

President Lynne's message

Educate to Empower and Enable



I HAVE JUST finished my final mentoring session with my current mentee and I am so pleased to see how far she has come since last autumn. It is such a worthwhile thing to do and I will continue to push The Girls' Network to spread programmes across our Region as I know there are members who would love to work with girls wanting to be mentored.

Like every charity, TGN is dependent on fundraising which is difficult in the current economic climate. They are however continuing to expand and also piloting online mentoring which hopefully will become available in the near future. This is still a very good and effective option for members who do not have a school or college nearby but who would like to be involved with the mentoring programme by becoming a mentor. (See page 03 for book award presentation.)

I have really enjoyed visiting clubs again this month. I was welcomed by SI East Grinstead's members to their club meeting to talk about our Regional project and was given useful suggestions on possible ways that The Girls' Network might spread into their area. I have passed this back to TGN who are interested in taking this forward. It was good to see so many members at the meeting and also to meet four potential new members who had been invited to come along.

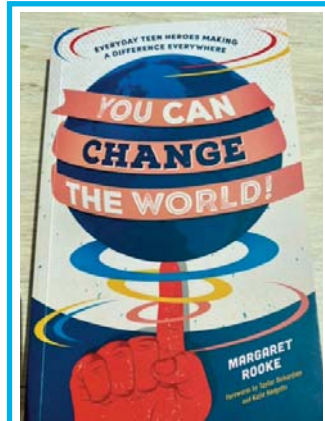
Enjoying a lunch at a restaurant attached to the Lord Whisky Animal Sanctuary with members of SI Folkestone was another treat (see page 04). It was good to meet members, including the Mayor of Folkestone, and also meet Susannah's rehomed dog! A big thank you to Yvonne for organising the lunch and our visit to the Animal Sanctuary.

I also enjoyed the recent Regional Past Presidents' lunch held in Betchingley, Surrey, and it was lovely to meet with Past Presidents who had held this Regional post going back over several decades. We were grateful to Ann Reeves for organising the lunch.

As I write, I am looking forward to being in Dublin for the Soroptimist International Convention where there are apparently 1700 Soroptimists from around the world attending. It should be a very interesting event meeting women from the different federations and sharing stories and learning from each other.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SISEE REGION PRESIDENT

What's in this month's newsletter?



President Lynne presents book awards, page 03.



Small Change Can Make A Big Change, page 04.



See Club Actions pages 04 and 07.



UNICEF book sale at Byron School, page 06.



Memories of the Soroptimist International Convention held in Dublin, pages 09 and 10.

A Night at the Museum!



From left: President Jane Griffiths and Anne Sanders



From left: Mary Swift, Sheila Fennings, a visitor, and Jane Griffiths

THE SI EAST GRINSTEAD Membership Team hosted a 'Get to know about Soroptimists' event in the local museum at the end of June. Building on interest shown at our May Fair stall in the town and from networking at a Mid Sussex Voluntary Association meeting, membership lead Anne Sanders kept in touch with local women who had expressed an interest in knowing more about Soroptimism in general and in particular what their local club was all about.

President Jane Griffith welcomed six local women into the museum for an evening of chat, questions/answers, and to discover what had encouraged them to want to find out more.

The Membership team of Anne Sanders and Mary Swift, Club Treasurer Sheila Fennings and PA team member Sue Edgar enjoyed exchanging stories about how long they had been members of our Club and what had led to their joining. All of them had had different experiences that led them to become members of SI East Grinstead.

Sue spoke about the various Programme Action projects that the Club has been or is currently involved in, such as our work with local schools, our support of Crawley Open House for the homeless and the I Choose Freedom refuge. She also explained our funding of the planting of mangroves in India, which in turn leads to the lessening of hurricane strength and saves lives. Our

guests were very interested in the variety of projects with which we are involved.

Anne then spoke about membership matters, such as where and when we meet, our Club nights and speaker meetings, and our fundraising social events. Sheila followed up by explaining the cost of membership and how, at the end of each year, the funds we raise are allocated to the various projects we support. We gave out a Programme of Events and invited our guests to come along to any meetings that might interest them and help them decide whether they would like to become Soroptimists.

President Jane spoke about our STEM work "Rocket Girls" with local Brownies which has been hugely successful and will continue later in the year. She also informed our guests about No. 63 and another future fundraising event in aid of The Magic Breakfast Club to be held in mid-September.

Before coming to our session, most of our guests previously had no idea of what Soroptimism was, but there was certainly a buzz about the room by the time they left. They were all invited to our Summer Cocktails evening which takes place in August and we really hope to see some, if not all, of them there so that they are able to meet more members in an informal social setting.

ANNE SANDERS AND ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

An Afternoon at the Clocktower Cafe

The Croydon Soroptimists met at the Croydon Clocktower Cafe to help bring awareness to our women's organisation. It was a great turn out and so much fun, there was lots of interest.



Surprised Sevenoaks Club learned of Tina's amazing work when she featured on BBC South East News



SI SEVENOAKS CLUB member Tina Fenner has been fostering desperate asylum-seeking children for over 20 years; she has fostered more than 30 youngsters during that time, some for two years or more. The children, girls as well as boys, often arrived at Tina's home traumatised and scared, sometimes with no reading or writing skills and no spoken English.

Tina has provided sanctuary, care and support, including teaching literacy skills, and has seen her young charges go on to successful and worthwhile lives.

One young woman, who had been trafficked, needed to stay with Tina beyond her 18th birthday, which the authorities permitted to enable her to overcome the trauma. Tina is still in touch with her, as she is with many of the others.

In the photo above, Tina can be seen redecorating one of the bedrooms in her Sevenoaks home for the next young asylum seeker.

Tina only joined the Sevenoaks Club earlier this year and we had not been aware of the extent of her work and the amazing devotion she has given to these 'lost children'.

It was a great surprise for us when Penny Robbins, who is our Region Programme Action Officer as well as a valued member and past Club President, alerted us to watch the BBC's South East news item on July 06, 2023 where Tina was featured! There were also articles in the Sevenoaks Chronicle and on the internet. We are truly privileged to have Tina – and we are very proud of her!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

Closing Date
for the next edition of SEE News
Saturday, August 26, 2023

Future Closing Dates are:
25 September; 25 October;
22 November; and 27 December

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

Book awards for mentees completing their mentoring programme



I HAVE ALREADY visited two schools in Hailsham, Eastbourne and Rottingdean, Brighton to provide inspirational books from our Region (You Can Change the World by Margaret Rooke) at their celebration ceremonies. Girls were delighted to receive their book awards as well as their certificates from The Girls' Network. They were also given information about our organisation.

Once they have completed their courses, girls become 'Ambassadors' for TGN. This is useful for a girl's personal statement/CV for further education or jobs. It also allows ongoing access to a network of over 3000 professional women who are willing to offer support and advice to aid the girls' future careers. It is hoped Ambassadors may return to volunteer as mentors themselves in the future – and perhaps become Soroptimists!

The photo above shows some of the mentees receiving their awards at Hailsham Community College, Eastbourne.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SISEE REGION PRESIDENT

Sevenoaks Club members 'Orange The World' again



SI SEVENOAKS HAVE been Oranging the World again, this time at Gail's Bakery in the heart of Sevenoaks town. Five members, two prospective members and a guest met up to make a splash of orange in Gail's, a very busy and popular café in Bligh's Meadow, Sevenoaks.

This was their third Orange the World in a row on the 25th of the month. These events have proved very popular with a chance to chat to guests and also to nearby tables! It is a fun way to highlight the SIGBI project to call for the nation to stop violence against women and girls.

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

Lunch at the Lord Whisky Tearooms



SI FOLKESTONE WERE joined by Regional President Lynne and her husband Graham at The Lord Whisky Tearooms for lunch in July. The Lunch was organised in memory of our former member Deanne Waitt who sadly passed away last year after a period of illness.

Deanne was an active club member for many years, taking on many roles during her time, although her age was always kept a great secret from us. She always loved our social events as well as being the friendship link for Haugesend and Lille clubs, therefore a social event seemed a fitting tribute.

Much chat and laughter, and good food was enjoyed by all.

JACALYN WOOD, PRESS AND PUBLICITY OFFICER, SI FOLKESTONE



SIGBI Day of Action



ON JULY 14, SI Sevenoaks marked SIGBI Day of Action by holding a coffee morning, hosted by Shirley Brigham, to raise funds in support of Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust.

The Trust, with which we work on a regular basis, is sponsoring disadvantaged local young people on a walking trip to Wales, which will include the ascent of Mount Snowdon.

PAULINE PAYNE, PRESIDENT, SI SEVENOAKS

Small Change can make a Big Change



The Soroptimists in the photo from left are Stella Barnes, Annette Davies (who is a Mary's Meals Ambassador) and Jane Barnes.

MEMBERS OF SI MEDWAY and Maidstone, together with some of the children from Byron Primary School in Gillingham, on June 28 took part in a Coin Challenge in aid of Mary's Meals.

The children in each class were asked to collect small change in their Mary's Meals Money box/Feeding Mugs. Our members also donated their small change and the large white double bed sheet on which the world map image was drawn (see below).

This related to the work the Byron children were focusing on this term relating to Article 28 of the UN Rights of the Child – Each child should have the right to an education no matter what, regardless of race, gender or disability or whether they are in detention or a refugee.

During the afternoon, each class sent three or four representatives with their mug of coins to start filling in the world map with the coins. It took more than two hours with children identifying the different countries as they worked.

A total of £211 was raised for Mary's Meals which equates to 2118 meals being provided to children in some of the poorer countries to enable them to concentrate and stay focused in school.

Byron Primary School is a Rights Respecting School and Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists work in partnership with them throughout the year.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



mary's meals
a simple solution to world hunger

Tunbridge Wells Flushed with Success



Cabinet Member Justine Rutland and TWBC Leader Ben Chapelard presenting Toilet Twinned Town Certificate at Town Forum meeting

WHEN TUNBRIDGE WELLS Soroptimists set out to secure Toilet Twinned Town status, we never expected it to be an easy task. However, with the help of our local network of contacts and much hard work collecting and recycling aluminium tin cans, we achieved our goal during late 2022.

The project required us to fund, or persuade local businesses to fund, a total of twenty toilets through ww.toilettwinning.org. This gave club members the opportunity to present the twenty certificates to local business leaders and various community groups and to publicise each presentation through local media.

On a lovely sunny day in July this year, club members were delighted to present the final award certificate to our local Council Leader, Ben Chapelard in the courtyard of The Amelia Scott cultural hub. The next day, Ben and TWBC Cabinet member, Justine Rutland, displayed the certificate at the Town Forum meeting, and advised that the certificate will hang in a prominent location within the Council offices for visitors to see.

It is wonderful to know that, as a result of this project, many young girls in rural communities will now be able to enjoy a measure of privacy and comfort, and most importantly, be able to avoid squatting under a tree and compromising their security.

ANGELA MCPHERSON, PAO, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS



Presenting the Leader of Tunbridge Wells Town Council with Toilet Twinned Town Certificate from left: Angela McPherson, Jill Ruddock, Louise Taylor, Caroline Auckland, Anne Walters, Ben Chapelard (Leader TWBC), Lorna Blackmore, Annette Ray, Justine Rutland (TWBC Cabinet Member)

Safe and Secure but not Secret



SI EASTBOURNE HAD a very interesting talk by Karen Spall from Clarion Housing who run our local Refuge. Karen spoke about a change in approach from keeping the location of Refuges secret to their being part of the community. Their new mantra for Refuges is "safe and secure but not secret".

The need for Refuges continues to grow with 1.6 million women reporting domestic abuse in one year and interestingly, 757,000 men. The Refuge in Eastbourne is a flagship for Clarion Housing in that it offers self-contained accommodation with nine flats. They are also planning a new Refuge in Eastbourne for transgender and LGBTQ1+ people.

Eastbourne club members have supported our local refuge for many years providing gifts for mothers and children at different times of the year. Recently we held an afternoon garden party at member Nuria's home in support of the Refuge and with the money raised were able to buy children's outdoor play equipment and art materials for their mothers who have an art group at the Refuge. These items were specifically requested.

A child's bicycle was also donated and the Refuge was delighted to receive these gifts and Karen said they were just in time for the summer holidays.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SI EASTBOURNE



FINAL CALL FOR ENTRIES for the The Grace Onions 'Our Planet, Our Future' Award

Submit your current project addressing climate change and/or biodiversity, by August 31, 2023, to Yvonne Freeman, yd.freeman@mypostoffice.co.uk. The winning club will be announced at the Region AGM on September 23, 2023.

Getting Acquainted with Speech Bubbles!



TUNBRIDGE WELLS MEMBERS enjoyed an uplifting and hugely informative presentation on July 17, from Jason Lower, Director of Creative Engagement at Trinity Theatre.

Jason told us of the inspirational work going on at the Trinity Youth Theatre in Tunbridge Wells as well as the Oast Theatre, Tonbridge, of which he is a trustee.

At Trinity, the work in-house covers all areas of theatre from performance to backstage skills, with many youth theatre members gaining enough confidence, enthusiasm and understanding to study a range of different courses at a higher education level. Everyone is welcome, and some workshops are tailored to SEND groups to maximise their enjoyment of theatre.

Trinity Creative Engagement works with older adults as well as young people and their singing group has proved hugely beneficial for dementia sufferers as well as providing socialisation and confidence-building for post-operative adults.

Jason also introduced members to Speech Bubbles CIO, an outstanding project with primary school students of which he is a trustee. Jason and his team work with Kent and East Sussex schools to help children 'communicate, play, learn and feel good about themselves'. Using drama skills and techniques the practitioners create a safe, playful and fun space where children can gain confidence, improve communication skills and boost their wellbeing. These areas have been identified as in need of real support post-pandemic in years 1 and 2, with social interaction for some children proving almost impossible. After a course of Speech Bubbles sessions, the team, as well as parents, have noticed real improvements in these areas, so it is a great disappointment to learn of the cuts to their funding for next academic year. Tunbridge Wells club was pleased to be able to donate to the project, bubbles@trinitytheatre.net

KATHLEEN LYNCH-HOWARD, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS
(JASON'S VERY PROUD FORMER DRAMA TEACHER!)

Dates of the 2023 Saturday Region Meetings

September 23 and December 02

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

Soroptimists Support UNICEF Book Sale at Byron School



MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE club members work in partnership with Byron Primary School supporting their work as a UNICEF Rights Respecting School. The Soroptimists and a Parent Representative ran the UNICEF Book Sale at the School Fayre on July 04.

Requests had gone out via the School Newsletter to families and to our club members asking for donations of good quality secondhand children's books to be donated for the UNICEF Book Sale.

A school room was allocated to hold the Book Sale and a parent representative along with Jane and Stella Barnes sorted through the bags of donated books, priced them up using a token system of 1, 2 or 4 tokens where 1 token = 25 pence, and displayed them ready for the Byron children to come and make their purchases.

The UNICEF Book Sale was well supported and £80 was raised and sent to UNICEF to be used to purchase books and pencils to go to Syria and Turkey.

Following the earthquake in Turkey and Syria on February 06, millions of people have been affected. UNICEF are especially concerned for the safety and well-being of children who have lost their homes, those who are sleeping rough in freezing temperatures, and those who have been separated from their families. In Syria they are setting up temporary learning spaces and supplying education supplies for 50,000 children and in Turkey are working with partners to develop a plan to get children back into the classroom.

In the July School Newsletter when the outcome was reported it included this message, "Thanks is owed to Soroptimists Jane and Stella who work in partnership with us and Mrs Reeve for giving up their time to run the event. Without their help this would not have been possible! Thanks so much everyone!"

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



SIGBI Day of Action Bagathon at Cherry Picnic



MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE Soroptimists were not put off by the Yellow Weather warnings on July 15, the SIGBI Day of Action. Members could be found busy setting up their Bagathon stall at the Vines in Rochester where the Cherry Picnic was being held. Luckily, the sun came out, even though it was a little windy, and lots of visitors attended.

On the stall were preloved bags, scarves and jewellery that attracted a lot of attention, including two overseas visitors to Rochester from the Voorburg area of the Netherlands, all enjoying rummaging through the wares looking for a bargain.

It was a good PR opportunity to raise awareness about Soroptimists and hopefully encourage women to join us. Membership cards were given out and information about Lend with Care which is where some of the monies raised will go to.

The total money raised was £288 and to be shared between Lend with Care, MacMillan Cancer Support, and the Hygiene Bank.

To add to the proceeds, plans are in place to have another stall at the Faversham Hop Fair later in the Summer.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Arts without Boundaries Poetry Festival



ALONG WITH SI SEVENOAKS, SI Tunbridge Wells has long supported the local charity Arts Without Boundaries, which works to make the arts more accessible to adults with learning difficulties, and inclusive, not just for their members, but to the whole community. It includes both disabled and non disabled members.

Arts without Boundaries (AwB) was developed from Band without Boundaries, which was formed in 2011. This originated as a partnership with Community Futures Kent who were supporting the social inclusion of people with learning disabilities in Kent and South East. The charity recognises the importance of social interaction, having fun, and the benefits for health and well being.

For the last several years AwB has run a poetry project in which members from both Soroptimist clubs have actively participated. Angela from SI Tunbridge Wells and Pauline Payne

from SI Sevenoaks have joined with members of AwB on Zoom where, under the guidance of an excellent poet, Charlie Bell, they have worked to create original, fun poetry. The workshops are a joy to take part in and it is amazing to see people with all abilities flourish in the creative environment they generate.

The fun part comes when as a group AwB are invited to recite their poems at live performances, and given the number of these, it seems the group are in great demand! This year the AwB poets made a return visit to the Tunbridge Wells Arts Poetry Festival held at the Forum on Sunday, June 18, where the group performed three poems, At the Heart of the Poetic Arts, Transience and Beauty, and Slubblebubble. The last poem was an entirely original creation not just of a poem, but of the majority of the words within it, being written and performed in a round to try to recreate the sounds that we imagined bubble away deep down under the oceans.

The Poetry Festival group performance was particularly special this year as Simon Armitage, the Poet Laureate, had heard a recital of some AwB poetry and sent a message to them which their leader Sue Marlow read out:

“Congratulations on the AwB poetry project and all the best for the future with it. It’s great to see poetry in action doing what it does well – making connections, letting the imagination float free of the everyday, letting language be a guide to better things. I tip my hat in your direction.”

The current crop of poems has also been filmed and recorded and, when the videos are ready, will be released on social media.

CATHARINE MENNELL, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS



Come and Take Uniform Event



IN JANUARY 2023, Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists heard from Hayley Heyes, talking about the work they are doing as a UNICEF Rights Respecting School and our partnership with them. She spoke about a Social Change project they had recently started to support the families who were experiencing challenges coping with the cost-of-living crisis.

One of the actions was to have a Come and Take Uniform event each term as part of their commitment to reduce, reuse and recycle school uniforms to the benefit of the environment and families.

The second of two such events was held on July 17 at Byron Primary School. Stella and Jane Barnes assisted preparing at both events. This time they went along and spent two hours sorting through and packing the donated clothes using vertical folding into storage boxes marked for each age group.

When sorted, other volunteers took over and assisted as families came in to see what was available. Last term eight families used the opportunity but this time there were between 30 and 40 families who came along. Obviously the need is great and growing in these challenging times.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



SI SEVENOAKS HAVE a special relationship with the Rockdale Centre, a wonderful facility in Sevenoaks combining housing for the elderly with assisted living, and residential care. Rockdale is set in the heart of Sevenoaks but has extensive gardens to which the residents have access.

SI Sevenoaks is privileged to meet there, in part due to one of our founders, Beatrice Wilson, being a prime mover in setting up Rockdale back in 1948. To celebrate 75 years, the Rockdale Management invited members to a guided tour of the grounds, which have many features and wonderful plants, followed by a chance to view residents' art and craft work, and some tea and delicious cake! Eight SI Sevenoaks members attended, led by President Pauline Payne (in the centre of the picture above); our new Town Mayor Cllr Claire Shea and other councillors were also in the party together with Rockdale CEO Mr Chris Munday.

Our tour was excellently led by head gardener Annette; we were lucky to dodge the showers so a lovely morning for us all, plus some very helpful gardening tips!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

An audience with Croydon's first Poet Laureate



SHANIQUA BENJAMIN (pictured on the right) is Croydon's first Poet Laureate, and the Croydon Soroptimists had the pleasure of hearing some of her lovely, inspired poetry while enjoying a great meal at Le Bon Café, on July 16. Shaniqua's credits include writing the lyrics for the London Mozart Players' Anthem and a

specialty 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.

CORAL PITTER-KONIBIRE, SI CROYDON

Tunbridge Wells Soroptimists visit the Houses of Parliament



On the terrace at the Houses of Parliament with MP Greg Clark.
FROM LEFT: Kathryn Lynch-Howard, Caroline Auckland, Claire Archbold (TW President), Angela McPherson, Cat Mennell, Ann Greenfield, Greg Clark, Jill Ruddock, Anne Walter, Miki Flannery, Lucy Raj, Lorna Blackmore, Louise Taylor



Kathleen Lynch-Howard, Lorna Blackmore, Caroline Auckland, Angela McPherson, Lucy Raj and Ann Greenfield in the tea rooms at Houses of Parliament with sisters from SI Croydon: Roxanne St Claire, Sheila Patel and Coral Pitter-Konibire

FOLLOWING UP ON our report published in the latter part of 2022 'A Spotlight on Safety in Tunbridge Wells', which dealt with how safe women and girls feel in and around our town, club members were invited to visit the Houses of Parliament in June 2023 by our local MP, Greg Clark.

This was subsequent to a visit by club members to the Strangers' Gallery in Parliament in late 2022, when Greg Clark introduced a private member's bill to deal with the harassment of women in public places.

On that occasion he had cited our report as part of his evidence supporting the proposed bill, which means that Soroptimists are now recorded in Hansard!

During this tour of Parliament, Greg took us to parts of the building the public don't routinely see. We even got to sit in the infamous 1922 committee room. All in all a rather different visit to the one made by Emily Wilding Davison in 1911, when she hid in the toilet during her protest against the Census that year.

After our tour of the buildings on a beautiful sunny June day, we happened by chance to meet Soroptimist sisters Roxanne St Claire, Sheila Patel and Coral Pitter-Konibire from SI Croydon in the tea rooms. So great to see so many Soroptimists at the heart of our democracy and living up to our goal of helping women to reach their full potential.

ANGELA MCPHERSON, PAO, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

A report by Janes Barnes on the Dublin Convention follows on page 10. Here are a couple of highlights.

**Soroptimist International
new logo unveiled
at Dublin Convention**



**Croydon Club's Pat Dale MBE
appointed the first SI Representative
for the Commonwealth
focusing on 'working together'**



SISEE Soroptimists attend Soroptimist International Convention in Dublin



Group attending Gala Dinner



Challenge the Future



AGM



Poster



Pat Dales' New Role



Patch of Peace Quilt



Convention Centre



New SI logo

TWENTY MEMBERS FROM the Region, including President Lynne Chiswick, arrived in Dublin to attend the International Convention 'Challenging the Future' (July 27-29). For some of us it was our first Convention.

We had all been sent an app to download that enabled us to follow the programme, speakers, attendees, tours, social events, posters, and social media – keeping us all well connected and informed.



There were 1700 Soroptimists attending the Convention from all over the world, representing all five Federations, and all of us were given a warm welcome. Many took advantage of being in such a beautiful country exploring the many sights in and around the city

before, during and after the convention, including visiting the famous Guinness factory and trying a pint or two!

The AGM was held on the afternoon prior to the Convention, and we heard about what had been achieved over the past four years that took us through the pandemic and the Soroptimist Centenary. A new post has been created on the SI Board and we are immensely proud that our own Pat Dale MBE has been appointed the first SI Representative for the Commonwealth focusing on 'working together'. (See page 09.)

In the exhibition hall there were opportunities for some retail therapy and all 100+ posters submitted by clubs and region outlining project work undertaken were on display to see.

Tunbridge Wells club had submitted a poster called 'Cans into Toilets' about their recycling project that brought dignity and safety to women and girls and attracted interest to find out more.

Also on display were the two quilts made by SI San Fernando from the patches of peace that 67 clubs had designed and taken to Belfast, and our submissions from the Region could be seen.

At the Convention, a new SI logo was presented (see page 09) and will be available from the Autumn – this seemed to have a mixed reception and the similarity with the Starbucks logo could not be missed.

For the first time we heard from the UN representatives, and they reinforced the importance of us submitting programme focus forms that inform their reporting and ensure SI maintains its consultative status.

After listening to some inspirational speakers and attending workshops over the three days, the Convention came to a close with an announcement about the July 2027 convention which will be one with a difference – a 'Wave of Change' Royal Caribbean cruise to Alaska. You can find out more at <https://siconvention.org>.

On the final evening it was the gala dinner with a distinct Irish theme where we were entertained with traditional dancing, music and singing, with many Soroptimists taking part.

Sadly it was time to say farewell to Soroptimist friends, old and new, and head for home.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

