



Issue No. 3 Autumn 2010

## Welcome to Our Autumn Newsletter

The last few months have been very busy for us as a group starting with June being National Sands awareness month. Since then we have seen an increase in the number of members. As heartbreaking as it is to see so many new people suffering the loss of a little one, it is good that we are raising much needed awareness, and that people are finding us so that we can offer much needed support at a very difficult time. It is important to know that you are never alone and there is always someone to talk to and listen here at Swindon Sands.

We have also been busy fundraising as a group so that we can continue to provide support where needed. Swindon Sands is here for anyone who has suffered a loss on their journey ahead.

- Jo Millard (Group Secretary)

### Cake Sale

Back in June we held a very successful Cake Sale at the Great Western Hospital. Many thanks to everyone, friends and family, who spent many hours in the kitchen cooking up some true delights. There were cakes of all shapes, sizes and flavours and it was so

tempting to try them all so that we could recommend them!



We were certainly very popular at the hospital, word got around quickly and by 2pm we were pretty much sold out. We raised over £140. We also displayed our precious memory boxes and had knitting patterns available to hand out.

## Memorial Day

June 28<sup>th</sup> saw a bright and sunny day and was the perfect start for the 12 members of the group who travelled up to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire for the Sands Annual Memorial Service. On arrival we enjoyed our picnic in the most beautiful of surroundings. It was such a lovely place to remember out little ones.

We then visited the Sands Memorial Garden, which was created in 2001 by Jon Stokes. It is such a tranquil place for quiet thought and reflection. On entering it there is a pathway lined with pebbles to remember our loved ones. Many of the group and their family and friends had lovingly hand decorated a pebble and placed it there as a very special ever-lasting memory of their little ones.



We then headed to the Millennium chapel where a very special and touching service was given in memory of our precious babies. Jon talked about the story behind the garden and the loss of his own son, Jack. There wasn't a dry eye in the house at the very special combination of readings, talks and hymns, which meant it was a most beautiful and fitting tribute.

A very special act of dedication was then given at the Sands memorial statue where we all placed a single yellow rose in our baby's memories.

It was such an emotional day, and we had a very quiet journey back as everyone was thinking of and remembering their beautiful little stars who will never ever be forgotten.



## Masquerade Ball

Finally after much hard work and many months of planning the day arrived for our first really big fundraiser and awareness event, the very first (and hopefully not the last) Swindon Sands Masquerade Ball. Around 50 people, parents, family and friends who have all been affected by the loss of a little baby came, all dressed in their very finest, complete with a wide variety of masks. It was a lovely evening in memory of our precious babies, a very glamorous and enjoyable occasion.



After reception drinks we were treated to a very tasty buffet bbq, plenty of delicious food ensured no-one went hungry and profiteroles for dessert for those who had saved enough room and weren't too worried about fitting in their outfits again!

We had Richard Lycett photography on hand to capture those precious memories in print and many thanks also to Kay Brown who was hard at work catching those formal and not so formal shots.

The MC for the evening and who kept things running to time (just!) was none other than our very own Rich Jones. Thank-you Rich for keeping things running smoothly although sometimes the microphone just had to be dragged away from him!

Part of the entertainment for the evening was the brilliant acoustic duet of Sian Chandler and Ray Hughes. As well as providing background arrival music we were also treated to a wonderful set, perfect for remembering our loved ones and chilling out.

One of the highlights of the evening was the balloon release in memory of our little babies. The evening was fortunately clear and dry and about 75 balloons made a beautiful sight floating off into the night sky. Attached to a mixture of either pink, blue or yellow balloons, were fixed a variety of personal and lovingly written messages. It was such a very touching and emotional part of the evening.

Throughout the evening we were selling our very own Swindon Sands wristbands and raffle tickets. The prize draw was a much-anticipated part of the evening with many pleased guests. Pink Fish Entertainment provided music and entertainment and there was much dancing (some rather better than others!) into the early hours of Sunday morning.

It was a most wonderful evening, thank-you so much to everyone who helped in the organization, to those who decorated the venue, it looked stunning, to those who provided raffle prizes and to all our guests. Without you all it wouldn't have been possible and we raised in excess of £1200.

We also had a very special Swindon Sands video presentation, explaining the history of the group, where it is now and its hopes for the future.

Thank-you to everyone for their contributions to this, there were some beautifully told personal stories that had many people reaching for tissues. A big thank you to Webmaster Dave for putting the presentation together.

If you were unable to make it on the night or would like to watch it again it can be found on the website under the **Group** page. We have also posted a selection of photos on the **Masquerade Ball** page.

[www.swindonsands.org](http://www.swindonsands.org)



## Snowdrop Room



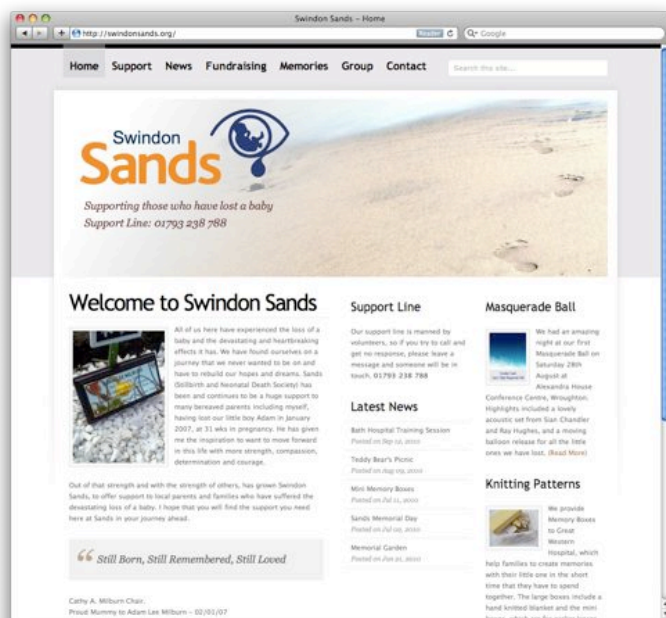
In August we helped to fund the Snowdrop Room at Swindon's Great Western Hospital. This is a furnished room to give families a private and comfortable place to receive help and spend time with their little ones. The midwives have said that it is already making a big difference to the care they are able to provide.

## Car Boot Sale

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August saw Rich, Sandy and Ellie Jones and Graham and Carly Mansell set the alarm clock nice and early to do a car-boot sale at Dauntsey to raise vital funds. There were many early morning visitors and along with selling Swindon Sands wristbands they raised £150. Many thanks guys!



## New Website



Many thanks to our Webmaster Dave for getting our new website up and running. The site includes personal stories and memories, a news blog of what the group has been up to, and useful downloads (like our knitting patterns and past-newsletters).

Please take a look at [swindonsands.org](http://swindonsands.org) for support information and for up and coming projects and events.

## Marathon des Sables

Earlier this year James Radford ran the grueling Marathon des Sables in the Sahara desert to raise money for Sands and in memory of his little boy Harvey. The marathon is an incredible 250km and takes 6 days for the competitors to do the distance in temperatures of up to 47 degrees C.

Runners carry their own supplies in their 10kg packs, although there are frequent water points. Just over 1000 competitors ran this

year, and their main objective was to stay in front of the rear guard camel. If the camel overtakes you - you're out!



Well done James on an amazing performance, and on raising over £2000 for national and local Sands!

## Bristol Half-Marathon



Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September saw a very wet start to the day as 17,000 people lined up for the start of the Bristol Half Marathon. Amongst them was Rachel Hiscox who after months of hard work and training was running in memory of her little niece Holly May Millard. Holly's very proud parents, Dave and Jo were there to cheer her on.

The course saw the runners take in many of the picturesque sights of Bristol and the surrounding area. Rachel completed the course in just under 2 and a half hours and raised well over £1000 for Swindon Sands. Such a fantastic achievement, well done Rach and many thanks!

## Memorial Garden

Plans for our very own memorial garden are now well under way at Kingsdown Crematorium. We have been allocated a beautiful and tranquil site, which will be a perfect place for quiet reflection and remembrance of our beautiful babies.

The plan is to create an enclosed hedged area in the shape of the Sands logo with a hard landscaped central seating area and maybe a water feature. The hedging will be Escallonia, a lovely evergreen plant with pretty pink flowers. The hedging is very kindly being funded by Swindon Borough Council. We are also hoping to have an area where we can lay pebbles in memory of our little ones and wooden memory sticks.

This very exciting project is aimed for completion in October 2011 with the hedge planting starting at the beginning of the New Year. Nearer the time we will be asking as many family and friends as possible to dust off their spades and help us with the planting project. No experience will be necessary, just enthusiasm for a bit of dirty work! If anyone has any ideas or suggestions at all or can donate any materials please contact [admin@swindonsands.org](mailto:admin@swindonsands.org) it would be very much appreciated.

There is also the potential for a beautifully planted wildlife border around the edge of the garden and plenty of space where we could plant individual ornamental trees. If anyone has any plants in their own garden that we can take cuttings from

or have overgrown their spot and can be divided please email admin and if you need help we can advise you how to do this.

We are also hoping to hold a very special Christmas memorial service at the Chapel at the Crematorium, more details will follow in the next newsletter.





## Training at GWH and Bath

On Wednesday 8th September five Swindon Sands committee members attended a 'baby loss' training session for Midwives and Midwifery Support Staff, being held at Royal United Hospital Bath. Despite the early start it was an extremely worthwhile and valuable visit.

Katie from Bristol Sands was delivering the training session, presenting both her own personal story and sharing vital information on how Midwifery staff can support parents at a time of loss, whether that be during pregnancy, stillbirth or neonatal. Katie's presentation was excellent, really driving home the crucial role that Midwives play to parents and families at a time of baby loss, and how they can positively impact the grieving process. The 40 minutes scheduled just didn't seem long enough to share the experiences which those in the room had been touched by, but the information that was shared seemed to be well received by the Midwifery staff. Katie is due to go on Maternity leave later this year and we are keen to continue her good work in Bath so Swindon Sands are planning to deliver this training from November onwards. We are also hoping to deliver similar training into GWH Swindon, beginning early 2011.

**“We all came away from the training in Bath raring to go, driven and motivated by our own personal stories.”**

Whilst I'm sure we will all struggle to share our stories as part of the training, for anyone effected by the loss of the baby we know how important it is to get the right level of compassionate care, support and guidance during this most devastating time in our lives. If through this training we can help them with what I'm sure is the most challenging part of their jobs, to provide a consistently high level of care and support to those affected by baby loss, we will have succeeded.

We all came away from the training in Bath raring to go, driven and motivated by our own personal stories. We will keep you updated as to how things progress later in the year with Bath and also as we begin to work with GWH in 2011. In the mean time, on behalf of Swindon Sands, a massive thank you to Katie for the great grounding she has given us in Bath and also our fondest wishes as she prepares for her Maternity leave.

## Pregnancy After Loss

As we all know losing a little one at any stage during pregnancy or after is an absolutely heartbreaking and devastating experience. Becoming pregnant with your little angel's brother or sister is sure to be a rollercoaster of emotions and is such a different and difficult experience this time around. If you would like to meet up for an informal chat, over a cuppa and maybe a slice of cake, contact [jo.millard@swindonsands.org](mailto:jo.millard@swindonsands.org)

It is hoped that we can get together a few people who can share experiences and support each other through this exciting but difficult time.

## Future Events

### Quiz

On Sun 17<sup>th</sup> Oct at 7.30pm, the Saracens Head Hotel in Highworth will be hosting a quiz night in aid of Swindon Sands. The cost is £10 for a table of 4 and is sure to be a perfect opportunity to show how knowledgeable you all are! Tables book up very quickly so please contact Jan Davidson at [jld@dvpvideo.co.uk](mailto:jld@dvpvideo.co.uk) for info. There will also be a raffle so if you can help with prizes please let Jan know. It will be a fun event and we look forward to seeing you there.

### Social Get-Together

Our next social event is on the 21<sup>st</sup> Sept at Cosmo, Holbrook Way, Swindon at 8pm. It is sure to be an enjoyable evening with as much food as you can eat! Email [admin@swindonsands.org](mailto:admin@swindonsands.org) asap if you would like to come.

### Tombola/Cake Sale

On Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> October from 9am at the Highworth Podium we will be hosting our very own Tombola and Cake Sale.

If you have any prizes you can give to the tombola, however small, (those left over Xmas and birthday present smellies etc. that you've never got round to using yet!) then please contact [vickyparker@sky.com](mailto:vickyparker@sky.com) Please bring them along to a support meeting or any other event before then or let us know if you need them to be picked up.

We are also planning a cake sale so if you are a bit of a whiz in the kitchen and fancy donning an apron and whipping up something tasty then it would be very much appreciated!

## Swindon Sands Wristbands

There are many different wristbands being worn for many different causes. But there are none so special as our very own Swindon Sands wristbands organised by Sharon Horsfield. Thank you so much Sharon for doing this.

In memory of our little ones, they are worn with love and pride. One could be yours for just a minimum donation of £1. If you don't have yours yet please see one of the committee members, we normally have them with us at meetings and events.



## Committee and Getting Involved

Our new look committee meets on a regular basis to discuss support, fundraising activities, future projects and other Swindon Sands matters. The committee is made up of the following members:

Chair:	Cathy Milburn
Co-Chair:	Rich Jones
Treasurer:	Keith Milburn
Secretary:	Jo Millard
Webmaster:	Dave Millard
Committee Members:	Sandy Jones, Sharon Northcott, Colin Northcott, Vicky Parker, Jan Davidson

We always welcome new volunteers and there are many ways to get involved. Please contact any of the committee or email [admin@swindonsands.org](mailto:admin@swindonsands.org) if you would like to get involved in any of our current projects, have new ideas for any future projects or would like to contribute to our quarterly newsletters.

## Support Meetings

Our support meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm at Broadgreen Community Centre, Swindon. They are very informal, providing a safe place to chat and meet others who are going through the heartache of losing their baby. It's a very friendly and welcoming atmosphere, and you can say as much or as little as you would like.

Feel free to come along for any amount of time and if it's your first time and you would like to meet up a bit early rather than walk in on your own then please get in touch and someone will be able to meet with you before the meeting begins.

## Important Dates for Your Diary

21 <sup>st</sup> Sept	Meal at Cosmo, Swindon, 8pm
28 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Support Meeting, 7-9pm
17 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Quiz, Saracens Head, 7.30pm
26 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Support Meeting, 7-9pm
31 <sup>st</sup> Oct	Cake-sale/Tombola, Highworth, 9am
30 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Support Meeting, 7-9pm

## Contact Details

**Support Line: 01793 238788**

If you try and call and get no response please leave a message and someone will get in touch as soon as possible

General Enquiries: [admin@swindonsands.org](mailto:admin@swindonsands.org)

Support after loss: [support@swindonsands.org](mailto:support@swindonsands.org)

Fundraising: [fundraising@swindonsands.org](mailto:fundraising@swindonsands.org)

Winter Edition out in December!