Soroptimist International St Albans & District

www.sigbi.org/st-albans

Newsletter February 2022



President's News from Barbara Saunders

Trying to find some inspiration on a wet and windy February day, I've been reflecting on how much we have achieved as a club in the past few months despite the ongoing pandemic. The success of our efforts to raise awareness of the increased impact of violence against women, was immeasurable. I was able to join politicians and some of our community partners at County Hall and at the St Albans Museum, but this was just the icing on the cake. If you haven't seen it, please watch our video on YouTube which Louise has so painstakingly put together https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g6Uhoy7PH8 The range of activity and involvement shown is the highlight of my year in office, and the work done to underpin the campaign in support of the UN 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence, will enable the Club to build on that success in future years. We are also hoping to work with other Clubs in the Region in a project to observe Domestic Violence Courts initiated by Dame Vera Baird, Soroptimist and Victims Commissioner. It was shocking to have to cancel our face-to-face meeting again in January, but we did have an exceptional meeting to follow up COP26. It was rewarding to hear the praise from both our eminent speakers for the work that we do as Soroptimists and our engagement in a range of initiatives to help reduce our impact on the planet and support women in developing countries to receive a fairer share of the world's resources. The report on that meeting can be found here www.sigbi.org/st-albans-and-district/24jan The Planet Team will continue to raise awareness of Climate Change and support projects such as tree planting which are beneficial to the environment and reduce its the impact of changing weather patterns.

Looking ahead, the People Team are, amongst other things, revitalising our Toilet Twinning campaign and aiming to achieve "toilet twinned city" status for St Albans and the Club. We are nearly there and ready to celebrate! As a Club we have also actively supported Herts initiatives to help Syrian families settling in the County, and our International Women's Day Meeting on 14 March will aim to increase our understanding of the plight of refugees arriving in the UK and trying to make a new life for themselves and their families in the face of appalling suffering and personal tragedy. My term of office has raced by and will come to an end at the **AGM** on 25th April which we will hold at the Greenwood United Reformed Church.



However, more importantly now, I want to pay tribute to the excellent job Jean has done in pulling together the newsletter over a number of years, highlighting key events and achievements, and putting a smile on our faces along the way. Jean has made a huge contribution to the Club over more than 20 years and deserves to have more time to indulge herself in her love of theatre and the fun side of life. We appreciate all you do for us Jean, and will continue to rely on your wisdom, enthusiasm and commitment in the future. Above, Jean presenting the SI St Albans & District: Peggy Hodges Female Engineering Award.

President Barbara

Groan from Jean.. A man returned his soup to the restaurant kitchen because there was a dead fly floating in it. When the waiter returned with a new bowl of soup, the diner was incensed to discover that it was exactly the same soup, simply with the fly removed. How did he know?
Answer at the end of this newsletter.

Since the last newsletter…….

On Mon 27 Sep Zoom our Planet Team organised the online event "Step Up to COP26 Whilst Stepping Down Carbon Footprints".



There were 28 people on the Zoom call learning what **COP26** is and what role it could and should play in helping women reduce their own, their community and the planet's **carbon emissions.**

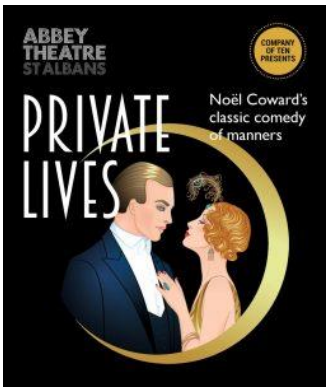
COP purpose is for global negotiations towards agreements and declarations; Former Energy Minister **Claire Perry** was appointed as Interim **COP26 President,** it is now **Alok Sharma** ; 'Powering past coal' alliance of LG/national/businesses committed to phasing out unabated coal power; 'Clean growth' strategy to decarbonise UK economy. We then split into breakout groups for 15 minutes and discussed ways we can all help to make a difference. Thanks to our own Linda Shall for this evening's presentation.

Monday 11 Oct we were delighted to be able to welcome our **new Member Maria Podrajanskaya** – pictured here accepting the hand of friendship from SI St Albans President, Barbara Saunders OBE. Maria (known as Masha) is originally from Moscow. She lived in Paris for 3 years before moving to St Albans with her husband and 4 year old daughter last year. Masha's work experience is in digital marketing and she is passionate about wanting to build a better world for women and girls – so we know she will be a wonderful asset to our organisation.



4th November





We had a Fundraising Success watching Private Lives by Noel Coward at the Abbey Theatre who offered us a charity night which raised an amazing £967 for SAHWR, plus other charities supported by us.

The play is a classic and got lots applause from an appreciative audience. It was an excellent Company of Ten production on the Main Stage and we collected donations at the end pictured here – l to r Janet Audley-Charles, Barbara Saunders, Sarah Lichman and Janet Tansley (who also volunteered behind the bar on the night!). Thanks to the team for organising such a great fundraiser.

22nd November



We welcomed **Elizabeth Gowing** from **The Ideas Partnership** to talk about her inspiring work in Kosovo supporting girls into education and empowering women in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community in Pristina.

Elizabeth shared the **stories of 7 women** living in Kosovo.

6th December We sang carols and festive songs this year at St Albans City Station for the first time since 2019. It was a great success raising £261 for the St Albans and Hertsmere Women's Refuge We thank everyone who made a donation, including the St Albans City supporters who were on their way to Borehamwood for their match with St Albans City. Thanks also to the station staff who joined in the singing and made us feel welcome.

As you can see we were helped by our four legged friends, Jules and Rosie.



From Nov 25 – 16 Dec the Orange the World **Campaign** and the 16 days of activism to set out to end gender based violence. We "oranged" much of Hertfordshire. Here we are on the left in the court room at the St Albans Museum & Art Gallery.



Our Club is very proud that the photo montage shown here won the Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland photo of the month competition for January 2022!



You can also view the video about the event:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g6Uhoy7PH8

24th Jan

Optimism after COP26? The world needs increased action to achieve climate justice



The title of our speakers' talk was "What's next after COP26?"

How do we achieve climate justice particularly for women in Africa?" We heard from two eminent speakers from the UK academic and the African international development communities.

6th Feb

Following the the success of the online quiz last year, more people attended this year, who had even more fun and raised more than £600 for the St Albans & Hertsmere Women's Refuge plus charities supported by the Club! We had 30 Zoom screens making up 10 teams with 4 to 8 people in each team. Being on Zoom enabled teams to include people from as far afield as Yorkshire and the USA – and the technology worked brilliantly again thanks to our member Jane Slatter pictured here on the right.





Thanks to Barbara our President who acted as MC for the evening and her husband Derek who supplied all the questions (and answers!)

Here they are relaxing at home.

14th Feb We celebrated celebrated World Water Day by raising another £41 for our Toilet Twinning Project. To do so we held a sale of liquids ranging from a bottle of milk to wine to shower gel to water. The project is to raise money to supply toilet facilities to places that have now running water. For every £60 we raise we have a framed picture of the toilet and its exact location. There are several of these now around St Albans. We have given them to places including St Albans Abbey and the Museum. When we have enough (and we are nearly there) St Albans can be called a Toilet Twinned City!!



We also welcomed Anna Barrett as a new member of our club. Anna is an active member of the Greenwood United Reformed Church. She has been instrumental in encouraging the church to help us with our recycling projects and also runs the pre-school playgroup at the GURC on a Thursday morning. Anna is also committed to the Abbey Theatre and played a leading role in their Christmas production of the Borrowers. Anna is already an active Member of the Club's Planet Team and Helen is her mentor. We are sure she will be a great asset to the Club and hope she enjoys and gains much from her Membership.

Thanks also our members who brought along a good supply of tea and coffee for the Womens' Refuge. blister packs, bras, stamps, inkjets.

I would urge you to look at our website, maintained by Jane Slatter, where there is so much more to read about any of these events – just scroll down through Club News
www.sigbi.org/st-albans/club-news



We are super proud that Kat Clark has had her first book published!
https://smile.amazon.co.uk/Book-Days-Building-Healthier-Time/dp/B09QF44HHY/
Don't forget that If you buy anything on **Amazon Smile** you can make a donation to your charity of choice - which could include the charities the Club supports - Herts Domestic Abuse Helpline, Home-Start Herts, Steve Sinnott Foundation.

Kat says: "The book was created with the vision of providing a diary that can be picked up at anytime in the year and used. There are no dates, just blank calendars and spaces for you to write in the date.
Throughout the book there are also a series of low key, practical exercises to try out, all with the aim of helping you to gain a greater insight into your own wellbeing and put in place strategies that will help to manage stress and remain mentally healthy.
All of the exercises and suggestions are evidence based and have been tried and tested by the people I have worked with over the past 20 years. I also live with my own mental health challenges and these are some of the ways I help myself remain grounded and well."

Friendship Links

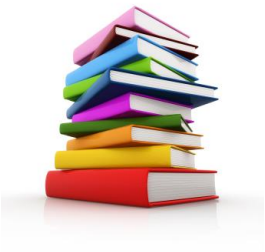
We received Christmas cards from our friends in Muenster, Chico, Warsaw and Osaka and we understand there is one still on its way from the Seychelles!

Easy Fundraising Update

This Quarter Soroptimist International St Albans and District will be paid £22.95 in #easyfundraising's £1.8 million payout! Thanks to everyone who's helped make a BIG difference during this difficult time by raising donations for us**. If you're not supporting us yet, please sign up now. It takes 2 minutes** & 6,000+ shops will donate to us for free every time you shop with them! Visit:

easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/soropstalbans/payments/61f901cd4a900db4227b865b/

Book Club - Did you know that we now have a book club? We meet on the evening of the last Tuesday each month. Each member suggests a book they would like to discuss. It could be one they want to read or have read and feel it warrants discussion. So far we have read Remarkable Creatures by Tracy Chevalier, Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell, Excellent Women by Barbara Pym, Courtney's War by Wilbur Smith and Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman. It has been interesting how much discussion has come from each of these books. If you feel you would like to come along one evening do just let me know and I can give you more details. Our next book to be discussed on 22nd Feb is "Bees" by Laline Paull. *Jean*



We Need your Help. Please can you offer a couple of hours on line once a month (except August and December) to help plan the Club's Programme and manage its activities by volunteering to be an Officer or member of the Team for 2022-23**. The team will be elected at the Annual General Meeting on 25 April.**

Do come along to the AGM to be held at our usual meeting place at Greenwood URC. You will find it more interesting than you think! Also consider becoming a member of the Exec. Even without a role you will be welcome to hear and share ideas.

Club Officers to be elected at the AGM

President: vacant - at present, the intention is to have a rainbow presidency in which the Club meetings are run by two acting Presidents in each quarter. The speaker meetings and other events are run by the Teams.

President Elect: vacant (Takes office April 2023) *(Plenty of time to watch and prepare for office)*

Vice President: vacant (Takes office April 2024) *(Even more time to watch and prepare!)*

Secretary: Katherine Clark, Kat is willing to continue.

Past President: Barbara Saunders

Treasurer: Sarah Lichman. Sarah is willing to continue *(keeps all records throughout the year and reports quarterly accounts to club.*

Programme Action: To be decided - Team Facilitators; Denise Powell – Peace, Barbara Saunders – People, Helen Byrne – Planet

Membership: Jane Slatter. Jane would welcome a volunteer to help with this area.

Communications: Jane Slatter supported on social media by Kat, Maria and Louise.

Finance Officer: Jean Eaton. (*SI asks that each club has a club finance officer – main role is to help with any major decisions especially at the end of year with donations and future subscriptions.)* (non-exec)

Welfare Officer: Vacant*: (follows up on any member alone or not seen at club for an unknown reason)* (non exec)

Executive members; Diana Kingham and Helen Byrne. We would welcome others to help for specific projects, or attend occasionally to contribute views and get to know how the Club works.

Newsletter: Louise Marron (non-Exec)

Regional Rep: Janet Audley-Charles (non-Exec)



Please don't forget to always let Denise Powell or Sarah Lichman know if you change your telephone number or address and send email changes to Jane Slatter 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.

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Recycle 4 Charity

Just a reminder to save your ink jet cartridges for me. When I get a full box I will send them off and we will then get a donation for the Womens' Refuge. *Many thanks, Jean*

Please continue to save used postage stamp, broken jewellery and empty blister packs. Also your slightly used bras and new pants in packets as we are able to send them off to "Smalls for All" for Africa. Bring them along to Club when we next meet.

Any packets of tea, jars coffee, shower gels or shampoo also bring along for me to take to the Womens' Refuge. You can deliver to my address or ask me to collect.

Many thanks for all the donations on Monday 14th February. Jean

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Are you interested in easily accessing shows in London by getting a coach to and from the theatre? If so please email jactheatretrips@gmail.com. To find out more. We send out occasional updates about the up and coming shows.
My love of theatre that started in 1968 with my first experience as a Siamese child in the King and I at the Scala theatre in London, then 20 years in amateur dramatics in Harrow from 1971 to led me to wanting to take lots of people to the theatre. So with over 1000 people on the database and 1,500 on both the facebook group and page I'm certainly fulfilling my strapline 'I just love going to the theatre and taking lots of people with me'.

In the summer, we hope to be able to support a group of young people who otherwise wouldn't be able to access theatre trips, by raising funds so they can go to see 'Wicked' for a matinee performance. For some young people and families, theatre trips is all but a dream, and for me to be part of that journey for them really makes it all worth while

Janet Audley-Charles



An Update on our Cricket Activities.



Audrey Collins (pictured here) was an inspirational Soroptimist – a pioneer of Women's cricket and a trail blazer for women. Audrey generously left a legacy to promote and support girl's cricket in Hertfordshire. In recent years this legacy has been supplemented by an anonymous donation which has enabled us to maintain our support from 2010 until 2025. To read more about Audrey please click on this page on our website Audrey Collins OBE

During this time our involvement has changed. Whilst there were competitive leagues for older girls (U15 and U17) in 2010 there wasn't one for younger girls which meant there was no clear route for younger girls to follow through to senior County Girls sides and beyond. Hence the creation of the Soroptimist Audrey Collins U13 Cricket League providing a Trophy and Prize Money each year. In 2018, we realised that the trophy and individual replicas were more relevant to the girls than the prize money which went to the clubs, and there was a pressing need to support the Hertfordshire Ladies on their first ever overseas tour. Our financial support helped pay for the kit bags for the team which kept the Soroptimist logo in the public eye throughout the tour. We were so impressed with the girls who gained confidence, learnt about teamwork and improved their cricketing skills playing at impressive locations against tough opposition. The England Women's team has a well established and successful history, but without the grassroot support in the counties this would not be sustainable.

Following the pandemic, the needs are once again changing. Girls cricket remains firmly on the map in Hertfordshire and we have been able to fund some new trophies which will be longer lasting and result in the winning Under 11, and Under 13 teams receiving a shield stating U11 Girls Cricket Soroptimist Trophy; U13 Girls Cricket Soroptimist Trophy, and the Under 15s receiving the Girls Cricket Soroptimist Audrey Collins Trophy. It will be a pleasure for one of our Members to award the trophies on behalf of our Club at the finals' day on Sunday 17th July.

Put the date in your diary if you are interested in coming along. The venue will be confirmed after Easter when the competition gets underway.
The one thing you can be sure of is that the location is often beautiful, usually at one of the clubs involved in the competition and the opportunity to sit on the boundary, socialise and chat to the families and winning teams is thoroughly enjoyable.

Barbara….



Finance

This is the last report I'll make before the year end on March 31st. Once I have done the accounts you will see the 'big picture 'of what we have achieved from a financial point of view during whole the year. Since the last newsletter we have had 3 specifically fundraising events which I will mention.
Firstly, the theatre. Given that this was in COVID times, and many people were reluctant to attend, it was very pleasing that we managed to sell over 60 tickets and made just under £1000. Many thanks to those who sold tickets and for the generosity at the bucket collection and mainly to the Abbey Theatre who charged just £250 and were very supportive. In addition, it was an excellent performance of Private Lives thoroughly enjoyed by us all.
It was good to be able to return to St Albans Station for carols. Despite the reduced footfall we took £260 in donations and had a lovely evening plus dinner afterwards at the White Hart Tap.
Finally, our second online quiz raised £650. Again, a great achievement and also, I think, a great format. Many thanks to our questionmaster Soroptimister Derek for the excellent questions and presentation and to Jane who manged the IT in her usual efficient way.
We have not passed any money to the refuge since April, which means that we have a large pot in excess £1500 to pass on to them. Rather than being subsumed into their running costs I believe it is going to be used for a particular project.
I am continuing to manage our **Lendwithcare** account. So far, the loans are being paid back as promised. At the moment we have 4 active loans: 3 in Zambia and 1 in Malawi. From our initial £200 investment we have made 17 loans, making a total lent of £840. This has helped 180 entrepreneurs and 788 people, including their many children who they are able to keep in education. Although we will continue to have our own account, we are now part of the SIGBI lending group so that the impact of the federation can be measured.
Of course, we have also raised other monies from our successful zoom meetings, and these have been passed to the nominated charities.
All that remains in this Club year is to choose charities for our end of year donations. A shortlist will be brought to the next Club meeting.

Sarah Lichman (Treasurer)

Things to come……

Mon 28 Feb – "Shwopping" at Barbara's from 7.30pm

Tue 1 March – Pancake Day – Home-Start pancake race in St Albans – if you'd like to volunteer to help on the day please email **sistalbans@hotmail.com**

Sat 5 Mar – SILC Region Meeting/Conference and Celebration of International Women's Day – 10am to 1pm on Zoom. **Booking information is on the website www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/iwd22**

Mon 14 Mar – Refugees Event – marking International Women's Day. 7.30 to 9pm on **Zoom.** We will hear from Irene Austin, Chair of **Herts Welcomes Refugees** www.hwsf.org.uk and the life experience as a refugee from our own Member Beatriz Sampson.

Fri 25 Mar Meet for Coffee at the Exquisite Peacock Emporium in the Maltings from 10.30 (on the left if coming from the Maltings car park or on right if coming in from Chequer Street). All are welcome please email **sistalbans@hotmail.com**

Mon 28 Mar – Speaker Meeting – Queen's Canopy Project – 7.30-9pm on Zoom.

Mon 11 Apr – Club Meeting – 7 Apr is World Health Day

Mon 25 Apr – AGM at Greenwood URC 7.30pm

Sun 15 – Tue 31 May St Albans Sustainability Festival 2022 #SustFest22 **www.sustfest.org**

Sat 11 Jun 2022 – Face-to-Face – SILC Region Conference Hosted by SI Slough Windsor and Maidenhead Club

Sat 8 Oct 2022 – Zoom – SILC Region AGM/Conference

Thu 27 Oct – Sat 29 Oct – SI Great Britain and Ireland Conference Belfast "Climate for Change" **www.sigbi.org/belfast2022**

For more information and keep updated do look at the website www.sigbi.org/st-albans/club-programme

Groan from Jean solution: He had seasoned the soup with lots of pepper before noticing the dead fly!!!!

Note from the Editor

This will be my last newsletter to you . I feel sad in a way as have enjoyed doing it for a number of years but it is time for a change. Pulling items together making what I hope has been an interesting newsletter has been a learning curve for me but enjoyable. From some of the comments I have had, you enjoy reading it, others I know don't read it, but that's life I guess. My thanks go to all who made contributions and especially to Jane who proof reads and reminds me of anything I have missed. Louise Marron is taking it over from me. I am sure she will do an excellent job with lots of new ideas and I look forward to reading it as her first edition comes out. Why not let Louise know of the items you would like to read more about louise.marron@hertscf.org.uk Good luck Louise!

Jean

If you want any further information on anything do look at the website www.sigbi.org/st-albans

Jean Eaton jean.eaton43@gmail.com

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