

President Lynne's message

Educate to Empower and Enable



MAY IS SIGBI Membership Month and our Regional Membership Officers, Jane and Lorna, are encouraging us to make an effort to bring in new members and establish contacts with other organisations.

The critical importance of attracting new members was stressed by SIGBI President, Cathy Cottridge at a recent Regional Presidents meeting I attended.

Although numbers in our Federation have fallen, we are

fortunate that numbers in our Region have remained relatively stable but we cannot be complacent and need to try and attract new members.

It was lovely to attend the AGMs and Dinners for SI Medway and Maidstone and my own club, SI Eastbourne and District, and to celebrate the impressive range of programme action being undertaken and to award certificates for long service to members. It was also wonderful to formally welcome our new members, Angela and Kryssy.

We are so fortunate that members continue to come forward to take on posts that are so important for the continuation of our clubs and Region. So a big thank you to all of those who give up their valuable time.

It is amazing what work is going on in our Region and I am picking up some very useful tips from all my visits! And just a reminder that Immediate Past President Yvonne will be organising the "Our Planet, Our Future" Award in memory of Past President Grace Onions. A club will be chosen for biodiversity/climate change programme action.

Another big thank you to those clubs and individuals who have generously donated to our Regional Project fund and I am pleased to say we are getting nearer to meeting our target to provide inspirational books from Region to girls completing their mentoring programme. Congratulations to Roxanne St Clair at SI Croydon for becoming our latest mentor for The Girls Network programme.

During May I am very much looking forward to visiting SI Sevenoaks and SI East Grinstead for their club meetings and attending the SI Croydon/SI Bromley's lunch.

Wishing you all a very good month ahead and let's hope we can attract some new members.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SEE REGION PRESIDENT

What's in this month's newsletter?



Tree planting to remember Sue, page 02.



SI Bromley twinned with a tap in Nepal, page 02.



Presentation of Molly Oldham Award, 03.



Launch of Grace Onions Award, page 04.



Meet Croydon's Poet Laureate, page 06.



Launch of Whitstable District Club, page 07.

Remembering Sue Nichols



ON MARCH 26 EAST Grinstead Club President, Sue Darney, President Elect Jane Griffiths and two of our members, Jane Oatey and Anne Richards, planted a tree at the British Wildlife Centre Lingfield in memory of Sue Nichols, a much-loved member, who sadly died last December.

As in previous tree plantings this year, all of which seem to have been dogged by torrential rain, Brian Griffiths, Jane's husband, provided most welcome assistance. Jane herself has faithfully provided tea, coffee and nibbles to sustain the teams in their efforts.

Sue's favourite colour was red hence the choice of a double crimson flowering red hawthorn which grows to a spectacular small tree flowering in May and helping the bees and other pollinators. In the autumn it bears yellow and bronze leaves and small red haws.

The tree also has sharp thorns that provide a safe home for wildlife and is planted opposite a new wildflower meadow sown with perennial seeds and just showing the first cowslips and orchids.

It is also located alongside trees previously planted in memory of Lillian Skinner and Ann Kesteven.

It is heartening to think that as current and future members visit the Wildlife Centre in years to come, they will be reminded of these three ladies who served the Club so faithfully over so many years.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

Dates of the 2023 Saturday Region Meetings

June 24 and September 23

Holiday Inn Maidstone/Sevenoaks,
London Road, Wrotham Heath, TN15 7RS

Eggs and teddies for women's refuge



Eastbourne Club President, Pat Hearn, is seen above with a selection of knitted teddies and chocolate Easter eggs, collected by club members for the mothers and children currently staying at Eastbourne Women's Refuge.

Each year, members collect Easter and Christmas presents for those women and children who are staying in the Refuge.

We also provide gifts for children to give to their mothers on Mothering Sunday and this year, members donated Boots' vouchers

PAT HEARN, PRESIDENT, SI EASTBOURNE

A TAP IN NEPAL HAS BEEN
TWINNED
BY SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL BROMLEY

WITH A TAP IN
NEPAL

tap
twinning.org

One in three people lack access to safe drinking water.
144 million still have to get all their water from rivers or lakes.
Your donation is helping to provide poorer communities with access to safe, clean water.

Tapwater is a Registered Charity Number 255-864 (England) and Number SC037624 (Scotland).

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Molly Oldham Award for Outstanding Achievement



President Lynne presents
Liz Duckworth with
2023 Award



Molly Oldham

Liz Duckworth Receives Molly Oldham Award for Outstanding Achievement

MOLLY OLDHAM JOINED SI Maidstone as a club transfer in September 2005, following a move from Leeds to Maidstone. She had been a Soroptimist since 1951 with the Leeds Club and was one of their most senior members. Molly had been a valued member and Leeds had bestowed honorary membership on her in 1988.

Within a year or two of Molly joining SI Maidstone she said she wished to donate her president's badge from SI Leeds to the Club. This led to discussion as to whether a specific use could be made of it and the idea of an annual award for a member's personal achievement within the Club was borne.

It became known as the 'Molly Oldham Award for Outstanding Achievement' to be presented each year at the AGM, following a

secret ballot in which all members could nominate the individual member they felt deserving, or most deserving of the award.

This tradition has continued with Maidstone members moving to SI Medway & Maidstone.

At our AGM held on April 13, Regional President Lynne Chiswick presented the Molly Oldham Award for 2022-23 to Liz Duckworth.

This Award was well deserved and in recognition of Liz's extensive work in planning and organising our 75th anniversary weekend and overseeing Programme Action throughout the year.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Bromley members' lunchtime get-together



BROMLEY MEMBER JANE Bahajjoub very kindly gave a most delicious lunch to our club members.

It gave us an opportunity to sit and talk, after so many Zoom meetings, and to get to know better our new and prospective members.

We continued our support for the local food bank, where several of our members contribute service. The photo shows what we collected on the day.

Sandra Callaghan has volunteered to do most of the heavy lifting of the food and toiletries we brought and will convey them to the warehouse.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY

Plans well underway for Membership Month in May



MEMBERSHIP OFFICERS FROM across the Region had a get-together on Saturday, April 22 organised by Lorna Blackmore and Jane Barnes (Joint Regional Membership Officers). We were also joined by Regional President Lynne Chiswick.

It was a lively meeting with everyone joining in to tell us of their plans for the coming weeks to attract new members.

Preparations are well underway with East Grinstead club having a new Soroptimist banner they are taking to the May Fair.

Bromley club will be taking along leaflets and talking to people at the Bromley Council Hub.

Sevenoaks club, in conjunction with their Town Council, will be taking part in a Coronation event and have a stall to promote their work.

President Lynne will be attending a Girl's Network event called 'Bright Futures' and will take the opportunity to spread the word on our own International President's Appeal – 'Opening Doors to a Brighter Future.'

Eastbourne club will encourage conversation when they meet at their popular monthly coffee morning.

Tunbridge Wells club will be holding a Coronation Garden Party in a member's home, demonstrating the fun and friendship from the youngest to the eldest member.

Hopefully, there will be lots of photos taken that can be shared with SIGBI and let us know what the outcome is in attracting new members to the clubs or as Associate members.

Date for the Diary: The next meeting for Membership Officers will be on Zoom on Saturday, July 08 at 14:00, and Jane and Lorna look forward to seeing as many as possible, attending.

JANE BARNES, REGION JOINT MEMBERSHIP OFFICER

Closing Date for the next edition of SEE News Friday, May 26, 2023

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

If you have events coming up after the closing date, which you would like to appear in SEE News, please advise Patricia who is happy to accept late articles with prior notice.

The Grace Onions 'Our Planet, Our Future' Award



MEMBERS WILL DOUBTLESS remember the passion and energy former Regional President Grace Onions had for her work on Climate Action and Biodiversity.

This was clearly reflected in her theme for the year 'Our Planet, Our Future'.

She was not afraid to stand up for what she believed was necessary to do to safeguard our planet, not only for ourselves but also for future generations to come.

Following her year as Regional President, when I became Regional President, we enjoyed sharing stories of our work on Climate Action and Biodiversity.

I know we were all deeply saddened to learn of her illness and even more saddened to learn of her passing on the eve of last year's AGM. I was, therefore, really pleased when President Lynne suggested we have an annual award to commemorate the life of dear Grace and all the wonderful work she carried out to address Climate Action and Biodiversity.

The award was launched at the last Regional Meeting on March 18, and I have now finalised the entry form. If clubs wish to enter, please contact me at

yd.freeman@mypostoffice.co.uk,

and I will e-mail you a copy to complete.

The deadline for entries is August 31, 2023 and the winning club will be announced at the Annual General Meeting on Saturday, September 23, 2023.

Good luck with your entries.

YVONNE FREEMAN, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT,
SI SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGION

President Lynne attends Club's AGMs

Eastbourne Club



MEMBERS OF SI EASTBOURNE & District enjoyed a lovely buffet supper after their AGM at their club meeting venue, the Hydro Hotel.

Outgoing joint Presidents Pat Hearn and Lucy McKeon were thanked for all their hard work over the past year and presented with gifts.



In accordance with club tradition, blue and yellow candles were lit to welcome in President Lotte Peasgood and President-Elect Julie Healey-Hill.

I was also delighted to present a club badge to one of our new members, Kryssy Hamilton.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SEE REGION PRESIDENT



Medway and Maidstone Club

MEMBERS WELCOMED REGIONAL President Lynne to our AGM Dinner held at the Holiday Inn Rochester on April 13.

It was President Lynne's first visit to Rochester and so she also visited some of the historic sights.

President Lynne said she was impressed with our Club's impressive reports outlining our extensive achievements, particularly the range of programme action projects.

She told us about her Regional Project, The Girls Network which helps girls achieve their potential via education. Lynne has been mentoring with the programme since 2019.

All the girls on the programme are from deprived backgrounds. Mentors play a key role as they help build the girls confidence and support them in many ways.

Janet Hughes thanked President Lynne for attending and presented her with a donation of £100 for her Regional project. President Lynne explained this will go towards providing the girls completing The Girls' Network programme with an inspirational book called 'You can change the world.'

President Lynne felt it was an honour to present well-deserved long-service certificates to four of our active members recognising 105 years of dedicated Soroptimist service:

- Janet Hughes 40 years' service
- Sue Daykin 25 years' service
- Barbara Fisher 20 years' service
- Wanda Wright 20 years' service

She also presented a name badge to Angela Christie as our newest club member and welcomed her to the Soroptimist family.



Janet Hughes receives certificate for 40 years service



Sue Daykin receives certificate for 25 years service



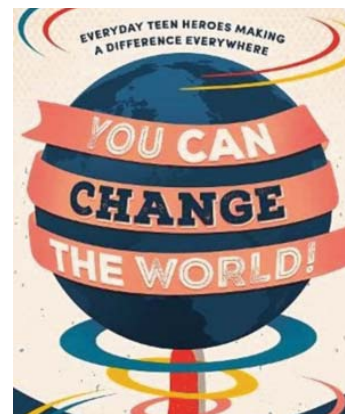
Barbara Fisher receives certificate for 20 years service



Wanda Wright receives certificate for 20 years service



President Lynne presents new member badge to Angela Christie



JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Soroptimists support Byron School fundraising for Toilet Twinning

Prizes for Byron Easter Raffle in aid of Toilet Twinning



MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE Soroptimists have been supporting Byron Primary School in their fundraising efforts. This term, as part of their Rights Respecting School initiative, the children were focusing on Article 27 'You have the right to food, clothing and a safe place to live' (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), and SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation.

At the end of last term, Byron School held an Easter raffle and chose Toilet Twinning as the charity to receive the proceeds after they had been given four Toilet Twinned certificates by Soroptimists.

They wanted as many of the children who come from socially deprived areas of Gillingham to take part buying raffle tickets with Easter egg prizes for each of the classes as incentives. Their goal was to raise enough money to buy five toilets for children living in poorer countries who did not have access to one.

An on-line presentation for class assemblies was prepared by the lead teacher. This was used with the children (age 5-11) to encourage discussion and awareness of the issues relating to need for clean water and sanitation and they viewed short videos produced by Toilet Twinning.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists provided details of the Toilet Twinning scheme with leaflets, raffle tickets and 48 Easter eggs as prizes. This included 21 Easter eggs kindly donated through the Community Champion scheme at Tesco in Gillingham.

The sum of £607 was raised and means the Byron children will be able to buy 10 toilets and learn how their efforts really make a difference... and they become CHANGEMAKERS.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Thank you from Blythwood Shoe Box Appeal



AN INVITATION WAS received from Blythwood to attend a Tea, Coffee and Cake event at the Royal Engineers Museum at Brompton on April 05. It was a 'thank you' to all volunteers for their hard work, support and help with the Blythwood Care Christmas Shoe Box Appeal in 2022.

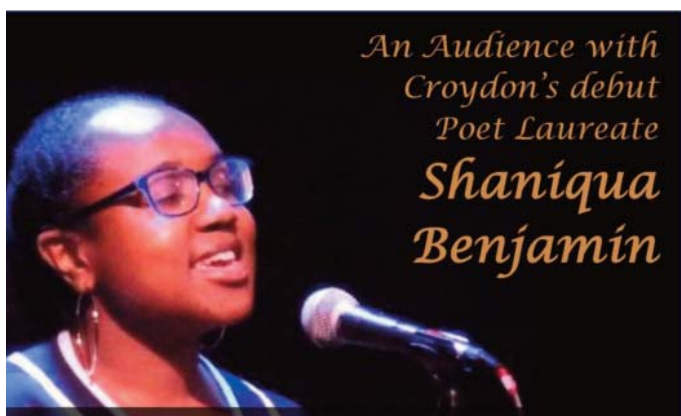
Stella and Jane Barnes represented the Soroptimists and joined with more than 50 other volunteers. It was good to hear that with everyone's time and efforts in the South East that we sorted and packed 14,166 shoe boxes. The combined efforts of all six collection points across the UK resulted in more than 90,000 shoeboxes being delivered in time for Christmas.

We heard from Alan Swanson who is based in Glasgow and Head of UK Projects at Blythwood. He travelled with the convoy to Serbia to hand out shoeboxes in 2022 and this time they also sent four loads to Ukraine.

In each of the Eastern European countries, Blythwood reach out to communities and partners to work out where is the greatest need for shoeboxes and what other community services are needed. For the first time, Blythwood Bosnia were successful in securing significant funding (£620k) from the Disaster Emergency Committee Fund to be spent in 12 weeks that would meet local needs.

As Soroptimists our involvement has continued throughout the long winter nights as three members have been busy knitting snoods, scarves, hats, gloves and tissue holders suitable for women and girls. We now have 100 sets ready for when we fill shoeboxes for the 2023 Appeal in October.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



SI CROYDON PROUDLY presents an Audience with Croydon's first ever Poet Laureate, Shaniqua Benjamin. Her credits include writing the lyrics for the London Mozart Players' Anthem and a specially commissioned poem for the re-opening of South London's biggest arts centre, Croydon's Fairfield Halls and the 2022 One Young World summit, as well as having several published works including Trinity College, Cambridge, Black History Month.

This event will be held on Sunday July 16 at 14:30 at Le Bon Café (Cuisine is Moroccan), 61 South End, Croydon, and tickets cost £25 each and price includes a 3-course meal. Tickets must be purchased in advance by emailing PAO.SICroydonanddistrict@outlook.com where enquiries can be received.

HELEN MANGAN, PROGRAMME ACTION OFFICER, SI CROYDON

Welcome to Whitstable and District Soroptimist International Club!

Join us on this exciting new journey



How we began

EIGHT MEMBERS OF the Canterbury club actually live seven miles away in Whitstable, a seaside town with its own identity and plenty of local needs.

SI Canterbury is thriving with five new members this year, plenty of volunteers to take office and do Programme Action so the "Whitstable Eight" decided to go it alone.

What is happening in Whitstable and District?

We are setting up a brand new Soroptimist International Club for women living in Whitstable, Faversham, Herne Bay and the surrounding villages. We want to work together to make a positive impact in our community by raising awareness of the issues and challenges facing young girls and women.

We are very appreciative of the support from Jane Barnes, Regional Membership and Development Officer, as we set about meeting the SIGBI tests for chartering.

The officers' posts are filled with: President Mags Harrison (ex SI Medway and Maidstone), Secretary Glynis Morgan, Treasurer Carol Townsend, Programme Action Officer Judith Jackson (ex Associate member), and Membership Officer Jane Webb.

It is vital that we are supported by our mother club and so, as well as planning the new club, we have joint planning meetings with Canterbury. We want to ensure that both clubs are resilient and flourishing.

Where and when does the Club meet?

The club meets on the last Wednesday of every month in the Community Space at Tesco Whitstable from 19:00 to 21:00. These meetings are fairly informal and a great opportunity to connect with each other, listen to engaging speakers and progress club projects and actions. As well as this, we also meet socially each month in the evening for supper.

What are the current Club projects and actions?

Our first Programme Focus forms have been accepted and we have chosen local and international projects as follows:

- Support for and volunteering at Maya's café, food bank and free shop in Herne Bay.
- Support for survivors of domestic abuse through a local Stop Shop.
- Beach clean-ups at Seasalter.
- Running the Whitstable Junior School Charity Car Park several times a year to raise funds.
- Walk for Water action project.
- Lend with Care (micro loans for women in the developing world).
- A midwifery project in Bangladesh

How do I become a member?

Contact us at whitstablesoroptimists@gmail.com

Our first open meeting is on Thursday, May 11, 2023 and we are planning a charter event on Sunday, October 02, 2023.

JANE WEBB, MEMBERSHIP OFFICER,
WHITSTABLE AND DISTRICT