

## President Alison's message

### Inside Out and Outside In



JANUARY HAS BEEN a comparatively quiet month (especially since I lost my voice for a few days!) in as much as I have not paid any visits to Clubs but lots has still been happening beneath the surface.

Plans for two Study mornings on April 13 and 27 continue sapace. Details of time, venues and themes may be found on page 06.

Details on fees, travel and lunch arrangements will be confirmed in due course but do please encourage members who are not able to make the longer journey to a centrally located regional

meeting, to join us at one of these events. Of course, those who would like to attend both are more than welcome!

Also a reminder about the auction planned for the afternoon of March 16. I do hope each Club is able to offer at least one item – the idea is to show we can raise funds through using our talents, not just putting our hands into our pockets! All proceeds to the regional project which will be launched by ABCD (Action around Bethlehem Children with Disabilities) fellow trustees that same morning. We are currently working on the revised proposal with partners in one of the West Bank refugee camps

As mentioned in my last message, we are considering an 'idea for a regional '90' challenge and details of this will also be announced at the regional meeting.

In case this information has not yet filtered through, SIGBI is adopting the 'official' theme "Inspire Inclusion" to mark International Women's Day. SIGBI will be producing a statement and writing letters to the leaders of each political party of the UK asking them what they are doing in regards to Inspiring and Including Women. By mid-February, sample publicity will be circulated to Clubs for their own use. Full details on this Call to Action are available on The Hub.

Finally, here is the latest news on the Modernisation Proposals: "Following the four meetings that took place with members in December, the Board wishes to advise they are still working on the revisions. The final Proposals will be circulated following the Board meeting – towards the end of February."

I think that covers everything for now – stay safe and keep warm.

YOURS IN FRIENDSHIP, ALISON DRISCOLL

## What's in this month's newsletter?



Lewes Club 'Sip and Paint' art workshop, raises funds for the School of Hope, page 02.



Silent March through Canterbury, page 02.



Nellie working in the sensory garden, page 03.



Remembering our Soroptimist Sisters, page 04.

## Sip and Paint art workshop raises funds for School of Hope



IN NOVEMBER 2023, Lewes Club held a well attended Sip and Paint art workshop, run by art teacher Maureen Wells, in aid of the School of Hope in Guatemala.

We raised £200 for art supplies, which members Maureen and Vera will take with them when they volunteer at the school for two weeks in February.

A second session is being held on Sunday, February 04 at Kingston Pavillion 14:30pm to 17:00. A fee of £22 includes all materials. Tea, fizz and cake to buy.

This is a really enjoyable event which promotes our club and which has found us two prospective new members.

Please message Larisa on 07733198127 to book a place.

VERA GAJIC, SI LEWES

## Donations for Gatwick detainees

SI SEVENOAKS HAVE been collecting small and medium men's clothes to support the Gatwick Detainees.

These asylum seekers arrive with very little and we are pleased to be able to support them with jumpers and other items.

We have a link through our former member, Beverley, and she kindly collected four bags of clothes on January 03.

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS



## Silent March through Canterbury protesting against violence to women and girls



SATURDAY MORNING AT the end of November brings shoppers to the High Street. On November 25, it also brought a large group of people carrying posters and banners protesting against violence against women and girls.

Yes, we all see it on the news, yet another woman killed by a stalker or ex-boyfriend. But we may not put two and two together to come up with the true figures.

One in four women in England and Wales will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, according to the Crime Survey of England and Wales, and 8% will suffer domestic violence in a given year.

On average, two women are killed every week in England and Wales by a current or former partner. The number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by police in England and Wales increased by 6% in the year ending March 2021 to 845,734. A total of 1,459,663 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes were recorded by police in the year to March 2021.

In 73% of cases, the victim of domestic abuse-related crimes was female. Domestic abuse is acutely underreported. Crime survey data for the year ending March 2018 suggest that only 18% of women who had experienced abuse from a partner in the 12-month period reported the abuse to the police.

That is why, each year, Soroptimist International Canterbury reminds the public that violence against women and girls, at home or elsewhere, the most widespread and pervasive human rights violation worldwide, a global pandemic, cannot be accepted. Those marching silently remember the ones who have lost their lives and are no longer with us. They march to remind us all.

TESSA WOODWARD, SI CANTERBURY

## Croydon Club's late Christmas Lunch

CROYDON CLUB HELD a late Christmas Lunch at the Chestnut Gardens Care Home in Purley, joined by SI Bromley members, and family and friends. It was a lovely afternoon to catch up and to welcome in the New Year.

A special thanks was given to the catering team at Chestnut Gardens for the lovely meal.

After lunch we were entertained by Magician Felicia, seen in the top left photograph amazing Pat Dale with a card trick.

STELLA IRUTHAYARASU, SI CROYDON



## How orange can you be?

MEMBERS FROM SI Bromley joined Sevenoaks Club at Polhill on January 25 to support the Campaign to end Violence against Women. Susan Shillito is seen below sporting several layers of orange.

CHRISTINE THOMAS, SI BROMLEY



IN THE FRIENDS of Rochester Churchfields and Esplanade (FoRCE) first newsletter of 2024 was a New Year message from the Chair, Terry Clennell:

*"This time of year, is one of reflection and resolution. As FoRCE ends our fourth year, my simple reflection is one of thanks – to those people and organisations who have given their time, skills, gifts or funds to enable us to achieve the impact we have had to date. Such acts of generosity are fundamental to how we help tackle litter, vandalism and pollution; enrich the biodiversity and aesthetics of our greenspaces; and represent the interests of our community. So, to those of you who have given something this year, we all of us say a very hearty thank you."*

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists are one of the organisations that regularly volunteer at the Sensory Garden monthly sessions. All enjoying the exercise, satisfaction and camaraderie of litter picking and gardening. The Soroptimist volunteers during 2023 have been Nellie Adjaye (see cover photo), Sue Daykin, Angela Howe, Stella Barnes and Jane Barnes (above).

Together they have contributed their time and skills for over 50 hours gardening and litter picking.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

### Closing Date for the next edition of SEE News Friday, February 23, 2024

#### 2024 Closing Dates are:

March 24; April 24; May 24; 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

## Jean MacLaren October 11, 1919, to December 06, 2023



FORMER TUNBRIDGE WELLS Soroptimist, Jean MacLaren died peacefully in December at the grand age of 104!

She studied Domestic Science at college in the 1930s and during World War II, ran the canteen for the Bank of England, which is where she met her husband John. After the war, they moved to Southborough (near Tunbridge Wells) and Jean worked for a gas company where she was responsible for demonstrating gas kitchen appliances to domestic users. She is listed in our membership records as a Domestic Manager.

Our older Soroptimists remember her well and her family commented how lovely it was to reminisce with them at the funeral. She has very generously left a bequest for our club in her will.

CATHERINE MENNELL, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

## Gillian Matthews April 18, 1928, to January 05, 2024

### Gillian the Soroptimist



Croydon Club's International Women's Day dinner in March 2014, where Gillian was presented with her 50 years certificate by the Region President Jacquie Emery.

A FOUNDER MEMBER of the Ashford Club of which she was President in 1967/8, Gillian founded a bursary to help women who had not had the opportunity to train professionally when they were younger. After a short break Gillian joined SI Croydon in 1980 with the same category. She was President in 1996 and her project was to support the handicapped Rangers based in Bramley Hill, Croydon.

In 1998 she became the Club Programme Action Chairman and served for three years. During this time she organised a public speaking competition for teams of senior school girls who chose a well known person who's success inspired them to further their own ambitions to speak about. The competition was held in the Croydon Town Hall in the presence of the Mayor and the Director of Education.

A questionnaire was sent to schools asking for information about out of school employment. As a result it was found that babysitting was not regulated or supervised adequately. A report was sent to the Director of Education. Another questionnaire was sent to schools asking for information about eating habits and obesity. This study was adopted by the SE Region. At the end of her year of office as Chairman, she became the Federation Representative on the United Kingdom Action Committee and later the UNESCO Representative.

**EMMA STEIN WRITES:** I have plenty of Soroptimist memories, since as a child in Ashford, the house became full of women who ran businesses, schools, worked as scientists, doctors, teachers and accountants. They were active in community, women with voices and women advancing women. I remember many by name. As a girl, they and Mum were my role models. I know the Soroptimists in Croydon were very important to Mum too, with friendship, support and kindness for Mum throughout her life.

### A tribute from her family

DR GILLIAN MATTHEWS (BA MB BChir FRCOG FFCM) died peacefully in her sleep on Friday January 05, 2024, at the age of 95. She was much loved and admired, as a mother and a grandmother, as a doctor and as an inspirational leader. She lived in a lovely bungalow in South Croydon. Apart from some mild confusion towards the end, read The Times every day.

During WWII, the family moved from London to Cheltenham, partly so Gillian could attend Cheltenham Ladies College.

Her medical career was wide-ranging and highly successful. She trained at Cambridge (Newnham)/King's, qualifying in 1952. She did junior and registrar posts in Obstetrics and Gynaecology in London, primarily at King's, and Queen Charlotte's Hospital – working with Sir Stanley Clayton.

She married Dr Maurice Stein (a GP, and ex-RAF) in 1959, and as well as being full-time doctors, they brought up four children in Ashford, Kent. To start a family, she had a short break from medicine, then became a part-time and later a full-time GP, maintaining her interest in Obstetrics, Gynaecology and family planning. Their home was their general practice.

She pioneered managing labour at home, sometimes returning to the family home to make breakfast for the family wearing her suit over her nightie. In the late 1970s she retrained in Public Health Medicine and became a Community Physician. Her career path was rapid, and she worked at District, Area (Croydon) then Region (South-East Thames), finally becoming Regional Medical Officer. Her many achievements in Public Health included leading (or being heavily involved in): the re-organisation of renal (and transplantation) services in South East Thames; closure of the Brook Hospital; merger of Guy's/Thomas' and London/Barts; and the Resource Allocation Working Party (RAWP). This worked to equalise healthcare spending in England, moving money and resources out of London.

She was an avid reader (and thought War and Peace an 'easy read'), and an expert dressmaker. She was a proud feminist and heavily involved in promoting women in medicine postwar, and throughout her career. She was always proud to wear Suffragette colours. Gillian was an active Soroptimist, at a local and national level – being President of the clubs at Ashford then Croydon (twice).

Above all she was a 'family woman' and held responsibility for and love of family as her most important achievement. She is survived by two sons and a daughter, and seven grandchildren.

EMMA STEIN, DR ANDREW STEIN AND SAMUEL STEIN KC

## East Grinstead's 'Orange' Cafe



EIGHT CLUB MEMBERS recently enjoyed a late January morning together at Chequer Mead Theatre cafe in East Grinstead.

It being the 25th of the month, the designated date each month for raising awareness of violence against women, some members dressed in orange.

Staff at Chequer Mead are very supportive and keen for this to happen in future months.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

## President Ruth's Challenge 'To be one up.'



AT THE SIGBI London Conference in November 2023, President Ruth set us all a membership challenge for 2024 'To be one up'.

SI Medway and Maidstone are pleased to have accepted this challenge and to welcome a new member, Mandy Samrai. Mandy has lived and worked in Medway for over 45 years. Although her day job is consultancy working in the areas of Mergers, Acquisitions and transformation, she has also been a magistrate since 2008. Family is important to Mandy, and she always aims to be a super Aunt to her six nieces and nephews.

Angela Howe, who had known Mandy through the Magistrates service for the past 13 years, told her about Soroptimists. Mandy was keen to be part of a group that focused specifically on women and girls in a local and international way.

At Angela's invitation, Mandy came along to our December club meeting and to our New Year party. She decided she liked what she heard and saw and agreed to join us. Angela will be Mandy's mentor supporting her as she settles in and develops a clearer understanding of who and what we are.

Already Mandy is eagerly contributing with ideas in relation to PR and Marketing, developing links in the community and even assisting with planning our Day of Reflection in February.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



MEMBERS OF SI Eastbourne recently enjoyed an interesting and informative talk by Jenny Eldridge (pictured below) from the Eastbourne Dementia Action Alliance (EDAA).

Sadly one in three people will develop dementia in their life-time and Jenny described the valuable work her organisation carries out in bringing together all the different services to support people living with dementia and their carers. EDAA's aim is to make Eastbourne a dementia-friendly town.

Club members were informed of the help that people living with dementia and their carers can receive. There are at least 24 organisations (national and local) providing support for people in Eastbourne and there are also allowances and benefits for people living with dementia and their carers. These include attendance allowance, Council Tax reduction, the Blue Badge scheme, discounts on trains, buses, cinema and theatre as well as reduced hospital car park charges and help with domestic fuel costs.

Eastbourne club members have supported the charity over the past years by helping on information stands in public spaces. Jenny was presented with an orchid and given a donation for her charity. Members also brought in various items that Jenny can use in tombolas to raise funds for EDAA.

LYNNE CHISWICK, SI EASTBOURNE



## A forgotten anniversary of women working together

IN MAY 1923 the women of Wales initiated a peace petition, urging the women of the US to pressure the US to take its place in the newly formed League of Nations and to encourage its full participation in the permanent court of international justice, established in 1922.

The 1923 petition was signed by nearly 400,000 women in Wales. It was received in Washington DC and travelled all over the US. Housed in a chest made of Welsh oak, it ended up in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, where it lay forgotten for decades.

A few years ago, researchers and activists, supported by the Wales Peace Academy, took up the challenge to mark the centenary. With generous support from the Welsh government, the petition was returned to Wales and is now housed in the National Library of Wales.

The full story, written by ROWAN WILLIAMS, may be found in THE GUARDIAN, using the link below. You will also find a photo of four women outside the White House after a meeting with President Calvin Coolidge in 1924. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/dec/30/welsh-women-wales-peace-petition>

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN 30 DECEMBER 2023



### Number "63" 500 Club



YOUR SUPPORT IS needed more than before. Soroptimist members, a Club, a Region or any non-Soroptimist can buy a number.

It is £12 for one number for one year and there is no limit to how many numbers you can have. The draw takes place on the last Friday of each month and two awards are made of £50.

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

PAT DALE,  
500 CLUB ADMINISTRATOR

#### Dates of the 2024 Saturday Region Meetings

March 16; June 22; September 21 (AGM)  
all to be held at

Orida Hotel (formerly the Hilton),  
Bearsted Rd, Maidstone ME14 5AA

#### and Saturday Study Mornings

April 13, 10:00-13:00, Howfield Manor, Canterbury  
Theme: County Lines (drug trafficking and young people)  
April 27, 10:30-13:30, Dorset Gardens Methodist Church,  
Brighton. Theme: The Sanctuary Movement

## Orangeing the World Together



SOROPTIMISTS FROM SEVENOAKS and Bromley joined forces on January 25 to create a splash of orange at the Polhill Garden Centre Café... AND we did manage to attract some attention!

The 25th of each month has been chosen to raise awareness of the campaign to combat violence against women and girls.

Seventeen of us met for coffee and a lovely chat – so nice to have plenty of time! The manager and his team were very welcoming and one of the chefs came out to see us and took the photo above.

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS

## New Friendship Link for SI Medway and Maidstone

ANNETTE DAVIES OF SI Medway and Maidstone and Christine Cole of SI Chaguanas from Trinidad and Tobago (both pictured below) met at the London Conference in November 2023. This chance meeting led to a discussion about forming a Friendship Link between our two clubs.

This proposal was agreed by all members at our December meeting. Our Friendship Link Officer Julia Search followed up completing the application online. Within weeks this was approved, and a Friendship Certificate received. SI Chaguanas posted the exciting news on their Facebook page about our new Friendship Link.

Our first Zoom Friendship Link Get Together for 2024 was held on January 22, and three members of SI Chaguanas joined us. Also in attendance were members of our other Friendship Link clubs from SI Accra, SI Heswall, SI Osnabruck, and SI Voorburg. It was an ideal opportunity for us all to start to get to know each other, find out about each other's programme action work and share ideas.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE





SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE have a partnership agreement with Byron Primary School in Gillingham. As part of their work as a Rights Respecting School one of our members, Jane Barnes, sits on the School's UNICEF Steering group which meets every three to four weeks.

As part of this partnership some wonderful links have been made such as with Mary's Meals and Toilet Twinning.

The Steering group hope to build on these links in the future as the Byron pupils develop a greater understanding of the UN Rights of the Child and become 'changemakers.'

During our visits to the School, we often wear our Kente sashes to promote who we are. These sashes have been admired by the teachers and pupils who have wanted to know about them and where they come from. We were asked if a banner could be made by the weavers to show the School motto

'Excellence Together' to display in the School. The request was passed on to Nellie Adjaye who liaised with our Friendship Link SI Accra in Ghana.

In December, Jane Barnes presented the UNICEF Steering Group with three Kente banners with their school motto. Two of the banners had kindly been donated to the school by Nellie, and the third by SI Accra.

They are now looking forward to Nellie visiting the School in February when she returns from Ghana to hear more about the Kente sash project.

The photo shows Hayley Heyes (Teacher) with the members of the Steering Group holding one of the banners after Jane had presented them. Hayley said, "We are very grateful to celebrate this cultural link."

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

## Taking care of the 'I' in 'SI'

WE ARE ALL members of Soroptimist International, our global volunteer service, with members in over one hundred countries. In a current climate of international strife, it is even more important than usual to retain the positive international tone and tenor of our clubs and to embrace the word international.

Many clubs have friendship links with those in different countries. So, visits, zoom meetings, emails, and other interesting international exchanges are possible. Some clubs have projects with sister clubs abroad too and this can bring welcome inter-cultural learning and experience. And those who can get to the international SI conferences can see the vivid reality of our worldwide organisation.

In the SI Canterbury club, we have been trying out a few ideas to make sure that we are thinking internationally on a regular basis although we are local. Below are a few of the things we have tried:

- A visit to the Sikh temple in Gravesend where we had a vegetarian meal and a guide helped us to understand the role of the temple in the local area.
- We plan to attend events such as the Africa Culture Day run by our local Ethnic Minorities in Canterbury (EMIC) group.
- We have been liaising with KRAN (Kent Refugee Action Network) to run coffee and chat sessions for migrant women needing to improve their English and meet local women.

- As we are in touch with our local branch of Amnesty International, we join in with letter writing to support political prisoners around the world.

Using a calendar of international festivals such as the one at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_multinational\\_festivals\\_and\\_holidays](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_multinational_festivals_and_holidays), we choose a festival each month that we meet. So, in November we learned about Divali, the Hindu festival of lights, in December about Yalda, the Iranian festival at the winter solstice, in January about Bhogi, celebrated in the southern states of India.

We tie in our 'woman of the month' with this idea too, choosing an activist from the same region as the festival. So, in November, we respected Ruth Manorama, fighting for the rights of domestic workers, slum dwellers and Dalits, in December Narges Mohammadi, recent Nobel Peace Prize winner, and in January, Viji Palithodi in Kerala, of the 'Right to sit' movement for shop workers.

These ideas do not take up too much time but are a regular reminder that there are parallel realities to our own.

We in Canterbury would love to hear what you do in your clubs to keep the spirit of internationalism alive.

Do write in and tell us!

TESSA WOODWARD,  
SI CANTERBURY