

President Lynne's message

Educate to Empower and Enable



IT WAS GOOD to see so many of you, including our new members, at our recent Region meeting. We enjoyed inspiring presentations from Pat Dale and Helen Schortz who spoke about their experiences of setting up and running school clubs. We heard "Good News" from SI Folkestone SI Lewes, and SI Medway and

Maidstone. So encouraging to hear about the wonderful programme action being undertaken by our Clubs.

We also welcomed Dishi Attwood who described her challenges as Director of Membership and Development at SIGBI to grow our membership and gave advice as to how we tell others about Soroptimism. She would say, when asked, that being a Soroptimist gave her a "warm glow". I think that is what many of us can relate to.

It was also wonderful to sign the Petition for our proposed new club in Whitstable (see pages 03 and 08). Many congratulations to Jane Webb and everyone involved in setting up this for all their hard work and forward thinking.

Our exceptional weather in June was the perfect backdrop to some of the events I attended. These included the unveiling of SI Medway and Maidstone's oak plaque in honour of their amazing project in planting 420 trees on a former landfill site last year. SI Eastbourne enjoyed a Catalan-themed event in the home of member Nuria with funds raised for our local Refuge. SI East Grinstead's garden party, hosted by President Jane, was most enjoyable. Although during a sudden heavy downpour and thunderstorm directly overhead, it was suggested it might be a good idea to take off my chain!

As you will see from the article on page 02, I am delighted to report that we have now reached our Regional Project funding target to buy books for 116 girls completing their mentoring programme with The Girls Network. I have already visited two schools to award books. Very many thanks for your generosity.

I hope you all have a lovely summer and thank you to everyone who works so hard to run our Clubs, achieve the programme action we do, and to bring in new members.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SEE REGION PRESIDENT

What's in this month's newsletter?



Keeping our beaches clean, page 02.

Congratulations on successfully completing The Girls' Network Mentoring Programme and becoming an Ambassador

Wishing you every success in the future from Soroptimist International South East England
<https://sigbi.org/south-east-england/>

STANDING UP for Women and Girls

Educate to Empower and Enable

Region TGN project funding success, page 02.



A Peace Pole for Croydon, page 04.



Guess the weight of the dog, page 05.

Gender Equality - Human Rights - End Domestic Violence - Fight Poverty - Environment Protection

Open up a world of friendship, advocacy engagement and fun. Join us!
www.sigbi.org/get-involved/membership

Inspirational Speakers - Events **STANDING UP for Women and Girls** Conferences - Outings - Friendship

SCAN

Canterbury members continue their beach cleaning work



WITH SUMMER FAST approaching, many of us are concerned about the state of our beaches and the quality of our bathing water. Will we find the perfect family picnic spot on the beach, unworried by abandoned plastic bottles, cans and other detritus? Are we and our children safe to bathe in the sea or local rivers or is there untreated sewage swimming around with us?

Soroptimist International Canterbury has been carrying out regular beach cleans in Seasalter since July 2019. However, as well as picking up the usual litter left behind by visitors, in the last year we have been picking up more and more reams of toilet paper and other sanitary products left behind on the shoreline when the tide retreats. Disgusting!! Nobody wants to find this on the beach, let alone imagine what is swirling around in the sea!

In June, our beach clean is dedicated to the Great Big Green Week (June 10-18), a nationwide week of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature.

There are many actions organised for the general public and we would encourage you to have a look at their website to find an action near you.

Also, if you are interested in what you can do to improve the cleanliness of our coasts and rivers, then you may want to have a look at the work of Surfers against Sewage, one of the UK's most successful marine conservation and campaigning charities.

So, lots of possibilities to get involved!

JACKIE MAINE, SECRETARY, SI CANTERBURY

A Taste of Catalonia in Eastbourne

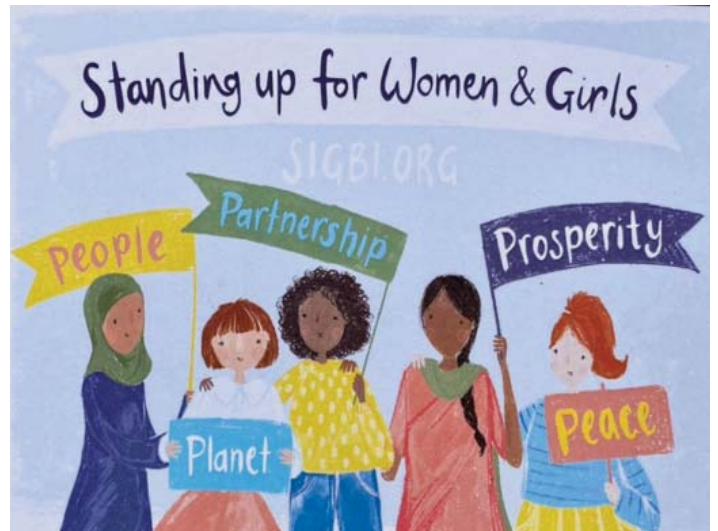
MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF SI Eastbourne and District recently enjoyed a delightful lunch in the sunshine in member Nuria's lovely garden (seen here with President Lotte Peasegood).

A variety of authentic and delicious Catalan food was served including tortilla, Catalan sausage and Crema Catalana. Nuria also provided each table with a potted history of Catalonia, her home country.

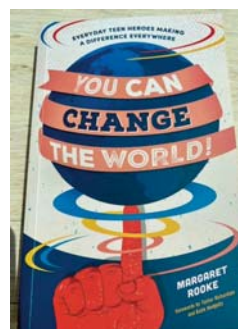
Funds raised at the event will be used to provide art materials for children in our local Refuge.



LYNNE CHISWICK, SI EASTOURNE



I AM DELIGHTED to report that we have now reached our Regional Project funding target to buy books for girls completing their mentoring programme with The Girls Network (TGN).



With the help of a generous discount from the author's publishers, we have been able to purchase 116 books, entitled You Can Change The World, for girls who have been on TGN's mentoring programme in our Region. Very many thanks to all clubs and individuals who have generously supported this project.

A group of members from Eastbourne Club (see below) recently spent an enjoyable and very warm afternoon sticking in labels in the books which state that they have been awarded by Soroptimist International South East England (see page 01). We have also included a SIGBI postcard in each book to be used as a bookmark (see above).

I hope the girls will treasure these books and remember Soroptimists in the future and hopefully join us.

As I have mentioned before, books awarded to me by the Soroptimists when I was 16 years old are still in my possession and were the reason I joined Soroptimists later on.

An interesting full circle!

LYNNE CHISWICK, SISEE REGION PRESIDENT
AND MEMBER OF SI EASTBOURNE



“15 Minute Soroptimists”



Jane Webb, Carol Townsend, Mags Harrison and Millie Brierley with some of the new and prospective members of the Whitstable club.

THE 15-MINUTE CITY is an urban planning concept in which “most daily necessities and services, such as work, shopping, education, healthcare and leisure can be easily reached by a 15-minute walk or bike ride from any point in the city”. It should reduce car dependency, promote healthy and sustainable living, and improve wellbeing and quality of life. The concept has been described as a “return to a local way of life”.

This approach applies to Whitstable and District Soroptimists. Instead of driving a distance to meetings and Programme Action projects, they will be on our doorstep. Five members of SI Canterbury wanted to reduce their travel, focus on local projects and maximise the membership from their local contacts.

To date this focus has attracted back four ex-Soroptimists as well as three brand new members, with more in the offing. Several can walk to the meeting place and no one lives further than a ten minute drive away.

Prospective members are being encouraged to take their time about deciding whether to join and are attracted by local Programme Action and local friendship.

We are working out our values for our Mission Statement and have already decided that we will be a plastic free club. Like every other Soroptimist, we want to make the world a better place, and have fun and friendship whilst we are doing so.

We already support a local multi-bank which offers free goods, clothing, equipment and food to people in need, and we are researching a member's connection with a midwifery project in Bangladesh where we hope to make contact with their local Soroptimists.

The website www.sigbi.org/Whitstable and social media are now up and running.

Wednesdays are Whitstable and District Soroptimist nights. The club meets every month at Whitstable Tesco's community space with a social evening in Whitstable, Herne Bay or Faversham in between times.

The Petition* to charter the new club will be presented to SIGBI at the end of July 2023 and the Charter Celebration lunch is planned for Sunday, October 01, at the Crescent Turner Hotel. SIGBI President Cathy Cottridge has already agreed to come and invitations will be sent to clubs at the end of August. More information from whitstablesoroptimists@gmail.com

JANE WEBB, WHITSTABLE AND DISTRICT

 Soroptimist International - Proposed Whitstable & District

***STOP PRESS:** The Petition was signed at the SISEE Region Meeting on June 24. See photos on Page 08



FOR MANY YEARS, successive presidents of Sevenoaks Club have chosen to continue fundraising for CAMFED (Campaign for Female Education) which supports women and girls in rural Africa, helping them set up businesses.

Our Treasurer, Margaret Nicholson, recently received the following thank you letter from CAMFED's Development Officer, Sarah Kerridge:

“On behalf of CAMFED, thank you for your recent generous donation made on behalf of the Sevenoaks Soroptimist International group. I would also like to thank Pat Downing who is stepping down as President and has been fundraising through various events throughout the year, and it's great to hear that the new President has named CAMFED as one of her charities for the coming year.

“Your support for girls' education is making sure even the most marginalised girls are seen, heard, and supported through school to achieve their full potential. With education, they go on to have productive livelihoods and through their own means, support more girls to go to school. That is the amazing multiplier effect you unleash when you invest in girls' education, and that is how, together, we are breaking the cycle of poverty for thousands of girls and families.”

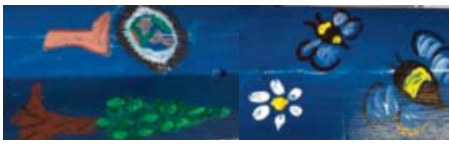
PAULINE PAYNE, PRESIDENT, SI SEVENOAKS

Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News
Wednesday, July 26, 2023

Future Closing Dates are: 26 August; 25 September;
22 November for combined October and November issue
(Editor is on a cruise); and 27 December

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



A Peace Pole for Croydon



Josi Kiss, THE Co-Chair, Friends of Park Hill Park and Recreation Ground, invited SI Croydon Club to design and decorate another Peace Pole for Croydon, to celebrate their support of women in Croydon and across the world.

Members Pat Dale, Heather Bailey, Helen Mangan, Roxanne St Clair and Coral Pitter-Konibire (who took photos) were up for the challenge and met at the Park Ranger's Office to plan the design and decorate the Peace Pole, assisted by artists Josi and Nick. They enjoyed a lovely afternoon being artistic and creative.

Once completed, the Pole will be topped off with a hand painted, purple roofed bird house and be planted alongside three other Peace Poles near the Soroptimist bench in the Walled Garden Project. The pole used, was a recycled pole sourced by Solo Wood Recycling.

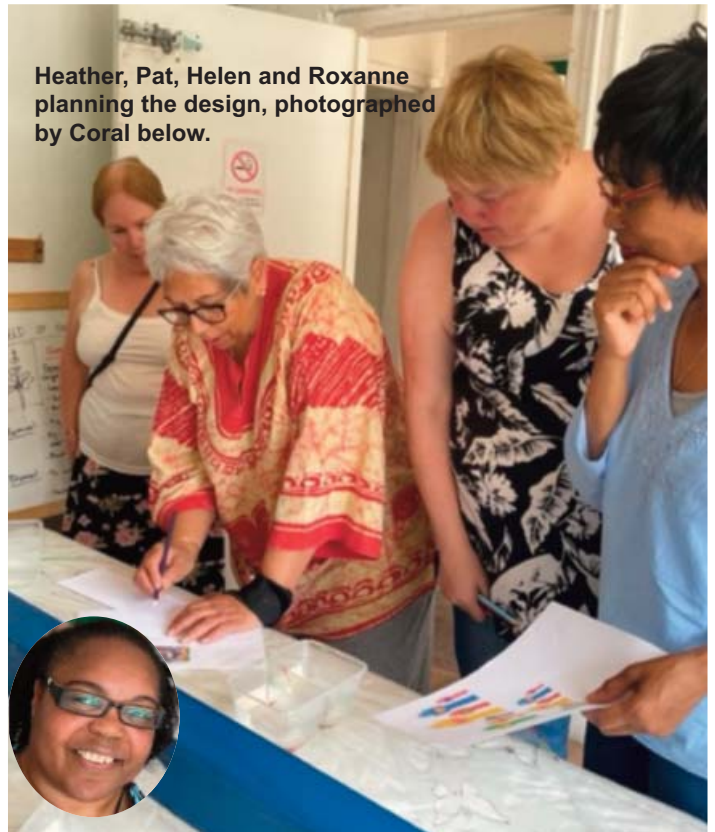
The project to create Peace Poles is an idea that originated in the US which has become an internationally recognised non-religious symbol of Peace.

The inspiration for the project is what peace means to each of the communities involved and since it started there have been over 250,000 Peace Poles erected across the world by different religious groups, schools, community groups, charities and others.

With this Friends of Park Hill Park arts project we will be connecting with 12 communities across Croydon and hopefully then across the UK and across the world.

CORAL PITTER-KONIBIRE, SI CROYDON

Heather, Pat, Helen and Roxanne planning the design, photographed by Coral below.



East Grinstead's outdoor/indoor Garden Party



East Grinstead President Jane Griffith (standing) with Region President Lynne Chiswick

SUNDAY, JUNE 11, the day of East Grinstead's annual garden party, dawned very bright and very hot. Tables protected by gazebos and colourful umbrellas were set up in President Jane Griffith's garden and all was made ready for the 55 expected guests.

At 13:00 the festivities began with President Jane welcoming us all and in particular our guest of honour, Lynne Chiswick, President of the South East Region.

Despite all attempts to shelter from the sun, the heat was overwhelming.

Whilst the main course of cold meats and a wide variety of delicious salads was being served and enjoyed dark clouds began to gather overhead. Then came the rumble of thunder with everyone saying "It's passing over, it's likely to miss us".

Famous last words! Just as we began to choose from an array of wonderful desserts, the heavens opened and thunder roared overhead. We all grabbed what we could and dashed indoors leaving behind soggy tablecloths, chairs and cushions.

Despite the dramatic ending to the event, everyone agreed that it was an excellent and thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

A raffle, tombola, 'Guess the Weight of the Dog' and an amusing Heads and Tails game, organised by Jane's 6- and 4-year-old grandsons, raised valuable money for the Club's charities. Despite the recommendation not to work with children or animals, we found this to be a very effective way of encouraging people to participate!

Very grateful thanks are due to President Jane, her husband Brian and all those who contributed in any way, especially those who prepared the lovely food

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD



Sue Hunt's Garden Party Raises £250 for Itarsi



ITARSI IS A LARGE railway junction town in the centre of India in the Madhya Pradesh region. In 1999 Sister Clara, from the local convent, became very concerned about the large group of children living on the platform at the railway station. They eked a living by cleaning shoes, portering, carrying out general errands and selling water. The children were homeless and often just lost. Sister Clara set out to provide a Centre for clothing, food, sanitation, and general care. She called the Centre, 'Jeevodaya' meaning 'hope'.

In 1999 our club member, Jill Joyce, travelled to Itarsi with a group of eccentric tourists lead by Ashley and Jane Butterfield who ran a tourist agency in the Medway Towns. The group were very impressed with Sister Clara's efforts and were determined to help and support her. The charity Jeevodaya has since grown and now runs two hostels, for boys and girls, and still supports the children who prefer platform life with a Day Centre.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists have been supporting the charity since 2000. Jill Joyce had been a member of both clubs and wished to raise funds for the charity. A small amount of money goes a long way in India and the Butterfields report annually on the progress of students and staff.

The Garden Party at Abbey Gate Cottages started in 2001 and has been a relaxing afternoon for all concerned and enabled both clubs to mix before their recent amalgamation. This year marks the 20th Garden Party and through the efforts of Sue and Chris Hunt, and the support of members and friends £250 was raised. (Sue, wearing a white top, can be seen in the photo.)

The charity Jeevodaya is going strong with substantial government funding, but the money we contribute through Jane and Ashley Butterfield buys the children holidays, treats and special items such as bicycles.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

SPECIAL DOMESTIC ABUSE COURTS REPORT LAUNCH

One of UKPAC's projects over the past few years has been observations on the Special Domestic Abuse Courts in England (Wales had no specific courts at the time of the observations whilst Scotland and Northern Ireland deal with these matters in different ways).

This project is complete, the report has been printed, is now ready for publication and a high profile launch. LBC Radio agreed to run an exclusive on the report, which will feature on the Shelagh Fogarty programme on June 26, and plan to give it a lot of exposure and share it with their sister stations.

Following the broadcast, more information on further media coverage as well as details on accessing the report will be sent out to all members.



CROYDON CLUB WERE delighted to welcome guest speaker Keji Moses to their June speaker meeting.

Keji, a member of SI Canterbury, is the founder and CEO of Mayah's Legacy, a charitable organisation founded in 2020 to empower and educate those affected by pregnancy loss with the tools they need to have their voices heard. They are working to address the systemic issues that exist within current maternity and neonatal services.

She also shared some of the statistics from the 2023 "Saving Babies' Lives" Report, published by Sands and Tommys Joint Policy Unit. The numbers tell a compelling story.

Thank you Keji for highlighting these facts for us, and for the amazing work that you and your team of experts are doing to ensure that expectant and bereaved mothers receive an appropriate quality of care for their specific needs.

CORAL PITTER-KONIBIRE, MEMBERSHIP OFFICER, SI CROYDON



From left: Keji Moses, Croydon PAO Helen Mangan, and Croydon Joint President Heather Bailey

Dates of the 2023 Saturday Region Meetings

September 23 and December 02

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

Orange the World



ON SUNDAY, JUNE 25, probably the hottest day of the year so far, SI Sevenoaks went to the café at Coblands Garden Centre in Riverhead for an Orange the World event.

Five members, five prospective members and three past members gathered for a chat and a coffee or a cool drink, before going among the plants for our photo shoot.

Coblands staff had kindly displayed our poster and then took the photo for us; we were also able to hand out a few leaflets, including to a young police officer who was very interested in the project as she and her colleagues are focusing on the problem of violence against women and girls.

Some of us then headed off to buy some lovely plants – all in all a successful afternoon!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

A surprise for Sevenoaks Club



SEVENOAKS MEMBERS WERE recently surprised to receive a photograph album, dated May 1960, relating to a past friendship club, SI Royal Oak, Michigan.

The album, which contains photographs and details of Royal Oak members of the time, had been in the possession of the late Janet Fawson, one time President of Sevenoaks. Janet's son Peter kindly passed it on to current President Pauline (pictured).

PAULINE PAYNE, SI SEVENOAKS



Unveiling of Plaque and Recycled Bench at Tree Planting site in Tovil

A PLAQUE AND recycled bench have been installed at Bridge Mill Way, Tovil, to mark the planting of trees and greening of the area by SI Medway and Maidstone.

In January 2022, Club members planted 420 native tree whips in the ex-landfill site area of Bridge Mill Way Recreation Ground in co-operation with the Parks Department of Maidstone Borough Council, to help re-wild the area. Since the planting we have helped maintain the area by carrying out periodic clean-ups to help keep the area litter free. It is now a beautiful and peaceful area with lots of wild flowers, enjoyed by residents and dog walkers.

The plaque was unveiled by The Worshipful The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Gordon Newton and Regional President Lynne Chiswick on June 03. This is a significant date in our calendar as SI Medway and Maidstone was chartered on June 03, 1946, some 77 years ago.

The former Mayor Cllr Fay Gooch also joined us, proudly wearing a Soroptimist brooch, as she was in office in January 2022

when we planted the whips and was very supportive of the work of Soroptimists to improve the lives of women and girls.

We were pleased that the weather was kind to us and so after the unveiling we were able to enjoy refreshments and snacks prepared by Julia Search. Whilst there we had gone prepared with litter pickers and black bags to do a litter pick but on checking around the area there was very little litter to be found.

In November, we will plant a further 60 tree whips provided by the Woodland Trust. The Council have also agreed to plant an oak tree behind the bench so as it grows it will offer shade.

Jane Barnes wrote to the Maidstone Borough Council's Climate and Biodiversity Department about what the Soroptimists have been doing. She received a positive response from their Engagement Officer, "Thank you for passing on your news story, it is fantastic to hear what your group have achieved in Tovil with assistance from our parks team! I would love to share this story as part of the July newsletter."

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Croydon Club welcomes two new members



JOINT PRESIDENT HEATHER Bailey of Croydon Club was delighted to induct two new members, Adebola Ajao-Taiwo, pictured on the left, and Jacqueline Hibbert on the right. Both introduced themselves as follows:

Adebola: "I worked with the NHS as an administrator for 14 years. I recently graduated from Queen Mary University of London (Mathematics and Actuarial Science). I'm in love with Mathematics. I presently work with the Civil Service as a 1st Line Service Desk Analyst and I tutor GCSE and A Level Mathematics. I joined Soroptimists to contribute to women empowerment."

Jacqueline: "I work in administration and participate in a number of sports, fencing being my main pursuit. Becoming a Soroptimist is an opportunity to rekindle my previous experiences of volunteering, such as mentoring and befriending. I am looking forward to meeting new people and working together to have a positive impact on the lives of women."

(Jacqueline attended the June Region Meeting.)

CORAL PITTER-KONIBIRE, SI CROYDON

Sue is Awarded Certificate of Continued Service



SUE DAYKIN, a member of SI Medway and Maidstone, retired seven years ago from her job as a specialist nurse working with first time teenage parents in Medway.

On June 03, Sue was awarded a Certificate of Continued Service by Holding On Letting Go (HOLG). This was to recognise Sue's incredible 15 years of service as a volunteer to children and families they support. Sue is one of their longest-serving volunteers.

About 16 years ago, HOLG was the club president's charity, and they came in to give a talk. HOLG is a Kent-based charity that helps children to cope with the death of someone close to them. As a children's nurse, Sue thought the work they did was really important, so she wanted to get involved as a volunteer.

After receiving on-going training, Sue has supported children at schools on a one-to-one basis over a six-week period, helped out at the neonatal death groups, with families who have experienced the death of a baby before birth or shortly after. She has also helped at the parent-carer groups too, supporting the lead member of staff.

Sue was asked recently, 'What's your favourite thing about working with HOLG?' She replied, "I just love being with the children. Even though they're there because someone has died, bereavement is not all about sadness; their memories can be happy ones and it's lovely being able to share that with them and have fun. Death doesn't always have to be negative, or about feeling guilty."

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



STOP PRESS

The signed Charter Petition for the proposed new Whitstable and District Club to be presented to SIGBI in July 2023.

MEMBERS OF THE Proposed Soroptimist club of Whitstable and District are delighted that, first of all, Canterbury President Dawn Ryder (seen right with Jane Webb) was satisfied that we have met the criteria for chartering and signed the Petition to SIGBI to support the new club.

At the Region Meeting held on June 23, Regional President Lynne Chiswick and Regional Membership Officer Jane Barnes, also expressed their satisfaction and signed the Petition which will be sent to SIGBI at the end of July.

The new club has 11 members and more are in the offing. Five are transferring from Canterbury, four are returning to Soroptimists and three are brand new members, meaning that SIGBI will have at least seven new members.

JANE WEBB, WHITSTABLE AND DISTRICT



BACK ROW FROM LEFT: Canterbury IP President Agatha Okwudinka, Whitstable Membership Officer Jo Shilling and Region Membership Officer Jane Barnes.

FRONT ROW FROM LEFT: Whitstable President Mags Harrison, Whitstable Membership Officer Jane Webb and Region President Lynne Chiswick.

Arts and Culture Events

Claude Cahun (Photographer) Beneath This Mask

The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge, Canterbury
Until July 23

Role Models: Portraits of Poets and Writers

Pallant House Gallery
Chichester
Until July 23

The Offbeat Sari

The Design Museum
Until September 17

All the Flowers Are for Me/ Plants of the Qur'an

Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art
Kew Gardens
Until September 17

DIVA

Victoria and Albert Museum
Until April 07, 2024

Black Venus: Reclaiming Black Women in Visual Culture

Somerset House
From July 20 to September 24

Memorial Project Wilma De Jong 1954-2022



To celebrate the life of Wilma de Jong, a sister from SI Lewes and Lecturer in Media and Film Studies and Doc Film Maker at the University of Sussex, we are now working on a short film festival in her memory to take place on March 09, 2024 at the Depot in Lewes. This will also coincide with a celebration of International Women's Day 2024 which embodies the spirit of Wilma and her work with her

students and the soroptimists movement. Details have been sent to clubs and more information will follow.

Please contact us if you have any film material that would be suitable and of interest for a project like this and contact any women's groups you work with to see if they have a film about their work. The more professional the better of course, the Depot reviews the quality of every production we submit.

Please email Vera Gajic with any suggestions on v.gajic@ymail.com or Anja St.Clair Jones anjascj@gmail.com

ANJA ST.CLAIR JONES, PAO, SI LEWIS

The Power of Stories



PRESIDENT LYNNE WAS pleased to welcome Dishi Attwood, SIGBI Director of Membership (both seen above) to our June Regional Meeting. It was Dishi's first visit to the Region, and she welcomed the opportunity to join us for the whole day and hear and understand more about the Region during the morning session.

After lunch Dishi spoke to us about the job of the SIGBI Board which is to ensure that the organisation keeps going. The Board members need to work in partnership with each other, membership is intrinsically linked to Programme Action and PR & Marketing. The Board is currently working on structural issues because of decreasing membership and hence less income. Dishi encouraged members to write to all members of the Board with any questions.

We want to maintain and support our current clubs so that they are there in the future. For some clubs, the message is that it is acceptable to have fewer members and do less Programme Action and they may need help from time to time to be empowered.

Looking to the future, we need to promote that Soroptimist is a network for women. Dishi built her profile on LinkedIn then started attending business network meetings. Personal contact brings members, it is important to get to know people and for them to know you, then you can invite them to join. 'Put yourself out there' and talk to people.

Dishi spoke about work that has been undertaken recently to streamline the process for setting up clubs and this is available on the Hub.

We need to recruit to the Soroptimist brand and not specific geographical clubs. We need to get the message out, stop talking to and amongst ourselves as if in an echo chamber. Our Soroptimist brand includes our membership of the UN which is special. Find a project on the Hub that appeals to you and use that as a story to tell people.

If you think of the 'Elevator pitch' – you need something that connects to people. Listen to what interests them and speak about a relevant project. Remember to use the TEEN approach:

Top line: own and recognise what is good. I am a Soroptimist because 'It gives me a warm glow'.

Example: find your own story about why it makes you feel good.

Emotional aspect: find an interesting fact to share, did you know...

Next: what next, invite them to come to a club meeting or for coffee.

There was certainly food for thought for all members to think about to secure the future of our clubs, Region and the organisation as a whole to ensure we continue to make a difference to improve the lives of women and girls.

JANE BARNES, REGION MEMBERSHIP OFFICER

Scenes from the June Region Meeting



Helen Schortz and the 'crisp packet' blanket



Pat Dale talking about School Soroptimist Clubs



Coral from Croydon with Jane Barnes



Croydon Club Members

SEE News Editor Patricia

Friendship Weekend at SI Voorburg, Netherlands, 65th Anniversary



MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE Soroptimists were contacted in April by our Friendship Link Club SI Voorburg and asked to 'Save the date' for their lustrum weekend and 65th anniversary from June 16-18, 2023. Julia Search and Jane Barnes were keen to go as it would be the first opportunity to meet in person after only getting to know each other via Zoom.

Setting off on the Friday morning Julia and Jane flew to Amsterdam and travelled by train to Voorburg and were met by our host Florette, who gave us a warm welcome.

On the first evening we walked down a red carpet to the house of Hanneke van Dijk for dessert and drinks and met more Voorburg Soroptimists and partners, chatting long into the evening.

As it was our first visit to Voorburg, the next morning we looked around the historic town and visited the busy market.

Then it was off to Leiden, a wonderful small town full of students, museums and ancient buildings. We went to the Hortus Botanicus and enjoyed a guided tour of these ancient botanical gardens dating back to 1590. Returning to Voorburg it was time to put on our glad rags for the anniversary dinner and another chance to get to know more of the members.

Sunday morning, we set off to Scheveningen Beach, the most popular and beautiful beach of the Netherlands to have brunch and sadly say our final farewells to all our new Soroptimist friends before being driven to the airport.

When Soroptimists get together it is always a time for food, fun and friendship and this visit was no exception. Medway and Maidstone members look forward to returning their hospitality in the future when our Voorburg sisters visit Kent.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



The Grace Onions 'Our Planet, Our Future' Award

Which SISEE Club will be the first to receive this award?
Submit your current project addressing climate change and/or biodiversity, by the end of August 2023.

MEMBERS WILL DOUBTLESS remember the passion and energy former Regional President Grace Onions had for her work on Climate Change 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 Change 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, pleased when President Lynne Chiswick suggested we have an annual award to commemorate the life

of dear Grace and all the wonderful work she carried out by presenting an award for a project a club is carrying out or has carried out to address Climate Change or Biodiversity or both.

The award was launched at the March 18, 2023, Regional Meeting and I have now finalised the entry form.

If clubs wishing to enter could please contact me at yd.freeman@mypostoffice.co.uk, I will e-mail you a copy to complete. Alternatively, you can download the entry form from the SISEE website and I will also ask Carol Reed, Regional Secretary, to circulate it to all club secretaries.

The deadline for entries is August 31, 2023, and the winning club will be announced at the AGM on September 23, 2023. Good luck with your entries. Yvonne

YVONNE FREEMAN, PAST PRESIDENT, SI SOUTH EAST ENGLAND