

Dear Sue,

2023-10-10

Firstly I must thank you for forwarding your newsletters and apologies for not replying to your September news. I have now taken over as ISO from Annika Sandén. I know she has informed you of this, but in the changeover, I was inundated with mails concerning IW and overlooked your communication. Annika took over from me in 2018 and I held this position for five years before her. However, I have only promised one year as ISO, so we will see what the future brings.

At our last Committee meeting we decided to accept your kind invitation of friendship and have added you to our list of international friendship clubs. We are already in touch with Boonah, Queensland. Our club meets once a month over dinner at a private venue and always has an interesting activity or speaker. Our club has 48 members, mostly retired women from various professions. Every other week we are a number of ladies who go for a ramble in a nature reserve not far from central Örebro. We try to walk in all weathers and all seasons. This usually takes an hour, and we round off at the restaurant on the edge of the reserve for a well-deserved lunch.

We have three projects that we support with funding. Firstly, we support our customs services by paying for the purchase and training of dogs used to detect narcotics and weapons at our borders. A worthwhile and very necessary service. Sweden is experiencing the worst gang wars and crime in history and drugs and weapons are the root of this evil. Secondly, we support Panzi Hospital in Bukavi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Dr Mukwege, a consultant gynecologist works tirelessly to help those women and children who are the subject of rape. Some of the operations he has to perform are horrendous and he has even had to operate children as young as two years old. We live in a brutal world but there are saints working to improve life for the under-privileged. He lives on the hospital site under the protection of the UN as he is seen to be a government enemy.

Dr Mukwege was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 and has visited Örebro twice where I was privileged to meet him on both occasions. Our third project is the May Flower Fund (a national charity) which gives children from underprivileged families, hospitalized children and other child groups something special in the form of trips or excursions which their parents would find unaffordable or presents for those children who need that little extra to give them a happy day or experience.

Örebro is the fifth largest town in Sweden with a population of about 156,000. It dates back to mediaeval times and Örebro Castle, situated right in the town centre, has its beginnings in the 13th century. Örebro is a town steeped in history but has a large modern university, university hospital and vibrant cultural activities. Surrounding us are the plains of Närke (the name of our county) where agriculture is prominent and also the Blue Highlands where formerly iron ore was mined in practically every village. Incidentally, the Castle is the official residence of our County Governor, at present a woman. The town is 200 km from Stockholm and 400 km from Oslo and is a logistics hub in central Sweden.

From your newsletter I can see that you are a very active club with many events, activities and get-togethers of all kinds. Sweden has another culture and lifestyle which I think reflects on the way we meet at Inner Wheel. We are however trying to attract new members which is mainly done through personal contacts.

Here in Sweden we are going into autumn, although we have had some wonderful weather in September. Swedes are sun lovers so many make for the Canary Islands, southern Spain, Thailand etc in winter. In the far north of Sweden, they have already had their first snowfall but I'm hoping the white stuff will keep away for a good while yet! Well, this is just a short introduction to our club, as well as a little about our town.

For my part I have been a member of Örebro Inner Wheel Club since 1995 and held different positions on the committee, including two terms as president. Please give greetings to the ladies of Pakenham IWC from our members in Örebro. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in friendship,  
Janice Karlsson, ISO Örebro IWC