



Soroptimist International of Manchester
1926 - 2016

PRESIDENT

Molly Robinson

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Dear Club Members,



I'm writing this with the sun streaming through the windows on a calm, though still chilly, day. How different it is from yesterday when storm Doris hit us with 90mph winds. Trees were brought down, slates were blown off, the Britannia Bridge was closed to all traffic and many places were without electricity for most of the day. It was difficult to remain upright, and car doors were either impossible to open, or ripped out of your hand. The change is virtually miraculous.



If variety is the spice of life, on the weather score, where better could one be than the UK where one never knows what it will be like from one day to the next. It keeps us on our toes, adaptable and resilient. I hope you all survived the storm without disaster.

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## GOOD CHEER!

The final business meeting of the year is, by tradition in the Manchester Club, a break from work as Members are invited instead to a pre-Christmas "get-together", hosted by Yvonne and Kathleen at Yvonne's home.



The 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016 was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and, speaking for myself, the start of the Christmas season in an atmosphere of friendship and hospitality set by our hostesses.

The famous secret-recipe hot punch, offered on arrival followed by delicious canapés and mince pies, coaxed us from our ever louder chatter to pit our wits against Kathleen's quiz which, as usual, we were assured was "not a difficult one". Very enjoyable though. We are so competitive!

Inhibitions cast aside, our session of miming titles of Christmas carols for everyone to guess, revealed an astonishing number of inventive mimes for old carols. The most challenging of these was set by Yvonne and was finally dispatched by Val's authoritative declaration "that will be the Goat carol"! Our spirited rendition of "We wish you a merry Christmas" brought the party to a fitting close and sent us all home in a happy frame of mind.



As ever, we are indebted to Yvonne and Kathleen for their hard work in giving members this opportunity to socialise in a very special way.

**Stella Kay**

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SIGBI ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM (26TH-28TH OCTOBER 2017)

If you have never attended the above event, why not try it this year? You will have the friendship and support of seasoned attendees. Granted, it is not a particularly cheap weekend but attending a Conference will give you a much broader view and experience of "What is a Soroptimist?"



The hotel list for Cardiff has been published, but there is a much less expensive alternative – self-service (serviced) apartments for 2 to 8 people, opposite the venue, the Wales Millennium Centre. Sue, Kathleen and Yvonne have already booked their apartments. Come and join us by contacting “A Space in the City”, tel 0099889 and ask for the Quayside Apartments (opposite the Centre!)

Think of the fun we could have if we have a good group.

Yvonne Mullen

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#### **KATHLEEN’S 90TH BIRTHDAY LUNCH**

Never let it be said that Manchester Soroptimists would miss the chance of a party during a long, cold January! So, when we realised that one of our Lifetime Honorary Members, Kathleen Beavis, had recently celebrated her 90th birthday, a lunch was arranged at the Pinewood Hotel!



We don't see much of Kathleen since she moved to Anglesey, so we all made the most of this opportunity for food, fun and friendship.

Kathleen cut her cake and was delighted to receive a Soroptimist Rose from the club, presented by President Elect Rose and Stella.

Yvonne, our other Lifetime Honorary Member, told us of past Soroptimist times spent with Kathleen. Responding graciously, Kathleen could not disguise her delight in having ‘the last word’.....‘for once!’

Kathleen has always played an active part in the South Lancashire Region, including serving as Regional President. We were joined by our current Region President Margaret Molyneux and by Immediate Past Federation President Margaret Emsley.

Our members, old and new, continued to exchange memories.....we even attempted to recruit a new member, assuring her that we don't have to wait for a 90th birthday before we celebrate!

**Sue Underwood**

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FEBRUARY’S SPEAKER



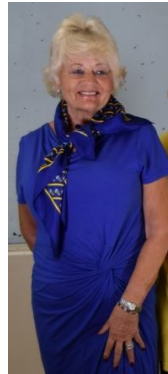
Dr Erinma Bell was the speaker at our February meeting. She became a co-founder and CEO of her own charity CARISMA (Community Alliance for Renewal Inner South Manchester Area) in 2003. CARISMA is a community based group set up to try and reduce gun crime and offer life chances to young people as an alternative to violence. Dr Bell spoke about ways of dealing with conflict and the different methods she employs to reduce violence. Through the work of CARISMA, in association with the police, gun crime has been reduced by 92%. CARISMA has since merged with Chrysalis - a family support centre which helps migrant families.

It was so interesting to hear about aspects of her life and work. We were delighted that she came to speak to us.

Rose Marginson

THE PHOTOSHOOT!

As part of the 'Growth Plan' it was decided that we needed an eye-catching poster to promote our Club. Susan discussed what we required with son Neil, who knows about these things, and he agreed to help us with a Photoshoot. Those of us who were 'up for it' (?!?) turned up in anything in Soroptimist colours that we could muster. Neil, a gentle soul, then did his best to get us into position....he tried us in various poses, with us offering our opinions, of course!



You will have to wait and see the final result, including Rose coming out from behind the camera! But, in the meantime, I offer the interview that Neil may have given.....

- Me: Neil, it is very generous of you to give up your evening to help us with this project.
Neil: My mother can be very persuasive!
Me: How would you describe the experience?
Neil: Very similar to the concept of 'herding kittens'
Me: How so?
Neil: Well in theory it should be possible, but you soon realise that you are not in control! Imagine telling your Mother and several of her strong minded friends what to do.....
Me: No way!
Neil:allows himself a smug look of triumph!
Me: This was our 'Calendar Girls' moment.....
Neil:with a note of panic in his voice Mum only mentioned a poster.....
Me: Yes of course! What I meant was, this is out of our comfort zone.....
Neil: and mine! I'm used to photographing inanimate objects!fully clothed inanimate objects!
Me: Were we so difficult to manage?
Neil:realises that any answer here would be a mistake, so just smiles ...
Me: Many thanks Neil, we truly could not have done it without you!
Neil: You are very welcome, but now I need to lie down in a darkened room for a while.....

Sue Underwood

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## LIVING LIBRARY

One of our members, Sally Carr MBE, recently took part in the "living library" event at Manchester Central Library. It was held on the 10th February (National Book Day). The event is open to members of the public and they select to meet a "book" from the people participating. People came along and from a book shelf chose a book sleeve representing someone they wanted to meet. They would then enter a room and, through conversation, learn about that character. Sally was one of the books.



Sally managed to speak with six women and give each of them a copy of the 'Ask me why I'm a Soroptimist' flyer. One woman was very keen and may have inadvertently been recruited to join SI Bolton! A new member all the same!



## PANCAKE PARTY 2016

On Saturday 11th February several of us attended an evening event which has now become established as a popular inclusion within the Club's social calendar: the Pancake Party hosted once again by Fiona and family.



We enjoyed delicious savoury and sweet pancakes in abundance followed by team games with great hilarity and considerable stretching of the imagination. A good time was had by all for which grateful thanks to the Charlton family. In addition, a useful contribution was made to our 90th fund raising account.

**Rosemary Steven**

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NEW HOPE ORISSA – CATARACT SURGERY



Jill Ghanouni from New Hope wrote to say she wondered if we might like to have a few photos of a typical cataract surgery scene. She went on to explain that when the patients are ready to leave (they normally keep them for about two weeks, partly to feed them up and partly because they have other health needs which require attention). A van is hired to transport them as far as possible, until the road runs out. The patients then make the rest of the distance home on foot. (Some live up to 2.5 days walk from the hospital as they live in remote tribal hill villages). All patients leave with a 'Bundle of Love' - one month's supply of rice or lentils, plus a bed sheet, and saree or lungi for men, basic toiletries and customised sandals.

Editors' Note: Cataract surgery is provided at a cost of £20 and think of the life-changing difference it makes !!!

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## CHILDREN ON THE EDGE

You may remember that last July we sent a donation of £150 to "Children on the Edge", a small charity which had provided a speaker at a Regional Meeting some years ago. They have since e-mailed us to suggest that they send us their monthly newsletter and they provided the following information.



### Keeping families warm in Syria

Winter in Syria can be bitter. Our partners are providing vital supplies, like food and fuel to families enduring freezing conditions. We're currently supporting 160 internally displaced families in Damascus.

### Desperation in camps as more Rohingya refugees flee violence

Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees from Burma have fled to makeshift camps in Bangladesh in recent weeks. Our Camp Schools provide safe, familiar spaces for 2700 children who have fled horrific violence. The current situation is desperate and we're looking for funding to continue this vital work.





### Playtime for working children in Bangladesh

Play is a key part of all our projects. At our Community Schools in Bangladesh, Thursdays are 'playdays' and members of our child councils arrange activities and games. The children also spend time making their environment nicer, by cleaning, gardening and making decorations for classrooms

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91ST ANNUAL DINNER



President Molly



High Sheriff



Martin & Gail

Friday, 24th February, was the chosen date for the club to celebrate its 91st anniversary. The new venue of Northenden Golf Club provided a bright and spacious venue, an elegant environment, whilst also being warm and friendly. Members, guests and fellow Soroptimists enjoyed a hot and delicious dinner with well presented food.

President Molly led the proceedings in a calm relaxed style and her toast to the City and Ports of Manchester highlighted the comparisons between her home city in the USA and Manchester, an international slant, reflective of our organisation. The response by The High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, The Lady Smith DL, was extremely interesting.

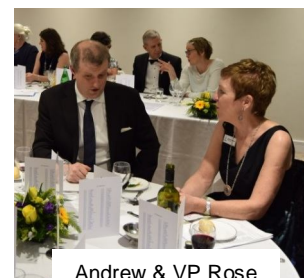
The toast to Soroptimist International was proposed by Gail Heath, CEO of the Pankhurst Trust (including Manchester Woman's Aid) who paid tribute to our Club's considerable contributions to the organisation she represented. Regional President Margaret Molyneux outlined the many and varied aspects of our Programme Action agenda and our sustained efforts to fulfil our charitable work.

The chosen guest speaker was most appropriately Martin Smedley, CEO of Act4Africa, as our fund raising focus throughout our 90th celebratory period has been to support the work of the organisation he founded. His presentation outlined the history of Act4Africa and what has been achieved to date, particularly the HEAL project which the Club has striven to support.

President-Elect Rose Marginson brought the evening to a conclusion by expressing the Club's thanks to all who had contributed to ensure such an enjoyable occasion. Grateful thanks must go to Peter Halliwell for once again undertaking the role of toast master in his usual cheerful, but professional and unique style.



The Hollick Family



Andrew & VP Rose

On behalf of all members of SI Manchester we thank the dinner committee for it's organisation of a very successful Charter Dinner.

Rosemary Steven

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### **TODAY'S GREEK FINANCIAL SITUATION**

As a part time Greek resident I am often asked, "Are you alright there?" "Is there anything on the supermarket shelves?" "Are the Greeks starving?"

I cannot speak for mainland Greece or for the Eastern Islands, which have distressing issues to deal with on a daily basis owing to the refugee crisis, but the following is a summary of my thoughts on the background to the financial problems and how life actually is today from my perspective.

The Greek people have long had a financial exchange rate based on a friendly bartering system; "you have my tomatoes and I'll have your fish". In addition, tax avoidance is something of a national sport. However it appears to me that in addition to these long-established habits, the population has now been politically disenfranchised with policies rubber stamped by the Greek Parliament for policies imposed upon it by European Banks and the European Commission.

The Greeks, who almost never had personal debt and didn't use credit cards before 2001, were persuaded into having both after Greece joined the Euro. The banks and government officials told them that now you are in the Euro zone you can spend, spend, spend just like the rest of the Europeans and therefore encouraged them to live far beyond their means. Likewise successive Greek governments were encouraged to ramp up the national debt (funding the Olympics and its infrastructure, buying weapons they didn't need and generally living far beyond their means.) Of course the Greek government and the people must take some responsibility for this but the bulk of the problem has been caused by Northern European banks that encouraged this, knowing full well that the debts could never be paid back.

So today the Greek pensioner has had his pension cut by 48 per cent as have Government employees, including teachers, police etc. Greece is being turned into a third world country and foreign investors are buying land and formerly nationalised industries at rock bottom prices. The Greek government is being forced to sell off anything of value and recently a German company has snapped up 14 regional airports (including Skiathos).

The Greek people are resilient despite incredible hardships; they have had 400 years of Turkish occupation, two world wars, a civil war, a dictatorship, successive corrupt governments and many other hardships. This austerity is just another one and is treated with a Greek shrug and another glass of wine.

In Skiathos life is still for us idyllic and one of the places where people, friendship and family are more important than money and a friendly hand is always offered to those in need. We have the sound of the breeze rustling in the olive groves, the smell of wild herbs, and our tranquillity only occasionally disturbed by the goat herder moving his flocks. The photograph is the view from our bedroom window.



Do not hesitate to visit a place where there is still a peaceful life rather than the view of a starving, non-tax paying, debt ridden country presented so often by the press.

**Rosemary Steven**



**MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

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

|               |                  |       |
|---------------|------------------|-------|
| Peggy Howarth | 12 <sup>th</sup> | April |
| Ann Thomas    | 19 <sup>th</sup> | May   |
| Susan Hollick | 29 <sup>th</sup> | May   |



**Diary Dates**

|         |                                    |       |                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------|------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sat     | 11 <sup>th</sup>                   | Mar   | Regional Meeting at Leigh Sports Centre, WN7 4JY. (Bring own lunch)<br>PAC 10am for 10:30am, followed by Business Meeting at earlier time of 12.30 |
| Thurs   | 20 <sup>th</sup>                   | April | AGM and Dinner, Pinewood Hotel<br>Dinner 6pm for 6.30pm. Meeting 8pm.                                                                              |
| Wed     | 10 <sup>th</sup>                   | May   | Coffee Pot Lunch, Wycliffe Hotel – further details later                                                                                           |
| Sat     | 13 <sup>th</sup>                   | May   | North West England and Isle of Man Regional Conference, Preston Marriott Hotel                                                                     |
| Thu/Sat | 26 <sup>th</sup> /28 <sup>th</sup> | Oct   | SIGBI Conference, Cardiff                                                                                                                          |

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We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to this issue and 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, 19th May.

Kathleen Beavis and Maureen Heywood