

Soroptimist International Edinburgh news notes anecdotes

SIEnna 240 January 2026



STANDING UP
for Women and Girls

Kathleen Hardie by her son

It is difficult to know where to begin, in trying to give, in a limited time, a sense of Mum's long and busy life.

Do you start with the WW2 child evacuee? The extraordinary academic achievements? The decision, remarkable at that time, to go to Africa to teach English?

Or to later return to Africa, married, with a 2-year-old and another child to be born there?

Leading the communal singing of "Is this the way to Amarillo" to welcome in the New Year? The accomplished stand-up comedy routine at her 90th birthday celebration?

The proud winner of Falkirk's worst poet award, her submission in the style of McGonagall? The creative writer, so generous of her time, in mentoring those just beginning? And a published writer and poet in her own right?

I have decided therefore to start with what might be called her second life, when she sold up and left Dunblane and started afresh in Edinburgh.



Now, I remember the first time I brought Sarah to Edinburgh to meet mum, which went well I'm pleased to say and after the first night, she confided to me, 'she goes out more than we do!'

And it was true.

It was impossible to keep up with Mum; one night was the Folk Club, another night was one of the many writer's circles, there was the Soroptimists, the Walter Scott society, the Muriel Spark society, not to mention visits to the theatre and cinema. And occasionally having a few friends rounds for a bite. Helping run the committee for Beresford Court. And not forgetting, of course, family visits, and long blethers on the phone, which I already miss more than I can say.

During the Festival, of course, she more or less left home. I'd be trying to phone her and would eventually contact my sister, panic-stricken, saying something had happened to

Mum; but she had only been out all day and every day, going to whatever show took her fancy.

All this activity might have seemed in someone else a bit sad, even hinting at a desperation to make new friends. But with Mum it was because she had so many friends, and a real and rewarding interest in people. She could talk to, and take an interest in, anyone and everyone that she met.

Her wide experience of travel meant that she could easily relate to people from different backgrounds and cultures, although it did once try her forbearance when, having hired a local decorator one summer to redecorate our house in Dunblane, she had not performed 'due diligence' on this tradesman's working practices. It proved apparent that he could only work to the works of, at full volume, ad nauseam, Mr Sydney Devine.

Enough, as she later said, to try the patience of a saint.

My mother was not of course a saint; I must be honest in this tribute.

She had of course her imperfections; for example, her ardent conviction that the Hungarian forint was legal tender in Marks and Spencer on Princes St.

Or indeed that when trying out a new recipe, family members were used as guinea pigs to see if it was suitable for 'proper guests.'

An emergency visit to the optician over a sudden and dramatic deterioration in her eyesight was cut short when the optician.....cleaned her glasses.

She was wearing these same spectacles, presumably, while walking to church one morning, and noticing a car slowing down

alongside her. Thinking it a kindly fellow worshipper offering her a lift, she hopped into the car.....and was promptly asked to leave by the driver, a complete stranger.

Finally – and I have a lot of stories to choose from – some years ago, I went with Mum to a meeting of the Edinburgh Poetry Society.

Seated in the very back row, I felt unaccountably proud when Mum was called to the rostrum up front to read, for the amusement of all, her new comic poem, 'I found myself a Toy Boy'.

And sure enough, her offering had the assembled poets laughing away. And then the assembled poets started glancing back at Mum's companion for the night, the handsome young man who'd arrived with her.....indeed. Having subjected Mum to all this (unfair) criticism, I'd like to finish by mentioning some of the things that were said about Mum in all the many, and very kind cards and messages that we have received since she died:

'wise, non-judgmental and kind'

'a friend and an inspiration'

'so much fun'

'kind, loving and hugely entertaining'

'her sense of enjoyment of life and friends'

I should say that even now, I still automatically reach for the phone to discuss with her the latest political foolishness, or whatever book I'm reading, or a particularly good obituary!

But then I remember, to my despair, that she's not there.

Finally I'll finish with one last thought: on the day that Mum died, Mary and I spent a long time on the phone, to tell friends and family about the sad news. And during those calls,

and I speak for Mary as well, one phrase was heard repeatedly;
'She lit up the room when she came in'
I can think of no more fitting epitaph.

I'd like to finish with one of Mum's poems
"Cleaning the Boots"

Remember when I cleaned your climbing boots

You always dressed them properly next day yourself.

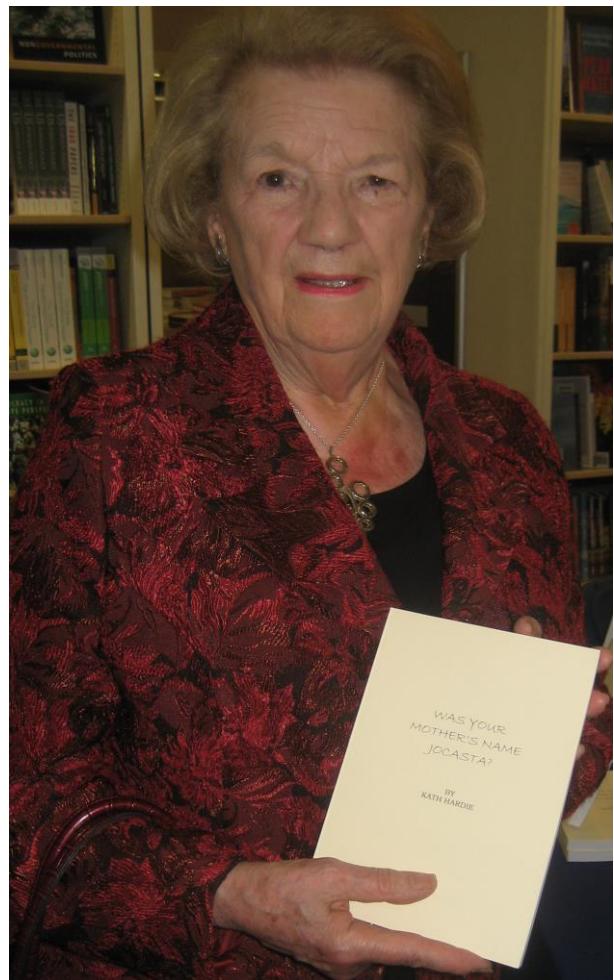
Even at oiling I was no use
Nor of shifting the cake of grit and clay
of Ben Ledi, Ben Vorlich, Ben Venue

but when the boots felt leaden and
gentlest slopes precipitous,
when close hill shifted out of reach
could therapeutic walks and easy strolls
ever compete with the beguiling peaks
of Ben Ledi, Ben Vorlich, Ben Venue

Last night I checked the boots for grit and clay
anointed them with oil.

Now dressed to face the shifting elements
they're clean for ever.

You would, you would approve.



Memories of Kathleen Hardie.

Kathleen joined Soroptimist International in 1992. She was in the SI Dunblane club when the tragedy happened. Every letter of condolence that was sent to Dunblane was answered.

A sunshine Tapestry was commissioned and donated to a General Practitioner surgery. The ladies who stitched the Tapestry were involved with the Altar at the Great Hall at Stirling Castle.

Kathleen transferred to SI Leith. One of the club social events was held in Holy Cross Church Hall. In 2002 after SI Leith disbanded 12 members transferred to SI Edinburgh

Kathleen was President of SI Edinburgh 2024-2025. I was President the following year. I had never been a top table person before, but Kathleen mentored me throughout the year.

Even if she was doing something else the evening of a club meeting she came along



and made sure I was OK. Then she would phone me later at home and asked "had I got my Gin and Tonic"?

On other occasions she would always come up with the right words at the right time I am very grateful to Kathleen for getting me through the year.

Kathleen came to our club Christmas social last year, and proudly said she was dining out on her royalties from her latest book. She was also pleased to have received an honour from the Sir Walter Scott Society.

Kathleen had a wonderful sense of humour which sustained her throughout her life. Anna,

Just a couple of short ones from me, which actually I picked up from the priest who obviously knew her well. Both coming from Kerry must have created a special link.

' an example of how to embrace ageing with grace'

He also described her as a sociable extrovert who lived life to the full.

Certainly her humour and self deprecation / ability to laugh at herself have stuck in my mind. 'Clephane

Minutes of SI Edinburgh Business Meeting on 14th January 2026 - on Zoom Only

Apologies Irene, Vicki

Chaired by Nikki

New member Elena was welcomed .

She was introduced via UN House where she is an intern and has been involved in a number of cohorts including topics on Nuclear Disarmament and on Human Rights and has done research on gender based violence . She has also been a Youth Representative at Council of Europe.

She is taking a degree in International Relations at Edinburgh University and is hoping this year to continue her Masters in Edinburgh.

Elena's has family connections to Norway and Scotland

Although a new member, with Pat's support, Elena has been selected to represent SIGBI at the CSW(UN Council on the Status Of Women) in New York in March.

Liz will be Elena's mentor.

Nikki hoped that SI Edinburgh and SI generally, can support Elena in her research on Violence Against Women and Girls, specifically in the social media space.

Minutes of meeting on 12th November 2025

Correction : Irene to be added to Apologies.

Matters arising :

SIE Speaker meeting November 2025: Scottish Government consultation on Women's Health and NHS Lothian Action Plan – five Scotland South Clubs were represented on line. Christmas Social was most successful - thanks to Anna

Dorothy stated that SIGBI invoice for £40.00 was payment for the website.

Thanks to Gari for frequently sharing information on UN House which helps to raise club awareness.

Programme Action (PA)

Liz explained that as well as clubs there are PA groups for Scotland North and South, who have joint initiatives.

Liz is our club rep at Scotland South PA meetings which are on a 6 weekly basis with a rotating chair and minute taker.

SIGBI ran a UK wide survey of safety at railways, not surprisingly larger stations were felt to be safer. This is an ongoing project. When the survey information is collated it will be shared with the relevant Rail authorities.

The SIGBI Conference in 2025 had a 'speed dating' session where clubs promoted their projects and ideas were shared. Scotland came out well regarding how we collaborate in activities.

Scotland South Region have written to the Scottish Government for clarity re gender eg impact assessments - the reply indicated that they are included as part of Equality Impact Assessments and there is no plan to do otherwise.

The PA group will follow up with the Scottish Government to ask how the issues are being addressed in new policy development.

SIGBI UK received a similar bland response from Westminster.

The SIGBI UK website is being updated - development was being coordinated by the previous PR person, now by Ruth Healey.

Liz mentioned that the region PA group had received a presentation from one member on the Supreme Court ruling regarding definitions of gender in relation to the Equality Act 2010. There were strong differences of opinion prompting someone to leave the meeting

Hopefully when we are discussing this matter in January and March we will stay level headed.

At the next speaker meeting Anna will give an overview on transgender issues based on her experience of working in the gender clinic. By March there may be more clarity from the EHRC.

Survivor Information Space project - a small group from both Scotland North and South Region chaired by Liz gave feedback to the police re their survey of survivors of domestic abuse. ACTION Liz to circulate comments.

The next meeting will be on Monday 19th January with reps from the Scottish Government and the Police task force.

The group is becoming a campaigning/advocacy group rather than a practical group.

Dorothy Bain Lord Advocate has commissioned a review on the experiences of survivors of domestic abuse in the Criminal Justice system - is it being done in tandem with Police Scotland and the Taskforce?

Pat commented that the UK Government has picked up on this issue thanks to Soroptimist pressure and plan do a similar review. Jess Phillips MP mentioned the influence of Soroptimists.

At the last Scotland South Region meeting Liz was thanked for the progress on the project due to her focus and enthusiasm.

The next Scotland South PA meeting is on Thursday 19th February at 19 30. Sue will attend on our behalf.

Lindsey mentioned ACTION projects to be considered for the PA 2026 plan:-

Smalls for All - collection of new briefs and gently used bras

Big beach Count - a survey is kept of litter picked and compared with previous years

Kids Love Clothes - dates will be arranged for later in spring when volunteers sort or iron donated clothes

Marie Curie Daffodil Appeal - Anna, Edith, Elaine, Lindsey and Sue will collect donations on Friday 27th February at Morrisons in the Gyle Shopping Centre. Elena will register independently and collect on another date.

Equally Safe Partnership on Violence against women and girls (VAWG) - City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) co ordinated a multiagency programme for the 16 days of activism on this subject. Liz attended a number of online events.

Judith attended a North Lanarkshire event about a Bristol teenager who was subjected to sexual assault and human trafficking plus an event on the attitudes of men who buy sex. ACTION Liz and Judith to forward resources and any recordings.

Sue attended the ESP subgroup on women's safety in public places - a survey had been sent out to 13 to 18 year olds asking about their awareness of the 'Respect Her Place' campaign and for ideas of where to display information eg social media. Sue sent comments re survey length. ACTION Liz will also comment. Agreed that we will follow up our conversation with Angela V about awareness in city bars of the Ask for Angela campaign.

Orange Cafes - discussion about date all at 11am:-

Wednesday 25th February, Cafe Patina, South Gyle

A date near International Women's Day (Sunday 8th March)

Saturday 25th April

Christine Jardine MP would be pleased to attend a cafe - she suggested Patina at the Gyle next to the Edinburgh Park tram stop as a venue. Note NOT at the shopping centre.

ACTION Liz will invite Ms Jardine to the April cafe.

ACTION To explore with Cafe Patina suitable publicity eg banner to publicise the Orange campaign.

ACTION To produce a new SI Edinburgh handout

Kathleen Hardie (Deceased)

There will be an article about Kathleen in this month's SIEnna including the wonderful eulogy from Kathleen's son James.

ACTION Send to Gari and Clephane any photographs and anecdotes.

Celebrations : SI Edinburgh will be 100 on 6th December 2027 and Scotland South Region is 90 in 2026. Lindsey has details of the project for the SI Edinburgh 90th celebrations and is happy to share.

ACTIONS To brainstorm at meetings on 28th February and in March.

Form a sub committee at the next meeting

Send a 'Save the Date' re our 100th.

Send Clephane ideas before our next business meeting

Membership - Anna reported that we now have 21 members

She also keeps in touch with 3 Soroptimists who are in other clubs but live in Edinburgh.

Anna felt that we should update our SIE leaflet and asked for assistance to do this. Pat volunteered.

Anna and Liz will meet Elena at the Futures Institute cafe on 22nd January at 1pm to present her badge and certificate.

Treasurer - Dorothy reported that she received £205 to spend on gifts for the women's hostel and after paying for the items purchased now has a residue of £143.15. She recommended this be held in the Charity Fund for future distribution as appropriate.

Scottish Love in Action sent a nice thank you for the £30.00 donation

The SI Foundation received a £45.00 gift from a member

Ballot for Soroptimist International President Elect - there was discussion on the qualities which each candidate, Sue Williams and Ruth Healey, could bring to the post. The person will be in post for two years and then become President. Members voted unanimously with 1 abstention, for Sue.

SIEnna - Items for SIEnna to be sent to Gari and Clephane by Friday 23rd January

Agenda 28th January -the following items from todays agenda will be moved to the next meeting for discussion post speaker.

Scotland South Region

SI Edinburgh submission to the Scotland 90th Anniversary celebrations (photographs for the Calendar and video for the event)

Report back on Region Meeting 22/11/25 (Nikki)

SIE 100th Anniversary

What do we want to do to celebrate?

Identify small working group to take ideas forward

Friendship Link - Joint project with South Perth Australia

Kathleen Hardie - Notification to SIGBI and Obituary for SIGBI

AOCB

Gari's daughter Catriona had shared a video of the Barefoot College, her work with women in the highlands of Guatemala to provide vocational training as solar engineers. Catriona is happy to join a Zoom meeting to talk about this and also an education and arts project she has established for children.

[Support indigenous women solar](#)

[engineers today](#)

Edith, Elaine, Sue and Nikki met Christine Jardine MP at her office in Corstorphine. We

had a general discussion during which she highlighted that since she joined Westminster 8 years ago 400 more women MPs have been welcomed and she felt that there is more cross-party activity between women members.

She would like to meet SIE members and perhaps talk about Westminster from a female perspective. Christine also said that she would welcome any SI briefing relevant to any debates she may be involved in.

ACTION Consider debates that Christine is involved in and where appropriate provide her with SI or SIE positioning. Explore dates to meet in person or on Zoom(She tends to be in London Monday to Thursday)

BEYOND COP at the UNA Scotland

On behalf of the Beyond COP team we would like to invite you all to read the Report from our first UNAS Earth Ambassadors event entitled "Eco Schools: Youth for Climate Action" which was held on **Tuesday 9 December at 12pm**.

The event was hosted and presented by our UNAS Earth Ambassador from Laos, Souksaveuy Keotiamchanh, and moderated by our UNAS Earth Ambassador from Guinea, Mohamed Bachir Camara. Andrea Gabriel from Keep Scotland Beautiful was also there to present.



BEYOND COP

Beyond COP Report: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SPi4nh0JUs2vCJv1-nZCv7Zzh3CX_a0e/view?usp=drive_web

Membership Team Action Plan – October 2025

| Immediate Actions (3 to 6 mths) | By Who m | By When | Update |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Draft article and send to the group and communications team. To be then sent to the necessary contacts for the newsletters for inclusion in the September editions. | Ann Mc | Mid-August 2025 | Completed Aug 2025. Article accepted for South Dunfermline Community Council Newsletter. SI Dunfermline now included in Newsletter Activity list. Draft available to use for other newsletters. |
| Article on SI Dunfermline to be drafted for Dalgety Bay Diary for review by Membership Team. | Eva T | Mid - October | |
| Other Dunfermline and West Fife community newsletters to be contacted and offered SI Dunfermline article for publication, along with club contact details. | Ann Mc | Mid - October | |
| Contact those on the "interested in joining" list with an updated programme | Mari an, Tina, Ann Mc, Estell e | Mid - September 2025 | Information re: first meeting sent to all those on contact list. |

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| and invite to first meeting in September. | | | | use of hybrid meetings – discuss with club members if they want to use this and with the CCC to check if this facility is available for us to use | | November 2025 | from CCC technician is that the new facility is fully equipped to support hybrid meetings. Membership Team will review further once we have moved to the new building. |
| Maintain contact with those remaining on/added to the “interested in joining” list | Mari an, Tina, Ann Mc, Estell e | On going | | Medium Term Action (6 to 12 months) | By Who m | By When | Update |
| Two new members have joined in Sept. Information pack for new members reviewed | Mari an and Ann Mc | Mid - October | Contents of information Pack have been refreshed and will be available for presentation to the two new members at next meeting. | Follow up contact with Head of Media Studies, Fife Collage | Ann Mc | On going | Unfortunately, despite follow up emails and phone calls no further progress has been made with this to date. |
| Current club info leaflet has been reviewed by Membership Team. and an updated draft will be provided shortly | Ann Mc and Tina | Mid - October | Draft to be reviewed and agreed by Membership Team and provided to Exc Team for approval/ado ption. | Immediate Actions (3 to 6 mths) | By Who m | By When | Update |
| Information pack to give to speakers | Ann Mc and Mari an | Mid - October | This will consist of refreshed club info leaflet plus SIGBI info leaflet. | Review and update mentorship policy. | Ann Mc to Lead | March 2026 | |
| Long service awards – discuss with members how often we give long service awards | Ann Mc and Mari an | End October 2025 | Proposal is 5yrs and every following 5 yrs for club awards (SGBI award at 20 and 40 yrs.) | Explore honorary membership with club members | Ann Mc | April 2026 | |
| Explore the | TBC | End | Initial advice | Other Suggested Actions For Discussion | | | |
| | | | | Target those about to retire from e.g. NHS Fife who run retirement | | | |

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| seminars, | | | |
| Do Fife Council have a Safe Partnership Group? Could we be included in that? | | | No such group exists in Fife, this action will be closed. |
| Increased presence in the likes of the Kingsgate, ASDA with leaflets and info to handout. | | | This is already being actioned. |
| Advertising SI Dunfermline in shop windows, Libraries etc. | | | This will be explored further. The Inn at Charlestown is being approached about info leaflets in toilets. |

| | |
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| | The main suggestion was to produce a card which clubs could use to aid recruitment. 5-6 key points to be printed on one side with contact details on the other. |
| 3. | Card design – what should be included, what should it look like. |
| | <p>The key points agreed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun and friendship/developing new friendships • International influence and work at the UN • Practical projects and help at local, national and international level • Learning and developing new skills • Partnership with other organisations • Open to all. <p>It was suggested that the front could be a word cloud or bubbles. The back should contain a QR code to the SIGBI website</p> <p>Facebook contacts for both regions</p> <p>A space for clubs to add their own contact details</p> |
| | <p>Actions Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SS will ask a member to help with the design of the card, • Region treasurers to be approached to ask if funding would be available from region funds to print cards • Prices to be obtained for a print of A5 size cards. • Debs at PR and Marketing to be asked about QR codes and other help that might be available. <p>Debs is speaking at SI Edinburgh on Zoom in January. Anna will send the link out to members.</p> |
| 4. | Membership strategy and workplans Have clubs got a workplan, what does it contain, would it be helpful to create a template for clubs to use, |
| | Ann shared the membership workplan which is used by the membership team in SI Dunfermline. (Copy attached). She is happy for clubs to |

Soroptimist International Scotland North and South Joint membership group

Meeting on Zoom on Monday 24th November at 7.30pm

Chair: Ann McCarlie SI Dunfermline

Note taker: Marian Sapcote SI Dunfermline

AGENDA

| | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Welcome and apologies |
| | 11 members attended representing 9 clubs. No apologies had been received. |
| 2. | Feedback and actions from SS Region meeting membership session |
| | Ann took us through the feedback from the membership session at the SS region meeting in September which had been circulated prior to the meeting. It had been a very useful session with lots of good suggestions. |

| | |
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| | use this as a template to design their own workplan as clubs may have different strategies and tasks they want to follow. SI Dunfermline find it a useful tool as it allows them to track their progress and can be updated at each meeting. |
| 5. | Scotland South members only – representation on region management team |
| | It was agreed that Ann McCarlie would be the membership rep on the region management team until the next Region AGM. |
| 6. | AOCB |
| | none |
| 7. | Date and time of next meeting – Monday 16 th March at 7pm using Zoom. Chair – Janice Wilson will chair and take the notes. |



ORANGE CAFÉ 25 November 2025
Elena, Lindsey, Elaine, Anna, Kay (SI Kirkcaldy)



SI Edinburgh Christmas Social at Ciao Roma

External

a

Alison, Edith, Sue M, Nikki
Marjory, Lindsey, Anna, Christine



SIE meetings
January 28 zoom speaker Anna
Chair: Clephane
February 11 hybrid business Chair: Elaine
February 25 hybrid speaker hybrid
Lothian Health Archives
Chair: Elaine

March 11 hybrid Business Chair: Sue
March 25 hybrid Speaker Discussions on
SIGBI's EDI policy Sue

April 8 hybrid speaker Chair Liz
April 22 hybrid AGM Liz

K.

We need your help to restore Number 63 –
Our Hotel, a Soroptimist Legacy situated on
Bayswater Road, London, U



Over many years one of the key challenges has been to repair and restore this beautiful, listed building to ensure its future going forward. Now is the time that significant work is required.

Your Board of Directors have been working to assess the work needed to ensure that the structure of the building is well maintained and safe for guests.

In early July there was more flooding after a severe weather event one Sunday evening. With the hard work of the General Manager and Staff, the damage was limited.

However it took several days and over £10,000 of work to enable Guests to remain in the Hotel. Ceilings came down, carpets, bed side tables, bedding, towels - were all damaged and in most cases not salvageable. All those rooms affected were made good and there was little business interruption.

The Board were unanimous that we needed to secure funding to be able to 'fix' areas of importance and as such have worked on a programme of works that are required.

We have launched a fund raising campaign via <https://gofund.me/3181cf9c3>.

To keep this beautiful listed building in good shape – and to ensure it remains a viable hotel for Soroptimists and the public – we need to raise at least £100,000 now. As a listed building, Number 63 needs significant investment to remain a safe, comfortable and attractive place for our guests.

Number 63 (Soroptimist) Limited – Number 63 Hotel has been a welcoming home on Bayswater Road, London, for over 76 years. Originally created for Soroptimists, we now also welcome friends plus national and international guests – helping us sustain this unique and historic property.

Every contribution, large or small, will help us

Thank you for your support – together we can give Number 63 a future.

Home - Number 63

On behalf of Board of Directors, Number 63 (Soroptimist)Limited

A personal message from the editor.

In support of 63:

A number of years ago, when I lived in Edinburgh but worked at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, at St James', I stayed at 63, Bayswater. It was almost a home from home – comfy bed without the 6pm feeding of children!.

After a day of mingling with other ComSec staffers, concerned about the affairs of the world, I cycled across Green Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens (don't tell anyone I cycled!) to 63. What a haven of tranquillity it was! My bike was allowed to perch at the side of the 63 Board Room and I swiftly settled into my room and a good night's sleep.

In the morning I awoke to no turbulent noise and a gentle discovery of the new day dawning.

Breakfast, all those years ago, was an introduction to 'continental' breakfast with pre-sliced cheese! Can you image the wonder of having it already prepared for the crackers or toast!!

The cycle ride across the various gardens meant I had no problems with car drivers and arrived at ComSec really ready for the day. I escaped the vehicle queues and gained a space to reflect on the day ahead – who did I need to speak with and what did I need to do.

Number 63 gave me that. Thank you to Number 63!