Soroptimist International of Paisley



1945 – 2016

1945 – 1995 Elizabeth (Betty) Milne

1996 – 2006 Madge Borland

2006 – 2016 Madge Borland

Edited and updated 2021 – Jenifer McFarlane 22 September 2021

**Soroptimist International – The Paisley Pattern**

The roots of Soroptimism are in America; the initial group of dedicated women coming together in Oakland, California on 3 October 1921. The first club in Britain was formed in Central London in 1924, quickly followed by Glasgow Central and Edinburgh in 1927. The Paisley Club was chartered on 18 February 1946 and the movement is now worldwide with approximately 72,000 members operating in 121 countries[[1]](#footnote-1) with very diverse lifestyles. The basic objectives however remain the same:

To maintain high ethical standards in business, the professions and other aspects of life

To strive for human rights for all people and in particular, to advance the status of women

To develop a spirit of friendship and unity among Soroptimists of all countries

To quicken the spirit of service and human understanding

To contribute to international understanding and universal friendship[[2]](#footnote-2)

It was once said that “all life is one rich tapestry”[[3]](#footnote-3) and perhaps we may think of our club as one valuable and colourful strand in the tapestry of life in the town of Paisley.

**Paisley Beginnings**

The initiative for the establishment of a Soroptimist Club in Paisley came from Mrs Annette Muir, then a member and extension officer of Glasgow Central Club, with the responsibility of encouraging the setting up of ‘daughter’ clubs throughout Scotland.

This she was successful in doing in Leith, Dunfermline, Motherwell and Wishaw and Glasgow South[[4]](#footnote-4)

Herself a ‘Buddy’ and wife of the owner of a Paisley weaving mill, Mrs. Muir aroused the enthusiasm of Miss Catherine Lobnitz, a distinctive and distinguished member of a local shipbuilding family and Girl Guide Commissioner, who, in turn drew together a group of energetic and talented ladies of the Burgh with interests in the activities and concerns of women in general.

An inaugural meeting took place on 14 November 1945 at which representatives from Ayr, Kilmarnock, Edinburgh and Glasgow were present to give advice and this was followed by a petition confirming that they were desirous of forming a Soroptimist Club in the Paisley area. Consequently a Charter Dinner took place on 18 February 1946 in the Cafe Riche, High Street, Paisley at which eighty guests[[5]](#footnote-5) were present, including the Provost of the Burgh of Paisley, the Rev. John Chambers; Mr. John Morrison, Town Clerk; J.O.Lang, Burgh Treasurer; Robert Urquhart, County Clerk of Renfrewshire; Mr and Miss Lochhead representing the press; Dr.and Mrs Stewart Black representing Rotary; and Miss Agnes McLuskie representing the Business and Professional Women’s Club of Paisley. Federation officers and Presidents of established Soroptimist Clubs also attended.

Dr. C. Stewart Black on behalf of Rotary presented a silver mounted gavel[[6]](#footnote-6) to the new Club and Miss Lochhead for the Inner Wheel gave a handsome desk set for use at the regular Club meetings. Mr. Morrison, Town Clerk and his wife also kindly offered to bear the cost of framing the Charter.

The twenty eight founder members were congratulated. [[7]](#footnote-7)

The dinner cost in present day figures, 37.5p. This included the charge for the suite of rooms, hire of piano, beverages for the toasts, cigarettes etc. but even in those days inflation was beginning to balloon. The second annual dinner in January 1947 cost 55p.

This nucleus of women from all walks of life – teachers to bakers (if not quite candlestick makers) expanded over the years to include successful and motivated women of most trades and professions: jewellers and journalists, milliners and ministers, dentist and dressmakers, architects and organists, newsagents, nurses and naval officers and up to the present day, 295 very active ladies have become valued members of the Paisley Club, (now titled Soroptimist International of Paisley)

The membership in 1995 was 61 and the Club had ‘daughter’[[8]](#footnote-8) clubs of its own in Greenock, Hamilton and Kirkintilloch.

Miss Catherine Lobnitz, Paisley’s first President, was a decisive lady of some presence, who wore a single eye glass. Of her a story is told, that at one Soroptimist Conference someone remarked that it was unusual to find a lady sporting a monocle, at which she drew herself up to her not inconsiderable height and declared: “I am a Scot! Why should I wear two when one will do?”The reaction is not recorded.

**Insignia**

The chain of office of the Paisley Club was presented by founder member Mrs Annette Muir and her husband. It is unusual in that it departs from the customary ribbon and bar type, but is of Celtic design in silver, its double chain supporting small coin shaped circlets to which each succeeding President’s name is added. The central medallion, designed in 1946 by local architect Mr Steel Maitland and presented to the Club by Lady Lobnitz, wife of Sir Frederick Lobnitz, the Renfrew shipbuilder, and mother of Paisley’s first President, shows a galleon at the top and a spinning wheel at the bottom with the word ‘Paisley’ around the centrepiece which is the old style Soroptimist emblem with the words ‘Soroptimist International Association’. A cut out space below the galleon reveals a piece of lapis lazuli representing the sea and around the badge is superimposed scrollwork depicting spirals of thread, thus giving recognition to the chief local industry of those times of shipbuilding and thread making.

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On 29 May 1947, a part replica of the President’s badge in silver was presented to Miss Lobnitz on her departure to England; the part omitted was the spinning wheel. This badge was returned to the club in 1962 by Miss Lobnitz with her best wishes and the suggestion it be worn by the Immediate Past Presidents.

In April 1948, a silver badge with Celtic work on the front forming a St. Andrew’s Cross design around the Soroptimist emblem, was presented to Mrs Annette Muir at the end of her year in office. In her will, Mrs Muir bequeathed this badge to the Paisley Club and on her death in 1971 it was returned and was worn by the Vice President.

Paisley members and Presidents are justly proud of their unique and precious insignia and chain of office. (An old saying goes: “Uneasy lies the head that wears the victor’s crown”[[9]](#footnote-9) and also uneasy lay Mrs Muir’s head when she was custodian of the Paisley chain because, to keep it safe while she was out of the town at Soroptimist functions, it was said that she even wore it in bed!)

**Early Days**

Back in the 1940’s and earlier, an annual street fancy dress parade and fête in the Royal Alexandra Infirmary grounds gathered funds for various charities – mainly for the Infirmary itself. In 1946, in their first effort at fundraising, Paisley Soroptimists set up a small stall at the fête and raised £20.12/-, no small sum in those days. This enabled the Club to give a donation to the Nurses Pension Fund and to the British Legion.

In June 1947, our first ‘daughter’ Club at Greenock was formed, thanks to the encouragement of Miss Robertson, Extension Officer of the Divisional Union (South West)[[10]](#footnote-10) as it was at that time. Members of this newly formed Club were present at an evening meeting on 29 May 1947, at which Miss Lobnitz was invited to become an Honorary member of the Paisley Club. It was on this occasion that she was presented with the brooch, later returned and worn by Immediate Past Presidents, as a recognition of her many services to the movement and also to the district.

In 1949, our second ‘daughter’ Club was formed in Hamilton, Dr Mary Knight of Riccartsbar Hospital was also proposed as an Honorary Member.

By this time the Club had 43 members. The capitation fee was 3/- plus a compulsory Benevolent Fund levy of 3d per member.

At the suggestion of Miss Annie Manifold, the organiser for Physical Education in the area, it was agreed that a trophy should be presented to the Organisation of Girls’ Youth Clubs of Renfrewshire for competition among girls for sport. Consequently an engraved silver cup was procured, a companion to one presented by the Rotary Club which was competed for by boys. Also under Youth Club auspices, an invitation was extended in June 1947 to 25 Dutch girls to visit Paisley and Club members made themselves responsible for their entertainment. Unexpectedly, Danish boys arrived instead of Dutch girls, but nothing fazed, our ladies took them for a day’s sailing on the Clyde to Auchenlochan, (near Tighnabruaich) and thanks to a 10/- levy on members, everyone enjoyed an unusual and refreshing day.

Another successful outing centred on children took place on 31 January 1948, when pupils of Sandyford School and children residing at Woodside House, of which Miss Peggy Shields was matron, were taken on a visit to the circus, an average of 5/6d (or 27.5p) being spent on each child. The day was completed by tea and a session of games at the ice rink.

Also under the guidance of Miss Shields, a Peggoty scheme[[11]](#footnote-11) was organised; at that time she had ten children under her care who were eligible for the appropriate support and ten members of the Club offered to ‘adopt’ those children.

**Friendship Links**

Soroptimists travelling out of their own area or country are privileged in having friends practically everywhere around the globe. One only has to contact a club in Europe, Australia, the United States – anywhere – to be immediately offered hospitality, guidance and entrée to club meetings and, by that means, an extension of cordial relations with women from a wide range of backgrounds and working environments Apart from purely social contact however, there is another even more important aspect to those links; a Soroptimist taken ill or meeting with an accident away from home whether near or far, will find care and comfort promptly and willingly offered by any Soroptimist in these circumstances and Paisley can quote its own outstanding example.

In 1985, one of our most highly regarded members, Jane Williams,[[12]](#footnote-12) formerly in the Traffic Department of the Metropolitan Police and then with Strathclyde Force, met with a horrific traffic accident in Dunbartonshire. Travelling from her home in Appin, Argyll, to the Vale of Leven Hospital to visit an acquaintance, another car travelling in the opposite direction crossed the central reservation and landed on top of Jane’s car. The other driver sustained cuts and bruises as did the child with him, but Jane’s injuries were so severe that she was removed to the neurological department of the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow where she remained unconscious for several weeks. Police on the scene, not knowing she was one of their own, discovered a Soroptimist emblem among her belongings, contacted ourselves and the Dumbarton Club and members were able to assist with identification. After many months of slow partial recovery, Jane was transferred from Scotland to a Police rehabilitation centre in Harrogate, and immediately ladies of the Harrogate Club “homed in” on her with visits, comfort and support. There has since and to this day, been a very special friendship between Paisley and Harrogate. They may not be our ‘daughters’, but they are part of our family.

Until her death in 2017, Jane was a treasured member (latterly an Associate member) of the Paisley Club and was in regular correspondence with us from her retirement home in Argyll, from where she commuted to our annual dinner, up until 1995.

In February 1963, a member of the Skipton Club who suffered a car accident was visited in the Vale of Leven Hospital and in the 1980’s the colleague of a member of Gravesend Club in Kent, suffered a sudden bereavement while on business in our area. Paisley ladies were of assistance to her in the emergency and a cheque received in acknowledgement of their help was allocated to the Accord Hospice. On a happier note, particular friendship links existed for many years between the Paisley Club and European and American sister clubs.

It is difficult to realise now, but in the late 1940’s, food, clothing and fuel were still very strictly rationed and our American friends in particular thought we were on the brink of starvation. Generously, in 1949, the Soroptimist Club of Laguna Beach, California, our first overseas ‘sister’, sent wonderful food parcels which provided the excuse for a really good party.

With the arrival of the early 1950’s, austerity, if not entirely banished, was on the way out. The New Look was flirting its wide skirts; instead of leg tan and eyebrow pencil stocking seams, nylons were appearing in the shops and children could actually have a sandwich with a real banana instead of the weirdo mush of parsnips and essence.

One member recalls of that time that her first impression of a Paisley Soroptimist lunch was of hats - hats with brims, hats with bows, boaters and berets. In those days of course, no lady would have dreamt of going out to luncheon hatless. Nowadays all we need is a hairdo.

So as subsequent years brought more very acceptable goodies from Laguna Beach, we made sure that our sister club knew how much they were appreciated and as things became easier, we acknowledged their kindness by sending each Laguna lady a tartan wrapped box of shortbread and a sprig of white heather with our thanks and gratitude. In 1963 we were delighted to welcome their member Mrs Ginny Stodart on her visit to our area.

In 1993, Laguna Beach was one of the areas of California devastated by the terrifying forest fires and on enquiry, we learned that one Soroptimist had lost everything and another had seen her roof destroyed. The Laguna Beach Club and its Federation were helping out with donations and the Club itself holding a kitchen ‘shower’ so, it was agreed that our club would send two Paisley tea towels as a gesture of friendship. A compensating piece of good news however was that one of the Laguna Beach members had received an award at a Women of Distinction Banquet.

By 1960, Paisley had been allocated the Soroptimist Club of Sion in Switzerland as its European ‘sister’ Club. Letters were exchanged with their President and Secretary and a copy of ‘Scottish Field’ with an article on Paisley was sent for their interest.

In 1971 a plaque with the Paisley coat of arms was presented to the Sion Club at the International Conference held that year in Rome. In 1980, as part of the promotion of international goodwill and understanding, four members of the Sion Club arrived for a week’s holiday in Paisley as guests of the Club and were given hospitality in the homes of two of our members. They attended a service in the Abbey, had trips to Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Trossachs, Largs and Millport and enjoyed an evening at the ballet.

In return six members of the Paisley Club were invited to Sion during September 1981. Five members accepted and the gift of an embossed blotting pad was presented, along with individual gifts of local interest. The visit of ‘ces charmantes ambassadrices du Nord’ was reported quite fully in the local Swiss newspaper.

In 1971 another friendship link with the Alameda Club in California was approved and the contact was maintained with them also.

For Friendship Day in 1974, a special tape was prepared and sent to our three link clubs and Scottish calendars despatched to remind them of our beautiful country. It is interesting and a pleasure to welcome visitors from our link clubs as well as making numerous other contacts with Soroptimists from many countries around the world. Most have heard of Loch Lomond and the Clyde, but the best features of Paisley, like the Abbey, the Museum and Library and the panorama from Robertson Park, which we made sure to show them, are also greeted with pleasure and admiration.

**Paisley “Firsts”**

The town has long been renowned as a place of “pirns[[13]](#footnote-13) and poets”, the local weavers were said to have rhythm in their blood, perhaps as a result of the hypnotic to-and-fro of the looms’ shuttles. Hugh MacDonald and Robert Tannahill were well known and there was a close connection between our local poets and Robert Burns, so perhaps naturally, Paisley Soroptimists were the first such Women’s Club in Scotland to hold a Burns’ Supper. This took place in January 1947 and followed the traditional programme of piper and haggis, toasts to ”The Immortal Memory” by Mr. Archibald Gardner and ”To the Lassies” by Mr. Crawford Miller, all thoroughly appreciated by the eighty members and guests.

Bearing in mind one of its main tenets, “Service before Self”, in 1948 the Club took its first steps towards involvement with local and national charities and concerns. One of these came under the Paisley and District Hospital Voluntary Association and was the adoption by the Club of the Peesweep Sanatorium[[14]](#footnote-14) on the Gleniffer Braes, above the town. There were nine men and eight women long stay patients, who were sent books, records and other suitable items. Christmas parcels were supplied, visits made and general friendly help given. By 1951, radio and an inter-com system between staff and patients, the first in Scotland, had been installed and by the end of 1956, large and small looms had been acquired and patients given instruction in weaving. Mr. Drennan, the tartan weaving expert, interested himself in this idea and willingly helped in the supply of wools and patterns, while Miss McEwan donated a book on weaving. Mrs.Gibson donated a piano, and billiard cue tips and ping pong balls were provided by the Club. Miss Shields and Miss Ballantyne were closely involved and arranged outdoor picnics and a trip to see blossom on the Clydeside.

It was decided to close Peesweep in May 1959, so a social evening was arranged, the committee providing a special meal and the patients themselves, along with Mr David McGinnigle and Mr Colin Stuart, STV singer, provided the entertainment.

Dr. Margaret Raeside spoke of the happy times the Hospital Guild had enjoyed during their association with the hospital and souvenir photographs were taken to be given to the patients and staff.

Subsequently a letter was received from the Board of Management thanking the Guild and the Club for their support of Peesweep.

In 1947, when the first mass X ray examinations were carried out in Paisley, the local Soroptimists assisted the team at the request of the Medical Officer, no other clerical help being available. Later, in 1958, another mass X ray campaign was held in the town and Club members took on house to house visits to notify the public and also carried out duties at the X ray unit, help that was much appreciated.

Also, in 1948, on request from the Town Clerk, Mrs Storrie was appointed to the Day Nurseries Committee, in later years to be followed by Miss Nan Hart and Mrs Gertrude Eadie. Then followed one of our most important and longest running commitments.

**The Over 70’s Club**

In 1947, it was felt that something could be done to cheer and befriend the lonely elderly of the town, so 20 December that year was designated by the Paisley Club as a Gift day, when members were asked to bring a small Christmas present suitable for a senior citizen. This gesture provoked discussion on what more could be offered, so on 24 June 1948, it was suggested that a club could be serviced for ladies of over seventy years who lived alone. Incidentally, this was the very first club for the elderly ever promoted and opened in the town and later that year, when Provost James O. Lang called a meeting in connection with aid to old people, the Soroptimist Club of Paisley was the only women’s organisation represented.

The first requirement of course was funds; a whist drive and sale raised £153 for initial expenses and members willing to assist agreed a rota of two ladies each week. Those were the days when traders in Paisley had a weekly early closing day (Tuesday), so on Tuesday 19 October 1948, the Soroptimist Over 70’s Club had its first meeting. This took place in the Girls’ Club, Moss Street with five invited ladies but soon more suitable accommodation was offered in the British Legion Rooms, Glasgow Road and by the time the Christmas parcels were prepared at the end of 1948, the membership had risen to sixteen and by August 1949, to twenty. From the beginning, it was decided that the Over 70’s Club should be completely supported and staffed by our own members, but that almost immediately a fund was started by the old ladies themselves contributing 3d per week whereby some other elderly person could benefit by a gift or entertainment at Christmas. When the need arose, and when Soroptimists were knitting blanket squares for refugees, the old ladies also decided they would join in this effort as well as contributing small sums over the years to our special interests, typical gestures of thanks and independence. Mrs Winifred Ness, at the time Convener of the Social Committee took the responsibility for the successful running of the Over 70’s Cub, which meant arranging rotas, ensuring that the British Legion rooms were open on time, a cheerful fire set going and the kettle boiled. It was one of the most satisfying and cheering experiences of Soroptimist service to realise, from the sudden smiles and exclamations, how much the warmth and company meant to our guests on a cold winter afternoon.

As well as tea and chat, as often as possible something special would be arranged. Mrs Gertrude Eadie brought along children from the Day Nurseries to entertain; the Abbey Guild presented one act plays; members gave slide shows and brought films of interesting holidays; and on one occasion, someone with particular knowledge was invited along to give advice on available benefits, such as the Provost’s Coal Fund, supplementary assistance and importantly, safety in the home with special reference to trailing flexes and fire hazards.

The years had their highlights of course; the summer outings – and there were some memorable ones – to the Three Lochs, the Forth Road Bridge, Belleisle Estate and most of the popular Clyde coast resorts. These were full day coach trips with lunch in suitable hotels and afternoon tea on the journey home. (Slide shows of these outings at subsequent afternoon tea meetings created a bit of nostalgia and hilarity) Summer garden parties were arranged by Mrs Kirk and Miss Donald, happy outdoor events in pretty surroundings. Then there were the Christmas lunches, with table decorations, seasonal musical entertainment, usually a local minister with a Christmas message, and of course Christmas parcels of groceries and sweets. Other unique and appropriate celebrations took place when two of our fine old ladies, Mrs Neilson and Mrs Bain, attained their 100th birthdays.

Every Soroptimist who could joined in these events, and many warm and close friendships were cemented between younger and older ‘sisters’, so much so that at the death of Miss Nana Hart, a long serving Soroptimist and regular member of the rota for organising events, the interest from a bequest from her estate was used for the benefit of our over 70’s; and as a touching note of appreciation, one of our old ladies also left a small legacy to Soroptimist Club funds.

In the early 60’s the Local Association for the Improvement of the Poor offered a small grant to the Over 70’s Club and it was decided to accept this for distribution to the old ladies as it did not entail the possibility of outside direction. In 1961, a firm of solicitors who wished to remain anonymous, donated twelve TV sets to elderly citizens and to our pleasure, one of our Over 70’s ladies qualified for this gift. In the same year, a silver tea service was donated, raffled by the club and the proceeds used to send four of our old ladies for a weeks holiday in West Kilbride. Later and for several years, long before the advent of living flame gas and electric fires, thanks to the generous donation from friends of the Club, each old lady received an extra bag of first grade coal at Christmas.

But times were a-changing. By 1957, the local authorities had established eight old peoples’ clubs in the town and their numbers were growing. At intervals, discussions took place as to whether it was necessary or even desirable, in view of the inevitable onset of frailty in our old ladies, for the Over 70’s Club to continue. Numbers fluctuated, but were usually maintained around twenty, although the majority of our Over 70’s were now Over 80’s and increasingly unable to venture out of doors in inclement weather. Also, business practices were different: for the most part, early closing days were a thing of the past, our trade members under increasing pressure, could no longer count on a free half day and the running of the weekly meetings was becoming more and more the province of the retired members, themselves no longer so active or able. After much heart searching, it was decided that no more new members would be invited to join the Over 70’s Club and in 1970, very reluctantly, the decision was taken to discontinue the Tuesday afternoon meetings, though Christmas lunches and summer outings would still be arranged. So, after over 20 years, the Over 70’s Club was disbanded in its original form, but sustained in that all the old ladies were visited regularly in their homes and kept in touch with each other and the club. Although in the natural course of events numbers dwindled, this tradition was maintained until 1995, when a regular visit was paid to our one remaining Over 70’s lady, now in her nineties, but still intensely interested in the activities of “her” club and in news of everyone she remembered from the old days. All the remaining equipment, locker, china, cutlery etc, was sent to Miss Marguerite Mennie at Scotscraig and to the Ferguslie Playgroup.

**Miss Nana Hart**

On the closure of the Over 70’s Club, the question arose as to the further disposal of Nana Hart’s bequest, the interest on which had been used for the benefit of the Over 70’s ladies. It was decided that a letter be sent to the minister of George Street Baptist Church,[[15]](#footnote-15) Rev. Martin Graham, intimating the proposal that this bequest be gifted to the church to be used in some tangible form as a lasting memorial to Miss Hart. This suggestion was received gratefully and subsequently the Church bought a projector, clock and two wrought iron flower stands, together with a plaque which read: “Presented by Soroptimist International of Paisley in memory of Nana Hart, a member of this church, who died in 1965”. The balance of the money would be used for replacing flowers.

**Local Concerns**

Right from the outset, the Paisley Club took an active interest in local affairs through its energetic Civic Committee. Members volunteered to drive the mobile “Meals on Wheels” van and representatives were appointed to the Burgh’s Road Safety Committee and to a sub-committee of the Ministry of Labour dealing with women’s work.

By October1946, when no woman Justice of the Peace had ever been appointed in the Burgh and only one in the County (of Renfrewshire), it was decided that the Club should press the Court to consider their inclusion in the dispensing of justice.

**The 1950’s**

The 1950’s saw the start of many projects which continued over many years. Following up a resolution passed at Harrogate Federation Conference in 1951, a day of prayer and a dedication service took place in Paisley Abbey, conducted by the minister Rev. Dr. Rogan and to which neighbouring clubs were invited. This was continued as our annual International Day when members attended a church service, usually in the current President’s church, until 2017. The first of these took place again in the Abbey, on the 11 December 1960.

**Oakshaw Home**

In 1954, a report was received from the Committee of the Oakshaw Working Lads Home run by the Church of Scotland, that it was their desire that a Soroptimist representative should become a member of that committee. The stipulations laid down were that she be able to attend committee meetings, also that she be a member of the Church of Scotland. The Home provided accommodation for apprentices working away from their own areas, many from the Highlands and Islands and the aim was to offer them a warm and family atmosphere in a strange town. Mrs Anne Campbell expressed interest and was duly invited to represent the Club, the only non church organisation on this committee. In time various aids were procured for the efficient running of the Home, such as an ironing machine, spin dryer and electric sewing machine. Plates, crockery and curtains were also purchased.

In 1975, the decision was taken by the Church of Scotland that the usefulness of the Home was by then outdated and that it should be closed at the end of July. This ended a long and close connection with the Paisley Club, much valued by the Church, which had always given practical support and made close friends with both the wardens and the boys over the years.

**Scotscraig**

For a number of years, when our member Miss Marguerite Mennie was warden of Scotscraig, and in response to an appeal from the Scottish Council for the Care of Spastics[[16]](#footnote-16), Scotscraig School for Spastics was supported by the Paisley Club. Initially Christmas parcels were provided, but the situation had changed by the end of 1975 and after then a record token was sent each year paid for from our Benevolent Fund. In 1979, Miss Charlotte Lall accepted an invitation to serve on the Western Regional Council of the Scottish Council for Spastics.

**Erskine Hospital**

Erskine Hospital also received help towards the purchase of a paraplegic coach and a contribution to their comforts fund

**Provost’s Appeal**

An urgent call in exceptional circumstances raised a special donation for the Provost’s Fund for Hungarian Relief after the 1956 invasion.

**Balnave Prize Fund**

On 3 April 1952, Miss Ara Balnave, on relinquishing office as President for 1951/52, handed over a bankbook stating that she had that day opened an account in the name of the Soroptimist Club of Paisley, the interest of which, to be called the “Balnave Prize Fund”, should be used each year for the purchase of a book prize for a successful pupil in a Paisley school. With the consent of the Director of Education, this prize would go to a different school each year and this plan was duly followed, the first school to benefit being Laighpark[[17]](#footnote-17) , succeeded in due course by most of the schools in the town.

In 1974 the balance of the school fund was transferred to a new account, with the supplementary funds from the Club, in the name of the “Paisley Soroptimist School Prize Fund”. In 1991, the final prize was given to Gateside School for the Deaf, and in March 1992, the total sum was uplifted and divided equally between Mary Russell School, Gateside School for the Deaf and Kersland School.

In March 1972, in recognition of all her good work and service as a treasured and active member of the Paisley Club and to Soroptimism generally, it was agreed unanimously that Miss Balnave be made an Honorary Member. Following a period of ill health Miss Balnave died in May 1975.

**Miss Annie Manifold**

Early in 1959, a suggestion was made that a member of the Paisley Club should contest a seat on the Town Council. This was agreed with enthusiasm and the name of Miss Annie Manifold was proposed. A founder member and past president, Miss Manifold had always been greatly interested in local government and was a well known and highly respected member of the community. Originally from Edinburgh and trained at Dunfermline College of Hygiene and Physical Education, she became supervisor for Physical Education for schools in Paisley and District, as well as being a member of the Burgh School Board and part time instructor in Paisley Grammar School. Promotion to full time organiser of Physical Education in Renfrewshire came in 1948 and her vast experience was acknowledged in her co-option to the Renfrewshire Education Committee in May 1960.

She decided to stand for the Town Council and with canvassing help from Club members, mounted an intensive campaign as an Independent against Labour Councillor, James McWalters in the First Ward of the town, and polled 2017 against Mr McWalters’ 2741 votes, an honourable defeat for a first time and very energetic candidate. In the following year, she conducted another vigorous campaign in the Fourth Ward and was only narrowly defeated by Mr Neil McMillan, former treasurer and Provost of Paisley. On a personal note, Miss Manifold was honoured in 1959 by being elected a Fellow of the Education Institute of Scotland. She continued her deep interest in Soroptimist affairs, especially in the running of the Over 70’s and was still an active member at the time of her death in 1962.

**Wider Issues**

Action in the wider scene in the 1950’s included sending a letter to Mr Douglas Johnston M.P., supporting a request for the appointment of an additional physician in South East Scotland, and the decision to send a donation towards the resettlement of refugees from Camp Spittal[[18]](#footnote-18)

Money was sent through UNESCO as help for children in the Middle East and also for refugee children from the north of Greece.

Two resolutions were put forward by the Paisley Club to the Divisional Union. These were:

That it should be brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for Scotland that the 3d rate limiting expenditure of Scottish Public Libraries was quite inadequate. Therefore new legislation should be introduced to remove this limitation so that Scottish libraries could take their full share in post war reconstruction and expansion

That the government in their fuel planning should set aside enough household coal to meet the quantity allocated in full to ensure a fair distribution to all, so that those who have not received their previous quota have the deficit made good.

From the National Conference in Scarborough in 1958 came a call to the Government to repeal the section of the Income Tax Act which deemed a married woman’s income to be her husband’s and not her own.

**The 1960’s**

In 1960 our interest continued in the resettlement of refugees and instead of a fund raising effort in that year, each member paid a £3 levy. The price of lunches in Gibson’s Tea Rooms increased to 7/- (approx. 35p) and the annual dinner cost 27/6 (or £1.37). The lunches had been taking place at this venue for many years and on the retirement of Miss Holt and Mr Pringle, senior tearoom staff, the Club members contributed to presentations to both of them at a lunch at which they were our guests.

Also in 1960, Miss Bessie Wotherspoon, who had acted as Secretary for eleven years, was thanked warmly for her efficiency and presented with a pair of silver candlesticks. A highly regarded founder member, Miss Wotherspoon was a Police Sergeant and had been awarded a British Empire Medal for services to the community. To our sorrow, she died in 1980.

Personal packs were prepared annually containing soap, toothbrush, face flannel, socks, tights etc. and given to the Salvation Army for distribution at Christmas to men and women sleeping rough. Later these were designated ‘dignity packs’ and distribution extended to other deserving groups.

Our Civic Committee became involved in discussions about the site of the electric power station to be built on top of the Gleniffer Braes. This was to connect the lines from Hunterston for an additional power supply to Paisley. Also on the environmental angle, the Glen Dams were being cleared, deepened and fenced off.

Following the disastrous whisky bond fire in Glasgow on 28 March 1960, a donation was sent from Club funds with the request that the money be used for the benefit of children of deceased firemen. This was acknowledged by the Lord Provost (of Glasgow).

In 1961, a substantial grant was made to the Commonwealth Paraplegic Committee to help send competitors to the first games in Perth, Australia.

Miss Peggy Young, President 1960/61, reported on one of the highlights of her year of office – the Garden Party at Buckingham Palace – to which she was invited along with Miss McLaren, during the International Convention of that year. Another highlight came when she attended the Freedom Ceremony in the Town Hall when Miss Mary Russell, a founder member was made our youngest Burgess, the first in 38 years, in recognition of her work in the field of mental welfare.

**Miss Mary Russell**

One of the town’s most honoured citizens, Miss Mary Russell had given a lifetime’s service to mental welfare in Scotland and as far back as 1936 had been awarded the M.B.E. for her work with children with physical and mental disabilities. Special classes had been started in 1907 and when five years later, Paisley School Board opened the Abercorn Special School, Miss Russell was appointed headmistress, a post she held until her she retired in 1944[[19]](#footnote-19). She instituted the Paisley After Care Committee, the first of its kind, which ensured that helpful contact was retained with ex-pupils. She also became a member of the board of management of Renfrewshire Mental Hospitals.

In her retirement, Miss Russell’s advice and assistance was sought by many organisations and through the Paisley and District Association for Mental Welfare, she played an active part in forming similar associations in other areas. She was also the first person to establish a home for children with disabilities in Scotland. When the child guidance clinic was set up in the Royal Alexandra Infirmary in 1932, Dr. Mary Wright gave her services in a voluntary capacity and the lady members of the Paisley Voluntary Association acted as social workers.

In making Miss Russell a Burgess [[20]](#footnote-20)in 1961, the Town Council also presented her with a cheque for £500 which she donated to the Voluntary Association.

One of the founder members of the Paisley Soroptimist Club, she later had Honorary Membership conferred on her, a gesture which honoured the club as much as a very distinguished lady. Sadly Miss Russell died in February 1968 in her 90th year.

With the official permission of the Hospitals Voluntary Services Association, our Old People’s Welfare Committee regularly visited residential homes in the District, e.g. Speirsfield, Stanely House and Johnstone I.D.Hospital as well as taking the residents out during the summer months.

**Mrs Mary Colquhoun**

As secretary of the Hospitals’ Guild which included Peesweep[[21]](#footnote-21) and the Eye Infirmary in Mansionhouse Road, Paisley, Mrs Mary Colquhoun established contact with matrons and staff and considered that in time, many ways of helping could be found. This was followed by the formation of a rota of members who carried out fortnightly visits to the Eye Infirmary with flowers (for a number of years Mrs Anne Campbell took over the pleasant task of arranging floral displays in the wards) – gifts and Christmas decorations. Later, help was given to fund a closed circuit television for the benefit of visually impaired children, a record player was gifted and the radio repaired.

In 1966, the year in which Miss Emily Dick was President, the Club had great pleasure in presenting Mrs Colquhoun with a gift in recognition of her many years of service as secretary of the Hospitals’ Guild. In addition to her personal efforts, as sub-postmistress of Broomlands Street Post Office for 37 years, Mrs Colquhoun kept a charity box on her counter, to which customers readily responded, with the result that on her retirement she was able to hand over more than £3000 to various deserving causes. She was also congratulated on being made an Honorary Members of the British Legion, an exceptional and well deserved accolade. A valued member of our Club, she moved from Paisley to Aviemore, where she died in 1970.

**Save the Children**

Miss Jessie Ballantyne, our President in 1960/61, was chairman of the Paisley Committee of Save the Children and made the suggestion that the Club might sponsor a child. After correspondence with the organisation, the decision was made to sponsor a Liverpool boy, Terence Egan, for 10 years during his school life. He was not a robust child and the family were in poor circumstances, so a Christmas dinner was provided and pyjamas sent to Terence and his brother. The Club received regular reports from his parents and also from the Welfare Officer concerned. By 1963, his health had improved greatly as the family had been able to move to a new house and he was now able to take part in some sport. The money was spent wisely by his parents and it was decided to continue the sponsorship until he was fifteen. Subsequently this was extended until he left school at eighteen and started training as a bricklayer. The sponsorship money provided for Terence was later allocated to Scotscraig School for Spastics.

**Urquhart House**

In this decade also, under the Club’s project “Helping Children”, connection was made with Urquhart House in Houston[[22]](#footnote-22). This was a Strathclyde Region (Renfrew District) Council Home for children who needed care, their ages ranging from a baby of three months to the early teens. For many years, gifts were made of Easter eggs and cakes (one spectacular one was donated by the chef at the Excelsior Hotel at Glasgow Airport), Christmas stockings, Hallowe’en nuts and apples, buckets and spades and holiday pocket money for every child in June / July. A pedal car and scooter were purchased and one little thalidomide boy provided with artificial arms. By 1979, our attachment to the children had developed to the extent that some members became ‘courtesy aunts’ and undertook to take particular interest in a named child by visiting, being his or her guest at parties, remembering birthdays, sending holiday postcards and little gifts at appropriate times. This continued until in the course of time, the house was no longer required and closed.

**Wider Issues**

The Ministry of Labour asked that we should be represented on the committee dealing with the employment of women and Miss Balnave, being a previous representative, was appointed again in 1962.

At Divisional Union level, the problems of married women returning to work were discussed, agreement being reached that the country needed these services and that anything that could be done to allow a woman to provide them without endangering family life and happiness should be encouraged.

Divisional Union also requested co-operation in making protest in writing to Mr John Robertson M.P. on the availability of pornographic literature and on violence on TV

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was written to on the question of tax allowance for single persons.

On the 20th Anniversary of the formation of the United Nations, one member of the Club was invited to be on the General Committee for Paisley.

In the late 1960’s, financial aid was sent to the fund which provided for the many thousands of children orphaned and maimed by the Vietnam War.

Talking books first made their appearance in 1968 and a fund was raised to help with their purchase.

**Funds**

In July 1963, a special meeting of the Club was called at which a 100% rise in the annual subscription from £2.2/- to £4.4/- was fully explained, other financial commitments were discussed and agreement reached on the disposal of funds. A General Fund would be financed from members’ subscriptions and a Benevolent Fund from money raising efforts

In addition, the purchase of two shares in Soroptimist House (now ‘63’) in Bayswater Road, London for which appeals were regularly made was financed in the name of the Club.

**Miss Jessie Ballantyne**

In 1968, Miss Jessie Ballantyne was elected chairman of the Cancer Campaign and became very involved in the fundraising activities. Coffee mornings and evenings, jumble sales, floral displays etc. and the interest of the Club in Cancer Research has remained intensive and vigorous to the present day.

Miss Ballantyne became our President for the second time in 1969/70. As well as giving unstinting service to Soroptimism and its many activities, she was also a tireless worker for her church in Johnstone and her keen interest in all local affairs was sorely missed on her death in September 1993.

**Pholela Institute** **[[23]](#footnote-23)**

In response to a letter from the Rev. Ian Moir, Pholela Institute, Bulwer, Natal, R.S.A., the Club agreed to award a bursary for four years to enable an African girl to go forward to university. This was Kirsteen Konyane, who over the years made good use of the funds provided and matriculated well. On starting a nursing career, the Club sent her a fob watch. Another girl, Gertie Chamade was recommended by the Rev. Moir in 1971 and she was sponsored in succession to Kirsteen and little personal gifts were sent to both girls at Christmas. When Gertie left school, she also took up nursing and Kirsteen moved on to Social Work. The sponsorship was continued to the benefit of Cleribelle M Bele and was ended in 1979.

**Miss Charlotte Lall**

A senior executive officer in the Post Office, Miss Charlotte Lall was responsible for most of the administrative work in bringing the Post Office Savings bank to Cowglen in Glasgow. On moving to Renfrewshire from her native London, she became a member of the Paisley Club and in 1969 was made M.B.E. for her service to the Savings movement in Scotland.

**The 1970’s**

The special fundraising of 1970 was for the Marie Curie Cancer Fund, a particular interest of that year’s President, Miss Isa Blane. It emerged later that Paisley headed the donation list for the Scottish Clubs and the Divisional Union South was fifth in the list for the whole of Britain.

**Mrs Winifred Ness**

When Mrs Ness, President in 1952/53, retired with her husband to live in Spain in 1970, she found there were no women’s clubs similar to the one to which she had been so attached at home. In spite of a wind of change in Spain which enabled many more girls to seek careers for themselves, and the fact that there were more than 100 women mayors, there were no Soroptimist or Business Women’s Clubs in existence.

Mrs Ness resolved to fill this gap. She founded a women’s group in Alicante, which had a large foreign community, the only qualification for joining being the ability to speak English. Members were drawn from many different nationalities and although it had a mainly social function, this consortium of women also had a spirit of service and an ability to raise substantial sums for charity. An approach was made to Federation regarding the formation of a Soroptimist Club[[24]](#footnote-24) and after lengthy delays and much negotiation, Mrs Ness’s group gained Spanish Governmental approval and recognition. At the inaugural dinner in 1974, over 100 people were present including the Mayor of Alicante. Mrs Ness, now an ‘attached’ member of her home Club, was sent a present of a subscription to “Scottish Field” and reported that it was much appreciated in Spain.

In 1984, Mrs Ness was proposed for Honorary Membership. The parchment she received stated: “Soroptimist International of Paisley is proud to confer Honorary membership of the Club on Mrs Winifred Ness in recognition of her great service to Soroptimism in Paisley and internationally to women in Scotland and Spain”.

A copper etching of Paisley Abbey was sent with the parchment. For health reasons, Mr and Mrs Ness returned to Paisley in 1988 and to our sorrow and loss, Mrs Ness died in 1992.

**25th Anniversary**

Wednesday 18 November 1970 was the actual 25th anniversary of the first meeting of the ladies who decided to start the Paisley Soroptimist Club, so what better date to hold a 25th birthday party.

This took place in the Brabloch Hotel, Paisley and as well as 95 Club members and friends, there were 13 members from Greenock[[25]](#footnote-25) and 6 members from Hamilton, our ‘daughter’ Clubs. Also present were 7 members, including Miss Helib Low, the President of our ‘mother Club’, Glasgow Central[[26]](#footnote-26). The principal guest of the evening, Mrs Annette Muir, was accompanied at the top table by Miss Low, Miss Isa Blane, Paisley’s current President, and four founder members – Miss Peggy Shields, Mrs Cathie Carswell (nee Stewart), Miss Catherine McEwan and Miss Elizabeth Wotherspoon, all of whom received floral corsages. Mrs Stewart (nee Miss Mary Scorgie), first Secretary of the Club was also able to be present.

The first part of the evening was formal: Miss Blane welcomed the guests, Mrs Muir cut an impressive birthday cake and Miss Shields spoke in honour of Mrs Muir in some detail, forgetting none of the innumerable services she had rendered both to the Paisley Club and other Clubs within the Divisional Union. Originally with Glasgow Central Club, she had been a prime mover in setting up the Paisley Club, becoming its first Vice-President in 1946 and President in 1947.

Along with the Divisional Union representative of the time, Miss Robertson, she helped set up our first ‘daughter Club’ in Greenock and later as extension officer, was instrumental in starting Clubs in Hamilton, Leith, Dunfermline, Motherwell, Wishaw and Glasgow South. In 1951, she was appointed President of the Divisional Union Scotland South[[27]](#footnote-27) and the Paisley Club were very proud of her enviable record in social work and service to the community. At this point, Miss Blane conferred Honorary Membership on Mrs Muir, along with a gift of a crystal vase from the Paisley Club with their very good wishes. Each Past President was then introduced by Miss Mary More with mention of the outstanding event in each year of office. Greetings were received from Miss Catherine Lobnitz, our first President, Miss Turner, President, and the Misses Syme of the Greenock Club and the Secretary of Bradford Soroptimists.

Presentations were made of a handsome silver cigarette box from Greenock and a splendid Parker pen from Hamilton, accompanied by compliments and expressions of regard. A letter of good wishes was read from Miss F.M. Baillie, the Federation President who had signed the Club Charter.

After cake and sherry, Miss Low proposed a toast to the prosperity of the Paisley Club coupled with the name of our new Honorary Member. Formalities over, there was still an appetising meal to be enjoyed, plus songs and music from Miss Mary Andrew and her friend Miss Isobel Jackson and a variety of competitive and hilarious games. Miss Jessie Ballantyne, Immediate Past President thanked everyone who had assisted in making the evening such a success and the singing of “Auld Lang Syne” brought a very enjoyable evening to a close.

**Mrs Annette Muir**

Sadly in April 1971, only a few months after this occasion, Mrs Muir died. In remembering her participation in the Soroptimist movement, we must also recall her many years of voluntary social work: the Infirmary Guild, the Child Guidance Clinic and the Prisoners’ Aid Society. She was a voluntary probation officer and her kindness and personal interest was an encouragement to many of her “cases”. She also ran a War Services Club for young service women arriving late in town, which included a canteen and sleeping accommodation (before this their only alternative was a bed in a cell in the Police Office). She was presented to the Queen Mother (then Queen Elizabeth) and King George VI when they visited the Hugh Smiley Day Nursery in Paisley. A lady who was much missed.

**American Links**

Reporting at the Federation’s Golden Jubilee party on 15 October 1971, Miss Agnes Thomson told of her visit to the United States earlier that year, when she had met and been entertained by the founder of Soroptimism, Mrs Violet Richardson Ward. Also from America, it was reported that the Alameda Club of California wished to have a Friendship link with our Club. This was agreed and headquarters advised. In 1989, the Alameda Club was within the area devastated by a severe earthquake and help was immediately offered by Paisley.

**Alexander Wilson**

Another American connection; like Robert Tannahill, Alexander Wilson was a weaver poet and radical. Falling foul of the Establishment because of his political convictions, about which he would not be silenced, he emigrated to America where he became fascinated by its unfamiliar and exotic birds. He taught himself to draw them and it is as the author of “American Ornithology”, a forerunner of Audubon’s[[28]](#footnote-28) works that he is best remembered. He died at the early age of 47 and was buried in Philadelphia. Through neglect, his grave fell into disrepair and in 1971 in response to an appeal from the Burns Club of Paisley it was decided to send a donation to help in its renovation. Members were subsequently invited to a memorial service in the Abbey, and Miss Jean Craig, Mrs Ann Cameron and Miss Agnes Thomson opted to attend.

In 1970, a first monetary gift was made to the Ferguslie Geriatric Group for the purchase of wool and other fabric and help was also sent to the local Boy’s Brigade whose hut had been destroyed by vandals.

Further afield, a donation was sent to Fraserburgh Lifeboat Disaster Fund and another to BLESMA[[29]](#footnote-29)

In 1971, when Miss Mary More was President, transport was offered to people with multiple sclerosis, who met in Ralston Community Centre. This led in 1974/75, when Miss Jean Craig was President, to our offer to the Town Council of the sum of £1,500 which would be set aside to assist in the purchase and maintenance of a suitable vehicle, in this case a Bedford bus for six, to be used by the Social Work Department for the transportation of people with disabilities. The offer was accepted and Mrs MacKenzie, our librarian member, handed over the vehicle. Miss Craig, Miss Mennie, Mrs Cameron and Dr Iris Gibson represented the Club on that occasion. Support for people with multiple sclerosis continued with a donation from the Club towards the purchase of a six berth caravan which was situated at Monkton in Ayrshire.

At this time also, the Town Council was approached on the question of accessibility in all new buildings for people with disabilities, especially toilet facilities.

In 1973, when Miss Alice Brown, now Mrs MacKenzie, was President, a stall was staffed at Paisley May Fayre and Mrs MacKenzie compiled a book of members’ favourite recipes which sold well. Also in that year, a letter supported by Paisley was sent by the Federation to the Department of Health and Social Security recommending a common retirement age for men and women and for equal pension rights based on equal contributions.

Mrs Ann Cameron became President in 1974 and this was the year when Dr Iris Gibson was voted on to the local committee of the Argyll and Clyde Health Board. This led to her appointment as Vice Chairman of the Local Health Council in 1981. She was also warmly congratulated in that year on being awarded the “Medicine Gilliland Travelling Fellowship”, administered by the Royal College of Physicians in London. Leave of absence was granted and she departed with our good wishes, to attend and research care of the elderly and geriatric medicine in Israel.

Returning to 1974, our new ‘daughter’ club of Kirkintilloch was set up and at their Charter Dinner, a press cutting book was presented by Paisley. Another ‘daughter’, Hamilton, celebrated its 25th birthday and a pad and pen were presented.

**Old Men’s Club**

The provision of a Christmas lunch to men living in the old Arthur Street lodging house had been supervised for several years by our member Mrs Mae Cochrane. This event, arranged in the Kibble School, was usually a great success, thanks to the valuable help of Mr. Gardner and also to the entertaining talents of the old men themselves, perhaps slightly lubricated by a small liquid intake. By 1976, the occasion was changing somewhat in character and was being funded by Rotary, Inner Wheel, Round Table etc. as well as the Soroptimists and in the natural course of events, was finally discontinued in 1977.

**Mrs Ann Cameron**

In 1974, after 25 years service, Mrs Ann Cameron retired as Social Welfare Officer for the Blind. Presentations to her were made by the Blind Club of Johnstone, whose members met at the United Services Club, and the Paisley and Johnstone Blind Bowling Club. A keen bowler herself, Mrs Cameron was Secretary of the Scottish Association of Blind Bowlers and her husband Steven, a former Provost of Renfrew, who died in 1980, was Social Welfare Officer for the Blind in Paisley. Mrs Cameron, President in 1974, was still an enthusiastic member of our Club until her death in 2003.

**Miss Marguerite Mennie**

Again in 1974, Miss Marguerite Mennie, at that time Warden of Scotscraig Home for Spastics, set out on a daunting journey to Australia, where her mother had trained as a nurse. As a result of an invitation from a residential home for spastic people in New South Wales, Miss Mennie took with her a totally disabled girl, confined to a wheelchair, who needed attention 24 hours a day. A trained physiotherapist, Miss Mennie had no qualms about the 12,000 mile flight as she had already taken residents of Scotscraigs on holidays by train and knew well of the difficulties involved. As her companion, Catherine Longmuir could receive no benefits while out of the country, so our Soroptimists rallied round with gifts and money to help make the trip a success and Miss Mennie was able to make comparisons with treatment methods and share points of view with her Australian counterparts.

The next year, she and members of her staff of Scotscraig flew to Scandinavia with 28 residents of the home for two weeks holiday in Copenhagen and Stockholm.

Miss Mennie became president in 1976/78 and in 1979 was awarded a grant by the English Speaking Union which financed a three week tour of North America, during which she studied the work for children with disabilities and adults in similar centres to her own.

**Miss Mary More**

In 1975, Miss Mary More, President in 1971/72, was installed as President of Divisional Union Scotland South[[30]](#footnote-30) at the Federation Conference in Llandudno. Having retired from Strathclyde Police in 1977, Mary joined Miss Marguerite Mennie in running Forrest House for Spastics in Albert Drive, Glasgow and both ladies transferred from the Paisley Club to Soroptimist International Glasgow Central, where Mary became Secretary in 1979. Following her experience at Scotscraig, Paisley, Miss Mennie was in charge at Forrest House[[31]](#footnote-31), opened in 1976 as the first facility of its kind, to provide respite accommodation for adults with special needs. In the course of time, it developed into a mainly permanent residential home for people whose carers’, for one reason or another, were no longer able to look after them and was supported by the Association of Parents and Friends of Spastics, Scotland. A cheerful and openhearted person, Mary More was a great asset to Forrest House and worked as a good right hand to Marguerite Mennie, succeeding in making a safe and happy place for its residents. Mary died in 1993 and her warm personality was deeply missed by her colleagues and friends.

**Tuesday Afternoon Group (T.A.G.)**

This Tuesday Afternoon Group held weekly meetings for mentally disabled adults living at home, (later changed to Fridays). This project was one of the interests of the local Methodist Church which provided the hall, transport and hospitality and was aimed at patients discharged from Dykebar Hospital. When our support was no longer required for Scotscraig Home it was decided that T.A.G. was a worthwhile object to which our interests could be transferred.

In 1975/76, when Miss Marion Gow was President, her special concerns for Rheumatic Research and the Deaf were recognised by fundraising efforts for these causes.

This was also International Women’s Year and to mark it, a supper was arranged to which international visitors to Paisley were invited. Three guests from France, the Bahamas and Ceylon[[32]](#footnote-32) gave talks on the status of women in these countries.

Women in the Gilbert and Ellice islands[[33]](#footnote-33) were sent sewing materials etc. for their use and a donation was offered towards the construction of an air strip in South Africa for the flying doctor service, the work being undertaken by Voluntary Service Overseas.

Mrs MacKenzie, our library member, was also involved in the collecting and packing of books in English for despatch to underdeveloped countries.

**Mrs Ellen McQueen**

An honour came the way of Mrs Ellen McQueen in 1977 when she was appointed M.B.E. for services to the W.R.N.S. She joined the service in 1943, became an air mechanic, then after an officer training course at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, spent fifteen months on the Admiral’s staff at Lee on Solent. She was demobbed in 1947, but when the reserve units were set up in 1952, she was asked to join. She spent more than twelve years on H.M.S. Graham in Glasgow before going to the new base H.M.S. Dalriada in Greenock in 1962, where she was senior W.R.N.S. officer and staff officer in charge. In July 1984, Mrs McQueen was awarded the Volunteer Reserve Decoration and ten years later presented with a clasp to the V.R.D. She retired after almost forty years with the Navy in 1981. As well as being a very active member of the Paisley Soroptimist Club, Mrs McQueen had a keen interest in the Old Grammarians Club and Dramatic Society[[34]](#footnote-34), associations which linked themselves to our money making endeavours by presenting plays in which we shared the proceeds.

Our ‘Mother ‘ Club, Glasgow Central, celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1977 with a dinner which some of our members attended and Miss Mennie presented a pen with chain with our best wishes. Again on their 60th anniversary, a gift of a paperweight was handed over by Miss May Burton, our 1987 President.

**Dr. Iris Gibson**

Dr. Iris Gibson became our President in 1978/79.having been closely involved with the Local Health Council since 1974, Dr. Gibson was the ideal person to report to the Club of her visits to local general, psychiatric and geriatric hospitals and the conditions and care provided by them. Given Dr. Gibson’s experience, it was natural that kidney donor cards were promoted and continuing anxiety was expressed in a letter to Mr Jack Ashley M.P. about the difficulties experienced by blind and deaf people using public transport, in particular British Railways.

President Iris Gibson was a lady of many and widespread interests, the protection of children and of the environment being only examples. A telescope for the centre at Lochwinnoch run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds was purchased, and as early as 1978, concern was expressed about the export of live animals to the continent for slaughter. A letter was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture on this matter and it was suggested that other clubs should follow this up with letters to their local M.P.’s. Another activity and a considerable success of our President’s, was publicised in an article in the “Herald”[[35]](#footnote-35) and the Soroptimist magazine in 1990, where it was recalled that Dr. Gibson had come second by one vote, to Alistair Maclean (well known novelist) in the short story competition which launched his writing career.

As well as literature, painting and art appreciation brought Iris much satisfaction. Fascinated by death masks and frustrated by the lack of information on their provenance, Iris carried out a great deal of research and prepared a manuscript for publication on these particular antiquities. Archaeology was an abiding passion: it was on an expedition to Turkey in pursuit of this enthusiasm that she met with a disabling accident by falling into a deep pit and being badly injured. In spite of a strong will and determination, she never fully recovered. She was forced to retire in 1988 and died untimely on 15 April 1993.

Appropriately as 1978 was the Year of the Child, our Civic Committee kept in touch with the house in Love Street, Paisley, Geoff Shaw Lodge, at that time a refuge for women suffering domestic violence. Sympathetic to the wives and children who were victims of domestic violence, financial help was given as well as gifts of household linen, towels, children’s shoes and toys, some being retained for use in the Lodge itself and others being distributed to mothers to help them set up a new home. A £100 donation from the estate of Mrs Gertrude Eadie was used to purchase items useful in establishing a children’s playground and contributions continued until the Lodge closed in 1987, when donations were passed on to the Salvation Army.

It was also appropriate to support the research into leukaemia in children being undertaken at the Sick Children’s Hospital in Glasgow. Much concern was expressed at the existence of ‘baby farms’ and child prostitution in underdeveloped countries, and material for literacy programmes for the under privileged and the families of refugees and immigrant workers was collected.

Local issues pursued at this time included an approach to the appropriate authority about the need for a pedestrian crossing at Causeyside / Canal / Gordon streets. This was installed early in 1981. It was also noted that a crossing was required at Incle Street with a provision for dropped kerbs for wheelchair users.

Miss Sheena Macfarlane who served the Club conscientiously and well as Secretary for six years, became President in 1979/80. At the 45th Annual Conference in Glasgow on 25/26 October 1979, Paisley members acted as stewards on coaches and at events and Miss Macfarlane was personal steward and hostess to the principal speaker, Sir John Wilson and Lady Wilson[[36]](#footnote-36). Other speakers were Miss Margaret Drabble, author; Mr John Drummond, Director of the Edinburgh International Festival and Mrs Myrtle Simpson, explorer.[[37]](#footnote-37)

To our sorrow, the 1970’s saw the Club diminished by the loss of several long serving members.

Miss Catherine Lobnitz, our first and founding President, died at her home in England. Even at such a distance, she kept in close touch with the Paisley Club, sending greetings to our various celebrations and taking a friendly interest in all our doings. At the time of our 40th anniversary in 1986 and as a sign that her personality was still fresh in our memory, members placed flowers on her grave in Arkleston Cemetery.

As well as Mrs Annette Muir, already mentioned in this history, three more of our founder members died.

Mss Catherine McEwan was Paisley’s librarian for eighteen years. Before that she served in Glasgow’s libraries, including ten years in the Couper Institute[[38]](#footnote-38) and in 1934, she became a Fellow of the Libraries Association. Among many enthusiasms, Miss McEwan took a keen interest in ladies’ sports, particularly tennis and badminton, served on the committee of Paisley Art Union[[39]](#footnote-39) and was an active member of the Abbey congregation. She worked hard for Paisley Soroptimists, especially for the Over 70’s Club and died in June 1972.

Mrs Catherine Carswell was particularly well known in Paisley through her long connection with the ‘Paisley Daily Express’. A founder member of the Club under her maiden name of Cathie Stewart, she was the Press and Magazine correspondent for many years. Her marriage to a colleague, Mr Allan Carswell, meant that she kept in close touch with the business community and members of the public with whom her forthright nature and sense of humour made her a popular contact. She took a full part in all Soroptimist activities including the Scotscraig School for Spastics, as well as furthering the progress of the Senior Citizens Club at Ralston. Mrs Carswell had been in poor health for a number of years before her death in 1973.

Also in 1973, Mrs Marion Gibson died at the venerable age of 98. Her local restaurant was the venue for our lunches and dinners over many of the early years of the Club and until increasing infirmity compelled retiral, she was a regular attendee at the Club meetings.

Miss Elizabeth Dempster, although not a founder member, joined the Paisley Club in the very early days of 1946. The proprietor of a long established jewellery business, she was a caring lady of quiet manner and within the Club, organised regular visits to patients in the Eye Infirmary and supported the Over 70’s Club, she died in January 1979.

In September came the death of Mrs Catherine Higgins, the Club’s representative of the coal business since 1970, a useful and competent member, and the death of Mrs Kirk, a regular helper at the Over 70’s Club and in whose garden several pleasant parties were arranged for the old ladies.

**The 1980’s**

In January 1980, an important symposium was arranged by Glasgow West Club attended by Paisley members, at which Miss Iris Rankine, our President in 1981/82, gave a talk on the quadrennial theme of “Building Tomorrow’s World”. This covered areas in which the Paisley Club took action over three years from 1980 to 1983.

Research into the causes and treatment of leukaemia in children, for which a cheque was presented to the consultant haematologist at the Royal Sick Children’s Hospital, Yorkhill, Glasgow

International Goodwill and Understanding. Under this heading, Miss Jean Coghill had visited India, going to less well known and remote parts of that country away from conventional tourist trails and gaining an insight into the mores[[40]](#footnote-40) of different ethnic groups.

On the other selected programme, health, we learned a lot from the District Dietician of the Argyll and Clyde Health Board and also from the Health Education Officer, both of whose talks emphasised the benefits of prevention rather than cure.

At a later international evening, we heard about projects in Suva, Fiji and Trinidad and two young students from overseas gave talks to the Club about their totally different lifestyles in Venezuela and in Kuwait.

Going back to the symposium, the question was raised as to the practicality of one of our declared objectives – Service Before Self. Was this really practical in today’s society? Perhaps the time had come to establish a “raison d’être” for Soroptimism, charitable fundraising. This is an ongoing discussion to the present day.

**ACCORD Hospice**

In February 1981, the idea of a local hospice was first mooted and in September, Miss Iris Rankine agreed to attend a meeting held on 19 November to consider the establishment of such a facility. This would not be an alternative to the National Health Service, but additional to its provisions. By January 1982, a steering committee was formed of professional medical people, all religious denominations and ordinary citizens, to assess the need, find out how it was done elsewhere and also to consider funding.

By 1983, plans for a Paisley Hospice were taking shape and being actively promoted by Professor Doyle, Mr. A. N. Bell and Mr Laurie Morton. The name agreed on was ACCORD (Action for Care and Comfort Over Renfrew District) and thanks to various fundraising events, the Paisley Club was able to hand over a cheque for £1060 in April 1984. Monies continued to be contributed in succeeding years and in 1989 Mrs Ellen McQueen was invited to serve on an ACCORD sub-committee, being assured of the Club’s ongoing support. A shop was opened which still operates in garnering resources and collecting boxes placed in local shop counters. The Hospice was formally opened on 19 June 1992. Rose trees were gifted by the Club and planted in time for that occasion.

**The Local Environment**

Miss Rankine suggested that a copper collection be taken during her year of office. This, plus the proceeds of a nearly new sale, would provide something for our community. £160 was raised and an 8ft garden bench carrying a plaque engraved “Gifted by Soroptimist International of Paisley, 1981-82” was presented by Miss Rankine to the District Council. It is now in position in front of the Regional offices overlooking the Abbey and being well used by appreciative passersby.

Various other matters of local concern were brought to the attention of the local authorities. For example, bad repairs to pavements and the lack of ramps at corners for wheelchair users; the height of access steps on local buses; dog fouling and the setting up of proper dog exercise areas; the provision of bottle and paper banks; difficulty of access for people with disabilities at Paisley Gilmour Street Station – a particular problem; the preservation of trees in the grounds of the Royal Alexandra Infirmary following the sale of the site; and conditions in the courts, facilities for witnesses and people with disabilities and for the choosing of jurors.

Gleniffer Home in Corsebar Road was visited and a discussion with the Matron and its committee indicated areas in which help would be welcome e.g. replacement cutlery, crockery etc.

As 1981/82 was the Year of the Disabled, Miss Rankine decided that her choice of charity would be the Scottish Spina Bifida Association[[41]](#footnote-41). A swivel walker was being developed and again attention was drawn to the need for access for wheelchair users at places of entertainment and other facilities.

Whitehaugh Day Centre for people with profound disabilities and the first such centre in Scotland, had been raided by thieves, so a collection was made to restore some of their losses. £300 was also granted to help with the purchase of a shower trolley, much appreciated by both carers and their charges.

Support was continued for Scotscraig, Westlands[[42]](#footnote-42) in Erskine and Corseford[[43]](#footnote-43) in Johnstone.

Looking further, coin cases which held ten 10p pieces were distributed to members and the proceeds were used via Save the Children, to enable vaccinations to be given to children in Malawi in an attempt to eradicate polio there.

**Liaison Officer**

By the early 1980’s, quite a few of our members were aging and due to physical disability or difficulty in travelling, intimating their retirement from the Club. It was felt a pity that contact should be lost, so it was suggested that a liaison officer should be appointed to keep in touch with them and also with members who became ill, by visiting, taking the magazine, remembering birthdays etc. This was agreed and this practice still continues.

**Miss Ruth Donald**

Miss Ruth Donald, J.P., secretary of the local branch of the Red Cross since 1952 and County Director since 1969, retired in 1981 after more than 30 years loyal service, always carried out with resource and cheerfulness. Her long and distinguished service was recognised by the presentation of a Certificate and a Badge of Honour, plus a bouquet, handbag and cheque from her colleagues. Miss Donald was an efficient and popular President of Paisley Club in 1967/68

**Mrs Ellen McQueen**

In 1982, as a representative of the Club, Mrs Ellen McQueen was elected to the Local Health Council, on which she had been a member for many years, and in the following year she was appointed Secretary of the steering committee for Crossroads[[44]](#footnote-44). In 1984, she attended an inaugural meeting of “Tak’ Tent”[[45]](#footnote-45). In March 1986, Mrs McQueen reported on a visit to the newly built Royal Alexandra Hospital which was due to be opened in September of that year. Come 1988, she was elected Vice-Chairman of the Local Health Council and along with our President of that year, Mrs Margaret Neil, was present at the opening of the Child and Family Centre at Hawkhead. In one year alone, 1989/90, Mrs McQueen attended four meetings of the Health Board as an observer, five meetings of Chairmen and other officials of the four Local Health Councils in the Argyll and Clyde area, the AGM of the Association at Seamill, one meeting of the Mental Health Welfare Association and one with the Scottish Hospital Advisory Service, both of these at Dykebar Hospital and did marathon duty at an open day at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. In addition, visits were paid to Renfrew, Bishopton and Linwood Health Centres; Johnstone, Merchiston, Elderslie and Erskine Hospitals; Dykebar long stay wards, Garthland House and the Child and Family Clinic. Talk about a full year!

In 1991, Mrs McQueen made her final report on vacating office from the Council. She had been on the committee for nine years and was thanked for representing the Club so conscientiously and well for so long. On 19 March, she was entertained to a farewell lunch as a “thank you” from the Council members.

The Club still maintained a connection with the Local Health Council by attending meetings and a two day conference, plus visits to clinics at Foxbar; Ferguslie; New Sneddon Street; St. James Centre, Merchiston Hospital[[46]](#footnote-46) to see the new splash pool and Wards 4,5,9 and 10 at Hawkhead Hospital; and the Club was continuously represented on the local committees of Save the Children and Cancer Research.

At the AGM in April 1982, **Dr. Stella Gibson** took over as President and spoke on the aims for the incoming year with particular emphasis on “Human Rights and the Status of Women”. Dr. Gibson and Miss Rankine, Immediate Past President attended the International Conference at Bournemouth that year, which had as its theme “Family Focus”. This was of special interest to Dr. Gibson who was involved in Community medicine.

A follow up effort was made on International Day in December, with support for women in need and starving children all over the world. In response to an appeal for spectacles which were no longer used, nearly 100 pairs were sent to India and later in 1983, an appeal for boots and shoes for Poland resulted in members contributing 500 pairs. These were delivered via the Scottish Polish Cultural Association. In addition, needles and scissors were sent to Zimbabwe.

In June 1982, two of our members, Dr. Sheila McArthur and Miss Jane Williams undertook a long sponsored slog on Ben Lomond to raise money for the Royal Commonwealth Institute for the Blind. A letter from the Institute later gave details of an eye camp set up in Khalilabad in the Basu district of India where forty one operations were undertaken for the restoration of sight and eighty seven patients treated for various eye disorders as a result of Club contributions. A further donation of £200 was forwarded to allow another eye camp to be set up. By 1984 the Institute had organised 1,200 eye camps and carried out forty thousand treatments for restoration of sight.

**Corseford School[[47]](#footnote-47)**

Another of our members, Mrs Marbeth Boyle, gave a special talk that year on the wide curriculum offered to children with physical disabilities at Corseford School, near Johnstone, of which she is head teacher. Physiotherapy and nursing care are incorporated into the educational process which is as broad as possible, with staff and pupil ratio much higher than in an ordinary school. A different kind of caring was illustrated by Mr Adrian Davies of the Centre for Alcohol Studies in Paisley College of Technology[[48]](#footnote-48), now Paisley University. This was the first centre of its kind in Britain and was a research unit not a counselling service.

A runner in the Glasgow Marathon of 1983 was sponsored for charity and support was also given to CRUSE[[49]](#footnote-49), the help agency for widowed people at the time of bereavement and afterwards.

In October 1983, the International Conference was centred on Istanbul and details of its debates were brought back to the Club by Mrs Ann Cameron. One of the schemes presented was the Senegal Clean Water project, extended over four years. Thirty countries were joining in a “Soak the Poor” effort and the Paisley Club duly played its part in the success of this enterprise. Another account of the Conference, illustrated by slides, brightened an evening meeting in November and was given by Miss Helen Adamson, one of the delegates and a Past President of Glasgow West Club.

**Dr Margaret Raeside (née Gibson)**

Dr. Margaret Raeside, who died in February 1983, had been President of the Paisley Club twice, in 1951/52 and 1959/60. After taking the Diploma in Public Health, she specialised in obstetrics and pioneered the technique of caesarean section in Paisley. At one time, most babies in Paisley and Renfrewshire were delivered either by her or under her supervision. Later she moved to geriatric medicine, finding as much fulfilment in this as in her earlier field. One of her pleasures was the art of flower arranging, which she encouraged in others by the founding of the Paisley Flower Club. She was one of two Soroptimists co-opted to attend meetings of the Town Council, the other being Mrs Gertrude Eadie.

**Mrs Gertrude Eadie**

Sadly, Mrs Eadie also died in 1983. An American by birth and a typical example of that nation’s drive and energy, she joined the Paisley Club in 1952 when she was already deeply involved in the operation of day nurseries and the welfare of children generally. Locally she was appointed to the committee of the Hugh Smiley Day Nurseries at a time when they were full to overflowing and were opening every year in various areas of the district. Then at a function in Edinburgh in 1978, she had the rare distinction of being made an Honorary Member of the Council of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. At the AGM of April 1982, the Club conferred Honorary Membership on Mrs Eadie, who had moved to live in England and a suitably inscribed parchment and flowers were sent to her.

1983 also brought the death of Miss Janet MacDonald who had been President in 1954/55. She was a gentle and caring lady. Assets of personality which were invaluable in her work as headmistress at Sandyford School[[50]](#footnote-50).

Two other members also lost to the Club in the early 1980’s – Miss May Graham, a long serving Soroptimist with attachments to both Paisley and Glasgow Clubs, and Mrs Betty Buchanan, a handsome and enthusiastic lady whose association with our Club was all too short.

In 1983/84 during Miss Jean Coghill’s year of office, letters were sent to M.P.’s Mr Allan Adams, Mr Allan Stewart and Mrs Anna McCurley regarding the spread of video ‘nasties’, requesting their support for a regulatory bill going through parliament at that time.

There was also discussion on family planning and rubella immunisation.

**Goodwill Village**

In fulfilling the international aspect of Soroptimism in 1984, our members agreed to sponsor a child, Theresa Kanickairaj, a pupil in Mangalamcombu Primary School at the Goodwill Children’s Village, Thandigudi, South India. She turned out to be an excellent correspondent and in one letter, during a period of severe drought in her area, she wrote that she was “praying for rain” and also prayed that we would have plenty too! An unnecessary plea surely, but it’s the thought that counts. Little gifts were sent to her on her birthdays and at Christmas and her letters continued to arrive regularly. She completed her education in April 1991 and a special gift was sent to her at that time.

Succeeding Theresa came Sorna Lakshmi and a welcome present was sent to her on her birthday.

Following a cyclone which caused damage to various International Goodwill Villages in India, donations were sent to assist in the repairs necessary to the Bapatla village in particular.

From a meeting of the Programme Action Committee of Divisional Union South[[51]](#footnote-51), Miss May Burton reported on the subjects discussed, which included parental leave (mother – father) during pregnancy and problems with drug taking in our area – all more than ten years ago!

In this connection, Miss Alice MacFarlane, one of our qualified members, made a very thorough research into drug addiction in Renfrewshire. The police kept a strict watch on cafes for trafficking among teenagers and the problem did not seem to be too prevalent here as it is in other parts of the country. This report of Miss MacFarlane’s was so comprehensive that it was sent to Soroptimist Federation for their enlightenment.

President for 1984/85, Mrs Ellen McQueen, indicated that her choice of charities for her year would include Accord, Multiple Sclerosis, WRNS Benevolent Fund and the Forces Help Society.

When in 1985, the Paisley Club was again given the opportunity to sponsor a local schoolgirl on an educational trip to Alaska, it was taken up readily. This was promoted by the British Schools Geography Society and the National Geographic Society and the object was to survey and chart part of Alaska as well as study the environment. Siuna Reid, Head Girl of Paisley Grammar School was chosen after being tested for her resilience to stresses and strains, as six weeks in close proximity and basic conditions can create tensions and on her return she gave a graphic account of the adventure, illustrated by slides. These truly demonstrated the contrasts encountered, from the beauty of the Alaskan mountains and glaciers to the basics of the latrines and oil drum bath! Her display of rocks, dried flowers and maps was fascinating and from her answers to the many questions, it was obvious that she had both enjoyed and benefited from the experience. She later went on to study Veterinary Science in Glasgow.

Early in 1986, our friends in the Harrogate Club indicated that they wished to establish an official friendship with Paisley and with pleasure this was duly confirmed.

This was the year of the Paisley Club’s 40th anniversary dinner which was attended by many friends from both “mother” and “daughter” clubs as well as ten Presidents from Clubs in the Divisional Union Scotland South.[[52]](#footnote-52) Gifts were received from Greenock, Hamilton and Kirkintilloch, along with reassurances that “life begins at 40”, a sentiment unanimously endorsed by all 230 members and guests.

At another meeting that year, a film was shown and a talk given on the Senegal Clean Water project[[53]](#footnote-53), for which a target of £100,000 was set. It was agreed that the Club should contribute to a wind surfing sponsorship as part of our commitment to the project.

**Miss Margaret Thomson**

Miss Margaret Thomson was President in 1985/86 and her interest in Save the Children charity was substantially supported. A lawyer and Depute Director of Administration for Renfrew District Council, the next few years were busy ones for her.

First of all, she was in charge as depute returning officer for General Election arrangements in the Paisley area, the only woman chosen for this important job. Soon afterwards she was appointed the local authorities’ first District Administrator, a post created following the restructuring of the Council’s top level management team. A highly respected official, she crossed swords on several occasions with Councillors from all political parties in her role as legal adviser, but this did not prevent politicians from all sides from paying her a warm and respectful tribute on her retiral in 1990 after twenty seven years close connection with the affairs of local government.

Around this time, the local Christian Action Centre claimed our attention and it had our support in various directions until it closed. Towels, duvets and footwear were donated and personal and practical help volunteered in preparing and serving meals and helping to provide basic, comfortable accommodation to homeless people who needed warmth and shelter.

This was not quite as taxing on members’ physical stamina as a ten mile sponsored walk to Save the Otter!

The Club was complimented on its response to appeals for Cancer Research. The Paisley Committee was presented with the West of Scotland Cup for the “Committee which had the highest percentage increase in its fundraising for the last three years”.

**Miss Peggy Young**

In February 1985, everyone was shocked by the sudden and untimely death of Miss Peggy Young who had been our President in 1960/61. A chiropodist by profession, she gave her services freely to the homebound people, and was a lively minded and cheerfully extrovert lady, popular in the community, her church and in our Club. Her sister Maisie, a member since 1955 and President in 1965/66, still attended meetings regularly and supported all Club activity with enthusiasm until the last few years of her life[[54]](#footnote-54)

**Mrs Mary Thomson**

Mrs Mary Thomson, another long serving member, also died in that year. An astute business woman of some presence, she was affectionately known in the Club as “The Duchess”, a tribute to her immaculate and dignified appearance.

**Mrs Jessie MacMillan**

Another former President, Mrs Jessie MacMIllan, died on the last day of 1986. Owner of a chain of successful bakeries, Mrs MacMillan, even as an elderly lady, thought nothing of turning out before seven in the morning to tour her shops and supervise their operation. Similarly tireless in the affairs of Soroptimism, Mrs MacMillan was involved in the founding of the Over 70’s Club and in countless other efforts.

**Mrs Ada Hood**

Early in February 1987, Mrs Ada Hood died. One of our most active and outgoing members, Ada joined the Club in 1948 and was our President in 1957/58, the same year as her husband Tom was President of Paisley Rotary. Both well known and popular in the town as they were a sociable and hard working couple who ran one of the area’s’ most successful licensed grocery businesses. Club and town alike were the poorer for Ada’s (as of Tom’s) loss.

**Miss Elma Kerr**

A special gift was made to Dr.Dorward’s Respiratory Unit Fund in memory of Miss Elma Kerr who died in September 1989 after a very short retirement. She joined the Paisley Club in 1979, served on various committees and was the Club’s representative on the Cancer Research Committee for a considerable period. Our donation was used to acquire nebulisers for the use of outpatients in the Paisley area.

At a service in Lylesland Church on 3 November 1991, a bible purchased with money left to the church by Elma was placed on the lectern, and at the same service a cross was dedicated to the memory of our well loved past President Mrs Ada Hood and her husband Tom. [[55]](#footnote-55)

**Paisley 500**

Forward planning was now taking place with the intention of marking the 500th anniversary of the granting of Paisley’s Burgh Charter and the Club was invited to appoint a representative to the co-ordinating committee which would organise the various celebratory events in 1988. As Miss Jean Craig was already on this committee in her capacity as an elder in Paisley Abbey, she agreed to represent the Club also. Among many events arranged for this celebration was a service held in the Abbey, graced by Queen Elizabeth and also a St. Andrews Night Dinner at which some of our members were present.

**Miss Anna Slack**

Miss Anna Slack, President in 1986/87, was one of the Boots Chemists’ Centenary Award winners in 1984 and seconded to spend almost a year as a member of the team involved in setting up Work Wise Limited, a youth training scheme aimed at helping disadvantaged and out of work teenagers. As area training officer in Scotland with Boots, Anna had the expertise necessary to deal with the problem of basic skills as well as attitudes to work and also considered that the experience enhanced her own capabilities in her role as mentor to the young members of Boots’ staff. Later she gained another award from her employers which enabled her to take a trip to New Zealand, entailing a study of unemployed young people in that country. Side trips took her to Singapore, Sydney and the United States, opportunities of which she took full advantage and on which she subsequently gave an interesting talk to the Club.

Two honours came the way of the Club in 1987.

**Miss May Burton**

In the New Year’s Honours List, Miss May Burton became an M.B.E. in recognition of her nineteen years’ devotion to the deaf, especially children. She started teaching in 1949 and moved to Gateside Deaf Centre in Glenburn when it was built in 1960/61. Knowing of developments in America, she spent a summer holiday there to study methods of teaching deaf children. On her return, she spread the news that many profoundly deaf youngsters were being educated in mainstream schools alongside children with good hearing. As Head Teacher at Gateside, she was responsible for integrating deaf children into ordinary schools in Renfrewshire and this system led by Miss Burton and Gateside is practiced throughout Britain today.

In 1993, a birthday party was held in Paisley Town Hall to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Gateside School. Mrs Jenifer McFarlane, chairwoman of Gateside Deaf Children’s Association, which helped parents of children with hearing difficulties, presented a cheque to the then headmistress Mrs Elizabeth Quinn. Miss Burton who retired in 1985, had the task of cutting the birthday cake, helped by Provost Willie Orr and his wife Nancy.

Appropriately in Miss Burton’s year of office, which was 1987/88, school text books were collected for despatch overseas, and while the President’s chief charity was the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association, donations were also sent to the Christian Action Centre and Jericho House, which was non denominational and funded mainly by the Department of Health and Social Security[[56]](#footnote-56) to provide accommodation for eleven homeless men.

**Miss Iris Rankine**

Then in the Birthday Honours of June 1987, Miss Iris Rankine, prominent in the Department of Health and Social Security, became a Companion of the Imperial Service Order (I.S.O.). She served our Club as President in 1981/82

During 1988, both our “daughter” Clubs of Greenock and Hamilton reached their 40th birthdays. Several of our members attended the two anniversary dinners, taking with them appropriate gifts from the Club.

The new Federation quadrennium theme, decided in 1988, was “Looking Forward” incorporating discussion on “Shelter for the Homeless” and on “Health” with particular emphasis on young people and addiction. Another aim was a project in the Peruvian Highlands in life skills.

**Mrs Anne Campbell**

In May 1988, Mrs Anne Campbell, one of the Club’s oldest former members died at the age of 88. She had been a hard working representative on the committee of the Oakshaw Working Lads’ Home until it closed and had done sterling duty with the Eye Infirmary’s section of the Hospitals Guild.

**Miss Margaret Dale**

Later, in December, we lost another valued member. Miss Margaret Dale, a solicitor, who although disabled, had been regular in her attendance at both ordinary meetings and social events.

Happier occasions were the conferring of Honorary Membership on Miss Margaret Shields (Peggy) and Miss Jessie Campbell, for which both received framed certificates.

**Miss Margaret Shields**

Peggy as she was popularly known, was a founder member and a signatory of the petition which preceded the formation of the Paisley Club. A tall and handsome woman, she was President in 1948/49 and served on the Hospitals Guild as well as on many committees. She was instrumental in persuading the Club in the early days to adopt the Peesweep Sanatorium and also represented the Club at the Royal Garden Party at Holyrood Palace in the presence of the Queen. Miss Shields was the Matron of Woodside Children’s Home[[57]](#footnote-57) and subsequently transferred to the School Meals Service where she acted as a health nurse. She remained a committed member of the Club which she supported for almost fifty years and was the last surviving founder member until her death in 1994 at the age of 92. In her will she left a bequest of £1000 to be distributed by the current President as she saw fit. The President’s decision was that the local Women’s Aid charity would benefit.

**Miss Jessie Campbell**

Miss Jessie Campbell joined the Paisley Club in 1960 under her category of Assistant Organiser of Physical Education for the County of Renfrewshire. She was well known to many of our members who had been taught by her when she was a gym teacher in Paisley Grammar School. In 1964 she took on the task of Secretary, a position which she held until 1979, a meticulous and helpful aide to the various Presidents during her term of office. On resigning from this duty, Miss Campbell was presented with a gold brooch as a sign of affection and a “thank you” from the Club. When in 1975, one of our then members, Miss Mary More, became President of the Divisional Union Scotland South[[58]](#footnote-58), Miss Campbell acted as her secretary for that year. As organiser for physical education in the area, she paid particular attention to the schools for children with disabilities and visited them regularly to give advice to classroom teachers. As well as an encyclopaedic knowledge of the rules of Soroptimism, which, incidentally saved many a new member from putting a foot wrong, Miss Campbell had an abiding attachment to Paisley Operatic Society and as singer, dancer and producer, promoted many shows not just locally but in the larger Glasgow theatres. She attended club meetings regularly until she was in her eighties and her cheerful presence was much missed following her death at the age of 91 in 1993.

**Miss Jenny Dewar**

Late in 1988, Miss Jenny Dewar retired from her “part time” job as Paisley Guide Divisional Commissioner. Her 8–5 occupation was as a local social worker and where she found time for her very active Guiding life is still a mystery. She began as a Brownie in the Lylesland pack, went on to become a Guide, then Lieutenant, and Captain, still with Lylesland. Around 1972, Jenny became a full time Scottish Guide Trainer, travelling all over the country and also in Canada, following which she had ten years as Paisley Divisional Commissioner. At her special presentation evening there were guests from the Girls’ Brigade, the Boys’ Brigade and many officials from the Guiding movement, all organisations with which Jenny had been connected during her lifetimes’ involvement. As well as gifts of a television and lawnmower, she received an illuminated scroll as official thanks for her devoted work with young people at home and abroad.

Jenny became our president in 1991/92 and her chosen charity which was well supported, was Research into Multiple Sclerosis. She resigned as a member in 2017 due to ill health.

**Mrs Margaret Neil**

Mrs Margaret Neil became our President in 1988/89, a year during which she attended the opening of the new Child and Family Unit at Hawkhead Hospital[[59]](#footnote-59) and the official opening of Accord Hospice Day Centre (forerunner of the Accord Hospice as we know it now), which also took place in the hospital grounds. Two events which compounded well with her interest in the charity of her choice, research into leukaemia in children. She was also invited to a working dinner by the Independent Broadcasting Council at which the views of various organisations in independent broadcasting were sought. Again, during 1988, the local Christian Social Action Centre appealed to our President for help in serving evening meals, so a rota was established of two nights monthly and this carried on until the centre closed when regulations around the housing of homeless people changed. The Club was asked to nominate a board member and Mrs Mary Dennison took up that position.

An architect, Margaret Neil has been a member of the Paisley Club for over 40 years, was a co-opted member of the Argyll and Clyde Health Board and a member of the Property Commission of the Church of Scotland. In addition, her decorative talents were displayed in the rather gorgeous floral arrangements which graced the tables at our annual dinners. She is after all a former President of Paisley Flower Club.

In August 1993, the Annual Federation Conference was held for the first time outwith the UK, in Hong Kong (of which more later) but as this was a rather far flung venue for many British Soroptimists, a specially organised Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland change of insignia lunch took place in Birmingham in October 1993, at which Margaret was installed as President of Scotland South Region.

During her year of office – an exceptionally busy one - she had the help of Paisley Club members, Mrs Mary Stevenson as Honorary Region Secretary and Miss Catherine Campbell as Region Minute Secretary.

Among the various other concerns, it was Scotland South Region’s turn to organise and host the joint Scottish Conference, the venue being the Police College at Tulliallan Castle. The programme theme was Human Rights and the Status of Women and the title “A Woman’s Place?” In addition to the various charity events, Margaret attended the launch of R.U.K.B.A. [[60]](#footnote-60)in Scotland, the AGM of the MacMillan Nurses Cancer Fund and also the “Scottish Joint Action Group” Conference on “The New Decade for Women”. This was a preliminary interest rousing exercise for the Beijing Conference on Women which took place in August 1995. Altogether, a productive as well as busy year.

Meanwhile it was agreed that the Club should join the Council for Voluntary Organisations in Renfrew District. Also, that service to the local community should be continued by providing cars and drivers to take disabled children to a day activity centre during the summer holidays, serving meals at the Christian Social Action centre and manning the local Save the Children and Accord charity shops.

At Scotland South Region level, there was discussion on street children, acid rain, illiteracy, the Hillsborough Stadium disaster and also the horrific Lockerbie air crash. Our former member Mrs Major Mary Elvin of the Salvation Army and her husband Major Derek Elvin, both of whom worked from an office in Paisley Town centre at that time, were on the scene at Lockerbie at midnight, about four hours after the crash and co-ordinated the Salvation Army’s emergency operations, on which two hundred of their volunteer officers were deployed. Mrs Major Elvin regularly counselled people at Lockerbie and for his efforts her husband was awarded the BEM in the 1990 New Years Honours List.

Through the Divisional Union and Miss Cameron, ex member of Soroptimist International of Paisley, a donation was made to the Community Nursing Unit to help buy mattresses for long term housebound patients, via the “Retired and Independent Ladies of Lockerbie”.

**London Club[[61]](#footnote-61)**

In response to continuing appeals for support and help with repairs and updating at the Soroptimist Residential Club in Bayswater Road, London, a contribution was made for the replacement of beds and mattresses.

**Miss Jean Coghill**

The sudden death of Miss Jean Coghill early in 1989 was a sad loss for the Club. Our President in 1983/84, Jean had spent all her life in the teaching profession in Renfrew and Paisley and for three years in Ghana. She lectured at Jordanhill College on Religious and Moral Education and ended her career as religious adviser to Strathclyde Region based in Paisley. Fond of travel, Jean made many trips abroad and was always available to give slide shows and talks about her experiences. A churchwoman and Presbytery elder, she was much missed in the town and Club.

**The 1990’s**

In 1989/90, when Mrs Mary Stevenson was President, “training” evenings were suggested, when new members could be helped to integrate happily into the Club, either by being linked with an older member or being paired with another new member. However it was emphasised by the President that it was the duty of all members to nurture and lead others to understand the style, and the jargon of Soroptimism. Mrs Neil offered hospitality for such a meeting in her home

Another idea taken up with enthusiasm, was a programme of “Supper Circles”, social occasions when members invited others to their homes throughout the year. Thanks to these individual efforts a quite handsome sum of £232.50 was raised.

A contribution was made to a fund to train “Carla”, a Guide Dog for the Blind, and Cancer Research being Mrs Stevenson’s chosen charity, the annual fiddler’s rally in support of this fund had, as usual, our full backing.

This being the year when the emphasis was on “Literacy”, the Stirling Club produced a book of short stories suitable for adults with a reading age of ten years. Several stories were submitted by Paisley members and won approval. Again in pursuance of this theme, the Club was informed that an Asian Women’s Aid project[[62]](#footnote-62) was based at Quarrier’s Homes, Bridge of Weir and Dr. Rashmi Routray stressed the need for tuition and tutors. An Asian family in Renfrew could also be helped.

The chosen charity of Mrs Frances McIlhenny, President in 1990/91, was the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped and the Club was able to hand over a substantial cheque raised at a “Songs, Sonnets and Supper” evening in Ralston Community Hall.

During this year the name of Divisional Union Scotland South was changed to Scotland South Region.

**The 3 S Trust[[63]](#footnote-63)**

In 1990/91, the late Mrs Liz Harris of Ayr Club was Scotland South Region’s President. She was anxious that all the Clubs in Scotland South should work together on a mutually acceptable project and her initiative resulted in the idea of the establishment of a charitable trust fund. It took some time to get this off the ground and at the end of the day the Inland Revenue[[64]](#footnote-64) could not be persuaded that the fund merited charitable status, so the 3 S Trust was established without it. The purpose of the Trust is still a joint ongoing effort by Soroptimists in Scotland South Region.

To sponsor persons willing to offer professional expertise voluntarily in specific fields overseas or in the UK

To sponsor persons from out with the UK to come to this country for study or training which would benefit their native community and / or country

To provide funding in part or in whole for a specific project to benefit a community or country

The launch of the 3 S Trust finally took place in September 1992 at a Scottish South Region lunch in Glasgow and the International Project “Sight Savers”[[65]](#footnote-65) was the first beneficiary of the fund.

**Women’s Fair**

The Club was invited by Renfrew District Council to take part in the Women’s Fair in Paisley Town Hall in early March 1991, culminating in a special event on International Women’s Day on 8 March. Members considered this would be an opportunity to promote Soroptimism, so a stall was set up with literature and posters etc from Federation and volunteers manned the stall on a rota basis.

**Miss Agnes Thomson**

Congratulations were due to our former member, Miss Agnes Thomson, now a very active member of Glasgow Central Club, on receiving an MBE

As patron of Save the Children, the Princess Royal paid a visit to the Mary Russell School in Paisley in 1991. Miss Elsie Sutherland, a physiotherapist interested in children with special needs and Miss Betty Mitchell, a former lecturer in psychology were present.

Multiple sclerosis had the special support of our President in 1991/92, Miss Jenny Dewar.

Another project that year was the sale of gold heart brooches in aid of the new accident and emergency burns unit at Yorkhill Hospital, Glasgow. Supplementing the general effort, the Variety Club had pledged £2 and the government £1 for each brooch sold.

**The Gulf War**

Appeals were made for toiletries and other comforts for servicemen and women stationed in the Gulf, so our co-ordinating committee took on the task of purchasing and delivering suitable items to the Territorial Army premises.

**Sight Savers**

This project followed a suggestion by Scotland South Region which was presented and accepted at the 1989 Annual Federation Conference. On ratification by the International Board, “Sight Savers” was launched at the International Convention held in Nottingham in 1991 and led to the establishment of eye clinics in Bangladesh to save the sight of under five year olds, including advice and training for mothers in food preparation and nutrition. Our support of this International project was boosted by filling Smartie tubes with 20p coins, a collection which went to a Regional Trust Foundation to enable scholarships to be awarded to people who could offer skills and expertise to work in Bangladesh.

**The Simona Trust[[66]](#footnote-66)**

Knitting needles were red hot throughout the year in manufacturing blankets, woollen vests, jerseys and soft toys to be shared between Save the Children in Britain and the Simona Trust in Romania. A substantial amount of money was also raised at a Christmas Cocktail Party in Paisley Town Hall and handed over to Mrs Wendy Ferguson who in 1990 spent three months in Romania as a member of one of the pioneer teams from Scotland, working in orphanages. Mrs Ferguson was placed in Bacau, a town near the Russian border, in the Quarantine Sector of an orphanage with two hundred children aged three years and under. All her spare time was spent in the AIDS unit of the hospital, which admitted children from surrounding orphanages who were seriously and terminally ill from HIV infection and AIDS, and for whose care and treatment little or no help was forthcoming from the authorities. By the time of her return to Scotland, Mrs Ferguson was fully committed to finding ways and means of funding treatment for the various illnesses resulting from the children’s damaged immune systems, so, thanks to her determination and persuasiveness, the Simona Trust was formed. It was named after an appealing three year old gypsy child, typical of the many thousands of neglected children living in orphanages in Romania and whose plight had particularly touched Wendy Ferguson’s heart. So much so that it was felt appropriate that her name should be remembered and used to identify the charity. Donations of drugs, baby food, toiletries and money poured in. The hospital authorities in Bacau agreed to the building of a hospice for terminally ill children and thereafter three years of tireless fundraising resulted in Romania’s only children’s hospice – the Simona Shelter, “a gift of love from Scotland” – being handed over to Bacau Hospital by the Simona Trust. The opening ceremony and dedication took place on 11 December 1992, carried out by the Rev. Elizabeth Houston, with Alison Buckley of “Life and Work” and Shereen Nanjiani of the BBC in attendance. The Shelter initially accommodated thirty children and a second phase (the building of a second storey) was opened in October 1993 and could then accommodate 80 children. Simona, then six years old, benefitted along with other children, from the devotion, care and treatment of a dedicated staff, although because of the scourge of AIDS, the life span of many was so sadly short. Mrs Ferguson was still totally committed to the Simona Trust, five years later and continued to take truckload after truckload of supplies and equipment to Romania, in all extremes of weather, in journeys which took five days each way. A very remarkable lady.

**Dr Jess Ireland**

Co-ordinating and inspiring the support of the Paisley Club for the Simona Trust was Dr Jess Ireland, convener of our Programme Action Committee at that time. Dr. Ireland had been a senior clinical medical officer with the Argyll and Clyde Health Authority, working with children with special needs. One of her dreams became a reality with the opening in April 1990 of the PANDA Centre (Paisley and Neighbourhood Development Assessment Centre) in the grounds of Hawkhead Hospital, which was a success story from the beginning for many Renfrewshire families. Staffed by medical experts, it catered under one roof, for children from birth to five years with varying needs from impaired sight to cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy, and assessed them for intensive speech and physiotherapy, as well as helping and advising their families. For her many years of work in such a specialist field, Dr Ireland received the MBE in 1992 and took official retirement in 1993, but continued to work hard for her brainchild, PANDA.

**Miss Catherine Campbell**

In June 1991, our member Miss Catherine Campbell, Head Teacher at Arkleston Primary School, was awarded the MBE in the Birthday Honours list.

Following on from our concern for the child victims of AIDS in Romania, we welcomed a visit from the HIV / AIDS Resource Centre at Ruchill Hospital, Glasgow. It was brought home to us that Aids was not just a “them” problem but must be an “us” problem too.

Four members of the Club travelled to the Bournemouth Conference to hear M.P. Linda Chalker and Mrs Margaret Jay, Director of the National Aids Trust, outline their grave concern at the rising rate of infection in young people and the patchy state of appropriate sex education in schools.

Another subject aired at this conference was the discriminatory charges, or supplements, imposed by hotels on single room occupancy. In view of the increase in individual business travel by both men and women, it was felt that these charges were an added and unnecessary burden on costs.

**Excavated History**

Of considerable local interest was a fascinating talk given to the Club by Mr John Malden, principal officer of Museum Services in Paisley, who described the discovery of medieval drains and artefacts under Paisley Abbey and its environs. Ever since we have been super conscious of the history and mystery over which we walk every day.

Riverway surveys by various Soroptimist Clubs were underway in 1991. (in view of the severe flooding in the town in 1994, this was interesting locally). North Region Clubs were studying the Tay, Dee, Moray and Forth; Kirkintilloch studied the Forth and Clyde Canal and Glasgow South, the river Cart.

The Literacy project continued and donations of old text books were appreciated. Books for distribution in Third World under developed countries were collected and sent for sorting and classification to the Ranfurly Library Service[[67]](#footnote-67), whence they would be despatched abroad.

Not for the first time, concern was expressed over the poor facilities at the local Court, and a letter was passed to the Estates and Services Group, with suggestions for improvements and refurbishment.

As a gesture towards community involvement, the new ASDA superstore invited two members to an opening preview. President Jenny Dewar and Dr Rashmi Routray reported that they had enjoyed their introduction to this new shopping outlet, not to mention the complimentary bag of goodies presented to them as they left.

Clubs were asked to react to offensive advertising by lodging complaints with the Advertising Standards Authority and also to append signatures to a letter of petition from the Church of Scotland to the Prime Minister concerning world poverty.

**Challenge**

In 1992/93, Mrs Janette Hodgson’s Presidency brought us a Royal Anniversary Challenge. This would operate over three years and was intended to stimulate service in others by personal involvement as well as fund raising.

Mrs Hodgson’s chosen charity was the Simona Trust for Romanian orphans and more funds were raised during that year by an auction of holiday memorabilia, plus ‘appreciated’ but ‘not required’ Christmas gifts and a very successful cocktail party. A ‘Skip a Lunch’ and ‘Save a Life’ effort was made for Save the Children.

We were somewhat shattered to learn that 1993 was The Year of the Elderly – the term ‘elderly’ apparently applying to anyone over the age of 55! We admit to being slightly reluctant about bringing our pet zimmers along to Club meetings.

**Dangerous Waste**

The Programme Action Committee presented a brief report on lectures given in Hillhead Library, Glasgow on Nuclear and Toxic Waste, a matter of some concern and it has been agreed that Clubs should try to study and monitor this subject in succeeding years. So in May 1993, as part of our investigations into the problems of pollution and the safe disposal of damaged waste, with particular reference to the impact on the environment, a visit was arranged to Hunterston Nuclear Power Station. This turned out to be a reassuring and informative trip, made even more enjoyable by the helpfulness of our driver and hostess and members came back with some unusual pictures of Soroptimists in hard hats and clumpy shoes.

A discussion also took place at an open meeting in May 1992, following a resolution from Federation HQ on Peace, Arms and Conflict Limitation.

**Attendances**

It was in 1992 that much discussion was instigated about the difficulty some members were facing in making 50% attendances; eventually it was felt that a good compromise was reached by redefining a proportion of lunchtime meetings as ‘informal’, thus helping working members with limited time and pressing commitments to attain the required attendance levels by rearranging evening meetings.

In March 1992, the Hamilton Club arranged a joint social evening with Kirkintilloch, Dumbarton and Paisley. This included a session of ‘Call my Bluff’; need we rub salt in the wounds by whispering that the Paisley team of Mrs Mary Stevenson and Mrs Ellen McQueen were winners?

**Subscriptions**

At the Annual General Meeting of April 1993, when President Una Ross was installed, it was announced that considering the increase in outlay necessary because of the rise in capitation fees and rumoured contributions to the Region travel pool, it would be essential that subscriptions be raised by £5 in each classification. This was agreed.

President Una nominated the Macmillan Nurses Appeal as her chosen charity, remarking that the money raised in Scotland for this service is spent in Scotland and the many letters of thanks the Club received from widely differing organisations proved that our helpful efforts were very much worthwhile.

**Mrs Margaret Alexander**

After six years as a most competent Secretary, Mrs Margaret Alexander retired and was thanked warmly for the support so willingly given to the various Presidents during that time. Mrs Elizabeth Cockburn agreed to take over as secretary; as a lawyer she should have no difficulty in keeping the Club on the straight and narrow.

From Scotland South Region meeting in April 1993, topics brought back for discussion included the impact on British life of Central European Time, the transportation of live animals, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and the kind of image Soroptimism projects.

The ‘image’ topic also arose at an important joint meeting in Crieff in May, attended by Mrs Ross, Mrs Neil, Mrs McQueen and Dr Ireland, at which the Federation Training Officer, Jane Barrie, a member of Soroptimist International of Taunton, showed a video made by West Country TV giving a media view of Soroptimism. Initially the movement was portrayed as middle class, clannish and elitist but as the programme moved on and the presenter’s questions were answered by Taunton members, he revised his opinion drastically and became convinced of the movement’s worth as a lively organisation, the first networking association for women, which should do more to publicise its aims and activities. In this connection a new training manual was being prepared and would be circulated via secretaries.

Congratulations were in order to acknowledge the fact that Soroptimist International’s Quadrennial project – Accepting the Challenge – originated in Scotland South Region. In this connection, two Federation officers took a lorry load of clothes to Hungary for refugee Moslem women from the Bosnian conflict and were shocked by what they found. Money was also badly needed, so a contribution was garnered from the Paisley Club.

**The Hong Kong Conference**

Six delegates from Paisley – Mrs Una Ross, President, Mrs Janette Hodgson, Miss Mary Lochhead, Miss Margaret Harper, Mrs Mary Stevenson, and Mrs Margaret Neil as President Elect of Scotland South Region, travelled to Hong Kong for the International Conference of 1993. Mrs Neil represented Scotland South Region at the opening ceremony and brought back to Paisley a report on the proceedings, the theme being ‘Wider Horizons’. Sir David Ford, acting Governor of Hong Kong, spoke on the subject of women in the colony, a topic expanded upon by Wong Leung Kam Shan, Lady Superintendent of Police, who talked about equal opportunities. Other concerns discussed were the problem of refugees, particularly boat people, child prostitution, AIDS in Thailand, slavery and international marketing. Generally it was considered to be a valuable conference and the entertainment, which included Chinese acrobats, a children’s choir and a wonderful Chinese banquet, was superb. Perhaps now was the time to think about forming a friendship link with a Far Eastern Club.

**Operation Raleigh**

An ex pupil of Miss May Burton’s at Gateside School took off late in 1993 on a ten week Operation Raleigh[[68]](#footnote-68) International Expedition to Zimbabwe. Kathryn Maguire was 24, profoundly deaf and suffered to some degree from cerebral palsy. Nevertheless, she successfully completed a rigorous weekend at Lochgelly to qualify for the trip and the Club agreed to sponsor her. She returned to a lunchtime meeting in January 1994 to give a talk on her experiences, which were very varied and included setting up medical clinics in small villages, building houses, studying soil samples and protecting endangered species of wild life. For fun – and some terror! – she also went white water rafting, so her return to her daily job as a clerical officer at a Job Centre must have been quite a pedestrian contrast.

Considerable interest was still taken in the Paisley Christian Social Action Centre which now has twenty one places for single homeless persons, nine registered with the Social Work Department; several of our members assist in serving meals, and soft goods and other furnishings have been donated.

It is estimated that there are six hundred and forty voluntary organisations operating in Renfrewshire and early in 1993 their work was put on display in local libraries. COVORD (the Council of Voluntary Organisations in Renfrewshire) was assisted in the setting up of the exhibition by our member Mrs Jenifer McFarlane, who was the Community Services Librarian. Jenifer also ran the libraries’ housebound service and in her turn could call on Soroptimist members to help with the delivery of books and tapes to the elderly and housebound.

Springtime in 1994 inspired a special Gardeners’ Road Show in Paisley Town Hall, promoted by the Club, which blossomed into a cash windfall for the ACCORD Hospice. Celebrity experts were Jim McColl from the BBC’s Beechgrove Garden series, Joe Waclawski and Colin Garrow from Renfrew District Council and Alistair Urquhart, a rose specialist from Greenhead Nurseries, Inchinnan. Displays and stalls were set up by Meadowsweet Herbs, Paisley and District Beekeepers Association, the RSPB and Paisley Wine Circle, and by the end of the evening the handsome sum of more than £2000 had been raised for the Macmillan Nurses Home Care Fund at ACCORD Hospice.

At the AGM of April 1994, Mrs Ellen McQueen retired as treasurer after serving most efficiently for six years and the warm expression of thanks to her, voiced by the retiring President, Mrs Una Ross, was heartily endorsed by all members. Miss Carolyn Lockhart agreed to take over treasurer’s duties and was assured of the Club’s support.

Owing to a traffic accident, the installation of Mrs Wyn Carlin as President for 1994/95 had to be postponed but she had recovered sufficiently for the ceremony to take place at the business meeting on 12 May. Her charities for the year were Women’s Aid, who will use our donation to fund a 24 hour helpline and Dream Flight, an imaginative project which whisks disabled and terminally ill children off on holidays of a lifetime in Florida and Disneyland. Costs are inevitably high but the rewards are immeasurable. Dignity and emergency packs were prepared for Women’s Aid, the Salvation Army, Jericho House and the Christian Action Centre where the new dining hall was officially opened on 17 October 1994. Members continue to serve evening meals there on a rota basis.

The local committee of Save the Children charity celebrated a 75th birthday and gifts sent to this fund were much appreciated.

During 1994, the International Year of the Family, a study of the provision of nursery education in Renfrewshire was undertaken.

In Paisley, in line with the Regional project, we concentrated on women’s health, in particular, hormone replacement therapy, osteoporosis and the effects of smoking, drug taking and the diet of women. Information was also collated on genetic engineering and this material passed to SI Headquarters.

**Sponsorship**

Linda Stewart of Cardonald, a third year student at Glasgow University, sought sponsorship for her proposed trip to Puerto Rico to work on dengue fever. It was agreed that she would be a suitable candidate for help from the 3S Trust[[69]](#footnote-69), so an application form was sent to her.

Another appeal for sponsorship came from Claire Pettinger, to enable her to take up a place on the Raleigh International Expedition to Belize from March to May 1995. A contribution of £100 was recommended and the Club subsequently received news from Claire from her base in Belize.

A donation was also sent to Goodwill Children’s Home Harvest Appeal towards converting a hall into classrooms and providing equipment.

**Awards**

One of our members’ who had run a successful coffee shop in the town since 1978, had picked up a Food Safety Hygiene Award each year since its inception by Renfrew District Environmental Health Service. Miss Carol Carruth was justly proud of her achievement, which included a “No Puffin” award for providing space in her premises for non smokers. The definitive accolade came her way in 1994 with the Silver Award for Food Safety Hygiene. (Her expertise in tossing up exotic snacks for our various events was also pretty impressive!)

**AIDS**

During World AIDS Week, 24 November to 1 December 1994, it was recommended that Soroptimists campaign by word of mouth to advise all motorists to include latex gloves in their first aid kits to avoid contact at traffic accidents.

**Winter Floods**

December 1994 brought disastrous floods to areas of Renfrewshire and environs and Paisley was badly affected. The Mary Russell School, among other locations, suffered a lot of damage including the ruination of all its Christmas gifts and decorations. Immediate expressions of concern and offers of help came from many Soroptimist sources, including our friendship club Harrogate; from Birmingham where a recent conference had been held; from clubs as near as Perth and Leith and as far away as Wales and the USA. Mrs Madge Aitken, a Paisley lady, President of Hoylake and West Kirby Club, sent a personal cheque. All these gifts, along with our own contribution, were added to the Provost’s Flood Appeal Fund and our warmest thanks were returned for these true examples of mutual support in times of emergency.

**Jubilee Year 1995/1996**

President Margaret MacKean’s chosen charity for our fiftieth year was the Cancer Research Campaign Scotland, and the Programme Action theme on health concerns continued e.g. research into cures for cancer in women and counselling for sufferers and their families; also a discussion forum on care in the community.

In May, a happy and sociable beginning was made to this special year by a successful summer outing to the Popinjay Restaurant and the Clyde Valley. This was followed in June by a special event in Seedhill Playing Fields, Paisley, to raise funds for the ACCORD Hospice at which the Club ran a stall of ‘Roll-a-Penny’ and ‘Roll-a-Ball’ and supplied a doll for ‘Guess her Name’.

To celebrate the original date on which the proposal was made to set up a Soroptimist Club in Paisley, there was a party on 18 November 1995 and early in 1996, senior members contributed to a ‘Night of Reminiscences’ when early days and events were recalled.

The fiftieth Annual Dinner in February 1996 was followed on the succeeding Sunday by a service of dedication in Paisley Abbey and a Civic Reception in the newly refurbished Town Hall. The local authority also honoured Soroptimist International of Paisley by setting out an appropriately designed flower bed in Dunn Square Gardens in the centre of the town.

**Looking to the Future**

The International Quadrennial project 1995/1999 was launched at the 1995 International Convention in San Francisco in July. President Margaret MacKean attended, and former Paisley and Scotland South Region President, Mrs Margaret Neil, also attended the Soroptimist International Board meetings as the Region’s observer.

In October, there was a good attendance by Paisley members at the annual conference in the SECC, Glasgow, the theme being “Accept Tomorrow’s Challenge” – a challenge which the Paisley Club continued to confront with determination as it moved into its next fifty years.

**On the Lighter Side**

As we looked back on the first fifty years of the Club, apart from “Service before Self” and fund raising, life for Paisley Soroptimists was not all real and earnest. It may read like self congratulation (which of course it was!) but the annual Paisley dinner rated high on the scale of sociability and entertainment. Held on an evening in February as near as feasible to the date of the original Charter dinner, they drew many guests and friends into a warm and hospitable circle of people from a wide spectrum of society.

Perhaps harking back to the local history of the weavers and the tradition of fashion – witness the grace of the Paisley shawl – they were also rather splendid affairs; indeed one visitor was heard to query whether he had strayed into the set of Dallas[[70]](#footnote-70); one other male guest obviously did not realise quite how splendid, as suddenly discovering a line of very elegant ladies, ‘en grande tenue’[[71]](#footnote-71), ready to receive him, executed the swiftest u turn in history and came back in remarkably short time if slightly breathless, having achieved a record breaking quick change into immaculate dinner jacket and black tie.

Speakers were distinguished and witty and ranged from legal eagles to Burns’ enthusiasts, from the academic – one speaker actually quoted the Greek alphabet – to the conversationalist. A full list would be wonderful but albeit impossible, but would have to include Mr Festus Moffatt, treasurer and magistrate of Falkirk Town Council, Honorary Sheriff Substitute and President of the Ice Hockey Federation! Also from the early days, Mr George Ballantyne, renowned for his appearance as conductor of the choir which annually paid tribute to the Paisley poet, Robert Tannahill, with outdoor summer concerts of his songs performed in a natural amphitheatre on the Gleniffer Braes. Another speaker was Mr John M. Bannerman, OBE, JP, LL.B outstanding player on both political and rugby fields.

Perhaps a rather exceptional after dinner speech was made by the plastic surgeon, Mr Thomas Gibson M.B., F.R.C.S. as it was entirely in rhyme. It would be wonderful to quote the whole content, which included the classics, history ancient and modern, suffragettes and – yes, sex! Just an opening line or two:

Adam in his Eden was contented on his own,

What a pity great Jehovah didn’t leave him there alone

But wrought some plastic surgery on one of Adam’s ribs

And very soon that woman Eve was telling Adam fibs

That was just the start of all the trouble that ensued

As man through the ages by woman was pursued.....

We’ll leave it there but the entire epic can be read on Page 11 of our scrap book

Men did not have it all their own way. We also enjoyed the talents of the Rev. Euphemia Irvine, the first woman minister of the Church of Scotland; Lady Avonside OBE[[72]](#footnote-72), back in her native town; Lady Jean Fforde[[73]](#footnote-73) from Arran and the indestructible Dr. Isobel Mair, MBE[[74]](#footnote-74), who made two memorable appearances at our functions.

Admittedly our Presidents have been heard to mutter mild complaints following dinners, usually about the necessity to let out waistbands and search for effective weight losing diets.

Many more happy occasions figured in our social calendar; the very first ‘fun’ activity began in January 1950 with the formation of a country dancing class under proper instruction. This group became so proficient that they were able to entertain at the annual dinner in 1951 and continued their practices for several years. Then there were the summer outings, sometimes jointly with our ‘daughter’ clubs and including treasure hunts, visits to the ‘Carrick’[[75]](#footnote-75), floral pageants and children’s parties, Easter bonnet fantasies and a memorable evening with Mr James Spankie, manager of TV AM Scotland, who with audience involvement, set up an interviewing situation with Club members acting the various parts, including floor staff and camera persons – a somewhat elastic situation which might have ended in mayhem had our members not been such talented Thespians.

For who could forget, having witnessed it, the famous all singing, all dancing pantomime, “The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, staged in 1974, written, produced and acted by a huge cast of – well, our Past Presidents! West End Gilbert and Sullivan it wasn’t, more Paisley Doily and Cart, but who wouldn’t have fallen in love or even into the aisles, with the dainty and fluttering Fairy Flounder, the swaggering Prince of Calside (there is no truth in the canard[[76]](#footnote-76) that it took the best part of a bottle of famous stimulant to get him/her into his/her costume), or shuddered at the mind blowing demon and the terrifyingly wicked Landlord?

Much nearer the present day, we were whisked off on a Round the World air tour, complete with hostesses, appropriate sound effects, Parisian can-can dancers, grass skirted hula girls and a whole menagerie of Walt Disney animals. Oscars to all of them.

**And so to the next section of our history...**

1996 saw Betty Smith installed as President, supported by Mary Stevenson as Secretary, Carolyn Lockhart as Treasurer and Elizabeth Cumming as Programme Action Officer.

Betty worked as a Systems Administrator in Group Four Total Security prior to her retirement and in her leisure played golf and bridge. Her year as President was dogged by a fall resulting in a broken kneecap with further complications, but she carried on and with the support of President Elect Elizabeth MacIntosh had a busy and productive year.

There were two new starts made; one a newsletter for the Club, produced by Mary Stevenson and Anna Slack. The aim of the newsletter, to be published monthly, was to inform housebound members of Club activities and help keep them in touch and part of the Club.

The second was the setting up of the Paisley Child Contact Centre in the Wynd Centre. The Contact Centre provided a neutral meeting place to allow divorced parents access to their children and Paisley Soroptimists became involved at committee and staffing levels.

President Betty also chose it as her charity and to this end the main fundraiser was a Christmas Cocktail, held in November, raising £2100 for the Centre.

As a contender for Scotland South Region’s Woman in the Community Award, we had proposed Margaret McCulloch. Maggie as she is known, was in charge of Paisley’s Ferguslie Park Library, for a long time a no go area as far as libraries were concerned. Maggie and her dedicated team pioneered the library service there very successfully and she had given a very interesting and informative talk on her work to the Club. Unfortunately she did not win the award, but she was very highly commended.

Scotland South Region had organised a seminar for senior schoolgirls called ‘Women Work Wonders’. We circulated schools in our area for participants, and Renfrew Trinity and St. Mirin’s Academy responded. In all, ten students attended, transported by Club members to Jordanhill.

The SIGBI Federation conference was held in Harrogate that year, which enabled us to meet with the Club whose members had so kindly supported our member Jane Williams when she was undergoing therapeutic treatment at a centre there after her horrific road accident[[77]](#footnote-77).

Our financial support for the Simona Trust was no longer required as the Hospice for terminally ill orphans in Romania, founded by Mrs Wendy Ferguson, was now being funded by the local medical authorities. As a final effort we raised £100 by raffling a picture presented by Anna Slack.[[78]](#footnote-78)

We must have eaten a lot of Smarties in the summer of 1996, because £300 was raised for the 3S Trust[[79]](#footnote-79) by emptying the tubes of chocolate buttons, and refilling them with 20p pieces.

Socially we celebrated the 75th anniversary of Soroptimist International at the business meeting in October, by cutting a cake and toasting Soroptimism – the minutes don’t specify with what! We had our annual Christmas party at the Brabloch Hotel, Paisley and the summer outing was a tour of Victorian Glasgow with supper at Harry Ramsden’s (Fish restaurant). The annual dinner held in the Normandy Hotel, Renfrew was a very happy evening.

The year was a very difficult one for membership as only two names emerged as possibilities, both of whom had to refuse because of other commitments, and there were two resignations, one for ill health and the other for pressure of work.

**1997 – 98**

New President Elizabeth McIntosh was ably supported in her year by the same team as before.

Elizabeth’s category was Food Consultant, a most useful one for producing recipe booklets for fundraisers, and advising on catering for social occasions. She spent most of her career at the Scottish Milk Marketing Board in Paisley promoting dairy products, before working for the last seven years on her own, involved in Home Economics.

Still finding our way about the Child Contact Centre, Jess Ireland, who was still on the Centre’s Board, arranged a meeting of volunteers in Betty Smith’s home with the centre organiser Heather Baillie. President Elizabeth’s chosen charity was Professor Dan Young’s Neo Natal Ward in the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Yorkhill, and the fundraiser was a Christmas Fayre and Fashion Show in October, raising £3229 for this and our other charities. Professor Young gave a fascinating account of his work with ‘his babies’ at the September meeting.[[80]](#footnote-80)

Another excellent speaker was the home grown James Wardrop, Depute Lord Lieutenant for Renfrewshire, who proposed the toast to Soroptimism at the annual dinner. The other main social occasion of the year, the Christmas Party in ACCORD Day Centre and the summer outing to Seamill Hydro were very successful. Whether all this eating prompted one of our Programme Action subjects is debatable, but the presentation was ‘Death in the Kitchen’ by Sam ‘n’ Ella.

We had nominated Gillian Bennie for a grant from the 3S Trust for her proposed year teaching in Chile under the auspices of Project Trust. Both Gillian and the Club were delighted when she was awarded £520 and she subsequently related her experience at a Club meeting in January 2000.

Very aptly, Margaret Thomson and Jean Craig were interviewed on radio on the subject of friendships, and three other members of the Club also achieved fame through awards. Nothing if not diverse in their interests, they were an MBA[[81]](#footnote-81)for Noreen Gethin, the Provosts’ Community Award for her work in Guiding and with children with disabilities for Elsie Sutherland, and the privilege of exhibiting her dog Robbie at Crufts for Barbara Scorgie.

Very shortly after her 90th birthday, Emily Dick died. Emily was a well respected elder stateswoman in the Club, serving as President on 1966-67. Her profession was primary teaching, which she did with old fashioned thoroughness and a genuine concern for her pupils. In the Club her advice and observations were delivered with a certain dry wit and twinkle in her eye.

Membership seemed to fare better this year, as twelve ladies were approached, evinced an interest in the aims and objects of Soroptimism, but found that the attendance requirement was a drawback.

**1998 – 1999**

Dr Jess Ireland became our 52nd President, with a new secretary, as Betty Smith took over from Mary Stevenson. Dr Jess graduated in medicine at Glasgow University, and after some years in General Practice changed direction towards Public Health, particularly with Child and School Health[[82]](#footnote-82).

Our support was requested by ACCORD for their application for Lottery funding and from the SI Club in 63 Bayswater Road, London[[83]](#footnote-83) for support in their lottery by buying shares. The second lottery proved profitable as we won prizes more than once which made Margaret Neil’s report in the newsletter of her visit even more interesting.

As part of our service commitment, Mary Dennison made and served a Christmas lunch at the Christian Social Action Centre on Sunday 20 December (possibly using some of the recipes for Christmas cocktails given in the current newsletter), and another group took part in tidying up operations in Gleniffer Park during National Clean Up month in April. This second activity was a practical extension of our study over the session on the Scotland South Regional theme ‘A Sustainable Environment’, and we had several speakers on related subjects such as conservation, pesticides and waste management. A more personal waist management was also considered along with healthy eating and fighting the flab.

A laminated wall chart, beautifully illustrated by Margaret Neil called ‘Handy Hints for a Healthy Happy Kitchen’ was produced by the Programme Action Committee and sold by donation at the Club and the Scotland South Regional meeting and study day on October 3rd, raising £81.27 for the Benevolent Fund.

Other Regional business included a petition called ‘Living Shadows’ which protested the subjugation of women in Afghanistan, signed by thirty six of our members and, as two years previously, a Seminar for Senior Pupils attended by four pupils from Linwood.

Following receipt of a questionnaire drawn up by Harris Research, Liz Traynor and a small subcommittee debated the questions, which were on changes to the criteria for membership, attendance, structure and the finances of the Federation.

President Jess’s chosen charity was the Education of Young Diabetics, and Dr Cameron Shepherd gave us a very illuminating talk on the subject. The fundraiser was a Silent Auction, which raised £2690.

Socially, the Christmas celebration was held at Haggs Castle Golf Club in the form of a dinner, and in April, a most enjoyable Friendship Evening was held with our daughter clubs, with the local author Evelyn Hood as a speaker. The summer outing to Gleddoch House took place in June and the views over the Clyde on a clear summer’s evening were breathtaking. The chef gave a cookery demonstration.

Mary Stevenson received a presentation from her church for fifty years service as organist in St. Mirin’s Cathedral, Paisley. She must have started as a schoolgirl! Although our financial support is no longer required for the Simona Trust, we continue to knit and donate children’s clothing for the Hospice and an interesting sideline, the fur coats we can no longer wear in our politically correct climate were welcomed by the adult carers in the bitterly cold winters of Romania.

**1999 – 2000**

In the Millennium year, when we were all worried about computers crashing, Elizabeth Traynor became President, ably supported by the same team.

Liz graduated in Food Science at Strathclyde University and worked with the famous Brown and Polson Company, subsequently CPC, a household name for cornflour products and latterly mayonnaise and other items found in every kitchen. She held various positions in manufacturing and technical management across the UK, all within the company.

A new Constitution for Soroptimist International was under way which everyone felt was a good thing, and Dorothy Reilly and Marjory Chirnside from Scotland South Region came to a meeting to explain the proposed changes. The new Quadrennial project ‘Limbs for Life’ was started by Ann Garvie[[84]](#footnote-84), and in collaboration with the Red Cross, the aim was to provide artificial limbs and to train the personnel required to fit them, where limbs had been lost through the action of anti personnel mines. Areas to be covered were Afghanistan, Georgia and Angola.

The new Regional theme was Women and Prison in Scotland. The Federation Conference in Dublin was not a great success for a variety of reasons. Accommodation was limited, the registration procedure was poor and one session was marred by inappropriate questions that were allowed on matters which could have been resolved by earlier correspondence. This is all rather unusual at conference.

Within our own Club, a proposal was put forward to alter the banding of subscriptions to reduce the amount paid by housebound members. After full discussion at Executive and Club level, a decision was postponed until the following year, when it was reconsidered, and a suitably reduced amount was agreed. New or different categories were also under consideration to attempt the required balance of categories.

As part of the ongoing exercise to secure and keep new members, a New Members’ Night was held in Ellen McQueen’s home to explain the workings of a Soroptimist Club, with emphasis of course on our own. Whether as a result of this or not, we welcomed three new members during the year.

While this was cause for rejoicing, we were saddened by the sudden death of Morag Kirkwood. Morag had been a devoted and generous member since 1961, and a few short months before her passing had bought and wrapped the dignity parcels which we distributed annually at Christmas to Jericho House, the Christian Social Action Centre and the Salvation Army. Being Morag, she wished to remain anonymous. She preferred working quietly in the background, but this in no way diminished her contribution to the Club, a contribution that sometimes included ‘mother sitting’, to allow another Club member to attend the Club or a function.

On a happier note, Ann Cameron was awarded Honorary Membership of the Club in recognition of her unstinting contribution to Soroptimism over 32 years, serving in many executive positions leading to the Presidency in 1973–74. Her Chain Gang[[85]](#footnote-85) must have been one of the strongest of all chain gangs, as they went on holiday together, achieving a visit to Iceland on one occasion. Latterly failing health curtailed her activities except for knitting, and she faithfully provided lovely clothes for children and babies in Ethiopia, Romania and Bosnia. She also donated beautifully dressed dolls for Jess Ireland’s PANDA Centre, and for prizes at Club functions. Ann loved a good argument, conducted amicably, and was heard to complain that Business meetings were rubber stamp affairs nowadays.

President Liz chose Renfrew District Carer’s Centre as her charity, as she felt it was a local charity and relatively unknown. The fundraiser was A Musical Extravaganza, which raised £1400.

The social events of the year were a Christmas meal at Madison Square Bistro and the summer outing to Glengoyne Distillery followed by supper in the Kirkhouse Inn, Strathblane. The annual dinner was held in the Normandy Hotel, Renfrew.

**2000 – 2001**

President Morven Findlay started her year in office with Betty Smith as Secretary as before, but a new Treasurer in Carole Dempster and a new Programme Action Officer in Grace Scott.

Morven claims her career is non-existent, but she has worked in the family home for over forty years. While that is true, she has also been heavily involved in charity work, at both ends of the age spectrum – Children First, Abbeyfield and Glasgow Old People’s Welfare. She just hasn’t been paid for it.

Focusing on the Programme Action theme, Women and Prison in Scotland, the Governor of Cornton Vale Women’s Prison in Stirling addressed a Region meeting and our own Club had a speaker on the subject in November. After this meeting there was discussion on practical ways to help these young women (average age 26) and it was suggested that we provide them with dignity packs. However on consulting the prison authorities, they highlighted difficulties in the way of this suggestion, and indicated that a monetary contribution to the Common Good Fund would be more appropriate.

Sadly one of our new members, Susan Stanley, died in America following a major operation. Susan’s category was freelance journalist and we had barely got to know her, but felt the loss of a promising member. Also, two senior members, Iris Rankine and Maisie Young, found they were no longer able to continue as members, but two new members had joined, and there was a transfer from Birmingham.

During the summer, Barbara Scorgie and Jean Ramsay vacationed in the United States, and took the opportunity of visiting our Friendship link in Laguna Beach, California. Slightly overawed by the pink Cadillac used to transport them to the Club meeting (membership 12, President is for life) they nevertheless managed to keep their wits about them to note several salient points and gave us a lively account of their visit.

This year’s chosen charity was the Neonatal Unit at Yorkhill and the fundraiser, a Gardener’s Road Show in February which raised £1500. Was the gardening theme perhaps inspired by the Regional Garden Party held in Hopetoun House, Edinburgh the previous June, which raised £5000 for Limbs for Life? Both occasions took place in inclement weather

An interesting point, six of our members attending the SIGBI Conference in Cardiff, stayed at a winery in the Vale of Glamorgan. The minutes do not reveal who arranged this.

Circumstances dictate change, and as the Club wishes to keep in touch with its housebound members, the liaison duty has been extended to encompass as many members as possible on a rota system. This has worked to everyone’s advantage, and means that the housebound ladies are seeing a variety of visitors, and variety is the spice of life. Here it may be said that one member to which this does not apply is Jane Williams, as she lives in Appin, rather far for an afternoon visit. Severe injuries incurred in a road accident forced her to retire to Appin, but her opposite makes sure she is kept informed of Club activities and Jane herself makes every effort to be as involved in Club affairs as she can be from that distance. She is a faithful attendee at the Annual Dinner, and enjoys visits from Club members from time to time. Ann Cameron’s knitting needles still click busily away and she has been joined as a knitter by Maureen Rankine. Maureen was a waitress at the Brabloch Hotel (where we used to meet) and on seeing some of Ann’s work, volunteered to knit for us, which she has done with skill and regularity over the years and this in spite of serious illness. Some more active service was undertaken by Elsie Sutherland and Jenifer McFarlane, who did some sponsored cycling for Save the Children.

**2001 – 2002**

President Jenifer McFarlane inherited the support team of Betty Smith, Secretary; Carole Dempster, Treasurer and Grace Scott, Programme Action Officer. Jenifer’s title of Information, Lifelong Learning and ICT Manager reflects the changing face of libraries, for she trained as a librarian and was a Community Librarian with Renfrew District Libraries before becoming Community Services Librarian and then through various restructurings reaching her present post, and being part of the Senior Management Team.

Travel and transport seemed to feature largely in this session, with a visiting speaker on Alaska and the Rockies and an in house production by member Margaret Thomson called Carry on Cruising, in which she had some unsought help from fellow member and cruiser Jean Craig. Two further speakers’ subjects were 150 years of Calmac and the Tall Ships Race at Greenock, from a behind the scene point of view. Member Margaret Alexander’s daughter Laura described Sleeping Around Scotland, that is for the Scottish Tourist Board, and member Margaret Neil described her experiences at her son’s wedding in the United States. After ranging far and wide, the penultimate meeting brought us back home with not only a speaker but a dog, as the subject was Pet Therapy. One of our members, Jean Ramsay is well into this, and takes her own dogs on a round of visits to residents in care homes, visits which bring much pleasure to these residents.

Still on the canine subject – President Jenifer’s charity was Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, and the main fundraiser was an Ideal Health Exhibition, which netted £1200. There was a subsidiary and hilarious fundraiser within the club in the form of an Easter Bonnet competition which raised £113 for a Regional project for AIDS victims in South Africa.

Changing circumstances in the work place meant many members could not attend lunch meetings. As we wished to continue some lunch meetings for the sake of our less fit members, it was decided to discount these meeting for attendance purposes. As a Club, we were not alone in this dilemma, as it was exercising the minds of Scotland South Region as well.

It was put to the Club that the programme is a Club responsibility and members were urged to suggest ideas and speakers for the Programme Committee to organise.

Throughout President Jenifer’s year, we felt we had to wear our best bib and tucker, as June Young was acting as Club photographer and her camera ran red hot.

To fund the story bags we proposed giving to Women’s Aid, a bookstall was arranged in January in the Piazza Shopping Centre in Paisley. This venture raised £85, and proved such a popular event that it was held annually for several years. Membership continued to see saw, against two deaths and four resignations, we only had two new members and a prospective transfer. The membership committee debated the problem thoroughly and came up with several suggestions for recruitment, increasing general awareness and improving some of our internal procedures.

The two deaths were of a long standing member and a new member. Marion Gow joined the Club in 1966 and served as President in 1975-76. She was a forthright lady and a keen bridge player, and her career in teaching Home Economics took her through several Principal Teacher posts to Adviser for Renfrewshire. Here her influence was strongly felt in expanding and upgrading the discipline throughout the County, and latterly extended to Argyll and Bute. Coincidentally on one of her trips to one of the islands, she shared a small plane with Jean Coghill, a Paisley Soroptimist and Past President, bound on a similar mission for Religious Education. The other loss we suffered was Fiona Farmer, who had barely joined the Club when she became ill, but we miss her for herself and for her potential.

Regretfully too we had to accept Mary Dennison’s resignation which meant we had no member on the Christian Social Action Centre Board.

In Region affairs, a new theme was sought, as Women in Prison had come to an end. There were four choices for the new theme – Anorexia; Paedophilia on the Internet; Oral Cancer, and Asylum Seekers. We preferred Asylum Seekers and this was adopted at Regional level.

We had submitted several names to the 3 S Trust for consideration and two were successful at this time. The first was Calum Fisher for a year in Pakistan and he was granted £450. The second was Ellen Kilburn for a year in Sri Lanka who received £500.

**2002 – 2003**

President Elsie Sutherland enjoyed the support of the usual team.

Having had successful treatment for polio as a child, Elsie took up Paediatric Physiotherapy as a career, which she undertook in Renfrewshire. Latterly she worked mainly with children with dyspraxia (a condition affecting physical coordination). Also stemming from her own contact with polio she was firstly Scottish Chairperson of the British Polio Fellowship, then Treasurer. She was also treasurer of her church, Wallneuk North and has a lifelong connection with the Girl Guide movement.

SIGBI Conference took place in Glasgow on 31 October – 2 November, affording us the opportunity to act as stewards (though this has been done at further away venues). The conference was voted a great success. Several motions were debated which reflected the changing attitudes to the structure of the Federation offices, the eligibility of members both in recruitment and taking office, and a proposed rewriting of the Constitution. Good news was that the Quadrennial theme, Limbs for Life, had surpassed its monetary target though barely halfway through its time span.

Programme wise, our woman who goes to London, Margaret Neil, gave an update on the Soroptimist Residential Club at 63 Bayswater Road, and Jean Ramsay’s husband steered us through the ethics of Biotechnology. A talk by a local Rotarian, Carol Puthucheary, was very stimulating and thought provoking. We extended our support to Women’s Aid, and made it seasonable by providing smallish decorated Christmas trees to be given to families housed by Women’s Aid in temporary accommodation. The festive season also saw our last meeting at the Brabloch Hotel which was closing at the end of the year. This ended what was a very happy association over many years. Naturally nowhere is perfect, but in spite of some drawbacks, we had always been made to feel at home there. Future meetings until the end of June were held at the Normandy Hotel in Renfrew.

President Elsie’s chosen charity was the Maxi Richards Foundation[[86]](#footnote-86), a one woman campaign to rehabilitate drug addicts. Maxi started by housing addicts in her own home and was so successful that she had to take over larger premises and some staff to carry on her good work. There was a rolling programme of fundraisers starting with a garden party in Morven Findlay’s lovely garden raising £365, and the main event was a St. Andrew’s Night Ceilidh in Paisley Town Hall, raising £1679. Following on in the spring there was a Bridge Night, £448 and a noisy Beetle Drive, £219.

At the start of the session, Club members had been encouraged to suggest subjects and/or speakers for the current programme, and that we would try to involve more of the general public in our fundraisers, partly to ease the onus on members but more importantly to raise awareness of Soroptimism.

The membership committee under Barbara Scorgie embarked on producing a New Members leaflet and a Club Directory. The leaflet to be given to new members, tries to guide those novices through the intricacies of club procedures – it should prove useful to longer standing members too!

About the 3S Trust, we had submitted Julie Miller’s name, and her request for a grant for her year in Chile was awarded £200. There was some disquiet about this, not about the grant, but that S.I.Paisley had had no formal notification of our candidates’ acceptance, but learned from a letter of thanks from Julie herself. At the same time, an application from Isobel Gray for a group sponsorship for Girl Guides had not been accepted, and though President Elsie was informed verbally of it, no communication had been made to the candidate herself. We duly rectified this and Elsie was seeking some clarification on the procedures. This was yielded at a subsequent Regional meeting, when procedure was stated that applicants will be notified within eight weeks of the status of their application, and then the applicant notifies the club.

**2003 – 2004**

President Carolyn Lockhart was the new President heading the old team.

Carolyn joined SI Paisley in 1991 as a Senior Bank Officer, but later switched to the Civil Service as an Administrative officer in Jobcentre Plus. She served the Club as Treasurer for six years, and after a year’s break, joined the Executive as Vice President, President Elect and now President. She is active in church affairs and is also involved in Guiding.

The Club Directory and new Member’s Booklet, started by Barbara Scorgie last session was continued by her, with notable help from Liz McFarlan and other committee members. They are now complete and available and should prove a great help. The Directory expands on the syllabus, providing further information on members’ interests, plus photographs, and will be a good networking tool. Questions had been raised about confidentiality, but Barbara was confident that the data was protected. The Beginner’s Guide to Soroptimism, given to each new member was expanded into a loose leaf copy for consultation and reference.

Elsie Sutherland attended the International Convention of Soroptimist International in Sydney in July / August 2003, and reported a very happy and relaxed conference. She had extended her trip both before and after the Convention to do some sightseeing – well when one goes so far away........

Reports also came from the Belfast Conference, and according to the appropriate minutes ‘the conference ended with a round of parties’ but over what happened at the parties the President drew a discreet veil.

Talks during the year included Safety in the Home, from a security point of view, and given by a very young constable – they do get younger! Another talk was Food, Glorious Food, by the chef at the Normandy Hotel, this on a subject dear to our hearts. November was a busy month as not only did we Stretch and Flex (suitably graded exercises) but we enjoyed a social evening at Dumbarton with our daughter Clubs from Kirkintilloch and Hamilton.

President Carolyn’s chosen charity was the Haematology ward in the Royal Alexandra Hospital, and the fundraisers were a Car Rally, Bridge and Beetle Nights, and a Line Dancing Event. An interesting fact here is that a fashion show had been suggested, but apparently this one time sure fire fundraiser is out of fashion!

We greatly regretted the loss of one of our Honorary Members, Ann Cameron, who joined the Club in 1967 and was President in 1973/74. Although housebound for several years, Ann still took a lively interest in the Club, and seemed to have a direct line to the seat of all knowledge as she could frequently inform her visitors of Club activities before they knew of them themselves. She knitted little garments almost up to the end, and many a child in Romania and Bosnia has reason to be grateful for her industry.

As if this was not enough, we also lost five valued members through resignation, mainly due to work and / or family commitments. It is a problem we share with other Soroptimist Clubs and one which is always under consideration.

Compromises in attendance rules have been made, and others debated both within the Club and at Federation level.

International Soroptimism lost one of its ‘greats’ with the death of Catherine Salt of SI Glasgow South[[87]](#footnote-87), who had served as Region, Federation and International President.

At the beginning of the session there had been discussion about and research into alternative venues, and it was decided to continue at the Normandy Hotel. However, as time went on it was obvious that the hotel was not giving satisfaction, and after further discussion and research the Glynhill was voted the best alternative option.

**2004 – 2005**

President Grace was as usual ably supported by Betty as Secretary, Carole as Treasurer and Jenifer at Programme Action.

Grace started work in an accountant’s office, but soon changed to what she does best, the Residential Care of Children. After taking a Social Work degree, she continued in Child Care within Renfrewshire Social Work Department, rising to Assistant District Officer for Children and Elderly Care. Although having taken early retirement, she continued her commitment to care with sessional work in Adoption and Fostering Assessment.

Her chosen charity was Paisley Threads, a Barnardos’ project to help homeless young people in this area. Fundraising was achieved by a quiz night which raised over £600, a Line Dancing event which raised £413 and a Bridge Drive raising £408. President Grace has her own method of fundraising. A Saturday afternoon spent washing dishes at a friend’s charity garden party, resulted in a cheque being sent to her own charity in gratitude. Over and above the normal fundraisers there was an appeal for the Tsunami Disaster Fund, which brought in £245.70 and a fund set up for the 60th anniversary of the Club in 2005.

All is not fundraising however. A talk early in the session on Erskine Care persuaded one member to volunteer for work there. Unfortunately our service connection with Paisley Child Contact Centre ceased for a variety of reasons, though they still received a monetary grant, and our links with Women’s Aid remained strong in grants of money and in kind.

Some Club members had participated in a Federation survey to monitor facilities at railway stations. The information gleaned was collated and published with copies being sent to the Railway Companies, and in Scotland to the Scottish Executive, but no comment had been received.

A rather charming idea was to plant blue bowls with yellow daffodils, displaying the Soroptimist colours, and when they bloomed, they were distributed to ACCORD, St. Vincent’s Hospice, Paisley, Abbeyfield in Johnstone, Adams House and Elderslie Care Home.

A small committee was set up under Elsie Sutherland’s chairmanship to consider ideas for our 60th anniversary. Disappointingly we need to be 75 years old before we can be granted a Civic Reception, but other ideas are forthcoming. The emphasis is to be on raising awareness of Soroptimism, but we will have a birthday party for ourselves while pursuing ways of serving the community.

New technology creeps in: last year Jenifer McFarlane prepared her excellent Power Point presentation on Paisley for the Reid Kerr Civic Reception and Liz McFarlan’s expertise (and equipment) is being put to good use in projecting the Club’s calendar and committee personnel at the start of the Club year, and generating printouts and other information as required.

We lost a well loved member in Margaret Thomson. Margaret was a very able President in 1985-86 and her pawky wit enlivened many a meeting both then and throughout the years. She was a lawyer by profession, spending much of her career in local government where she crossed swords with councillors on several occasions in her capacity as legal adviser. She rose to become District Administrator of Renfrew District, a post of the highest importance and quite an achievement for a woman.

We applied successfully to the 3S Trust for sponsorship for three candidates: Laura McKenzie, Calum Fisher and Mhairi Fisher.

The first Regional dinner was held on 14 November 2004, and apart from the food, was a great success.

A copy of the rewritten constitution was received and studied by a small committee, who reported little change.

The unfortunate lack of a Vice President and consequently a President Elect, cast a shadow over the session, but help came at the last minute, and the Secretary was able to announce a full team at the AGM and the Club’s future was assured.

This problem of reluctance to become office bearers and of securing new members, is common to other Clubs, and was tackled at a Regional training day held in Perth in February 2005. SI Dumbarton showed a presentation on how they had changed their Club structure to enable them to operate more successfully, and at our invitation, their President came to an Executive Committee meeting to explain it. After a most interesting discussion with her, we found that we already did as they did, with one major difference, in that their committees were autonomous, and could act without referring back to the Executive and the Club. This was reported back to our Club at an Extraordinary Business meeting and was discussed there.

**2005 – 2006**

President (Elizabeth) Liz McFarlan started her year with a new Secretary, as Grace Scott replaced Betty Smith who had given six years of sterling service in that office. Otherwise she retained Carole Dempster as Treasurer and Jenifer McFarlane as Programme Action Officer.

She also started her year with some advice from our ‘country member’ Jane Williams, who sent her a card with the legend ‘Be reasonable – do it my way’.

Liz began her working life as a nurse, specialising in midwifery before switching to education at the then Jordanhill College, though continuing her interest by being involved in teacher education for nurses and midwives. Latterly she became Senior Lecturer and Course Director for the Teacher Education Course for the Post School Sector at Jordanhill, which had by then become the Faculty of Education of Strathclyde University. She retired in January 2005. She was Set Apart as a Reader in the Church of Scotland in June 2004, working – hard - in this capacity since August 2004. In any spare time she has, she enjoys walking, photography, computing and Suduko.

This being our 60th anniversary, some of the plans came to fruition within this year, notably the Friendship evening with our ‘family’ and the Birthday Party. At the Friendship event, our daughter clubs entered happily into the spirit of things, the theme being the 1960’s and appeared in all sorts of costumes purporting to represent those swinging times. After a good meal, a musical quiz taxed our memories, as tunes of each decade were played by Madam President on her CD player while June Young gave a commentary of events in the Club and in the world during that decade. As if this was not enough, as each decade was announced, a Club member gowned in the style of a musical of that decade sashayed among the guests – it was magic.

The birthday party was for ourselves, and as our venue, Scotscraig, could not accommodate us on a suitable evening, we broke with tradition and held it in the afternoon after the Annual Church Service. Again it was a thoroughly enjoyable day, with the serious dedication of the Church Service, and then the relaxed and happy celebrations of the party.

Our other anniversary plans were still to come, but took the form of an exhibition in Paisley Museum in July and a themed flower bed in Barshaw Park over the summer. These helped raise awareness of Soroptimism, as did the garden seats to be donated to two new care homes in the area.

The Annual Dinner was, as ever, the culmination of the Presidential year, and since it was a special birthday year, it was a special dinner, not only because we had the parents of ‘Dr. Who’ (a.k.a. David Tennant) as guests, but for the good wishes and goodwill which, while it is always present on these occasions, was heightened in this special year. Some of the good wishes were expressed, by our request, in monetary form.

Meanwhile our more mundane activities continue. The President’s chosen charity was the PANDA Centre, which delighted everyone, but particularly Jess Ireland, whose notable achievement this centre was. The fundraisers were a quiz night and the highly successful Line Dancing Event, which raised the splendid total of £1260.

Two of our successfully sponsored candidates for 3S Trust grants were due to tell us of their experiences. Unfortunately one of them, Kenneth Sinclair, had to postpone his talk, but final year medical student, Laura MacKenzie gave an excellent presentation of her visit to Ghana, which she felt had been of help to those to whom she administered there, and also to herself in her future career as a GP.

The recurring topic of membership was discussed, and the fact that the Glasgow Clubs joint campaign last summer was not noticeably successful was deplored.

In this year it was decided to follow Dumbarton’s example and do some restructuring, and the Hospitality and Co-ordinating Committee were merged into one. The Club was delighted when our own Programme Action Officer, Jenifer McFarlane’s nomination as Scotland South Region’s Programme Action Officer was accepted.

From the agendas of Regional meetings, we discussed whether Soroptimism in Scotland should have a patron, whether the Soroptimist emblem (the lady) should be changed to something more relevant to modern attitudes, and at Federation level, to passing legislation banning the free issue of non-biodegradable plastic carrier bags. The four proposed projects for the next Quadrennial theme were discussed at length and we were pleased that our chosen one, ‘Project Sierra, a family and a future’, was the one finally voted in at conference.

In July 1996, the Soroptimist International Convention was held in San Francisco, and Margaret Neil attended, finding it hard working in the American style of carrying on through lunch. While there she formed an unofficial Friendship link with President Mary Kay Berlier from S.I. La Quinta Coachella Valley, California (Palm Desert) which continued until 2017.

In 1997, the Way Ahead flagged up proposals to change the Constitution, and during 1998 Margaret and Ellen McQueen attended several inter Regional meetings at which delegates discussed and voted on proposals which were very radical and meant a complete change in the running and management of the Federation. These changes were passed at the Bournemouth Conference in October 1998.

On a lighter note, we recall a pair of geriatric elves who tottered round on their walking frames distributing gifts at a Christmas party, and the knees displayed by the miniskirts at the 1960’s themed Friendship Evening. Then there was the summer outing to Troon, where a pleasant evening stroll on the front was envisaged. Alas, a howling gale and torrential rain put a stop to that, but after a very pleasant meal had been enjoyed, the party set off homewards – except one member left her handbag behind. What followed degenerated into farce, with the bag being taken back by the last car to leave, but without them being able to contact the bagless one.[[88]](#footnote-88) So here was the bag on its way back to Paisley and its owner, discovering her loss, doubling back to Troon. Frantic phone calls and an encounter with a drunk man ensued, before the bag and its owner were re-united some time after midnight. As if this were not enough, another member finished her evening in hospital with a gall bladder attack.

Of such highs and lows are Soroptimist activities compounded.

**Another Decade**

**2006 – 2016**

This decade saw many changes, both within the Club and at higher levels. Gone is the insistence on 50% attendance, gone are the Active and Continuing categories, and gone is some of the previous formality. A more aggressive approach to membership recruitment is allowed, and more has been done to raise awareness of Soroptimism within the community.

The Benevolent Fund came under strict review, and the emphasis on its annual disbursement was radically changed. In this context, while every member gave always and generously, our involvement with DEAR[[89]](#footnote-89), Renfrewshire Rising[[90]](#footnote-90),Renfrewshire Council, the STAR Project[[91]](#footnote-91) and Renfrewshire Women’s Aid both raised awareness of Soroptimism and fulfilled one of our aims, that of service to the community.

The thread of service runs all through this decade, from attendance and participation at Club, Region and Federation meetings, to bag packing for Save the Children, can collecting for Marie Curie and assembling the Christmas shoe boxes and other work for Blythswood Care. One notable night when assembling these boxes, Elsie Sutherland donned white overalls and oversaw the production line.

So while adapting to a changing world, the core values of our founding members and predecessors in S.I.Paisley were maintained, encapsulated in their first strap line,

**Service before Self**.

**2006 – 2007**

President Carolyn Lockhart embarked on her second term of office with her team of Grace Scott as Secretary, Nancy Fisher as Treasurer and Jenifer McFarlane as Programme Action Officer.

Carolyn joined S.I. Paisley in 1991 as a Senior Bank Officer but later switched to the Civil Service as an Administrative Officer in Jobcentre Plus. She served the Club as Treasurer for six years, and after a year’s break joined the Executive as Vice President, President Elect and now President.

When her year as Club President was over she became Vice President of Scotland South Region, becoming President in 2009 – 2010.

Carolyn is active in her church and also in local Guiding.

Her chosen charity was the two local hospices – ACCORD and St. Vincent’s – and the principal fundraisers were to be a book stall at Lilias Day in Kilbarchan; a sponsored walk in Barshaw Park, Paisley; a performance of ‘The Steamie’[[92]](#footnote-92) ; a Silent Auction within the Club; a quiz night and a Line Dancing evening.

The Book Sale raised £126, but was felt to be a lot of work for little return; Govan Market was suggested as a future venue. The Silent Auction raised £289 and the sponsored walk £794. This walk put much of the fun into fundraising with 17 people and several dogs participating. ‘The Steamie’ raised £489 and the Line Dancing £1256.70.

The two membership categories, Active and Continuing, were brought up for consideration, as the Executive worried that the Continuing was too heavily over weighted. The solution proposed, and accepted was that continuing members could be considered active on the strength of voluntary work undertaken regularly.

The summer outing to the Bosun’s Table at Largs Yacht Haven was a most enjoyable evening and two other summer events were carried over from our 60th Anniversary Celebrations, namely the Soroptimist flower bed in Houston Square, Johnstone and the display of Club memorabilia in Paisley Museum.

The Club lost two valued members, in Ellen McQueen, MBE, VRD, in 2006 and Betty Smith in 2007. Both ladies had served in office; Betty as Secretary and President and Ellen as Registrar, Treasurer and President.

Wishing to extend our Friendship links, feelers were put out to S.I. Harrogate and S.I. Blantyre, Malawi. While Harrogate proved successful, Malawi was a non-starter. However negotiations with a new Club in Poland were commenced, which resulted in an invitation to two members from Paisley to visit the Club in Katowice.

Also in the future, plans were being laid for the International Convention to be held in Glasgow in 2007. S.I. Paisley as well as providing stewards, were chosen to host a Friendship evening for fifty visitors, the cost to be contained within a specified budget.

Undaunted, another Book sale was tried at the Fruitmarket in Glasgow, but only raised £62. It was felt that this might be our last venture in this direction.

Mary Lochhead achieved a personal marathon as Co-ordinating Convener. Due to various circumstances her committee were unavailable for the annual distribution of Dignity Packs, so on her own Mary gathered and distributed twenty one packs to the Christian Social Action Group in Paisley.

Speakers on subjects as varied as recycling and fingerprinting were all good, but outstanding was Mary’s Meals, a sympathetic and appealing subject, and a charismatic speaker in Andrew Parker.

**2007 – 2008**

President Margaret Wallace had a new Programme Action Officer in Maggie Mackean, otherwise retaining Grace Scott as Secretary and Nancy Fisher as Treasurer. Margaret had retired from her first career as a secondary school teacher and is now working as a podiatrist, very different jobs, but both enjoyable in their own way. In amongst those, she has also enjoyed working for and with the Club. Soroptimism has become quite a large part of her life and she has made many good friends and learned about subjects of which she previously knew nothing.

During her year, Margaret also had the support of Jemima, a doll wearing a red hat and purple scarf á la famous poem by Jenny Joseph[[93]](#footnote-93), to encourage us all to act positively. Her chosen charity was Alzheimers, as sadly her mother had suffered from it. The fundraisers were the tried and tested Quiz Night (£641); Line Dancing (£1118) and two in house events, the Silent Auction (£270) and the Red Hat night (£162). An ongoing ‘Drip it in the bucket’ for Water Aid took care of our small change at each meeting, and the annual Saturday of Service, involving bag packing at a local store, raised £1125 for Marie Curie Cancer Care. A final attempt at a book sale only raised £25.80, so this previously successful fundraiser was abandoned and the remainder of the books donated to Culzean Castle bookshop. We continued to fill shoeboxes for Blythswood Care.

A previous Friendship Link with Laguna Beach was re-forged but sadly was short lived. More successful was the visit by Margaret and Grace Scott to the newly formed Polish Club in Katowice, where they enjoyed friendly hospitality, attended Club meetings, exchanged gifts and had tours of castles and monuments as well as an evening at a Polish opera.

Meanwhile plans for the Friendship evening to take place at the International Convention in Glasgow in July were divulged. Each guest received an S.I. Paisley coaster as a memento. The guests came by coach from the Glasgow SECC[[94]](#footnote-94) to Paisley Museum, where Valerie Reilly, Senior Curator gave a talk on the Paisley shawls, which were on display. Then by coach to Paisley Abbey, welcomed by a piper, and given a guided tour of the Abbey by Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Renfrewshire, Jim Wardrop. This was followed by a meal served in ‘The Place of Paisley’, an upper room in the Abbey, prepared by former Soroptimist Carol Carruth. The guests were then taken by coach to Braehead to board the Pride of the Clyde and sail up the river to the Broomielaw[[95]](#footnote-95). The whole evening was a resounding success, and our American friends in particular enjoyed the old Abbey and its kilted Church officer.

The 60th anniversary celebrations were finally brought to a close when Montrose House Day Care received a handsome wooden garden seat, engraved with a plaque, as the Club’s gift to the community.

Some housekeeping items were undertaken, such as re-insuring the Club’s insignia and making folders of good practice to be passed from retiring to succeeding conveners.

The Club mourned the loss of three members – Bessie Irvine, Mary Stevenson and Una Ross. Bessie was a longstanding Soroptimist, having joined the Club in 1965, and Mary and Una had both served as President.

On a happier note our Immediate Past President, Carolyn Lockhart, went forward to serve as Vice President of Scotland South Region; one of our interests in the STAR Project received a grant of £500 from the 3S Trust and we decided to go to Ross Priory for the summer outing

At Federation level, discussion of its governance was started, with a view to incorporation, and Project Sierra was launched as the Quadrennial theme.[[96]](#footnote-96)

**2008 – 2009**

President Barbara Scorgie had the usual team of Secretary Grace Scott, Treasurer Nancy Fisher and Programme Action Officer Maggie Mackean.

Barbara was a Consultant Anaesthetist at the RAH in Paisley from 1979 – 2007, specialising in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Always keenly active in sport, she had 50 caps in International Women’s Hockey for Scotland, and played competitive squash and tennis for her club. Another abiding interest is dog showing with English Springer Spaniels, successfully showing at Crufts[[97]](#footnote-97) as well as being involved with judging at dog shows.

Her daughter Emma is following in her mother’s medical footsteps, and husband Sandy and Barbara enjoy widespread travel, often by cruise liner.

Barbara’s chosen charity, ACCORD, got off to an early start in May, as several Club members took part in the Great Scottish Walk at Bellahouston Park, raising £1600 in sponsorship. Our other fundraisers were the in house Silent Auction (£203), the Quiz Night (£515), Bridge afternoon (£904) and the Line Dancing (£1148). Money from the silent auction was set aside for the Federation Born Free project, while the Saturday of Service day raised £1048 for Marie Curie Cancer Care. A subsidiary in-house fundraiser was a fun night of games and quizzes called Ground Hog Night and reflecting Madame President’s love of dogs. Fortunately we did not need to eat dog biscuits.

Continuing the social side, the summer outing was an all day affair to Edinburgh visiting the Dynamic Earth exhibition in the morning and then the comparatively new Scottish Parliament building in the afternoon. The latter evoked a mixed response, but all agreed it was a memorable outing.

Back to business and the logistics of SIGBI’s incorporation go on, a complicated but necessary business. Scotland South Region ran a series of workshops for information on the subject which proved helpful. Also at Federation level the Can Do Campaign to increase awareness and membership was instigated, and Paisley set up a sub-committee of the Membership Committee to study mentoring. A panel of mentors was set up with a support pack for them, and one for any new members desiring to be mentored. This scheme was entirely voluntary. Meanwhile the Membership Committee was busy compiling a New Members’ Introductory pack.

Several domestic affairs were tackled, resulting in the number of lunches being reduced from four to two, a different way of recording the minutes, and consideration of changing the name of Opposite to something less confrontational. Nothing more suitable was found, so Opposites we remain. Letters were dispatched to former members encouraging them to return, and it was proposed to extend committee membership from one to two years.

Margaret Wallace was appointed Ambassador for Project Sierra, and promptly organised a quiz sheet and a lunch.

Liz Cumming attended the Federation Conference in Barbados.

Four points which emerged from the reflective evening held in October were:

1. Every member should be more committed and make a concerted effort re. Programme Action
2. More flexibility around Membership Categories
3. Higher level of publicity re. Soroptimism and Paisley in particular
4. Better communication at all levels

The views thus expressed were done anonymously by post-it notes which were then collated.

Unfortunately the subscription this year had to be increased to £75, but we got value for money in the varied speakers throughout the session, with subjects like Wood Turning, the Chocolate experience and Child Protection to name but a few. Not to mention the service undertaken by the continued fellowship of members.

**2009 – 2010**

President (Elizabeth) Liz McFarlan presided with the usual team.

Liz’s CV for her previous service as President traced her career through nursing, specialising in midwifery, before switching to education and becoming Senior Lecturer and Course Director for the Teaching Education Course for the Post School Sector at Jordanhill, the Faculty for Education of Strathclyde University, retiring in January 2005. She had been set apart as a Reader in the Church of Scotland in June 2004, and has worked hard at it since then. She listed her spare time hobbies as walking, photography, computing and Sudoku, only now she has no spare time.

Her chosen charity was the very local STAR Project. This project originated through a co-operation of churches in the north end of Paisley, with the aim of supporting and encouraging the women of deprived areas. She promised her focus this year was local services for women and children, including Renfrewshire Women’s Aid, domestic abuse, and the topic of internet safety.

The relevant fundraisers were the Silent Auction (£274), Bridge lunch (£1151), Quiz Night (£694) and the Line Dancing. This event was not well attended so possibly will be dropped in the future. The Saturday of Service day again consisted of can collecting for Marie Curie Cancer Care, netting £1601 and our efforts for Project Sierra were the lunch (£353) and the Quiz Sheet (£82).

As well as welcoming a new member to the Club in the usual way, we also got four new members who were already dedicated Soroptimists. Sue Williams came north from S.I.Harrogate, having been head hunted for the post of Head Teacher overseeing two schools for children with special needs run by Capability Scotland. One at Corseford, Johnstone and the other in Lanark. Her advent strengthened our friendship link with Harrogate. With the unfortunate demise of S.I.Dumbarton, their loss proved our gain, as Chris Turner and Moira Veitch ventured over the Erskine Bridge bringing with them their expertise and one of their newer members Mairi Clayton.

Our Past President Carolyn Lockhart became Scotland South Region President. As well as the honour she also inherited a poor financial situation. This generated much discussion among all the Region’s Clubs and in Paisley also led to a suggestion that the annual subscription could be paid by instalment if so preferred.

Both the Membership Committee and its sub-committee of Mentoring continued to be busy. The existing Members Book and Skills Register were reviewed and updated, follow up letters to those sent last year to ‘lost’ members were sent, and two of our latest new members were asked to give a candid report of their opinion of the Club so far. They were quite revealing. The mentoring scheme was progressed to a successful finish by March, in that the paperwork was in place with a tool kit for Mentors and Mentees, and a panel of mentors. It was again emphasised that this was a voluntary exercise. The Membership committee also had an information pack ready for new members.

About Federation, discussion on the ongoing process of incorporation went on at all levels, and the final document was checked and returned to HQ with our approval.

Several members went to Edinburgh and took part in the Guid Cause Walk, celebrating the centenary of the Suffragette movement, while nearer home some of us went clubbing at Paisley library at their Go Clubbing event, which helped raise awareness of the Club.

During the session we had informative talks on the STAR project and Women’s Aid, we visited Kathmandu and heard how our Provost spends her time, officially, that is.

**2010 – 2011**

President Jenifer McFarlane took over with Grace Scott as Secretary, Nancy Fisher as Treasurer and a new Programme Action Officer in Elsie Sutherland.

Jenifer was the Libraries Manager with Renfrewshire Council. Over a career spanning 38 years, including two Local Government reorganisations, she has held many posts within the library service, starting as trainee librarian on leaving school. Having completed her training at university, she worked in a number of community libraries across Renfrewshire, before moving on to more posts within the service. During this period libraries have gone through tremendous change especially with regard to the use of technology to deliver services. There have been many challenges to deal with over the years but delivering the best possible service to customers has always been the main driver of her work.

In Soroptimism she has been active as President and Programme Action Officer both in Paisley and in Scotland South Region.

As with Liz McFarlan’s choice last year of a local charity, Jenifer chose Renfrewshire Women’s Aid as hers. Fundraising for this included the ever successful Bridge Lunch (£850), the popular Silent Auction (£309), and the Quiz Night (£602), but a new venture was a Fashion Show, which raised £636, with gowns by Toggery, modelled very professionally by members of the Club. In fact the photo of one member’s legs as she twirled gracefully on the catwalk made it to the Soroptimist magazine. As well as the handsome cheque given to Women’s Aid from these events, was the provision of large t-shirts to be held in store and issued as nightwear as required. We continued to pack Christmas boxes for Blythswood Care and to drip it in the bucket for Water Aid. A happy outcome of our friendship link with S.I.Harrogate was a joint effort to provide mosquito nets for a hospital in the Gambia, and two members of Harrogate came north to talk about it. Outwith the box as it were, two intrepid members of Paisley, Jenifer McFarlane and Carolyn Lockhart undertook the Midnight Bridge Walk over the Erskine Bridge for ACCORD Hospice and Margaret Maxwell did a Gala Walk up Ben Nevis.

There was no rest for Madam President over the summer as a special Executive meeting was called for August to discuss a development plan for the Club, resulting in the compilation of a very comprehensive document. She was also occupied as President Elect of Scotland South Region, while Sue Williams, not to be outdone in the spirit of service was sole nominee as Vice President. Sue was further proposed as Scotland South Region Federation Councillor, both successful.

At Club level the e mail distribution of the minutes was having teething troubles, but steps were taken to remedy them.

Another successful Go Clubbing event was attended, and through Programme Action, seven members assisted a Renfrewshire Women’s Day of Action for Violence Against Women, continuing the debates on this subject held within the Club.

Over the years, the Club has gathered a considerable amount of memorabilia, and the question of its storage was raised. It was agreed that some items be disposed of and other were given into the safe care of members whilst still remaining the property of the Club.

Sadly the Club lost three members, Ruth Donald, Mary Andrew and Elspeth McMichael. Ruth and Mary were members of longstanding, 1961 and 1963 respectively, and Ruth had served as President, while Elspeth, a meticulously efficient Dinner Secretary, joined in 1973.

Further afield, preliminary discussions were being held at Scotland South Region concerning the chartering of a new Club in the Region. The venues suggested were East Kilbride, Troon and Kilmarnock, and in each case Paisley would be involved in the setting up.

**2011 -2012**

President Sue Williams had the support of the usual team.

She started as a Soroptimist with S.I.Barnstaple at the end of the last millennium, moving to S.I.Harrogate because of a career move. She was a founder member of S.I.York Ebor and President as well as Vice President of S.I.Yorkshire, before relocating to Scotland. She has been President in two different Clubs, Federation Councillor, Region President and Federation Director without Portfolio, and currently is Federation Director for Membership.

She has worked as a teacher for 39 years and has been head teacher five times and is now Head of Learning Provision for Capability Scotland.

She is married with three sons and two grandchildren.

She gave the Club the choice of three charities to support during her term of office. The clear winner was the one which included her own school at Corseford, plus three other schools for children with Special Needs in the area, namely Clippens, the Mary Russell and Kersland. She also issued a Summer Challenge, giving each member £1 to make it multiply over the summer in any way we chose and not necessarily to make money. In the event, most efforts did make money and a total of £350 was raised, much of it by the sale of home baking and preserves. We do like our food!

The usual fundraisers of the Quiz Night (£657), the Silent Auction (£335) and the Bridge Lunch (£1015) were augmented handsomely by the proceeds from a highly enjoyable brass band concert by Renfrew Burgh Brass Band. Member Mary Thomson’s husband plays in the band which is celebrating its centenary and our share of the profits came to £700. The final fling for the Quadrennial theme, Project Sierra, was an afternoon tea, netting £436. Well done Margaret Wallace.

Several means of raising awareness of the Club were investigated. Beautiful sashes in Soroptimist colours were made by Margaret Wallace, to be worn at outside events, and a banner for the same purpose was made by several members. A plaque advertising S.I.Paisley was considered for display at our venue, the Glynhill Hotel, and to celebrate HIV/AIDS day members distributed red ribbons to students at the University of the West of Scotland.

The formation within the Club of a book club and a walking club were mooted, but over time failed to generate much enthusiasm.

Another disappointment was the failure to recruit the Provost of Paisley, a woman, as a Friend of S.I.Paisley. She refused the honour with regret, pleading lack of time.

On the plus side, a handsome legacy of £10,000 was received from former member Mary Andrew, whose death was recorded last year. Under the terms of the legacy, the President could allocate the yearly interest on this sum to a cause of her choice, whist not touching the capital itself.

Long service certificates for twenty five years or more were awarded to nineteen Club members. Betty Milne won hands down with fifty nine years of service.

Another happy award was that for Best Practice from the Federation for our joint effort with S.I.Harrogate providing mosquito nets for the hospital in the Gambia.

The Membership Committee were working on ways to make meetings more attractive, and held a very successful open meeting in March, with displays of our previous activities and talks from Soroptimists about Soroptimism.

The Programme Action Committee was very active too in promoting awareness of Human Trafficking. Schools were asked to design posters, and Renfrewshire Council co-operated in displaying them in their public buildings.

Relaxation from these efforts was effected by the summer outing to Highgrove House in Troon.

Past President Jenifer was now President of Scotland South Region with current Club President Sue as her President Elect. The Region was considering Kilmarnock as the venue for a new Club, and an inaugural meeting was held there in February. In spite of hard work by Paisley Soroptimists and others, no enthusiasm was forthcoming from Kilmarnock.

Sue Williams succeeded as Director Without Portfolio for the Federation at a time when SIGBI and Soroptimists at all levels were discussing a new and more dynamic logo.

A year of ups and downs, but, more ups than downs.

**2012 – 2013**

President Liz Cumming had a new Treasurer in Chris Turner, but continued with Maggie MacKean as Secretary and Jean Ramsay as Programme Action Officer.

Liz enjoyed a successful career in catering, working in England and Scotland in both the public and private sectors. Her domestic professionalism has been very useful to her as a Soroptimist, not to mention her skills as a baker. She is a dedicated attender at Conferences, even venturing to Barbados and enjoyed meeting and befriending other Soroptimists there. In S.I.Paisley she was Convener at least once in every committee.

Liz was pleased to report the annual subscription was held at £100, and her chosen charity was Erskine Home[[98]](#footnote-98). As well as hands on support like bag packing and distributing leaflets, the usual fundraisers were offered, i.e. the Quiz Night, the Bridge lunch (£1000), the Silent Auction (£229) and a mini carol concert by Renfrew Burgh Brass band (£277). There are of course the ongoing fundraisers which are for specific projects like “Drip it in the Bucket” for Water Aid and the Smartie tubes filled with 20p pieces for the 3S Trust.

Moving with the times, badges with the new Dynamic S logo were purchased and worn, and it appeared on the current syllabus. Our website was up and running, and a link with Facebook was envisaged. It was hoped that these would prove useful in attracting new members.

At this time it was suggested that the Club volunteered as a group to help at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014, but apparently only individual applications were considered. Nevertheless several members did participate in the event.

We had hoped to carry out one of President Liz’s aims of local community service by hosting a St. Andrew’s Day afternoon tea for senior citizens from care homes in the area, but unfortunately transport difficulties prevented this. Another disappointment was a proposed Walk for Heroes in Barshaw Park, to take place concurrently with a similar walk by S.I.Harrogate, but again circumstances outwith our control prevented it. We can’t win them all.

The Programme Action Committee worked hard to strengthen local connections with the local Council group - Diversity, Equality and Advocacy in Renfrewshire (D.E.A.R.) and Renfrewshire Women’s Association sought our help in several ways. Much valuable work was done in partnership with these two groups. The scourge of Human Trafficking, particularly of women, continues and an extremely successful evening was arranged in November, with speakers from TARA (Trafficking Awareness Raising Association), based in Glasgow, and Strathclyde Police. The meeting was attended by Renfrewshire Councillor, Jim Sharkey, members and friends from other Soroptimist Clubs and Renfrewshire Women’s Association. A panel of speakers on anti-trafficking was compiled, and one of our members has spoken on the subject on two occasions already. Stickers from the nationwide Purple Teardrop Campaign and S.I.Poole project, have been distributed to female toilets operated by Renfrewshire Council, and posters displayed at Glasgow Airport. With wider spread the Scottish Women’s Anti Trafficking Conference was very well attended by Soroptimists from all over Scotland South Region, and who definitely made their presence felt.

During the year, we heard from International President Elect Ann Garvie; about Street Pastors and Erskine’s Fundraising co-ordinator brought along two of his best fundraisers, a lady of 90 and her most appealing little dog, Harry.

For light relief, we had a Valentine themed fun night and repeated the Summer Outing to Highgrove House. Finally, our indefatigable Sue Williams stood and succeeded as Federation Director for Membership.

**2013 – 2014**

President Nancy Fisher, supported by the usual team, is one of several Guiders in the Club, and with Federation’s wish for clear co-operation with the Girl Guides, Nancy not unnaturally chose Guiding as her charity, with particular attention to the camp at South Newton. This camp is widely used by Guides, notably disadvantaged ones, as well as other organisations.

Nancy’s career lay in the Heath Service, working as a medical secretary, as a lecturer at Bell College, and latterly as a Practice Manager in Johnstone. She has had a lifelong interest in Girl Guiding and the Trefoil Guild, and was County Commissioner for East Renfrewshire. She is an active member and elder in her church, and a devoted and hands on grandmother.

Our stalwart fundraisers were the Silent Auction (£191), the Quiz (£630) and the Bridge Lunch (£1079). Nancy also envisaged a shared activity with the Birkenshaw Trefoil Guild and this resulted in a joint coffee morning in February, our share of which was £140. Two Soroptimists judged the Guider’s Cake Baking Competition.

An audit of the Club’s activities and its’ disbursement of funds was undertaken; the main object was to ensure that our monetary jam was not being spread too thinly or in the wrong direction. This resulted in the cessation of our link with Goodwill Village, our annual distribution of red ribbons for HIV/AIDS and the dignity packs for the Salvation Army. New ventures were support for the Foodbank, the Dress for Success scheme and a closer relationship with Renfrewshire Women’s Aid, this latter to be under constant review.

Foodbanks exist to supply the immediate needs of people suffering a cash flow problem, e.g. between jobs or just out of hospital. Jane Neal did extensive research to prove those receiving help were in genuine need.

The Dress for Success scheme is a form of clothes bank for women who are seeking employment, but for one reason or another have not got suitable clothes to wear for interviews.

In addition to work on trafficking concerns, the position of Women in Prison was being considered, and Jean Ramsay and Maggie Mackean visited Cornton Vale Prison and gave a most instructive insight into what they had learned there. On the Trafficking theme we had an Anti Slavery Quiz, at which we scored 30 out of 40 and at Region level, we helped support the Human Trafficking Bill (Scotland) going through the Scottish Parliament. Talks on trafficking were given to our Guiding partners in Birkenshaw Trefoil Guild and the Vandura Trefoil Guild, and Jean’s report on our trafficking activities at the Joint North/South Conference in May won us a joint award with S.I.Perth.

In the effort to recruit new members, Federation has asked Clubs to consider a new category of Associate member. This is designed for potential new members unable to attend meetings for whatever reason, or current members who suffer a change in circumstances which precludes attendance.

Sadly we lost two members, Wyn Carlin who had served as President and Betty Milne. Betty was our remaining Honorary Member and died at the good old age of 99. She frequently said she couldn’t believe she was nearly 100, nor could any of her visitors, because she was so lucid and had a witty tongue and an abiding interest in the Club and its members.

As the Commonwealth Games were drawing nearer, the Summer Outing consisted of high tea in the Rowan Cafe at Barshaw Park followed by a guided tour of the various venues for the Games, accompanied by a Stirling Soroptimist who is a registered Glasgow Tour Guide.

**2014 – 2015**

President Grace Scott’s team comprised of Secretary Maggie Mackean, Programme Action Officer Jean Ramsay and a new Treasurer in Carolyn Lockhart.

Grace started work in an accountant’s office, but soon changed to what she does best, Residential Care of Children. After taking a Social Work degree, she continued in child care within Renfrewshire Social Work Department, rising to Assistant District Officer for children and elderly care. Although having to take early retirement, she continued her commitment to care with sessional work in Adoption and Fostering Assessment.

Grace’s year got off to a cracking start as she issued a challenge of a £1 coin and a sweetie to each member to raise money for a charity called 500 Miles. This charity was set up by Olivia Giles, herself a quadruple amputee, to provide prosthetics and orthotic devices to disabled people in Malawi, Zambia and Zanzibar[[99]](#footnote-99). By dint of baking, ironing, quizzing, chauffeuring and other means, plus a marvellous combined effort of an Afternoon Garden Tea Party chez Morven Findlay, the splendid sum of £3000 was raised. Grace’s “ordinary” charity was the STAR project, and she also introduced her strapline – T.E.A.M. – which translated to “Together Everyone Achieves More”. This was borne out by the quiz raising £553, the Silent Auction £338, the Bridge lunch £1253 and the Fashion Show £352. At the Fashion Show, models from both the Club and the STAR Project were used.

The new look Syllabus and Members’ List were distributed. It was emphasised this was the Mark 1 model, and is under review for next year. Another new look was our closer involvement with Renfrewshire Women’s Aid. As well as our customary donations of money and food, material help in the shape of cutlery, crockery, kitchen ware, towels, bed linen, clothing and children’s backpacks (paper, pencils etc) were added.

At the end of summer, a Development Day was held with fifteen attendees. After a lively and stimulating debate on various Club matters, a comprehensive report was followed later in the year by members’ responses as to why they embraced Soroptimism.

The Programme Action panel of speakers was increasingly active in giving talks on Trafficking to schools, Renfrewshire Council groups and others. Purple Teardrop[[100]](#footnote-100) bookmarks were distributed to STAR, Renfrewshire Rising[[101]](#footnote-101), Renfrewshire Libraries, Women and Children First and at Glasgow Airport. The bookmarks were also distributed during Reclaim the Night. This was a march organised by Renfrewshire Council on the evening of November 25th 2014, to mark the international call to End Violence Against Women Campaign, and S.I.Paisley took a very active part. Some acted as stewards on the march from West College in Renfrew Road to Paisley Town Hall, while others served welcome refreshments at the Town hall before the talk, music and entertainment which followed. The night was a great success, both in raising awareness of Violence Against Women, and in our case, of us.

We lost valued members in the deaths of Jean Craig and Helen Nokes, and the resignation of Chris Turner and Moira Veitch – did the Erskine Bridge prove to be a bridge too far?

The Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in July 2014 saw Paisley Soroptimists participating in various ways: stewarding at the Marathon, helping with the beautiful floral displays in Glasgow Cathedral, attending the UN Gift Box[[102]](#footnote-102) amongst others.

At Federation level, the motion about Associate members was defeated, but is being reworded and put to the vote at the next SIGBI Federation conference.

We had an evening of discussion on SIGBI’s Goals and Objectives to end this busy and productive year.

**2015 – 2016**

President Margaret Wallace started the year with Grace Scott taking over as Secretary and Jane Neal taking over Programme. The rest of the team remained the same but with the addition of Anne Sheridan shadowing Carolyn Lockhart as Treasurer with a view to taking over this post in the near future, and similarly Carol Roxburgh and Elaine Corcoran shadowing Jean Ramsay in Programme Action.

Margaret chose to have “500 Miles”, the Olivia Giles charity as her main charity for the year. This was following on from Grace Scott who challenged the Club to make money for this charity although it was not her main charity.

All our usual money spinners were used with the Quiz Night coming first in November and raising £469, and then the Christmas raffle which raised £370. As normal we had the Silent Auction in January raising £277 and followed by a very successful Bridge Lunch, raising in excess of £1000.

At the SIGBI Conference during Margaret’s year, we met a very lovely lady from Kathmandu. (While at the conference she stayed with Grace). We subsequently formed a new friendship link with S.I.Kathmandu and look forward to greater closeness between the two clubs. Our Friendship Link with Harrogate continued apace with two of their members coming to our dinner as usual.

As the Club’s 70th birthday was in February 2016, Margaret formed a small sub group to oversee the birthday celebrations. The group consisted of Grace Scott, Elsie Sutherland, Margaret Alexander, Sue Williams, Anne Sheridan and Margaret herself. The group decided that it would be too expensive for members to have a separate birthday dinner, so it was decided to use our normal annual dinner and make some changes in order to mark the occasion. They worked closely with Carolyn Lockhart, the Dinner Secretary, to achieve this. A birthday cake was ordered and two of our longest serving members – Elsie Sutherland and Stella Gibson – were asked to perform the ‘Cutting the Cake’ ceremony. Other longstanding members Sheena MacFarlane and Margaret Neil were asked to light the candles to SIGBI, our daughter Clubs and S.I.Paisley. It was also decided by the group to make a gift to the community to mark our birthday and a “Chatting Chair” for the garden at South Newton, the Guiding Outdoor Centre was settled on. In addition, it was decided to give all members, and those present at the dinner, a key fob made from Soroptimist tartan and inscribed “S.I.Paisley 1946-2016”. These were made by Mairi Clayton, one of our members who runs her own business making these plus many beautiful handbags and other accessories.

Madge Borland, one of our longest serving members spent many hours writing the Club’s history of the last decade and many of us were astounded to discover things in there that had been forgotten. Madge had ten years ago written the history of the previous decade and readily agreed to put pen to paper again to mark the latest decade of the Club’s history.

The final and perhaps one of the most important decisions made by the Club, was to ask the Club Executive for agreement to approach Madge and offer her Honorary Membership of S.I.Paisley. Permission was given and Madge was delighted to accept. The certificate of Honorary Membership was presented at the dinner.

The dinner was well attended by members and their friends as well as fellow Soroptimists from other Clubs, past members and Paisley Rotary, who found our speaker, Olivia Giles, inspirational. A cheque for £2000 was presented for the work of “500 Miles”.

**Soroptimist International Mission**

Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships

**Soroptimist International Vision**

Soroptimist International is committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

1. Figures from S.I.website Jan 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Current version attached at the end of the document [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. From The Games Mistress, a monologue recorded in 1937, set in the confined world of all girls’ school by the English Author, journalist, broadcaster and monologist Arthur Marshall (1910 – 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Leith closed 2002; Motherwell and Wishaw closed after 2011; Glasgow South was absorbed into Glasgow City, which was established in 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A full list is available in the Visitors Book [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Club still have the gavel but not the desk set [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Appendix A [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ‘Daughter’ clubs are started by members of another existing Club. Greenock closed in 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. From Shakespeare, Henry VI, Part II [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Now Scotland South Region [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Peggoty Scheme or Club, supported and provided entertainment for children living in Woodside House [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Jane was the first woman appointed as Chief Superintendent in Strathclyde Police. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. A **Pirn** is a rod onto which weft thread is wound for use in weaving [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Now Lapwing Lodge Outdoor Centre, owned by the Scout Association [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Now part of Central Baptist Church, Lady Lane. No information to be found re. what happened to the plaque [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Now Capability Scotland [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Thought to be on Renfrew Road, Paisley but not confirmed [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. A displaced persons camp in the British zone, Austria after WW2, housing refugees mainly from Croatia, Slovenia, Lithuania and Ukraine [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The current Mary Russell School for children with additional support needs was named after her [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Freedom of the Burgh of Paisley [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Page 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Demolished 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Founded in 1921, it became a public school in 2000 Source -Wikipedia [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. No longer in existence [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Closed 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Now part of Glasgow City [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Now Scotland South Region [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Audubon’s ‘Birds of America’ [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Military charity for limbless veterans [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Forerunner of Scotland South Region [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Now a care home run by Glasgow City Council [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Now Sri Lanka [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Now the separate countries of Kiribati and Tuvalu [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For former pupils of Paisley Grammar School [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Glasgow Herald newspaper [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Founders of Sightsavers www.sightsavers.org [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Skier and first woman to cross the Polar Icecap [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Clarkston Road, Glasgow [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Probably either Paisley Art Institute or Paisley Art Club, now Paisley Artists [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Mores – customs and conventions of a community Oxford English Dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Now Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Scotland [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Now Littleinch Erskine Care Centre [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Corseford School run by Capability Scotland [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Crossroads Caring Scotland [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Now Cancer Support Scotland [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Merchiston and Hawkhead Hospitals no longer exist [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Run by Capability Scotland [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Now the University of the West of Scotland [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Now Cruse Bereavement Care [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. As far as can be discovered, this was a school for children with special needs, based in Renfrew Road, Paisley and the forerunner to the Mary Russell School, Hawkhead Road, Paisley. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Now Scotland South Region [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Now Scotland South Region [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Soroptimist International Quadrennial project [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Peggy Young died in 1985 [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Not confirmed whether these items are still in use [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Now the Benefits Agency [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Woodside House,  situated to the east of what is now Woodside Crematorium, built 1850-52 for Sir Peter Coats; gifted to Paisley Corporation in 1931; used as children’s home; burnt down in 1952 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Now Scotland South Region [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Hawkhead Hospital no longer exists but Accord is still based in what was its grounds [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Royal United Kingdom Beneficent Association. Now Independent Age – a modern charity helping build a better future for older people in the UK [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Now know as “63” [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Hemat Gryffe Women’s Aid, now based in Glasgow [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Became The 3 S Fund in 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Now HMRC [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. See Page 46 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. See Page 58 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Now Book Aid International [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Now Raleigh International [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Now the 3S Fund. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Popular TV show of the 1980’s [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. ‘in full dress’ [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. BBC Governor for Scotland 1971 – 76 amongst other things [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Daughter of the 6th Duke of Montrose and a code breaker at Bletchley Park [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Medical pioneer, particularly in the care of children with disabilities [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. An old clipper ship at the Broomielaw. When she finished active service as a Royal navy training ship she became the RNVR Club, moored on the Clyde. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. An unfounded rumour or story [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. See Page 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. See Page 43 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. See Page 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. He saved the life of Euan Ramsay, son of our member, Jean Ramsay [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Master of Business Administration [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. See Page 44 [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. ‘63’ residential club [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Member of Glasgow City [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. A Chain Gang comprises of all Club Presidents from each year [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. www.maxierichards.org.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Now part of SI Glasgow City [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. This was before the days of mobile phones [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. DEAR – Diversity and Equality across Renfrewshire [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Renfrewshire Rising – the local women’s association [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. STAR Project – supporting families in need in Paisley [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. A comedy – drama stage play set in Glasgow [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Warning, When I am an Old Woman I shall wear Purple [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Glasgow’s first quay adjacent to the river Clyde [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. **A Family and a Future** was a four year partnership from 2007 – 2011, between Soroptimist International and the UK based international Non Governmental (NGO), Hope and Homes for Children. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Annual Kennel Club Dog Show. One of the most famous dog shows and highly prestigious to qualify to get there [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Erskine Hospital – Care Home for Veterans [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania.  [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Established by S.I.Poole, the objective of the Purple Teardrop Campaign is to promote human rights and its focus is the infringement of human rights suffered by the victims of people trafficking [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Previously Renfrewshire Women’s Association [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Stand with information promoting awareness of trafficking [↑](#footnote-ref-102)