

May 2021

President Grace's message

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



TWO YEAR'S AGO, at the beginning of May, a Climate and Ecological Emergency was declared.

Notwithstanding the fact that 2020 was a year with many upheavals, what have you noticed in your local area or in your lifestyle, or even nationally, that has changed dramatically with regard to this?

Our future and our planet depend on our swift and concerted efforts – is replacing plastic straws with reusable ones the best we can do? Is killing every bug or weed our only option? We can see the plastic waste that we each generate every time we put our bins out and we now know that it is causing devastation all around the world, so why do we keep buying things in plastic packaging?

What is inspiring, is the enthusiasm from Soroptimists to learn about the many issues facing our natural environments in these frightening times for future generations, and to act on workable solutions.

Not that this is new to us. Our organisation has been involved in local, national and international projects to protect and conserve nature right from the start – 100 years ago when the first club members protected the giant redwood trees in California. This continues today as each club in our Region plants trees, cleans beaches, protects wildlife, and many other positive actions.

So much of what we have to do now revolves around drastically cutting our carbon emissions. As individuals, one way to do this is to stop burning/using fossil fuels (*petrol, diesel, oil, coal, gas, peat*).

With that in mind, the next President's mini challenge for you to consider is this: work out (or guesstimate) how many miles you DID NOT travel to Soroptimist meetings since March 2020 which would have involved fossil fuels.

This could also be totted up to find the miles per club as a whole – you may be surprised by the amounts. Remember to include a possible flight to the Belfast conference (322 miles from London).

If you really get stuck in, here's a link to work out the carbon emissions – [Car CO₂ Emissions List: Check Your Car Model - Which?](#) (use the 'well-to-wheel' measure WTW).

With COP 26 fast approaching in November, get ready to sift through the greenwash. What is greenwash? Something that sounds positive for the environment but is actually useless (carbon capture; hydrogen made from fossil fuel, emissions trading etc) often designed to continue 'business as usual'.

Little Pack Big Impact Initiative



EARLY IN APRIL, Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists read on SI Preston's Facebook page about 'Little Pack Big Impact' the Medicine Pack Recycling Programme that Terracycle UK were involved with.

This is a UK-wide initiative where they will accept any brand of empty blister pack. Once collected, the empty blister packets are separated by polymer type and cleaned (if necessary). The material is then extruded into plastic pellets to make new recycled products.

Those local pharmacies found to be taking part are Superdrug in Sittingbourne and Paydens in Bearsted, where each has a collection box. Superdrug is donating any monies raised to Marie Curie and Paydens to Parkinson's UK, both worthwhile causes.

Our Medway and Maidstone members were all keen to participate and over the last two months have been busy collecting all the empty blister packs from friends and family and dropping them off at the collection points, with other members who have offered to take them on their behalf, or at their local church such as St Peter's in Bredhurst.



Dementia Action Week see page 03

Mental Health Awareness Week, May 2021

Watching my garden grow



Gisella Pereira

FROM AN INITIAL degree in economics to an eventual career in education, a casual comment from a friend made me seek out an introduction to a counselling course four years ago. However, something about my college's open day propelled me straight to Level 2 and from there I haven't looked back.

Working with children seems to call me as my placements have been in both primary and secondary schools. I also work with some school staff, having switched to online when the pandemic struck.

I am fortunate enough to have a little garden, even with a small space at the front of my house for a few plants. I am also lucky to have a country park close by.

Buffeted by the ongoing uncertainty and anxiety, nature has provided me with little moments of reassurance. I tend to take many pictures using my phone, Google Photos regularly reminding me of what I took last year, so I find myself documenting nature through the ever changing seasons. The abundance of cherry blossoms on the streets, the tall white walls of the black-thorn in the country park, the re-emergence of the blackberry bushes, as I remember last August when I returned home laden and T-shirt stained, with more blackberries than I could carry. Some unsuccessful attempts at jam making followed.

In my own garden I watch each morning for subtle changes in my plants. How my clematis, sad and woody just a month ago has burst into a green mass with pink buds. I am starting to prepare hanging baskets yet feeling over protective of those little green plant plugs, the night frosts not having fully disappeared.

Having placed some various bird feeders in my garden, I have noticed a variety of birds returning usually in pairs. Two robins built a nest in my palm tree. I loved watching their busyness and especially delighted in spotting a baby robin waiting patiently yet vulnerably on a low branch to be fed.

One of my very first clients, when I was a trainee, spoke of how sustained and grounded she felt tending to her plants, the exquisite joy she felt from discovering new shoots. Growing and nurturing recharged her and gave meaning to her life despite her many challenges. That really stayed with me.

When life feels chaotic and when I start to feel overwhelmed, nature's impermanence provides me with a sense of stability, its rhythms somewhat soothing. And when I plant seeds or prepare borders and baskets, my mind stills a little as yesterday and tomorrow are briefly forgotten and I feel the soil crumble between my fingers.

It can be such a slow yet beautiful process like my relationships with clients, of tending to and nurturing and of watching them flower and thrive through small, subtle changes. And when I risk being swept away by the tide of my anxiety, when I wake up worried, I can stand at my kitchen window with a cup of tea and literally watch my garden grow.

I obtained my Integrative Counselling Diploma last year. My last day at college with my tutors and peers was online. It wasn't the ending we had hoped for, but I am looking forward to a graduation ceremony of sorts later this year.

At present I volunteer as a children's counsellor at primary school and am currently setting up private practice.

GISELLA PEREIRA IS A MEMBER OF SI CROYDON AND DISTRICT



Article first published on the BACP website.

East Grinstead Club comes to the aid of geriatric patients



SOME MONTHS AGO an East Grinstead member spotted a plea for help!

A nurse working at Crawley Hospital had been funding toiletries for geriatric patients out of her salary, a situation that was becoming problematic. The Club rallied round and a collection of basic necessities was delivered.

Realising that this is an ongoing situation, SI East Grinstead has donated again, this time with toilet bags made by our Crafting Queen, Helen Pond.

Many patients in the geriatric wards do not have relatives or friends who can visit with essentials. In addition the hospital shop has been closed, so the option of acquiring basic items has been removed. The Club will continue to monitor the situation and help out as and when the need arises.

SUE EDGAR, SI EAST GRINSTEAD



Dementia Action Week in East Grinstead

As reported last month, East Grinstead Club members had been busy knitting and crocheting forget-me-not flowers for May's Dementia Action Week.

Together with a host of other contributions, East Grinstead's flowers have been displayed around the town by the Council.

The majority of the flowers appear in trees and hedgerows, along the sides of paths and on benches (see front page). Waitrose, a member of the East Grinstead Dementia Friendly Community, also took part in the town's initiative.



The displays will remain in place until the end of May raising public awareness of this dreadful condition and the need to support vital, ongoing research.



SEE Region Charity 2020-21 keep the DEG in mind

THANK YOU ALL for supporting the Diamond Education Grant – our Region charity for this year.

All members should have received small collection boxes as an incentive to help with fundraising, although with many of us not going out much this year, cash and change may not have been the easiest thing to find! With enthusiasm to support the charity so strong with all our clubs, many alternative suggestions came forward.

Whatever way your club is supporting our Region charity this year, please send your donations to Treasurer Barbara via bank transfer prior to the AGM in September. Every penny goes to empower, enable and educate a woman in need and can lead to lifechanging opportunities for them and often their families too.

PRESIDENT GRACE

Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland Programme Action Team

Kay Richmond – Programme Director

Yvonne Gibbon, People



SDG 1 - 5

Carol Infant, Prosperity



SDG 7 - 11

Anitha Rajarajan, Planet



SDG 6, 12 - 15

Kim Ann Williamson MBE, Peace



SDG 16

Yvonne Freeman, Partnerships



SDG 17

BPA, FPAT and 5Ps. What do they have in common?

THE TIME IS drawing closer for the Best Practice Awards. Each year members of the Federation Programme Action Team review all projects added to the programme database that year to select the best practice winner in each of the United Nations Category.

The "5 Ps" that shape the SDGs are People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships. The 5 Ps highlight how the (Sustainable Development Goals) SDGs are an intertwined framework instead of a group of siloed goals. Progress on one P must balance and support progress on another. Please think about which P your project supports – People is the one most often cited, but do think broadly.

It is our work on the SDGs that gives SI the Consultative Status at the UN. Please focus your work on women and girls, if you are raising money tell us what is it for/how it will be used, that is the important bit. We need to know how it will make a difference to the lives of women and girls.

We will be looking for all these points, plus why did you do it/what was the need or situation you wanted to improve? How did you plan it, did it take time to plan, were all members involved, did you work in partnership with another organisation? Giving money to an organisation is not partnership, you need to be working together with both organisations gaining from the partnership.

The SDGs aim to "ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social, and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature." They also call for "a spirit of strengthened global solidarity" ie, partnership.

Please make sure you get your programme focus reports in by mid-July so they can be uploaded by the end of July.

During August myself and other APDs (Assistant Programme Directors) will be reviewing them all. The winners will be invited to give a presentation at the conference in October. If you have any questions, please contact me or Yvonne Freeman.

CAROL INFANTI, APD

SIGBI Ltd President Johanna Raffan



SEE Region is saddened by the news that President Johanna is in hospital after suffering a severe stroke. We all wish her a full and speedy recovery.

The family requests privacy at this time and ask that cards/emails be sent to SIGBI HQ.



SI Canterbury invited to comment on the tragic killing of Julia James in Kent

ALTHOUGH THE CIRCUMSTANCES are tragic, the Canterbury club were pleased to be contacted by The Times as part of their research into the murder of

PCSO Julia James. It was gratifying that the journalist included Soroptimists in her list of women's organisations. Less encouraging was that,

until starting her research, the journalist did not realise that so many women lose their lives every day. It seems that awareness raising continues to

be necessary. Hopefully the article will have let more people know about violence against women.

JANE WEBB, SI CANTERBURY



Julia James, 53, was walking her dog in the afternoon when she was murdered

'Women are being killed but we don't hear about it'

Julia James's murder in Kent has left people fearful — and angry. Lucy Bannerman and Andy Robinson write

After Julia James was murdered on Tuesday last week as she walked her dog in woods in Kent, Deputy Chief Constable Tim Smith sought to reassure the public that such crimes were "thankfully very, very rare".

In fact, James, 53, was one of three women killed by blunt-force trauma in England that week. Four days earlier Michelle Cooper, a 40-year-old gym instructor, had been killed outside a post office in Jaywick, Essex, in what police also described as an isolated attack. Three days after James's murder, Beth Aspey, 34, was also killed by blunt-force trauma at her flat in another "isolated incident" in Reading, Berkshire. Men have been charged in both cases.

Indeed, 21 women are suspected to have been killed by men in Britain in the ten weeks since Sarah Everard, 33, was abducted in south London and murdered. Her killing was described at the time by Dame Cressida Dick, commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, as "thankfully incredibly rare".

The supposed infrequency of such killings offered scant reassurance to James's friends and neighbours in the quiet, former mining community around Aylesham, who until last Tuesday walked the same wooded paths and peaceful fields of the countryside.

Christine Prime, 67, has lived there all her life. She is friends with James's parents and used to walk her dog along the same path where the mother of two was killed at about 4pm. Now her husband, David, a retired mine worker, accompanies her when she leaves home.

"We used to walk that exact same spot quite often," said Mr Prime, 69, in the market square, where flowers have been left in memory of the police community support officer. "My wife used to do it on her own but now we go out together and I think we always will do."

from now on. That was one of our favourite walks but this happening has haunted it a bit. When I go out for a walk in the future, I will be taking a nice big stick to protect us."

The brutality of the attack "brought back memories of the Chilenden murders", said Mrs Prime, referring to Lin Russell, 45, and her daughters Megan, six, and Josie, nine, who were walking their dog in a copse a few miles away when a man attacked them with a hammer in 1996. Only Josie survived.

"It's very scary. The possibility it could be a stranger attack like that one 25 years ago is frightening," Mrs Prime said. "We are a very close-knit community in the village. Most people know each other. My mother is of the old school. She never locked her door but I now tell her, 'Mum, please, lock your door.' Women living by themselves, like my daughter, should do the same. I've been telling her to keep her doors locked. I just hope they find who did it and soon to put everyone's mind at rest."

Overall, murder victims tend to be male. According to the Office for National Statistics, 506 men and 188 women were killed in the year to March 2020. Of the suspects convicted that year 179 were men, eight were women.

It is not known whether James was

killed by a stranger or someone she knew. On average, nationally, one in 12 murdered women is killed by

someone they have never met.

The Femicide Census, which records the number of women killed by men in the UK every year, shows that of the 36 women killed in Kent over the past 12 years, all but one knew their attacker. It remains unclear whether Harjit Chagger, 67, a widow who was thrown down a hatch in a shop in Chat-ham in 2013 and left to die, knew the four men who were jailed in connection with her death.

Such is the growing unease around women's safety, and frustration that women continue to be killed at a rate of



Police seek man pictured a mile from the scene

one every three days, that some local branches of the Women's Institute have decided to reschedule their traditional evening meetings for the early afternoons from now on.

Gill Crone, chairwoman of the East Kent Federation of Women's Institutes, said that until the rates of violence against women decreased, it was too dangerous to expect their members to attend evening meetings. "It's awful. It shouldn't have to be like that but some of the WIs say it will probably make people feel safer. There are lots of worries just now. They just feel safer to have their meetings during the afternoon."

A mystery man photographed in a field less than a mile from where the body of Julia James was found is "of crucial importance" to the investigation, detectives said (John Simpson and

Fiona Hamilton write). Kent police issued a picture of the man taken the day after the PCSO was found bludgeoned to death and said he could be "key" to their inquiry. A £10,000 reward has been offered for information that leads to



Peggy Wright and Klaudia Solty are two of at least 21 women to have been murdered in Britain since early March

The 21 women who have been killed since early March include Egle Vengalene, a 35-year-old mother of five who was found dead in a pond at a Suffolk country park and whose husband has been charged with her murder; Klaudia Solty, 30, whose body was found in the house in Hull she shared with a man who has been charged with her murder; Phyllis Nelson, 76, from east London who was allegedly killed by her grandson; Loretta Herman, 85, also from east London, who was allegedly strangled in the bath by her son; and Peggy Wright, 80, who died escaping a house fire in Birmingham. A man of no fixed address has been charged with her murder.

As a police community support officer, James worked at the Rising Sun Domestic Violence & Abuse Service in Canterbury. She had also attended a conference about stalking. Jane Webb, who volunteered at the service as a receptionist, remembered James as "kind, welcoming, friendly and caring".

The killing felt "too close to home", she said, as did that of Everard, whose remains were found in woods 20 miles away. Wayne Couzens, 48, a Metropolitan Police officer from Deal, Kent, denies her murder.

"I'm a rambler," Webb said. "I walk those places. You're thinking about

your safety, other women's safety, so it gets in your conscience. It's there all the time."

Webb, who is secretary of Canterbury Soroptimist International, a local women's group, said that many women would have had moments of panic and vulnerability while walking alone in the countryside. "It stays with you," she said. "I'm sure most women will have experienced that many times over."

Referring to the 21 women who had been killed since March, she said: "I'm not surprised, but we don't hear about them. The Femicide Census is doing great work but it shouldn't be necessary. It should be obvious that these women should be counted and steps taken to prevent this."

Carol Reed, 70, a grandmother who lives locally and lit a candle in James's memory this week, said that she had thought a lot about women's safety after Everard's murder. That James was killed in the middle of the afternoon, she said, "beggared belief". She added: "I just can't get my head around why anyone would do that to someone out walking their dog."

A woman in her fifties told ITV news this week that she had walked her dog along the same path before the murder. Choking back tears, she added: "I was probably there an hour before she died. Something like this is a real wake-up call not to be out there on your own. It's terrifying. I don't feel I'll ever feel safe again."

News

KENT POLICE, RINGFESTIVE
the person who attacked James, 53, as she walked her dog on a remote country path near Aylesham last Tuesday.

Alan Pugsley, the chief constable, said that investigators were no closer to establishing a motive and did not know "100 per cent" what weapon was used in the attack.

He said that the murderer would need to keep looking over their shoulder because "detectives will 'find you and get you'". He told BBC Kent he had called for help from other police forces because they had not identified a suspect.

Hours later the force released an image of a young man who they wish to speak to, taken in a field near the murder scene. He was wearing a black hooded jacket and carrying a sports bag.

Tom Richards, assistant chief constable at Kent, said: "We firmly believe he has information that could help this investigation and we urge him to come forward."

"We are also appealing to the public or anyone who knows this individual. Perhaps he lives near you, you work with him or he visits your local shop. Please get in touch and help us find the answers Julia's family deserve."

James was murdered in Ackholt Wood near her home in Snowdown, a hamlet near Aylesham. Yesterday there was a cordon around fields along a country lane.

Paul, her husband, changed his profile picture on social media to one of their wedding day. He wrote: "I miss you so much Luvly xxx"

Medway and Maidstone mark May as Membership Month

Zoom Induction Session with 4 New Members



Membership Month – 21 May 2021

MAY IS MEMBERSHIP Month in the Soroptimist Calendar and Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists have in recent months welcomed new members to the club. Our latest recruit is Carol Perry who joined us this month after hearing about Soroptimists whilst attending Towards Plastic Free Medway meetings being chaired by our own Liz Duckworth.

On May 21 we organised an induction for four of our newer members via Zoom that was delivered by Carol Infant, Janet Hughes, Sue Daykin and Jane Barnes. The feedback from the new members who attended was positive, finding the presentations that focused on Federation, Region and Club both interesting and informative.

Sharon Forghani, who joined us before the pandemic, particularly felt that the presentations were comprehensive and filled in any gaps she had and demonstrated how all the different levels fit together in addition to providing the opportunity for asking questions.

Within the club we find that having a Mentor helps new members settle in more easily. So Sue, Janet, and Liz have been identified as Mentors and each one matched with a new member.

JANE BARNES, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Afternoon tea... TOGETHER!



SOROPTIMISTS FROM MEDWAY and Maidstone club got together for tea and cake on Saturday, May 01 and were able to meet new member Annette Davies in person.

Annette was a Zoom speaker at a club meeting, updating members on the work of Mary's Meals, for which she is an ambassador. We were delighted that our organisation appealed to her and she was keen to join.

Eleven members met in Julia's garden in two sessions and there was plenty to catch up on as it was the first time we had met in person since our September Memory Walk.



#WhoIsShe Coffee Morning with Dr Mary Buchanan



Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists - Past and Present Celebrating Membership Month - 21 May 2021

Past and present members of SI Medway and Maidstone celebrated Membership Month at a Coffee Morning on May 18 with Dr Mary Buchanan, who talked to us about her professional and Soroptimist career.

Mary is one of 100 Soroptimists recognised by SIGBI as part of the centennial celebrations who have made a noteworthy contribution to society in the furtherance of the aims and objects of the organisation.

Due to lockdown, we have not been able to meet in person to present Mary with her #WhoIsShe Certificate signed by Federation President Johanna Raffan and so we opened the Coffee Morning with a warm welcome and presented the Certificate virtually.

Mary spoke of her being invited and interviewed to become a Soroptimist fifty-four years ago in Maidstone when she was working as a young GP in a practice with two other women – which was unusual at the time. She was welcomed in and allocated to a community committee which enabled her to extend her knowledge and experiences beyond her medical area of expertise. She went on to take on many of the roles within the club and at Region but never as treasurer.

Mary brought to life her time and experiences at Federation level and International level with the SIAM project where many young girls were prevented from entering the sex industry and enabled to explore education opportunities.

There was a unanimous feeling by everyone attending of how inspirational Mary has been hearing it all first hand, amazed at how she managed to achieve so much through hard work and how proud we are to have her as an honorary member of our club. Congratulations Mary.

JANE BARNES, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER



Programme Action News – May 2021



WHERE HAVE THE first five months of the year gone to? The current cold and damp weather makes it hard to believe that we will soon be into June – nearly half-way through the year! Nevertheless, our Region has continued to carry out some excellent Programme Action work and projects.

I have just checked the database and as of May 19, our Region had submitted a grand total of 98 Programme Focus Forms and raised £7,066 with an estimated 945 beneficiaries. A big ‘thank you’ to all those clubs who have completed forms and a gentle reminder to those who still have reports outstanding to complete them as soon as possible, as we will soon be going through all reports for our Federation to determine the five Best Practice Awards for People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnerships.

The period the awards will cover is August 01, 2020 to July 31, 2021, but forms must have been entered onto the SIGBI database by July 31, not just submitted.

It is encouraging to see that many clubs are now working in partnership with other organisations, however, SDG 17 is still not being ticked on the Programme Focus Forms. Out of a total of 199 completed and referring to working in partnership, only one had ticked SDG 17 – Partnerships is the main one of the 5Ps.

I fully appreciate the fact that ‘working in partnership’ can be interpreted in many ways and this was explored in some depth at the recent Programme/Membership/Growth Webinar on April 24. The meeting focused on the future of programme action, membership, and the growth of SIGBI and the importance of the correlation between the three. It was attended by Country Representatives on the Federation Programme Action Committee, Regional Programme Action Officers and Federation Councillors.

Following the webinar, Kay Richmond, Federation Programme Director, produced a report which was highlighted in the May 21 SIGBI News Briefing and which I would encourage members to read, as it gives a very good summary of the meeting and what was discussed in the breakout rooms. It was thought that template examples of Programme Focus Forms for each of the 5Ps would be helpful and so each APD will be producing the one for their ‘P’ and these will be shared with Programme Action Officers across SIGBI.

Kay has also included what constitutes true partnership working in her report, noting the benefits that can be achieved for both organisations whilst at the same time raising the profile of Soroptimism. The link for Kay’s report is as follows:

<https://sigbi.org/members/files/Programme-Action-Webinar-Report-Final.pdf>

Copies of the presentations given by Kay, Chevonne Agana – Membership Director, and Dishi Attwood – Growth Plan Ambassador are also available via the following links:

<https://sigbi.org/members/files/KR-on-PA-2.pdf>

<https://sigbi.org/members/files/CA-for-PA-webinar.pdf>

<https://sigbi.org/members/files/DA-Programme-Action-webinar.pdf>

I hope members will find these documents helpful – I certainly learnt and shared a lot of helpful information throughout the webinar.

As always, I would like to thank you for your continued support for all our Programme Action work.

YVONNE FREEMAN, REGIONAL PROGRAMME ACTION CHAIR
ASSISTANT PROGRAMME DIRECTOR - PARTNERSHIPS

The Eastbourne Treebourne Project



FOLLOWING THE REPORT in the January SEE News, of SI Eastbourne members’ support for Eastbourne Council’s Treebourne Project, Claire Bell updates us on progress.

“On May 14 Kshama and I took part in the work at Sevenoaks Rec to save the trees that we helped to plant in December 2020. Over 10,500 trees had been planted and they needed to be straightened and mulched to help retain water and suppress weeds and improve the soil, after the very dry start to spring.

“We were delighted to see how much the tiny whips had grown and many were also in blossom. It has transformed the rec and we will now be helping to transform other parts of Eastbourne.

“We will be hearing more about the work of Treebourne at our club meeting on June 14, 2021.”

CLAIREE BELL, SI EASTBOURNE



Bras, bras and even more bras!

YES, ANOTHER CALL-OUT for newish or lightly used bras. Most of us have had clear-outs before but you probably won’t be surprised if more of these little items have found a spot to languish, unloved, at the bottom of a drawer somewhere.

Our neighbours in the Southern Region will be chartering a new club in Sutton in the near future. With work going full steam ahead to get everything in place for the chartering, a look at their website <https://sigbi.org/sutton/> shows that they have selected a wonderful charity to support – Smalls For All.

In the true spirit of Soroptimist friendship and to give their first venture a boost, please gather up any bras in good condition. Why not ask friends and family to donate too, or you may wish to buy a new one or two. A postal address will be provided or they can be brought to the Region AGM in September. Thank you all

SMALLS
FOR ALL

PRESIDENT GRACE

June Bridgeman CB receives award for #WhoIsShe? Campaign



APRIL 2021 SAW lockdown lifted to allow up to six people to meet in an outdoor location.

As lockdown eased in April, Tunbridge Wells Soroptimists were delighted that The Mayor of Tunbridge Wells, Cllr Joy Podbury, was able to present club member June Bridgeman with her award certificate recognising June as one of the one hundred Soroptimists who have made a noteworthy contribution to society.

This coincided with a media report in a local publication, the Town Crier, which is distributed to 11K homes in the Tunbridge Wells Area.

As the small group met outside the Town Hall we took the opportunity to present June with flowers and take some photographs.

June expanded on her experience with Soroptimists, commenting that she had taken part in her first Soroptimist event in 1945. She had been part of a Girl Guide operetta in Aberdeen,

this being a fundraiser to improve people's lives. This was about the same time that Tunbridge Wells Soroptimists were beginning to plan their formation at Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Girls. It would be another 20 years before June would join Tunbridge Wells Soroptimists.

She commented that the connection with the Girl Guides movement is still very strong and stressed the importance of Soroptimism in encouraging young women in their decision taking and making skills.

June also spoke about the good relationship Soroptimists have with the local Council and the emphasis on providing useful reports to aid with community decisions as well as continuing to raise funds.

June wonders if there is anyone else in SISEE who has such a long connection with the organisation. 76 years is an amazing length of time to have such a link and we also wonder how many of us have been Girl Guides.

Your generous donations make a difference



Barbara Fisher

DURING THE LOCKDOWN our Region meetings have been via Zoom. They have proved to be popular, but what we have missed, other than meeting fellow Soroptimists, is the ability to run raffles to fund Quadrennial Projects, speakers' charities and, most importantly, SIGBI Funds.

However, over the past year, members attending the Zoom meetings, have generously donated monies they would have spent attending in-person meetings to the following: SIGBI Benevolent Fund £460, just under £500 to the Kent Surrey and Sussex

Air Ambulance, and £250 to speakers' charities.

For the June meeting the Regional Executive have made the decision to select the SIGBI Disaster Fund for donations.

Please donate generously for this worthwhile fund by paying directly into the Regional Bank Account (details on the June Agenda). If this should prove difficult consider donating via your club treasurer, who can then forward donations to the Regional Bank Account.

BARBARA FISHER, SISEE TREASURER

Joint North South Irish Virtual Conference



FOUR MEMBERS FROM South East England Region (President Grace, IPP Lorna Blackmore, Sue Edgar and Jane Barnes) attended the Joint North South Irish Virtual Half-Day Conference along with 124 other Soroptimists on Saturday, May 22.

We were welcomed by National Association President Mary and Regional President Melanie, who had planned the event, and we heard some excellent speakers during the morning.

Political journalist, Alison O'Connor spoke about female representation in Parliament and the disproportionate effect COVID has had on the lives (both work and family) of women.

Having moved back to the stereotypical Hunter gatherer in many ways, Soroptimists will join with other organisations to ensure women do not underestimate their own skills and work to regain their confidence in the workplace. She said her mantra was 'Women should fake it till they make it' and encouraged us to do a broadcast if asked.

There is an organisation called 'Women on Air' where you can register on their database your details and area of expertise so that women are better represented and there are more balanced conversations.

We listened to two young women, Anna Woodside (NI) who spoke about the purpose of food and body shaming, and Izzy Tiernan (ROI) who spoke of women empowerment and her own journey to be herself. Both had won their respective countries Speaking Competitions in 2020 and demonstrated they were worthy winners.

Our last keynote speaker was Jennifer Smyth, a former champion gymnast who spoke of her journey of recovery following a training gym accident in 2013 which left her unable to walk due to a major spinal injury. She was determined to walk again and went to NextStep in Orlando for intense physiotherapy and was eventually able to walk with the aid of an exoskeleton ReWalk. The journey was long and very tiring but her determination shone through.

Unfortunately, Jennifer was then a passenger in a traffic accident leaving her with pelvic fractures requiring a further period of recovery. A truly amazing young lady who used her gymnastic skills of determination and focus to regain the ability to recover whilst also graduating from University and supporting others. (Find out more on Jennifer's Facebook page.)

JANE BARNES, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER,
MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



SOROPTIMIST TUNBRIDGE WELLS are fundraising for local Kent charity 'Hospices of Hope' who are celebrating 30 years of providing hospice home care in Eastern Europe. Home care as we know in the UK is a vital service bringing comfort and care to patients in their homes. Most people prefer to spend their final days in familiar surroundings at home with their loved ones. Others simply do not have the choice as there are no inpatient hospice facilities available to them in Eastern Europe.

Nurses and doctors are often supported by hospice social workers, psychologists and volunteers. Sometimes the home care teams are the only people the patients have contact with and, like us, in Romania they have been isolated during the pandemic.

We are hoping to raise at least £30 in recognition of Hospices of Hope anniversary, ideally more, to help fund the hospice home care team in Romania.

£30 can cover the daily costs of a Physiotherapist, as well as a Social Worker.

£50 can pay for a whole week of medical supplies.

£70 can cover the daily costs of a Doctor or two Nurses

We have produced 30 photographs of 'pearls in unusual places' during our time in lockdown, to have a little fun and as an exercise in creativity.



Here is a link to our Facebook album where the images are being uploaded:

[Pearls in Unusual Places](#)

and here is one example by President Elect Claire Archbold.

Our campaign can be supported by clicking this link:
[Soroptimist Tunbridge Wells Pearl Photography](#)

High Viz



Tunbridge Wells Club have designed and purchased our own high viz jackets. Here Club President Caroline is wearing the jacket to take part in a community planting project for Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park. The wording displayed is Soroptimist Tunbridge Wells & District IN ACTION and these jackets will be useful in increasing our visibility in all senses of the word, fulfilling part of the risk assessment function and also highlighting our work as a club.



The Comedy of Errors will be touring to the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury from Wednesday to Saturday, October 27 to 30, 2021. Public booking is now open.

**Closing Date for the June issue
of SEE News
is Wednesday June 23, 2021**

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

Croydon's President Reena to focus on SERVICE in the community



It's been quite a year, the past year and unfortunately this year didn't start with the easing into the routines that we had all hoped for.

But it has given us the opportunity to be more than grateful for so much. In that light, I see the privilege of being President of the Croydon club to be exciting but challenging. It is in these difficult times, that we are forced to think of novel ways

to do what needs to be done to keep moving forward.

The past year has forced all of us to use the time to refocus. And that is what we intend to do at Croydon. Looking inwards, to work on creatively and innovatively finding avenues for bringing in change. Being committed to making a difference at the grassroots is at the very core of the organization. There is a critical need to raise the VISIBILITY of the organization within the community, and we can do that by being more involved in the charities and other organizations that we already support through our fund raising activities. We can also do that by leveraging on the skills and experience of our members to be more involved in providing SERVICE and creating an IMPACT in the community that we are involved with.

The future belongs to the youth. Today's youth are the ones who will have to continuously reskill themselves many times over during their life and face greater angst and mental health challenges than ever seen before. The gifted ones will usually find opportunities far easier than the ones who are far below the ladder. We have seen the impact of not lifting those marginalized in our community. Too many of them remain in the cycle

Reena Bhanotha

of not being able to find their potential and rising to it. Many do not have the guidance that is vital and the support to gear them towards a goal with a compass. The despair creates more social problems and that baggage is often carried forward to the next generation with similar patterns being repeated. We intend to contribute to LIFTING THE FLOOR.

There is no charity that has been chosen for this year. The focus is going to be placed on building on our existing relationships and creating opportunities to use our skills and experience to provide service.

Fatigue from attending umpteen ZOOM meetings is something we are all familiar with now. Last year it had forced us to quickly adapt to it. We have also found this as a way to be more connected with other club members, especially when there are speaker meetings. Shared knowledge and resources have benefited all and generated more connection. We intend to use this medium going forward, even when we get back to meeting physically, so that we can continue to build closer relationships with other clubs. We would welcome all members of other clubs and their guests to participate in our speaker meetings.

We intend within our club to upgrade our own skills with particular focus on technology, to share our members' skills in supporting other members in their areas of interest and to develop a more detailed programme in the processes that would make us more efficient.

Our club members have always been supportive of every event we have organized in the past and I look forward to more involvement in ideas, planning events, and anything else that comes up as we play 'catch up' this year!

REENA BHANOTHA, PRESIDENT SI CROYDON AND DISTRICT

Tunbridge Wells 75 for 75 Chartering donations...

...continued in March 2021 when members delivered
75 chocolate items to add an Easter flavour to the home deliveries.

In April they pledged **75** cans and jars of vegetables in recognition of Earth Day and Stop Food Waste Day.



75 assorted chocolates delivered in March 2021



75 cans and jars of vegetables delivered in April 2021



East Grinstead Club remembers the Duke of Edinburgh

DofE | THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

In memory of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh our Club is making a donation to his Award Scheme, pointing out our involvement with the scheme through a local project led by one of our members as described below.

Since 1994, East Grinstead Club has been involved with a conservation project to create a Local Nature Reserve from a parcel of 25 acres of land with very poor biodiversity.

At that time two crab apple trees, excellent pollinators, were planted. These have now grown to around 12 feet high and are laden with blossom for the bees.

I started this project, which has full public access, around the same time as I became a Soroptimist. I then began to take students working for Duke of Edinburgh Awards for volunteering sessions in conservation as part of their community service.

The overall objective for these students is to teach them the aims of conservation. Within their sessions they will all plant a young tree and learn how it should be protected and nurtured. Learning about trees includes pruning, coppicing, pollarding and hedge-laying to make better wildlife corridors. They also build a dead hedge as part of learning about habitat creation.

Studying the value of endangered lowland meadows and their wild flowers together, with ponds, scrapes and ditches, is also part of the programme. A diary is kept along with a small illustrated project based on their chosen flora or fauna species. After eight sessions are completed, as an assessor I give a report on their volunteering and the Duke of Edinburgh paperwork is signed off for them.

ANNE RICHARDS, SI EAST GRINSTEAD





SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF SI ~ Canterbury

In June our club will be celebrating 60 years. We would be thrilled if you would join us on

19 June between 3.00 and 4.30pm as we mark the occasion on Zoom.

One way we are marking this milestone is through an award for 'Canterbury's Most Inspirational Woman'. The presentation will be made by the Sheriff of Canterbury, Anne Dekker and there will be a toast from SISSE Region President, Grace Onions.

The event will include a brief presentation of the history of the Canterbury Club, some words from our Federation President, Johanna Raffan, and a talk from local business woman and inspiring speaker Rachel Sanders.

We would love for you to attend and deliver a birthday greeting, but if this is impossible, video or written messages would be welcome.

I look forward to hearing from you and will share the Zoom link nearer the event.

R.S.V.P. by 12 June 2021 womanoftheyear.canterbury@gmail.com

Carol Reed BEM
President 2021 SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL Canterbury
M: 07753 502762
www.sigbi.org
www.sigbi.org/canterbury
<https://www.facebook.com/CanterburySoroptimists>

**Women inspiring action,
transforming lives**

Together Talks

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

SI Lewes

Monday, June 21, 2021 at 19:00

Hazel Thompson author of e-book 'Taken' will talk about children and sex trafficking in India

SI Lewes

Monday, July 19, 2021 at 19:00

Stephanie Pech

'Boosting our Immunity through Nutrition' talk and Q&A

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:**

June 26 (via Zoom)

September 25

December 04

IN THE NEWS

It is reported that despite pressure to overhaul the justice system, only 1.6% (one in 62) rape cases recorded by the police result in a suspect being charged. Concern is growing that the backlog of cases in the criminal courts could lead to an increase in the drop out rate of victims.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

On two island groups, Henderson Island in the South Pacific and Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean, a study has revealed that plastic debris on the beaches has increased local maximum temperatures by nearly 2.5 centigrade.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

Nadia Whittome, Britain's youngest MP, has been praised for her openness of her PTSD diagnosis. She has been signed off work for several weeks. Sadly, despite recent publicity, a stigma is still attached to mental health issues.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN