

Spring drought, summer deluges, autumn floods – and then the snow but Cirencester Soroptimists have survived the lot, and we are actually doing quite well! Our membership numbers are buoyant, our social and fund raising events great, and the friendships, which keep our club strong, are as good as ever.

The last Club News ended with a photo of 15 of us on the bridge marking International Woman's Day in 2012. This year we are planning something different but first you need a resume of the events and changes that occurred during 2012.

Jackie Gloyn, Newsletter Co-ordinator

We are so lucky once again to have a strong executive, which this year has been led by President Sue, with Marietta as our President Elect. The structure of the club has been strengthened, with all members assigned to sub-committees, and events also being organised by separate sub – groups. This has the advantage of taking some of the pressure off our executive whilst also giving us the opportunity of getting to know one another better. New members are automatically assigned to a committee and now, as we approach our AGM, we are discussing the rotation and roles of members.

Being a Soroptimist is not just about raising money – but this year we seem to have managed to support a number of charities whilst having fun doing so. As her personal focus for the year, President Sue chose The Timmy Mason Trust children's cancer charity



<http://www.timmystrust.org/>, set up in memory of Timmy Mason who died in 2011. Several members can be seen, with Timmy's father,



painting red wellington boot moneyboxes for the charity, two of which are passed around at meetings for our loose change. President Sue undertook a sponsored swim, when she swam on average three times a week over three months, covering 22,725 metres and raising a wonderful £700 for the fund. A cheque for £1,000 will be presented to Timmy's parents.



Sue started her programme with a talk about *Shelter Boxes* <http://www.shelterbox.org/> by a stimulating speaker and Shelter Box 'Rapid Response' volunteer, Liz Odell. The Club subsequently presented Liz with a cheque for £590, from Immediate Past President Anne's Charity funds, to purchase a Box, which we were able to track. Each box contains a tent and enough equipment to help a family, hit by disaster, to survive and to start to rebuild their life. We have recently been told that our Box was sent to Nigeria and used to

assist a family affected by flooding.



Next on Sue's programme was an exciting 'Call My Bluff' wine evening when friends and family plus several



Soroptimists from S.I.Cheltenham joined us. A local pub provided a set meal and each table competed to recognise the wines being served at intervals throughout the evening. It was a night of friendship and fun, at the end of which we were able to make a donation towards the *Timmy Mason Trust* and *Hope for Tomorrow* <http://www.hopefortomorrow.org.uk/> which is a charity that raises money to purchase Mobile Chemotherapy Units.

Jackie G organised a Safari Supper in aid of Cirencester Housing for Young People, raising just over £2,000 when matched funding was included, and in August a small number of Soroptimists met up for a picnic supper in Westonbirt Arboretum. We have had fund raising stalls at several events which has enabled us to give grants to both local and national causes and Anne C, our Fund Raising Co-ordinator, who organises events so well, is already amassing household bric-a-brac for her next stall. At Christmas, we have 'Joyful Giving' when members make a donation in place of sending each other Christmas cards. This raised £200, which we sent to the International President's Appeal – 'Birthing in the Pacific'. We also presented £500, again from Immediate Past President Anne B's charity fund, to the NSPCC towards their work with abused children in Bristol, where there is a pilot scheme aiming to reduce the numbers of babies with 'non accidental head injuries'.



President Sue, Maggie E and Anne D formed a new link with the local Girl Guide Association and as a result some of us, sporting rubber gloves, spent one or two Saturday mornings helping to spring-clean the local Guide and Brownie camp accommodation. We have also been invited to have a Soroptimist information stand at their next Guider training day. We have continued to organise and collect for Marie Curie and

to support Stroud Refuge with filled sponge bags, Christmas stockings and home start packs, whilst Swindon Social Services had 40 stockings and Cirencester Deaf Children's Club, run mainly by Soroptimist members, had 27 Santa gifts. We also gave a local playgroup £200 after their funds were stolen.





In October, we supported Anti-Slavery Day with a stand outside the Parish Church in the Market Place. Over 400 signatures were collected on a petition to stop the publication of sex advertisements. Several members allowed themselves to be chained up (using paper chains) to illustrate the trafficking of girls and women. International Day of the Girl Child was marked when Muriel and Tildi gave a talk to children from years 5 and 6 at a

local primary school. This was well received with many questions and some amazement at the restrictions girls face in some cultures.

'Educate, Empower, Enable' has been at the forefront of much that we have done this year. Annie and Muriel continued to run the Nature Quiz for South Gloucestershire Primary schools with members going along for support and then realising how little they knew about nature compared to the children! The Club donated a book to Ampney Crucis school, which won through to the final. Linda B and



Margaret M rose to the challenge of further developing our school Literacy Competition – and marked over



600 scripts – reading them twice to determine the winners because of the high standard! The prize giving was a fantastic event, with author Lynne Armstrong-Hobbs presenting books to the winning children and silver shields to the schools. Cheltenham Literature Festival donated a special family prize, which was raffled on the night. One of the real highlights for the first, second and third winners was the opportunity to stand on a podium (made by Margaret M's husband) and, in addition to their prizes were presented with a gold, silver or bronze medal. In 2013/14, the competition will

be developed even further with more schools being invited to participate.

Immediate Regional Past President Shirley Alexander

SI Cirencester has been proud to have a member serving as Regional President for 2011/2012. In September we not only staged the Regional Conference, but also combined it with a Friendship Weekend. The feedback from delegates and those who attended was very positive and many particularly stressed how much they had gained from the workshops at the Conference and the friendliness and team working shown by the members of our Club. IPP Regional President Shirley writes:

My lightning year as Regional President is now over; I just cannot believe it all went so quickly! I enjoyed travelling around our large, long region and joining with friends old and new, playing my part in linking us all together; no easy task when we are so spread out geographically - and, of course, sharing some wonderful meals with fellow members and a vast array of guests. Hosting the successful AGM and regional conference in Cirencester, with the support and commitment of all the

club members, was one of the highlights of the year.



IPP Regional President Shirley with Club Presidents and Club Immediate Past Presidents at regional Conference.

Guess who our President Sue and IPP Regional President ended up near at the Federation Conference in Belfast when those present formed a rally to raise awareness to the *Purple Tear Drop Campaign*? None other than Soroptimist International President Alice and SI President Elect Anne Garvie - but that is another story!



September and October were positively hectic as not only did the Club organise and host the Regional Conference and the Literacy Competition but also a further sub-committee was frantically organising the Club's main fundraiser – the Caldicot Choir Concert - in aid of The Cotswold Care Hospice and the Sue Ryder Leckhampton Court Hospice. The evening started with a short performance given by young people from The Corinium Guitar Ensemble before the 50 singers of the Male Voice

Choir took the stage. The audience was also mesmerised by the beautiful voice of soloist Claire Lees. The organisation for this event included sorting out sponsorship, advertisements for the programmes, providing refreshments (ably assisted by Mr Soroptimists!), feeding the choirs and selling nearly 400 tickets. However with the enthusiastic reception of the audience and the profit of over £4,000 it was well worth doing and we congratulate those involved. A presentation of cheques was made to representatives from the two local hospices. This event will be repeated in 2014 when we have booked the choir to return.



The announcement that the government would double the money raised by Water Aid if paid in by 13th September, meant that in the midst of all the Caldicot preparations a coffee money had to take place – so it duly did at Jackie G's house where £251 was raised, meaning over £500 was available to drill a well somewhere in Africa!

Friendship Links

Events in Cirencester are often supported by Kath, from our Friendship Link in Bury. She comes to at least one meeting during the year and helps at stalls or with goods for The Refuge. She and Elva attended the Friendship weekend but sadly six members from our link club in Itzehoe were caught up in the Lufthansa strike when their flight was cancelled at the last moment. We are lucky to have close ties with all four of our links – President Sue with her daughter Rachel and IPP Anne enjoyed the Charter Dinner in Bury and several club members are hoping to travel to Germany for the Itzehoe celebrations in May 2013. We sent cards on S.I. Club Friendship Day, supported Durham's Presidential charity and have continued to help our Latvian link with their community work. Special congratulations are sent to IPP Sabine on her 'Kegums Person of the Year Award'. Their Christmas greeting to us seemed very appropriate!

*'From Home to Home and Heart to Heart, from one place to another,
The warmth and Joy of Christmas brings us closer to each other.'*



Christmas is a busy time for all – but we again decorated a tree in blue and silver in our Parish Church with information about both Soroptimist International and our Club, through which we were able to inform the many visitors and tourists of our activities. Taking both a stall in the Combined Charities Market and a chalet in the Christmas Market Place, which takes place annually in front of the church, was again good for our profile – and the total of £650 raised by the sale of donated goods was divided between six local good causes. We finished the year with an excellent meal and Christmas celebration at Ingleside House.

2013 looks as if it will be as busy as ever. We have started with helping the Spring Cleaning with Guiders and also held a pancake and coffee morning in aid of research and treatment of cancer of the pancreas, which raised just over £500. This will be added to the money being raised for the same charity by President Sue's daughter, Rebecca, who will be running the London Marathon. We will be cheering her on! Some of our members will be helping with serving tea following a celebration and act of thanksgiving to acknowledge the 10th anniversary of the Cirencester Eating Disorders Self Help Group.

Instead of being 'On the Bridge' on March 8th, International Women's Day we will be behind an information stall at our charter market and in the late afternoon hosting an Oxfam "Get Together" at The Bingham Gallery, inviting members of other women's organisations in the town to join our celebrations. President Sue is likely to be in New York on that day so she will be seeing if she can observe proceedings at the UN. Our Fund raising co-ordinator also has some ideas for 'Water Aid' - so watch this space.

Message from President Sue

Firstly, I must thank Jackie Gloyn for all her hard work in putting this Newsletter together. However, what she has omitted to say is that in August 2012 a very surprised and pleased Jackie was invited to a Rotary

member's dinner meeting to be presented with the Rotary Club of Cirencester's Community Award in recognition of the work she has done over many years in the local community. Well done Jackie!



Although it was unplanned, I am pleased that I accepted the proposal to step up into the role of President for 2012/2013. I was privileged to follow in the footsteps of Immediate Past President Anne Brooker who had a very successful term of office under her quiet but strong leadership.

As I read everything that has been included in this Newsletter, I realise how busy the year has been particularly with hosting the Regional Conference on behalf of one of our members Shirley, as you will have already read. We invited the members of Inner Wheel, my daughter Sarah and other friends to a Dinner meeting in November at which Dame Janet Trotter OBE, Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, gave a very stimulating and thought provoking talk, and we also joined Rotary for a Dinner meeting. I proposed at both of these events that our organisations should endeavour to work more together and support each other.

At the beginning of my year, I held an evening where members were asked to consider strategic Long and Short term Goals for the Committees. This has worked reasonably well but I hope it will be improved and develop over the years as it will help in the planning of events and also to understand why, in some circumstances, things did not progress. I am particularly pleased that we have eventually been able to make some links with the local Girl Guiding movement.

I think that it is natural to feel that I could have done more but we are all volunteers and what has struck me very much through this year is what a fantastic Club we are. OK I can hear our members saying '*didn't you know that already?*'. It is only as the figurehead that I realised how fortunate I have been to have the enthusiasm and commitment of our members. It has been an absolute pleasure to see all the members contributing, in whatever way they could, to different events throughout the year – all working to their strengths. I would also like to thank my Executive team and in particular, President Elect Marietta Crockford (left in photo with IPP Regional President Shirley in middle and President Sue on right) for her support and wish her every success for her coming year as President.



Sue Dennis

President Sue Dennis, Soroptimist International of Cirencester and District