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Message from Sue Edgar President



It's Never Too Late – or Too Early

For many of us this Winter has been cold, wet and grey and yet there is evidence of Spring being around the corner. Bulbs seem to be pushing on regardless.

One miserable Sunday afternoon in January I joined a Zoom meeting, hosted by President Ruth Healey. She had invited a group of Regional Presidents to discuss Edinburgh Conference following attendee feedback and several of the Regional Presidents did not hold back on their comments.

The phrase 'you can't please all of the people all of the time' springs to mind, however there was constructive feedback. At our forthcoming regional meeting on 15th March, I will expand on the meeting content such as the role of the FCC and the Open Board meeting held on February 8th. President Ruth intends to continue these Regional President meetings throughout the remainder of her Presidency.

There has been much activity planned around International Women's Day on Saturday 8th March, being posted on Facebook. SI Lewes' event is a Fundraising Walk and proceeds will go to RISE women's refuge services in Sussex. SI Whitstable and District's International Women's Day Dance with 'Project F' looks very interesting if you fancy strutting your stuff.

I am sure other Clubs have events to mark the day and it's relevance and I look forward to hearing about the day either at the Regional meeting or in the Newsletter. Please photograph any activities for your newsletter articles or social media postings.

**Spring is around the corner and so is
International Women's Day on 8th March.**

Save the Date for an important event

On Sunday 20th July please join Sue Edgar for a fundraising lunch at the London Beach Country Hotel Spa & Golf Club. (Funds raised will go to Breast Cancer Kent and other local charities)

*More details will be available
at our March Regional Meet-*



From East to West and all points in between

After our SISEE Poster was proudly displayed at the Edinburgh Conference, it was decided to print more robust copies (to be used inside or out and wipeable) for use at Club events. We have three in all, two in the West of the Region and one in the East of the Region. If you have an event where you think this Poster would be a good addition to your display these posters can be made available to all.



Soroptimist 63 Gin is back



Partnering with Gorilla Distilleries, this bespoke Gin is now available again.

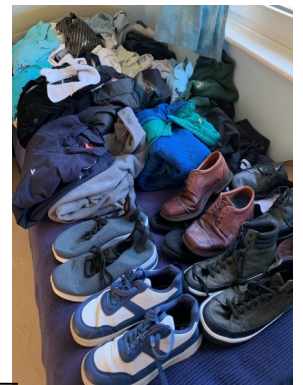


For more details contact Pat Dale



Clothing for Gatwick Detainees

SI Sevenoaks have been collecting clothing for the Gatwick Detainees for a number of years now – we have managed to gather a good quantity of items, including several warm jackets and coats, and these were delivered in 5 bags to former member Beverley who will take them to Gatwick – she said a big thank you - the items will be put to good use - and can we please continue to collect! Our photo shows the clothing ready for packing.



Sandie Higgs SI Sevenoaks

Potential New Members welcomed and Interesting Speaker



"SI Sevenoaks were very happy to be able to meet in person for their meeting on Tuesday 11th February, and were delighted to welcome 4 guests - hopefully soon to be new members!"

We had a most interesting talk from Professor Ronald Denney, a noted Forensic Scientist, which was really interesting and engaging. At the end of the meeting President Margaret made a small presentation to member Kathy Jordan, pictured in the striped top, as she is getting married this week! We wish Kathy all the best!

Sandie Higgs SI Sevenoaks



At SI East Grinstead's meeting on Wednesday 5 February we were delighted to welcome Charlotte Holmes who spoke to us about her very varied career. After a year at university she decided that wasn't the way she wanted her future to go so she took a risk and left and obtained an office role at Chelsea football club. She stayed there for a few years before moving into fundraising roles, initially helping to fundraise for IVF charities, until moving to work for Leukaemia UK.

She is Head of Philanthropy, where she helps people give to causes they are passionate about, whether it is a business, as an individual or an event.

One of the biggest events of the year that Clare is involved in organising is "Who's Cooking Dinner?". You pay to come to an event and sit with 9 other guests at one of 20 tables not knowing which celebrity or Michelin star chef might be cooking your four-course meal. The likes of Gordon Ramsay, Rick Stein, Mark Hix, Angela Hartnett, Tom Kerridge and more have cooked at this unique event, where each table has a different chef preparing their meal - certainly an evening to remember!

Clare was so full of energy and enthusiasm that you can imagine she is very successful at her role. You would certainly find it difficult to say "no" to her!

Gill Beeney SI East Grinstead

Meet the Soroptimist Sister Volunteers

In President Ruth's February Membership blog on the Hub, her focus was on volunteers and the diversity of Soroptimist volunteers. She said, *'It's hard (and scary) to imagine a world without volunteers and it's equally hard (and scary) to think of the world without Soroptimist volunteers. They do so much, they work so hard, and they give so much of themselves!*

WE ♥ OUR VOLUNTEERS

Have you ever paused to think about how much volunteers give without asking for anything back? They show up, roll up their sleeves, and get things done – often without much fuss. It's easy to forget to say thanks, but even a few words can mean a lot. No matter if they helped at a single event or have been there through bigger efforts, showing a bit of appreciation goes a long way.'

Friends of Rochester Churchfields Esplanade (FoRCE) is a Medway based community-driven group dedicated to protecting and enhancing Rochester's green spaces and river walks. Their mission is to preserve the beauty and biodiversity of these cherished areas while creating welcoming spaces for everyone to enjoy.

Since their founding, they have been at the heart of projects that bring people together, from transforming overgrown beds into vibrant sensory gardens to tackling large-scale clean-ups along the Medway. Every step of the way, volunteers have made a meaningful impact on the environment and the community. In January, FoRCE launched their new website. Every so often they try and spotlight some of their amazing volunteers in their monthly newsletter and encourage others to come along and join in. Jane and Stella Barnes from SI Medway and Maidstone were the focus in January. The feature was headed 'Soroptimist Sister's and they introduced their readers to sisters Jane and Stella.



Canterbury Soroptimists enjoy a talk about family history

The popularity of the TV programme 'Who Do You Think You Are?' and of genealogy sites such as Ancestry.com show that many of us want to know more about where we 'come from' geographically, ethnically, and socially.

One person who wanted to know more about a particular ancestor is Bernie Morgan. She came to talk to Soroptimists and their friends in Canterbury on January 23rd at the Thanington Neighbourhood Resource Centre. Bernie had, as a child, heard her family talk about her great grandmother, one of India's first women lawyers. And later in life she decided to learn how to research her family, write a book drawing on the research, and then publish and promote a book about her great grandmother. The result is a book called 'The Amazing Life of Cecilia Chattergee.'

Bernie's great grandmother, a Parsee, lived from 1876 to 1947. She was a lawyer at a time when few women in British India had careers. She had four husbands and fourteen children, lived as a widow at a time when Indian society ostracised widows and, in short, was a remarkable woman.

Bernie's talk was interactive, drawing on comments and questions from the audience. And by the end of her talk, she had sparked a keen interest in many present in researching their own grandmothers!

Bernie also produces a podcast where she interviews other amazing women. For more information visit:

<https://www.amazingwomeninvisiblelives.com/product-page>



Tessa Woodward SI Canterbury

Friendships become more cherished as time goes on...



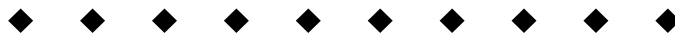
SI Bromley combined support for the VAW campaign on 25 January with an event to celebrate the life and works of Robbie Burns. Val Carrier generously invited members to her home where the traditional neaps and tatties was served, along with other good food.

Thanks Val and Trevor for the lovely afternoon and making us so welcome...



Several members who find it difficult to attend meetings were able to pop in, making the afternoon a great celebration of friendship.

Chris Thomas SI Bromley



SI Sevenoaks held their annual Charity Quiz night

A lively time; 10 teams competing including 2 guide dogs! The sum of £940 was raised for President Margaret Crabtree's chosen charity, Guide Dogs for the Blind. Margaret is pictured here, second left, presenting the prizes to the winners. This was our Sevenoaks Town Mayor, Councillor Libby Ancrum's team - very well done to them! Cllr Libby is next to Margaret, each with their smart chains of office! A big thank you to all the helpers for making the event such a success!



Sandie Higgs SI Sevenoaks

First Friendship Link Get Together in 2025



On 30 January, Julia Search Friendship Link Officer for Medway and Maidstone organised and hosted our first virtual Get together with our friendship link clubs for 2025. It was attended by 19 Soroptimists from clubs in Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, Germany and the Netherlands.

It was good to see new faces and to hear of the work clubs are doing and how we seem to work on similar projects.

Cassandra had read a book of Daniel Verlaan, a Dutch journalist on (cyber)crime called 'I know your password'. In this book he also talks about violence against women via socials and mobile phones. It opens one's eyes!

Carol from Medway and Maidstone spoke about a useful presentation and leaflet produced by Annette Maudsley (Safeguarding) on Technology Facilitated Domestic Abuse that could be shared. Julia agreed to forward a copy of the regional newsletter, as it has articles about the projects Medway and Maidstone are involved with, such as Shoebox Appeal, Fundraising for SI Foundation and Christmas Hampers to Women's Refuges.

Marie Luise (SI Osnabruck) spoke about their 25th anniversary in 2026, when Medway and Maidstone will also be celebrating their 80th anniversary. Hopefully, members will be able to travel to Germany to join in the celebrations. Christine from SI Chaguanas spoke about the successful recruitment of 7 new members and some were able to join

the meeting, where they were given a warm welcome. Nalini told us about an inspiring book they had written called 'Renew The Future' for primary age children to learn about renewable energy. It aims to spark curiosity and inspire young readers to explore how they can defend and renew the planet.

It was felt by all to be an excellent and worthwhile meeting with our friendship clubs. Christine said, 'It is always so rewarding getting together with sister soroptimist from different countries and learning what they are doing and how they are doing it. It reminds us of the bigger picture and gives us encouragement to continue our work. We thank you very much Julia for taking the initiative to bring us together. We appreciate this gesture.'

All those present agreed for their email addresses to be shared so they could make direct contact to follow up on projects they had heard about. Looking forward to the next Get together in May.

Cassandra (SI Voorburg) shared photos below of their Orange the World Day activities: with the mayor of Rijswijk (lady in black), the library (a lot of books about strong women were already taken home by people), at the market and the beginning: collecting and painting more than 80 shoes to give them a primer and a second layer of orange paint. A lot of fun painting them together with the other ladies.

Jane Barnes SI Medway and Maidstone



SI Croydon Events— Save the date and book today!

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND THE BOOKING FORMS,
PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE

SOROPTIMIST CROYDON CLUB
INVITES YOU
TO MAD HATTER'S BINGO AND
AFTERNOON TEA
SUNDAY 13th APRIL 2.00pm-5.00pm



AT THE SELSDON CENTRE, 132 ADDINGTON ROAD, CR2 8LA
£15

THERE WILL BE A RAFFLE IN AID OF THE COMMONWEALTH
GIRLS EDUCATION FUND AND ALSO A PRIZE FOR THE
BEST MAD HAT

BUT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO WEAR A HAT THAT'S OK!

PLEASE MENTION ANY DIETARY REQUIREMENTS ON YOUR
BOOKING FORM AND RETURN IT TO US BY MONDAY 31ST MARCH.

Soroptimist International
Croydon and District

2025-2026

Badge of London Borough of Croydon
Displayed by permission of Croydon Council

Croydon and Bromley Inter-Club Lunch
Saturday 17th May 12.30 for 1.00pm
Shirley Park Golf Club, 194 Addiscombe Road, CR0 7LB
(Free onsite parking)

Tickets £45.00

Guest Speaker: Sam Stein KC



"The Post Office Scandal"

Sam Stein KC is a leading silk in the field of public and regulatory law, who represented Sub-postmasters, Post Office managers and staff at the Court of Appeal in the Post Office Statutory Inquiry

There will be a raffle in aid of the Commonwealth Girls Education Fund
R.S.V.P. by Wednesday 30th April
Friends and family welcome
Please see below/overleaf for the menu and booking form:

Other save the date IWD events.....

SI LEWES SOROPTIMIST CLUB
FUNDRAISER WALK
on International Women's Day

Fundraising for RISE a Sussex-based charity that supports people affected by domestic abuse and violence.

Saturday 8th March 2025

11am meet at The Swan Pub, Southover High St, Lewes
Walk to The Juggs Pub in Kingston for Lunch (optional)
& back to The Swan Pub

RSVP TO:
Call Lara 07779096595
email Lewessoroptimistclub@outlook.com

Suggested donation £10
All Welcome!



Soroptimist International
Great Britain & Ireland
SI Tunbridge Wells & District

Celebrating Successful Women
in Tunbridge Wells

Sunday, 9th March
King Charles The Martyr Church Hall
2pm - 4.30pm

An International Women's Day Event

To celebrate International Women's Day, the Soroptimists of Tunbridge Wells are hosting an event which will focus on the achievements of five local successful women.

Each speaker will tell us in their own words about their individual paths to success, after which there will be a panelled discussion about the future and the most effective way of breaking down the remaining barriers to gender equality.

There will then be a Q&A session involving the audience followed by refreshments and an opportunity to network and share opinions on life in Tunbridge Wells

Our Speakers:

- Vic Jones**
– Senior Policy Officer at the TUC
- Nell Mellerick**
– Founder and Director of Arty Farty Retreat
- Sarah Raine**
– Founder and Managing Director of Colley Raine Associates
- Laura Toop**
– Chair of the Tunbridge Wells Independent Advisory Group (to the Police)
- Cora Valentine-Goddard**
– Founder and Director of CVG Family Law

A free event
Please register your place on Eventbrite

Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

At every monthly club meeting, Medway and Maidstone members bring in their empty blister packs to be taken for recycling to Superdrug in Sittingbourne. It was really good to find out this month that Boots



Medway and Maidstone Soroptimists Reduce Re-use Recycle



are also now offering recycling medicine and vitamin blister packs. You just need to register and opt in by downloading the Recycle at Boots app and follow the instructions.

Another way in which, members get involved in sustainable projects is with Kent & Medway Community Sharewear, which is a SATEDA-run project and a franchise of Community Sharewear. It is simple. They collect high-quality unwanted clothes and provide them free-of-charge to women and children in economic difficulty, using a combination of a referral system for individuals and an outreach service for organisations.

For some of us with the New year, it was a time for some de-cluttering sorting through the wardrobes and drawers. Sharewear had particularly asked for children's clothes age 4 and upwards. With the grandchildren growing so fast, bags of good unwanted clothes were soon finding their way to the new Community Hub in Sittingbourne. Organiser, Valerie Williams was pleased to receive them. She confirmed after a busy winter, they were now accepting season appropriate women's clothing again, so more decluttering and a return visit the following week.

Jane Barnes SI Medway and Maidstone

Time for Fun and Friendship

With busy schedules over the Festive period, Medway and Maidstone members decided to have an After Christmas Party on 18 January. Our host was Wanda Wright who opened up her home to 19 members with partners for a Bring and Share Supper. There was plenty of time for chatting with old and new members in relaxed surroundings whilst enjoying the selection of delicious food. We also brought a small, wrapped gift for Secret Santa. Before the enjoyable evening was over it was time to find out what Santa had for each of us. A big thank you to Wanda and her husband for their excellent hospitality.

Wanda as our Club Social Secretary is always busy looking for ideas for things for members to do and places to go. One suggestion was the MARS War and Peace exhibition at Rochester Cathedral (11 Feb- 9 March). Mars: War & Peace is a touring artwork by UK artist Luke Jerram. Measuring seven meters in diameter, the artwork features detailed NASA imagery. Visitors will feel transported to the inhospitable desert wasteland of Mars, whilst also reflecting on the realities of war for ordinary communities of people on our planet." Some members took advantage to pop in to see the exhibition before meeting up with other Soroptimist members for an enjoyable and relaxed lunch at Quills in Rochester. The next outing being organised by Wanda is to do one of the Quiz Trails in Tenterden in March followed by lunch.

Jane Barnes SI Medway and Maidstone



Sad Farewell to Liz Duckworth

SI Medway and Maidstone are sad to announce the death of Liz Duckworth on 17 February, shortly after a diagnosis of cancer. Liz joined the then Medway club in June 1982 and quickly became fully involved, joining the International committee.

Liz held office at club level as Secretary, President and Programme action officer, and attended several Henshaw weekends, a joint social event with Southern region.

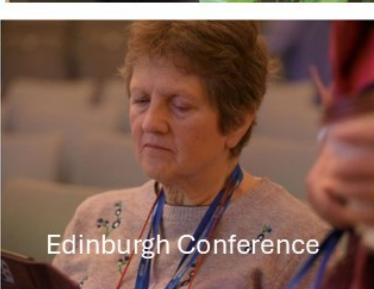
Liz took over from Daphne Whitmore as Region Secretary and went on to be Region President (1999 – 2000), working with Sue Greener, Maureen Keppler and then Ann Greenfield to review how the region operated. The model they devised was agreed by member vote and forms the basis of how we still work today.

Liz was chair of the Federation conference committee for the Nottingham Conference in 2004/5, and attended many subsequent conferences, up to the 90th one in Edinburgh last year.

In 2004, Liz and Jane Barnes travelled to Auckland, New Zealand on a Soroptimist bursary for three weeks, staying with Soroptimist members there, and learning much about the country by exploring the North and South Islands.

Liz was a gifted organiser, ever a fan of a spreadsheet, and with a passion for governance. She was a Soroptimist to her fingertips and will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Janet Garnons-Williams SI Medway and Maidstone



Closing Date

For the next edition of SEE News is

Monday 24 March 2025

Email your text and photographs to Sherry at soroptimistnewsletter@gmail.com