

President Alison's message

Inside Out and Outside In



THANK YOU TO everyone who attended one or other of the study mornings (and eight members participated in both!) which were very well received.

I am grateful to Jane Barnes and Claire Bell for their excellent reports which may be found on pages 07 and 08.

This was clearly the kind of event which many had found helpful in previous years and I know all those who were able to join us would agree.

We have all learned a lot more about people who need to be released from

entrapment (County Lines – Inside Out) and others who need to be welcomed into our communities (The Sanctuary Movement – Outside In).

In addition to these events, during April I have given a progress report on my regional project at the Medway and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells AGM's.

Both Croydon and Sevenoaks have also invited me to share an updated presentation at their club meetings later in the year.

At the time of writing the total raised to fund the salary of Noor (the speech and language therapist at the Deir Ammar refugee camp) has reached close on £4,000 so I have now requested the form to apply for matched funding from the Rosemary Nutt Memorial Award.

If my "bid" is successful this means we will certainly have sufficient to provide Noor with a bursary for further training. Your support for this project has been phenomenal – thank you all so much.

I hope some of you were able to attend the Programme Action seminar on April 20 when the new process for selecting the Best Practice Awards was launched. If any clubs are considering entering, please do let Yvonne Freeman know but don't forget we have our own Regional "Grace Onions" award too.

Last call for the SI Bromley and Croydon interclub lunch on May 18 (see page06) when President Ruth will be in attendance. Our keynote presentation will be "How global heating affects women in fragile and conflict-affected countries", an issue of major concern for many of us.

We need confirmed numbers by May 03 (contact Susan Lee at susanlee.el@gmail.com); the venue is only four minutes from Junction 4 of the M25. do please.

I look forward to seeing some of you there.

YOURS IN FRIENDSHIP, ALISON DRISCOLL

What's in this month's newsletter?



Celebrating World Mother Earth Day
April 22, 2024, page 03.



A windswept day at the
seaside, page 02.

**THE BIG
PLASTIC
COUNT
11-17 MARCH**

Medway and Maidstone
take part, 03.



Movement co-founder
dies aged 84, page 05.



Reports on Region study
days, pages 07 and 08.

Canterbury Soroptimists choose a new project



AT THE RECENT Canterbury Soroptimists' Reflections Day, we discussed what we have been doing over the last year, our on-going work, and proposals for possible new projects to focus on in the coming year.

We wanted something that would build on work we are already doing, would involve all our members, in an activity of individual choice, linked by a common theme, and at a level of time and energy that people's busy schedules allow.

We chose a project on biodiversity.

We are in an exceptional era when climate change, loss of habitat, over hunting and fishing, air/water/light/noise and earth pollution, along with other factors, are causing huge losses in the diversity and abundance of our planet earth's essential flora and fauna.

Although the current situation seems daunting, we have decided on a three-phase project to parallel the efforts of huge numbers of individuals and organisations working to turn the tide of biodiversity collapse.

Our project links in with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, numbers 2,3,6,7,11,12, but especially 13, 14, and 15.

Our project will have three phases: Education, Choice of action and Evaluation. Education will continue throughout. Evaluation will also be ongoing and choices of action may change and be added to as we all learn more about the topic and about what is going on in the Canterbury area that we can join in with.

Our biodiversity project co-ordinator is currently mapping out basic concepts, possible areas of interest, relevant local initiatives and research questions to go with each area of concern. She will present this to club members soon.

We will report on the first stage as we settle into it and, if readers are interested, we can share resources and report back on the next two stages too as we reach them.

TESSA WOODWARD, SI CANTERBURY

A day out at the seaside



Members of SI Whitstable and District welcomed Carol McKeough from SI Medway and Maidstone and her daughter Baronie, for their day out at the seaside on April 04. Carol was a winner at Regional President Alison's Silent Auction in March and chose a day of shopping and sightseeing, at the north Kent coast town.

Carol's previous visits to Whitstable were fraught with parking problems but there were no such difficulties for this visit, with parking organised at the charity car park in the town centre, where Whitstable club members do regular fund raising.

Starting with coffee with members Jane and Millie, a tour of the high street and harbour followed. At lunchtime Carol and Baronie were driven by member Glynis to President Mags' home for lunch, which was all sourced locally, in line with Whitstable and District's environmental and plastic-free ethos.

When departing Carol said "It's been a beautiful day. We missed the rain and I'm glad it wasn't too hot. We really enjoyed browsing in the independent shops and I'm very happy with my teddy bear purchase. I'm also pleased with my purchases in the RNLI shop, which was a welcome escape from the stiff breeze!"

MAGS HARRISON, PRESIDENT, SI WHITSTABLE





SIX MEMBERS OF Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists took part in The Plastic Big Count over one week, March 11-17. This was the UK's biggest ever investigation into household plastic waste to raise awareness about single-use plastic and to inspire people to reduce their own plastic consumption.

You had to keep a tally of food and drink, cleaning and household items and anything else plastic. Each of us counted up and registered on-line and each household taking part received a digital footprint.

For us it showed that the number of pieces of plastic per household ranged from 14 items (single occupant) to 73 (two persons) and most related to food and drink.

The overall findings from the UK wide survey were published in April. 225,000 participants took part in The Big Plastic Count 2024, which is fantastic! The data collected has been analyzed to work out the true scale of the plastic waste crisis in the UK. It showed that:

- The UK throws away 1.7 billion pieces of plastic packaging every week. It is leaking into our oceans, polluting our air, devastating our climate and human health.
- 58% of it is burnt in incinerators, releasing greenhouse gases, and contributing to air pollution.
- The rest is sent to other countries or dumped in landfill, with only 17% recycled.

We cannot recycle our way out of this crisis. We need to cut plastic production instead.

It is time for Governments and Big Brands to take action. Governments have now started UN negotiations for a Global Plastics Treaty which will set a global target to reduce plastic. This year we have a huge opportunity. 175 countries are coming together to agree a Global Plastics Treaty which could set a global target that requires all states to cut plastic production.

We need to contact our MPs to ensure they support this treaty. They have produced a video see https://youtu.be/a_gzSDySh5s?si=OBbolS9v7_t2_khm

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Closing Date

for the next edition of SEE News
Friday, May 24, 2024

2024 Closing Dates are:

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

Marking World Mother Earth Day



WHITSTABLE AND CANTERBURY members and friends marked World Mother Earth Day, as well as demonstrating our support as a Plastic Free Whitstable Community Ally. Your club can be registered here <https://plasticfree.org.uk/>.

Nine of us picked up at least ten kilos of bits of plastic washed up from the sea. Our beach cleans are registered with Canterbury City Council.

JANE WEBB, SI WHITSTABLE

A past memory



Kathy



Erwin



Carol

IN SEPTEMBER 2009, SI South East England Region offered a Grant of Friendship to two Soroptimists from California, Kathy and Carol.

During that month, Croydon Club held their annual Autumn Supper at Shirley Park Golf Club, when the guest speaker was Erwin James, a former prisoner convicted of murder.

The two Californian Soroptimists, together with members from Region attended the supper, where it was discovered that Kathy and Carol both worked for the California State Prison Service so had lots of questions for Erwin.

Prior to his conviction he had escaped to join the French Foreign Legion but nagging guilt led him to return to the UK. In prison he studied at evening education classes and after 10 years had a degree in history, and a reputation for writing a good letter through assisting other inmates.

In 2000 he began writing a fortnightly 800-word column for The Guardian newspaper entitled "A Life Inside".

On his release in 2004 he became a trustee of The Prison Reform Trust and the Alternatives to Violence project, and he continued to write for The Guardian offering a glimpse of the reality of life behind bars and the challenge faced by those trying to build a rehabilitated life after it.

Erwin James died in January 2024, aged 66.

PATRICIA PAINTING, EDITOR

East Grinstead hosts visit from Friendship Link, Southend on Sea



The three photos from left: show the group outside Sackville College; Southend members Tracey Haisman-Baker, Heather Tetchner and Sharon Richardson standing across the Meridian line, and finally Janes Tea

DURING THE COVID lockdown East Grinstead presented a comprehensive programme of renowned speakers via Zoom which clubs both at home and abroad were invited to enjoy. This proved very popular and many friendships were fostered in particular with SI Southend on Sea which became an official Friendship Link in summer 2023.

Several members of East Grinstead Club visited Southend on a glorious, sunny day in September 2023. They enjoyed a visit to the RNLI, experiencing the longest pier in the world, a Fish and Chip lunch and assisting with a beach clean. This was a day to remember.

On Saturday April 14, East Grinstead welcomed three ladies from Southend for a return visit. A busy day saw them enjoying a guided tour and welcome coffee at Sackville College, an almshouse for the elderly and infirm. John Mason Neale, Warden of the College from 1846-1866 was the writer of many well known hymns including the popular Christmas carol, Good King Wenceslas.

There followed a visit to East Grinstead Museum, a walk around the town and lunch. Of particular interest in the museum were exhibits outlining the story of the McIndoe Guinea Pigs and the reconstructive plastic surgery carried out on their World War II injuries, most of which resulted from burns. East Grinstead became known as 'The town that didn't stare'.

In the afternoon President Jane Griffiths took the visitors to East Court Mansion where we hold our meetings and showed them the Meridian Line that passes through the grounds. Then, assisted by other members, Jane provided a delicious tea at her home in Lingfield, an opportunity to sit together and chat.

This was a very happy and successful day in which 12 members of East Grinstead took part at various times enabling the two Clubs to establish closer links. The Southend Club is keen to introduce East Grinstead's anti-spiking campaign and Rocket Girls work with Brownies into their PA programme.

We look forward to many years of friendship and collaboration in the future.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

President Alison is Guest Speaker at Medway and Maidstone's AGM Dinner

WE WERE PLEASED to welcome Regional President Alison Driscoll as guest speaker at our AGM Dinner on April 11 at the Holiday Inn, Rochester.

Jenny Jones hosted the event with the business part of the AGM being dealt with promptly prior to the dinner. President Alison then gave us an interesting insight to the work of the ABCD charity – Action Around Bethlehem Children with Disability, with which she has been involved for many years.

The charity is based in Bethlehem working with children with disability. She hopes to raise monies during her presidential year to fund a Speech and Language therapist.



Jenny thanked President Alison for coming and presented her with flowers and a donation for ABCD.

President Alison then made two presentations to two club members.

The first was a 25-year long service certificate to Julia Search. Julia continues to be an active member of the club in her



role as Friendship Link Officer. She also volunteers regularly with Sharewear providing pre-loved clothes free to women and children.

The second presentation was made to Teresa Cambell who received the Molly Oldham Award, in recognition of her out-

standing contribution as the Programme Action Officer and for facilitating the Days of Reflection in both 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Congratulations to both Soroptimists for their commitment to improve the lives of women and girls locally, nationally and internationally.

A raffle was held, and President Alison's ticket was the first one drawn. £60 was raised and donated to the Medway Food Bank.



JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MADSTONE

Inaugural Reflection Day on March 24

ON A BLUSTERY, chilly, Sunday in late March, we gathered for our inaugural annual Soroptimists' Reflection Day. We, being members of the new Whitstable and District Branch having formed last year becoming chartered in October 2023.

The lovely venue in a local art gallery – an open, airy space with plenty of light plus room for projectors and screen – together with our objectives, agenda and pot luck lunch would inspire us to get the most from our day together.

After an introductory "get to know each other" icebreaker, we moved on to cover the Global, UN and Sustainable Development goals of Soroptimists International. Our Programme Action Officer, Judith Jackson, delivered an excellent presentation on Programme Actions and Activities clearly linking our projects with UN sustainability goals. We all agreed it would be worthwhile sharing this presentation at a club meeting so that all members could benefit.

We started the day with a sparsely populated programme for our monthly Club meetings and following lively discussions were able to fill most of the meetings with guest speakers – subject to invitation and acceptance – alongside club business.

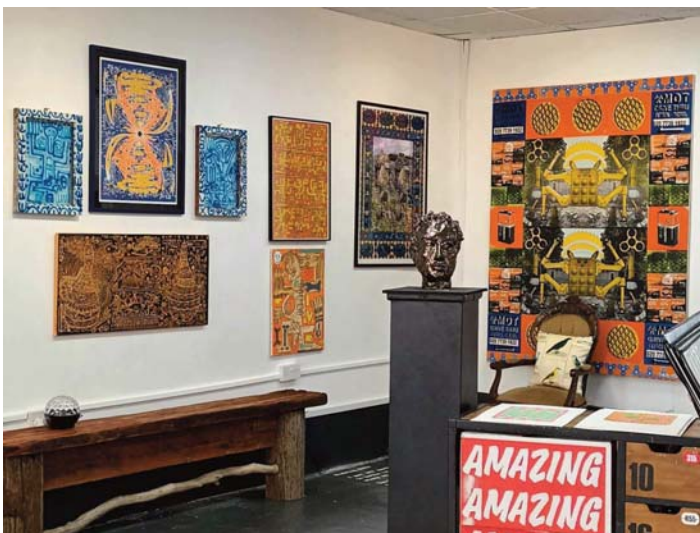
We discussed and agreed Club structure, communication and decision making processes going forward and decided that the Planning Team would continue to deal with most club business but all members would be welcome to attend meetings on an ad hoc basis. The Planning Team will circulate their Agenda prior to meetings and the minutes thereof should reflect the decision making processes. It was agreed that succession planning for Club roles will be discussed with all members at our AGM in May.

We celebrated the successes during our first year particularly the support, both financially and on a practical level, given to local Maya's Community Cafe; our International Women's Day fundraiser gig; organising a monthly beach clean and our nascent involvement with reviving Plastic Free Whitstable (PFW) in liaison with Surfers Against Sewage (SAS).

Although only half of our membership were able to attend, we had such an interesting mix of members from longstanding, re-joined, transfers in, and newbies that we were able to engage and participate in considered, positive and creative conversations enabling us to plan and agree our way forward together.

SUSAN BAULCH, SI WHITSTABLE

It was such a busy meeting that we forgot to photograph ourselves! So here is an image from the Art Gallery instead.



Knitting for President Ruth's 90 Challenge



SOROPTIMIST MEMBERS WERE set a challenge this year by President Ruth Healey to take action with a '90' theme to mark SIGBI's 90th year. It has been left to members across the Federation to think of creative ways as to how and what they will do to meet the challenge.

Jane Barnes decided she would pick up the challenge and would knit 90 items for charity. She started the task in December 2023 and has continued knitting for more than 500 hours throughout the long winter evenings. This has resulted in her knitting 25 snoods, 15 beanie hats, 15 pairs of gloves, 29 tissue purses, four baby comforters and two lap blankets.

All of the 90 knitted items are suitable for women, girls, and babies.

They will go in the shoeboxes we make up later this year for the Blythswood Care Christmas Shoebox Appeal and be sent to Ukraine.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



Co-founder of the Fairtrade movement dies aged 84

FATHER FRANS VAN DER HOFF, a Dutch missionary and co-founder of the global Fairtrade movement, died on 19 February 2024.

For much of his adult life he lived and worked in Southern Mexico. His initiative began in 1988 when he helped coffee farmers in the state of Oaxaca gain fair prices by selling directly to consumers. Drawing on contacts in the social justice movement in his homeland, he arranged for organically produced, co-operatively managed coffee beans from Oaxaca to be exported to the Netherlands and sold through a network of anti-poverty retail stores, known then as 'world shops'.

In co-operation with the Dutch charity Solidaridad, run by Nico Roozen and Jeroen Douglas, Van der Hoff saw his idea of engaging consumers in 'trade not aid' quickly spread to Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark and Germany. In 1994, after expanding in the English-speaking market of the UK and North America, it formally adopted the Fairtrade label.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

An orange AGM



WITH THEIR AGM taking place on the April 25, Croydon Club seized the opportunity to incorporate the Orange Cafe theme. Members wore something orange and, of course, raised a glass of orange juice in acknowledgment. More Orange Cafes are planned for the coming year.

The meeting welcomed their co-Presidents for 2024/25, Heather Bailey and Roxanne St Clair.



As co-presidents, Heather and Roxanne are currently planning the year's programme.

Their first aim is to strengthen partnerships with other local organisations, including the Friends of Parkhill Park, "Off the Record" and Croydon Climate Action.

They are delighted that SISEE Regional President, Alison Driscoll, will be Croydon Club's first guest speaker of the year at the May 23 meeting.

Working together with Bromley Club, they will continue to support Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid.

HEATHER BAILEY, CO-PRESIDENT, SI CROYDON

Celebrating our Founders

A MEMBER OF Canterbury Club, became interested in finding out who had founded our club. Luckily, all the Past Presidents were listed on our website.

The Founder and first President was Ellinor Hinks. An internet search revealed an obituary in a national newspaper, where she was described as a 20th century visionary in physical education.

She was a principal of a local college where she successfully pushed for the very first mixed-sex, physical education teacher training course in England. She was also a photographer, film maker and archivist. We can see from her Wikipedia page at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellinor_Hinks that she was a real go-getter! We are happy to celebrate her.

What wonderful woman or women founded your club? It would be great to hear all about her/them!

JACKIE MAIN, SI CANTERBURY



SI Croydon's first President was Councillor Mrs Bessie Roberts, who served from 1927/28 and 1928/9. She served as President again in 1935/36 when she was appointed the first woman Alderman of Croydon Borough Council.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL BROMLEY AND CROYDON

INTER -CLUB LUNCH

Saturday 18 May 2024, 12:30 for 13:00

Chelsfield Lakes Golf Centre
Court Road, Orpington BR6 9BX

Guest Speaker: Paul Knox Clarke
☐The frontline of climate change☐

Tickets £45

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL EASTBOURNE & DISTRICT

CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF SERVICE 1954-2024

President Lotte invites you to our
70th Anniversary Lunch

At the Hydro Hotel, Eastbourne

Saturday, 1 June 2024 at 12.30 for 1.00pm

Dates of the 2024 Saturday Region Meetings

June 22; September 21 (AGM)
all to be held at the Orida Hotel (formerly the Hilton),
Bearsted Rd, Maidstone ME14 5AA

Region Study Day – County Lines Report by Jane Barnes

‘Every person trapped in modern slavery is a person with a name and a dream.’

ON APRIL 13, 32 Soroptimists from across the Region attended a Study Day on County Lines at Howfield Manor organised by President Alison Driscoll. This was the first Study Day after a gap of many years. President Alison was pleased to see so many members in attendance to hear about such a current issue as County Lines.

Our key speaker was Cliff Grieve, a former Detective Superintendent and founder of Kent Community Against Trafficking (KCAT) who has been involved in raising awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery for many years. He is also an Ambassador to Kent for the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS).

Cliff shared with us some alarming statistics:

- The numbers for human trafficking over the last 10 years are on the increase and estimated 52 million worldwide.
- 138,000 British citizens are slaves in the UK.
- Every 10 seconds a child is being taken.

Modern Slavery is said to be ‘hidden in plain sight’ as we all come into contact with victims in our daily lives.

It is more prevalent in industries such as beauty, car wash, hospitality, construction, domestic and agricultural industry’s as well as criminal activities such as the sex trade, organ trafficking and drugs.

We heard about the types of human trafficking and modern slavery such as forced labour, as seen in care homes, criminal exploitation ie cannabis cultivation, (if under 18 cannot agree to

exploitation), sexual exploitation, forced marriage and debt bondage which can be passed on to family members.

A video called ‘Dangerous Lover Boy’ was shown highlighting sexual exploitation and a second one about County Lines.

County Lines is a particular type of criminal slavery in which children and young people are coerced into selling drugs on behalf of gangs. The victims may be groomed by offer of gifts such as a phone or new clothing. Once tricked into participating in the drug trade, the young people are forced to continue by intimidation or violence.

The physical impacts of Human Trafficking can include lack of access to medical care, physical injury, sexual health, and ritual abuse. Whilst the psychological impact can be post-traumatic responses, depression and/or anxiety, feelings of guilt or shame, self-harming and suicidal.

Tabletop discussions followed where we had three questions to debate on Sexual exploitation, County Lines, and the Illegal Migration Act. These proved to be interesting talking points and we could have talked for much longer. However, we have been sent copies of the questions that can be taken back to club meetings for those unable to attend the Study Day.

We can all play our part in helping people escape modern slavery and find protection and support to build a better life, by being alert to the signs and reporting suspected instances using the Stop the Traffik app. The Stop app provides a readily available means of notifying Stop the Traffik and all the information you need as to the signs. It is comprehensive, easy to use safely and securely, and anonymously if required.

President Alison with members at Study Day



Cliff talking at Study Day



Carol, Alison with Cliff



Carol presenting gift to Cliff



Regional Study Day on County Lines - 13 April 2024

Region Study Day – Sanctuary Movement

Report by Claire Bell

‘There are 36 million refugees across the world.’



NINETEEN MEMBERS ATTENDED an inspirational study day on Saturday April 27, 2024, in Brighton at the Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, on the subject of the Sanctuary Movement.

After an introduction from President Alison, Ruth Samur of the Brighton and Hove Methodist Circuit Refugee Project led the first session in which we learned that there are 36 million refugees across the world. It was the warmth of the reception that Ruth herself had received in many places across the world in her travels in her youth, that had given her the passion for extending a welcome to refugees and asylum seekers in her local community.

The Sanctuary project was started in 2005 to fundraise and build awareness for the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. There are now many cities of Sanctuary across the UK and they have been joined by libraries, universities, schools and theatres of Sanctuary, all with the aim of building a more welcoming UK for people forced to flee their homes.

We then heard from Cathy Maxwell of the Network of International Women for Brighton and Hove. The charity started in 2017 providing a safe space for women in the Brighton and Hove area from diverse cultures and backgrounds to come together, share experiences and knowledge and support one another. They now run a huge variety of activities for women from 56 countries speaking 44 languages, from art and craft classes to food and cooking events, to sewing and selling their products. They also run ecotherapy courses and healthy city walks around the city and surrounding countryside.

We also heard from Siri Areelertworakul, the case worker for the project, who helps those for whom English is not their first language to access the kind of support they need. This involves trauma sensitivity, a holistic approach and an aim to build social cohesion. In the past year they have supported 119 women and their families through the cost of living crisis.

After we had enjoyed a coffee break with Holy Land Cake, Turkish Delight and Chocolate Brownies, delegates had a choice of taking part in a discussion group or a craft activity making orange origami boats and origami hearts. The discussion group discussed how to put compassion into action.

The photograph on the front cover shows the craft group having fun learning how to make the boats and hearts.

Orange is the colour chosen to represent support for refugees and asylum seekers, reminding everyone of the orange inflatable boats which are so often seen in reports on TV about desperate refugees trying to get to the UK.

Although this was a fun activity, the serious issue underlying the study day was brought sharply home to all of us during the presentations.

Proceeds from the sales table (left) are to be donated to the Network of International Women.

