



Soroptimist International of South Lancashire Regional Conference 2024



Soroptimists standing up for women and girls. A conference focused upon the key themes of women's health and wellness, education, gender equality and human rights.

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday 11th May 2024



THE WRIGHTINGTON
• HOTEL, HEALTH CLUB & SPA •

Moss Lane, Wrightington, Wigan WN6 9PB

Club News from around the Region

SI CROSBY

Goodness, it's difficult to believe that we are nearly a quarter of the way through 2024 with the March copy of 'The Leader' here already.



December was full of activity for SI Crosby. We served refreshments at Jospice on a very rainy afternoon for the annual Light up a Life Service. As well as this we accompanied Santa to switch on the Christmas tree lights in Thornton - though because his sleigh and its reindeer were in the garage for pre-Christmas check-ups for sky-mobility, our eco-friendly Santa arrived by bicycle! The following week we joined him again at Waitrose for fundraising - once again without his sleigh as the weather was far too wild and windy. The blustery conditions, whist challenging, didn't prevent us from collecting substantial amounts of cash from Christmas food shoppers to support local charities.



Our jolly Christmas social meeting mid-month gave us all a lift to our Christmas spirits. Several of us also attended SI Liverpool's International lunch. Then there was also our annual visit to the Liverpool Philharmonic for the "Spirit of Christmas". It is always a wonderful way to mark the season and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.



As well as all this, several of us attended Bowls Bingo at Hightown to raise funds for a much-needed toilet block. A very busy month indeed!

Contributed by Margaret Davidson



SI CROSBY

January offered some welcome respite. We met as usual for Orange Café on the 25th, when we had a robust discussion on modern slavery and gave out lots of information about ourselves to other customers.

We followed this up by attending a locally held Trafficking symposium on Wednesday 7th February, which opened our eyes to hidden domestic servitude and to the enormous difficulties endured by those who have escaped such slavery. The meeting was well attended by SI Crosby members and certainly gave us food for thought.

February was an unexpectedly busy month for us. We enjoyed a Spa day at Chill Out Spa – a great start to the Spring to replenish our well-being in preparation for the challenges to come in 2024. We also attended a SWACA fundraiser quiz and the following day we held our usual Orange café.

Meanwhile, throughout we have continued our links with Lunt Meadows. The Education Centre is now well above ground and almost ready to open its doors to the public.



Roll on March! We are ready for you.

Contributed by Margaret Davidson

SI Wigan - Quiz Time again !

January saw the Wigan Soroptimists gathering at one of their favourite places, Highfield St Matthews, for their Annual quiz. Teams from around Wigan congregated to showcase their wisdom and knowledge. This year's music section proved particularly popular and general opinion was that it was a very enjoyable evening, the food was excellent, Lancashire Hotpot of course, and a very healthy profit from ticket sales plus a raffle resulted in welcome donation to our charities.

May thanks to our Treasurer , Elaine Tyrrell. For organising the event - we look forward to the next one.

Contributed by Anne Clarke & Angela Holmes

SI Wigan - Eyes Down!

Congratulations to Linda Lilley, SI Leigh, who could shout 'House' and was the outright winner of Human Rights Bingo at our December 2023 regional PAC. This was the concluding Club 'PAC' Presentation at the meeting by Wigan. It was fully interactive – thank you to the whole room who joined in with great gusto. Is it a first or have Soroptimists played bingo at a regional PAC? Is it the future?

SI Wigan attended a fully interactive play called Human Rights Bingo at Edge Hill University Rose Theatre. It was brilliantly hosted by Yael Karavan and Sylvia Mercuriali. They were dressed in full blown bingo hall costumes. It was a surreal night of bingo with visual treats and dancing beats. It certainly made us think, as it did when we played a regional game:

How fair and square is our Human Rights Treaty?

How well do you know your rights?

As they said;– You are all equal here...until one of you wins, in which case you will all be losers but one...

One of the reviews stated: 'Conceptually ingenious, this interactive show is part competition, part comedy and part learning experience in multiple senses...building a sense of community among participants who are clearly instructed how to play.'

What can I say – I can only recommend it to you if it does the rounds again, or maybe they could put on a performance just for South Lancashire Region clubs as so many people said they would have loved to have seen it had they known about it. Now that's an idea!



Keep on running!



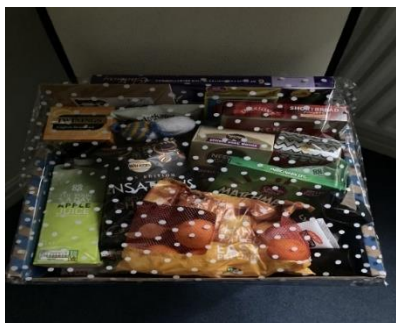
John Rourke, son of Jayne Rourke, ran two marathons at the New Year along the waterfront in Liverpool. He raised a grand total of £1500 for a project that has seen us cement our partnership with The Shoebox fairies. He ran one marathon on New Year's Eve and then repeated this on New Year's Day. He made great time and was cheered on by his family. His target was a few hundred pounds but he galvanised colleagues, friends and our Wigan Soroptimist family to get behind the cause.

John regularly supports Wigan Soroptimists with his girlfriend Gemma; planting trees with us, enjoying a recent Chinese meal, entering our recent quiz and helping with Tea at the Farm. He has been one our largest fundraisers this year, totalling almost a whopping £5000.

You will find out about The Shoebox Fairies charity at our May Conference, Rise up and Roar. The Shoebox Fairies are an independent UK charity based in Wigan, Greater Manchester. They have no religious affiliations and their volunteers and donors may come from different beliefs and background - united by their vision to help relieve poverty and bring joy to those who need it most.

Contributed by Anne Clarke & Angela Holmes

SI BOLTON - TOTS (Toddlers on Tuesday)



SI Bolton continue to support a children’s playgroup located in a deprived area of the town. Pre-school age children attend with a parent or grandparent and are encouraged to engage in play and creative activities. At Christmas two hampers were provided by SI Bolton. The contents, aimed at all family members, were donated by club members.

In January the TOTS group enquired whether we would be able to assist with the purchase of an activities table for the children. This was unanimously approved, and the photo shows the table set up for play. The height of the table is adjustable and the middle setting is perfect for two-year-olds. The rim is aimed at keeping the contents on the table, however having seen it in use a couple of times, the children like to pick up the contents and drop them on the floor! They are encouraged to help with the clearing up at the end.



SI Bolton Jigsaw Project

SI Bolton continue their support for this project which helps Syrian refugees in camps in Lebanon. A friend of our club, Kath, is an avid knitter, something she is still able to do after suffering a stroke. We provide her with the wool, and she happily creates trauma teddies and cot blankets. These are among some of the items that Nadirah from Jigsaw takes with her on regular visits to Lebanon. Unfortunately visits to the Lebanese camps have not been possible recently due to the situation in the Middle East.

SI Bolton Jigsaw Project

In January, Maureen and Jane from SI Bolton invited Kath and Nadirah, who had not so far met, to join us for a simple lunch.

When we started taking photos of the handover of items this attracted interest from a nearby table. Maureen explained what was happening and a lady offered to donate some spare wool she had. Arrangements were made for this to be dropped off at the café.

Nadirah has shared this update with us:

Thanks to your support and kind donations, alongside a lot of hard work from our partners and local team, 2023 saw an incredible year for helping to alleviate period poverty and provide health checks for hundreds of refugee women and girls in some of the neediest areas in Lebanon. This could not have been done without your support and we would like to thank each and every one of you for helping us to create a healthier world piece by piece.



SI Bolton Coffee Mornings

The Club hold a series of coffee mornings over the course of a year. They are generally held monthly in members' homes if there is no other social event in the calendar.

The opportunity is taken to add some money to the Charity Account and a different charity is nominated each year to receive funds.



This year the money raised at coffee mornings has increased the funds for 'Out There'. This is a charity which supports families of prisoners across Greater Manchester. Those impacted tend to be mainly women and children. An interim payment recently sent was used towards the cost of their half term activity, a family trip to Manchester Art Gallery for craft activities and lunch.

The photo is from February's coffee morning at Eileen Watson's home.

Contributed by Jane Hemingway

SI LIVERPOOL



A wonderful occasion celebrating International Human Rights Day and the end of sixteen days of activism! We were delighted to host the Lord Mayor, Councillor Mary Rasmussen and her consort, Regional President Pam Wright and members from SI St Helens, SI Widnes, SI Crosby and SI Southport as well as our guests. The event began with our candle-lighting ceremony for the work of Soroptimists around the world and the reading of the Declaration of Human Rights. The dinner was followed by a light hearted celebration of Christmas, thanks to the wonderful Sing Your Socks Off choir, who got everyone into festive mood!



Members meet socially for “Time to Talk” on the first Wednesday of the month. This hour long social is a much-needed legacy of former federation President Sue Williams’ theme; to look after our mental health. What a great turnout!!



Contributed by Ann Grimes

SI LIVERPOOL

A warm welcome home to club member Dorcas and her husband Claudius! They have spent three gruelling weeks travelling around parts of Nigeria, delivering much needed asthma medication and equipment to clinics and hospitals in the region. There is a dire shortage of basic medication for the condition, with hospitals asking patients to share inhalers! Pictured are Dorcas and Claudius distributing vital inhalers and nebulisers on behalf of their charity, Breatheasy, founded in loving memory of their daughter.



Contributed by Ann Grimes

S. I. BOOTLE AND DISTRICT



As a small group, we are continuing to support our current projects including “Lend with Care,” the Mawuena Women’s Collective and Tuscano 1101 Group. These loans have been repaid and we are reinvesting in other women’s projects, building businesses to provide an income to support their families.

Recently we enjoyed hosting members from our Friendship Club S. I. Wrekin and District with a day at the Albert Dock. This was well received by our visitors who were very impressed with what we had to offer. Following coffee and a visit to the Liverpool World Museum, we made ourselves known as Soroptimists and engaged with the Museum staff, highlighting our organisation.

We made our way to the Langton Dock and boarded a cruise on the Floating Grace for afternoon tea. This was an excellent trip, and we took the opportunity, when asked if we were celebrating anything, to have it announced “Soroptimist International of Bootle and District and their Friendship link Club Soroptimist International of Wrekin and District were having a Friendship Link meeting”! Just another opportunity to raise our profile., and he knew how to pronounce “Soroptimist” so the word must be getting out there.

One member, a very new member, had been a resident in Formby until moving away 30 years ago, and was delighted to be back in Merseyside. We are already looking forward to a re-visit.

S. I. BOOTLE AND DISTRICT

The Club welcomed 2024 with a second Orange Day café at the Kindfulness Café in Bootle raising awareness of Violence Against Women.

An 'orange' of publicity information, relating to the subject plus leaflets and window display was set up.

This was well received with an increased interest being shown as they became more familiar with us being there, many women interacting and chatting, requesting information and wanting to know more about Soroptimist International.

It proved to be a mutual success, with one member offering to volunteer for one day per week and another member offering her specialist qualifications to provide counselling sessions. Both of which were accepted with delight. So, plans are now in place

A further visit on International Women's Day 8th March will see members wearing "Purple and Pearls" for the occasion. We look forward to continuing our connection with the Café.

We continue our support for Business Women through "Lend with Care", our most recent being Mrs Hoeun Lorm, a farmer in Cambodia who requested a loan to purchase an extra hectare of rice paddy. This strategic investment is anticipated to increase their yield by an extra 3 Tons per hectare. We wish her every success.

Contributed by Caroline Holmes



SI Widnes Charter Dinner

The dinner was held on Saturday 11th November 2023. It was very well attended and our honoured guests were Lady Mayoress and Consort, newly appointed Soroptimist Regional President Pam Wright, members of Widnes Rotary and Soroptimist's St Helen's and Liverpool. Not forgetting our own members who were a great support.

The evening was a great success and we raised funds for President Sheelagh's charity Halton Haven. Our little Widnes Soroptimiss, Amelia Gibbon was also in attendance and she was a wonderful asset to our evening.



Bury Market

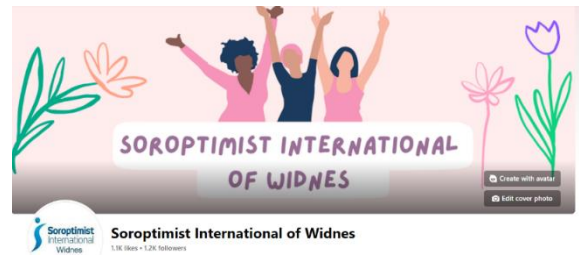
Five members of SI Widnes, and one member of SI Runcorn Club enjoyed a coach trip to Bury Market. We had a lovely day exploring the vast and famous Bury Market. First stop was the black pudding stall, where black puddings were bought for friends and family. The stallholder called us all 'missus' and obligingly took a photograph of the group. It was hungry and thirsty work exploring the market. We had lunch in the shopping centre, only to later realise that we could have eaten nearer to the market!



We discovered bountiful cake stalls and interesting cheese stalls and bought local delicacies such as Eccles cakes and Manchester Tarts. We ended the day with lighter purses, heavier shopping bags, and full stomachs. Prior to getting on the coach, we found a cafe in the market for coffee and cake. We had a raffle on the coach, with proceeds of £48 going to President Sheelagh's charity; Halton Haven. Prizes were bottles of wine. We all agreed that we had had a grand day out at Bury Market. We are looking forward to arranging our next coach trip. The black pudding went down very well with the recipients of it.

Social Media update

The latest post calling for blankets to be made has had 302 likes, comments, shares or clicks. We are reaching a wider audience and raising awareness of what we do!



Bra Collection

In June 2023, SI Widnes commenced a project to collect new or unwanted bras in order to support the charity 'Against Breast Cancer' (ABC). For every tonne of bras collected, the Charity receives £700 enabling the funding of life saving research projects at some of the UK's most respected academic establishments leading to improved outcomes for women throughout the world. Every £1 raised enables the charity to continue their work in finding a vaccine against breast cancer and to look at ways to increase the survival of women and men who have the disease. The bras are prevented from going to landfill and are sent to small businesses in developing countries in Africa and around the world. The bras are given a new lease of life in countries such as Ghana and Kenya where bras are expensive to produce locally, and this provides an income for struggling families.

Being able to access reasonably priced bras, boosts the self-esteem of women and girls in developing countries but more importantly, it can give status to women and girls; and a girl who is wearing a bra is less likely to be raped or, sexually assaulted. With support from local businesses and churches, SI Widnes has placed bra recycling bins in sports and community centres, churches, the local Masonic Hall, Tesco and Halton Haven Hospice. Bra donations are collected from the recycling bins, collated and despatched to the charity 'Against Breast Cancer' by SI Widnes. In October this year, SI Widnes sent the first shipment of 611 bras to the Charity. SI Widnes are continuing to raise awareness locally of such a worthy cause and bra collection is ongoing.

Contributed by Anne Alvers

Baby Blankets & Dignity bags

The dignity bags project for Liverpool Women's Hospital continues into 2024 with the addition of the handmade baby blankets donations. We have already gained a lot of interest from people both locally and as far as Kent that are looking to get involved. So far we have 9 through Facebook and 27 through Instagram. We have also purchased 100 cotton bags with our Logo and with thanks to Goodwill Masonic Lodge for their donation.



S.I. Leigh & District

What incredible speakers we had in January! Amelia and Rowan returned (accompanied by their dads) to share their experiences with us of their trips to Canada and Japan with Girl Guiding, Northwest England. They both had very different experiences on these trips of a lifetime. We were proud to have supported their fundraising for these trips and captivated by their presentations. Good luck for your future girls, we're sure you will make your mark in the world.



February saw us celebrating our 77th charter anniversary with a lovely lunch at Brookfield Hall, Westhoughton. The theme was Friendship and Joy and we were joined by friends from across the region. Our speaker Joy France entertained us with her story of 'school teacher to winning battle rapper!'



The Bridge launched Tea Junction; their new community café. Pictured are the MP for Leigh James Grundy and the Mayor of Wigan Borough cutting the ribbon, Soroptimist Dorothy Bowker and other trustees and staff. We have made use of this facility with our orange cafes and supporting their activities by providing confidence building sessions, through the use of makeup.



Looking forward to International Women's Day



Contributed by Lynda Lilley

SI SOUTHPORT – FEBRUARY 2024

There has been considerable activity in SI Southport in the last couple of months, with two major events, involving brilliant leadership and collaboration of many club members – and have boosted our coffers!



As has been the tradition for many years, we schedule a Christmas event in November for those who like to plan early for the festive season. The 2023 event was ‘re-branded’ as a Christmas Market and superbly organised by members, Doreen Roberts and Janet Williams.

As well as our popular ‘home-made produce’ stall, brimming over with delicious cakes, biscuits and preserves prepared by our members, We also had stalls of scarves, jewellery, Christmas flowers, boxed games and Chinese crafts and delicacies, as well as a bottle tombola and a hamper raffle. The Rotary Club of Southport joined us with a stall selling paintings by a local artist, John Duffy and extra stalls were offered to local businesses, who came along to sell cards and paintings.



Our young visitors were especially welcome - we had a ‘Children’s Corner’ with a doll raffle (the doll was made by Miriam McCann) plus games and crafts to keep the little ones occupied whilst their parents and grandparents were browsing and shopping. Refreshments, including mince pies and shortbread, were in good supply, thanks to our catering team.

There were some new features this year, including a demo of Christmas table arrangements and, with the assistance of Jill Newsham, a brilliant performance from the Southport Atkinson Wellbeing Choir, who created a happy festive atmosphere.



We were delighted to welcome many friends and visitors to the event and this proved to be one of our most successful Christmas functions, with around £1,200 raised for local charities. Many thanks to the members of SI Southport for all your hard work and great contribution.

Contributed by Ghislaine Fletcher



In mid-February, SI Southport welcomed the Chinese Year of the Dragon in great style. President Agnes hosted a magnificent celebration dinner, with over 130 guests, including the Mayor of Sefton, Cllr June Burns, and her consort and SI South Lancashire President Pam Wright. Over 130 people attended the event, which was held at 'Valhalla' at Southport's Pleasureland. The room was adorned with red Chinese lanterns and lots of gold and red balloons and the video wall showed a continuous loop of traditional celebrations.

Our guests were greeted by a wonderful (and very noisy!) dragon dance by the amazing Blackpool Unicorn Association and then we were treated to a sumptuous Chinese buffet, prepared by President Agnes' catering team from the Dukes Folly Hotel. During dinner, our guests were challenged with a quiz and some riddles.



Many thanks to President Agnes, Lily Chan (one of our newest members) and their friends and relatives from the local Chinese community who brought the authenticity of the new year celebrations to Southport. We are also most grateful to our supporters for their help and in particular to the brilliant team from Dukes Folly Hotel. And enormous thanks to Norman Wallis, the CEO of Pleasureland, for providing his wonderful venue and for his generosity and assistance.



Finally, please note that SI Southport has a new Facebook page, see this [link \(press ctrl and click to open\)](#). Many thanks to Rosemary Moore, who created this new page. Please follow this page, as it will show all the news from the club going forward.

Contributed by Ghislaine Fletcher

SI Manchester's 98th Charter Lunch

A delightful afternoon of good food and good company! Skilfully managed by Toastmistress Alison, President Sue welcomed members, friends and guests to SI Manchester's 98th Charter Lunch.

President Sue's 'Toast to the City and Ports of Manchester' referred to the Manchester Bee that started life as seven bees on the coat of arms, to represent Manchester's trade across the seven seas....and is now 'on the buses'!

The High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, Mrs Mary-Liz Walker replied on behalf of the 'City & Ports' recalling all the voluntary work carried out by Soroptimists of Manchester. Mary-Liz wore her Court dress including the traditional Ostrich feather in her hat.



Barbara Blaber, Trustee of Act4Africa, one of the many projects supported by SI Manchester, proposed the 'Toast to Soroptimist International' including looking forward to working with SI Kampala just recently chartered. Pamela Wright, President of Soroptimist International of South Lancashire, gave the response reminding us all to 'Rise Up & Roar!'



The Guest Speaker was Karen Humphreys, former Head of the Junior Royal Northern College of Music. Karen gave us all a very informative insight into the life of the 'Head of the Junior School' and shared some of her experiences of her years in office.

The 'Vote of thanks' was given by our President Elect Carole Swarbrick, including a toast to our guests.

We were pleased to be joined by Soroptimists from eight Clubs of South Lancashire; President Angela of Wigan, President Sue and members of Stockport & District... Also members of Ashton-under-Lyne, Bolton, Leigh & District, Liverpool, Southport and St Helens.

President Sue couldn't resist attempting to gather all of the Soroptimists present for the International Women's Day 'Inspire Inclusion' pose!



Contributed by Sue Underwood

'Good times' story: The Spice Chicks

We were heading to Brighton in 1997, for the SIGBI Annual Conference, to celebrate Dot Massey's election to the post of Regional President for South Lancashire Region. Dot was the first Widnes member to wear the Regional chain. This demanded something different from our members!

Some time before, BT had an advertising campaign involving fluffy yellow chicks bobbing up and down on telephone wires and Hough Green Scouts had used this idea in one of their revues. We borrowed the costumes, six in all, and called ourselves 'The Spice Chicks'. Posh, Sporty, etc plus Old Spice! Toilet tissue down our tights created the knobby knee effect and orange rubber gloves completed the effect as our feet.

Then we wrote some songs! We travelled to Brighton in a minibus filled with luggage and mysterious black plastic bags that confused Dot somewhat. A massive fire led to a circuitous route around Guildford but we arrived safe and sound. On Saturday evening, after the Change of Insignia Ceremony, we set about our 'do', and 'The Spice Chicks' entertained the company with our versions of the popular songs, Hello Dolly, Thumbelina and Nick-nack-paddy-wack. Fortunately, we had changed back into our glamorous evening clothes when a fire broke out in the hotel. How glad I was, being roast fowl would have been my preferred option rather than appearing on the street as a giant fluffy chick! Oddly, the hotel was fortunate that we were there as the staff had no idea what to do. Soroptimists stopped people from getting into lifts and steered everyone down the stairs and through fire exits. Somebody had a room with a 4-poster bed and it was astonishing how many people with filled glasses can fit on one!

Contributed by Marjorie Blennerhassett

