

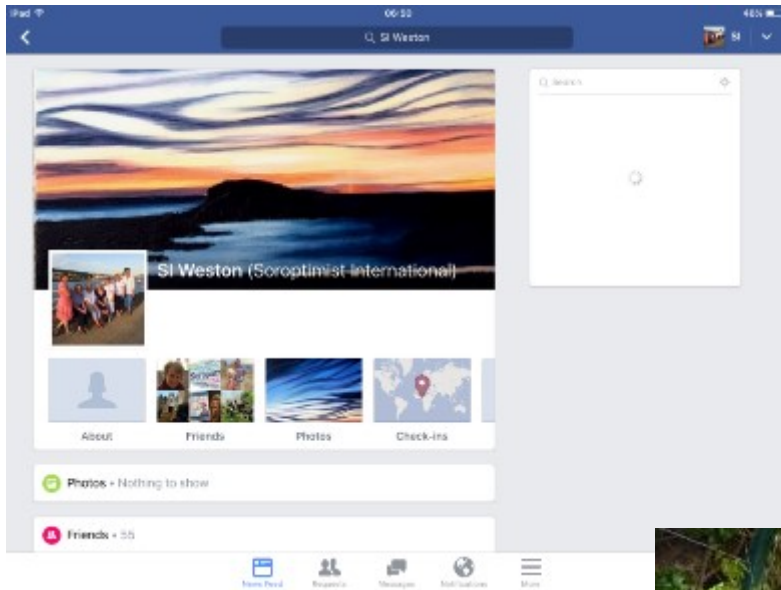
Year 2017-2018

Following a year without a president, Weston Soroptimists were delighted that Ruth Thomas had agreed to lead the Club for the next twelve months. As Immediate Past President, Shelagh Jeacocke presented Ruth with the club's Presidential chain at the Annual General meeting in April. Ruth said that she aims to make the Club as democratic and inclusive as possible during her year in office. As she put it: the Club belongs to all the members.



May 2017

Weston Soroptimists sprang into action when they received a message from the charity Target Ovarian Cancer asking for volunteers to collect donations after performances of Weston Operatic Society's musical 'Annie Get Your Gun' at the Playhouse. They were able to send two volunteers for three of the performances. Club Secretary, Olly Parsons, is seen here with Ken Cole, President of WOS.



May 2017 Our new Facebook profile

May 2017 Garden of fragrance

The pergola was officially opened on Friday May12th at 10am in the presence of our MP, John Penrose.

We were in the middle of an election and this photograph was not made public. Thanks go to Martha Perram who made it happen.



May2017 – speaker

It smelt of Gauloises, garlic and Chanel No 5” said Tony Helliker when he spoke about his first visit to France.

He was sent there by the aero-nautical engineering company he worked for to supervise testing of a new Havilland engine. Later, when the Prime Minister Harold Wilson said the new planned supersonic plane

would be half-French, half –British, Tony was the obvious choice to return to test Concorde’s engine.

Tony described the intense competition between the groups in France and in Bristol but he became part of the French team.

After a number of years, Tony’s French was so fluent that he gained a French wife, Danielle now a Soroptimist. Movingly he described how he watched the wheels of Concorde leave the ground on its maiden flight and return when it landed for the last time at Filton, Bristol.

June 2017 - speaker



Mulako SafeHome is the name of the charity started by Mazuba Solilo, who gave an inspiring talk to the Soroptimists last week. Revisiting her home village in Zambia she became aware of the plight of children who had been orphaned when their parents died of AIDS. They were leading a disorganised life with grandparents and friends. They needed to

attend school so Mazuba raised money to cover school fees. She also bought a piece of land and had a borehole drilled for water and said to the children they must raise crops to feed themselves and sell to buy equipment and clothes for school. Mazuba is now helping 35

children whom she visits in Zambia every 4 months, returning to the UK to sell goods made in their village to raise funds. At the meeting Mazuba and her friend, Hilda, had a large array of items for sale and raised over £200 during the evening. -

JUNE 2017 - Sidcot



Soroptimists of Weston were pleased to have a stand at Sidcot School's Peace Festival on today. The festival was well attended with many different events taking place. Soroptimists talked to those who showed an interest in the stand where the club was displaying the range of projects it undertakes.



June 2017 – Garden of Fragrance



July 2017
Book awards at
Windwhistle chool

Soroptimists' science showcase



The event was attended by Jos Holder, Roz Willis and Chris Blades.

Picture: WESTON SOROPTIMISTS

An annual workshop which aims to boost girls' participation in science was held at a North Somerset school last week.

Weston Soroptimists held its ninth Skirting Science event at Churchill Academy on June 29, with 188 year nine girls from North Somerset taking part in science workshops.

There were 16 different workshops for the children to try, including one which tasked them with using Lego to build a robot.

British Soroptimist

Federation president Ann Hodgson said: "It's so good, I wouldn't miss it. I'd like to do all the workshops."

Weston mayor Jos Holder, mayoress Roz Willis and North Somerset councillor Christopher Blades attended the event.

A Weston Soroptimists spokesman said: "We would like to thank Churchill Academy for allowing us to take over one house for the day and for all their administrative assistance."

"Special thanks to the headteacher for his contribution at the opening ceremony."

June 2017

Mandy Brown made Honorary Member

SKIRTING SCIENCE SUCCESS

On Thursday Churchill Academy welcomed 200 Year 9 girls from 12 schools to Skirting Science which aims to widen girls' appreciation of

scientific careers.

The day started with a keynote speech from Civil Engineer Christine Ramshaw who gave the girls a glimpse into her career, taking her all around the world. She has changed people's lives by designing and constructing huge projects such as shopping centres, roads and railways.

The girls then split into 16 hands-on workshops where they explored a great variety of topics. Girls tested eyes, made air rockets and designed plane cabins. They built calculators and robots, extracted their own DNA and separated blood. Others diagnosed diseases, tested water purity and solved crimes. They designed and made flood resilient homes, cardboard chairs and lava lamps. Some experimented with chemical molecules, analysed their voices and used pro-bots to explore the human genome. Science, Maths and Engineering subjects are a gateway into a vast range of careers and Skirting Science provided a glimpse into the many opportunities.

Soroptimists inspire action to transform the lives of women and girls around the world. The UK lags behind other European countries in the number of women in Scientific and STEM careers. Skirting Science provides practical way of inspiring girls.

Chris Hildrew, Headteacher commented, "As a school passionate about gender equality and STEM, we are proud to host Skirting Science to promote and inspire the next generation of female scientists and engineers."



August 2017 – Visit to SS Great Britain



SOROPTIMISTS INTERNATIONAL WSM

President, Ruth Thomas, presented the club's cheque of £700.00 to the League's committee.

A group of six people are standing together, holding a large ceremonial cheque. The cheque is from HSBC, dated 31st Mar 2017, and is payable to the League of Friends of Essex Arsenal for £700.00. The group consists of five women and one man, all smiling for the photo.

September 2017 – Stand at the Tropicana



Early November 2017- Soroptimist railing against abuse

Once again Sidcot School have made a generous donation to Weston Soroptimists to support their rally on November 25th, UN Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. On this day Soroptimists from the South West will be travelling by train to Bristol for a march which aims to draw attention to Domestic Abuse and to distribute bookmarks highlighting aspects of good and bad relationships. In the

photograph Melanie David hands over bookmarks to the school while Tara Newley Arkle receives the cheque from the Headmaster, Iain Kilpatrick. Tara's mother, Dame Joan Collins, will be joining the march on Saturday.

Iain Kilpatrick said "This is such an important issue. Sidcot Schools hopes to continue working with the Soroptimists to teach children of all ages about healthy respectful relationships".

November 2017- Soroptimist railing against abuse



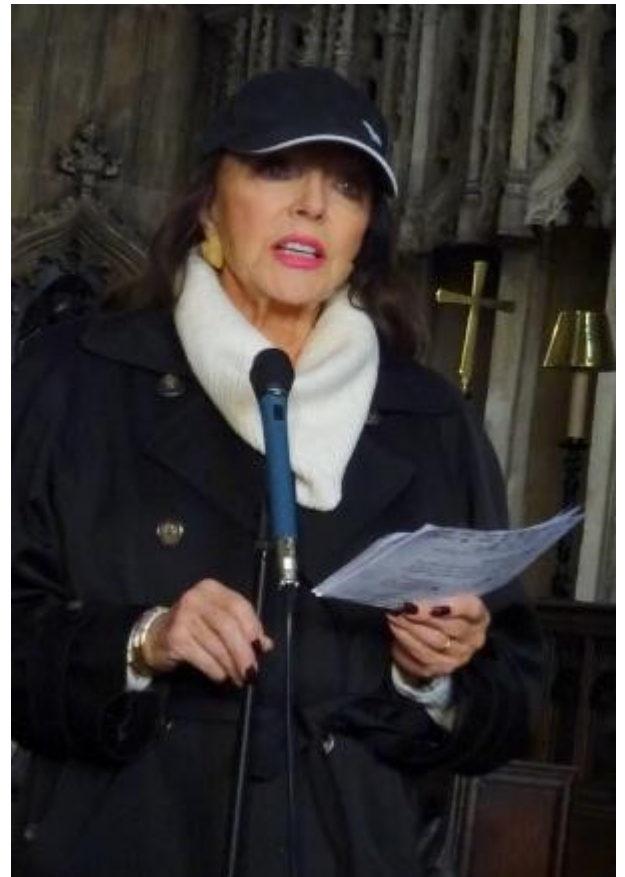


On November 25th, UN Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, more than 60 Sorooptimists and friends travelled by train from all over the South West to Bristol Temple Meads station. They marched to the Lord Mayor's Chapel, distributing bookmarks about respectful relationships to those en route. At the chapel they were addressed by the Lord Mayor, the PCC Sue Mountstevens, Jodi Collett of

Victim Support, Tara Newley Arkle and her mother Dame Joan Collins.

Sue Mountstevens talked about the importance of the issue of domestic abuse and how it was now being taken seriously and investigated by the police. Jodi Collett explained how her organisation supported domestic abuse victims. Both Tara Arkle and Dame Joan admitted to having been victims of domestic violence.

This event was organised by Weston-super-Mare Sorooptimists and their President Ruth Thomas thanked all those who had participated in the event and thanked Dame Joan in particular for making the effort to be present and for lending her valuable support. The bookmarks were funded by a grant from the Police Commissioner's Community Action Fund



Dame Joan Collins speaks up for abused women



January 2018 - Speaker

Weston Soroptimists were treated to a hilarious talk by Peter Tinney, a local farmer from Wedmore. He was able to bring his primary schooldays in Allerton to life with his eloquent description of his teacher who brought her cat to school along with three pairs of knickers to dry by the stove. He explained that teachers always carry a large bag in which to deposit items belonging to the children which they have confiscated (i.e. stolen!) and never return. Girls and boys were separated in the playground by a fence topped with barbed wire. None of the 8 children in his class passed the scholarship exam to go to grammar school. All this and more kept club members totally absorbed and entertained.

February 2018



Three members of Soroptimist international of Weston-super-Mare had a meeting with Det Supt Marie Wright, Avon and Somerset Police Officer with responsibility for investigating Domestic Violence cases. DS Wright was able to reassure the Soroptimists that, despite cuts in funding and manpower, domestic abuse cases were treated as high priority and she was setting up new initiatives such as a programme for perpetrators of violence. She was delighted to receive some "Loves me, loves me not" bookmarks for Police officers to hand out where appropriate.

Weston Soroptimists - Inspiring girls for a decade

A century on from the suffragettes' victory, many British industries remain male-dominated, including the sciences - but a Weston women's group is enjoying 'incredible success' in attempting to address the imbalance.

Weston Soroptimists, part of the Soroptimists International organisation, has been running its Skirting Science project for a decade, introducing teenage girls to a world of opportunities in the field.

The project sees experts from prestigious firms like Rolls Royce and Airbus deliver workshops to hundreds of 14-year-old secondary school pupils, hoping to inspire them to pursue further studies or a career in science.

Weston branch president Ruth Thomas, an engineer by trade, told of the 'inspiring young women' she has met through the workshops, and affirmed that girls can enjoy a career in science too.

She said: "It has been incredibly successful in opening girls' eyes to a career



in science. We try to give them role models to aspire to be like.

"It has become part of the school calendar. Around 200 girls take part from 12 schools and it raises awareness of subjects and careers they could follow."

The latest batch of pupils to take part in Skirting Science will participate in workshops at Churchill Academy on

June 28.

"The female experts who come along enjoy doing it," said the president. "They like seeing girls get excited by a potential career in science. There is a real buzz on the days."

"We still get girls who say engineering is for boys, but girls can do this too - and they can be feminine, they do not have to behave like men."

Ruth Thomas, SI President, said "Following from our Soroptimists Railing Against Abuse march which took place on November 25th, it was good to meet Det Supt Wright and be assured that the police take domestic violence cases very seriously. This is important, considering that 2 women every week are killed by their partner or ex-partner"

MARCH 2018 – Soroptimists in Geneva



MARCH 2018 – Article published in the Mercury

Weston women's group collect 500th backpack to help impoverished children

A local women's group has filled its 500th backpack with educational items to help some of the world's poorest children.

Soroptimist International of Weston-super-Mare is supporting the charity Mary's Meals through its Backpack Project which appeals to groups and schools to donate backpacks filled with materials such as notebooks, pens and school clothing.

The backpacks are sent to children receiving Mary's Meals in Malawi where the charity runs its largest school feeding programme, providing a daily meal in school to help impoverished children access an education.

Soroptimists of Weston have been donating backpacks to Mary's Meals since 2013 after hearing about the project at one of their UK-wide conferences. Their latest contribution of 40 filled bags brings the total number of backpacks collected by the group to 500.

Member Ronnie Murdin, who has led on the collection, explained: "It is so uplifting seeing pictures of children receiving the backpacks – they have sheer joy on their faces from receiving something basic they have never had before, such as a pencil or tennis ball.

"This joy is what we think of when we are packing up the backpacks to send to children receiving Mary's Meals."

The local branch of the women's organisation is creative in the ways in which they source items for the Mary's Meals campaign and try to include recycled items as much as possible.

Ronnie added: "We buy backpacks at car boot sales which are then washed, and I make skirts out of my husband's old shirts. The son of one of our members lives in Dubai and he brings home a suitcase full of flip flops which also go into the backpacks!"

Since the Backpack Project started in 2005, Mary's Meals supporters have gifted an incredible 500,000 backpacks, making a real difference to the daily lives and learning of impoverished children receiving meals in school. The project is a great way for school pupils and groups in the UK to recycle items such as school bags and clothing.

Joe Black, Education Officer at Mary's Meals, said: "We are very grateful to the Soroptimists of Weston for their amazing support.

"Most of the children who benefit from Mary's Meals and the Backpack Project have suffered war, poverty, famine, or natural disaster. They don't have simple things like pencils and copy books, or even suitable clothes to wear to school, which means they can miss out on an education.

"A simple backpack filled with basic educational items, together with Mary's Meals, can help solve this problem, and allow these children to make the most of their education which provides an escape route from poverty."

Mary's Meals, a UK-based charity, currently provides a meal every school day for over 1.2 million impoverished children in 14 countries.

It aims to address the immediate needs of a hungry child by giving them something to eat, and to enable that child to receive the education which can offer an escape from poverty. The average global cost to feed a child for a whole school year is just £13.90.

Where Mary's Meals is provided, there is a rise in rates of enrolment, attendance and academic performance. Mary's Meals is a no-frills charity that is committed to spending 93 pence of each £1 donated on its charitable work.





OBITUARY

At the beginning of our new Soroptimist Year, we lost Dr Carole Morrison who was a well loved and respected member of our club and is sorely missed.

Carole was President of our club in 2003-2004.