

Soroptimist International Solihull & District

SI Solihull & District was chartered in 2000. Our present club is in fact the second SI Solihull & District, the first being formed in 1955 but closed in 1995. A second club was formed in 2000 and remains the flourishing group we know today.

In the early days, membership of the original club was by invitation only! Applications for membership were 'on the table' for three meetings before either being accepted or rejected. All members were professional women and only one representative from each profession was allowed. As always there were several teachers, so to get round the 'one representative' rule they were listed as 'Teacher' or 'Head of Department', 'Head Teacher' and so on. Committee members served for two years, and club meetings were held at the Manor House in Solihull.

Initially the club was enthusiastic, but as time went on club activities declined and it became little more than a lunch/social club until its closure in 1995.

Five years later, a new club was formed under the leadership of new Founder President Beverley Haywood with 18 members. This was largely due to the efforts of Anne Hill from SI Central Birmingham. The first meeting was held at a local infant school, but a new venue had to be found. It was not good to be sitting on small chairs! Later meetings were held at the Greswolde Hotel, Knowle, and then David Lloyds Sports Club in Cranmore Boulevard, Solihull. Several of the founder members are still with us today. Our Charter Dinner on 25 March 2000 held at the Motorcycle Museum was a great success with over 200 people from other clubs and regions. The regional officers had decided to do a dance during the ceremony, taught very ably by Carol Strongman from Kidderminster. Sadly, on the day it went wrong much to the laughter of the

audience! However, it was appreciated and such fun. After this, Bev Haywood and her husband Steve started dancing with a Salsa demo. The club was off to a great start and year on year since then we have gone from strength to strength.



Founder members at the Charter celebration in 2000

The Presidents of the original club were:

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|---------|--|
| 1955-56 | Miss VIM Wilkinson (Founder President) |
| 1957-58 | Mrs Gwenda Hollander |
| 1958-59 | Miss MJ Hoggart-Hill |
| 1959-60 | Miss F Winridge |
| 1960-61 | Miss B Fox |
| 1961-62 | Miss J Paterson |
| 1962-64 | Mrs D Hughes |
| 1964-65 | Miss IC Thomas |
| 1965-66 | Miss J Miller |
| 1966-67 | Miss GM Fitter |
| 1967-68 | Mrs G Paton |

| | |
|---------|------------------|
| 1968-69 | Mrs DM Holtom |
| 1969-70 | Miss RL Wiseman |
| 1970-71 | Mrs KEW Wilkin |
| 1971-72 | Miss MG Smith |
| 1972-73 | Mrs VE Lane |
| 1973-74 | Mrs EJ Hooper |
| 1974-75 | Miss EM Bacon |
| 1975-76 | Mrs E Motely |
| 1976-78 | Miss J Harrison |
| 1978-79 | Mrs NA Rawson |
| 1979-80 | Miss DN Bastable |
| 1980-81 | Mrs ME Lane J.P. |
| 1981-82 | Mrs A Mason |
| 1982-83 | Mrs J Tizard |
| 1983-84 | Mrs M Downes |
| 1984-86 | Mrs NA Rawson |
| 1986-87 | Mrs J Tizard |
| 1987-88 | Mrs J O'Sullivan |
| 1988-90 | Mrs M Downes |
| 1990-91 | Mrs R Tullock |
| 1991-92 | Mrs M Bates |
| 1992-94 | Mrs M Downes |
| 1994-95 | Miss M Codbett |
| 1995-96 | Miss J Tizard |

Past Presidents since our Charter in 2000 were:

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| 2000-2001 | Beverley Haywood (Founder President) |
| 2001-2002 | Ann Roberts |
| 2002-2003 | Alison Burrows |
| 2003-2004 | Val Lacey |
| 2004-2005 | Jan Hemlin |
| 2005-2006 | Susan Knowles |
| 2006-2007 | Helen Clarke |
| 2007-2008 | Ann Keepax |
| 2008-2009 | Jenny George |
| 2009-2010 | Grace Hampson |
| 2010-2011 | Jannette Lambert |
| 2011-2012 | Angela Sadler |
| 2012-2013 | Chris Spriggs |

2013-2014 Margaret Jarman
2014-2015 Marie Lawrence 6mths / 6mths shared by Past Presidents
2015-2016 Elizabeth Lowe
2016-2017 Ann Thomas
2017-2018 Elaine Stephens
2018-2019 Shared by members
2019-2020 Jan Tilsley

2000 – 2001 President: Beverley Haywood

Theme: **New Beginnings and Wider Horizons**

During our first year, we were still trying to understand Programme Action and the best way of making a difference, so much of our initial work was fund-raising for charities.

We had a talk about the Chernobyl Children's Charity which supports victims of the Chernobyl disaster. Each year, the Solihull branch hosts a group of teenagers from Belarus. As well as raising funds for the charity, two members of our club were host families for the visit in July 2000.

We were concerned about the high number of teenage pregnancies in the UK. As a result, we held a fund-raising barbecue to raise funds to buy a "Baby Think It Over" virtual baby doll for Whitesmore School in Chelmsley Wood. This was a lifelike baby doll, with realistic computerized responses, that teenagers could take home overnight to help them appreciate the responsibilities involved in being a parent. Jan Hemlin accepted the "Virtual Baby" from President Bev at a school assembly and 'Virtual babies soon established a place in GCSE Child Development courses.

In our first year, donations were made to various charities including:

- Warren Pearl Marie Curie Centre
- Chernobyl Children's Charity

2001 – 2002 President: Anne Roberts

Theme: **Service and Community**

As part of our Programme Action, a rota was set up for members to go to the Fireside Homeless Centre on a Sunday to help serve meals and wash up.

This year for the first time we were involved in helping organise Solihull Festival with the Solihull Rotary and Inner Wheel clubs.

Our first Friendship Link was established with St King's Lynn.

Charities supported included:

- Chernobyl Children's Charity
- Limbs for Life: This was the Soroptimist International Quadrennial Project, supporting victims of landmines.
- Hope & Homes for Children

2002 – 2003 President: Alison Burrows

Theme: **Realising our Potential**

One of the main objectives this year was to develop our Programme Action work and, as a result, by the end of the year, we had several more focused projects in their early stages to form the basis of our work in future years.

In addition, we continued with our teenage pregnancy prevention programme by supplying our second Baby Think it Over virtual baby, this time to Light Hall School in Shirley.

During the year, we raised the profile of our club locally through closer involvement with local organisations such as the Solihull Rotary clubs, Solihull Council, Solihull Community Foundation, and several local businesses. As part of Solihull Festival, we organised a John Lewis Choral Evening at Solihull School which raised awareness of the club considerably.

Honeypot was President Alison's special charity for the year, chosen because of its work helping disadvantaged children. We reached our target of raising enough money to send ten children from the Midlands for a week's holiday at Honeypot House in the New Forest.

Other charities supported were:

- Chernobyl Children's Charity
- Edwards Trust which provided accommodation for parents whilst their child was receiving treatment at Birmingham Children's Hospital
- Make a Wish Foundation – The foundation grants the wishes of children aged 3 to 18 living with life threatening illnesses.

2003 – 2004 President: Val Lacey

Theme: **A Healthy Woman makes a Healthy World**

One of the main projects during the year was **Datalink** or **Message in a Bottle**. 22,000 bottles were given out to the elderly & those living alone. These were empty film canisters (remember them?!) containing a datasheet with contacts, doctors name & health issues. Canisters were kept in the fridge for emergency services to refer to if necessary.

During the year, we started to get involved with the Make a Better Life (MABL) Trust, a charity set up to assist the victims of domestic violence in Solihull. We helped them with funding to produce cards and leaflets containing key information and points of contact for victims.

Charities for the year:

- Warwickshire Orthopaedic Centre
- Edwards Trust

2004 – 2005 President: Jan Hemlin

Theme: **'MAKE A BETTER LIFE' "Dream with your eyes open"**

My inspiration came when I was at the Sydney Convention in 2003. It was my dream to make a difference to someone's life and together to make it a reality. My focus was particularly on disadvantaged young women and children.

Programme Action was established by then and some projects ran for two or three years. Message in a Bottle started in 2002, continuing in my year.

Partnerships were starting to be established in the borough, with Solihull Council, Rotary clubs, and the Make a Better Life (MABL) Trust which provided support for those affected by domestic violence prior to the opening of the Solihull Refuge.

The club's Environment group with SMBC produced a booklet A-Z of Waste Management and Recycling.

Links with Solihull Rotary and Solihull Festival continued with our club having a stand with an Environment theme. This was before SMBC started to recycle waste.

Friendship Link with SI Johannesburg established, and funds raised for the Empilweni Garden project, teaching women how to grow and sell organic vegetables. As well as providing tools, the funds were used to provide a building for the gardeners' use.

Funds raised during the year went to:

- Solihull Victim Support
- Turners Society (the granddaughter of one of our members Maris, had been diagnosed with Turner's Syndrome, a chromosomal disorder affecting only females. At a highly successful Ascot Race Night funds were raised for the Turners charity.
- After listening to a speaker from the Solihull Drug Action team it had become evident that an increasing number of teenagers consumed excessive alcohol during pregnancy, babies born were at risk of suffering from Foetal Alcohol syndrome. Club decided to donate a Drug Affected Virtual baby for the team to take into school to warn students of the risks.
- Several pupils taught by President Jan attended Enoch's Youth club in Chelmsley Wood. Club made a donation, which paid for a day out at Alton Towers for all its members.

A programme of speakers and social events provided fun and friendship.

2005 – 2006 President : Sue Knowles

Theme: **'Soroptimism changes lives'**

This year saw the club launch and successfully run the Solihull Businesswoman of the Year Award. This was set up to give an award to encourage a businesswoman in Solihull who had been successful in setting up her own small business.

'Adopt a station' – This project was started in late 2005 when we adopted Widney Manor station and in early 2006 we started planting. This project is continuing today with a small team of members who look after the plants and talk to train travellers about our organisation.

Aquabox – This was carried out in conjunction with Rotary who send emergency boxes all over the world wherever they are needed in disaster areas. The large plastic box contained a water filter and a plastic groundsheet. Club members

packed it with a variety of donated items for a family to keep them warm and to provide shelter and safe water. The box was sent to Eritrea in Africa. Since then, another 3 boxes have been packed and dispatched by the club.

Charities supported included:

- St Basils who work with homeless young people in Birmingham,
- Make a Better Life (MABL) Trust including funding for the telephone help lines for people affected by domestic violence in Solihull.

2006 – 2007 President: Helen Clarke

Theme: **Expect the Unexpected**

My theme for the year was intended to reflect on the sudden and unexpected events that can overtake us all and how we, as an organisation, can respond positively.

From instruction in first aid to how to deal with life changes, the aim was to broaden our knowledge and have fun at the same time. We attempted to challenge perceived thinking with Freemasonry and the Church and conducted many services and fund-raising projects.

These included:

- The first Fun in the Park event organised jointly with Rotary, raising money for local charities.
- Operation Christmas Child: for the 6th year running, SI Solihull enjoyed wrapping and packing shoeboxes for needy children. 76 boxes were wrapped and filled, making a total of 396 boxes since 2001.
- Raising awareness of the impact on the lives of sufferers with Motor Neurone Disease and their carers which was one of my charities for the year.

We introduced Sup with Soroptimists – promoting our organisation at our Supper Meetings, we promoted Fairtrade and were instrumental in Solihull becoming a Fairtrade Borough and introduced our members to Solihull Mind via the garden which operates locally, an involvement which continues to this day. Looking back, I realise how much our Club managed to achieve during that year and the fun we all had and how many enduring friendships were made.

2007 – 2008 President: Ann Keepax

My theme for the year was **AWARENESS IN THE COMMUNITY**. Although as a Club we had been running for 7 years, as an organisation we were still unknown, particularly locally, and I wanted to ensure more people and organisations knew who we were.

In the previous two years we had started a partnership with the Rotary Clubs in the Borough of Solihull. We were particularly involved in establishing Solihull Festival which was organised by Solihull Soroptimists and the Rotary Clubs of Solihull Borough. In 2006 we jointly organised a community event in Brueton Park, called Fun in the Park with Solihull Rotary Club. This consisted of a joint marquee promoting our two organisations; a children's land train for them to ride on; and football coaching by an ex-player from Aston Villa. In 2007 we worked with Monkspath Rotary to grow this event and set the template for future Fun in the Park events. In 2007 the event consisted of many stalls from local organisations, and a stage for local acts to perform and entertain. My how this event grew! Running from 2007 until 2019.

I was delighted when my cousin Sally Ann Saunders joined us to talk about her visit to Homelands School in Uganda. Sally Ann was Deputy Head of a School in Nuneaton, and through the Department of Education, she, and a couple of members of staff went to Uganda to help teach and support the staff. This was a reciprocal visit with Canon Charles coming to the UK and spending time at Sally Ann's school. Members from the Club had provided some items for Sally to take such as crayons, pencils, rubbers, etc. Sally talked about her experience at Homelands which is a school and orphanage. She also talked about the work Canon Charles's wife did with the women in the local area. To date we are still working and supporting Homelands School.

On 20th October some of us joined other Soroptimists, along with International President Lynn Dunning and Federation President Hilary Kay-Young for the dedication of the new site/plot at the National Memorial Arboretum. A fantastic day. As a club we also bought a tree for the Soroptimist plot as a lasting testament to the work of our club. It is so wonderful that we still have strong links with our plot at the Arboretum. The plot at the Arboretum is the only memorial to the work of Soroptimists in the world.

My charities for the year were:-

- Make a Better Life (MABL) a local organisation to support the work of the Women's Refuge and women suffering domestic violence. The Refuge in Solihull had only recently been opened in Solihull. Monies raised were to support a help line set up in John Lewis.
- The Lady Taverners. This is a national charity whose aim is to support children with special needs and disabilities by fundraising to purchase specially adapted green minibuses for Special schools, as well as equipment for Sensory Rooms. I have been a member of this charity since 1992.

2008 – 2009 President: Jenny George

Theme: **Step Outside the Comfort Zone**

This year saw us continue with many successful projects, including support for Homelands School and Orphanage in Uganda. We sent educational equipment, laptops, and a football kit, making a great difference to the children's lives.

Another of our projects this year was Pens4Life. We saved ballpoint pens which were taken out to Rwanda, enabling children in Rwanda to go to school.

The club Lobbying Group worked extremely hard within the Solihull Fairtrade steering group towards attaining Fairtrade status for the borough.

Local charities for the year included:

- Solihull Young Carers
- FastAid
- Warwickshire Air Ambulance

2009 – 2010 President: Grace Hampson

I was President in the Club's 10th year and my theme was '**Working together to improve lives**'.

Our major project in my year was the bag project in conjunction with SI Johannesburg which was to produce hessian bags decorated with painted used tea bags. We made hundreds of bags with many of our club members involved in their production in some way. We purchased a water tank for the orphanage

at Sithabele with the proceeds. This was led by Marjorie. As part of this we involved our friendship link clubs who also sold bags on our behalf. We were asked to present the project to the SIGBI conference and did a song onstage - who can forget 'I have a cup and saucer...'

We also had a £1 challenge in my year when each Club member was presented with a £1 coin and asked to turn it into £10 in the year. We did this as a joint project with friendship club SI Kings Lynn and their friendship club SI Amber Valley. It was great fun and most members participated. The money raised by our club was used to support Project Sierra which was the SI Quadrennial Project 2007-2011, supporting women and their families in Sierra Leone.

We supported the Poppy Project, a national project to support women who have been trafficked into prostitution who worked with Eaves, a London based charity which provided accommodation for the women. This was the early days of trafficking when it was little understood and led to the setting up of the Purple Teardrop campaign which we supported and raised awareness of at a local conference.

My charities for the year were:

- MABL – to support the helpline
- St Basils
- Brain Tumour UK

2010 – 2011 President: Jannette Lambert

Theme: International Goodwill & Understanding, "The Possibilities are Infinite"

During the year we worked closely with one of our friendship links, SI St Vincent & the Grenadines, supporting their Helping Hands Centre for treating children with cerebral palsy. We provided funds towards a new minibus for the centre.

Many members continued to knit colourful blankets to be given to patients at the Hamlin Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia, so it was particularly relevant that one of our speakers during the year talked about the work being done at the hospital to rehabilitate girls injured during childbirth.

Another of our speakers was a local member of the International Search and Rescue Team UK whose day job was a Fireman in Solihull. He told us about the part that he played, after the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti, rescuing a two-year-old girl, who had been trapped for three days beneath piles of rubble when her Kindergarten school totally collapsed. A donation was given to aid the rebuilding of the school.

Other charities supported:

- MABL
- Water Aid

2011 – 2012 President: Angela Sadler

My theme was "Enhance Our Understanding, Enhance Our Contribution"

Our first Skirting Science event was held in March 2012 with the aim of encouraging girls to take up science subjects. The event was developed in conjunction with the local council and schools and enabled a total of 155 girls from 10 schools to attend several science workshops throughout the day.

Fun in the Park this year was organised solely by SI Solihull & District. There were a fantastic number of stalls, classic cars, a dog show, and an arena providing a great variety of events. Despite the fact it was a rainy day, it was a fun day for the community raising funds for local charities and increasing the profile of our club.

This year was the first visit of members to Homelands School and Orphanage in Uganda. We saw the impact a relatively small amount of money could make and purchased a sewing machine for the Vvamatulu ladies in the neighbouring village.

My charities for the year were:

- SoLO
- Solihull Young Carers
- Bees for Development

2012 – 2013 President: Chris Spriggs

My theme was **Service with Fun and Friendship.**

Lamps for Malawi: We joined with the Open University, who was running a project with the Saltire Trust (Scottish Government) for Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA). It looked to recruit women to become teachers in their own communities, combining academic study and structured experience of school practice. A key constraint had been a lack of the necessary academic qualifications required for admittance to teacher education programmes, so the Scheme provided pathways for rural women to access relevant training.

We supported the scholarships with wind-up lamps to enable the students to continue to work even in the dark. Something I was particularly pleased about, was that with each lamp went a personal letter to the student, telling them about us, and offering words of encouragement.

Swishing: This was the first time we tried Swishing, taking quality, pre-loved clothes, and accessories, and selling them in a member's home to raise money for charity. This is an exceptionally low cost, extremely pleasant way to raise funds, but definitely put the fun in service!

Firewalk and Glasswalk for the Meningitis Trust: This was the most challenging event in my year. Two members and some friends took part in this event at the Old Sils in Knowle, with several Soroptimists and supporters gathering to cheer on the participants.

2013 – 2014 President: Margaret Jarman

Theme: **Peace begins with a Smile**

During the year, SI Solihull & District and the other Midland Arden clubs supported my Manga style comic books to raise awareness of Anti Human Trafficking. These books are a particularly effective way of addressing the problem of Anti Human Trafficking in Cambodia, a transit point between Vietnam and Thailand. Most of the villagers are still illiterate although this is slowly changing. They have no access to TV or radio to learn about the tricks that the traffickers use when targeting a village. Children and particularly girls are vulnerable to human trafficking and end up in sexual slavery. Thanks to S I support we raised enough to buy and distribute 1,000 of these books to the villagers. I am incredibly pleased to say that not one single child or young person in our Commune became a victim since we raised awareness. This cause was presented to the Federation Conference in Gateshead.

I was pleased to introduce the Helping Hands Food Bank to the club. Following a talk by the manager of Helping Hands at one of our meetings, regular collections of donated food were started at every club meeting.

Charities supported included:

- Handicap International (now rebranded as Humanity Inclusion)
Tom Shelton of Handicap International came and presented his work on Cluster Bombs to the club. This was no mean achievement as he came straight off a plane from France to address the meeting, only just making it by the skin of his teeth. Forgotten Ten was sponsored by SI Solihull during my Presidential Year.

2014 – 2015 President: Marie Lawrence

Theme: **With you. By you. For you.**

The two main projects this year were:

- Skirting Science
- Fun in the Park

Also, this year, some club members made a trip to Uganda, visiting our friendship link SI Masaka as well as Homelands School and Orphanage which we have supported since 2007.

Charities supported included:

- Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid
- Brain Tumour Charity

2015 – 2016 President: Liz Lowe

Theme: **Release your Potential, Realize Another's**

The aim was to find Programme Action projects with which each member could actively engage to raise awareness of Soroptimism through service, fundraising, fun and friendship.

The charities I chose were:

- **'Cherished'** an initiative for disaffected girls in school. We helped to fund and support a Girls Conference run by Cherished and were delighted that Hannah Borg the founder of Cherished won the MAR Inspirational Woman award.
- **Breast Cancer Now** for which we held a "Paint the Town Pink" event where local shops in Knowle dressed their windows pink and the Mayor of Solihull judged the winner. There were tables in the precinct displaying information leaflets and promotional items. Money was raised through bucket collections, tin shakes, and raffles.
- **The Ladies of Vvamatula in Uganda** for whom we raised sufficient funds to provide 7 water storage cisterns to collect rainwater from the roofs of their homes.

This year for the first time we ran our own Solihull Schools Public Speaking Competition with the winner going through to the Regional Competition.

Also, during this year SI Solihull & District formed two new Friendship Links - One in Norway and one in Germany. Six members from Solihull visited SI Molde in Norway in June and four Members from SI Fulda in Germany visited Solihull in October.

2016 – 2017 President: Ann Thomas

Motto: 'If you can dream it, you can do it'

Theme: Inspiring women

My year as President was a privilege and honour. Our Club had 50 members and in addition to our Programme Actions and fund-raising events as set out below, we enjoyed a visit from members of SI Molde, Norway, one of our friendship links. Our members also enjoyed the Federation Conference in Malta that year.

We ate (and drank!) well with afternoon strawberry tea in the summer in the President's garden, then an Italian meal evening - same venue- later in the year, both raising funds for the Women's refuge. Our Club visited Highgrove, home and garden of HRH The Prince of Wales, and had afternoon tea there. Nearer to home we visited the historical church and alms houses at Fen End.

In February 2017, our annual Public Speaking competition presented two large new silver cups, one for Intermediate ages 11-13, the other for Seniors 14-17. This partnership with Solihull Council reinforces our commitment to education action. We have endeavoured to put forward our winner each year to the Regional competition, though for two years due to the pandemic this has paused. Together with 'Fun in the Park' our Club is one of few who stage large scale community events, achievements of which we can feel justifiably proud.

Here is a taste of our actions:

- June 2016 'Skirting Science' event for our Borough Secondary School girls to explore STEM career choices through workshops and key speakers. This was attended by SIGBI President Ann Garvie.
- November 2016 'Bags for Bravery' - handbag packing of essentials for the Birmingham and Solihull Women's refuge.
- February 2017 Our annual Solihull Schools Public Speaking Competition at the Civic Suite as part of our Education action plan.

My three charities were:

- Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid (to support the Solihull refuge)
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- 'Look good, feel better' therapy for women with cancer

2017 – 2018 President: Elaine Stephens

Theme: **We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone**

As part of the "Dress a Girl around the World" project, the dressmakers in the club made over 70 cotton pinafore dresses for children in less developed areas of the world. These were later presented to the Kori project in Sierra Leone.

Some members also made costumes for adults with learning disabilities from Park View Day Centre. These costumes were for their summer musical production based on "Grease".

In July of my year, in recognition of members of our club tending the gardens at Widney Manor Station for over 10 years, London Midland presented us with a plaque which is displayed at the station.

Charities supported included:

- Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid
- Breast Friends Solihull
- Vision Aid

2018 – 2019 No President

Theme: Pressing for Progress

During this year, there was no Club President, and the club was a “club of many voices”, with 15 different members successfully leading meetings during the year.

A lot of focus was on the centenary of some women being given the vote and celebrating the achievements of the women's suffrage movement. The club was awarded a Women's Vote Centenary grant which was used for the following:

- A questionnaire was developed to learn about women's views on voting and to understand reasons why some women may not always use their vote.
- Equaliteas was part of a programme of events from the UK Parliament to mark the centenary. We used this event to bring together a group of people to share, debate and celebrate what democratic equality means to them over a cup of tea. It took place in The Core at Solihull Library and was attended by Caroline Spelman MP, Mayor of Solihull Mrs Flo Nash, and representatives from many local organisations.
- A conference was run in Autumn 2018 with the theme “Your Community Needs You” exploring the issues around isolation and loneliness in our community.

To support women coming out of prison who have been identified as benefitting from help from the charity ANAWIM, members made tote bags filled with toiletries. These were gratefully received by ANAWIM.

In addition to ANAWIM, charities supported included:

- Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid
- Marie Curie Hospice in Solihull

2019 – 2020 President: Jan Tilsley

Theme: **Changing Attitudes**

One of President Jan's main objectives was to raise awareness of ME. Booklets were delivered to GP surgeries in Solihull and further afield. In addition, "How to support Students with ME" booklets were distributed to local secondary schools.

Another focus area was Forced Marriage. As a result, we were able to link Solihull Council's School Support Services with Julie Ann Kelly of Birmingham Airport so that she could go into schools to talk about the different ways they identified young women being forced abroad for marriages.

During the year, we were again able to support the Vvamatulu ladies in Uganda by providing funds to build latrines for the ladies in the village.

The President's charities for the year were:

- Action for ME: Various fundraising events were held including a very enjoyable afternoon tea to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings, with war-time songs and Lindy-Hop dancing.
- Karma Nirvana, to support victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage in the UK