Soroptimist International Port Talbot

Our History 1948 to 2018

70 years of Soroptimism

No Soroptimist Club can exist in isolation and to fully appreciate the strength of the organisation we should view ourselves as part of the whole. Soroptimism has a long and powerful history and as a small cog in this great wheel we in our club can really make a difference as we have been doing since 1948.

"How wonderful it is that nobody needs wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." ~ Anne Frank

History of Soroptimist International

"A people without the knowledge of their history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots". Marcus Garvey.

The first Soroptimist club was founded by eighty women in Oakland, California, in 1921. The idea quickly spread across America and over to Europe with the first British Soroptimist Club chartered in London in 1924. By 1928, there were enough clubs to form two federations: Soroptimist International America and Soroptimist International Europe. In 1934, there were sufficient clubs to form another federation - Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI); this title

is rather misleading as SIGBI embraces 29 of the Commonwealth countries, 355 clubs in total. Soroptimism continued to spread throughout the world and in 1978 the Federation of the South West Pacific was formed. The Federation of Africa is now in the pipeline.

From the beginning SI was a category organisation. This meant that members came from different businesses and professions. The intention was to give a wide spread of knowledge and experience within each club. There were also two tiers of membership: Active and Senior. Senior members were ladies who had retired but who had served at least three years as Active members. Each club had to have at least 15 Active members. The senior membership status was removed many years ago because these ladies paid a lower subscription and could not take over the role of President. As the membership age was rising, clubs could not function without all members playing a full part. Categories were removed more recently.

History of Soroptimist International Wales South

"The present defines the future. The future builds on the foundation of the past"

Lailah Gifty Akita

The first club to be chartered in Wales was Swansea in 1933. The development of our Region, Soroptimist International Wales South, followed in 1939. There are currently 16 clubs in the Wales South Region extending from, Barry & District in the South, Abergavenny in the North and Haverfordwest in the West. Swansea is the mother club for both SI Port Talbot, chartered in 1949, and SI Neath & District, chartered in 1947. So, although we are senior members in Wales South, we are still quite young compared to other clubs who are some 16 years our seniors.

Soroptimist International Port Talbot

"Kindness is the most tender and effective form of leaving a memory inside people's hearts. The things you do out of joy and compassion are sometimes the catalyst that create happiness in people's lives and yours". – Dodinsky

Soroptimist International Port Talbot was chartered on March 17th 1949. At that time there were 22 members. Our first president was Mrs Pugh Bevan whose category was social worker. The charter dinner was attended by 41 people, the cost of the meal was £13.6s.6d (£13.32) and the expenses for the whole event came to just over £33.

At that time the entrance and subscription fees came to £2.11s (£2.55) which included a capitation fee of £0.10s (£0.50). Today fees also include monies paid to both region and federation as well as including a contribution to the Benevolent Fund. Today these contributions account for well over half of each member's annual fee.

The Club's Regalia & Other Artefacts

The club has several pieces of regalia. The first and most prestigious is the President's chain which was presented to the club by the founder secretary Mrs M Humphreys. The chain is now valued in excess of £1000. The second is the Immediate Past President's pendant which was given to the club by Swansea Club in 1970 on the occasion of Port Talbot's twenty-first birthday. The third is the President Elect's pendant which was the Regional Vice President's badge worn by Founder Member Hilda Jones and given to the club after her death. By 1999 there was sufficient money in the chain fund to buy a new chain in time for the Golden Anniversary. The old 'gong' was attached to a more up to date chain, which clips to the shoulders of the wearer. Although much more elegant in appearance, the gong proved to be too heavy for the chain, so members saved for a new pendant which is much admired by other clubs. The old chain and pendant have been mounted in a display case. The President Elect's pendant has been replaced by a brooch.

We have also been gifted a ceremonial gavel from our former American Friendship Link Club of Cloverdale, which is used at our Charter Dinner and a Club Shield from former President Meg Edwards to mark her Presidential year of 1980 to 1981.

Soon after its charter, the club bought four shares of £5 each in Soroptimist headquarters at 63 Bayswater Road, London. These premises are no longer used as Soroptimist International headquarters, but they are still used as a residential club for Soroptimists world-wide. From time to time SI Port Talbot has made donations to '63' to help maintain and refurbish it and the facility is frequently used by our club members.

In 1989 a commemorative tablecloth was started on which all members embroider their signatures. This is displayed at the Annual Luncheon and on any occasion where visiting Clubs are present. Also, in 1989 a kneeler was presented to Holy Cross Church in memory of a much-loved member, Past President Alvin Mahoney, who had died earlier that year. In the same year founder member Ms Hilda Jones celebrated her 90th birthday, but sadly, died very soon after. Members decided to buy a commemorative seat to mark the Club's forty-year history and the work of the sisters Hilda and Ivy Jones, both founder members. In 1993 the bench was placed in Margam Park in the Orangery grounds overlooking the Soroptimist Copse.

Club Meetings

During its history the Club has had a rather nomadic existence. The original venue was the Walnut Tree Hotel with members gathering there for many years before a move to the Grand Hotel in 1963. The club stayed there barely a year before moving back in 1964 following a lot of discussion relating to the annual twelve guineas rent charged by the hotel. Apart from a few breaks the Club continued to meet there until it was demolished during the reconstruction of Port Talbot Town in the early 1970s. From then until 1992, a variety of venues hosted the Club, these included: Courtland Place Surgery, Red Cross House, YMCA, Baglan Country Club, a flat in Commercial Road and the Twelve Nights Hotel. One secretary is quoted as saying "have minutes will travel". Between 1993 & 1996 the Baglan Country Club was used. Since 1996 the club has met at the Aberavon Beach Hotel.

Currently members meet on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the Month. Monthly we hold a business meeting and have dinner together.

Charter Dinners, Luncheons and other Functions

It seems that every possible hostelry has been tried for dinners and luncheons including: The Grand Hotel, The Twelve Knights, The Jersey Beach Hotel, the Afan Lido, The Ros-Y-Mar and the Baglan Country Club; with the favoured venue since 1992 being the Aberavon Beach Hotel.

The club used to hold two annual functions, the dinner or luncheon to commemorate its charter and the '*At Home*'.

The Annual dinner became the Annual luncheon in 1978 and has been well supported over the years. Presidents have found a wide range of interesting and exciting speakers, usually linked to their category, but sometimes friends who have achieved fame. Notable among these guests have been:

- 1965 Lady Treharne, wife of the Lord Lieutenant Glamorgan.

- 1966, Alan Williams, well known broadcaster.
- 1968 Geoffrey Howe MP, later to be Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary in Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet.
- 1990 locally born, Anthony Hopkins, actor and film star, later to win an Oscar.
- 1995 Donald Maxwell, International Baritone.

At the beginning of its history the At Home was an annual event and originally paid for by the President. Members from all over region were invited and they were true visitors and not charged. Soon Club members agreed to share the costs and responsibility. The events were usually held in a church hall. One or two members took responsibility to host a table of 8 or 10 to provide linen, cutlery, china and silver tea service. Cakes were made by members. These occasions were helpful in creating links between clubs. At Homes ceased being annual events and Presidents held them if they wished. The last At Home was held in 2009 in St Theodore's Church Hall. As it was our sixtieth-year members were asked to dress in the style of the time and the food was to be similar but a bit more lavish as food was still rationed in 1949.

Other events out of club include BBQs, pool parties, a friendship tree planting afternoon and a musical afternoon tea held at Margam Orangery.

More recently because Soroptimists are well known for their love of food several members have opened their homes for lunches, tea parties and buffets to raise funds for charity and to fund club members who were taking on the role of Regional President. At one time, there was an annual themed lunch. The first was Italian, and then we had German, Greek, Spanish and finally Peggy George held a Mamma Mia themed lunch when all the guests dressed up in appropriate costumes. Many members have opened their homes: Julia Butt hosting a strawberry tea and Italian evening meal, Gaynor Oak hosting an International Women's Breakfast and a WaterAid Coffee morning, Patt Morgan two themed lunches and a cheese and wine party, Tegwyn Williams hosted an afternoon tea and

Halloween party, Judith Morgan hosted a Tunisian garden party and a dinner party. Other current members who have offered hospitality include Beryl Tyler, Cath Phillips, Margaret Poston & Pam Jones. This year, our 70th, we are planning three more with Peggy George, Julia Butt and Sue Evans hosting an event.

Club Milestones

> *"I've discovered that every time I've reached a milestone I think I'm there, but there's another there waiting for me".*
> *Sara Benincasa*

Most Club Presidents have taken their regional and national responsibilities seriously and many have commented at the end of their year of office that it was through attending regional and federation meetings that they have truly realised what Soroptimism was all about. There are records of attendance by Presidents and others at both national and International conferences, for example President Mrs HW Thomas went to Helsinki for the European Conference and two members attended the International conference in Lausanne in 1964. Mrs Sue Walker went to Istanbul, Turkey in 2015. Presidents and members travel all over the country and offshore to attend the annual SIGBI Conference. In 2001 eleven club members went to South Africa to witness Meg Edwards installation as Regional President, a few years later seven members and two husbands went to Barbados to witness the installation of Haverfordwest member, Carwen Wynne Howells, as Federation President and in 2016 seven went to Malta.

The Club has produced four Regional Presidents: Miss Mamie Roderick who became President of Wales South in 1963 and Mrs Pamela Roberts in 1971, Miss Meg Edwards in 2002 and Mrs Sue Walker in 2016. In addition, Club members Miss Margaret Morgan and Miss Meg Edwards each held the post of Regional Extension Officer for several years. Mrs Evelyn White held the Regional Treasurers Post from 1995 to 2001.

When Miss Mamie Roderick was Divisional President (now Regional) the conference was held at Glan-y-Mor school where Mamie was Infant School Headmistress. All the clubs in the region were represented and there were 164 Soroptimists to be catered for. The Port Talbot Club was responsible for this and it was no mean task as few women could drive. Taxis were hired to carry food and crockery to the school where club members and Glan-Y-Mor teachers served the visitors. In the evening a dinner was held at the Twelve Knights Hotel attended by 64 people. Subsequently many letters were received by the club thanking members for the excellent arrangements and it was understood in the minutes that this was the most successful Divisional Conference so far and some lovely hats were worn.

In 1974 the Divisional AGM was held at the Baglan Bay Hotel and the Port Talbot Club organised a study weekend in Cardiff. To celebrate its twenty-first birthday in 1970, the Club held a dinner at the Afan Lido, which was attended by the Federation President.

In 1989, the Club celebrated its Ruby anniversary and to mark the occasion a special 'At Home' was organised and attended by eighty people.

The Golden Anniversary was celebrated during the Presidency of Mrs Lynda Harris and was thoroughly enjoyed by the Club and visitors. The celebration took the form of a Friendship Weekend in September 1999. On the Friday evening a concert and buffet were held in the newly restored Margam Castle. We were entertained by Glanafan Comprehensive School Choir and our own Evelyn White. Members from neighbouring clubs and four ladies from our friendship link club of Haringey North joined us. Ray Butt, the Park Manager, (husband of Club Member Julia) gave us a potted history of the park and castle and arranged mini bus tours to see the game by moonlight. On Saturday morning the Mayor welcomed Club Members and our Haringey friends to his parlour. The afternoon was at leisure in preparation for the grand dinner in the evening. Lady Howe, wife of Sir Geoffrey Howe, was the guest speaker at our Gala Dinner. It was

a very successful function which was much enjoyed by all those who attended including Immediate Past Federation President Mrs Olive Newton and Regional President Mrs Iris Hopkins. The weekend was brought to a conclusion with a service on Sunday morning at St Paul's Church Aberavon, after which club members enjoyed a relaxing lunch together at Blanco's.

In April 2002, it was the club's responsibility to host the Regional Study Weekend. This was held at the Aberavon Beach Hotel and attended by Federation President Mrs Lynne Dunning and this time there was not a hat to be seen. Nearly all the clubs in the region attended and it was generally agreed that it was a most successful weekend. The speakers all represented Regional President Meg's theme of Tomorrow's Woman and were all women at the cutting edge of their professions. Entertainment on the Saturday evening was provided by the talented granddaughter of Club Member Sally Searle.

Several Past Presidents have undertaken a second stint as President and for our sixtieth year, Meg Edwards undertook the presidency for the third time. The year started with a bang. We were invited to the Mayor's parlour to commemorate the occasion and some weeks later the Mayor joined us to be photographed alongside a floral display outside the Civic Centre. The Soroptimist logo was the centrepiece and the flowers were in Soroptimist colours. This earned us a picture in Soroptimist News. Also pictured was the highly successful 'At Home'.

The Diamond Anniversary Dinner took place on March 1st 2009 coinciding with St David's Day. It was held at the Aberavon Beach Hotel. It was a really important celebration for the club and to mark the occasion, Federation President Carwen Wynne-Howells attended.

During the anniversary year, the Press and Publicity Committee worked to bring out new publications which had a corporate image for all material. The Club profile, handbook and history were

updated and the SI Port Talbot website, linked to SIGBI, was inaugurated thanks to Mrs Peggy George.

In 2015, the Regional Study Weekends having been abandoned, during Sue Walker's first of two years as Regional President a most interesting Study Day was held on the subject of Fair Trade and also a symposium on the subject of Modern-Day Slavery with experts contributing from the many services involved.

Friendship Links

""There are no strangers here; Only friends you haven't yet met" William Butler Yeats

The Club established friendship links with Vienna and with Newark Delaware. As a token of friendship, the Port Talbot members sent an engraved bowl to Delaware and for many years individual Christmas presents were exchanged. In 1964 this was discontinued when our club members decided to spend the money on needy people in our own community. In 1965, The Friendship correspondent in Vienna appealed for help to support two refugees whom she had found in the rushes near her home after the war. She had maintained them for 13 years but at the time of the appeal she herself was in need. It was decided by the Port Talbot Club to provide that help at a cost of two shillings and sixpence per member. Vienna's sister clubs also responded to the appeal.

The link with Vienna was lost in the eighties but renewed in1990 although it has since been lost again and there is no record in Federation of that link. The link with Delaware lapsed in 1975 but another American link was established with Cloverdale in 1986. In 1994 a Soroptimist pastry knife was sent to our American friends.

Since the golden anniversary we have lost our link with Haringey North which unfortunately had to dissolve but we formed a new friendship link with Sudbury in England and Hansestadt, Hamburg in Germany and Bombay North. Five club members went to Germany

in 2003 to join Hansestadt, Hamburg Club in celebrating their tenth anniversary. President Farida Patel visited the President of Bombay North in 2007 and we had two meetings with Sudbury members. Unfortunately, Sudbury dissolved in 2014. We continued to have correspondence with Cloverdale, USA until their club dissolved too. Most recently a link has been established with SI Cannock and District.

Programme Action

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted". Aesop

A welcome development in the seventies was the increase in work done on Programme Action. In 1973 there was an investigation into the Child Health Service and into the effect of the Consumer Credit Bill. Studies were made into the status of women and the effect of tax credits on females.
From 1991 to 1994 as part of a national project our club surveyed local rivers. The information gathered was sent to Federation where it forms part of a nationwide survey. In 1991 with other clubs in region, we looked into the local tree-planting programme and ran a poster competition in schools entitled 'trees for life'. The two winning entries received trees for their schools. At the end of the Regional Project in 1992, with the help of the Prince's Trust, the Club bought and planted 28 trees in Margam Park. These trees represented the 28 clubs in the Region of Wales South and coincidentally the 28 members of SI Port Talbot at that time. Wild flowers were planted in the copse to create a wild nature area.

In 1993, in response to a directive from Federation, the Club appointed a Programme Action Officer and a Programme Action Committee under her Chairmanship. The region also set up a regional PA group which consists of Club PA officers and other interested members. This group meets in the morning of the Regional council meetings and discusses the work done in the region and also

decides upon Regional Projects. Through Programme Action, we continue to work hard to make a positive contribution locally, nationally and internationally.

Over the years, in order to respond to our objective to advance the status of women, the club has been involved in sponsoring young women who wish to take part in Operation Raleigh. To answer the call for improved literacy, we have helped fund an adult literacy project in the Borough and since 1994 we have held a competition to find a young writer of the year. This is no longer held mainly because of lack of interest in schools. In 1994 too, we established a Christmas Song Writing Competition. The winning entry was announced and sung at the Borough Carol Festival. Again, this was discontinued because of lack of interest. Over the years the club has presented trophies to the best company in the Young Enterprise Presentation Evening and a trophy to the best sales person in their trade fair. Cups have also been presented at school sports to mark pupils' achievements. When we decided to give up the music and literary competitions we adopted the Federation 'Care in the Community Award'. This recognises the efforts of young people who give up their time to help in the local community. The winner then represents us at Regional level from wherever the winner would take part in the Federation final. In 2006 our winner became the Regional Winner but by that time SIGBI had abandoned the project. Because of a lack of enthusiasm across the region the events now take place only every other year.

Locally we continue our support for the Women's Refuge and for Dewis, the single housing project for young people. We have become supporters of the local Charity SNAC (Special Needs Activity Centre).

In 1993 Port Talbot Club mounted an awareness campaign on the issue of osteoporosis and the use of HRT. In 1995 the Regional Project was '*Caring for Carers'*. Once again, an awareness campaign was held in order to inform carers of the help that was available to them and as a result of a fund-raising event a supper club was set up for

Alzheimer's patients and their carers. This was known as the Friendly Club and ran until 2014 when the Alzheimer's Society became more active and taking on this function.

In 2006, Region Wales South undertook the project, Licking Lassa Fever, to which our Club made a very worthwhile contribution. To raise money for this project the Region held a poetry competition. The winning poems were published under the title Peace Poems and one of these was by Sadie Jarrett, granddaughter of member Brenda Jarrett. In 2006 as a result of our friendship link with Bombay North and as our contribution to the Water Aid project, we built a block of toilets for a tiny village outside Mumbai. Although we did not win, this project was considered in Barbados for a Best Practice Award. In 2014 the club began raising money for 'Toilet Twinning' a Regional project and in 2015 the Meru Garden Project, a Federation project, was embraced.

We have made significant contributions to the quadrennial projects: including Limbs for Life, Project Independence, Water Aid and Project Sierra.

As a club, we have also chosen to give year-on-year support to a particular project. From 2003 to 2010, the club supported the Gobizazi Creche in Durban, South Africa. This project was close to the hearts of several of our members. It started when nine of our members travelled to the SIGBI conference in Durban, South Africa. While there, the members became very conscience of the poverty in the country, especially the children. On returning home, they contacted Reg, who was the trustee of a charity that ran the Gobizazi Creche which helped orphaned children. As a result, from 2003 to 2010 the club donated £200 annually to this trust and together with donations from other sources the trust were able to support the initial development of the actual creche building, then finance the provision of a daily meal for each child and pay for the salary of an assistant teacher. Although members never met Reg we were in regular contact and established a great friendship. We received an annual update, with photos, on the progress of the

children. Unfortunately, on Reg's passing we no longer had the contact to continue with our donations.

This year (2018) the club has decided to provide five years of support (April 2018 to April 2023) for another charity: Le Restaurant des Enfants de la Rue (LRDE), Cambodia. This charity provides a children's restaurant and education for street children in Phnom Penh and nearby villages. They transport the children by tuk-tuk. Many of these children are scavengers in dump yards, trying to help their families by selling cans and recyclables. All children receive a free meal & shower every day. LRDE feeds 200 – 250 children daily, and the numbers are on the increase. LRDE also provides a free doctor service twice monthly. A new Baby-House assists new mothers to nurse their babies and provides help, vaccines, baby food, clothing and education to nursing mothers.

Fund Raising

There are no minutes available before 1963 but Club records give some idea of the activities. There seems to have been a succession of jumble sales and coffee evenings to raise funds not only for charity but also to run the club. In 1949 a very successful garden party raised over sixty-three pounds which was a large sum when the average wage was less than five pounds a week. In 1965 the Club presented its first concert and the range of fund raising activities broadened to include cocktail parties, fashion shows, hat parades, beauty demonstrations, sponsored walks, nearly new shops, dances and of course the ubiquitous raffle. President Gaynor Oak had the bright idea of using the biblical talent and gave each member a pound coin to see what they could do. £126.00 was raised this way. Concerts, auctions, coffee mornings, themed parties, barbecues and sponsored walks have all been tried. The raffle as always is a consistent source of income. Every year we are amazed at the amount of money raised even though we continue to maintain that we are a service organisation and the aim is not to

"Fundraisers are the catalysts of change". - Unknown

raise money. The most recent and largest fund raiser, started in 2010, is the annual fashion show and lunch held in Margam Orangery

Soroptimists have to raise money to provide service and during its lifetime the Club has donated large sums to worthy causes. Regular recipients since 1949 have been the Mission to Seafarers, Port Talbot Hospital, CAB, Save the Children, The Red Cross, Girl Guides, SNAC, Age Cymru Afan Nedd, Welsh Air Ambulance Service, RNLI and Blood Bikes. The Club has also made gifts such as books for the blind and large sums have been raised to buy equipment for local hospitals. On occasions money has been raised for specific causes such as Ty Hafan Children's Hospice, LATCH, Childline Wales, The Salvation Army, The Macmillan Nurse Appeal and The Geraint Evans Memorial Fund. Currently books are sent to Monze to help a new school there. From its early years the Club has supported the Mayor's Charity Appeal and provided a stall at the charity fair when it has been held, as they have at the Port Talbot Hospital Annual Fete.

In 1964, to assist in fund raising for the National Eisteddfod, which was to be held in Port Talbot, the Club members made and sold jam in a tent in the town. In 1966, during Eisteddfod week, the club was responsible for the Soroptimist Hospitality Tent on the Eisteddfod field. When the event has been held in neighbouring towns, SI Port Talbot has helped to man the tent and provide refreshments. There is no longer a Soroptimist presence at the Eisteddfod because of the huge expense.

There are three recent projects which have cost members little more than time. Two of these are Regional projects which involve the collection of old jewellery which is sold for charity and the other the collection of bras in good condition to be sent to women in the third world. Our club in collaboration with Tools for Self-Reliance Cymru have collected sewing machines and garden tools at various venues for TFSR Cymru to recondition before sending them off to Tanzania to help villagers set up workshops. Nearly 500 sewing machines have been collected and several tons of tools. Today, TFSR send the tools to Tanzania for the now trained locals to refurbish

and some are sent back to this country to be sold. Sometimes the Club has intervened to help individuals as in 1963 when a local family was threatened with eviction because of rent arrears the Club settled the debt and sought outside help for the family to prevent them getting into difficulty again. On another occasion the club responded to an appeal to provide a holiday for a disabled child and for several years needy pensioners were given a week's holiday at the Rest, Porthcawl.

Not all the club's activities have been connected with fund raising or service. Raising Awareness to the problems of women and children here and in the Third World is part of our remit. From 1967 to 1973 an International Night was held each year. Overseas students were invited to share an evening with Club members. In the eighties attempt was made to hold a Women's Forum to which women from other organisations were invited. The first in November 1984 was badly attended and this was put down to bad weather so in 1989 the forum was held in July when the weather was as bad and the attendance was no better. Since 2014 the Club has held an International Breakfast with a speaker on an international theme. This has proved very popular.

During its history the Club has acted as a pressure group within the community. In 1989 it was proposed to build a chemical plant on a greenfield site in the Borough. With other local groups we campaigned against the plan and the idea was abandoned. Also during the eighties pressure was put on the local authority to provide recycling facilities within the town. Bottle banks appeared first and at last in 1995 a receptacle for newspapers appeared in the town car park. SI Port Talbot in 1994 joined others in the town to protest at the scaling down in the size of Baglan Moors Hospital. A small measure of success was achieved.

Our interest in the environment has continued. In 2004, during National Tree Week and to celebrate their thirtieth anniversary of the Tree Council, and with the Brownies' help, we planted 100 saplings in Margam Park. To mark the Millennium, we planted a London

Poplar in the park. During the nineties, again with the Brownies, we undertook several beach cleans. More recently, working with Keep Wales Tidy, members have assisted in Beach Cleans at Aberavon Beach.

Socialising

"It's all about being a part of something in the community, socializing with people who share interests and coming together to help improve the world we live in". Zach Braff

For many years the Club ran excursions to beauty spots, such as to the opera at Craig Y Nos and the theatre. With ever increasing numbers of women driving and owning cars this sort of activity has declined, although in the nineties overnight trips to London were organised. Day trips have always been an enjoyable experience. Club has been to see Concorde, the Morgan car factory, and Laura Ashley's home, which is now a hotel.

Dress Codes

Another change has been in the attire of members, during the early years great consideration was given to what was fitting for various occasions. Hats were always worn at '*At Homes*' and long very formal dresses to dinners. Increasingly, liberal attitudes in society have been reflected in the Club and even when formal dress is specified it is almost a case of 'anything goes'.

Representation on other organisations

As a service organisation the Club is expected to provide members to serve on committees of local charities and other public bodies. We have been represented for many years on the Community Health Council, Dewis, Age Concern, CAB, CVS, Port Talbot Victim Support, Save the Children, Red Cross and Friends of the Hospital. At

one time members played active roles in Cruse, Boparth Cymru and The Rest Porthcawl. For various reasons we are no longer linked with all these organisations. Before legislation made it illegal, members were volunteer helpers at the Family Planning Clinic at Port Talbot Hospital.

Membership

"Instead of counting your days, make your days count."
Unknown

Throughout its history Port Talbot has had problems with numbers and a reluctance of some members to take office. Even as long ago as 1965 when Mrs Evelyn Jones took office for the second time she said 'I venture upon this year with mixed feelings; whilst it is an honour to wear the chain for the second time, there is in our Club a lack of enthusiasm. I am prepared to work to regain ground and regain our aims and objectives, but I must have your help.' Similarly, in 1974, President Dr Joan Richards said in the AGM, 'We should stop paying lip service to Soroptimism and should really make it part of our lives and not just a badge on our coats'. In the mid-eighties, although the Club had raised its profile in the town and had donated considerable sums to charity, there were problems. More and more members were becoming Senior and there were not enough new Active members being recruited to replace them. The future of the Club was in jeopardy if it could not maintain fifteen active members. As has been mentioned previously, the recruitment of new members has been a long running problem in Port Talbot maybe because it is a town of really heavy industry or maybe because there are so many clubs in the area. Although Port Talbot is known for its friendliness, within two years it lost all five new members it had gained in 1998 plus two older members. Many clubs were closing because of falling numbers but Port Talbot was determined that this would not happen to it. The numbers crisis seems to be cyclical and Port Talbot would surely survive. There was a great deal of enthusiasm among the current members and determination to carry on our work. In 2005 a

recruitment drive was launched by President Tegwen Williams. Five new members were gained but all but two were lost by the end of 2006. The decision was made to recruit only one or two at a time as the club was too small to absorb too many all at once. In 2004, SIGBI, keen to raise the profile of the organisation suggested that clubs sought a high-profile patron. There was no doubt in our Club who that should be… Baroness Lady Howe, not only was there a link to the club through Sir Geoffrey but Lady Howe was a baroness in her own right by reason of her work in championing equal rights for women. Her patronage was requested, and she agreed and has since visited the club to talk about her life in politics. When Sir Geoffrey died in 2016 Lady Howe invited two members to represent the club at his memorial service in Westminster Abbey.

In 2008 the club created its first honorary member, Miss Margaret Morgan, in recognition of her long service to Club and Region.

Over the years many influential and valuable club members have passed away, sadly far too many to list.

"Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement."
- Golda Meir

Membership at time of writing stands at 24 which is bucking the trend of SIGBI as a whole. Four years ago, we had only 15 and one of those members has since died and another left. We have increased our membership by 8 (54%) new members in the last four years. SIGBI has tried to increase fees to compensate for falling income but members in Conference have voted this down believing high fees are what is causing fall of membership among other issues. Two alternative versions of membership have been introduced – Associate Membership and Linked Membership but that is still costly for potential members.

Most members volunteer to take up a role on the club executive committee, but this is not compulsory, members then agree the appointments. Current roles and history of past offices held are included in the final section.

Linked Membership Is for women who want to be "Linked" to and involved with what's happening in a Club but due to their geographical location or personal circumstances they cannot physically attend a Club's regular meetings. With this form of membership, individuals still get involved with Club projects and social events when they can.

Associate Membership is open to women who believe in what we do, want to be involved, but can't commit to Club Membership. They will learn about our organisation and get involved in our project work to improve the lives of women and girls through our magazine, website, social media and email updates. This is an online membership although Members can attend our annual conference and can be invited to attend local Club and regional events.

The Future

"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make." - Jane Goodall

So, the future of Soroptimist International Port Talbot rests not only in the hands of its members but in the fate of the organisation as a whole. Soroptimists worldwide have really made a difference in their own communities and across the world. Port Talbot can be proud of its contribution and long may it continue as our whole is greater than the sum of our parts (Aristotle) and in the words of Mother Teresa … It is not how much we give but how much love we put into giving that matters.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP AND HISTORY OF CLUB OFFICERS

2018 Club Positions & Members

	2018 to 2019 (70th Year)
President	Sue Evans
President Elect	Julie Morse
Immediate Past President	Judith Morgan
Secretary	Gordina Appleton
Treasurer	Patt Morgan
Minutes Secretary	Judith Morgan
Communications	Gwyneth Morgan support Hazel Bowden
Membership Officer	Margaret Poston
Programme Action Officer	Judith Morgan
Regional Representative	Gordina Appleton (secretary)
Website Administrators	Julie Morse & Judith Morgan
Catering	Julia Butt
Invites Secretary	Tegwyn Williams (supported by Meg Edwards)
Visitor/Welfare Officer	Gaynor Oak
Book Monitor	Julie Morse (supported by Julie Butt)
Food Bank/Provisions	Jean Davies & Margaret O'Connor
Club members	Ann Baker
	Beryl Tyler
	Cath Phillips
	Christine Brown
	Christine Thomas
	Helen Bayley
	Linda Gow
	Maureen Morgan
	Meg Edwards
	Pam Jones
	Peggy George
Regional secretary	Gordina Appleton

History of Club Positions Held

The club's year starts at the AGM, which currently falls on the 4th Thursday in April. At the AGM, the outgoing President and Officers hand over their office to incoming officers.

Past presidents:

1948	Mrs K Pugh Bevan	1985	Miss M Davies
1949	Mrs K Pugh Bevan	1986	Mrs M Berni
1950	Mrs HM Jones	1987	Mrs E Trott
1951	Mrs EF Howe	1988	Ms E Jones
1952	Mrs IP Jones	1989	Mrs H Bowden
1953	Mrs E Richards	1990	Mrs M Richards
1954	Mrs M O'Shea	1991	Mrs B Tyler
1955	Mrs A Morgan	1992	Miss V Lewis
1956	Miss E Jones	1993	Mrs HT Williams
1957	Mrs GE Jones	1994	Mrs BE White
1958	Miss P Thomas	1995	Mrs PC Jones
1959	Miss M Roderick	1996	Miss Meg Edwards
1960	Mrs M Williams	1997	Mrs Gaynor Oak
1961	Mrs M Thomas	1998	Mrs L Harris
1962	Mrs AW Thomas	1999	Mrs G Crompton
1963	Mrs EA Richards	2000	Mrs Julia Butt
1964	Mrs M Mullins	2001	Mrs C John
1965	Miss E Jones	2002	Mrs Cath Phillips
1966	Miss M Roderick	2003	Mrs Gwyneth Morgan
1967	Miss G Davies	2004	Mrs Tegwyn Williams
1968	Mrs M Thomas	2005	Mrs Pam C Jones
1969	Mrs B Thomas	2006	Mrs Patt Morgan
1970	Mrs M Morgan	2007	Mrs Farida Patel
1971	Mrs C John	2008	Miss Meg Edwards
1972	Miss P Roberts	2009	Mrs Sue Evans
1973	Dr J Richards	2010	Mrs Cath Phillips
1974	Mrs M David	2011	Ms Sue Walker
1975	Mrs M David	2012	Mrs L Rowland
1976	Mrs C Heard	2013	Mrs K Briton
1977a	Mrs C Heard	2014a	Mrs Gaynor Oak
1977b	Ms P George	2014b	Mrs Tegwyn Williams
1978	Mrs P George	2015 a	Mrs Tegwyn Williams
1979	Miss R James	2015 b	Mrs Cath Phillips
1980	Miss M Edwards	2016	Ms Judith Morgan
1981	Mrs L Bath	2017	Ms Judith Morgan
1982	Ms J Howell	2018	Mrs Sue Evans
1983	Ms G Wood	2019	
1984	Dr J Richards	2020	

Club Secretaries.

1968 -to 1969	Mrs B Tyler	1988	Mrs M David
1970	Mrs M David	1989	Mrs H T Williams
1971 to 1973	Miss M Morgan	1990	Mrs L Bath

1974 to 1975	Mrs C Heard	1991 & 1992	Mrs L Llewellyn
1976 to 1977	Mrs M Morgan	1993 to 1998	Mrs S Searle
1978	Mrs M David	1999 & 2000	Mrs Cath Phillips
1979 to 1980	Miss J Howell	2001 to 2006	Mrs Evelyn White
1981	Mrs A Mahoney	2007 & 2008	Mrs Cath Phillips
1982	Miss M Davies	2009 & 2010	Mrs Sue Walker
1983	Mrs L Bath	2011 to 2016	Mrs Chris Brown
1984	Miss M Morgan	2017	Ms Julie Morse
1985	Miss B Tyler	2018	Mrs Gordina Appleton
1986 & 1987	Mrs A Mahoney		

Club Treasurers

1970	Mrs E Hopkins	1987	Mrs G Oak
1971	Mrs M Thomas	1988 to 1990	Mrs A Davies
1972	Mrs C John	1991 to 1994	Mrs P Jones
1973	Mrs A Mahoney	1995 to 1999	Mrs J Thomas
1974	Mrs D Evans	2000	Mrs Pam Jones
1975	Mrs E Hopkins	2001	Mrs Gwyneth Morgan
1976 to 1978	Mrs A Mahoney	2002	Mrs P. Jones
1979	Mrs C John	2003 to 2005	Mrs P. Morgan
1980	Mrs S Morse Jones	2006 to 2009	Mrs M. Poston
1981	Mrs G Wood	2010	Mrs F. Patel
1982	Mrs M Davies	2011 to 2012	Mrs S Prosser
1983 to 1986	Mr A Mahoney	2013 to 2018	Mrs P. Morgan

Programme Action Officers

	Mrs Pam Jones		
	Mrs Marion Price		
	Mrs Cath Phillips		
	Mrs Gaynor Oak		
	Mrs Tegwyn Williams		
	Mrs Sue Evans		
2018	Ms Judith Morgan		