Soroptimist International St Albans & District

www.sigbi.org/st-albans



Newsletter March 2020

Letter from your Editor

I do hope you are enjoying the newsletters. If you have any comments or things you want included or excluded do let me know so they can be incorporated.

I have been doing this letter for over two years now so if anybody feels they would like to have a go and take it on I would be pleased to share it or hand it over. By doing the newsletter I get great pleasure in reminding myself of things that have happened since the last issue. I send it to my two friendship links and ladies who are not Members now but still in touch with us. I always get a good response and some comment on how much we do.
I am ever grateful to Jane Slatter who proof reads this letter and lets me know when I have missed something or got it wrong before it goes out. Thank you Jane.

It is not long now until our Club's year end (31st March) and then our AGM 27th April at the transept at St Mary's Church Redbourn. This begins at 7.00 pm and is an opportunity to be reflect on what we do.
If you are not sure of the location or need a lift just any of our Exec or long-standing Members and we will arrange something for you.

Next year we are without a President so it will be shared between our Teams but the following year Barbara Saunders will be in the chair. Do read the piece later on in this letter from Barbara who explains the vacancies and if you want to know more about any of them you can always ask any of the Exec or experienced members. Of course there are also jobs outside of the Exec such as coffee rota, organising coffee mornings, helping at events, for example the quiz coming up soon or the book stall in May. All the events belong to us all and need support and help. Remember also if you want come to any Exec meeting to see what happens you are more than welcome to do so. Just let one of the team know.

I must thank Kat who has been our President this year. Kat you have done a splendid job with your sense of fun, awareness of what's important, caring for the Club and coming up with ideas to keep us engaged.

Thank you for reading. ***Jean***
PS Kat recently had a nasty fall and broke a finger badly which had to be operated on – yes ouch!! She now has her left hand in a plaster and is finding life pretty tricky. Kat - we all send you best wishes for a speedy recovery.
PPS Quiz 21 March cancelled due to Coronavirus – look after yourselves everyone and please let us know if you need any help

Groan from Jean....

What gets wetter as it dries? *Answer at the end.*

Jane Slatter, our Communications Officer has kindly agreed to a Q&A piece for our newsletter. Jane does an excellent job keeping our web site up to date and has been a member since April 1997.

1. What prompted you to join the Soroptimists?
When I worked for Reuters I was lucky enough, as part of my leadership development, to be sent on a Programme called "Common Purpose" which brought together people from the private, public and voluntary sector to work out ways to improve our country with a "Common Purpose". For one day a month over a year we learnt how the country worked – the criminal justice system, housing, education, health, the political system etc. I was introduced to many areas where things were just "not fair" in my eyes – and I realised that correcting inequality is something that "pushes my buttons". I told Jean Crabtree, one of my Mum's friends about one of the projects we had visited in London, helping disadvantaged Asian women to become empowered and thrive. As my husband Jack would say I was on my "hobby horse" and had a good rant about how some of these women had been so badly treated. It turns out that Jean was a Member of the Dewsbury Soroptimists so she said "you need to be a Soroptimist". How right she was! Jean passed my details to SIGBI HQ and the rest is history…. Sadly Jean's life was cut short by breast cancer, but I like to think her legacy lives on in me.

2. What things in particular do you enjoy most about your Membership?
I was a lone voice banging on about at issue, but Soroptimists collectively can make a much bigger difference than I could on my own. I think the strap-line of Soroptimist International "A Global Voice for Women" is spot on. I love the international part of our Membership, the cultural side and the fact that we can effect change through the United Nations. My Soroptimist "sisters" have been amazing when the chips have been down for me in my life – always there to support me. I hadn't been a Member very long when I was very ill with a burst appendix and within a few days I had a visitor, a few days later I was deluged with get well cards – I'm sure it helped my recovery. When I was made redundant I'm not sure how I would have got through it without Soroptimists being there as friends with good advice and it gave me something useful to do so that I maintained my self-esteem.

3. What don't you like?
Soroptimists have a declining Membership, as do a great many voluntary organisations. It is much easier to stay motivated within something that is successful and growing. I think this is what leads to negativity which I really dislike. I am mostly an optimist but every now and again I can get dragged down by pessimists around me so I need the success of the great work and projects that we do to keep me positive and hopeful. When I first joined there were quite a few things about our Club that I didn't like so I joined the Club's Executive and started trying to change them (dropping the annual jumble sale was a victim of my change initiatives….). I also worked up to becoming SIGBI Director of Communications so that I could change things. I was behind the recruitment of a Communications Officer for SIGBI, Clubs use of social media, an improved website and the implementation of the logo with new branding. I'm looking forward to the new SIGBI website because the current one is in need of an update. The negativity from some Members and people at quite a senior level about the new logo and branding was appalling – and still goes on now with many Clubs refusing to use it – this is the Soroptimist behaviour that I really don't like.

4. What is your favourite type of holiday?
Jack and I both love skiing and SCUBA diving holidays. The best thing about these sports is that places we've been to ski and dive are also very beautiful so we've visited some fabulous places all over the world. The Galapagos is at the top of our "best holidays ever" list at the moment!

5. Now you are retired what do you like to do with your spare-time?

Many of you know that I help look after my grandchildren Max and Leo 2 days a week. The boys belong to my step-son Robin and his wife Lucy who live in Hemel. Our other son lives in Sheffield so we see less of Ellie (we are excited that their number 2 is due in April!). Having been unable to have my own children I am so lucky to be involved with these wonderful little people. My Mum is nearly 90 and fiercely independent (as you might expect!) and I spend as much time with her as I can every week. Soroptimists takes up a lot of my time – the Comms/website always takes longer than you ever think it will! I am Comms Officer for our Region as well as for the Club and Learning Ops Team Facilitator. I chair my local Residents' Association in Watford where I live – at the moment we are fighting a losing battle in our campaigning against over-development of the area but doing well at gaining/keeping Green Flag status for our local parks. I am an active citizen in my own right – I am sure to lobby and campaign about things that are not fair. I go to a Zumba class twice a week. I socialise with friends and family whenever I can. Jack and I are foodies so we love to cook nice meals or go out to eat, both of our families were in the bakery business so we say we have food in our veins! We also love the cinema and are Members at the Rex in Berkhamsted, so we see about 4 films per month. I love being busy…..

6. If there is one change you would like to make with either our Club or the organisation generally what would it be?

I would like to inject a dose of positivity and motivation into all the Members right across the organisation. If people were more focused on the positives of their Membership then they would communicate more about it and that would attract Members. Women in general are not good at blowing their own trumpets, but in this digital age we must, otherwise we will get drowned out and become irrelevant. I believe the Projects we do that make a difference are the main reason people join but it is the support and friendship of Members that maintains our support – both of which are something to celebrate at our Club and in the wider organisation.

Thank you Jane for this and for all the hard work you do for our club. *Jean*

From Sarah Lichman – the Club's Treasurer

Lendwithcare – microfinance charity

The original loans we made through www.lendwithcare.org have been repaid. Following the vote taken at a Club meeting I have now made 3 further loans of £60 each on the club's behalf. The criteria I used to choose the loans were women in groups and entrepreneurs who were not just looking for stock to resell, however it was not possible to completely comply with the latter point. The number of entrepreneurs available on the website is also variable and I had to return to it a few times to find suitable groups. We have lent to Kanayanda Group and Lonjezo Group both in Malawi and Village One group in Zambia. The first 2 groups have women running retail stores including grocery and clothes but also restaurants and snack bars. The third group is in Zambia which because of the current drought conditions is inherently riskier. However, the drought makes them more needy and the group I selected is supporting 62 of their own children in school as well as some orphans. They include sellers of homemade snacks and they have also repaid previous loan which I thought boded well. I will update you when we receive any repayments.

Easyfundraising - raising money for charities through on-line shopping www.easyfundraising.org.uk

This is the simplest way to add to our funds. It is only a small percentage but soon adds up particularly with larger purchases such as holidays. Only 4 people have so far signed up on our behalf…but have raised over £70…imagine how much we might raise if everyone plus family and friends signed up as well! So, come on folks when you shop online please, please use the easyfundraising website and select **Soroptimist International St Albans and District** as the cause you wish to support. If you use a PC you can add the donation reminder to the toolbar and it pops up whenever you shop. On Android, iPads and iPhones you can download the app and it's really easy to shop that way. Also please don't forget to recycle your printer cartridges with the envelopes that Jean has....another simple way to add to our coffers.

Looking forward to receiving plenty of paperback novels for the **bookstall**.

Since the last newsletter….

December 11th



Watling View School for pupils with profound learning difficulties had a Christmas Stall on St Albans Market . Students from the school made and prepared plants and crafts as Christmas gifts to sell to raise funds for the school. The stall made over £120 which was the best ever!!! Well done!!!



Barbara Saunders (pictured looking very festive) and Debbie Tankard (photographer) helped staff and pupils on the stall. The young people were able to engage with members of the public and to gain practical experience of selling items which they had previously made.

January 11th



Pictured here are St Albans Soroptimist baristas Janet Audley-Charles, Joan WIlliams, Denise Powell, Barbara Saunders with John Powell, our Soroptimister for the morning who completed the team. It was a busy Saturday morning at Wesley's Cafe High Street, Harpenden – and the team served up plenty of teas/coffees and yummy cakes. On our behalf they raised £100 for the Women's Refuge and Rape Crisis.

January 13th



To start the new year Eva Obeng brings colour and insight to Club Members on a wintry night in St Albans. Born in Ghana, Eva came to the UK at the age of 16 with her father. She talked passionately about her desire to help and support women in Ghana. Eva purchases beautiful, well-made and brightly coloured handbags, rucksacks, purses, handmade baskets and shea butter from women in Ghana and sells it for them at local markets. She spoke about a poignant visit to Ghana to bury her father during which she visited some of her producers and talked with young women about how social attitudes are changing. Hard-working women, with a basic education, can turn their lives around with access to small amounts of finance and some business knowledge and training. Eva cited examples of women in Accra working in textiles, and in the rural areas producing Shea butter oil. All these women striving to do the best for their families and put food on the table. Eva is pictured above second on the left with President Kat Clark, Mary Moran (who introduced us to Eva) and Barbara Saunders. In the next picture the group are standing in front of some of the wonderful products that Eva sells.



January 27th

We heard from Steve Pike, on the left, Joint Project Leader at Earthworks St Albans, the local charity that provides *"Horticultural training for those with learning disabilities"* and also from Andy Scott, on the right, Head **of** Watling View School St Albans , the special school for pupils with a wide range of complex and profound learning difficulties.





Steve Pike has worked for Earthworks for 15 years. Our Club has helped this worthwhile charity over many years. Steve spoke passionately about Earthworks – The Natural Place to Grow **-** having shown a short film made by the Earthworkers who benefit from the environment which nurtures people with learning disabilities. Earthworks has a lovely garden in Hixberry Lane and was established under the Care in the Community Act in 1995; 2020 being its 25th Anniversary year. 45 individuals are currently supported (up to 12 a day) with core funding coming from Herts CC. Fundraising is necessary to buy equipment and build facilities. They are a small team and rely heavily on volunteers especially as Trustees to provide governance. A new project is Earthworks on Wheels – a Community project piloted last summer and providing basic gardening for vulnerable people in the community. They have recently introduced Bee Happy – bee-keeping, are upgrading the flooring in the marquee and introducing new toilets. Donations of gardening gloves would also be valued as they get through lots of them. Diary Dates to note : 16 May – Open Garden, 25th Anniversary Event in July, Summer Fayre – 5 September and Xmas Fayre – 28 November.



Debbie then introduced Andy, acting Head Teacher from Watling View – A very Special School which the Club has supported financially and by assisting on the market stall (see entry for Dec 11th). They encourage that their pupils learn the skills of communication. The students have Educational Health Care Plans and there is a strong focus on outside visits. They experience horticulture , horse riding and the use of a hydrotherapy pool. Standalone events such as fishing, acting and performing, visits to Wesley's café in Harpenden and helping in the school café all add to students' life-skills. Travel on trains and buses is also encouraged. Funds are needed for general renovation of the buildings, provision of an emotional regulatory room, specialist equipment, construction of a studio flat and café to support the development of individual living skills. The hydro-therapy pool also needs upgrading and a new boiler

January 28th



Denise Powell, Debbie Tankard and Jane Slatter volunteered again this year to take part in St Albans Girls School (STAGS) "Big Interview day" for GCSE year students. As part of the careers programme the' School offers a mock interview to every year 11 student on a day called **"**The Big Interview". Each student has a half hour interview based on CV's they have prepared in school and receive verbal and written feedback. The event has been running for the past 7 years, and it is very well received by students, for most of whom it is their first interview experience. We have been involved for the last 5 years and have found meeting the girls a real inspiration – a win win for everyone! Let Jane know if you would like to participate in future interview days.

February 12th

Watling View School for pupils with profound learning difficulties had a Valentine's Day stall on St Albans Market. Love was very much in evidence as students and teachers from the school had prepared and decorated pyramid boxes of chocolates, book marks, fridge magnets and painted pebbles with caring messages amongst other things for sale to help school funds and support their development.





Soroptimists Debbie Tankard (who is also a Watling View School Governor) and Barbara Saunders (pictured here with Rosie their canine assistant) helped staff and pupils on the stall. The young people were able to engage with members of the public and to gain practical experience of selling items which they had previously made. Their next sale will 25 March selling Easter gifts so please let Debbie know if you can help for an hour or two.

February 25th

Soroptimist volunteers Amanda Brown, Jane Slatter, Helen Byrne, Sarah plus husband Laurie Lichman, Kat Clark, Denise Powell, Catherine Moore and Mary Moran helped on the day with registration, marshalling, raffle ticket selling, communication and anything else that needed doing! Amanda Brown who is both a Soroptimist and a Trustee of Home-Start Herts organised the St Albans Soroptimist volunteer crew.





Jane Slatter (pictured with mascots Hope the Hippo and Mr Crepe) said afterwards *"we all loved being there to help and cheer everyone on – what a flipping brilliant event for such a great cause!"*.

Above see a thank you card received for our efforts.

There were 30 teams and loads of volunteers and sponsors – we hope this will be the best fundraiser ever for Home-Start Hertfordshire!

March 7th

Once again Joan Williams organised a coffee morning at the Wesley Church in Harpenden. Here we have Joan as the Barista supreme with her Soroptimist friends after making £100 to go to the Womens' Refuge and Rape Crisis.



New Club Year coming up

It is hard to believe that Kat Clark's year as President is racing by and will be over at the end of next month. Our AGM will be held in the transept of St Mary's church, Redbourn, at 7pm on Monday 27 April and everyone is welcome. As you know, normally at the AGM President Kat would hand over to the President-elect, but Ameeta is unable to take on the responsibility because of other commitments, and is doing a good job as Membership Officer having taken over from Amanda who has put a huge amount of energy into the role. As a result, the Executive members of the 3 Project Teams are sharing the year between them, and it looks as if it will be an exciting time. Kat will continue until August with Sarah's help chairing meetings, then the Violence against Women team will take over until Christmas with Denise and Ameeta taking the chair. Jane and Barbara (President-elect) will cover January until the AGM which will lead nicely into Barbara's Presidential year. We are so fortunate that Denise Powell, a Past President of our Club is President of the London and Chilterns Region of SIGBI and will be with us for the AGM.

Can you help us?

Our Club, like all voluntary organisations, depends on its really useful Members to keep the Club going, organise events, and manage the routine business so that we can all enjoy the Programme, make friends, contribute to local activities and continue to raise money for good causes. Our priorities for the forthcoming year will be based on the SIGBI themes in which "An equal world is an enabled world" enabling women and girls to play a full part in their communities, through equality, empowerment and education. The environment will also feature significantly next year because of the Climate Emergency and need for urgent action. We will also be Standing up for Women through our ongoing commitment to stop violence against women, helping those who have suffered, and trying to understand and improve mental health. To achieve our common goals, we need help on the Executive and are looking for Members who will be prepared to take on roles in the future. In particular, we desperately need a new Secretary to take over from Barbara or share the responsibility. It gives a fascinating insight into all the things that are going on in the Club and brings you to the heart of the action. Come and talk to Barbara if you are willing to give it a go. We have a new Membership Officer (Ameeta), and relatively new Treasurer (Sarah) who are doing great work. Our Communications within the Club and through Social Media rely wholly on Jane's expertise, time and devotion. Our Club's Representative at London Chilterns Region (Janet A-C) keeps in touch with Region and communicates with those who are attending the Region's meetings/conferences. Friendship link co- ordinators (Jean, Joan, Rita and Catherine) correspond with our linked Clubs overseas. Jean takes an interest in the welfare of members, sorts the coffee rota and organises coffee mornings, and Joan can be relied on for supplies. But it would be helpful to have some more volunteers who can get involved, see what happens at Exec and perhaps volunteer to assist with arrangements for Club meetings, socials and booking speakers**.**

Barbara



Keeping you up-to-date: 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. Also let Jane Slatter know if you are changing your email address.

THANKS from the St Albans and Hertsmere Women's Refuge

Sadly Liz and Sara from the Refuge were both ill and unable to join us at our February meeting when we would have presented them with a cheque for £1300! We will reschedule their visit so they can give us one of their inspiring updates about their work and we bank transferred the money to the Refuge anyway. We have received two lovely thankyou letters - for the money and for the Christmas gifts – they really are a super charity to support.

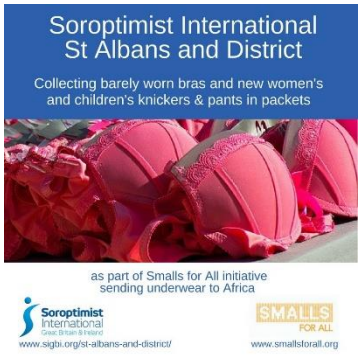
Hot off the Press……

The QUIZ on 21 March has been cancelled due to risks related to the Coronavirus and our duty of care to everyone involved – really disappointing but we will reschedule for the Autumn.

We now have a **Friendship Link with S I Victoria Seychelles**. We hope to have the certificate in time for the AGM when we can celebrate this event.
This means we have links with Muenster in Germany, Warsaw in Poland, Chico in USA, Osaka in Japan and now Seychelles.



Dont forget.....



your milk bottle tops, 'gently' used bras, uses postage stamps, broken jewellery. Just bring them along to club. All go to a good cause.

Also when you are shopping why not get an extra packet of tea or coffee, bring it along to club and it will go the Womens' Refuge - they get through a lot of "Cuppas" !!!

Helen Byrne has kindly sent this piece about a special event on 4th May.

Looking ahead to next Soroptimist year - don't forget to put Monday 4th May in your diary and invite your friends!
We have changed the date of our first meeting of the New Club Year to the first Monday of the month – Monday 4th May - so we can share in our Japanese Friendship Link club, SI Osaka's 50th celebration with a fun evening of all things Japanese.
A lovely friend of Diana's – June Rowland – has kindly agreed to bring us a glimpse into the lives of Japanese women in the past and now, including kimonos, flower arranging and lots of other specialities. Having lived in Japan for a number of years and continued to maintain contact with Japanese women visiting the UK ever since, June has lots of personal experience to share.
There will be interesting Japanese food treats on offer during the break plus chance to try out your skills with origami – making Peace Cranes which we hope to send to SI Osaka and perhaps to our other friendship link Clubs.

Do invite female friends and family along to what I am sure will be a great evening.

Helen

Dates for your diary. All subject to any government announcement re the Coronovirus outbreak

Sat 21st Mar QUIZ Night – **CANCELLED**

Mon 23rd Mar Our own Linda Shall will report on the Carbon Literacy Project and its relevance to women.

Mon 27th Apr AGM at the transept St Mary's Redbourn 7.00 pm Reflect on the last year and look forward to the new year. Also enjoy some light refreshments.

Please see the piece from Barbara about the incoming executive members and the "sits vac"

For club year 2020-2021 May to August Katherine Clark and Sarah Lichman to chair our meetings.

Mon 4th May Special evening to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our Friendship Link Osaka. See details from Helen earlier in this newsletter.

Mon 11 May – Hands-on Glassmaking Workshop with Heartwood Glass £17 per person to make a light catcher. 8pm to 9.30pm at Chiswell Green URC Hall.

Sun 24th May Charity Bookstall in St Albans market. This is part of the St Albans Sustainable week activities. If you can, give just an hour or two to help at this event

Sat 13th Jun Region Meeting held this time at Milton Keynes

Sat 20 Jun – 2.30pm to 4pm Soroptimists Visit to New Ground Co-Housing Barnet for afternoon tea. This visit was promised when two residents came to our Club to tell us about it last November – please see the website for more www.sigbi.org/2019/wtd19/

Mon 22 Jun – Speaker TBA

Jul Date TBC – Earthworks 25th Anniversary Celebration event www.earthworksstalbans.co.uk

Sun 12 Jul – Harpenden Highland Gathering – Rothamsted Park – see the Harpenden Lions website for more info – Soroptimists will be "womanning" the raffle to raise money for charities.

Mon 13 Jul – Club Meeting + Feedback from June Region meeting (note 18 Jul SIGBI Day of Action)

Sun 19 Jul – Cricket – Herts Junior League Finals Day

Mon 27 Jul – social event at the URC Hall – pot luck supper? TBA

Sat 1st Aug UKPAC Study Day in Durham. "Sex Drugs and Rock'n Roll"

? Aug ? Summer Club Outing – TBA

Sept to Dec to Denise Powell and Ameeta Sabharwal to chair meetings

Sat 5 Sep Earthworks Summer Fair www.earthworksstalbans.co.uk

Mon 14 Sep – Club Meeting (note Sep 8 Int Literacy Day)

Mon Sep 28 – Speaker Meeting TBA (note Sep 21 Int Day of Peace)

Sat 10th Oct - Region AGM at Lancaster Hall Hotel . Welcome our own Helen Byrne as new Regional President

Mon Oct 12 – Club Meeting + Prep for Conference

Mon Oct 26 – Social TBA

Thu 29 to Sat 31 Oct – SIGBI Annual Conference Belfast "We Stand Up for Women" www.sigbi.org/belfast2020/

Mon 9 Nov – Club Meeting + Feedback from Oct Region Meeting (note Nov 19 is World Toilet Day)

Mon 23 Nov – Soroptimist Event from the Violence Against Women Team (Nov 25 is the Int'l Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and starts 16 days of action 25 Nov to 10 Dec Human Rights Day)

Sat 28 Nov Earthworks Christmas Fair www.earthworksstalbans.co.uk

Mon Dec 7 – TBC – Carol singing at St Albans Station – fundraising event (note 10 Dec is Human Rights Day)

Sat 12 Dec – SI London Chilterns Region Human Rights Day event

The club programme is kept up-to-date on the club website so please keep checking this link:
www.sigbi.org/st-albans/club/programme/

Region Meetings are held quarterly. If you have never been to a Region meeting I would recommend it as they are always very interesting. **Also don't forget that if you are a "first timer" to a Region Meeting, you will receive £10 for a London meeting or £15 for an out of London one toward your expenses. If you are going and never been before mention it to Sarah.**

Groan from Jean solution

A Towel!!!!! ***Sorry….***

Note from the Editor

The next newsletter will be in June 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. If you have a favourite famous woman in business, art, history, music, and I am sure you all know SOMEONE!!!

I haven't put in the coffee rota yet as the new one from April is not agreed yet – watch your emails!

*If you have any news of members - be it yourself or another member (with their permission of course) that you think we can 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! Or if you want to be the Q&A subject just let me know…*

. *I look forward to hearing from you, Jean*

Jean Eaton *jean.eaton43@gmail.com*

If you want any further information on anything I urge you to look at the website

www.sigbi.org/st-albans



As part of General Data Protection Regulation please advise if you don't want to be contacted by us in the future.