Soroptimist International
St Albans & District



www.sigbi.org/st-albans

Newsletter May 2021

Welcome from our President – Barbara Saunders





After so many months in virtual isolation for our members, families and friends, the AGM was an opportunity to reflect, celebrate what we have achieved, despite the pandemic and set out our stall for the next twelve months.

Two weeks previously, Kat Clarke and I met in the Vintry Gardens in St Albans for a virtual hand over of the chain of office, also the Pandora bracelet given to the Club by our friendship link Si Chico in California. I hope I may have the pleasure of wearing it before too long, but I will need training to open Pandora's lock! It was a lovely afternoon for a chat, and a perfect, calm start to what I expect to be a busy year.

My Theme for the year will be "Sustaining our Club and supporting our Communities". We have achieved a great deal in the Club during the past year, despite the pandemic, as can be seen in Jane's report www.sigbi.org/st-albans-and-district/2021/agm21/

As we come out of lockdown, there is so much more we want to do, starting with meeting in small groups, having some fun and getting on with projects which will benefit the charities we support in our local Community and Soroptimists internationally. This year marks the Centenary of the formation of the first Soroptimist Club in America, and it gives us an opportunity to celebrate. Planting trees, walking 100 laps around the lake in Verulam Park, helping with a litter pick in Harpenden, and presenting the trophy to the winning Herts Girls cricket team are in my diary already. Society faces many challenges. and we will contribute through advocacy, campaigning to improve the lives of women and girls and increasing our understanding of the issues and what needs to be done to improve the lives of those who suffer.

We are delighted that Daisy Cooper, the local MP for St Albans Constituency, has agreed to come and talk to us about the way forward on women's safety following the murder of Sarah Everard. We are also keen to hear about her experience as a first time MP and the obstacles she has faced on the way to Westminster. Do join us on 24 May for what we expect to be a very important meeting. Meanwhile, as I write, the sun is shining, children are playing outside, and the blossom on the cherry trees signals the start of May I won't be up at dawn to dance round the Maypole, but we will have our first family meal outdoors to celebrate my daughter's birthday, and the festival of Spring.

Stay safe and well
Barbara

PS – spot the deliberate mistake – no prizes just the satisfaction of knowing when someone is trying to catch you out!

Groan from Jean:- A man is lying in bed. He makes a phone call, says nothing and goes to sleep. Why?

What's happened since the last newsletter…

8 Feb we were joined by Nicky Thompson Chair of The Dianne Oxberry Trust dianneoxberrytrust.org at our Club Meeting on Zoom.

Nicky talked passionately about her friend, Dianne Oxberry, a well known BBC TV and Radio Broadcaster in the North West of England who died very soon after a diagnosis of ovarian cancer and in whose memory the Trust was formed. Nicky is a natural story teller who, speaking from the heart and without any notes spoke of a 'friendly, straight-talking weather presenter' well known in the North West; a no-nonsense-woman with good judgement and a strong moral compass, who was mad about horses, dogs and life; an incredible mum and gifted broadcaster who behind the scenes was a champion of women and key driver for those lobbying for equal pay at the BBC. .

The talk was inspiring not only about Dianne but also for us to be aware of our bodies being aware of any changes like bloating, constipation, frequent weeing and stomach pain. Don't be afraid of contacting your GP not wanting to bother him. It might just matter.

22nd February we heard from Dr Margaret Ashwell OBE about Elsie Widdowson - "a woman who inspired action in the world of diet and health." What an interesting evening we had on Zoom when Dr Margaret spoke to us about the inspirational **Elsie Widdowson CH, CBE, FRS**. Elsie's work undoubtedly improved the health of our nation and saved many lives. Margaret is a public health nutritionist and she is also the biographer of Elsie Widdowson. Margaret is pictured when Elsie received her Honorary Doctorate from University of Salford



8th March was International Womens Day. International Women's Day and this year had the campaign **#ChooseToChallenge** – we accepted the challenge to work for a better world for women post-COVID. Then we watched an excellent short video from SI Esperance in Trinidad and Tobago, on "Choose to Challenge" . Led by our Member **Katherine Clark** we accepted the challenge, **Self-Compassion and Self-Care** – situations where kind, supportive, compassionate and nurturing are one. We understood, from Kat, using herself as an example, that we know what a difference it makes to how other people are feeling when we are kind and supportive towards them – and yet sometimes we can't seem to apply that to ourselves. Women tend to be harsh judges to themselves. After going into breakout rooms and hearing some stories Kat reminded us to not only care for others but ourselves too.

22 March we had an engaging evening on Zoom – "How can Women lead on Reducing Carbon Footprints?" The event was led by our own member Linda Shall who is an experienced Carbon Literacy Project trainer and a member of the Club's "Planet Team". We all have a part to play in that reduction pf carbon footprints and we need to start now. **Carbon Footprint SISTA Presentation Linda Shall 22 Mar 2021** Linda went through the slides before the attendees were split into 5 break out groups – for discussions. After the discussions Linda brought us back together as a group to go through the feedback, Linda She then made suggestions of what we could do to help reduce the climate change, for example, with Provisioning, Diet, Waste, Packaging, Home Energy and Travel.

7 Apr Liz and Sara, Managers of the St Albans and Hertsmere Women's Refuge **SAHWR** joined us for our monthly coffee morning on Zoom. They were delighted that the Club has been able to send the Refuge £1000 from this year's fundraising and generous donations. The Club has supported SAHWR for many years – it is a charity which provides specialist domestic abuse services in the St Albans, Hertsmere, Three Rivers, Watford and Dacorum areas.

Liz told us that they will use the money from our Club specifically to benefit residents. This year with home-schooling of children they were able to use the money we sent last year to buy Wi-Fi Access SIM cards for the iPads that had been provided by BBC Children in Need. The money also funded Easter egg hunts in the Refuges and gifts for the Mums from the children for Mothers' Day.

Liz and Sara told us how amazing local community groups are in our area – when they had an outbreak of COVID in one of the houses they got an immediate response from organisations like Sopwell Community Trust and the Vineyard. The virus had a significant impact on them financially – housing benefit didn't cover the time rooms had to be left empty after cleaning between clients under COVID sanitising rules. Most residents stay with them for about 4 months and it can be extended to 6 months. Community workers support those who cannot flee for 3 months. All of the work is reported to Safer Places, who are responsible for managing the contract overall, and they then report to Herts County Council. Liz and Sara have seen written feedback from clients that the Community Workers have literally saved their lives. They think that the "virtual" legal process put in place during COVID is working well – e.g. non-molestation orders can be worked out by telephone which is much less of an ordeal for the clients.

The bid/tender process for Refuge services is due again in 2022 so the work on the bid will start in August this year. precise arrangements are still unclear at present.



Liz and Sara thanked us again for the money raised and donated by Members of our Club in the last year. They repeated how lovely it is to receive our support over the many years and how grateful they are, not just for the money but also for the tea and coffee we send, household items and generally knowing that they have our support. if they need us. We all feel comfortable chatting together like old friends. They promised to let us know when the Refuge needs our help and we will continue to support them in any way we can. How times have changed – Liz and Sara used to visit the Club for a cheque handover – see the pic here from 2011 (l to r Janet Tansley, Liz Perry, Sara Jackson, Jane Slatter). Nowadays it's an electronic bank transfer and a Zoom meeting! Mind you we are looking forward to a time "post-COVID" when we can all see one another face to face again…

12 April we welcomed Rotarian Fiona Miles to talk to us, via Zoom, about the Rotary Project Sight Solutions. Their mission is to provide free eye care and eye surgery to the very poor in the developing world. She explained how the charity worked and how they help in needy countries to ensure free help is available. Our club was so inspired a donation of £60 was made to Global Sight Solutions

Club Meeting – After Fiona left the meeting we held a regular Club meeting. It was encouraged that we attend the AGM on 26th April as we will be marking the **100th anniversary year of Soroptimist International**. We will also hear some reflections from Joan Williams. We heard about the **medical blister pack recycling** initiative where empty blister packs can end up with Superdrug who in turn make a donation to Marie Curie.

26th April We held our first ever online AGM. We were able to look back on a strange year but looked forward to the year ahead when we will be celebrating the **100th Anniversary of Soroptimist International** and the 65th anniversary of our Club Soroptimist International St Albans and District.

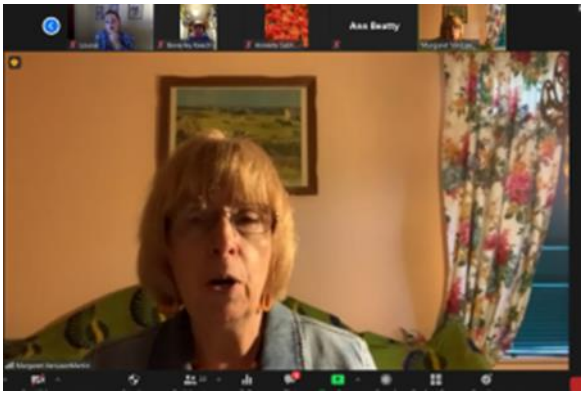
At the meeting we have the handover of office from one President to another and this year was, of course, a little different…. Katherine (Kat) Clark ended her term of Office in April 2020 when we were unable to have an AGM due to COVID-19. We didn't have a President in place for last year – instead sharing the Presidency with six of the Club's Officers taking a period: Kat Clark and Sarah Lichman were in the hot seat through to the end of summer 2020, then Denise Powell and Ameeta Sabharwal took over when Barbara Saunders and Jane Slatter took the reins up to this AGM. Part of the handover is to pass the "chain of office" from one to the other – so Barbara and Kat met up outside ahead of the meeting . You can see the pictures in the President's welcome piece on page 1.

Kat chaired the meeting skillfully and was able to use an updated version of the speech she had prepared for last year!

Reports were delivered : Ameeta Sabharwal for Membership, Jane Slatter for Communications and People Team, Helen Byrne for Planet Team, Denise Powell for Peace Team and overall Programme Action, Sarah Lichman for Finance. During the year we have been able to donate more than £4000 to the many charities we support. All the reports from the meeting can be seen in the Members Area of this website www.sigbi.org/st-albans/members

To mark the occasion Denise Powell pre-recorded a 15 minute **interview with Joan Williams**, our longest serving Member who joined the Club in 1967. **"A reflection on my life, our Club and its projects".** The recording took place outside due to COVID restrictions with apologies for the background noise. Just click below to listen and enjoy Joan's trip down the memory lane of someone who has been a **Soroptimist for 54 years**:

Helen Byrne, SI London Chilterns Region President and also a Member of our club Helen took over from Denise Powell. Her theme of **"Celebrate the Past, Create the future**" – recognises that in October 2021 we will be celebrating the centenary of Soroptimist International. Helen was keen to invite everyone to the next Region event on **Sat 12 Jun which is being hosted by SI Milton Keynes** This event promises to be a fun and inspiring Celebration of SI's Centenary with, among other things, a play about the history of Soroptimist International and a meet up online with founding club **SI Oakland in California.**



One of the great things about being online is that we have been joined by friends from around the world. It was lovely that Margaret Van Laan Martin, our main contact with our Friendship Link with **SI Chico** in California, was able to join us for our AGM. Margaret gave us an update on life after the horrendous fires in 2019 that have affected where she lives at Paradise. One of the ways SI Chico has been fundraising during COVID is though "Bistro Bag" meals that people pay to pick up. Through things like this they have been able to fund new play areas for kids in the local area.

Last but not least **Barbara Saunders** delivered her first speech as the **Club's new President.** Congratulations Barbara – we all wish you every success in the coming year. Do read the letter from Barbara at the beginning of this newsletter.

Charities supported by the Club receiving a share of the **£4000+** were: the St Albans and Hertsmere Women's Refuge, Herts Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre, Homestart Herts, Herts Viewpoint, Cruse Bereavement, Earthworks, Carers in Herts, Radio Verulam, UCL haemotology, The Traveller Movement, Herts Domestic Violence Helpline, Dianne Oxberry Trust. There were also donations to International charities – Steve Sinnott Foundation Period Poverty Project, Toilet Twinning, SIGBI Emergency Relief Fund, SI Road to Equality Appeal and International Peace Initiatives.

Our new executive committee is:-

President -	**Barbara Saunders**
President Elect….	**Vacant** (to shadow Barbara, help her when needed and take over as President in April 2022
Vice President –	**Vacant** (will take over in April 2023)
Past President –	**Kat Clark**
Secretary –	**Kat Clark**
Treasurer:	**Sarah Lichman**
Programme Action:	**President is the contact : Team Leaders : Denise Powell - Peace Jane Slatter – People and Helen Byrne - Planet**
Membership:	**Vacant - Executive sharing the role for now**
Communications:	**Jane Slatter**
International Project :	**Diana Kingham**
Regional Rep:	**Janet Audley-Charles (non-exec)**
Welfare:	**Jean Eaton (non exec)**
Finance Officer -	**Jean Eaton (non exec)**

If you want to know about any of these roles you can always contact any of the exec to know more, or even attend any exec committee meetings.

I would urge you to look at the web site to find out more about any of these evenings. Jane keeps it up to date, a big thank you Jane, *www.sigbi.org/st-albans*

During the pandemic which we hope to be ending soon I am sure we have all found things to do (if you are like me not always the things that SHOULD be done!) I have been doing jigsaws, reading, rubbish TV, and writing newsletters! Here is a lovely picture of Joan dog walking in Harpenden.



A riddle for you:-

I have a mouth but don't eat
I have a bank but no money
I have a bed but don't sleep. *Answer at end of Programme of events.*

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

On the subject of collecting; - a note from Helen:-

As Lush no longer collect bottle tops, we advise members to leave any new bottle tops on the bottles and put them into the local recycling until further notice but to hang on to any already collected.

The Planet Team has a concern that tops put into the general recycling could be being burned or sent overseas rather than recycled as has been highlighted in the press recently. Janet is working on an alternative for the already collected bottle tops. We can't confirm yet whether this is possible and,as it could be quite onerous, we don't know if it is going to be a permanent option or only a one off for the already collected items. Meanwhile we will investigate what happens to plastic put into local recycling and keep you informed.

On the same subject from Sarah:-
This scheme looks great opputunity to declutter, recycle rather than send to landfill and raise some money in the process. I'm sure we've all got something in the categories that are mentioned. We can have a big collection when we eventully meet face to face but in the meantime have a scout round for appropriate items that are filling your cupboards and ask family and friends as well.



How It works
We offer a unique service for charities and non-profit organisations by recycling unwanted items and turning them into valuable funds. Individuals wishing to help raise funds for their chosen charity or cause can benefit from the use of our free service too.
Donors send in unwanted items and we recycle them to get money for your cause. We recycle an array of items such as: unwanted watches and jewellery (anything from plastic beads to old broken gold chains); gadgets (such as cameras, games consoles, mobile phones, sat navs and MP3 players); old currency (UK & foreign) and used stamps. We have experts in place to ensure that all items we receive are individually assessed and recycled to get you the highest price possible for your charity or cause. All this is done at absolutely no cost to you.
We process your goods as quickly as possible, so you can be in receipt of your funds in no time at all.
This is the link to their website . https://www.recyclingforgoodcauses.org/

Please don't forget to always let Denise Powell or Sarah Lichman know if you change your telephone number or address and Jane Slatter for email changes - 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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From Sarah who reminds us that this might just be our first face to face meeting for a long time!!! Lets do it!



SIGBI Day of Action on Climate Change

Summer's evening stroll round the tree trail in Highfield Park.

at **7pm on Wednesday 14th July**

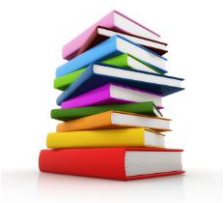
Trees are a powerful weapon against climate change:
They are the ultimate carbon capture and storage machines. Like great carbon sinks, woods and forests absorb atmospheric carbon and lock it up for centuries. They do this through photosynthesis.
The entire woodland ecosystem plays a huge role in locking up carbon, including the living wood, roots, leaves, deadwood, surrounding soils and its associated vegetation.

We are fortunate to have some lovely, wooded areas in St Albans which are important in the fight against climate change and also offer us beautiful places in which to relax and socialise. One of the nicest is Highfield Park. Highfield Park contains many species of tree, of which 40 make up the tree trail. In addition there are a large variety of shrubs. Some of the trees are native (naturally occurring in this country), whilst others have been introduced from abroad. Since the Park was established in 1996, thousands of new trees (mainly native) have been planted. We are also fortunate to have so many fine mature trees in the park, in particular ornamental varieties, many of which were planted in the former Hospital grounds about 100 years ago. Other trees, hedgerows and woodland pre-date the hospitals and are surviving features of the past agricultural landscape, including the original field boundaries. The trail makes a pleasant walk around the park and we will have information about each featured tree. It will be a lovely relaxing and interesting way to spend a sociable, sunny (hopefully!)summer's evening together.

We hope that you can join us on 14th July at 7pm
We will meet in the carpark of the YMCA St Albans 59 Russet Drive St Albans AL4 0DB

Thanks Sarah

Book Club



I am thinking of starting a book club. The idea is to meet monthly, can be evening or during the day, to discuss a book and have a cuppa. I can suggest a book to start with and then we can choose books for the next few months, each having a choice. Can be one you have enjoyed, or not, or one you have always meant to read and this way you will be inspired to do so. So far I have mentioned this idea to a few members who would like to join but need a few others to make it work. Let me know if you are interested to join in. If we have enough support we can go ahead or if you have any questions or ideas do please contact me. *Jean*

Things to come……

23 May to 6 June – Sustainable St Albans Sustainability Festival #SUSTFEST21 sustfest.org now online. Do look at this website – there is so much.
Mon 7th June – 10.30 am Virtual Coffee morning on Zoom
Sat 12 Jun – hosted by SI Milton Keynes – SILC Region Meeting/Conference and Celebration of our Soroptimist Centenary Zoom 2-5pm This event promises to be a fun and inspiring Celebration of SI's Centenary with, among other things, a play about the history of Soroptimist International and a meet up online with founding club **SI Oakland in California. www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/12jun**
Mon 14 Jun Roma Mills will join us to update us on the work of **Carers in Hertfordshire.**
Mon 28 Jun 7.30pm online "How memories are made, making the most of your stuff in the home" with Jane Fletcher founder of The Art of Giving Community Interest Company theartofgivingcic.com – sustfest.org **www.sigbi.org/st-albans/art-of-giving**
Mon 12 Jul – Club Meeting – Richard Radcliffe joins us to share news of his wife Nazanin.
Wed 14 Jul – SIGBI Day of Action on Climate Change – Tree Walk with the Planet Team
Mon 26 Jul – Speaker Meeting with Shelley Hayles and Raihaanah Ahmed – two inspiring women in our community (30 July is the International Day of Friendship)
Sat 7 August – Soroptimist International Centenary Event – 100 Laps of the lake in Verulamium Park from 1.30pm
Sun 12 Sep – The Harpenden Lions Highland Gathering 2021 Rothamsted Park www.Harpenden-lions.co.uk
Mon 13 Sep – Club Meeting to celebrate International Literacy Day and 21 Sep is International Day of Peace)
Mon 27 Sep – Follow Up Meeting on the Club's Sustainability Event in March
Fri 1 to Sun 3 Oct – 100th Anniversary of Soroptimist International
https://100.soroptimistinternational.org/si100
Sat 9 Oct – Lancaster Hall, London – SILC Region AGM/Conference
Mon 11 Oct – Club Meeting – feedback from Region meeting + prep for SIGBI Conference – 11 Oct is International Day of the Girl Child, 10 Oct is World Mental Health Day
Mon 25 Oct – Social event
Fri 29 Oct and Sat 30 Oct afternoons – SIGBI Conference
Llandudno **www.sigbi.org/llandudno2021** will be held online
Sat 30 Oct – after Conference – Club celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Soroptimist International
Mon 8 Nov – Club Meeting – feedback from Conference
Fri 19 Nov is World Toilet Day
Sat 20 Nov – Virtual Quiz
Mon 22 Nov – Speaker Meeting on Zoom – hosted by the Club's Peace Team
25 Nov-10 Dec "Orange the World" – 16 days of action to end gender based violence ending on Human Rights Day
Mon 6 Dec – Carol singing and social event
Sat 11 Dec – SILC Region Meeting/Conference and Celebration of Human Rights Day

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Answer to the . riddle: A river !!! sorry……

Our organisation is 100 this year! On Sat 7th August starting from 1.30, I am hoping that between us we can walk round the lake 100 times. No, not everybody doing hundred laps, just between us. I am sure that with us, our friends, husbands, partners, children, we can do it. We would be in small groups going off every 10 minutes so as not to overwhelm the park paths. There will be ongoing picnic facilities if you want to bring along some favourite food/nibbles. Later I will be asking who would like to take part, how many laps they want to do and arrange a start time that suits A non fund raising event – just a bit of fun! More details still to come but do keep the date free.
Jean



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Dont forget.....

Do read Helen's note about your milk bottle tops, but continue to save used postage stamp, broken jewellery and empty blister packs. Also your slightly used bras and unused pants as we hope in due course to continue with this again. 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, You can deliver to my address or ask me to collect. Jean

Groan from Jean solution He is in a hotel, unable to sleep because the man in the next room is snoring. He telephones the snorer using the room number technology with most hotel phones. The snorer wakes up and answers. The first man hangs up without saying anything and goes to sleep before the snorer starts snoring again!



Note from the Editor
Apologies that this newsletter is a little late but I have been knocking my leg about and ended up in Lister Hospital. Thanks to all who have shown me support in this uncomfortable time. The next newsletter will be in September/October, 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
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.