



In Memoriam



It is with great sadness that we announce that Federation President Johanna M Raffan MBE passed away on 15 June 2021.

Our thoughts are with Johanna's family at this very sad time. If anyone wishes to send a card, then please send it to SIGBI HQ who will collate them to forward to Johanna's family at an appropriate time.

We ask you to please respect the privacy of Johanna's family, and direct any email messages to SIGBI HQ.

Cathy Cottridge
SIGBI President Elect

Joanna was a much-loved member of SI Thames Valley and was elected president of our federation, Soroptimist International Great Britain & Ireland (SIGBI) in 2020.

SI Leigh – Cycling a Wheelie Long Way!

We've dug out the lycra, helmets are at the ready and our pedals are spinning. Penny farthing, Tricycle, Exercise Bike, Racing Bike, Off Road Bike, Mountain Bike - anything goes!

During June we'll be cycling a collective 175km to raise money for 'Breast Cancer Now' and The Christie; two charities which have supported and cared for our members and the local community through very difficult times.

Soroptimist International is 100 years old this year and our club has reached 75 years and we thought what better way to celebrate these big milestones than to cycle a wheelie long way?!

We'll be sharing our totaliser as we go along so you can keep up with our progress! **Wish us luck!**

We'd love your support - to donate please click here:
<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sileighandddistrict>

Alternatively, our members have sponsor forms at the ready!



contributed by Margaret Molyneux

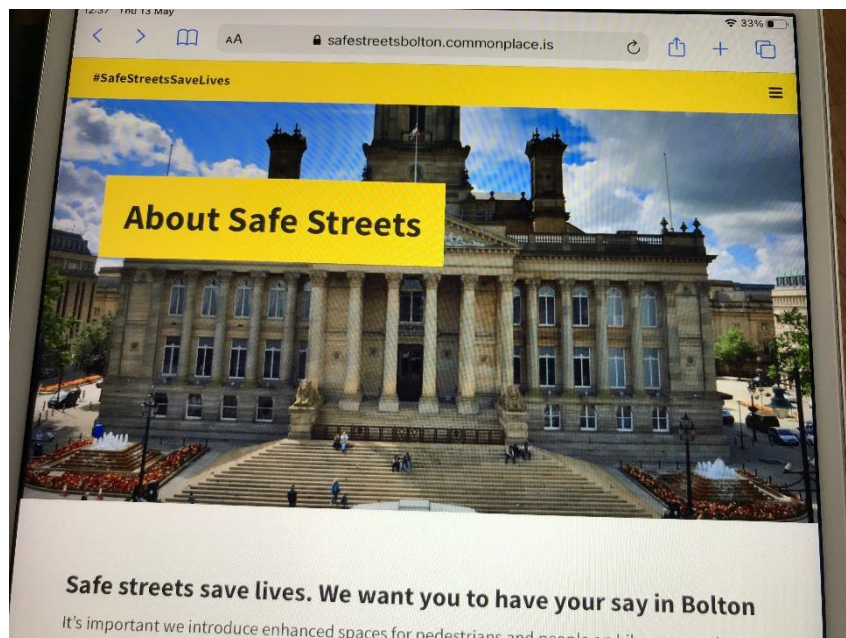


Club News from around the Region

SI BOLTON – The longest journey starts with the first step

Like so many women, SI Bolton were shocked and saddened by the tragic death of Sarah Everard as she crossed Clapham Common. This coincided with some information from the Mayor of Greater Manchester on a Safer Streets initiative so we decided to lobby our local representatives on this important issue for girls and women in particular.

We began by agreeing to contact councillors to ask specifically what Bolton's strategy was and how we could be involved in any consultation. At the same time, we learned that some of the young girls attending the Sixth Form College were also concerned about this issue.



As a result, we were invited to take part in a podcast along with the students which, of course, was an opportunity for us to promote Soroptimism. You can listen to the podcast via this link:-

<https://anchor.fm/thesixthformbolton/episodes/Women--safety-and-society-part-2-with-special-guest-Carole-Swarbrick-e10rvf9>



Students & staff pictured at the College

We also spoke with the deputy leader of the council who had arranged to speak with the girls. Once the podcast had been edited it was posted on the college website.

Bolton council has now embarked on an extensive on-line consultation on how they can make our streets safer by perhaps widening footpaths, improving lighting, trimming bushes etc. It may take a while to see improvements but 'the longest journey starts with the first step' so we will be patient whilst continuing our crusade on behalf of women in our communities.

Contributed by Carole Swarbrick

SI STOCKPORT – Top of the Class of Big Knitters



Club members responded to a request to support a project between Age UK and Innocent Smoothies which was extended due to the pandemic.

The photo shows just some of the 150 bottle toppers taken to Age UK to help their fund raising with The Big Knit. Innocent give Age UK 25p for every bottle topper.

The toppers were cleverly knitted by Joyce Garside and Nancy Owen, both members of SI Stockport.

Pamela Brown, a Senior member of the club, has been very busy during the past 15 months knitting and sewing for Wellspring and St Ann's.

Pamela made these very attractive jewellery bags for St Ann's Hospice shop in Romiley.

This is her second donation of bags which were gratefully received by the shop.

Contributed by Joyce Garside



SI SOUTHPORT OUT AND ABOUT!

Members of Soroptimist International Southport gathered in Victoria Park to plant trees, as part of the SI centenary project. The first action taken by Soroptimists in 1921 was to save trees and 100 years later, we are **'Planting Trees for a Brilliant Future'**.



As part of the Woodland Trust's reforestation project - 'A TREE TODAY, A FOREST TOMORROW' - Alan Adams, General Manager of Southport Flower Show and the Victoria Park Management Company, secured a supply of saplings which he offered to schools, community groups and local organisations for planting in Victoria Park. Every tree planted will contribute to the global reforestation efforts, restoring lost forests, repairing damaged ecosystems and mitigating climate changes.



Alan generously provided the saplings and assistance from Victoria Park volunteer Simon Moorhouse. Soroptimists planted 60 crab-apple saplings from the 'Wild Wood' mixture, which can tolerate exposed sites and help dry up wet areas, thereby supporting the Woodland Trust and the local environment with new trees, as well as supporting Victoria Park, an outstanding local resource and a self-supporting registered charity. For more information on Victoria Park, visit their website www.victoriaparkevents.co.uk



President Rosemary Moore (pictured above) told the club of a recent 'Market Trail' in Southport - a roving car boot sale around the town, advertised on Facebook. As we had gathered items from a variety of sources, we decided to put some tables out in the garden of Baverstock House, where our clubroom is located, and await the hordes of buyers!!

Whilst we had some visitors, we would have appreciated more, but we did raise some much-needed funds for the club's charity and PAC accounts, as well as for the Mayor of Sefton's Charity. It also

proved to be a wonderful impromptu opportunity for club members to meet for the first time in 14 months - outdoors and in a Covid-safe environment. We all had a lovely time!

Contributed by Ghislaine Fletcher

SI WIDNES - Tree Planting

In 1921, the first Soroptimist Club was started in California and their first project was to lobby to 'Save the Redwoods' which were under threat of being felled. To mark this event, Soroptimist Clubs throughout the world are planting trees to celebrate our centenary and in support of the planet.

Friends, members and a member in the making planted 100 wild wood saplings at St. Michael's Eco Park, Widnes. The saplings were donated by The Woodland Trust and planting was ably supported by Alister Harman, ranger with Halton Borough Council.

To learn more on Facebook control & click on the link below:

[#PlantTrees#saveourplanet#CaptainTom100](#)

Contributed by Yvonne Gibbon



Pandemic Pamper

SI Widnes enjoyed their second online Pamper Night of the Covid19 Pandemic, hosted by Chelsey Murdoch from Body Shop. Chelsey is no stranger to SI Widnes, as she hosted a Body Shop event for the club in 2019 at The Holy Family Club in Cronton.

The event was attended by both friends and members of SI Widnes who had all been sent samples of products in advance to try out on the night. There was a quiz, of course, and a guessing game 'Top 5 items to take to the beach'. Club member Denise Parker won the prize of a goody bag.

Chelsey donated her commission in the form of toiletries, which the club passed on to charities they support, for example to include in bags put together for Nightstop, the food bank or for needy families via Reverend Linda from St Michael and St Thomas' Church.

Members had an enjoyable and very informative evening.

Contributed by Denise Parker

SI BOOTLE & DISTRICT



Karen Chorlton, a returning member who moved out of the area in 2012, has now returned and was welcomed back and inducted into the Club at the A.G.M.

Due to Covid restrictions, she was presented with her badge and membership folder on the doorstep of the Membership Officer, suitably distanced of course.

A unique experience for us, but then Soroptimists are always ready to adapt to any challenge.

Contributed by Caroline Holmes

SI MANCHESTER - Programme Action Reimagined!

We have always carried out a 'Programme Action Review' in January for members to express their views and preferences but we were hearing 'What is that charity all about?', 'Why do we support that charity at that level?', 'How may a different charity be considered?' as well as 'How does this fit in with the 5 P's?' and 'What do we do for 'Planet?'..overall, a professional business approach was required!

Keeping '**Partnerships**' and '**Peace**' as a goal in all that we do, Programme Action Officer Barbara set up two steering committees – '**People & Prosperity**' and '**Planet**' – inviting all members to join one, or both. Each committee faced different challenges and has adopted appropriate strategies:

'People & Prosperity', chaired by Sophie, encompassed our recent and long-standing projects, but needed to be open to new projects too.

Longer serving members took a project to summarise the history of the Club for the benefit of newer members using the headings that would also be required for new project initiation, based on the Programme Focus forms to streamline the reporting.

Information was summarised, evaluated and ranked for future involvement using the 'traffic light' approach. Projects were then allocated a 'Lead' & 'Deputy Lead' and 'Contact' information was recorded and we have a defined process for proposing a new charity to the Club.

'Planet', chaired by Carina, only really had 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' as an ongoing project, so had scope for development as Club initiatives and several members were eager to be involved.

Here our approach and methods have been innovative and varied:

- The PLANET group have two programme actions at the moment:
 1. **Project Green Footprint:** this is running for a year and it's about reducing our collective carbon footprint.
 2. **Sunflower Project:** we're planting sunflowers to support bees and other pollinators as they go about their business.
- Some of us are using TreeApp to plant trees. It is completely free – you watch an advert and can plant a tree a day.
- Barbara took part in a Climate Change conference entitled 'There is no Planet B' organised by our Friendship Link Club, SI Madurai, and attended by more than 100 Soroptimists from all five Federations courtesy of Zoom.
- Carina took us 'Foraging' on Zoom!
- Our quarterly Newsletter now has a 'SIMple Green Tips' page for us all to share our ideas.



Each committee has met monthly via ZOOM for about an hour of 'business', which has meant less time commitment and may well be the format for at least some future meetings.

Our 'Programme Action' (or 'Projects') has emerged refreshed, rejuvenated, professional and transparent for all members, old and new.

Contributed by Sue Underwood

SI LIVERPOOL - Freedom Bus

At the end of May, Liverpool Stop the Traffik organised and hosted the Freedom Bus to come to our city of Liverpool once again to raise awareness of Human Trafficking. The new Police and Crime Commissioner, Emily Spurrell, paid the £350 fee for the bus.

Our aim was to stop outside the hand car-washes in the north of the city, then outside the Anglican Cathedral who very kindly provided us all with coffee, tea and snacks when we arrived. Following on from the Cathedral we went to the International Slavery Museum at the Royal Albert Dock.



We stopped outside numerous car-washes which were extremely busy - not only with people having their cars washed but also with an abundance of workers. With the cheap prices, and number of workers, it was clear that they may not even be paid the legal minimum wage. We noticed that people who were having their cars washed were taking photos of our bus, so hopefully they have called and reported anything suspicious or anything else that they may know.

Arriving at the Albert Dock, and stopping outside the Slavery Museum was also a huge success, with lots of interest and fabulous weather! Our wonderful new president Debra and our previous president Anne came to see the bus at the Slavery Museum.

This is the second time that we have hosted the bus and we will continue to host it many more times in order to raise as much awareness as possible.



Contributed by Annette Maudsley



SI LEIGH - Choose to Challenge

The 2021 International Women's Day (IWD) this year had the focus of inequality; prevent bias; question stereotypes; aim for an inclusive world; encouraging women throughout the world to raise a hand in support.

SI Leigh & District members wore purple and rose to the 'Challenge' with a varied evening programme on the 8th of March 2021. Beginning with a brief history of IWD from 1908 when women in New York demanded improved working conditions and voting rights and leading to 1914 when IWD was inaugurated on the 8th of March. Of interest is that many countries in the world have an official holiday on IWD including China, Nepal & Russia.

Speakers from the Dianne Oxberry Trust gave an insight into their focus of work & included member's questions in their excellent presentation.



A 'Hands Up' activity of guessing whose hand was shown on screen e.g., Duchess of Cambridge, then led to several members speaking of inspirational women they have known and their attributes.

Finally, we watched a video of Leigh members explaining 'Why I am a Soroptimist'. Some of our speakers stayed to listen to the activities throughout the evening and commented the following day about how much they had enjoyed the event and felt inspired by the passion for Soroptimism and the warmth and honesty in sharing incredible stories".

Soroptimidiscs Event



An unusual and entertaining event organised by the club's social committee led to members being invited to be a 'castaway' and choose a memorable song and the reason for the choice.

We had an eclectic range of music from the 1960's classic 'Bobby's Girl' to the western theme music of 'Magnificent Seven'; 'Space Between' to 'Star Spangled Banner' and a loud & lengthy 'MacArthur Park' followed by the melodious 'Answer me' by Nat King Cole.

Members reminisced about poignant life events, concerts and special occasions.

Hand clapping! Foot tapping! Body swaying! even Dancing! proved that virtual events can be great fun. Luckily, singing whilst muted, enhances the experience!!

All stories & photos contributed by Margaret Molyneux





St David Day Celebrations.

At the Invitation of our friendship Club-Haverfordwest, we virtually joined their St David's Day event together with their other friendship clubs; Dunfermline (Scotland) and Brelsko-Biala (Poland). Federation President Johanna and Region President Wales South Heidi (who is also a member of the club). As a member of Leigh Club, our Region President Josie also joined the event, and had prepared a plate of Welsh Cakes to commemorate the occasion.

Throughout the evening we visited member Ruth's kitchen to watch her culinary skills preparing traditional dishes of Cawl, Bara Brith and of course Welsh Cakes. We also had floral art demonstrations by several members and renditions of Welsh poetry.

Guests were reminded of the friendship links with Leigh Club stretching back over 20 years and reciprocal visits have taken place. Sadly, last year's planned visit by Leigh's members in June was cancelled due to the Pandemic. In being wished Nos Da at the end of a very enjoyable evening, we now look forward to our rescheduled visit when Covid regulations allow.



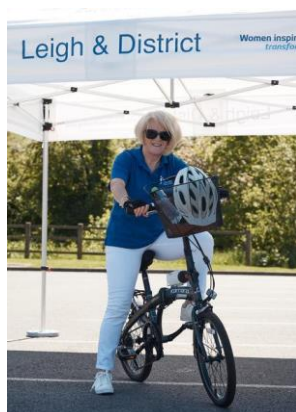
A Wheelie Good Idea



During June we'll be cycling a collective 175km to raise money for Breast Cancer Now and The Christie; two charities that have helped support and care for our members and the local community through their most difficult times.

Soroptimist International is 100 years old this year and as a club we have reached 75 years - we thought what better way to celebrate these big milestones than to cycle a wheelie long way?!

We'll be sharing our totaliser as we go along so you can keep up with our progress! Wish us luck!



We'd love your support - to donate please click here:
<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sleighanddistrict>

SI CROSBY – Keep Busy Walking, Bumping Elbows, Planting & Bidding for Bargains

Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and government restrictions, Crosby Soroptimists have continued to find new ways to provide support and service to the local community and beyond. Club members have also supported their own physical and mental wellbeing with participation in the challenge for the club to clock up 1,000 walking miles during 2021. The challenge is called 'Walking back to happiness' and the club has a hashtag #sicrosbywalkhappy to make it easy to search for Tweets and Facebook posts and members' photos of their walks.

SI Crosby regalia was passed from Immediate Past President Chris-Chua Short to President Chris Smith observing Covid restrictions and new member Vesna was welcomed and inducted with elbow bumps. President Chris has chosen Waterloo Primary School as charity for the year. Crosby Soroptimists invited the Headteacher, Ruth Baldwin, to speak to members during the club's June zoom meeting to learn more about how club members will be able to volunteer to support reading skills.



SI Crosby has a long-term partnership with Lunt Meadows nature reserve and green-fingered club members are growing a variety of wildflowers such as lesser knapweed, meadow vetchling, ox-eye daisy and ragged robin from seeds provided by the nature reserve. When the plants are bigger, members will plant them at Lunt Meadows with the aim of providing a source of food for pollinators and invertebrates, thereby attracting wildlife such as birds and dragonflies.

Fundraising co-ordinator Pam McKee arranged a virtual charity fundraising auction to raise funds for Sefton Women's & Children's Aid, raising over £1,400 from members and friends.

With match funding from Barclay's Community Giving Force this will total over £2,000. Club member Pat Murphy created excitement amongst bidders who didn't want to miss out on the items on offer. The prize for best decorated paddle was won by club member Ann McCracken.

Contributed by Jill Boggan



Meet the Region's President in Waiting – Introducing Dorcas Akeju OBE



Born in Nigeria, Dorcas Akeju has lived in Liverpool since 1974, and after training as a midwife at the Liverpool Maternity Hospital, she practised in both hospital and community settings for 35 years. In 1999 she was instrumental in the establishment of a special clinic - "The Link" - to provide antenatal care for mothers whose first language is not English. This clinic continues to have an important impact on the care of these mothers.

Since 1990 Dorcas has been an active campaigner against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), both at local and national level. She contributed to the establishment of the Liverpool Multi-Cultural Women's Advisory and FGM Group, which aims to raise awareness of health issues such as breast and cervical screening amongst Black and Ethnic Minority women, and signposting and supporting victims of FGM. She chaired the Liverpool FGM Group for several years, and has addressed audiences, both nationally and locally, about this issue. She continued to be involved when the Group was merged with the Forced Marriage Group, and when a new Harmful Traditional Practices Group was set up.

Dorcas served on the Council of the Royal College of Midwives for seven years, and in 2000 co-founded the African Elders Association, which worked to reduce isolation and depression. When her children began attending schools in Liverpool, Dorcas became involved in many school activities, serving for many years as a School Governor. After taking a degree in Clinical Management at the age of 55, she led a team at Liverpool Women's Hospital concerned with equality and diversity, and developed policies addressing bullying, harassment and racism. In 2015 she became an Advanced Practitioner, after taking a Master's degree. Among her awards, Dorcas was named the Liverpool Black Female Achiever of 2009; received the Royal College of Midwives Life Time Achievement award and was awarded the Order of the British Empire by H.M. The Queen in 2003.

In 2009, Dorcas's daughter sadly died from asthma, and in 2014 Dorcas and her husband set up the Breathe Easy Foundation in her memory. The Foundation supports patients with chronic asthma in the United Kingdom and Nigeria. As it's Chair, Dorcas is responsible for strategic planning, training and fund-raising.

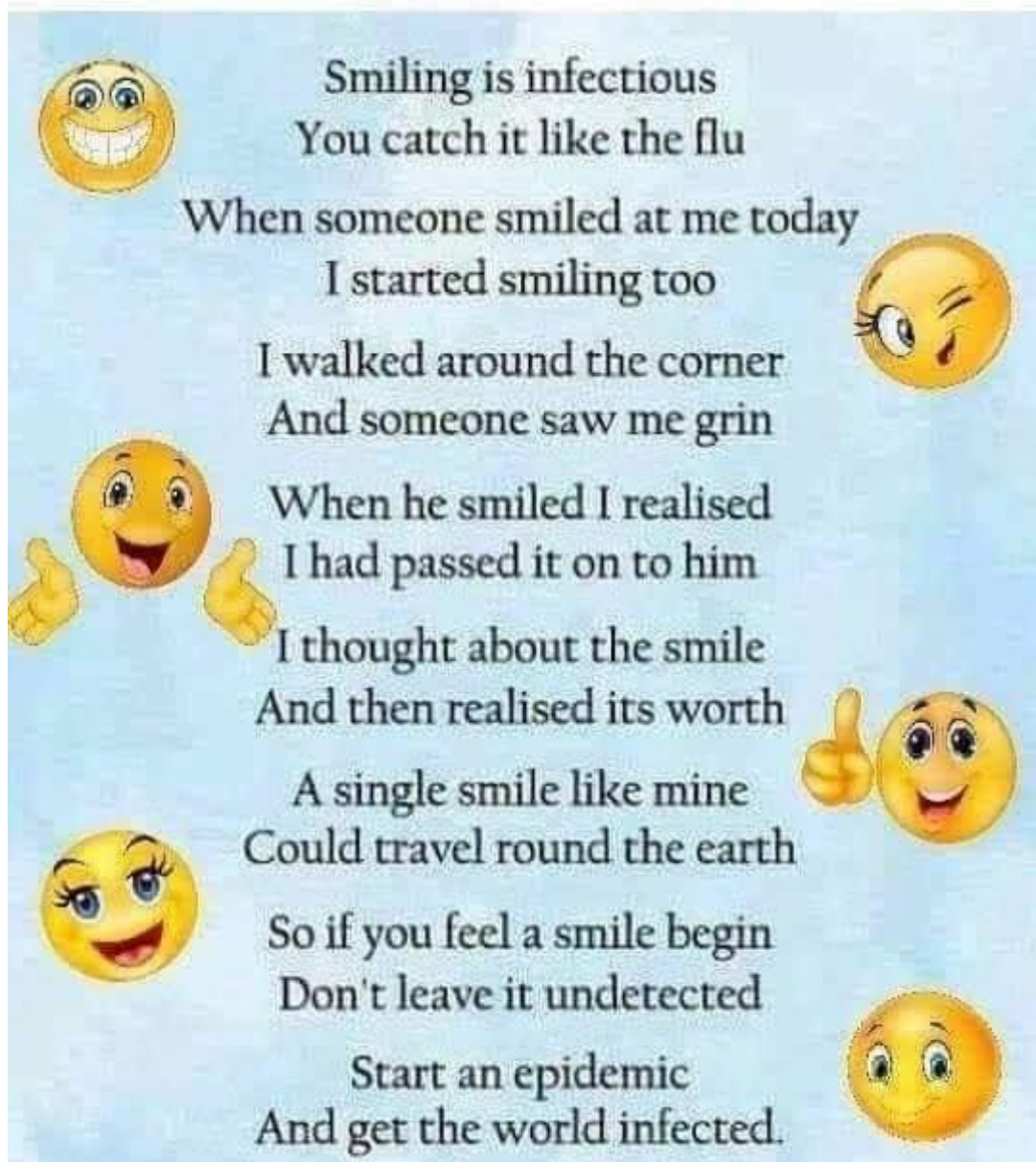
She served as a Shadow Governor for the Royal Liverpool and Broad Green Teaching Hospitals Trust for seven years, and is now a full Governor. Since 2010 she has been the Equality Advisor on Liverpool's Health and Local Council's Social Care Scrutiny Panel, and is a Trustee of Liverpool Community Voluntary Services. She is an active member of her local church.

Dorcas is currently Chair of the Merseyside Yoruba Community Association (her tribal organisation), and set up the Yoruba Descendants' Network in 2005, connecting Yorubas from the North-West and Midlands. She was given the Omoluwabi Award in recognition of outstanding commitment and leadership in community services for this pioneering initiative. Joining Soroptimist International Liverpool in 2013, she served as President in 2018. She is currently S.I. South Lancashire's Regional President Elect. Congratulations Dorcas on your citation!

Contributed by Anne Grimes

and finally....

What a great poem by the late Spike Milligan about smiling



Contributed by Caroline Smiler Holmes (SI Bootle)