

Stockport works to help victims, witnesses

SI Stockport and District raised funds to refurbish two Greater Manchester Police video interview and waiting rooms at the interview unit in Hazel Grove.

The facilities are used by both adult and child victims and witnesses, as well as those accompanying them.

Interview rooms were provided with pictures, cushions small tables and lamps, to make them more user friendly, calm and comfortable for the victims of crime, especially the vulnerable and those who have suffered serious assault or domestic violence.

Also, waiting rooms were provided

with pictures, cushions and lamps; TVs with inbuilt DVD players, DVDs suitable for children, books, toys, games, colouring books and pencils, along with magazines and paperbacks for adults.

As well as providing crockery, supplies of tea, coffee, sugar, milk and fruit juice will be replenished on a regular basis by the club.

Both the Stockport and Hazel Grove GMP Twitter accounts later posted the picture below with the Tweet: "Huge thanks to the Soroptimists of Stockport who sponsored the upgrades for victims at the division's Video Interview Unit at Hazel Grove."



SI Leigh members explain the aims of the CSE project to Federation President Ann Hodgson at North West England & IOM Region's Conference.

Leigh joins the fight against exploitation

SI Leigh and District members have joined forces with Wigan Council Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) team and Greater Manchester Police to highlight the increasing incidence of this horrendous abuse on vulnerable child victims.

The current focus is to provide awareness-raising workshops and training sessions to parents of at-risk children.

Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Lloyd funded the initiative under the Active Citizen Award scheme with the aim to target "hot spots" in the borough where parents and grandparents of Year 5-6 primary school students will be provided with details of sexting, cyber-safety and grooming and educated about prevention strategies to use.

Wigan Council have urged community groups and organisations like Soroptimists to take action as it strives to trigger its Prevent, Protect, Pursue, and Prosecute Strategy.



SI Stockport and District's President Eleanor Reakes and club members presenting a commemorative plaque to GMP Divisional Superintendent Stephen McFarlane.

SI Liverpool celebrated the 90th anniversary of its charter on February 25. Ann Clayton looks at the club's history.



The Soroptimist idea emanated from the United States, where the Rotary movement had been founded in Chicago in 1905. One of the founders of Rotary was an Irish-American lawyer, Stuart Morrow, who realised that a similar women's movement had distinct possibilities. He chartered the first Soroptimist Club in Oakland, California, in 1921.

Morrow made a living from chartering Rotary and Soroptimist clubs - he set up a Soroptimist Corporation headed by himself, and was paid 12½% of each member's initiation fee. In 1927 Stuart Morrow agreed to sell his rights in the Soroptimist Corporation for \$5500 (this would be £58,000 today). This amount was underwritten by all Soroptimist Clubs then in existence, in the USA and Europe.

Morrow arrived in Liverpool in 1926, and established an office close to the commercial centre. From here he contacted business and professional women via the Chamber of Commerce and their businesses, and called them to a first meeting on November 30, 1926, at Francis's Cafe in Parker Street. Morrow took the chair, and 29 ladies were present. The very first member to sign up was Mrs Elizabeth Pratt, a wholesale fish merchant.

Among these early Liverpool Soroptimists there was an actress, a broadcaster with the fledgling BBC, an emigration officer with the Canadian Government (which had a substantial office in Liverpool to deal with the constant stream of emigrants through the port), a secretary at the Chilean Consulate, a corset manufacturer, an embroiderer, a journalist, a masseuse, a "medical electrician" (treating muscle pain with electric current), an expert in "medical gymnastics" (early physiotherapy developed by a Swedish doctor), and a "modiste" (maker of fashionable hats and dresses).

This first meeting began with the singing of the National Anthem. Five "Group Captains" were appointed, i.e. five sub-committees, one of which was to deal with recruiting members; all membership enquiries had to be addressed to Stuart Morrow, the "Managing Director" at his Liverpool office.

A Constitution was drawn up ready for the day when the Club's Charter would be presented. There could only be one member per profession or classification, and a second person in a classification could only be an Associate member (half fee, no voting rights).

Luncheon meetings were to be held every week, and were addressed by prominent local women like Mrs Dobbin Crawford, a gynaecological surgeon. Meetings were fully reported in the *Liverpool Daily Post & Echo*. By the end of January 1927 there were 54 members. The fees for members were set at five guineas initiation, and an annual membership fee of three guineas. One guinea equalled 21 shillings—the old age pension paid at age 70 at this time was two shillings and sixpence (12.5p).

The first President was elected in February—She was 35-year-old Maud Carpenter (above, left), who had already addressed club members. She had been appointed General Manager of the Liverpool Playhouse in 1922, a post she retained until she retired in 1962. The Charter and Installation Banquet took place at the Adelphi Hotel on 25th February 1927 (middle picture). There were now more than 80 members. The Charter was handed to President Maud by Stuart Morrow, whose work in Liverpool was now done!. Present were the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, other local dignitaries and more than 180 guests. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of the SI Liverpool Charter is unknown.

Projects undertaken in the early years were mostly local rather than international, and the first major task was to take up the Lord Mayor's invitation to help organise the city's Haig Fund Collection (Poppy Day).

Women's health needs were a serious concern, and in 1927 the Club began raising funds for a proposed Women's Hospital.

During the "Hungry Thirties" Liverpool suffered from much poverty and poor housing, and the education of girls was a priority - SI Liverpool formed a Careers Advisory Committee to assist the local authority, and the Soroptimists' Women's Aid Fund (1934) provided financial assistance to needy women and girls. "Aged women" were invited to an annual Christmas party and, as war approached, plans were formulated for the Club to help with the evacuation of children.

In 1940, the Lord Mayor asked the club to staff and run a canteen for HM Forces passing through the city. The Angel Hotel in Dale Street was lent free of charge by the owners, and members and their friends provided hot meals, drinks, and sleeping accommodation for 350,000 servicemen and women by the end of the war. By 1951 Liverpool was the largest Club in Britain. The country's first woman QC, and later first woman judge to sit at the Old Bailey, Rose Heilbron, became President in 1954.

Today, SI Liverpool has 40 members and supports a number of projects including Alder Hey Hospital, where members are pictured with Ken Dodd in 1984 (above, right).

The structure of Soroptimism in the UK is naturally far more complex today than it was in 1927 when only three Clubs existed, but it has been most rewarding to think that our Club has been active for 90 years, and hopes to continue giving service well into the future.

BURY

Bury Soroptimists and President Joan Rees rose to the challenge of raising funds for and awareness of those less able to help themselves over the past year.

The club held a variety of social events, resulting in donating £1000 to Bury Hospice and £900 to Bury Cancer Care. Both charities are close to President Joan's heart, her husband having received their care whilst suffering with terminal cancer. Both the members and guests enjoyed the food, fun and friendship which was the theme for all the

events which were wonderfully supported.

In addition, from the remainder of the monies raised during the year, Bury was able to purchase a prosthetic limb for a war-damaged child, eight thermal foil blankets for the rough sleepers of Bury and, from the proceeds of an Indian-themed evening, £80 was sent for the Meru garden project.

The members were urged to collect non-perishable foods and suitable clothes for both female and male asylum seekers who had been re-



located in Bury. A car boot full of these items was delivered to their drop-in centre. Members are pictured above loading up the boot with the items.

WIDNES

Widnes members were walking among the daffodils in April when Len Tomlinson once again opened his farm to the public in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support (President Maureen Ellerton's chosen charity).

Foxtwist Green Farm, Whitegate, was a sea of yellow.

Len, who has appeared on the BBC's Gardeners World, is an expert on daffs and gave us an in-depth guided walk, which last about 90 minutes. He grows hundreds of varieties of daffodil and had interesting tales and jokes to tell us, too.

During the tour, Len explained and picked samples of the various daffodils and gave them to eager listeners to take home.

The farm also has a Magic Fairy Trail for children and refreshments are provided by volunteers.

The open event is supported by a team of Macmillan volunteers and has become an annual event. This year was the 11th.

SI Widnes likes to hold a party each April as a thank-you to our president.

President Maureen Ellerton did not know what to expect as she arrived for the evening and greeted her top-table guests.

It turned out we were to be treated to a Murder-Mystery, written and acted by club members.

The story was that a club president had become a murder victim during a meeting of the Executive at her home.

The acting was very entertaining and then it was the turn of all present to try to work out who the murderer was, while we enjoyed the buffet supper.

SI Widnes celebrated Programme Action with 16 members and 10 guests at an evening showcasing the work.

The club presented 12 overnight bags to Nightstop and twiddlemuffs to two care homes in the Widnes area for residents with dementia.

Our toilet twinning project, which started last February, is coming to an end and we will have raised enough money to sponsor three school toilet blocks.

CROSBY



President Annette Hughes and Patsy Worth had great pleasure in handing over a cheque in the sum of £250.00 to Crosby Youth Club. The money will go towards much needed sports equipment.



Battling against wind and rain, members of SI Crosby, together with Lions and Rotary hosted the annual barbecue for the visually impaired on Sunday, June 11.

SOUTHPORT

SI Crosby's Learning for Living awards ceremony was held on March 8 at Formby High School – the sixteenth annual final so far!

The essay writing competition is to encourage thought and debate about moral and citizenship issues with the aim of putting into practice

principles which would make the world a better place to live in.

All schools in Formby, both primary and secondary, take part and more than 400 entries were submitted this year.

Three students from each school were presented with prizes and primary and secondary overall winners were presented with shields. This year's winning primary school entry was about diversity, called Don't Judge a Book by its Cover. The secondary school winner was a moving piece by a pupil about her brother.

Sponsorship is provided by SI Southport, and the club receives acknowledgement on the host school web-site.



BOLTON

More than 60 participants enjoyed a stimulating Quiz Night, run by SI Bolton at Bolton Masonic Hall.

Competitive Soroptimists and friends, including teams from SI Bury and SI Leigh and District, initially had deep conversations about the strategic decision of when to play the Joker - not an easy process!

Midway through the evening a welcome pasty and peas supper sustained the quiz teams to continue to a very close finale and final score.

To keep the suspense and tension a comprehensive raffle was drawn, with some excellent prizes to win.

The winning team comprised four members of SI Bolton – Eileen Watson, Frankie Hahlo, Eveline Bridge and Jennifer Hindshaw. They were lavished with prizes by the quiz organisers who were delighted that £500 had been raised for Soroptimist Charities.

SI Bolton member, Jane Hemingway, produced a varied selection of puzzles, musical tunes and taxing science questions, to make it a friendship and fundraising event to remember.

SOUTHPORT

SI Southport members have been collecting items for Activity Packs for Sefton Women's and Children's Aid.

More than 50 packs were made up for the children. When parents are being interviewed the children are given a pack to keep them amused. Information about the Club is included so the ladies know where the pack came from.

Every year the club raises money for local charities through a variety of fundraising events. A number of charitable organisations are chosen for their contribution to the community and the quality of the service provided.

The selected organisations sent representatives along to a special cheque presentation evening, allowing each group to explain their mission and their achievements..

Southport members were very impressed by the organisers and volunteers with these presentations, knowing that there is so much caring and love in the community.

This year's organisations were: Friends of Four Seasons, Parenting 2000, Southport Sea Scouts,



Churchtown Chipmunk.

SI Southport holds an auction every two years to support local charities. This year, Laurel and Hardy (Margaret Davies and Jean Tweddell, above) conducted the enthusiastic auction for us.

There were 80 club members and friends attending the successful auction. With 120 items collected and auctioned, more than £700 was collected.

STOCKPORT AND DISTRICT



Stockport's Immediate Past President Ingrid Whiteman thought she was going for coffee with a friend but was greeted by club members wearing wedding hats.

She was speechless.

Current Stockport President Eleanor Reakes organised the surprise bridal shower for Ingrid and invited Regional President Margaret Molyneux to attend.

A wonderful evening was enjoyed by all.

WARRINGTON

SI Warrington members have been supporting New Routes, a gardening project in Victoria Park, for some time now. The horticultural project works with adults with learning difficulties.

Recently it was the turn of the trainees and volunteers at the project to reciprocate.

Club members were treated to tea and cake made by one of the

volunteers at the project. Afternoon tea was served in the project's orchard cabin, which has been extended by apprentices from Warrington Collegiate.

The Soroptimists were the first visitors to walk through the new poly-tunnel in the garden. They also saw the work in the Healing Garden and in the orchard and admired the achievements of the gardeners.



Deadline for the next issue of the Leader: September 1, 2017