirion Roberts a violinist accompanied by Mrs Elsie Roberts on the piano. Miss Myfanwy Edwards and Marian Edwards sang Welsh songs.



Soroptimists Help Local Charities 1984

Pictured here is the decanter presented to the club by Mrs A. Roche O'Reilly, President of the Fingal link club of Ireland in 1983. Three members of the Dublin club visited for our tenth anniversary and the following year 1984 members of S.I. South Caernarfonshire made a visit to Dublin to meet the club members who had not been able to travel to our 10th anniversary.



Founder members

S.I. South Caernarfonshire is privileged to be located in beautiful countryside. Additionally, we have the fortune to be blessed with one of the most magical places in the UK in which to hold special events, Portmeirion, the famous Italianate Village South of Portmeirion sits on an estuary leading into Cardigan Bay. Here below some of our founder members are pictured sitting outside the Portmeirion Hotel.



Over the years many occasions have found us meeting at Portmeirion. The photograph, that follows pictures both current members (2019) and members who have left or who have sadly now died.



Projects and Activities

We have had a history of participating in projects which support the ecology of the area and add to information collated nationally from well before these became so prominent. So for instance, beach cleans, plant and bird counts and working for a community garden.



Beach Clean pictured above and photographs which follow are Shoe collection symbolising @Limbs for Life and the abolition of Land Mines. A plant count and a certificate for our work on the Wildlife Garden in Criccieth





Economic injustice

We support our food bank each year by having an evening where we bring contributions. We did this twice last year bringing Christmas goodies as well as essential food stuffs. We live in an area which, relies heavily on tourism and many local people are out of work once the season ends in October.



Sexual Violence and Violence Against Women

We have supported Amethyst the sexual abuse referral centre for North Wales for some years now.

Initially we focused on providing clothing such as underwear, leggings and T shirts and toothpaste and brushes and soaps and shampoos for those who had to give up their clothes for Forensic purposes and so they could have nice and personal toiletries for showering after examination.

In recent years we have also been supporting the Young People's advisor. We have provided things for children who are waiting to be interviewed at the centre and we have provided things for 'Distraction Boxes'. These are boxes put together by the girls support group to be used when they feel very low and may self-harm. They contain such things as note books, felt tips, mindfulness books, nail varnish, bath products, face masks, scented candles etc.

This year our fundraising supported the launch of a booklet written by young people using the centre about their experiences and to help others who need the centre in future.



The slippers above were made by young people at Amethyst with the flip flops we had collected.

The video and podcast produced by the Young people at Amethyst can be accessed via our Facebook page and web site. We met the young people at the video launch In Sept 2019.

Working in Partnership with Pwllheli Rugby Club

Continuing the work on the theme of violence against Women and Girls we had a project last year during the Rugby Season in Partnership with Pwllheli Rugby Club. At each home match a difference leaflet about Domestic Abuse was inserted into the programmes. Obviously, these reached any visiting clubs as well as local Rugby players and match goers.

International

We have had regular produce tables at Business meetings to support the Meru Women's Garden Project. Also in aid of Meru and two years running we had growing competitions, one for sunflowers and one for pumpkins. The pumpkin competition was followed by a supper where pumpkin/squash was the main ingredient of a range of dishes at a harvest supper that also supported the food bank.

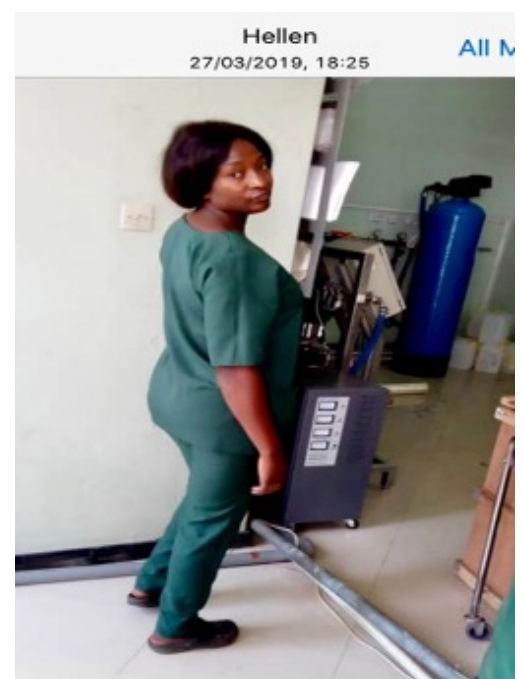
Water Aid

For many years the club has saved small change for Water Aid and over the years this really adds up

Itala School and Trainee Nurse Hellen

When Andrea Roberts was president Itala School was her chosen charity. This has led to a long term project for our club, which has been to support one woman to complete her education and now she is training to be a nurse. We were introduced to Hellen through the Itala Project which won the Bangor club the S.I. International award at the Malta conference.

A young woman and mother, Hellen had, through family bereavement and misfortune, not had a complete education and so S.I. South Caernarfon financially supported Hellen to complete her school education and then, for the last three years, her university training course which will qualify her to be a nurse in Zambia her



home country. This has been an 8 year commitment so far and we are so pleased that Hellen will qualify as a nurse in July 2020.

We have supported the International Presidents projects over the years through our Carol Service collection and we have sent donations to things like The Brick School in Nepal and the Ebola Crisis through 'Medicin Sans Frontiers, coats for Syrian Refugees' and so on.



Wombling Free!

If anyone remembers the Wombles they were avid collectors, we too have become so, collecting plastic bottle tops for recycling by LUSH. Mascara wands for use with rescued hedgehogs etc., Bras to be sent to Africa through Bravissimo, this year we made eco bricks for a local school out of milk cartons and soft plastic, we collected pound coins in Borrocca tubes and many more things have focused us on gathering together often unwanted things for recycling.

Last year 2018/19 we all did a clothes detox to support Seren Ffestiniog, a charity for Learning Disabled people which recycles, mends and sells clothes thus teaching skills to service users.



Charity of the Year

Each year we support a Charity selected now by the club, as we have not had a president for three years. We have supported the local Cancer Treatment Ward, Alaw at Bangor, Riding for the Disabled, Young Carers through Action for Children, the local Children's Hospice, Hospice at Home, Ronald Macdonald House, Robert Owen House, to mention but a few. We are supporting SANDS this year 2019/20 the stillbirth and neo natal death charity that supports parents whose children have died. We raised funds by a cycle ride, Cheese and Wine Evenings, Dinner Dances, Cakes Stalls, Bric a Brac stalls, Speaker Evenings with food and so on.

Practical Work

We have recently made fidget blankets for people suffering from Dementia and knitted Teddies for those who have lost all their toys due to war.



Soroptimist South Caernarfonshire also have fun so:

This year we went bowling and for a meal. We had a great evening and Sara was awarded the bowling cup.

We have also enjoyed trips to conference, regional meetings, open gardens and we have a range of speakers during the year.

We enjoy singing twice annually at two local old people's homes, one in Criccieth and one in Porth madog. Here we are at Christmas 2018 at the Pines.



COVID 2020

Our club like many others has met infrequently during 2020. Our last meeting was to mark International Women's Day in March 2020.

We had a socially distanced garden tea in September 2020. We also met for a beach and cliff walk.

Some of our members raised over £1,500 for the British Heart Foundation walking paths that cross bridges around the Llyn.

We donated to the Food Bank substantially this year. We also helped a family in need through Amethyst. We kept in touch via ZOOM meetings and attended Regional meetings this way too. Like many others we long for normality whilst trying to keep the club together and relevant through this unprecedented time.

We wish all other clubs well in this centenary year as we plan to plant fruit trees on the Llyn to mark this special milestone.





