

President: **Fiona Spencer**

Dear Club Members,

Welcome to your Newsletter, a bumper Christmas edition, sorry it's only 'just about in time', Manchester Soroptimists have had a very busy few months.

I've produced this on my new MacBook, quite a challenge, a bit like cooking a 5 course meal in someone else's professional kitchen....I've spent time looking for things, but then it's responded at the speed of light, doing the job far smarter than previously! I hope you enjoy your Christmas read.....& of course there are Quiz challenges!

**Sue Underwood**



## President Fiona's Message



As we look back, something we often do at this time of year, I feel that we can be very proud of our achievements so far in celebrating our Centenary.

Since the last newsletter we have the Greek night, with massive thanks to Carole and her circle dancing friends, Rosemary and Gus with the quiz and bar, and all the members who made it so successful bringing food, raffle prizes, and organising the hall. Of course there was food, fun and laughter, as always with Soroptimists involved, and we got to admire Carole's footwork (mine was not so nifty, I might add) as well as add to our incredible fundraising total.

But there it is, the key to our success has been working well together and I think you will all agree that has made it so much fun!

When I went, with Carole, to see the Tigers playing I was struck by the coaches saying that they like to give everyone who wants to play an opportunity and

delighted that we sponsor a team with such an inclusive approach, so fitting with Soroptimist goals for all women and girls to achieve their full potential.

This theme runs through so many other projects we support; our recent contribution to "Maureen's Mission" will pay for half a year at boarding school for a girl who has suffered through FGM, the sponsorship of the nursing student from Orissa and of a schoolgirl through our friendship link in Katmandu, and closer to home the prize at Pendleton College for the performing arts and the Helen Latto prize at the junior RNCM.

Now though is a good time for us to reflect on what we do, what we should keep doing and what we should change, along with the lessons we have learnt this year ready for discussion at our January meeting.

By the time you read this we will have enjoyed a Christmas celebration together and I hope you all enjoy a wonderful time with family and friends over the coming festivities. Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Peaceful and Joyous New Year ahead.

**President Fiona**



## The Helen Latto Prize, Junior Royal Northern College of Music (JRNCM) 2025

Helen Latto was President of S I Manchester in 1980-81. She was an Aberdonian, trained as a pharmacist in Scotland, then moved south and opened her own pharmacy in Moss Side. Helen was introduced to Soroptimism by Ivy Roberts, lecturer in pharmacy at the University of Manchester and Club President in 1941.

During Helen's Presidency she organised a charity event at a music school in Whalley Range which had a link to the Royal Northern College of Music. The singing of the children during this event enhanced Helen's love of music and led to her involvement with the JRNCM when it was formed some years later. On her death she left a bequest to the school and the interest is used to award an annual prize for singing. The President is privileged to be invited each year to the prizegiving to award the prize. This has led to a long-term connection with the Junior RNCM.

In June I attended the 2025 prizegiving with Lorraine. It was wonderful to hear the musical ensemble practising beforehand and then meet the students who are recognised for their expertise and commitment. All the students are invited for tea and have the opportunity to meet each other as they may be in different groups throughout their lessons and practice. Many of the students are getting ready to move on and it was lovely to hear their plans and where they will be continuing their musical journeys.

It was delightful to meet this year's recipient **Madeleine North** and wish her well in future endeavours.

We also learnt that we are invited to attend the student's concerts in future. These are often quite informal, and it is not necessary for us to stay for the whole event, as some performance dates run throughout a day for example. It would be wonderful if some members could do so and continue our relationship with this wonderful institution.



*These are the Concerts for the remainder of the school year:*

31 January	Chamber Music Showcase 9:30 - 4:30pm,
28 February	Formal Concert 12:30 - 2pm,
14 and 21 March	Informal Concert 12:30 - 2pm,
2 March	Formal Concert 12:30 - 2pm
6 and 13 June	Informal Concert 12:30 - 2pm,
4 July	Performance Day 10:15 - 4pm.

*The Informal Concerts consist of 10 Junior students giving a solo performance in the Concert Hall. These are auditioned for. The Formal Concerts are given by 4 students handpicked by Aled. These tend to be the most advanced/older students.*

*Performance Day see all 5 of our ensembles performing in back-to-back concerts throughout the day.*

*Chamber Music Showcase sees all Chamber Groups performing back-to-back throughout the day.*

*Should you wish to attend any of these concerts, please don't feel like you must stay for the duration. They are all very relaxed and people can come and go as they please."*

**President Fiona**



## SI South Lancashire New Members & Awards Lunch

Several members attended the New Members & Awards lunch today. It was great to hear from new members as to why they joined and also to hear from 2 members who have been Soroptimists for 57 years each. Amazing!

The environmental project from SI Crosby that won the Programme Action award was very worthwhile, read more about it here:

<https://sigbi.org/crosby/our-projects/lunt-meadows/>



Sophie Kennedy (Facebook)



## Greek Evening

Our October Greek-themed evening proved to be another fantastic event during our Centenary year. Members, friends, and guests gathered in Heald Green for a night filled with delicious food, lively music, and traditional circle dancing. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, with laughter and conversation flowing as easily as the music.

The event was not only a wonderful social occasion but also a significant fundraising success. Thanks to the generosity and enthusiasm of everyone who attended, we raised nearly £1,500 for our charities. This achievement reflects the commitment of Soroptimist International Manchester to supporting women and girls across our city, and it demonstrates the impact that can be made when professional women come together with purpose.

The evening began with a quiz, before a Greek-inspired meal, followed by music and dancing that encouraged everyone to join in. Circle dancing proved to be a joyful highlight, with members and guests alike taking part, whether seasoned dancers or complete beginners. Though it's fair to say that not all of us mastered the steps, which only added to the laughter and enjoyment.



Beyond the entertainment, the evening offered an opportunity to have fun and friendship within the club and with our wider community, including some from our projects. Guests commented on the great food and welcoming atmosphere, reminding us that fundraising can be both enjoyable and deeply rewarding.

As a club, we are proud not only of the funds raised but also of the way the evening showcased our values: friendship, service, and advocacy for women and girls. The success of the Greek evening adds to the momentum of our centenary celebrations and reinforces our confidence that we will continue to meet our ambitious fundraising targets.

We extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed—whether by attending, helping with organisation, or supporting behind the scenes. Your efforts ensured that this was more than just a fundraising event; it was a celebration of culture, community, and the positive change we can achieve together.



The success of all our events this year, the Afternoon Tea in April, the Africa Night in June, and this Greek evening in October has set the tone for the year ahead. We are already looking forward to another major fundraising event during Sophie's presidential year: a Race Day Lunch in August. This will be a chance to combine the excitement of the races with the same spirit of friendship and generosity that made this year's fundraising events so memorable.

Just as with the Greek evening, the Race Day Lunch will bring members, friends, and supporters together for an enjoyable occasion with a clear purpose—raising funds to support our chosen charities and projects across Manchester. We are confident it will be another highlight in our Centenary programme, blending fun with food and friendship!!

**Sophie Kennedy**

## & It's All Greek To Us!

A dark, cold, late October evening proved to be an ideal time for SI Manchester's latest Centenary fundraising event – A Greek evening.

Heald Green Village Hall was transformed for the evening into a Greek Taverna, decorated with Greek flags and full of tables decked out in a Greek theme.



Soroptimists from Manchester and guests from our sister clubs, husbands, partners and friends, more than 65 of us in total, gathered together to conjure up warmer nights with an informal evening of Greek music, food, wine, Ouzo and.....Circle Dancing.

SI Manchester's Carole Swarbrick and friends from her Circle Dancing group expertly led the dancing and most people needed no persuasion to get up and try it out. The dance floor was soon filled with dancers of all abilities stepping out as if they had been dancing in Greece for years!

A break for an authentic meal of Greek Gyros and the traditional Soroptimist raffle was soon followed by more dancing and not a plate was broken!

It was a most enjoyable evening of great fun, music, food, wine and friendship for everyone. Grateful thanks must go to all those involved in making the evening so successful, from the initial planning through to the final clearing up.

Our Centenary Fund continues to grow through the generosity of members and friends' money and time.

**Hilary Dodd**

President Fiona with her son and daughter – it was her birthday!



*See the amazing Quilt that Fiona made in the background!  
Tickets are still available for the draw on the 14<sup>th</sup> January*





## In Celebration of the Centenary Supper

I have to say that since becoming a Soroptimist nearly two years ago, I have enjoyed several centenary suppers including the one that I hosted at our house. To be fair I have always enjoyed a convivial meal usually with friends and family. These are a bit different in the sense that they provide an opportunity to find out more about the women, (and sometimes their partners), that are part of the club in a relaxed way where fun and friendship are top of the agenda. Past and present working lives, families, interests, opinions and their involvement in Soroptimism have given me a valuable insight into the makeup of the club and the organisation.



The latest supper was hosted by Helen and Rachelle at Rachelle and Rich's house. The weather outside was awful but once we got inside, we enjoyed a really convivial evening with plenty of good food and wine. The challenge for the hosts is to keep the food within a budget of five pounds a head leaving the remaining ten pounds a head as a contribution to the club. Canapes, then veggie pasta, salad and garlic bread and finishing with cheesecake was excellent but the starring role was taken by the two kittens who made instant friends with members of the group. It's a great way to get to know others and there was no shortage of conversation and laughter throughout the evening.



Another recent supper was at Fiona's where a different group of Soroptimists, some with partners, enjoyed roast pork, roast potatoes, greens and roasted aubergine with lentils and a choice of deserts and cheese and biscuits. Again, it was good fun with conversation that was really interesting and we were made very welcome by the family. *(See Carole's report!)*

My enthusiasm for these events means that I have also enjoyed supper at Sophie and Kev's and Alison and Rosemary's and I am looking forward to our actual Centenary Year when more of these may well be forthcoming and supplement the other social events that we plan and organise as a club.

This type of social event complements the other social events that the club has throughout the year. These usually involve meticulous planning and a fair amount of hard work by the club members who have volunteered to run the event. After next year we will have to agree on a different name for the Centenary Supper, but I hope that they will continue as they are one of the ways of helping integrate newer members into SI Manchester and give the long-standing members chance to find out who we are.

**Sue Silk**

## Centenary Supper at Fiona's

To further celebrate SI Manchester's Centenary year President Fiona and Paul hosted a Centenary Supper and was joined by Sue Silk, Sophie, Catherine, Sue Underwood, Carole, Denise and her husband Simon and 2 delightful young people Kiera and Alex.

Storm Amy raged outside but inside we enjoyed a feast of flavours. The pork with crackling and accompaniments were delicious as was the aubergine and lentil parmigiana. We had a choice of desserts, and some could not resist a slice of both the bittersweet chocolate creation and the apple strudel. A moment of pure indulgence! Cheese lovers also enjoyed a mix of flavours perfect for sharing over interesting conversation.

When excellent food meets good company magic happens and it was a most enjoyable get together.



President Fiona used the occasion to present a Soroptimist badge to new member Denise who has joined at a very special time in the history of the club, and we hope her Soroptimist journey will be one of service but also fun and friendship.

**Carole Swarbrick**



President Elect Sophie presented a Soroptimist badge to another new member Catherine Tong. Catherine's hobby is photography so we're looking forward to some stunning photos.

We have been delving into the archives in The Central Library Manchester to look at some of the material that is stored relating to the activities of SI Manchester over the last 100 years. The group comprising Hilary, Val, Sue U., Susan H, and myself with further interest and support from Lorraine and Rachelle have really only scratched the surface but we hope that we have now got enough for our immediate purposes.

The process of accessing archived material requires some organisation which has been taken on by Hilary who has liaised with archives staff. There is a large number of boxes containing possible items of interest, but we first had to make a selection based on a list that had been provided by an academic doing research of her own into Soroptimist activity in Manchester. Having done the selection between the group members we had to put in the request which then takes two weeks before the material can be moved from the store in Northwich to Manchester for access. The Archives access is strictly controlled with up to four people at any one-time given permission to come and do the research. Their names must be submitted in advance and identity proved on arrival. Only pencils are allowed in the room and bags, coats etc. are locked away. Phones are allowed and we used those extensively as well as making a few photocopies of newspaper or photographic material.

Members of the group have spent three days in the library going through each box and selecting and photographing snippets from documents ready for mounting a display at the Centenary Dinner at the end of March 2026. A parallel exercise is also being undertaken by two other members of the group who have been sorting through a huge photographic collection much of which has come from Yvonne Mullen, a long standing and now deceased member of SI Manchester. This has been a fascinating exercise exemplifying social and political change through the decades and how the operation of the club has evolved over this time. I think that it is fair to say that the club has a more inclusive approach now.

In the New Year we will be bringing to the table the material that we have chosen and selecting the most relevant bits to organise it into what we hope will prove to be an interesting display.

There are so many interesting aspects:

The occupations of the club members throughout the decades

Their social activities

Their contributions to consultations on changes that affect women and girls

Their campaigning on issues affecting women and girls

Their support for The Pankhurst Centre

The list of topics covered by speakers at their meetings

Club rules and regulations

SI Manchester's contribution to the war effort from 1939

The setting up of The Daisy Cross Trust

The SI Manchester Housing Association

SI Manchester's long-standing relationship with the Royal Northern College of Music.....and that's before we get to our recent activity in celebration of our centenary year!!

This is the 1933 dinner at The Grand Hotel in Manchester found in a box of archived material. We don't know what they had to eat but we do know that the President was an E. Hesling.

I will report on progress in the next newsletter

***Sue Silk***





## An Article from Our Summer 2017 Newsletter:

### **Miss Edith Hesling LL.B (1899-91) – President 1934**



From December 1919 it was possible for women to be admitted to the Inns of Court. The first woman was Edith Hesling who was admitted on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1920, whilst studying for a law degree from the University of Manchester. She was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1923. Her Chambers were in King Street where she practised Commercial Law. Principally, she worked as an academic at the University.

Miss Hesling was married and during her presidency of the Manchester Soroptimist Club gave birth to her third daughter. Those of us who attended the Pankhurst Statue Dinner may recall her being listed among the outstanding women of Manchester.

**Yvonne Mullen**

We have heard from Edith's Great Granddaughter Deborah Airey

In January 2020 Deborah emailed:

*Hello, I am currently researching the life of my Great-Grandmother, Edith Hesling, who was the President of the Manchester Soroptimist Club in 1934. I am keen to hear any information you may have about her time at the club, what kind of things her role involved and just general things about the club at that time, that you don't mind sharing. Best wishes, Deborah*

We did plan to meet her on her next trip to Manchester but were thwarted by COVID

In January 2024 Deborah emailed:

*I'm emailing as I'm now a student member of Gray's Inn. Following on from the 100 year celebrations in June 2023, the Inn is looking for other ways to celebrate Edith's achievements. I was wondering if you have any photographs of Edith?*

I replied together the Summer 2017 Newsletter with the article about Edith and a formal photograph of the Silver Jubilee Dinner in 1951, from which Deborah easily picked out Edith.

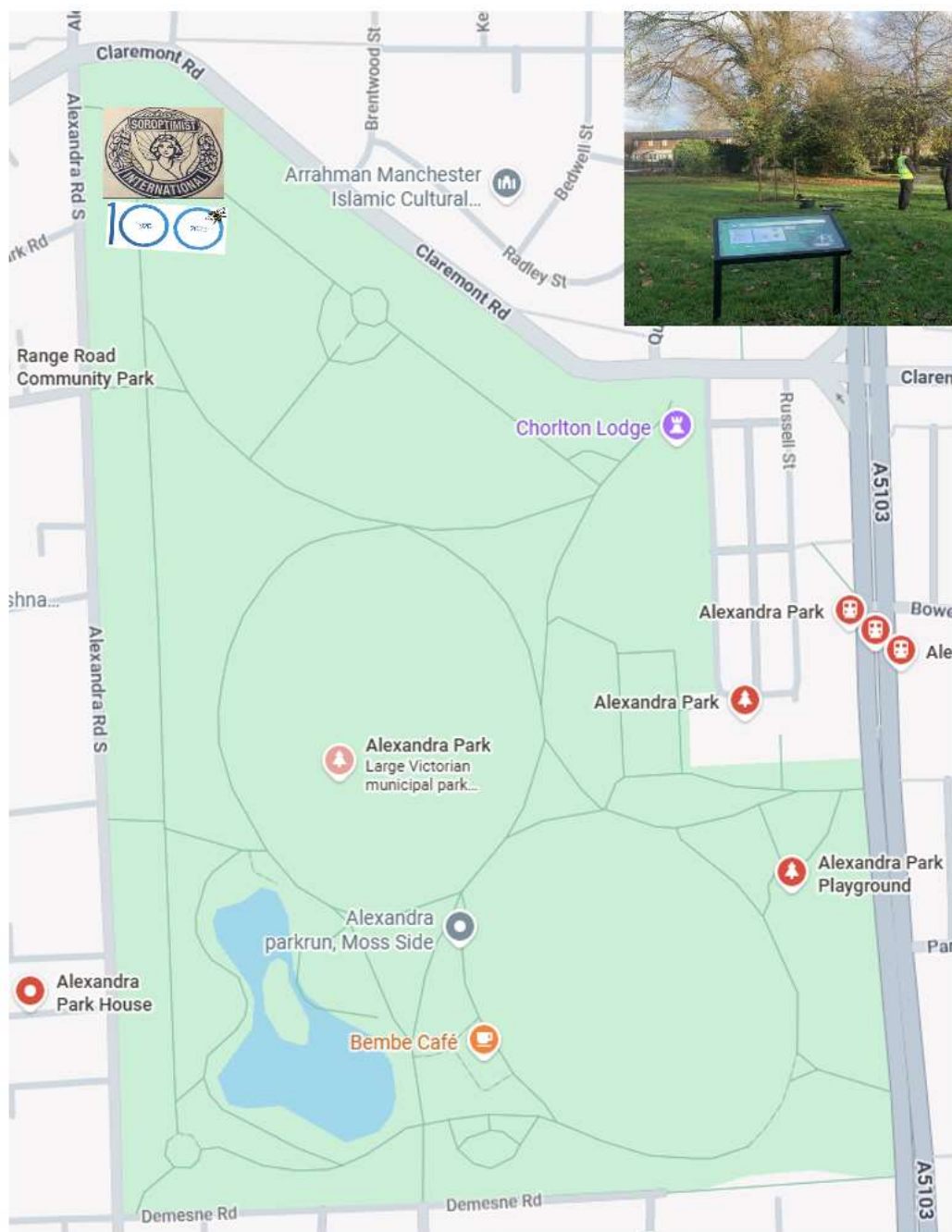
Can you spot Edith in the 1933 photo? It's no good looking for the Chain, it wasn't commissioned until 1936, a gift of the Past Presidents, so Edith will have contributed. I will send the photograph to Deborah too.

**Sue Underwood**



## Centenary Tree

On Friday 28th November, as part of our 16 Days of Action and to mark National Tree Planting Week 2025, we planted a **Larch Larix Decidua** in Speaker's Corner at Alexandra Park to celebrate our Centenary. We arrived at Chorlton Lodge—soaked through from the rain—where Alexandra Park's charming mini-museum is housed. It's well worth a visit and is open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 11am to 2pm.



Angela and the Friends of Alexandra Park welcomed us warmly with hot tea and biscuits. Angela also shared a captivating talk & film on the park's history, including how funding from the Heritage Lottery has breathed new life into the park, restoring its place as one of Manchester's true People's Parks. Manchester, in fact, was home to the very first public parks in the mid-19th century, which came with extensive bylaws and park keepers who held the combined authority of police officers and gardeners. After Peterloo, councils were nervous about crowds or gatherings—anything that might resemble a “mob”—so the idea of public parks was met with no small amount of anxiety.

When Alexandra Park opened in 1870, protests were still prohibited. Public rallies weren't permitted until 1890, and Speaker's Corner was the only place the bylaws allowed people to meet. Our Centenary tree stands on the upper end of the raised wall—an area that served as the park's unofficial Speaker's Corner. It was near here that the famous 1908 rally took place, with ten platforms (or soapboxes) featuring speakers discussing housing, health, prison



reform, education, peace, labour laws, child protection, social ethics, the Poor Law, and votes for women. During the First World War, the Women's Peace Crusade also gathered many signatures here. From records at the Pankhurst Centre, Susan Hollick discovered that Manchester Soroptimists (which was established as a club before all women got the vote) wrote letters expressing their support for the Suffragettes. It's possible that some of our early members attended rallies and meetings held at Speaker's Corner in Alexandra Park. The Alexandra Park Arboricultural Team were enthusiastic about our Centenary planting becoming a real feature. They recommended the **Larch Larix Decidua**, a species known for its golden-yellow autumn foliage. Our tree currently stands at 2 metres tall, but it has the potential to reach 40 metres (130 feet.)

This tree has a carbon credit score of A and can expect to live 350 years in our Urban environment.

KEY:	VARIETY	LIFE EXPECTANCY (URBAN)	LIFE EXPECTANCY (RURAL)	CARBON CREDIT SCORE (A-E)	CARBON STORED AT MATURITY (KG)
	Larix decidua	350	750	A	5097



Felix and Keiran from Arboretum Team

How our tree will look for our 200<sup>th</sup>!



During our visit, we also discovered **Bembe Café**, a hidden gem in the pavilion—with great food and a relaxed atmosphere full of people enjoying the park. We've already pencilled in a return visit to see our tree and have and lunch for 2026... though we're hoping for slightly sunnier & warmer weather next time!

*Rachelle Manders-Ratcliff*



## **"Make Your Voice Heard – Alexandra Park – Speakers Corner**

*As reported in our Summer/Autumn 2021 Newsletter*

On Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup> of September a celebration took place at Alexandra Park, which is located between Whalley Range and Moss Side, which explored the Park's past and present including its rich heritage as a place of protest, dialogue, and expression of diverse opinions. The celebration included art, spoken word, and graphics. The event was well attended including three lively SI Manchester members Valerie, Elaine and Malgorzata.

Alexandra Park in Manchester celebrated their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 and the Park's Heritage Group made "Protest in the Park" the theme for the year. This coincided with the re-creation of the "Speaker's Corner" and the Heritage Group worked hard to develop leaflets, an Interpretation Board, and the active participation of students from the local Loreto College.



The story of 'Protest in the Park' began in 1870 when it first opened. Originally, people were forbidden to protest in Parks but Kier Hardy, the founder of the Labour Party, challenged this in 1892 by organising a huge May Day rally and from then on the laws on protesting were gradually relaxed.

An informal Speaker's Corner developed at the Gates of the Park around 1906. The groups who supported this development included Suffragists and Suffragettes, Conscientious Objectors, the Independent Labour Party, supporters of an independent Ireland, fascists and anti-fascists, and many other groups and individuals. Eventually Sunday mornings became established as the regular time for speakers to bring powerful issues to an audience who would cheer and boo the speakers depending upon their sympathies. The Speaker's Corner became a place of education for many as the speakers brought to the attention of audiences many issues with speeches being delivered passionately and with commitment.

The September event in the park was originally scheduled to take place in 2020 which was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Park. Due to Covid restrictions, however, it was postponed until this year. The event highlighted the importance of raising awareness of a range of contemporary issues through the medium of having a public space to give people a voice. The anniversary celebrations included flags made by local community groups in different languages representing the culturally diverse areas around the Park.



The event also coincided with the visit to Manchester of a group of young Christians, representing the Young Christian Climate Network who formed part of a relay team walking to Glasgow for COP26 to draw attention to the issues of Climate Change. They were supported by the Whalley Range Climate Action Group and many local people.

Speakers also included eight students from Loreto College who recited poems and spoke passionately about issues they are facing in their lives including their experience of racism, the importance of green spaces and parks and the role of parks, and ecological and justice issues.

Dr Ali Ronan gave an engaging talk about the history of the role of Suffragists in fighting for the right of women to vote and play

their part in presenting a vision for a more just and fair society. Their message continues to inspire and empower women and men today.

Anthony Brown spoke passionately about the experiences of the Windrush generation and the controversy regarding their right to British citizenship which, in recent years, had often been contested and, in some cases revoked, by the Government which shamefully deprived many of their legal rights. The event concluded with a blessing from Revd Grace Thomas, the Diocese of Manchester's Environment Officer.

This anniversary event passionately and engagingly explored a range of complex, yet thoughtful, issues which brought people together through the sharing of stories and experiences. Soroptimists of Manchester were delighted and felt privileged to take part in this significant event. We look forward to meeting again at the Speaker's Corner.

**Malgorzata Kmita (& Val's photos)**



## WomenMATTATA

WomenMATTATA, an acronym for **Manchester And Trafford Taking Action**, is an organisation set up in 2010, based in the St Wilfred's Centre, Hulme. It forms part of a national organisation, 'Women in Prison', established almost 40 years ago to deliver support to and campaigning for, vulnerable and marginalised women, especially those affected by the criminal justice system. These women have often worked with multiple professionals and lack trust in state services. They need someone to guide them through a difficult and complex system when they are most in need of stability, guidance and someone to trust. Their issues are wide ranging from domestic and sexual abuse, substance misuse, mental health, housing, parenting, education, employment, poverty and debt.

WomenMATTATA was set up to work with specific project workers in hubs in Manchester and Trafford, to provide intense holistic support to women on probation, at the point of arrest or on release from prison. One to one support is given to women - for example - through a prison link where WomenMATTATA works with HMP Styal to provide "through the gate" support to women leaving prison and returning to Greater Manchester. There is a "triage" scheme partnership between Greater Manchester Police and WomenMATTATA which is based on the premise that giving a woman support is more effective at stopping her re offending and thus getting a criminal record. In these cases, women, instead of being arrested and charged are given a conditional caution of engagement with WomenMATTATA.

WomenMATTATA ensures that women's needs are prioritised by working with partnerships from various agencies in Manchester and Trafford including mental health teams, children's social care, community drug and alcohol teams, also Women's Aid and Manchester Action on Street Health MASH (which are organisations we also support) They are given access to free clothing, toiletries and an emergency food bank. To enhance WomenMATTATA's holistic approach, there are therapeutic workshops, drama in creative and community space, art workshops, day trips and gardening, plus counselling services.

SI Manchester began supporting WomenMATTATA in 2019, when we invited someone from the organisation as a speaker. Since then, we've made annual donations to their funds. Our members also kindly regularly contribute clothes, coats, shoes and toiletries to their clothes and toiletries bank.

For the past few years, our members have donated diaries to be given out as Christmas gifts along with other items that WomenMATTATA or other organisations provide. We've been told that the service users particularly value the diaries, as they help to get their lives back on track by helping them to be organised e.g. for appointments.



This year we had significantly more funds due to the distribution of our **Centenary Fund**. When we asked Women Matta what they would like us to purchase, they asked if we could make up gift bags, as they were short on both funds and staff. We were delighted to do so and made up 100. The bags contain shower gel, wonder-balm for

lips and hands, a large bar of chocolate and a diary. We wrapped each individual item, recognising that for many of these vulnerable and marginalised women, these could be only presents they receive. Quite a salutary thought.





We held a bag packing morning for five of us at one of our members' houses where we also included an insert explaining about our club and the bags were finally labelled as a gift from the club. A local solicitor is donating socks which WomenMATTa will be adding to the bags.

One of our club members delivered the bags to WomenMATTa where they were warmly and emotionally received by the team - the manager passed on her thanks from the bottom of her heart. She also explained that the time we spent purchasing, wrapping and packing the gifts, was time freed up for their project work.

The bags will be given out to their service users in the run up to Christmas.

***Elaine Loader***

### The Daisy Cross Trust

In 1954, one of our former members Daisy Cross, made a bequest with the aim of supporting the welfare of elderly people, of which a small proportion has been donated annually. As we approach the centenary, we have decided to wind up the Trust and distribute the funds to charities that support elderly people.

The Daisy Cross Trustees are delighted to announce that they will be making the below donations, as part of winding up the trust.

#### **£3,500 to Didsbury Good Neighbours.**

They are very enthusiastic to discuss with the club on how this could be used. This is a potential "Planet" partnership for the club as one of their suggestions is a Community Well Being Garden. The manager mentioned that they have other environmental projects too.

If you are interested in horticulture and/or working to improve the lives of older people, and would like to get involved, please get in touch with Elaine. This is open to any club member.

#### **£3,000 to New Hope Rural Community Trust**

They said that they were extremely grateful to be a recipient and have confirmed the funds will be used to support senior citizens in their care. They said they will send us reports and photos of the project's progress and will acknowledge our support in newsletters and social media.

#### **£1,500 to Age UK Salford and Trafford**

They thanked us for thinking and reaching out to them. We will be contacting them about a visit to the Critchley Community Hub.

***Elaine Loader***



## Vice President Cathrine Reviews Her Active 2025!

With the Manchester Christmas markets in full swing and advent only a week away, I'm wondering "just where did 2025 go?" As William Shakespeare wrote in one of my favourite plays, "time trots withal". As I get older, I increasingly understand what he meant by this. After a few days recovering from the excesses of last Christmas, I took the plunge in the icy cold waters of Salford Quays with some other masochistic swimming types sporting woolly hats, in support of a local charity at the annual New Years Day dip. Normally this would be particularly unappealing with a post NYE "head" but as I'd been on duty for the NHS on New Years Eve and thus totally abstinent, I had no excuse this year. I'd be lying if I said the experience itself was pleasant, but I did feel great afterwards and it seemed a fitting way to kick start an active 2026. I eschewed the cold water for a few months and instead got some miles in my legs ready for the Edinburgh half-marathon. Then on a windy day in May, I laced up my running shoes in Auld Reekie and donned a very nice running vest sent to me by the lovely folks at Contact Hostel in Manchester, for whom I was fundraising. Fuelled by the kindness of strangers who pressed jelly babies and gummie bears into my sweaty palms at various points during the route when my legs were like lead, I made it to the finish line and raised £875 for **Contact** in the process, to help support the amazing work they do with vulnerable young women and girls.....Half-marathon here I come (Edinburgh 2025)



In June I travelled to Liverpool at the invitation of a colleague there, to speak to other women's health specialists and women's health charities about vulval skin disorders, a topic that never gets the air-time it merits, although those of us in women's health are trying to change that! The meeting was a great success and the team in Liverpool were wonderful hosts.

*Raising awareness of vulval disease and teaching colleagues in Liverpool (June 2025)*

Back in Manchester, the summer sun coaxed me out again and I decided to enter a trail race, a swim event in Coniston Lake and a couple of triathlons. All these events were very inclusive with large numbers of women and girls on the start lines. It is always great to see so many women of all ages and abilities taking part for health and wellbeing, challenge or just the pure joy of being active in a supportive environment. The encouraging words during every event from the other participants is worth more than a few energy gels!

Enjoying the great outdoors in Blighty was fun but the highlight of 2025 was definitely our trip to Namibia in September. President Fiona loaned me some Namibia wildlife books in preparation and told me what an amazing place it was. She was not exaggerating. Charlotte and I cycled across mountain passes and desert in searing heat, camped in National Parks, went trekking, met some lovely local people and saw some of the most incredible birdlife and wildlife on earth. I ticked off one of my "bucket list" items when I climbed the breathtaking sand dunes at Soussoulei in the Namib Desert to watch the sunrise. I'd go back in a heartbeat to see the parts we did not have time to travel to.

*We were here! (Namibia 2025)*



A short swim trip to Crete brought me back to Earth gently but a return to the UK and work, signalled the start of a long-overdue house makeover complete with noise, dust and a clearance of many pre-loved items of furniture and clothing (which went to local charities in the main). Finally, the chaos has settled, the house is back in order and unbelievably we are fast approaching Christmas again. The Winter season is typically busier than any other in the NHS and after such a non-stop and active 2025 I had considered taking it easier next year. But somehow my resolve weakened and I've already entered another half-marathon and a 5k swim in 2026 so now I'll have to find a different New Year's resolution!

**Cathrine Holland**

## 16 Days of Activism: 25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December

16 Days of Activism is a global campaign fighting against gender-based violence.

(<https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/16-days-of-activism>)

Spearheaded by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign beginning on 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and concluding on 10th December, Human Rights Day.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violation in the world. In the UK it is a 'national emergency'. It is happening at all levels, in all areas of our society.

Prevention starts with awareness and ends with action.

This year's theme was  
**End Online Violence Against All Women and Girls**





## 16 Days of Activism 2025

### Art Project with the Pankhurst Trust incorporating Manchester Women's Aid



Our [Centenary Grant](#) to the Pankhurst centre funded a collaborative art project over 4 weeks with women from all the refuges invited to take part with the artist lead.

As this year's theme for the [UN 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence](#) is focussed on stopping online violence and abuse, the aim of the project was to create a piece to celebrate good and happy memories of using technology or social media.

As sponsors we were also able to

attend and both Rose and Fiona made it to sessions at one of the refuges as well as attending the drop in event on 27<sup>th</sup> November at the Pankhurst Trust. There we met Gail Heath, the CEO and were able to present her with the certificate for the [Centenary Grant](#). She was delighted to say that the art project had had good feedback. Indeed, it was wonderful to see the women being able to unleash their creativity and it seemed to be a successful as a way for them to talk to each other and a stimulus for them to explore their emotions around technology.

**Fiona Spencer**



### 100 "Hug in a Mug"s

The mug packing is always a joyous occasion knowing the mugs filled with tea, coffee, hot chocolate and biscuits will be given to each new arrival at a Manchester Women's Aid refuge.

Rose was again a brilliant host, providing tea or coffee, and cake, as we beavered away packing the contents and wrapping the mugs, collected by members throughout the year, with cellophane and ribbon to make them a more special gift from us. Rose and I had met women at the Pankhurst Trust art project who had received "A Hug in a Mug" and were very thankful, so that helped make it even more meaningful.



# 16 Days of Activism 2025

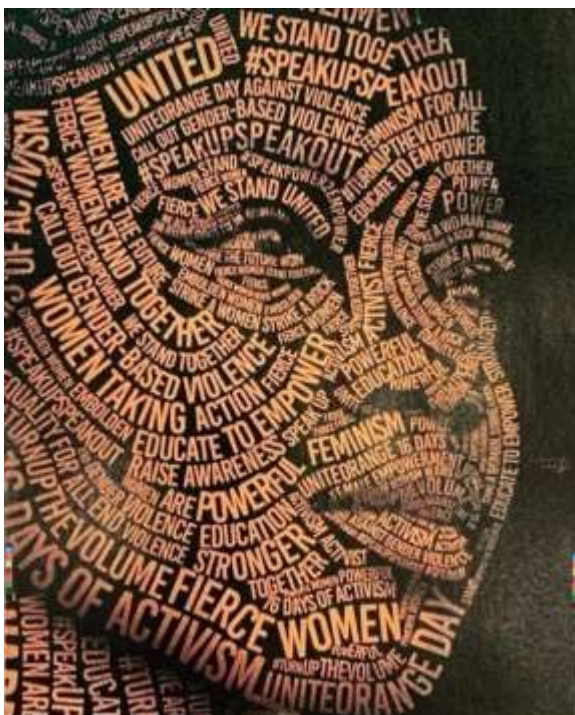


This year we received a donation of the contents of the mugs from the Manchester West Novotel as they have chosen to partner with us for their charitable and community projects.

*Fiona Spencer*

On December 10th 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

December 10th is World Human Rights Day  
& now **Soroptimist International Foundation Day**



**On Day 16  
we call for  
365  
Days of Action!**



## The River Manchester – Centenary Grant & 16 Days of Activism Event

We were pleased to award The River Manchester a Centenary Grant of £3,000. We increased the impact of this donation by paying £2,500 of this during a matched funding campaign, so becoming £5,000 to The River.

Lydia, Donna and the team were delighted and included our 100<sup>th</sup> logo on their event flyer. Sadly, we hadn't realised that it didn't include 'Soroptimist International Manchester' but we will correct that for the future.



Members generously donated prizes for the Raffle that we offered to run, very impressive selections in the gift bags!

Several members battled through the evening traffic and were delighted to be greeted by the volunteers in their new T-Shirts with our 100<sup>th</sup> Logo emblazoned across the back.....that will do very nicely!



Vice President Cathrine presented their Certificate for the Centenary Grant ....then turned their backs to the audience for the full impact!



I had the opportunity to explain a little about Soroptimist International of Manchester before outlining what the UN 16 Days of Activism is all about.

We heard some inspiring stories from survivors of domestic abuse who have been and continue to be helped by The River's services.

Delicious food was then served; we continued to talk about Soroptimism as we ate.



The lights were dimmed and Donna lit candles as the names of 89 women killed by domestic violence this year were read out....

To quote from The River

*"An evening of heart tugging testimonies and how wonderful healing can happen when we pull together our strengths and stand in solidarity. Thank you to Soroptimists Manchester for their support and faith in us and ending domestic abuse"*



Our raffle made around £200 and we all bought a T-Shirt!

**Sue Underwood**



## People & Planet: A Visit to Costa Rica

I had been thinking about Costa Rica as a destination to visit for some time and set off with my daughter Ciara for 2 weeks at the beginning of November. "Did it live up to my expectations?" "Absolutely and exceeded them", is my reply! November is a transition month from the rainy season to dry so we expected some rain. However, the aftermath of hurricane Melissa added to the mix, having pulled the clouds across to the Caribbean we were under them as they passed back over the Caribbean coast and emptied their contents on us in Tortuguero. Twice in the first 24 hours we were soaked to the skin, despite waterproofs and had to empty water out of our boots. Not an auspicious start in many ways but meant we had amazing wildlife spotting opportunities. Everything seemed to come out after the rain. So, after seeing an enormous turtle on the beach at midnight (in the storm) heading back to the sea after laying her eggs, we were treated the next day to chancing upon a nest full of hatchlings heading to the sea themselves, something usually seen by a few up at 4 am, and it was astonishing. When you see turtles in an aquarium, they look large, but I was not ready for how massive they seem on the beach or how tiny the hatchlings are. It felt like a scene out of a David Attenborough documentary, and I could almost hear his voiceover as we watched 20-30 of them heading across the sand.



The rest of the trip was just as amazing for seeing 3-toed and 2-toed sloths, the collared anteater, aguti, coati, and the 4 types of monkey spider, howler, squirrel and the white-faced capuchins. We also saw innumerable tiny frogs, snakes, tarantulas and butterflies. We explored the Rio celeste area, La Fortuna and Lake Arenal, the Monteverde Rainforest and Manuel Antonio national park on the Pacific coast. We hiked through national parks, along rivers, to waterfalls, on a volcano and ziplined (yes in superman position) for a mile Tortuguero and in the Pacific mangroves. above the cloud forest., took boat rides at





The trip was also amazing for the people we met. Travelling with 'Intrepid' you get a homestay and so I had to practice my schoolgirl Spanish as 4 of us were involved in preparing and cooking supper in the house. It was huge fun and I discovered how lovely the plantain chips are. The home we stayed at was part of a community set up where we saw cacao and coffee growing and discovered all the plants and seasonings they can grow and eat and helped grind some chocolate to drink before going to our host family. Astonishingly they had 8 dogs, mainly outside, a cat and rabbits. Everywhere we went we were amazed how many 'pets' people had but also how chilled out and relaxed all the dogs are, no barking, such a contrast to Europe. The opportunity to meet families, to visit an indigenous community of the Maleku and talk to our amazing guide was a special part of the trip and indeed Costa Ricans are very friendly, warm people. We were also lucky that the 12 of us in the group, though of varied ages and disparate backgrounds (Australia, Canada, Germany, UK and USA), we all got on so well that we were sad to say goodbye and will no doubt meet many again in future. It goes without saying that it was very special to undertake the trip with my daughter as who knows when that will be possible in future.



So, is Costa Rica really eco-friendly? I believe the answer is yes. There seemed to be a commitment to sustainability and living with and nurturing the environment. Of course, we met people doing just that, but it seems to filter through the wider community, encouraged by the government which provides funding for those who do not cut down trees and maintain wild corridors around settlements too. They prioritise wild corridors along rivers and have many national parks to try to maintain biodiversity. Yes, there are tourists, but we only saw lots in one park at Manuel Antonio, and there is no doubt that tourism provides many jobs and those people would otherwise not be dedicated to protecting the environment. Without tourism then Costa Ricans would have to undertake other work or ways to feed their families which would be less kind to the planet, so I came away feeling they are doing something right. I was filled with fresh enthusiasm for what we can do to help and can heartily recommend a visit.

***Fiona Spencer***

## Child Sponsorship with Action Aid

Alisha, pictured here, from Nepal is the young girl our club sponsors.

She was born in 2018 and lives in a village called Thakre which is near the Kathmandu valley and is extremely remote. Most people live below the poverty line and rely on farming to feed their families and earn a living.

Alisha attends a school which covers primary grade to secondary grade 10. Her family have a small plot of land on which they grow rice and maize and own a few chickens, goats and cattle. The family home is made from stones and cement with a sheet roof. They have water piped to a tap, within the family compound. Action Aid is working in Thakre to improve farming skills, develop employment opportunities and ensure particularly girls complete their education.

Alisha writes to our club having her words translated into English by an Action Aid worker. Her latest letter is a long one. She starts by saying that her family are well, and she hopes that our families are well. She writes about her favourite clothes which are traditional Nepali dresses. Her most favourite dress is red and was bought by her mother especially for the Dashain festival. She also has new dresses bought for her on her birthday. Alisha looks after her clothes with help from her mother to wash them in the stream near her house. In her previous letter she wrote about the game she plays of hide and seek with her friends.



***Val Jenkins***

## Saint Ethelburga - a Saxon Soroptimist?

A rather fanciful idea perhaps, but I came across the story of this remarkable woman on a recent pre-Christmas trip to London. I hadn't gone with the intent to do any historical research, visit any museums or galleries; quite the reverse, my mission was shopping, nice food and soaking up the festive atmosphere. But there she was, tucked away in a small corner of All Hallows Church overlooking the Tower of London waiting to be discovered!

So, who was she and why would I link her with the Soroptimists?

I now know that Saint Ethelburga was one of the great female religious leaders of the early Saxon church. This 7th century Saint founded All Hallows Church by the Tower of London, said to be the oldest church in the City tracing its foundation back to 675 CE.

Her brother Erkenwold was Bishop of London and Ethelburga Abbess of Barking. All Hallows was created as a chapel of the Abbey of Barking apparently.

My husband and I came across the church and Ethelburga quite by chance, after we'd wandered around Tower Hill taking photographs of Tower Bridge and the Tower of London. The light was fading, it was getting very busy around the food market stalls on the embankment, and we were about to leave when I noticed the warm glowing lights of what I now know is All Hallows Church. They seemed to beckon.....



Half an hour before closing, we just managed to get in.....and what a delight, such a rich history. It's said that Pepys climbed its tower to view the damage wrought by the Great Fire of London. There's a museum in the crypt where you can see part of a floor from a Roman villa and various artefacts found on the site which give a glimpse of Londinium nearly 2000 years ago.

But more of Saint Ethelburga and why I think she would be a very worthy Soroptimist. Although her image is tucked away at the back of the church, she was the first female leader of a religious community. Described as a selfless healer, highly regarded diplomat and most importantly, a proponent of women's and girl's education.

Born into an Anglo-Saxon royal family around the middle of the 7th century CE, she refused to marry a non-Christian prince. She became Abbess of Barking and proved to be gifted at healing. Through her work she is credited in providing an educational focus for surrounding communities. She is described as dedicated and heroic in leading the monks and nuns at the time through the various plagues of the period.

Barking Abbey grew to be one of the most important monasteries in the country, its strong literary and educational tradition continuing down the centuries. It's described as perhaps the

longest-lived institutional centre of literary culture for women in British history.

I'm so glad we followed the lights shining in the twilight that late afternoon, Saint Ethelburga and her work will stay in my memory much longer than the bright Christmas lights of London.

**Lorraine Whitehouse**



## Feminist History for Every Day of The Year by Kate Mosse

Sue Silk and Lorraine Whitehouse attended the Manchester Literature Festival to hear acclaimed author Kate Mosse discuss her new book - Feminist History for Every Day of the Year.

Her new work mostly celebrates overlooked women in history from scientists and artists to activists, highlighting their achievements and struggles for equality. She highlights the extraordinary contributions of women and girls throughout history.

It aims to reclaim history for women, correcting in some way the historical record by bringing women's stories to the forefront.

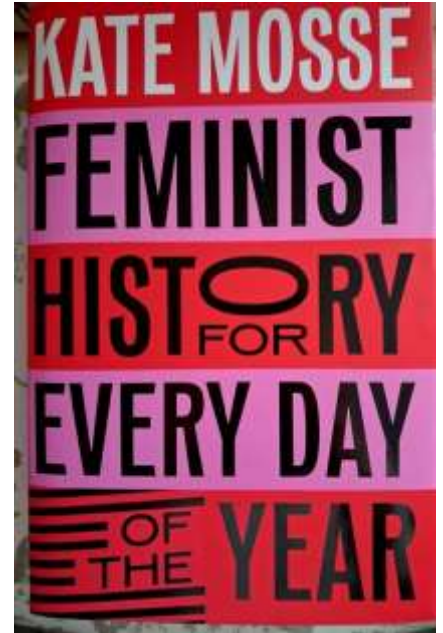
The book showcases women who defied limitations and challenged the status quo. It's aimed mainly at a younger, teenage audience but a good read at any age.

Kate Mosse's talk was very interesting and informative by equal measure; witty, pithy and full of insight into feminism both past and present. It was pleasing to see such a packed audience at the Manchester Central Library event.

She is an award-winning novelist, playwright and nonfiction writer. A lifelong feminist, Founder Director of the Women's Prize for Fiction and Nonfiction. Kate Mosse is also the founder of the global Women in History campaign.

If anyone would like to have a look through the book, please contact Lorraine and she will bring it to a meeting.

**Lorraine Whitehouse**



## November Speaker – Peter Fletcher & The Tigers.

Our speaker in November was **Peter Fletcher** under 12's girls coach at Ashton on Mersey Football Club.

Thanks to a legacy from our late member, Yvonne, we started supporting Ashton on Mersey Chiefs under 12s – a girls' football team in the South Manchester League – by providing home and away kits. It's a new team and they have been making steady progress. The team's name was subsequently changed to Tigers to avoid a clash with another team.

President Fiona and Immediate Past President Carole attended a recent match. Although they lost 3-2 Carole explained –

*They had most of the possession and were unlucky. The coach explained that some teams will only field their best players whereas our team is inclusive. All the girls will be included regardless of ability.*

Vice President Cathrine commented –

*I like that they are inclusive – so important in enabling girls and young women to enjoy sport which we know carries on through to adulthood if they get enjoyment from it earlier on.*

It is the second year we have been sponsoring the girls team.

It was great to hear about the club, and we are delighted to be sponsoring the girls .

**Pat Usher (Web Page) & Rose Marginson (Facebook)**





## 22<sup>nd</sup> Soroptimist International Europe (SIE) Congress Krakow, Poland, 23-25 October 2025

This much anticipated event was originally planned to take place in 2021. However, the COVID pandemic led to it being postponed until this year. It took place in Krakow, Poland and was attended by over 1000 Soroptimists from Europe and other continents.

Anna Wszelaczynska from SI Krakow and the European President Hafdis Karlsdottir opened the events with lighting of the candles and they introduced the theme of the Congress of which the focus was two significant contemporary issues: **Sustainability and Artificial Intelligence (AI)** which were explored within the overall congress theme of

### **“Soroptimists Impact Sustainability”.**

Sustainability was addressed in the context of a range of interconnected dimensions including, for example, social exclusion and inequality, poverty, homelessness, deprivation and hunger. These were considered with reference to the impact of economic and environmental factors. These dimensions and factors were incorporated into all the

Congress presentations which affirmed and celebrated the roles of women and the importance of international collaboration in order to reduce the impacts of poverty, violence, pollution, and social exclusion as these are challenges which have global consequences, yet they particularly affect the lives of girls and women.

Many speakers emphasised the vital contribution that women can make in leadership roles in which their strengths of, for example, emotional intelligence, empathy, accountability, and transparency underpinned by agility and ambition. Lessons were drawn from women leaders from the past and the present, including particularly Indira Gandhi who in 1972 said: “We have to bring our people out of poverty, wars, pollution and discrimination”.

Although the Congress recognised that the nature of contemporary global politics, often characterised by polarisation, fragmentation, hostility, and violence, is slowing down this process, it clearly indicated that climate change, wars and conflict, often involving violence towards women and girls have to be considered in the context of wide ranging contemporary geopolitical developments. Therefore, the development of creative and practical collaboration of Soroptimist sisters internationally is required to facilitate raising of awareness and transformative positive action. Soroptimists recognise that the challenges and opportunities which face the world today are not gender neutral. All too often the impacts of these challenges disproportionately affect women particularly in less developed countries where there is often conflict, violence, oppression, and war. Many of the Congress delegates responded to these challenges by recognising the primacy of, and interrelatedness between, living in harmony with the Earth through, for example, living simply and sustainably, developing and cultivating innovative and peaceful approaches to ecological management including the development of a diverse and healthy food supply and for technological developments to be inclusive and accessible.

The Congress also addressed issues arising from the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the ways in which the pace of technological change impacts upon societies. The collaborative participation and empathic leadership of women was recognised as being of vital importance to these developments. It was acknowledged that much of the present culture and infrastructure of AI is characterised by a ‘top down’ approach led by an approach in which a small, yet deeply influential, indeed, world changing, survival of the wealthiest philosophy which does not intrinsically encourage the participation of wider society in the development of these life changing technologies which, all too often, can appear to exist for the benefit of a small elite group of the wealthiest who, as a result of their increasing technological and cultural influence have very significant economic and political power and influence.

Soroptimists quoted the Istanbul Convention which emphasises protection from abusive and excluding practices which ought to be challenged. Women, including Soroptimists, internationally envision a world of both passion and compassion infused with empathy and commitment to move forward and promote environmental and technological progress. Many SI members view the Health of our Mother Earth as a primary consideration, deeply rooted in the plans for recovery of our environment, economics and social cohesion. Soroptimists recognise that AI developments are not neutral; indeed, the algorithms which are built into AI can incorporate bias and distortions which can reinforce negative views of women and biases which benefit men in our global society. Technological companies are often not aware of this bias and rely on the information from algorithms. Only 10% of women are currently represented in the leadership of AI companies and only 2% to 5% of AI applications for funding is dedicated to projects led by women. It is not surprising that if 92 to 95 % of this AI gold rush is in the hands of men, women understandably view this as inequitable, unfair and unjust.



AI involves the storage of vast quantities of data which require energy and huge quantities of water to cool these systems. A significant concern is that these resources, which will have to be redirected from the ever decreasing resources of wider society, will contribute to the further erosion of individual and social freedoms as tax payers will be contributing to the ever increasing expense of developing AI infrastructure and, particularly in less developed countries, this will often be at the expense of women and children.

Therefore, women at the Congress stood by technology which reaffirms the principles of equality, justice and the emergence of a **SustAinable** tomorrow.

Soroptimists at the Krakow Congress reinforced the belief that AI is not intrinsically a hero or a villain but, rather, it mirrors our choices and we must remain vigilant and monitor progress and stay actively involved in developing, reviewing, and preventing the development of AI technologies which promote a homogenous, 'one size fits all' global monoculture.



Another highlight of the SIE Krakow Congress was the award of the SIE Peace Prize to an exceptional woman, Hamida Aman. This award was given to Hamida in recognition of her unwavering commitment to giving Afghan women and girls a voice, access to education, and hope for the future. Hamida Aman launched Begum TV on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2023. Thanks to this initiative 54% of Afghan women have access to her broadcasts from France where she now lives, which provide information and entertainment. Hamida's commitment, action, and vision were truly recognised by all the organisers and participants of the Congress.

Congress participants fully recognised that many women and girls live in ideologically driven cultures which can inhibit, seriously restrict, and deny their rights. Alongside recognition and affirmation of the rights of women and girls, the Congress declared that we must never give up on collaborative actions which can help to, for example, work toward reducing and, ultimately, eliminating, the devastating effects of, for example, pollution, climate change, poverty, and exclusion in order to provide hope for a better tomorrow.

It was good to hear at the Krakow Congress that the famous words of Dame Jane Goddall (1934-2025) were shared on the large Congress screen: "What you do makes a difference, you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make"

With all the messages of concern, values and hopes, empathy and compassion as expressed at this inspiring and memorable event in Krakow, Poland, we must ask ourselves a question: will all our hopes become a reality or continue being a dream? Time will show. Soroptimists internationally remain united in their vision of contributing to the creation of a better world.



Despite the seriousness of the SIE Congress Agenda, we had a wonderful, energising time, sharing food, singing and dancing, listening to music and visiting places of interest. Lots of laughter and joy was present throughout the event which ended with all of us listening to a song written by Trond Henriksen "A Global Voice", of which the lyrics included these words: "song of freedom and justice and hope that survives..... with friendship and courage we shine in the light".

**Malgorzata Kmita**

**'A Global Voice'** by Trond Henriksen was played at the SIGBI Conference in Birmingham and SIGBI have now made it available on YouTube:

SIGBI – A Soroptimist Song created for SI Norway

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KFO3sQYRT0>



## 91<sup>st</sup> SIGBI Federation Conference Birmingham

The conference started Friday lunchtime with the opening ceremony followed by 3 interesting and very different speakers.

The first was **Professor Suzie Embers**, a space physicist, TV series winner-Astronauts:” Do you have what it takes?“, high altitude mountaineer global environmental leader. Her day job is Professor of Planetary Science at the University of Leicester. She also dedicates much of her time to widening opportunities for disadvantaged



children to study science. It was very interesting hearing about her life and work.

Then we heard from **Alison Hitchcock** co-founder of cancer support charity, “**From me to You**”. This charity helps to ease the isolation and loneliness experienced by patients having treatment for Cancer by sending letters to people facing the disease offering connection, joy and in some cases a lifeline to a world outside of their cancer journey.

It is definitely worthwhile reading up about this charity as anyone can write a letter to a patient through the charity and it is sent on anonymously. ( <https://www.frommetoyouletters.co.uk/> )

**Sharia Choudry** was our third speaker who is a Professor in the Faculty of Law, and Hackney Fellow in Law at Wadham College. Her research focuses on gender human rights and violence against women. She talked about how the safety of victims of domestic abuse are being compromised across family Law jurisdictions. It was very concerning hearing about Parental Alienation. She was an excellent speaker.



Saturday was a day of what they called ‘workshops’. We could choose 4 through the day to attend. There was a wide choice of subjects.

I attended one on Membership presented by Sandy Taylor MBE Director of Membership. She did a presentation - Does size really matter? with discussion / questions through the session.

The next one I attended was Programme-Planet /Good Citizenship. There were videos related to Climate Change with members also sharing their ideas.

My next workshop was delivered by Liz Jebb, Training Consultant from The Suzy Lamplugh Trust. She talked about Personal and Lone Worker Safety. She talked about many things we can do to try and stay safe. One important thing, keep your phone charged, tell people where you are going and when you plan to arrive. Always lock your car including going in to pay for petrol. We as a club should have emergency contact numbers for all our members.

Speed Dating was my final workshop. Sue and I talked about Early Essentials.





A social drink followed.

Sunday morning included hearing about the Best Practice Awards. Some great projects with many supported.

It was lovely to see Sue installed as Regional President by our new Federation President Gillie O'Rourke.

This ended for me a very enjoyable conference. It was great meeting new people and catching up with friends.

**Rose Marginson**



## & My Conference Experience

For newer members, may I introduce 'the jacket'.... It's been to as many Soroptimist Conferences as I have! My first was SIGBI Harrogate in 2007, but it's been to Barbados, Malta, even Kuala Lumpur for the International Convention. With navy trousers it's my Soroptimist 'uniform' and I'm easily spotted in a crowd or photo!

I don't think any of us knew what to expect from the day of 'Workshops', I pondered over my choice and went to the ones that would form a 'normal' day at conference:

- Report from the Caribbean, yes, a member of SIGBI Soroptimist International of Great Britain & Ireland, on their Programme Project work
- White Ribbon Campaign – 'How we engage men in our messaging
- Report from Asia on their Project work. There is an SI Asia Pacific Federation, but SIGBI includes India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

I was delighted to find that a member from SI Kathmandu, Mousami Guragain, was one of the speakers. By the end of the session, we had arranged a way to 'send' them the £150 we had been trying to donate for their 'Educate to Lead' project! With the agreement of both Treasurers, Mousami would take the cash home with her, mission accomplished!

*Photographic evidence of the handover, in front of the flags & many Soroptimists!*



**Gillie O'Rourke** is now our SIGBI Federation President for the next two years, from her inaugural Blog on the Hub:

1. *Be kind to one another, demonstrating what it means to be a Soroptimist (best of sisters)*
2. *Embrace the very reasons upon which we were founded*
3. *Remember that all views are valid, let's forget "we have always done it this way" or "why have we always done it this way". Instead listen, respect each other's views and move forward. We are a broad and inclusive women's organisation, and there is room for everyone.*
4. *Continue with all the wonderful and impactful work you are doing, whether it is local, national or international, remembering always that every time you engage with someone you are changing that person's life.*
5. *And finally go back to your Clubs and Regions confident in the knowledge that you are all MAKING A HUGE DIFFERENCE and it is recognised and respected by all who come into contact with you.*

Gillie has accepted our invitation to the 100<sup>th</sup> Charter Dinner in March

I agree with Rose, a very enjoyable conference, especially meeting friends old & new, especially over dinner.

**Sue Underwood**



## Millie's Miles That Matter

**INTRODUCING MILLIE** Millie is our 18 month old rescue dog. We adopted her 12 months ago from 'Dogs 4 Rescue' in Irlam, a charity that specialises in "kennel free" rescue. She arrived on a plane from Bosnia on the Friday and came home with us for a home trial on the Sunday. The rest, as they say, is history! 😊



**THE CHALLENGE** Act4Africa put out a call to supporters to walk, run, cycle or swim 25 miles in November to support the mission to empower women and girls in Uganda. I decided to take up the challenge with Millie, giving Jamie – our long suffering labrador – a chance to have the house to himself for a while! The walks would be in addition to, or extensions of, our normal daily walks, and the aim was to visit different places and environments. I used an app called MapMyWalk to record what we achieved. We completed the challenge with 10 walks and with 4 days to spare. Here are a few of the highlights.



**LOCAL PARKS** We're very fortunate to have some lovely parks in the Sale area, from small pocket parks like Newton Park in Timperley to beautiful Worthington Park in the centre of Sale.

**LOTS OF WATER!** Sale lies between two major waterways – the River Mersey and the Bridgwater Canal – and there are several smaller waterways such as Sunderland Brook and Baguley Brook. And then there's Sale Waterpark. All provide excellent opportunities for walking.



## FURTHER AFIELD

I took the opportunity to visit a couple of parks outside of the Sale area - Millie was decidedly spooked by the statue of Oliver Cromwell in Wythenshawe Park! And of course, I couldn't miss the opportunity of doing a walk at our home from home, Donington Park race circuit – although sadly not actually in the track itself.





## THE DETAIL

MILLIES MILES THAT MATTER		
Date	Route	Distance (Miles)
01-Nov	Carrington Moss inc United Utilities reserve	3.00
03-Nov	Donington Park	1.70
06-Nov	Woodheys/ Newton/ Walton Park	3.34
07-Nov	Wythenshawe Park	1.76
10-Nov	River Mersey/ Ashton Village	3.52
14-Nov	Sale Water Park	2.02
16-Nov	Sale West circular	2.80
21-Nov	Carrington Moss/Isherwood Road	3.08
24-Nov	SAA Worthington Park	3.16
26-Nov	Longford Park	1.05
		<b>25.41</b>

You can see more photos on my Instagram account @blb53 or watch our video on TikTok @Barbara53

If you would like to donate to the cause, here is the link to our Just Giving page:

[https://www.justgiving.com/page/millies-miles?utm\\_medium=FR&utm\\_source=CL](https://www.justgiving.com/page/millies-miles?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=CL)

**Barbara Blaber**

**AND FINALLY..**

We'd like to take this opportunity to wish  
you and yours all the very best for the  
festive season  
Barbara & Steve Blaber, Jamie & Millie,  
Sophie, Casey & Freddie



Merry Christmas Everyone  
& looking to forward  
(like my kittens in the photo)  
to celebrating our Centenary in 2026!  
Rachelle



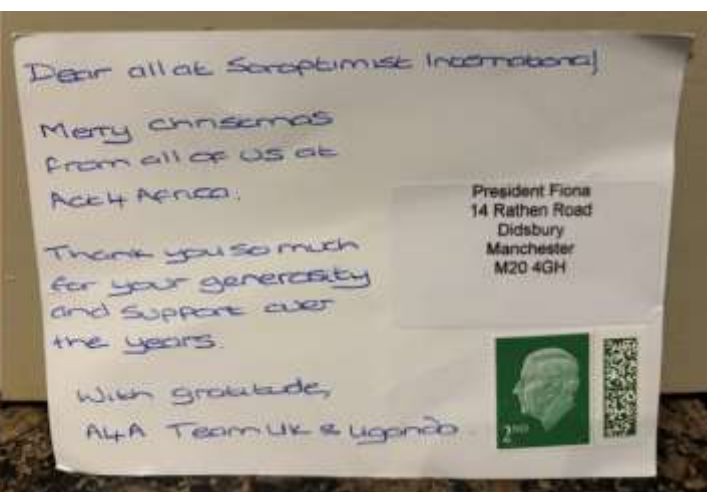


## A Unique Gift for Act4Africa's Kathy's Kindergarten Children

Remember these outfits for the children at Kathy's Kindergarten from our Summer Newsletter

Well, they arrived!

Can't you just feel the excitement?







Act4Africa

★ Favourites · 26 September · 🌐

Gratitude in Action! A heartfelt thank you to [Soroptimist International Manchester](#) and Sahar Bhojak for their generous donations! Your support has enabled four young women, trained under our She Leads Programme, to each receive a brand-new sewing machine as part of their start-up kit.

Doreen, one of the beneficiaries, shared:

"I had been in the village for years, doing hopeless manual labour — digging in people's gardens to survive — since I dropped out of school in Primary Four. Act4Africa has completely changed my life by giving me a skill and a sewing machine. For the first time, I feel my future is bright."

Such kindness leaves a lasting impact. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for changing lives!

*(The patterns included with Rosemary's clothes gift will be put to good use!)*



Soroptimist International Manchester

★ Favourites · 6 December at 19:54 · 🌐

🎁 Big Give Challenge completed, including our £200 donation becoming £400! We know it will all be put to good use!



## Maureen's Walk for 'One Woman At A Time'

Joining Together to Change Lives.

A joint venture between the Soroptimist Club of Bolton and the charity "One Woman at a Time"


Meet Maureen Barber who, at 85 years young, has set herself a challenge to walk 67kms, over a period of time, in order to raise enough money to fund the training of two young women from the Pokot region of Kenya to be trained as midwives.

Women, who as young girls, fled FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) and in some cases forced marriage.



Becoming midwives in this poor region of Kenya would help women to have safer births and have access to the care they deserve.


Let us support Maureen in her challenge by raising the funds to support the lives of women and children in this region of Kenya.

**One Woman at a Time** ✓  
RCN 1183863  
[www.onewomanatime.co.uk](http://www.onewomanatatime.co.uk)

We are a UK charity that supports girls and women fleeing gender based crimes predominantly in Kenya but also in India and the UK. Every penny counts when it comes to educating the girls in Kenya and giving them the opportunity to become role models when saying no to gender based crimes.

Maureen Barber was a member of our Club for many years while she was the Manchester Archivist.

Several years ago, we 'earmarked' £150 to be used for work preventing FGM....Maureen's Walk aims to do just that, so

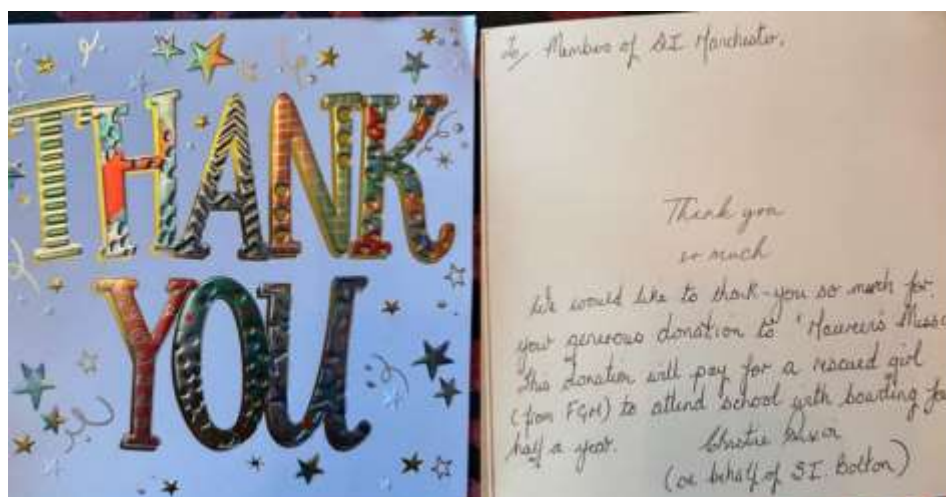
**Soroptimist International Manchester** 46 minutes ago

Maureen, Manchester Soroptimists wish you well ..... you are an inspiration X

**£150.00**

Here is the link if you wish to make a private donation

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/christine-dixon-3>





## Our Christmas Party

President Fiona's home was the venue for our 2025 Christmas party. In pretty, festive surroundings, 20 Club members gathered, bringing food to share – all of it delicious – and drinks ranging from mulled wine to lemonade!

The evening began with the customary lighting of candles to remember our Soroptimist Friendship Link members across the globe. Always a moment of reflection to remember our sisters united in the principles of Soroptimism, wherever they are.



We enjoyed an evening of fun, friendship, conversation and good company, as usual, catching up with each other's news, talking over the year's events and thinking about the Centenary year to come.

We said au revoir to our member Malgorzata who has moved to Cumbria, but we know we will keep in touch.

All too soon the evening came to an end.

Many thanks to our host Fiona and family for their hard work in preparing for and making the evening so successful.

**Hilary Dodd**

*(See the Back Page for more photos!)*

## Au Revoir from Malgorzata



Now as I have moved and settled in Cumbria, I wish all my SI Manchester Friends a very happy Festive Season, Christmas and the New Year 2026.

Your 100th Anniversary will be so special and known all over the world.

I also wish to extend my best wishes to SI Gdansk Friends and SI Krakow where I recently spent some amazing time.

As I join my new Friends in SI Cockermouth, I connect with them enriched by over 20 years of Soroptimist experiences, wisdom and future adventures.

Enjoy every celebration in life and live beautifully.

With Friendship and Respect

**Malgorzata Kmita**



Lorraine couldn't join us,  
but she was with us in spirit!



# Christmas Quizzes!

Absolutely no prizes!

Answers available at the January Club meeting, for a small donation!



## MISSING LETTERS – XMAS FOOD & DRINK

Example      \_U\_K\_Y      =      TURKEY

1. \_R\_N\_E\_R\_-S\_U\_E      .....

2. P\_U\_-P\_D\_I\_N\_      .....

3. \_I\_C\_-\_I\_S      .....

4. \_R\_N\_Y-S\_U\_E      .....

5. \_H\_R\_Y      .....

6. \_I\_S-\_N-\_L\_N\_E\_S      .....

7. M\_L\_E\_-W\_N\_      .....

8. C\_R\_S\_M\_S-C\_K\_      .....

9. G\_A\_E\_-P\_R\_N\_P\_      .....

10. B\_U\_S\_E\_-S\_R\_U\_S      .....

11. S\_T\_F\_I\_N\_      .....

12. \_I\_G\_R\_R\_A\_      .....





### Christmas Cryptic Carols

Solve the clues to find the Christmas carol!

1. DECORATE THE CORRIDORS .....
2. JUBILATION TO THE TERRESTIAL GLOBE .....
3. NO NOISE BETWEEN 8PM AND 6AM .....
4. SMALL EQUUS AFRICANUS ASINUS .....
5. ONE PERCEIVED WITH EYES A TRIO OF VESSELS .....
6. SMALL TRIO OF ROYAL MEN .....
7. MIXED THE ORCS TO LIGHT YOUR WAY .....
8. REMOVED IN AN ANIMAL FEEDING TROUGH .....
9. SUMMON THE ENTIRETY OF BELIEVERS.....
10. IT ARRIVED AT 12:00 ON A TRANSPARENT DAY.....





Kev and I send you our warmest wishes for a wonderful Christmas and a fantastic New Year. While you're celebrating, we'll be soaking up a little Spanish sunshine and enjoying some well-earned rest!  
All the best, Sophie xxx



Sending everyone my very best wishes for a happy Christmas and New Year  
Hilary"



Wishing all our Soroptimist friends a wonderful Christmas with your family and loved ones and a joyous and peaceful New Year ahead  
President Fiona



Wishing all my friends and their families in Soroptimist Manchester a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Peaceful New Year  
Love from Rose and John



Val wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and Peace, Good Health and Happiness in 2026  
Val



Merry Christmas to all my friends at SI Manchester, their families and our Friendship links and lets raise a toast to a successful 2025 and a very special 2026!  
.....from an NHS Santa and one of her elves  
Cathrine Holland



Warm wishes to all my Soroptimist friends for Christmas and the New Year  
From Maureen





We wish all Soroptimist  
friends and their families  
a very Happy Christmas  
and a healthy and  
prosperous New Year.  
Rosemary & Gus



Wishing you all a very  
happy Christmas and a  
healthy and peaceful New  
Year. Thanks for your  
friendship and the  
opportunity to be involved  
in worthwhile and  
interesting activities.  
Sue (Silk)



Barry and I wish you all a  
Happy Xmas and New Year  
and above all, good health.  
Shena & Barry



Wishing all Soroptimist's  
friends and families a very  
Happy Christmas  
and Best Wishes for a  
Peaceful 2026.  
Love Ann



Wishing you a day full of  
love, peace and happiness.  
Carole



Merry Christmas  
everyone. Thank you for  
your support this year and  
for each of you being truly  
inspirational.  
Wishing you all a  
wonderful Christmas.  
Helen Kenny-Levick xxx



Love and best wishes to  
everyone for Christmas  
and the New Year  
Susan & David





Dear Rose,  
I would like to sincerely thank you for your support this past year. We are proud to partner with Soroptimists who are helping to create a future free from abuse and your support makes a real and lasting difference.

Thank you again, and I wish you a safe and joyful Christmas and a successful New Year.

I am looking forward to working together more in 2026.

Ashleigh

Pankhurst Trust & MWA



Merry  
Christmas  
  
from  
  
The Tigers!



## Dates for Your Diary

Tuesday 6 <sup>th</sup> January	6:30 for 7pm	Club Meeting 'Time for Reflection'
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> January	7pm	Executive Meeting
Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> January	7pm	Programme Action Meeting
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> February	6:30 for 7pm	Club Meeting
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> February	7pm	Executive Meeting
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> February	From 10am	South Lancs Region PAC & Council Meeting
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> March	6:30 for 7pm	Club Meeting
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup> March	7pm	Pancake Party at Fiona's
Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup> March	7pm	Executive Meeting
<b>Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March</b>	<b>From 6pm</b>	<b>100<sup>th</sup> Charter Dinner – deadline 31<sup>st</sup> January</b>
Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> April	7pm	Club Meeting
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> April		Annual General Meeting – to be arranged
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> April	7pm	Executive Meeting
Friday 1 <sup>st</sup> May		Lord Mayors Tea
Saturday 16 <sup>th</sup> May	All day	South Lancashire Regional Conference
Further information & Social events – Watch for emails! - See <a href="https://sigbi.org/manchester/meetings-and-events/">https://sigbi.org/manchester/meetings-and-events/</a>		



### Christmas Greetings:

We are grateful to all who, in lieu of cards, have sent their Christmas greetings.  
The donations will go to our General Charities Account.



**Copy** for the Spring edition of the Newsletter by **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March**, please.

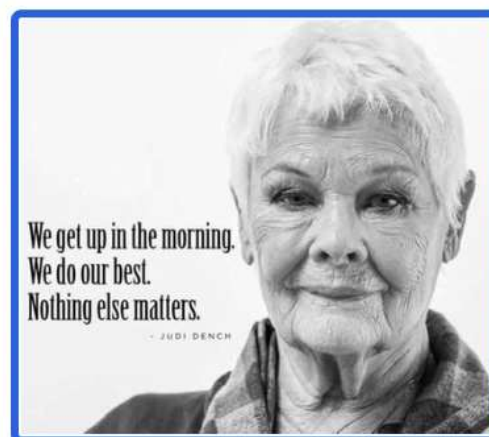
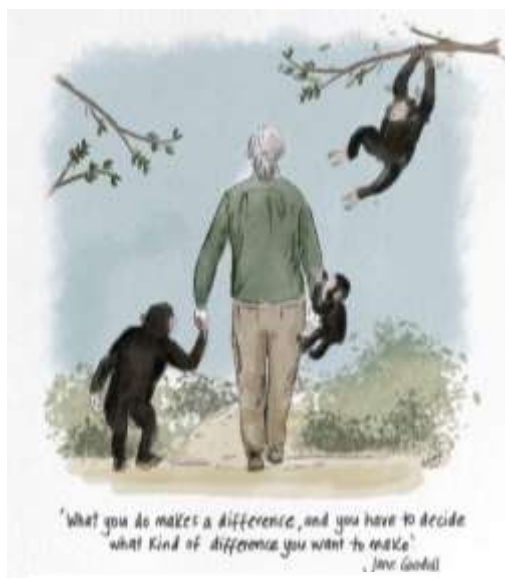
Looking forward to articles from each of you!

Tell your story ... Review your Soroptimism ... Newer Members please introduce yourselves!

Anything else you would like to share? Personal anecdotes always welcome

**Sue Underwood** [sueuhome@sky.com](mailto:sueuhome@sky.com)

Last Words ..... from Women & a Dog who could/should have been Soroptimists!







Fun, Food and candles for our Friendship Links  
**Merry Christmas & Happy New Year**  
 To All our Members, Friends and Family

