

Soroptimist International of Crosby

1938 –1998

The sixty years of Soroptimism in Crosby encompass a World War, a technological revolution and many great changes – not least in the position of women in society.

What follows is not a comprehensive history of the club. Rather it is a series of glimpses of the past, looking back from 1998 to the activities and preoccupations of members as the club celebrated its major anniversary, then more fully at the events of the past decade.

Much of the information about the club's community service has been drawn from histories prepared in 1968, 1978 and 1988.

Hilda Garner, April 1998

1938 - Early days and the years of war

Soroptimism came to Crosby in May 1938, as the dark clouds of conflict gathered over Europe.

Six members of the Soroptimist club of Liverpool came to the Sundene Hotel and explained how Soroptimist Clubs were organised.

The first officers were elected and the Soroptimist Club of Waterloo-with-Seaforth received its charter from the Federation President, Miss E. Hawes, in the presence of Miss M.F. Adams, President of the Divisional Union (now the Region) and Miss H. Critchley, the DU Secretary.

The Crosby club began with 26 active members. Its first president was the Headmistress of Merchant Taylors' School for Girls, Miss E. Fordham, and the link between school and club has remained strong. Mrs Margaret Davies, who was headmistress of the school for more than 25 years, is a past president and was a long-serving member of the club into the 1990s. The Diamond Jubilee Year membership list includes many Merchant Taylors' old girls and some members of its current staff.



Miss E Fordham

By July in 1938, the club was already cooperating with the newly-formed Rotary Club of Crosby, responding to a request from its first president, Mr Allan Jones, to help with a collection for the Scouts.

When members discussed the 1939 Divisional Union Conference to be held in Southport, the suggestions included Careers and Openings for Women, the Reasonable Age that Spinsters Could Receive Pensions and A National Medical Service.

The first shadows of the war began to appear. The club considered the billeting of children who had to be evacuated. It was decided unanimously that camps, under proper supervision, were the answer. Subsequently members talked about taking on a house to provide homes for up to twenty-five refugees, but this plan did not progress.

At the first annual general meeting in May 1939 the club had £17 15shillings and 3 pence in the bank.

A lot of work in the first year of the club's life went to making a success of a fete in aid of Waterloo Hospital. Another fete at Crosby Hall in June 1939, raised funds for a Refugee Appeal.

As the international situation deteriorated, members wrote to the local MP about nationality rights for women – asking that they should be the same as those for men. They also made representations that women air raid wardens should be paid the same rates as the male wardens.

When the club held a members' evening on August 1, 1939, the occupations covered included a hospital matron, laundry proprietress, blind welfare worker and private hire car-driver.



The Soroptimist emblem was created by Anita Houtz Thompson of the USA whose winning design won the competition. The design, typical of art taste in the early twentieth century, “represents womanhood with her arms uplifted in a gesture of freedom and acceptance of the responsibilities of the best and the highest good. The leaves and the accord represent the strength of our organisation and the leaves of the laurel typify victory and achievement.”

Taken from the history of SI by Janet Haywood (1995)

The club's annual dinner was planned for October 3, 1939, at the Blundellsands Hotel, but at a meeting on September 5 – as World War II was breaking out – the dinner and all other social functions were cancelled.

Wartime needs then dictated the efforts of club members. They helped in canteens, looked after soldiers billeted locally and sent parcels to other servicemen billeted overseas. They assisted in the distribution of food sent from America, they knitted...and they mended enormous numbers of socks.

One unusual local need met by the club in those early days was to buy an artificial leg for a local girl. In addition, of course, the club joined in national aid initiatives, in particular by making a large contribution to the Red Cross to aid prisoners of war.

Crosby members were the vanguard of women's networking. Two Soroptimists were the first secretary and first chairman of the wartime group that later became the Standing Conference of Women's Organisations.

With the end of the war came the setting up of the United Nations. Crosby Soroptimists took a keen interest, particularly in the work of UNESCO and the link with the UN has remained strong into the 1990s, with another long-serving member and past president, Miss Ethel Jones – again a headmistress – playing a major role in the local United Nations Association serving for many years as branch chairman.

Care for the elderly of the area was a priority for Crosby Soroptimists from the earliest days. As early as 1941 members were talking about a scheme to provide homes for older people in Crosby. Inspired largely by the club, the Crosby Residential Trust was formed in 1949 and a suitable large house Sundene Lodge was brought by the local authority and leased to the Trust as a home for the elderly.

Club members provided personal and financial aid for the project right through to 1992 when changes in social care provision and local authority decisions led to its closure.

1948 - Into the second decade of service

In 1948 the club held its annual general meeting in Norman's café in South Road.

During the year, the club came to the aid of an old couple in want. For some months the sum of ten shillings a week was found for their rent and the substantial sum of three pounds ten shillings was provided to pay for replacing the old lady's spectacles after they had been broken in a fall.

Members were greatly concerned about catering for the annual bazaar and a plea went out for ration points so that enough biscuits could be bought. Tea was another problem, but several members pledged to provide supplied from their own personal rations.

The Crosby Soroptimist Club's tenth anniversary was celebrated with a party at Brompton Avenue Church Hall on May 10, 1948. A special cake was made and several members, among them one Mrs Peg Malley, whose service and generosity proved exceptionally enduring, each offered a bottle of sherry.

More seriously, individual members were urged to write to the local MP seeking equal pay for equal work, a novel notion at that time.

The club became involved in the start of the Council of Social Services in Crosby.

But some of the most heated discussions centred on the purchase of new china for club use. "Not white," pleaded one member of the executive, but no coloured china was available. And then it transpired there had been a misunderstanding about ordering it at all...!



1952 saw the setting up of the Crosby Old People's Welfare Committee, its first treasurer was Soroptimist Mrs Peg Malley, who, more than 45 years on is still serving the cause, in 1998 as vice-chairman of the group (now part of Age Concern) and is still an active, animated and articulate past president of SI Crosby.

The Crosby club has also from its earliest days concerned itself with young people. The cup, pictured left, presented by the club to the Crosby Music Festival in 1955 is still, in the late 1990s, among the festival's trophies.

Soroptimists were active, too, in the running of Crosby Children's holiday Fund set up in 1957 to provide holiday breaks for youngsters who would not otherwise have them.

Crosby Soroptimists have always been international women, too, looking far beyond the boundaries of Crosby to make friendships and to give aid. It was in 1957 that the club “adopted” through a European Aid to Refugees Scheme, a stateless Yugoslav, Alois Kustovic, then living in Germany, near Nuremburg.

1958 - Still hard at work after 20 years

The club, in its twentieth year, was sending regular food parcels, letters and parcels to its adopted displaced person, Alois Kustovic. Later Mrs Mary Doughty, the president in 1957, visited him and the club’s final gift was a contribution towards his grave-stone.

In addition, the club sent a donation to UNICEF to provide vaccine to protect 2,800 children from TB and distributed around £300 to a number of good causes, noting that it was not appropriate to repeat the previous year’s one guinea provision for the Manchester United Fund (presumably after the Munich plane crash).

1958 was a vintage year for new members, three names on the table together were Miss Mary Graham, secretary of Waterloo Boys’ Grammar School, Miss Sheila Allen headmistress of Beach Road Primary School, Litherland, and Miss Edna Gaskin of Littlewoods Personnel Department – three names still well known as the Millennium approaches.

1963 - Silver Jubilee Year

Members put a lot of effort at this time into the movement to get the Boundary Commission to keep Crosby as a borough, not to join it with Bootle.

They were also working to try to ensure that there would always be a woman police surgeon available to examine young girls after assaults.

Crosby’s new swimming baths were opened. Its architect, Mr Ronald Mason, was invited to speak to the club and later members went along to admire the new facility.

In the same year, support was given to the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. Later in 1966, similar aid was given to the Winston Churchill Memorial Fund.

Crosby Soroptimists twenty fifth anniversary dinner was held, with Canon Dillistone as its guest speaker. Disappointment was expressed at the coverage offered by the Crosby Herald and a letter of complaint was sent to the then editor!

1968 - Swinging in the Sixties

The club's president in its thirtieth year was Mrs Marjorie Lawley – another enduring personality, still active in the Diamond Jubilee Year.

This was a busy time, including involvement with the Women's Standing Conference, Old People's Welfare, Abbeyfield, Swimming for the Disabled, the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Crosby Children's Holiday Fund, the United Nations Association, UNESCO and Education for Progress towards a Literate World, under which the club chose to study the education of young immigrants.

Cash was sent to help victims of an earthquake disaster in Sicily.

Locally members were involved in Operation Springclean, which aimed to make the people of Crosby "litter minded".

The support for Sundene Lodge and the work for Age Concern went on enthusiastically.



*Crosby Soroptimist Dinner 1968 - President Marjorie Lawley, second from right with
from L-R Marjorie Patterson, Doris Taplin and President Elect Mavis Boyd, well-known local soloist and music teacher*



L-R: George Boyd, Edna Gaskin, Crosby President, Mavis Boyd, Bootle President Pauline Birkett, long-standing secretary Mary Graham and her sister Lily Graham



Crosby Club members at The South Lancashire Divisional Union Conference in 1968 in Manchester. Mary Doughty (seated) with President Mavis Boyd (right) L-R Edna Firth, twin sisters Eileen and Phyllis Cannell, Marjorie Lawley and Majorie Patterson

The 1970s – New Ventures

In 1975 a new venture Riding for the Disabled, Crosby group, was given encouragement and financial help from its inception. One of its founder members was Mrs Margaret Berger, a well-loved club member.

Charity donations increased over the years and 28 good causes were helped in 1977 for example. It was in that year that the club supported a Federation project to sponsor a swimmer from Wigan to train for the Olympics.

A resolution from the club to reduce the age limit for membership of Soroptimist clubs from 25 to 21 was defeated, but then the age limit was abandoned altogether.

The Crosby club noted that “it would be happy to support the formation of a club in Formby if there was sufficient demand”. It also considered moving the venue for its meetings from, by that time, its regular venue at the Blundellsands Hotel to a room in the new Crosby Central Library, but this was left in abeyance.

It was in the 1970s that the name of the club changed to Soroptimist International of Crosby, but its commitment to service continued unchanged.



Soroptimist members pictured at the annual dinner in March 1975 when Miss Edna Firth was President. L-R Rae Pickett, Helen Coats, Mavis Boyd, Dorothy Prichard, Moira Peate, Win Crompton, Margaret Lanchester, Mary Graham and Peg Malley



Moira Peate handing over the Chain of Office to Muriel Dyke

As Soroptimist International of Crosby entered its fortieth year, it had 52 members. Subscriptions were £15 for active members, £10 for retired members.

The fortieth anniversary year president, Mrs Moira Peate, was invested with her chain of office by her predecessor, Miss Vicky Scott.

Attendance at the annual dinner reached 210 and two members of the Kalundborg Friendship Link Club in Denmark, Lassa and Gerda, were warmly welcomed to the celebrations. The Crosby Herald devoted three pages to the anniversary events and thanks went to Crosby member Jane Daly, the paper's news editor, for this coverage. Later three Crosby members visited Denmark and were warmly welcomed in Kalundborg.

During the year, in excess of £900 was collected and distributed to good causes. A long-term project to raise funds for the Clatterbridge Research Project reached its target of £1,000. This was the year the 100 club was introduced to boost fundraising efforts.

Reports were made to the club on the continuing growth of the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the work done by members for Crosby OPW and Riding for the Disabled.

It was announced that metrification was to become effective by 1981.

Within the Federation extensive discussion was taking place on long range planning, covering the programme and structure of Soroptimism, The Federation President was a Southport member, Miss Celia Evans, and she was able to clarify for members locally the issues being discussed.

The concept of an equal retirement age for men and women found support among Crosby members.

The Crosby Children's Holiday Fund reported that costs were rising – it took £3.50 a day for each child and they tried to offer a holiday for 20 boys and 20 girls.

The club adopted a tufted duck at Martin Mere. It was given the name Scottie in honour of past president Vicky Scott, one of SI Crosby's truly unforgettable characters.

Support for Riding for the Disabled Crosby group continued with the president Kathleen Lovatt (80-81) making it her main charity for the year and a pony called Popcorn was acquired with the club's help.



L-R Cllr Jenny Kemp, His Honour Judge Frank D. Paterson, Jane Daly, Violet Hewitt, President of SI Liverpool and John Hallam, MD of Sefton Newspapers Ltd

Miss Lovatt was succeeded in 1981 by Jane Daly who, at the age of 30, became the club's youngest member to hold the office of president.



Jim Woodhouse on the float with Jane Daly and Joyce Sullivan

It was in her year that an approach was made to the Rotary Club of Crosby to allow Soroptimists to use the Christmas Carol Float to tour an area of the town not reached by Rotarians. The inaugural tour of Thornton and Little Crosby was made by Soroptimists, their families and friends, in snowy and icy weather with Rotarian Jim Woodhouse, the then editor of the Crosby Herald, sitting aloft the float as Father Christmas.

1984 saw Jane Daly become the first woman editor of the Crosby Herald.

1988 - A Golden Year



Patricia Fahey after her installation as South Lancashire regional president with her predecessor Miss Mavis Williams

Irene Emlyn was elected as President for the club's Golden Jubilee Year. Crosby members achieved high office, the Reverend Frances Briscoe became a Canon, one of the first women in the country to reach such office. Within Soroptimism, past president Patricia Fahey was installed as President of the Divisional Union and later nominated for membership of the Federation Executive.

Members agreed to a Jubilee levy of £10 and a Jubilee Market raised close to £1,500.

There were two major Crosby projects to mark the Jubilee. The club funded a guide dog for the use of a local blind person at a cost of £1,000 and a panoramic plaque was planned for the seafront, indicating the mountain peaks and islands that can be seen from the Crosby foreshore.

Through the efforts of Past President Margaret Berger, the anniversary was also marked uniquely by the development of a new fuchsia named after the club.



Irene Emlyn cutting the Golden Anniversary Cake with Kate Fussell and Peg Malley

A Golden Jubilee party was held at the Civic Hall. The club's friendship links were happily represented by Liselotte Neilson and Lisa Voight from Kalundborg and four members from Chichester. Guests at the party were able to see the club's historic first minute book and, representing the club's gift, a model guide dog was also on display. The gift of a briefcase was made to Bootle Club which was also celebrating its Golden Jubilee.

Crosby's friendship link Chichester presented a pin. It was decided that this should be worn by the second vice-president and Margot Wright was its first recipient.

The club welcomed two new members, held a successful barn dance, hosted a Divisional Union meeting, made representations to MPs on sentencing in rape cases and, among many other events, heard of the problems of women and children living in poverty in Peru, subsequently raising cash to provide help for them.

As the year ended the membership stood at 57, of whom 39 were active members. Irene Emlyn was congratulated upon a most successful year as Jubilee President and invested her successor, Joyce Sullivan, with her chain of office.

1989/1990 - Active Involvement

As Soroptimists prepared for the nineties, members, including those in Crosby, were looking at the organisation in the light of the findings of the Cadogan Report.

A very succinct description of Soroptimists was circulated: "Business and professional women with an active involvement in local and world issues."

The international organisation's fundraising for women and children living in poverty in Peru passed the £50,000 mark early in 1990 and a Divisional Union stall at the Federation Conference in Blackpool brought in £2,000 for UNICEF.

At that conference, members pressed for legislation to ban untreated sewage and there was a move to ban foxhunting. Other subjects that had been considered included the need to protect the tropical rain forests and the idea that every club should plant a tree, though this was not taken forward. Soroptimists also firmly rejected a suggestion for a Soroptimist credit card.



President Joyce Sullivan, Mayor of Sefton Cllr Maureen Fearn who lent her support for the event. Also pictured Soroptimists and members of the Crosby & Waterloo Operatic Society

In Crosby, the Programme Action Committee actively supported National Spring Clean Day, discussing the sponsorship by the club of a litter bin and joining in a local clean-up. The club bought Womble kits which were given out to children who brought along items to recycle and President Joyce Sullivan welcomed the Mayor of Sefton, Cllr Mrs Maureen Fearn and her consort to the event.

The 40th anniversary of Sundene was marked with an Open House Day, but later in the year the reduced numbers of residents in the home gave rise to concern.

The club continued active support, too, of the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Old People's Welfare and the Crosby Children's Holiday Fund with regular reports being presented at most business meetings.

Tricia Fahey reported back on her visit to the Sacramento International Board Meeting where she had been an observer. The club presented her with a plate to commemorate her year as President of the Divisional Union. Another member, Colette Connell, was appointed auditor of the DU.

Three honorary members were appointed – Edna Firth, Sheila Allen and Edna Gaskin. Sheila and Edna had both joined the club at exactly the same time, 31 years before.

At the AGM, when Margot Wright was installed as President by retiring President Joyce Sullivan, a vote of thanks said how fortunate the club had been that year in its "leading ladies."



Friendship

L-R Irene Emlyn, Edna Firth, Ethel Jones, Stella Atherton, Muriel Dyke and Kay Spencer

1990/1991 - Moving towards Europe

A major feature of the year was the work done by club members and others in the field of adult literacy. Co-operating in particular with Crosby Adult Education Centre, members met students and attended a conference at Bootle Town Hall. A sponsored walk raised £250 for the initiative.

After a great deal of negotiation with Sefton Council, much of which was carried out by the Jubilee Year president Irene Emlyn, the panoramic plaque was at last installed on the seafront at Blundellsands. It was unveiled by the Mayor of Sefton in what is remembered as a Force 9 gale. One letter of thanks described it as “an imaginative and wonderful gift to Crosby’s Citizens.”

With the approach of the European single market the club adopted Europe as a theme for 1991 and 1992. Discussion groups were formed and plans made for an exhibition with displays covering the then twelve member nations.

The club made representation for a Public Inquiry on the proposed Switch Island to Southport road. Even nearer to home, members were pleased to hear that the Soroptimist meeting plaque, which disappeared from the doorway of the Blundellsands Hotel during refurbishment there, had not been lost and would be put back. Then a member and a past president Catherine Hounsell, presented a new brass plaque for the hotel doorway.

The 1990 Soroptimist Federation Conference was held in Jersey and SI Crosby was well represented. Members reported back on debates covering literacy, dyslexia and a variety of health topics, but what made the conference memorable was the weather – storm winds and torrential rain. Delegates needed, it was reported, “webbed feet, waterproof hair, stamina and orienteering skills.”

1991/1992 - Looking Further

This was a year when members looked beyond the boundaries of Crosby a great deal. Planning was beginning for the Federation Conference in Hong Kong, our Friendship Link Club in Chichester held its ruby celebration and our sister club in Southport reached its 60th anniversary.

Planning began, too, to mark the 40th anniversary of the Queen’s Accession. A new Soroptimist International Quadrennial appeal was launched for Sightsavers, with the aim of raising more than £25,000 for children in Bangladesh.

The club was warmly congratulated on the European Experience Exhibition it staged at St Helen's Parochial Centre. The local MEP, Ken Stewart attended, children from local schools took part and, among many interesting features, there was a demonstration of how to make tapas.

A local schoolgirl, sponsored in part by the club, gave an enthusiastic report on her year of travel and work in Brazil.

Crosby club hosted a Regional meeting at the Civic Hall in June, providing hospitality for between 60 to 80 guests.

Of course, members found time to enjoy themselves, too. The strawberry tea at Sundene Lodge brought in over £400 which was later presented to the home. And a group took to the water for a meal on a "floating bistro" on the Leeds/Liverpool Canal.

The longstanding honorary club auditor Colin Brennand stepped down and Brian Taylor kindly took on the task of checking the club's books.



The President's chain of office was refurbished with new links now joining the bars. New silver links would have cost £130, gold links £200. The club voted for gold and agreed to a levy of £5 per head to cover the cost of the work.

At the AGM, held on the same day as a General Election, out-going President Marion Howel said that while members might not be happy with the election result, she was sure they would be happy with their new President, Maureen Baker.

1992/1993 - Friendship – and a bequest

Homelessness was President Maureen Baker's theme for the year. Funds from a number of events went to help people in Sefton and in Liverpool to get off the streets and into suitable accommodation. Club members prepared 'starter packs' of household items to help them settled into their new homes. A report on the homeless project was submitted for the Royal Anniversary Challenge and gained a Bronze Certificate.

Members were shocked at the sudden decision of Sefton Council to close Sundene Lodge and re-house residents elsewhere. Safety considerations were given as the reason for the closure, but it caused a good deal of distress, especially to long-time residents of the home. Perhaps the only good to come out of the event was that some of the home's contents were bought and donated to the homeless project.

The year was a good one for publicity. An excellent full-page article on the club's bowls team appeared in the Liverpool Daily Post, highlighting the less serious side of Soroptimism. There was extensive coverage in both the Daily Post and the Crosby Herald of the election of Crosby's Tricia Fahey as President-elect of the Federation. Within the club, a regular newsletter, planned to appear four times a year, got off to a strong start.



*L-R Barbara Bate, Val Dale, Maureen Baker, Pat Usher,
Dawn Patterson and Tricia Fahey*

The bowls team not only achieved publicity, but also success – winning the Regional Tournament and bringing home a rosebowl, a fitting reward for SI Crosby's initiative in promoting bowls throughout the Soroptimist clubs of South Lancashire region.

The Tall Ships came to the Mersey in 1992. The club joined in barge trips round the ships as they lay in Liverpool docks and, as they left the river, the President invited members to an 'At Home' in her flat overlooking the estuary.

The Federation Conference, at which Tricia Fahey was elected vice-president, was held in Liverpool. Many members of the Crosby club acted as stewards. It was reported before the event that Crosby had 'the highest involvement of any club.' Two members of Chichester came up for the conference. After the event, however, delegates reported back that the Conference could not be regarded as one of the best – but that was not due to any lack of effort by Crosby members.



Miss Ethel Jones

A Soroptimist from the South of England brought back warm greetings to Crosby from its Friendship Link club, SI Tauranga in New Zealand.

The exquisite handmade Christmas cards produced by Ethel Jones brought in £200 for the Sightsavers project.

As she prepared to hand over the chain of office to Pam Stubbs, retiring President Maureen Baker said that the word friendship had characterised her year.

Friends, federation and fundraising

Representation. Refurbishment of the Presidential chain

Innovation – in particular a new venue for the dinner

Executive – all its hard work

New members

Dinners – at the club and elsewhere

Secretary's unfailing support

Honorary members and the homelessness project

International approach of Soroptimists

Publicity and Programme Action

The President-elect Pam Stubbs announced the theme for her year as 'Education for Leisure.' As a taste of what was to come, she invited a past president Marjorie Lawley to lead members in gentle exercises at the close of meetings.

Probably the most memorable moment of a very active year, however, came when it was announced that a local resident, not a member of the club, Miss Mary Catherine Daley had bequeathed £30,000 for Soroptimist charities.

1993/1994 - Education for Leisure

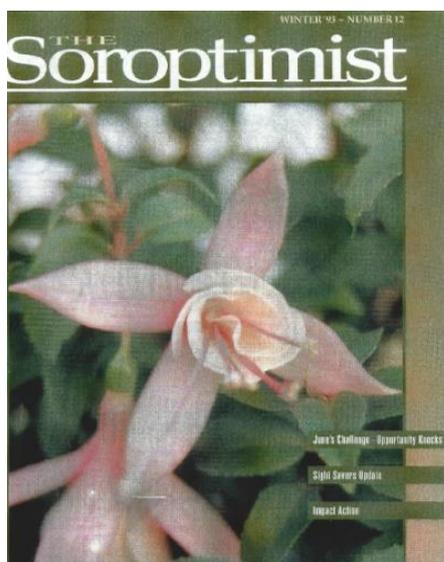
As President Pam Stubbs received the chain of office, membership of SI Crosby remained healthy – there were 55 members, 34 active, 10 senior, 3 associate and 8 honorary members. The average age over five years was 41 compared with the average age of the Federation of 50. A survey showed that within the active Crosby membership, the groupings were:

Education and Science	6
Administration, Law and Local Govt	6
Finance and Insurance	6
Communication, Arts and Crafts	2
Health and Social Welfare	14

The membership was 'looking further', too, providing the second largest party in the country to travel to the Hong Kong Federation Conference and already members were making plans to attend the San Francisco International Conference.

The club looked at measures to mark the Year of the Elderly and also suggested that a representative should serve on the Young Persons Helpline Project.

Dr Jane Fennell of SI Wigan, asked for support in her efforts to help refugees of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Toys and sweets were collected for children in camps in Hungary and later requests for lengths of fabric to make scarves for women there and for clothes and medical supplies were met with strong support from Crosby members.



A display publicising Soroptimism was mounted in the window of the Midland Bank in Crosby Village and the club was again in the public eye when the Crosby Soroptimist fuchsia featured on the cover of the Federation's soroptimist magazine.

Tricia Fahey took office as Federation President Elect. Another Crosby member Jane Daly, was elected as President of the Guild of British Newspaper Editors NW.

Among the year's evenings of fun was a barbecue when a couple of brave Soroptimisters acted as chefs and a highly successful Antiques Evenings with valuations and advice for collectors

A sub-committee formed to handle the very generous Mary Daley bequest was congratulated on its painstaking work. The club agreed to its recommendations that its funds should be used to set up a trust to pay for five youngsters to attend Crosby Hall Educational Trust Centre for five years and that other good causes to benefit would include Jospice, Crossroads for Carers, Women's and Children's Aid, Victim Support, Sefton National Deaf Children's Society, Adult Literacy and – getting the most publicity because of its photogenic quality – a horse and carriage was presented to Riding for the Disabled.

The club was also able to distribute over £3,600 from its own fundraising during the year. Another photo opportunity came when the club bought cows for CHET, cash went to Bosnian refugees and towards the sponsorship of a car in the Shamrock Run charity rally and to many other local good causes.

1994/95 - The International Family



L-R Tricia Fahey, Ethel Jones, Val Dale

The theme for the year chosen by President Val Dale was International Goodwill and Understanding. A series of speakers told of their beliefs, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and the Moslem faith, relating to birth, marriage and death.

A Polish evening, with appropriate food, music and dancing furthered the theme and also helped to cement the Borough of Sefton's twinning link with Gdansk. Merseyside's links with Ireland were highlighted with an evening of Irish dancing and singing.

The Queensway Mersey Tunnel was closed to traffic and opened to walkers to mark the 60th anniversary of opening and a group of club members joined the thousands who walked from Liverpool to Birkenhead under the Mersey. They were seen off from Crosby by Past President Marjorie Lawley who had walked through when the tunnel was first opened in the Thirties.



Miss Jean Kerrigan

The collection of goods and cash for Pecs, the camp in Hungary housing refugees from the former Yugoslavia continued. Chichester club sent a donation of £100 to swell funds and Vicky Scott organised a cricket match to bring in more cash. The task of packing the goods became a mammoth task, but club members turned out willingly to lend a hand.

The club chose its first Woman in the Community – Miss Jean Kerrigan of Age Concern and she was presented with a certificate and gifts at the annual dinner.

There was a lively debate on whether children should be smacked and other club events ranged from a barbecue to raise funds for the Shamrock Run to an expert giving advice on breast cancer. The Shamrock Run finally received over £3,000 from SI Crosby – much of it raised through sponsorship of the four entrants, with a donation from the club.

Tricia Fahey, now President-Elect of the Soroptimist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland brought a taste of the wider world to club meetings. She told members that a new club was being chartered in the Seychelles; that the 4th World Conference of Women would be held in Beijing in 1995; that she would be going to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party and attending an International board meeting in San Francisco. She described the worldwide impact and success of four years of the Sightsavers Project and explained she would be chairing the 75th anniversary committee and that her conference in 1996, would take place in Harrogate.

The SIAM project, Soroptimist International Aids Mediation, successor to Sightsavers, was chosen to run for the four years from 1995 to 1999.

1995/1996 - A Federation President

The high spot in President Elspeth Cooper’s year was, for everyone in the Crosby club, the installation of Tricia Fahey as President of the Soroptimist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. A coachload of members from Merseyside, including a large party from Crosby, travelled to Glasgow for the moving and impressive ceremony and, of course, for all the fun and friendship of a major conference.



Tricia Fahey(L) with Dave Clark who cultivated the Fuchsia Soroptimist International and past president Margaret Berger

There was a Mayoral reception in Southport town Hall in recognition of Tricia's appointment and also to mark the 75th anniversary of Soroptimism. Parties to celebrate Tricia's achievement were held for Crosby members and for the South Lancashire Region and gifts included a framed portrait from Crosby and a watch and brooch from South Lancashire members.



Through the involvement of Crosby's long-serving member Ethel Jones with the United Nations Association, members also participated in events marking the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. The club supported the visit to Crosby of an inspirational speaker on UN topics and Ethel was presented with a book by Liverpool's Bishop David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Worlock, autographed by both of them.

A review of club procedures was begun by a committee chaired by Catherine Hounsell and a number of recommendations were made. These included limiting reports at business meetings generally to three minutes, replacing the President's theme with a series of topics of local interest and tabling lists for dinners (and other events) rather than circulating them during meetings.

The Blundellsands Hotel agreed to serve bar meals to members in the club room before each social meeting, offering an opportunity for a comfortable chat before as well as after events.

Club membership stood at 60 – 8 honorary members, 36 active, 13 senior and 3 associate members. A successful awareness seminar was held for those who had been Soroptimists for less than three years.

President Elspeth's theme was 'understanding disability' and several speakers threw light on various aspects of the problems facing people with disablement and on some of the help that was available.

A large group from Crosby travelled to the International Conference in San Francisco to make the South Lancashire party the largest delegation among the 2,700 women at the conference.

Nearer to home there was a celebration to mark the Crosby Herald's 100th birthday with a family day at CHET attracting large crowds. Soroptimists put in a great deal of work to help make the day a success. Members also joined in yet another beach clean-up, went out collecting with the Christmas float and enjoyed a beach walk in Formby raising funds for Soroptimists 75th Anniversary project.

1996/1997 - Friends Old and New

Crosby Soroptimists certainly 'looked further' and travelled further, too, in President Dawn Patterson's year of office.

Two new Friendship Links were forged – with Bona Beri in The Cameroons and with Scarborough in Tobago – both clubs chartered by Tricia Fahey in her year as Federation President.

Six members accepted the invitation of the Kalundborg club to join in the 40th anniversary celebrations there. After a few days in Copenhagen, they were warmly welcomed and extremely well entertained in Kalundborg, meeting Soroptimists from all over Scandinavia and taking part in an impressive three-day programme to mark the event.



*The four members pictured just before the start of the rally.
L-R Pam Stubbs, Maureen Baker, Pat Murphy and
Colette Connell*

Later in the year, four club members took part in the Merseyside Challenge, a car rally through Holland, Belgium, France, Luxembourg and Germany to raise funds primarily for the Forget-Me-Not-Appeal. The event had a target of £67,000 and SI Crosby was able to make a substantial contribution from sponsorship received. There were 27 cars taking part in the event. The SI car took third place and gained another of the prizes, becoming the only entry to win two awards.

For just two days, SI Crosby members became shopkeepers, opening a charity shop in Crosby Village. Sales raised £800 for the International SIAM Project and a subsequent jumble sale brought in a further £100. Also, for SIAM, Crosby club responded to an appeal for used stamps, and hundreds were collected.

Crosby's MP was approached about the British withdrawal from UNESCO and also about child prostitution abroad and replied with helpful letters.

Members willingly responded to Regional President Dorothy Lee's request for help on a craft stall at the Southport Country Fair to support the Malawi Project – linking nurses in Malawi and Alder Hey – and helped to raise a total of £545.

In Crosby, a tree was planted in the grounds of Waterloo Day Centre with a plaque at its base commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Soroptimist movement.

A large party travelled from Crosby to the Federation Conference at Harrogate. This was, of course, the conference chaired by Tricia Fahey and it was stirring and stimulating to see a member of the home club as the head of the Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. It was a most impressive event – and the report back was unique....in rhyme with words by Crosby member Doreen Forbes.

Members were saddened at the loss of three members during the year – Ethel Jones, Phil Miller and Vicky Scott, whose death at a tragically early age shocked the Crosby community.

Preparations began for the club's Diamond Jubilee in 1998 with the formation of a Jubilee Committee.

At the AGM, membership stood at 53 – 31 active members, 11 senior, 2 associate and 9 honorary.



Vicky Scott

1997/1998 - The Way Forward

Ten years after the Cadogan Report, Crosby club – along with the rest of the Federation – spent time discussing the structure, image and organisation of Soroptimism with the aim of having new guidelines in place by October 1998. The club offered its views on 'The Way Forward' after benefiting from the informed guidance of Tricia Fahey.



President Pat Murphy plants a tree with Jenny Kemp

Crosby's new MP, Claire Curtis-Thomas, a qualified engineer and a Soroptimist – member of the Nantwich Club – came within months of her election to speak about her enthusiasm for Soroptimism and her passion for engineering.

The club, doing a little to help the environment, marked the Year of the Elderly by planting a tree in the grounds of Kemp Lodge. A wall garden was planted at St Luke's Halsall School in memory of Ethel Jones.

Involvement with the community continued, with members serving on the Young Persons' Helpline, Old People's Welfare (Age Concern), the CAB committee, the United Nations Association and the Sefton Women and Children's Aid and the Crosby Committee of the Sefton Mayoral Charities Fund.



Club Reps on OPW L-R Sheila Allen, Jo Parker, Edna Gaskin and Peg Malley pictured at the mystery parcel stall

Honorary member Peg Malley's exceptional 45 years of service with Old People's Welfare was recognised when she was presented with a lifetime achievement award from the Mayor – the first such award for voluntary service in Sefton.

President Past Murphy signed a Book of Condolence on behalf of the club upon the death of Princess Diana and a contribution of £50 was sent to the Anti-Personnel Mines fund as a tribute to her memory. Members noted that the Princess had been able to do more in a few days to highlight the horror of landmines that Soroptimist International – and many other organisations – had achieved in several years.

Club members faced the buffeting of a gusty morning on the seafront to help with the organisation of the Jospice Challenge. The challenge was accepted by 1,200 walkers and 70 dogs and raised over £8,000 in sponsorship money for the hospice.

Members braved the weather again to run a stall at the switch-on of the Christmas lights in Crosby Village and again rattled cans and gave away balloons with Santa and the Christmas float outside Sainsburys – wearing their new tabards to enhance the club's public image.



Crosby's then MP Claire Curtis Thomas with The Soroptimists at The Play Your Card Rights Stall

Despite a poor response to the publicity, the Woman in the Community award winner proved an admirable choice. Mrs Doreen Olsen, nominated as being an 'angel in disguise' for her care of the residents in a sheltered housing scheme, really was one of those who work quietly in the background to create happiness and keep the community running smoothly.

As the Diamond Jubilee year began in 1997, the first sign of club celebrations appeared – a showcase in the foyer of the Blundellsands Hotel was reserved for twelve months displaying Club information and memorabilia. Similarly, an exhibition covering the history of the Club attracted a great deal of interest when it was displayed in Crosby Library.

At the AGM, the Jubilee Year President, Shirley Smith, accepted the chain of office and revealed that she had a particular reason to celebrate the Club's 60th birthday, as she had reached the same milestone herself during the Jubilee Year.

A joint celebration church service with the Rotary Club of Crosby, which was also celebrating its diamond jubilee that year, took place at St Michael's Church in Blundellsands. The Bishop of Warrington, the Rt Rev John Packer, in his address gave thanks for the former and present members of both organisations who through their service had made a difference locally, nationally and internationally. Also taking part in the service was one of our club members Canon Frances Briscoe.

In addition to the annual Charter Dinner, a Diamond Jubilee Party was held at West Lancs Golf Club in May. Among many distinguished guests and civic leaders, we were joined by members from our Friendship link clubs SI Chichester and SI Bonaberi, Cameroon.

Other events to mark the diamond jubilee included the presentation of a bench with a memorial plaque in the centre of Crosby village shopping area and the planting of a flower bed featuring the Soroptimist logo in Victoria Park, Waterloo. The commitment to support children attending courses at CHET – Crosby Hall Educational Trust – was renewed for a further five years.



Members and guests pictured outside West Lancs Golf Club before the start of the Diamond Jubilee Party



The deputy Mayor and Mayoress of Sefton Cllr and Mrs Terry Francis, accepted the gift of the bench on behalf of the people of Crosby. Pat Murphy, immediate past president is seated with them with back row from left, treasurer Vicki Fahey, Jane Daly, Stella Atherton, Joyce Sullivan, Maureen Baker, Pam Stubbs and members Janine Cookson and Marie Caddick, who both have businesses in Crosby village.



Diamond Jubilee President Shirley Smith cuts the anniversary cake, helped by Federation President-elect, Pamela Lee and the club's newest member Julie Sutton

As another successful year in the history of SI Crosby came to a close, members looked forward to the challenge of change which the approaching new Millennium would bring.