

President Grace's message

Our planet, our future – let's get cracking!



THIS MONTH IT has been my bitter-sweet task to complete the installation of a commemorative chair for my friend, Croydon club member, past club and Region President, the wonderful Penny Veness. The process started almost a year ago and it's fair to say that over this particular year, there have been a variety of obstacles and delays.

Nevertheless it is now situated beneath the Peace Tree in Park Hill Park, a few yards from the Soroptimist section of the walled garden where Penny planted a peace rose not long ago. Soroptimists and friends celebrated her life there on the SIGBI Day of Action [see report on page 04].



Our planet, our future – climate change has come knocking at Europe's door in a much more noticeable way with severe flooding and heat waves. Help can be given via the SIGBI website through the SI Europe Disaster Relief Fund.

All predicted by scientists and environmentalists decades ago but accompanied by a lack of political action. Fortunately, many organisations, businesses, schools and individuals have stepped up and put a lot of time and effort into finding and using sustainable practices and products.

I was delighted to receive information from Medway and Maidstone and Bromley clubs in particular for the June President's mini-challenge with information about reductions in carbon emissions during 2020 from not using conventional (fossil-fuelled) transport to Soroptimist events.

There have also been great efforts to step aside from buying new clothes, now that the damage done by the 'fast fashion' industry is gaining momentum. How wonderful to have a new law to make household goods repairable again – how did it ever happen that washing machines and similar goods were made so that they couldn't be repaired? We humans are slowly waking up to the fact that the resources on our planet really are finite and Soroptimists and many others are now acting as if they know what that means for every-day life. So encouraging, and such a relief!

Plastic-free July is in full swing and I will be delivering all my single-use plastics to my local supermarket at the end. There are many alternatives to this environmentally disastrous product out there so your challenge for September is to make the change to those alternatives, and let me know your experiences before the AGM so that we can share with everyone. Hopefully, during my visits I have given you some ideas?

Enjoy the sunshine and I look forward to (hopefully) seeing many of you in person in September (TBC of course!).

Knitting Trauma Bears for the '100 Years Challenge'



THE SIGBI UK Programme Action Committee recently launched a 100 years' challenge, asking members to knit trauma bears for children in vulnerable situations necessitating police intervention or the help of women's refuges.

Shirley Bringham, a member of SI Sevenoaks club accepted the challenge and has knitted six bears with more to come (Shirley is pictured above with two of her bears).

As Programme Action Officer for SI Sevenoaks, I contacted Kent Constabulary, using their online enquiry website, to ask if they needed the bears and was quite taken aback to receive an immediate response from DI Richard Pringle, West Kent Child Protection Team, saying "Yes please. How many can we have?" Later that day I received two more enquiries from police teams and also a request from the Probation Service!

Too much for one club, so I sent an SOS e-mail to our daughter club Tunbridge Wells who answered with alacrity and are extremely supportive of the challenge with knitters in their club. Thank you so much SI Tunbridge Wells.

As the police referrals came from other parts of the county I asked DI Pringle for contact details of other teams, together with a Police HQ, in the hope that other clubs in the region would take up the trauma bear challenge. Perhaps our region could knit the 100 bears between the clubs? There's a thought, let's make it a fact!

DI Richard Pringle, richard.pringle@kent.police.uk is my contact and is willing to give talks to our clubs about the work of his teams. [Details of police and other contacts, may be found at the bottom of page 02.]

For a copy of the Trauma Bears knitting pattern, or any other information, please contact me:

ISOBEL GROVES, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS
email: isobelgroves@btinternet.com



ON MONDAY JULY 05, Past President Fatima Koroma of SI Croydon, presented a cheque for £806 to Ann Tighe, Chief Executive of CAYSH (Croydon Association for Young, Single Homeless).

CAYSH, established in Croydon 40 years ago, is a specialist service for young people aged 16-25, offering advice, supported accommodation, practical and emotional support, and onward referral to other services when required. It is now expanding into other London Boroughs.

CAYSH was Fatima's chosen charity during her presidential year, a charity she knew well through her work running a local foodbank. Like other presidents, her year unfortunately coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and so we had to "think outside the box" for different ideas from our normal fundraising activities!

Group meetings, of course, were banned for the majority of that time, and so most of the money raised came from a Takeaway Curry night, with food donated and cooked by Club members, a homemade cream tea delivery service, followed by a Zoom tea party which included a Virtual Tombola, and a suitably socially-distanced collection at East Croydon Station before Christmas, while playing Carols (no singing allowed!).

Unfortunately this meant that we had not managed to raise as much money as we might have done during a "normal" year, but nevertheless the team at CAYSH were very grateful, saying that this was the first donation they had received this year!

Croydon Club members President Rheena Bhanatha, Heather Bailey, and Pat Dale also attended the presentation to CAYSH.

HEATHER BAILEY, SI CROYDON AND DISTRICT

Knitting Trauma Bears

continued from page 01

Police headquarters: chris.raby@kent.police.uk

Family Liaison Coordinator West Kent Division DI Richard Pringle: Richard.Pringle@kent.police.uk

Shepway Child and Adult Protection teams, Maria Cutter: Maria.Cutter@kent.police.uk

Safeguarding Coordinator Swale Vulnerability Investigation Team Sittingbourne Police Station. Katherine Hurst: vit.swale@kent.police.uk

SI Canterbury saves the day!



CANTERBURY CLUB MEMBERS have been collecting good-quality, used handbags, together with new, unused toiletries, in support of the Love Grace Handbag Appeal. This campaign was set up by the family of Grace Millane, a young woman who was murdered by a man whom she met whilst backpacking on her gap-year in New Zealand. The campaign provides handbags filled with essential toiletries for women who leave situations of domestic abuse. Many women in these circumstances have to escape at short notice, carrying very little with them.

Rising Sun, the Canterbury domestic abuse service, together with Canterbury City Council Community Safety Unit, were managing the project, and club members took part by collecting 73 handbags plus a considerable quantity of toiletries and 'pamper' products to fill the bags. Rising Sun had intended that students from the local universities would clean, quality-check, and fill the handbags. But when the students left in June the bags were left languishing in a store-room at the council offices.

Then SI Canterbury leapt into action! Six club members met up to clean, sort and fill a total of 97 handbags, ready for local agencies to distribute to women in need.

It was a satisfying afternoon's work, in partnership with staff from Rising Sun and Canterbury City Council. We were especially privileged to have Grace's mother and aunt with us, who were an inspiration in their dedication to survivors of domestic abuse, in memory of their beloved daughter and niece.

JAN TEBBETT, SI CANTERBURY



Canterbury City Council @... · 5h

We've been working with the Rising Sun Domestic Violence Abuse Service and the Canterbury Soroptimists to support the wonderful Love Grace Handbag Appeal, which helps women who are suffering from domestic violence and abuse. Full story: news.canterbury.gov.uk/news/article/2...



“Baby—basics”



MEMBERS OF FOLKESTONE Club are supporting their local branch of Baby Basics as their charity of the year.

The main Baby Basics charity was formed in Sheffield in 2009, and the Folkestone branch began just before the first lockdown! It is a registered charity, with sole purpose to support vulnerable women by providing them with the basic needs of a new baby for the first three months of its life, as well as basic hygiene needs of a new mum, eg shower gel, maternity pads, breast pads etc.

The Folkestone branch does also accept some secondhand clothing, mainly from other new parents who have received too many new-born clothes and been unable to use them. They are also often asked for one off items such as floor mats for a new baby to kick about on, or premature clothing.

Women are referred by a frontline professional involved with

the family – Social Worker, Midwife, Health Visitor, Foodbank, Women’s Refuge, Children’s Centre, or local council.

Each family is assessed on an individual basis, therefore some women may receive a Moses basket filled with goodies, whilst another may only require a few items. The charity liaises closely with the frontline professional. The volunteers do not meet the recipients of the goods, all items are delivered discreetly by the professional.

Many of us are parents and grandparents, so know that having a baby can be an expensive time for a young couple, so Imagine, therefore, if you are then unable to provide the basics that a new baby needs to thrive? This will impact on the whole family so Baby Basics is there to support these vulnerable women and babies.

JAN DOYLE, SI FOLKESTONE

Books for Change[↗]

Feeding the Mind

FOLLOWING THE MURDER of Sarah Everard and the subsequent “Reclaim the Streets” campaign and vigils organised in her name, with many women wanting to express their concerns over safety in public places, our club members felt that because of COVID lockdown restrictions they could not take part in any organised vigils but nevertheless wanted to do something.

It was generally agreed that, in particular, boys should be made aware of women’s feelings and the club was pleased when they heard about a local initiative “Books for Change”. (www.booksforchange.co.uk).

The project was started by two local women who, following the black lives matter campaign and other key issues, wanted to make a difference and to raise awareness to children that our communities and families are made up in many differing ways.

The campaign had already successfully raised funds for books for schools in Folkestone and Hythe and were currently engaged in extending the project to Dover schools.

We made contact with a history teacher at a school in Dover who was spearheading the campaign at her school and agreed to contribute to that project. Anna came along to our recent meeting and told us more about the work. She indicated that initially the focus had been on primary schools with the project contributing books to school libraries. The aim was to raise £600 for six schools in the area with 12 books going to each school.

As a History Teacher in a secondary school which leads the local school MAT, she is very well placed to liaise with local schools, and she indicated that she had the support of her Head-teacher. We queried with her whether school budgets were able to fund these books but with many schools experiencing pressures on their school budgets there is not much left to go towards stocking school libraries. Anna went on to explain that the idea was that Relationships Education would use the books in the libraries, working in small groups with the focus being on

the young people raising questions and discussing issues; she asked whether any of our members would be willing to come along to talk to a group of students about issues associated with relationships.

Like many clubs we have not found it easy to raise funds during the last 18 months but one of our members came to the rescue with the profit she makes from selling homemade jams, pickles and marmalades – I think many of the region members would have bought something from her.

We have asked Anna if we can support the project by extending it to schools in the Ashford area and one of our members will work with her on this.

JAN DOYLE, SI FOLKESTONE



Croydon members gather in the Peace Garden to celebrate the life of Penny Veness



ON SIGBI DAY of Action, July 17, Croydon club members gathered together for a celebration of the life of Penny Veness, who we lost to COVID in 2020, and the installation of a memorial bench beneath the Peace Tree in Park Hill Park, Croydon, a few yards from the Soroptimist section of the walled garden where Penny had planted a peace rose.

The event was attended by Penny's son Rufus, his wife Lucy, and their 18-month-old daughter Sienna, together with Bromley members Peggy and Alison, and past Croydon member Sylvia Wachuchu King.

Stella Sangster said a prayer, Heather Bailey read an amended version of the obituary which she had written last year, and Rufus related the story of when Penny was attacked by a stray cat she was trying to evict from her



house on the day of Pat Dale's Bollywood evening!

The story behind the Peace Garden goes back to 2018 when the Friends of Park Hill Park (FOPHP), who maintain the rest of the Walled Garden, were looking for 12 groups or organisations to each take over and be responsible for maintaining and planting one part of the area around the edge of the Peace Garden.

We were one of the groups who applied, and were allocated our section of the plot. In 2019 the FOPHP raised over £30K through crowd-funding to cover the cost of hard landscaping in order to create a central performance space with seating around it. The work was due to take place in 2020 but was delayed by the Pandemic. It is now scheduled to start in September 2021. HEATHER BAILEY, SI CROYDON



Programme Action News from APD Yvonne Freeman



Best Practice Awards

I HAVE JUST checked the number of reports from our Region to be considered for these awards for the period August 01, 2020, to July 31, 2021, and members have completed 246 reports, raised £19,010.75 and helped 16,010 beneficiaries. I think that is very impressive with a total of just over 24 reports being submitted each month. It is possible

that a few more reports are still to be entered onto the database by the deadline. Thank you for all your hard work with such a wide range of projects and your continued support for Programme Action over the past year.

Tree Planting Webinar

President Grace and I are both represented on the SIGBI Centenary Tree Planting Working Group, which will be hosting another webinar on Saturday, September 11 between 14:30 and 15:30. Our speaker will be Dr Selvam who will be talking about the mangroves in the Sundarbans Delta in India and the possibilities for a livelihood option developing fisheries within the mangrove plantation. The Sundarbans, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is located at the south eastern tip of the 24 Parganas district, about 110 km from Kolkata. It got its name from one of the mangrove plants known as Sundari (Heritiera Minor). SIGBI also has a club in the area – SI South Kolkata. I will be hosting the meeting together with Naina Shah, who some will

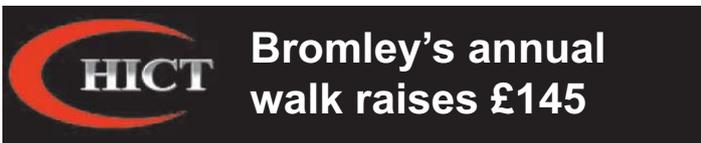
remember as the former APD for Planet. I attended a previous webinar on the mangroves by Dr Selvam on June 05, World Environment Day, and he is an excellent speaker who uses lots of maps and diagrams to explain what he is talking about. I will be circulating more details in the August SEE News, and to our club Programme Action Officers.

Annual Conference

I am delighted to be able to report that I have managed to persuade Dr Asha de Vos, Founder and Executive Director of Oceanswell, to be one of the keynote speakers at our Annual Conference this year. Asha is a Sri Lankan marine biologist, ocean educator and pioneer of blue whale research within the Northern Indian Ocean. She calls the population of blue whales in Sri Lankan waters 'the Unorthodox Whales'. As you will see from the Conference page of the website, Asha has an extremely impressive CV. She has also worked with the BBC and was one of the conservationists featured on Sir David Attenborough's programme 'Perfect Planet'. I was privileged to meet her during a cruise to the Far East in 2016 when she was one of the speakers on board our ship. She is certainly an amazing lady, and I am sure you will enjoy listening to her.



YVONNE FREEMAN, SEE REGION PA CHAIR
AND APD PARTNERSHIPS



BROMLEY MEMBERS RECENTLY held their annual club walk, led by Lesley in Lloyd Park, and raised £145 for Humanity International. It was lovely to see ex-president Grace, who joined us in the morning, and several of the non-walkers were able to join us for the lunch at a local restaurant in the biggest club get-together we have had for well over a year!

Humanity International is a charitable foundation based in Woking, dedicated to helping those in need.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY



CROYDON MEMBER HEATHER Bailey, hosted a Raspberry Cream Tea on July 14 raising £155 towards the Club's Christmas donations.

Home-made jam and home-grown cucumbers were sold, there was a raffle, and quite a few extra ££s were contributed by various people because a £1 fine was charged during the event for each time anyone mentioned the words: SELF-ISOLATION, CORONAVIRUS, PANDEMIC, BORIS, COVID, VIRUS.

Seven people attended, including Sheila Patel's Mum Deviben who is visiting at the moment. Although the weather was not very kind (this annual event is usually held outside), everyone enjoyed it, and many scones and glasses of Prosecco were consumed. Heather's husband, Bob, acted as waiter for the afternoon and did the washing up as well!





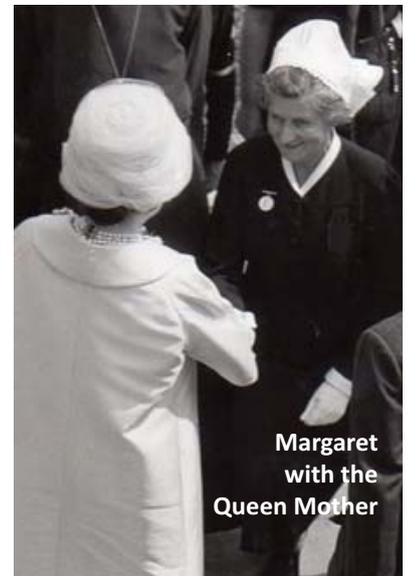
Margaret Agnes Duncombe MBE

SI EAST GRINSTEAD

#WhoIsShe Congratulations

to our member **Margaret Agnes Duncombe MBE** who is being celebrated for our centenary as one of some hundred women who have made a difference.

We are proud of her!



Margaret with the Queen Mother

MANY MEMBERS WILL be aware that, as part of its celebrations for 100 years of Sorooptimism, SIGBI invited Clubs to submit details of members past or present who have made a noteworthy contribution to society whilst furthering the aims and objects of Sorooptimism. Twelve outstanding Sorooptimists are being showcased each month and East Grinstead are delighted that Margaret Duncombe, who joined the Club soon after it was founded in 1962 and remained a member into her 90s, was chosen as one of the twelve to be highlighted in July.

Margaret had a very varied and colourful life. Born in Vienna in 1912, by the age of three she had made up her mind to be a nurse. As her parents were against the idea she went into teaching running her own kindergarten and helping in an after-school club. Having been interviewed by the Nazis, her family decided she should move to England shortly before the outbreak of World War II. She travelled with jewellery and gold coins sewn into her undergarments!

In 1942 Margaret completed general nursing training at Guys Hospital and subsequently qualified as a paediatric nurse at Great Ormond Street. In 1944 she returned to Guys as Sister in Charge of the Children's Ward, taking a short break to train as a midwife in Cambridge. From 1954 to 1960 she was Lady Superintendent of Nurses (Matron) at the Evelina Children's Hospital in London.

Following service on various paediatric committees, Margaret was appointed Chair and President of the Association of British Paediatric Nurses, representing them at International congresses in Rome, Frankfurt, Bucharest and Montreal. In 1954 her book on Paediatric Nursing was published followed by seven further editions. She still found time to act as examiner for the General Nursing Council! As Paediatric Nursing Advisor to the Ministry of Health, Margaret worked tirelessly to introduce free, daily,

unrestricted visiting to children's wards. She considered this to be the proudest achievement of her professional career. In 1960 Margaret became Matron of the Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH) in East Grinstead which is famous for Archibald McIndoe's pioneering treatment and rehabilitation of badly burned aircrew, The Guinea Pigs. For 15 years Margaret cared for patients with great empathy and dedication and was instrumental in opening the children's 'Peanut Ward' with a private room enabling parents to stay with their children.

After retirement in 1972 Margaret was awarded an MBE for services to Paediatric Nursing. A Women's Surgical Ward at QVH was named after her in 2003 and having been a founder member of the East Grinstead Branch in 1975, Margaret became Honorary President of Save the Children in September 1960.

With her sense of humour and her alert, interested and compassionate personality, Margaret was a true Sorooptimist.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

I was interested to see that Margaret brought about change enabling parents to visit their children more often. When I was about a year old, I had to go into hospital for 18 months and my parents could only visit on one Sunday each month (apparently I sulked for the first six months, which must have been so upsetting for them). When I was told this some years later I thought it was because the hospital was quite a distance from our home but discovered these were the rules at that time. I also spent several years attending appointments at Evelina Hospital.

I had to go into hospital again at the age of 10, but at the time my mum was in hospital and, of course, children weren't allowed to visit, so my dad had to get special permission for me to go in after visiting hours to see her. How things have improved!

PATRICIA PAINTING, SEE NEWS EDITOR



Bromley supports the Henna Cafe

AFTER AN INSPIRATIONAL talk via Zoom on Henna Cafe in Marrakech, we gave £250 to help with the soup kitchen in the markets area.

Following the Covid pandemic and its impact on the tourist trade in Morocco, many people are having a difficult time and Henna Cafe has been serving food for 150 people a day.

It has become a co-operative effort in the Medina, with other businesses donating food items. This follows our long-term interest in the area, via the Anglo-Moroccan Society, who earlier helped us to channel funds for transport to help girls

from more remote areas to get to school.

We have had a number of fundraising events and it's been a real joy to see so many of our friends in person, after a year of Zoom. Angela raised £155 at a brunch and plant sale in her garden, despite the showers that made us dash for the brollies!

Banu and her daughter Yagmur made us a lovely Turkish brunch, which we ate in her garden on a sunny day, and raised £150.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY

SI Canterbury 60th Anniversary Challenge



My 60 mile walk by Jane Mennell

AS PART OF the Club's 60th anniversary celebrations, members were asked to take on personal challenges involving the number 60. One of our Club members had invited people to go on a trek to Nepal in November and I had signed up for this. As I was rather unfit, I thought I would kill two birds and walk 60 miles as my own anniversary challenge, perhaps getting a bit fitter in the process as well as raising money for the local Oasis domestic abuse charity.

In March, I set up a fundraiser through Facebook, which is very easy to do and avoids begging for sponsorship! The walk was scheduled for April before the weather got too warm, and my plan was to walk a triangle from my local town of Sandwich to Canterbury (20 miles), Canterbury to Dover (22 miles) and Dover back to Sandwich (16 miles). The missing miles were made up from walking one mile to and from home at the start and finish. I couldn't find good public transport options for any midpoints so decided to just walk over three days, one per week – we live in Kent which is flat, so how hard could it be?

The first stage took me past the Roman Fort at Richborough and through the orchards to the river Stour, which runs into Canterbury. The ground was very hard as we had not had rain for a while so the hardest part was sore soles, even with my walking

boots. I left home at 09:00 and got to Canterbury at 16:15pm to catch the bus back.

The next stage had a slightly later start as I had to catch the bus to Canterbury first. This was the longest stage and followed the route of the Francigena way. There were more people along this section, including someone on a unicycle, so it wasn't as easy to nip into the bushes for a private moment! I left Canterbury at 09:40 and got to Dover at 17:45pm.

The final stage was the most scenic, along the coast path above the white cliffs of Dover. There were even more people but at least we now had public conveniences as well! Although this was the shortest section, my feet were tender from the previous walking and the last stretch from Deal to Sandwich nearly had me on my knees as it was very stoney! I left Dover at 09:30 and got home at 15:30.

Friends and family had been very generous but once I had finished the walk, donations flooded in and the eventual tally to Oasis was £607 (a bit more than 10 x £60!).

I was definitely fitter and had passed some parts of Kent that I hadn't seen before – it was very enjoyable and not as hard as I feared. Sadly, due to COVID it looks as though our trek in Nepal will be delayed. I will have to maintain my fitness levels!

Medway and Maidstone welcomes a New Member and Congratulates another



AT OUR JULY club meeting, Janet Garnons-Williams introduced Teresa Cambell, who was formally welcomed into the Club and will be mentored by Jane Barnes.

Teresa has recently retired following a varied career (mostly) in education which included teaching, teacher training and education leadership in schools, colleges, and universities in the UK and overseas. Within Medway, Teresa worked as Principal for Medway Adult and Community Learning where she had also taught French, Italian, and English to Speakers of Other Languages, championed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, and supported the creation of a number of women's groups. Her last job was as Head of Teaching at the Royal School of Military Engineering in Brompton.

Following retirement, Teresa was keen to maintain a socially responsive, social and professional network and was particularly attracted by the Soroptimist mission to educate, empower, and enable girls and women to achieve their potential. She met several Soroptimists and attended the June Region meeting prior to accepting the offer of membership.



Liz Duckworth introduced Carol Perry who she will mentor within the club. They had met at a Towards Plastic Free Medway meeting, which Liz chairs. Towards Plastic Free Medway

is a community group tackling single-use plastic pollution in Medway, which encourages local businesses and organisations to switch from single-use plastics to reusable and sustainable alternatives which both members are totally committed and passionate about.

Unable to attend lectures, Carol has been studying remotely throughout lockdown and has recently heard that all her hard work has paid off as she has achieved a 2.1 degree in Environmental Sciences.

Well done from everyone at SI Medway and Maidstone on this excellent achievement.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

SI Medway and Maidstone at July Club Meeting



Theme was Climate Change and Pledge for Actions

At our club meeting on July 08, the theme was on Climate Change and a presentation was given by Sharon Forghani, who is also a member of Towards Plastic Free Medway and has developed and delivered training programmes on the environment to local schools.

We heard that most of the global warming has happened in the past 40 years with the seven most recent years being the warmest. 2019 saw the highest co2 emissions ever recorded. Global sea levels have risen about 20cm in the last century with the rate in the last 20 years being nearly double which continues to rise as polar ice sheets, glaciers and sea ice continues to melt.

Extreme weather events are more frequent with flooding, monsoon, and droughts where previously this was not a problem. We have seen recent reports of the devastation in parts of Germany and the Netherlands caused by such extreme flooding.

Sharon challenged members to complete a carbon footprint quiz and to make individual pledges to reduce their carbon footprint in line with Sustainable Development Goal 13 and submit these to her so they could be collated and analysed in time for the SIGBI Day of Action on July 17.

The analysis report was drafted and showed that 21 members of SI Medway and Maidstone took up the challenge and responded, making individual pledges to take further steps to reduce their carbon footprint. Members have committed to reduce their carbon footprint across a wide area, including how they commute, air travel, diet, shopping choices, home energy consumption and water use.

The biggest reduction in carbon footprint being pledged was in the areas associated with home energy use, shopping and commuting.

It is important that the actions that members have agreed to carry out are sustained in the longer term, and so arrangements are being made to review progress in six months' time.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Together Talks

All Region members are invited to join the following Zoom speaker meeting. Please register with the Club Secretary.

SI Lewes

Monday, September 20, 2021 at 19:00

Brighton Women's Shelter on how they provide domestic violence support for women and their children

SI Lewes

Monday, October 18, 2021 at 19:00

Ram Rajil co-founder of Bloom Nepal School to give us an update on the school and children.

**Region Meetings in 2021
are scheduled to take place on:
September 25 and December 04**

Day of Action in Eastbourne

EASTBOURNE CLUB HAVE adopted a beach in Eastbourne, near the Buzz Activity Water Centre, and clean it several times a year collecting rubbish and recording it for the Marine Conservation Society.

On Saturday July 17, five members took part in the SIGBI Day of Action by cleaning their allotted beach. The day was absolutely perfect with the sea sparkling like diamonds in the sunshine.

It was very interesting as at first the beach looked quite clean but 90 items of rubbish were recovered with small plastic pieces making up over half these. The rest was made up of an assortment of paper and wood. There were some strange items; a plastic comb, charcoal from bar-b-ques and pieces of cane from a beach chair.

DENISE STAPLEHURST, SI EASTBOURNE



Eastbourne Members Getting Together



Eastbourne Soroptimists braved the weather at outside event

ONE OF OUR new members Kshama thought it would be nice to have some Prosecco to share and so it was decided to have an outside get together for the first time since Covid, and Lotte offered the beach outside her house or the front garden.

Unfortunately like true England – it was raining... but as we hadn't met and we were all excited, we went ahead with the event and got wet! This was a small fundraiser for President Claire's charity.

There was lovely food was prepared... and some of us managed to stay for an hour. Lotte made hot cups of tea and coffee and provided blankets!

DENISE STAPLEHURST, SI EASTBOURNE



PRESIDENT CLAIRE THOUGHT it would be nice to have a coffee morning to raise funds.

Some members invited a small group of friends round to their gardens and others did Zoom meetings. I myself started at 09:00 with a Zoom with friends; then I joined a Soroptimist Zoom with Claire and a few members; and then at 11:00, I had a real coffee morning with my mum and friends. By the end of the morning I had raised £50 at three separate events.

The total raised at £5 a coffee and cake was just over £100 and the morning was enjoyed by all.

We are so looking forward to meeting face-to-face and buying jams, and sharing books, and raising more money.

DENISE STAPLEHURST, SI EASTBOURNE



**Closing Date for the August issue
of SEE News
is Monday August 23, 2021**

Email your text and photographs to Patricia at
pat.painting@btinternet.com 020 8668 2681

Women Making History



IN JULY, MEMBERS from SI Tunbridge Wells visited 'Women Making History' in London.

"In June 2018 tens of thousands of women embraced the idea of PROCESSIONS and joined us to create an unforgettable mass-participation artwork celebrating 100 years of votes for the first UK women. Three years on, Women Making History continues this legacy, providing an opportunity to reflect on the banners' calls for equality, to examine the pace of progress and to be inspired to keep pushing for change.

"Created by leading artists in collaboration with women's groups across the UK, these vibrant artworks inspired by the banners of the suffrage movement, speak to the present and the future. Artists include Claudette Johnson, Sarah Maple, Sadie Williams and Vivienne Westwood." [Quote from the Artichoke UK page for Women Making History.]

In 2018, Tunbridge Wells Club made our own banner and marched in London with thousands of other women (including other Soroptimist Clubs) to celebrate 100 years of women (over 30) gaining the vote.

In 2021, a merry band of six (covid restrictions) travelled to London to view a selection of banners from the 2018 event displayed in London Scottish House. A reminder of past battles both male and female and of the battles ahead as we face different challenges or some might say ongoing ones.

CAROLINE AUCKLAND, PRESIDENT SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS (ALL REPORTS)

Trauma Teddies



FOLLOWING ISOBEL GROVES' appeal for more teddies (see page 01), Tunbridge Wells members instigated knitting sessions. Expert knitters passed on their skills to club members who could not knit. Currently the club have produced six and a half teddies with a new session about to start so our learners can be introduced to a new stitch.

75 for 75



CONTINUING THEIR PLEDGE of 75 for 75 in recognition of the Club's 75th anniversary, in June Tunbridge Wells members donated 75 dental hygiene products to the Nourish Foodbank.

Sadly, according to our local foodbank Nourish, one in six children in the area of Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells live in poverty. Since 2018 Nourish report a 37% increase in the use of the service.

Bunting for Grace House



IMAGO DEI GRACE House is a local Kent charity helping vulnerable women when they leave prison, they contacted Tunbridge Wells Club to ask for support producing bunting for their Afternoon Tea event this summer to raise funds for a house for women to be supported as they rebuild their lives. Soroptimists responded by making 43 packs of bunting produced in ID Grace colours.

The Grace House website: <https://www.gracehouseuk.org/>

Anyone interested in holding a fundraising tea party on August 14 for this charity could receive a set of Tunbridge Wells Soroptimist bunting! Here is the link to find out more:- <https://www.idprisonministry.org.uk/resources>

Federation Consultative Council Report from SEE Federation Councillor Jan Doyle



EARLY IN JULY I attended the online Federation Board Meeting, the first meeting with President Cathy Cottridge chairing. A one-minute silence was held to remember Past SIGBI President, Johanna Raffan MBE. Cathy Cottridge thanked everyone for their kind messages of support and asked that her gratitude be passed on to all clubs and regions. I have been asked to bring the following points to your attention:

Membership

Membership Director Chevonne Agana updated the Board on her work which included:

- A meeting with Associate Members when the tree planting project was presented and well received; it was noted that the meeting had generally felt that SIGBI could do more to promote Associate membership.
- Membership Month was a success and the videos prepared by Regions are to be reviewed with the aim of compiling a number of videos aimed at different audiences. A webinar/brainstorming is planned for Region/NA/Network Membership Officers to discuss the formation of new Clubs.
- The National Association of India has several new clubs in the pipeline and the board offered their congratulations.
- It was also reported that there are three potential E-clubs – two in the UK and one in India. It was noted that an E-Club is created using the exact same process as for forming a physical club and each E-club is a club within a Region/NA/Network. (I am sure some members of South East Region will remember that an E-Club was started some years ago with I believe the co-operation of Southern Region).

Programme: SIGBI Project

- Programme Director Kay Richmond presented a report to the Board exploring whether a future SIGBI project is feasible.
- Changes within charity laws, COVID-19 restrictions, safeguarding regulations plus insufficient staff and personnel to monitor the project could pose a significant risk to SIGBI.
- Various choices were laid out in the report and Kay reported she would involve clubs in a consultation exercise starting with a webinar which, in view of the current workload, would probably be in January 2022.
- Invitations to join this webinar will be circulated to the Board, FCC and Region/NA/Network Programme Action Officers.

Programme: COP 26

- Kay reported that 4000 applications have been received for COP26 and that SIGBI is on the 'long list'. It is hoped that SIGBI will hear by mid-August whether they have been successful in obtaining an exhibition space.

Programme: SIGBI Best Practice Awards

- The awards will be chosen from projects on the database for the period August 01, 2020 to July 31, 2021. The Federation Programme Action Team (FPAT) will hold a meeting on August 29 to choose the winners.

PR, Marketing & Communications

- PR, Marketing & Comms Director Nisha Ghosh reported on

work done over the last three months which included creating the map of trees planted.

- A 'Virtual Etiquette' Document has been produced and circulated to Clubs; it has also been uploaded onto the SIGBI website
- Exhibition materials for the Centenary Celebrations have been produced; the material will, later, be digitised for members to use if they wish.
- The 'Photo of the Month' is being reviewed to encourage production of dynamic photographs which showcase SIGBI.
- Nisha went on to report on a possible opportunity with CNN News (which include two-minute fillers for organisations celebrating a 100-year anniversary). SI has agreed to apply for a slot using the Centenary film produced by SIGBI.

Governance

- Governance Director Sylvia Watson reported on the recent meeting with the FCC on SIGBI policies and procedures. She reported she and her committee will be looking at overlaps with a view to simplifying documents.
- The Governance Committee has been reviewing the Club and Region/NA/Network/Country Constitutions. It is planned that a clause is inserted which states that when a SIGBI policy is amended all Clubs, Regions, NAs, and Networks adopt that policy.
- Now that it has been in place for nine months, the Governance Committee is looking to review its Role Specification, to ensure it accurately reflects work required. The Role Specification of the Governance Director and how it impacts on or is impacted by the Procedural Consultant will also be reviewed.

Finance and Systems

Finance Director Ruth Healey presented her report highlighting a few points:

- The microfinancing working party is working well, using LendwithCare and Kiva to make loans to women all over the world. The working party has virtual monthly meetings with a view to investing up to £5,000 in the first year. Loans made are already receiving repayments as scheduled.
- The members' area of the website has been re-organised under the five Director portfolios in the hope that this will make it easier for members to locate documents, and positive comments have been received
- Ruth and Sally Higgins in HQ are working with Thule Media to produce SEO statistics for clubs. Further work is required but once done clubs will receive quarterly automated, e-mailed reports if they wish. These reports should be available from August 2021.
- An early review of annual returns received this year shows an approximate 5% loss of members again. This is made up of Asia and The Caribbean holding their own with membership but the UK losing 7.5% of members. Ruth commented that she had compared the list of clubs losing members to those commenting about cost in the Treasurers' survey and there seems to be a correlation. Those clubs seeing the value of membership (rather than the cost) have fared better. Ruth said it was important to note that 50% of clubs had lost members, 25% had stayed the same and the other 25% had significantly increased their membership so sharing the success of those clubs is key.
- The auditors have nearly finished their work and the Board have approved the 2021 accounts. In addition, the Annual Report for 2021 was approved.

Walking the Via Francigena



In 2018, SI Lecce contacted us about their project campaigning for the Via Francigena route to be extended from Rome to the heel of Italy.

In March 2019, fourteen Soroptimists from Canterbury, Folkestone and Croydon Clubs set off to walk the first leg of the Via Francigena. The whole distance is 1800k, the UK section, between Canterbury and Dover, is 30k. On the first leg they walked from Canterbury to Sheperdswell, and in May, joined by Eastbourne Club members, completed the journey to Dover. Members from SI SI Lecce and SI Aosta, walked the Italian section at the same time as us.

As part of a project on friendship between the Soroptimist clubs along the Via Francigena route, filming of conversations about the stretches of the route undertaken by Clubs, took place on June 03, 2021, and I was able to tell about the two stages we had undertaken in England.

Canterbury Club were planning to walk the third stage from Calais to Wissant in 2020 when the lockdown began. Maybe they will make it in 2022!

The Via Francigena is an ancient road and pilgrimage route running from the cathedral city of Canterbury in England, through France and Switzerland, to Rome and then to Apulia, where there were the ports of embarkation for the Holy Land.

In the year 990, archbishop Sigeric travelled between Rome and Canterbury, describing the 79 stages of his itinerary in his journal.

The pilgrims had only one destination: the "pasagiumultramarium", the land and sea route that led to the Holy Land.

Anselm of Canterbury, also called Anselm of Aosta after his birthplace and Anselm of Bec after his monastery, was an Italian Benedictine monk, abbot, philosopher and theologian of the Catholic Church, who held the office of Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109. After his death, he was canonized as a saint; his feast day is 21 April.

In 2005 SI Valle d'Aosta visited Canterbury. The Alter in St Alselm's chapel at the cathedral, created by artist Stephen Cox and consecrated on 21 April 2006, is a gift from the people of the Italian Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta, birthplace of Anselm. It is made from Aosta marble chosen for its dark colour and unique markings reflecting the mountainous region.

In 2006, Canterbury Cathedral launched a major appeal to raise money for an ambitious programme of restoration and conservation work. A group of enthusiastic cyclists led by Canon Edward Condry cycled the whole 1700km of the Via Francigena, all the way to Rome, to help raise this money. Eurovelo route 5 signage for cyclists are also in place along National Cycling routes 1 and 16.



Although we have just 30km of the 1800 km route in Kent the local City Council has always provided time, money and resources to encourage understanding and promotion of this important route. Although paths and highways are the responsibility of the Kent County Council, the regional authority, Canterbury City Council has taken a lead role in the region and beyond.

Our city is the proud host of the zero stone laid at Canterbury Cathedral in 2001 which represents the starting point of the journey to Rome. The Cathedral is undergoing major restoration works and the remodelling of its grounds to open the site to visitors. When complete, we are hoping to see the zero stone in a more prominent position along with better information about the Via Francigena story.

The cathedral, Abbey and St Martin's Church comprise the Canterbury UNESCO listing.

Promotion opportunities have increased, and explorers will find the Via on the City Councils website and Visit Canterbury apps. They will also find more detailed information on the council's partner sites such as the North Downs Way. However, references are fairly limited – links to Associazione Eurpoea delle Vie Francigene, AEFV and other relevant sites are missing or faulty. There are inaccuracies too.

At the cathedral the Via is just one of the pilgrimage routes that takes in Canterbury. Two of the main visitor sites, Kent Visit Kent and Explore Kent make no reference at all.

Nevertheless, more and more people are hearing about the Via and the appetite for experiential tourism continues to grow.

The route follows the path east out of Canterbury and then southeast towards Dover alongside the North Downs Way. The first village we walked through was Patricbourne which is three miles from Canterbury. Womanswold, Woolage Village, and Sheperdswell are the only other villages along this part of the route.

The Canterbury Church of England Diocese and the Confraternity of St James are encouraging pilgrimage and experience of the Kent Sections.

We still have conflict and disharmony across our territories. Intolerance of new communities, refugees and immigrants is growing and many national governments are moving to the right. We have BREXIT too and although many British people are still committed to a shared European community it is all the more important that initiatives such as the Via Francigena promote healthy and connected communities.

SI Canterbury will continue to value our friendship with our sister clubs along the VF.

CAROL REED BEM, PRESIDENT SI CANTEBRURY