

No harm in asking . . .

SI Manchester members now know the power of a good letter.

One of theirs has had a result well beyond expectations, resulting in a visit by the Duchess of Cornwall.

In Autumn 2015, members were interested to read a newspaper article about Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, visiting a rape crisis centre in London. She believed giving a small gift of toiletries to survivors of such crimes could make a great difference to them, by bringing them the human touch after their trauma.

This struck a chord because SI Manchester has been donating toiletries to St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Manchester since it opened in 1986.

Members asked Programme Action Officer Val Moss to write to the Duchess about it. In the letter Val informed the Duchess that St Mary's SARC would be marking their 30th Anniversary year in 2016 and expressed the hope that she would visit them if she was able.

Sometimes Soroptimist dreams do come true, and on April 26 the Duchess of Cornwall did indeed come to see for herself.

She was greeted and given a tour of the Centre by Dr Cathy White, the Clinical Director, and Val and President Molly Byrne Robinson were privileged to be amongst those introduced to her.

At the end of the tour the Duchess unveiled a plaque on the occasion of the centre's 30th

Anniversary, which marks 30 years since they opened and 10 years since their specialised paediatric service began.

Dr White thanked the Duchess for visiting the centre and raising awareness.

The Duchess said that she had learned that St Mary's was the first of its kind in this country, had been told that it was the best and expressed the wish that we all keep talking about such issues.

President Molly had only been in office for a few weeks, so this was the first engagement of her year. She is American and married to a Mancunian, and says that her Mum back home was very proud to hear how her Presidential year had begun.



Left: The Duchess chats to one of the survivors of sexual abuse. Right: President Molly and PAO Val are pictured with Dr. White (Clinical Director) and Bernie Ryan (Centre Manager) after the unveiling.

Fifteen members of SI Crosby recently returned from Bruges, Belgium, having spent a long weekend renewing friendships with members of their twinned friendship clubs from Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

After recent visits in past years to the three countries and having hosted a visit back in Crosby, it was decided that a "neutral" destination would be "Bon".

One party travelled by Eurostar while the others flew into Brussels Airport, still recovering after the terrorist attacks there.

The first evening was a tapas and wine get-together which presented a wonderful opportunity for members of the four clubs to meet and catch up and for new members to experience for the first time the special relationship which international friendship brings.

There was time, too, to discuss the projects and work undertaken



by each club.

A walking tour of the city with an English guide got the first morning off to a good start while the afternoon programme offered a guided tour and beer tasting at the brewery Bourgogne des Flandres.

There was also an opportunity to try a Flemish delicacy of braised pig's cheek at the brewery restaurant.

Saturday saw the group enjoy a canal trip, visit lacemakers, tour famous landmarks, sample

chocolates at the chocolate factory and then buy chocolate, chocolate and yet more chocolate to take home.

The final dinner of the weekend was a fun occasion at Michelin listed restaurant, Brasserie Raymond, where gifts were exchanged and a heartfelt thank-you made to Swedish Soroptimist, Asa Fors Johnsson, a travel agent, who had made the weekend hotel bookings and arranged the programme with SI Falkenberg president, Margareth Johansson.

The other Scandinavian clubs participating were SI Kalundborg, Denmark and SI Sigal, Norway. SI Crosby President Margaret Cole said, "It was lovely to see our Soroptimist sisters from the three countries and catch up on news about their project work and their families.

"The weekend was a great success."



Merseyside club members at the Royal—making Soroptimists highly visible!

Regional President Sandy Taylor organised a special event for local Soroptimists at the new Royal Liverpool University Hospital to celebrate International Women's Day.

Representatives from Soroptimist clubs in Bootle, Crosby, Liverpool and Southport had the opportunity to find out more about the facilities, many of which are still in the planning stage.

In particular, there will be sanctuary or "crisis" rooms for patients who have undergone a traumatic experience (such as FGM) or who are facing bad news.

Members of the four Merseyside clubs have the opportunity to

provide extra facilities in terms of comfort and décor, which distressed patients would really appreciate.

President Sandy said: "This is an excellent opportunity for the local Soroptimist clubs to work together. In partnership with the hospital's R Charity, we could provide something of lasting value to patients – and vulnerable women in particular. I am delighted that members in the four clubs have agreed to support this project.

"The hospital is currently a building site, and hard hats were mandatory. So I hope our Federation President Margaret Emsley, who is an engineer, approves of the line-up!"

The visit also got Soroptimists a

special mention in the Royal's newsletter:

"R Charity welcomed four local Soroptimist clubs on International Women's Day to launch their fundraising and awareness raising journey supporting R Charity. The groups from Bootle, Crosby, Liverpool and Southport were joined and led by their regional President, Sandy Taylor, who also happens to be a nurse practitioner in Ophthalmology at the Royal Hospital.

"This fabulous group of women are organising fundraising events over the next 18 months and will do what they can to raise awareness of issues affecting women and girls along the way."

WIDNES

It was all about the 20s when SI Widnes members gathered at St Basil's on April 12 to celebrate President Denise Parker's year. Members and their guests channelled the flappers as they dressed up in 1920s fashion.

We welcomed our Regional President and presidents of several other clubs, who joined us for the evening.

President Elect Maureen Ellerton made us use our brains with a quiz about the 1920s.

A lot of it was guesswork - especially where the answers required giving the actual year when an event took place!

As always, members provided a great supper and everyone got a present from the lucky dip.



Afterwards, President Denise sent members a message:

"Thank you so much for a great President's Party last night. Particular thanks to Maureen and

the social committee.

"I love the beautiful Swarovski crystal pen that I was given by the club. Your hard work and friendship is very much appreciated."

Five Widnes Soroptimists travelled to Göttingen for the German club's 25th anniversary celebration weekend.

We flew to Frankfurt and then made the two-hour train journey to Göttingen. Helene, who had visited us in April, was there to meet us and take us to the Hotel Gebhards, owned by a Soroptimist, just a few minutes walk away.

Göttingen is a walled Roman city with a University that was founded by George II (yes, King of England) in 1734. The university has 13 faculties and has produced 47 Nobel prize-winners.

The official celebrations started on the Friday evening with an informal dinner at the Planea restaurant on the site of the Planetarium.

On the Saturday morning there was reception at a gallery when President Gabbe Flügge welcomed everybody.

In the afternoon we had an organised walk with a guide through the city visiting the City Hall and other



gees on the Turkish border and donations were given for this very relevant cause.

Between courses Andrea D. Buhrmann, Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Diversity Göttingen, gave a talk on "lifting the glass ceiling" - a talk giving ideas and guidance to enable women to take up the challenges of the present day.

On Sunday we had a walk to and around the botanical garden and along part of the wall back to the hotel.

meal of wild boar stew served in a large bread roll.

On Monday it was time to leave Göttingen. We travelled as far as Frankfurt but then had to stay an extra night due to a strike by Lufthansa!. We arrived home next day after a very enjoyable time: renewed our friendship with Helene and Gesine as well as making more friends. The Göttingen sisters had been superb hostesses and we look forward to meeting up with them soon.

- Lilian

LIVERPOOL



The SI Liverpool AGM was held at The Victoria on Wednesday, April 27.

Members were delighted to welcome into office our new President, Joan Felgate, her President Elect Dorothy Zack-Williams (right) and our newly elected Vice-President, Dorcas Akeju OBE (left).

SOCIAL MEDIA

SI South Lancashire's new public-facing Facebook is called Soroptimist International of South Lancashire.

The Twitter account is SISouthLancs (@SISouthLancs). The e-mail address for material to be posted on these is sislmedia@outlook.com

Membership Month (May) saw some ingenious events held by clubs across the South Lancashire Region, said regional membership officer Pat Williams.

“A great deal of thought and hard work has been put into the preparation and execution of these events,” she said.

“They served to bring club members together with focus and purpose.

“Hopefully all the clubs concerned will be rewarded with an increase in their membership - but even if not, they have impeccably raised the profile of Soroptimist International in their local areas.

“A brilliant effort - well done to everyone concerned.”

Some of the events reported to her:

SI Ashton under Lyne held an open evening as their event for Membership Month.

They advertised in the local press to the general public and invited other voluntary organisations.

Federation President Margaret gave a presentation about Soroptimism and a representative of Greater Manchester Police spoke about modern-day slavery, highlighting Programme Action work..

To highlight past, current and ongoing work and achievements of the club, a display stand was set up and there was plenty of promotional literature.

Refreshments were provided and time was allowed for networking

The aim of the event was to give the local community a wider knowledge of SI Ashton under Lyne.

The club gained publicity and there was the opportunity to make further links for their programme action work. The intention was to create a database of names and contacts for future reference.

SI Bolton's purpose in holding their Membership Month event was to raise awareness of Soroptimism and engage with prospective members for SI Bolton.

The Event was held at at Heaton Cricket Club on Tuesday the 10th of May.



The Federation President in action at Ashton under Lyne. SI Bury members ready for action.

It was organised by the Club, so that they could comprehensively answer the question, “Ask me why I’m a Soroptimist.”

Twenty-one visitors were invited to attend the informal Event and members were delighted to be able to welcome every one of them.

Jackie Roberts, the Club Treasurer, gave a brief presentation designed to answer the question. The visitors said afterwards that they had learned so much about the Soroptimist organisation in general and also about the work of the Bolton Soroptimists.

The buffet supper was enjoyed by all and there was plenty of talking and interest expressed in the club.

SI Bury had a very thorough approach in their preparations for their event on Wednesday 18th May.

Prior to the event many discussions took place at the end of club meetings, so that all members had an input. A timeline was devised and a Steering Committee was appointed to ensure jobs got done.

Leaflets and posters were produced and these were distributed to offices and business premises in Bury town centre. There was also an advert in the Bury Times for the two weeks preceding the event and they also managed to get a small paragraph in the paper in the final week.

The open event was held in their usual meeting place. There were displays of the club’s activities, both Programme Action and social. A buffet was provided and hot and cold drinks—including wine. Most of

the members signed up to be there for at least a couple of hours.

Six visitors came during the evening.

Two representatives from local charities were also invited so they could be presented with cheques.

After the event the President sent emails to all the attendees. One came to the next club meeting. Another apologised that she was on holiday, but was interested in coming to a meeting.

Members feel confident the lady who came to the meeting will come again and they have high hopes of attracting two of the other ladies so they may end up with three new members.

They agreed that it was a lot of hard work - but it did bring the club members together when planning it.

SI Ramsbottom's event took the form of Lunch with Ramsbottom Soroptimists in the local library on May 19.

The central location was accessible for women to call in their lunch hour or while shopping at no cost to the club and made use of a local amenity.

Prior publicity:

- a) What’s on in Ramsbottom/ Facebook/online info to Bury Times
- b) Posters distributed to public buildings, shops etc
- c) Bookmarks left in Library and busier shops, to be put in bags with goods
- d) Invitations were attached to leaflets giving information about the Club and its activities, projects, charities supported etc. These were distributed to smaller shops/

MEMBERSHIP MONTH

solicitors etc.

On the day, members made a variety of soups, provided rolls, biscuits and drinks.

Pull-up banners were placed outside and in the building.

Display boards were set up with photos of Club activities and a range of leaflets, Soroptimist Magazines. There was also a display of items collected for, such as Victim Support and porch boxes.

The outcome? Two probable new members, two possible new members and other expressions of support for fundraising.

SI Southport celebrated Membership Month by having a stand at The Atkinson, an elegant arts venue staging music, comedy and theatre in a 19th century building with a shop and cafe.

They gave out leaflets asking the question “Ask Me Why I’m a Soroptimist”, answered questions on the organisation and raised the profile of SI.

Photos and articles on the stand showed how members shared fun and friendship whilst fundraising, giving service and undertaking projects with a local, national and international impact.

SI Widnes organised an afternoon tea for Sunday 15th May at the Everglades Hotel(their meeting venue).

Fifty invitations were sent out to women members knew, who had been speakers, were involved in charities the club had supported or who had shown as interest in the organisation.

They could respond by email or phone and an effort was made to offer an alternative to all those who declined the afternoon tea—three possible speaker meetings, May, July and October

On the day there were 19 club members and 22 visitors, who enjoyed tear/coffee and scones with jam and cream. There was a friendship link display and examples of programme action activities. Finally, a free raffle for guests, the prizes being Soroptimist mementoes. It was a great afternoon enjoyed by all.



SI Bolton (above) answered the question: “Why am I a Soroptimist?” at their event.



SI Southport members (left) welcome visitors to their membership information stand.



SI Widnes held an afternoon tea.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

More than 100 Soroptimists attended South Lancashire's regional conference, held in Liverpool. Delegates also included many from the neighbouring region, North West England & the Isle of Man.

President Sandy Taylor's theme was "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Dr Nick Beeching opened the day with a look at some of the risks to travellers from infections and other "nasties" prevalent at holiday destinations, aboard cruise ships and in aircraft.

He was followed by a look at changing guidelines for managing the menopause, presented by Dr Paula Briggs. Her presentation prompted many questions from the floor.

Debbie Shelley, who manages a local Trussell Trust foodbank network, emphasised the extensive support needed for UK people in crisis, and outlined the risks that food poverty poses to people's physical and mental health.

Dr Melissa Gladstone discussed recent research into early child development. Findings in African countries on deprivation (whether of food, or education or stimulation) highlight the risks of children not reaching their full potential.



President Sandy with SI Crosby members at the conference.

Our Federation Vice President Sue Biggs gave a succinct outline of Soroptimist International's reputation within the United Nations where, as she said, "We punch above our weight."

"People living with dementia deserve choices" was the message from Teresa Jones, who set up Choices, a local activity and support day-care centre which promotes independence and opportunity.

Mezzo-soprano Danielle Thomas finished the day off with a programme of songs from light opera and famous musicals.

SI Crosby's President, Margaret Cole, summing up the day, "I am delighted that so many were able to support Sandy."

"The day was a great success for her and the Organising Committee and all the hard work paid off and the sun shone over the Mersey to delight all the visitors."

WARRINGTON



SI Warrington members were delighted when the local Press sent a photographer to their presentation of a wheelchair to the Oughtrington Community Day Care/Luncheon Club. Though they did think the large published picture seemed to have one important element missing!

BURY

A group of Bury Soroptimists enrolled in "Walk in Her Shoes" this Spring.

They agreed to walk 10,000 steps each day for seven days, which represents how far women and girls in Ethiopia walk daily to get water.

Without access to water, women and girls across the world are left unable to work or go to school because they have to spend their days walking to fetch water. Our group raised £800 which was sent to Care International UK.

Funds raised from campaign are used as part of the Help Her Live Learn and Earn project - a campaign to introduce a number of life-changing improvements



Sporting their T-shirts are, from left to right, are Julia DeSousa, Pam Wells, Joan Rees (President), Diane Nicholsby and Debbie Gregory.

for the women and girls of the Afar region in Ethiopia – one of the most geographically remote and inhospitable areas of Africa.

Deadline for the next issue of the Leader: September 1, 2016