



**Soroptimist  
International  
Edinburgh  
news  
notes  
anecdotes**

**SIEnna 217 May 2023  
SIE President's Message**

Firstly and importantly I would like to take this opportunity to thank SIE for their very warm welcome to the group and putting their trust in a newbie to take on the President's role, for not just one but two years! It will take me some more time to become familiar with the ramifications and expectations of SI and SIGBI but I know I am well supported and will be kept on track by you all.

The death of the lovely Myint Su was, I know, a shock to everyone and I certainly feel the loss at the start of my time as President but I am confident in the strength and commitment of our club to keep working together to empower women and girls through our actions.

There is, quite sadly, even more of a need to stand up for the rights of and access to education for women and girls than even there was way back in the 1920's when the Soroptimist movement was founded. It is obvious around the world where support is needed but some of the issues that we are grappling with in the UK are vital to keep high on the agenda as they disproportionately affect or undermine the opportunities for women and girls. We are all too aware of these issues but just to remind ourselves of what underpins our actions I will mention a few: poverty/cost

of living crisis, domestic and sexual violence, a culture of misogyny and misogynistic behaviour. With no clothes, it is impossible to go to school; without food/heat /feeling safe it is harder to learn; where there is persistent criticism based on how you look/what you say or think, it is not easy to hang onto your self esteem and confidence.

I am looking forward to us keeping moving forwards and increasing our impact by continuing to work together and build relationships with other clubs and organisations that share our values and goals. Now is not the time to do nothing!  
Liz



Last month we lost our much respected friend, member and treasurer Myint Su. A number of us had the pleasure of attending a very vibrant, beautiful and inspiring service to acknowledge her passing but as importantly, to celebrate her life. Myint Su's son and daughter led the reflections and spoke so eloquently and with heartfelt sadness but also great pride and happiness. I have obtained permission to reproduce some of the narrative in this edition of SIEnna to remind us, or maybe even inform us for the first time, of the person Myint Su was, all she did and her selfless focus on helping others. Nikki

## A Remembrance

*"Finding the right words to say in this moment has been one of the hardest things either of us has ever had to do – not just because of the sudden and unexpected nature of mum's death, but because of the daunting prospect of trying to portray in words, the vibrancy and richness of her life. To attempt to cover the lifetime of experiences and interactions she had with so many people, in the time we have today would be foolish. And so we decided not to try, but instead wish to use the next few minutes to share a few personal reflections and remembrances of our much loved mother.*

*To us, her children, she was simply our Mum, although the complexity and depth captured within those three simple letters would take a lifetime to unpack. But we know she was so much more - someone special to so many others: Ma Ma, Hpwa Hpwa, Daw Myint-Su, Ma Su, Ti Ti Lay, Cynthia – a wife, a mother, a grandmother, an auntie, a teacher and a friend - it makes us so immensely proud to know that she has meant so much to so many people in different guises over the years.*

*It has been amazing to read all the wonderful stories and memories that have been shared with us over the past few weeks – some are of shared experiences that we can relate to from our own childhood memories, others are of a life that is less familiar to us but in which we can well imagine her. And yet even though these stories are from a time when we didn't exist, more than 50 years ago when she was busy galivanting across the globe with a dashing young man from Kent, it is easy to recognise that distinctive mix of characteristics and qualities that has always been her very special personality. Warm, welcoming, compassionate, generous, full of energy, gracious and, radiant were all words frequently used by people describing her. Interesting, intellectual, and opinionated were perhaps some others that portray the determination that always kept Dad on his toes."*

*"Whilst the anecdotes and memories span many decades, continents and cultures, they are universal in the fact that they describe someone that always aspired to make a positive difference wherever possible. This collective memory has allowed us to see her in more ways than any one individual could ordinarily, and remind us how broadly she will be remembered."*

*"There were certain core beliefs, values and passions that remained a constant wherever she was and whatever she was doing - these shaped her life and hence our memories of her.*

*"Both Mum and Dad have always shared the same belief that it is their duty to ensure that any good fortune that they have been blessed with is used to help others less fortunate than themselves. Whilst this has always been a guiding principle through their life together, it has more recently been turned into a tangible reality when they established their own charity, The Mingalar Trust.*

*This was their way of combining what they would refer to as their good luck (but most others would recognise as the fruits of their hard work), with their core training as linguistic and education professionals for the benefit of those in her mother country - Myanmar. She may not have always seemed the most patient teacher to us at home - particularly when trying to get her to teach us how to cook Burmese food - but it is clear from the many messages we received that she was an inspirational and respected teacher, both in her early career and also when she was back in Myanmar more recently."*

*"Mum and Dad spent much of their recent time in Myanmar focussing on the charitable aims of the Mingalar Trust by establishing the Myanmar English Reading Programme. Whilst the current troubling events there have put an unfortunate halt on further developments for the foreseeable future, we know that she found this work deeply fulfilling, doggedly working through the bureaucracy and against the*

*headwinds of military government rule, but motivated by the knowledge that what she was doing would help future generations of Burmese students and equip them with the language skills they would need to have the best opportunities in life. Her dedication and conviction to this cause was an inspiration to others so we sincerely hope that her legacy endures with the people that she was able to build relationships with, even if circumstances seem challenging at the moment.”*

*“One of the other great joys in her life was her love of nature, and animals in particular, although this was one that was perhaps indulged, rather than shared, by the rest of the family.” “Whilst Dad did his part in playing the dutiful husband, and accompanying her to endless wetlands and bird sanctuaries here at home, it was also the catalyst to be able to take themselves off to explore some more exotic lands like Antarctica. She was always looking to share her passions with her loved ones and open their eyes to the big wide world and experiences she so enjoyed.”*

*“When she wasn’t gallivanting around the world, mum had plenty of other interests and causes that she supported and that supported her. Along with dad, she wholeheartedly took advantage of the cultural scene that was on offer here in Edinburgh, regularly going to concerts or ballets from our national ensembles. We knew not to try to phone them in August as they had a better social life than either of us and were always out enjoying whatever exotic dance, theatre or music that was on offer as part of the International Festival.”*

*“‘Groupie’ is maybe not a word that you might have associated with mum, but let me assure you that she was one, going around the world to watch The Ring Cycle by Wagner more times than you would think any one person could bear. At around 15 hours long, it is not an opera for the faint hearted but she truly loved it.”*

*“As mentioned earlier supporting those less fortunate than herself was something mum was really conscious of and I*

*remember well when she joined the Soroptimist International Club of Edinburgh” “She wholeheartedly agreed with the vision and mission of that organisation to support women and girls all around the world and for the last 28 years she found the opportunity to meet, listen to and socialise with accomplished, talented and inspiring women from all over the world”*

*“Soroptimist International conferences also allowed her to combine supporting the organisation with indulging in her other passion of travelling” “She continued to enjoy her involvement with the Soroptimists right to the end, including the most recent conference in Belfast in October last year and just about managing to conclude this year’s accounts before she became ill.”*

*“Despite living in the UK, mum maintained her Buddhist beliefs and one of the most significant moments in her life here was the discovery of the Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist monastery which was established just outside of Belsay in Northumberland. Commonly known as Harnham to us” “ She also had her regular Thursday Buddhist group from where many long friendships have sprung. Mum spent a long time as a Trustee of the monastery at Harnham and though the community has grown with more supporters and infrastructure since those days, Harnham alongwith its hermitage Mil ntuim in Perthshire, remained a central feature of her life and the anchor for her Buddhist beliefs. That’s why it is fitting that Ajahn Munindo and Ajahn Candasiri are here today and we are so grateful for the support they have given us in organising the ceremony. It has been of particular comfort to dad that this afternoon’s events will be just as mum would have wanted.”*

From Lindsey: I have so many memories of Myint Su but I’ve included this one as it was my Presidential year 2009 and having been asked - very kindly by York Soroptimists (I think that was the club) - if we could help out by accommodating some Soroptimist from SI St Petersburg Neva who wanted to visit Edinburgh. Now

I've had difficulty remembering the whys and wherefores but I recall there were about 10 or so and naturally I had a wobbly trying to think of where we could house them all. 'I have room in my B & B' said Myint Su 'and I can make room in our house for the one extra lady with her daughter'. All arranged and our guests duly arrived in Edinburgh and we entertained them on the Friday and in the evening we had a 'bit of party' in Myint Su's B & B dining room with members bringing all manner of salads, cold cuts and trifle - the latter went down very well with our Russian friends. Singing and gift exchanges took place and on the Saturday morning, I waved them away from Waverley on the London train on their journey home. I still have the lovely green hand-made glass vase - due to be given to Liz for safekeeping and although several exchanges by e-mail were made, the conflict has put on hold any further communication - sadly - as they were lovely and generous Soroptimists.

### **Book Review: Gutsy Women by Hillary and Chelsea Clinton**

I read many book reviews, to find out what's new which, as the object is to sell books, tend to be positive.

In this book the chapters are arranged thematically for example 'ground breakers', explorers, advocates and activists.

I am a quarter of the way through and am impressed by the accounts of many inspiring women, for example Frances Perkins who played a major part in reforming labour law and working conditions as executive secretary of a citizen's committee on industrial safety.

One phrase resonated with me 'a small group of dedicated creative reformers could come together and make a difference'. A bit like SI Edinburgh and orange cafes!

I disagree with the critical reviews which imply that because the short articles are readable they are facile.

I would recommend this book. Chris

Club Dates 2023-2024  
All hybrid meetings (Central Youth Hostel and Zoom) unless it specifies otherwise:

#### **2023**

April 26th AGM  
May 24<sup>th</sup>

The speaker on 24 May is Lisa from the Flourish Jewellery Project,  
June 14th and Summer outing 24th  
Sept 13th & 27th  
Oct 11th & 25th  
Nov 8th & 22nd  
Dec 13th business meeting or possible  
Christmas do tbc

#### **2024**

Jan 10th and 24th (Zoom only)  
Feb 14th & 28th  
March 13th & 27th

### **Minutes of Soroptimist International of Edinburgh Business Meeting held on Zoom at 19 30 on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

#### **Correspondence:**

SWC events on Misogyny bill - sent by Liz on 07/04/2023

Electric Voice Theatre Misfolding - sent by Frances Lynch 12/04/2023

SI Scotland North newsletter - sent by Pat 11/04/2023

National Rape Day HOAX - sent by Liz 16/04/2023

Electric Voice Theatre Eliza Flowers - sent by Frances Lynch 19/04/2023

SIGBI Club Mailing 21/04/23

UN Round Table on access to Health Care - sent by Liz 22/04/23

Social media for clubs - sent by Liz 24/04/23

SIGBI Election of President Elect - sent by Chris 25/04/2023

Orange cafes - international interest - sent by Liz 24/04/2023

Oxfam briefing paper on business and SDGs - sent by Gari 26/04/2023

SIE subs - sent by Dorothy 28/04/2023

SIGBI Nomination requested for SI Scotland South Councillor - sent by Chris 28/04/2023

Draft AGM minutes - sent by Alison 02/05/2023

SIGBI Club Mailing - sent by Chris 06/05/2023

Thank you from the Trussell Trust - sent by Dorothy 09/05/2023

**Soroptimist Vision and Mission** read by Clephane

**Attendance** (Marjory)

**Present** President Liz (in chair), Nikki, Christine, Anna, Clephane, Kathleen, Winifred, Pat, Lindsey, Edith, Gari

**Apologies - Alison**

**Welcome from President Liz**

**Minutes** of last meeting (April 12th 2023)

Matters arising not covered by agenda.

After the AGM there was agreement to change the subscription from £120 to £130 after further study of finances

Pat has provided the SI Edinburgh email address to Nikki, who is looking into how best to make use of this central email.

Liz has ordered a weaving kit to take part in Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHTIS) weaving 1000 scarves project

(Note : post the meeting Nikki agreed to propose the minutes of the last meeting and Christine seconded them)

**Programme Action** (Nikki/Liz/Lindsey):

Discussion on club response to consultation on proposed Misogyny legislation - see separate report

**Region PA meeting** (Liz, Nikki, Lindsey)

The June meeting will be face to face with preliminary discussion on 16 Days of Action in November and by September to get a sense of any change of direction from Scotland South Region or SIGBI

Proposal to have a big Orange cafe in October/ November

**Programme Action**

Handbags of Hope - Clephane has a police contact for this charity which deals with women leaving custody who may need small bags of toiletries.

The club decided to concentrate on support for Cranston Street women's Hostel.

**ACTION** Liz and Nikki to meet the Edinburgh City Mission, the Welcoming

women's group on 27<sup>th</sup> June to find out more about how we may be involved.

**Treasurer's Report** (Dorothy)

Please pay subscriptions as soon as possible, since the annual return has to be made and capitation fees have to be paid to SIGBI by the end of May.

£250 paid to the Trussell Trust, £130 to Scotland South Region for the 3S Fund, £270 to the SI International President's Appeal, £60 to the Emergency Relief Fund, £100 to the Diamond Education Fund, £70 via donation from Pat to the African Federation (Pat helped to set up the Federation and wishes to support our African sisters).

**ACTION** Still to progress payment to Turkey after the devastating earthquake.

The club approves the purchase of another printout of postcards/ literature for membership and Orange cafes.

**ACTION** Liz to progress and add on the reverse details of organisations supporting women who have experienced violence

**3S Fund** ( Marjory )

Thea our 3S recipient is involved with the Girls Club Ghana which helps to reduce period poverty and provide education, empowering girls to prevent teenage pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

**ACTION** The club agreed to support the Girls Club, once we have heard back from Thea, as a good example of 'think global - act local. If Soroptimists from Ghana are visiting the Dublin conference, they could be put in touch with the project.

**ACTION** Dorothy to collect any Smarties tubes of coins for 3S fund

**Membership** (Anna/Nikki)

Anna has already circulated her notes about the North/South Region joint membership meeting

Invite different organisations to Orange cafes.

Some clubs speak on local radio

Anna has contacted two women who expressed interest at the Women of Scotland lunch

Anna attended an event at Holyrood organised by Target Ovarian Cancer - **ACTION** she will send a report to SIEnna

### **Programme** (Alison)

The speaker for the 24<sup>th</sup> May hybrid meeting is unable to attend. Instead, we will have Lisa Arnott of Flourish Jewellery which provides training for vulnerable women.

### **Region** Contacts and reps

There was a report on the zoom meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> May on the future of Soroptimism in Scotland South Region:-

The current thinking is that we might have a Region but no Exec.

Scotland South and North Regions may discuss mergers

Proposed action is to

a) draft a paper on proposed options for way forward, for Region and issues facing SiSS for SIGBI

b) approach SiSN about possible collaboration etc

c) check what basic constitutional obligations need to be fulfilled by core regional groups

This is being researched and proposals taken back to Clubs in July.

SIGBI also looking at structures and financial concerns

### **Press and Publicity** (Chris)

Press release sent to the Edinburgh Evening News about Orange cafes - thanks to Liz

Press release sent to Evening News for their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary supplement

Thanks to everyone who wrote text and sent photographs

### **Nominations**

For Scotland South Councillor, closing date 12/06/2023

SIGBI vote needed for single nomination of President Elect 2023-2025

**ACTION** To discuss at 24<sup>th</sup> May meeting

### **SIEnna**

**ACTION** - Please send items to Gari by Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May

### **AOCB:**

SI Madurai Friendship Link – **ACTION** Latha from the Madurai club is currently in London and is planning to join our next speaker meeting on Zoom We can check if we still have a Link

Next meeting is the speaker meeting on May 24<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm ECYH and Zoom

**ACTION** - to bring any gifts or items that have been received by SI Edinburgh as Nikki will collect them together

SISNR and SISSR Joint meeting Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023 at Discovery Point, Dundee - 6 members are attending



June Summer outing 24<sup>th</sup> to Great Tapestry of Scotland in Galashiels

**ACTION** Lindsey to liaise re booking for lunch

Dublin convention: July 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>

London conference November 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>

### **A Report from SWC 12.5.2023**

A Misogyny Law for Scotland – what are women's views?

The Scottish Women's Convention ran a webinar/conference on this issue on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May. Several Soroptimists attended. The discussion and debate was helpful background information to our own discussion about how best to respond to the consultation on the proposed Bill. Our discussion took place at the Business meeting on May 17<sup>th</sup> and agreed outcomes will be provided in the June



edition of SIEnna. Round tables, surveys, consultations have fed into the planning for the event. A report of the conference will be published later.

Agnes Tolmie in the Chair. Speakers included:

**Eileen Flanagan** - Head of the Gender Equality Policy Team in the Scottish Government's Equality Unit

- Policy side
- Gender neutral approach not helpful to implementation of current Law
- Overview of the work of Helen Kennedy's review – over 932 responses from women – most common Misogynistic behaviours were whispering. Comments, cat calling in the street behaviours
- Outlined recommendations made for creation of new criminal offences Working Group report
- Recognise not just about Law but how it is implemented and supported after it is enacted

**Mhairi MacLennan** - Directing Manager of Kyniska Advocacy & International GB Athlete.

- Celebrating women and girls in sport – decision made by women for women in sport – survivor of abuse
- Impact of Misogyny on particular sector
- Set up to ensure women's well being, protection and celebration in sport – telling the story straight re lack of level playing field
- Need to tackle culture – need to educate re how to treat one another with respect
- Physical dominance in sport – allows for most misogynistic behaviours – performance and bodies linked – bodies scrutinised and not "owned" by the person
- Male dominance and/or women dominant over others
- Men said to be "serious"; women said to be "icy"
- 1 in 3 female athletes experience sexual abuse in their lives
- 1 in 10 women in Scotland report being raped – conviction rate = 1%
- Need top down and bottom-up approaches – schools/sports clubs/Uni – catch them young – what perpetuates the

behaviours?

- "Don't be that guy" - more followed by women than men!

### **Report on the discussion re the Clubs response to Scottish Governments report and consultation paper for 'Reforming the criminal law to address misogyny'**

Nikki recorded the discussion with the consent of all present. Comments:-  
We can make an individual response, a club response, a club statement  
However, there is power in a collective response

We could say we agree on principle but we don't have a legal background or knowledge, so are unable to comment on specific legal questions.

SI Glasgow City has sought the help of a criminal lawyer

But we need to start somewhere: There were similar concerns about other equality laws

Liz has sent out a summary of 5 offences and the 29 questions - to respond by Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> June are contained in the full consultation paper. Responses can be made on the Holyrood website.

The law specifies women and girls - existing laws do not tackle misogyny

The law has a key part to play in changing the behaviour of men

There has been debate if the behaviour is in a private or public space

Views are sought on length of sentence or reasonableness

Be careful not to be victimised as women but to centre on the behaviours of men

A key concern is how the law is implemented and evidenced

The Bill outlines a framework which is needed for women in the future

Abuse of power - challenge how men think  
Hope the law will lead to a change in men's attitudes. The endemic problem needs to be tackled

**ACTION** - Nikki to draft a reply based on the issues raised, as far as possible, to the questions in the consultation. This will then be added to, if necessary, by a separate statement from SIE to ensure that the concerns/issues raised were noted.

Step 1 - NC to draft response to formal questionnaire

Step 2 - run draft past Advocacy group and agree whether this addresses issues raised by the club

Step 3 - if any queries - re run past SIE club members

Step 4 - edit draft if needs be and submit on behalf of SIE by June 2nd

The next region Region PA meeting is not until 21st June so I anticipate sharing our response with them for comment /and ideally endorsement but there may not be enough time enough for a full SISS endorsement. This has been on their agenda for a while now - but let's aim for that!

Nikki could go through the questionnaire to find if we can comment and will come back to us and consider making an SIE statement.

May be advisable to discuss at a Regional level. Deadline for response is 2<sup>nd</sup> June

**Pat Black - International Advisor, Soroptimist International\_**



"We, the Leaders of the G7, commit to... recognising that all women and girls have a right to an equal place in all societies which acknowledges them as individual human beings facing many interconnected barriers.

We believe those barriers can be removed by political will on our part and encourage all national leaders to join us.

As G7 leaders we commit to undertaking gender sensitive budgeting to ensure that the gender equality legislation we introduce can be converted to policies which have a practical outcome for changing the lives of all women and girls in our countries."

We know that gender equal countries are **healthier, better educated and safer** and also **more peaceful**. So surely the G7 countries will have gender equality, and how to accelerate progress for girls and women, at the top of the agenda for their Leaders Summit. Don't count on it.

Where's a G7 gender equality champion to turn? Thankfully, we have a group of assembled experts on gender equality – the **Women 7** Advisors – who are ready with the (evidence-based) solutions that G7 Leaders seem to so lack. The W7 are a grouping of civil society leaders, advocates, and activists who aim to influence the G7 countries to take greater action on gender equality both at home and in their international commitments.

EM2030 has been proud to be part of the collaborative process of working with other W7 Advisers around the world, convened by a highly effective team of Japan-based civil society leaders (hosted by the Gender Unit of SDGs Japan), to produce our own **W7 Communique**, outlining what G7 Leaders really need to do to promote gender equality globally.

Ahead of the G7 Leaders Summit this week, EM2030 sat down with some of the brilliant W7 Advisers and asked them if THEY were holding the pen on the G7 Leaders Communique, what commitments would they make to create a more gender-equal world?





## **The Future of Soroptimism in Scotland**

**South Region** As stated in the Region Newsletter which has just been circulated, the position of our Region is now critical. It is therefore important that we share with all of you what the current situation is with regard to the future.

Areas to be discussed at the meeting are: i) The situation as of September 2023 re. an Executive / Region meeting; ii) SIGBI - where it currently stands iii) Options for the management / running of Clubs; iv) Region Programme Action Forum; v) Joint Scotland Membership Forum

It is the intention to follow this meeting in the next few weeks with several informal coffee meetings, open to all members, where we can share further discussion around the future: Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June

Edinburgh City Centre: The Scottish Café under the RSA from 10.30 -11.30 am

### **Region PA meeting Monday 15th May**

Meeting on Zoom chaired by Brenda

1. **Orange Cafes** - doing well and been picked up by other clubs in sigbi - some photos are regularly appearing on Facebook. Further publicity might be tried on METRO and other local newspapers. We felt the need for a little caution so we don't impede on other diners in a cafe.

2. **AGM charity collections** - list being finalised - possibility to have central drop-off at the AGM in September at the Trinity Church. If clubs have a large amount of donations for a particular club collection, say jewelry, perhaps let that club know in advance to facilitate carrying it all back to parked car.

3. **Membership Month** - nothing known at present

4. **Misogyny consult** - Glasgow City have had consultations with a lawyer - strong feeling that there is still work to be done before it is presented to the MSPs.

5. **The Way Forward** - PA Region is aiming to have a face-to-face meeting on 21.06.23 at Grange Manor Hotel - more to follow.

6. **As a region**, we will need to look at how to do things 'differently' - the word 'grave' was used by a member and the sheer lack of nominations to regional posts, makes this a must. Some PA members pointed out that they are having to do things differently in their clubs, now have problems with lack of members, ageing members, etc One club now already on summer leave - 'executive' meetings a thing of the past as are committee meetings - discussion/decisions might be made at business meetings and action taken there and then.

7. **Dates for the June, August and September meetings** to be held every 6 weeks and on different nights to allow all PA members to attend as often as possible. Stressed that an alternative member (wingman?) to Zoom in instead to keep continuity.

Club meeting dates to be sent to Islay Golden and she will organise the future meeting dates starting late August through to winter. Brenda will step down - definitely - at sigbi conference. UKPAC rep still required. Lindsey

Sally-Ann, my daughter, decided to treat herself to a wee visit to London. Upshot was that she made three visits to the V&A and discovered this little gem of a piece of Soroptimist regalia.

Sally (SIGBI) was surprised to hear of a piece of club regalia in the V&A but looking at the photo, the medallion may be of gold/silver gilt and enamel and is very pretty but the date on it (1926) is confusing - maybe the members just met in the 1920s - early stages of the formation of Soroptimist clubs, and waited to see whether they would 'catch-on' before being Chartered. Oh, and she really enjoyed her stay at '63' of course!!

Lindsey

