

Johanna M Raffan MBE (1943 - 2021)

Johanna was born in Wales but with three out of four Norwegian grandparents, her first language was Norwegian.

Johanna went to Cardiff University and then began a thirty-four year teaching career in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire schools. Twenty-five of them as a Head Teacher.

In 1982 she was one of the founders of the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE). This is an organisation to support teachers and schools to improve the provision for More Able and Talented (MAT) pupils in the regular classroom. Following early retirement in 1999, she became Director of NACE in 2000. This work took her all over the world plus acting as an Advisor to the Governments of Madeira, Denmark, Norway and Wales. During her travels she always took the opportunity to visit local Soroptimist Clubs, enjoying club meetings and social events, thereby experiencing Soroptimists' globally, at a local level. Johanna very much enjoyed returning to Wales and had the opportunity to work with all the local authorities and many hundreds of schools, for this work she was honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours with an MBE for services to education in Wales.



Johanna's other interests included travel, a member of the International Wine and Food Society she loved tasting wines from around the world, visiting family in Norway plus being actively involved in St Luke's Church, Maidenhead and the Community of the Resurrection.

Opportunities to travel have included attending the SI Conventions in Sydney, Montreal, Istanbul and Kuala Lumpur.

Johanna joined Soroptimists in 1987, first with SI High Wycombe and then SI Thames Valley, as a founder member in 1990. She has held most offices at club and Regional level, becoming a Federation Councillor for four years and Director Without Portfolio for two years. She was also Chair of Trustees of the Kori Development Project in Sierra Leone, raising funding for the library and schools, a continuing major project for the club.

Johanna's support for her club has been exemplary, especially in encouraging newer members to get involved in Programme Action work. She was always ready to support club activities like the five year Missing Miles project when over fifty other clubs joined Thames Valley in walking, publicising and supporting the walkers who raised awareness of the need for more support for the families of missing people. She was there when the club planted trees to commemorate their tenth

anniversary, again when we planted a cedar tree in the Lebanon. She was delighted to be one of the first clubs to raise funds for the Tissue Banks set up by Breast Cancer Now.

Johanna was very proud and honoured to be SIGBI Federation President for the 100th anniversary year of Soroptimist International.

SI Thames Valley has been desolated by the passing of Johanna Raffanearlier this year 2021. She was our club rock. She had been a Founder member and cared deeply about all things Soroptimist.

Several of our club members were lucky enough to know Johanna for many years. However her wisdom and great kindness were clear, even to those of us who had only known her for a relatively short time. She was also a great friend and a discreet support whenever it was needed by any member of our club – and indeed beyond. We have been so touched by the dozens of emails and cards sent by Soroptimists who have shared our loss.

Johanna has left a considerable gap to fill and we in Thames Valley will miss her inspirational ideas. Indeed we shall be very grateful for any support from our soroptimist sisters to help us to rebuild our club and our confidence.

Please come and join us on **Sunday 21 November** when our club will finally hold our long-delayed 30th Anniversary Charter Lunch at the River and Rowing Museum, in Henley-on-Thames, which of course, Johanna organised. We shall honour the memory of our dear Johanna and celebrate her life and many achievements.

