

Newsletter for South West & Channel Islands Region

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

Number 27 Summer 2020

Believe you can, Together we will

Welcome Sister Soroptimists to our Summer Newsletter. Well who would have thought that we would still be in this lockdown situation, albeit, not quite as restrictive as before? This is certainly not the year I thought it would be. I have contacted all Regional Secretaries and have been so impressed and indeed proud of all the fund raising, social events and work taken on by all our Clubs during this difficult time.

The Newsletter will be slightly different this edition. I have asked Clubs to keep me up to date with everything they have been doing during the Covid 19 outbreak. With that in mind I am basically going to list all these amazing achievements of our Clubs. Be prepared to be overwhelmed.

SI Barnstaple and District

SI Barnstaple and District sorted out a mountain of bags of recycling clothing for Knickers for Knowledge.

This baptism did not put off a prospective member who had come along - she decided to join the club.

SI Barnstaple and District held an Ascot hat competition on Ladies Day. Although one member posed with a horse, there was no favouritism shown by President Carolanne, who judged the entries and chose the winner. The entry fee, and donations from those with no hats, will go to Empowering Girls in Nepal.

Like most clubs, members have volunteered to do shopping for neighbours, made 10 sets of scrubs, 50 masks and other PPE items for key workers, and supplied a Nursing Home with face masks which were obtained from China.

Kept in phone contact with single person households on a regular basis, assisting written applications for COVID 19 related work benefit, talking to students with worries over exams, university places and shattered dreams of a 'summer off' with friends, to name but a few.

The AGM was done via E mail. A separate E mail was sent for each of the items on the agenda. When the majority of members had responded, the next agenda item was forwarded until completion. Planning to have a Zoom Club meeting soon

A new member was inducted via video link to welcome her into the club by our last president. Freda was previously a member of Taw & Torridge, so was well versed in procedure. There will be a live presentation of badge etc. at our hotel meeting after the lockdown is over.

For fundraising, there was a 26 miles challenge sponsorship. The idea came from cancellation of the London Marathon, and several would be contestants setting up their own sponsor events to raise money for their chosen charities. Club members chose their own challenge which varied

from walking the dog for 20 miles over 7 days, plus 6 miles on the running machine, to watching 26 hours of 'Call the Midwife' followed by a further 52 hours as it was so enjoyable. Christine had an excuse as she had had a fall and needed to rest with her legs elevated. She raised £72 in sponsorship which a positive side to her accident. Approximately £300 was raised with money still coming in, to be divided between our local Age Concern and Knickers for Knowledge.

A member made 26 facemasks for her family, friends and neighbours. Others forced themselves to read for 2.6 hours, Pam Roebuck, a member in Bradford, ran a 1/2 marathon

SI Bath

The Club have been continuing their PA work by sewing for the NHS for RUH, Bath also for Care Homes in Melksham. They are still collecting pennies for Water Aid and the treasurer has sent them a cheque for funds raised prior to lockdown. There are other ideas in the pipeline e.g. writing a story for 'The Big Story, a member is holding yoga classes on line and asking for donations for Club charities and some are supporting President Marion Reid of SI Bristol in her Centenary walk for Club charities

SI Bristol

SI Bristol Bears “go down in the woods today”

President Marion continues her sponsored walk and one of her favourite places is Leigh Woods. Twenty of 1,000 Teddy Bears (knitted by SI Bristol, other Soroptimists, family and friends) joined her on this occasion and hung out in Leigh Woods before inspecting them for their upcoming picnic. Watch this space as the remaining 900+ bears will be given to Emergency Services at a Teddy Bear's picnic hopefully in September. Twenty other bears made their way to the Alzheimer's Ward at Southmead Hospital. They believed they would bring a smile to the patients and give comfort. A bear necessity!



Six members of SI Bristol each wrote a story for SIGBI's "The Big Story Challenge". This was in support of SIGBI's Empowering Girls in Nepal. Collectively, they donated £200, which together with Gift Aid and match funding amounted to £450.

2020 was meant to be a big celebratory year for the Centenary of our Club but unfortunately the Coronavirus pandemic has meant postponing plans until 2021. On our actual anniversary, members of SI Bristol toasted the Club together, but apart, saying a toast penned by Sue Perry

“We toast the Soroptimist Club of Bristol on this, our one hundredth anniversary of its foundation as a venture Club on 10th May 1920.

May it flourish and continue in its work for human rights and the status of women.”
Photographs of individual members raising their glass are on our website and social media.
Lizzie sent Region and SIGBI a copy of how we are celebrating our centenary.

SI Brixham

Programme Action is continuing in a limited way having regular collections for the Brixham Food Bank.

Members are making knitted toys/hats/mitts for the Christmas children's shoe box scheme

Some members are contributing to Water Aid by Penny for a Pee

Many members are sewing heart shaped cushions for the breast cancer unit at Torbay Hospital

SI Cheltenham and District

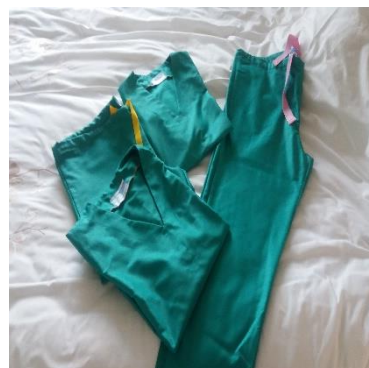
My sister, Deborah Henley, and I (Catriona) are both members of Cheltenham club. Deborah is a very good seamstress so when we heard about a volunteer group called Cotswold Scrubs she was interested to know more. The group have got together to find local skilled sewers to make up scrub suits and laundry bags for the NHS. They got the volunteers to make up the laundry bags first using good poly-cotton bed linen (there are some very interesting designs about!). After some quality checks the sewers were able to get ready cut out suits to make up. So far we have made 70 laundry bags between us and Deborah has made 35 scrub suits. We were so pleased to be doing something useful.



In our Pinnies



Cut and waiting to be sewn



Finished and ready to go

We haven't been involved in any PA since February when we supported one of our chosen charities by making cakes and serving teas at the annual Colesbourne Park Snowdrop Sundays. It was just before storm Ciara swept in so we were able to help raise £1700 in one day which was what they had hoped to make for the whole weekend. Deb, Patricia Grieve and I went along - the rest of the team were 'stood down' as the Sunday was washed out.

SI Cirencester and District

The Club have an ongoing environmental project to reduce, reuse and recycle; they are continuing to support local initiatives e.g. the Churn Project (charity supporting vulnerable families and people in Cirencester) and a local sewing project; planning for future UN days; supporting our local Women's Refuge

SI Guernsey

June 20th Guernsey Soroptimists held a tree planting and afternoon tea to commemorate 40 years as a club. Guernsey is fortunate to be in Phase 5 of lockdown, which means we are almost back to normal and all social events are allowed to take place with no need for social distancing. Yesterday was the first day of phase 5 and we were so pleased to be able to celebrate this too, although we did raise a toast to absent friends and are disappointed not to be able to share the day with others.

These celebrations were also given some prominence in the local press with an excellent press release giving lots of information about Soroptimists International.



'The Cake'



Guernsey Soroptimists



Lady Corder and
Sall Evans



Lady Corder
tree planting

SI Jersey

During the lockdown SI Jersey have been incredibly supportive of each other. Younger members have helped with shopping and prescription collections etc. They have held virtual meetings and have sent out hard copies of paperwork to those without Internet connections

SI Plymouth and District

SI Plymouth are supporting the local Women's Refuge. The women have been having virtual cooking lessons, teaching them about healthy and economical cooking. The menus are sent to the Club with a list of ingredients, from the cookery teacher. This will feed the residents for three days of meal. The Club has shopped and paid for the food on three occasions



Sausage tomato pasta

Curry

Veggie pasta

The club also support SARC and they put a shout for biscuits and crisps which were also provided. As with many clubs they have kept in touch with all members during the lockdown especially those living alone.

The club are in talks with the Salvation Army about how they might help the poorer families in Plymouth post lockdown. Several ideas are being considered

SI St Austell and District

The clubs June social & fundraising event was to celebrate Friendship and the summer solstice. Members pledged an amount related to a meal that day. The proceeds will go to Look Good Feel Better and the Sticker Memory Cafe.

Many members took the opportunity to meet in small groups, maintaining the appropriate social distance of course. 63 members and friends joined in the day, sharing photos. Everyone was eligible for the prize draw and Mary Weston won the bottle of no 63 Gin. A price list for breakfast, morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner was circulated and members chose to do one or as many as they would like. The plan was to dress for the occasion, to take photos of the outfit and the food. Some members who live near each other were planning to meet up and socially distance of course and others were going to meet up via technology. Just needed the fine weather to return. President Barbara wore 50 shades of blue and ate breakfast, coffee, lunch, afternoon tea, supper and a nightcap during the longest day!



Photo shows Jill Barnard, Vice President,
Jeanette Gay, President Elect and
President Barbara reaching out to everyone.

At the clubs first virtual club meeting 25 members were able to join in. A few had problems with the technology and so could not take part. We hope to resolve these issues in time for next month's meeting.

The outcome of the virtual South West Coastal Path challenge undertaken by club members, where pledges were sent in, and miles walked each week were tallied up and progress along the route recorded. £1,000 was raised to be split among four local causes.

SI Swindon

Just before lockdown a donation of Easter Eggs was made to the Women's Centre and was publicised in the local newspaper. Also, on the same day a delivery was made of several bags of items for sale in Women's Aid shop.

200 Love is/ Love is not bookmarks were collected by the Sexual Assault Referral Centre

A link re a book on trafficking, suitable for children, was sent to Swindon Drove Primary School (as sent by UKPAC Chair Kay Richmond)

Two members are still filling 2L plastic bottles to pass to Jackie Mosedale later in the year.

Limited to what they can do as a small Club (three members) the Club have sent a donation of £100 to the local Swindon Women's Aid (and Refuge) as, of course, they are getting greater demands for their services and have lost funding sources as their charity shop is closed.

SI Taunton

Many of the members work for other voluntary Organisations.

Arranged Easter Eggs for the Nelson Trust in Bridgewater.

Several members have been supporting Taunton Scrubbers and one member, who is a driving instructor, has been part of a delivery team for the Scrubbers.

One member is Chair of the Somerset Community Foundation and had ensured that everyone has been made aware of the grants that are available. Through this Taunton Scrubbers received £2500 in grant aid to buy materials.

One member has been working at the Food Bank in Taunton and the Club has continued to support the Food Bank too

There is also an ongoing Mental Health Project with Mind which has been delayed because it is for schools

The Leader, and inspiration behind, the Taunton Scrubbers, Susan McDonnell will be speaking at the Zoom meeting in July.

At least £1000 raised for a story for the Big Story appeal written by a member of the Club

SI Taunton Club held the Cheque presentation from our Swimathon. The 4 charities, St Margaret's Hospice, Taunton Opportunity Group, Reminiscence Learning and Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance received £4,132.02 each and they have gift aid forms to collect at least £500 each. We held the presentation ceremony in Vivary Park and the Mayor of Taunton attended to present the cheques. It was the first engagement face to face since lockdown. I have put a collage together of all the attendees which I attach.

In addition, we held our July meeting by Zoom. We had a guest speaker, Susan McDonnell of Taunton Scrubbers, the organisation that has been making scrubs etc for hospitals, care homes and GP surgeries across Somerset. One of our members has been part of the logistics team as she persuaded the driving school with which she is attached to provide the logistics for Taunton Scrubbers and they did the collection of completed scrubs and delivery to the various organisations. The Lord Lieutenant Anne Moore attended our meeting and was very impressed with the work that has been going on.

At our meeting in September which will also be by Zoom, we have Justin Sargent, the Chief Executive of Somerset Community Foundation to talk about the state of charities in Somerset as we move into the recovery phase. The Mayor of Taunton will be joining us and an invitation has been issued to this year's High Sheriff as well as the Chairman of the District Council. So we are working well and have 3 possible new members on the stocks

Swimathon Celebrations



SI Tiverton and District

Mid-Devon School reaches out to SI Tiverton for urgent 'Red Box' supplies

We all know how hard our local teachers and educational support staff have been working during 'lockdown' to support children of key workers and vulnerable families. Last year SI Tiverton co-ordinated a successful 'Red Box' project. Our plan of action to combat 'period poverty' grew and grew. We received generous donations from club members, friends of SI Tiverton, Morrison's Super Store, Tiverton Golf Club etc. Tiverton Spiritualist Church have a full box of donations ready for us to collect when we are able to.

We helped a total of 12 local schools. Items we received that were not suitable for younger girls were donated to our local CHAT (Church Housing Action Trust), and used as part of the Tiverton Food Bank.

We made sure that our 'red boxes' were labeled with our contact details in case of future need. On 24th June, Tiverton Soroptimist Janine Stedman received an email from a staff member at a local primary school, requesting a top-up for the red box our Club had provided. We are pleased that the school has approached us at this time of great need, and we are happy to support

this, so that no girl misses' lessons for lack of sanitary items. Daphne Dowsing, Joint Membership Officer, who coordinated the project said, "It has been an amazing project and has helped us to raise our profile even more in Tiverton and the surrounding area. We will be delighted to send a top up to the school as soon as possible."

June Club President, Bridget Tosh said, "It is clear that the schools have been needing the supplies in the Red Boxes distributed in the Tiverton area. My daughter is a teacher in one of the primary schools in Tiverton, and they were very grateful to receive their box, especially as the school is in one of the poorer parts of the tow



SI Tiverton members Dorothy Yates, Elaine Greensmith
Louise Clunie-Ross, Gill Sharland and Daphne Dowsing

SI Tiverton have supported the Tiverton Sundarban Support Group (TSSG) for many years. The group has supported health and education in the village of Sundarban, Bangladesh for over 30 years and have been pleased to be able to respond to the health needs in the area during the pandemic providing PPE and medicines. Clinics are attended by between 40 and 50 patients each day with particular focus on the needs of mothers and children."



The photos of our Sundarban health workers during the COVID 19 pandemic. For a little update on the situation the team are working around each para in the village area and have so far seen 570 patients mainly women and children but also giving out medicines to all who need. They have also purchased a large quantity of medicated jell which they take with them on their bicycle cart teaching the importance of hand cleansing.

The Club have a weekly zoom conference with them to hear their report and the general rate of infection in the area. SI Tiverton & District has supported the Tiverton Sundarban Support Group

(TSSG) for many years. The group has supported health and education in the village of Sundarban, Bangladesh for over 30 years and is pleased to be able to respond to the health needs in the area during the pandemic providing PPE and medicines. Clinics are attended by between 40 and 50 patients each day.

[SI Torquay](#)

Things have been quite quiet in Torquay during the lockdown. Club members have kept in touch with each other and all seem to be coping well

[SI Weston-Super-Mare](#)

In Weston-super-Mare, our main focus during lockdown has been to support our local Women's refuge organisations. Here is an article and accompanying photograph that we used in our local paper.

Local Soroptimists Giving Service in Lockdown

Despite the Covid19 pandemic lockdown, members of SI Weston-super-Mare have been staying in touch with each other using videoconferencing technology. They are continuing to actively give service to their local communities. The Club recently donated articles for the children of domestic abuse victims. This was coordinated by Next Link, an organisation based in Bristol, providing support for local domestic abuse issues. Between us we found old toys, games, art supplies and books which we gladly donated. The club is now gathering donated items for a new Women's Refuge in Weston-super-Mare run by Gemini. President Melanie David said "We are really pleased to have done something to help women and children living at home in difficult circumstances at this time"



Susannah Crook with a selection of the items donated prior to delivery.

[SI Yeovil, Sherborne and Districts](#)

A member has taken part in 'The Big Story' project for empowering Girls in Nepal. Sponsorship from members, friends and family secured and a donation made on behalf of the Club.

The Club has also donated money to the local 'Blood Bike' (Freewheelers) group which is one of their local charities.

Support continues for the Yeovil Hospital Breast Care Unit which is the other charity supported by the Club

Members donate items to the Food Bank when doing their own shopping

Membership

Membership Officers' Meetings

It was a pleasure to host recent zoom meetings for the region's Club Membership Officers. It was great to put faces to names and to bring everyone together to share experiences and ideas. Our focal points were 'Communications' and how, as Clubs and individuals, we have adapted to technology and virtual meetings, 'Raising our Profile'....how we have been showcasing our Projects and Work in the Community during lockdown, alongside Facebook/Press Coverage, etc. 'The Growth Plan Phase 3' and how we hope to see a presentation in the near future by Dishi Attwood and lastly, 'Potential New Members'... how to encourage PNMs to take notice and join our organisation in these unusual times.

We realise that we need to think 'outside of the box' going forward and take small, but positive steps, in this 'new world'. Not only to convey our commitment to make the world a better place for women and girls, but also that we are 'friendly', 'approachable', 'it is affordable', AND 'we have a good time!'

Sincere thanks to everyone who took part. I look forward to organising another meeting in a few months' time.

Kay Turner

Regional Membership Officer.

Please forward details and possibly photos of any new members to Kay

Up date on Empowering Girls in Nepal Project Nepal

We are getting a good response from the clubs in our Region. However, just to remind the last few clubs the deadline for stories is 31st of July at 5 pm

Topics are childhood memories, your memoirs, any funny story or on being a Soroptimist. Maximum words under 60 years young, 3,000 words over 60, 1500 words. Please make sure you add your name and club at the end of your stories. The website is www.thebigstory.org.uk look for Chora Chori matched funding is instant and you get a receipt and a thank you email direct from Philip Holmes.

Matched funding and gift aid is added instantly that makes it ideal for local publicity reports. Here in Tiverton as a club, with personal and a club donation the Girls in Nepal will receive £1000 and we have some great publicity.

I am trying to report back how much our Region has raised at the moment with matched funding our club is around £4000.

Thank you to those who have sent me your stories, I have loved reading them. There are plans to put the stories into a book so we could buy a copy in the future. So far I have had feedback and that stories which have been written by ten clubs and I hope that there could be at least one from each club. Please try and write something or I will write a story for your club and send it to you as your club's entry.

The girls in Nepal, like us are in lockdown. The refuge is still open and helping the girls some as young as five. They have been raped, abused and trafficked and it takes time and money to rebuild

shattered lives. The training hostel has had to be closed due to the lockdown and the tailoring and jewellery courses suspended.

Joanna Lumley has donated personally £5000 and is becoming more involved, there are plans for her to make a video for our organisation. Philip Holmes posts on Face book almost daily.

if you would like me to join one of your Zoom club meetings I am happy to do so. I will be doing ones with SI Bath and SI Austell or if you need help with submitting your stories and donations please ring me on 01884 255942 I will be pleased to guide you.

Looking forward to reading your stories and thanking you in person for your donations.

Yours in friendship

Daphne

SW and CI Regional Ambassador for

Empowering Girls in Nepal.

SI St Austell club has sent out a quiz to all Clubs to help raise funds for Empowering Girls

I hope you have all been as impressed as I have been with all this wonderful work. A couple of photos sent to me proved impossible to download so sadly have not appeared in this newsletter I do apologise

I am very much looking forward to our Regional meeting on July 25th and hopefully a proper AGM in October. I will of course keep everyone informed with the details etc.

Obituaries

Jeanette Jones

Soroptimist International Bristol

Sadly, we have to report the loss of one of our members, Jeanette Jones, who died peacefully at home on 21 April after a long period of ill health.

Jeanette was a loyal and active member of SI Bristol and although never President served for 6 years as our treasurer and was a regular supporter both at Regional and National level.

She greatly enjoyed the facilities of "No 63", and her knowledge gained through working at a variety of jobs including the Prison Service, Catering and VAT inspector, was much appreciated by our Club.

She had the skill of being able to enthuse others to take part in Club events and then encourage them by her own example. Earlier this year she received her long service certificate for 25 years of membership of S.I. Bristol.

We extend our sincere sympathy to Graham, who helped to support our Club in so many ways and to her family at this difficult time.

Wilhemina Mitchell (Min) Watt

Soroptimist International Yeovil, Sherborne and Districts

It is with sadness that members of Yeovil, Sherborne & Districts mourn the loss of an Honorary Member, Min Watt who died on the 28th April, aged 95.

Min joined the then SI Yeovil Club on 15th April 1969. She was the very much respected Secretary to the Editor of the local newspaper. Min was a committed member, serving on all the club committees. She held office as President 1974/75 and went on to serve as Treasurer and secretary for full terms.

Min continued to be an active member until frailty necessitated her going into a care home where she maintained an interest in Soroptimist activities.

A much loved and respected member, Min will be remembered for all she contributed over 50 years of Soroptimist service.

Margaret Skerrett

Soroptimist International of Bristol.

It is with sadness, affection and respect that we report the death of our only Honorary member Margaret Skerrett. She died peacefully in hospital on 12th June after a short illness at the age of 95.

Margaret, as Miss M. Holgate, joined S I Bristol in 1958 in the days when most members wore hats and gloves to meetings, smoking was the norm, with ashtrays provided, and members addressed each other formally. Most of the members at that time were in full employment, and when they reached retirement age they might be invited to stay on only if they were thought to be useful! Margaret enjoyed the aims and projects of the Club although at first found the formality quite daunting.

Her category was Horticultural Statistician, working at the Long Ashton Research station where she met her future husband Professor John Skerrett. They married in 1988 and enjoyed an active life together, sharing many common interests. Sadly John died of cancer in 1994.

Within the Soroptimist club Margaret avoided taking office as she always felt herself to be a "back room person". However, she willingly took an active part in club, visiting our various projects, working on committees and on reception, loyally supporting SI Bristol and attending meetings even in the last few months of her life.

She was a gentle person, kind, thoughtful, always smartly dressed -anxious to be no trouble, a true lady who nevertheless was active and determined, taking her almost daily exercise even during lockdown, despite a number of falls in the last few years.

Margaret took a great delight in her Family; watching her nephews and nieces grow up. We send to her Family our very sincere sympathy, and we will all greatly miss such a kind and gentle friend and member at our meetings.

Sylva von Bormsdoff

Soroptimist International Bristol

Sadly we have been told that Sylva died several weeks ago, at the school she founded at San Martin de Porres, Lima, Peru. Initially, as a teaching nun, she had worked in Peru from 1988-94. After her mother died she was able to use the money she had inherited to fulfil her calling to found a school for children in one of the poorest parts of Lima. In 2004 she started with 6 students and by 2011 this had risen to 126!

Sylva joined S I Bristol in 2001. Our club supported her fund raising for the school under the title "Learning in Lima" and we were successful in nominating her as a SIGBI Outstanding Soroptimist in 2006. As she spent almost all her time in Lima, Sylva then became a "friend of the Club", and we continued to support her with donations throughout the years.

In 2006 together with money kindly donated by SI Croydon the impressive sum of £3,862 raised by SI Bristol, thanks largely to the hard work and leadership of one of our ex members, Liz Frier. This money was matched by the Rotary Club of Bristol, and Sylva was able to buy a secondhand bus, equip the classrooms and library and provide breakfast for the pupils. She and her volunteer teachers ran classes for the Mothers on cooking and income generating skills. Sylva was justly proud of the school she had built from nothing and the fact that both her infant and primary schools gave better education than the state.

Sylva had great affinity with all people rich and poor. Her warm, genuine personality radiated her love of humanity, and it is to be hoped that her dedicated work will continue in the hands of her "adopted" family in Lima.



Caroline Mutagh

Soroptimist International Barnstaple

When Caroline joined SI Barnstaple in March 2004, she didn't waste any time in showing us one of her many talents by catering for our Conference on Human Trafficking, without having any idea of the prospective number of attendees.

Upon her retirement she took on the volunteering role of main cook of the Diner for the homeless, twice a week, providing hearty meals for the most vulnerable and commanding respect from them at all times

During her treatment for cancer she made linus blankets and as recent as the start of lockdown she was sewing scrubs for her local Cottage Hospital.

Her positive attitude to her treatment, with her coloured fringes on head bands under har hat was a reflection of how she lived her life

Caroline will leave a hole in our Club that will be never filled

