

President Alison's message

Inside Out and Outside In



I FINISHED MY June message by saying we were going to Kos for our holiday. This proved to be quite an eventful visit as we were evacuated on our first night to the football stadium (along with 5,000 others) because a wild fire was heading our hotel's way. Another sign of climate change I fear, and one which will detrimentally affect tourism to many of the Greek Islands.

I'm sure this vitally important environmental issue is high on each club's agenda and some of you will be

showcasing any relevant projects when applying for the Grace Onions Award. Just a reminder that the deadline for submissions is the end of August and we will announce the winner at the AGM on September 14 (please note change of date). A small panel from the Executive looks forward to evaluating the various entries.

Just one visit this month to Lewes Club on July 27 for the additional Murder Mystery lunch. Thanks to Vera Gajic for hosting and all the participating suspects, who seemed to enjoy themselves (see page 11).

SI Lewes donated an additional £100 towards the regional project, so we are well over the £4,000 mentioned in my last message. I've not yet heard back from the educational trust concerning my application for some funding but am keeping my fingers crossed.

In August I'll be giving an update on ABCD and the project at a lunch in Canterbury, and then to Sevenoaks and Bromley club meetings in September. Hopefully there will be some more positive news about the situation in Palestine to share at the AGM.

Some of you will have picked up the fact that each region has been invited to showcase their projects at Conference in Edinburgh. A small group held a discussion on ZOOM on how we propose to take this forward. Our initial idea is to invite each club to submit a photograph and caption of a highlight from their past year so we can produce a poster collage.

Do look out for this request as we need to have our presentation ready by the end of August.

We will also be appealing to each Club once again for nominations for Regional Secretary and Treasurer. To reiterate: **we cannot run the region without these two vital posts.**

I trust nobody else experiences such an adventure as ours during your holiday but wish you all a restful summer break.

YOURS IN FRIENDSHIP,
ALISON DRISCOLL

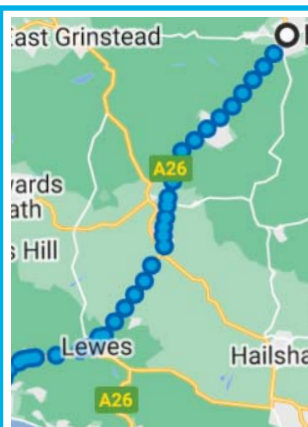
What's in this month's newsletter?



President Lotte cutting the 70th cake, page 02.



Fundraising Raspberry Tea, page 04.



Sponsored walk raises £620, page 05.



Celebrating Wellness Month, page 06.



Assisting with Mock Interviews, page 07.



Silver Award for Byron School, page 10.

Eastbourne and District Club celebrate 70 years of service



At the
Town
Hall



Presentation of flowers to the ladies
and a bottle to the driver



Visit to the
Mint House



Our Japanese visitors at the Hydro
with Denise Staplehurst and on her
left Dianne Couch from SI Colchester



Nuria



Fish and Chips
to finish the day

OUR 70TH ANNIVERSARY celebrations took place during the first weekend in June. We were delighted to welcome our friendship link club visitors; four from Japan, three from Germany and two from Leeds, and they all stayed at Eastbourne's Hydro Hotel where our celebration lunch took place on June 01.

The event began on Friday evening, May 31, with a welcome buffet supper where gifts were presented to our visitors, which included a copy of the Eastbourne Club Writers' book and gifts from Eastbourne.

On Saturday morning, June 01, we had an audience with the Eastbourne Mayor Councillor Candy Vaughan. This was attended by our Federation President Ruth Healey, club members and our link club guests. We shared details of our projects and were given a tour of the magnificent town hall.

The main event of the anniversary was lunch at the Hydro Hotel, where we welcomed many members from our Region, past members and friends. We held a raffle which raised £305 for our club charities.

Our visitors were very generous with their gifts and we received £700 from our friendship links for our club projects, £70 from Whitstable Club for the club, and a candle and Ferrero Rocher chocolates from the East Grinstead Club.

The meal was excellent with a salmon starter, chicken main course and tiramisu for dessert. This was followed by coffee and a slice of our delicious anniversary cake, cut by President Lotte (see cover photo).

Flowers were presented to the Mayor, Federation President Ruth, Regional President Alison, Club President Lotte and a bottle was given to our mini bus driver who transported our guests to all events.

In the early evening the minibus driver picked up our friendship links and took them on a tour of our famous Beachy Head before arriving at President Lotte's house on the beach in Pevensey Bay for a delicious buffet supper prepared by her daughter and her friend.

On the Sunday we went to the Mint House in Pevensey where our Soroptimist member Harriet gave us a guided tour of this ancient building. We also visited St Nicholas Church in Pevensey, the Court Gaol Museum and the Roman Fortress before enjoying a roast lunch at the Royal Oak and Castle Restaurant next to the castle.

In the afternoon we all visited Eastbourne member Nuria for a traditional afternoon tea of cakes and scones with jam and cream. The club presented her with a Fuchsia for her beautiful garden.

The Japanese visitors said goodbye on Monday morning as they were travelling to London and then on a coach trip to Stonehenge. Also in the photo is Dianne Couch from the Colchester Club.

The German visitors had problems with their flights and stayed an extra night. So on the Monday President Lotte and Denise took them to Rye for the day. We went via Hastings to see the Fisherman's huts. They really enjoyed the old town of Rye and on the way back we paused at Battle Abbey and talked of 1066 and the Battle of Hastings. The day finished with a traditional fish and chips supper at Denise's house.

The following morning there was an early start and Denise took them to Heathrow leaving at 07:00. It was an amazing weekend.

DENISE STAPLEHURST, SI EASTBOURNE

Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI), Press Release 26/6/2024 Produced by Altitude

85% of UK Women Demand Domestic Abuse Services Funding Answers from Government.

Here at Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI), we recently conducted a survey revealing the key topics women feel are most important for MPs to address ahead of the UK's General Election on Thursday July 04.

Of the 482 women surveyed – all SIGBI members – 85% feel one of the top three most pressing questions is: 'How will your government ensure that domestic abuse services for women and children are properly funded?'

According to ONS data, 2.1 million people – 1.4 million of whom were women – experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023.

The other areas Soroptimists placed in their top three topics for government attention were:

- How the Government will develop a women's health strategy (65%)
- How the Government will ensure the efforts of volunteers, charities, and civic society are valued and maintained (43%)
- How the Government will ensure more girls are involved in the tech sector (41%)

A quarter (25%) of respondents cited the development of a women's health strategy as their top concern.

Commenting on the results, Ruth Healey, President of SIGBI, said:

"While women make up 51% of the UK electorate, they only make up 35% of members of the House of Commons.

"There is nowhere near enough parliamentary representation, and this needs to change.

"Having more females in government is crucial, as this helps to ensure that legislation and policies are inclusive of women and girls' needs and concerns.

"And in order to secure women's votes, politicians will need to clearly communicate how they aim to address the challenges facing the 51%, and how the lives of women and girls are at the heart of their policies."

In 2022, the BMA reported that the UK has the widest gender health gap in the G20. And while women make up 50% of the UK workforce, only 24% of tech roles are occupied by women.

"Domestic abuse services, women's health strategy development, and involving more girls in tech are all women-specific issues needing more focus and funding from the Government," continued Ruth.

"The catalogue of stark statistics and our survey results combined clearly show more attention is needed in these areas and that women across the country want, and deserve, answers from MPs."

Founded in 1921, SIGBI is a registered charity born out of the service movement. The charity has consultancy status at the United Nations, focuses on empowering women and girls to achieve their full potential and works to eliminate barriers and discriminations that hinder women's progress.

It has 248 clubs throughout the UK, Malta, Asia and the Caribbean – over 200 of which are in the UK – and has a total of 5,150 members.

Inspiring our future leaders



COMPLETING MY FIRST year as a mentor with The Girls Network (TGN) has been a rewarding experience. Helping my mentee to gain clarity in her studies, such as which A levels to choose and why, highlights the need for organisations such as TGN.

Combining my experience as a coach with the TGN resources meant that our sessions were well structured whilst allowing room for flexibility as needed. I was especially happy for my mentee when she applied for and, out of over 300 applicants, secured one of 30 places on a specialist programme over the Easter break. This was a great boost to her confidence, helping her to become more aware of her capabilities.

Thank you to past president Lynne Chiswick for your encouragement and the gift of books for the cohort at the school. The girls were delighted to receive them on the final day of term.

ROXANNE ST CLAIR, JOINT PRESIDENT, SI CROYDON

Auction Dinner for Four



WHITSTABLE MEMBERS JANE Webb and Karen Grieves, and their husbands, joined us for dinner here in Canterbury on July 19, the hottest evening of the year.

We were able to eat outside as though we were abroad, and stay outside until it was dark.

I can be seen just about to go inside for another beer!

It was a good evening with lots of chat. I'm not the best of cooks but everyone seemed to enjoy the food.

£100 was raised for the SISEE Region Project, ABCD.

CAROL REED, SI CANTERBURY

Dates of the 2024 Saturday Region Meetings

September 14 (AGM note change of date)
to be held at the Holiday Inn, Rochester
Maidstone Road, Rochester ME5 9SF

December 07 via ZOOM (to be confirmed)

Proposed dates for 2025 Region Meetings

March 15; June 21; September 20

Medway and Maidstone welcome new member Mel



At the July club meeting, we were pleased to welcome Mel Dann Adamson as a new member. Carol Infanti, Membership Officer, can be seen here presenting Mel with her name badge.

Mel wanted to join the Soroptimists because she believes in our core values of improving the lives of women and girls. She is a wife and a mother of two daughters, who wants to ensure that she is doing all that she can to shape their lives by empowering, educating and enabling them the opportunity to be strong women in the future.

She was introduced to the club by Annette Davies, who is also godmother to Mel's daughters.

Mel works in the care sector and says, "I enjoy my job immensely. Every day is different and comes with different challenges but it's also rewarding. I enjoy making a difference in people's lives in my everyday role. I'm a people person who enjoys meeting new people, getting to know them and learning about their lives."

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Membership and Communications Officer shares insights from the Standing Committee



At a recent club meeting, Croydon's Coral Pitter-Konibire shared her insights from the SIGBI Membership Standing Committee headed up by Dishy Attwood, Director of Membership.

She spoke about why she had joined the committee board, and the skills she is learning with regard to the different projects undertaken to research membership recruitment and retention. She hopes her new knowledge will benefit Croydon Club.

CORAL PITTER-KONIBIRE, SI CROYDON



Fundraising Raspberry Tea for Croydon Vision



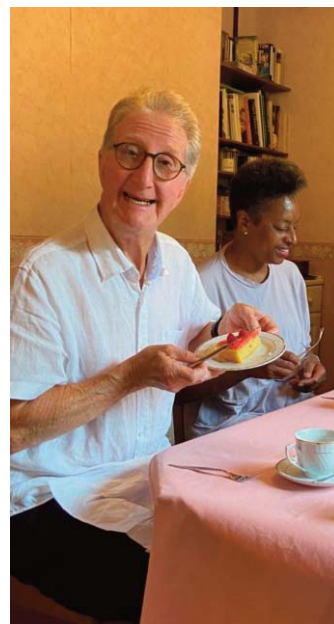
MEMBERS AND FRIENDS from Croydon and Bromley clubs gathered at Heather Bailey's house on Sunday July 07 for a fundraising afternoon tea.

Sandwiches, scones, a raspberry iced sponge cake, and an ice cream containing layers of chocolate, raspberry ripple and Bailey's liqueur flavours were eagerly consumed, accompanied by Prosecco and tea served by Heather's husband Bob!

A small raffle was held, together with the sale of home-made Raspberry jam, courgettes and gooseberries all grown in Heather's garden.

The event raised £176 for Croydon Vision. It had been hoped to hold the event in the garden, but the weather forced a change of plans.

HEATHER BAILEY, JOINT PRESIDENT, SI CROYDON



The Annual Summer Lunch!



THE MONTH OF July has come and it's always a joy to organise the SI Sevenoaks annual Summer Lunch.

The Conservatory roof closed and heater on but the rain could not be heard over the cheerful chatter.

Thanks to The Chaser Inn at Shipbourne for wonderful meals and of course members' good company.

PENNY ROBBINS, PAST PRESIDENT, SI SEVENOAKS

Supporting Amnesty International at the Chatham Carnival



ON A COLD AND blustery Saturday in July, Janet Garnons-Williams and Carol McKeough, from Medway and Maidstone supported the Chatham community carnival by helping on the Amnesty International stall. The carnival, part of Medway Culture Fest 24, celebrated Medway's community, creativity and history.

It was a very interesting and fun event, but the weather was destined to have its say. Strong gusts of winds followed by the torrential rain did not daunt the enthusiasm of the crowds.

There were many banners, including those celebrating the lives of Kent and Medway women, such as Verena Holmes, mechanical engineer, and Dame Kathleen Courtney, suffragist.

Janet and Carol encouraged people to sign up to the local group, but particularly to sign a letter to our new MPs, pledging to protect human rights. They collected over two sheets of signatures for the MP letter and 15 for the Amnesty International mailing list. This builds support for our longstanding partnership with Amnesty.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



TUNBRIDGE WELLS' CHARITY for this year is Survivors' Network, a charity that supports women and children who have suffered sexual trauma.

The club held a film night in May, which raised £120 and benefitted from a fund matching scheme that was in place at the time, meaning our donation was doubled.

In June, President Cat Mennell undertook a sponsored walk from Tunbridge Wells to Brighton where Survivors' Network is based. The walk took place over two days, fortunately sunny and dry!

The first leg was from Tunbridge Wells to Nutley, a length of 24 miles mainly through the Ashdown Forest area. On the second day, the walk continued from Nutley through to Brighton, another 28 miles through farms and woodland and over the South Downs.

A total of £620 was raised for the charity.

We have another event planned for November 30, a quiz night during the 16 Days of Activism. This will also fall within a fund matching period, meaning that anything we raise will be doubled.

CAT MENNELL, PRESIDENT, SI TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Closing Date
for the next edition of SEE News
Sunday, August 25, 2024

2024 Closing Dates are:
September 24; October 25;
November 24; December 27.

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

SOROPTIMIST DAY OF ACTION



13 July 2024

sigbi.org



IT WAS THE SIGBI Day of Action on July 13 and the theme this year was poverty. Each club was able to decide what they wanted to focus on – such as Food, Health, Education, or any local issue. Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists chose to focus on Food and Education.

In the week leading up to the Day of Action, two Soroptimist members Stella and Jane Barnes spent a morning at Byron Primary School sorting through 12 black sacks full of donated clothing. This was in preparation for the End of Term 'Come and Take Free Uniform' event on July 09 that parents had been invited to attend.

On July 11 we had our club meeting, and the speaker was Ruth Lindsay, manager of Medway Food Bank. This year's word is 'together', it is about being connected and re-connected.

In 2023, 15,153 people were fed, this was 0.6% down on the previous year. This is good news as their overall aim is to reduce

the demand for the service. The current figures show that 217 people in 84 households across Medway were fed during the third week of July. The only criteria is that people do not have enough money to buy food. The food parcels given out last for three days, and are nutritionally balanced. Parcels are only issued if a person has a voucher. These are issued by various agencies, such as social workers, GP, schools, health visitors.

The food bank can also arrange an Arriva bus ticket for the person to get into town from outlying areas to collect their food parcel. Once in the centre, they are encouraged to have tea and a chat to help understand their issues so that volunteers can give advice and or direct to other agencies.

Ruth was thanked for her interesting talk and was presented with food and toiletries donated by club members for the Food Bank. [See thank you card on page 10.]

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

July was Wellness Month at SI Croydon



Pat Dale (left) and Francis Lamberth

MEMBERS ENJOYED TALKS from two Soroptimists, Croydon member Frances Lamberth and Bromley member Angela Hulm.

During her talk, Frances, a qualified Physiotherapist who works with mature adults, educated members about mobility, flexibility and how to prevent falls at home. Members were intrigued to hear that most falls happen first thing in the morning or in the bedroom.

Heather Bailey, Lynette Richards-Lorde and Pat Dale were willing volunteers for Frances' pace test, and did a very good job too. Frances' talk was enlightening in that it brought awareness to avoidable hazards in the home, such as the positioning of a footstool, that can be overlooked due to lack of knowledge.

Angela's talk on July 25 was a visual display of the benefits of Iyengar yoga. In addition to sharing the history of Iyengar yoga Angela demonstrated how tension can be released from the body in order to improve flexibility. Her effortless movements and poses had even the most cautious members considering how practicing yoga might be beneficial to them.

With these two superb sessions, SI Croydon members embraced their wellness month with much vigour.

ROXANNE ST. CLAIR, JOINT PRESIDENT, SI CROYDON



Angela (left) and Roxanne showing how it's done



East Grinstead Club assist with mock job interviews



ON THURSDAY, JULY 18, three members of the Club spent the day at Sackville, a local secondary school, conducting mock employment interviews with Year 10 students as part of the school's annual Futures Day.

The aim of the event was to develop interview and employability skills in the students and to make a positive contribution to their preparation for the world of work.

The students had written letters of application for their chosen jobs and submitted CVs. Our three Club members and other representatives of outside organisations interviewed each student for 10 to 15 minutes using questions based around communication, creative problem-solving, self-management and collaboration, all vital skills for working in today's world. The interviewers then provided feedback both verbal and written.

For many students this was the first time they had experienced an interview situation and quite naturally found it quite daunting. The feedback given to the students was constructive and positive enabling them to learn from the occasion and put their newly acquired skills into practice in real life.

The Club has had a long-standing relationship with Sackville School, both with Interview training and competitions, and with a Good Citizen Award. This latest initiative has developed from these past ventures and has proved very beneficial both to the students and the interviewers who were most impressed by the young people involved.

ROSEMARY STONE, SI EAST GRINSTEAD

Orange the World at the Buntastic Cafe, Sevenoaks



TWELVE MEMBERS AND friends of SI Sevenoaks gathered at the elegant Buntastic Café in Sevenoaks High Street to enjoy a coffee and chat, and to draw attention to our Orange the World Campaign to end Violence Against Women and Girls. In the light of the dreadful figures recently released by the BBC, we are very conscious of the scale of the problem and are keen to highlight it as much as we can. The café owners were very helpful and let us leave the posters in place for other customers to see.

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO SI SEVENOAKS

Rise to the Challenge and step forward!



WHAT CAN YOU say when you get a phone call at home totally out of the blue at a very inconvenient moment? Well, I am glad I did answer it and said I would phone back in 15 minutes!

Full of curiosity I phoned Gina Coad at SIGBI. I answered some questions, and to her delight shared that I was an experienced recruitment interviewer in the past, and also, amazingly, given my busy diary, was available at short notice for two zoom meetings within a week with SIGBI President Ruth Healey.

It was only then that I learnt that I was to be one of three on an interview panel for the SIGBI Director of Programme... and not just that, but so was Hilary Rowberry (pictured above right). We had both been singled out given our strong commitment and track record on Programme Action (PA). The third member was Sue Biggs a former holder of the equivalent post.

SIGBI is determined to involve more members in shaping the future of the organisation as we move forward with the Modernisation Agenda, and embrace its challenges and different ways of working. There can be advantages to technology!

I really enjoyed the experience, and Hilary and I gained some fascinating insights into the strategic thinking on the potential plans for Programme Action. These include significantly increasing our advocacy work and our focus on partnership working, whilst driving consistency in our messaging, which is being developed by the marketing consultants collaborating with SIGBI for a trial year.

The importance of PA engagement within Clubs and Regions is fully appreciated and encouraged. There are plans to ensure that we are able to log information and data in the most efficient way, so that our system also captures our service and volunteering work that is currently well under-recorded. This will enable SIGBI to report against its charitable objectives, as well as the Office of National Statistics classifications, and the SDGs.

The focus shown by our reports will provide evidence and examples for targeted partnership working and advocacy to improve the lives of women and girls, whilst also raising the public profile of Soroptimism.

So, if you should get a phone call from SIGBI, or possibly have information or expertise to share when a request is made, you can gain and learn a lot by raising your head above the parapet and stepping forward. Two quotes from world leaders come to mind:

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

Mahatma Ghandi

"It always seems impossible until it is done."

Nelson Mandela.

MARY DALMAN, SI BROMLEY

Soroptimists attend the Inauguration of the Suffragist Sensory Garden in Rochester



ON JULY 20, 2024, six Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists joined around a hundred supporters and volunteers, gathered on Rochester's Esplanade for the Dedication Ceremony of the Suffrage Sensory Garden.

The event was organised by Friends of Rochester Churchfields and Esplanade (FoRCE) and featured special guests, including author Jennifer Godfrey, Lauren Edwards MP, and Deputy Mayor Cllr Douglas Hamandishe. They formally concluded the project by planting three crab apple trees generously donated by supporters that included two by the Soroptimists.

The plan to develop a sensory garden started in January 2020. Over the last four years this beautiful garden has been brought to life by FoRCE's volunteers as a tribute to local non-militant suffragist Vera Conway Gordon. She peacefully campaigned for equality and Votes for Women in the early 1900s and led a group of local pilgrims to walk the 'Kentish Pilgrims' Way' to London during the Great Pilgrimage of 1913. Her dedication

and spirit are reflected in the serene and inclusive design of the garden.

Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists have been proud to be associated with this project over the past four years. This has involved donating funds for plants, contributing 100's of hours volunteering, and planting in the gardens a Soroptimist Rose given to the club by Regional President Grace Onions for our 75th Anniversary.

The Suffrage Sensory Garden has been created to enrich the overall landscape of the Esplanade Park below Rochester Castle as an inclusive area where visitors of all ages and abilities can enjoy a range of educational and recreational sensory experiences. This has been achieved using a combination of the existing landscape, together with pollinator-friendly plants, herbs, and other flora to generate a range of aromas, colours, textures, and sounds to encourage and stimulate the senses.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE



The Deputy Mayor planting a crab apple tree



Soroptimists at the ceremony

Walking for Trees

ON JULY 25, SI Croydon were happy to welcome back to the club Sam Baker from Croydon Climate Action (CCA) to update members on the outcome of the Trees4Croydon campaign (June-July 2023).

The initiative saw over 700 people (including seven from Croydon club) register to walk, run or cycle to raise funds to plant trees in the less green areas of the borough. Participants covered a total of 30,000 miles and succeeded in raising £25,000. With match funding the final figure secured was £115,000.

Most of the trees have been planted in the designated locations, including the Crocus Garden in Croydon University Hospital, an area of tranquility for mothers who have lost their babies. To date eight trees are still waiting to be planted and £7,500 remains unspent. The intention is to use the remaining funds to plant trees in local schools that would benefit from and can accommodate a green space.

Members were pleased to hear that the campaign was successful, and look forward to working with CCA on future projects.

ROXANNE ST. CLAIR, JOINT PRESIDENT, SI CROYDON



Becoming an Associate Member... and the Teddies march on!



President Elect Margaret Crabtree, Shirley Brigham and Sandie Higgs, PAO.

AFTER 33 YEARS AS a Soroptimist I sadly decided not continue my full membership due to health issues, so became an Associate Member in May 2024. It's great, fellow Soroptimists, and is working well. I have had excellent communication with Federation and Region and have continued my links with the Sevenoaks Club, so still feel very involved. The Teddie project is a great example.

Shirley Brigham, Sevenoaks' knitter par excellence, has never stopped knitting and outlets must be found for the Teddies. I have always enjoyed finding Teddie outlets so was thrilled to find that a previous outlet, Charles Dickens Primary School Southwark, wanted 60 teddies to use as Literacy Aids [SDG4, Quality Education]. My link with the school is my daughter Stella who teaches there.

Teachers are very concerned that the Covid generation of children joining school are very behind with literacy skills. The nursery and reception class children have each taken a Teddie home this Summer and are tasked to talk to their Teddie all summer, come back to school in September and share their Teddie holiday stories.

At the SI Sevenoaks monthly coffee morning on July 25, highlighting Violence against Women, Shirley was presented with lots of thank you cards from the children at Charles Dickens School (see above). This school serves two huge housing estates in Southwark and the Teddies were also distributed with food packs.

Stella adds "Thank you for access to the brilliant Soroptimist network!"

ISOBEL GROVES, ASSOCIATE MEMBER

If you are an Associate Member and would like to share your story, please contact Patricia Painting at pat.painting@btinternet.com



Executive Committee Summer Tea Party



ON JULY 28, PAST SI Sevenoaks President Pat Downing invited current President Pauline Payne to host a tea party at her lovely Otford home.

Present were President Pauline Payne, Pat Downing, President Elect Margaret Crabtree, retiring Treasurer Margaret Nicholson, retiring Secretary Jenny Webb and PA Officer Sandie Higgs.

Pauline provided prosecco (being enjoyed above) and nibbles followed by a delicious cream tea!

We are very lucky to welcome Margaret Crabtree as our new President, taking over in October, and we have also been able to find a new Treasurer and Secretary, so the Club is in very good heart!

SANDIE HIGGS, PAO, SI SEVENOAKS





IT HAD BEEN a busy time for the Byron Rights Respecting School (RRS) Steering Group as they prepared for the Silver level re-accreditation meeting being held virtually by UNICEF on the morning of June 20. This is to assess how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is known to the children, and adults, who use the shared understanding for improved child wellbeing, school improvement, global justice and sustainable living.

Jane Barnes is a regular member of the Steering Group as a Soroptimist and the Community representative. She was invited to take part in the preparations and was the community representative at the important re-accreditation meeting.

Jane was able to sit in and observe the pupils aged 5–11 years being asked probing questions about what they understood about rights. One young pupil aged seven was cuddling one of the school mascots, 'Rocky, the Rights Respecting Turtle', as she responded to the questions and spoke passionately and with enthusiasm about rights.

The children were familiar with a number of articles including the right to an education, to rest and play, privacy as well as the rights of refugees... and to not be kidnapped.

They spoke with confidence about children not having their rights met, such as being forced to do dangerous work, girls being treated differently to boys and not allowed to go to school. They spoke about problems with the lack of access to clean water and the impact of not having a toilet.

The assessor explored how the children are empowered to enjoy and exercise their rights and to promote the rights of others locally and globally. She heard how they had suggested the school become plastic free and have eco-warriors to do regular litter picks. The school runs a free school uniform swap and a food bank for those in need. Children have actively participated in fundraising for Mary's Meals, Water Aid and toilet twinning. The children were able to explain how doing this helps other children access their rights. It was satisfying to see how those specific activities, which Soroptimists have actively supported Byron with throughout the year, have played a significant part in evidencing this aspect.

As the children left, two teacher representatives and two parent representatives joined the meeting. One of the teachers said they were fully on board and had brought in one of the

folders 'Rocky's Rights Holder'. This was full of examples from the children in his class that had been completed as part of their homework when they took Rocky home.

Both parents commented on how they felt well-informed about rights, how using the language of rights has '...opened a dialogue... it is a massive support.' Rocky, the Rights Respecting turtle is sent home with each child along with information on children's right and this with the newsletters, '...educates the parents.'

There was Good News as the feedback from UNICEF following the meeting was that Byron had achieved their Silver level award. At the next Steering Group meeting, Jane took in fairy cakes she had made to congratulate the children, which were enjoyed by all.

Next term, Byron will start working towards achieving the Gold level award. Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists will be proud to continue supporting Byron as part of our commitment to our partnership agreement and their work as a Rights Respecting School.

JANE BARNES, SI MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE

Medway and Maidstone receive thanks for their support on Soroptimist Day of Action (see page 06).



SI Lewes Dead on Time!



ON SATURDAY, JULY 27, Region President Alison Driscoll cooked up a Russian storm full of eastern delights.

Lewes club bid for the Murder Mystery afternoon at the March regional meeting to raise funds for Alison's regional project working with the charity ABCD. The proceeds from the lunch, along with an additional donation of £100 from Lewes will go towards the salary of a speech and language therapist in one of ABCD's five partner refugee camps in the West Bank.

Club members and partners enthusiastically took on their various characters while Alison's husband Renee set the wheels in motion aboard the Orient Express.

The lunch was hosted at the home of Lewes member Vera Gajic (Hanky Panky in a fetching Kimono and wig) where eight guests enjoyed a four course meal while they tried to work out who had murdered Mr Big Job. No-one guessed the identity of the murderer (including the murderer) but they did raise £300 and had a lot of fun.

SI Lewes would like to thank Alison and her husband for organising such a lovely, enjoyable and delicious afternoon.

VERA GAJIC, SI LEWES



**Lewes & District
Sorooptimist Club's
Annual Summer BBQ Party**

 Women inspiring action,
transforming lives 

Sunday 18th August @ 12.30pm

Lunch £15 per person

**at Anja and Robin's house,
Barcombe Cross Station,
High Street, Barcombe, BN8 5BD**

Family and Friends welcome!

Raffle Prizes available £1 per ticket

