
SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

OF MANCHESTER

PRESIDENT
Stella Kay

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Dear Club Members



Two doses of computer failure within the last six weeks had frustrated me in the extreme. The first was a complete breakdown and the computer was out of use for 10 days. When it was back to good health it took me two days to cope with the accumulated e-mails. The second one was much briefer but again three days without being able to access e-mails and the subsequent catch up. My frustration was such that I have seriously considered giving up the receiving and sending of e-mails for Lent.



It is not that I am a luddite or against progress but I do feel that when so much can be forwarded to so many by the mere press of a button, those of us on the receiving end get information overload.

I hope this Newsletter does not fall into that category!



HILDA SWINDELLS MBE



Those of us who remember the late Hilda Swindells, MBE, who died at the age of 101, will not be surprised to learn that in addition to the £5,000 donated to S I Manchester, she gifted £10,000 to The Christie. She had led a very busy and interesting life, much of it devoted to helping others and details of this are set out in a brief biography of her in the annual brochure of The Friends of The Christie.



ACTIONAID

As many of you know, for several years we have sponsored a young girl through ActionAid. Masoma is our latest beneficiary and the following is a report we have received from ActionAid.

“Masoma who lives in Balkh, one of the poorest areas of northern Afghanistan. She was born in 2007 and she is one of a family of six children. Her family is Muslim and she speaks Dari. This is one of the two national languages of Afghanistan. Masoma’s family live in a home made of mud walls with a thatched roof. Thatch is often used to keep the rooms cool. Houses are constructed by local masons and generally have 2-4 rooms.

“Her father is currently unemployed. There is no government support to people who are unemployed and finding work can be very difficult. Her mother takes care of the family, fetches water, prepares food and also helps on the family land, taking care of the crops.



"Masoma is enrolled in school. Although the education system is slowly improving, there is still a long way to go. Many more boys (70%) attend school than girls. Schools lack facilities and teachers are not regular, as they are so poorly paid. ActionAid is working with the community to ensure qualified teachers are regular and to encourage more girls to attend school. We will also be improving the conditions of school, so children like Masoma can have a better quality of education.

"Families like Masoma's, generally have 1-3 hectares of land on which to grow various crops such as wheat, cotton and vegetables. This land is mainly owned by the male head of the household. In the summer months, shortage of irrigation water can cause crops to fail. Women and children are mainly responsible for collecting water, and this can range from a distance of 1-3km. Such families often collect water from rivers, streams and wells. This water is not clean and can often cause illness.

"ActionAid is working in Balkh, in partnership with families like Masoma's, to secure adequate healthcare, education and improvement of livelihoods. We are also prioritising work with women and girls, to ensure that they are able to play a role in developing their communities. Together, we can change the future forever for children like Masoma."

Shena Cuttle



PADDINGTON AND SI MANCHESTER



The friendly adorable Paddington bear has been a beloved toy by several generations of children and has now been given a tremendous boost in popularity following the release of the recent film. I had agreed to take my goddaughters, aged 12 and 10, to the cinema as a birthday treat and was relieved at their choice of film, (Paddington) as I had wondered how I would survive an afternoon of sci-fi or animation.

The bear from darkest Peru was amazing, the cast of high profile actors including the Downton Earl, Julie Walters, and Nicole Kidman were fantastic and as an adult I found the film both emotional and absorbing.

However, the star was this club's furry friend for many years, complete with hat, duffle coat and marmalade sandwiches.

Rosemary Steven

Note from Val:

Our Paddington has been collecting five pence pieces at SI Manchester for around 25 years. He came to us when the Quadrennial Project charity was based in Peru, where the aim was to empower the women there in their marketing skills. He has stayed with us for every four-year project since then including Limbs for Life, Project Sierra and the BIG (Birthing in the Gambia) project. Who knows what he may be collecting for next - we can but hope we have something to do with that!



The following three items have been copied from our Club Website, courtesy of Val and Molly

ANNUAL COFFEE POT LUNCH

Members and friends gathered on January 14th to lift their post-Christmas spirits and enjoy a friendly and relaxing lunch at the Wycliffe Villa Hotel.

It was, as ever, a very enjoyable occasion and thanks go to Yvonne Mullen for organising it. It also happened to be President Stella's birthday and this was marked with the gift of a plant and a chorus of 'Happy Birthday to you'.



JANUARY SPEAKER MEETING



President Stella welcomed Gail Heath, CEO of Manchester Women's Aid, as our speaker at the January meeting. Gail spoke about how Manchester Women's Aid merged with the Pankhurst Trust last year and the work that is done



there. She told us about the services offered to support women both at the Pankhurst centre and in the refuges and about the current financial problems of running these services. Women's Aid are campaigning to make the use of coercion and control criminalised and have a strategy to move away from having to rely on local authority funding.

There was also a presentation by Martin Smedley, CEO of the charity Act4Africa, and member Barbara Blaber who asked if the club would propose the charity's HEAL (Health, Empowerment and Livelihoods for women in Malawi) project as SIGBI's next Quadrennial project. Members voted unanimously in support of this, and the bid will be submitted as long as the agreement of the South Lancashire Region can be procured.



SELLING CAKES FOR THE FORGOTTEN TEN

Nine members attended the regional council meeting on 22nd November as it was our club's turn to host the event. One of the duties of this is to 'brew up' for the 100+ delegates on arrival and at lunch time.

Alongside this we decided to run a cake stall in aid of Handicap International's 'Forgotten 10' campaign. The charity supports the victims of landmines and holds an annual campaign for 10 days from the 1st to the 10th of December to raise awareness of these often forgotten victims. The cakes were very popular and many members of other clubs took away information about the charity.



FUN AND FRIENDSHIP WITH PANCAKES

Saturday 7th February was a most enjoyable occasion when over 40 members and friends spent a great evening at the home of Fiona and Paul.



The pancakes with savoury and sweet fillings were delicious and were accompanied by good wine in an atmosphere of real friendship and warm hospitality. An excellent financial outcome to add to our charities was also realised. On behalf of all who were able to attend such a really super party, we give our grateful thanks to the Charlton family.

Rosemary Steven



KATHRYN RUDGE – FIRST WINNER OF THE HELEN LATTO PRIZE FOR SINGING AT RNCM

In November Val and Maureen had tickets for a concert at the Bridgewater Hall at which Kathryn Rudge was to perform. Knowing a little of her history at the Royal Northern College of Music, Val e-mailed Kathryn mentioning the connection and asking if she would mind answering a few questions. Kathryn responded very generously, as follows:-

What are your special memories of your time at the RNCM and Junior RNCM?



I had a very happy time at the Junior RNCM and learned so much about what life would be like in a conservatoire environment. I attended on a Saturday there for two years during my A-level studies at school and I always looked forward to focusing on my singing and piano studies at the week-end - it was never a chore! I will always be grateful for the opportunities I was given at the Junior RNCM, especially performing in external recitals. There is no substitute for having the experiencing of performance and audience interaction and I believe this definitely helped me to meet the challenges that lay ahead in my graduate training in opera studies and as a performer today. I remember being truly honoured to receive the Soroptomist's Award during my time there and also the very warm welcome I received when I came to perform in a recital for you all.

When I started my formal studies at the RNCM I was thrilled to have the opportunity to completely immerse myself in music. I have so many very special memories during my training there and met some wonderful people. I think my highlight would definitely be performing in the roles on the opera stage. I had tremendous fun performing as Cherubino in Mozart's Marriage of Figaro and learning how to move and act as a boy, and the drama of the role of Erika in Barber's Vanessa but my unforgettable memory will always be the opportunity to perform as Bizet's Carmen – the costumes, set, dialogue and singing the wonderful music was a dream come true!

Thinking about your early career was there a performance you feel to be the beginning of your professional life?

From my early days of studies at the RNCM I was lucky to always have opportunities for external performances. I had won the award "Merseyside Young Singer of the Year" as I entered the RNCM and this afforded me the opportunity to work with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. At 18 I found myself on the stage at Leeds Castle in Kent with Conductor Carl Jenkins and the RLPO as their guest soloist performing to 4000 people in wonderful open air concerts. I still enjoy performing with the RLPO today having recently performed Michael Nyman's Hillsborough Memorial No 11 with (released on CD 3rd November 2014). There were lots of external engagements to enjoy throughout my studies, so to answer the question, I feel I have always had a "professional" life but I think when I left the RNCM and was immediately offered the opportunity to become an ENO Young Artist and make my debut on the professional opera stage as Cherubino in Mozart's Marriage of Figaro at the London Coliseum I felt my career as an opera singer had truly begun!

Do you have a favourite type or era of music you prefer to sing?

Aside from opera, I especially enjoy performing English song. I have just recorded my debut CD with pianist James Baillieu on Champs Hill Records which is due for release soon. It is a CD of English Song entitled "Love's Old Sweet Song". It was such a pleasure to have the opportunity to record some of my favourite songs and ballads by British composers. Amongst the selection of songs are nostalgic gems like "We'll gather Lilacs" and "Roses of Picardy", beautiful melodic pieces by Roger Quilter and passionate songs by Ivor Gurney, Edward Elgar and Frank Bridge. I feel very at home in this era - I also love singing music from the great Broadway composers Porter, Gershwin, Kern, Hart, Rodgers and Hammerstein.

Is there a type or era of music you would not want to sing?

I am always learning that it is best to be open to the experience of singing in any genre of music! A piece of music may sometimes look daunting, or perhaps not at first appear to be what you would chose to sing, but you can gain so much from the challenges of getting to grips with it and it can be very rewarding to succeed in delivering what may become a very special and unique performance.

What have you got coming up in the future?

There is the release of my debut CD with pianist James Baillieu and Champs Hill which is exciting! I will also be performing in a series of concerts with Conductor Karl Jenkins to celebrate his 70th Birthday. I am looking forward to performances again with the RLPO – a Valentine's Day Concert and a celebration of the RLPO's 175th Anniversary in two Beethoven 9th Symphony concerts. I am performing Elgar's 'The Kingdom' at Wells Cathedral and Mozart's 'Vesperea Sollenes Confessore' and Handel's 'Dixit Dominus' with the Leeds Festival Chorus in Leeds Town Hall. In the summer of 2015 I will be performing in the role of Dorabella in Mozart's Cosi Fan Tutte with Garsington Opera.

RALLYING CALL TO S.I. MANCHESTER

From your AGM papers, you will see that there are vacancies for various Officers and Executive Committee Members. If you feel you can help or are approached DO PLEASE allow your name to go forward for election.

Everyone is busy with work and family as well as Soroptimism and other interests but getting involved is what life is all about and I am a firm believer that the more you put into a project, the more you get out of it.

Don't feel that you don't know enough none of us does. The step forward is the beginning of a learning curve and there is always help available. If you need it, you have only to ask someone who has done the job before but you can do it your way!

The Club needs your active support, so offer it - you did join to serve and make a difference – the friendships and fun are the bonuses.

I am not sure whether the following poem will encourage or deter you but I hope that, at least, it will amuse you.

Editor

ODE TO COMMITTEE



At the beginning of the meeting

We compose and propose, we support and oppose
And the points of procedure are fun,
But though various notions are brought up as motions
There's terribly little gets done.

We resolve and absolve, but never dissolve,
Since it's out of the question for us.
What a shattering pity to end our committee,
Where else could we make such a fuss.

Author: Unknown

Oh! Give me your pity, I'm on a committee,
Which means that from morning to night
We attend and amend, contend and defend
Without a conclusion in sight.

We confer and concur, we defer and demur
And reiterate all of our thoughts,
We revise the agenda with frequent addenda
And consider a load of reports.



At the end

Members of longstanding will have seen this poem before but it is still very applicable!

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Birthday Greetings to the following members, each of whom celebrates her birthday in the next three months.



Peggy Howarth	12 th	April
Christine Gibbons	26 th	April
Ann Thomas	19 th	May
Ruth Jackson	23 rd	May
Susan Hollick	29 th	May

Diary Dates

Sat	7 th	Mar	Regional Meeting at Leigh Sports Centre, WN7 4JY. (Bring own lunch) PAC 10am for 10:30am, followed by Business Meeting
Thurs	16 th	April	AGM and Dinner, Pinewood Hotel. Dinner 6pm for 6.30pm. Meeting 8pm.
Sat	16 th	May	N. West England & Isle of Man Regional Conference. Preston Marriott Hotel
Thu/Sat	5 th /7 th	Nov	81 st SIGBI Conference, Clyde Auditorium, Glasgow.



Should any of you feel you have a comment or anecdote that would be of interest to others, please play your part and send them to us for publication. Last date for copy for the next newsletter is Thursday, 22nd May.

Kathleen Beavis and Maureen Heywood