

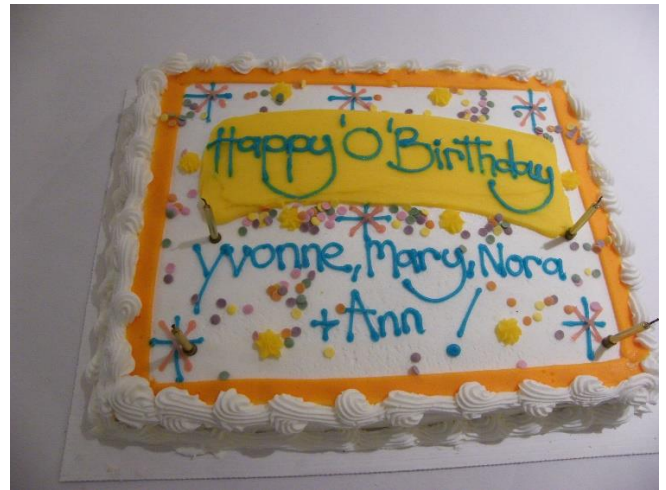


# ***Soroptipool Times***

**January 2020**

## **The Golden Girls!**

Yes, birthdays come along every year but seldom do a number of significant birthdays coincide within the same month! November was therefore a very special month when four members were 90, 80 and 60 years young within a few days of each other. Unknown to President Mary, one of the birthday girls, the meeting was interrupted while club members presented bouquets of flowers to Yvonne, Mary, Norah and Ann. This was followed by cake and a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday!". Congratulations to our Golden Girls and many more happy birthdays to come!



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## **The Reader Organisation- Speaker Meeting September '19**

At the beginning of the meeting we were given a very interesting talk by Jan Heron on behalf of the Reader Organisation, who work out of Calderstones Park. Today, many of us don't have the time, concentration or inclination to read. Yet at the same time, we're experiencing an epidemic of mental ill health, stress and depression, and despite technological advances, many of us feel disconnected from each other. This is where the Reader Organisation offers solutions. They believe that literature's unique power has the potential to connect individuals, help us feel better and rebuild lost social bonds. Staff and volunteers are building a Reading Revolution, bringing people together and books to life in order to make warmer, healthier, stronger communities. 'Shared reading' is a key feature and everything is read aloud, even if only a paragraph. The team are open to new volunteers joining them, whether it is reading with small groups of adults, in the Story Barn with children or in the centre, helping in the cafe or on reception. After a number of club members visited the centre to present a reading bench for our 90<sup>th</sup> celebrations, it was great to hear how the organisation's plans are coming to fruition!

Pictured is Jan with President Mary and the refurbished Mansion House at Calderstones Park



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## Josephine Butler 1828-1906: Social Activist; Soroptimist Pioneer?

In November, Mary and Dorcas attended a lecture at the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral organised by the Mothers' Union. The speaker, Rod Garner gave a talk about the life, faith and social action of Josephine Butler, who was born in 1823 and spent her life, throughout the 1800s, waging a social war on behalf of women and girls. With the support of her husband George, her home was opened up to social outcasts.



Josephine became involved with the Brownlow Hill Workhouse in the centre of Liverpool, "a forlorn and desperate institution that housed up to 5000 inmates", including paupers, convicts, unmarried mothers and prostitutes. (It is now the site of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King). She campaigned for better education for women and fair wages for their work.

In 1864 the Contagious Diseases Act was introduced. The Act granted power to Magistrates to order genitalia examination of prostitutes and detain them for up to 3 months in degrading "lock up hospitals until they are cured". Josephine led a public and political campaign to repeal this Act which was being used to treat the prostitutes as "ticketed human rights" and was a constitutional violation of personal liberty of women. She spoke

at public meetings, conferences, organised petitions, protests and collected signatures. Her campaign took her to the continent where she became aware of the extent of child prostitution and the slave trade of English minors, mostly girls.

Her campaign brought about revolution in the urban working class people, which forced Parliament in 1885 to push through the Criminal Law Amendment. This raised the age of consent to 16 –the same law we have now. It also made it a criminal offence to procure girls for prostitution. A year later, in 1886 The Contagious Diseases Act was repealed. The lecture was very inspirational and motivating

In the 21st century, women and girls are still objects of Gender based violence, victims of Domestic Violence, Female Genital Mutilation, sexual exploitation, rape, trafficking and sex slaves. We Soroptimists must continue to fight for women's and girls' rights.



## SIGBI 85th Federation Conference: Bournemouth 24-26<sup>th</sup> October 2019

### "THINK ON IT!"

Trains, planes and automobiles brought hundreds of Soroptimists to the seaside town of Bournemouth, in excited anticipation of a great conference. (Train and car in our case!) The club was represented by four members and their Soropto-'Misters'. After our stewarding roles last year, now was the time to sit back and enjoy all the hardwork done by another team!

After the flag-ceremony, outgoing President Sue Williams welcomed us and introduced the Rock Choir who had us singing along and dancing in the aisles, a lively start!

There is a full conference report both on the website <https://sigbi.org/bournemouth2019/> and in "Soroptimist News November" but here are some of the highlights!



Friday: Baroness Susan Greenfield, who specialises in neuroscience, treated us to an unbelievably entertaining talk on how the mind develops. What makes me the person I am? Something worth taking from Baroness Susan's talk was that multi-tasking is not good for our brain health. Sequential activities are better. Playing music, cooking from a recipe, walking, gardening and reading all help keep our brain synapses active. We heard about work that she is undertaking with her new company NeuroBio on developing a treatment for Alzheimer's Disease. She left us with a message for the next generation by Rita Levi-Montaigne: "Above all don't fear different moments. The best come from them."

The second speaker of the morning was George Anderson, a motivational life coach. He encouraged us to become more active physically – uninterrupted sitting constitutes a substantial risk to physical and mental health. This was followed by the hustings between Pat Black and Maureen McGuire for the role of President of Soroptimist International. The current International President then addressed conference. Mariet Verhoef-Cohen is President of Women for Water Partnership. She reported on her President's Appeal 'Women, Water and Leadership'. The audience gave a hearty round of applause at hearing of the magnificent £405,000 was raised for the 2017-19 appeal.



Next was Katy, the perfect inspirational speaker to demonstrate the SIGBI theme for 2018/19 – all Soroptimist delegates were on their feet to give this brave young woman a standing ovation, they were so moved by her story of her personal journey with the ups and downs of suffering from mental illness.

Katy described living her young life constantly scared and anxious. She was unable to tell anyone how she felt. She was referred to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) through which she is learning coping mechanisms and now she is back in control and

she knows, with 1 in 4 people suffering from mental health problems, that she is not alone. Last year Katy had the opportunity to travel with the charity Toilet Twinning to meet a 14 year old girl called Monica who lives in rural Zambia with her family who didn't have a toilet. Not having a toilet meant that Monica suffered constant anxiety and fear of being attacked, bitten by snakes and shame just from going to the toilet. Now that the village has toilets provided by Toilet Twinning their fears have been lifted. Monica gave Katy the motivation of "if she can deal with her problems, then I can deal with mine". Katy certainly had courage- speaking to a conference is not something many of us would happily undertake!

In the afternoon the SIGBI GENERAL MEETING took place.

There were six Resolutions, which produced lively debate, controversy even confusion but all was resolved finally, as follows:



**Resolution 1** was carried thereby reducing the Board from 12 to 7 Members (amended from six to seven) with effect from October 2020: These now constitute President, President Elect, Programme Director, Membership Director, Finance Director, Governance Director, PR & Marketing Director.

**Resolution 2**, to accept the revised Articles, was carried without Amendment

**Resolution 3**, to accept the revised SIGBI Bylaws was contentious because it included a change- a two-year term of office for the SIGBI President. An Amendment was received from the floor, and accepted by the President, to accept the revised SIGBI Bylaws with the exception of the change to the SIGBI President's Term of Office. This Amendment was carried. This means Presidents will only stand for one year. The main advantage of this is to have an experienced pool of SIGBI candidates from which to elect an international president.

**Resolution 4**, to accept the revised Region/NA/Network Constitution, was carried.

**Resolution 5**, to accept the revised Club Constitution, was carried.

**Resolution 6**, to allow Membership Fees to be increased each year by no more than 4% using the Consumer Price Index, was carried.

Saturday: Penny Mallory's presentation started with a short, explosive video of driving a racing car, and the vibrancy continued. She described her background, growing up with an alcoholic mother suffering from manic depression, leading to her growing up angry and resentful. She behaved badly, was moved into hostels in London and eventually hit rock bottom with drugs.

She changed her life by focussing on driving and a compulsion to succeed to gain her father's attention and approval. For Penny mental toughness is crucial- 'What/How/Why' is important, people who know why they are committed and get things done. Are we focussed enough to take risks, be the best and unlock our pure, true potential?

Dr Kay Richmond, SIGBI Programme Director, introduced delegates to the changes to the SIGBI Programme Database, which is used for creating reports to the UN and maintain our Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council). She then announced the Awards for Best practice (which are detailed in the online magazine and website)

Empowering Girls in Nepal, the new SIGBI project in partnership with ChoraChori –

This project won the vote at the Liverpool conference. Now we had an opportunity to get to know the background to the charity ChoraChori, which means 'girl boy' ie. 'children' in Nepalese. The charity was founded by Philip Holmes when his first wife, Esther Benjamins, took her own life in January 1999. She couldn't live with being childless. Philip refused to be overwhelmed by grief and despair. Instead, he turned his back immediately upon a promising career as a British Army officer and set up a charity for Nepalese children to perpetuate Esther's love and burning sense of social justice.

So began a remarkable spiritual and physical journey that took him to living in Nepal – a country of which he had no prior knowledge – in his bid to rescue hundreds of children from prisons, the streets and modern-day slavery.



ChoraChori rescues girls in Nepal who have been abducted, trafficked or raped, and rehabilitates them, offering them training to enable them to earn a living. Girls in Nepal are particularly vulnerable because it is easy to take them over the border to India, where they can become untraceable. A target of raising £105,000 has been set for the three years of the project.

Dr Leyla Hussein- Leyla created a counselling service for FGM. The service offers group and 1 to 1 support. The psychological impact is huge. The victim of FGM comes to the FGM counselling service. Many suffer from PTSD, fear of sex, mother/daughter relationship, depression and anxiety. Many women feel resentment- against schools, clinics and the system that was supposed to protect them. Many women also have been victims of Sexual abuse, Domestic abuse, Child marriage, Economical abuse, Child trafficking and Breast Ironing. It was a very moving presentation.

Closing ceremony:



Incoming Federation President Isobel Smith came to the podium to set out her theme for the year "We Stand Up for WOMEN". She presented the new Regional Presidents and her Federation Management Board (FMB). The conference was rounded off by a fabulous ABBA tribute group. The group had the audience on their feet. What an ending to a memorable conference!

Here's to Belfast 2020! Book your place now! I can't wait!

<https://sigbi.org/belfast2020/>



PS: While our hairstyles were attracting a lot of attention for the "Think On It!" photos...(can you spot former member Maureen?).....



... the Soroptimisters said they had been 'forced' to go on a brewery tour!!

They know how to suffer!

## A Christmas Carol..... concert!



Glenys, Debra, Anne C, Ann and Dave Mercer thoroughly enjoyed a lovely festive evening in December at the Anglican Cathedral. There were traditional and contemporary carols, school choirs and poems read by Lady Anne Dodd, Roger Johnson and Janice Long from the BBC, all hosted by Joe Riley from the Liverpool Echo. The wonderful fund-raising evening was in aid of Alder Hey Children's hospital. We look forward to supporting this special event in 2020. Why not join us?

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## International Lunch 10<sup>th</sup> December Appeal

The Hallmark Hotel in Sefton Park was the venue for the club's International Lunch which celebrates International Human Rights Day and fund raises for the International President's appeal- this year it is "Women, Water and Leadership". Funds were also shared with the new federation project, 'Empowering Girls in Nepal'. In a relaxed and enjoyable afternoon, President Mary welcomed Lord Mayor Anna Rothery and Regional President Yvonne Gibbons along with over fifty guests from other regional clubs, members of SI Liverpool and their friends. The celebrations began with the candle-lighting ceremony in honour of SI clubs throughout the world. Club member Mary S read out the UN Declaration of Human Rights. After an enjoyable meal, the afternoon was rounded off with excellent entertainment from the Liverpool Signing Choir....that was until their conductor Catherine invited members to get up and join them!! And then you realise how unco-ordinated you really are! But it was all good fun and as usual, we said our goodbyes for the holiday break. What a lovely way to start Christmas?







## Making a difference!

Whether we are empowering, enabling or educating, making a difference to the lives of others is at the heart of Soroptimism, especially to the lives of women and girls. While we can't change the world for the better for everyone, we can change the world for one person! And why shouldn't that one person also include ourselves? Has being a Soroptimist changed you? Here are just a few pics of how we have made a difference to others in the last few months.



Some club members joined the anti-slavery Freedom Walk through the city of Liverpool to draw attention to the ever-growing problem of modern day slavery. Without drawing attention to the use of enslaved workers in nail bars, car washes, service industries etc, many of the public are unaware that they are unwittingly contributing to the misery of the lives of these workers.

Members continue to support food banks in South Liverpool and provide food and clothing for the homeless who use the services of the Whitechapel centre in Langsdale Street. At Christmas, we donated gifts of toys to the Annabel James Toy Hamper appeal.



Most club members are quietly getting on with service for others in their daily lives- befriending a vulnerable person, getting involved with advocacy for social justice, fundraising for causes close to their heart, generously donating time, money or skills for the welfare of others, visiting those who are housebound or in hospital etc. However we are living out our Soroptimist values, we know that we **are** making a difference!



## The "Chain Gang" Lunch

Following in SI South Lancashire tradition, Regional President Yvonne Gibbons invited regional club officers, as well as anyone aspiring to office, to attend what's known as the 'Chain gang' lunch at Widnes Masonic Hall in January. The informal afternoon gave club members the opportunity to chat with members from other clubs, though President Yvonne kept us on our toes with several table quizzes! Pictured are Regional President Yvonne, with President -Elect Josie Carter of SI Leigh on her left and our own Vice-President Dorcas on her right. Also pictured are President Mary with Debra, Anne, Dorcas and Lynne.



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## Diary Dates 2020

**Jan 14<sup>th</sup> Executive Meeting 7.00 pm**

**Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> Club Meeting 7pm at Sefton Park Hotel**

**Feb 11<sup>th</sup> Executive Meeting 7.00 pm**

**Feb 26<sup>th</sup> Club Meeting 7pm at Sefton Park Hotel**

**Mar 7<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting Leigh Harriers**

**Mar 8<sup>th</sup> Information Stand Liverpool One- International Women's Day**

**Mar 10<sup>th</sup> Executive Meeting 7.00 pm**

**Mar 25<sup>th</sup> Club Meeting 7pm at Sefton Park Hotel**

**Mar 29<sup>th</sup> Afternoon Tea and Flower Arranging Demonstration Sefton Park Hotel 2pm**

**April 14<sup>th</sup> Executive Meeting 7.00 pm**

**April 22<sup>nd</sup> AGM and Club Meeting 7pm at Sefton Park Hotel**

**May 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Conference Bliss Hotel, Southport (Book now!)**

**May 3<sup>rd</sup> Charter Dinner and Exchange of Insignia Hallmark Hotel 12.30 for 1pm**