

President Lynne's message

Educate to Empower and Enable



I HOPE YOU have managed to take a look at SIGBI's significant modernisation proposals, which SIGBI President Cathy emailed to everyone. These may also be found on the Hub.

There is quite a lot to consider and some substantial changes to the way SIGBI, regions and clubs operate. It will be interesting to hear from members what they think about the proposals. We have to comment on them by October 27, and we are planning to hold an Extraordinary Regional Meeting on Zoom on Saturday, October 07, at 10:00 so members can share their thoughts. Hope you will put this date in your diary.

It was really satisfying to complete our Regional Project and be able to provide 120 book awards from our Region for girls completing their mentoring programme with The Girls' Network. Book awards have already been given out to two schools in Eastbourne and Brighton and more programmes will be completed over the coming months. I have been told by TGN that the books have been greatly appreciated by the girls.

It was lovely to spend several days in Dublin at the SI Convention with members from our Region and what a great opportunity to meet with Soroptimists from around the world. The speakers and workshops were excellent although there was consternation about the new SI emblem and the proposal to have the next convention on a cruise ship in Alaska.

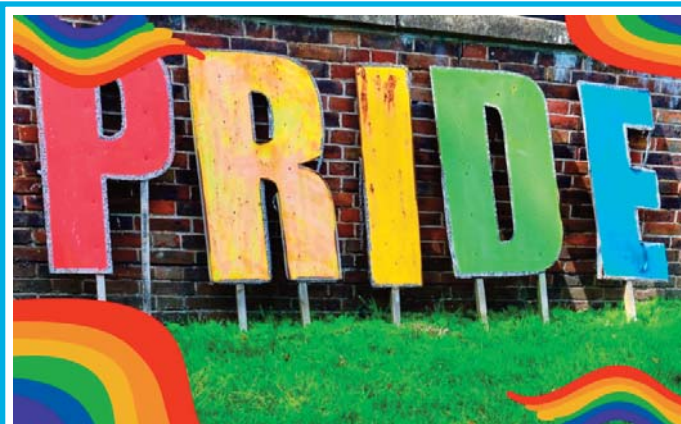
I am now looking forward to our AGM on September 23, and hope you will be able to attend. We have two excellent speakers: Dawn Whittaker, Chief Fire Officer for East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services who will describe her work, and the education and training programmes for children and women they run. Dawn is only one of six female CFOs out of 55 in the UK. We will also hear from Annette Maudsley, who will talk about her important work as SIGBI Safeguarding Officer and about her own career in safeguarding and anti-trafficking.

Although I remain in post until after the November London conference, this is my last President's Message before the AGM when President-Elect Alison takes over this column. Can I say what a privilege it has been to be President of our Region. I've met so many wonderful and inspiring members and learnt such a lot too. It's got to be the best organisation for a woman to join for a meaningful and enjoyable way of contributing to improving the lives of women and girls.

If you have ever thought about taking on a role in Region, I can thoroughly recommend it. The Region Executive Committee does sterling work and has been so supportive to me as President and I know incoming President Alison will continue to enjoy the same support and I send her my best wishes for her year as Regional President.

LYNNE CHISWICK

What's in this month's newsletter?



Tunbridge Wells celebrate Pride, page 02.



Learning to play the mini lap harp page 02.



A summer historical walk, page 03.



A feast in aid of SATEDA, page 04.



Pupil hands certificate to Deputy Mayor, page 08.

A Pride Celebration in Tunbridge Wells



FROM LEFT: Tunbridge Wells members Louise Taylor, Miki Flannery, Lorna Blackmore and Cat Mennell

ON A VERY sunny Sunday in August, members attended Tunbridge Wells Pride to represent and raise awareness for our chosen charity, AKT (formerly the Albert Kennedy Trust).

AKT supports LGBTQ+ young people aged 16-25 in the UK who are facing or experiencing homelessness or living in a hostile environment. Members of the club had received training from AKT to enable us to speak about their wonderful work.



Visitors to the Tunbridge Wells Club stall, shared with Amnesty International.

We shared a stall with our local Amnesty International group and took along Pride themed items made by club members.

It was a fun and colourful afternoon allowing us to spread the word about AKT (www.akt.org.uk) and make lots of new contacts with other charities and businesses in our local community.

CLAIRE ARCHBOLD,
PRESIDENT SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Croydon Inner Wheel and Croydon Soroptimists enjoy afternoon tea



A MEMORABLE AFTERNOON was spent at Barchester Chestnut Gardens care home in Croydon. Residents and some SI Croydon Soroptimists were able to join members from the Inner Wheel Club of Croydon to enjoy the hospitality alongside savoury and sweet refreshments provided by the Care home.

In addition, it was a pleasure to welcome award-winning harpist Keziah Thomas. Not only did Keziah delight us with a passionate recital she also gave everyone the opportunity to learn to play mini lap harps. The culmination was, those on the mini lap harps strummed a basic rhythm to a backing track

of 'Can't help falling in love with you' whilst Keziah played the main tune.

Those who wished to look at some of the accommodation areas and outdoor spaces were offered a guided tour by our host, Jenny McKenzie. All of the residents were welcoming and appreciated that during the tour their privacy was respected.

It was a joy to be able to get together and spend time with the staff and residents of Chestnut Gardens care home during UK Afternoon Tea week.

ROXANNE GLEAVE, CROYDON INNER WHEEL

A summer historical walk



AUGUST IS A quiet month for Sevenoaks members; we don't hold club meetings, and would not be 'Oranging the World'. Instead we looked forward to a planned historical walk around Otford, a pretty village just north of Sevenoaks.

Member Valerie Caton had organised it and member Margaret Nicholson, an Otford resident, had prepared an informative talk for us. We went ahead with our walk, even though it was raining hard as we set off!

Undaunted, we followed Margaret, trying not to spike each other with our umbrellas, and had a really interesting time, including learning some hitherto unknown facts about the duck pond and the Archbishop's Palace.

We spent a little time in the pretty church of St Bartholomew and finished up in the Olive Branch Café, which is part of the Hospice of Hope charity shop in Otford High Street, where we enjoyed some more chat and a delicious cream tea!

The photo shows us in the field in front of the Archbishop's Palace. Due to the ongoing renovations started in 2019, the Palace is currently shrouded in blue plastic sheeting and scaffolding, so we didn't take a picture of it on the day, but here is one taken a few years ago. Hopefully, it won't be too long before we can see the building again.



The Archbishop's Palace has an interesting history; it was visited by Thomas Beckett and Beckett's Well stands 150 yards from the palace, although not accessible to the public. Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon also stayed there. There is a lot more information on the website.

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News
Monday, September 25, 2023

Future Closing Dates are:

25 October; 22 November; and 27 December

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

Celebrating Friendship Day

MEMBERS FROM SI CROYDON embraced #FriendshipDay with friends and family at an informal Chai Tea held in Pat Dale's Garden.

A selection of sweet and savoury dishes were washed down with an aromatic Masala Tea.*

CORAL PITTER-KINIBIRE, SI CROYDON



*Masala chai is an Indian beverage popular throughout South Asia. Chai is made by brewing black tea in milk and water and then sweetening with sugar. Adding aromatic herbs and spices creates masala chai, although chai is often prepared unsipped.

BBQ raises £254 for Schools Programme on Healthy Relationships



THE ANNUAL BBQ was held in August as a fundraising event at Carol McKeough's home on the North Downs. Although the weather had been temperamental we were fortunate that on the day it was kind to us and remained dry and we could eat outside.

Soroptimiser, Chris Garnons-Williams was in charge of the new BBQ and ensured cooked items were readily available to go with the prepared salads. It was then time to enjoy the delicious home-made desserts on offer.

The good news is that with donations and proceeds from the raffle the sum of £254 was raised. This will be going to SATEDA

for their schools programme. SI Medway and Maidstone have been in discussion with SATEDA to work jointly with them on developing their school's programme focusing on healthy relationships with primary age schoolchildren.

This work will explore the red flags to look out for in a relationship, through a variety of scenarios. Also look at which laws exist to address different types of abuse, what a healthy relationship looks like, and how to seek support.

A big thank you to Carol for a successful day for a worthwhile cause and the warm hospitality shown.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

A stormy barbecue

EASTBOURNE CLUB MEMBERS and guests were less fortunate with their barbecue, with heavy rain and high winds on the south coast. But this didn't spoil their enjoyment.

Fortunately everyone was able to be accommodated inside to enjoy delicious food and a raffle in President-Elect Julie's lovely home. What adaptable women Soroptimists are!

It is the Club's 70th anniversary in 2024 and proceeds from barbecue will be put towards our hospitality fund, welcoming our link clubs from the UK and around the world.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SI EASTBOURNE



A walk at Sparrows Den



BROMLEY MEMBER LESLEY Darvill organised a walk for the club at Sparrows Den. Turnout was low, as it had to be postponed because of bad weather, but on the eventual day the weather was glorious, and some non-walkers were able to join the group at the cafe.

Members donated for the Spilno Spot, a UNICEF project in Ukraine to educate children about the dangers of landmines and over £200 was collected.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY



UNICEF, together with the 'Eastern Ukrainian diaspora' organisation, has launched a Spilno Child Spot in Dnipro, which helps children to rest and recharge

Folkestone's Fab Four went to Dublin

FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL visit to Belfast last November to attend the SIGBI Annual Conference, Ann, Jacalyn, Susannah and I decided attending the 2023 International Convention was a must.

As we had all decided to fly from London City Airport and to add a few days either side of the Convention to enable us to do some sightseeing, we all met up on Monday, July 24 at the airport for our flight to Dublin. We had agreed to rent an apartment, which is part of the Dublin University, and this worked really well.

We certainly made the most of our stay in Dublin visiting the Guinness Storehouse, the Epic Museum covering the emigration of people from Ireland, the General Post Office where the Easter



Rising, also known as the Easter Rebellion, an armed insurrection in Ireland took place during Easter Week in April 1916. No visit to Dublin would be complete without listening to some great Irish music in the local pubs, seeing Molly Malone and



going to see a Riverdance show, which we did on our final day.

The Hop-on-Hop-off bus proved to be very useful, and part of the route covered the parks of Dublin, which we were told are the largest in Europe and where the US Embassy is located, and also the residence of the President of Ireland including



Mary Robison, our first keynote speaker. Mary was the first woman President of Ireland, UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and is a founding member of and current Chair of the Elders. Mary is indeed a most inspirational speaker, and her theme was 'Women Leaders Must Step Up and Lead as Never Before'. Mary is a passionate advocate for gender equality, women's participation in peace-building human dignity and climate justice.

Mary started by paying tribute to the Irish singer, songwriter and activist Sinead O'Connor who had died the previous day. She continued by focussing on Climate Change, noting that we are heading for a world of 2.5 degrees above the pre-industrial world – in other words disaster. She referred to an important initiative aimed at women called 'Project Dandelion' – a new women-led global climate justice campaign. The dandelion grows in six out of the seven continents of the world. It is very resilient and good for regeneration of the soil and its roots can detoxify the human body. Mary noted that it is a light-touch way of supporting Climate Change and the project is doing amazing work throughout the world. Please do have a look at the following link: <https://www.projectdandelion.com/>

Pat Black, SI Advocacy Adviser, asked Mary for two actions for delegates to take back:

- 1) Each of us needs to make Climate Action part of our lives – make it personal.
- 2) We need to consider what if our best time is ahead of us?

Mary concluded with a quote from Archbishop Desmond Tutu: "I am not an optimist – I am a prisoner of hope".

There were many other inspirational speakers including: Suba Umathevan, originally from Sri Lanka but now living in Sierra Leone, who spoke about 'Inclusive Leadership and Gender Equality'.

Sean Wensley – a vet from Ireland author of 'Through a Vet's Eyes: Securing Wellbeing for Animals, People and Planet'.

Mr Ma Ying-Jeou, former President of The Republic of China now living in Taiwan, who spoke of his work to promote the interests of women – their rights and equality.

Jim Gamble, a former policeman and global authority on safeguarding children. His theme was 'It's not all about the technology' and he explained that technology is not the problem rather it is about how it is used and managed.

Nicole Ameline, a member of the committee of CEDAW for the UN and her theme was 'Stand up for Human Rights for Women'.

The final speaker was Renata Dwan, the daughter of a Soroptimist, whose theme was 'Women, Peace and Cyber Security – Securing our Future'.

The Convention also included some interesting workshops and we each decided to do different ones to give the maximum coverage. I chose Life on Land organised by SIGBI and Climate Action – Women Leading the Way organised by SI South East Asia Pacific. It was good to see the work being undertaken by the second federation and to meet Dr Donnell Davis, Immediate Past President, UNAA Qld.

As previously reported, the Convention concluded with the Gala Dinner and Ceilidh Night, with lots of Irish dancing which was great fun.

All too soon, it was time to say 'goodbye' to Dublin and head home.

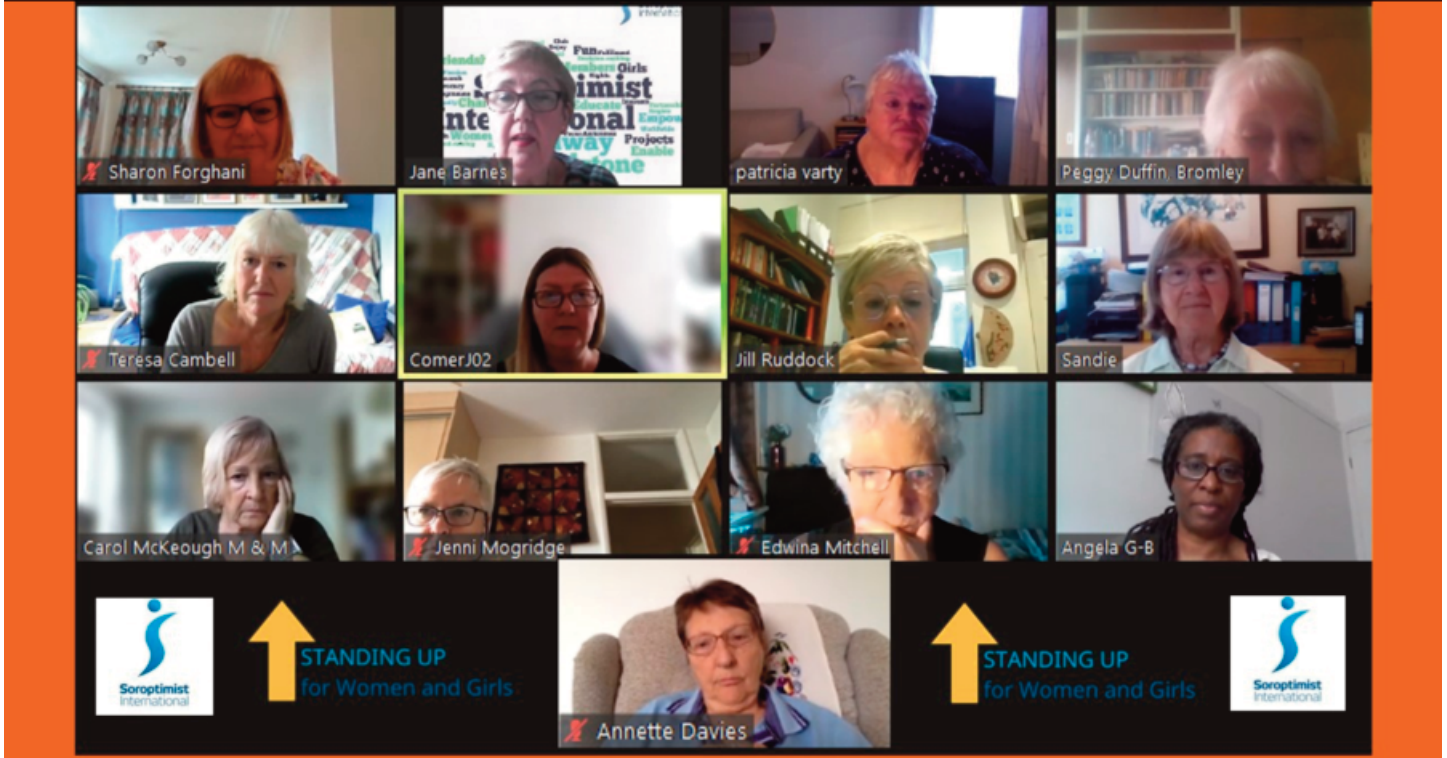
I think the expressions on my sister Soroptimists faces show how we felt about leaving this amazing city where we had received such a warm welcome.



YVONNE FREEMAN, SI FOLKESTONE



Consultation on Kent and Medway Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024 - 2029



ON 25TH OF each month, Soroptimists worldwide 'Orange the World' to draw attention to the need to eliminate violence against women and girls.

The consultation is now live on the Kent & Medway Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-2029 and will run until October 09.

They want to hear our views on this strategy, which represents the work and ambitions of 20 partners across Kent and Medway and has been written based on detailed feedback from people who have experienced abuse. They are keen to gather as much feedback as they can.

A Zoom Consultation meeting was held on August 18, organised by Sharon Forghani of SI Medway and Maidstone. An invitation was extended to those clubs in the Kent and Medway parts of our Region, and representatives attended from Bromley, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Medway and Maidstone.

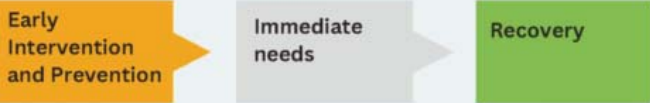
Joanne Comer, Domestic Abuse Project Officer took us through the progress to date on the existing Strategy and some of the consultation themes. The meeting was recorded and has been shared with clubs, so everyone is encouraged to watch it, read the consultation documentation on the link

www.kent.gov.uk/domesticabusestrategy

and then complete the questionnaire by October 09, 2023.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Have your say Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024-29 Public consultation 24 July - 9 October 2023



Find out more and tell us your views at:
www.kent.gov.uk/domesticabusestrategy

Easy Read and British Sign Language versions are available.



Number "63" 500 Club



YOUR SUPPORT IS needed more than before. There may be new members who can be made aware of our "63" club. You can buy one number for £12 for the year or set up a standing order. Bank order should be set up for renewal once a year.

The draw takes place on the last Friday of each month and two numbers get £50.

50% of all contributions help with continuing maintenance, 45% is issued as prize money, and 5% is for administration cost.

PAT DALE, 500 CLUB ADMINISTRATOR

Community radio asks "What is a Soroptimist?"

I WAS INTERVIEWED about Soroptimism by Ridge Radio, a community based radio station. I spoke about the structure, membership, and United Nations. It was a perfect opportunity to explain about our history and the achievement of many women who have contributed for the last 100 years and more.

It was good to spread the message that we would welcome likeminded women to join our organisation. I was asked about male membership and yes we have two male members in USA but none in the UK.

PAT DALE, SI CROYDON



Westminster meets East Grinstead



President Jane Griffiths, in the orange top, and our MP Mims Davies with the sunglasses on her head.

ON AUGUST 23, EAST Grinstead members, prospective members and their friends enjoyed what is now becoming an annual event, cocktails, mocktails, nibbles and fellowship in Sue Edgar’s lovely garden. Around 40 people, including our local MP Mims Davies, gathered for two hours of catching up and getting to know each other as the Club does not meet during August.

Several members had contributed to the delicious nibbles which included tiny cheesy scones, rye bread with cream cheese and smoked salmon, mini sausage rolls, cheese and pineapple on sticks, mini chocolate brownies and various other delicacies. A variety of refreshing drinks was on tap both alcoholic and non-alcoholic.

The weather was kind to us this year. The afternoon was so hot that we were wondering whether we should find it unbearable but by the time the event began it had thankfully become cooler, an ideal temperature for mingling both outside and in.

The cost of the evening included a free raffle ticket and three lucky people went home with a welcome prize. All proceeds will be donated to Club charities.

This was a very enjoyable evening and a great opportunity to introduce some new and prospective members. Our grateful thanks go to Sue for providing the venue once again and to all those who worked so hard to prepare refreshments and make sure the evening was a success.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

Eastbourne MP visits local club



Regional President Lynne Chiswick, Club President Lotte Peasgood and Caroline Ansell MP

SI EASTBOURNE MEMBERS welcomed local MP, Caroline Ansell, to speak at a recent club meeting. Caroline spoke about what it is like being a woman MP and the challenges of balancing family life and political career.

She also described the very traditional procedures operating at Westminster, the lottery system of choosing questions from backbenchers for Prime Minister’s Question Time, the voting system on bills and the incredible noise in the chamber during discussions. Half of her week is spent in the Commons and the other half on constituency business and attending local events.

Although there is still quite an imbalance between male and female MPs, she suggested that more women needed to put themselves forward for political leadership although discounted the use of quotas to achieve that balance.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SI EASTBOURNE

Supporting the Eastbourne Dementia Action Alliance



SI EASTBOURNE PRESIDENT Lotte Peasgood, together with Regional President Lynne Chiswick (pictured together), staffed a stand in an ASDA store on Sovereign Harbour in Eastbourne recently in support of Eastbourne Dementia Action Alliance.

As well as selling tombola tickets, enquiries were answered from members of the public seeking initial advice on services for dementia.

Money raised helps support the wide-ranging activities of the EDAA which acts as a signposting charity providing guidance and information to help improve the quality of lives of people living with dementia in the Eastbourne area and also supports their families, friends and carers.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SI EASTBOURNE

Thumbs Up to Medway becoming a Toilet Twinned Town



MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE Soroptimists, Angela Howe, Stella Barnes, and Jane Barnes joined with pupils from the Byron Primary Rights Respecting Steering Group on July 19. The occasion was a celebration of Medway being given the status of becoming a Toilet Twinned Town.

The Deputy Mayor of Medway, Marian Nestorov, and the Deputy Mayoress were in attendance and heard about Toilet Twinning and the various projects we have worked on in partnership to make a real difference.

The photo on the cover shows a Year 5 pupil proudly presenting the Deputy Mayor with the Toilet Twinned Town certificate for Medway.

It also highlights how 1 in 4 people worldwide don't have a loo and by supporting Toilet Twinning we are helping to flush away poverty. The Soroptimists and Byron Primary School had jointly funded a total of 22 toilets in countries such as Afghanistan, Malawi, Nepal, Uganda, and Zambia.

The pupils gave us all a tour of the school and we were shown the Toilet Twinning certificates on the walls outside each of the toilets that had been matched.

Afterwards Hayley Heyes, Byron teacher said, 'It was so amazing today and I felt so proud of the achievements of the Steering Group and our partnership with the Soroptimists...'

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



Deputy Mayor, Deputy Mayoress, Byron Primary School Pupils and Teacher, and Soroptimists, at the presentation of Toilet Twinned Town Certificate

Visit to the Sculpture Park



SIX MEMBERS OF SI Medway and Maidstone spent an enjoyable day in August at The Sculpture Park in Farnham Surrey. The trip was organised by Wanda Wright.

The sculpture exhibition is thought to be the most extensive outdoor display of sculpture in the world. It is set within an enchanting arboretum and wildlife inhabited water garden which creates the perfect haven for immersing oneself in art. There are two miles of trail covering 10 acres and the environment of the park is always evolving as it changes with the seasons.

Some of the sculptures on display are made of recycled materials, such as the rhino made from old skip parts and the horsemen of the Apocalypse made of toys and rubbish. All the sculptures on display are for sale.

For some members it was their first visit, whilst others had been before, but everyone although exhausted at the end was keen to go back to see more, as there are always some new sculptures to see. Nellie Adjaye said: 'It was the most fascinating park I have ever seen. There is so much more to explore and so we will have to do it again.'

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

