

Soroptimist International Edinburgh news notes anecdotes

Issue 185

January 2020

# A Very Happy New Year to you all

Let's go back to December for a moment.

# Edinburgh Christmas Tree Festival

This year St Andrew's and St George's West Church in George Street asked SI Edinburgh if we would be interested in decorating a tree for their 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas Tree Festival, this year called -

# Let There be Light!

Initially it sounded quite a challenge but with Edith, Anna, Pat and myself getting our heads together, the idea of focussing on who Soroptimists are, and what we do throughout International, SIGBI, South Region and within our own club here in Edinburgh began to take shape. Too often when telling strangers that one is a Soroptimist, a look of genuine surprise comes over their faces – a what? Enough we thought – this is a great opportunity to tell the world – well at least Edinburgh – just who we are.

We had to have our tree decorated by the 6<sup>th</sup> December – trees provided by Bethany Christian Trust for which we paid a donation. In the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> the

decorators were treated to the grand 'switch on' of the 39 trees (there was a 40<sup>th</sup> downstairs in the café) and a welcome glass of fizz!

We had Soroptimist International's colour scheme of gold and black near the top of the tree, followed by SIGBI, SSSR and SI Edinburgh in our blue and white lower down. Hanging glitter gift cards had the names of the various charities and organisations supported within each group and 'star' gift cards gave the first name and destination overseas of our current 3S Fund young women.

We added some blue and glitter baubles, one or two ornaments from overseas and several handbag size SIGBI leaflets tied to the tree. Our tree was topped by a blue and white glitter star echoing the theme of *Let There be Light!* 



L to R:
Pat, Anna, Edith – decorating in progress

Leaflets from SI, SIGBI, Region and our own club were available for the visitors to uplift and I'm delighted to say that there were very few remaining by the 27<sup>th</sup> December when Clephane and I stripped the Tree. Our hope is that the leaflets will be read and thought about so the question 'what's a Soroptimist?' will have been answered!

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There was provision in the church for a voluntary donation which could be made to the church's nominated charities, *Bikes for Refugees (Scotland)*, *The Yard*, which provides adventure play for disabled children and young people, and *Canongate Youth*, who support young people facing challenges in their lives.

There were over 2000 visitors, 500 at the Carol Concert, + visits to nurseries and care homes – all of whom would see/hear about the trees.

Many thanks to the additional helpers on the decorating day and to those who donated bits and bobs for the tree. We hope we are now a little bit better known in our home city.

*Lindsey* Programme Action Officer, SI Edinburgh



Decorating complete

# G4

# A four-piece British vocal troupe

Sometime back when the weather was quite warm and we were contemplating what Fringe shows to visit, SI Edinburgh was approached via our web page by the charity 'missing people'. Could we consider being volunteer stewards at the Christmas Concert of the male singing group called G4? Needless to say, it was September before this could be pursued by the club but in time, we had four members and two additional friends, and we went through the fairly rigorous procedure of registering to volunteer. Anna, Nikki (and two of her friends), Lindsey and Edith – who was aware of assisting this charity sometime back – agreed to help on Sunday evening 29th December. Prior to that we met up with Marjory – the charity's Edinburgh 'ambassador' - who reassured us that a bit of programme selling before the concert started, and a bucket shaking collection after the show was all that was required – indeed that was about the sum total of our efforts. We enjoyed G4 who were backed by a junior choir from Stagecoach – a national theatre training group for young people with classes in the city – and Scottish tenor, Jai McDowall. The missing people charity advertise themselves as 'a lifeline when someone disappears' – and stress that 'missing' is strongly linked to mental health, care experience, dementia, homelessness, relationship breakdown and sexual and criminal exploitation.

We were all happy to help!

Lindsey, PAO for SI Edinburgh

Marjory, from missing people, has reported £548.04 was raised by the bucket collection at the end of the concert. In total the whole tour raised £19,639

Ed.

#### And now back to November:

## A Year in Thailand - Project Trust Gap Year Report for Edinburgh Soroptimists

At the beginning of September last year, I was sent overseas to volunteer teaching English in a small town in the North East of Thailand. Having previously only ever travelled within Europe I was unsure what to expect of Thai culture but was pleasantly surprised at how welcome we were as soon as we entered the country. The organisation I volunteered with sends volunteers out in partners, so I was joined up with another girl, Mairi, with whom I was sent to work in our project town: Phana. Our first challenge was seeing how we would interact over the year we would spend together. Thankfully, we got on very well from the start and developed a very strong relationship that allowed us both to work to the best of our ability over the year.

In our first week in Phana, we stayed with a host family who took care of us and showed us around the town that would soon become our home. They were a close family of two sisters, a mum and aunt, all of whom welcomed us warmly despite having varying levels of English. They taught us how to cook some basic Thai dishes and hand wash our clothes, so we were prepared for living on our own when the time came. We were very grateful for the relationship we developed with them whilst there as it meant we knew we had a base to come back to throughout the year.

We did not begin teaching until November due to school term times, so we spent many days volunteering in the local monkey forest. We became good friends with the couple that looked after the forest and so got into the habit of asking what needed to be done in the forest in our time off, often being rewarded for our work with amazing meals and coffee after. Our duties included cleaning water basins, picking up litter, spray-painting bins... the list goes on.

Also, in the time leading up to teaching we were sent by our employers to Chiang Mai for 3 weeks where we took part in a language course. All of the other Thai volunteers took part in this as well, so it was great to see everyone after spending a month in our projects. The linguistics of Thai are very interesting as the understanding of words relies more on the tone you use rather than the actual words. Many of their sentences are also very simplified and in the reverse order to English so learning even basic conversation can be tricky. Therefore, we were very grateful to be sent to the course where we got to learn some of the ins and outs of the language.

Once back we were straight into teaching and soon discovered what our weekly routine would be. We worked for the local council rather than just one school and so were spread across four schools during the week. Mondays and Wednesdays, we were in a kindergarten school where we taught kids aged 4 to 7. Due to their age, we were limited to easy vocabulary taught in 40-minute periods, where we got creative teaching through games, drawing and songs. Tuesdays we worked in the council's partner school, Samakke, where we taught ages 7 to 15. The periods here were an hour long and we would teach five classes a day. This was a lot more challenging than the kindergarten school as we had to teach grammar and vocabulary to larger classes, but it was still enjoyable as we developed good relationships with our students. On Thursdays we worked in the local nursery with kids aged 1 to 4 where we acted more as teaching assistants, organising activities with the kids and sometimes teaching them using flash cards and nursery rhymes. Friday was our last working

day of the week and we would be placed in Anuban Phana, which was another primary school similar to Samakke - though smaller. Between us, we taught all of the classes so also developed a strong connection with that school. Our varied week meant we were never bored and interacted with a variety of different characters every day, widening the circle of friends we had in the community.

One of my favourite things about Thailand is the people. They are some of the kindest, most generous individuals I have ever interacted with. Thailand is known as the 'Land of Smiles' and there could not be a more apt name as everywhere you go you will be met by a large smile and friendly greeting. We enjoyed interacting with those in Phana in particular, as everyone would always be so happy to see us. Our students would yell "Teacheerrr" as we passed, market ladies would offer us treats to try when it was clear we did not know what mysterious thing they were selling, teachers would stop us and ask where we were going or what we planned to cook for dinner whenever we passed them. Though we were the only two young foreign girls in the town, it was clear that this was also how they interacted with each other. The community in Phana was a very special one as everyone works together in one way or another. All the schools are linked, teachers will often do work in the council and it's completely normal to see the bin man interact with the mayor. This intrinsic environment was an interesting one to be a part of as it was the complete opposite to the anonymity I feel in my own hometown. We were a part of everything and were often placed front and centre at many of the town's celebrations – of which there were *a lot*.

My experience in Phana was a unique one and something that will affect everything I do in the future. It is a Global South country climbing the ranks of development due to its popular tourism industry and by living within it, you can see how it is in the process of developing. Their plastic use was shocking originally but we witnessed programmes introduced while we were there encouraging increased usage of reusable products. Some have a very relaxed attitude towards education as many students are likely to work in family businesses or on family farms when they are older, however, far more students are continuing to university than before and you could see a lot more kids taking initiative with their learning. There is still a clear gender divide with many males in the highest government positions, however we were more often than not surrounded by the strong women in the society, witnessing first-hand how they are climbing the ranks within the schools and the council. Identifying these issues and seeing them be improved upon has inspired me to be proactive about my degree and pursue something that will actually be worthwhile in the long run as it has let me see that there is always a want for change.

I really appreciate the generous donation I received from the Soroptimists last year as without it I would never have been able to live and grow in such an amazing place, witnessing so many things I never thought I would.

\*\*Lauren\*\*

Lauren received a contribution from the 3S Fund for her expenses.

See page 5 for photos of some of Lauren's classes:



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# SIE Business Meeting held on 8th January 2020 at St Peter's Church, Lutton Place.

**Present:** Gari (in the Chair) + 12 members. Gari welcomed everyone to the meeting including visitor Catriona who was to give an update on her work with 'Limitless Horizons'.

**Apologies for absence:** were received from 6 members: Pat Black, Dorothy, Myint Su, Trish, Carolyn and Morag.

SI Vision and Mission statement: was read by Nikki.

**Limitless Horizons Ixil:** Catriona attended the meeting to provide an update on the work she is doing with *Limitless Horizons* as an International Co-ordinator in Ishaw, Guatemala. She provided a very descriptive narrative of the location, the projects underway and the people she is working with. This really brought the activity to life and helped us appreciate the lifestyle and challenges for the local population.

3 main areas of work:

- the Library eg Story Hour x3 per week engaging between 50-60 children in literature/education through storytelling.
- the Youth Development Programme Personal Development Workshops engaging 50-70 young people in helping them understand challenges of becoming adult and building self-confidence and self-esteem.
- the Artisan Project helping local mothers to build skills and create sustainable income generation projects.

Catriona is specifically supporting and mentoring 5 young fellows who are taking leading roles in the project. These are local women between 19 and 24 who have been able to attend and graduated from schools in other areas and are now supporting their local projects – creating a real change locally in attitudes towards women's rights and freedoms. Additional objective for 2020.

- To build a school in the locality to open in 2021. Initially as a middle school and then as a high school in 2024. The intended population will be 70% girls and 30% boys. This will bring more children in to education and avoid long hours of travel (up to 6/7 hrs each day) to obtain education in neighbouring towns/cities. This is also to increase the likelihood of local girls accessing University education (which currently stands at 1%). It is hoped that this increase in education and successful university graduates will help changes in attitudes towards women's equality and their value in the community.

#### **News of members:**

Carolyn – was ill before Christmas but is now back on the mend.

Clephane - recently involved in a large Church service in Perth in recognition of women's achievement and was presented with a 25 years' service award. Congratulations Clephane. Friendship messages from other clubs:

Our Australian guests in the summer sent best wishes for Christmas.

Our American friends (whose husband found the Soroptimist Bench in West Princes Street Gardens) also sent Christmas Greetings.

Jenny sent best wishes and Christmas Card.

Anne – spoken to her recently and she is hoping to join the next Friendship Group meeting.

#### **SIGBI Vice President Nominations:**

2 nominations have been received which the Club need to vote on.

ACTION: please read the two biographies on the website and be ready to vote at the business meeting in February.

**Treasurer's report** – no report presented.

**Programme Action** – Lindsey had circulated an updated report by email prior to the meeting and provided the following updates:

<u>Missing People Charity support at G4 concert</u> – we raised £548.04 in the bucket collection at the end of the concert.

<u>Kids Love Clothes</u> – possible Tuesday in February to help sort clothes. Lindsey will confirm <u>Great Daffodil Appeal</u> – Lindsey will contact organisers to establish which local pitches are available for us to collect. (indoors is preference)

<u>Domestic Abuse Act for Westminster</u>. Letter received via Brenda at Region. Hope is that SIGBI members can encourage the introduction of the Act in England. It is already in place in Scotland but championing our Scottish MPs to support the Act progressing in England would be considered helpful. (stress to your MP that Soroptimists are looking for parity within the Union as Scotland's Domestic Abuse Act became law in April last year) Lindsey has emailed the letter to all club members. Please amend as you see fit. ACTION: all members to consider sending letter to local MP. Please let Lindsey know if you do.

**Empowering Girls in Nepal** <a href="https://sigbi.org/our-charities/girlsinnepal/">https://sigbi.org/our-charities/girlsinnepal/</a> Federation Project 2019/2022

ACTION: club members to consider how we can raise funds to support this Federation Project and discuss at business meeting in February.

Can we engage with local Nepalese Restaurants and ask for a donation from each diner? We will need collateral – see website.

ACTION: Anna to research addresses of local Nepalese Restaurants.

ACTION: Regional reps to understand what Region's ideas are.

**Joint activity Scottish Soroptimists and UN House:** 2019 report on Mental Health now available: Consideration now being given to similar collaboration on the subjects of Human Trafficking and Climate Change.

#### **Membership:**

<u>SIE Posters and Leaflets:</u> Nikki to revamp the poster and leaflet following receipt of feedback. Lindsey to share 'what we are' information that was provided for the Christmas Tree promotion activity. Suggestion was also made that we have a 'question' style poster to create curiosity. Also, comment was made that we need to update/maintain our social media sites to attract new members/share information in the way younger potential members want to receive it. We could all develop our 'lift pitch' statement – short and sharp statement, impactful, powerful words, leave people being curious - eg

'SI Edinburgh is a part of Soroptimist International and we have been in Edinburgh for ninety-three years. We work on projects that will help end hunger, eradicate poverty, preserve the environment and provide education especially for women and girls, around the world'.

In summary – multiple pieces of collateral would be useful for us to use as appropriate. We will start with leaflet and poster.

ACTION – to be discussed briefly at next Speaker Meeting.

ACTION – all members to consider their 30 second 'lift pitch' statement if asked 'what is Soroptimism?' and discuss at next friendship meeting.

<u>New Members:</u> Anna updated us on the work she has been doing following up on leads. Dr Patricia C has joined. Badge ready to be given at February meeting.

Patricia has one chapter to finish for a book. Does not wish to be on SI Edinburgh social media. Lives South side.

Dr Teresa: Was not able to come this evening and has been given date for next meeting. Clephane and Anna met her before Christmas. She is a retired Psychiatrist. Has joined Extinction Rebellion.

Karen: North Berwick: Was ill last year. Anna sent email update. No commitment as yet. Sue moving to North Berwick in March 2020. Her mother was a Soroptimist and contact was via SIGBI. Anna sent email before Christmas.

# **Visiting Soroptimists:**

Karen working for the tram company. May attend our meetings when in Edinburgh. Nasim Ghaffari Tabrizi-Wizsy

**Activity:** We have a very good programme of speaker meetings coming up. Please start thinking who you would like to invite to these.

Please let Anna know of any female you see or read on the media, that she could write to. Even if they are not interested at least they will know we exist.

From last **Region** meeting we are to think of SI Edinburgh past and present Soroptimists for celebrating 100 years of Soroptimism.

## Press & Publicity: Update from Christine.

Scottish Awards for new Music – Christine has sent email to all members to consider voting for Minerva Scientifica.

Our Photo has appeared in the Evening News.

Lunches: SI Paisley, (74<sup>th</sup> Anniversary), 15<sup>th</sup> March and SI Dunfermline (70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary), !7<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

Number 63 (Soroptimist Residential Club in London) – update provided by Nikki

- SIE is a shareholder and holds 66 Shares. Nikki is now our registered shareholder contact so we should now receive all information pertinent to the Club and our shareholding.
- Bit of history why should we care about No 63? The property was built in 1865 and in 1949 it was purchased on behalf of Soroptimists 2 objectives to provide an HQ for SI (later to be moved to Cambridge) and 'something for ourselves' ie to provide a place where women could safely and comfortably attend meetings and stay in our capital city. (ref Booklet 'Something for Ourselves A History of Number 63' has been produced fascinating. Informative and well worth a read! Beautiful building and a great insight into the vision and determination of our fore sisters to make it happen including the Aunt of our very own Alison)
- Current status? (my view!) Board was reinvigorated/ re-energised by the resolution in Jan 2019 to close down the club. The resolution was declined and much has been done to improve and re-ignite the club since then. The Board appears far more focused and is establishing a professional and more diverse agenda to cover all aspects of running the Club

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as a business and going concern. Accounts are showing an improvement with an operating profit declared in Sept 2019: Maintenance and previous improvements have been funded predominantly through legacies of circa £350k. Big focus on further, significant physical improvements and facility updating, with Penny appointed to the Board as a Building Consultant to overview all planned improvements. Share capital is currently £70k. Property book value is circa £5m. Occupancy levels up above average for London area and up to 90% in summer 2019.

- Planned changes and how will they be funded? -Refurbishment of the reception area, front sitting rooms, TV room and bar with the addition of 'work stations' to enable people to work from the club.
- Upgrade of business facilities eg Video Conferencing and enhanced technology. 3-4 room upgrades. Full details and costings to be provided at AGM (25/1/20): Platinum Appeal has been launched to fund these improvements (target suggested by Ann, Chairman, £700,000 to recognise the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club)
- General funding how can we help? Shareholding, 500 Club, 2000 Club, Legacy, Platinum Appeal all details available on the Number 63 website <a href="https://number63.co.uk/">https://number63.co.uk/</a>
- Marketing making a difference! Focusing on different ways to increase useage of the Club eg Business Open Days to encourage local companies to use the meeting facilities; themed weekends; weekend and family packages.

#### **ACTION FOR AGM:**

Vote for re-appointment of Auditors – AGREED

Vote for re-election of 2 Board Members – Ann (Chairman) and Kay (Finance Director-AGREED

Appointment of Proxy – Nomination Edith - AGREED

#### **AOCB:**

SI Dunfermline 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. As we are their mother club members agreed we should acknowledge this anniversary specifically. ACTION: Gari will speak with a member from SI Dunfermline to understand what would be a suitable gift. Consideration being given to a tree to add to the Orchard SI Dunfermline is creating.

**SISSR next meeting** – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Isabel attending. Gari and Lindsey hope to attend.

**Date of next Business Meeting**: 12<sup>th</sup> February 7.30pm at St Peter's Church, Lutton Place. Edinburgh YHA renovations still not completed.

SI Club of Dnipro, Ukraine is happy to announce the third International Project "Golden Ring of Ukraine" and to invite Soroptimists, their families and friends to discover the capital Kyiv and its historical and picturesque suburbs.

The dates of the trip: **Sep. 19, 2020 – Sep. 25, 2020** ·

Three days you devote to the sightseeing of Dnipro founded by tzarina Catherine II and its suburbs. You will visit the Cossacks' places and the village Petrykivka famous for its unique paintings.

You will have the opportunity to see our project Hope 3: 'Give the Child a Chance'

The participants and sisters of SI club of Dnipro will also enjoy a galadinner with meals of different parts of Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and delicious wines.

And you will keep warm recalls about hospitality of Ukrainian Soroptimists' families.

Then accompanied by Soroptimists of our club you will be lucky to see one of the most beautiful cities in the world – Kiev.

You will visit such wide known places like Khreshchatyk Avenue, Kiev Pechersk Lavra and St. Sophia Cathedral.

The guests will also take the "time machine" which transports you to the old-Ukrainian village with its open-air museum.

Bila Tserkva is the largest and one of the most interesting cities in the Kiev region, founded by Prince Yaroslav the Wise in 1032. You may enjoy Roman Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist. Today it is a House of Organ and Chamber Music. Besides other historical places for sightseeing are definitely unique. It is Arboretum "Alexandria", monument а of XVIII landscape art which represents a kind of gallery of live one paintings, of the largest landscape parks in Europe with its great territory of plants and ponds. You will also visit one of our

You will also visit one of our previous president residences Mehzigorie.

It is also the opportunity to help the Club make the fundraising for its Projects: 'Give the Child a Chance' to help physically and mentally disabled children of the orphanage Think of your vacation today!

Your husbands, children and friends are welcome!

The total price for the seven-day trip including transportation, hotels' accommodation, all meals and, galadinner and excursions is 670 Euros. You pay only after arrival.

WELCOME!



Coordinators of the "Golden Ring of Ukraine" are Olga Markova and Nataliya

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Coordinators cont.

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PS. You also have unique opportunity to participate in the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SI Club of Lviv which will be held in Lviv on September 26-27, 2020. We will help you to go to Lviv in time.

We are waiting for your reply till May 20, 2020.

Конец формы

## Suffragette from the early 1900s

I recently attended a Dickensian Festival in Ulverston, Cumbria where I was given a leaflet about a young Ulverston woman, Selina Martin, a working-class suffragette, In 1909 Selina threw an empty ginger beer bottle at the Prime Minister's car, at a demonstration outside a public meeting in Liverpool.

She was arrested and taken to Walton Gaol.

As an unconvicted prisoner she should have been offered bail and been allowed to contact her friends, but this didn't happen. Fellow suffragette, Lady Constance Lytton, daughter of the Viceroy of India believed that the difference in their social status explained why Selina had been treated so badly, while she herself had been released from prison in Newcastle after only two days, and had not been assaulted or force fed.

Whilst Selina's family was told she was in good health and being treated well, her letters and diaries tell a very different story.

Selina made a significant impact on women's suffrage and on the treatment of suffragettes who decided to hunger strike, prompting the 'Cat and Mouse Act'

Christine

Thanks go to the knitters Isabel, Carolyn and Lindsey. Ed.

# **Violence Against Women**



SIE meeting 27/11/19

L to R: Back row: Edith, Anna, Dorothy, Nikki, Alison, Christine, Irene, Marjory. Front row: Lindsey, Daniella, Clephane, Sophie, Isabel.

Recognising our stand on 'Violence Against Women' members were wearing orange.

Daniella, a project researcher, and Sophie, who trains volunteers with Edinburgh Global Partnerships (EGP) spoke at our meeting explaining some of the projects undertaken by the volunteers.

In 2019 five countries benefitted:-

Kenva: mental health issues.

Uganda: health issues. Malawi: a fish drying unit.

India: a fish-pond.

Zambia: cooking, work involving

groundnuts.

TWIDDLEMUFFS safely delivered to ward 202, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh on 15<sup>th</sup> December. These were gratefully received.

# Where are the women? - A guide to an imagined Scotland.

by Sara Sheridan

This is a guidebook to an alternative Scotland where for example Arthur's Seat is renamed after St Triduana, and Dundee Railway Station is called Slessor Station. Fictional streets, buildings, statues and monuments are dedicated to real women. telling their often unknown stories. Sara reveals a new picture of Scotland's history and heritage.

The book is in the form of a gazetteer arranged by geographic area. It is an ideal book for dipping into rather than reading straight through. I recommend that you borrow it from your

local library.

Christine

# **SLA**

The **Book Cafe** in aid of Scottish Love in Action is on Saturday 29th February from 10.30 -14.30 at George Watson's College Dining Hall,

69-71 Colinton Road, EH10 5EG Tickets £7.50, available online at sla-india.org

Scottish Love in Action will be featured on the **Radio 4 Charity appeal** on 8th March 2020

Scottish Love in Action is no longer supporting children in Tuni.

It is now supporting vulnerable children at the Asritha rainbow home in Hyderabad, India.

Apr 8 Business Meeting 22 AGM

Christmas Greetings have been received from SI St. Petersburg,

(Myint Su and I met Marina at the SI Convention in Kuala Lumpur last July.) "The time spent in Kuala Lumpur was absolutely amazing, wasn't it? "I wish you and your club sisters a merry Christmas and a very prosperous New Year - 2020!

Marina Zakrevskaya"

Thanks have been received from **Cranston Street Hostel:** "We received the Christmas presents. We are forever grateful for your kind gesture around Christmas time and the women appreciated, liked and said thank you for the presents."

from Elizabeth, Project Worker.

**Items for SIEnna 186** should be sent to the editor by Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2020

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

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# **Dates for Your Diary**

## 2020

Jan 22 Friendship Group Meeting to be arranged to suit each Group

Feb 12 Business Meeting +
Catherine Booth speaking on
Women in STEMM

26 Speaker Meeting: Liita Carney, Women's menstrual health and Women's advancement in Business

Mar 7 SISSR,

11 Business Meeting 3S Fund applicants

15 SI Paisley 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary lunch, Glynhill Hotel, Renfrew, 1.30 for 2.00 pm

25 Speaker Meeting: Blindness



Sent by Hilary of SI Loughborough (see page 1)