



## Letter from the Editor

Friends,

It is only two months since my last news letter but as we are still in strange times I thought another one might be a good idea.

I don't know how you have been coping but I found the first 3 months ok as am used to being on my own but was lovely with the good weather to have spare time to do the garden, read and all those things I don't usually have time for. As things started to get a little easier, I found it mentally more difficult for some reason. I guess there were suddenly some choices and needing to know what to do for the best. I am now going out but obeying the rules and being vigilant and wearing my mask. Hopefully you are too. I have been doing walks with friends, been out to lunch, had a haircut and even had a couple of days out – amazing!!! Getting on a train was odd as so empty but still obeyed the rules and wore the mask.

We are able to keep in touch with each other through the Zoom meetings and telephone conversations but nothing is like being face to face with fellow members and friends. Our next Zoom meeting will be very exciting – on **Mon August 24<sup>th</sup> at 2pm** we are having a **Virtual Club Outing to Kenya** please try to make it – COVID and Technology is making us try all sorts of new things like this! Thanks to Jane Slatter for the hard work she is doing to get us all on Zoom and organising the virtual tea/coffee and speaker meetings.

I have been ringing members who are on their own but I would urge any of our members to do the same. Even if not living alone it is good to have a phone call occasionally, it can help a lot.

Let's hope that we can meet face to face again soon, check the Club Programme, watch this space and see how it goes. I am sure the Exec will let us know as and when that can happen.

Do please let me know anything you would like to put into the next Newsletter. Doesn't matter what it is, good news, bad news, funny anecdotes, just something you would like to share with us, or perhaps a question for the exec ( I can keep it anonymous if you like).

Keep well,

*Jean Eaton (Editor)*

*Groan from Jean....*

*A prisoner survived in a cell with no water and a thick steel door between him and a fresh water well outside in the courtyard, How?*

Since Lockdown, apart from virtual coffee mornings and tea afternoons we have had three excellent speakers focused on wellbeing. As we come through the COVID-19 crisis it is really important that we all stay as well as we can, so that we can enjoy our lives to the full when we move into the new normal...



The first was **Dr Alka Patel** who founded “**Lifestyle First**” and advised us on ways to improve our lifestyle. An inspiring GP who has studied ways for us to improve ourselves without a lot of pill popping!

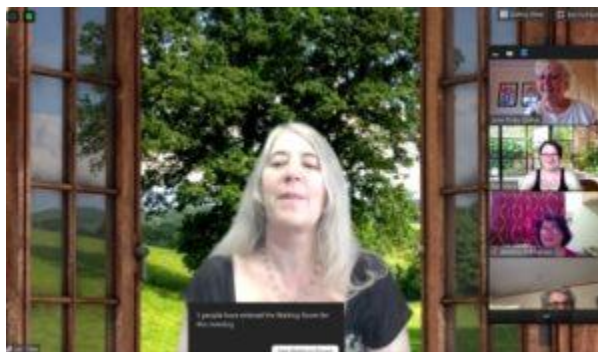
This evening was free for our members and raised £450 for the St Albans and Hertsmere Womens Refuge through voluntary donations.

[www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/lifestyle](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/lifestyle)

The second was **Jen Tiller**, a **breathing coach** who had us practising how to breathe more economically to improve our well-being.

Also free for our members and £133 was raised for the Herts Area Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre.

[www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/breathe](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/breathe)



Our third Zoom speaker was **Louise Caplin** from her own kitchen. It was the first time she had done this and was a great success as she demonstrated several tasty looking dishes. Oh to have been able to smell and/or taste these dishes!

Louise was ably assisted by her husband seen here with Louise in her kitchen. She has a shop **Spice Way** in Battlers Green, Radlett which I hope to visit in the near future. Again we were able to raise some funds (£120), this time for Louise' own favourite charity the Haematology Cancer Unit at UCLH which does splendid work.

[www.sigbi.org/st-albans-and-district/2020/spice](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans-and-district/2020/spice)

It was the first time we had tried this style of evening and it worked very well, each attracting other Soroptimists from all over our Region and beyond.

**27<sup>th</sup> July we had another Zoom club meeting.** This time we welcomed back Orla Fawcett to tell us about her visit to Nepal with the Project Trust. She was inspiring and was great to hear how she had got on with her adventure.

Orla is pictured here 6<sup>th</sup> from the right with all her garlands.

[www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/27jul20](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/27jul20)

To read more about all events please go to **Club News** on our website [www.sigbi.org/st-albans](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans)



our

## International Peace Initiatives

We have been supporting International Peace Initiatives in Meru, Kenya since 2011. For many years we have sold jewellery made by the ladies there, held fundraising events and raised much money. We have recently made a further donation to them and got this reply... Don't miss our **Virtual Visit on Monday 24 August at 2pm** [www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/kach](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/kach)

### RE: THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATION!

My name is Dr Karambu Ringera, founder and president of International Peace Initiatives (IPI: [www.ipeacei.org](http://www.ipeacei.org)), an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) that works to support and advocate for the needs and rights of children who are orphaned or affected by HIV/AIDS, marginalised youth and women living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya. IPI has been operational in Meru County since the year 2003. IPI works with children, youth and women for peace in the form of social, spiritual, economic stability, health and transformation of people and communities through education, enterprise (entrepreneurial skills development) and empowerment. IPI therefore, offers training programs that enable people from around the world to meet and share best practices and experiences working to transform challenges in their lives into opportunities for thriving and resilient communities.

I wish to acknowledge with deep gratitude your very generous donation of GBP 451.90 to International Peace Initiatives, received on May 22nd, 2020 through Western Union in Kenya. During these COVID-19 pandemic times, this donation has come at a very critical time when we have all 63 of our children at home at Kithoka Amani Children's Home (KACH) because schools were closed in March 2020. With new cases increasing every day, we do not see an end to staying at home in the near future. The impact of the COVID-19 situation for us at Kithoka Children's Home (KACH), a program of IPI is largely in the escalating cost of food - prices are rising every week. Yesterday I went to the market and the cost of a bag of English potatoes had doubled in a week. The same for carrots, bananas and cereals. In addition, since people have to stay at home, we have to cook for ourselves at the home; do school work; keep our home clean as well as find time for the kids to play! Medical bills too are rising as kids keep getting ill from normal children's illnesses - coughs, stomach aches, menses issues, toothaches, headaches, ETC - not COVID-19 related. All these - food and medical bills require money. Having to study at home, we have had to buy books for each level of study - and those books are costly!

My fear has been that if we continue to stay at home much further, all the food I had bought will finish. Cooking for 60 people every day, three meals a day, is no mean feat as you can imagine. We have to run classes so that our kids can keep up with their curriculum as well as keep them meaningfully engaged at this time. We have to work with a detailed plan of who does what everyday so that everyone does their chores, studies, had time to play as well as work on the farm (since all the workers have had to go home, we have to tend the farms ourselves - six acres in total!). Your generous donation has therefore helped me meet my food budget for the rest of this month. Words are not enough to say what this means to all of us at International Peace Initiatives and KACH. THANK YOU SO MUCH and may God bless you abundantly.

*Karumbu Ringera*

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In the last Newsletter I did a small piece about how VE day was celebrated, Here is a pic we have received from our Friendship Link in Muenster, Germany showing how they celebrated with a "Britnic". Don't you just love the telephone box which is for real!!!



## From Ann Beatty – Living Letters

During recent times we have appreciated connection more than ever, the value of a conversation and human interaction has become more important as time has passed. For many of us this regular communication is not as often as we would like and we are missing meeting people.

**Chickenshed** (theatre company) is reacting to these challenging times with a brand-new initiative for people over 70yrs. **Living Letters** is a project that connects people, and in doing so aims to improve communication and develop intergenerational friendships. Our young people are keen to connect with the more 'mature' members of our community - finding out about their lives and comparing them with their own, especially during these times of uncertainty. We are all experiencing change in our lives - no matter what age we are - and it's good to share these experiences with each other.

**Are you over 70yrs and would like to participate? Or do you know someone over 70yrs who you think would benefit from some extra correspondence each week during this time? A person who would enjoy writing about themselves and learning about someone much younger?**

If you do, the only thing we ask is that you/they have access to email. We will guide you/them through the whole process and give plenty of support. There is no charge to be involved.

### **Living Letters - How Does It Work?**

The participants are gently guided through a four week on-line programme of correspondence, where they are paired with a writing partner from Chickenshed's Young Company. The couples are encouraged, through letter writing, to reflect on life, share histories and swap stories with the aim that through this unveiling process, human connections are made and friendships are formed.

At the end of the fourth week the pairs are brought together to finally meet in a virtual 'zoom' chatroom, they are then invited to join our social network where they can continue meeting people and interact daily with our **Space Between Us** community.

You can watch this short film that helps illustrate the project and process further:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjipuMvRBKo>

**If you would like to nominate yourself** please email [rachely@chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:rachely@chickenshed.org.uk). She will then be in contact with you.

**If you are nominating someone else over 70yrs**, please follow these steps:

- Contact your 'person', explain the process outlined above and share the film that illustrates it.
- If they are interested you need to send their email address, along with their name, to [rachely@chickenshed.org.uk](mailto:rachely@chickenshed.org.uk).
- Rachel will then contact them, answer any further questions and lead them through the process.

Together we can help fill the space between us.



## From Jean Eaton - The Womens' Refuge

We have been supporting the St Albans and Hertsmere Womens' Refuge for more than 15 years. We got even more involved when Jill Ogley chose them as the Club's annual charity when she became President of our Club. We have so enjoyed working with them and, inspired by the work they do, we are still supporting them. In normal times when we meet we bring along to Club any extra tea, coffee or biscuits that we have which are then taken to the Refuge as to quote them "they run on tea and coffee".

Since Rita Andrews has left our club as she is moving away I am pleased to have taken over as our contact with the Refuge.

Because we haven't been meeting our Club funded a special delivery of goodies which I had the privilege of taking along to them. This was my first visit to the house although I had met the Managers Liz Perry and Sara Jackson several times before. Jane kindly bought the basket of goodies from Costco and here is a picture of what we purchased. They were delighted to receive this package.



During my conversation with Liz Perry I learned that they are opening a new house in Hemel Hempstead this coming September. I asked if there was anything we could do to help in this project. She said that she felt we did enough but after my further questioning she said that they could do with any bedding, towels, crockery, saucepans, kitchen utensils etc etc and you would have had notice of this earlier. My spare bed became piled high with contributions! I downsized to a maisonette about ten years ago so don't have the room that I used to have but I have said that so long as nobody wanted to come and stay I could cope with the storage. After all I am not likely to have overnight visitors for the time being! The housekeeper has now been to collect all these goodies and was amazed at how much we have collected. She had an estate car with lots of room but even so we had to shoehorn the last few bags in. I am imagining she then drove using her wing mirrors! A big thank you to all who have sent/brought bags full of supplies for this new house. A friend of mine had let me know she had some boxes of crockery which she kindly brought along as we were starting to do this loading and then the three of us were "chain-ganging" all the bags and boxes into the car.



Here is a picture of some of what I was storing. My spare bed is underneath somewhere!!!

I am delighted to have taken on this role. *Jean*

PS I have taken the liberty of saying to the housekeeper that if she finds she is short of anything at all, let me know, there is just a chance that one of us might have that item lurking in garage, loft or spare room. If we haven't, so be it, we will let them know, but it would be shame if they go out to buy something and we can help.

[www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/refuge-support](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/2020/refuge-support)

Meanwhile, don't forget when you are shopping to get an extra packet of tea, coffee, shower gel, shampoo toothpaste (full size please – not hotel samples). Bring it along to Club when we can and it will go the Womens' Refuge - they get through a lot of "Cuppas" and the ladies (and gents) do appreciate some toiletries. Either save them up for when we meet again or pop them in to me and I will see that they get to Refuge.



## The Planet Team gets Started

The Planet Team – Barbara, Diana, Helen, Janet T, Linda, Patsy and Sarah had a thoughtful and very enjoyable first meeting on Zoom on Monday 10 July. We looked at the relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to identify our focus and the SI Position Statement on Climate Change <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Final-WWS-Statement-Climate-Change.pdf> and other important national and local documents to establish our priorities.

Our agenda is big and time critical – if irreversible climate change is to be averted – Zero Carbon by 2030 - there is no time to lose. Though it is sometimes difficult to see immediately, it is absolutely an area Soroptimists should be getting their hands dirty with. We looked at evidence confirming that “Climate change and subsequent damage to water, land and clean air impacts women disproportionately”. And as reported by an SI Special Advisor in 2019, “Climate change aggravates inequalities and increases the risk to women and girls of [all forms of] gender-based violence”.

Nearer home you may be surprised to know that St Albans has the second highest ecological footprint of all the UK's cities (only Winchester is higher). We consume enough to require three and a half planets if everyone in the world lived as we do. So, this environmental agenda is very relevant to our area and to us as individuals.

During our meeting we shared personal priorities – achieving zero plastic, reducing food waste, bio-diversity, planting trees (as part of the SI Centenary 2021 Project “Plant Trees for a Brilliant Future”) and recycling being some of them. We talked about how COVID-19 had had a major impact: on the one hand the use of plastic has increased dramatically as we've returned to wrapping all food products in plastic and on the other, a dramatic reduction in pollution because transport effectively stopped.

As we all begin to navigate the new normal there is a strong desire to maintain the simplicity of having and using only what you need and sourcing and sharing locally, key components of a sustainable lifestyle. As a Team we are keen to use this as a springboard to develop an appetite within our club to make personal changes which reduce our impact and to support each other in doing so. Whilst also working with others to promote the major changes required in St Albans, the UK and beyond.

Linda Shall will be running a session in the not-too-distant future to help us get started with this first aim. In the meantime keep on keeping on with whatever sustainable activities you are already involved in, checkout our “Things you can do to make a difference” slot which we hope will become a regular feature of the club newsletter and be willing to share your successes and challenges at our first Planet Team meeting.

Helen, Team Facilitator, Planet Team.

*[helenbsorop@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenbsorop@yahoo.co.uk)*



### Planet Team - Things you can do to make a difference:

**Recycle Plastic Bottle Tops at LUSH** - LUSH are still taking these so if you are collecting bottle tops and are able to get into town they will be very grateful to receive your bundle. If you have accumulated lots and are unable to get to the shop please email me and I will endeavour to collect them from you.



**Buy Recycled toilet paper and supply toilets at the same time** - following a suggestion from Jane several team members have ordered supplies from the aptly named “Who Gives a Crap” who as well as supplying recycled toilet paper, kitchen towels and tissues also use half their profits to buy toilets in countries where they are badly needed. A real win-win! If you would like to hear more please email Helen and the Team will send you more information.

**Helen Byrne**

## Peace team

The newly created Peace Team have met virtually a couple of times since its inception. It is lovely to welcome Catherine as a new member of our small but perfectly formed group! The predecessor VAW team **has** been used to meeting virtually, having done it for the past 2 years, so aside from a switch from Skype to Zoom, it was really business as usual. Domestic Violence is high on our agenda, especially at the moment with reports from many agencies of increased reports on incidents. We were really pleased that 2 of the 3 very successful 'public' Speaker meetings that we held raised funds for charities related to our cause (the Refuge and HARCSAC). Our fundraising efforts are obviously seriously limited at the moment, so this was a great help. As you can also see elsewhere in the newsletter, the Refuge benefited from the kindness of our members and their contacts with a huge donation of goods for their new premises. The Peace Team will be holding the Presidency of the Club from September to December and with the help of Exec we are busy getting ideas together for the programme. It is really important to the whole club that we have interesting things to hear about and we are looking forward to doing our bit!

*Denise Powell*

## People Team

The People team combines Learning Opportunities and the Wellbeing aspect of the old SEW team. The three Zoom events we have had over the last few weeks have been health related and Jane has submitted the Performance Report Forms for these. The SIGBI Conference in October (to be held on line) may even consider these for a Best Practice Award – watch this space. The projects which have been cancelled due to the COVID crisis, the quiz and toilet twinning we hope will continue in due course. The projects from SEW were Smalls for All (suspended for now) Womens Refuge (see separate article) and Plastic Top collection(ongoing – don't forget to save them). We hope that next year we will be able to have the Wesley Charity Coffee mornings and help with the Pancake Race supporting Home-Start. Pamela is still working with the Syrian Refugees in St Albans helping them to improve their language skills (using Zoom) There were some speaker ideas including hearing more about Alexander Technique from our own Bev Keech, about health projects in Seychelles (our new friendship link). Eight Members of the Team were very lucky in having a (bring your own) picnic in the lovely garden of Madeline Skinner. Madeline had put out socially distanced chairs in the shade so we were able to actually meet up and chat which was most enjoyable. See picture below of 5 of the Members (Pamela and Joan had already left when Jane took the photo).



## From Treasurer Sarah Lichman...

I am pleased to report that as well as being excellent meetings our three zoom events were successful fundraising occasions. We raised £300 for the Refuge, £143 for Herts rape Crisis and £145 for the Haematology Dept at UCL. This makes a total of £588 which is an excellent result.

Following the Club meeting when we agreed to donate £100 to Radio Verulam 92.6FM, who were struggling financially during lockdown and who have been supportive of us and of our events, we received the following thank you:

*Dear Sarah*

*That really is incredibly generous. It is our role to be helpful to organisations like yours so we see it as "just what we do"! Nevertheless, this has been a tough time for us and donations like yours really help.*

*I'm pleased to say that, as a result of support like yours, our financial position is improving and we are out of the danger zone now.*

*Thanks again*

*Nick.*

**Nick Hazell**

*Chairman*



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## Reminder from Rita Beaumont – Regional Trustee SIGBI Benevolent Fund

The Benevolent Fund is a confidential fund available to ease financial difficulties for those who apply.

The Fund can give a quarterly payment to help cover outgoings or a one-off payment to help cover an unexpected item. Discretionary help may be considered for such items as utility bills, telephone bills, essential living expenses or house maintenance.

Who is eligible to apply?

Any Soroptimist who has been a member for 3 years or more living in the UK including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland. The support is given subject to simple confidential financial checks.

How to apply ? If a member would like to apply, contact me and I will talk through the application process.

Rita Beaumont – Regional Trustee

Email [r.beaumont3@ntlworld.com](mailto:r.beaumont3@ntlworld.com)

Phone 01234 401475 Mobile 07764511006



**Dates for the diary** [www.sigbi.org/st-albans/club-programme](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/club-programme)

**Mon 24 Aug - 2pm to 3.30pm Virtual Club Outing to Kenya** – see separate email plus more on the website and [www.sigbi.org/st-albans-and-district/2020/kach](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans-and-district/2020/kach) All are welcome.

**Mon 14 Sep – 7.30pm to 9pm "Top to Toe" health event on Zoom** - more details will be available soon.

**Mon 28 Sep – 7.30pm to 9pm** - Mandy McNeil will talk to us about her experience as a 9/11 Survivor from the World Trade Centre in New York - this Zoom event marks the International Day of Peace

**Mon 12 Oct – Club Meeting** TBA

**Sat 10 Oct – SI London Chilterns AGM/Conference on Zoom - 10am to 1pm** Including excellent speakers Philip Holmes and Janis Feely MBE and a Virtual Change of Insignia. Visit [www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/2020/08/08/agm2020](http://www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/2020/08/08/agm2020) for details.

**Mon 26 Oct – Club Social?** TBA

**Fri 30 to Sat 31 Oct – SIGBI Annual Conference ONLINE from Belfast “We Stand Up for Women”**  
[www.sigbi.org/belfast2020](http://www.sigbi.org/belfast2020) Book Now!

From September to December our “Double Act” Presidents will be Denise Powell and Ameeta Sabharwal.

January to April next year will be Barbara Saunders and Jane Slatter.

Thanks for Kat and Sarah for taking good care of us from May to August this year.

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**Contact Details:** Please don't forget to always let Denise Powell or Sarah Lichman know if you change your telephone number or address so that we can keep our records straight. Denise will update the Contact Sheet and Sarah will advise SIGBI (if you haven't already done it on your on-line SIGBI Membership record). Please also let Jane Slatter know if you change your email address.



**Message from Amanda** to say that the bra and pant project is suspended at the moment.  
But, .....

***Dont forget.....***



*To hang on to your milk bottle tops, used postage stamps or broken jewellery.*

*Bring them along to club when we next meet. All go to a good cause.*

*Any packets of tea, jars coffee, shower gels or shampoo also bring along for me to take to the Refuge.*

Also don't forget that when you are putting in a new ink cartridge into your printer that you send the old one to Recycle4Charity. Just use one of the envelopes, pop the old cartridge into it, seal and post. That's all you have to do.

Each time you do some money will drop into our bank account and will go to the Womens' Refuge. This ticks two of our boxes, Recycling and helping the Womens Refuge. If you want any more envelopes please just let me know and I will get some to you, Thanks, Jean



### **Groan from Jean solution**

**The door was not locked!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Sorry.....**

### **Note from the Editor**

The next Newsletter will be in October/November so if you have anything you would like to put in, please send it to me, no need to wait until then, get it off your desk on to mine and I will make sure it is included. Perhaps you would rather deliver your "life talk" in writing rather than present it verbally, have an interesting story to share with us, a comment about the Club or a particular item you would like to air or an interesting holiday story. Perhaps you have some "tales of the epidemic". Tell us if you have a favourite famous woman in business, art, history, music, and I am sure you all know SOMEONE!!!

If you have any news of Members - be it yourself or another Member (with their permission of course) that you think we would like to share do please let me know.

Maybe you might like to do a "Letter to the Editor" with any comments about our Club - could be a new section! Perhaps some ideas for things we can do when we get back to whatever the new normal is.

I look forward to hearing from you, Jean

If you want any further information on anything do look at the website [www.sigbi.org/st-albans](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans)

Jean Eaton [jean.eaton43@gmail.com](mailto:jean.eaton43@gmail.com)

