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London Chilterns Region

**Regional Newsletter – January 2021**

Welcome to our latest Newsletter of Helen’s Presidential Year and our first for 2021

**Message from President Helen**

Happy New Year.

I hope you were able to find enjoyment over Christmas despite everything. It is heartening that Spring is beginning to show itself and to hear of members having their first vaccinations.

**Soroptimists - The First 100 Years**

I do hope the uncertainty and the other challenges we face from the virus won’t deter you and your Club from making the most of the **SI Centenary**. If you haven’t already, do make sure you have included a **Centenary celebration**in your club’s programme for 2021 - we all deserve chance to let our hair down after the strictures of the last year.

However, the Centenary can be so much more - it is a once in a 100-year opportunity to promote and celebrate your Club’s and the wider Soroptimist family’s achievements in your local community.

* **Why not invite your charity partners to share in your celebration**- ask them to talk about their own work and what an impact your involvement with them has made. You could talk about SI or SIGBI’s wider achievements in the same field and perhaps promote our relationship with the UN too.  Invite visitors - from the Mayor onwards - some who know you already and some who don’t.  Hearing your partners talk about your achievements is both a great way to celebrate and to get your message across.
* **Why not start a discussion in your club**about your club’s best achievement over the last 10 years and the greatest achievements for women over the last Century and **take it out into Social media or the pres**s. Get a conversation going and then ask contributors to suggest what will be the greatest challenge for women in the future.
* **The Centenary could be an opportunity to take on a challenge**- one which you promote widely or just record and recognise in the club - something positive to keep members engaged and cheerful.

The SI Centenary is the perfect vehicle - don’t miss your chance.

**Programme Action**

With continuing COVID challenges our Programme Action is valued more than ever but I know how difficult the various restrictions can make it for Clubs. So, I am delighted to hear about the great work which you are doing and at Region we will continue to look for ways to support you. Don’t hesitate to **contact me or any of the Regional Officers**and we will do our best to assist with anything you are grappling with.

**The Centenary and Regional Tree Planting Project**

Having challenged you all to take part in at least 1 tree planting activity in 2021 I am delighted to hear about Clubs plans: from a club who already plant trees to remember their members and are extending this to celebrate the Centenary to other clubs planting trees in local hospices or with their local council.

The latest story is from **SI Thames Valley**. They were finding it almost impossible to find land to plant trees in the UK so they have decided to create a Soroptimist Woodland in Kori Chiefdom, Sierra Leone as part of their Kori Project. They aim to plant mangoes, oranges, coconuts, lime and lemons for the next generation. A fantastic idea.

If you are having similar difficulties why not contact SI Thames Valley and join in with their plans?

**Please record your trees and let me know too**. You will have seen in the 8 January Club Mailing that the Centenary Project Team are keen to chart the number and types of trees we are planting and to create a map to show their location. This is a great opportunity to be able to celebrate our achievements during the Centenary so as well as sharing your tree planting stories with me so we celebrate them within the Region and sending your story to SIGBI for the Centenary website, don’t forget to fill in the new simple online form as well as completing a Programme Focus Report Form. Don’t wait until the tree planting is done to share your story - send your story in to SIGBI and me once you have the details confirmed and include autumn planting plans too.

**Tree Planting data collection form**:

[https://sigbi.wufoo.com/forms/w1d02o87190yylb](https://sigbi.wufoo.com/forms/w1d02o87190yylb/)/

**Sending SIGBI your Tree Planting story:**

<https://sigbi.org/soroptimistcentenary2021/contact-us/>

**Email me your story for the Regional Newsletter:**[helenbsorop@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenbsorop@yahoo.co.uk).



As **CSW 65** is virtual this year I do hope as many of you as possible will consider joining the event. It’s a special opportunity to take part in something which usually takes place in New York and only a very few SIGBI members get to attend.

Anyone will be able to listen to events at CSW via the link <http://webtv.un.org/>

however, there are advantages to registering as an NGO CSW65 Virtual Forum Advocates via Eventbrite and this is now free too (although they would still appreciate donations of $25). It is a simple 5-minute registration process through Eventbrite. Once you have registered take a look at the  **Advocates** **Tutorial v** idea here to make the most of your experience:

<https://ngocsw.org/ngocsw65/>

**CSW65 ADVOCATE REGISTRATION by 22 February 2021**:

[NGO CSW65 Forum Advocate Registration Tickets | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ngo-csw65-forum-advocate-registration-tickets-137312871495?mc_cid=d43079b1de&mc_eid=f04d2c0250)

**Programme Director Kay Richmond’s letter gives more details :**

<https://sigbi.org/members/files/CSW-65-Kay-Richmond-Letter-to-Clubs-updated-22-January-2021.pdf>

**Do invite me to your Meeting or event.**

I have attended several clubs’ meetings and would be delighted to visit to meet you all and hear about your activities, even if only on Zoom. I am keen to promote Regional activities and priorities but am also happy to talk about or answer questions on your choice of topics. So please do get in touch.

**Yours in Friendship**

***Helen***

Helen Byrne

President 2020-21

Email: [helenbsorop@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenbsorop@yahoo.co.uk)

**Regional Programme Action News from Pam Robertson & Jackie Paling**

**Good News** – On January 10th, the Lord Chancellor announced a new standalone offence of non-fatal strangulation.

Escaping domestic abuse is now stated as a valid reason for leaving your home during lockdown.

**Thank you** to all those clubs who have submitted Programme Action Report Forms since our last report in December. The next UK Programme Action Committee (UKPAC) meeting is on January 30th when we are asked to talk about one project from our region. We try to select a different club each time and, on this occasion, we have chosen SI High Wycombe who, on the suggestion of their newest member, provided toiletries and Christmas treats for the Mayor of High Wycombe’s “bags of joy campaign”, enabling the Mayor to reach out to an additional 30 people. Their full report can be seen on the data base ID number 56296.

**Congratulations** to SI Milton Keynes who have published their plans to celebrate our Centenary:

* *Press Release -* out to MK Citizen re. Soroptimist Centenary and interview on MKFM Radio.
* *Celebrating Invisible MK Women –* Monthly twitter report on celebrating local women.
* *MyPledge#Pledge2021 –* Starting mid january2021. People to make a pledge of kindness and to tell us about it – to be published on website.
* *April 16th Violet Awards –* Named after Violet Richardson SI founder. Celebration event to establish and reward outstanding contributions from our four linked charities.
* *June 12th* – Regional Conference – Downs Barn, Milton Keynes.
* *September 11th-18th* – Arts, Crafts and Soroptimist History event in the Gallery at the City Centre Church. It will include stalls to display our crafts for sale, a section for an arts and history exhibition.
* *Music Event* – October
* *October/November –* Plant a Tree in conjunction with MK Schools and Parks Trust.

**Don’t Forget:** Keep those Programme Action Report Forms coming in. Need help in completing these? Pam is on the end of a ‘phone (01920 822631 or 07870 824469) as is Jackie (01753 840666) and both would be happy to talk you through the process. Not much club activity to report but individual members beavering away at home or volunteering in the community? – there is scope on the forms to report these actions: just click on ‘select’ right at the beginning.

And… you could always sign a petition (and report it of course!). These do make a difference. Go to SIGBI website and click on ‘sign a petition’.

**Participated in any good webinars lately?**

There have been some excellent ones featuring the different aspects of our International President’s Appeal ‘**The Road to Equality’**. Don’t worry if you’ve missed them, these can still be accessed on Soroptimist International’s website. Click on ‘The Road to Equality’ or ‘SI Voices’. (Has your club made a donation yet to ‘The Road to Equality’?)

Hosted by Soroptimist International, the **SI Voices Series of Podcasts and Webinars** welcomes experts, renowned speakers, Soroptimists and friends, to take on many of the tough topics and challenges affecting the lives of women and girls today. The Series also takes a look back over 100 years of service; uncovering a vast range of Soroptimist International projects, programmes and people, whilst putting policies and practice under the microscope. The programme of Podcasts and Webinars are be available on **You tube @SoroptimistGlobal**

Unfortunately, the SIGBI Tree Team webinar scheduled for January 23rd was beset by technical problems and will need to be re-scheduled. If you missed the first one, you can still catch up by going to the Centenary section of SIGBI website and clicking on ‘Planting Trees’.

**And finally**: If you’re looking for a project from the comfort of your home, WaterAid’s Future on Tap appeal, eligible for UK government match funding until **February 4th 2021,** will help climate vulnerable communities across Ethiopia build a secure future with sustainable clean water. Go to: **wateraid.org/uk/future-on-tap**.

*Pam Robertson*

*Jackie Paling*

*Regional UKPAC Representatives*

**Stories from Clubs Across the Region**

**SI Slough, Maidenhead & Windsor**

One of our members, **Pam Robotham,** sadly died nearly three years ago, just short of her 90th birthday.  She was a **founder member of our club and was a solicitor and judge** who devoted most of her life to helping women and girls, specialising in family law and being actively involved in the Girl Guides.  Right up to her death she was an active member of our club. **Pam left a generous legacy to our club which we felt should be used for something appropriate to Pam’s ideals.**

One of our **Friendship Links is SI Kathmandu in Nepal**, **and through our connections with that club we learned of a girl, Asmita, who was about to embark upon a law degree in university**.  We felt that to sponsor her through university would be the perfect use of Pam’s legacy, reflecting her passion for helping girls, and her legal background.

**Asmita has now started her third year**, but of course thanks to covid much has changed since she started her course.  She sends us regular updates regarding her progress, noting that her second semester exams were disrupted due to covid, and the third semester lessons will for the time being be conducted online.  She is an amazing girl – not only is she a hard-working student, but she is also a keen activist on behalf of human rights, recently campaigning for youth against rape, and against gender violence. Photos on Facebook of her protesting with fellow students show her passion.  So, on reflection she is a perfect candidate for our support.

This is a country that has been hit hard by the pandemic.  Extreme poverty was already a problem, and Nepal depends to a great extent on tourism.  Over a million foreign tourists visited the country in 2019, and on the 1stof January this year the “Visit Nepal 2020” campaign was launched.  This was expected to attract 2 million visitors and create thousands of new jobs, but of course was not to be. The country was locked down in March, resulting in massive cancellations of hotel and tourist bookings and widespread unemployment.  And all this coming only five years after a devastating earthquake.

Against this background we feel very privileged to be able to help this extraordinary young girl who is determined to succeed in an environment fraught with challenges.

*Sally Redford*

*President SI Slough, Maidenhead & Windsor*

**SI Greater London**

**SI Greater London, like many clubs have found the pandemic challenging for Programme Action**. However, we have all managed to adapt quickly to virtual meetings, which have actually made it easier for our club to meet as most of us would normally have a long commute to No. 63. We have seen a rise in attendance to our virtual meetings, and have made several links

We have also **cultivated a strong link with the Centenary Action Group**, a group established by Helen Pankhurst in 2018, made up of several organisations including Care International and the Millicent Fawcett Society, to take action over the next ten years to ensure equal representation by 2028, the centenary when all women in the UK won the right to vote. Irene Cockroft has represented SIGBI in CAG for the past couples years, but thanks to meetings now being virtual, several other members of SIGL have been able to attend and give regular updates to the club.

Our latest project we hope to undertake was brought to the club and UKPAC by our new member**, Dame Vera Baird**. She has given our club an in-depth presentation about the need for **lobbying support of the amendment to the Domestic** **Violence bill regarding non-fatal strangulation** and has suggested work we can do as a club to aid in this. We are currently developing a plan to lobby peers about this issue, as well as connecting with other women’s organisations through our link with the Centenary Action Group to gather support.

In previous years, the president would choose a charity to support throughout the year, and proceeds from our activities (we love a raffle!) including the charter lunch would also be raised for that cause. Most recently, we raised **£200 for Young Minds charity from our 95th charter lunch. Prior to this, we also supported the Alzheimer’s society.**

We also used social events to raise awareness and funds as part of programme action. For example, we supported our member Irene Cockroft’s outstanding exhibition “A Stone’s Throw from Westminster: Suffragettes & Other Feminists in Camden” at the Camden library and travelled as a club for a private tour of the exhibition. Further to this, we held a garden party at a member’s home to raise funds for the Meru project. And finally, by spreading the word to friends, co-workers and family, we collected several packs of knickers for the Yarl’s Wood Befrienders.

*Molly Byrne*

*SI Greater London*

**SI High Wycombe and Dementia Action**

My interest in dementia is personal. My parents, now in their 90s, both suffer from different types of dementia. I was their primary carer for three years after they came to live with me when they could no longer look after themselves. When their conditions deteriorated to the extent that I could no longer cope they went to live in the same excellent care home, and I wanted to turn my experience into practical help for others.

**At a Regional Soroptimist meeting I heard a presentation by Alzheimers Research UK (ARUK) and I volunteered on the spot to become a community speaker,** raising awareness of these dreadful, and often misunderstood, diseases. Not long after that my Club, SI High Wycombe and District, invited several high profile local women to a brainstorming meeting to develop our Programme Action strategy. Sue Hynard, who works for Steve Baker, the High Wycombe MP, suggested that we might be interested in supporting **Wycombe District Dementia Action (WDDA)** whose aim is to make the town dementia friendly and promote dementia projects in the area. Representing both Soroptimists and ARUK, I joined the committee.

WDDA’s key partners are Wycombe Wanderers, many local care providers, Tesco Loudwater, Alzheimer’s Society, Carers Bucks who our Club also supports, and now Alzheimer’s Research UK and Soroptimist International High Wycombe & District Club. With WDDA Chair, Hilda Stearn, I am developing a course specifically designed for businesses to help them understand dementia and develop policies to support customers and employees who live with dementia or are carers.

Not long after this, Liz Johncock, a Chepping Wycombe parish councillor and Flackwell Heath Residents Association representative, joined our Club. With her influence an exciting and forward-thinking project is being launched across **Chepping Wycombe parish and has been taken up by the newly-formed Beaconsfield and Chepping Wye Community Board with the Parish Council and Flackwell Heath** people taking the lead.

**Chepping Wycombe Dementia Action (CWDA)** has three significant aims:

* Education about dementia for local businesses, families and carers
* Practical support to combat loneliness, isolation and lack of mobility in the community
* Community initiatives to bring the generations together

We launched the project formally on December 10th with a video presentation to local businesses and services. Although our progress has been curtailed somewhat by the lockdown, we are able to continue communicating and raising awareness before starting more practical projects later in the year.

**Dementia is an increasing problem in our community. It is a leading cause of death in the UK and there is no cure.** Dementia is not an inevitable part of ageing as is commonly believed. The term is used to describe the symptoms associated with a number of brain diseases including Alzheimer’s, vascular dementia, dementia with Lewey Bodies, Parkinson’s dementia, and frontotemporal dementia.

Many of us have been touched by dementia in some way. Over 850,000 people in the UK are affected by dementia. Most are over 65 but it is estimated that over 40,000 people under 65 are affected by early-onset dementia.

The number of deaths from dementia has increased steadily since 2006, and in 2018 dementia overtook heart disease as UK’s biggest killer. Statistics compiled by the Office of National Statistics reveal that in 2018 70,366 people died from Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia as opposed to 66,076 deaths from heart disease. 25% of people dying of Covid-19 also had dementia. Every 3 minutes someone in the UK develops dementia and it is estimated that 1 in 3 children today will go on to develop dementia. Without a cure the projection is that 1.2m people will have dementia by 2040.

The progress of the disease can be long and slow and with support many people live well with dementia until the later stages. This places an onus on us all to recognise the impact of these devastating brain diseases, not only on those diagnosed with dementia but on their families and carers, and to support them.

**I am happy to talk to Clubs and other organisations about dementia and our projects.**

*Sue Granshaw*

*SI High Wycombe & District*

*For more information visit:*

*WDDA on Facebook @WDDementiaAction*

*ARUK at* [*www.alzhemiersresearchuk.org*](http://www.alzhemiersresearchuk.org)

**Bedford Soroptimist Housing Association**

SI Bedford was Chartered in October 1931 and it’s first large project was to set up a Housing Association for **“Single occupancy accommodation for ladies of reduced means”**

**Potted History**

* With the aid of an anonymous donation of £200 Fund Raising started in 1934 , events included a Summer Garden Party, a Ball, Roulette Parties, a Midnight Film Matinee and a Darts Championship!
* A plot of land was purchased in Clapham, a village 3 miles from the town; plans drawn up by a local architect and a builder contracted to start the work; an additional £700 was borrowed from bank: this was paid back in full in 1944
* The Clapham House Foundation Stone was laid in 1938 by the Hon. Mrs. Michael Boyes-Lyon, for a high standard building with 4 bedsits
* The House was opened in 1939 and 4 ladies moved in ~ all newly retired who had lived in work tied housing including a district nurse and village school teacher
* The House was extended in 2000 to make into 4 self-contained flats funded by a legacy

**A Second House in Bedford** was obtained in 1965; this is an Edwardian House with 8 units ~ 4 small self-contained flats and 4 bed sitting-rooms, all have own kitchen and bathroom

The two houses provide safe accommodation for ladies with limited income

We charge an affordable rent for good standard of accommodation: annually we plan to make a small trading profit to ensure we are able are able to maintain a good state of repair and refurbishment, meeting building regulations and the legal requirements of a good land lord

For many years the Housing Committee were responsible for all operational management. My predecessor as Chair introduced letting via an agent; we have now taken the next step on and negotiated with the agent to also carry out day to day management ~ as a housing committee we still have ultimate management control but do not have to sort our blocked toilets on Christmas Eve!!

Our tenants are a mix of retired ladies and 2/3 younger working women: these include two teaching assistants, an NHS Clerical officer, a charity worker working with children from abusive homes and a mature curate. Regularly we have women as medium term lets fleeing abusive marriages: the ladies at both houses are a close-knit supportive community

This year has been difficult for everyone: we have pegged the rents for all tenants: plus, during lockdown 5 tenants have been furloughed and we have been able to agree rent packages with those who were unable to meet their full financial commitments ~ reduced rent for 6 months meant they could pay their bills and eat and they will be able to pay the rent balance over an agreed period

Bedford Soroptimist Housing Association was one of the first to be established and remains one of only a handful still functioning. It has evolved over the years to meet changing needs but still fulfils the founding aims of proving safe good standard accommodation for single women with a limited income: 2020 was no exception

*Rita Beaumont*

*Chair: Bedford Soroptimist Housing Association*

**News from your Regional Executive**

* **Rita's Ramblings! Notes from your Regional Secretary**

**Celebrating our Centenary** ~ Remember to ordered your commemorative items from SIGBI Trading

* **A Unique Piece of Soroptimist Jewellery** to commemorate 100 years of Soroptimists – a beautiful Soroptimist brooch to add to your collection
* **Commemorative Envelopes with our own Soroptimist Stamps.** – Own a Little Piece of Soroptimist History.

Keep as a memento or give as a present to promote our Soroptimists worldwide

* **Jane Slatter: Communications Officer**

**Hints and Tips**

**Communications - efficient writing which saves time and reaches a wider audience**

When you have an event and share information with Club Members and people outside of your Club try to write things in a way that you can use the text in other places.

I'll share with you how I do it.

1. **Club events** Usually I write a line about a **Club event**on our Club's website **"Club Programme" page**as soon as I know about it [www.sigbi.org/st-albans/club-programme](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/club-programme) - with minor tweaks this info can then be cut and pasted into mailings to Club Members, the Club Meeting agenda, Dear Diary, local publications, social media. I write it in such a way that makes it easy to amend if anything changes.
2. **Pre-event publicity** Once a particular event is firmed up, we may decide we want to get it out to a wider audience. The event entry in the Club Programme then forms the basis for **"****pre-event publicity"**. I cut and paste the Club Event into a separate Post on the website with any photos, logos, flyers etc. The weblink from this post can then be used in mailings to Club Members, Dear Diary, local publications, social media to provide extra information. I also include the weblink in Club Programme on the website. Using the weblink in publications and social media will help to attract people to your website to find out more about your Club. You can make the weblink something snappy and different to the headline - for example our quiz headline is "Virtual Quiz Night Sat 23 Jan" and the link is [www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2021/zoom-quiz](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2021/zoom-quiz/)
3. **Post-event publicity**" After an event I edit the Post on the website giving information about how the event went, adding photos and any presentation material. I change the headline and edit the content but maintain a lot of the original information which saves time and effort. The post on the website is then the foundation for any "**post-event publicity**" - and I cut and paste the main story and send the link and a good photo to local media, perhaps to SIGBI and share on Facebook and Twitter.
4. **Programme Focus Report**- when I write up an event on the website my Club has found it helpful if I write it in such a way that some of the text can be cut and pasted into the Programme Focus Report - along with any photos and the weblink which can also be a source of extra information for the SIGBI Assistant Programme Directors to read. I make sure that the news items are posts and I don't delete them - that means the latest one always appears at the top, but the links to older news items will still work and are there as an archive of our Club’s activities.
5. **Examples** My Club's home-page [www.sigbi.org/st-albans](https://www.sigbi.org/st-albans-and-district/) shows the top 4 posts and in Club News [www.sigbi.org/st-albans/category/club-news](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/category/club-news) you can scroll down to see may years of news items which hopefully demonstrate what I am saying here.

I am just sharing how I do things for my Club most of the time. I tailor what I do depending on how important I think the event is to the Club and how busy I am at that time…. It is now a habit for me and because I try to write efficiently it doesn’t take up too much time.

If you have any questions or need any help please don’t hesitate to ask.

Jane (Pinky) Slatter – SI London Chilterns Communications Officer

Email: [pinkyslatter@hotmail.com](mailto:pinkyslatter@hotmail.com)

Tel: 07834345796

* **SIGBI Benevolent Fund: Regional Trustee Rita Beaumont**

This has been difficult time for all of us and our families but for some members the sudden reduction in income has caused of extreme hardship, so just a reminder about the Benevolent Fund.

The fund is a totally confidential service available to help the financial difficulties of those who are eligible to apply.

The fund may be in the form of a quarterly payment or a one-off payment to pay for an unexpected item.

Examples of how Discretionary help that could be considered includes:

* Utility bills
* Telephone Bills
* Essential living expenses
* House maintenance

**Who is Eligible?**

You must have been a Member of a Soroptimist Club in the UK, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, or

the Republic of Ireland for 3 years or more. The support given is subject to a simple confidential financial check

**How to Apply**

A member who might need financial help at this time can contact me so I can talk through the application process

Rita Beaumont

Email: [r.beaumont3@ntlworld.com](mailto:r.beaumont3@ntlworld.com)

Telephone: 10234 401475

Mobile: 0776 4511 006

**Why not share your club activities with your friends across the Region?**

**Send me your news on** [**r.beaumont3@ntlworld.com**](mailto:r.beaumont3@ntlworld.com)

**Copy Date for the March 2021 Edition of the Newsletter is 22nd March 2021**