

**Soroptimist International Durham**  
**Newsletter - CONNECT**  
**March 2021**



**We have one foot in Winter but the other is pointing towards Spring**

Jane M. shared this lovely wintery photo taken when walking at  
Whinney Hill near Durham.



*Remember, "Whatever the weather may be" .....*

*... as Snow White once said,*

***"You're the one who can fill the world with sunshine!"***

## How are you keeping fit? Sue P. shows us one way!



My exercise bike was purchased in January as I was unable to get out on my bike due to weather conditions. Tennis and swimming were also abandoned because of restrictions leaving just a daily dog walk, which isn't quite enough for me!

I would never have considered an exercise bike before, but needs must! I have to say I am really enjoying the routine of 30- 40 minutes daily pedalling through the Alps, Dolomites and the Colorado wilderness; virtually of course, thanks to the availability of hundreds of YouTube videos! I'm looking forward to cycling outside again as the weather improves. You can't beat fresh air and our wonderful countryside, particularly the disused mineral lines, but I shall continue to use my exercise bike in between these occasions and on rainy days!

**And of course: keeping or getting fit *now*, means we can be off to a roaring start when restrictions lift!**

# GREENPEACE

2021 marks 50 years since Greenpeace was founded.  
What have campaigners achieved?

***Below are examples of the significant work undertaken to help save our planet:***

- Greenpeace in Africa is helping to protect the Congo rainforest from commercial logging and conversion to agriculture.
- Educating young people about climate change and involving them in delivering projects, including forest restoration in Russia.
- Investigating and reporting on destructive fishing methods in the Indian Ocean.
- Highlighting ocean plastics pollution in Scotland.

**Since the founding of the Greenpeace Environmental Trust in 1982 and with partner organisations, there have been many successes for the environment including:**

A moratorium on driftnet fishing is put in place and saves thousands of dolphins and other marine life

Antarctica is protected from mining and declared a sanctuary from exploitation

Toxic dumping at sea is banned internationally

Mahogany exports from the Amazon rainforests are made illegal

## What is their main concern?

The priority issue for green peace is climatic changes. If we don't act and quickly, decisively and together, future generations will inherit huge problems. Members believe the disruption in the ecosystem will likely harm everything from Minke Whales to coral reefs to polar bears. The world forest cover will deplete, and hundreds of thousands of species will become extinct due to drastic weather change. J.K.

For current information on Greenpeace work to stop a highly destructive way of fishing in the North Sea, copy the links below into your browser

[1] [Greenpeace blocks destructive fishing with new 'boulder barrier' off the coast of Brighton](#)

[2] [Fishing boats spend thousands of hours 'bottom trawling' protected sea beds around the UK](#)

[2] [Destructive bottom trawling to be banned at key marine sites](#)

[3] [Greenpeace builds underwater barrier to stop destructive bottom trawling in North Sea protected area](#)



**A Northern Sunrise sent by Cris Y. of SI Newcastle.**



**A Southern sunrise sent by Jane K's daughter, Erica**

## Binchester Hall Farm Eco Project – a short summary Vyvyenne M.

### Zoom Meeting

On 17<sup>th</sup> February I attended a Zoom meeting organised by The Auckland Project (TAP). The presentation was given by Tam Mayor who is overseeing, on behalf of TAP, an eco-farm project and is keen to work with us as part of the volunteer tree planting scheme down on the farm.

### Binchester Hall Farm

The Auckland Project (TAP) owns 300 acres of farmland at Binchester Hall Farm. The farm has boundaries with Auckland Castle Deer Park and the Kynren site. There are currently tenant farmers at Binchester who've been farming in the area for more than three generations. TAP, as the landowner, and the tenant farmers are working together to move farming methods forward.

### Regenerative Farm

The farm has recently been classified as a "Regenerative farm" and there is a 5year regenerative farm project.

### Regenerative agriculture – a definition

"A conservation and rehabilitative approach to food and farming. It focuses on topsoil regeneration, increasing biodiversity, improving the water cycle, enhancing ecosystem services, supporting biosequestration, increasing resilience to climate change and strengthening the health and vitality of farm soil."

### Some of the terms were unfamiliar to me so here are a couple more definitions/explanations.

**Water cycle** – continuous movement of water on, above and below the surface of the Earth, which impacts on climate change due to an exchange of energy leading to temperature change.

**Ecosystem services** – many and varied benefits to humans from the natural environment.

**Biosequestration** – the capture and storage of atmospheric greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, by continued or enhanced biological processes.

**5year project** - the project seeks to improve the natural landscape by the way cattle and sheep on the farm graze; hopefully to improve the pasture, the health of the soil and its micro-organisms and help mitigate flooding. The aim is to have more wildlife, plants and insects to improve bio-diversity.

**Mob grazing** - occurs when animals are taken to a small parcel of land to graze and only when that is fully grazed, they are then moved on elsewhere. This should lead to a more effective use of pasture and ensure some areas aren't over or under grazed. (As a group we agreed that we looked forward to the time when we could go out to a restaurant and "mob graze" with our friends!)

**Sequestering Carbon** – more trees, (with SID members helping to plant them,) but also drawing carbon down through the soil. There will be improvement and development of hedgerows and creating meadowlands, (97% of meadowland has been lost in England since World War II).

**Working farm** – lamb and beef will be sold and it will form part of the TAP visitor attraction.

**Volunteer opportunities** – there will be opportunities for individuals, families and groups to become involved in specific parts of the project e.g., tree planting and citizen science projects.

**Recommended reading** – "Wilding" by Isabella Tree (Amazon and various other bookstores)



## Jane K's Book Review On:



Read by William Hope

No, I haven't read this book but I have listened to it on BBC Sounds. I am a fan as I can call up programmes any time I like. Listening allows multi-tasking too; I can iron or cook etc. and listen to interesting documentaries, plays or books etc. simultaneously.

In his book, Bill Gates explains his ideas for how the world can get to net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050 and avoid a climate catastrophe.

Whilst quoting lots of statistics, eg. the manufacture of steel accounts for 31% of greenhouse gas and making electricity accounts for 27%; he also supplies a roadmap for governments and policymakers to adopt, to ensure that every corner of our planet can remain inhabitable.

The stark reality is that 51 billion tons of greenhouse gases are emitted all over the world every year and if we want our planet to continue and flourish there has to be a plan. For every problem, Bill Gates comes up with a solution, however; he warns that it is going to be a hard journey that we must take.

It's by no means, all bad news and always better to have a plan at the ready – Bill Gates provides one!

**Nothing changes if nothing changes**  
**Lead the way!**  
**(Slogan on the latest M&S girls' Tee shirt)**

# 'It's what you do that counts' Violet Richardson Ward



## How well do you know the origins of Soroptimism?

- 1 In which century was Violet born?
- 2 In which month did the first Soroptimists meet?
- 3 Where did this meeting take place?
- 4 How many women were needed then, in order to charter a club?
- 5 On what date was the first club chartered?
- 6 What was chosen as the first Programme Action focus?
- 7 From which country had Violet's parents emigrated in order to live in America?
- 8 Do you know the origins of the word, 'Soroptimists'?
- 9 Why did she resign from her job several times?

Do you think Violet would recognise Soroptimism today?

Replies to Jane K

## The first Soroptimists





## Ushaw College DH7 9BL



### **Rosemary K Suggests where to go for a good walk.....and lots more!**

For me, one of the positives of lockdown has been the opportunity to explore the local area. It's a cliché that you don't appreciate the beauties that are literally on your doorstep and that is certainly true of Ushaw. I had been there before, for a flower festival and a Christmas tree festival, which my grandchildren loved. We had also been to a folk concert there a few years ago, but I had never really explored the grounds before.

Ushaw College has an interesting history; it was founded in 1808 by scholars from the English College in Douai, fleeing from the French revolution. No longer operating as a seminary, it is run by a charity and a team of enthusiastic volunteers. The library boasts a number of first editions and (if I remember correctly) nine chapels. The interior of the building is truly beautiful and it's well worth taking a conducted tour once conditions allow.

But for me the grounds have the greatest appeal. The gardens are really magnificent and in the summer the sights and scents are amazing - and the roses kept blooming until late in the autumn! There are a variety of walks, including some lovely rambles through the woodland, and some fascinating woodland creatures, which you will see from the pictures. There are a number of benches where you can rest your weary limbs should you feel the need, and a small shop offering takeaway drinks and snacks which has operated throughout lockdown. The college involved the public during lockdown by putting on outside events, one at Halloween - hence the skeletons - and an evening outdoor light display at Christmas. I didn't manage a visit to the latter but I heard it was amazing.







The large green field with recessed buildings on the right as you drive in is interesting - it was used by the scholars over the years to let off steam with an elaborate game, which seems to have resembled rounders.

For me, the grounds of Ushaw College have become my happy place, somewhere to wander and to meet with friends - when it was possible. The car park charges £3 for non-residents, but well worth the money for a lovely visit. I'd recommend it.



**How lovely to see you again!**



**A message from Judith S about our friends THE ALPACAS**

Those members of SI Durham who were involved with the Alpaca project may recognise these faces!! They now live with my sister in Cumbria. Carol has none at all now but keeps up to date with most of those she had at Headlam.

Evergreen; named after the school we worked with as the children witnessed his birth; is a father to two and apparently both of them are exceptional - one has the prized markings and the other is pure white with high quality fleece. Carol sends her best wishes to all of us.





**Why wait?.....  
.....when we can celebrate International  
Women's Day every day of the year!**



Members of SI Durham celebrated International Women's Day a week early – on 1<sup>st</sup> March. We had all chosen a woman to talk about who had influenced our lives in some way. It was interesting to find that some members chose a family member, whilst others chose well known public figures from both the past and present.

The video we watched at the beginning showed how women scientists' work was often accredited to men! (A problem shared is a problem halved – let's work together.)

My request to anyone who reads this article is that they consider writing a briefing about a woman of their choice and send it to me for inclusion in the Newsletter.

There are many to choose from.

**INSPIRATIONAL CELEBRATED BRAVE UNIQUE  
AMAZING VALUES LED CONFIDENT EMPOWERED  
PASSIONATE VISIONARY ENERGETIC VISIONARY  
COURAGEOUS POWERFUL PHILANTHROPIC**



IWD 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Linda S talked about Maya Angelou, an American authoress, screenwriter, prolific poet and civil rights activist. Maya is well known to many Soroptimists perhaps most of all for her inspirational sayings.



“ I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

— Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

*LiteraryLadiesGuide.com*

Recommended reading: ‘Why the Caged Bird Sings’. If you’ve read it already you may like to send me a book review for April’s Newsletter. J K

**INSIGHTFUL POWERFUL ACCOMPLISHED**  
**PURPOSEFUL YOU!!? ME!!? US!!?**



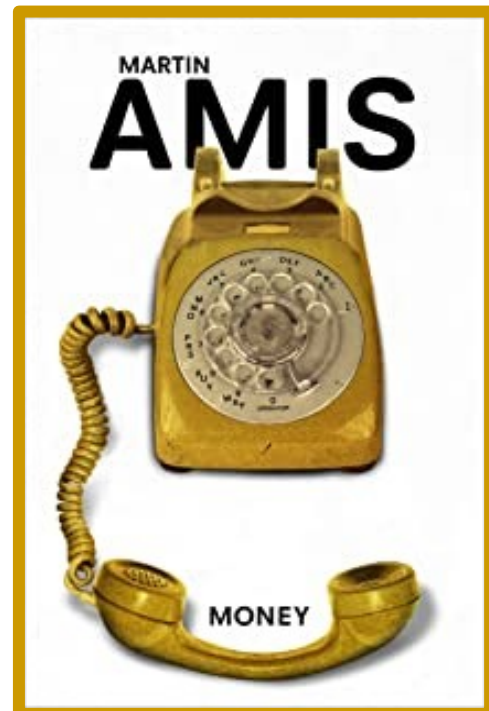
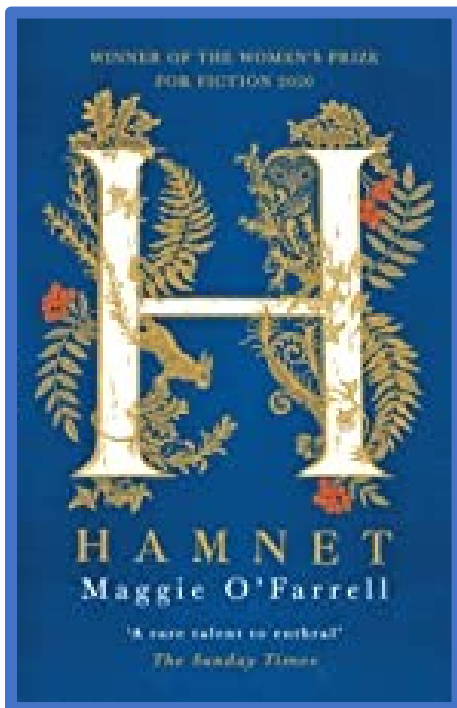
## A book I can recommend and one I can't. Jan C

Over the years my sister has come to realise that I will always appreciate a book as a gift. Recently she has bought me **Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell** and **Money by Martin Amis**.

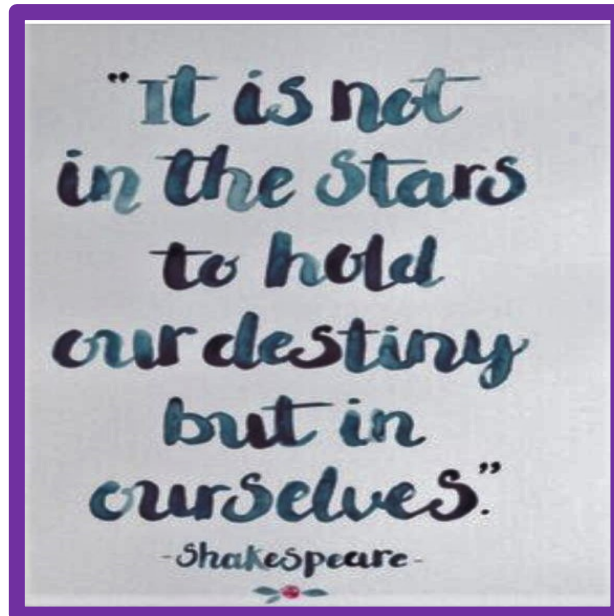
I'll start with **Hamnet**. A work of fiction it explores the life of one of Shakespeare's twins, a boy called Hamnet. All that is known of him is his date of birth and his death at the age of 11. The novel tries to fill in the gaps not only of his life but of his father and his mother Agnes. I know you will be correcting me; saying her name was Anne but, if you read the book, you'll learn something different. It is a love story of a young man who falls in love with an older woman, the bond between twins and the impact grief has on a family and the link between all this and one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. Beautifully written with lovely poetic description it is a tender reimagining of a story many of us think we know something about.

The novel won the Women's Prize for Fiction and Waterstones book of the year.

I heartily recommend it.



Unfortunately, her other choice was less engaging. Normally I must be forced to put a book down but with **Money** it was a case of congratulating myself at having read three pages! Set in the 80s it explores: greed; excess; addiction to pornography, food and money; as well as violence towards women, of its anti-hero John Self. He is a thoroughly unlikeable character and at the end there is a somewhat of a happy ending. There is lots of word play and it certainly depends on black humour. Maybe I am a bit of a prude, it is certainly shocking in places; many people praise its humour. It is making a comment on the lifestyle it portrays but I just kept thinking here is someone being clever, and I didn't appreciate his intellect.

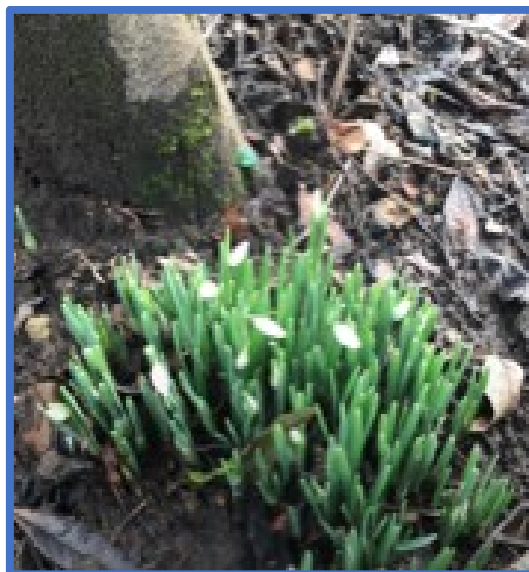


Thank you Cris Y of SI Newcastle for the above quote.

If you have enjoyed reading this Newsletter, I hope you may consider contributing to the next. Here are a few suggestions: A favourite recipe, a poem you would like to share, a book review, a place to walk – with a photo perhaps? Anything to do with the 5 P's. in fact, anything that you think your sister soroptimists would enjoy.

Please email your contribution to; [janekatsambis@gmail.com](mailto:janekatsambis@gmail.com)

**THANKYOU!**



**And Finally: Snowdrops from Janet H – a promise that Spring is on its way!**