

President Alison's message Inside Out and Outside In



At the Regional AGM on September 23 (see page 08), I was reminded what big shoes I have to fill (and I take only a size 3!) when President Lynne gave a presentation on her very successful year. Not only did she manage to visit every club at least once (something I too hope to achieve) but also her Regional Project in part- nership with

The Girls' Network was a real triumph from all points of view. I was pleased to have the opportunity to give President Lynne an official vote of thanks on behalf of all clubs in the region.

Together with Sue Edgar, IPP Yvonne Freeman and the rest of the Executive, we have worked well as a team and I know I can rely on their continuing support. Just a reminder: we are looking for a Vice President – do please consider stepping up. Be assured if I can do it, so can you!

Plans for my year were introduced and the relevant notes are included in the AGM minutes already circulated to clubs, but of course fuller details will be given as the year proceeds.

October is a strange month because although the chains of office were exchanged last Saturday, I am not officially Regional President until the Changeover of Insignia on November 04 at the London Conference.

I am delighted that 34 members from eight clubs are joining me for a Fish & Chip supper after the business finishes on the Friday. I hope this will provide a time of fun and friendship as we get to know one another better in a purely social setting.

I am disappointed not to be able to attend the chartering of SI Whitstable and District but wish the new club well and hope to visit them very soon. I am sure a full report on the proceedings will appear in the October edition of SEE News. However, by the time this issue goes to print, I will have attended two coffee mornings: Macmillan Cancer Support's "World's Greatest" hosted by Sandie Higgs, SI Sevenoaks, and another organised by my own club, in aid of the Bromley Homeless Project.

Finally, please don't forget to attend the Extraordinary Regional Zoom meeting at 10.:00 on Saturday, October 07 (see page 04). This will be a real opportunity to air our views about the Modernisation Proposals. SIGBI President Elect Ruth Healey has kindly accepted our invitation to join so I look forward to seeing most of you then and all of you at sometime during the next 12 months.

YOURS IN FRIENDSHIP, ALISON DRISCOLL

Alison's Regional Project for 2023-2024: Sponsoring a young female physiotherapist from the Jalazone Refugee Camp, near Ramallah, to take a master's degree in special education at Nablus university with a view to her training therapists in other refugee camps in the West Bank to work with disabled children.

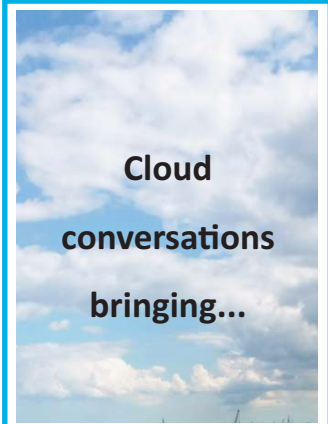
What's in this month's newsletter?



Annette Davis embracing the Faversham Hop Festival, page 02.



A welcome to seven new members, page 02.



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bringing...

...women and girls closer together, page 03.



The Rockdale Centre 1948-2023, page 03.



Christmas is fast approaching, page 06.

Soroptimists Fundraise for Hygiene Bank at Faversham Hop Festival



AS THE CELEBRATIONS were underway in Faversham for the annual hop festival, three members of Medway and Maidstone club, Annette Davies, Jenny Jones and Wanda Wright could be found manning a Bagathon stall.

After the success of the recent fundraiser in Rochester, on September 03, they set up a stall with second-hand bags, scarves and jewellery. It was a long and tiring day having to be set up by 08:30 and remaining through till 18:00.

We were pleased that the organisers had introduced as many green measures as they could into the festival in conjunction



with Swale's Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer and Plastic Free Faversham. This included use of recyclable packaging and encouraging visitors to use public transport.

At our May meeting, we had a speaker from the Hygiene Bank telling us about the work they do and the growing demands as there are 3.1 million people in the UK living in hygiene poverty.

We therefore chose the Hygiene Bank in Medway and Maidstone to receive the proceeds raised from the day which were £245.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Extending a warm welcome to new members at Sevenoaks and East Grinstead



MEMBERS OF SI SEVENOAKS extended a warm welcome to, Tracey Kemp, Vicky Tibbits and Kathy Jordan, when they were enrolled into the club on Tuesday, September 12. They are pictured with President Pauline Payne.

PAULINE PAYNE, PRESIDENT, SI SEVENOAKS



AT EAST GRINSTEAD'S Club meeting on Wednesday, September 20, members were delighted to welcome and induct four new members; Gill Beene, Aileen Hargreaves, Kate Benstead, and Angela Sharpe, pictured with President Jane Griffiths (centre).

All of them have attended meetings and functions over the past few months and we are so pleased that they have been encouraged to join us. We look forward to working with them.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

Garden party to celebrate Rockdale's 75th Anniversary



On Monday, September 04, a glorious early autumn day, seven members of SI Sevenoaks joined residents and guests for a "forties" themed garden party to mark seventy five years of Rockdale retirement centre. As usual the grounds looked immaculate.

Speeches were made by Rockdale Chairman Ian Grattidge, Sevenoaks Mayor Claire Shea (seen in the photo above) and the High Sheriff of Kent, Nadra Ahmed. Tea and cakes were served and musical entertainment was provided by Henry's Big Band.

In his speech, Mr Grattidge pointed out that our club has a special connection with Rockdale, since it was established by Beatrice Wilson, a founder member of SI Sevenoaks. It is our privilege to hold our monthly meetings in the room which bears her name.

PAULINE PAYNE, PRESIDENT, SI SEVENOAKS



Closing Date
for the next edition of SEE News
Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Future Closing Dates are:
22 November; and 27 December

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

Cloud conversations bringing women and girls closer together



EDUCATE A WOMAN AND YOU EDUCATE A FAMILY: SI Sevenoaks members and guests heard an interesting and informative talk given by Paramita Biswas from Bengal at their October 2022 meeting. Her family has been active in the field of education in Dasghara village West Bengal for over 160 years. Her father donated family land enabling a boys' school to be built, followed by a kindergarten school.

Paramita followed in her father's footsteps by donating more land to establish a girls' college. She feels passionately about women and young girls having equal rights and equal access to education. Her generous donation of land led to the building of a college for young women aged 18-21 years which opened its doors in August 2017. Prior to this the village girls had no access to Higher Education. Colleges were distant and mixed. Their destiny was early marriage and motherhood, and without economic independence they are very often abused. Now these women have a college on a green campus in their own village affiliated to the University of Burdwan. Their future is bright.

Paramita requested Soroptimist help in providing English conversation practice on Zoom. It is important for these women to speak English well in order to progress. Opportunities to practise English are limited as everyone in the local area speaks only Bengali. Offering an hour's conversation would be both enabling and beneficial. It was an inspiring talk giving hope for the future of women's education and empowerment. Sevenoaks SI have taken up the challenge.

We have had some teething problems since our starting date of February 09, 2023 but now, at a set time each week, two Soroptimists talk to four of the students on Google Meet for an hour. The college and the girls are delighted by this opportunity and we Soroptimists enjoy meeting girls from such a different culture and learning about their lives.

WENDY METCALFE, SI SEVENOAKS

SIGBI Matters

a reminder from President Lynne Chiswick

ARE YOU ON THE HUB?

Of our 217 members, 142 have signed up but 75 still haven't!

It sounds daunting but it's not difficult to do and is a very useful resource for members and contains the following sections:

- **Newsfeed** with easy to read, latest information from SIGBI.
- **Address Book** which lets you look up any member who has registered, to be able to contact them easily.
- **Events section** giving more information on upcoming events like the London Conference. Clubs can also add details of their own events when they want to publicise it to other club members.
- **Programme Reports** is particularly useful if you are searching for information about a project you are considering that another club may have carried out.
- **Library** containing lots of useful information about everything to do with Soroptimism, including Membership, Programme, PR and Marketing, Finance, Governance etc.

As you are probably aware most of our communications from SIGBI are now coming through The Hub. Also the modernisation proposals that SIGBI are asking us to comment on place considerable emphasis on The Hub. This is an opportunity for you to feed back your thoughts on The Hub.

If you are still unsure how to register, there will be other members in your club who have already registered and who may be able to help.

There is an excellent step-by-step guide video on using The Hub from a Soroptimist who also guides you through getting registered. Here's the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZzWZISnc-Y>

Let me know if you would like me to arrange a Region webinar on using The Hub.

Hope that helps and you manage to get registered.

ARE YOU READY TO COMMENT ON SIGBI'S MODERNISATION PROPOSALS?

The proposals recommend important changes for the way Federation, our Region and our Clubs operate, so please do make your opinions known.

SIGBI sent out details of the proposals and a covering letter from SIGBI President Cathy Cottridge to all members by email on August 21. I hope you have had time to read the proposals (which can also be found on The Hub) and have been able to discuss them within your Club.

SIGBI is asking for comments by October 27 and they want **individual feedback** rather than feedback from Clubs or Regions, so your response is very important.

There will also be an Extraordinary Regional ZOOM Meeting at 10:00 on Saturday October 07 for you to share your thoughts about the proposals. Incoming SIGBI President Ruth Healey will also be at the Zoom meeting to help answer your questions about the proposed changes.

AGENDA for the Zoom meeting:

1. SIGBI's rationale for modernisation proposals
2. Impact on Clubs
3. Impact on Regions
4. Use of technology (especially The Hub) for communication
5. AOB

The Zoom link is

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88265488486?pwd=ckhmRmNxd-mJGSlloaEZOQmxiMGMrUT09>

I do hope you can take part and look forward to seeing you on October 07.



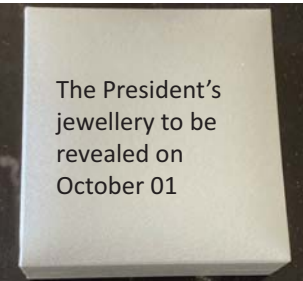
SOROPTIMISTS FROM CANTERBURY and Whitstable joined forces on September 23 to support the Save Our Seas campaign protesting about sewage pollution in our seas.

Several of us are keen swimmers and we all enjoy our proximity to the beaches, so the state of the sea waters is of great importance to us and our health.

As well as beach cleans, Whitstable club members are taking the lead on reviving Plastic Free Whitstable. We'll be working with partners and existing community allies as well as signing up new businesses. It's proving to be a great way to raise the profile of Soroptimism locally.

JANE WEBB, WHITSTABLE AND DISTRICT

Countdown to Whitstable and District's Charter Lunch



The President's jewellery to be revealed on October 01

THE BADGES HAVE ARRIVED! Whitstable and District members are looking forward to their Charter Event on Sunday, October 01, at the Crescent Turner Hotel, Whitstable, when Federation President Cathy Cottridge will be the Chartering Officer.

Whitstable and District members have elected to have a club president and are delighted that Mags Harrison, formerly of SI Medway and

Maidstone, accepted the invitation to become the first.

We also decided not to have a club regalia. Founder member, Jane Webb, commissioned jewellery for Mags and her successors to wear. The designer and maker is Karen Walls, a member of SI East Lothian.

It will be revealed at the Charter Ceremony.

JANE WEBB, WHITSTABLE AND DISTRICT

Preparations start early for Shoebox Appeal 2023



Knitting for Christmas Shoebox Appeal 2023

AS THE 2022 SHOEBOX Appeal was coming to an end in mid-December with all the packed shoeboxes in transit to Eastern European countries in time for Christmas, the clearing up at the collection Point in Gillingham was taking place.

Julia Search was one of the volunteers working in the final days and agreed to take away and store some of the surplus filler items that included toothbrushes, hats, scarves, and gloves to be used in the 2023 Appeal.

Jane and Stella Barnes joined Julia to sort through the knitted items to see what was needed to make complete and matching sets. Over the long winter nights and into early spring they each set about knitting hats, scarves, snoods, and gloves, along with knitted tissue purses to make up 100 sets, primarily for women and girls.

In the meantime, shopping trips also included looking for bargains in the sales, such as for socks and underwear, some of the essential items listed in the checklist from Blythwood.

A spreadsheet of all the items collected so far is regularly updated and shared with members so that those wishing to take part can ensure they only purchase items needed. This is accompanied by the Shoebox leaflet with checklist from Blythwood. For those members unable to do the shopping

themselves, then a personal shopper service is offered so they can donate.

In August, our speaker was Lorna Bailey, a long term Blythwood volunteer, who shared her experience of going to Serbia to see the shoeboxes being delivered.

We hope to fill between 75 and 100 shoeboxes for 2023 and so need to ensure we have sufficient shoeboxes. Members and friends have been collecting them and we have found it easier if they can be covered ahead of the evening set aside (October 23) at Angela Howe's to fill the shoeboxes. Now that Christmas wrapping paper is available in the shops, work has already begun on covering the shoeboxes.

Each year, Lorna organises a Sponsored knit to raise monies towards the transport costs of the shoeboxes. Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists will be fielding a small team of knitters for the event on October 16 to assist with raising monies.

This year the shoeboxes from the Southeast Collection Point will be sent to Ukraine. We are waiting for confirmation of the venue for the Collection Point and dates it will be operating from as members routinely volunteer over the six weeks it is operational checking the shoeboxes and packing them up.

JANE BARNES, 51 MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Croydon's Quiz Night



SI CROYDON would like to thank everyone who helped to make our annual Quiz Night a success. Seven teams took part on the night, and the scores were close... Our formidable Quiz Mistress, Danae, ensured that the questions were vast, and maintained the pace of the evening with great flair.

Guests were treated to a tasty biryani supper, followed by tea, coffee and cookies.

Our lucky raffle winners took away one of four luxury hampers, raising funds to go towards the club's upcoming centenary celebrations.

CORAL KONIBIRE, SI CROYDON AND DISTRICT

East Grinstead's Magic Breakfast



SUSAN BERKSHIRE, MARY Swift and host President Jane Griffiths served a full breakfast to 20 East Grinstead members, on Sunday, September 17, raising £205 for Magic Breakfast a charity which serves daily breakfasts to all pupils in schools in deserving areas.

JANE GRIFFITHS, PRESIDENT, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

magic
breakfast
fuel for learning

Sewing over the Summer Break for Home Learning at Byron

AT THE END of last term, a request was made to us by Byron Primary School, which Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists work in partnership with. This was to assist with sewing rainbow material onto twenty turtles to become Rocky the Turtle mascots for their Right Respecting School initiative, and making twenty drawstring bags for each class for home learning to start in the new September term.

Jane Barnes took on the sewing task over the summer and was able to deliver the completed turtles and bags to the school. This meant that they were able to launch their *Rocky the Rights-Respecting Turtle home learning*.

Its aim is to encourage the children to talk about the UN Rights of the Child with adults and siblings at home. Each week a member of the class takes home Rocky the Turtle with information about it and a letter. Home learning will be linked to one of the rights and teaching the children how rights are part of their everyday lives. The feed-



Soroptimist Sewing Bags
and Customising Turtles
for Rights Respecting
School Project

back was that they were absolutely thrilled with the Rocky mascots which they consider are cute and look brilliant. They know the children will be excited when it is their turn to take Rocky the Turtle home. JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Inspirational Speakers and Reflections on the past Year at the Region AGM



ON SEPTEMBER 23, MEMBERS gathered at the Holiday Inn, Wrotham, for our 64th Regional Annual General Meeting. President Lynne welcomed us all to her last Regional meeting as her year of office ends at the London Conference. It was also a significant date for President Lynne as it was her birthday and so we all sang her 'Happy Birthday.'

Our first inspirational speaker was Dawn Whittaker KFSM, Chief Fire Officer for East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. She is one of only six women out of 55 Chief Fire Officers in the UK, as well as being a mother of five and a grandmother. She spoke about the Service's wide range of education and accessible training programmes for young people and women. In addition, she spoke of her voluntary work that includes being a mentor with the Girls Network.

President Lynne shared with us a presentation titled 'My Year as President,' that covered her many visits to clubs for social events, programme action, regional events, attending the Dublin Convention and her work with the Girls Network. She has thoroughly enjoyed her year, meeting so many interesting people and learning so much, and would recommend others to consider taking office.

President Lynne invited incoming President Alison Driscoll to share her plans and vision for the year when she becomes our Regional President at the London Conference. It promises to be a busy year that includes a Regional Conference on County Lines being held in two locations to enable more members to attend.

After lunch, Annette Maudsley, SIGBI's Designated Safeguarding Officer gave us an impressive and thought-provoking talk about her role and her professional and voluntary work in safeguarding and anti-trafficking in the UK and abroad.

At the final part of the day, it was time for Annette to announce the first winners of the Grace Onions 'Our Planet, Our

Future' Award. The very worthy winners chosen were SI East Grinstead who have supported biodiversity and reducing climate change over many years. Many members have contributed across a range of positive projects working in partnership with many organisations and which continue to evolve. Well done to East Grinstead members.

An excellent day enjoyed by all demonstrating the amazing work and achievements to improve the lives of women and girls, and 'You Can Change the World'.

JANE BARNES, SISEE JOINT MEMBERSHIP OFFICER

