

Soroptimist International Edinburgh news notes anecdotes

Issue 190

June 2020

In this strange time of lockdown we are having our own strange time, having co-opted three people to serve as presidents in a team. We would very much welcome your thoughts as to how to what we should be called? The official form for office bearers for the year needs to be completed

It is difficult to know what will happen during the rest of the year 2020 and the months before our next AGM but we have formulated a statement for what we hope can be achieved.

This is already on the website but we are very conscious that not everyone has access to the internet so include it here.

Aims for our club in the year ahead.

As we face the uncertainties of coming out of lockdown, we need to focus our thoughts on the year ahead, however it may be.

We look ahead to the centenary of Soroptimism worldwide and take inspiration from the newest federation – recruit, nurture and retain.

(Thanks to our sisters in Africa – we wish them well: The newsletter for the new African Federation is 43 Pages long. It

includes translations in French. Isabel has abridged it and this is on the last page.)

We look back and celebrate what has been achieved, but in this ever increasingly digitalised world, we must take care not to leave behind those who have no access to technology.

We move forward, working together as we try to improve the lives of women on the margins, to empower and enable them to contribute to society.

And follow the United Nations 5 'Ps' – a commitment to aim for quality of life for People worldwide, Prosperity, to care for the Planet, promote Peace, and develop Partnerships.

Trish and the programme team are ready to go into action whenever we know that we can meet, which obviously depends in part on what the Youth Hostel permits. It would be helpful to know how people feel about travelling to meetings – please tell us.

What have you been doing in the lockdown? Stitching masks? Baking for neighbours?

Many of us will not have been allowed to venture far afield, but have been making good use of email and the telephone.

We have done our best to meet via skype, but some people are invisible!

Looking further ahead How we might raise money for Educating Girls in Nepal?

And what environmental issues should we be considering?

So strange time it may be – there's still a lot going on! President Team

SIE Business Meeting held on 13th May 2020 on Skype

Present : Anna (in the Chair)+ Gari, Pat Black, Christine, Patricia, Nikki, Clephane, Edith, Dorothy, Myint Su, Marjory and Lindsey joined on Audio. Anna welcomed everyone to the 2nd Business meeting to be held on Skype and thanked everyone for making the effort.

Clephane read the Soroptimist Vision & Mission

Apologies for absence were received from 7 members: Trish, Winifred, Alison, Irene, Carolyn, Isobel, Morag.

Minutes of the last Meeting were agreed as accurate and no matters arising.

News of members:

Isobel has been in touch with Morag who is confined to her room (in view of COVID) and is a bit fed up but when Clephane also spoke to her she was about to have a cocktail! She has also access to a new machine to help her with her reading. Alison has confirmed that she is still working full time at the hospital (Renal unit) but is OK.

Correspondence: Christine – SI Dunfermline's 70th Anniversary Dinner has been rescheduled for 16th May 2021 at Forest Park Hotel

Treasurers Report: Myint Su – written report submitted prior to meeting. Isobel and Dorothy have found the £70 discrepancy mentioned at the AGM and the accounts have been amended accordingly Myint Su expressed thanks to her 'committee' members Isobel and Dorothy for their tenacity in finding the discrepancies: Confirmation was provided that an additional £100 was to be allocated to the 3S fund and thereby leaving £230,43 to be distributed as per

decisions made at the AGM for charity donations. Agreed £75 to each of Trussell Trust, Soroptimists Benevolent Fund and UNICEF (split between 2 projects : Toilet Twinning and Tap&Soap): Expenditure this year has been significantly lower in view of 7 meetings not taking place at YHA plus we have been advised of a 40% reduction in the SIGBI website charge: Easy funding has raised £117 this year and we need to decide where that will be allocated. Please encourage friends and relatives to sign up www.easyfundraising.org.uk : Myint Su had provided details of all club owned No 63 shares- numbers don't seem to correspond with numbers at No 63 – this is to be reconciled and confirmed back to the Club:

Patricia asked about the possibility of having on-line facilities for the Club accounts. Myint Su will check criteria with RBS and come back to Club.

Anna asked about current situation with payment of subscriptions. Not everyone has paid but we still have some time to pay SI dues etc.

ACTION : Nikki to send list of Charities to receive donations across to Myint Su

Nikki and Edith to work with Myint Su to reconcile the No 63 shareholding

Myint Su will look into on-line banking facilities

Myint Su will send around an email list of subs paid and still to pay.

Membership: Anna – Minimal activity to report. Request for members to look at the SIGBI website about membership and refresh themselves on ideas etc

Programme Action: Lindsey – final Programme Focus Report submitted re the 3S Fund activities (no.53961): There was a virtual UK Programme Action meeting

9th May – awaiting report and will circulate: Some problems with navigating the new website have been reported to SIGBI, but Lindsey has established that Red Cross has been in touch asking for support: Edinburgh Kilt Walk 13/9/20 has not yet been cancelled – we have nominated Empowering Girls in Nepal as our charity to raise funds for: Contacted Kids Love Clothes – we will get back in touch when safe to continue support: Cranston Street -we have not been able to make contact with them. (**Post meeting update** : Anna has called in to hostel , still operating and would welcome toiletries and any masks (spare or made) Lindsey will try and organise a collection system.): Carolyn has been making tiny baby hats for local hospital : Christine has sent a report re Rape Crisis in Scotland and the situation re cessation of legal aid: Christine and Lindsey wrote to their local MPs re the Domestic Abuse bill being introduced in England (following advice from SIGBI) – hearing in Parliament once COVID crisis is over: Beach Watch clean possibly still on 18-21st September.

Lindsey flagged that next year is the 100th Anniversary of SI giving Services and requested suggestions for SIE to celebrate/ commemorate- perhaps activity with an environmental theme. To be discussed at future meetings

Programme: Trish – (in Trish's absence Nikki updated) Nikki, Alison and Trish to get on a call in June to mobilise thoughts for Programme activity for when we return to some normality

SIGBI Website: Pat -Pat has completed the training. SIE website has been tidied up and updated to reflect our meetings are now taking place on Skype. Recommendations that we look to make the site more snappy and use key words so Google search is more successful -Pat will look into how to do this IDC. Please

let Pat know if you spot any errors/inaccuracies on the website

SEenna: Edith - Edith passed on her best wishes to the new editors Gari and Nikki and reminded members that items for the newsletter to be sent to Gari/ Nikki's email addresses which are recorded in the Club Membership list. Also reminded club that business meeting minutes are captured in SEenna in place of us retaining a separate Minute Book

AOB

Anna : if anyone is making face coverings please let Anna know. Patterns available on Good Housekeeping website.

Lindsey: could Marjory send around a photo of the SIE bush we have planted in Saughton Park?

Christine (on meeting messenger!) : looking for a 'shadow' secretary specifically to help with submitting certain forms (which Christine does not have the technology to do) Any volunteers please contact Christine.

Edith: SSRegion have asked for nominees for club members past and present who have made a significant impact, for the '100 4 100' item being collated by Region (100 great women for 100 years of SI) Isobel and Edith have been researching for SIE and their recommendation would be Helen Somerville, 2nd female Chartered Accountant in Scotland. They will prepare the information and submit to Region. We had 4 other possible nominees as well!

Myint Su: Mentioned archiving of SIE papers (as several club members have been clearing out during lockdown!) SIGBI have provided guidance on (legal) retention of documents but we also recognise that the Club may wish to retain items for posterity. Edith has commenced the archiving review.

Action : everyone review papers they have and bring anything they feel is significant/is of Club interest, to next face to face meeting when consideration be given to what needs to be retained

Agreed no 'speaker' meeting in May

Date of next Business Meeting: 10th June 7.30 by Skype. Attendees to join at 7.20

100 4 100 and Helen Somerville.

To celebrate the first centenary of Soroptimist International what better way to raise the profile of the Organisation than to identify 100 Soroptimists (living and deceased) who have made a noteworthy contribution to society.

These amazing women will be 'Celebrated' by publishing their biographies on Wikipedia, clearly noting prominently in the piece that they are/were members of Soroptimist International. Once achieved awareness will be raised in the press and on Social Media Platform.

Helen Mitchell Somerville JP, CA

Helen was born in 1883 in Edinburgh where she attended St Margaret's College, later becoming a Governor of the College. She was the daughter of the Procurator Fiscal for Edinburgh, George Somerville. Until 1934 she resided in Edinburgh when she moved to a house built for her grandfather in Aberdour, where she fully appreciated having an outlet for her passion as a keen gardener.

During World War 1 she began an apprenticeship in the family firm D C Wallace and Somerville Accountants. In 1925 she was fully qualified – the second lady in Scotland and first lady member of the Edinburgh Society. She became a partner in the company with her brother Sir John Somerville. During her career

she actively encouraged the young female apprentices and members to achieve their potential. In 1975 she celebrated her Golden Jubilee described as her 'red letter day' and acknowledged by David Flint, President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. He was well aware of her encouragement of women in the profession and wrote 'You must, I am sure, be particularly pleased at the women's record in the Institute's examinations in recent years when, as you know, in three years out of five recently the Gold Medal was won by a woman.'

Helen retired in 1967 aged 84 years.

The first record of Helen in SI Edinburgh is a letter describing the hair raising voyage on the Danube from Vienna to Budapest for the 1936 "Peace Week", an early indication of her interest in the international aspect of Soroptimist. Apparently the boat caught fire and their luggage was thrown overboard!

In 1938 the club recognized her financial acumen in appointing her Treasurer of SI Edinburgh, a post she held till 1951. However this was the beginning of over 20 years service to the club, region federation (vice president 1951 52) and the international association.

In the years leading up to 1948 there had been discussions on the formation of a First Sister Plan to encourage correspondence and co-operation with Soroptimists in other countries. When it was agreed in 1948 to form the First Sister Club, Helen was chosen to be the first Chairman, a post she held till 1952.

Discussion had been ongoing about the constitution of the Soroptimist International Association (SIA) especially concerning the Governing Body (the International Board).

In 1952 it was agreed that the President and Secretary should be from one

Federation and the Treasurer from another. The first President and Secretary appointed were from the American Federation and Helen was appointed from the British Federation as the first Treasurer of the Soroptimist International Association. She held the post till 1956.

All this service was acknowledged in 1960 by the award of Honorary Membership of the Federation.

Helen played a much appreciated part in the administration of numerous women's organisations locally. She played Hockey with the Edinburgh Ladies and may have played for Scotland. She received a plaque from the Scottish Hockey Association. Golf was also an interest first in Edinburgh as captain of KIngsknowe Club, then later Aberdour where she founded the golf club. There is a plaque commemorating her opening of the clubhouse in 1965.

Helen died on 27 November 1978 aged 88.

Programme Action

PA and I have fingers crossed that the Kilt Walk in September can go ahead - I can manage 5 miles and hope some others can as well. This would be for Nepal. There are daily updates on Facebook but I think more info is available on the SIGBI web site which most people can access. Pat is doing a great job of keeping our section up-to-date and colourful.

As far as I'm aware, Carolyn is the only member doing something particular for this lockdown - will check with other members. Anna called in at Cranston Street (they can only use a mobile phone as their BT landline is down, hence no response from my calls) - they are still busy and we will ask members to donate something for sometime in June which I will be happy to deliver.

Empowering Girls in Nepal

<https://www.empoweringgirlsinnepal.org/>

Empowering Girls in Nepal is our SIGBI Federation Project 2019-2022.

This project is in partnership with UK registered charity ChoraChori (the Nepali word for 'children'). ChoraChori works to support rape victims and their families and brings rapists to justice. Empowering Girls in Nepal is a three-year collaboration between ChoraChori and SIGBI. The project supports rape survivors, trafficked and vulnerable girls as they rebuild their lives. The project empowers them through education and training helping them to gain employment and a future within society.

Please be aware that ChoraChori is not the Federation Project. The project is Empowering Girls in Nepal and we are working on this in partnership with ChoraChori. The project aims to raise £105,000.00 over the three-year term. So far £16,500 has been raised - a good start in the first year.

Alison working at ERI

Region wanted to know if we had anyone in the club working for the NHS at this time - well Alison is and is travelling daily to the RIE Renal Unit, to work - as she says not in the frontline - but nevertheless dialysis is life and death to patients in that department. So although we are at home nursing our gardens and baking cakes, we do have a member out there doing what is necessary!

Alison bought 2 face coverings for travelling by bus to work and back. They are foam ones with black covering. She got them from Edinburgh bargain stores.

KINDNESS MATTERS Lindsey

During the month of May, Mental Health Awareness Week took place and it highlighted some important information during these very difficult times, not least the need to be kind to one another – the theme for the week being ‘Kindness’. At the end of that week I shared a small paragraph to a couple of friends and the thought is that it might be worth sharing with all of the members of our club.

If you had, perhaps, to choose a single word or description for a Soroptimist, might it be her kindness for all her fellow women and girls here, and around the world, in whatever country and in whatever difficulties that they have in their lives. The kindness of many, not just Soroptimists, during these very challenging times have made us all more fully aware of the inequalities, hardships and downright brutality in the lives of so many of our fellow human beings, especially women and girls. Facebook and other social media on the Internet constantly remind us of the work our fellow Soroptimists are doing – and will continue to do into our next Soroptimist century - for our fellow women across the world.

The Mental Health Awareness campaign highlighted how important giving kindness, and not just receiving it, was to one's mental health. Soroptimists around the world, have been making masks, scrub bags, shopping for others, and working in foodbanks etc – all to help their community struggle through lockdown – with the hope now that the worst is nearly over. This ‘kindness’ will surely continue and we must believe that a happier and more caring society will be the result. There is a certainty that in any community or club like Soroptimists, someone will have felt the anxiety and the depression so common in peoples' mental

health what with the loss of thousands of jobs, the difficulties in keeping close to families and the inability to attend funerals to say a final goodbye, has been so harsh on so many.

Just a little bit of kindness goes a very long way, as we in Soroptimism know so keep smiling and remember – we will meet again soon!

Mental Health Month is in October

Social Justice Commission and Universal Basic Income

The Scottish Parliament has formed a Social Justice and Fairness Commission to 'chart a course for Scotland to be a better place to live'.

On the Holyrood website it mentions a Universal Basic Income (UBI). The SIGBI magazine also mentions UBI.

At our next meeting, perhaps we could discuss whether to send submissions from SIE. Christine

Friendship Links -

Irene has sent an informative chart with details of the Coordinators for each club.

SI Caldwell, Idaho, USA

SI Cockermouth, England (Pat Black)

SI Kiev, Ukraine (Dorothy)

SI Madurai, India (Myint Su)

SI Riverside, California, USA

SI Sioux Falls, South Dakota, USA

We cancelled our link to SI Groveland in 2019.

Dunfermline 70th

A card has been sent to Sandra and Abby (Joint Presidents) saying we look forward to a future celebration.

The celebration lunch is now scheduled for 16th May 2021.

African Federation Unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic the planned African Conference in Abidjan during April 2020 has been cancelled as there was no charter ceremony the transition from SI (F) AF to SIAF has not taken place. However the steering group are accepting applications for posts on the Federation Board and will consider those from 25th May with a view. To having people in position when the transition takes place- possibly in November.

The value of the new Federation should lead to closer co-operation of all the African clubs and may help set up clubs in other African Countries. Also a new independent Federation is a challenge to find new ways of working and creativity. Lastly there is a weaning from SIGBI and SIEurope with their encouragement.

The Directors of SI(F) AF have outlined on further activities:

Communications: foster and use your talents maybe by applying to be a member of the Federation Board.

Extension : Recruit,Nurture and Retain both members and clubs

Membership: keep database up to date.

Programme Action.: Submit your programme focus report forms. Also submit programmes to be considered for best practice award.

The effect of Covid-19 pandemic on clubs have been considered. The African population have suffered by the loss of jobs especially among the lower paid women resulting in loss of money and lack of food. There is also the problem with domestic violence and gender irregularity. The clubs are beginning to respond to these problems with food banks, refuges and education on the rights of women and girls. These problems have been faced in the last year and projects are recorded in the report from each region. However there are a few projects which might be of interest

SI Pretoria Tshwane the embroidery project set up in 1991 has now spread with a daughters embroidery project taking the Mapula system to Kibeho, Rwanda. It has now been developed into a self - Sustaining Mapula Embroidery Trust. The club still supports the daughter project where they plan to increase the number of embroiders from 30-60 in Rwanda. They made bags for a big fundraiser event in 2019. The expansion of the number of women working is being supported by SI Ede in the Netherlands.

SI Nigerian Association. SINA together with ICLED business school NGO set up a one day conference in February 2020. "Entrepreneurship Growth Summit 2020". The girls discussed the challenges for the girl child in society, sexual harassment, gender discrimination.

SI Gwarinpa organised "My sight is my right" during the International Science Day at a Senior Government Secondary school Gwarinpa, Abuja. Free eye checks were conducted on the girls.

SI Accra Four members has been trained to use CPR both in the paediatric situation and with adults and elderly.

The Vice Presidents of each region gave short messages. The one from East Africa region was quite imaginative "Together we are on a journey whose ultimate destination is equality...the small things we do for ourselves and the women and girls close to us drive us closer to our destination.....Stay on the SI road to the Equality Bus-change gear from commitment to action

The future African Federation has 2000 members in 24 countries in Africa with 106 Active clubs. The languages are English and French.

Abridged by Isabel from the 43 pages of the Voice of SI F AF

Anna has the full version if any member would like to read it.

Identify the plant!



And finally: Any thoughts on the name of this mysterious plant? Gari will be delighted to hear these at the Business Meeting on 10 June or before, through email, phone or mail!

Items for SIEnna 15.6.20 (following Business Meeting 10 June)

SI Edinburgh web address:
www.sigbi.org/edinburgh