



Summer  
Autumn  
2023  
Issue 84



Soroptimist International of Manchester

President: **Sue Underwood**

Dear Club Members,  
Here at last is your Newsletter, now presented as the 'Summer/Autumn' edition! I planned to complete it in August before going to France for most of September... but then Albert came to stay and this was 'the look' I had to contend with if I was delaying play, walk or food time! I even took my laptop on holiday to continue on wet days but the weather was glorious. I promise that you will have the Winter edition before Christmas, including all of your Greetings.  
My challenge to you all was that you should contribute at least one article each for this edition.... Congratulations to all of you who accepted!  
Now my challenge is that you all should contribute something to each edition of your Newsletter!

**Sue Underwood**



**President's Message – President Sue Underwood (V)**



It's been a busy and enjoyable Summer & Autumn of Soroptimism and holidays! Charter Lunches of SI Wigan, St Helens (80<sup>th</sup>), Stockport and Bolton (85<sup>th</sup>) were very pleasant ways of spending a Sunday enjoying good food in delightful company.

Another pleasurable Presidential duty was welcoming Njideka (NJ) and Cathrine to our meetings by presenting them with their badges, even though this was long overdue.



I joined Barbara and other Act4Africa volunteers, Zohra and Sarah at the Lions Father's Day Fete in Worthington Park, Sale. Our

Tombola was declared the 'classiest' among several thanks to the donated prizes! Madam Mayor Dolores O'Sullivan, was very interested in the work of Act4Africa as well as Soroptimism.

Then of course there was the Soroptimist International Convention in Dublin in July – somehow it seemed longer than four years ago that we convened in Kuala Lumpur, I suppose because so much has happened in the world since 2019. More about SIC Dublin follows.



Madam Mayor Dolores O'Sullivan (C) with Barbara Blaber (L) and Sue Underwood (R)

Most of September was spent in an amazing villa in Provence named 'L'Aigo Vivo', apparently 'I'm Alive' in Catalan, with a pool shaped like a wine bottle.... We've booked for all of September next year!

**President Sue**



## Our Speakers

### May – S.A.L.V.E. ‘Support And Love Via Education’

Nicola, CEO and co-founder of [SALVE](#) spoke at our May Club meeting. The charity has been supporting children living on the streets of Jinja, Eastern Uganda, and their families since 2008.



There are over 600 children living on the streets of Jinja and another 3,000 that turn to the streets for work. A team of Ugandan social workers offer counselling, support, medical care and education. They build relationships with the children and, where possible, return them to their family or to a foster home.



worthwhile charity.

We were pleased to be able to make a donation to this very

### June – Visitor from Armenia

At our June meeting we were very pleased to welcome Natalia, a member of S I Yerevan – a club in the European Federation.

Natalia told us about the history of her club and her work as a doctor including her research into the genetics of Mediterranean fever and the treatment of COVID.



### July – Didsbury Good Neighbours (DGN)

DGN Manager Jamie explained to a very select July Club meeting the role of Didsbury Good Neighbours.

*‘Offering support and friendship Didsbury Good Neighbours is a local charity whose aim is to provide neighbourly support to older people. We do this through a volunteer befriending service, practical help and a programme of social activities.’*

[www.didsburygoodneighbours.org.uk](http://www.didsburygoodneighbours.org.uk)

Jamie invited us to try our first ‘Orange Café’ at one of their regular Coffee Mornings



*Excerpts from our Website (thanks Pat) and our FaceBook page (thanks Rose)*

## Our New Bank Account with CSR\* Corporate Social Responsibility

*CSR\* Corporate Social Responsibility is a strategy undertaken by companies to not just make profits, but also to take an active and positive social role in the world around them*

When we decided to replace our HSBC Bank Account with one that was more ethical, our Treasurer Elaine set about the research and 'due diligence' ..... We now bank with Metro Bank

**Nilany Vasantharasan**, Manager of Metro Bank, 45 Market Street, Manchester, explains why.....

### **Metro Bank Supports Women**

At Metro Bank, our customers and colleagues are at the heart of everything we do; we breathe equality, diversity and inclusion day in, day out, and as a community bank, it's so important that we reflect the communities we serve. This includes supporting women to achieve their full potential, whether they are looking to take the next steps in their business or escaping an abusive relationship.

### **Backing female entrepreneurs**

Metro Bank is a founding signatory to the **Investing in Women Code**, a commitment to support the advancement of female entrepreneurship by improving access to tools, resources and finance. The code has established a means of sharing best practice across the financial sector and as part of this we have designed and held a series of workshops to support female business leaders within our communities covering important topics such as how to access finance, and building a network to support growth. Our dedicated team continually reviews our products and services to make them more accessible to women, works with external bodies to ensure they are maximising the opportunities for women in business and encouraging female-led start-ups to get off the ground and has created our own series of free events.

### **Creating Safe Spaces**

Metro Bank store colleagues have been trained to offer a Safe Space to domestic abuse victims, many of whom are also victims of economic abuse by their partners. As a community bank, our store teams already have well-established connections with local domestic abuse charities and as our stores are open seven days a week, evenings and 362 days a year, we can offer extended access on the high street for those needing a safe space. In addition to this, 48 Metro Bank stores offer the Safe Spaces scheme. This will give anyone experiencing, or at risk of domestic abuse, the opportunity to safely call a helpline, support service or loved one.

These initiatives not only allow us to make a difference to our communities, but they make sure our amazing culture is engrained with equity, diversity and inclusion throughout, creating a place of belonging for all of our colleagues and in turn, our community too.

**Nilany Vasantharasan**

## **We welcomed Nilany as our Speaker at the October Club meeting.....**

Nilany told us the story of her personal journey fleeing war torn Sri Lanka in 1995 when she was just 5 years old. With just two hours to either 'leave or be killed' Nilany's mother packed what essentials she could for Nilany, her sister (4) and brother (8) and fled.....they survived a harrowing journey across 20 countries and 3 continents before arriving in the UK in 1999. They were in the hands of people smugglers, known as 'The Agency', finding more and more money to pay them from branches of their family all over the world.

Nilany, a child refugee, has now earned 2 degrees and manages the Manchester Branch of the Metro Bank. She stresses that "we came here to have a good education and to stand on our own two feet, none of us (mother, sister or brother) have ever claimed benefits"

Those of us who listened to her story were left humbled, almost speechless and longing to meet her mother! Nilany asked that the £50 donation be sent to 'World Vision', she sponsors a child through them and recently did the '6K Walk for Water' because

***"6K is the average distance that children often girls walk every single day to fetch water for their community.***

***Water that is often filthy and makes them really sick.***

***I'm doing this challenge because every step I take is one they won't have to."***

Thank you Nilany, we look forward to getting to know you and sharing our Soroptimism with you.

**Sue Underwood**





## Our trip to the Balkans by Range Rover June 2023 by Soroptimister Kev Gascoigne

Sophie and I, together with our friends Ollie and Nancy from Eire, left Manchester on a sunny Wednesday lunchtime and pointed our car south, the destination for the day was the channel tunnel. Early the very next morning we drove onto the train and 35 minutes later we were driving off and heading towards Belgium, Luxemburg and into Germany for our second night and the rendezvous point for others in the group travelling with us.



We have travelled with Russ before, his one-man travel company organises trips all over Europe and North Africa, as I write this, he's leading a trip through Iceland. He's a gruff Yorkshireman and calls a spade a spade, he certainly knows his stuff though, which is how we ended up in a group of five four-wheel drive vehicles heading through Germany, on the autobahn, to Austria and then Ljubljana the capital city of Slovenia.



Slovenia is now part of the EU and is a lovely compact and clean city with some beautiful buildings. We ate at the best restaurant in town our waiter was very knowledgeable about the other countries we were heading to, giving us plenty of tips.

The next day we went through tiny villages and down small rough roads to Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, it was a Saturday and there was a wine festival in the park a short walk from our hotel. Obviously, we were very keen to find out more about local customs and try the local wines, we had a very nice evening indeed with a fantastic party atmosphere.



On the drive down, chatting in the car, we had decided to learn four words for each country we visited. These were "Please, Thank you, Beer and The Bill". Generally, these words got us through most situations!

The next city was Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. We took a boat trip on the Danube and the river Sava, the confluence of which is in Belgrade. We spent three nights in Serbia including the birthplace of Slobodan Milosević.

The next country was Montenegro, probably the most surprising of all the countries we visited. The Tara Canyon, the second largest canyon in the world at 82km long and 1.3 km deep runs through this tiny country. I would argue it's more beautiful than the Grand Canyon, it's certainly more verdant and has lots of wildlife including Bears! Not that we saw any.... fortunately 😊 Montenegro is about 110 miles from the Greek border. Maybe next time we'll carry on south.







We were now well out of Europe and border crossings were “interesting”. The border personnel always wanted to see our passports and all the car documents and our “Green Card”. We knew this before we left the UK and asked our insurance company for a card, only to be told that they no longer exist. I had a think about it and bought some green A4 paper from amazon and printed our insurance certificate onto it. Incredibly this worked a charm on every occasion we were asked for it.

Next, we travelled into Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo being our first City and the capital. We visited Latin bridge where Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, the Siege of Sarajevo museum, and the site of the 1984 Winter Olympics.

Next on the trip was the city of Mostar, using the route taken by the UN tanks when they arrived and relieved the siege, these tracks go up the mountainside and can be very tight and overgrown. Some of the tracks are quite technical to navigate and can be quite a challenge. I was giving myself a pat on the back after one particularly nasty section when a 35 year old VW Golf appeared coming towards us, the driver and his two passengers, one of which was a sheep, seemed unfazed by the rough road and waved as they went past us in a cloud of cigarette smoke.



Mostar is an incredible city. We stopped in the old town near the old bridge, the word MOSTAR translates to OLD BRIDGE. We were staying right in the middle of the old town with all its lovely minarets and Muslim culture sat alongside Catholic churches and Jewish synagogues.

The next day we started to head north, we saw lots of deserted villages and lots of evidence of the ethnic cleansing that happened during the Yugoslavian Wars in the 1990's. Throughout the trip we were always welcomed by everyone we met the hospitality was exceptional, people were always keen to say hello and to look at our cars, the language barrier was never a real problem, it added to the fun if anything.

Over the next three days we made our way back north and ultimately back through Austria, Germany and then France. 18 nights, 4000 miles, we were tired when we arrived home however, we will definitely be returning to the Balkans in the future.

***Kev Gascoigne***

*(All Soroptimisters are welcome to contribute articles! Thanks Kev. Sue)*



## SIGBI Day Of Action- Emmeline's Birthday Party

First came the advert in Pankhurst Museum Newsletter and on social media:

Every year on the Sunday nearest to Emmeline's birthday (15th July), we host a party, and this year is no different! Join us for a FREE, FABULOUS & FUN celebration on Sunday 16th July here at the museum & garden. There will be music, poetry workshops, card making, fancy cakes (courtesy of the Soroptimists International), a glass of something sparkly and the chance to explore our small but perfectly formed museum (the home of the Suffragette movement). There'll also be games and Suffragette Selfie dressing up in the garden!

(*'Manchester' didn't get a mention but Soroptimists is spelt correctly!*)

Then on the day:

President Sue and some of the members enjoyed helping out at the Pankhurst Centre at their celebration of Emmeline's Birthday Party.

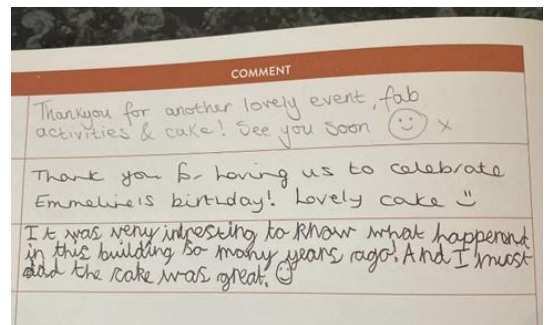


We enjoyed serving the cakes we had baked for the occasion and the fizz.

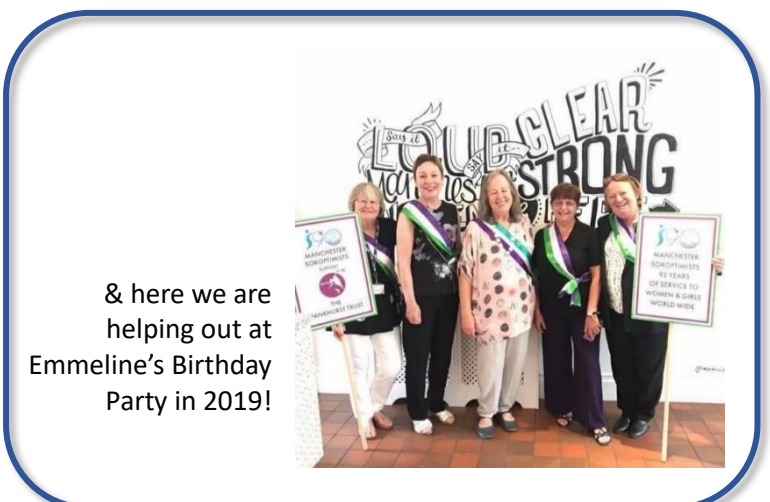
A lovely occasion. Nice to see the lovely comments in the visitors book about the cakes.



Everyone enjoyed their visit and it was a pleasure to see so many people, particularly the children, so interested in the Suffragettes and the Pankhurst Family.



Susan, a regular Pankhurst Volunteer was on duty in the Parlour for the day.



<b>The story of your project</b>	
What did your Club/Region/NA/Network do?	We baked cakes/buns for the celebration of Emmeline Pankhurst's Birthday at the Pankhurst Centre in advance and on the actual day served the cakes and fizz and chatted to the people including many families who had come to find out about the suffragettes.
Why did your Club/Region/NA/Network choose this project? What issue did you tackle with this project? Was the club approached to help with the issue?	We have supported and taken part in projects with them previously. We were asked to take part . Those who came wanted to find out more about Emmeline Pankhurst and the Suffragettes . They had a tour of the Heritage Museum , took part in different events , and finished off with cake. It was a celebration and an educational event.
How did you carry out the project? Who was involved in the project? What did they do?	5 of our members took part with the staff and the volunteers of the Pankhurst . Our members baked cakes in advance 14 hours volunteer hours and on the day set out the refreshments, served them and chatted to the families and people who attended about the Pankhursts -28 hours .
What was the outcome of this project?	Those who attended left with more knowledge of the Suffragettes and their fight to get women the vote .

Thank you to Manchester Womens Aid for this photo of the mural we always like to stand in front of!





## Our 'Big Help Out' – Disney Day At Emmeline's Pantry

SIGBI asked – The 'Big Help Out', please get involved; as part of his Coronation King Charles III is promoting the 'Big Help Out'. The initiative is to encourage more volunteering in the community. As we are a volunteer organisation it is a great way to promote what we do and recruit members.



Manchester Club have a strong partnership with Emmeline's Pantry a charity that support families in need , particularly women and children escaping domestic violence.

They were having a Disney Day on May 20th both to raise money and also give the families they support a fun day out.

Volunteers were needed and 4 of our members spent a very happy day helping with refreshments, running the raffle and the toy stall.

We also donated toys that had been given to us from Tesco, Sale.



It was so lovely seeing the children with the toys .....and the sun shone that day, a bonus!

### Rose Marginson





## Smashing It For M.A.S.H.!

Once upon a time (January 2023), I sat drinking tea and eating chocolates with a couple of young surgeons-in-training at work, discussing how well (or otherwise) we were adhering to our New Years resolutions. Each of us had been determined to maintain some semblance of fitness over the winter months but the cold, icy weather had led to lack of motivation and a tendency to reach for the chocolates that were left over from the festive period. Until that is, one of my young charges suggested that we should enter the Great Manchester Run in May as a motivational tool. "No problem" I thought, "I can manage 10K. I've done that before". Except the plan announced was to enter the half marathon, a distance I've never attempted, and which seemed a little daunting.

The challenge was accepted, the entry fee paid and there was no backing out. I ate another chocolate Celebration to mark the occasion.

I've raised money during events, for cancer charities before, mainly due to my cancer work in the NHS but I thought this would be a good opportunity to raise some money for a local women's charity having recently joined Manchester Soroptimists. I'd heard of M.A.S.H. (Manchester Action on Street Health) initially from fellow Soroptimist Sophie and having browsed their webpages I was impressed with the work they do to support women who do sex work.

So after sticking rigidly to a training plan I downloaded from the internet, on Sunday May 21<sup>st</sup> I finally lined up with hundreds of other runners in the centre of Manchester and with my heart pounding, set off. It was a hot and sunny day with little shade but when the going was tough and my legs were burning, the support enroute from strangers as well as friends and colleagues (who had placed themselves at strategic vantage points on the way), and the boost of knowing I was raising money for M.A.S.H., saw me through. Crossing the line was a euphoric feeling and I finished in 2hrs15mins which I was pleased with as a first-timer.

Manchester was at its very best that day in glorious sunshine and its spirit was really on show. I was overtaken by a Manchester Bee and spent a couple of miles running with Batman. I even spotted the Blackpool tower coming in the other direction too!

Post-event re-fuelling comprised a midday pint of beer with my young challengers followed by a slap-up afternoon tea at the Richmond Tea Rooms complete with a glass of fizz. I won't be doing a marathon anytime soon (I've promised!) but I thoroughly enjoyed this half-marathon and with the sponsorship of many generous people raised **£565** for M.A.S.H. Janelle who co-ordinates fundraising efforts at the charity, sent a lovely card of thanks which is currently sitting on my dresser.



*Before....pre-race nerves*



*During.....*



*After with the Medal....*



*Post Race Rewards!*

**Cathrine Holland**



## Travelling the Slow Road

My second summer of retirement, a new campervan conversion for the two of us and the stage was set for a long trip to the islands of Shetland and Orkney. This was a much anticipated trip and we were worried it might not live up to our high expectations but they certainly delivered as destinations, so much so, that we cannot imagine not returning to them. Now I can imagine that many of you will think that a campervan is not a particularly luxurious way to travel but perhaps I can persuade you otherwise. Our van conversion, for two, is from a brilliant company in Leeds called Consort, and is very comfortable and well thought out. The large rear lounge allows us to put our feet up to watch a movie if it is raining, to play board games (I am rather obsessed with them!) and host other friends we often travel with, and it converts to a king size bed.

The kitchen is very well equipped so we eat similar food to home but can also cook outside in good weather. Our 3 solar panels mean our fridge can always produce ice, which was rather handy as there are some very good new distilleries on Orkney that produce award winning gins. This allows us to use low voltage appliances even without an electric hook up; buying local produce reduces food miles and contributes to their economies so we feel very "green" reducing our carbon footprint.

We also have our own toilet and shower so can be truly "off grid" for a few days between campsites. This allowed us to camp alongside beautiful wild beaches with sands as white as any in the Caribbean and to get a lot closer to nature. We had plenty of cupboards for clothes and essentials like board games and books (thank you Val for the loan of a great walking book). Most campsites on Shetland are at marinas so have kitchens, showers and washing facilities for a small charge making it easy for us.



Campervans and motorhomes became much more desirable in the pandemic but we have had a larger motorhome for at least 15 years with our family so were not new to this type of travel, but wondered if Paul and I would survive 7 weeks together in a small space! In fact we thrived, and the smaller van, just under 6 metres, meant we could meander down quieter roads and fit in small parking places and was just brilliant and as a bonus we didn't argue (much). The Scottish Islands nearer the mainland like Mull and Skye were overwhelmed as lockdown eased and are now fed up of unreasonable motorhomers, and we don't blame them, so we wondered how the islanders would feel about us. What an amazing experience we had as they were overwhelmingly welcoming and helpful, perhaps realising the effort we made to travel to them and how much we appreciated the islands.

We set off in May and wandered up visiting old friends in Aberfeldy, spending an evening in a bar listening to the most incredible musicians, before heading to Aberdeen for the overnight ferry to Shetland's capital, Lerwick. Shetland is an archipelago with a long mainland with the islands of Yell and Unst to the North, the easiest to visit by a short ferry trip, Fair Isle and Foula both of which we left for a return visit, and overall up to a hundred tiny islands. We found a wild beauty with many dramatic cliffs and deep grooving inlets, called geos, which are home to huge numbers of birds so a bird watchers paradise and we always had the binoculars (a retirement present) to hand. There are many stunning offshore stacks and rock arches and breathtaking panoramic views. The miles of moorland peat bogs are another extraordinary habitat and it is also fringed with beautiful beaches and, on a sunny day, turquoise clear waters. The islands do feel remote and different, it is hard to capture the vistas you see in photographs. As well as the opportunities to see birds and other wildlife, Yell is considered the otter capital of the UK and there are whales and dolphins off shore, you quickly get immersed in the history and culture of the islands too.





I felt inspired to start knitting again as it is such an amazing tradition on Shetland; essential as it is pretty windy there (had I mentioned that?) and you need a hat when walking...or even two.....so watch this space.

The Scandinavian influence is evident in their houses and culture and Norse history accessible from the archaeological finds at places like Jarlshof on the mainland. Perhaps we were more surprised at understanding how pivotal the islands were in neolithic times as we visited 5000 year old Brochs and roundhouse and wheelhouse remains. I certainly had not realised how often they would have been visited by travellers from Scandinavia heading down the coasts of Scotland or Ireland and onto Europe or across to Iceland and Canada.

Of course, sea travel in those ages was much easier than land travel but I had not really appreciated how much we knew about our Iron Age ancestors! I blame the school curriculum for concentrating on Ancient Egypt (fascinating, but the pyramids are 2000 years younger than the site we visited on the islands)! Jarlshof has iron age(neolithic), C12th viking and C18th buildings on one site showing how hard it is to preserve such sites and explore the layers below! Where are those old series of Time Team?



Island life is interesting and encourages resourcefulness and resilience and the creativity of islanders is clearly supported as there are creative trail leaflets and signs to artists' studios throughout. Paul and I enjoyed therefore visiting galleries and studios of painters, weavers, knitters, jewellers, potters and found the displays and information about island life in the museums and local heritage centres fascinating. Balance that with almost daily walks with birds and stunning scenery and you have a wonderful recipe for a fascinating visit.

So what have I left out.... Of course, food, always close to a Soroptimist heart, and particularly cake, my one weakness (well maybe there are others...). As in more remote places generally cafes or restaurants, and even the famous Frankie's fish and chip restaurant/shop (voted best in the UK), close early often at 7pm so people presumably stop by after work on their way home. However the quality of fresh and local produce is excellent, homemade soups and cheese scones universal and delicious and cheap and what can I say about the cakes..... well always scrumptious and homemade on the premises, huge slices and frankly would satisfy even the strictest Bake Off judges. Did I mention cake fridges and honesty boxes? Yes really, roadside caches with delicious treats to tempt you, some with veg, eggs, preserves and we even found an honesty café with a kettle outside and everything to make a drink. That was next to the Peerie rock shop (means little) an honesty shop with all the stones in containers outside and an honesty cash box



for payment! A little research and facebook pages tell you where they are and what they stock, so we found quite a few on our travels!!



So where should you go when on the islands? Truly it was all fabulous and I am happy to share ideas with anyone now considering them for a visit. I would also recommend a day out with a naturalist as our day on Yell, with Ian from Otter Tracks, meant we did see two otters. Yes they are still elusive but a knowledgeable guide really increases your chances. We weren't lucky enough to see Orcas or basking sharks but yes to dolphins and seals. If you need inspiration do watch the first one of the BBC Wild Isles recent series which is mainly based on Shetland and follows pods of Orcas. The Broch on the island of Mousa, a 5000 year old well preserved tower of 13 metres, was worth the night time trip to the RSPB reserve, to see the storm petrels that return to nest in the crevices of the broch walls around midsummer; they come out to feed when dark to avoid predating larger birds, an amazing spectacle not to miss. Hermaness, Unst, on a clear day meant views of a huge gannet colony, sitting for lunch with puffins popping out of their burrows around us, views of the most northerly rocks of the UK with the lighthouse at Muckle Flugga (what a name, see above photos) and Great Skuas displaying and mating, it felt as though David Attenborough would pop up to give us a commentary at any moment, very magical.



Don't leave out Eshaness, St Ninian's isle with a famous sand tombolo, or even Lerwick and if you were a fan of the Shetland TV series, based on Anne Cleve's books, you will recognise many places.





Of course, those who know us well will imagine that we chatted, endlessly, to everyone as we travelled, learning about their lives on the islands, and what it was like to grow up there, getting their tips for things to see and do and trying to keep to the maxim of taking nothing with us and leaving nothing behind except memories and footprints in the sand.



.....Perhaps I will leave Orkney until the next newsletter as there is so much more to say. I will tempt you to read the next instalment by saying that we left Shetland sadly, wondering if Orkney could possibly live up to the first half of the trip but looking forward to slightly warmer weather. The temperatures for Shetland in May are 6-11°C so on the good and sunny days we still had warm hats, fleeces and coats on as you can see from the pictures. Somehow we evaded the promised days of rain and didn't have to lock down in the camper with books and the TV but were out each day. So what would Orkney bring when the highest recorded June temp has been 14°C. I remember laughing as Paul put in a pair of shorts and then sneaked some in for me too...did we get to wear them?

As Orkney is so much closer to the top of Scotland we wondered if it would feel as remote and exciting. Like Shetland both sets of islands had belonged to Norway historically from C9th to C15th century, a dowry gift to the Earls from Norway who themselves were under Danish rule. As there are many who would like to return to Norway we wondered if it would feel as Scandinavian as Shetland.

We were not disappointed.....  
**Fiona Spencer**

*Birds rule on Orkney!*





## Supporting the North West England & Isle Of Man Region (NWE & IOM Region)

In May Carole, Pat, Val and I crossed the border to attend the NWE & IOM Regional Conference at Brockholes Nature Reserve's Conference Centre near Preston.

([www.brockholes.org](http://www.brockholes.org))

(Our South Lancashire Region and the NWE & IOM Region used to have a Joint Regional Conference each year, now we alternate years but still like to support each other's Conference)



The theme was 'Make it happen, make it matter'.

A good venue and excellent conference, no 'death by PowerPoint'! Nice lunch too.

Speakers included

- Claire Bennett CEO of 'Positive Action in the Community' (PAC) spoke of the projects that PAC currently manage including 'SafeSpace' (Supported Accommodation for Homeless Young People), HAPI (Homelessness Awareness and Prevention Interventions), 'Be Free' dealing with domestic abuse and 'Evolve' providing a community wellbeing service. ([www.p-a-c.org.uk](http://www.p-a-c.org.uk))
- Emma Porter explained her role as the controller/facilitator in the UK for the British Cave Rescue Teams part in the Thai Cave Rescue back in July 2018 when 12 boys and their soccer coach had a miraculous escape.
- Mary Storrie, Founder and CEO of the 'Rosie May Foundation' told us about the Pink Tuk Tuk project in Sri Lanka and how 'Rosie the Little Pink Tuk Tuk' became an iconic symbol of hope during the pandemic when furloughed volunteers were able to deliver essential items to the vulnerable and self-isolating people in a Nottingham village. ([www.Rosie-May.com](http://www.Rosie-May.com))
- Dr Jan Graffius, Curator of Collections at nearby Stoneyhurst College introduced us to some of the exhibits and whetted our appetites for a visit. ([www.stoneyhurst.ac.uk](http://www.stoneyhurst.ac.uk))

Superb Speakers, rounded off by a rousing call to next year's South Lancashire Region's Conference 'Rise Up & Roar' by Regional President Elect Pamela!

All told, a truly uplifting and entertaining day.

*Sue Underwood*



### **Soroptimist International of South Lancashire Regional Conference 2024**

**Soroptimists standing up for women and girls. A conference  
focused upon the key themes of women's health and  
wellness, education, gender equality and human rights.**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Saturday 11th May 2024**



**THE WRIGHTINGTON**  
• HOTEL, HEALTH CLUB & SPA •

Moss Lane, Wrightington, Wigan WN6 9PB



## Helen Latto Prize for Singing

Helen Latto was President of S I Manchester in 1980-81. She left a capital sum to the club which was donated to the Royal Northern College of Music for investment with the interest gained to be used annually as a prize for singing to a student in the junior school.

President Sue and I had a lovely afternoon at the Junior Royal Northern College of Music on Saturday presenting prizes and being entertained to an incredible performance of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No3 by one of them! A lot of 'us spreading the Soroptimist word' went on there too .

Congratulations to Josie McEvey, a soprano, recipient of our Helen Latto Prize for Singing.



This year the winner of the Helen Latto Soroptimist Prize for Singing was Josie McEvey, seen here with President Sue and Susan.



This is Karen Humphrey's last year as head of the RNCM Junior School – a long time friend of S I Manchester, she has promised to keep in touch.

Josie has since written:

*Dear Mrs Susan Hollick,*

*I would like to show my gratitude for being awarded the Helen Latto Soroptimist Prize for Singing. I hold my four years at the JRNCM very close to my heart as I have found friendships that will last a lifetime and been nurtured by the amazing staff, who have moulded me into the musician I am today. The JRNCM has allowed me to reach for my dream of conservatoire giving me all the knowledge and experience I needed to gain a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music. Being awarded the Helen Latto Soroptimist Prize for Singing has been an amazing way to end my life changing time at the JRNCM.*

*Many Thanks, Josephine McEvey*

**Susan Hollick**

## Circle Dancing

Having decided that I needed to exercise my body and mind I discovered Circle Dancing.

Dancing in a circle is an ancient tradition common to many cultures for marking special occasions, strengthening community and encouraging togetherness. The dances can be energetic and lively or gentle and reflective and draws on the rich and diverse traditional dances of many countries including the Balkans, Greece, Israel, Africa and Ireland.

Anyone of any age or ability can circle dance and it is fun. I now teach a range of dances such is my enthusiasm for this little known uplifting pastime.

My favourite saying is 'There are no mistakes in circle dancing only variations in the steps.'

**Carole Swarbrick**





## Julian of Norwich Event in Manchester Cathedral

Manchester Cathedral hosted a very special event on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 to celebrate the 650<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Julian of Norwich's 'Shewings', the revelations that she received and wrote down. Her writings are known as 'The Revelations of Divine Love' and is believed to be the first book written in the English language by an English woman who was an anchoress and lived a solitary life in a church cell in Norwich. Her writings are rooted in her religious experiences, and it would not have been possible for them to be published in her time as it was not regarded as being acceptable for a woman to write and publish about religious matters. Society, including the Church, was male dominated and generally women did not have a public voice. Julian would have been considered by the Church to be illiterate as she could not write in Latin.

One of the main insights of Julian was that everything in this world is made from love, for love and all beings and nature must be kept and protected by love till the very end. Love for Julian is synonymous with God, and she believed that through contemplation we can get closer to God and with God's help face the reality of our lives, which in Julian's time was devastated by the plague.

Although this prophetic anchoress lived like a hermit, she was not only the first English woman of letters but also the first woman theologian who, despite the turbulence of society at the time, articulated what can be called a 'positive theology'. She is particularly known for her statement of hope:

*"Yes all shall be well, and all will be well and thou shall see thyself that all manner of thing shall be well"*  
Julian's spiritual optimism shines through this beautiful and powerful sentence.

Julian also believed that God was our Father and also our Mother and in her "Shewings" she wrote *"and so I saw that God rejoices that he is our Father and God rejoices that she is our Mother..."*

Julian believed that God created and nurtured the Universe, all of Nature and all beings from the smallest hazelnut to the complexity of human existence. Her belief that God's nature is both Father and Mother, masculine and feminine, would have been regarded as heretical but, in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, her radical insights are increasingly wisely appreciated.

Julian immersed herself in contemplative silence, the example of which can inspire us to engage with our self, others and the world around us attentively in order to grow spiritually, being manifest in peace, joy, safety, trust and closeness to God who to Julian represents protection, caring and parenting.

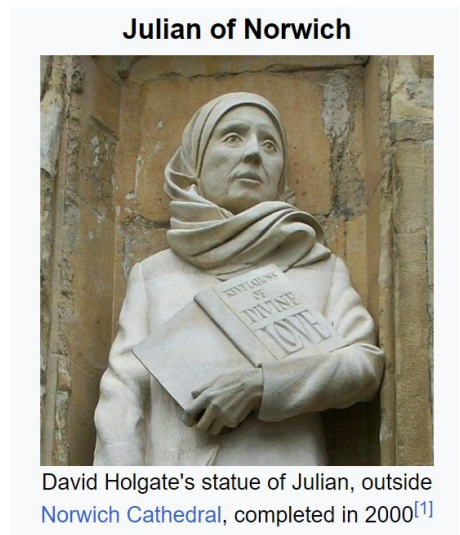


The event in Manchester Cathedral was very well attended which illustrates a growing interest in Julian of Norwich's way of seeing. Speakers at the Manchester Cathedral Julian event included the Bishop of Manchester David Walker who explored the issue of the "commodification" of Julian of Norwich and the challenge of suffering in Julian's life and in our lives today. Reflections upon Julian's significance for modern times, including the ecological dimension of her 'Shewings', was presented by Kelvin Ravenscroft. Archdeacon Karen Lund coordinated and chaired the event and treated us all to some wonderful and reflective music by playing the flute which preceded and concluded a short period of meditation.



Those who attended the event appreciated the Question & Answers session and the event concluded with refreshments in the beautiful Cathedral environment, at the very heart of the city. The Cathedral gathering invited us to consider that Julian of Norwich is undergoing a renaissance as a woman of wisdom, courage and relevance to our contemporary world.

**Malgorzata Kmita**





## The Fabric Of Protest Anti-Fast Fashion Banners

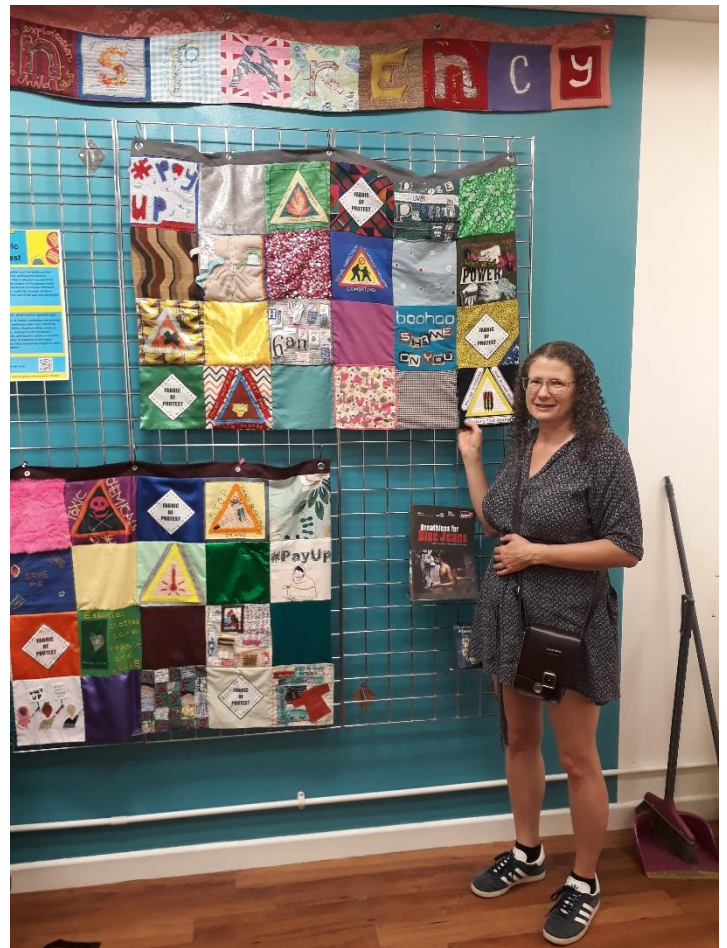
I popped into 'Stitched Up' as needed some fabric and bits and bobs. They came to see us a couple of years ago to talk to us about their sustainable fashion activities and their shop in Stretford Mall.

Was lovely to see The Fabric of Protest Anti-Fast Fashion banners up in the shop. This is the monthly textile workshop that myself and mum attend at The People's History Museum.

We created the pieces during COVID zoom workshops, then joined them together when we could meet in person.

There was a bit falling off one of my pieces. Good job there was a needle and cotton for me to do a running repair!

**Elaine Loader**



## Community Engagement at Worsley URC Summer Fair

Recently Elaine and I spent a very pleasant few hours involved in 'community engagement' at the Worsley United Reform Church Summer Fair.

We helped on the refreshment and craft stalls but it wasn't entirely all work.

We were entertained by Moorside primary school choir, Urban Stage Theatre School and Salford Community Leisure Street Dance Team.

Wearing our Soroptimist T shirts opened up the usual questions about what is a Soroptimist although it was refreshing to have a conversation with a visitor who knew exactly what we do as she had been a member of S I Grange Over Sands.

A snapshot of a church and local community coming together, having fun and enjoying simple pleasures, although a lot of hard work for the dedicated organisers. Our efforts were very much appreciated, we enjoyed the occasion and were able to promote S I Manchester.

Thankyou Elaine and the church.

**Carole Swarbrick**





## Emergency Ward 'Villa Katerina' - A very different visit!

We arrived as usual at the beginning of May to our home in Skiathos for 3 months. Looking forward to rest and relaxation and beautiful sunny weather, however this was not to be as May was the coldest for 56 years of record keeping! We had forgotten how to switch on the central heating as we hadn't needed it for years, we remained optimistic looking forward to a lovely peaceful visit.....

The second morning we were there Gus had sore gums, he had in fact visited the Oral Hygienist in England the previous week. The Pharmacist recommended and supplied an ointment and all seemed to be fine until 5 days later when he was in severe pain. An emergency visit to the dentist and he was diagnosed with a large gum abscess and he was prescribed a 7 day course of antibiotics. He improved and a week later at a lunch time party at our villa whilst washing coffee cups he managed to deeply slice his finger open, not helped by anticoagulants the kitchen sink resembled a scene at an abattoir. The Health Centre (very quick and efficient) dressed the deep laceration and prescribed yet another course of antibiotics and we had daily visits for 10 days for dressings. I then was ill with a severe chest infection, antibiotics also for me. This was not a good start!

The next week friends arrived for a two week holiday and one morning as Mark finished his shower he fell and was in severe pain so back to the Health Centre where he was diagnosed with a broken collar bone and displaced shoulder. Sister Rosie needed again. (Since his return to his home in South Wales he has had two operations to repair his shoulder.)

Two weeks later I went with three friends to the next Island of Skopelos, a very beautiful Island with many monasteries and churches. It was the middle of June but there was a thunderstorm with ferocious rain.... despite this two of my friends decided to climb up the steps featured in the Mamma Mia film whilst I stayed in the car. One fell, coming down, lacerated her knee and hand, hit her face and cracked her cheekbone. Dressings and analgesics were provided by the paramedic in attendance, Rosie. She subsequently soon sported a black eye.

Things settled for two days when our next visitors arrived for a holiday and to stay with us. David & Jean our friends are English but live in Athens and work for a Greek company. The third evening of their stay he tripped and fell on our patio and I realised immediately that he had broken his hip. An ambulance arrived very quickly with a doctor and paramedic, the Health Centre being again the destination. Skiathos has an extremely efficient well equipped modern Health Centre but there are no in-patient facilities. Life threatening conditions are airlifted to Volos (our mainland nearest city) and serious injuries are taken by hydrofoil or ferry. David was transferred the next day accompanied by his wife, nurse and paramedic. He was in hospital for 10 days and had a hip replacement. Their fourth floor apartment in Athens with no lift was not a viable option so back to Skiathos and ward Katerina He was discharged without dressings or analgesia, no occupational health aids and no physio therapy arranged. The organisation of everything fell to me including daily dressings, finding and obtaining occupational health aids (which had to be bought) arranging private physio therapy and when his 49 clips required removal arranging for a private doctor to come to our villa where the guest accommodation resembled a hospital ward. The entire experience was extremely traumatic and made us really appreciate the services we take so much for granted provided by our NHS.

The last two weeks before we returned in the middle of July became unbearable as the temperatures soared over 40c. Rhodes, Corfu, and our neighbouring Island Evia were ablaze and the tinder like large Forests of Skiathos were extremely worrying. We were for once pleased to return to the wet and cold weather of Manchester.

David and Jean have remained to allow him to mobilise and recuperate and I am pleased to say he is in much less pain and more mobile. They plan to return to Athens in September.

A ten week nightmare! My nursing skills might have been a little rusty, but were certainly tested.

We are now looking forward to our Autumnal visit\*, hopefully this time for a holiday.

**Rosemary Steven**

*\*The Autumnal Visit follows later as 'Skiathos Revisited!'.....an even more different visit!*

