

**Soroptimist  
International  
Edinburgh  
news  
notes  
anecdotes**

**SIEnna 214 February 2023**

**A tribute to longstanding Soroptimist Morag Insley**

**SIE President's Message:**

**Sadly, in December last year we lost one of our longest serving and loyal members – Morag Insley. This year, Morag would have served 60 years with Soroptimist International.**

**Joyously, we have dedicated the majority of this edition of SIEnna to reflect and celebrate Morag's incredible life – a life of adventure, travel, pioneering, commitment and service.**

**Love, family and friendship were also threads through Morag's life.**

**Thank you Morag for all you gave in your life and for the positive impact you had on so many.**

**Always remembered.**



**Morag Lillie Insley  
(née Henderson) 1924 - 2022**

**Words by Morag's family at her service at the Cloister Chapel,  
Warriston Crematorium, Edinburgh**

**21st December 2022**

**Andrew: Thank you all for coming to help us say goodbye to Morag. That was the overture to Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker, one of Morag's Favourite Ballets. Even as her sight and hearing failed, she was still able to enjoy the spectacle and narrative of the performances.**

**Turning to Morag's own narrative, most of you are aware of the later chapters but I thought it would be apt to remember some of the early parts of a long and full life.**

**Her father, Robert Henderson, was pressed reluctantly into studying law by family, but on qualification, left Scotland to work in the tea trade in what was then Ceylon. The First World War saw him soldiering in India and Persia, before illness forced his return to Scotland.**

**He resumed his legal career as a solicitor practicing in Ayrshire and Fife, latterly joining the Fiscal service. He married Agnes Adams and by the time they were settled in Cupar, Morag had joined them.**

**Morag was an only child and after school in Cupar, progressed to Edinburgh University to study Medicine. Junior doctor duties followed and she had many memories of wartime callouts, particularly in the more colourful part of Leith. During this time she met John Insley, serving in the RAF medical corps and they**

married and moved to Oxford when he was demobbed. She joined the staff of Cowley Road Hospital and it was here that she developed her interest in the problems of ageing. Her subsequent MD thesis was based on this and led to her specialising in Geriatric medicine.

She and John moved to Monmouth in South Wales, where he entered general practice and Morag joined the hospital sector becoming a consultant covering Newport, North Monmouthshire and part of the Welsh valleys.

During this time, we three children were born and raised by her despite becoming divorced from John. Once off to university, and off her hands, she was able to reassess her professional life and moved into Public Health. Study in Bristol enabled her to join the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Area Health Authority and she moved with her father to a village outside Truro for the rest of her working life.

On retirement she was able to spend months at a small holiday home she had bought in Italy, before returning to the UK to be with her "ain folk" here in Edinburgh.

Melanie: Mention must also be made of Morag's long Soroptimist career.

A member of 4 successive clubs (Newport, Falmouth, London Mayfair and of course Edinburgh), next year Morag would have been a Soroptimist for some 60 years.

At its heart, Soroptimism has the vision that women and girls will achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide. Soroptimists aim to transform the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment and enabling opportunities. Morag travelled far and wide to many international meetings, particularly enjoying her trips to Africa where she was involved in many projects.

Morag introduced me to Soroptimism via a contact she had made in a Brussels Club. We both enjoyed the friendship and travel opportunities which the organisation affords and managed to go to the Soroptimist International of Europe Federation conference together in Berlin some years ago. We met up with my Belgian Soroptimist "godmother" and both she and Morag were made a great fuss of by the attendees.

Morag and I used to giggle together over a perceived transition from my being "Morag Insley's daughter-in-law" to her being "Melanie Leivers' mother-in-law" (as I gained experience in the organisation). Our one-time International President, Ann Garvie, was a big fan of Morag's and, whenever she saw me at meetings, always asked "How's your mother-in-law?" Both of them apparently had fond memories of a luxurious hotel, a swimming pool and no doubt just a few cocktails..... And only in October this year at a meeting in Belfast, did a long-time Soroptimist friend of Morag's from Cheshire reminisce fondly with me of the very happy time she and Morag had spent together in Iceland.

Morag will long be remembered for her involvement with the Soroptimist Chatline and of course she will be remembered far and wide for her contribution to the organisation as a whole.

**Jane: Hello, everyone, and thanks for being here**

**It was while going through some of Mum's papers so I could draw up a list of names of who to contact that I had a bit of a flashback – I'd seen a list a bit like this before. My last exhibition project before retiring from the Science Museum in London was about the life and work of the engineer James Watt, and amongst the papers in his attic workshop was a sheet of paper entitled Friends of my Father. It had been written by James Watt junior, Watts's elder son, and it was dated a week after the old man died, in 1819. Some things don't change!**

**Also amongst the papers were official documents about Mum's life – her birth certificate and so on. Although our parents divorced in 1973, it was a little wince-making to see that today would have been her wedding anniversary....**

**But following on from Andrew and Mel, the other document I'd like to mention was her last passport. Mum adored travel, and did a lot of it, both professionally – I went with her to Japan many years ago, as her plus-one – through the Soroptimists, and on her own account, by cruising. The passport it covered 2011 to 2021, she would have been aged 87 to 97, and during that time, she acquired official stamps from Murmansk – I think that was the North Pole trip -, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Iran, Georgia, China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Japan, and Canada. Putting to one side a suspicion that the size of her carbon footprint was probably the single-handed cause of global warming, I offer this as inspiration to people of all ages – if you want something badly enough, you are never too old!**

**I was also informed that as she wanted to go to Iran, the travel company required her to have someone accompany her, and she informed me that it would be me! And it was a huge delight to both of us, not only to see an amazing country I then knew very little about, but also to meet some of our relatives in Isfahan, and Cousin Susan and Balman are here today.**

**Once she could really no longer travel, she read voraciously about other countries – she acquired a shelf-full of books on the history of modern nations. I realised that perhaps things were slowing down when, having read them all at least three times with her fabulous photographic reading device, she made arrangements for them all to be transferred for use in local schools, I think it was. And it was quite difficult to keep up with her reading - we're grateful to numerous bookshops and charities for fresh supplies (Crime novels a favourite), and again to charities for taking them in when she'd done with them, for others to enjoy.**

**I'd like to finish by thanking you again for being here today and accompanying her on one journey for which her passport was NOT required – although she mentioned to us that she would rather like to be scattered on the Scilly Islands, associated with her last professional job, so the travelling isn't over just yet.**

**Indian Prayer**

**When I am dead,**

**Cry for me a little.**

**Think of me sometimes,**

**But not too much.**

Think of me now and again As I was in life  
At some moments it's pleasant to recall  
But not for long.  
Leave me in peace  
And I shall leave you in peace  
And while you live  
Let your thoughts be with the living.

#### **Music**

Overture to the Ballet "The Nutcracker" Tchaikovsky  
Calon Lân – Froncysyllte Male Voice Choir

#### **Auld Lang Syne**

**Morag transferred to SI Edinburgh in 1992. Memories and reflections from Members of SI Edinburgh**

**She continued her enthusiastic contribution to Soroptimism locally and internationally. At club level Morag joined in the various activities to give service and raise funds and was able to attend meetings in person until September 2019.**

**One of our projects was to collect rags (any old clothes and materials) for Mary's Meals, a registered charity that sets up school feeding programmes in some of the world's poorest communities, where hunger and poverty prevent children from gaining an education. The number of black bags Morag contributed caused the janitor to wince ! (Note : Morag collected from many of the residents who lived in the same retirement housing complex as herself.)**

**Thinking of Morag and her retirement housing, brought to my mind our visit to the nearby secondary school. This was in 2013 shortly after the shooting of Malala Yousafzai and the fast-development of a world-wide awareness of the importance of education for girls. Morag and I were invited to speak to the school about Malala, girls' schooling and Soroptimism. I recall vividly, walking into the main hall with hundreds of students watching and Morag smiling unconcerned at the huge number and their ripples of interest. When she spoke her humanitarian authority came over loud and clear and even the students in the back rows listened. Gari**

**A recent SIE project was to donate a bush to Saughton Gardens (which were being renovated) to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Soroptimist International of Edinburgh. Myint Su was able to take Morag to see the bush, an Eriobotrya Japonica, which is flourishing, as is the whole garden area. Morag was the club's representative to the 3S Fund. She liaised with students who had applied for funding to support their overseas placements. The students were interviewed, introduced to club members before making their presentation. A decision would then be made by Region as to how much would be awarded and the student informed. Morag was therefore able to support many young women to travel, develop and make a difference to others. There is**

no doubt that her 'chats' with them beforehand would have been full of advice, encouragement and enthusiasm.

As Jane has already mentioned Morag adored travel. One of her interests involved her going to Africa and working with an organisation dealing with African Gerontology. Merely being a pensioner you did not qualify to being classed as old. In her early 90s when a cruise company said she could not travel without an escort she was furious !

And so Morag continued to be positive for the whole of her long life.

She will certainly be missed by many and remembered as an example of how to be positive in all you do.

Although I cannot speak from the personal experience of meeting Morag (having joined the club at a time Morag was not able to participate in person) I have always felt I have 'known' Morag. She was always mentioned at our meetings and we received regular updates from the members who continued to visit and call her regularly. I have never before experienced how powerful and tangible someone's impact could be – in absentia - as she continued to inspire, encourage, advise and support all that we did as a Club and all that Soroptimist International stood for.

Thank you for everything Morag  
President Nikki



