

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Summer 2026 SI King's Lynn newsletter

In its 50th anniversary year club events were supported by various Past Presidents. Kim Bramham, who is also President for the SI London Anglia Region, chaired the AGM in April. The year was very busy and successful, with anniversary celebrations and over £1,000 being raised for club charities through our Literary Lunch and stalls at Norton Light Railway and Dersingham Christmas Fayre.

After the AGM we heard from Founders Grant awardees, our charity of the year Home-Start Norfolk and welcomed new members.



AGM & Charity Round Up

Founders' Grant & Donations

The Founders Grant of £250 was awarded to Ranger Lillie of 19th Reffley Guides who is fundraising after being selected for a trip abroad in 2026. Pat Pinnington accepted the grant on Lillie's behalf at the AGM.

Ranger Maddie gave a presentation to members on her trip to The Azores, with Pat telling us about Ella's trip to Morocco, both of which had been supported by the club Founders' Grant at last year's AGM.

Home-Start Norfolk was the club's charity of the year 2025-26.

Liz Cross, Home-Start's Business Support Manager, thanked the club for its support at the AGM.

She spoke about how the funds will help train and support the charity's amazing volunteers offering emotional and practical support to families with young children in their homes across West Norfolk.

The Club will make a further donation to Soroptimist International of Krakow to help support their project work with Ukrainian refugees. This will be presented in October when some King's Lynn members will be visiting Kraków.

£200 was donated to Lend with Care earlier in the year.



Our support of CARE International's microfinance lending initiative has to date helped 95 entrepreneurs in low income countries to work their way out of poverty with: 31 loans, creating 88 jobs, supporting over 500 people.

Charity Literary Lunch

Sunday 15th November 2026 12.30 for 1pm

Guest Author **Midge Gillies** Journalist and biographer. Her latest book is 'Atlantic Furies: the women who risked everything to be the first to fly'

At Marriott's Warehouse, South Quay, King's Lynn PE30 5DT

Cost £29 to include 2 course lunch

Proceeds to club charities

To book your place email sikingslynn@gmail.com

Programme Action

Public Speaking Competition 2026

On a very warm evening in June, the club hosted the 15th Public Speaking Competition for Primary Schools in King's Lynn and surrounding area.



Judges Gill Rejzl, Kerry Healthcote & Tracee Findlater



Club member Sue Renwick with Mayoress Marisol Bearshaw and Mayor Steve Bearshaw

Teams from 12 schools had to choose from a list of six topics to speak on:

- With all the information we need on our phones/tablets/computers, do we still need libraries, such as the new one built in King's Lynn?
- In Scotland the voting age has been lowered from 18 to 16. Are children really mature enough at that age to take on this responsibility?
- King's Lynn is often seen as dull and uninteresting. How would you improve the town's image?
- "I love you to the moon and back"; became literally true for the family of astronaut Jeremy Hansen. However, in the current economic climate, how can the cost be justified?
- Australia raised its age limit to 16 for children to have a Facebook account. Should the UK follow suit?
- Are School Councils really of benefit and do the teachers really listen to the views of the children?

The arguments presented by all the teams were excellent, making a hard task for the judges: **Gill Rejzl**, Chair of The College of West Anglia (CWA) Governors, **Tracee Findlater**, local author and **Kerry Heathcote**, Deputy CEO/Vice Principal of CWA.

Not surprisingly the most popular topic was libraries, with all the teams who spoke on the topic agreeing we still need libraries as they provide so much more than what can be found on our phone/tablets.

Programme Action

Public Speaking Competition 2026 – results!



Judge Kerry, West Lynn Primary School team, the trophy and Mayor Steve Bearshaw

The prizes for the winning teams were presented by The Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Councillor Steve Bearshaw: -

First place

West Lynn Primary School

Second place

Snettisham Primary School

Third place

North Wootton Academy

The winners all received medals with the first place also being presented with the Benita Hayne's Trophy.

Certificates were presented to all the pupils who had taken part in the competition.

It was a wonderful event, and the club were grateful for the support provided by The Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Councillor Steve Bearshaw and Mayoress Marisol Bearshaw, the judges Gill, Kerry and Tracee, the College of West Anglia for the excellent venue and the twelve schools who took part. Thanks to Andrea for leading organisation of the event and club volunteers: Sue, Kim, Jane, Kate, Mary, Carolyn and Lorraine.

Club Charity 2026/27

Introducing Break

No young person should feel alone in the world. At local charity Break, they make sure they don't.

Working across East Anglia, Break walks alongside children and young people in, around and leaving care when they're needed most. Through fostering, residential homes, family support, mentoring and their leaving care service, they help children and young people build their confidence, create strong relationships and experience new opportunities.



Break runs 12 children's homes including a short break home that provides a safe, warm, stable and thoughtful environment for young people with complex disabilities and needs, while giving their families some respite for what can often be intense and stressful situations.

Beyond the homes, Break have different support services for all young people in their care, leaving their care or who have left their care. They offer a wellbeing service to help young people understand their emotions and develop healthy coping strategies, and friendly one-to-one support from volunteer mentors, offering guidance, encouragement and a listening ear when it's needed.

They support those leaving their care with life skills, participation activities, tenancy support and work experience opportunities – and young people can continue to access experiences like creating podcasts, volunteering and going on wilderness retreats for as long as they like, through the charity's lifelong opportunities team. Break also runs its own fostering agency. As it's not-for-profit, they reinvest every penny into giving foster carers the guidance, training and support they need to create the best opportunities for them and the young people they care for.

Pete Marron, Senior Projects and Partnerships Manager at Break, said: "We're so pleased to have been selected as your Charity of the Year. As Break continues to walk alongside children and young people across the region, partnerships like this make such a meaningful difference.

"Thank you to Bea for the nomination and to all of you for selecting us — we're very excited about working together and are truly grateful for your support of Break."

Club Charity 2026/27

Break Partnership Event

Club members Lynne and Bea attended the launch of Break's Partnering Programme in April. Lynne reported from the event.

Dan Crouch, Director of Income Generation, gave a welcome address and outlined Break's vision. He spoke about Break's work with children and young people in care in East Anglia and its commitment to offer life long support to care leavers.

He explained how it does this through mentoring, residential homes, short breaks, therapeutic services and pathways into employment.

Two guest speakers gripped the audience's attention.

Tracie Nemeth from Aviva captivated us with how her life has gone from 'from Chaos to Confidence'. How, from the most deprived and unsafe childhood, she has transcended it all with the right help. Her story was one of resilience and she has gone on to build a very successful life and career. We were all really moved by her talk.

Jake Humphrey, a podcaster and BBC Presenter, hit the ground running with his words on the transformative value of charity work in his life. Encouraged by his father initially, he has now been an ambassador for Break for more than 10 years.

Jake reminded attendees that when it comes to young people 'if you can't see it you can't become it'. Break's ethos is to raise expectations to let talent reach the light despite a difficult youth and childhood, to literally 'break free'.

We connected with organisations from Kings Lynn and promoted the work of Soroptimism wherever possible, leaving with useful contacts for potential collaborations and with real understanding of Break's work.

We both agreed Break is a very good choice of charity for SIKL to support.



Jake Humphreys, by ETT Photography

Speaker meeting summaries

February: Antonia Hayes on writing

Local author Antonia Hayes spoke to the club in February and told us about her lifelong love of books which led her to working in a bookshop and then a career in publishing.

She had always kept a diary and after taking a short writing course produced her first book 'Relativity'. The manuscript was sought after, attracting 6 bidders at auction. Since then, she has published a book of essays and has a new book in the pipeline (from which we were treated to an extract).

Antonia was born in Australia and lived in Sidney, Paris, California and London before moving to King's Lynn with her husband and children.



Antonia Hayes with Julie

They chose King's Lynn because the big skies 'feel like home'.

They set up the Margery Kempe Trust which aims to promote life writing and storytelling in King's Lynn and run weekly creative writing sessions at the library. They also work with the Forward Day Centre and have plans for outreach work in the surrounding villages.

Club members then tried their hand at writing – all producing a short piece on the origin of their name – and all had a different story to tell. It was a great evening and we thanked Antonia for an inspiring and entertaining session.

Speaker meeting summaries

March: Alex Kemp on campaigning,

Councillor Alex Kemp was our guest speaker in March.

Cllr Kemp has served as both a Borough and County Councillor and her talk focused on the challenges and successes of both roles. In 2006 she was part of a campaign for full basic state pensions for women in West Norfolk. At that time only 12.5% of women in the area retired on a full state pension in their own right.

Cllr Kemp had worked with the Fabian Women's Network, the Fawcett Society, female MPs, and was especially pleased with the improved outcomes for women with caring roles and those who had had part time or multiple jobs. In 2010 90-95% of women were accessing a full state pension on retirement.

In the past Cllr Kemp had been pleased to collaborate with SI King's Lynn members on the issue of stopping violence against Women and Girls and was involved in the One Billion Rising campaign, where Loves Me/Loves Me Not bookmarks were distributed at the Mart.

Cllr Kemp resigned from the Labour Party to pursue her opposition to the Saddlebow Incinerator at County Hall and worked with other parties to oppose it. In 2014 the Incinerator was stopped when the County Council voted to end the Incinerator contract due to Planning Failure, pressure from the local interest groups which had been established, and from the public, as well as a sustained media campaign.

Cllr Kemp stressed the need for: –

- clear objectives,
- persistence to overcome the many barriers,
- the use of a variety of tactics in pursuing aims.

A discussion of the importance of local Government and the need for more female representation followed.



Cllr Alex Kemp (centre) with club members Pallavi Devulapalli and Bea Knights at Holocaust Memorial Day 2026 in the Town Hall

Speaker meeting summaries

May: All about Healthwatch Norfolk

In May, Angela Edwards' first question to the members was to ask how many people had heard of Healthwatch Norfolk.

Unfortunately, only those who had experienced difficulties in accessing healthcare may be aware of them.

Healthwatch Norfolk is the local independent health and social care champion for the County.

They ensure that NHS leaders and other decision makers hear the patient's voice and use patient, carer and community feedback to improve care. They can also help people to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Feedback is used to ensure the patients point of view is heard. Feedback can be left via the website, links on associate sites, by letter, by email or by phone. Feedback can be anonymous.

Angela explained that they have a team of 13 plus a Trustee Board and they hold charitable status. They are split into two teams; Engagement and Project work.

The engagement team gathers feedback from various health sources around the county. They visit Doctors Surgeries, dentists, opticians, pharmacies and hospitals. They also gather feedback from focus groups.



Angela Edwards with Kim

The project team works with commissioners on research studies producing reports and making recommendations.

Healthwatch Norfolk receives core statutory funding from Norfolk County Council and also additional funding from commissioned work. Sorooptimist International is an organisation whose primary interest lies with women and girls and would be suited to give feedback from that viewpoint.

Club Charity Quiz

Friday 25th September

7pm

South Wootton Village Hall

Further details to follow

Programme Action

IWD 2026 at Sandringham Park Run

On 7th March, ten members of the club joined the Sandringham Parkrun volunteer team to celebrate International Women's Day 2026.



Club member and Soroptimist Regional President Kim Bramham said, "Soroptimist International clubs across the world mark International Women's Day every year, joining women to raise awareness of the importance of gender equality globally and to celebrate women's achievements."

The theme for IWD 2026 was 'Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls'. Parkrun and Soroptimists make great partners – both are volunteer-led and inclusive, working to enable all people to achieve in a safe and supportive way."

Members wore mimosa sprigs, kindly made by Soroptimist member Kate as a thank you for volunteering.

The tradition of gifting mimosa on IWD began in Italy after World War II and has become a gesture of respect and solidarity, with the custom spreading worldwide, making the mimosa a symbol of admiration, empowerment and celebration for women everywhere. Mimosa flowers represent hope, optimism and renewal, while its soft yet resilient petals mirror the gentle strength that women display every day.

Programme Action

50 for 50 – Round Up

In 2020 (the Club's 45th and Julie's first presidential year) activities were curtailed by Covid 19. We couldn't meet in person, the public speaking competition and luncheon were cancelled, so to keep members occupied it was decided to see if, between us, we could achieve 45 different things. Mary walked 45 miles, Corinne took pictures of 45 flowers in her garden, Carolyn made 45 face masks etc.



Jewellery

This being the Club's 50th year, we tried to do 50 different things. Some we could do as a club activity, such as the Public Speaking Competition and marshalling at the Sandringham Park Run to mark International Women's Day in March 2026.

Then we had the various things which we collected for different charities. Some we had done before; some were new to the club. One or two activities are still to be completed as time ran out!



Coats

Margaret was the inspiration behind this project and also did a great deal of the work – her spare room acting as a storage depot – and we salute her dedication.

Click here to view the [full list of 50 for 50 things](#).

Summaries and photos of a few of the 50 things follow.



Books

Programme Action

Volunteer Work Day at Hardings Pits

In May, six club members joined Harding's Pits volunteers to carry out a litter pick and weeding to create more space for young plants to flourish at the South Lynn green space.

Harding's Pits Community Association has worked hard since 2004 to develop and manage the 'doorstep green' site, which now covers 10 acres and includes a recently added community orchard and the Beuys Acorns oak circle.



Bea, Kim, Carolyn, LIndsey, Mary and Janice

Bea Knights, club programme action officer, said: "On June 5 it's World Environment Day, Soroptimist International is very proud to have general consultative status at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, with Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland having special consultative status and celebrate the day this year under the motto 'Women leading green futures.'. Climate change affects everyone, but not equally. Women and girls are often among the most impacted, while also being powerful drivers of change. This year we have combined our club's efforts with our 50 for 50 pledge by helping protect new planting at Harding's Pits, whilst observing this important international day a little earlier."

Night Shelter Shopping

The club responded to a call for help from [King's Lynn Night Shelter](#) in March.

Eight bags of food shopping, including fresh fruit and vegetables, and a bumper supply of 50 loo rolls were donated by Members and delivered to St John's House on Blackfriars Road, to support residents.



Shopping delivered - loo rolls not pictured!

Programme Action

50 Books Donated

Club members donated three boxes of books to West Norfolk Deaf Association as part of the 50 for 50 (50 things to commemorate 50 years of existence) initiative.

These were delivered by member Dr Pallavi Devulapalli to Sarah Cox, manager at the association's bookshop, No 8 The Old Bookshop in Downham High Street.

The books covered a cross section of reading material from novels to biography and non-fiction and were gratefully received.



Pallavi and Sarah Cox

50 for 50 Federation Reading Challenge

One of our book clubs – comprising Corinne, Karen, Marion, Mary, Lyn and Carolyn – decided to read 10 books for each of the 5 SI federations, and each book needed a connection to one of the countries in that federation.

The books were a mixed bag and very much an individual choice and most of us met regularly to discuss our finds. If you would like to know what they were [click here](#).

50 at Red Mount Chapel

The Chapel of St Mary on the Mount, known as the Red Mount Chapel, was built between 1483-85 by Robert Curraunt for William Spynke, the Benedictine prior of Lynn.

Built as a 'stopping off' Chapel for the pilgrims travelling through Lynn on their way to Walsingham - the second most Holy Shrine in England - (the first in importance is Canterbury).



The club is bringing 50 visitors in one go to this beautiful, grade I listed building in The Walks. If you are part of a group that would like a visit to the Red Mount contact enquirermg26@gmail.com with two weeks' notice and hopefully at least six people, and we can arrange.

London Anglia Region

Update from LAR President, Kim Bramham

I have been mixing with some interesting Soroptimists because of my role as Region President and can recommend people to make that leap into a new role (it was a leap for me, anyway!).

I have been invited to a few interesting zoom meetings over recent months, including with President Gillie and President Elect Kate Belinis, which is great for nosy people like me, as we often gain insights and find out a bit more about what's going on behind the scenes!

I also attended one of SI Cambridge's meetings, when the speaker was Deborah Thomas, the Global Executive Director of Soroptimist International. Deborah was an amazing speaker – there is always something more to find out about being a Soroptimist and I learnt so much from her talk, not least around the controversial changes that were made to the SI Emblem recently!



Kim with Lindsay Green

London Anglia Region met recently, hosting Programme Director Lindsay Green and Liane Ward from Papyrus as our speaker.

Papyrus is a British charity that was founded in 1997 by Jean Kerr, a mother from Lancashire after losing her son to suicide. Papyrus aims to reduce the number of suicides among young people and we are donating the collection from Human Rights Day to this worthy cause. I found out about Papyrus because one of the 3 Dads Walking is local to the college where I work and came along to give a talk. The 3 Dads have all lost daughters to suicide and now walk to raise money for Papyrus.

I am very proud that our Region was able to donate £500 to this excellent cause; Liane's presentation was thought provoking and showed us how difficult it is to change the narrative around suicide – we participated in an activity using words that might (or might not be used) when discussing mental health and potential suicide. We learnt that we should not refer to committing suicide because it insinuates that suicide is a crime.

London Anglia Region

It was wonderful to host Lindsay Green, Programme Director at our June meeting for several reasons.

Lindsay has been a tremendous support to me over the past couple of years and it was good to catch up with her.

Lindsay spoke to us on the Strategic Plan and her time at The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, the rights and the empowerment of women and it was interesting to hear a first-hand account of this annual event held at the United Nations in New York.

We have lots of plans for future speakers at Region (watch this space!), and have almost concluded our Bookmark Project, so that clubs across the region can use bookmarks for children and teenagers for their projects – the messages are clear and feature what makes a good friend and relationship, and resources that support children and women. I look forward to the end result!

SIKL Socials

Summer garden party

On 13th June, club member Julie hosted a garden party and wine tasting.

Wines were provided by Mike from M & M Vintners who ran a quiz involving grape, country of origin and estimated price.

As the quiz progressed the answers became less reliable despite much hinting from Mike – this was possibly due to the 10 varieties being sampled..

About 20 members and their guests attended and everyone contributed to a cold buffet. Luckily the weather was kind and although not sunny it remained dry and an enjoyable afternoon was had by all.



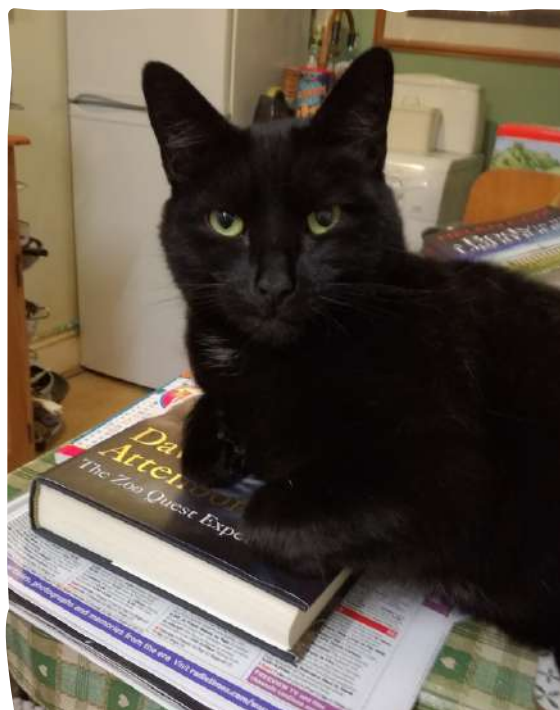
The Sunday Morning Reading Group

We continue to meet at our lovely garden centre. I am happy to report that the cheese scones are still scrumptious, and some of us have discovered that delicious sausage sandwiches are also on offer! Usually, the first half hour or so is devoted to socialising and food, before we get down to the serious business of discussing what we've been reading.

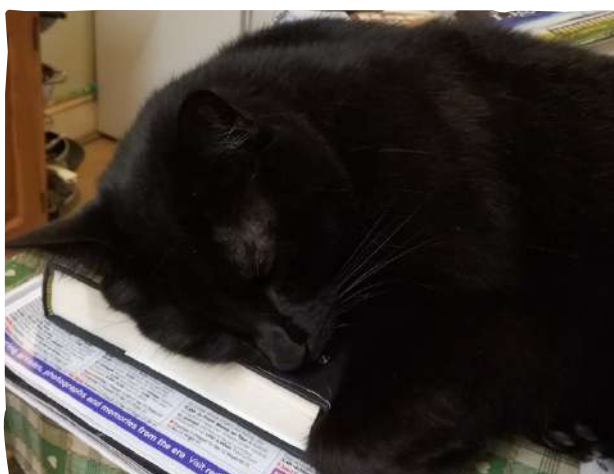
There are currently seven of us in the group: Margaret, Kim, Janet, Gill, Kate, Angela and me (Lindsay). We have met five times this year. Our themes have included Letters; Politics; Diaries; Books that were set in the future which is now the past (think Orwell's "1984"); and in May we had a David Attenborough Centenary Celebration.

Not everyone is able to attend every meeting, but we have lively discussions, particularly if one of us doesn't like the theme. On these occasions, the "wild card" selection sometimes has a very tenuous link to the theme, requiring considerable justification, but this just adds to the fun.

You may remember that our themes are chosen at random from The Tin, alternating between a group member and Ptolemy-the-Cat. Ptolemy was a founder member way back during our Zoom meeting days, when we were in Lockdown during COVID. He takes his selection duties very seriously, and comes running to choose whenever I rattle the tin.



Ptolemy-the-Cat and his David Attenborough book choice



Included are a couple of photographs of Ptolemy, one with his David Attenborough choice, and the other showing how hard he works on our behalf...

And finally, as the Venerable Bede said, *Lege Feliciter* (go on, Google it!), as we do!

SIKL Get involved

Club Photo – July 2026



Some of our club members enjoying the sunshine at Marriott's Warehouse prior to our July meeting.

SAVE THE DATES

Literary Lunch with author Midge Gillies at
Marriotts Warehouse - Sunday 15th November 12.30pm

Club Charity Quiz at South Wootton Village Hall
- Friday 25th September 7pm

Club members are volunteering as stewards on King's Lynn Heritage Open Day, Sunday 13th September 10am-4pm. Explore local history and architecture with over 50 properties not normally open to the public

Keep up to date with all our activities via our website sigbi.org/kings-lynn/.

If you would like to join one of our Monday meetings (at Marriott's or on Zoom), please contact us via: sikingslynn@gmail.com

Newsletter compiled by Carolyn and Lindsey