Soroptimist International St Albans & District



www.sigbi.org/st-albans

Newsletter September 2021

President's News from Barbara Saunders

The meteorologists tell us September 1st is the start of autumn, when the colours in the environment change and we think of festivals such as Harvest, Halloween and Thanksgiving. Personally, I like to hang on to every last ray of sunshine (having not seen much of that this summer) but I get great pleasure from picking a few tomatoes, courgettes, beans and salad veg from my garden till the last possible moment. We are fortunate to live in a beautiful area, and enjoyed our sociable walk around the lake in Verulamium as part of the celebration of 100 laps for 100 years of Soroptimism worldwide. Sincere thanks to Jean and her team for the idea and making it happen. My theme of Sustaining our Club and Supporting our Communities as we learn to live with the pandemic starts with getting to know each other better, and for those of us able to meet in person, enjoying some social time, having fun as well as campaigning and working together for a better life. Looking forward to our programme for this autumn, there are some big issues demanding our attention and action. The Planet Team are focussed on trying to reduce the harmful impact of people in driving climate change. Working with other local organisations to improve levels of recycling especially for those hard to recycle items like empty blister packs from medications, old gadgets and bits of outdated technology seems like a no-brainer; changing our behaviours seems more difficult, but we will be learning more about how to do that and support each other through the process at our Zoom meeting on 27th September. Plans are also in hand to become involved with tree planting as part of the Jubilee celebrations next year, and a joint meeting with SI Hertford regarding what is needed in Hertfordshire.

The Peace Team, very aware of the increase in domestic violence during the pandemic and its impact on women and within families, are focussed on Orangeing the County for the 16 Days of Action against gender-based violence. This is a United Nations Initiative worldwide, which starts on 25th November, the International Day for Elimination of Violence against women and ends on 10 December, Human Rights Day. Please do get involved if you can. The On-Line Quiz, our major fundraiser for the St Albans and Hertsmere Refuge, has had to be postponed because of a clash with other events involving key members within our Region, but will now take place on Sat Feb 5th next year. Meanwhile, we are still providing tea, coffee and toiletries, so please take any you have to Jean or bring them to our Club meetings in person.

No-one can have witnessed the appalling plight of people trying to flee from Afghanistan this summer without feeling compassion and concern for the future of the millions of people who become refugees, and have to leave their countries, through no fault of their own. Our Club has supported Herts Welcomes Syrian Families for a number of years. Pamela Rochford in particular, assisting with English language and family support. The People Team will, amongst other things, be considering what we can do to better understand the plight of refugees in the UK and what action is appropriate for our Club. We also have the Charity night at the Abbey Theatre on 4th November, which we hope will raise a significant sum. Private Lives by Noel Coward is an entertaining comedy so do please book your tickets, bring your friends and support this event.

Barbara Saunders

Groan from Jean ... An ordinary American citizen, with no passport, visits over 30 foreign countries in one day. He is welcomed in each country and leaves each one of his own accord. How is this possible?

August 7th as a Club we celebrated **100 years of Soroptimist International** by walking 100 laps of the lake in Verulamium Park. Some did 2 laps and some 10 but the joint effort was 150 laps and I was worried if we would do the 100!!!!! Jane kindly did the publicity for this event which meant we had a few people dropping by to see what we were up to, giving us a chance to tell of what we do. This picture of our cake being cut was taken just before the rains came sending us scuttling under the gazebo.





I had the privilege of cutting the cake, see picture left what it said on top!

Thanks to all who gave up their Saturday afternoon to take part and have a jolly Saturday afternoon *Jean*

A Report from your Treasurer

There has been a significant change to our bank balance as we have now paid the £1400 that we had kept ringfenced for 7 years to IPI. You may remember that we had this money due to a banking error where IPI received £1400 from us in 2014 but despite efforts to rectify this it was not debited from our account. It could have been reclaimed for up to 7 years but now that period is over, we are free to spend it as we wish. It was agreed at the time that IPI would be the beneficiary. Banking errors are rarely to one's advantage so in this case it's great that this one was to the benefit of a worthwhile cause.

I am also pleased to report that as a result of the inspiring meeting with Richard Ratcliffe we donated £440 to **Redress** the charity that is supporting his wife Nazanin.

Our "Lend with Care" scheme is still going well. Despite further warnings that groups may miss repayments due to COVID this has not been the case. We have received regular repayments and as our lendwithcare account is in credit I have just made a further £45 loan to Favour 1106 Group in Zambia.

That's it for now. There will be a fuller details on our finances with the quarterly accounts at the end of this month.

Tree Walk

A group of club members plus one Soroptimister gathered at Highfield Park on a lovely evening in July. We sauntered (rather than walked!) around the park following the tree trail. All in all we looked at almost 40 trees of different types The park looked lovely in the evening light and it was fun picking out the featured trees and then spending a bit of time admiring them and hearing the information that was in the booklet.

We all enjoyed it so much that we have decided to repeat the walk in the autumn to see the trees in their glorious colours. We will be meeting in the morning of Thursday 14 th October and hope that more club members will join us. We could always end up in a pub for lunch! More details will follow.

Sarah Lichman

*The Club is now on **Instagram** as well as **Facebook and Twitter** and our name is the same on all three - **@sistalbans** If you use Facebook, Twitter or Instagram please follow the Club and share posts.*

Since the last newsletter……



24th May We were very honoured to have our local MP Daisy Cooper come to speak on Zoom. Whilst carefully avoiding politics, Daisy treated us to a very interesting and inspiring talk covering many topics. Daisy answered all the questions put to her during a Q & A session. You can see all of these on our website. Do have a look.

www.sigbi.org/st-albans/24may

28th June We had another Zoom meeting this time guiding us on **how to make the most of memories in our own homes.**

For example, Louise showed us this message and pressed flower. She said "**Jane from the Art of Giving** asked us to send her any examples of how we'd made art out of our 'stuff' following her event…. a couple of months ago I received a letter from The Ideas Partnership charity in Kosovo I do work with. They sent a piece of black card with a pressed flower and stuck on the back a little thank you note, to say it was from the land where the new community centre is being built. I was there on the day they helped choose that bit of land. I carefully removed the white paper from the back and framed them both… directly inspired from Jane's session…"





Barbara tidied up her bathroom shelf with shells that her husband had collected in his youth!

Don't forget if you can think of somewhere that might benefit from an art poster motivational pack more information is on the Club website www.sigbi.org/st-albans/art-of-giving

Also as part of



We can see Barbara and Sarah doing a litter pick on the Redbourn Road – good stuff!!!!

14th June Roma Mills from Carers in Herts updated us on the work that this charity does lately supporting carers during the COVID 19 pandemic. We also heard from **Helen Byrne** about accepting the challenge for a **"Plastic Free July"** something we all could do, in any month – or longer! www.sigbi.org/st-albans/plastic



8th July Coffee morning in Jean's tiny garden. On a beautifully sunny morning somehow 7 of us managed to sit round a tiny table to drink coffee or tea. It was just lovely to be together again after the COVID time of isolation and put the world to rights!

We are always looking for new venues or ideas for morning coffee so if you have any ideas do please let one of the executive know – just email sistalbans@hotmail.com . It can be at home or a garden centre, park or anywhere easily accessible. Any ideas for October?

12th July We were privileged to hear from **Richard Ratcliffe** about his fight to free his wife **Nazanin**. The nightmare for the family started in 2016 when, while taking her daughter to see her own parents, Nazanin was taken by the Iranian Revolutionist Guards and held in prison. It emerged that the arrest was linked to a political issue between Iran and UK. Daughter Gabriella is now with Richard in the UK but of course the fight goes on for Nazanin's return. The case has now become one with a high profile which while making Nazanin more safe has complicated the situation. While we had all read of the story in the press, the horror of the family situation was brought home to us to actually hear it from Richard himself. Thanks to Louise for arranging such a powerful and moving evening. www.sigbi.org/st-albans/richard-ratcliffe



18th July was the final of the **Under 15 Audrey Collins Trophy 2021** held at Berkhamsted cricket ground. It was a beautiful afternoon and Helen was accompanied by Jean Eaton and Madeline Skinner who knew little about cricket but thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and seeing young girls playing so well. Our past Member Audrey would have been delighted if she was looking down that afternoon! www.sigbi.org/st-albans/cricket21







26th July We heard from **Raihaanah Ahmed** (left) about the **Sopwell Community Trust** which runs community initiatives such as Eid in the Park with the aim of breaking down barriers between different communities living in St Albans. They also run food banks helping the hungry throughout the COVID 19 outbreak. We also heard from **Shelley Hayles** (right) and her Community Interest company, **Leanna's Wish,** which helps 12-17 year olds get access to learning and training. Raihaanah and Shelley are inspirational women, motivational role models for young people finding their way in the complex and inequitable St Albans society and community. www.sigbi.org/st-albans/26-jul



10th September We met for **coffee at Ayletts**. After enjoying a coffee, and for some us cake, we wandered over to their Celebration Garden to admire their beautiful Dahlia display. Wonderful!!!
Anybody want to offer hosting a coffee morning in their home during October? Or have an idea for a good venue? Please contact Jane or Jean.

13th September We actually met "face to face" and celebrated with a pot luck supper
As you can see on the right there lots of goodies and surely nobody went hungry!! To **celebrate 100 years of Soroptimists and mark the International Day of Peace** four candles were lit. L-R Joan our longest serving member, Denise Immediate past President of our Region, Ameeta and President Barbara.











I urge you to look on our website for more information on any of these events *www.sigbi.org/st-albans/club-news*

New Members

At our face to face meeting on 13 Sep (see above) we were also able to welcome new Member **Nicky Bloom** in person – see pic and website www.sigbi.org/st-albans/candles

I am sure we will meet **Anne Leverton, Maria Podrajanskaya** and **Louise Marron** in person soon. **Beatriz Sampson** who has rejoined our Club from the Winchester Club will continue to join us online when she can.



Friendship Links…



*Sad news from our Friendship Link in **Muenster**. We are very sorry to say that **Myrte Schrunder** has passed away. Says Jean " when we first became a link with Muenster, Myrte was our contact and there are many happy memories and photographs of being with her in her lovely home in Muenster. She was always such a warm friendly lady offering very kind hospitality at all times. She will be very much missed"*

I have been given some pieces which I would suggest many of us could benefit from… Here is one of them

The clock is my dictator, I shall not rest
It makes me lie down only when exhausted.
It leads me to deep depression
It hounds my soul
It leads me in circles of frenzy for activities sake
Even though I run frantically from task to task
I will never get it all done
For my "ideal" is within me
Deadlines and my need for approval, they drive me
They demand performance from me beyond the limits of my schedule
They anoint my head with migraines
My in basket overflows
Surely fatigue and time pressure shall follow me all the days of my life
And I will dwell in the bonds of frustration for ever.

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

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 or if possible hang on to those already collected until we can find an outlet for them

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.

Please continue to save used postage stamps, broken jewellery and empty medicine blister packs. Also your gently worn bras and packs of new pants as we hope in due course to continue with "Smalls for All" again soon. 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 Womens' Refuge, you can deliver to my address or ask me to collect.

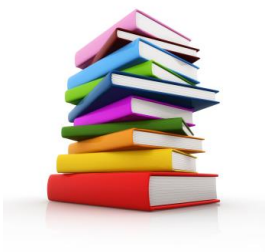
To use that "C" word – the Refuge would be delighted if we once again gave adult gifts at Christmas. These will used for the children to give to their Mums or Dads. They can be toiletries, gloves hats and the like. We gift wrap them and label them from the St Albans Soroptimist but also attach a post it note saying what is inside (so that the right gift can go to the right person)

Many thanks Jean



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 – you can check your own data on the Members database on the website www.sigbi.org/members

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Book Club

I have started a book club. We have had one meeting so far when we discussed "The Thursday Murder Club", a first novel by Richard Osman. We were only four but had a good friendly discussion. Our next meeting is September 28th when we are reading "Remarkable Creatures" by Tracy Chevalier. We would like to have a few more members so if you think you might be interested do please ring me to find out more. *Jean*

A couple of messages from Diana Kingham

For those of us who knew **Hilary Ratcliffe** (she moved to Derbyshire a few years ago having been a very active member of our club). She joined in a street party in Harpenden in early July. Hilary said how much she had enjoyed joining our Zoom meetings and celebrations - a definite gift of the COVID situation. She was pleased to hear that we would continue having some of our meetings on line to continue reaching a larger audience. She sent her love to you all. You can read more about Hilary here – www.sigbi.org/st-albans-and-district/about-our-club/inspirational-members/hilary-ratcliffe-obe and here www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/files/2021/05/Hilary-Ratcliffe-OBE-WhoIsShe.pdf

International Peace Initiatives - International Club Charity since 2012 www.ipeacei.org a charity supporting women and children affected by HIV/AIDS in Meru, Kenya.
We have finally managed to transfer the £1,400 to IPI (our International Project) - after keeping it for the advised 7 years in our bank account. Exec decided that we would like it to go towards the training of a woman in either hairdressing or tailoring to enable her to learn a trade and support herself and her family. This seemed to be in line with our club's current thinking. I hope you agree.
Dr Karambu Ringera who runs IPI has just been asked to take in a couple of girls in their early teens who have nowhere to turn. They have both been raped and rejected by their families and community - one now infected with HIV and the other just given birth to the resulting baby. Karambu currently has 83 kids in her children's home (KACH) and didn't have the space or funding for the girls. Fortunately, a number of people have rallied round to provide support them, build them a new home and she has taken them under her wing. Their stories are heart breaking. I don't know if she has sufficient funds for them yet, and suspect there may be more girls in a similar situation. If anyone would like to know more or would be able to offer support in any way, please contact me, Diana.

Things to come……

Mon 27 Sep – Zoom meeting "Step up to Cop26" Sustainability Event 7.30pm
Sat 2 and Sun 3 Oct – 100th Anniversary of Soroptimist International online 5-9pm https://100.soroptimistinternational.org/si100
Sat 9 Oct – SILC Region AGM/Conference Speaker Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London on Career and Gender www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/agm2021 Zoom 10am to 1pm
Mon 11 Oct – Club Meeting at URC Chiswell Green
Mon 25 Oct – Social event – watch this space!
Fri 29 Oct and Sat 30 Oct afternoons – SIGBI Conference on line
www.sigbi.org/llandudno2021
Thurs 4th Nov "Private Lives" at Abbey Theatre St Albans in aid of the Womens Refuge www.sigbi.org/st-albans/private-lives
Mon 8 Nov – Club Meeting – feedback from Conference
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 www.sigbi.org/st-albans/orange21
Mon 6 Dec – Carol singing and social event
Sat 11 Dec – SILC Region Conference and Celebration of Human Rights Day on Zoom

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

Groan from Jean solution He is a mail courier who delivers packages to the different embassies in the United States. Sorry!!!!!!!!!!!!



Owl Messaging Service

Would you like to hear from the police about what it happening in your area? If you log on to www.owl.co.uk/herts you can register your interest and then from time to time get information on what is happening in your area. It is not meant to frighten you but inform so that you can be aware and thus safe. You can also find out what they are doing to keep your neighbourhood safe.

Note from the Editor

The next newsletter will be in February which will be my last one as Louise Marron is taking it over from me. I am sure she will do an excellent job and I will look forward to reading it as it comes out. If you have anything you would like to put in the February edition, 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 have a comment about the Club or a particular item you would like to tell us about, something that has happened to you during the pandemic. an interesting holiday story. Tell us if you have a favourite famous woman in business, art, history, music, 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!

. 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.