
SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

OF MANCHESTER

PRESIDENT
Sandra Woodhead

Issue No 47
Spring 2013

Dear Club Members



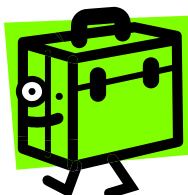
I must apologise for this Newsletter being later than usual. Please blame family problems and technical hitches.

As we approach the end of the Club year, the time has come to plan for the future. Elections are upon us and it is important, especially in a relatively small club, that everyone does what they can to alleviate the load on the officers. A commitment to a small task could ease the burden. We all have talents, let's use them for the common good and enjoy working together.



HOLIDAY IN THE GAMBIA

In January we returned to The Gambia for three weeks. This was to be our longest time ever spent there and we were pre-warned that after two weeks we could well feel brain dead. Far from it – perhaps a sign of our mentality.



Unfortunately, our air carrier was Thomas Cook. We arrived at Manchester Airport on a freezing morning and were greeted by a smiling young lady whose sole job was to make sure that hand luggage fitted into a stamp-sized frame. She turned out to be the smiling assassin as Barry pushed our hand luggage, with no success. I drew the line when he suggested that he would take shoes out and put them into his pockets and tie laces round his neck. Finally,

we proceeded to the check-in on the understanding that this piece of "hand luggage" would go through as luggage. Oh dear! We had a total of 20Kg allowance each but I had purchased an extra 10Kg as we were talking children's clothing. At the back of my mind, I knew Barry's three pairs of trousers and four shirts would be well within his allowance BUT my twenty-one outfits and eight pairs of shoes (not to mention beachwear) could well take us over the weight. Fortunately we were within the limits.



We arrived back at our usual hotel, sun shining, and were shown to our room with a wonderful view of the sea and were warmly greeted by the staff.

I no longer meet up with the Banjul Soroptimists but I have a few Sorop friends from many years back when I was President of S I Manchester. Patricia, a dynamic Jamaican Soroptimist, was soon on the phone and invited us for lunch. Her great friend is Ingrid, the newly-retired German Consul. Only two years ago Ingrid turned on her radio to listen to the local news, to hear that her Gambian husband had "taken another wife". (He is a prominent member of the Government.)

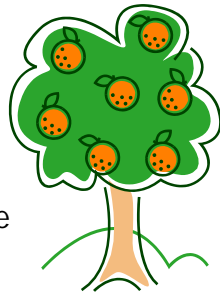


Ingrid and Patricia took me to the market – a very different experience from being a tourist. I also managed to visit “African Elegance”!! After a few fittings, my new dresses arrived at our hotel reception!

Patricia has built up a prestigious school (Tranquil Academy) but whilst we were there, she received an e-mail stating that within 10 days as from 1st February, there had to be no teaching on Fridays – nor had banks or Government buildings to be open! Mayhem! She spent a week in meetings, had one Friday with school closed and then ... CNN News – The President was reverting to the original scheme!

Apart from reading, swimming and sun-bathing, we travelled around and visited so many places the “ordinary” tourist never even imagines exists. One of our most memorable days was going out with John and Mary (from Devon) who come out annually on holiday, bringing funds for the area raised through their Church. We visited a multi-faith school attended by the two sons, aged 8 and 10, of Abdu, our taxi driver of many years. Abdu is a delight and only four years ago lost his wife in the childbirth of his third son – childbirth mortality is all too common. He has struggled to bring up the boys and work, earning a pittance. We met his new wife-to-be who is a lovely girl. John paid over the fees for the boys £126 each and we visited the classrooms. One of the boys likes the Christian prayers better than his Muslim prayers. Dad is perfectly happy with this.

We then visited Abdu’s home. The Government had given him a little piece of land a few years ago. He has grown banana trees, orange trees, carrots and flowers. Through John and Mary electricity is going in at the moment. Abdu has actually manufactured each brick and has even raised a little area with a table and chairs so that the boys can sit properly to eat, rather than on the floor as is typical. The boys also have a bed each – quite unknown. We came away elated. We have learned never to give money so we bought them a sack of rice.



My other inspirational moment was with Wassa. Wassa is 38, lives in a compound with another 21 members of the family. She has five children (but has promised me to have no more!) and a lazy husband, as Gambian men tend to be. We have known her for a number of years. She travels by boat daily, takes three different buses, buys sarongs and then sells them on the beach, making a profit of £1 each. On a good day she will sell six; on a bad day she sells none. For a few years we have provided the licence she needs to enable her to sell, otherwise she would be taken to the police station and her goods seized. She brought five year old Mohammed to see Auntie Shena Bucket. He had his first fizzy drink with ice and his first chips, eaten off a plate with a fork, his little face etched with excitement. He had no chance of school and therefore no chance of reading and writing. Barry and I discussed it, wrote out a contract for a school and, provided we hear on a regular basis that he is attending, we have taken on his fees. The joy on Wassa’s face would have broken one’s heart. We will see!

Finally, ladies, if any of our members (the more elderly the better) feels the need of male company, the Gambia is just the place. It was full of ‘ladies’ who would not turn heads here but who, over there, attracted young Gambians who carried their bags for them and attended to their every need. In return, all meals, etc, were paid for by the ladies. An example of this is Barbara from the Channel Islands. She is 72, looks 72, and wears a bikini. She comes out from January to April and “fries” in the sun on the beach all day and every day. During one conversation (Barry calls it my “interrogation”) she told me that this year she has an older boyfriend – he is 45; last year it was a 21 year old waiter. It takes all kinds.

Likewise, men of Barry’s age were frequently to be seen wining and dining lovely young African girls, around 20 years old, or even less. It certainly gave Barry ideas.

I could write and write but I must leave space for other contributions – perhaps another year.

Shena Cuttle

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**MAGICAL MARDI GRAS**

On Saturday the 25th January 30 Soroptimists and friends enjoyed a great evening of fun, friendship, food and games at the home of Fiona, Paul and family.

The theme of "Mardi Gras" encouraged a variety of masks to be worn. The winner of best mask (judged by Alexander and Ciara) was Sue, who looked amazing. We were also pleased she could join us thanks to delays in the Algerian visa system.



The food was delicious; a choice of chicken a la Fiona, salmon with Jamie Oliver overtones and a very popular vegetable curry were all mouth-watering and resulted in many guests sampling all three and even managing to find room for seconds. A range of naughty but irresistible puddings ensured that residual New Year resolutions of calorie control were forgotten. Thanks so much to Fiona and all who contributed to a superb supper.



The evening's entertainment of a wide range of unusual board games required the invaluable input of Alexander and Ciara, who enthusiastically acted as instructors, advisors and invigilators, showing future leadership skills.

The raffle was extremely well supported with an unbelievable choice of prizes for the lucky winners, and in addition to the generosity of all involved resulted the in sum of £350 being raised for club funds. On behalf of all who were able to attend thanks once again to Fiona and her family for their wonderful hospitality.



**Rosemary Steven**

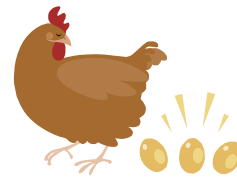
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AN UPDATE ON ORISSA

In their current Newsletter New Hope Rural Community Trust thank their supporters for making 2012 a great year of help and giving, in spite of the recession. The following list shows what has been achieved since the summer of 2012.



- A further 50 cataract operations
- 197 emergency aid packs 'Bundles of Love' for leprosy colony patients
- Training for 3 nurses, 1 lab technician and 3 tailors
- 9 pairs of special sandals for patients
- 2 more wheelchairs

- 4 cows
- 25 chickens
- 13 children through school
- 14 children vaccinated against life threatening diseases
- Funding to expand and improve the biogas digester
- Help for our special needs children
- Help to feed New Hope's orphaned children



Part of New Hope's self-sufficiency plan includes raising chickens. A flock of 100 would produce enough eggs for the community and a small herd of cows would provide enough milk for the children's daily needs.



BACKPACKS FOR MARY'S MEALS

One of the pleasures of working in a team is that it provides the opportunity to appreciate the special talents of each individual in the group. So it proved when several of us spent a couple of hours packing up items donated by members to be sent to children in Africa.



Nine members (accompanied by an extremely well behaved grandchild, whose presence was a delight to a couple of very willing pram-pushers amongst us) unpacked a myriad of bags and boxes and sorted the contents according to suitability for particular age ranges and whether for boys or girls. There were clothes of all shapes, styles and sizes, toiletries, note books and pencil cases. When this was done everything had to be re-packed in rucksacks and labelled appropriately ready for collection by the Charity.

Phyl packed the pencil cases, Yvonne organised the toiletries, Stella prepared the labels and the rest of us picked and packed. As ever, we all chatted as we worked and had a word with the grandchild as we passed his push chair.

It was a cold day, (so cold in fact that I had put on my ski pants before leaving Macclesfield) but the caretaker had very kindly turned up the heating in the hall and before long we began to flag. It was at this point that Ruth's impeccable sense of timing showed itself as her voice could be heard calling "tea or coffee?" Never was a cuppa more welcome and it gave us an opportunity to stop work and do what we all do well, i.e. concentrate on the talking. We didn't count how many sacks we filled but somewhere soon some children will ALSO be talking, this time about what they find when they open the sacks.

Our thanks must go to Yvonne for organising the collection and to Ruth for arranging the venue. The space available at Platt Lane Methodist Church Hall made the sorting process much easier.

Barbara Valcaccia



OUR ANNUAL DINNER

This year, as an experiment, it was decided to change the dinner to a lunch and hold it on a Sunday; the venue was Chancellor's Hotel. What are your views on the changes? These matter as the function is an important occasion in the club calendar and needs your support.

I found the parking easy, the venue pleasant and the staff helpful. At first I was not sure about the change to a lunch as I felt that this might make it less of an "occasion" but such was not the case and it was certainly an advantage to feel able to linger and chat instead of rushing off in the dark to get home before the 'witching hour.



Seventy-three attended the lunch and were greeted with a welcoming drink before proceeding in to the attractively arranged dining room. It was good that several members whom we don't see very often and two ex-members were able to join us. The food was tasty and of a good standard. I particularly enjoyed the piping hot Cream of Leek soup and the Orange Posset with its Ginger Nut Crumble (a modern twist on an old-fashioned recipe).

Our President gave an excellent speech in proposing the toast to "The City and Ports of Manchester". It is very difficult for presidents, year after year, to find a different approach to this but Sandra succeeded. The toast to Soroptimist International proposed by the Rev. Paul Rolfe and the response by Mrs. Liz McConnell were both apposite and interesting. After the interval the Rev. John Hemsworth entertained us with the story of his change of profession from jeweller to minister

This pleasant occasion was brought to a close in our traditional way by the singing of Auld Lang Syne and the joining of hands in friendship.

Kathleen Beavis



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Birthday Greetings to the following members, each of whom celebrates her birthday in the next three months.



Sameem Ali	17 th	March
Peggy Howarth	12 th	April
Christine Miles	26 th	April
Joan Davis-Rice	6 th	May
Ann Thomas	19 th	May
Ruth Jackson	23 rd	May
Susan Hollick	29 th	May

Diary Dates

Thurs	11 th	April	AGM and Dinner, Pinewood Hotel. Dinner 6pm for 6.30pm. Meeting 8pm.
Mon	25 th	Mar	Forced Marriage Conference, Jean MacFarlane Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Rd. 8.15am
Sat	11 th	May	Joint Regional Conference. Preston Marriott Hotel
Thu/Sat	31 st Oct/2 nd	Nov	SIGBI Conference, The Sage, NewcastleGateshead.

Last date for copy for the next newsletter is **25th May**.

Kathleen Beavis and Maureen Heywood