

President Alison's message

Inside Out and Outside In



As predicted in my last message, October has been a strange month.

From a Soroptimist point of view, we have been in an almost "twilight" zone. Having handed back the Presidential chain to Lynne after the AGM, on November 04 official Change of Insignia will take place at conference. Then I shall no longer be a pseudo president but the real McCoy!

However, I did represent our Region at SI South of England's Bluebell Award event (see page 08) and have also attended some most enjoyable fundraisers. (I realise already I shall have to be careful – so many tempting treats on offer and one wouldn't want to give offence!)

Of course, much discussion about the modernisation proposals has also kept me busy but a huge thanks to Lynne for leading on this to date. It was so helpful to have SIGBI President Elect Ruth Healey at our ZOOM earlier in the month and I hope you have all managed to return your feedback forms to Head Office. We await the response in due course. The process has made me appreciate how blessed we are in SISEE with members willing to share their skills and take on leadership roles – other regions are nothing like as fortunate.

Now to the elephant in the room – my proposed regional project. As I said at the very beginning of my message this has been a strange (peculiar) month for me personally but a strange (inconceivable) month for all those living in Israel/Palestine. This is clearly not the place to air any political views but suffice it to say I have had to put on hold my plan to sponsor a Palestinian physiotherapist (Ruba) in further training. The rehabilitation centre in the refugee camp where she is based was severely damaged during a recent incursion and nobody knows when it might be up and running again. Normal everyday life in the West Bank is now "adjourned until further notice". Firas, our ABCD Palestinian trustee (born in the same camp) should have been out there right now interviewing Ruba for a video link so I could introduce her to you at the regional meeting, but clearly this field trip has not been able to take place.

As this highly volatile situation continues, I am sure you will understand that for the time-being at least I am postponing any final decision and I hope and pray that sooner rather than later I shall be able to reinstate my initial plans. My thanks to all those who have written to me, showing their concern.

To finish on a lighter note, I am very much looking forward to seeing many of you at Conference (where our region will be very well represented) and enjoying our social supper on November 03.

YOURS IN FRIENDSHIP, ALISON

What's in this month's newsletter?



Eastbourne members visit the iconic Mint House at Pevensey, page 02.



SI Whitstable and District, page 03 and 09.



In support of orphanages in South African, page 04.

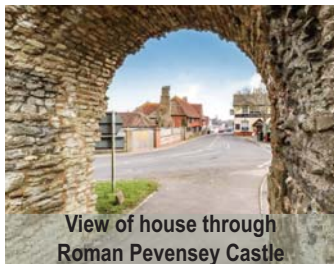


The first batch of shoeboxes, page 07.



Gold Medal for the Vine Gardens, page 08.

Eastbourne Club donate to the Mint House educational project



View of house through Roman Pevensey Castle



The Mint Chamber



The Parlour Fireplace



Leviathan, 1600s detail



President Lotte with Harriet

Eastbourne's President Lotte Peasegood organised a social event for members, which included a tour of The Mint House at Pevensey.

The Mint House is one of the most iconic buildings in Sussex and is now under the custodianship of the Friends of the Mint House Trust.

Club members were delighted to present a cheque for £100 to Harriet Tait, Chair of Trustees, to assist with an educational project for young people.

LUCY McKEON, SI EASTBOURNE

The Mint House, is steeped in life, history and mystery. Dating back to 1490, this Grade 2* building has many layers of stories to be told within its walls. The Mint House Project are using cutting edge techniques of conservation and restoration to preserve the beauty and stories within.

Once a civic building in the bustling village of Pevensey, this Sussex icon stood in the heart of the community under the walls of the Roman outer bailey of Pevensey Castle, next to the market square and opposite St Nicolas's Church and the (now gone) village manor.

After being a home, then an antiques business for over 100 years, it has now come full circle and is again being used by the community.

Photos by kind permission of The Mint House Friends.



Bromley members support their local homeless charity



BROMLEY CLUB MEMBERS, with the support of Bromley Methodist Church, held a coffee morning on September 30 to collect goods for starter packs to support the Bromley Homeless Charity.

As well as the goods £400 was raised.

Bromley Homeless is a charity that supports people in Bromley who are either homeless or facing the possibility of becoming homeless. Their clients are offered advice, practical help and friendship at a local church, and most are housed successfully.

SUSAN LEE, SI BROMLEY

Canterbury Club holds fundraising quiz for charity



SI CANTERBURY HELD a quiz on October 13 to raise funds for a local charity, Catching Lives. This independent charity supports adults who are struggling with everyday living and are often rough sleeping or homeless. The charity provides food, health care and support and advice from trained specialists. In addition clients have access to laundry facilities, a clothes bank and showers.

70 people attend the quiz, including a Catching Lives, team and, after costs, we raised £678. The money will be used for women in need, attending the Centre.

Participants enjoyed a delicious ploughman's supper as well as trying to find the answers to searching questions. There was much laughter and chatter so it appeared that everyone enjoyed themselves.

YVONNE HILL, SI CANTERBURY

Soroptimist International Whitstable and District – it's official!



Members of the newly Chartered Club



President Mags, with
SIGBI President Cathy



Revealed, the specially designed
President's Brooch

The conditions were perfect on October 01 for Chartering the new SI Club for Whitstable and District. It was a lovely, warm day in beautiful surroundings at the Crescent Turner Hotel, overlooking the coastline that is so important to the towns of Whitstable, Faversham and Herne Bay.

Originally conceived by members of SI Canterbury living in Whitstable and Herne Bay, it was thought that the time was right to launch a new Club to focus on the needs of the three coastal and creek towns. The proposed new SI Club grew quickly, with a current membership of 16, including six members who transferred from SI Canterbury.

The Chartering lunch was attended by SIGBI President Cathy Cottridge, SIGBI Membership Director Dishi Atwood, South East England Regional President Lynne Chiswick and South East England Regional Membership Officer Jane Barnes. As the Sponsoring Club, SI Canterbury President Dawn Ryder was also present, with a good number of Canterbury members, all

providing lots of support and encouragement to new Whitstable and District Club President Mags Harrison and Club members.

Mags and Whitstable and District Club members present were delighted to welcome other guests from Clubs at Medway and Maidstone, Folkestone, Eastbourne, East Grinstead and London and East Anglia Region and receive lovely good luck cards and generous gifts and donations. Gifts were also received as an inheritance from Ashford and Thanet Clubs, sadly no longer in existence but Whitstable and District will continue to put the items to good use.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our new Club, especially those who attended the Charter lunch. With programme action already taking shape and on-going joint initiatives with SI Canterbury, its going to be a busy time and Whitstable and District Club members cannot wait to get started!

MAGS HARRISON, PRESIDENT, SI WHITSTABLE AND DISTRICT



Charter Lunch guests

VAWG Campaigning in Tunbridge Wells



From left: Inspector Ian Jones, Angela McPherson, Caroline Auckland, Anne Walters, member of local Street Pastors, and Councillor Siobhan O'Connell at the 'VAWG Engagement Event' at Fiveways in Tunbridge Wells

AS PART OF SI Tunbridge Wells 2022 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) initiative, our report 'Spotlight on Safety' addressed the safety concerns of women and girls in our community. The report was widely circulated and well received, as a result of which the club has looked to carry on the initiative in our local community through strategic networking and lobbying.

We were, therefore, pleased to receive an invitation from the Kent Police Community Safety Unit to take part in a 'VAWG Engagement Event' intended to promote interaction on the subject with members of the public passing through a busy area of the town on a Friday evening. The event took place on October 06 at Fiveways by the town's Millennium Clock and opposite the Victoria Shopping Centre in Tunbridge Wells.

The plan from the police perspective was to highlight the issue of VAWG by asking members of the public to complete a questionnaire on safety issues in our town. So, alongside a large contingent from the Kent CSU police team, a team of Street Pastors and representative from PAS (Protection Against Stalking) club members Caroline Auckland, Anne Walter and Angela McPherson took the opportunity to promote our own VAWG initiatives. The three of us spent several hours circulating amongst the crowds networking and talking about Soroptimism, its objectives and advocacy on behalf of women. In this way we were able to demonstrate to the public that the Police and local groups such as SI Tunbridge Wells work in partnership on important issues affecting women and girls.

The opportunity was also taken to promote our latest VAWG initiative. This is a competition for young people to design a poster or flyer on how to be safe on the internet. The focus of the competition, Safer Internet Day, takes place on February 06, 2024, and is widely promoted in schools. Initial information on the competition has been circulated to all local schools and youth groups, and plans are well underway for poster display and judging opportunities locally, culminating in an event to be held on the subject of internet safety on International Women's Day in March 2024. Suffice to say 'Watch This Digital Space'.

ANGELA MCPHERSON, PAO, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

East Grinstead School Club raises money for South African Orphanages



ON OCTOBER 16 OUR School Club, based at Kent College, held a Halloween cake sale to raise funds for orphanages in South Africa. Several of East Grinstead Club members baked cakes and biscuits to support the girls who will be delivering the £150 raised – in just 20 minutes! – to the orphanages when they visit South Africa on a sports tour in the near future.

We are very blessed to be able to support a school club with young girls who are demonstrating their concern for the needs of overseas children less fortunate than they are.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD



visits Eastbourne Soroptimists



WE WERE DELIGHTED to welcome Daniel Brookbank from East Sussex Vision Support to give us an overview of the services they provide and to make us think about the obstacles people face with little or no sight.

We tried on various glasses which enabled us to see how our vision would be limited if we suffered from various eye problems including macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetes and tunnel vision, and had the opportunity to see some aids that are available including a brilliant gadget to assist in making a cup of tea.

This led to a discussion about how modern technology such as smart speakers and phones are such an asset to helping people live independent lives.

East Sussex Vision Support now offers support to access and help with IT equipment. They are based in Hailsham at 13 Vicarage Field BN27 1BD for more information visit their website www.eastsussexvisionsupport.org

LUCY MCKEON, SI EASTBOURNE

Connecting with the local community

ON SEPTEMBER 30 members from SI Croydon and District, with a guest visit from SI Eastbourne's Denise Staplehurst, took part in the Sanderstead Community Day.

This outdoor event was organised by the local Rotary club, with a variety of vendors and entertainers taking part.

There was something for everyone, and the weather held out.

ROXANNE ST CLAIR, SECRETARY, SI CROYDON



New contacts were made, and some older ones reacquainted.



SI Sevenoaks Orange the World



SI SEVENOAKS HAD a relaxing afternoon at the local Soprano Café, to mark the October 25 Orange the World day.

Club members had ordered colourful orange scarves from Sushila Sadarangani via the SIGBI website and were delighted as they arrived in time to be handed out for the event! The scarves are beautiful, fine pure silk – it looks as though we might be ordering some more soon!

Pictured are from left, Shirley Brigham, Margaret Nicholson, Jenny Webb, Sandie Higgs, President Pauline Payne, Pat Downing, Kathy Jordan, Anne Bond and Mary Hogarth. Our prospective new member Victoria kindly took the photo for us!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

Stour Riverbank Clean Up



SI CANTERBURY MEMBERS met by the River Stour in Canterbury on September 24 to join in with the Great Stour Riverfest 2023 river litter-pick, organised by Canterbury City Council.

The weather was perfect, sunny but not too hot. Plenty of volunteers joined in, including students from Kent College and members of the Canterbury District Biodiversity Network. We were kitted out with the gloves, high viz jackets and litter pickers provided, were given a section of the area for each group plus a map, and off we went for an hour or so. It was fun catching up with other people's news, being out in the fresh air, as well as doing something very useful. Good excuse for a cuppa and a piece of cake in a local café afterwards too!

TESSA WOODWARD, SI CANTERBURY

Lorna Lee 1930-2023



LORNA LEE WHO died recently, at the age of 93, was a member of SI Sevenoaks from 1991-2012. She never took office, apart from a short time as Secretary; a post she had to relinquish when she needed operations and treatment for bowel cancer, but she was a very active member, particularly in programme action.

Her category when she joined the Club was owner of the Otford Bookshop, and literature was always one of her great interests. For example, she researched and wrote about Rudyard Kipling's sister Alice or Trix Fleming.

Programme Action at that time involved a Regional Project on safety at Railway stations and the Banana trade.

Lorna was a passionate gardener and offered her services at a fundraising Dutch Auction at Shirley Lloyd's for which I bid... and she reorganized my garden, donating plants. Her own town garden was relatively small but well researched and until her final days at Weald Heights Care Home, she was giving her ideas to the gardener. She was also busy creating a library there and suggesting films for their cinema.

Sevenoaks members will remember the Pamper and Craft evening she organised, with a chance to have a head massage and purchase some of her knitted goods. She held craft mornings in her home to raise funds for Médecins sans Frontières. One of her grandsons was born deaf and Lorna set herself the task of learning sign language and sharing her experiences with members.

Lorna was a kind, welcoming person, working quietly and conscientiously. In the words of former Sevenoaks member Jill Webster: "She was the epitome of an upright Soroptimist, busy in the community and concerned about women's place in the world."

ISOBEL WHITE, SI SEVENOAKS

Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News
Wednesday, November 22, 2023
(the 50th edition of SEE News)

Future Closing Dates are: December 27
2024 dates are: January 25; February 23;
March 24; April 24; May (TBA); June 24;
July 25; August 25; September 24;
October 25; November 24; December 27.

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

Celebrating World Food Day 2023

'Water is Life, Water is Food. Leave No One Behind.'

MEMBERS OF CROYDON club, joined by members of SI Bromley and some friends, held a World Food Day event at Pat Dale's house.

The idea was for everyone to bring a dish and donate £5 towards charity. The afternoon began with Prosecco followed by varieties of food. Indian, Mauritian, Malaysian and other cuisine were devoured by members. The famous Italian desserts Cassata ice cream and Tiramisu with generous amount of alcohol tasted great.

Everyone was given a raffle ticket and members enjoyed choosing their prizes which were added fun.

The event was organised to have fun, friendship, laughter and chit chat. Members appreciated the day to celebrate diversity and inclusion of different cultures and cuisine.

PAT DALE, SI CROYDON



Canterbury Programme Action

SI CANTERBURY WERE aware of refugee and migrant women living in our city who were struggling to feel confident speaking English after a weekly formal language class. We also realised that many new and longer-established migrant women had few opportunities for contact and friendship with other women living in Canterbury.

We contacted the Mason Foundation, a charity that supports local organisations to work together with vulnerable communities, and several of our members completed training to lead walks for health and wellbeing. In January 2023 several of us set off on our first walk through our city with a small group of Afghan refugee women. We together visited our monuments and shop fronts, chatting between ourselves along the way, and we finally stopped for a well-earned cuppa in the park!



In March, we contacted the Kent Refugee Action Network who provide weekly English language classes for women who have lived in the city for a while. They introduced us to a group of women who have few social opportunities to speak English. Now every week during term times we meet with this group of about eight women to chat or to walk. These women are from many different countries, including Nigeria, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Egypt, and are now making new friends with one another and with us. Together, we have visited local museums and tourist spots, cafes, food fayres and other community events. We made some wonderful friendships, learning new recipes, and swapping information on local schools, job-seeking and college and university applications! We are together planning an end-of-year celebration where we will share foods from across the world.

We were recently nominated for the Kent Mental Wellbeing Awards and this September received the wonderful news that we had been awarded Highly Commended for the Kent Mental



Wellbeing Awards 2023. The awards panel were highly impressed by our initiative and dedication. We are really enjoying this programme action and we have learned so much from these friendships! We will evaluate the impact of our programme action in January 2024.

MARY ADAMS, PAO, SI CANTERBURY

Margaret Pau, project lead; Mary Adams Club programme action administrator; Yvonne Hill, club member, and Dawn Ryder, Club President.

Soroptimists fill 92 Shoeboxes for Ukraine



A successful evening filling shoeboxes

SI MEDWAY AND Maidstone meet each year to fill shoe boxes, beautifully wrapped in Christmas paper to give to people in Eastern Europe who face enormous difficulties through poverty, illness, disability etc but whose faces light up with joy when offered a Christmas present.

This year, the club assembled 92 Boxes of Love which will go out to Ukraine to those affected by the war.

The boxes are filled with practical items like toiletries, stationery, warm hats, scarves, gloves and socks and topped up with a toy and sweets. Even the practical items, which we take for granted, are greeted with absolute delight. However, we are told by Blythwood Care, the charity which distributes the boxes, that the pleasure they get from the gift is not only from its contents but from the display of care and love that has gone into it.

WANDA WRIGHT, PRESS OFFICER,
SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

SI Sevenoaks Gardening Team and Sevenoaks Town Council secure a Gold Medal for the Vine Gardens, Sevenoaks!



The gardeners, Ann, Shirley, Isobel and Penny

SI SEVENOAKS HAVE been working at the Vine Gardens in central Sevenoaks for five years – back in 2018 club member Isobel Groves spotted a notice on one of the gates asking for volunteers. She organised a team of gardeners and persuaded the Sevenoaks Town Council to provide plants and tools and over the years the area has seen much success in the South & South East in Bloom Competition.

This year the team worked very hard, but the adverse weather conditions during the summer meant that it wasn't easy to get things blooming as they should! The judge came to Sevenoaks at the end of June and he did sympathise with us over the difficult conditions. We had a long, anxious wait to see what the results

would be – imagine our delight when the Vine Gardens were awarded a Gold Medal again! Sevenoaks Town Council issued a press release earlier this month and the gardening team were thrilled.

Isobel (pictured with the broom) has announced that she will be stepping back from the gardening after such a long stint, but the club will continue with the work under new team leader Mary Hogarth.

The club is planning a celebratory lunch to thank Isobel for all her hard work, and to congratulate and thank Mary for agreeing to take over.

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

East meets South

Karen Gadd receiving the award from Hilary Ratcliffe OBE



SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL SOUTH of England recently held their AGM followed by a special awards ceremony at Folkington Manor, Polegate.

As this venue is in our region we were invited to come along to see the Bluebell Awards being presented. Oh and to enjoy a lunch and chat exploring what their programme activities are! President Alison Driscoll, President Elect Sue Edgar and SI East Grinstead's Beryl Bartter represented SISEE (pictured top right).

From Salisbury to Surrey Hills, clubs presented their entries and we were able to see the breadth of their programme action focus. Each entry had great merit and the judging panel admitted it was a tough job to pick a winning Club.

SI Salisbury won for their project of How to Make our City Safe. (Photo by permission of Southern England.) The award was a cheque for £1000 towards the continuation of this initiative.



A community conference addressing concerns regarding the safety of women and girls in Salisbury took place in November 2021 setting the scene for all agencies to get on board with their strategic goal of safety for women.

They are aiming to involve the wider community in strategies to make the city safer. They revisited the street light audits and reported findings to Wiltshire Council. The Council have undertaken to pay for a survey of identified dark areas. They have also joined a funding application to have lights and mirrors installed in many underpasses.

They have also organised self-defence training at Salisbury Hockey Club and plan another Schools' Forum in November to address Bystander Training. More details can be found at <https://sigbi.org/salisbury/womens-safely-initiative/>

SUE EDGAR, PRESIDENT ELECT, SI SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

**September is
World Alzheimer's Month**



ON SEPTEMBER 30, MEMBERS of SI Medway and Maidstone did a 6k Memory Walk in aid of Alzheimer's Society UK. The five members who took part were Janet Hughes, Jenny Jones, Carol McKeough, Wanda Wright and Jane Barnes, along with two of their dogs, Mabel and Kayde.

We set off from the Air Ambulance Memorial at Blue Bell Hill led by Jenny and walked along the North Downs. We were extremely lucky with the weather and were able to enjoy the stunning panoramic views. On our return we took advantage of the good weather and enjoyed a picnic together.

It is estimated that there are more than 900,000 people in the UK living with dementia. One in 14 people over the age of 65 have dementia, and the condition affects one in six people over 80. During the month of September, the aim is to raise awareness, educate and highlight issues faced by people affected by dementia.

A JustGiving page was set up for family and friends to support the Soroptimist walkers and £155 was raised. We are reminded that every step taken helps provide vital dementia support for those who need it most.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



Macmillan Coffee Morning



On September 29, SI Sevenoaks held a coffee morning in aid of the Macmillan Cancer charity. Our hostess, Sandie Higgs, made us very welcome and those present, some forty members and guests, were able to enjoy her lovely lakeside garden on a beautiful late summer's day.

Special thanks go to Regional President Alison and SI Bromley for helping us raise the grand total of £536.

PAULINE PAYNE, PRESIDENT, SI SEVENOAKS



Following the SI Whitstable Charter...

... some members decided to go for a swim in the sea!



**SILENT MARCH
AGAINST
GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE**



**JOIN CANTERBURY SOROPTIMISTS IN A SILENT MARCH TO
PROTEST AGAINST AND RAISE AWARENESS OF
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

MEET AT BUTTERMARKEt, CANTERBURY

10.45AM SATURDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2023

Processing via High Street, Orange Street, Sun Street, return to Buttermarket

**WE ARE DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE MARCH WILL BE
ACCOMPANIED BY THE LORD MAYOR OF CANTERBURY**

Posters will be provided or bring your own appropriately worded banner

**SUPPORTING THE UNITED NATIONS 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
25TH NOVEMBER TO 10TH DECEMBER 2023**