

# Rotary

The Official Magazine of Rotary International in Great Britain & Ireland

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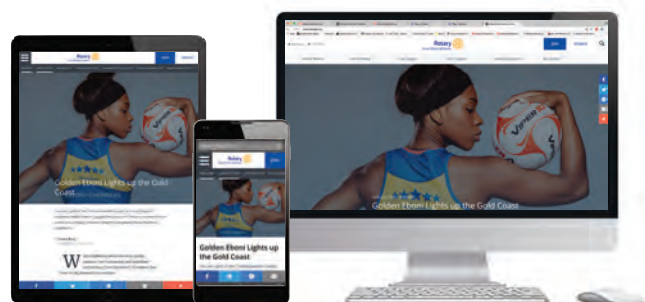
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# *How perverse is the paradox of poverty?*

*Editor Dave King visited Delhi in January, along with Rotarians from across the world, to help with India's fight against polio during one of the country's National Immunisation Days.*

**T**HE smell of the slums is an incredibly powerful one. It is a deep, gut-wrenching, nostril-filling, chemical stench of stale ammonia. It is an invisible smelling salt which packs the powerful punch of a heavyweight boxer to your solar plexus.

The pain to your senses is doubled by the squalor and human suffering which burns your eyes. Is the moistening around those eyes as you wander the pot-holed, narrow streets of this Delhi settlement a chemical reaction, or one carried by raw human emotion?

Wearing warm clothing against the early morning January chill, a stomach well fed by the feast of a recent hotel breakfast, and carrying an expensive iPhone to capture these soul-destroying moments, you feel ashamed by your own humanity.

Occasionally you hear overhead, but cannot see through the low-lying smog, the roar of aeroplanes landing at nearby Indira Gandhi International Airport.

And barely half a mile from the slum at Vasant Vihar lies a Skoda showroom, advertising expensive, flashy cars which would cost a lifetime's wages to the humble folk of a place known as 'spring settlement'.

From a nation with the fastest-growing trillion-dollar economy in the world, and the fifth largest economy in 2019, with a nominal Gross Domestic Product of \$2.94 trillion – overtaking the

United Kingdom and France – the paradox of poverty is perverse.

But for a country like India, settlements such as Vasant Vihar represent a menacing medical tinderbox, threatening a cherished six-year long, polio-free status at an instant.

Vasant Vihar is rammed with around 13,000 tiny homes, many shielded with a simple curtain as a marker to the front door. Most are temporary dwellings, some are built with brick or tin.

Here, the sanitation is pitifully poor.

Water has to be carried, animals such as pigs, cattle and dogs forage freely on rubbish-filled open spaces, as folk scratch out a humble living.

It's why settlements like Vasant Vihar are key targets for the Indian Government's polio National Immunisation Day – a mass campaign, supported by Rotary International, held on a number of days each year when supplemental doses of the oral poliovirus vaccine are given to children to halt the transmission of wild polio viruses.

Speak to Deepak Kapur, Chairman of Rotary International's PolioPlus Committee in India, and he knows just how vulnerable this nation of 1.37 people billion is to losing that cherished polio-free status. Near neighbours Pakistan and Afghanistan remain the last two countries on earth where polio is endemic.

He said: "We are literally sitting

on a time bomb until Pakistan and Afghanistan are free of the virus. Polio does not need a passport, it has no borders. After all, what are these borders; they are just man-made lines."

But what about conditions at home?

Deepak admits that India is looking down a yawning khud (chasm), because of its claustrophobic population density, along with insanitary conditions, impure drinking water, malnourishment, and enteric (stomach) diseases which still exist in some areas.

However, the Delhi Rotarian points to the state of Uttar Pradesh, which lies close to Nepal in northern India – the perennial bad boy of polio, where a World Health Organization official once warned: "The world will be polio-free only when India



The battle against polio is taken to all villages





National Immunisation Day in India seeks to reach 170 million under-fives in the country

is polio-free, and that will only happen if Uttar Pradesh becomes free of polio.”

Deepak explained: “The reason we were able to get rid of polio in Uttar Pradesh, and some other endemic areas, is because they were literally drowned in an ocean of oral polio vaccine.

“The job has been done by the vaccine and by Rotary volunteers, with their catalytic role to ensure every child gets immunised.”



*“Polio does not need a passport, it has no boundaries.”*

And so, on January 19th, 2020, Rotarians from around the world gathered in India on National Immunisation Day, or Polio Ravivar, to ensure the country’s 170 million children under the age of five were protected from this crippling disease.

From Great Britain & Ireland, there were two teams; one based in Delhi, and

another in Amritsar in Punjab, just 15 miles from the Pakistan border. Based in the Indian capital were also Rotarians drawn from the USA, Canada, Belgium, Luxembourg, Japan and Barbados.

Their role, was to support health volunteers administering the couple of polio drops to each infant at health centres that Sunday. And then, the Rotarians worked with these tireless folk, armed with census details, in door-to-door follow-ups to ensure no child was missed.

“We work hard to make sure the polio virus never comes back,” said Neelam Devi, a 20-year veteran as a local health volunteer, who was knocking on doors in the market town of Najafgarh, some 15 miles south-west of Delhi.

Her task, with colleague Sudesh Kumani who were as part of 73 teams in the area, was to visit around 550 households in the next week.

“Some people do say ‘no’ when we tell them they have to have their child vaccinated. They are afraid. But when we explain the polio drops are not harmful, they apologise and let us give the vaccine,”



Rotarians helped families in Najafgarh

explained Neelam.

“I would say one in a thousand tell us absolutely ‘no, no’, so we refer the family to the hospital. We don’t miss anyone. We make sure every house is covered.”

Dr Dinesh Chawla, who was co-ordinating efforts in Najafgarh, explained they use newspapers, radio, loud speaker broadcasts, posters and social media to promote the polio campaign to parents.

Unlike in Pakistan, where health visitors have been shot dead, Dr Chawla, said his team were not placed in any danger. The health visitors are well known, and, besides dispensing polio drops, ➡



The polio vaccines are stored in cool boxes and distributed to health centres across India.

many help mothers with issues such as breast-feeding and mental health.

“Probably our biggest challenge is that people have become relaxed about polio,” he said. “They know polio is no more in India, and ask why we are still doing this? So we have to tell people why it matters.”



*“When you drown the polio virus in vaccine, it cannot float”*

Lajwanti, a 25-year-old mother from Najafgarh, brought her 18-month-old daughter Hitiksha to the clinic at the Ekta Model School in Najafgarh. She has a 34-year-old friend crippled with polio, so knows full well of the dangers.

“It is terrible to see,” she said. “I want my daughter to be safe, so I had to come.

“We all know what can happen with polio, and all my family knows that too.”

Deepak Kapur describes India as ‘relieved’ to have been polio-free since January 13th, 2011, when the last wild virus polio case was detected in Bengal. Three years later, India was certified polio-

free by the World Health Organization.

So what of the perverse paradox of poverty which threatens India’s polio-free existence? The Rotary chief admitted the Indian Government is making tremendous efforts to raise per-capita income, but this is going to be a long-term story.

“There is no easy way out,” admitted Deepak. “So what does a sad man do?

“Traditionally he goes to the pub and drowns himself in ale.

“When you read about the history of middle-age England, a lot of people would become dipsomaniacs. They would drown themselves in their own sorrows.

“When you drown the polio virus in vaccine, it cannot float. That is really the only full-proof effort.

“We have to keep immunising 170 million children, day in, day out, in India to keep the virus away, until Pakistan, Afghanistan and the rest of the world is free of polio.

“I certainly expect it to happen in my lifetime. I expected it to happen sooner, but we have just been held up by unsettled conditions in our two neighbouring countries.

“If the virus can be stopped and if every child gets the vaccine, there is no reason why it should not happen soon.” ●

## FACT FILE

### NATIONAL IMMUNISATION DAYS

- National Immunisation Days (NID) were organised by the Indian Government and other governments throughout the world following advocacy by Rotary and its partners at the World Health Organization & UNICEF.
- Thousands of volunteers and health workers, together with Rotarians, canvas the streets throughout the country promoting the immunisations.
- Organising an NID in India is complex. The date has to be agreed by states to avoid clashes with state holidays or local elections.
- NIDs started in 1995 when Rotary clubs in India manned booths every six to eight weeks during the winter months. This became the most successful weapon against polio, resulting in India becoming polio-free from 2014.
- In 2006, Indian Rotarians’ resources were stretched, so they asked for help from overseas Rotarians. Rotary International funded a Rotary Polio Office in Delhi to co-ordinate the visits and direct volunteers to high risk cities.



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# Polio and Rotary – what’s the story?

*Rotary International has been at the heart of the fight against polio ever since 1979. It has been described as the conscience of the polio movement.*

LAURA WILLCOX



Rotary made the eradication of polio a top priority in 1979

**P**OLIO is a paralysing and potentially deadly disease, most commonly contracted by children under the age of five.

The virus spreads from person to person, usually through contaminated water, and can attack the nervous system. Sadly, once contracted, there is no cure, therefore the prevention of this disease is vital.

In 1916, a major polio outbreak occurred in New York which killed more than 2,000 people and paralysed thousands more. This outbreak highlighted how deadly polio is, and also how quickly the virus can spread.

What happened in New York forced the world to find a solution to stop this deadly disease which took until 1954 when American physician, Dr Jonas Salk, developed the first safe and effective vaccine against polio.

It was approved a year later.

The fight against polio had begun!

Rotary International made the eradication of polio its top priority in 1979, and began a multi-year project to immunise six million children in the Philippines in 1979.

However, eradicating polio is a mammoth task. It was clear in order to really make a difference a huge amount of resources and funding would be required.

PolioPlus was launched in 1985 by Rotary International with a fund-raising

target of \$120 million. This was the first and largest internationally co-ordinated private-sector support of a public health initiative.

Three years later, Rotary International and the World Health Organization launched the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, with UNICEF, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, joining in the years which followed.



*“The UK has supported the polio effort to the tune of £1.7 billion since 1995”*

At this point there were an estimated 350,000 cases of polio, in 125 countries.

With more organisations joining the fight, a more aggressive approach could be taken by immunising more children on a scale larger than ever before.

Over the next few years, there was a huge push to vaccinate as many children across the world as possible.

In 1995, 165 million children in China and India were immunised in one week, and in 2000, a record 550 million children received the vaccine.

By 2003, only six countries had reported cases of polio – Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Niger, Nigeria and Pakistan.

A synchronised National Immunisation Day was held in 23 African countries targeting 80 million children. By 2006, Egypt and Niger were declared polio-free, leaving just four countries affected.

Today, there are two countries with endemic polio – Afghanistan and Pakistan. Last summer, Nigeria passed the three-year barrier without a reported case, and is close to becoming declared polio-free.

Rotary has been at the forefront of this work, and although the end is in sight, a final push will require formidable work and fund-raising.

As part of a four-year Polio Endgame Strategy, from 2019 to 2023, \$4.2 billion (£3.2 billion) will be needed, with \$3.27 billion (£2.5 billion) raised from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI).

Last autumn, the Government announced a package of up to £400 million going towards GPEI, helping to vaccinate more than 400 million children a year against polio.

The UK has supported the polio effort to the tune of £1.7 billion since 1995.

Alok Sharma, International Development Secretary, explained: “If we were to pull back on immunisations, we could see 200,000 new cases each year in a decade.

“This would not only be a tragedy for the children affected and their families, but also for the world. We cannot let this happen.” ●





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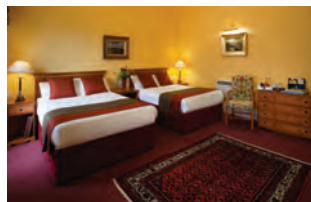
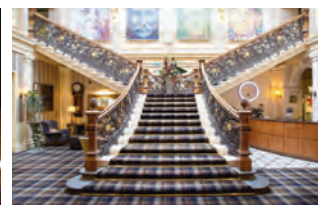
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# Dr. Varghese: polio warrior and true hero

*Meet Dr. Mathew Varghese, the inspirational orthopaedic surgeon from New Delhi, who was once described by polio champion Bill Gates as one of his heroes.*

DAVE KING

**F**OR 30 years, Dr. Mathew Varghese has been a warrior on the front line of the battle against polio.

An orthopaedic surgeon who runs India's only polio ward at St. Stephen's Hospital in New Delhi, he was once described by Microsoft founder and philanthropist, Bill Gates, as one of his five heroes for saving the world.

And it's not a bad shout. Dr. Varghese is a hero to his legions of patients, and hugely respected by his peers.

"Dr. Varghese is my inspiration and my real-life hero for fighting and dedicating his life to polio eradication in India," wrote the Microsoft founder and philanthropist on his Facebook page.

Although the last reported case of polio in India was in 2011 in West Bengal, and this vast country of 1.37 billion people has been certified polio-free since 2014, the wretched legacy of India's past can be witnessed in the two polio wards at St. Stephen's.

In the early-90s, polio crippled more than 50,000 children each year.

For the millions of people who survived polio, they still live with the scars, so from all over India they come.

"There are now many polio-affected people out there who can lead a more normal life with orthopaedic surgery," explained Dr. Varghese.

"However, there are hundreds of thousands of people waiting to be treated, but it will be beyond my lifetime before I can cover all of them. It will take another 50 years for the devastating effects of polio to not be visible."

The doctor reckons 99% of his polio patients walk again. The most common issue is knee deformities, but with surgery, followed by traction and physio, the process tends to take up to six months to heal.

However, depending on surgery required and the degree to which the bones have to be straightened, it can also take a year for recovery.

The quietly-spoken doctor's close-quarters combat of surgically-correcting and rehabilitating people with polio dates back more than three decades when, as a senior resident at the Maulana Azad Medical College, he visited the Sanjay Amar Colony slum in eastern Delhi every Saturday to treat the poor.

"Several patients had deformities caused by polio, so I decided to help them," he recalled. "I was part of the slum outreach



programme before Rotary and governments came into the picture. We were running voluntary efforts to do camps for these children who were not vaccinated."

St. Stephen's is Delhi's oldest medical centre, which started out as a dispensary in 1876 and became a hospital nine years later. But its partnership with polio began just over a century later, in 1987, through revered surgeon Dr. Balu Sankaran.

Dr. Sankaran was one of the world's top surgeons, and polio was close to his



Dr. Mathew Varghese at the polio ward.





St Stephen's Hospital in New Delhi is India's only polio hospital with two dedicated wards

heart. When he came here from the World Health Organization he joined St. Stephen's on one condition. He told hospital director, Dr. Lucy Oommen, 'I'll join your hospital provided you create a polio ward and treat them for free.' Dr. Oommen was a very compassionate lady – and she did just that."

Treatment for polio victims at St. Stephen's works on what Dr. Varghese describes as the 'Robin Hood principle'.



*"It will take 50 years for the devastating effects of polio to be invisible"*

Thirty per cent of the beds at the city centre hospital are private, with patients there paying up to five times what it would cost a general patient for treatment.

Rich patients are subsidising the cost

of care in the polio wards.

Dr. Varghese joined the hospital on March 30th, 1990, and soon established himself as the best in the field, working punishing hours. He leaves home each day at 7.15am, arriving half an hour later.

On his outpatient days, he can see as many as 80 patients without taking a break. On surgery days up to 20 patients will come under the scalpel. "We never cancel anyone for want of time, so usually the list goes on until 1am or 2am, then I take the rounds and get home by 3am."

Raman Bhatia, a past District Governor with the Rotary Club Midtown (Delhi) has been associated with Dr. Varghese's work since 2001.

"The doctor is a workaholic," he said. "He has devoted his entire life to surgery mainly on people with restricted disabilities.

"He is very calm. In all the 20 years I have known him he is always smiling, and all the children and patients love him. The doctor is not married, his only family is

his patients and staff – and his 90-year-old mother."

Dr. Varghese does not know where he gets his stamina from, maybe his patients, since they are expecting so much from him, and he has a responsibility to deliver.

"It is only in the last three months that my hours have reduced because my mother has not been well," he explained.

"There is absolutely no need to slow down because of my age. I have had very few sick days.

"I hope I don't ever retire. I would like to die in my boots, I enjoy what I am doing."

Humility lies at the core of the man, many of whom regard him as a saint for the tireless work he performs each day.

But don't dare pass any comparison with the feted Mother Theresa.

"Mother Theresa of this hospital – that is far too much of an exaggeration, I can't even closely match what she has been," he shot back, before fondly ➡



One of the polio victims at St Stephen's Hospital with his leg in traction after corrective surgery

reflecting on the time he once spent with the Catholic nun and missionary from Kolkata after working with the Mother Theresa Home for Dying Destitutes.

"I spent a couple of hours with Mother Theresa, who afterwards allowed me to take a picture with her.

"I think she was more humble than you can ever imagine.

"She was a big person for what she did, and her work is huge. I can come nowhere near that. Please don't compare me."



*"The patient is full of hope, if I refuse them I am shattering their hopes."*

But the caring qualities of compassion and grace Dr. Varghese shares with the revered Saint who saw the suffering and poverty glimpsed outside the convent walls at St. Mary's Hospital in Kolkata, and then devoted herself to working among the poorest people in the slums of the city, are noticeable and comparable.

"My passion for polio didn't happen just like that," he added.

"I have a passion for all sorts of things. I have a passion for reducing suffering, it's not just polio.

"Anybody with suffering I will try to help. I am lucky, I have been blessed with the medical skills to help.

"I wouldn't say what I do is emotionally tiring. To cancel a case

is very distressing. To me, they may be my 100th patient, but to them I am their doctor who is going to make a life-change for them.

"The patient is full of hope. If I refuse them, I am shattering their hopes. I don't have the heart for that.

"I get more satisfaction from my job than money can buy. People tell me that with my level of knowledge and skills that I am sitting on a gold mine and I am a fool not to use it."

In fact, Dr. Varghese has been tapped up by other hospitals, particularly in the private sector, many times with eye-watering offers, up to 20 times his salary.

In 1995, he was earning 6,000 rupees (£65) a month. Another hospital tried to poach him with a salary of 30,000 rupees (£324) a month, plus a car, driver and a house. He didn't take it, and he now says rival hospitals know they no longer buy him with money.

Because, for this polio warrior, he knows how fragile the peace is, and he needs to be on the front line. The imminent threat of polio one day returning to India is tangible.

The answer, he reflected, is peace. "What really worries me are disturbed areas of the world where polio is still lurking behind a lessening of peace. Unless we have peace, we will not be able to provide an environment for a freedom from polio.

"In endemic countries, peace is a foundation for health.

"You build everything on peace, yet you destroy everything with disturbance and war. You can be at peace when your brethren are at peace." ●





Sahil, India

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Dr. Varghese running his clubfoot clinic at St Stephen's Hospital

# Ignoring clubfoot can lead to lifelong disability

*Clubfoot is a condition which can have major consequences if not treated straight away. Now, a new fund-raising initiative is being launched in the UK to support Dr. Mathew Varghese's work in India*

**C**LUBFOOT is a congenital deformity which severely twists the foot downward and inward, making walking difficult or impossible.

Dr. Mathew Varghese has been at the forefront of the clubfoot disability elimination programme in India for the past three years.

And now a fund-raising initiative to support over 300 clinics in the country is coming to the UK.

Rotarian Raman Bhatia is the man behind the launch of the charity Clubfoot India (UK) which is chaired by the Marquess of Reading, with Hélène Frost as its chief executive.

Raman is planning a launch event in London this March, and is keen to hear from Rotarians in Great Britain & Ireland who would be interested in supporting the project.

Dr. Varghese has trained more than 4,000 medical professionals how to treat clubfoot through the Ponseti Method.

This uses a series of plaster casts over four to six weeks to correct the deformity. That is followed by a patient wearing foot abduction braces for 23 hours a day for the next three months.

The Delhi doctor pointed out that two out of every 1,000 children are born with clubfoot around the world, but this can be treated and healed if caught quickly. In India, more than 50,000

children are born with clubfoot every year.

The UK charity is supporting efforts in India to ensure free treatment for the children, as well as promoting the impact of clubfoot with the knowledge that the condition can be treated, but if neglected, it can lead to a lifetime of disability.

Dr. Santosh George, Director of Cure International India Trust, which oversees the clubfoot initiative pointed out how there are more than 65,000 children currently receiving the latest modern treatment. "Many of them are already walking, running and playing like any normal children," he said.

"At the same time, there are thousands of children across India waiting for treatment and, with Rotary's help, we can immediately start their treatment that will completely transform their lives."

As for Dr. Varghese, he admits he loves his work. He said: "The ability to change something for someone gives so much joy. I don't think anyone can be as happy as I am." ●



For more information visit:

Website: [www.clubfootindiauk.org](http://www.clubfootindiauk.org)

Email: [ramanbhatia07@gmail.com](mailto:ramanbhatia07@gmail.com)



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Dr. Abdirahman Mahamud revealed how election periods in Pakistan can prove an obstacle to polio vaccinations

KAREN EVELEIGH

# *Vaccinating the missing children*

*Pakistan remains one of the last strongholds of polio. Dr. Abdirahman Mahamud, who is leading the battle, explains how they are trying to win the hearts and minds of people in the country.*

**“I**F we can vaccinate every child, then we can end polio”. That was the blunt message from one of the leading campaigners to eradicate polio in Pakistan.

Dr. Abdirahman Mahamud is the Polio Eradication Initiative National Team Leader for the World Health Organization in Pakistan – just one of two countries in the world where polio still has a strong foothold.

Over the past 25 years, the number of

children affected by polio has declined from 2,600 cases in 1994 to 72 cases in 2019 in Pakistan and 16 cases in Afghanistan.

Speaking to Rotarians in Oxford, Dr. Mahamud reflected how some increases in cases can be linked to election periods.

Political campaigning and changes in administration mean that for seven to eight months, polio eradication becomes a secondary consideration for local district administrations, he explained.

Other increases can be linked to the

Taliban’s 2009 ban of vaccinations.

He said: “We’ve seen dramatic improvement, but then we have also witnessed ups and downs during the last 15 years, which are related to the geo-political situation in the country.”

The key challenge, explained Dr. Mahamud, was to capture the missing children; those who were not receiving the valuable, life-saving polio vaccine.

He added: “If we can vaccinate every child then we can end polio. This has



been achieved in countries such as Sudan, despite being a poor country and with ongoing conflict.

“Unfortunately, in Pakistan, it has not been possible to reach every child.

“Of the 167 districts in Pakistan, 11 are classed as high risk, and children are not always available when vaccinators visit homes. Over one million children were missed in one recent campaign.

“As long as we are missing these children, polio will fight.

“It is a disease we are trying to eradicate and it’s trying to survive.

“It’s a competition between our efforts and the virus: wherever you have this vast majority of almost one million children who have not been vaccinated, polio will find them and we’ll end up with more cases.

“To interrupt polio, you need to reach 95% of the children, consistently, not one time, but every time when you do a campaign.”

Pakistan’s polio champion admitted that the scale of the campaign in his



*“If we can vaccinate every child, then we can end polio.”*

country is immense.

In the high risk polio areas, covering approximately 11 out of 67 districts, there are nine vaccination campaigns each year.

In total, around 40 million children are vaccinated five times each year by 260,000 frontline workers.

Communication is key, and the Pakistan Polio Eradication Initiative is re-thinking its communications strategy.

In the high risk areas of Pakistan, where there are the nine vaccination campaigns in a year, each vaccinator who visits a family with children under five-years-old is followed by monitors and supervisors, and this has been part of the quality assurance processes.

However, it is recognised that this approach can alienate and irritate people.

Repeated knocks on the door can



Dr. Mahamud with Rotary’s polio ambassador, Judith Diment in Oxford

lead to refusals by parents, so the plan is to change the approach and have just vaccinators visiting homes.

To achieve this, the campaign was halted from September through to November to enable the polio eradication teams to build layers of trust through the communities.

It was also hoped this cooling off period would help to build alliances beyond the Global Polio Eradication Initiative members: Rotary International, World Health Organization, UNICEF, Centers for Disease Control and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Dr. Mahamud admitted with so much attention focussed on polio, some of these communities might view these frontline workers as the only representatives of the government, fixed on polio, but without making reference to clean water and sanitation.

Politicians have been visiting these communities to hear these concerns, while both the Prime Minister Imran Khan, and the Chief of the Army, Qamar Javed Bajwa, have given their commitment to polio eradication as a priority.

“At the highest levels of the government, there is commitment to finish the job of polio eradication,” added Dr. Mahamud.

And what about social media?

In April 2019 in Pakistan, 35,000 school age children were admitted to hospital, with rumours that the polio vaccine had made them sick.

This was an example of panic on social media and led to parents closing their doors on vaccinators. The polio

teams are coming up with solutions for Facebook and Twitter fake news and scaremongering, with help from the platforms themselves.

Dr. Mahamud revealed that they were working with Facebook to shut down anti-vaccination sites. However, the mobile phone communications application, WhatsApp, remains a challenge because of its encrypted access.

Polio remains a disease of marginalisation and inequality.

Pakistan faces a moral dilemma of investing millions in the vaccination for one disease, when there are still cases of diarrhoea and malnutrition, along with poor water supplies and sanitation.

The Pakistan government, Rotary and other aid organisations are supporting improvements to the nation’s water supply with initiatives such as solar filtration systems.

Dr. Mahamud is full of admiration for the work conducted by Rotarian volunteers in Pakistan, led by Aziz Memon, Chair of Rotary’s Pakistan PolioPlus Committee.

Aziz is a successful businessman, but he has also led on advocacy and built good relationships with many politicians.

Dr. Mahamud pointed out how Rotary funds billboards across all of Pakistan’s major bus stations and railways to promote End Polio Now.

Rotarians, he said, have been in the frontline, yet it hasn’t been easy to push the polio agenda in a difficult economic climate.

“I really want to take this time to appreciate the excellent work of Aziz Memon and the Rotarians of Pakistan,” added Dr. Mahamud.

Rotary is seen as a local organisation. So when some communities have viewed the vaccinations with suspicion, Rotary is able to cross that divide.

1. Similarly, the Army is viewed with respect so, when the Army has been involved in vaccinations, providing security support for health workers, this has helped to improve community acceptance.



For more information visit:

[www.endpolio.com.pk/](http://www.endpolio.com.pk/)



**Rotary GBI President**  
Donna Wallbank

# Love is in the Air

**F**EBRUARY is known to be about love. Shops are filled with heart-shaped chocolates, balloons, fluffy gifts, television and magazine adverts telling you to show how much you love each other and even an intonation that now is the time to propose!

However, my proposal is not about platinum-set glittery stones. It's a proposal set around The Rotary Foundation, our own and only charity, alongside our top humanitarian service project globally - polio eradication.

It should be what glitters for us and the thing we truly cherish, love, give to and be proud to be part of. So, instead of giving chocolates, my love and I will be giving funds to The Rotary Foundation for polio, to ensure children in the world know of the promise made, with love, by Rotary is kept, ensuring a child gets something which our community members enjoy by right.

Giving to our Foundation can be fun too, just like the 'Get Moving to End Polio' with the 1,240 Challenge! Why 1,240? Well, the border between the last two polio-endemic countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan, is 'more than 1,240 miles', so we have focused the figure around our new sponsored activity.

The idea is simple. Organise anything incorporating the number 1,240 whilst raising funds to eradicate polio. It's too late for a Valentine's event, but not too late to do something before May 3rd, the last day of Volunteer Expo where this Rotary year's 'Get Moving to End Polio' campaign will finish.

It also means engagement with non-Rotarians, showing what Rotary does, giving opportunities to tell others what we do and, importantly, showcasing Rotarians in action.

You can demonstrate just how much you love Rotary by inviting others to enjoy it too.

Don't forget to send your funds in to The Rotary Foundation UK before the year end (clearly marked for polio) so we do not lose out on the additional giving from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for this Rotary year. Every £1 you raise is worth £3.

All too often we hold onto the monies too long and it could mean we miss out!



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My New Year's resolution was to heighten the awareness of the need to immunise children at home and overseas.

When we saw how measles raised its head in 2019 because herd immunity has been lost through falling immunisations in the United Kingdom, it made me realise how easily any disease including polio, can become a threat to the children we love.

If we don't step up and face the challenges 2019 presented to the polio programme and finish the job, it is estimated 200,000 children every single year all over the world will be impacted by polio within 10 years.

In October 2019, a new activity was trialled in Cardiff with a 'health has no boundaries' seminar focusing on pandemics of many types. This would be something I would recommend groups of Rotary clubs to consider. It was a school-based, one-day event where young people came together to discover more about pandemics.

Fourteen-year olds who would not normally mix did so in a fun way whilst we delivered a message of what Rotary does, discussed health, immunisations and infrastructures, and the elements of peace that are part of it all at home and internationally.

Rotarians Keith Moger (Cardiff Bay Rotary) and District Governor Nominee Ray Bevan, (Pontllanfraith Rotary) have been working on adjustments to the information packs with polio champion Jannine Birtwistle, since the event to enable an even better experience for schools.

Why not e-mail Jannine for more information about another way to deliver the Rotary messages at: pauljannine@icloud.com

So is love in the air? Will you cherish our Rotary Foundation and be part of keeping that promise?

Because, with the help of our partners and with your help, we will eradicate polio and create many other new opportunities for our Rotary Foundation funds to benefit others. ●



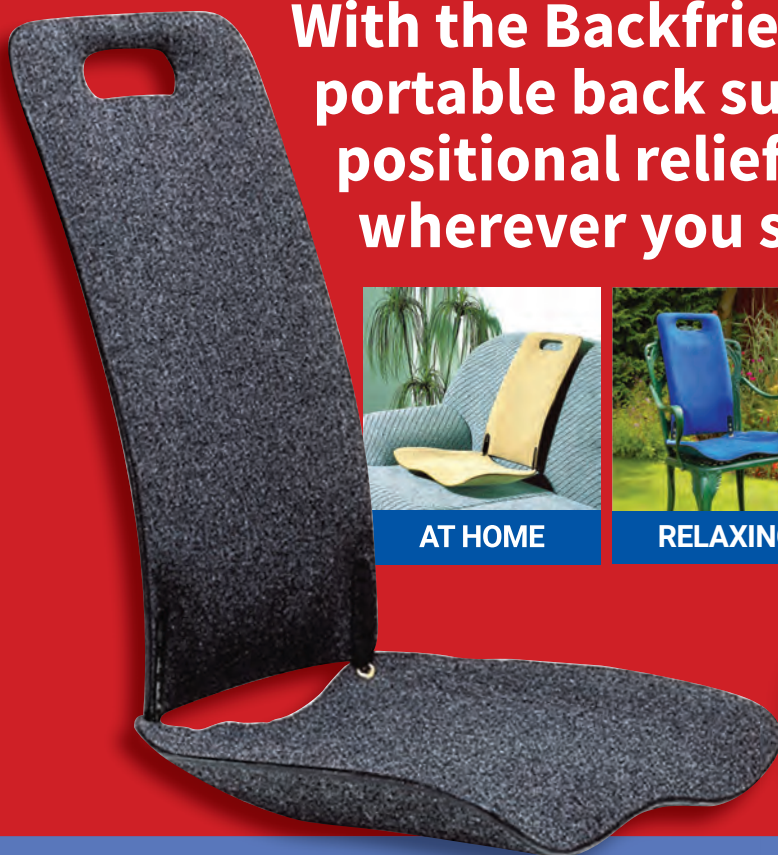
For more information visit:

[www.rotarygbi.org/projects/purple4polio/get-moving-to-end-polio/](http://www.rotarygbi.org/projects/purple4polio/get-moving-to-end-polio/)



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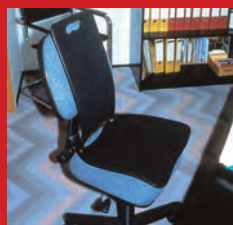
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# *Australia will rise as a phoenix from the flames of bush fires*

*East Gippsland in Victoria was a focal point for the devastating Australian bush fires which have ravaged the tinder dry land since September. Rotarian Janne Speirs, who lives in East Gippsland and is Chair of the Emergency Management Committee for Rotary District 9820, tells her story.*

**R**OTARY 9820 is one of five districts in Victoria, stretching from the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne, the Mornington Peninsula and Phillip Island through Gippsland to the New South Wales border.

Our neighbouring District 9790 is also dealing with a current fire crisis!

Our District has a varied and beautiful landscape, from coastal flats and 'Victoria's Riviera', including towns like Mallacoota and Lakes Entrance, for whom this is normally the busiest time of year with thousands of tourists, to the world renowned Fairy Penguins of Phillip Island.

There's Wilsons Promontory National Park, Mornington Peninsula, wineries, dairying and pine plantations. Ours is a truly beautiful state.

Travel further east, and you enter a different world with small isolated farming communities in amongst magnificent bush in the mountains of the Great Dividing Range. Here are the Buchan Caves, High Country and Snowy River, of Banjo Paterson's 'Man from Snowy River' fame, and its mouth at Marlo.

It is in East Gippsland that lightning strikes started fires in November. Much

of the area had already been in drought for approximately three years, so it was tinderbox dry.

The very isolation that makes many of these communities so attractive became a threat. Evacuations became essential, not just for residents, but for holiday makers too, some driving out while, and others being evacuated by Army helicopters and naval vessels.

Following the disastrous events of December 30th/31st, when temperatures hit 40C, and 30,000 residents and tourists were urged to flee East Gippsland, available members of the local Rotary cluster met on New Year's Day to form a committee in accordance with our District Emergency Management plan.

For those who stayed to defend their properties, they have endured almost two months of disturbed sleep, emergency and evacuation warnings.

They have been faced with the terrifying spectre of fire fronts descending on them, then moving back, only to reform a few days later on another temperature or wind change.

So far, some 2,000 homes have been lost, plus sheds, fencing, equipment, livestock and wildlife. 28 people have been

confirmed dead nationally, in Australia.

Displaced families are either 'couch surfing' or in temporary accommodation but often with no real timeframe on a return home.

There is no short-term fix to our situation. East Gippsland is a vast area and as Rotarians we have a mammoth task in front of us.

We are a 'recovery organisation', but even then, cannot do everything. Rather we are focused on helping local families and communities on a priority basis.



© iStock





Clearing roadside fencing lines are part of our 'to do' list. We have already received a number of other requests for assistance, some of which are already completed.

We have been overwhelmed at the financial generosity shown to us in the past two weeks and, in the words of our Committee Chair, who said: "The question regarding dispersal of funds raised has been asked several times.

"Firstly, I can guarantee that 100% of money raised will be used to re-build communities and help those in desperate need of assistance, along with assisting in the purchase of rural fencing materials to assist our already drought struggling farmers.

"We have concerns for the well-being of many in our farming community. BlazeAid, a fencing volunteer group, are coming to do fencing once the lead agencies give the all-clear, however they do not fund the fencing materials. One

container load of 'star pickets' to assist the process will cost us \$31,000 and that's at cost price!"

Hay, and other high energy stockfeed, is also being sourced by the Rotary committee to help farmers in the region.



*"There is no short-term fix to our situation. We have a mammoth task"*

Access is still prohibited to many areas due to continuing fire activity, so we will work where we can until these open up.

As with any Rotary involvement, we will listen to the needs of those we are wishing to help so we can assist in the way that they most need within our capability and scope. We are in for the long haul!

In the words of the 19-year-old poet Dorothea Mackellar, written in 1904:

**I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains.  
I love her far horizons,  
I love her jewel-sea,  
Her beauty and her terror -  
The wide brown land for me!**

Geographically the same size as the USA and China, but with less than a 30 million population, Australia is still the 'wide brown land'!

It will take time, money and huge commitment, but we will emerge from this national disaster as we have so many others and in Rotary District 9820, we will be there for as long as it takes! ●

# How you can help Australia

**T**HE Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland Disaster Recovery Trust has launched an appeal to raise funds following the devastating bushfires in Australia.

The Trust collates donations and makes grants to Rotary projects working to rebuild communities affected by natural disaster in the medium to long-term. As such, the Trust's Bushfire Appeal is a non-emergency appeal.

For those wishing to donate to immediately support the ongoing efforts, a separate online appeal has been created by Rotary in Australia.

## **If you would like to support the Disaster Recovery Trust, you can:**

- Donate to the Australian Bushfire Appeal via our Virgin Money Giving Online page: <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving/> and type in: Rotary Australian Bushfires nonemergency appeal in the search box.
- Send a cheque to – Rotary International In Great Britain

And Ireland Donations Trust, Kinwarton Road, Alcester, B49 6PB. Please note that despite the Trust undergoing a recent name change, cheques should still be made payable to the former name.

- Contact the Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland finance department for bank transfer information: [finance@rotarygbi.org](mailto:finance@rotarygbi.org)

The Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland Disaster Recovery Trust (formerly known as the Donations Trust) is a registered charity, established in 2007.

Since then the charity has continued its work with the purpose of responding to major disasters at home and abroad in the reconstruction phase following a disaster.

Typical projects include constructing and equipping schools and community centres, rebuilding infrastructure and providing rescue vehicles. The Trust is not a first or emergency responder.

During the last 12 months, the Trust launched an appeal following Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas, which collected over £44,000, as well as re-opening a

long-standing UK and Ireland flood appeal, following the Christmas floods in South Yorkshire. ●

## **FACT FILE**

### **BUSHFIRES**

- Fires have been burning across Australia for over four months and they have destroyed more than 63,000 square kilometres of bush, forest and parks. Every Australian state and territory has been affected along with a number of major cities.
- It is also estimated that almost 2,000 homes have been destroyed, according to the BBC.
- As well as damage to the land and environment, the death toll currently stands at 28 people. According to the University of Sydney, an estimated 480 million animals, birds and reptiles who have perished in the blazes, which will leave a lasting impact on the country's biodiversity.
- Record temperatures of over 40C and long periods of drought have exacerbated the spread the fire across the country.



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**Mark Maloney**  
Rotary President 2019/20

**H**APPY 115th birthday, fellow Rotarians and members of the family of Rotary!

In the 115 years since Rotary was founded, seemingly everything has changed except Rotary values. We began, and remain, committed to fellowship, integrity, diversity, service, and leadership.

While our Service Above Self motto dates to 1911, the ethos behind those words had already been ingrained by Rotary's founders.

As the pace of change worldwide continues to accelerate, the need for Rotary service is greater than ever. It's one thing to read about service projects, quite another to see them in action and to see the grateful faces of people who have benefitted from them. Rotary projects change lives and connect the world.

And over the past year, I have seen some amazing Rotary projects in action.

Gay and I visited Japan's Fukushima prefecture last year. Few places in the world have had to deal with the kind of devastation that visited Fukushima in March 2011, when a tsunami touched off by an earthquake led to disaster at a nuclear power plant.

But the story of Fukushima today is not one of destruction; it is one of hope and renewal. Rotary grants have helped improve access to medical and mental health care for victims of the disaster and reduced the isolation of these communities by sharing the experiences of people from other parts of the world who have also recovered from disasters. Our grants have fostered self-motivation and encourage sustainable long-term community recovery across the region.

In every area of focus, and in every part of the world, Rotary projects are improving lives and helping communities adapt in a time of rapid change. As we celebrate another great year for Rotary, let us rededicate ourselves to strengthening the connections that make our service so impactful. We will make lives better as Rotary Connects the World. ●



**Gary C.K. Huang**  
Trustee Chair 2019/20

**N**I HAO Rotarians!

Since ancient times, people have built communities around water. Having the ability to draw clean, fresh water from a well means that a village has staying power and the ability to endure hard times.

Wells are vital to people worldwide, but as a metaphor, they are just as powerful. What is The Rotary Foundation's "well"? From what source can we draw to replenish ourselves to keep up with all of the amazing global grants saving lives around the world?

The Rotary Foundation well is our Endowment, of course. We are building a very deep, strong well that will ensure funding for major projects for generations to come. A strong endowment will ensure the long-term financial stability of our Foundation and provide essential resources to help deliver even more outstanding humanitarian service into the future.

We are aiming high with the Building TRF (The Rotary Foundation) Endowment: 2025 by 2025 initiative to build an endowment of \$2.025 billion by 2025. By then we expect the Foundation's Endowment to have a minimum of \$1 billion in net assets, with the balance in expectancies and bequest-type commitments.

Imagine the good we will be able to do with a \$2 billion endowment! The investment earnings will provide about \$100 million annually for Rotarians to do all sorts of life-changing projects around the globe, year after year.

Together, we can make this happen. As much as the world changes around us, the well of The Rotary Foundation will stand the test of time and keep making a positive impact on the world.

Confucius took great pleasure from water. He said: "Great water can continuously move forward without stopping. It is so kind as to irrigate the lands everywhere it goes, yet it does not regard itself as having performed outstanding feats. It's just like virtue." ●



**Tony Black**  
RI Director 2019/21

**I**N Rotary terms, I always find February a very strange month.

Our current teams are still working at their respective projects/fund-raisers, while next year's team is starting to prepare for a new Rotary year.

No matter where you are in the Rotary cycle, districts will be actively at work creating new, innovative club models and will need your support.

You can also help to expand your reach by creating a satellite club and by forming a community-based Rotaract club.

Maybe you should host at least one strategic meeting each year at which you could ask:

"What should our club be like in five years and what steps should we take to help achieve that vision?"

What value do we bring our members?"

Select new members carefully, making sure that they are a good fit with your club and that your club meets their expectations. Engage with them and take care of them.

You know your own communities and what they need or benefit from.

What could revitalise your club and enthuse them? If you have ideas do not be afraid to put them to your club.

It is amazing how a small suggestion brought forward can put a spark into a Rotarian or Rotary club and suddenly you have a club project that could even get to Rotary International in Great Britain & Ireland or even RI in America, but it cannot happen without you.

Always remember our own charity, The Rotary Foundation and please continue your club's efforts to end polio by donating to End Polio Now. We must fulfil the promise that we made to the children of this world. ●





# LIFE SAVING FLIGHTS TO THOSE IN GREATEST NEED

MAF has been flying in partnership with Rotary for over 30 years. In 1986, the Swedish Rotary clubs raised money to buy a Cessna 206 aircraft for MAF, which is still flying today. Operating in the remote villages of Tanzania, this life-saving aircraft enables essential medical services — such as antenatal care and vaccinations — to reach isolated communities.

To arrange a free speaker to your Rotary Club and hear more about MAF's inspirational work, please phone **01303 851955** or visit

[www.maf-uk.org/rotary](http://www.maf-uk.org/rotary)



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# How Rotary connects the world through its influence

*Judith Diment, who was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List and is Rotary's Representative to the Commonwealth, reflects on 75 years of the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations, and Rotary's role.*

**'R**OTARY Connects the World' is the theme of President Mark Maloney this Rotary year.

The Rotary Representative Network to the United Nations (UN) and other agencies is a prime example of Rotary connecting the world, and its history starts in the 1940s.

Rotary played a critical leadership role in the San Francisco conference that formed the United Nations in 1945.

Throughout World War Two, Rotary published materials about the importance of forming such an organisation to preserve lasting world peace.

Rotarians had organised the 1942 conference in London which inspired the creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and, as early as 1943, had advocated for a "central world organisation".

Rotarians were educated about plans to create the UN through numerous Rotarian articles and a booklet entitled "From Here On".

When the time came to write the UN charter, Rotary was one of the 42 organisations the United States invited to serve as consultants to its delegation to the San Francisco conference.

Each organisation had seats for three Representatives, so Rotary's 11 Representatives served in rotation and included the General Secretary, the editor of the Rotarian, and several Past Presidents. Other Rotarians from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America

served as members or consultants to their own nations' delegations.

The Rotary Representative Network grew out of this deep and lasting relationship with the UN.

Through various Rotary International Board decisions, the network assumed its current size and configuration between 1991 and 2013, with 31 Rotary Representatives at UN Agencies and key international organisations in 15 capital cities around the world including:

- United Nations - New York & Geneva.
- World Bank & Organization of American States - Washington, D.C.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization & Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Paris
- European Union - Brussels
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations - Rome
- Commonwealth of Nations - London
- Arab League - Cairo
- African Union - Addis Ababa
- United Nations Environment Programme & United Nations Habitat - Nairobi
- United Nations offices in Bangkok, Santiago & Beirut

Selected each year by the Rotary International President, the Representatives serve as Rotary's unofficial 'ambassadors' and are headed by the Dean, Peter Kyle.

Rotary Representatives make the UN and other officials aware of Rotary's programmes and relay back information



Rotary President, Mark Maloney, has adopted the theme of Rotary Connects the World

about the UN's humanitarian and educational work.

Through personal contacts developed over time, Rotary Representatives ensure the organisation has access to the highest UN and other officials when needed by Rotary senior leaders.

Representatives organise high level meetings including, for example, Rotary Days at the UN in New York, Geneva and Nairobi, and at UNESCO in Paris and FAO in Rome.

The UN is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2020 and President Mark Maloney is celebrating with three Presidential conferences in 2020 at UNESCO, Paris, FAO in Rome and in Honolulu, prior to the Rotary Convention.

Rotary Representatives also perform a variety of other valuable services including attending and speaking at the UN, as well as at other meetings.

They assist district conferences to secure UN speakers or prestigious meeting locations, and educate Rotarians on the work of the United Nations and its parallel humanitarian goals to create a healthier,





The United Nations building in New York, where Rotary maintains a presence through its Representatives

better educated, and peaceful world.

The Commonwealth of Nations is the latest addition to the network in 2013.

It is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year, and to mark this occasion it has provided a number of grants to accredited Non-Governmental Organisations.



*“Rotary played a critical leadership role in the conference that formed the UN in 1945.”*

One was awarded to Perez Bress, a Rotaractor from Nairobi, who is currently being mentored as part of the Commonwealth Women’s Mentoring Programme. This is an initiative which I helped launch in 2017 along with Rotarian mentors.

The grant allowed Perez to attend the Rotary Day at the UN in New York in November. The theme of this event was refugees, challenging assumptions and

creating opportunities.

Perez has conducted research on refugee camps in Kenya. Perez said: “I was humbled and honoured to get such a life changing experience by attending the event in New York.

“It was particularly special to me due to the fact that this year’s theme was on refugees. Coming from a country which hosts the largest refugee camps in Africa, I learned that there is so much that we can do in terms of policy and advocacy to change the refugee narrative.”

Other opportunities afforded by the Representative Network in December include another Rotaractor, Winnie Chepkemai, also from Nairobi, who was invited to speak by Clara Montanez, Rotary’s Representative to the World Bank, at the World Bank Youth Summit in Washington, D.C.

Rotaractors Ssanyu Mellisa and Purity Bolo, who are students at the University of Keele, attended a three-day Commonwealth workshop on Governance and the rule of law to help set the agenda for the Youth Forum at the



Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda in June 2020.

The Rotary Representatives provide an extraordinary amount of outreach value to Rotary. They ensure Rotary has a voice in the international community and is viewed as a relevant player on the international stage, thereby strengthening Rotary’s reputation and effectiveness in the international community. ●



For more information visit

**United Nations:**  
Web: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

## Making radio waves

I WAS interested to read about Sittingbourne Invicta's radio initiative in *Rotary* magazine (October) and wish them well because I believe radio has a big role to play in telling the Rotary story.

However, I must point out that this is not Rotary's first 24 hour radio station.

In 2005, the Rotary Club of Chichester ran a radio station between March 18th-24th to celebrate the centenary of Rotary in partnership with Chichester College.

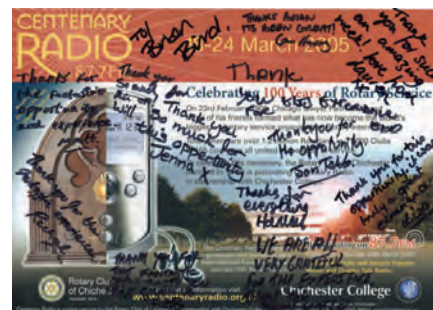
Broadcasting on 87.7 on the FM waveband, under a Restricted Service

Licence issued by the Radio Authority, the station provided a full service of adult contemporary music, news, weather and traffic information as well as features including, especially, a regular history of Rotary item.

Media students, under the guidance of their tutor, fully staffed the station which was on air 24 hours a day for the full seven days, and which was based in a studio at the college.

Funding for the station was provided by way of advertising and sponsorship from local businesses and a small profit was made. Friends of mine in the radio industry gave advice and supplied equipment.

I have a card signed by all the



The historic card from 2005.

students containing messages such as "Thanks for the fantastic opportunity and experience". The station could be heard from Emsworth to Bognor Regis.

**Brian Bird**  
PP Rotary Club of Chichester

## Yarns of Rotary

LOOKING for a different way of enjoying a get together, Liverpool South Rotary decided to have a club poetry evening where members joined forces to write a club poem.

The event was led by Rotarian Phil Daniels. Based on 'Yarns of the People', written by the American Poet, Carl Sandburg. Phil used the Aims of Rotary as the underlying theme.

And so 'Yarns of Rotary' was born.

### Yarns of Rotary

*(With thanks to the American poet Carl Sandburg)*

They have yarns  
Of a membership so diverse that Methuselah was  
thought of as a youngster  
Where different minds meet different people  
Of friendship that removes the barriers that keep us apart  
Of going around to help eliminate human suffering  
Then going around again  
Of helping to fund the development of vaccines that rid  
the World of disease  
Of removing the 'i' out of polio  
Leaving only the mint  
Of a Carol Wagon that produced a collection  
Still being counted at Easter  
Of a Father Christmas whose belly was so big  
We had to buy him a new coat  
Of a Shelter Box that had a tent that could also heat the food



© iStock

Of the same Shelter Box arriving before it was paid for  
Of Education that gives people knowledge so that they listen  
But are still eager to learn  
Of Information Technology so advanced  
Even Rotarians use it  
Of Service above Self - a motto to live and die by  
But not too soon  
Of Water Aid that cleans the rivers and waters  
Quenching the World's thirst  
Of planting seeds that will grow trees huge enough to drink  
a reservoir  
Of the child who received a new limb and reached his own  
mountain top.  
Of Rotary representing all the World in the Council of  
the Galaxies.  
Oh yes, they have yarns .....

**Peter Woods**  
Liverpool South Rotary

We welcome your letters on any subject to do with Rotary. Submissions should not be more than 250 words long. Please include your name and address. Email: [editor@rotarygbi.org](mailto:editor@rotarygbi.org) or post to: *Rotary* magazine, Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland, Kinwarton Road, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 6PB. The comments made on this page do not necessarily represent the views of Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland and Rotarians.



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Rotarian Brian Johnson (right) cuts the ribbon to open the new medical oxygen plant in Monrovia

# *From Marlow to Monrovia – all in a bid to end Ebola*

*The Ebola virus disease is a serious viral infection which originated in sub-Saharan Africa. The 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa was the largest and most complex outbreak since the virus was first discovered in 1976. Rotarian Brian Johnson tells the story of how he became involved in trying to make a difference in Liberia.*

**A**UGUST 2014, and a Rotary meeting in Marlow, Buckinghamshire. The words “We must do something about Ebola” started an unprecedented chain of events for me and my club.

No-one could have guessed that, five years later, virtually to the day, I would be in Liberia witnessing the culmination of an incredible campaign of aid and education, with the graduation of 19 medical graduate students and the opening of the first major medical oxygen plant in Liberia’s capital, Monrovia.

Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world.

Even today, there is no running water in central Monrovia. Water is brought in by lorries, and pumped into major buildings or sold on the street in plastic bags for those less fortunate.

When the worst recorded Ebola epidemic hit West Africa in late 2013, Liberia was not equipped to cope even with what seemed like yet another outbreak.

Ebola has been around since 1976 and this outbreak seemed no different, but in July 2014, it exploded in an unprecedented way.

In August 2014, Ebola hit the UK headlines and was the number one story. In abject desperation, Monrovia Rotary appealed on Facebook to the world for help.

They were desperately working hands-on to fight this horrendous epidemic, and needed funds NOW.

Marlow Rotary was able to respond, and started an appeal for funds - initially at district level. Amazingly, this became a co-ordinated appeal for the whole of Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland, eventually raising well over £100,000.





Initially the need was for supplies, rubber gloves, mattresses and food for quarantined people, along with hand-wash buckets with chlorine, and much more. With the arrival of the big Non-Governmental Organisations, the Rotary club could turn its attention to education.

Because of this campaign, I believe Rotary was able to drastically shorten this horrendous epidemic by many months; statistics from the World Health Organization would seem to support this.

The epidemic decimated the health sector with hundreds of deaths of front line medical staff.

Recognising this, the club started the Ebola Legacy Campaign, appealing for a Rotary Global Grant of nearly \$100,000 for graduate students.

The important thing was to ensure that once graduated, the newly-qualified nurses and technicians remained in Liberia to help rebuild the system.

Monrovia Rotary worked very hard with the Mother Patern College of Health Sciences to ensure that the most suitable students were selected.

Rotary agreed to support them as much as possible during their training. In 2016, the first students were enrolled on two, three and four-year courses. Eventually 35 students should graduate.

During the epidemic in 2015, the son of one of the Monrovia Rotarians died. Not from Ebola, but from a respiratory condition. Had oxygen been available, he should have survived.

This spurred the club to start an even more ambitious project of building a medical oxygen plant. Even when oxygen is



Inside the new medical oxygen plant at ELWA Hospital in Liberia

available, and frequently it is not, hospitals are forced to use impure industrial oxygen, sometimes with disastrous consequences, particularly amongst the young and elderly.

A Rotary Global Grant worth nearly \$200,000 was eventually applied for, but the project was not without issues.

The chosen supplier of the oxygen concentrator and associated plant went into bankruptcy, and the first hospital chosen to host the plant proved unsuitable.

Feasibility studies were carried out on four suppliers and four hospitals, before the perfect fit was found with the ELWA Hospital.

On August 28th, 2019, I arrived in Liberia at Monrovia's new modern airport where I was met by my good friend, Rotarian David Frankfort.

David and I first met in 2014. David was the Ebola co-ordinator for Monrovia Rotary and was on a flying visit to the UK. We launched an appeal to District 1090 on September 1st, 2014 in Marlow.

The airport is a considerable way from the city and it was rainy season. As we got closer to Monrovia, I was very aware of a great deal of the street side activity.

There were lots of people and market stalls, often illuminated only by the headlights of passing cars. Like so much of Africa, the roads can be bad. This is not helped by the six-month long rainy season,

and some of the potholes were the size of small lakes!

The following day, it was lunch with Past President and current Foundation Chair, Victoria Cooper-Enchia, who started the Ebola campaign at the beginning of her presidency in 2014.



*"I believe that Rotary was able to shorten this horrendous epidemic by many months"*

Monrovia Rotary was determined to make my visit unforgettable, a programme crammed full of meetings and receptions.

During my hectic stay, we met with the graduate students, the Rotaractors, attended two receptions, and had a meeting with the British Ambassador.

The British Embassy is very small, contained in a block of embassies overlooking the sea.

Ambassador David Belgrove knows Monrovia Rotary well and has been very supportive in the past. We discussed the two current projects, as well as the possibility of training more students and the need for funding. ➡



Monrovia Rotarians were crucial to the project



Thanks to Rotary, help is at hand to care for the most vulnerable victims of Ebola

We agreed to keep in contact as I sought to fund a new project for more graduate students.

The ELWA Hospital is set a little outside of central Monrovia.

In the centre of the hospital complex is a haven of green space and tranquillity.



*“Ebola has been around since 1976 and this outbreak seemed no different. But in July 2014, it exploded in an unprecedented way.”*

It is one of Monrovia’s major hospitals, run by a Christian mission which operates in over 70 countries.

ELWA approached Rotary and Monrovia Rotary was able to build them a new oxygen plant. They are worthy recipients and this will offer long-term sustainability. ELWA is now looking to extend the facility with the money saved by not having to buy oxygen.

The dedication of the plant started in the chapel with thanks from ELWA Chief Executive Officer, Jason Troxtell, and the Chief Medical Officer of Liberia Dr Francis Katech, who affirmed how the plant would save many lives.

Victoria Cooper-Enchia made a moving speech about the Rotary journey, bringing everything into context.

After the dedication, the British Ambassador helped with the ribbon cutting and the plant was officially opened.

For the first few months of operation, the plant has only been supplying ELWA, but now it is planned to offer up to 100 cylinders a month to other hospitals.

## FACT FILE

### EBOLA

- The 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa was the “largest, most severe and most complex Ebola epidemic in history”, according to the World Health Organisation.
- Ebola was first identified in 1976 near the Ebola River in the Democratic Republic of Congo, then known as Zaire, and in what is now South Sudan.
- The Ebola virus is one of the world’s most virulent diseases, with a fatality rate of up to 90%. It damages the body’s immune system and organs.
- The infection is transmitted by direct contact with the blood, bodily fluids and the tissues of infected animals or people.
- Currently there is no cure for Ebola.
- Following the 2014 outbreak, 28,000 people were infected and 11,000 died before the emergency ended in 2016.
- The World Health Organisation declared an Ebola outbreak in north-east Democratic Republic of Congo in 2018 with 1,700 deaths.

A visit to the Museum of Monrovia put the reality to the much talked about civil war in Liberia from 1997 to 2014, but it also confirmed my feelings about the sincerity of the Rotarians working to rebuild Liberia.

Do they have to stay? For many of them the answer is no. They have homes elsewhere, but they stay because this is their home, the country they love which they want to see prosper.

During my visit, I had lunch with the Rotary Club of Monrovia and was asked to be their speaker. There was nothing strange or remote, I was amongst friends, I was coming home.

I am proud to be associated with a club that can, and will continue to do, so much good in the world. ●



For more information visit  
**World Health Organisation:**  
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# Alana's cakes put a smile on people's faces

*Meet 12-year-old Alana Habergham-Rice, whose venture, Alana's Caring Cakes, is making a big impression in South Yorkshire*

**A**LANA Habergham-Rice was one of the stand-out winners from last year's Rotary Young Citizen Awards.

The Rotherham-based school has become the ultimate Good Samaritan looking to make the world a better place at the tender age of 12-years-old.

From the tender age of six, Alana has been baking with her mum Rachel after setting up her first cake stall to raise funds for charity. This became an annual event including, one year when Alana raised money for a girl with cerebral palsy, helping her with the cost of her therapy and specialist equipment.

Soon Alana's Caring Cakes was born, a venture which celebrates its third birthday this month, when the youngster bakes a heart-shaped cake covered in sweets for someone who deserves a treat.

The response has been overwhelming with cakes made for folk in care homes, those undergoing chemotherapy, for carers looking after those with a terminal illness and hospice staff.

Always, at the heart of everything Alana does, is a desire to make people smile when life becomes difficult.

Since being nominated by Rotherham Rotary, and receiving her Rotary Young

Citizen Award in Nottingham last year, Alana admitted that business is brisk.

"This past year has been great," admitted Alana. "It has been nice to see all the different things that have happened and to look back on them to see what we have achieved."

"It is a lot of busier now. I'm baking at least 10 cakes a month, and we have just done a 'Kindness in the Community' week."

If that wasn't enough, Alana is also writing a cook book. She's including some of her own recipes, and is asking celebrities such as athlete Jessica Ennis-Hill, and Great British Bake Off's Mary Berry and Paul Hollywood to contribute.

The BBC Breakfast presenter, Dan Walker, has already agreed to submit a recipe, and with the book due to be published later this year, all proceeds will go to the Sheffield Hospitals Charity.

"The reason I chose the charity is someone really close to me had Hodgkin's Lymphoma and he is trying to pay back for all his treatments and chemotherapy."

Bizarrely, Alana chooses to cook the imperial way, in pounds and ounces, rather than metric, taking on the knowledge her great grandmother passed onto her mum.

The first ever cake she baked were butterfly buns, but her favourite recipe is the classic Victoria Sponge.



One of Alana's heart-shaped cakes



Alana with her Rotary Young Citizen award

Why baking? "It keeps me calm," answered Alana, who also has five siblings. "I do it because it makes me happy to see other people happy."

"It's really hard to choose a special cake, because they have all been so special. Every single one is different."

"But I remember delivering a heart cake to a lady at the hospice who cared for someone. That was special."

In a world where Alana's generation are often derided, hers is an uplifting and inspirational story.

"I think teenagers have a bad reputation because of the odd minority," she reflected. "We hear about the small few who are bad all the time, but there are lots of teenagers, doing lots of good things all the time, who are not getting the recognition as much as they should."

"They deserve credit, because it will make people feel there is hope for the next generation." ●





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**Dr. Brendan Crabb**  
Worldwide Antimalarial Researcher  
Melbourne, Australia  
A discussion on the on-going research to develop a malaria vaccine.

**Dr. Nanthale Mugala**  
Country Director, PATH | Lusaka, Zambia  
On research being done to block mosquito to human transmission.

**John Fairhurst**  
The Global Fund | Geneva, Switzerland  
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**Afternoon Program**  
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# Young role models who are making a difference

*Eve Conway, Founder and Co-ordinator of the Rotary Young Citizen Awards reflects on some of the talented and hard-working youngsters who, over the years, have previously won this prestigious honour.*



Award winner Grace O'Malley.

**T**HE Rotary Young Citizen Awards are a fantastic opportunity for young people, and they showcase Rotary at its best, attracting extensive media coverage every year, especially on BBC News.

So this is a great way to recognise positive young role models making a difference in our communities, either an outstanding individual or a group, under the age of 25, by nominating them for a **Rotary Young Citizen Award 2020**.

Hundreds of amazing young people have been nominated by Rotary clubs across Great Britain and Ireland for Young Citizen Awards since they were launched in 2007 to counter negative stereotypes of young people and showcase the good work which so many youngsters are doing to help others, locally and globally.

From tackling issues around mental health, child poverty, anti-social behaviour, through to campaigning against plastics pollution to supporting cancer patients, the homeless, migrants and refugees.

These are young people who are real “changemakers”, stepping up today to change the world for the better for tomorrow. Through their amazing work, they are inspiring other young people.



*“These young people are real changemakers”*

Like winner Grace O'Malley, now aged 21, who received her Rotary Young Citizen Award in 2013 after being nominated by Padiham Rotary for using her singing talents to raise tens of thousands of pounds for The Royal British Legion, a local hospice and cancer charities.

She said: “Receiving a Rotary Young Citizen Award still remains my most precious and proudest achievement.

“Raising money for charity is a very big part of my life and ethos. I live with the mindset of, if I can't help someone, then who can? Rotary inspired me to carry on supporting many different charities.

“It's helped craft me into the person I am today. So, thank you Rotary.”

Grace plans to become a professional opera singer and is studying for a Bachelor of Music at the Royal College of Music. Her aim is to use her singing talent to raise one million pounds for charity.

The Rotary Young Citizen WheelPower Sports Award winner in 2018 was 16-year-old Abbie Breakwell, who was President of Long Eaton Interact Club in Derbyshire for two years, and continues to go from strength to strength. She was nominated by Long Eaton Rotary who started the Interact Club at her school.

In the past year, Abbie has won 12 titles in the National Wheelchair Tennis Series, including being ranked as Great Britain's number one girl and being crowned in 2019 the LTA Women's National Wheelchair Tennis Series' singles and doubles champion.

She has organised inclusive sports days at local primary schools, coaching wheelchair tennis, and is passionate about empowering women in disability sport. ●



# Do you know someone who's got what it takes?

*This countdown is on to find nominees for this year's Rotary Young Citizen Awards, which will be presented at the Volunteer Expo in Birmingham in May. This year, there are two special awards reflecting young people's work in sport and peace.*

**T**HIS year, we are introducing an exciting new award. **The Rotary Young Citizen Sporting Hero Award 2020** recognises the achievement and contribution as a positive role model, of an able-bodied or disabled sports participant, or a group, under the age of 25, who is enabling others to participate in sport.

It's an opportunity to recognise someone in your community, or a group, which has achieved exceptional things in the world of sport - either able-bodied, or disability sport.

This is one of a number of categories which Rotarians across Great Britain and Ireland are being encouraged to nominate.

The closing date for nominations is fast approaching on February 14th.

For a second year, we are also delighted to offer the **Rotary Young Citizen Peacemaker Award**, reflecting Rotary's area of focus on peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

This award recognises young people who have made a significant contribution by building peace and understanding, whether in their school, for example, as peer mentors, within their local community, or with a peace project internationally.

Nominations can be for an individual or group under the age of 25.

Winners will receive a trophy, certificate and a fantastic, relevant



Bella Field with BBC TV presenter, Ellie Crisell

vocational experience.

The awards will be presented by the BBC TV presenter, Ellie Crisell, at the Volunteer Expo in Birmingham on Saturday, May, 2nd.

Winners are also eligible to be put forward for a Diana Award.

Begun in 1999, in memory of Diana, the Princess of Wales, this prestigious award acknowledges her belief that young people have the power to change the world for the better.

## Rotary Young Citizen Award

2015 winner Bella Field, nominated by Redbridge Rotary, was chosen as one of 12 outstanding young people from across the world to take centre stage for The Diana Award's Change\_Makers campaign to mark the 20th anniversary of the awards.

Bella, now aged 14, has helped to raise more than £120,000 for Haven House Children's Hospice in memory of her sister Molly who died from a brain tumour at the age of eight.

Bella has also become a 'buddy' for other children who have siblings with life-limiting illnesses.

She was invited by past Rotary International President Gary Huang to speak at the Rotary International Convention in Brazil.

So if you know of an outstanding, inspirational young person or group, under the age of 25, whose citizenship and dedication to a good cause, project or projects deserves national recognition, please nominate them.

If you are a member of the public or an organisation and want to make a nomination, contact your local Rotary Club.

Nominees do not necessarily have to be working on a Rotary project to be eligible. ●



For more details and to download this year's Guidance Notes and Nomination Form visit:  
**[www.rotarygbi.org/yc2020](http://www.rotarygbi.org/yc2020)**

# Nottingham sisters take on the fight with plastic

*Teenagers Amy and Ella Meek from Nottingham are passionate about pollution. They will be telling the audience at Volunteer Expo in May why we all need to take action against plastics and environmental issues.*

DAVE KING

**I**N 2019, climate change-denying world leaders and industrialists were woken from their collective slumbers by Swedish teenager, Greta Thunberg.

"You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words," the then 16-year-old climate activist told a United Nations summit in New York. "We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth – how dare you?"

In 2020, the names of Nottingham sisters Amy and Ella Meek are likely to become more prominent as the generation of tomorrow takes on the leaders of today.

They are the founders of the charity, 'Kids Against Plastic', a project which was started four years ago and is now beginning to get its voice heard.

At the time of this interview, the schoolgirls, who are studying for their A Levels and GCSEs respectively at Redhill Academy, north of Nottingham, were about to fly out to Geneva to speak at a United Nations' conference coinciding with International Human Rights Day.

And this May, the Meeks will be taking to the stage to talk about their environmental campaign at the Volunteer Expo in Birmingham.

Ella, 14, explained the charity was kick-started when they were studying the United Nations' goals for sustainable development, and discovered one common thread was plastic pollution. "When we looked into this a little more, we felt we couldn't not do

anything about it," she reflected.

"Four years ago, this very big environmental issue was getting very little coverage, and we were shocked. We felt the public were often being misled, especially about recycling.

"We felt we couldn't sit back to wait for this issue to get worse before people actually start to notice, or give the attention it deserves – especially as this is something we are going to inherit."



*"We felt the public were often being misled"*

The family were on holiday in France at the time, so the girls began litter picking on a beach. They set a goal of collecting 100,000 pieces of plastic litter – the number of sea mammals killed by plastics in the ocean each year. So far they have collected 70,000 pieces of plastic.

But 'Kids Against Plastic' is not a small beer campaign hatched by two idealistic teenagers. Their website and social media has quickly gained traction and support from other environmental charities, businesses and children themselves.

There is a small army of litter-pickers around the UK armed with an app, developed by the mapping agency Esri, which allows them to log their plastic collection, as well as mapping concentrated areas where litter has been picked up.

**The three key focuses of the charity are:**

- Raise awareness and understanding of the problems caused by plastic misuse.
- Encourage and support others to become plastic-clever and reduce single-use plastics.
- Empower children and young people to believe they can make a difference.

The plastic-clever campaign has 700 schools signed up to reduce their use of plastic. The charity is also working with cafés and businesses.

"Plastic-clever is about encouraging people to become more discerning users of plastic and to cut down their use," explained Amy, 16.

"The kids side of it is really important to us, encouraging young people to stand up for what they believe in, to believe they can make a difference whether it is against plastic or other issues.



Ella and Amy Meek are Kids Against Plastic





Amy and Ella Meek have taken to public stages around the world to promote their message.

“So far we have got over 30 kids around the country who are part of our ‘Kids Against Plastic’ team, who are making a difference against plastic pollution.”

The goal is to develop the charity and grow the plastic-clever initiative with more schools and businesses involved.

Amy and Ella are also conscious how they want to pass on the baton to other children once they step into adulthood. Legacy, and ensuring theirs is a child-run charity is important.

The girls admire the stand which Greta Thunberg has taken. The clock is ticking in the race to halt climate change, and perhaps the directness of youth is the way of forcing change.

“We can’t afford to delay these issues to the future, or dress them up and not take urgent action,” said Amy.

“I think Greta is really inspiring because she says how it is. For young people, like ourselves,

“Greta is very inspirational and shows the impact we can have.”

As far as their message to Rotarians, it will simply be - do something.

“It doesn’t matter what you do, so long as you do something. Because even small changes can have a really big impact if we work together,” added Amy. “Even if you do something small like stop using coffee cups when you go away from the Volunteer Expo, you will be making a difference.

“Plastic is an issue which is really growing and is turning into a crisis. Make a change in your life to help stop this. It does not have to cost you more or take up your time. Start by becoming plastic-clever and using reusables.

“For Rotarians, I also think you can encourage more young people, whether it is your children or schools you work with, to help them believe they have a voice, that they can make a difference, because we are the future generation, and so we going to have to make that change.” ●



For more information:

**Kids Against Plastic:**

Web: [www.kidsagainstoplastic.co.uk](http://www.kidsagainstoplastic.co.uk)

## FACT FILE

### PLASTIC POLLUTION

- Plastic pollution can now be found on every beach in the world, from busy tourist beaches to uninhabited, tropical islands nowhere is safe.
- Scientists have recently discovered microplastics embedded deep in the Arctic ice.
- In 1950, the world’s population of 2.5 billion produced 1.5 million tons of plastic; in 2016, a global population of more than 7 billion people produced over 320 million tons of plastic. This is set to double by 2034.
- Every day approximately 8 million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans.
- There may now be around 5.25 trillion macro and microplastic pieces floating in the open ocean. Weighing up to 269,000 tonnes.
- Plastics consistently make up 60 to 90% of all marine debris studied.

**Source:** Surfers Against Sewage

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But everything changed when they got in touch with Staysure's emergency medical support team. Due to Denise's pre-existing medical conditions, it was decided it would be better for her to be flown home. A medical team and organised transport was arranged to get the couple back to the UK for the urgent treatment Denise needed.

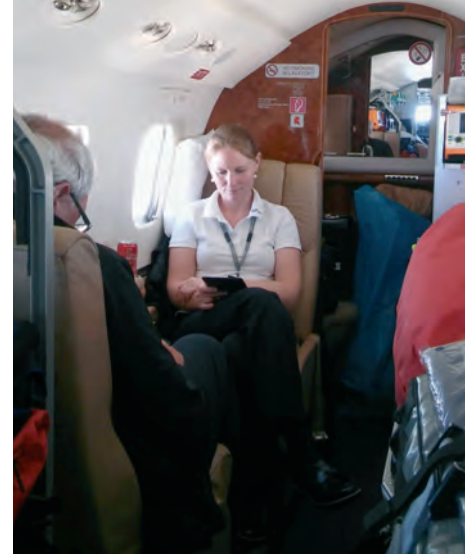
## 'I couldn't have asked for better'

She says: 'Staysure were fabulous and just seemed to lift every worry off our shoulders. They quickly got a plane sorted out, with two pilots, a doctor and a nurse, and we were on our way home. The service was first class, it really was. I had the operation done and was out of hospital within six days.'

Denise adds: 'The peace of mind you get from Staysure's cover and service is brilliant. I believe we would have had to sell the house if I had not had travel insurance. They were with me every step of the way. I couldn't have asked for better.'

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**Medical care for Denise, on-board.**

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# It's Rock on Rotary!

*Don't mention Brexit to the Rotarians in Gibraltar. The British overseas territory, sitting on the border with Spain and overlooking North Africa, has its ties firmly linked to Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland.*

**S**INCE 1713, Gibraltar has controversially been a British overseas territory, dominated by the 426-metre limestone ridge rock. This Mediterranean outpost also hosts a Rotary club with firm ties to Great Britain & Ireland. Immediate Past President, John McKillop Smith, describes Rotary on the Rock.

## **Tell me about the history of Rotary in Gibraltar - how and when did it get started?**

The club received its charter in 1966, personally presented by the Rotary International President at the time, the late Richard L. Evans, who landed in

Gibraltar on the SS Independence with a number of Rotarians, on their way to a convention in Italy. It was formed by a group of influential Gibraltarian businessmen who included the late Sir Joshua Hassan, who later became Chief Minister. The club was sponsored by Aaron Azagury from the Rotary Club of Tangiers in Morocco.

## **What have been some of the landmark achievements for the club over the years?**

That depends on which of our members you ask, but I expect the answers would be 1) integration of women into the club (what would we do without them?), 2) becoming part of

Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland (RIBI) and districted, 3) our 50th anniversary gala attended by the Governor and many distinguished people, 4) or maybe just walk around Gibraltar to see the small secreted plaques and knowing we had a hand in helping the community.

## **Tell me about membership - how many members, who are they and where do they come from?**

Membership varies between 32 and 40. Gibraltar has a significant expat population, businessmen and women, Forces, Ministry of Defence and the like, plus retirees soaking up the sun. Our membership reflects this variety. ➔



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Gibraltar Rotary is firmly connected at the heart of the community

### Where do you meet, and what are your meetings like?

We are very fortunate to have our meetings at The Rock Hotel on Tuesday evenings at 7.15pm for 7.30pm. The late Joseph Gaggero was a member of the club and owned the hotel, which now belongs to his son, James. Our meetings vary with speakers, business meetings, dine-outs and outings.

### How would you describe the Rotary Club of Gibraltar?

A place where like-minded people gather to socialise and try to make the community in which we live and the world, in general, a better place.

### Would you describe yourselves as a typically British club, a typically Spanish club, or a unique Gibraltar club?

I would not describe us as any of those. We have mixed nationalities, some Gibraltarians, some expats and are generally like Gibraltar itself – multi-national. I'd just say we are a unique Gibraltar club.

### Is there anything you do different at your meetings?

Many clubs have different formats. We only dine after a meeting once a month or so, as we are fortunate to be provided

with tapas by The Rock Hotel. We have speakers and sometimes outings in place of a meeting.

### How do you feel being part of Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland (RIBI), and part of a south coast district? Do you feel disconnected?

With a thousand miles and the expense of air fares, it is difficult to keep continual close ties with RIBI and our District 1120. They do visit and are always there if needed for advice. From the very early days, our club had close ties with a club in Kent hence the affiliation with District 1120. We have made many Rotary friends over the last few years and attend district conference in Kent.

### What is the relationship like with Rotarians in Spain? Are you involved in any joint projects?

We have had very good relationships over the years with various clubs in Spain, attending each other's galas and we have joint projects from time to time too.

### What current projects is the club involved with?

We have raised funds for many charities this year. At the moment we are focused on environmental issues and liaise with other clubs, charities and institutions.

We have just given long-life water bottles to schools in an attempt to cut down on single-use plastic water bottles. As you can imagine, with the heat here, a lot of plastic bottles are used. We also have a joint project with Round Table and Lions Club in aid of mental health.

### Tell me about the Straits of Gibraltar initiative?

The Rotary clubs of Gibraltar, Tangier and Ceuta have joint projects, one per year taking turns. Last year, the Rotary Club of Tangier project was to renovate village schools and provide sanitary conditions for children. This year was our turn and funds were raised for Clubhouse, a mental health support initiative. We are about to embark on the Ceuta project.

### With all the tensions around Brexit, what has it been like living on the Rock over the past three years?

In Gibraltar, we are used to dealing with frontier problems and cope with whatever cards are dealt by planning ahead. Life goes on here, it's our home and we love it. Gibraltar did vote overwhelmingly to remain in Europe.

### How do you see the future of Rotary in Gibraltar?

It is hard to encourage younger members into an ageing club, but with the changes we are making there will always be a place here for Rotary. We have started an Interact group and we hope they will one day be Rotarians.

### Why do you do Rotary?

It can be very sociable and fun but, more importantly, I want to help the community in which we live and generally make the world a better place. ●



For more information:

**Gibraltar Rotary:**  
[www.rotaryclubofgibraltar.com](http://www.rotaryclubofgibraltar.com)



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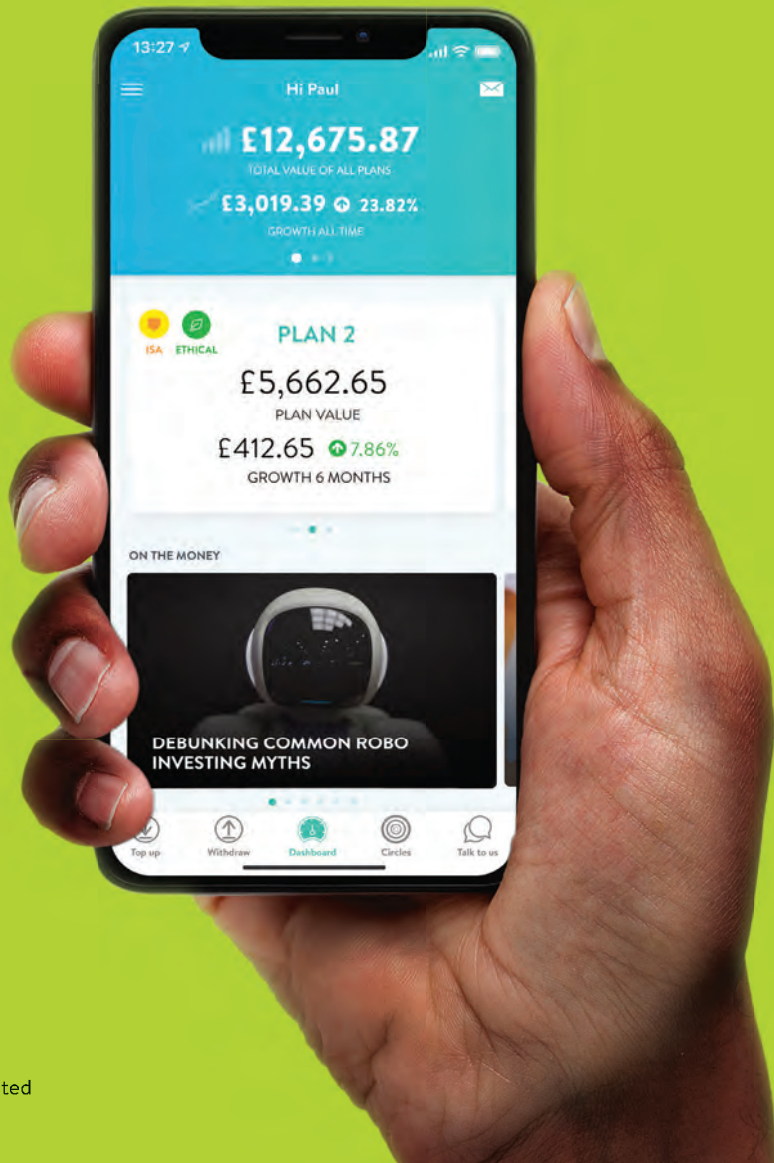
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## LATEST NEWS FROM AROUND GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND

### A BOOK TO INSPIRE



**T**HE parents of Max Johnson, the heart transplant youngster from Cheshire who has inspired a law change over organ donation in the UK, have written a book about their experience.

'Golden Heart' is written by Emma and Paul Johnson, whose son Max was featured in the August issue of Rotary magazine.

This book follows the ups, downs, twists and turns of this tumultuous journey, the pain of waiting for an organ, of seeing other children not make it, and the *Daily Mirror's* 'Change the Law for Life' campaign for which Max has become the poster boy.

Emma Johnson said: "We found it very cathartic writing the book, as so much of what was swimming around in our mind, could be put down on paper and this helped us to process what had happened, cope better with the chronic stress of our situation and come to terms with our new normality."

"We want to raise awareness about organ donation and emphasise the incredible second chance that organ donation bestows, through the power of a real life touching human story."

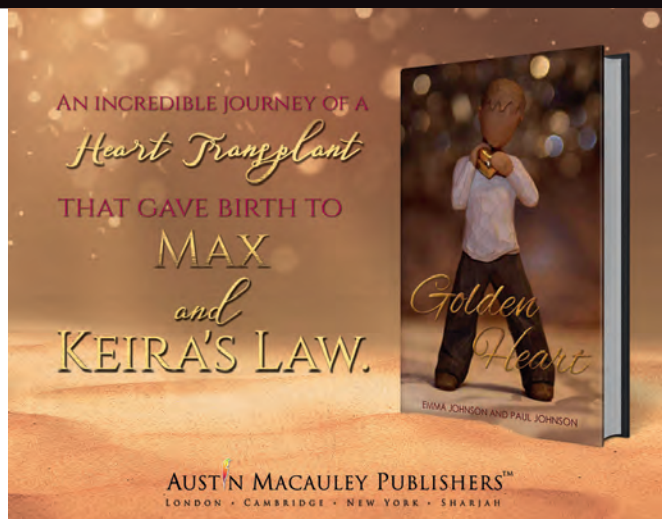
The Johnson family campaigned in favour of an opt-out system for organ donation in England.

In 2018, the Government announced that the law will change in Spring 2020 and this legislation will be known as 'Max and Keira's Law'.

A proportion of author royalties will be donated to The Sick Children's Trust, The Children's Heart Unit Fund and Inspired by Keira, with the family's blessing.

"Our hope is that this book will encourage readers to think about organ donation and make their wishes known to their family," added Emma. •

 **Website:** [www.austinnmacauley.com/book/golden-heart](http://www.austinnmacauley.com/book/golden-heart)



### FOOTBALL CRAZY



**N**OW in its 23rd year, 260 pupils took part in the Rotary District Special Needs Football Festival, held at the Aston Villa Football Club Academy.

A total of 21 schools entered 34 teams from an area that is centred on Birmingham and the West Midlands, and includes parts of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire.

Sponsorship was provided by Rotary clubs within the Rotary district. This is the ninth year the competition has been hosted by the Rotary Club of Wylde Green, supported by their Inner Wheel Club, on behalf of Rotary District 1060.

Wylde Green Rotarian and Festival organiser, Nick Thurston, said: "The football festival is one of the best examples of Rotary in action I have seen or been involved with, and we look forward to continuing to run this event for many years yet." •



## WAR AGAINST PLASTIC

**T**HE North Wales seaside town of Prestatyn has joined a network of communities across the UK leading the way to tackle throw away plastic at source.

The town has been awarded Plastic Free Community status by the marine conservation charity, Surfers Against Sewage (SAS), in recognition of the work it has done to start reducing the impact of single-use plastic on the environment.

Prestatyn Rotary Club, the local business forum and town council started the campaign last year after more evidence emerged about the catastrophic effect plastic was having on our planet and in particular to the marine world.

As a coastal town, leading organisations said they could see the impact and felt a stand had to be taken to actively reduce plastic consumption, promote recycling and responsible disposal of single use plastics.

The Plastic Free Prestatyn Steering Group pulled together key organisations and businesses setting up a community led steering group, instigating the SAS Plastic Free Schools' education programme, getting local council commitment and working with local businesses, organisations and community groups to spread the word and minimise the amount of disposable plastics they use.

Prestatyn Rotarian Peter Dop, Community Lead for the Plastic Free Prestatyn Steering Group said: "The community backing has



been extraordinary, supporting events, circulating information and taking an active interest in the progress towards Plastic Free status.

"Many businesses had already made conscious decisions not to use single use plastic within their shops, whilst others have made significant changes to the products and packaging they use."

Peter pointed out how there are now over 600 communities across the UK working to reduce single use plastic and the impact it has on our environment.

"Every step those communities and the individuals in them take, is a step towards tackling the problem at source, challenging our throwaway culture and encouraging the habit and system changes we need to see," he added. •

## WRAP UP LANCs



**N**O matter what the weather the good folk of Lancashire should be warmer this winter thanks to Rotary and the thousands of people who have answered the call to #warmheart and #wrapuplancs this autumn.

The Fylde coast of Lancashire is perhaps a unique place. Lytham in the south is regarded as one of the

most exclusive places in the county and Blackpool is recognised as having some of the most deprived communities in the country.

Wrap Up Lancashire, spearheaded by the partnership of Great Harwood & Rishton and Accrington Rotarians Pam Holgate, Ann-Marie Etherington, along with Malcolm and Jacquie Baldwin, has provided Rotary Lytham's new satellite group – TotallyRotaryFY8 – with an ideal project to get its teeth into.

The project has helped to raise the profile of the group, the club and Rotary but, above all, provided the residents of Lytham St Annes with an opportunity to help the few under-privileged families in their own towns, as well as the many homeless and those in need in Blackpool.

The scheme has been taken on by several clubs in the Cumbria and Lancashire District, as well as in Rotary in North West England and the Isle of Man.

Club lead for TRFY8 since its inception in the spring has been Joy Chatters.

Ironically the new group is made up entirely of women, led by Chair Deborah Wilkinson, whose enthusiasm for the Wrap Up project was fired by her own experience working with one of Blackpool's homeless projects, Amazing Graze.

Thanks to Lytham Skip Hire, who offered a large suitable collection centre above their offices, the team, with great assistance from friends, has been able to sort and distribute around 1,000 coats together with jumpers, hat, scarves and gloves.

They have gone out not only to those who sleep rough every night in the area and underprivileged families, but also the local women's refuge, local Syrian refugee families, charities helping young offenders and in fact anyone in need of good warm clothing. •

## ROTARY SUPPORTS FLOOD VICTIMS

**L**AST autumn, large parts of northern England were besieged by flooding after a month's worth of rain fell in 24 hours. That's prompted Rotary clubs to rally behind their communities.

David Hood is Rotary's District Governor for Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire, as well as south-east Staffordshire and north-west Leicestershire.

David, who heads District 1220, lives in Matlock, Derbyshire, in the heart of the region where the Don, Derwent and Trent rivers burst their banks flooding tens of thousands of homes and businesses for weeks.

That prompted the Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland Disaster Recovery Trust to re-open its UK & Ireland Flood Appeal.

David reported that Rotary clubs across the district were heavily involved with supporting the community both during the flooding and afterwards.

Doncaster was one of the hardest hit towns in the region where more than 1,000 homes and businesses were affected. Doncaster Rotary, Doncaster St. Leger and Doncaster St. George's all came together to offer aid.

Over the county border in North Nottinghamshire, Worksop Rotary's secretary, Philip Smith, reported that at the height of the flooding, Bassetlaw Foodbank was seeking more requests for help.

These were from not only directly-affected families, but those who are indirectly affected, such as workers on zero-hour contracts who have not been able to earn as much. •

## SHED PROJECT WINS AWARD

**R**OYAL Wootton Bassett & District Rotary has won an outstanding award from the South West in Bloom competition for its Men's Shed project.

The Men's Shed idea was conceived almost four years ago. One of the touch points for the concept was how this was a way of tackling mental health in men, especially the elderly, by giving them a focus.

That sparked some partnership working with between Rotary and the Wiltshire community, including Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service, who offered use of their fire station to house three sheds.

Two of the sheds were left over from CarFest and, through the National Association of Men's Sheds, they were transported to the fire station.

Tools came in from various sources with people clearing out family sheds and garages donating items to the project. Rotary provided a grant of £500 and Wiltshire Council gave £2,000, while Rotarian, Keith Griffin an electrician, wired up the sheds to professional standards.

The Men's Shed officially opened January 1st, 2017 and a core of faithful shedders has been rapidly established.

Linda Locke from Royal Wootton Bassett



& District Rotary explained the Men's Shed club has evolved to become closely involved with the community.

She added: "They decided to focus on woodworking and set out to recycle wood from various sources such as unused pallets, to make bird boxes, hedgehog houses and planters.

"The benches in the High Street have been renovated by shedders and much of the ironwork around the Town Hall has been repainted.

"Planters and benches have been made for local schools. They also have a connection with the Oak and Furrows Wildlife Rescue Centre, which is extremely happy to take hedgehog houses which can go with hedgehogs when they are returned to the wild in the spring." •

## ROTAKIDS RALLY FOR MIND

**T**HE beauty of North Cumbria was explored in aid of the mental health charity, Mind, by five RotaKids groups.

The 2.6-mile sponsored walk, with 600 feet of ascent, was organised by the Brampton & Longtown Rotary Club.

Pupils, teachers and parents from five local primary schools with RotaKids groups, took part in the event. The schools taking part were Castle Carrock, Fir Ends, Hayton, Irthington and Warwick Bridge.

"This was the first event of its kind which we have run with the school children. It was enjoyed by all, and the feedback was that this should be an annual event," said one of the organisers, Wendy Aldred.

The Brampton & Longtown Club is one

of the most rural in England, in the heart of Hadrian's Wall country and stretching up to the Scottish border. They work closely with Rotary clubs based in Carlisle.

Mind was originally formed in 1946 as the National Association for Mental Health, and celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2016.

The charity offers information and advice to people with mental health problems, as well as lobbying Government and local authorities on their behalf.

RotaKids is a Primary School Citizenship programme. The concept is developing fast. The programme is mainly aimed at the Junior School age group, focused on seven to 11-year-olds, which is Years 3-6 in Primary schools. The main objective is to introduce Rotary ideals to young people. •



## ROTARY CONNECTS THE WORLD

**R**OTARY has been organising youth exchanges for over 60 years.

Each year, worldwide, over 7,000 young people enjoy the experience of a lifetime through Rotary Youth Exchange.

Back in August 1978, Julie West from Pontypool in South Wales took part in a Rotary Youth Exchange to Allentown, Pennsylvania, USA. And even today, she is in touch with the American family who hosted her.

Julie's three-week visit to America was to stay with Rotarian hosts Stanley and Sally Drabick, together with their children Denise and Scott.

Now, 41 years have passed and the

Drabicks have kept in touch over the years by visiting visited Julie at her home in Pontypridd.

But recently, Julie decided to retrace her steps to the USA to visit the family who hosted her on the Youth Exchange Scheme all those years ago. Julie and husband Colin returned to stay with Denise who now lives in New Jersey.

Julie and Denise greeted each other as long-lost friends, a true friendship which was created within Rotary but has lasted a lifetime.

She wishes to thank her parents and the Rotary Club of Narberth & Whitland who gave her this opportunity to travel and forge a lasting friendship with the Drabicks. •

## SIGN OF THE TIMES



**C**ARDIFF Rotarians have been getting themselves well and truly noticed in the Welsh capital.

They have been using a billboard at the Capitol Centre to promote Rotary in South Wales.

The prime city centre location was used to promote World Polio Day. It has also featured World Peace Day and Rotary Day.

Alison Sutherland, who will take over as District Governor for Rotary in Southern Wales (District 1150), was the instigator behind the project.

"We have been using an electronic billboard for about six years," explained past District Governor, Steve Jenkins.

"It was Alison Sutherland who made the connection by asking whether the firm behind it would put on a free ad for us to promote a Stroke Awareness Day at the Capitol Centre where the billboard was located.

"They agreed and we have used it since about three times a year for Rotary Day, World Polio Day and World Peace Day.

"It is still provided free of charge and the firm have now added a second, which is also in a prominent position.

"We rely upon Alison's good relations with the firm and do not overuse their generosity."

The first sign is situated next to Queen Street Station in Cardiff, which has a footfall of around 10,000 people a day.

"The second electronic billboard is situated on Newport Road, near to the city centre. •

## ALL ABOARD SHELTERBUS



**T**HE Rotary Shelterbus project was due to be launched in Wolverhampton in January.

It will provide 10 private, secure overnight sleeping pods, including for those with accessibility requirements.

There is a light cooking space, washing and toilet facilities, provision for pets, and a medical/private consultation space.

The bus, which was handed over in the name of Rotary in Wolverhampton, is fully owned and operated by the Good Shepherd/Enterprise Homes charities group for the homeless.

Their volunteers will assist rough sleepers to regain their privacy and dignity,

and be given assistance to find work.

The project has been almost three years in the making. The original idea was to set up a hostel but, when it was realised that the point of need could move around the city, it was decided that a suitably equipped bus could be much more effective.

So, in January 2017 plans for the first Rotary Shelter Bus began with National Express West Midlands donating Birmingham Breakfast Rotary a double decker bus.

Over the past year, refurbishment has been carried out on the bus at a workshop in Sheffield.

It has cost in the region of £37,000 which has been met by an online fundraising website, a grant from The Rotary Foundation and sponsorship. Charter Court Financial Services in Wolverhampton also made a substantial donation.

Richard Green from Wolverhampton Rotary, one of five from the town involved with the project, said: "It is an amazing project which has come about as a result of the hard work and enthusiasm shown by the Birmingham Breakfast Rotary club team." •

## LITERACY AID WITH THE UN IN LEBANON

**R**OTARY clubs in Ireland made a special presentation to the Irish Army before they embarked on a peacekeeping mission to Lebanon.

The Kilkenny, Carlow, Newbridge, Raheny, Dublin-Fingal, Portlaoise & Youghal Rotary Clubs all joined forces to send a shipment of literacy aid to children in Lebanon.

Taking the shipment to Lebanon were the Irish Defence Forces (Óglaigh na hÉireann) who have deployed to the Middle East as part of the 115th United Nations Interim Force Battalion.

This was established in 1978 as a peace-keeping operation to support the Lebanese Armed Forces in the south of Lebanon and to also provide humanitarian assistance.

The presentation of literacy equipment was made to Lieutenant Colonel Declan Crummey at the James Stephens Army Barracks in Kilkenny, which is home to the 3rd Infantry Battalion.

The Rotary Ireland literacy project was supported by Stakelum Office Supplies in



Thurles, County Tipperary.

Jason Dempsey, President of Kilkenny Rotary, said: "Stakelum Office Supplies have stepped up and really helped source as much literacy supplies as we could from the modest funds which were gathered.

"I think you will all agree that the amount of stock heading to Lebanon is sure to make some difference to the lives of young children who don't have much.

"This is an excellent international humanitarian aid project at a significant time in the history of Rotary and the United Nations as we approach the 75th anniversary of the formation of the UN." •

## £125,000 FOR PUDSEY!

**R**OTARY clubs across Great Britain & Ireland have raised £125,000 for BBC's Children in Need.

Rotary has long been a supporter raising funds for the popular BBC telethon, which looks to change to lives of disadvantaged children and young people across these isles.

The annual show, which was broadcast live from the BBC's Elstree Studios, was kicked-off by Rotary polio ambassador, Ade Adepitan.

He was joined by co-host Tess Daly, before Mel Giedroyc and Graham Norton rounded off the evening.

Paul Fisher from Rotary Misbourne Matins in Buckinghamshire, and who

has been Rotary's co-ordinator for BBC Children in Need since 2014, described the response from Rotary clubs this year as 'magnificent'.

Clubs across the isles took part in a range of fund-raising initiatives.

He said: "We have pledged £125,000 this year which I am very confident we will make.

"Last year, Rotary raised £138,500, but that was partly down to an unexpected £8,000 from a swimming relay organised by Maidstone Riverside, which was not expected.

"The £125,000 is a conservative estimate, but we fully expect to hit that target." •

## A 1240 MOTORING CHALLENGE



**A** PAIR of Cumbrian Rotarians took part in a unique motoring challenge in aid of the End Polio Now 1240 Challenge with a 1240 km drive from northern England to Essex.

Get Moving to End Polio is a new fund-raising activity to support Rotary's Purple4Polio campaign.

The border between the last two polio-endemic countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan, is more than 1,240 miles, so organisers are challenging Rotarians to incorporate the number 1240 while raising funds to eradicate polio.

Seeking to support this initiative two Eden Valley Rotarians Roger Frank of the Upper Eden Club and John Taylor of the Appleby Club challenged themselves to a 1240 km road run to arrive at 12:40 at the Grays Thurrock Club in District 1240, donating £1240 to the Rotary Get Moving to End Polio 1240 Challenge.

Driving a beautiful Bugatti, the dynamic duo left Appleby on a bleak day to head south across the Pennines. They called in on the Scunthorpe Pentagon and Saffron Walden Rotary Clubs, before arriving in Essex to attend a reception organised by the Grays Thurrock Club.

Once they had collected various cheques, the pair made the 398 mile or 640 km return trip to Cumbria in torrential rain! •





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## PURRFECT PET

**W**AKEFIELD Rotary club is spearheading a campaign to alleviate the suffering of cat-loving dementia patients in the UK by linking with Britain's best-selling feline magazine, 'Your Cat'.

The club has had a long association with the scheme, which sources and donates robotic cats to sufferers of the debilitating condition.

It is widely recognised that these cats, which look and sound like the real thing, have a remarkable, positive effect for sufferers.

Now, linking with the 'Your Cat' magazine publishers, the club is extending the initiative to a nationwide audience. They recently had a major article published in the magazine.

Wakefield Rotary's Past President, Sheila Wainwright, is spearheading the club's initiative, following the loss of her husband John to early-onset dementia eight years ago.

The Yorkshire club is also the lead Rotary club in the UK for assisting Dementia UK, and their work with Admiral Nurses providing help to those with the condition, and their carers.

Wakefield Rotary Club's Vice President, Peter Clarke, is part of the co-ordinating team. He said: "We are very grateful to 'Your Cat' for promoting World Mental Health Day and featuring the benefits of the robotic cats.

"We know first-hand the comfort they can bring to people affected by dementia, or who feel socially isolated."

The robotic cats cost between £90 and £100. •



To find out more visit:  
[www.rotarywakefield.org.uk](http://www.rotarywakefield.org.uk)  
or email:  
[cats@rotarywakefield.org.uk](mailto:cats@rotarywakefield.org.uk)

## KIDS WITH A LOT OF BOTTLE!

**C**HILDREN at South Wingfield Primary School in Derbyshire have collected 1500 plastic bottles and recycled them into a Rotary eco greenhouse.

The greenhouse is now complete after Rotary Amber Valley members provided the frame and canes with children helping to put bottles on the canes.

Headteacher Fiona O'Hara said: "It's a great project and thanks to Rotary the children are understanding the need to recycle plastic but also will be able to both grow plants and then put them into the school garden."

Local village company Taylors Corn Stores donated a number of pallets which Rotarians recycled into greenhouse staging.

The project has taken some months to collect bottles and six sessions with four Rotarians and children to complete the greenhouse.

The children demonstrated their knowledge of environmental issues during a piece for BBC Radio Derbyshire about the eco greenhouse.

Year 5 student Katie aged 10, when asked why we need to recycle plastic replied: "If we don't it ends up in the sea and can kill our fish."

Project lead, Rotarian John Stamp said: "It's been a great project, both having the children involved and also during their break time they chat to us and ask questions.

"It has been really rewarding for all the Rotary team." •

## DEFIBRILLATOR PROVES ITS WORTH

**T**HE modest gift of a cardiac defibrillator by a Dorset Rotary club is having an impact on a wide section of the community.

Christchurch Rotary donated the device to the St Joseph's Church in Purewell, and at a club meeting it was explained how the defibrillator is valued by the community.

Roger Adams, who is involved with maintenance of the church buildings, and Nick Coghlan, Chairman of St Joseph's Church Pastoral Council, offered their thanks to the Rotary club for raising the funds to buy the equipment.

This has been installed at the church and is now available for use in the event of anyone collapsing from a cardiac arrest whilst visiting the premises in Purewell.

Well trained first-aiders are on site and able to assess any such emergency and administer life-saving treatment with the machine, thankfully the need has not yet arisen.

St Joseph's Church now has four components - a presbytery, a church, a parish hall and an old chapel.



Pictured, from left to right, are Roger Adams, President Mike Court and Nick Coghlan

Nick and Roger explained how large numbers of people use these facilities every week, so the availability of the defibrillator was of great importance.

For example, the Christchurch food bank is run from St Joseph's and at least 200 people are coming in and out to this per week.

The church itself seats 270, but it has been known to accommodate 400 people at peak times.

They said it was reassuring to know that emergency help was now available in the event of a medical crisis. •





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In more recent history Knebworth House has been named 'The Stately Home of Rock'. The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Queen, Oasis and Robbie Williams as well as over 100 other major artists, have played Knebworth festivals since 1974 to over two million fans. Knebworth House has also made appearances on the big screen, from major feature films, commercials, music videos and still shoots, with highlights including Batman, Victoria & Abdul and The Crown.

Groups can visit the Historic House between March and September. Tours are included with House admission tickets and are guided most days. Lasting about an hour, the knowledgeable guides will tell the story of the house and the Lytton family.

An organiser's complimentary admission ticket is offered for the visit as a thank you for bringing 20 or more guests. Upon arrival, a member of our team will welcome the group and familiarise guests with the amenities. For more information call our Group Bookings team on 01438 810 931.



## and finally...

*Ian Riseley, who was the Rotary International President between 2017-18, writes about the impact which the devastating Australian bush fires have had on his country.*

# A global family who care for each other

**E**VERY year in Australia, we have fires somewhere during summer. What is different this year is that the fires started so early, in Spring, and they are so widespread and intense.

Australia has six states and for most of the past couple of months there have been fires burning in every state.

In my home state of Victoria, most of the eastern part of the state, between 100 and 250 km from Melbourne, is impacted and the fires have destroyed hundreds of homes and killed several people. The speed and power of the blazes is astonishing.

The impact is felt in the major cities because of the horrible footage on TV, which I understand has been shown right around the world, as well as the strong smell and haze in the air from smoke.

Also, many families from the city take holidays in the east, and they have been evacuated, along with the local residents.

Australia is renowned for our unique wildlife, and the mass destruction of millions of koalas, kangaroos and possums, amongst many, as well as farm animals, is heart-wrenching.

Rotary raises funds nationally, via the Royal Australia World Community Services website, as well as in each Rotary district.

The philosophy is that other agencies



© iStock

undertake the urgent relief work while the fires continue to burn and are in the news, and when others have gone and the community starts to rebuild, Rotary is there.

That doesn't mean we do nothing in the meantime, and in District 9820 in Eastern Victoria, Rotary is collecting and donating hay for those who have been burnt out but livestock has survived.

Also, Rotarians are helping repair fencing, to keep livestock under control.

In addition, Rotary is distributing vouchers for those in need to spend in the local community, to assist both the needy and the business operators in the towns.

As an Australian Rotarian, I have been enormously gratified by the support

we have received from right around the world. The expressions of goodwill and the donations flowing in have been gratefully received.

It is in times like this that it becomes clear that Rotary is more than a great organisation for doing good in the world.

It is a global family who care for each other, and that makes Rotary special.

As President Mark Mahoney has told us: Rotary Connects The World. ●



For more information:

**Royal Australia World Community Services:**  
[www.rawcs.org.au](http://www.rawcs.org.au)

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